

*This book offers an introduction to the Sophists of fifth-century Athens and a new overall interpretation of their thought. Since Plato first animadverted on their activities, the Sophists have commonly been presented as little better than intellectual mountebanks - a picture which Professor Kerferd forcefully challenges here.*

These men were professional showmen and teachers, the first to provide education beyond the traditional basic subjects—music, poetry, physical training, and arithmetic. They were entrepreneurs, rivals, and competitors who expected to be paid. They traveled from city to city, charging fees for teaching and for their public performances. Each Sophist taught whatever subjects he wished, subjects ranging from mathematics and astronomy to grammar and literary criticism. Many Sophists had interests in language and taught techniques of reasoning, argument, and public speaking that could be useful in public and private life. They came from different cities in the Greek world. Plato contrasts individual Sophists with Socrates and sophistry with philosophy. They were important in many areas. To them is due the beginnings of the study of language and speech, which stands at the origins of grammar and rhetoric. Others puzzled about the gods and the origins of religion. Some contributed to mathematics. Most importantly, they stand at the origins of moral, political and social philosophy, anthropology, and political theory. Study of the Sophists requires access to information about them, not just to the interpretations of others. This information falls into three sorts: The first three sorts form the basis of valid research. They were collected for the first time in by Diels—*Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. The Sophists have been viewed from many angles which cannot all be represented adequately in this bibliography, which is intended as a guide to books and articles useful for understanding who the Sophists were, their methods, aims, and achievements, how they were viewed in antiquity, and their contributions to philosophical thought.

**General Overviews** Most works on the Sophists contain chapters on individual Sophists and on topics concerning the Sophists in general, some works emphasizing the former Kerferd and Flashar , others the latter Bonazzi , Guthrie , Kerferd , and de Romilly Alcidas, Lycophron and Xenias, and other figures are treated less frequently, either because their credentials as Sophists are weak or because the information on them is too scanty. In *A companion to ancient philosophy*. This important but hard to find book, which is being revised and translated into English, gives intelligent and innovative treatments to basic issues concerning the Sophists: In *The Blackwell guide to ancient philosophy*. The world of the Sophists. In *A history of Greek philosophy*. Although superseded in ways by more recent work, this remains an excellent source of information and sensible interpretations. In *The Routledge history of philosophy*. Much of this article follows Kerferd , but many of his views have changed. The discussion of Antiphon in the light of the fragment first published in is particularly interesting. In *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*. *Die Philosophie der Antike*. Contains an extensive bibliography. De Romilly argues that the Sophists contributed vitally to the transformation of Athenian culture and deserve a place among the most important thinkers of antiquity. Users without a subscription are not able to see the full content on this page. Please subscribe or login. [How to Subscribe Oxford Bibliographies Online](#) is available by subscription and perpetual access to institutions. For more information or to contact an Oxford Sales Representative [click here](#).

*Interesting book - though I'm not convinced that the sophists were such insightful philosophers as Kerferd wants to argue. The enterprise of the sophistic movement seems to me to have been more flippant, and more unscrupulous, than Kerferd suggests.*

The derogatory modern usage of the word, suggesting an invalid argument composed of specious reasoning, is not necessarily representative of the beliefs of the original Sophists, except that they generally taught Rhetoric. Origins The meaning of the word sophist gr. Initially, a sophist was someone who gave sophia to his disciples, i. It was a highly complimentary term, applied to early philosophers such as the Seven Wise Men of Greece. In the second half of the 5th century B. Due to the importance of such skills in the litigious social life of Athens, acclaimed teachers of such skills often commanded very high fees. The practice of taking fees, coupled with the willingness of many practitioners to use their rhetorical skills to pursue unjust lawsuits, eventually led to a decline in respect for practitioners of this form of teaching and the ideas and writings associated with it. Protagoras is generally regarded as the first sophist. Other leading 5th-century sophists included Gorgias and Prodicus. Socrates was perhaps the first philosopher to significantly challenge the Sophists. By the time of Plato and Aristotle, "sophist" had taken on negative connotations, usually referring to someone who used rhetorical sleight-of-hand and ambiguities of language in order to deceive, or to support fallacious reasoning. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle all challenged the philosophical foundations of sophism. Eventually, the school was accused of immorality by the state. In modern philosophical usage, sophistry is a derogatory term for rhetoric that is designed to appeal to the listener on grounds other than the strict logical validity of the statements being made. The Sophists held a relativistic view on cognition and knowledge. Their philosophy contains criticism of Religion, law and ethics. Though many sophists were as religious as their contemporaries, some held atheistic or agnostic views. It is necessary to keep in mind that Plato and the sophists had severe ideological differences, and Plato might have benefited from modifying or slanting the original sophistic arguments when he presented them in his writings ironically, a sophistic technique at work , or may even not have fully understood their arguments himself. An excellent book on the topic is "The Sophistic Movement" by G. In the Roman Empire, sophists were just professors of rhetoric. For instance, Libanius, Himerius, Aelius Aristides and Fronto were considered sophists in this sense. Reconstruction of Sophist philosophy In traditional logical argument, a set of premises are connected together according to the rules of logic and lead therefore to some conclusion. When someone criticizes the argument, they do so by pointing out either falsehoods among the premises or logical fallacies, flaws in the logical scaffolding. These criticisms may be subject to counter-criticisms, which in turn may be subject to counter-counter-criticisms, etc. Generally, some judge or audience eventually either concurs with or rejects the position of one side and thus a consensus opinion of the truth is arrived at. The essential claim of sophistry is that the actual logical validity of an argument is irrelevant; it is only the ruling of the audience which ultimately determine whether a conclusion is considered "true" or not. Critics would argue that this claim relies on a straw man caricature of logical discourse and is, in fact, a self-justifying act of sophistry. Various perhaps even most politicians employ sophistry, as well.

