In Plato’s *Gorgias* (482c–484c) Callicles charges Socrates for using sophistic rhetorical techniques to refute Polus in two ways. First, he accuses Socrates of drawing on Polus’s sense of shame in getting Polus to agree to the complex thesis that doing wrong is better but more shameful than suffering it. In stating this charge, Callicles also faults Polus for giving in to his sense of shame. Callicles claims that Polus only agreed that doing wrong is more shameful (\textit{aischion}) than suffering it because he was ashamed (\textit{aischuntheis}) to deny it (482e3–4). Second, he charges Socrates with deliberately misleading Polus by shifting between two usages of the word \textit{shameful} (\textit{aischron}). Callicles distinguishes between two types of shame and points out that an act may be shameful by nature (\textit{kata phusin}) or shameful by convention (\textit{kata nomon}). These two ways of judging an action are “for the most part . . . opposed to each other, so that if a man is ashamed (\textit{aischunetai}) and dares not say what he thinks, he is forced to contradict himself” (482e9–483a1). As Callicles sees the problem, the charges of shame and ambiguity (as I will refer to them) are related to each other. The shame that prevents Polus from speaking out is a false shame because it is based on what the majority thinks or says and thus is no more than a social convention. Polus does not really accept the conventional values of shame and justice, but rather
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than admit this in public he let himself get caught in a terminological
difficulty with the words admirable *(kalon)* and shameful *(aischron)*. In short,
Socrates has not refuted Polus's position; he has capitalized on Polus's sense
of shame and forced Polus into a contradiction by shifting between two
ways of speaking while using the same word.²

In the first part of the article, I examine the fallacious argument that
Socrates uses in the refutation of Polus *(474c–475e)*. I claim that Socrates
ignores the meaning that Polus tacitly gives to *aischron* (shameful) when
Polus first states his thesis. In the argument that Socrates constructs, he
uses a “sliding” ambiguity on the meaning of *aischron* (and *kalon*) to get
Polus to agree with the premises. A sliding ambiguity occurs when there is
a slide or shift between two or more closely related senses of a term that fall
under the concept. Socrates does this by means of a series of examples that
leads Polus into an agreement that excludes his original meaning of *aischron*
by proposing new defining criteria. Polus fails to distinguish among the
several meanings or uses of the same term. As a result, he accepts a nar-
rower range of criteria for the application of *aischron* than he should given
his original use of the term. Also, I present a critical analysis and discuss
the interpretations that scholars have offered of the refutation. I find these
interpretations to be inadequate because they mostly give a technical or
purely logical analysis of how Polus is refuted without explaining why he is
refuted by the argument as they have configured it.³

In the second part of the article, I make a connection between the refu-
tation of Polus and Plato’s critique of sophistic rhetoric. Plato is concerned
both theoretically and practically with the inherent ambiguity of language
and with its misuse. He directly criticizes sophists and rhetors who use per-
suasive language in a self-serving and irresponsible manner. As part of this
criticism, he parodies them extensively in the drama and argumentation of
his dialogues. The misuse of language is what makes it possible for sophis-
tic rhetors, such as Gorgias and Polus, to mislead their listeners, hide their
real views, and remain oblivious to the inconsistencies of their positions.
I argue that the dramatic device of parody is appropriate in explaining the
purpose of the fallacy used in the refutation. To support this thesis, I draw
on passages in the dialogue that show the unmistakable parody in Socrates’
discourse as he mimics the words and plays back the ideas of all three inter-
locutors. I present two cases of verbal argumentation used by the historical
Gorgias in the *Encomium of Helen* and Antiphon in his critical arguments
against *nomos* in *On Truth*. Finally, I appeal to Thucydides’ account of the
way words were misused to accommodate the ruthless politics of the Greeks
during the Peloponnesian War. I bring in two parallel passages, one from Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* I.9 and the other from Plato’s *Republic* 8, that show similar concerns about the misuse of language.

2. THE REFUTATION

Polus is a young follower of Gorgias who considers himself an expert in rhetoric (462a–b). Historically, Polus is linked to studies in rhetorical style and diction. He has written a handbook on rhetorical discourse or on other matters pertaining to rhetorical language (462b–c). In the *Phaedrus* (266e–268a), Socrates recalls, one by one, the names of the sophists and their respective achievements. Polus is among them, with his “gallery of learned terms such as ‘reduplication,’ ‘quotation of maxims,’ and ‘use of images.’” We also hear about the dictionary that Licymnius gave to Polus to “help him make the correct use of language” (*Phdr.* 267b9–c3, trans. Waterfield [2002]).4 Plato presents Polus as someone who is shaped by his professional association with Gorgias; he is a living product of Gorgias’s rhetorical art.5 He imitates Gorgias’s style of speech and desires the honors and personal freedom that Gorgias advertises. He believes that rhetorical skills will give him the power to do whatever he pleases and control others. He may even qualify as one of those students who would be likely to misuse his skills, if he found himself in a difficult situation.

There are three distinct refutations of Polus. The first one begins with a disagreement over the power and value of rhetoric (466b–e). Socrates challenges and refutes Polus with regard to his thesis that rhetors, like tyrants, have great power in their cities (466b–468c). The discussion between them is intensified by the dispute about the proper way to refute or persuade an opponent (470c–d, 471d–472d, 473d–474b). The second refutation involves the doing wrong/suffering wrong thesis and is my principal concern (474c–475e). Socrates follows this up with a third refutation on the question of whether it is better or worse for the unjust man to go unpunished (476a–477a). At the end of the refutation, Socrates suggests a new function for rhetoric that is described in a Socratically paradoxical way. It involves blaming oneself if one detects an injustice; questioning and admonishing others, even one’s friends, if they do wrong; and seeing to it that they are properly punished for their own benefit. Callicles is disturbed by the paradox (481b–c). His criticisms come after the third refutation, but they are aimed primarily at the issues generated by the second.
Earlier in the dialogue, Gorgias is evasive when Socrates tries to get him to define rhetoric (450e7–8, 451d9). He eventually defines it as “the ability to persuade with speeches” at political meetings and other public events (452e1–3). At the same time, Gorgias is forthcoming with the praise he lavishes on the unlimited power of rhetoric (455e–456b). While he offers to teach rhetoric, he disclaims responsibility for any unjust use of it by his students (456c–457b). Gorgias admits that if a student came to him for lessons in rhetoric and happened not to know “what is really good or bad, noble or base, just or unjust” (459d7–8), he would teach these things to the student as well (460a3–4). When he agrees with Socrates that anyone who learns justice is just, he gets caught in what appears to be an inconsistent set of claims and is refuted (460b–461b). Polus enters the discussion by blaming Socrates for his rude questioning of Gorgias (461d–e). After Polus is refuted on his first thesis, he makes the snide remark that Socrates, like everyone else, really does covet the power of the tyrant who can do whatever he pleases with impunity (468e6–10). This remark leads them to the question about whether, if one had to choose between doing wrong (DW) and suffering wrong (SW), which would be better. Socrates claims that “to do wrong is the greatest of evils” (469b6) and believes that the unjust man is the most miserable of all. Polus counters this with the example of Archelaus, the Macedonian tyrant, and claims that no one would hesitate to call him happy (470d–e).

