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Author(s): Bruce McComiskey

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Disassembling Plato's Critique of Rhetoric in the *Gorgias* (447a-466a)

Plato's disdain for sophistic doctrines, especially those concerning rhetoric, is no grand secret.¹ George Kerferd calls Plato's treatment of sophists in general "profoundly hostile" (1). Indeed, throughout the Platonic corpus, sophistic doctrines are criticized; specifically in the *Gorgias*, the sophist from Leontini Sicily is outright ridiculed. Despite Plato's overt distrust of the sophists in general, and of Gorgias in particular, some recent scholars find no fault with Plato's treatment of Gorgianic rhetoric in the early pages of the *Gorgias*. 

For example, Kathleen Freeman maintains that "the opinions on rhetoric attributed to [Gorgias] by Plato are probably genuine" (366). Similarly, in the introductions to their respective editions of Plato's *Gorgias*, both Terence Irwin and W. H. Thompson claim that the sophist Gorgias is accurately represented, that the ideas of the historical figure match those of Plato's character (Irwin 9; Thompson 3-4). Renato Barilli argues that in the *Gorgias*, the Leontinian sophist is treated with dignity and fairness (8), and that "Plato had skillfully expounded the point of view of the Sophists in [the] *Gorgias* . . ." (30). Finally, Michael C. Leff suggests that the *Gorgias* "perceptively locates essential features of sophistic rhetoric and recognizes clearly the threat they pose to [Plato's] own philosophical program. Ironically, then, it is one of the best available sources for reconstructing the thought of the ancient sophists" (36). Unfortunately, the acceptance of Plato's treatment of sophistic doctrines—especially those regarding the art of *logos*—has resulted in an impoverished contemporary view of sophistic rhetoric.²

In this essay I argue for a conception of Gorgianic rhetoric that is very different from Plato's version. When the extant fragments of Gorgias are examined closely, abandoning the "aid" of Plato's dialogues, we discover theoretical coherence and practical validity where there was once thought to be only contradiction and deceit. The extant fragments reveal that Gorgias' epistemology is relativistic: human sensory perception distorts external reality, creating subjective mental images in each individual (DK 82 B3.77-82).³ His corresponding rhetorical methodology works to seize the opportune moment (*kairos*) in which certain kinds of language can unite these disparate subjective consciousnesses into a single desire for action. Gorgias' rhetorical methodology, based on *kairos*, requires a relativistic epistemology which allows for the determination of truth through the consensus 

of many. *Kairos* cannot function as the basis of a rhetorical methodology within a foundational epistemology, since any time is the “right time” when one possesses truth. In the *Gorgias*, however, Plato misrepresents the Leontinian sophist as having a foundational epistemology, while retaining Gorgias’ *kairos*-governed methodology, making him appear contradictory and absurd.

The purpose of this essay is to reveal Plato’s motivations and methodology for misrepresenting Gorgias’ epistemology in the *Gorgias*. First, I will examine Plato’s writer-audience relationship with the Adenine citizenry around the date that Plato published the *Gorgias*, revealing some of the economic, political, and social exigencies that led Plato to misrepresent the sophist Gorgias’ epistemology. Finally, I will analyze the methodology Plato employs to misrepresent Gorgias’ epistemology; and I will defend Gorgias against Plato’s critique of rhetoric through reference to the extant Gorgianic fragments.⁴

The Historical Situation

When Plato wrote the *Gorgias*, the Adenine democracy was in an unstable condition. E. R. Dodds convincingly places the date of the *Gorgias*’ composition at around 387 BCE (24)—just twenty-four years after the tyranny of the Four Hundred and just seventeen years after the tyranny of the Thirty. Alcibiades and Critias, two of Socrates’ most successful students, led the revolutions that resulted in these bloody oligarchic tyrannies; and their antidemocratic exploits contributed much to the Adenine death sentence against their mentor Socrates.⁵

According to Thucydides, in 411 BCE Alcibiades persuaded many of the war-weary Adenine troops that he could arrange a peace treaty between Athens and their Spartan enemies. This peace treaty, however, would contain one necessary condition: that Athens restructure its democratic government into an oligarchic system of four hundred rulers (8.45-49).⁶ Soon after the oligarchy took power, Alcibiades failed in his attempts to secure peace with the Spartan allies (8.70-71). As dissension from vocal democrats increased, the oligarchs began putting to death anyone who dared speak freely against the present government (8.72-73). Finally realizing the deceit Alcibiades used to gain power, the failure of his attempts at securing peace, and the brutality he employed to retain his power, the reinvigorated democratic sentiments of the Adenine citizens incited them to overthrow Alcibiades and his oligarchic colleagues. The bloody oligarchy was over, and Athens returned to democracy (8.74-81).