**Chapter 3 : The Sophistic Movement by G.B. Kerferd**

*Synopsis. This book offers an introduction to the Sophists of fifth-century Athens and a new overall interpretation of their thought. Since Plato first animadverted on their activities, the Sophists have commonly been presented as little better than intellectual mountebanks - a picture which Professor Kerferd forcefully challenges here.*

For example, a charioteer, a sculptor or a warrior could be described as *sophoi* in their occupations. Gradually, however, the word also came to denote general wisdom and especially wisdom about human affairs for example, in politics, ethics, or household management. This was the meaning ascribed to the Greek Seven Sages of 7th and 6th century BC like Solon and Thales, and it was the meaning that appeared in the histories of Herodotus. Richard Martin refers to the seven sages as "performers of political poetry". The word "sophist" could also be combined with other Greek words to form compounds. In 5th century BCE[ edit ] In the second half of the 5th century BCE, particularly at Athens, "sophist" came to denote a class of mostly itinerant intellectuals who taught courses in various subjects, speculated about the nature of language and culture and employed rhetoric to achieve their purposes, generally to persuade or convince others: It was good employment for those who were good at debate, which was the specialty of the first Sophists; they received the fame and fortune they were seeking. Protagoras is generally regarded as the first of these professional sophists. A few sophists claimed that they could find the answers to all questions. Most of these sophists are known today primarily through the writings of their opponents specifically Plato and Aristotle, which makes it difficult to assemble an unbiased view of their practices and beliefs. In some cases, such as Gorgias, there are original rhetorical works that are extant, allowing the author to be judged on his own terms. In most cases, however, knowledge about what individual sophists wrote or said comes from fragmentary quotations that lack context. Sophists could be described both as teachers and philosophers, having traveled about in Greece teaching their students various life skills, particularly rhetoric and public speaking. There were numerous differences among Sophist teachings, and they lectured on subjects that were as diverse as semantics and rhetoric, to ontology, epistemology. Before the fifth century B. He taught his students the necessary skills and knowledge for a successful life, particularly in politics, rather than philosophy. He trained his pupils to argue from both points of view because he believed that truth could not be limited to just one side of the argument. Protagoras wrote about a variety of subjects and some fragments of his work survived. Gorgias authored a lost work known as *On the Non-Existent*, which centers on the argument that nothing exists. In it, he attempts to persuade his readers that thought and existence are different. Plato studied philosophy under the guidance of Socrates. Due to his opposition, he is largely responsible for the modern view of the sophist as a stingy instructor who deceives. He depicts Socrates as refuting some sophists in several Dialogues. Another contemporary, the comic playwright Aristophanes, criticizes the sophists as hairsplitting wordsmiths. Aristophanes made no distinction between sophists and philosophers as Socrates did, and believed both would argue any position for the right fee. In the comedic play *The Clouds* by Aristophanes, Strepsiades seeks the help of Socrates a parody of the actual philosopher in an effort to avoid paying his debts. In most cases, however, knowledge of sophist thought comes from fragmentary quotations that lack context. Many of these quotations come from Aristotle, who seems to have held the sophists in slight regard. Due to the importance of such skills in the litigious social life of Athens, practitioners often commanded very high fees. The attacks of some of their followers against Socrates prompted a vigorous condemnation from his followers, including Plato and Xenophon, as there was a popular view of Socrates as a sophist. For example, the comic playwright Aristophanes criticizes the sophists as hairsplitting wordsmiths, and makes Socrates their representative. In comparison, Socrates accepted no fee, instead professed a self-effacing posture, which he exemplified by Socratic questioning. His attitude towards the Sophists was by no means oppositional; in one dialogue Socrates even stated that the Sophists were better educators than he was, [10] which he validated by sending one of his students to study under a sophist. Plato described Sophists as paid hunters after the young and wealthy, as merchants of knowledge, as athletes in a contest of words, and purgers of souls. Plato sought to separate the Sophist from the Philosopher. Where a Sophist was a person who makes his living through

deception, a philosopher was a lover of wisdom who sought truth. To give the Philosophers greater credence, the Sophists had to receive a negative connotation. Protagoras was the first sophist, whose theory said "Man is the measure of all things", meaning Man decides for himself what he is going to believe. In this view, the sophist is not concerned with truth and justice, but instead seeks power. Some scholars, such as Ugo Zilioli [15] argue that the sophists held a relativistic view on cognition and knowledge. However, this may involve the Greek word "doxa", which means "culturally shared belief" rather than "individual opinion". Their philosophy contains criticism of religion, law, and ethics. Though many sophists were apparently as religious as their contemporaries, some held atheistic or agnostic views for example, Protagoras and Diagoras of Melos.

Democracy[ edit ] The first sophists prepared Athenian males for public life in the polis by teaching them how to debate through the art of rhetoric. The art of persuasion was the most important thing to have a successful life in the fifth century Athens social commonplace when rhetoric was in its most important stage. The societal roles the Sophists filled had important ramifications for the Athenian political system at large. The historical context provides evidence for their considerable influence, as Athens became more and more democratic during the period in which the Sophists were most active. Sophists contributed to the new democracy in part by espousing expertise in public deliberation, the foundation of decision-making, which allowed—and perhaps required—a tolerance of the beliefs of others. This liberal attitude would naturally have made its way into the Athenian assembly as Sophists began acquiring increasingly high-powered clients. In addition, Sophists had great impact on the early development of law, as the sophists were the first lawyers in the world. Their status as lawyers was a result of their highly developed skills in argument. The Sophists were notorious for their claims to teach virtue and excellence, and particularly for accepting fees for teaching. The influence of this stance on education in general, and medical education in particular, have been described by Seamus Mac Suibhne.