Before the refutation begins, Socrates reviews with Polus their respective positions (473a–b). Socrates maintains that (i) DW is worse than SW, (ii) wrongdoers are the most unhappy people, and (iii) wrongdoers are better off if they are caught and punished than if they are not. Polus holds the exact opposite of each of the three claims and says, “What a strange (atopa) doctrine, Socrates, you are trying to maintain!” (473a1). Polus believes that he has already refuted the second claim, proving that “many a wrongdoer is happy” (470d3) simply by citing the case of Archelaus, the “greatest wrongdoer in Macedonia” (471c8). In his attempt to refute the third claim, he cites a host of horrors that the would-be tyrant might suffer if caught, and he compares this wretched situation with the life of a tyrant who escapes punishment and wins the favor of the people (473c–d). Polus then laughs at Socrates’ view (473e3–5) and calls for support from the multitude, saying that Socrates makes “such statements as nobody in the world would assent to” (473e6–7). Socrates is not impressed and challenges Polus to submit to questioning (474c2–3).

I divide the refutation into three stages. In the first stage (474c–d), Socrates sets up the thesis that Polus will accept. Socrates asks the
question: “Which of the two seems to you, Polus, to be the worse—doing wrong or suffering it?” (474c5–7). Polus answers that suffering wrong is worse, and his thesis stands as (1) DW is better (more beneficial to the agent) than SW. Socrates then poses the question as to which of the two is more shameful. Polus responds that (2) DW is more shameful for the agent than SW. Polus does not say what he means by shameful (aischron); however, he clearly intends to separate the moral value of shame from the nonmoral value of badness or harm. For when Socrates asks, “And also more evil [kakion], if more shameful [aischion]”? Polus responds, “Not at all.” Socrates follows this up, “I see: you hold, apparently, that admirable and good are not the same, nor evil and shameful.” Polus responds, “Just so” (474c8–d2).

In the second stage (474d–475b), Socrates establishes a general principle that provides the defining criteria of kalon. The criteria they agree on come from a set of examples that Socrates puts forward for Polus’s consideration. The first group Socrates mentions is within the physical realm of beautiful bodies, colors, figures, and sounds. Socrates proposes that the two criteria for kalon are usefulness (chrēsimon) and pleasure before Polus has the chance to say anything (474d8). With regard to “bodily beauty,” Socrates asks Polus if he can add anything further, and Polus says he cannot (474d10–e2). Socrates continues talking about figures, colors, sounds, and music and then moves on to laws and practices. In all of these cases, the admirable or beautiful things (ta kala) are judged by standards of pleasure or benefit (ōphelimon [474e3]). Socrates has just substituted ōphelimon for chrēsimon. He asks Polus again whether the same criteria hold. Limiting himself to those cases that Socrates raised, Polus says he is unable to think of another standard by which such things are judged (474e8–10). In fact, Polus responds enthusiastically and accepts the proposed criteria as if a real definition of kalon has been offered (475a3–4). In giving his approval, he contributes to another subtle shift of terms by treating ōphelimon (beneficial) and agathon (good) as synonyms (475a4–6). So, then, they have agreed that (3) if something is kalon, it is either pleasurable or beneficial or both; and conversely, if something is aischron, it is either painful or harmful or both.

What is worth noticing so far is that Socrates’ examples are directed entirely toward ta kala, the admirable or beautiful things, with no mention of ta aischra, the shameful or ugly things. He has moved from the level of physical things that give pleasure to the senses to the level of intellectual objects such as laws, practices, and things learned. And, as I have just mentioned, Socrates has moved surreptitiously from the description of kala things as
useful, to their being beneficial, and then, with Polus’s help, to their being good (cf. *HMaj.* 295a–297d). Further, there has been a significant change in contexts. The original context of their discussion was the doing of unjust and shameful actions; the issues were about tyranny, punishment, life and death, happiness or unhappiness. In this moral context, what Polus meant by the term *aischron* (and the comparative *aischion*) was something much closer to “morally blameworthy” or “socially disapproved.” He did not mean “painful,” and he certainly did not mean “bad,” “evil,” or “harmful” when he stated his position. The focus of attention is turned from *ta kala* to the concept of *to kalon*, and only now does Socrates bring up *to aiscron* (475a2–4). They agree that pain and harm (bad/evil) are the criteria for calling something *aischron*. The two sets of criteria, pleasure/benefit and pain/harm, are now treated as definitionally equivalent to *kalon* and *aischron*. Socrates explains how the criteria would be applied to the type of comparative judgment made between a pair of admirable things when one is thought to be more admirable than the other or between a pair of shameful things when one is thought to be more shameful than the other (475a7–b2).

In the third stage (475b–e), Socrates returns to the DW/SW question and asks Polus to recall what was said earlier, “Were you not saying that suffering wrong is more evil, but doing it more shameful?” (475b5–6). Socrates now refocuses on the meaning of *to aiscron*, reminding Polus of his position (475b4–6). This move establishes the agreed-on premise that (4) DW is more shameful (for the agent) because it is either more painful or more harmful or both. The argument takes the form of a disjunctive syllogism. Socrates gets Polus to rule out one of the alternatives by asking whether DW is more painful for the agent or for the victim. At this point, Polus has to decide between two nonmoral criteria to affirm his judgment about a moral situation. Polus answers as expected, (5) DW is not more painful (for the agent) than SW. Polus is left with the conclusion that (6) DW is more harmful or worse, *kakion*, for the agent than SW (475b3–c4). The conclusion appears to contradict his original thesis, and he is refuted. Socrates wraps up the argument with a few reminders about what it was that Polus said everyone believed about DW and SW. Polus experiences shame, and this is indicated dramatically when Socrates says, “Do not shrink from answering” (475d7; cf. 515b3). Given that Polus has agreed, in the first refutation (466b–468e), that no one would choose what is harmful, he is compelled to accept the further conclusion that no one would choose DW over SW. Polus must admit that neither he nor anyone else would choose to do wrong because to do so would bring more evil and shame (475d6–7).
For convenience, the argument structure is as follows:

1. Doing wrong is better (more beneficial to the agent) than suffering it.
2. Doing wrong is more shameful (for the agent) than suffering it.
3. Admirable things are judged by the standards of pleasure or benefit, and shameful things are judged by the standards of pain or harm (kakon).
4. Doing wrong is more shameful (for the agent) because it is either more painful or more harmful to the agent.
5. Doing wrong is not more painful for the agent.
6. So, doing wrong is more harmful (kakion) to the agent.