The tyranny of the Thirty in 404 BCE, led by Socrates’ student Critias, was even bloodier than the tyranny of the Four Hundred in 411 BCE. As Xenophon tells us, having received several regiments of fresh troops from supportive Spartan allies, Critias and the other oligarchic tyrants set up a government of thirty rulers (with twenty-one powerful economic advisers) and 3,000 citizens—all other residents of Athens were allowed no legal rights whatsoever. Two fates often befell those middle- and lower-class residents of Athens who were not listed among the

3,051 citizens protected by the laws of the oligarchic government: many of them had their properties confiscated, and others were murdered for publicly opposing the Thirty (*Hellenica* 2.3.11-21).⁷

Having removed all legal rights from the middle- and lower-class residents of Athens, Critias and the rest of the Thirty began to make more specific the ambiguous laws which Solon wrote for the Adenine democracy (Krentz 62); ambiguous laws require deliberation, which empowers those who possess rhetorical skills over those with mere wealth and high birth. In fact, Critias was so leery of rhetorical prowess among the masses that he wrote a law forbidding all instruction in the art of discourse (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.31).

A few months after the forced installation of the oligarchic Thirty, Thrasybulus and about 70 other exiled Adenine democrats marched toward Athens and defeated the oligarchs despite their Spartan troops, killing many of the Thirty, Critias among them, in battle. Athens again returned to democratic rule (*Hellenica* 2.4.2-43).

In democratic Athens, following 404 BCE, oligarchic sentiment was treated with caution, as when Socrates was tried by Miletus for corrupting the youth of Athens—indeed, during the trial itself, Miletus mentioned the brutal oligarchs Alcibiades and Critias as the most prominent of these corrupted youth (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.9-12). And soon after Socrates drank the hemlock, Plato, perhaps Socrates' most prominent student, began to challenge democracy—favoring, of course, oligarchy—and attacking rhetoric and its teachers.

Plato's desire for oligarchic government in Athens rested on his foundational epistemology; access to true knowledge was limited to those of wealth and high birth, and those few born with these qualities were the only legitimate candidates to be counted among the philosophic ruling few. The sophists, on the other hand, favored the Adenine democracy the way it was, and their desire for democracy rested on their relativistic epistemologies. They believed that all "knowledge" is opinion (*doxa*), and that all laws and policies (*nomoi*) grow out of opinion. For many of the sophists, and especially Gorgias, these opinions are governed by language (*logos*). Thus, rhetoric supplies the necessary tools for mastery over opinion, and, consequently, the ability for anyone to function effectively in a democratic society. All people, claimed the sophists, are able to learn how collaboratively to govern a *dêmos*, and nobility of birth and high economic status are irrelevant.⁸

Plato must have been concerned about the Adenine audience who would read the *Gorgias* in 387 BCE. Most Adenine citizens, when Plato wrote the dialogue, were anti-oligarchy, with the bitter memory of Socrates' students Alcibiades and Critias fresh in their minds. At that time, few Adenine readers of the *Gorgias* would have judged in Socrates' favor had Plato presented Gorgias' beliefs as he truly would have expressed them. Thus, in order to win the inevitably hostile Adenine democrats over to the side of philosophy (from rhetoric), Plato presented Gorgias' *technê* as though it had arisen out of an epistemology grounded on the belief in

extralinguistic, a priori truths and certain knowledge—both of which are assumptions that Gorgias would have flatly rejected. As I intend to demonstrate, Plato's purpose was to present Gorgias as a rhetorician with a foundational, ahistorical epistemology, so that his *kairos*-governed *technê* would seem absurd.