Influence on Roman education[ edit ] During the Second Sophistic, the Greek discipline of rhetoric had heavy influence on Roman education. During this time Latin rhetorical studies were banned for the precedent of Greek rhetorical studies. In addition, the Greek history was preferred for the education of the Roman elites above that of their native Roman history. Cicero, a prominent rhetorician during this period in Roman history, is one such example of the influence of the Second Sophistic on Roman Education. His early life coincided with the suppression of Latin rhetoric in Roman education under the edicts of Crassus and Domitius. Cicero was instructed in Greek rhetoric throughout his youth, as well as in other subjects of the Roman rubric under Archias. Cicero benefited in his early education from favorable ties to Crassus. Despite his oratorical skill, Cicero pressed for a more liberal education in Roman instruction which focused more in the broad sciences including Roman history. He entitled this set of sciences as *politior humanitas* 2. Regardless of his efforts toward this end, Greek history was still preferred by the majority of aristocratic Romans during this time. A sophism is a specious argument for displaying ingenuity in reasoning or for deceiving someone.

**Chapter 4 : Who were the sophists? | Yahoo Answers**

*Though this philosophical-historical approach to the study of the Sophists has led to masterful studies by W. K. C. Guthrie and G. B. Kerferd, it often involves speculation beyond what the fragments can bear, as it did in Hegel's *Philosophy of History* and Mario Untersteiner's *The Sophists*.*

Since Homer at least, these terms had a wide range of application, extending from practical know-how and prudence in public affairs to poetic ability and theoretical knowledge. Notably, the term sophia could be used to describe disingenuous cleverness long before the rise of the sophistic movement. Theognis, for example, writing in the sixth century B. In the fifth century B. The Clouds depicts the tribulations of Strepsiades, an elderly Athenian citizen with significant debts. Deciding that the best way to discharge his debts is to defeat his creditors in court, he attends The Thinkery, an institute of higher education headed up by the sophist Socrates. When he fails to learn the art of speaking in The Thinkery, Strepsiades persuades his initially reluctant son, Pheidippides, to accompany him. Here they encounter two associates of Socrates, the Stronger and the Weaker Arguments, who represent lives of justice and self-discipline and injustice and self-indulgence respectively. On the basis of a popular vote, the Weaker Argument prevails and leads Pheidippides into The Thinkery for an education in how to make the weaker argument defeat the stronger. Strepsiades later revisits The Thinkery and finds that Socrates has turned his son into a pale and useless intellectual. In the first instance, it demonstrates that the distinction between Socrates and his sophistic counterparts was far from clear to their contemporaries. Although Socrates did not charge fees and frequently asserted that all he knew was that he was ignorant of most matters, his association with the sophists reflects both the indeterminacy of the term sophist and the difficulty, at least for the everyday Athenian citizen, of distinguishing his methods from theirs. Thirdly, the attribution to the sophists of intellectual deviousness and moral dubiousness predates Plato and Aristotle. He is depicted by Plato as suggesting that sophists are the ruin of all those who come into contact with them and as advocating their expulsion from the city Meno, 91cc. Hippocrates is so eager to meet Protagoras that he wakes Socrates in the early hours of the morning, yet later concedes that he himself would be ashamed to be known as a sophist by his fellow citizens. Plato depicts Protagoras as well aware of the hostility and resentment engendered by his profession Protagoras, c-e. It is not surprising, Protagoras suggests, that foreigners who profess to be wise and persuade the wealthy youth of powerful cities to forsake their family and friends and consort with them would arouse suspicion. Indeed, Protagoras claims that the sophistic art is an ancient one, but that sophists of old, including poets such as Homer, Hesiod and Simonides, prophets, seers and even physical trainers, deliberately did not adopt the name for fear of persecution. Protagoras says that while he has adopted a strategy of openly professing to be a sophist, he has taken other precautions "perhaps including his association with the Athenian general Pericles" in order to secure his safety. The low standing of the sophists in Athenian public opinion does not stem from a single source. No doubt suspicion of intellectuals among the many was a factor. New money and democratic decision-making, however, also constituted a threat to the conservative Athenian aristocratic establishment. In the context of Athenian political life of the late fifth century B. The development of democracy made mastery of the spoken word not only a precondition of political success but also indispensable as a form of self-defence in the event that one was subject to a lawsuit. The sophists accordingly answered a growing need among the young and ambitious. This is a long-standing ideal, but one best realised in democratic Athens through rhetoric. Rhetoric was thus the core of the sophistic education Protagoras, e , even if most sophists professed to teach a broader range of subjects. Suspicion towards the sophists was also informed by their departure from the aristocratic model of education paideia. Since Homeric Greece, paideia had been the preoccupation of the ruling nobles and was based around a set of moral precepts befitting an aristocratic warrior class. The sophists were thus a threat to the status quo because they made an indiscriminate promise "assuming capacity to pay fees" to provide the young and ambitious with the power to prevail in public life. This is only a starting point, however, and the broad and significant intellectual achievement of the sophists, which we will consider in the following two sections, has led some to ask whether it is possible or desirable to attribute them with a unique method or