As I interpret the argument, Polus’s position is not genuinely refuted because of the ambiguity of aischron, but Polus has contradicted himself and is defeated in debate. He is not convinced that he is wrong, however, and finds it hard to take Socrates’ views seriously despite what he has been through. Although it is not clear from the immediate dramatic context whether Polus’s sense of shame was genuine when he agreed that DW is more shameful, the shame he experiences from the defeat has an impact on him. During the third refutation, Polus has calmed down. He is no longer the unrestrained and defiant interlocutor. He has become compliant and detached in his responses. His final remark is that Socrates and his paradoxical views are strange, out of place, or even absurd (atopos [480e1, 473a1]).

To conclude this section, I wish to point out that there are two different types of shame that emerge from the refutation and both may be signified by the Greek words aischunē and aidōs. In general, these two words connote what in English we would call “shame” or “shamefulness.” In English, one usage of shame refers to having a “sense of shame” and carries with it a prospective or inhibitory meaning. Shame is a disposition that inhibits wrong action, yields to propriety, and serves to protect one’s reputation. The Greek notion of aidōs has this connotation, but it may also connote a feeling of awe or respect for others. Another usage of shame refers to “being ashamed” or “having the feeling of shame,” involves past wrongs or failures, and is retrospective. Shame, in this latter capacity, is a painful, emotional reaction that happens to a person; it is something that one undergoes at a given moment of recognition over which one has very little control. Like fear, it occurs instantaneously with the event that causes it or soon thereafter. In this refutation, Polus may have experienced both types of shame. When Callicles
attributes to Polus a sense of shame and blames him for it, he means that
Polus did not speak his mind because he felt that he must protect himself,
fearing the loss of reputation. When Polus is refuted, he is a loser; he feels
the shame that comes with being defeated in front of people whom he
respects and admires.

3. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE REFUTATION

The first stage (474c–d) contains premises (1) and (2), and together they raise
several points for discussion. The first point is that when Polus says that
DW is better, it is on the condition that the wrongdoer does not get caught
(470a4–7). This is made clear by Polus’s response to Socrates’ description of
the man with the dagger in the market place (469d–470a) and his use of a
tyrant as his model of the supremely unjust but happy man (470–471d). The
claim that an unjust man is happy as long as he goes unpunished is once
again touted by Polus when he gives his scary description of the would-be
tyrant who gets caught and tortured in contrast to the tyrant who gets away
and lives happily ever after (473c–d).

Second, it is important to note that Polus assumes a conventional
notion of shame that consists primarily in preserving one’s reputation in
accordance with what others say and think. When he agrees that DW
is more *aischron* than SW, he means that DW is more “morally shame-
ful,” and in saying this, he tacitly relies on the social/moral dimension
of shame that Callicles refers to as “shame by convention.” Generally
when *aischron* is used in a moral context, it denounces an action as fail-
ing to meet an established moral standard or ideal. Accordingly, an act is
morally shameful, in the conventional sense, if it is the object of other
people’s moral disapproval. It is simply what other people will say, or some-
times how things look to other people, that sets the conventional standard
of shame.10

A few general remarks about the value terms *kalon* and *aischron* are
needed for clarification. Like many Greek terms, these terms have a wide
range of application and are used, respectively, to commend something of
which the speaker approves or denounce something of which the speaker
disapproves. Although *kalon* and *aischron* are often used in a moral context,
there is no distinct “moral” meaning that belongs to them. Understanding
what the speaker means by use of these terms relies heavily on context and
background knowledge. Whereas *aischron* has a distinctively moral mean-
ing when used in a moral context, it has a complex relationship with the
word *kakon* (bad/evil), and these words are often linked together or assimilated in speech. Further, *kakon* is easily connected with *blabē* (harmful), and Socrates uses these two terms interchangeably when it facilitates the argument, as he does in the third refutation (477c–d). So while *aischron* has multiple and overlapping uses that extend its range of meaning to include what is covered by the English words *bad*, *evil*, *harmful*, and *ugly* or even *painful*, *aischrun* literally means “shameful.” It is frequently used to mean “morally shameful.” Strictly speaking, none of these terms is synonymous in Greek or in English.

Third, Polus makes it a point to separate the shameful from the bad. Using the conventional language of shame, he has diverged sharply from ordinary morality, and yet he emphatically claims to be speaking on everyone’s behalf when he says that SW is worse. He speaks out defiantly and seemingly without restraint. He sees himself as having the courage to say, in public, what people would not dare to say out of shame. Polus follows Gorgias’s lead and studies sophistic rhetoric because he thinks it will enhance his personal power and success and give him the freedom to do whatever he pleases. More importantly, though this feature does not emerge as fully with Polus as it does with Callicles, Polus values rhetoric for its ability to protect him against the harms and injustices that might be done to him by others.

Overall, Polus’s position is problematic because at the same time he seems to commit himself to the conventional norms of shame, he denies that what is shameful is bad. What he means to say is that what is morally disapproved of by the society is not the sole determinant of an agent’s conduct or well-being. Moral judgments may be overruled by prudential or self-interested motives, and it is this type of comparative situation about which Socrates and Polus disagree. The inconsistency of popular attitudes toward the benefits of injustice and its shamefulness is at the core of Socrates’ criticism of the moral viewpoint of the many. Polus holds an exaggerated version of it. The exaggerated viewpoint is conveyed in Polus’s description of Archelaus and by his motivation for raising it during the discussion. On the one hand, Polus praises the tyrant’s success with rhetorical embellishment. He describes Archelaus’s deeds in vivid detail in what Rutherford calls “a crazy hymn to injustice” (1995, 154). On the other hand, Polus blames the tyrant for his injustice and conveys the popular feelings of indignation about the tyrant’s brutality and injustice. In a similar way, Gorgias praises the power of rhetoric to rule over others and accomplish whatever it pleases, yet he blames those students of rhetoric who misuse these powers (456b–457c).
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4. Socrates’ Use of Ambiguity

The second stage is crucial to the refutation because it is here that Socrates introduces the two defining criteria (474d–475b). With regard to the ambiguity in the argument, Polus’s original meaning is preserved only if aischron in premise (2) is taken strictly to mean “morally shameful” in the conventional sense associated with social disapproval and moral blame. Once Polus agrees with Socrates’ flawed definition of aischron in premise (3), the meaning of the term begins to slide between the moral and non-moral usages. In premise (4), the two nonmoral meanings of aischron as painful/harmful are substituted, and the standard of the morally admirable and morally shameful is dropped out. The argument that Socrates has constructed to refute Polus is an equivocation related to the ambiguous term aischron. Consequently, Polus’s thesis is not refuted.

