Rustam Galanin

Listening Carefully: Plato Tells About the Sophists*

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Abstract. It is well known that most of our knowledge of the Sophists is obtained from Plato's dialogues as well as the long tradition of criticism aimed at sophistry. Thanks to the *œuvre* of Plato and Aristotle and their followers, we envisage the Sophists as bad guys, obnoxious "many-sided creatures" who take fees for their teachings and are "not to be caught with one hand". Fortunately we know not only how bad the Sophists were, but also what they taught, and it is Plato who in many cases is our only source of information on the topic. That is why I am not going to criticize Plato for having an inadequate view of the Sophists — which is a common notion — but, on the contrary, will try to offer an apology in behalf of Plato by way of demostrating how much we owe him in terms of our knowledge about the Sophists. Further, I am planning to make a summary of modern assessments of Plato as a source for sophistology, and to show that Plato's dialogues are unique historical testimonies, and therefore many things written by him about the Sophists are to be taken on trust.
Keywords: ancient philosophy, sophistry, rhetoric.

The dialogues never lie

Everyone would remember the famous words of the Eleatic Stranger to Theaetetus regarding a Sophist, "that this creature is many-sided and, as the saying is, not to be caught with one hand."[1] The irony of Socrates ridiculing the false importance in which wallow the Sophists and their

© Р.Б. Галанин (Санкт-Петербург). mousse2006@mail.ru. Русская христианская гуманитарная академия.
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[1] *Sph.* 226a: τὸ ποικίλον εἶναι τοῦτο τὸ θηρίον καὶ τὸ λεγόμενον οὐ τῇ ἑτέρᾳ ληπτόν. Translation by Harold N. Fowler.

disciples, is well known, too.[2] It is no secret that one couldn't learn anything from the Sophists except to produce "idle chatter". But the worst thing is that they took a lot of money for their teachings, and even Socrates couldn't avoid the temptation to attend a lecture on philology delivered by his friend and teacher Prodicus[3] for one drachma, as he was too poor to pay 50 drachmas for a full course.[4] The primary source of these historical details is Plato, who is not stingy in "praising" the Sophists, who were his opponents.

All this is, so to speak, the tip of the iceberg, something that everyone knows. However, let's take a closer look at the contents of the dialogues. Plato deliberately attacks, in the first instance, not *what* the Sophists say, but *how* they do it, i.e. their complacency, their clothing and other attributes. In other words, he attacks but everything external. He abundantly uses vivid imagery in his descriptions, compensating as it were for the lack of illustrations in contemporary volumes, and his reader could perfectly well envisage the picture Plato was painting: the pretentiousness of the Sophists' behavior, the way they were lying around in sheepskins, conceited and arrogant, surrounded by beautiful, naive and, what is especially important, rich young ephebes, Athenian preppies who looked slack-jawed at them as at celestial beings. All this ridiculous buffoonery is mechanically transferred by a trustful reader to the Sophists' arguments, while a thoughtful and dubious one can separate the grain from Plato's chaff and understand that such a representation of the Sophists is just a *rhetorical device* where the Sophists appear only as historical personalities, and has nothing to do with the essence of their teachings.

Here I must briefly mention what I believe Plato's dialogues existed for. They may be viewed as handbooks intended for three categories of citizens: 1) educated amateurs, 2) knowledgeable readers trained in sciences, 3) pupils of Plato's Academy.[5] At the same time, it is not nec-

[2] *Prt.* 315–316.

[3] Cf. Guthrie 1971: 222, 275.

[4] *Cra.* 384b.

[5] Cf. Szlezák 1999: 25.

essary that, for example, Plato's early dialogues would not be of interest for an advanced pupil, and, on the other hand, that the later ones would not appeal to someone who had just started his studies. Nevertheless, I believe the basic intent of at least the early and middle dialogues was a protreptical invitation to any educated reader to come and philosophize within the walls of the Academy. In all this, there is a hidden advertising effect, a marketing gesture, and we should not be surprised by that. There were many schools and teachers in Athens, and during his lifetime, Plato was not as popular as we now think. Socratic authors, such as Aristippus or the ideologist of social protest Antisthenes (let alone Isocrates), were much more ambitious intellectual "stars" in terms of fame.[6]