Disassembling Plato's Critique

In his speech to Polus, following his dialectical interaction with Gorgias, Socrates claims a meager place for rhetoric in the activities of human life—that it is to the soul what cookery is to the body—through three basic assertions: (1) rhetoric is not an art (*technê*) because it is irrational (*alogon*) (464e-465a); (2) rhetoric is flattery (*kolakeia*) because its goal is to elicit pleasure (*terpsis*) without concern for the greatest good (*beltistos*) (465a); and (3) rhetoric is a knack (*tribê*) because it cannot articulate its methods or their causes (*aitiai*) (465a). In order to validate this three-part claim, Socrates must coax Gorgias into accepting three binary oppositions: (1) knowledge (*epistêmê* or *mathesis*) vs. opinion (*doxa* or *pistis*); (2) instruction (*didachê*) vs. persuasion (*peithô*); and (3) language (*logos*) vs. content (*pragma*) in the definition of a *technê*.⁹ Although in Plato's dialogue Gorgias readily assents to any claim Socrates cares to make, a closer look at the extant Gorgianic fragments will reveal the absurdity in the assertion that Gorgias would have uttered agreement with any of Socrates' claims about rhetoric or any of the binary oppositions that Socrates sets up to make those claims.

Socrates' first major claim about rhetoric, that it is not a *technê* because it is irrational, is legitimate within the world of the dialogue since Plato's Gorgias agrees to the binary opposition knowledge vs. opinion. The only way for Plato to succeed in claiming that rhetoric is irrational is to make Gorgias concede that there exists such a concept as the "rational." For Plato, the rational is based on certain knowledge of immutable truth; it is to an eternal image or form, discoverable only through negative dialectic, which arguments may be compared in order to determine their rational or irrational character. Mere belief, according to Plato, cannot be based on immutable truth (otherwise it would be knowledge); thus, when compared to any relevant eternal image or form, opinion proves irrational, inconsistent with absolute truth and pure knowledge. Plato writes:

Socrates: . . . Is there a state which you call "having learned"?

Gorgias: There is.

Socrates: And such a thing as "having believed"?

Gorgias: There is.

Socrates: Now do you think that to have learned and to have believed, or knowledge [*mathêsis*] and belief [*pistis*], are one and the same or different? Gorgias: I consider them different, Socrates. (454c-454d)¹⁰

Plato's Gorgias agrees that knowledge (the rational) and opinion (the irrational) exist simultaneously, and his assent to this point haunts him when Socrates asks him what sort of effect rhetoric has on its audience: Gorgias concedes that his *technê* merely creates belief, and does not provide knowledge of what is right and wrong (454d-454e). Thus Plato's Gorgias allows Socrates to claim that Gorgianic rhetoric is irrational, that it does not refer to an immutable standard of truth, and so does not qualify as a *technê*.

But for Gorgias the sophist, all "knowledge" is opinion. There can be no rational or irrational arguments because all human beliefs and communicative situations are relative to a kairotic moment. In his *Encomium on Helen*, Gorgias writes:

if all men on all subjects had [both] memory of things past and [awareness] of things present and foreknowledge of the future, speech [*logos*] would not be similarly similar, since as things are now it is not easy for them to recall the past nor to consider the present nor to predict the future. So that on most subjects most men take opinion [*doxa*] as counselor to their soul . . . (Kennedy DK 82 B11.11)

For Gorgias, perfect knowledge of the past, present, and future is impossible. Thus, since rationality depends on some sort of reference to perfect knowledge in order to judge its legitimacy, no argument can ever be entirely "rational" (in the Platonic sense of the word).

Gorgias' relativistic epistemology legitimizes his claim that there is only belief (not knowledge) and that no *logos* can be wholly rational. Gorgias explicates his epistemology through a trilemma in *On Nature*: (1) nothing exists, (2) even if anything were to exist, it would be unknowable, and (3) even if anything were to be knowable, it would be impossible to communicate it (DK 82 B3.66, 77, 83). This relativistic epistemology is the grounding for Gorgias' belief in the distorting process of sensory perception, which also makes Socrates' knowledge vs. opinion binary unacceptable for Gorgias the sophist. Gorgias refers often in *On Nature* to "things that actually exist" (*ta onta*), or perceptibles, which reveals his belief in a reality external to human interpretation. It is, however, the process of human perceptual interaction with these realities which negates the possibility for certain knowledge (and rationality) in the Platonic sense, and necessitates a belief only in opinion. Gorgias writes, "if things considered in the mind are not existent, the existent is not considered . . . Therefore, the existent is not an object of consideration and is not apprehended" (Kennedy DK 82 B3.77, 82). Humans can only think about things; they cannot think the things themselves. Thus, once a real thing is perceived by a human, it ceases to exist in a real sense, thereby distorting the existential nature of the thing perceived. Gorgias' view that the act of human perception distorts reality allows him to deny the possibility of pure knowledge

