Lecture 3: Ancient Greece

> ***The ancient Greeks had the gift of wondering at things that other people take for granted.***
>
> Bloomfield

As we have already mentioned, the earliest records of linguistic thought in Europe go back to Ancient Greece. **'Homeric scholarship'**, the establishment of acceptable texts of the poems and their critique, had begun in Athens during the **sixth century BC** (Robins: 1995). These 'seeds' of philosophy grew into the teachings of the earliest Greek philosophers, usually referred to as the *Sophists*.

I. The Sophists
⇒ Protagoras (490–420 B.C.)
⇒ Prodicus, Gorgias , Cratylus, Hippias, etc.
II. Socrates (470–399 B.C.)

The Sophists
The meaning of the word **sophist** (Gr. *sophistes* meaning "wise-ist," or one who 'does' wisdom, i.e. who makes a business out of wisdom; cf. *sophós*, "wise man", cf. also *wizard*) has changed greatly over time. Initially, a sophist was someone who gave *sophia* (wisdom) to his disciples. It was a highly respectful term, applied to early philosophers such as the Seven Wise Men of Greece.
In the second half of the 5th century B.C., and especially at Athens, "sophist" came to be applied to a number of highly respected thinkers/traveling teachers who employed debate and rhetoric to teach public speaking, grammar, linguistic theory, moral and political doctrines, doctrines about god and nature and the origins of man, literary analysis and criticism, mathematics, and physical theories of the universe, etc. Due to the importance of such skills in the *litigious* (quick to argue or sue in court) social life of Athens, practitioners of such skills often commanded very high fees.

Protagoras is generally regarded as the first sophist. Other prominent Sophists were ***Prodicus, Gorgias, Hippias, Antiphon***, ***Cratylus,*** etc. Many sophists held a *relativistic* view on *cognition* (the act of learning) and knowledge. Their philosophy questioned the validity of religion, law and ethics. The Sophists' practice of taking fees, and their perceived lack of moral principles, eventually led to a loss of respect for the Sophists.
Unfortunately, most of the Sophists' original texts have not survived: we know about them and their ideas from Plato's writings. Now, Plato's teacher, Socrates, was critical of the Sophists, so we should take Plato's accounts with a pinch of salt (they may not be accurate). Eventually, the Sophists were accused of immorality by the state.

Let us now take a brief look at what we know of what a few of them: **Protagoras**, **Prodicus, Gorgias, Antiphon,** and **Hippias** thought (and taught) about Language.

The first great Sophist was **Protagoras (c. 490-420 BC).** He was more modest than some of the later Sophists, and is treated respectfully by **Plato** in his dialogues. He is credited with being the first to distinguish *sentence types*: 4, according to some sources (prayer, question, answer, and command), and 7, according to others (narration, question, answer, command, report, prayer and invitation). He also, according to Aristotle, distinguished ***grammatical genders*** and *tenses*.

Protagoras is most famous for the doctrine that **"man is the measure of all things." Plato** claimed that Protagoras believed all sensory perceptions to be true for the person who feels them. This doctrine is known as **"Protagorean relativism."**

The earlier Greek philosophers made a clear distinction between **sense** and **thought**, between **perception** and **reason**, and had believed that the truth is to be found, not by the senses, but by **reason**. The teaching of Protagoras rests on **denying** this distinction.

Protagoras is also known for his *agnosticism* (the claim that we cannot know anything about the gods):

> Concerning the gods, I have no means of knowing whether they exist or not or of what sort they may be. Many things prevent knowledge including the obscurity of the subject and the brevity of human life.

Prodicus, a disciple of Protagoras, was born c. **450 BC**, and is known as the "precursor of Socrates" (he was still living in 399 BC, when Socrates died). His main contribution was in semantics, on how to distinguish synonyms from true synonyms (real or apparent synonyms).