Furthermore, most of the dialogues have no preconceived answers. This suggests that while reading the dialogues, even though it is possible to ascend to the truth through the dialectics, the ultimate answers, the Truth as it is, can be reached only by becoming a student of the Academy, communicating within its walls with Plato and other initiated ones, leading a communal living, and sharing the common joys and sorrows of philosophical questioning. What does this mean? It means that the answer is too valuable to propagate it on paper, and it cannot be stated definitively in writing. Therefore, Plato generally trusted writing to a very limited extent, only as a support tool and a way to preserve the work and remember it at the end of life. Writing is only a servant of memory. It should be added that a dialogue cannot help itself, protect itself from misunderstanding when someone reads it. Therefore, each dialogue is provided with the figure of a bodyguard of truth, a true dialectician, who somehow defends the doctrine due to the lack of a real interlocutor, and who therefore must surpass all other participants in the dialogue with his or her (I cannot help recalling here the priestess Diotima!) spiritual qualities — and it is surely Socrates.[7]

Taking this into consideration, viz. that the dialogue leads to the Truth, let us also accept that the teachings of the Sophists as the main

[6] Collins 2000: 59.

[7] Szlezák 1999: 103 ff.

opponents of Socrates / Plato could not be distorted to the extent that they did not correspond to historical realities at all. The content of their doctrines must have been presented truthfully, because, first, it was easy to verify whether Plato was lying, and second, one could deduce from these doctrines the true consequences for the Platonic Truth, even if from a philosophical point of view sophistical doctrines were false. Therefore, at least from the historical point of view, the authenticity and attribution of these teachings to one or another Sophist must not have been false. After all, it would be pointless for Plato to argue with the Sophists and refute their views if their original conceptions corresponded neither to the dialogues, nor to the texts and teachings of Socrates' historical opponents, and for these reasons, I am sure, Plato's very argumentation must have been built on a historically legitimate basis.

Protagoras — our father and mentor

After these preliminary observations, let us turn to concrete examples where Plato serves as the most important and, in my view, most credible source of the tenets of sophistry. I would start with Protagoras and his famous thesis about man being the measure of all things. John Dillon notes that the fragments of *Theaetetus*,[8] where this saying is being introduced, are "the oldest surviving testimonies to Protagoras' doctrine, although we should recognize their tendentious character."[9] If we are talking about Protagoras' "monologue" (*Tht.* 166a–168c), it seems that it does not look tendentious or ironic, but rather truthfully and sympathetically reflects the doctrine of the Sophists. At least, it seems obvious that Plato himself understood the doctrine of Protagoras this way. John Burnet believed that it was impossible that Protagoras had really been expelled from Athens, and that his books were burned, as Diogenes Laertius (9.55) states. Even if these events took place, it is quite obvious that many copies of his works should have survived,

[8] *Tht.* 151e–52e.

[9] Dillon, Gergel 2003: 9.

and there is no reason to believe that Plato was not sufficiently acquainted with them. Accordingly, if the book was extant and probably widely read, then it would have been impossible for Plato "to interpret the doctrine of Protagoras in a sense not really suggested by it."[10] In its original form, the "man-measure" saying was the beginning of the book called Ἀλήθεια ἢ Καταβάλλοντες (*Truth, or Overthrowing Arguments*); Diogenes Laertius[11] does not mention this work, and according to Mario Untersteiner, it was Plato to first comprehend this work of Protagoras as his *opus majus*.[12]

Now let us turn to Plato's *Protagoras* which includes the famous myth, or, as it is customarily called among scholars, the *Great Speech*. The authenticity of this myth is no longer a topic of discussion, and therefore we can fully trust Plato here, and even assume that he made some sort of interpolation into the dialogue of some work by Protagoras that he either had before his eyes or whose content he remembered very well. Edward Schiappa,[13] referring to Michael Gagarin,[14] notes that Plato could have easily removed some parts of the *Great Speech* for the sake of greater stylistic harmony of the dialogue, but he did not, which allows Gagarin to assume that the *Great Speech* is an insertion from an original work of Protagoras. David Hoffman agrees with Michael Gagarin and believes that Plato's goal was not to attack Protagoras, but rather to compare Socrates' views on the nature of virtue with those of the Sophist, and, finally, to find out whether virtue can be taught.[15] Therefore, I believe that Plato, who was a great dramatist and composer, has expounded the views of Protagoras so completely and vividly that, by reading this dialogue, it is quite possible to construct a completely truthful image of the Sophist in regard to both his teaching and his appearance.[16]

[10] Burnet 1914: 113.

[11] D.L. 9:55.