Socrates has asked Polus what he or others call (kalein) kalon [474d4]. This question is quite different from asking what the kalon is or what causes something to be kalon or aischron (cf. HMaj. 293d–294c, 299b1–2). When the principle is formulated, Polus takes it as a statement of identity rather than for what it is: a formal statement about the qualities assigned to kalon/aischron based on how people are affected. The criteria of pleasure/benefit and pain/harm simply fail to capture the distinct social/moral sense that kalon and aischron have when they are applied to actions (cf. Ar. Rb. 1.9 1366b–1367b). The possibility of judging an act to be admirable, on its own ground, precisely because it is kalon, and for no other reason, is ruled out by Socrates. Further, there are morally shameful things that are pleasurable and beneficial and morally admirable things that are neither pleasant nor beneficial (cf. 502b–c; HMaj. 299a1–9). Socrates successfully assigns the two main pairs of nonmoral values to the meanings of kalon/aischron and excludes the meaning he does not want Polus to consider.

Polus is refuted because he needed to make a distinction between types of shame that would disambiguate the meaning of aischron or he needed to recognize and include a third alternative to which he could appeal to escape the false dichotomy. He does neither because he does not know how to recognize the proper conditions for a definition. Polus had earlier been admonished for his confused thinking about definitions (462c10–d2, 463c). Socrates stressed the dialectical importance of distinguishing between what a thing is and its accidental attributes (cf. Meno 71a–b; Phdr. 237b–c). When Socrates went to great lengths to define rhetoric within a larger scheme of classification (462b–465c), Polus was inattentive. He seems to be so taken
in by the proposed definition that when he accepts the new meaning of *aischron*, as the painful/harmful, he does not notice that the terminology has been revised so as to reconnect *shameful* with *harmful* in a way that makes the terms become synonymous.\(^{17}\) Polus eagerly approves of the proposed definition as *kalôs* (475a2) because it pleases him and is easy to follow.\(^{18}\)

It remains a matter of scholarly speculation why Polus is unable to think of a third standard when such a standard—the distinctively moral ground on which people judge something to be admirable or shameful—is the very standard that he has tacitly assumed. However, there seems to be no getting around the fact that Polus has contradicted himself verbally and that he is partially at fault for failing to make proper distinctions and for not being aware of how he was using the terms. He is misled into accepting an essential verbal connection between the shameful and the bad (evil/harmful) when, moments earlier, he had emphatically denied that any real connection existed between them. I suggest that this almost inexplicable fact—Polus has admitted a claim that he had earlier denied—is to be accounted for by looking to Plato’s attempt to criticize Gorgias and Polus dramatically by means of parody. The parody is intended to show the absurdity of sophists getting tangled in their own devices and trapped in their nets of language. Their confusion is inevitable because sophists are not interested in getting at the truth about the matters on which they speak. Rather, they are concerned with words and how words can be used to win a debate or move an audience in whatever direction they choose (*Rep*. 454a–b). I will return to this point in section 6.

5. DISCUSSION OF OTHER INTERPRETATIONS

The problem that most scholars identify in this argument is of a different nature and stems from an analysis of the fallacy given by Vlastos (1967).\(^{19}\) Vlastos concentrates primarily on the set of examples that Socrates uses to arrive at the principle formulated in my premise (3) and the inference from (4) to (5) at 475c2–8. Some scholars have explicitly criticized Vlastos’s interpretation of the fallacy, but they still follow a similar logical analysis and discuss their modifications in terms of this analysis.\(^{20}\) It is useful to summarize Vlastos’s approach.\(^{21}\)

According to Vlastos, in the first example of beautiful sights such as bodies, Socrates makes reference to the pleasure of those people who might view them (*tous theôrountas* [474d10]). This reference introduces a qualification to the criterion of pleasure that Vlastos claims must be kept parallel in the other cases that Socrates enumerates to get Polus’s agreement to
premise (3). However, the qualification that would specify the referent, for whom or to whom the pleasure (or pain) applies, has been dropped in the other cases. There is no referent in the formulation of the principle that Polus has accepted. In the final stage of the argument (the disjunctive syllogism) either the referent must be kept unspecified or it must be supplied in order to indicate the recipient of the pleasure/benefit or pain/harm. Socrates makes no explicit mention of the referent in premise (4), so it is left unqualified (475b7–9). In premise (5), however, Socrates brings in the agent and the victim (475c1–2). Following along, Polus agrees that he must specify that DW is not more painful for the agent even though, in Vlastos’s view, he need not have done so. Given that Socrates’ use of “elliptical expressions” in the argument (an unintentional use, according to Vlastos) has resulted in the omission of the proper qualifications needed to indicate the recipient of the pleasure/benefit or painfulness/harm, Socrates has not refuted Polus with a valid argument.22

In my view, Vlastos’s diagnosis of the fallacy and any of the more general approaches that identify the fallacy to be a matter of the indeterminacy of the referent miss the mark because they locate a technicality in formal reasoning that has little to do with the content of the argument itself. The diagnosis takes a Socratic dialectical argument outside its context in order to analyze it and fails to account for the purpose of the fallacy. I will develop this criticism momentarily. There are two additional reasons why I find this approach unconvincing. First, as noted by Mackenzie, the proposed definition in premise (3) is intended to be a general principle for determining a variety of cases in different contexts. Given the generality of the principle, there is no reason to require that Socrates restrict the referent to any particular case beforehand.23 Second, Polus does not appear to be misled by the openness of the referent. He understands both (4) and (5) as referring to the agent because this was the original context in which the DW/SW question was posed.24 Polus takes the pain or harm to refer to the agent, just as he took the shamefulness of the act to refer to the agent. He is answering Socrates’ questions about what he (or anyone) would choose from the point of view of the person considering the dilemma. This observation is not new; it was made long ago by Adkins and repeated by several scholars since then.25 Although it is true that Vlastos’s diagnosis offers a possible way to account for the invalidity of the argument, on a certain reading, it does not adequately explain why Polus is refuted.26

The main reason why I disagree with Vlastos’s approach is that it does nothing to bring out into the open the concern that Socrates and Polus
have with shame as a moral value, nor does it recognize the fact that Polus gets tripped up on the *kalon/aischron* terminology. Polus casually spurns justice and subordinates moral values to prudential values. He shows no facility with or understanding of the admirable and shameful things, yet these are the kinds of things he presumes to know so well. In most Socratic refutations, the interlocutor’s commitment to conventional values is central and rarely ignored. The reason for this is that the interlocutor’s core beliefs and values are an integral part of the persuasive mode of reasoning that Socrates engages in during a refutation. Core beliefs and values are examined, concepts are reinterpreted, and terms are given deeper meanings. This process, what may be loosely called “Socratic method,” is carried out by using the interlocutor’s premises or, at least, his agreement to the premises and turning them against him.27 There is a similar pattern here. Socrates makes use of a sophistic verbal technique. This usage is part of Plato’s dramatic parody in which he imitates the sophistic devices of rhetoric and uses them against the sophistic rhetors.