Gorgias (**c. 485-380 BC**), like Protagoras, is treated respectfully by Plato (he wrote about him in his Dialogue *Gorgias*). He had a very polished style of speaking that made him very popular. He was among the first to recommend and use *figures of speech* (i.e., *antithesis, assonance, analogy, repetition, metaphor, metonymy, pun*, etc.) in writing and narrative. He did not like the term Sophist, he preferred to be called a rhetorician. He taught his disciples the art of persuasion, "to give them such absolute readiness for speaking, that they should be able to convince their audience independently of any knowledge of the subject." So Gorgias was acutely aware that Language is the most effective **tool** for persuading and manipulating others:

> *"The power of speech has the same relation to the order of the soul as drugs have to the nature of bodies. For as different drugs expel different humors from the body, and some put an end to sickness and others to life, so some words cause grief, others joy, some fear, others render their hearers bold, and still others drug and bewitch the soul through an evil persuasion . . ."*
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> (*Praise of Helen*)

Hippias was born about the **middle of the 5th century BC** and was thus a younger contemporary of Protagoras. He was a man of great versatility and won the respect of his fellow-citizens. He knew Socrates and other leading thinkers. He claimed to be an authority on all subjects, and lectured (always for a lot of money!) on poetry, grammar, history, politics, archaeology, mathematics and astronomy.
He boasted that he was more popular than Protagoras, and was prepared at any moment to deliver an impromptu address on any subject to the assembly at Olympia.
Certainly, he was an able orator, but it is also known that he was superficial. His aim was not to give knowledge, but to provide his pupils with the weapons of argument.
However, it is true that Hippias did a real service to Greek literature by insisting on the *meaning of words, the value of rhythm and literary style*. He also made a detailed study of the *sound system of the Greek language*. He forms the connecting link between the first great Sophists, Protagoras and Prodicus, and the innumerable eristics who brought their name into disrepute.

The Sophists were at first widely admired. Eventually they came into disrepute because of their high fees and the radical nature of what many of them taught. People were particularly suspicious of their claim to be able to teach a student how **"to make the weaker argument stronger" (Protagoras)**.
Though Sophists did not agree on everything, all their ideas seem to revolve around the idea that there is no Absolute Truth. Every man has his own truth. This probably has something to do with Plato and Aristotle giving them a bad name. They said that Sophists were not genuine seekers of the truth and called them quibblers and cheats in arguments. This general belief is responsible for the meanings of *sophist*, *sophism*, and *sophistry* today:

sophism: a deliberately invalid argument displaying ingenuity in reasoning in the hope of
deceiving someone

wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn

Socrates (June 4, **469**–May 7, **399 B.C.**) was perhaps the first philosopher to significantly challenge the
Sophists.

According to ancient manuscripts, Socrates' father was a sculptor, and his mother - a midwife. He was
married to *Xanthippe*, traditionally considered a shrew, and had three sons, all quite young at the time of
his death. It is unclear what exactly Socrates did for a living. He did not work, and devoted himself only to
discussing philosophy, which he thought to be the most important art and occupation. Some alleged that
Socrates was paid by his students, and that he was even running a school of sophistry with a friend of his.
Plato, however, wrote that Socrates never accepted money for teaching (unlike the Sophists). Socrates did
not charge for his teaching, or claim to be wise. He would engage men in philosophical conversations
about the nature of knowledge, justice, virtue, etc.

Several of Plato's Dialogues describe debates about the nature and origin of language. *Cratylus*
(Κρατυλος) is the name of a dialogue by Plato, written in approx. 360 BC. In the dialogue, Socrates is
asked by two men, Cratylus and Hermogenes, to tell them whether names are "conventional" or "natural",
that is, whether language is a system of arbitrary signs or whether words have an intrinsic relation to the
things they signify. In doing this, *Cratylus* became one of the earliest philosophical texts of the Classical
Greek period to deal with matters of etymology and linguistics.

When discussing how a word would relate to its subject, he compares the original creation of a word to the
work of an artist. An artist uses colour to express the essence of his subject in a painting. In much the same
way, the creator of words uses letters containing certain sounds to express the essence of a word's subject.
There is a letter that is best for soft things, one for liquid things, and so on. He comments, "This would be
the most perfect state of language."

The counter argument is that names have come about due to custom and convention. They do not express
the essence of their subject, and so they can be swapped with something unrelated if those who use the
word were to agree upon it.