[12] Untersteiner 1954: 15.

[13] Schiappa 2003: 147.

[14] Gagarin 1968: 90.

[15] Hoffman 2006: 10.

[16] As indicated above, we should not trust Plato when he portrays the appearance of

Another famous scholar, George Kerferd, sees in this myth not only an outline of the doctrine that really belonged to Protagoras, which could have been expounded in some of his treatises (*On the initial order of things*?) devoted to politics and other similar things, but also an expression of something resembling a theory of progress in the context of the opposition between *nomos* and *physis*, and the time when natural man turns into a cultural one.[17] Rejecting the theory of progress, Guthrie holds the same opinion about the authenticity of interpolation.[18] Manuvald argues that Plato's contemporaries, many of whom had access to the writings of the Sophist, would have found him not a trustworthy person had he significantly altered the content of the doctrine of the historical Protagoras, or had he, God forbid, completely distorted it.[19]

Callicles — the first Nietzschean in the world

Now I am going to turn to the *Gorgias*, but let us look not at Gorgias himself, for Plato nowhere calls him a Sophist, but at a different figure, his disciple and friend Callicles. As Guthrie has written, Callicles "is a somewhat mysterious figure, for apart from his appearance as a character in Plato's dialogue he has left no trace in recorded history."[20] So what can we learn from this dialogue in order to consruct a true image of the Sophist? We know where he came from — he is Acharnanian,[21] he fell in love with Demos, and it would be too naive to understand that word to refer to the Athenian people.[22] The handsome Demos was

the Sophists, but knowing how much they loved shock value and chic-looking clothes, we can still do it. Just recall Gorgias, speaking in a purple cloak, as if he were not a sage, but a king. The Sophists liked to show off very much.

[17] Kerferd 1991: 125.

[18] Guthrie 1971: 63, 64.

[19] Manuwald 2013: 164

[20] Guthrie 1971: 102.

[21] *Grg*. 495d.

[22] *Grg*. 481d: σὺ δὲ δυοῖν, τοῦ τε Ἀθηναίων δήμου καὶ τοῦ Πυριλάμπους ('you are in love with both of them — one is the people of Athens and another is Demos of Pyrilampes'). The pun is due to the polysemy of the word δῆμος, which is understood here either as *the people* or as a Greek *male name*.

a son of a former moneychanger Pyrilampes who became a rich man and was Plato's stepfather. Eric Dodds and Debra Nails believe that Callicles was a real historical figure,[23] and the way he is portrayed by Plato, and the things he speaks about in the dialogue, can correspond to the historical truth.[24] For instance, in the Assembly, Callicles used to please the Athenian people and change his own position depending on the will of the crowd. He acted similarly with his favorites, pleasing them in everything and going from one extreme to another.[25]

As far as the people are concerned, one can draw an important conclusion about rhetoric: Callicles, like many public people in general, is guided not by the principle of pure reason, but by the urgent affairs of the polis. These public persons, according to John Poulakos, "took leads from their audiences, and designed their discourses with those exact audiences in mind",[26] that is to say, on the one hand, they were led by the audience, and on the other, they themselves led the audience to a certain acceptance of certain positions necessary for making a specific decision in performing practical tasks. That is where the impression that Callicles pleased people derives from. That is where Plato's hatred for the Sophist arises. And as Plato stresses, it was their rhetoric that was to blame for all this, which, without knowing the truth, was able to stimulate the masses, distanced from philosophy, to various unrighteous deeds. It would be a small loss if the Sophists were just chatting or doing harmless eristic, but no! — they and their students were involved in political and judicial life, they were concerned with action based on certain historic circumstances, rather than with understanding reality *sub speciae aeternitatis*. In other words, according to Plato, as noted by Poulacos, "produced by the ignorant few (the orators), the discourse of the Sophists is directed to the ignorant many (the public), whose

[23] For the sake of justice, it should be noted that there are other points of view according to which Callicles is either a fictitious figure or a mask behind which the deeds and faces of Critias and Alcibiades are hidden. For more details see Untersteiner 1954: 344, n. 40.

[24] Nails 2002: 75.

[25] See *Grg.* 481e.