Earlier in the article, I said that Callicles identified two different problems in his critical remarks, the shame charge and the ambiguity charge. In general, scholars have given adequate attention to the shame charge.28 As Kahn (1983) notes, Callicles tells Socrates that it is because Polus conceded premise (2), DW is more shameful than SW, that Polus “got entangled in your argument and had his mouth stopped, being ashamed to say what he thought” (482e2–4). Kahn points out rightly and emphatically that Polus granted this premise because “that is what everyone will say (regardless of what they really think)” (1983, 94). Whether or not Callicles’ remark about Polus’s shame pinpoints the whole problem is an interesting topic of debate in the literature. But few take into account or fully address the ambiguity charge. The ambiguity in the argument complements the emphasis that Callicles has given to Polus’s shame reaction. Although some scholars discuss the dramatic context and the psychological impact of shame on Polus, as well as on Gorgias and Callicles, they do not put the logical strategy and rhetorical features together, nor do they seem to be concerned to explain the relevance of their interpretation of the fallacy in the argument to Polus’s character and dramatic situation.

A number of scholars argue that Polus is unaware of what he really believes. In their view, the refutation has shown his implicit allegiance to justice, and his admission of the shamefulness of DW is a indication of this attitude.29 Also, there are some scholars who suggest that Plato dramatizes Polus and Callicles, in an extreme fashion, to impress upon Gorgias
the consequences of his rhetoric, in the hope to reeducate Gorgias about how rhetoric should be properly used.\textsuperscript{30} Others think that Polus’s attitude toward justice and shame is moderate and that Socrates, in forcing the issue, makes Polus’s view less plausible than it really is.\textsuperscript{31} They argue that Polus represents a position that is commonly held and that his distinction between the value of justice and what is beneficial for the agent need not imply that he endorses injustice.

In my view, Polus is deliberately hiding a position that he genuinely holds. Polus is doing what any good rhetorical speaker would do in a situation where he is being openly questioned. He conceals himself and his motives as a matter of professional savvy. He is imitating Gorgias, who is his model. His display of a sense of shame is a quintessential rhetorical device because it makes the multitude think more highly of him for deferring to their established moral conventions.\textsuperscript{32} A sense of shame is also effective in helping him to deflect what he perceives to be Socrates’ attacks. Polus is insolent but guarded; he will only say what he really thinks in private when he is around people of like mind.\textsuperscript{33} This standpoint is consistent with Callicles’ remarks and with Socrates’ description of sophistic rhetoric as highly pretentious and capable of nothing more than a “semblance” of justice and politics using skills with language. In the drama, Polus exhibits a strong preference for prudential values, for example, doing whatever it takes to survive and having the power that guarantees success taking precedence over the values of justice and shame. This interpretation of Polus’s motivations and priorities reflects the strong upheavals in Greek values that Thucydides reports in the *History of the Peloponnesian War.*\textsuperscript{34}

6. PLATO’S CRITIQUE OF SOPHISTIC RHETORIC

In his critique of sophistic rhetoric, Plato uses parody to convey his distaste for and disagreement with the rhetorical practices of the sophists. In effect, Socrates engages in mock imitation of such rhetorical practices with the interlocutors. The parodying of sophistic styles of speech and verbal techniques is effective in light of the sophists’ interests in and contributions to the study of language.\textsuperscript{35} They express views on grammar, semantics, composition, etymology, correct diction and usage, and the relations among language, reality, and culture. Protagoras is associated with the correctness of names and diction and with teaching students how to argue skillfully for either side of a case (antilogikê).\textsuperscript{36} Prodicus is best known for his interest in correct usage and famous for his practice of making careful terminological distinctions.
between near synonyms. Gorgias excelled in high-flown speech and a poetic style of prose. He made excessive use of alliteration and the jingling sounds of words and rhythms that he thought would most please the ears of the listeners. His speeches contain an assortment of rhetorical devices that became his trademark: pleonasm, the balancing of clauses and word endings, tricolon, antithesis, and vivid imagery to stir the emotions. There are several occasions in Plato’s dialogues where Socrates parodies sophists and rhetors. Examples are Socrates’ response to Agathon’s speech and subsequent refutation (Sym. 198a–201c), Socrates’ mock imitation of a literary critique of Simonides’ poem (Prt. 339a–348a), and Socrates’ middle speech on love (Phdr. 238e–241e) and the subsequent reexamination of the speech (Phdr. 260a–263e). All three examples involve ambiguity or the fallacious substitution of near synonyms.

In the Gorgias, a main source of parody is Socrates’ critical account of rhetoric as an empeiria (462c1–8, 463b3; cf. 501a–c). Polus had used the word empeiria to refer to the rhetorical skills that can be gained only through experience. He relies on the repetition of the word to make his point: “There are many arts amongst mankind that have been discovered experimentally, as the result of experiences: for experience conducts the course of our life according to art, but inexperience according to chance” (448c4–7). Plato parodies Polus imitating Gorgias’s style when Polus says about the various arts that “various men partake in various ways, and the best men of the best” (alloi allōn allōs, tōn de aristōn hoi aristoi). Other instances include when Socrates repeats Gorgias’s dramatic use of the phrase “to draw aside the veil” (apokalupsas [460a1; cf. 455d8]). Callicles says that Socrates ought to be ashamed to be “word-catching” (onomata thēreuōn [489b10]), and Socrates later echoes the term in denying that he does such a thing (rhēmati thēreuō [490a5–6]). He reuses Callicles’ expression “to be boxed on the ear” and denies Callicles’ claim that to suffer such a thing would be a serious disgrace (508e1–2; cf. 486c4–5). In his opening speech, Callicles admonishes Socrates, saying, “You neglect, Socrates, what you ought to mind” (hōti ameleis . . . ōn dei se epimeleisthai [485e8–9]). Later, Socrates mirrors the sentiment and tells Callicles that his neglect of geometry (geōmetrias gar ameleis) causes him to think that greed (pleonexia) is good (508a7–10). Callicles compares the advice he gives to Socrates to that which Zethus gave to Amphion in Euripides’ play Antiope (484e, 485e–486a). Socrates returns the comparison with a vindication (489e, 506b–c).