The line between the two perspectives is often blurred. During more than half of the dialogue, Socrates
makes guesses at Hermogenes' request as to where names and words have come from. These include the
names of the Olympian gods, personified deities, and many words that describe abstract concepts. Many of
the words which Socrates uses as examples may have come from an idea originally linked to the name, but
have changed over time. Those of which he cannot find a link, he often assumes have come from foreign
origins or have changed so much as to lose all resemblance to the original word. He states, **"names have
been so twisted in all manner of ways, that I should not be surprised if the old language when
compared with that of now in use would appear to us to be a barbarous tongue."**
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cratylus_(dialogue)

Socrates lived during the time of the transition from the height of the Athenian Empire to its decline after
its defeat by Sparta and its allies in the Peloponnesian War. At a time when Athens was seeking to stabilize
and recover from its humiliating defeat, the Athenian public court was induced by three leading public
figures to try Socrates for impiety and for corrupting the youth of Athens. The Greeks at that time thought
of gods and goddesses were protectors of particular cities. Athens, for instance, is named after its
protecting goddess Athena. The defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War was interpreted as Athena
judging the city for not being pious. Socrates was called "Gadfly" because he questioned everything

(including the gods). He was eventually blamed for the defeat in the war (the last thing Athens needed was more punishment from Athena for one man inciting its citizens to question her or the other gods).

Powerful men in Athens were suspicious of Socrates' claim to have a ***daimonion***, an inner voice that warned him against mistakes but never told him what to do or coerced him into following it. He had claimed that his ***daimon*** was more accurate than any of the forms of divination[1] practiced at the time. This ***daemonion*** (Socrates claimed) always guided his actions. Three of most prominent Athenians accused Socrates of attempting to introduce new deities. It was one of the charges he faced at his infamous trial. Socrates was totally serious about his ***daemonion***, inner voice or force. They say, few people have this strong inner voice that guides them through life, like an 'autopilot,' and that it usually manifests itself early in life. Socrates himself, in his Apology, states:

> ***"This sign I have had ever since I was a child. The sign is a voice which comes to me and always forbids me to do something which I am going to do, but never commands me to do anything..."***

Socrates was known as the "gadfly" of Athens, tormenting all the rich but lazy citizens who found his critical thinking offensive. The legend goes that a friend of Socrates had asked the oracle at Delphi if anyone was wiser than Socrates; the Oracle responded negatively. Socrates interpreted this as a riddle, and set out to find men who were wiser than he was. He questioned the men of Athens about their knowledge of good, beauty, and virtue. Finding that they knew nothing and yet believed themselves to know much, Socrates came to the conclusion that he was wise only in so far as **he *knew* that he knew nothing**. Socrates' superior intellect made the prominent Athenians he publicly questioned look foolish, so they turned against him and accused him of 'impiety' and 'corrupting the youth." According to Plato, Socrates was also accused at his trial of being a Sophist. Despite Socrates' brilliant and moving defence speech, he was found guilty, and sentenced to death by drinking a cup of hemlock.

The Socratic Method
Perhaps his most important contribution to Western thought is Socrates' dialectic method of inquiry, known as the Socratic Method, which he largely applied to the examination of key moral concepts such as the Good and Justice, concepts used constantly without any real definition. It was first described by Plato in the *Socratic Dialogues*. In this method, a series of questions are posed to help a person or group to determine their underlying beliefs and the extent of their knowledge. The Socratic method is a *negative* method of hypothesis elimination, in that better hypotheses are found by steadily identifying and eliminating those which lead to contradictions. It was designed to force one to examine one's own beliefs and the validity of such beliefs. In fact, Socrates once said, "I know you won't believe me, but the highest form of Human Excellence is to question oneself and others"