[26] Poulakos 2008: 27.

practices affect the character of and life in the polis."[27] Such injustice triumphs because — and only because — the Sophist and the Orator, as Plato thinks, are one and the same figure.[28] As for the content of Callicles' doctrine, in general, it defended the rights of *physis* against *nomos*, and this, as Dodds writes, "marks him as anti-democratic in principle".[29] The laws, that is the sphere of *nomos*, according to Callicles, were invented by weak human beings who could not protect themselves, by the motley, impersonal majority, in other words, by the masses who envied outstanding personalities, or geniuses, and in every way tried to bind them with ridiculous decrees, ground them into the dirt, make them like everyone else.[30] Such beliefs, as Dodds points out, can not, of course, belong to a democrat, but only to Plato's tyrant, who is a flesh-and-blood brainchild of democracy, and at the same time its mortal enemy.[31] In a reduced form, without mentioning the author, we find this theory put into the mouth of the Athenian in Plato's *Laws*, at 889e–890b. It should also be noted that the theory of Callicles was very popular in the 19th and 20th centuries, and it largely motivated aristocratic tendencies in Nietzsche's philosophy: the rights of the strongest, etc. In May 1956, a popular radio show on CBS *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* featured a five-part episode called *The Callicles Matter*, where Callicles was named the greatest of all Greek philosophers.[32]

Hippias, or getting back to natural roots

In the *Protagoras* we read about the knowledgeable Hippias who argues that the law governs people and compels them to do things that are contrary to nature.[33] This position probably was the theoretical basis for Callices' reasoning, which he could have borrowed from Hippias. Anyway, we are to agree with Dillon who says that thinking about

[27] Ibid. 80.
[28] See *Grg*. 520a.
[29] Cited by Nails 2002: 75.
[30] See *Grg*. 483cd.
[31] See Nails 2002: 75
[32] See Nails 2002: 76.
[33] *Prt*. 337d.

the contrast between nature and law was very common at that time (the 20s of the 5th century B.C., when this conversation supposedly took place), and it is clear that Hippias wasn't the thinker who introduced this problem into the general intellectual turnover.[34] In this passage of the *Protagoras*,[35] Plato makes a masterful example of the manner in which Hippias really used his speeches. This sample, according to Alexander López Eire, is an excellent representation of the method which enabled Hippias to evoke interest in his listeners and fascinated them even when the topic of the speech was entirely scientific.[36] As for the aforementioned concession to the law, Hippias believed that what is more useful *to most people* is also more legitimate.[37] That is perhaps all that we can extract directly from the body of Plato's dialogues regarding the doctrine of Hippias. In other cases, Hippias speaks very often, but as a rule, only as an interlocutor of Socrates or simply a participant in the general conversation of the main characters of a given dialogue.

Prodicus, or synonymic unhappiness

Speaking of Prodicus, let us first turn to the dialogue *Eryxias*.[38] He argues there that wealth is evil for vicious and ignorant people, but for people who know how to manage money well, wealth, on the contrary, is good, and this is also typical for everything else.[39] In the *Axiochus*, Socrates, pointing out that Prodicus had taught him this for money, says that death is good and nature is evil, because it has put an immortal soul in a mortal body, subject to illnesses and sorrows; our joy is fickle and is always associated with suffering; the sorrows, on the contrary, are persistent, lasting and deprived of any admixture of joy. The soul, scattered by parts in the body, feels all the sicknesses and, because

[34] Dillon, Gergel 2003: 365, n. 7.
[35] *Prt.* 337e–338b.
[36] López Eire 2010: 340.
[37] See *Hp. Ma.* 284e.
[38] I leave aside the problem of attribution of this and next early dialogue to Plato.
[39] *Erx.* 397e.

of this, suffers very much. The soul strives in every way to go back to its heavenly homeland, into the ether, where it will be playing heavenly roundelays and enjoying its freedom.[40] But the most important thing that Prodicus became famous for is the *theory of language*. He elaborated synonymy and orthoepeia, and Kerferd believes that the satirical image of Prodicus in the *Protagoras* can indirectly serve as proof that he might have had written *On the Correctness of Names*.[41] Moreover, *Protagoras* 337a–c can serve an example of Prodicus' technique, simulated by Plato.[42] In the *Cratylus*, at 384b, Socrates says that had he heard Prodicus' fifty drachmas lesson, nothing would have stopped him from learning the whole truth about the correctness of the names. On the basis of this ironic statement, Allesandro Chiapelli argues that synonym as such has its source in the etymology of words, i.e. in the doctrine according to which every given word corresponds to nature, to a given thing, and it happens because of the similarity in the sounding of the word and the thing itself; the thing expresses itself through the word, therefore words must be carefully distinguished from each other, and, consequently, the reason why something is called by one name or another does not come from the practical aspect of using things, but from their very nature.[43] A theory of that kind, as it is easy to guess, is called *linguistic naturalism*. However, Mario Untersteiner believes that there is no clear evidence in the dialogue that Prodicus adhered to such an interpretation of synonyms and etymologies.[44]