outlook that would serve as a unifying characteristic while also differentiating them from philosophers. Scholarship in the nineteenth century and beyond has often fastened on method as a way of differentiating Socrates from the sophists. For Henry Sidgwick, for example, whereas Socrates employed a question-and-answer method in search of the truth, the sophists gave long epideictic or display speeches for the purposes of persuasion. It seems difficult to maintain a clear methodical differentiation on this basis, given that Gorgias and Protagoras both claimed proficiency in short speeches and that Socrates engages in long eloquent speeches – many in mythical form – throughout the Platonic dialogues. It is moreover simply misleading to say that the sophists were in all cases unconcerned with truth, as to assert the relativity of truth is itself to make a truth claim. Kerferd has proposed a more nuanced set of methodological criteria to differentiate Socrates from the sophists. According to Kerferd, the sophists employed eristic and antilogical methods of argument, whereas Socrates disdained the former and saw the latter as a necessary but incomplete step on the way towards dialectic. Plato uses the term eristic to denote the practice – it is not strictly speaking a method – of seeking victory in argument without regard for the truth. Antilogic is the method of proceeding from a given argument, usually that offered by an opponent, towards the establishment of a contrary or contradictory argument in such a way that the opponent must either abandon his first position or accept both positions. This method of argumentation was employed by most of the sophists, and examples are found in the works of Protagoras and Antiphon. As Nehamas has argued, while the elenchus is distinguishable from eristic because of its concern with the truth, it is harder to differentiate from antilogic because its success is always dependent upon the capacity of interlocutors to defend themselves against refutation in a particular case. More recent attempts to explain what differentiates philosophy from sophistry have accordingly tended to focus on a difference in moral purpose or in terms of choices for different ways of life, as Aristotle elegantly puts it *Metaphysics IV, 2, b* Section 4 will return to the question of whether this is the best way to think about the distinction between philosophy and sophistry. Before this, however, it is useful to sketch the biographies and interests of the most prominent sophists and also consider some common themes in their thought.

Protagoras Protagoras of Abdera c. Despite his animus towards the sophists, Plato depicts Protagoras as quite a sympathetic and dignified figure. Pericles, who was the most influential statesman in Athens for more than 30 years, including the first two years of the Peloponnesian War, seems to have held a high regard for philosophers and sophists, and Protagoras in particular, entrusting him with the role of drafting laws for the Athenian foundation city of Thurii in B. The first topic will be discussed in section 3b. This seems to express a form of religious agnosticism not completely foreign to educated Athenian opinion. Despite this, according to tradition, Protagoras was convicted of impiety towards the end of his life. As a consequence, so the story goes, his books were burnt and he drowned at sea while departing Athens. Apart from his works *Truth* and *On the Gods*, which deal with his relativistic account of truth and agnosticism respectively, Diogenes Laertius says that Protagoras wrote the following books: *Gorgias* Gorgias of Leontini c. The major focus of Gorgias was rhetoric and given the importance of persuasive speaking to the sophistic education, and his acceptance of fees, it is appropriate to consider him alongside other famous sophists for present purposes. Gorgias visited Athens in B. He travelled extensively around Greece, earning large sums of money by giving lessons in rhetoric and epideictic speeches. Gorgias is also credited with other orations and encomia and a technical treatise on rhetoric titled *At the Right Moment in Time*.

Antiphon The biographical details surrounding Antiphon the sophist c. However, since the publication of fragments from his *On Truth* in the early twentieth century he has been regarded as a major representative of the sophistic movement. *On Truth*, which features a range of positions and counterpositions on the relationship between nature and convention see section 3a below, is sometimes considered an important text in the history of political thought because of its alleged advocacy of egalitarianism: Those born of illustrious fathers we respect and honour, whereas those who come from an undistinguished house we neither respect nor honour. In this we behave like barbarians towards one another. For by nature we all equally, both barbarians and Greeks, have an entirely similar origin: Whether this statement should be taken as expressing the actual views of Antiphon, or rather as part of an antilogical presentation of opposing views on justice remains an open question, as does whether such a position rules out the identification of Antiphon the sophist with the oligarchical Antiphon of Rhamnus.