Socrates seems to have often stated that he "knew only that he knew nothing." Socrates may have believed that wrongdoing was a consequence of ignorance, that those who did wrong knew no better. The one thing Socrates consistently claimed to have knowledge of was "the art of love" which he connected with the concept of "the love of wisdom", i.e., philosophy. He never actually claimed to be wise, only to understand the path that a lover of wisdom must take in pursuing it.
Socrates matched those who were unsuited for philosophy with Sophists. For his part as a philosophical interlocutor, he led his respondent to a clearer conception of wisdom, although he claimed that he was not himself a teacher. His role, he claimed, was that of a ***midwife***, explaining that he was himself barren of theories, but that he knew how to bring the theories of others to birth and determine whether they are

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[1] ***Divination***: 1. the practice of attempting to foretell future events or discover hidden knowledge by occult or supernatural means; 2. augury; prophecy: The divination of the high priest was fulfilled. 3. perception by intuition; instinctive foresight.

worthy or mere "wind eggs." He pointed out that midwives are barren due to age, and women who have never given birth are unable to become midwives; a truly barren woman would have no experience or knowledge of birth and would be unable to separate the worthy infants from those that should be left on the hillside to be exposed. To judge this, the midwife must have experience and knowledge of what she is judging.

We will learn more about Socrates and some of the sophists through reading excerpts of Plato's dialogues later this week.

References

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The Sophists on Correct Speech
Michael Gagarin (University of Texas)

The issue of "correctness," in language (or, put differently, the status of established norms of usage) has been a concern of all who think about language down to the present day. The first people to raise this issue were the sophists. … Protagoras, Prodicus and Antiphon used concepts of "correctness" (*orthos, orthotês*) to mediate between an absolute standard corresponding to some sort of natural essence of things (***physis***) -- which is sometimes opposed to established practice (***nomos***) -- and a more relativistic approach which acknowledges that the correctness of any *logos* can only be determined by human beings and is thus negotiable.

http://www.camws.org/meeting/2004/abstracts2004/gagarin.html

Kata Ton Orthotaton Logon: Correct Argument in the Sophists and Early Orators
Michael Gagarin

Like many of you, I'm sure, in my teaching I sometimes confront new standards of language use among my students. I was taught grammar as a matter of right and wrong. "Between you and me" was right; "between you and I" was simply wrong. Such rules, I understood, were absolute and non-negotiable. We all know, of course, that the rules change over time, and that the authority of grammatical rules waxes and wanes. Today in the US, the attitudes seem to be set by our President, whose ignorance of and lack of concern for correct speech actually appeals to a substantial segment of the population. And increasingly my students question how I can insist that a certain usage of theirs is wrong. I find myself beginning to feel sympathy for traditionalists in Greece who reacted with outrage at the questioning of common rules and assumptions about language by the new intellectuals in the second half of the fifth-century. Many who listened to the Older Sophists must have accepted without question, and probably without thinking, that certain ways of speaking were simply right, and others wrong. The sophists were out to change that. As in so many other areas, the sophists were the first to offer an explicit challenge to traditional rules about *logos*. I want to look carefully at this challenge, and in particular, I want to see why they fastened on a standard of *orthotês*, or correctness, how they used that standard, and how others reacted to it. As we shall see, the standard of correctness sometimes found itself in competition … with a standard of truth, though the two could coexist in the orators. Let me begin, then, by considering the use of *orthos* among the sophists.

The various uses of *orthos* are well illustrated in a well-known scene in Plato's *Protagoras*. After an intermission midway through the dialogue, Protagoras resumes the discussion by questioning Socrates about poetry. He prefaces his questions by stating,
"I think the greatest part of education for a man is to be clever about poems; by that I mean he is able to grasp which of a poet's lines are composed correctly (*orthôs*), and which are not, he knows how to distinguish them, and he can give a reason when questioned" (338e7-339a1).
Protagoras then quotes the opening of a poem of Simonides and asks whether Socrates thinks it was composed "well and correctly" (*kalôs kai orthôs*). "Very well and correctly," answers Socrates. But Protagoras then cites lines from later in the poem which appear to contradict the earlier lines and concludes that either the opening of the poem or the later stanza must be incorrect (*ouk orthôs*). In desperation, Socrates asks Prodicus to find a correction (*epanorthôma*) using his special *mousikê* or talent with language. Prodicus' *mouskiê technê* is, of course, his ability to distinguish correctly between near synonyms. Moreover, when Prodicus' correction turns out to produce a worse error than the one that needed correcting in the first place, Socrates, in an obvious parody of Prodicus' special expertise, proposes that Simonides is criticizing Pittacus for distinguishing the meanings of words incorrectly (*ouk orthôs*, 341c). When this line of argument also fails, Socrates gives his final interpretation, which shows, among other things, that the word "truly" is in its correct place in the sentence.