Thrasymachus is almighty, he is always right

Next we have Thrasymachus. From Plato we learn that Thrasymachus adheres to the principle that Justice is something useful for the stronger.[45] Every power establishes laws in its own favor, depending

[40] *Ax.* 366ab
[41] See Kerferd 1991: 46.
[42] *Ibid.* 70.
[43] Untersteiner 1954: 213.
[44] *Ibid.*
[45] *R.* 338c.

on the type of authority, for power is stronger than its subordinates.[46] These beliefs, according to Untersteiner, coincide with those that an anonymous author puts in the beginning of the *Athenian Constitution.*[47] And here Socrates agrees that justice is a kind of τὸ συμφέρον — that which unites, strengthens, nurtures development and supports growth, i.e. something that is *suitable.*[48] The real ruler does not make mistakes, he unerringly does what he has to do, and his orders must be performed by everyone under his authority.[49] Rulers treat their subjects no better than shepherds treat their sheep, so it turns out that justice is a specific kind of good that belongs to the *Other*, to the strongest. For this reason, for an ordinary man, justice, on the contrary, is injustice,[50] and there is a weighty argument for him to not be just. Thereby, as Claudia Baracchi says, we got to know that there are two kinds of justice:[51] the first belongs to the rulers, the second one speaks on behalf of the oppressed, humiliated, and other down-at-the-heel people. This is justice which happens to be unjust. It turns out after all that it is the subordinates, unfairly fulfilling their social obligations, who are just.[52] The rulers exercising their power are always unjust. The fact that the subordinates *a priori* are in an oppressed position gives them the right to be unjust in relation to the authorities and laws.

But let's not forget that Thrasymachus is primarily a rhetorician and not a revolutionary, and his main interest is rhetoric. By showing the dual nature of justice, he, like any rhetorician, juggles with the concepts of *truth* and *doxa*, he accepts the distinction between *being* just and *seeming* just. Therefore, being a rhetorician in the service of the powers that be, he can not openly show that those who try to *seem* the most just — that is, the power and authorities — in fact *are* the most unjust, and vice versa that subordinate people who *seem* to perform injustice,

[46] *R.* 339a.
[47] Untersteiner 1954: 327.
[48] Baracchi 2002: 48.
[49] *R.* 341a.
[50] *R.* 343cd
[51] Cf. Baracchi 2002: 49.
[52] *Ibid.*

but only in view of the *lawlessness* of the authorities, *are truly the most just*. And there is nothing surprising in this position, for, as it is said in the *Phaedrus*, "As to the art of making speeches bewailing the evils of poverty and old age, the prize, in my judgment, goes to the mighty Chalcedonian. He it is also who knows best how to inflame a crowd and, once they are inflamed, how to hush them again with his words' magic spell, as he says himself. And let's not forget that he is as good at producing slander as he is at refuting it, whatever its source may be."[53] John Dillon believes that even though Thrasymachus is portrayed in a very satirical way in the *Republic*, there is no reason to doubt that the Sophist might have been a follower of *the strong is always right* doctrine.[54]

Antilogical phratry: Euthydemus and Dionysodorus

And finally, I would like to briefly talk about another sporty couple of the Sophists, Euthydemus and Dionisodorus, with whom we can get acquainted by reading the *Euthydemus*. As Dillon points out, despite the satirical image of these Sophists, the biographical data and their doctrine are depicted quite accurately.[55] Here the question may arise, why then, if both of these people are real historical figures, are the utterances of Euthydemus not included in the Diels edition? Rosamond Kent Sprague believes that this is due to the fact that in the days of Diels, when he composed the section dedicated to the Sophists, many characters of the dialogues were seen as masks of Plato's intellectual adversaries among his contemporaries. In this case, Antisthenes the Cynic might have been discerned behind Euthydemus' mask. Furthermore, the reason for this could also be that Diels, like many classicists of the time, did not attach much importance to eristic, which in turn was a very significant aspect of sophistic teachings. In this respect, Diels's position is quite different from that of Plato, since the