Hippias The exact dates for Hippias of Elis are unknown, but scholars generally assume that he lived during the same period as Protagoras. Hippias is best known for his polymathy DK 86A His areas of expertise seem to have included astronomy, grammar, history, mathematics, music, poetry, prose, rhetoric, painting and sculpture. Like Gorgias and Prodicus, he served as an ambassador for his home city. His work as a historian, which included compiling lists of Olympic victors, was invaluable to Thucydides and subsequent historians as it allowed for a more precise dating of past events. In mathematics he is attributed with the discovery of a curve – the quadratrix – used to trisect an angle. It is hard to make much sense of this alleged doctrine on the basis of available evidence. As suggested above, Plato depicts Hippias as philosophically shallow and unable to keep up with Socrates in dialectical discussion. Prodicus Prodicus of Ceos, who lived during roughly the same period as Protagoras and Hippias, is best known for his subtle distinctions between the meanings of words. He is thought to have written a treatise titled *On the Correctness of Names*. Prodicus spoke up next: There is a distinction here. We ought to listen impartially but not divide our attention equally: More should go to the wiser speaker and less to the more unlearned –! In this way our meeting would take a most attractive turn, for you, the speakers, would then most surely earn the respect, rather than the praise, of those listening to you. For respect is guilelessly inherent in the souls of listeners, but praise is all too often merely a deceitful verbal expression. Socrates, although perhaps with some degree of irony, was fond of calling himself a pupil of Prodicus Protagoras, a; *Meno*, 96d. Thrasymachus Thrasymachus was a well-known rhetorician in Athens in the latter part of the fifth century B. He is depicted as brash and aggressive, with views on the nature of justice that will be examined in section 3a. Major Themes of Sophistic Thought a. Nature and Convention The distinction between *physis* nature and *nomos* custom, law, convention was a central theme in Greek thought in the second half of the fifth century B. Before turning to sophistic considerations of these concepts and the distinction between them, it is worth sketching the meaning of the Greek terms. Some of the Ionian thinkers now referred to as presocratics, including Thales and Heraclitus, used the term *physis* for reality as a whole, or at least its underlying material constituents, referring to the investigation of nature in this context as *historia* inquiry rather than philosophy. The term *nomos* refers to a wide range of normative concepts extending from customs and conventions to positive law. Nonetheless, increased travel, as exemplified by the histories of Herodotus, led to a greater understanding of the wide array of customs, conventions and laws among communities in the ancient world. This recognition sets up the possibility of a dichotomy between what is unchanging and according to nature and what is merely a product of arbitrary human convention. The dichotomy between *physis* and *nomos* seems to have been something of a commonplace of sophistic thought and was appealed to by Protagoras and Hippias among others. Antiphon applies the distinction to notions of justice and injustice, arguing that the majority of things which are considered just according to *nomos* are in direct conflict with nature and hence not truly or naturally just DK 87 A His account of the relation between *physis* and *nomos* nonetheless owes a debt to sophistic thought. Callicles argues that conventional justice is a kind of slave morality imposed by the many to constrain the desires of the superior few. What is just according to nature, by contrast, is seen by observing animals in nature and relations between political communities where it can be seen that the strong prevail over the weak. Callicles himself takes this argument in the direction of a vulgar sensual hedonism motivated by the desire to have more than others *pleonexia*, but sensual hedonism as such does not seem to be a necessary consequence of his account of natural justice. Like Callicles, Thrasymachus accuses Socrates of deliberate deception in his arguments, particularly in the claim the art of justice consists in a ruler looking after their subjects. Justice in conventional terms is simply a naive concern for the advantage of another. Our condition improved when Zeus bestowed us with shame and justice; these enabled us to develop the skill of politics and hence civilized communal relations and virtue. Protagoras measure thesis is as follows:

**Chapter 5 : G. B. Kerferd, The Sophistic Movement - PhilPapers**

*G.B. Kerferd (a) has proposed a more nuanced set of methodological criteria to differentiate Socrates from the sophists. According to Kerferd, the sophists employed eristic and antilogical methods of argument, whereas Socrates disdained the former and saw the latter as a necessary but incomplete step on the way towards dialectic.*

Nomos encompasses both law and unwritten, traditional social convention. The contrast between the two concepts is central to ancient sophistic thought, with roots in the pre-Socratic inquiry into the underlying natures of things. For the Sophists, nomos and phusis are polar terms, roughly equivalent respectively to the socially constructed and the universally, objectively given. The contrast was most strikingly applied in relation to justice. By "nature," Antiphon seems to understand what is physiologically given to all humans Greeks and barbarians alike. However, the same conceptual framework, including the assumption that nature represents an authoritative norm, could be used to support the opposite stance. The Anonymous Iamblichus argues that law and justice should be obeyed as having "kingly rule" among human beings—a rule established by human nature itself. So the nomos-phusis contrast was a framework for discussion rather than a theory in itself. It allowed for fruitful debate as to where the testimony of nature might be observed, what guidance it could provide, and how the norms of law and morality might relate to it. Far from being restricted to justice, nomos-phusis is best understood as a catch phrase for the general sophistic inquiry into the institutions of human society. Thus various Sophists seem to have applied the concepts to slavery, gender roles, language, and religion. For instance, the Sisyphus fragment by either Critias or Euripides argues that religion was invented by ancient sages as a device for social control, implying that the gods exist only by convention. The contrast could even be extended to questions of general epistemology. Democritus usually classed as a pre-Socratic, but associated by sources with Protagoras summed up his atomism by claiming that sensory properties, such as colors and tastes, are merely conventional; in reality there are only atoms and the void. Here, conventional seems to be tantamount to mind-dependent, or merely apparent. The adoption of nature as a normative standard is the most powerful legacy of sophistic thought. Plato and Aristotle both constructed their ethics and politics around their understanding of human nature, and took this to be in harmony with the nature of the cosmos and the divine. Later, Epicureans and Stoics both argued that the good life is one lived in accordance with nature *kata phusin*, which they explicated by invoking animal behavior in the "cradle argument. A History of Greek Philosophy. Cambridge University Press, Rachel Barney Pick a style below, and copy the text for your bibliography.