This discussion illustrates some of the many ways in which the new intellectuals had begun to use the term *orthos* and its compounds in connection with language. Of course, Plato may be misrepresenting the arguments of Protagoras or Prodicus or Socrates, but the general historical accuracy of the arguments and positions represented in the scene is supported by other evidence that both Protagoras and Prodicus were interested in correct speech. Plato tells us elsewhere (*Crat.* 384b, *Euthyd.* 277e), that Prodicus taught the correct use of words (*onomatôn orthotês*), and the speech that Plato puts in his mouth earlier in *Protagoras* 337a-c, distinguishing four pairs of close synonyms, would hardly have a point if the historical Prodicus had not done something of the sort.

Protagoras' interest in correct speech is also well attested elsewhere in Plato, for instance in *Cratylus* 391c where his interests are said to have included *orthotês* [i.e. *tôn onomatôn*] and in *Phaedrus* 267c where he is said to have written on *orthoepeia*. We also have a report in Plutarch (*Pericles* 36.3), citing the fifth-century "historian" Stesimbrotus, that "When an athlete unintentionally struck Epitimus the Pharsalian with a javelin and killed him, Protagoras spent an entire day with Pericles puzzling over whether one should believe that the javelin or the javelin-thrower or those who arranged the contest were more to blame, according to the most correct account (*kata ton orthotaton logon*)." Interestingly, Antiphon treats what is apparently the same case in his Second Tetralogy. I'll come back to Antiphon later, but first I want to look more closely at the sophists' use of *orthos*: Why did Protagoras and Prodicus use this word to describe correct speech? And what does their use of the term reveal about their views on language and linguistic orthodoxy?

First, some background. From Homer on, *orthos* is the most common adjective for "straight." The adverb *ithy* is sometimes used in the sense of "straight forward, straight ahead," but if a person stands straight or a line or a path is straight, the word is *orthos*. By the fifth century, however, metaphorical uses of *orthos* have begun to predominate. For Pindar, a messenger can be *orthos* -- "accurate" or "true" (*O.* 6.90); surgery can make a man's body *orthos*, or "sound" (*P.* 3.53); and a mind (*noos*) can be *orthos*, or "upright" (*P.* 10.68). Metaphorical uses are especially common in tragedy and Herodotus. The latter speaks of the Delphians being *orthos* ("correct") in their ascription of a vase to Theodorus of Samos (1.51) and Croesus being *ouk orthos* ("wrong") in blaming Apollo (1.91). The dative *orthôi logôi* means "in truth" -- as when Demaratus asks his mother, "Who is my father *orthôi logôi*?" -- that is, "tell me straight who my father is" (6.68). In this sense, an *orthos logos* is a statement of fact that is correct, true, or accurate, and the standard of correctness or accuracy is for the most part objective. Herodotus implies that Demaratus' mother knows

as a matter of objective fact who his father is. Note, however, that there is already a tendency here for *orthos* to refer to some kind of speech act -- a message, an ascription, blame, or information.