I have claimed that the verbal argumentation Socrates uses against Polus contains an ambiguous slide among several meanings of the same term. A similar technique is used by the historical Gorgias in the Encomium of
In his argument that Helen should be freed from blame for leaving her husband if she was persuaded by logos (Hel. 8–14), Gorgias makes use of a resemblance between two ideas: being persuaded by logos and being compelled by force. Gorgias says that Helen may have “come under the influence of speech just as much against her will as if she had been seized by violence of violators” (Hel. 12). In just a few lines Gorgias exchanges the idea of persuasive speech with the idea of compulsion without giving any argument for why these ideas should be treated as the same. He calls up the image of logos as “the persuader” who compels ψυχή, “the persuaded,” by necessity “both to obey what was said and to approve what was done” (Hel. 12). The exchange is facilitated because the active verb peithein (to persuade) is linked grammatically to the passive verb peíthein, which means “to be persuaded.” However, peíthein can also mean “to obey” or “to have trust in,” so Gorgias makes a conceptual leap from persuasion in the soul (of Helen) to the soul obeying and approving without Helen being free to give her consent. Gorgias concludes that it is the persuader who compelled (ho peisas hōs anagkasas) that is to blame and not the persuaded who was compelled (he peistheisa hōs anagkastheisa [Hel. 12]). He implies that it is not just the speech but the speaker, Paris, who deserves the blame. Likewise Helen as listener and victim had no choice but to follow his commands and yield to the necessities of her nature, so she is not to blame.

Another case of sophistic verbal argumentation occurs in Antiphon’s On Truth, a work well known for its criticism of conventional morality or law (nomos) and adherence to the standards set by nature (phusis). Antiphon expresses the view that the “advantages which are prescribed by the laws are fetters of nature, whereas the advantages which are prescribed by nature make for freedom” (DK 87 B44, Fragment A). On this view, just actions are “against nature.” Antiphon takes as his examples a person who acts only in a self-defensive manner against his attacker and a person who remains respectful to his parents despite having been treated badly by them. He calls negative attention to those cases where the laws fail to protect people against the injustices done to them. Further, Antiphon questions the justice involved in the practice of a witness giving testimony against someone who has done the witness no harm. Because justice requires that a person do no harm to those who have not harmed him, Antiphon claims that “it is impossible to reconcile the principle that this conduct is just [i.e., giving evidence against one’s neighbor] with the other principle, that one should not do any injustice nor suffer it either” (DK 87 B44, Fragment C). With regard to the validity of the argument, the contradiction that Antiphon
suggests depends on the ambiguous use of adikein, which usually means “to
do wrong” but can also mean “to harm.”48 Contrary to Antiphon’s claim, it
is possible for a witness to testify justly against a wrongdoer who has not
harmed him. But to see why such testimony does not entail a contradic-
tion between two principles of justice requires that a distinction be made
between two closely related meanings of the same term.49

A shorter example of Socratic verbal argumentation occurs when
Socrates tries to defend himself against Callicles’ ambiguity charge by
showing that the standards of nomos and phusis are not opposed (489a–c).50
Callicles fails to clarify his meaning and distinguish precisely among the
terms to kretton (the superior), to belton (the better), and to ischuraton (the
stronger [488d1–4]). Socrates argues that the laws of the many are superior
and better and that this must be so by nature because they are naturally
stronger. Yet, as Socrates points out, the many uphold the beliefs that “ju-
stice means having an equal share, and it is more shameful to wrong than
to be wronged” (488e9–489a1), and they do so by law/convention (489a9).
So, Callicles was mistaken earlier in his claim that Socrates had tricked
Polus by shifting between the two standards. Callicles protests that what he
meant by the “stronger” are those who are politically dominant. In any case,
Callicles cannot treat all three terms as synonymous. He must drop the term
to ischuraton (or else be more precise) because those who are stronger, in the
sense of physical manpower are not those whom he calls better or superior.51
Socrates has succeeded in correcting Callicles’ use of terms in this case, but
the point is not relevant to the question of whether he had earlier traded on
an ambiguity of aischron in refuting Polus.

7. THE CONCERN WITH THE MISUSE OF LANGUAGE

The same issues—justice versus expediency, dominance over others, rhe-
torical speechifying, honor and shame, greed, personal advantage and
protection—that are relevant to the political contexts of the discussions in
the Gorgias are found in the reports given by Thucydides of the Athenian
assembly debates (Hist. I.75–76, III.37–50, V.105).52 Thucydides observes
the dismissive and callous attitudes that the Athenians and other Greeks
adopted about the morality of justice during the Peloponnesian War.53 He
comments on how political speakers use rhetorical language to speak half-
truths or hide their motivations behind the talk of ideals. In his account of
the civil strife in Corcyra, he describes in stark terms how political events
and violence caused a moral deterioration and affected the use of moral
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language. Thucydides writes, “To fit in with the change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings. What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded as the courage one would expect to find in a party member . . . any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one’s unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that one was totally unfitted for action” (Hist. III.82). Political speakers use words recklessly in order to put their position into the best light. They appropriate conventional moral terms and misuse them to convey a new meaning that stands opposed to conventional moral values. According to Solmsen, Thucydides observed a “new type of synonym,” what Solmsen aptly calls “pseudo-synonyms” (1975, 107).

Here are a few examples that call attention to the misuse of language by the technique of using pseudo-synonyms. In Aristotle’s Rhetoric I.9, he explains how rhetorical speakers who wish to put things into a better light for purposes of praise or blame are able to do this by treating certain qualities that “closely resemble the real qualities” as if they were “identical with them.” His examples include calling “the simpleton good-natured, and the emotionless gentle . . . the choleric and passionate man may be spoken of as frank and open, the arrogant as magnificent and dignified . . . the foolhardy as courageous, the recklessly extravagant as liberal. For most people will think so” (Rh. 1367a28–b5). In the Republic 8 (560c3–d5), Socrates describes how the unruly desires in the democratic man’s soul take control over him. Such a soul speaks “false and braggart words” in an effort to maintain dominance (Rep. 560c1–2). These braggart words call “reverence and awe ‘folly’” and “teach that moderation and orderly expenditure are ‘rusticity’ and ‘ill-berality.’” Further, they will “euphemistically denominate insolence ‘good breeding,’ licence ‘liberty’; prodigality will be deemed ‘magnificence’ and shamelessness ‘manly spirit’” (Rep. 560e3–5). The same technique is illustrated explicitly in the Gorgias when Callicles misconstrues what Socrates says and uses the same phrase to refer to a very different character trait. Socrates introduces the idea that “every man is his own ruler” (auton eautou archonta [491d5]), and Callicles asks him for his precise meaning. Socrates says that he is talking about people who are temperate and rule over their desires. Callicles says: “You mean ‘the simpletons’ by ‘the temperate’” (491e2–3). Socrates objects that this is not at all what he means, but Callicles insists that it is exactly what he does mean.