and atemporal rational thought. Platonic rational thought relies on the ability to refer to some external reality or immutable truth in order for it to progress rationally. However, since, for Gorgias, external perceptibles are constantly susceptible to distortion in the human sensory-perception process, no human thought can ever be considered “rational.”¹¹

Socrates’ foundational epistemology allows for the knowledge of immutable truth and Gorgias’ relativistic epistemology does not. Had Plato presented Gorgias’ epistemology accurately, most fourth-century BCE Adenine citizens would have preferred Gorgias’ arguments, since democracy depends on the ability to change the opinions of others and the willingness to allow one’s own opinions to be changed. For the Adenine citizens to admit to the possibility of perfect knowledge—attainable only through the Platonic negative dialectic—would require them also to deny the validity of their own democratic, broad-based power structure. Thus, in order to gain the approval of his anti-oligarchy Adenine audience, Plato misrepresented Gorgias’ epistemology. Plato’s Gorgias admits to the possibility of knowledge and rational thought, to which only someone with a foundational epistemology could admit. He then concedes that his own notion of rhetoric creates mere opinion (as opposed to knowledge) in his audiences. Plato, therefore, creates a Gorgias with a foundational epistemology and a *kairos*-governed methodology, making Gorgias appear not only irrational, but also absurd.

Socrates’ second major claim about rhetoric, that it is merely flattery because its goal is to elicit pleasure without concern for the greatest good, is legitimate within the world of the dialogue because Plato’s Gorgias agrees to the binary opposition instruction vs. persuasion. Since Plato’s Gorgias has agreed that there is knowledge (the rational) and opinion (the irrational), then it follows that there must also be instruction, which results in knowledge, and persuasion, which results in belief. In Plato’s *Gorgias*, the Leontinian sophist says that the rhetorician will be more persuasive than the expert “before a crowd.” Socrates replies, then, “among the ignorant, for surely, among those who know he will not be more convincing than the [expert].” Plato’s Gorgias agrees that the rhetor lacks the true knowledge possessed by the expert, and so must also agree to Socrates’ claim that “the ignorant [rhetorician] is more convincing among the ignorant than the expert” (459a-459b). With Gorgias’ assent, Socrates’ claim that Gorgias merely persuades and does not instruct takes special significance. Plato writes:

Socrates: Then rhetoric apparently is a creator of conviction that is persuasive but not instructive about right and wrong.

Gorgias: Yes.

Socrates: Then the rhetorician too does not instruct courts and other assemblies about right and wrong, but is able only to persuade them.

... (455a)¹²

Socrates believes that knowledge of immutable truth (i.e., the greatest good) is the goal of negative-dialectical instruction, since one who knows justice will never act unjustly (460b-460c). Thus, Socrates' *technê* for moving audiences to action is philosophical (not rhetorical) and the direct result of knowledge (not opinion).

However, as we have already seen, Gorgias the sophist rejects the notion of absolute knowledge of right and wrong in favor of belief and opinion governed by the historical moment; thus his rhetorical methodology must rely on some force other than knowledge, since knowledge is not humanly attainable. Gorgias' *technê* for moving audiences to action is aesthetic, relying on sensory *terpsis* (aesthetic pleasure) for its dominant effect. Gorgianic rhetoric is a two-step process: (1) *terpsis*, or the eliciting of a passive, aesthetic, sensory-based response to a stimulus, in this case the metron (or formal aspect) of the *logos*, leads to and must precede (2) *anankê*, or the active, *psychê*-based force that motivates the desired physical action in the audience (Segal 106-17).