[53] *Phdr.* 267cd. Trans. by A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff.
[54] Dillon, Gergel 2003: 208.
[55] *Ibid.* 266.

latter gave a lot of importance to Euthydemus' eristic, for he considered it a kind of Eleatic attack on his own theory of Forms.[56] In her famous edition of the older Sophists, Rosamond Kent Sprague includes Euthydemus and leaves aside Dionysodorus, believing that the attempt to separate the teachings of the two brothers from one another makes no sense from a philosophical point of view, for they always speak in unison in the dialogue. The two brothers were born in Chios, came as colonists to Thouria, where, for political reasons, they were banished around 413 B.C., then for some time they traveled to Attica and settled in Athens, having exchanged work as instructors in military affairs for work as speech contest instructors.[57] The basic points of their theory of argumentation are as follows. If I am not mistaken, in the finished form, the famous doctrine that *contradiction is impossible* is first encountered in the *Euthydemus*.[58] That was the core of sophistical argumentation, whose adherent, as we know, was Protagoras.[59]

Concerning οὐκ εἶναι ἀντιλέγειν, things are not as simple as they may seem. In fact, we do not really know where it came from and who exactly coined it. Thus, Rankin writes, "we can be reasonably sure that it is old. Plato presents it as a kind of recessive gene in the tissue of contemporary philosophy, though we cannot exclude the possibility that he deliberately exaggerated its obsolescence, for it seems to have been widely current in his time, and not to have been merely the peculiar fossil-pet of Antisthenes… then we may perhaps discern Heraclitus as one of its ancestral patrons."[60] If contradiction is impossible, then the one who speaks always speaks of existing things, therefore uttering the real truth — because nothing can be said about nonexistent things,

[56] Sprague 1972: 294.

[57] *Euthd.* 271c.

[58] *Euthd.* 285d: Καὶ Διονυσόδωρος, Ὡς ὄντος, ἔφη, τοῦ ἀντιλέγειν, ὦ Κτήσιππε, ποιῇ τοὺς λόγους; Πάντως δήπου, ἔφη, καὶ σφόδρα γε· ἢ σύ, ὦ Διονυσόδωρε, οὐκ οἴει εἶναι ἀντιλέγειν;. "On this Dionysodorus said: *As though there were such a thing as contradiction*! Is that the way you argue, Ctesippus? Yes, to be sure, he replied, indeed I do; and do you, Dionysodorus, hold *that there is not*?" (Translation by W.R.M. Lamb; italics added).

[59] See D.L. 10.53; Isoc. *Helena* 1; *Euthd.* 286c.

[60] Rankin 1981: 25.

and because speaking about nonexistent things is equivalent to being silent. Therefore no one speaks of the non-existent and, therefore, no one utters a lie.[61] Also in this dialogue we meet a remarkable phrase of Euthydemus saying that "to speak thus is to do something and to create".[62] One is left only wondering how much this resembles the postulate of the English analytic philosophers' *speech acts* theory and the late Wittgenstein's language games theory, according to which a language game is the unity of thought, word and deed.[63]

Plato has smashed History to pieces

If we tried to present History in human form, it would most likely be a woman, just like the Greek Muse Clio, at least because the noun ἱστορία in Greek is feminine. History is a very eccentric and bizarre lady. She does whatever comes in her head. She wanted to wipe the writings of the Sophists away from the face of the earth, but came across a very powerful opponent in the face of Plato who was a fighter for memory against historical oblivion, and who also was a night-soil-man of the river Lethe. Plato has made it hot for History, so that she finally had to save the Sophists for us… At the same time, Plato is criticized by rhetoric and sophistry lovers for criticizing the Sophists. Having completed this brief review, it seems obvious that the divine Plato is an invaluable source for the study of the Sophists. I am not going to over-hype Plato's aspiration to preserve the historical truth, not at all. Plato is a great dramatist and joker. He jokes and mocks the Sophists, but nonetheless we are always able to separate his jeers and irony from the real content of sophistic doctrines. I think it's time to finally change the hypercritical attitude towards Plato in favor of an accurate and vigilant trust in him. Why don't we join Plato and make some fun of the Sophists?

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[61] *Euthd.* 283e–284d.

[62] *Euthd.* 284c: τὸ λέγειν ἄρα πράττειν τε καὶ ποιεῖν ἐστιν.

[63] See Austin 1962; Wittgenstein 1986: 5.

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