There is a constructive and literary dimension to Plato’s critique of sophistic rhetoric in the Gorgias. He builds a revisionist model of rhetoric by drawing on rhetoric itself. Plato argues for a noble rhetoric that is
progressive and compatible with the philosophical view of the good life (502e–503a, 504d–e, 517a–b). He takes up several major themes and terms contained in Gorgias’s Encomium of Helen. He reworks the themes, gives them philosophical substance, and assigns the terms a new Socratic meaning so as to make the practice of rhetoric suitable for a dialectician.⁵⁸ These themes include the power of logos as a rationally persuasive force, the inverse value of doing wrong and suffering wrong, the nature of the kalon and aischron, the use of praise and blame as a medium for political speech making, and the double meaning of kosmos, as a beautifying arrangement of external things (Hel. 1) or as an internal, rational ordering of the soul (506e–507a, 508a–b). The verbal and conceptual links between Plato’s Gorgias and Gorgias’s Helen cannot be developed here, but it is noteworthy that Plato’s critique of sophistic rhetoric assimilates the historical Gorgias’s own words and ideas. What I have argued in this article follows a similar line of reasoning. I have argued that there is a connection between Socrates’ use of verbal argumentation with Polus and Plato’s concern with the sophistic misuse of language as expressed by means of dramatic parody. Plato’s use of dramatic parody is multifaceted. It is an effective literary device that extends to the sophistic argumentative strategy that Plato has Socrates use against Polus. The refutation of Polus is all the more interesting and impressive when it is viewed as an integral part of the dramatic parody of sophistic rhetoric in the Gorgias.

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NOTES

My genuine appreciation goes out to the referees and to the editor for their valuable input on this article. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Plato and Aristotle are from the Loeb Classical Library collection (see Aristotle 1926a, 1926b, 1960, 1978; Plato 1914, 1924, 1925, 1926a, 1926b, 1926c).

1. Translations of the Gorgias are taken from W. R. M. Lamb’s 1925 translation. For the most part, I follow Lamb except wherever he translates kalon and aischron as fair and foul, I substitute admirable or noble and shameful, with a few other minor emendations. The most recent translation and commentary of the Gorgias, by Arieti and Barrus (2007), provides valuable notes on the diverse forms of wordplay and rhetorical language in the dialogue.

2. Callicles says: “And this, look you, is the clever trick you have devised for our undoing in your discussions: when a man states anything according to convention you slip ‘according to nature’ into your questions; and again, if he means nature, you imply convention. In the present case . . . when Polus was speaking of what is conventionally shameful
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(κατὰ νομὸν αἰσχίον), you followed it up in the sense of what is naturally so (κατὰ φύσιν) (483a2–8).


4. Kennedy puts Protagoras, Licymnius, and Polus into a category of writers of “lexicographical works” who cataloged “different types of diction on the basis of meaning or form and provided lists of examples” (1994, 32). Kennedy notes that according to a scholiast on Plato’s Phaedrus, Polus was said to have learned from Licymnius “definitions of words, compound words, related words, epithets and other categories which contribute to elegant diction” (1965, 64).

5. Euben remarks: “Socrates had asked Gorgias who he was, what he taught, and what, in consequence, his art produced in the world. Now, we have an answer: Polus” (1994, 208). See also Ostwald (1986, 199–274, esp. 243–45), who discusses the political effect of Gorgian rhetoric on his students.

6. Polus exclaims, “Your definition (ὁρίζε) is quite fair when you define (ὁρίζομενος) what is fair (τὸ καλὸν) by pleasure and good” (475a3–6). Cf. HMaj. 298a10–8. Also relevant are Aristotle’s remarks on definition (Top. 5.102a1–5), on homonymy (verbal ambiguity) and multiple uses of a word (Top. 3.110a111a8; cf. S.E. 16–17, esp. 175b1–15), and on καλὸν as homonymous (Top. 15.106a1–21).

7. The word atopos is picked up by Socrates and used to mock Polus’s attitude toward his views and to mock the sophists who engage in “out-of-place” behavior as they claim to be teachers of virtue yet accuse their students of misusing their teachings (519c7–8; cf. 465e3, 481e9, 493c5, 494d1–2, 521d4).

8. The adjective aischron is a derivative of the noun aischunē and is commonly rendered in English by the word shame. The abstract noun in the neuter form to aischron translates as “the shameful.” Aischunē and its cognates are closely tied to the very complex range of usages associated with aidōs.

9. For example, see Chrm. 160e–161b; Prot. 322c, 329c; Eu. 12a–d. On the concept and terminology of shame in Greek culture, see Cairns 1993; Dover 1994, 69–73; Konstan 2003; Williams 1993.

10. In the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle describes shame (aidōs) as a “kind of fear of disrepute.” He argues that shame is more like a feeling (pathos) than a disposition (hexis) because the experience of shame is accompanied by certain physical effects (N.E. 1128b10–16). In the Rhetoric II.6, he defines shame (aichunē) as a “kind of pain or disturbance in connection
with those evils that appear to pertain to disrepute (adoxian phainomena pherein tôn kakón), whether present, past or future” (1383b22, trans. Lawson-Tancred [1991]).

11. See Dover 1994, 70–73; Kahn 1983, 93–95. Kahn notes that “in ordinary usage kakon and aischron are sufficiently distinct to be contrasted with one another” (1983, 93).

12. This point is frequently noted by scholars. See Bernadete 1991, 44; Kahn 1983, 95–96; Nichols 1998, 139–41; Rutherford 1995, 151.

13. Bernadete says that Polus “indicts Archelaus as if he were bringing him to trial . . . he has to raise moral indignation to the highest pitch and then drive it still higher by stirring up envy of his happiness. He arouses resentment and indignation together” (1991, 44). Similar descriptions are given by Nichols (1998, 139) and Stauff er (2006, 62–63).

14. My critical analysis of the fallacy agrees with the interpretation given by Robinson (1942). Robinson describes a sliding ambiguity as one that “covers a wide area and refers now to a larger and now to a smaller part of it. Such a term embraces a big complex of conceptions, put together under one word . . . and it has varying uses in which varying parts and selections of the complex are intended and omitted” (1942, 142).

15. In addition to Robinson, Archie (1984, 170, 173) and Johnson (1989) have identified the logical problem of the argument as a matter of there being two distinct sets of definitions for aischron.

16. In the Cratylus, Socrates engages in etymological play with aischron (416a–b) and puns on the similarity between kalein (to call or name something) and kalon (416d–e). Attention is given to kalon by Bernadete (1991, 49, 63) and Wardy (1996, 59).

17. Stauff er (2006, 73n35) rightly objects that commentators have neglected the question of Polus’s acquiescence to the proposed definition. He does acknowledge Kahn’s (1983, 94–95) efforts to address the problem.