First, in *terpsis*, phenomenal reality presents itself and is perceived by various interpreting senses (*logos* or *opsis*, for example). *Logos* involves the auditory senses used in interpreting linguistic signals, and *opsis* involves the visual senses used in interpreting colors and shapes. The reception of these perceptibles in the human sensory realm leads to a pleasurable, aesthetic dissonance (*tarachê*) of the senses. This aesthetic *tarachê* of the senses must precede the active second step in the process of Gorgianic rhetoric, *anankê*. Sensory *tarachê* transfers directly to the *psychê*, and causes it to experience dissonance as well. *Tarachê* of the *psychê* then leads to *ekplêxis*, an immediate submission to an affective response, which directly motivates the audience to the desired physical action (Segal 106-17). Thus Plato's claim—that the goal of Gorgias' rhetoric is to elicit pleasure in the audience—is only partly true. Gorgias' *technê* is aesthetic, and eliciting pleasure is one aspect of it, but the primary goal of Gorgias' *technê* is the desired action of the audience, just as it is for Plato's *technê*. However, whereas for Plato this action can be achieved through the pursuit of knowledge via negative-dialectical interaction with the audience, for Gorgias the desired action of the audience can only be achieved through eliciting and surpassing an initial passive, pleasurable, aesthetic response.

For Gorgias, the nature of human sense perception and its effects on human communication necessitate an aesthetic *technê*. But, for Socrates, the nature of immutable truth and its effects on negative-dialectical instruction necessitate a knowledge-based *technê*. Gorgias writes that Adenine tragedy, by means of myths and suffering, produces "a deception [*apatê*] in which the deceiver is more justly esteemed than the nondeceiver and the deceived is wiser than the undeceived" (Kennedy DK 82 B23). Because distorting perception allows only for opinion, and not for knowledge, those who create *apatê*, or artistic deception (imitation, interpretation), are openly acknowledging and celebrating their humanity, their inherent imperfection in the perception of reality. Thus these creators of *apatê* become

creators also of reality—human reality. Nondeceivers are, in a sense, themselves deceived, since they believe they can know and communicate the truth. But wise people are those who submit to the powers of *apatê*, and thus broaden their interpretive (hence creative) abilities. Those who reject *apatê* continue to interpret perceptibles in the same ways, and can never come to understand the complexities of the universe as it interacts with humankind. Thus, for Gorgias, instruction in certain knowledge is impossible. Even if it were, since it does not deceive its audience, it would be inferior to rhetoric.

The majority of the fourth-century BCE Adenine audience for Plato's *Gorgias* were proponents of democracy who believed strongly in the powers of *logos* on the *doxa* of the human *psychê*. Plato's *technê* of the greatest good is foundational, and only the philosophic ruling few in Plato's oligarchic social and political structure would be able to achieve it. Had Plato presented Gorgias' aesthetic *technê* based on the effects that the distorting process of sensory perception has on human communication, then Plato's fourth-century BCE Adenine audience may have judged the argument between Gorgias and Socrates in favor of Gorgias. Knowing it would be best to avoid such a negative response, Plato again misrepresented Gorgias as having a foundational epistemology. Since Plato's *Gorgias* accepts that instruction and persuasion exist simultaneously, he must also admit to the existence of immutable truth. Consequently, from the essentialist perspective which Plato's *Gorgias* adopts, the notion of a rhetorical methodology which focuses on persuasion via pleasure is indeed absurd.

Socrates' third major claim about rhetoric, that it is merely a knack because it cannot articulate its methods or their causes, is legitimate within the world of the dialogue since Gorgias agrees to the binary opposition language vs. content in the definition of an art. For Plato, all arts comprise both extralinguistic content and language, which, through a priori rules and techniques, conveys this content. Plato's *Gorgias* agrees that rhetoric's effect is secured through language (*logos*), but he also claims that its content (*pragma*) is twofold: (1) words, or *logoi* (449d), and (2) the greatest and noblest of human affairs (451d), including "freedom to mankind in general and to each man dominion over others in his own country" (452d). Gorgias explains to Socrates that the content of the arts other than rhetoric (medicine, physical training, painting, sculpture, etc.) is "concerned with manual crafts." But rhetoric "deals with no such manual product but all its activity and all it accomplishes is through the medium of words" (450b-450c). Thus, rhetoric's content is not merely describable physical activity; rather, it concerns the timely use of language, which is a necessary component in the content of the art of rhetoric.