**Chapter 6 : Kerferd's The Sophistic Movement | QuEst**

*G.B. Kerferd The Sophistic Movement Area: History of Rhetoric and Memory Studies Chapter One: Introduction* *â€œ Sophists provoked their own condemnation, first by Socrates then Plato.*

The word sophist Greek: Thus Homer , Hesiod, the Seven Sages, Pythagoras , and other preeminent poets, musicians, philosophers, and statesmen are referred to as "sophists" by ancient writers. However, the word acquired a technical meaning by the middle of the fifth century b. The principal source of information about the Sophists is Plato ? Since their own works exist only in fragmentary form, there is uncertainty about their philosophical views and the precise impact of their thought on the history of rhetoric, philosophy, political theory, and pedagogy. If we follow Plato, the list of major fifth-century Sophists should include Protagoras of Abdera c. It is customary, however, to include a number of other figures on the list, such as Gorgias c. Sophistic Speeches Sophistic speeches were famous in antiquity for their rhetorical style and their moral and philosophical content. Though the life of vice appears easy at first and the life of virtue difficult, virtue is said to produce genuine happiness eudaimonia , while vice produces shame and distress. In a different vein are the speeches of Gorgias, which showcase the power of certain rhetorical techniques to defend positions of dubious morality and truth. Thus his "Encomium of Helen" and his "Defense of Palamedes" make two classical villains appear blameless, while his speech "On the Non-Existent," argues that nothing exists, that even if it exists it is inapprehensible to man, and that even if it is apprehensible, it cannot be expressed. Pedagogy Surprisingly little is known of the virtues that Sophists taught in private when they took students under their wing for long periods a pedagogical method referred to as "association," suneimi. Certainly skill in legal and political argument was a large part of these virtues, since the Sophists were all talented statesmen, and their students were aspiring members of the political class. Evidence suggests that the major Sophists imparted a fairly wide set of moral and intellectual virtues. Eristic, which derives from the Greek word for strife, is a form of rapid verbal combat in which opponents are drawn into well-rehearsed philosophical paradoxes in order to be refuted or confounded. Doctrines In addition to their activities as teachers and statesmen, the Sophists wrote treatises on a staggering array of subjects, including rhetoric, debate, poetry, music, natural science, geometry, theology, and government. One of the most common mistakes has been to treat the Sophists as a unified movement or school. Protagoras is best known for the opening and only surviving lines of two works. His book On Truth began: Prodicus was more famous in antiquity for his art of defining words called "synonymic by German scholars , which enabled his students to untangle vexing paradoxes by distinguishing precisely between terms and concepts. The fragments of Hippias of Elis testify to the breath of learning of the Sophists. Historiography The Sophists have always been controversial figures. In Plato they are criticized chiefly for accepting pay when they have failed to think deeply and rigorously about the virtues they teach. This is usually described as a rejection of both Ionian and Eleatic accounts of reality for a greater emphasis upon sensory experience, where the Ionians had stressed a single causal substance at work in the universe for example, fire or air , and the Eleatics particularly Parmenides had described being as one, the Sophists are said to have emphasized the phenomenal world with all its variety and contradictions. Though this philosophical-historical approach to the study of the Sophists has led to masterful studies by W. Most recently, the Sophists have been studied for their seminal role in the history of rhetoric. In this context the so-called "second Sophistic" movement is also important; this was a vast movement of the second century c. See also Aristotelianism ; Democracy ; Platonism ; Rhetoric: Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, griechisch und deutsch. Sprague, Rosamond Kent, ed. With a New Edition of Antiphon and Euthydemus. University of South Carolina Press, The Origins of Democratic Thinking: The Invention of Politics in Classical Athens. Cambridge University Press, The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics. New Haven , Conn.: Yale University Press, Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. The Philosophy of History. The Ideals of Greek Culture. Translated by Gilbert Highet. Oxford University Press, Southern Illinois University Press, The Open Society and Its Enemies. Princeton University Press, The Great Sophists in Periclean Athens. Translated by Janet Lloyd. Translated by Kathleen Freeman. Corey Pick a style below, and copy the text for your bibliography.

**Chapter 7 : Works by G. B. Kerferd - PhilPapers**

*Sophist: Sophist, any of certain Greek lecturers, writers, and teachers in the 5th and 4th centuries bce, most of whom traveled about the Greek-speaking world giving instruction in a wide range of subjects in return for fees.*