18. In the discussion with Meno (76b–d), Socrates agrees to give a fancy-sounding definition of color “in the manner of Gorgias,” adding that it is one that Meno “would find easiest to follow” (76c4–5) and calling it an answer “in the high poetic style” (76e1).


21. Some scholars who discuss the Polus section or the second refutation with different issues in mind include Bernadete (1991), Nichols (1998), Johnson (2005), and Stauff er (2006).

22. Vlastos (1991) fills in the missing qualifications necessary to make the argument valid. He argues that the elliptical expressions are of the sort “which Socrates would have had the strongest temptation to regard as only a stylistic matter, not affecting the substance of the thought” (1991, 145).

23. Mackenzie argues that “Plato’s failure to specify who suffers the pain or the harm is quite proper in view of the fact that many people occupying different roles, may call something aischron—they may observe, do or suffer” (1982, 87).
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24. Johnson argues that in weighing the factors of better/worse and more/less shameful, Socrates and Polus tacitly assume that “the ellipsis is to be filled in by the same person in both instances: the one facing the choice” (1989, 202).

25. See Adkins 1960, 267; Archie 1984, 172–74; Kahn 1983, 89–92; McKim 1988, 45–46. These scholars claim that there is no reason to think that the reference to possible observers who derive pleasure from observing sights and sounds, which Socrates makes when presenting his first set of examples, is intended to cover all the cases he mentions.

26. Kahn maintains that there is still a problem with the referent because Socrates must show that doing injustice is more harmful or worse for the agent, otherwise he has not refuted Polus’s thesis. In Kahn’s view, the most that Socrates has shown is that doing injustice is “worse for someone or other, for example, worse for society as a whole” (1983, 91).


28. For instance, Dodds (1959), Adkins (1972), and Kahn (1983) accept without qualification that Callicles’ psychological diagnosis of the refutation is right. Irwin (1979, 171), for instance, claims that Callicles is both right and wrong. For further debate about Callicles’ assessment, the discussions in Archie 1984, McKim 1988, Johnson 1989, and Berman 1991 are helpful.

29. For instance, McKim 1988; Stauffer 2006.


32. In the Republic, Socrates refers to the multitude as the “chief sophists” (492b1), and the sophists do nothing more than teach to the multitude its own opinions (τὸν πολλὸν δογματα [493a6]).

33. In the Rhetoric II.23, Aristotle notes that “men do not praise the same thing openly and secretly, but in public praise especially just and noble things, but privately wish rather for what is to their advantage” (1399a–b, trans. Lawson-Tancred [1991]). Cf. S.E. 12.172b35–173a5.

34. Kennedy describes Polus as well as Gorgias and Callicles as “practical politicians of the breed believing in expediency and force, historically best known to us from the pages of Thucydides” (1963, 15).


36. Prot. 310c, 312d; Crat. 391c3–4; Phdr. 267c5; Eud. 286c; cf. Ar. Rh. 1407b. The eristic practice of antilogikē is parodied in the Euthydemus. Cf. Tht. 154e, 178b–179a; Soph. 232d–e.

37. Eud. 277a4–5, 305c; Prt. 337a–c, 358a–b; Ar. Top. 112b22; Ar. Rh. 1413b12. Socrates mentions Prodicus’s name or his association with Prodicus in Crat. 384b; Meno 75e, 96d4–6; La. 197d; and Chrm. 163d.

38. Ar. Rh. 1404a26. On Gorgias’s manner of teaching by model speeches, see S.E. 183b37.
39. Classen makes the notable point that “Gorgias’ insistence on balanced sentences with corresponding clauses or parts of speech necessitated the use of words with similar meanings” (1976, 231).

40. Also, there is Socrates’ speech on behalf of Protagoras (Ibt. 166a–168c) and his funeral speech in the Menexenus. Brown and Coulter (1979, 239–41) discuss the middle speech in the Phaedrus as a parody of an Isocratean style of rhetoric. In this regard, they make note of Isocrates’ practice of amphiboloi logoi in his Panathenicus.

41. A pleonasm is the repetitive or superfluous use of a word or phrase for emphasis. Examples of parody of this device are 520c4–7; parody of Gorgias’s and Polus’s jingly style occur at 521d–10; cf. 522b3–4 (pathos, pathein). Also, Socrates says: “Spare your invective, peerless Polus—if I may address you in your own style” (467c1).

42. In the Helen, Gorgias points out how painters use colors to please the sight and says, “Many things create in many people love and desire of many actions and bodies” (polla de pollois pollon [18]).


44. Buxton (1982, 53–54) comments on to peithein and to peithesthai in the Laws speech (Cr. 51b–c).

45. Also, Adkins shows that Gorgias uses an ambiguity inherent in the words paschein and pathêma, which may or may not connote emotional passivity depending on the context (Hel. 7). He claims that there is a “rhetorical transference” of paschein between two contexts (1983, 111).


48. See Gagarin 2002, 76–77. Gagarin says, “Antiphon plays on this ambiguity: a person’s behavior that is just by the rules of the legal system has the consequence that it injures someone who has done them no harm” (2002, 76).

49. A similar point is also noted by Dillon and Gergel (2003, 373n63).

50. Socrates addresses the shame charge in his discussion with Callicles (487b–c) and again when he presents his account of the proper order and virtue in the soul (506c–507d, 508b–c).

51. On the reasoning in this argument, see Euben 1994, 212–13; Waterfield 1994, 152, and his note on 489b.


53. The Athenian representatives tell the Spartans that “security, honor, and self-interest” are their main motives for defending their empire and for “refusing to give it up.” They argue that they have not done anything different than what other states would do: “It has always been a rule that the weak should be subject to the strong” (Hist. 1.76). Cf. Gorgias: “It is not natural for the stronger to be hindered by the weaker” (Hel. 6).
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54. With particular reference to the kalon, Solmsen (1975, 153) discusses the Corinthians' argument against Corcyra in the Athenian Assembly (History of the Peloponnesian War I.38). See the Athenians' description of the Lacedaemonian's misuse of to kalon and to dikaion in the Melian Dialogue (History of the Peloponnesian War V.105.4). Other passages in Thucydides on the misuse of words are I.75–76, II.53.3-4, III.58.1, IV.38.3, and V.104. These topics are discussed in Farrar 1988, 178–84; Ober 2002, 72–79.
55. See Isocrates' remarks in the Antidosis (284) and Areopagiticus (20, 49 [1929]).
56. See Dodds 1959, 294, on this point.
57. For similar views, see Bernadete 1991; Kastely 1991, 97; Kaufmann 1979; Nichols 1998; Rendall 1977; Rutherford 1995; Stauffer 2006, 29, and n. 23 for further references; Weiss 2003.
58. See Wardy 1996, chs. 2–3. Wardy gives a detailed account of Plato's use of concepts and terminology adapted from Gorgias's Encomium of Helen.

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