In typical Platonic fashion, however, soon after Plato's *Gorgias* explains his position, the Leontinian sophist accepts Socrates' claim that a *technê* must include extralinguistic content and the language to convey it (453a-455a). Having already coaxed Gorgias into admitting that his own rhetorical methodology includes *logos*

in its content (449d), Socrates may then legitimately deny *technê* status to Gorgianic rhetoric. In Plato's notion of art, language is used to articulate the methods of the *technê*'s content and the causes which allow the *technê* to function—since content cannot articulate itself. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates and his student conclude that successful rhetoric (i.e., philosophical rhetoric) presupposes absolute knowledge of the subject at hand (260a). Socrates warns Phaedrus that if he neglects philosophy, then he will never be a competent speaker on any subject because he will lack the means to discover the truth about it (261a). Intensive study of truth legitimizes rhetoric for Plato, but the study of language itself, as in sophistic rhetoric, dooms the art of *logos* to operation merely on *doxa*, opinion. And in the *Gorgias*, because Plato's Leontinian sophist places language in the content of his rhetorical *technê*, and since this content cannot articulate itself, then its methods and causes must remain unknown and incommunicable. This argument, however, is only valid when the binary opposition language vs. content in the definition of an art is accepted. And, as usual, Plato's Gorgias readily accepts the binary.

Yet Gorgias the sophist would not have accepted this language vs. content binary opposition in the definition of an art; he did believe that *logos* could be part of both the content and also the articulatory method of a *technê*. According to Segal, the content of Gorgias the sophist's *technê* (only slightly different from Plato's representation of it) is twofold: (1) the metron, or the formal aspect of the *logos*, and (2) its effects on the human senses and *psychê* (106-28). Because Gorgias' epistemology is relativistic and governed by *kairos*, his *technê* is empirical; since no two aesthetic, formal aspects of any *logos* will be effective in any two kairotic situations, Gorgias' *technê* involves empirically testing and implementing in each individual communicative situation the linguistic techniques which are, at that particular time and place, most effective. Thus, it is necessary for the Gorgianic orator to know and be able to apply all of the different literary devices (*metra*) to any *logos* in any kairotic situation. In Gorgianic rhetoric it is the metron of the *logos* which causes the state of *tarachê* in the auditory senses, and thus transfers this state of *tarachê* to the *psychê*. Consequently, the second aspect of Gorgias' rhetorical *technê* is to analyze and know the different types of *psychai* that exist, and to empirically test in each kairotic communicative situation what *metra* of the *logos* are most effective. So the methods of Gorgias' empirical *technê* and their causes can be articulated only within a kairotic context; but these methods cannot apply to ahistorical, or even hypothetical, situations, as Plato would have them.

Conclusion

Plato is able to claim that rhetoric is to the soul what cookery is to the body through three assertions: that Gorgianic rhetoric is irrational, only concerned with pleasure, and unable to articulate its methods and their causes. Plato can make these arguments based on his character Gorgias' acceptance of three binary oppo-

sitions: knowledge vs. opinion, instruction vs. persuasion, and language vs. content in the definition of an art. However, by examining the extant fragments of Gorgias, it becomes clear that Gorgias the sophist could never have accepted any of Socrates' three claims about rhetoric because his relativistic epistemology could not support their three corresponding binary oppositions.

Denying *technê* status to Gorgias' notion of *logos* denigrates rhetoric, the primary vehicle of the Athenian democracy, and it valorizes its counterpart negative dialectic, the primary vehicle of the oligarchic power structures in 411 and 404 BCE. Thus, since Plato's audience for the *Gorgias* was largely democratic in political orientation, he misrepresented Gorgias' epistemology in order to ease the anticipated hostility toward the text and to make Gorgianic rhetoric appear absurd.