Sophist, any of certain Greek lecturers, writers, and teachers in the 5th and 4th centuries bce, most of whom traveled about the Greek-speaking world giving instruction in a wide range of subjects in return for fees. History of the name The term sophist Greek sophistes had earlier applications. This would explain the subsequent application of the term to the Seven Wise Men 7th-6th century bce, who typified the highest early practical wisdom, and to pre-Socratic philosophers generally. Plato and Aristotle altered the meaning again, however, when they claimed that professional teachers such as Protagoras were not seeking the truth but only victory in debate and were prepared to use dishonest means to achieve it. Finally, under the Roman Empire the term was applied to professors of rhetoric, to orators, and to prose writers generally, all of whom are sometimes regarded as constituting what is now called the Second Sophistic movement see below The Second Sophistic movement. The 5th-century Sophists The names survive of nearly 30 Sophists properly so called, of whom the most important were Protagoras, Gorgias, Antiphon, Prodicus, and Thrasymachus. Plato protested strongly that Socrates was in no sense a Sophist—he took no fees, and his devotion to the truth was beyond question. But from many points of view he is rightly regarded as a rather special member of the movement. The actual number of Sophists was clearly much larger than 30, and for about 70 years, until c. Thereafter, at least at Athens, they were largely replaced by the new philosophical schools, such as those of Plato and Isocrates. Most of the major Sophists were not Athenians, but they made Athens the centre of their activities, although travelling continuously. The importance of Athens was doubtless due in part to the greater freedom of speech prevailing there, in part to the patronage of wealthy men like Callias, and even to the positive encouragement of Pericles, who was said to have held long discussions with Sophists in his house. Athens was a democracy, and although its limits were such that Thucydides could say it was governed by one man, Pericles, it nonetheless gave opportunities for a successful political career to citizens of the most diverse backgrounds, provided they could impress their audiences sufficiently in the council and the assembly. A Sophistic education was increasingly sought after both by members of the oldest families and by aspiring newcomers without family backing. The changing pattern of Athenian society made merely traditional attitudes in many cases no longer adequate. Criticizing such attitudes and replacing them by rational arguments held special attraction for the young, and it explains the violent distaste which they aroused in traditionalists. Plato thought that much of the Sophistic attack upon traditional values was unfair and unjustified. But even he learned at least one thing from the Sophists—if the older values were to be defended, it must be by reasoned argument, not by appeals to tradition and unreflecting faith. Seen from this point of view, the Sophistic movement performed a valuable function within Athenian democracy in the 5th century bce. It offered an education designed to facilitate and promote success in public life. All of the Sophists appear to have provided a training in rhetoric and in the art of speaking, and the Sophistic movement, responsible for large advances in rhetorical theory, contributed greatly to the development of style in oratory. Naturally the balance and emphasis differed from Sophist to Sophist, and some offered wider curricula than others. But this was an individual matter, and attempts by earlier historians of philosophy to divide the Sophistic movement into periods in which the nature of the instruction was altered are now seen to fail for lack of evidence. The 5th-century Sophists inaugurated a method of higher education that in range and method anticipated the modern humanistic approach inaugurated or revived during the European Renaissance. La Hire, Laurent de: Rhetoric, oil on canvas by Laurent de La Hire, In a private collection Nature of Sophistic thought A question still discussed is whether the Sophists in general had any real regard for truth or whether they taught their pupils that truth was unimportant compared with success in argument. Eristic, for Plato, consists in arguments aimed at victory rather than at truth. Antilogic involves the assignment to any argument of a counterargument that negates it, with the implication that both argument and counterargument are equally true. Antilogic in this sense was especially associated with Protagoras; but Plato, no doubt correctly, attributes its

use to other Sophists as well. He regards the use of antilogic as essentially eristic, whether it be used to silence an opponent by making his position seem self-contradictory, or whether it be used mechanically to negate any proposition put forward in debate. He concludes that the widespread use of antilogic is evidence that Sophists had no real regard for the truth, which must itself be free from antilogic. Plato conversing with his pupils Plato conversing with his pupils, mosaic from Pompeii, 1st century bce; in the National Archaeological Museum, Naples. For example, if a person is tall in relation to one object, he will be short in relation to another object. In so characterizing the phenomenal world, Plato certainly did not wish to be called eristic—he regarded the application of antilogic to the description of the phenomenal world as an essential preliminary to the search for the truth residing in the Platonic forms, which are themselves free from antilogic. Seen in this perspective, the Sophistic use of antilogic must be judged less harshly. To the extent that it was used irresponsibly to secure success in debate it was eristic, and the temptation so to use it must often have arisen. But where it was invoked in the sincere belief that antilogic elements were indeed involved, or where it was used for analyzing a complex situation in order to reveal its complexity, then antilogic was in no way inconsistent with devotion to truth. This raises the question to what extent the Sophists possessed any general view of the world or gave expression to any genuine philosophical views, whether original or derived. Ancient writers, influenced by Plato and Aristotle, seem to have excluded the Sophists, apart from Protagoras, from their schematized accounts of early Greek thinkers. Modern writers have frequently maintained that, whatever else they were, the Sophists were in no sense philosophers. Even those who acknowledge the philosophical interest of certain particular doctrines attributed to individual Sophists often tend to regard these as exceptions and claim that, inasmuch as the Sophists were not a school but only independent teachers and writers, as a class they were not philosophers. Two questions are involved: Among moderns, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was one of the first to reinsert the Sophists into the history of Greek philosophy. He did so within the framework of his own dialectic, in which every thesis invokes its own opposite, or antithesis; thus, he treated the Sophists as representing the antithesis to the thesis of the group of philosophers known collectively as the pre-Socratics. Pre-Socratics such as Thales, Heracleitus, and Parmenides sought the truth about the external world with a bold enthusiasm that produced a series of explanations, each claiming to be correct. None of these explanations of the physical world paid attention to the observer and each was driven to reject more and more of the phenomenal world itself as unreal. Finally, with the Eleatics, a 5th-century school at Elea in Italy that held that reality is a static one, of which Parmenides and Zeno are representatives, little or nothing of the phenomenal world was left as real. This trend in turn produced a growing distrust of the power of human beings to attain knowledge of the ultimate basis of natural phenomena. Philosophy had reached an impasse, and there was a danger of complete skepticism. To Hegel, the Sophists were subjective idealists, holding that reality is only minds and their contents, and so philosophy could move forward by turning its attention to the subjective element in knowing. Whether any of the Sophists actually were subjective idealists may be doubted. The conclusion depends in part on whether Protagoras held that phenomena had subjective existence only, or whether he thought that all things perceived had objective existence but were perceived differently according to the nature of the percipient and their relation to him. It is fairly clear, however, that the Sophists did concentrate very largely upon human beings and human society, upon questions of words in their relations to things, upon issues in the theory of knowledge, and upon the importance of the observer and the subjective element in reality and in the correct understanding of reality. This emphasis helps to explain the philosophical hostility of Plato and Aristotle. Particularly in the eyes of Plato, anyone who looks for the truth in phenomena alone, whether he interprets it subjectively or relativistically, cannot hope to find it there; and his persistence in turning away from the right direction virtually amounts to a rejection of philosophy and of the search for truth. Many a subsequent thinker for whom metaphysics, or the investigation of the deepest nature of reality, was the crowning achievement of philosophy has felt with Plato that the Sophists were so antimetaphysical that they have no claim to rank as philosophers. But since the mid-th century there has been growing appreciation of a number of problems and doctrines recurring in the discussions of the Sophists in the 5th and 4th centuries bce. In the 18th and early 19th centuries the Sophists were considered charlatans. Their intellectual honesty was impugned, and their doctrines were blamed for weakening the moral fibre of Greece.