There is one passage in Herodotus where we can see even broader possibilities for expanding the meaning of *orthos*. This comes in the story of Deioces, the first king of the Medes. Before becoming king, Deioces devoted himself to justice (*dikaiosynê*) and gained a reputation as the best settler of disputes for the villagers in his area. He did this by judging *kata ton orthon* -- correctly, rightly, justly. From everything we know about Greek judicial procedure, it is clear that Deioces' superiority did not lie primarily in his ability to discern or state the true facts of a case or to quote laws accurately; rather, his talent lay in finding a fair or just resolution to a dispute, one that was perceived to be fair by the community. *Kata ton orthos* must then refer to Deioces' judgment -- his decisions were just or fair in that they were generally accepted or recognized as fair by the disputants and the rest of the community.
Now, there is a precedent for this use in the metaphorical use of *ithys* -- "straight-forward" in epic. The main example comes in the trial scene on the shield of Achilles in *Iliad* 18. Here two litigants plead before a group of elders and an award is given to the elder who "speaks his judgment most straightforwardly, most correctly" (*dikên ithyntata eipoi*, 18.508). Here too, just as with Deioces' judging *kata ton orthon*, settling a dispute *ithyntata* is a matter of fairness or correct judgment, not simply factual truth. In these legal contexts, both *orthos* and *ithys* designate a negotiable and problematic standard of justice that is to some extent subjectively determined by the community. At the same time, both terms imply that this standard is also in some sense an objective standard of straightness or correctness.

Another indication that this standard of correctness must have an element of subjectivity is the fact that the Greeks spoke of some judgments as most correct (*ithyntata*, *orthotatos*). This suggests that <u>in any given situation, a correct verdict was a relative concept: one verdict could be more correct than another, or could even be the most correct</u>. Thus, in a legal context, correctness is a more complex standard than it is, say, in determining who is truly Demaratus' father. We see then, that by the time of the sophists, *orthos* had already developed a broad range of meaning, from objective accuracy to subjective good judgment. And it was this broad range (I believe) that made the term particularly appealing to the sophists, and particularly to Protagoras.

It's not clear which sophist first applied the term to a linguistic matter, but my guess is that it was **Prodicus**. Even though he was a generation younger than Protagoras, linguistic concerns seem to play a larger role in Prodicus' work, and he seems to have adhered closely to an objective sense of *orthos*. In ***On the Correctness of Names*** he distinguished between near synonyms, and the examples of this skill reported by Plato's (*Protagoras* 337a-c) appear reasonably objective: <u>impartially</u> does differ from <u>equally</u>, <u>debating</u> from <u>quarreling</u>, <u>esteem</u> from <u>praise</u>, and <u>enjoyment</u> from <u>pleasure</u> in the ways Prodicus explains, and his judgment on these matters seems essentially objective. To be sure, Socrates later (341c) leads Prodicus to conclude that difficult (*chalepon*) means bad (*kakon*), which is patently absurd, but when challenged, Socrates quickly rescinds his proposal, calling it a joke. In the end, this false definition only reinforces the view that Prodicus' definitions accord with what "all of us know," as Protagoras puts it (341d). Thus, Prodicus' judgments were essentially objective, and the broader, problematic uses of *orthos* were the work of Protagoras.

We do not know the contents of Protagoras' work on **Correct Speech** (***Orthoepeia***), but it probably included discussion of the **proper gender of nouns**, which is parodied in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, and of the **proper use of moods**. Protagoras developed his views on these subjects through criticism of Homer. According to Aristotle (*Soph. Elench.* 173b), he said that "wrath" (*mênis* -- the first word of the *Iliad*) was masculine and that it was wrong to use a feminine adjective, *oulomenên*, to modify it, as Homer does in line 2 of the poem. According to Aristotle (*Poetics* 19), Protagoras also criticized Homer because in the same sentence he gives a command to the Muse ("Sing, Muse") when he thinks he is uttering a prayer. If,

as is likely, Protagoras used *orthos* in criticizing Homeric usage, he probably wanted to suggest that grammatical issues like these are objective, factual matters. He was undoubtedly aware, however, that his assertions about correctness and incorrectness were not only not objective, but would provoke strong objections from many (if not most) in his audience. This raises the question how seriously he took these assertions about Homer, and what his purpose was in making them.

We find a broader sense of *orthos*, though still grounded in objectivity, when Protagoras criticizes Simonides' poem by arguing that two stanzas are contradictory, and therefore one of them must be incorrect. Objectively, a poet cannot truly make contradictory assertions. But since the points that are judged to be contradictory are concerned with human virtue and its attainment, the discussion also quickly moves to broader, moral issues that go beyond the specific question of logical contradiction. Using *orthos* for these issues, too, suggests that standards of moral judgment, which would normally be considered subjective, are in some sense reducible to objective rules of logic.