Notes

¹Although I refer here to "sophistic doctrines" (and later to "the sophists") as a coherent entity, I recognize that the sophists' epistemologies and ideologies varied widely from individual to individual (in Sprague's *The Older Sophists*, compare Gorgias to Antiphon, or the anonymous *Dissoi Logoi* to the anonymous *Iamblich*, for example). However, I believe that the relativistic, democratic sophists far outnumbered the foundational, oligarchic sophists. Thus it is to these relativists that I refer when I use the terms *sophistic* and *sophists*.

I also employ the term *rhetoric* here, and throughout this essay, in its most broad sense—any use of language for any purpose (as in the sophistic *logon technê*)—not in its narrow sense of only persuasive discourse (as in Plato's *rhêtorikê*). For a fuller discussion of the distinction between *logon technê* and *rhêtorikê*, see Edward Schiappa's "*Rhêtorikê*: What's in a Name?"

²Susan Jarratt's recent book *Rereading the Sophists* is an excellent example of scholarship on the sophists which self-consciously avoids the negative biases of Plato's dialogues. In *Protagoras and Logos*, Edward Schiappa also argues that scholars of sophistic rhetoric and philosophy must refer to the fragments of the sophists in order to arrive at historically accurate interpretations of their doctrines.

³This and all subsequent citations of Gorgias' works are documented intratextually by the section numbers used in Diels.

⁴Throughout this essay, when I refer to "Gorgias the sophist," I mean the historical figure, and when I refer to "Plato's Gorgias," I mean the dialogic character.

⁵Although I contrast democracy and oligarchy in this essay (favoring the rule of the many), we must keep in mind that fifth-century BCE Athenian democracy was by no means an ideal government. In fact, under democratic rule, Athens permitted institutionalized slavery; and women were denied the possibility for citizenship and were not allowed to vote on public issues. However, given the brutality of the rulers in the oligarchic Athenian governments during the fifth century BCE, it is clear why democracy was the favored form of government for most Athenian citizens.

⁶This and all subsequent citations from Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War* are documented intratextually by book and chapter numbers.

⁷This and all subsequent citations from Xenophon's *Hellenica* and *Memorabilia* are documented intratextually by book, chapter, and section numbers.

⁸For a similar argument that focuses on Protagoras, see Schiappa's *Protagoras and Logos*, pages 157-89.

⁹Although this paragraph may seem a bit dense at first, I have decided to include transliterations of the critical Greek terms Plato uses in his attack on Gorgianic rhetoric for the sake of clarity. Many of the terms used in this discussion lose a great deal of their power when they are translated.

Epistêmê is knowledge already acquired, and *mathêsis* is the process by which knowledge is acquired. *Pistis* is the state of belief or agreement resulting from successful persuasion, and *doxa* is the opinion upon which judgments are based. Both *pistis* and *doxa* can be translated "opinion," but in *pistis* that "opinion" is the result of persuasion, and in *doxa* it is the catalyst of judgment. *Didachê* is the process of instruction, and *peithô* is the process of persuasion.

¹⁰This and all subsequent citations from Plato's dialogues are documented intratextually by section number.

¹¹For a further discussion of the role of perception in the Gorgianic epistemology, see Richard Leo Enos' "The Epistemology of Gorgias' Rhetoric."

¹²Plato uses several different grammatical forms of *didachê* and *peithô* throughout this passage.

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Bruce McComiskey is completing a PhD in Rhetoric and Composition at Purdue University, where he teaches Composition and Business Writing. He has presented papers on ancient Greek rhetoric and philosophy at the Conference on College Composition and Communication and the Penn State Conference on Rhetoric and Composition. His dissertation examines the recent evolution of "neosophistic" rhetoric.

At the 1991 CCCC in Boston, *Rhetoric Review* presented its award for best essay in Volume 9. The Editor and Editorial Board named the 1990-1991 award The Winifred Bryan Horner Award in honor of a teacher and scholar who has opened up new areas of research for students and scholars and who has encouraged us to see research as a shared activity in a community of scholars. The award, along with \$200, was presented to Sue Ellen Holbrook for "Women's Work: The Feminizing of Composition."

We look forward to presenting the 1991-1992 award for best essay in Volume 10 at the 4Cs meeting in Cincinnati. We will also take that opportunity to bring notice to a colleague who contributes to our scholarship and sustains our endeavors in rhetoric and composition by naming the 1991-1992 award for that person.