

## Sophists

500 BCE →

- itinerant;
  - taught for a fee;
  - schooled people in the skill of rhetoric (the art of persuading)
  - came to be associated more with verbal cleverness than with profundity, truth or sincerity.
- Plato disapproved of sophists for several reasons.

## Protagoras

Circa 490-420 BCE

- “Man is the measure of things, both of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not.” = “Whatever appears to be true for any one person *is* true for him/her.”
- objective truth is denied;
  - Plato argued that Protagoras’ argument is self-refuting  
[My believing that belief x is false is supposed to be true because I believe it.]

## Socrates

469-399 BCE

- charged no fees;
  - the philosopher is not to instruct but to question maieutically;
  - the philosopher exposes false pretension most importantly in moral matters;
  - moral knowledge and virtue are the same: to know the right is to do the right (only the ignorant do wrong);
- Socrates didn’t claim that degree of knowledge (wisdom) that rendered him flawlessly virtuous; instead he relied on an inner divine voice that intervened whenever he was on the edge of doing wrong;
- when he was 70 his enemies laid several capital charges against him: [1] impiety, [2] introduction of strange gods, [3] the corruption of Athenian youth;
  - he defended himself on all three charges;
  - however, he refused to defend himself sophistically;
  - to his accusers he said, “The difficulty, my friends, is not to avoid death but to avoid unrighteousness, for that runs faster than death.”
  - the genuine philosopher has no fear of death, but neither does he take his own life;
  - at death, the soul, freed from the body, passes into its proper home: the world of purity, eternity and immortality;
  - impure souls are not completely immaterial and will be reincarnated – with no guarantee of release.