The charge was based on two contentions, both correct: Much less weight is now attached to these charges. First, many of the attacks on the traditional morality were in the name of a new morality that claimed to be of greater validity. Attacks upon particular doctrines often claimed that accepted views should be abandoned as morally defective. Furthermore, even when socially disfavoured action seemed to be commended, this was frequently done to introduce a principle necessary in any satisfactory moral theory. Finally, there is no evidence that any of the Sophists were personally immoral or that any of their pupils were induced to immoral actions by Sophistic teaching. The serious discussion of moral problems and the theory of morality tends to improve behaviour, not to corrupt it. It has usually been supposed that the writings themselves hardly survived beyond the period of Plato and Aristotle, but this view requires modification in the light of papyrus finds, admittedly few, that were copied from Sophistic writings in the early Common Era. It also has been possible to identify in the works of later writers certain imitations or summaries of 5th-century Sophistic writers, whose names are unknown. This evidence suggests that while most later writers took their accounts of the Sophists from earlier writers, especially from Plato, the original writings did in many cases survive and were consulted.

Particular doctrines As part of his defense of the Sophists against the charge of immoral teachings, the English historian George Grote " maintained that they had nothing in common with each other except their profession, as paid teachers qualifying young men to think, speak, and act with credit to themselves as citizens. This denial of common doctrines cannot be sustained—the evidence is against it. While the Sophists were not a sect, with a set of obligatory beliefs or doctrines, they had a common interest in a whole series of questions to which they sought to apply solutions along certain clearly defined lines. No complete writings survive from any of the Sophists to check the accounts found in Plato, and later writers were often, but not always, dependent upon what they found in Plato. Consequently, almost everything that is said about particular Sophistic doctrines is subject to controversy. Theoretical issues Relativism and skepticism have often been regarded as common features of the Sophistic movement as a whole. But it was early pointed out that only in Protagoras and Gorgias is there any suggestion of a radical skepticism about the possibility of knowledge; and even in their case Sextus Empiricus, in his discussion of skepticism, is probably right when he declares that neither was really a skeptic. Protagoras does seem to have restricted knowledge to sense experience, but he believed emphatically that whatever was perceived by the senses was certainly true. This led him to assert that the tangent does not touch the circle at a point only but along a definite length of the circumference; clearly he was referring to human perception of drawn tangents and circles. Gorgias, who claimed that nothing exists, or if it does exist it cannot be known, or if it exists and is knowable it cannot be communicated to another, has often been accused of denying all reality and all knowledge. Yet he also seems to have appealed in his very discussion of these themes to the certainty of perceived facts about the physical world; e. Others dismiss his whole thesis as a satire or joke against philosophers. Probably neither view is correct. There is evidence that other Sophists e. The Sophists, in fact, were attempting to explain the phenomenal world without appealing to any principles outside phenomena. They believed that this could be done by including the observer within the phenomenal world. Their refusal to go beyond phenomena was, for Plato, the great weakness in their thinking. A second common generalization about the Sophists has been that they represent a revolt against science and the study of the physical world. The evidence is against this, inasmuch as for Hippias, Prodicus, Gorgias, and Protagoras there are records of a definite interest in questions of this kind. One of the most famous doctrines associated with the Sophistic movement was the opposition between nature and custom or convention in morals. It is probable that the antithesis did not originate in Sophistic circles but was rather earlier; but it was clearly very popular and figured largely in Sophistic discussions. The commonest form of the doctrine involved an appeal from conventional laws to supposedly higher laws based on nature. Sometimes these higher laws were invoked to remedy defects in actual laws and to impose more stringent obligations; but usually it was in order to free the individual from restrictions unjustifiably imposed by human laws that the appeal to nature was made. In its extreme form the appeal involved the throwing off of all restraints upon self-interest and the desires of the individual e. On other occasions the terms of the antithesis were reversed and human laws were explicitly acclaimed as superior to the laws of nature and as representing progress achieved by human endeavour. In all cases the laws of nature

were regarded not as generalized descriptions of what actually happens in the natural world and so not like the laws of physics to which no exceptions are possible but rather as norms that people ought to follow but are free to ignore. Thus, the appeal to nature tended to mean an appeal to human nature treated as a source for norms of conduct. See also natural law. To Greeks this appeal was not very novel.

#### Chapter 8 : sophists | QuEst

*Most works on the Sophists contain chapters on individual Sophists and on topics concerning the Sophists in general, some works emphasizing the former (Kerferd and Flashar ), others the latter (Bonazzi , Guthrie , Kerferd , and de Romilly ). The Sophists treated standardly.*

#### Chapter 9 : Nomos and Phusis | [www.nxgvision.com](http://www.nxgvision.com)

*A sophist (Greek: ῥητορικός, sophistes) was a specific kind of teacher in ancient Greece, in the fifth and fourth centuries [www.nxgvision.com](http://www.nxgvision.com) sophists specialized in using the tools of philosophy and rhetoric, though other sophists taught subjects such as music, athletics, and mathematics.*