The broadest use of *orthos* we find in Protagoras is the report that he and Pericles spent a day arguing about who was responsible for the accidental death of someone hit by a javelin, "according to the most correct account" (*kata ton orthotaton logon*). This expression, used here in a quasi-judicial context, recalls Herodotus' *kata ton orthon* and Homer's *dikên ithyntata*. As I noted in those two examples, finding the straightest account or judgment in a legal situation involves negotiating issues of fairness and good judgment, not the mere ascertainment of factual truth, though the word "straight," whether *ithys* or *orthos*, also suggests that a straight judgment is in some sense objectively correct. So when Protagoras used the expression *kata ton orthotaton logon* in this context, he, too, probably intended to suggest that in this case matters of fairness or justice could be correctly (or more correctly) decided by some objective standard. The story also suggests that a straighter, more correct judgment is one that is reached through a process of discussion or debate. And we actually have an example of just such a debate on this same issue in the Second Tetralogy composed by another contemporary sophist, **Antiphon**.

Antiphon's Second Tetralogy consists of four speeches, two on each side. The prosecution accuses the thrower of the javelin of what we might call negligible homicide, but the defense blames the victim for causing his own death through negligence. Both litigants appeal to a standard of truth (*alêtheia*), not straightness or correctness. The defense insists that although the accused "did throw [the javelin], he did not kill anyone according to the truth of what he did" … . The plaintiff responds by asserting that the facts are clear, and asking the jurors not "to think that the truth of what was done is really false" … . Interestingly, in its final speech, the defense claims that this apparently **objective "truth** of what was done" **can only be discovered through words**, *logoi*. And he adds that the jurors, "must examine the facts (*ta prachthenta*) impartially (*isôs*), for their truth is only discernible from what has been said" (3.4.1-2). Antiphon thus establishes truth rather than correctness as the standard of judgment in this case, but like Protagoras' correctness, Antiphon's truth is also problematic: though both sides try to make it appear objective, here, too, truth can only be determined through a process of verbal negotiation, here involving opposed *logoi*.

Thus, Antiphon argues for "the truth of what was done" as the standard of judgment, as distinct from Protagoras' standard of correct argument. The two approaches are only slightly divergent, but the difference is significant. In late-fifth-century texts, ***orthos*** is almost always used of the realm of ***logos*** …, to include not just speech and argument, but thoughts, beliefs, decisions, and the like. ***Alêthês***, on the other hand, is generally used of facts, actions, events -- the realm of ***erga*** or ***pragmata***. One could talk of speaking correctly or speaking the truth, *t'alêthes*, but the former directs the listener's attention to the speech or argument itself -- is he speaking correctly? -- whereas the latter directs it to the content of the speech -- is what is being said true?

To illustrate the difference, consider the sentence in the same defendant's speech that follows the last statement I just quoted about the truth only being discernible from what has been said. He continues, "for my part, if I have said anything false (*pseudos*) about anything, I agree that whatever I have said correctly (*orthôs*) can also be discredited as unfair; but if I have spoken the truth (*alêthê*) but with subtlety (*lepta*) and precision (*akribê*), then it is only fair that any hostility that results should be directed not at me, the speaker, but at him (i.e. the boy) who acted" (3.4.2). Now, Antiphon, you may recall, was suspect among the Athenians for his *deinotês*, and his defendant's case here would certainly be seen as confirming this cleverness. From the beginning, therefore, the defendant takes pains to play down his skill in argument. He apologizes ahead of time for the subtlety of his case. Clearly, he wants to turn attention away from his speaking ability, and if he claimed that his *logos* was correct (*orthos*), this would draw attention to the skill with which he constructed his case.

Protagoras, on the other hand, clearly did want to draw attention to the construction of arguments. He taught how to argue different sides of a case and especially how to make **"a weaker *logos* stronger."** When several *logoi* could be constructed for a case, one could then try to decide which was *orthotatos*. And the skill in speaking he promoted became perhaps the notorious aspect to the sophists' teaching. In Plato's *Protagoras*, the young Hippocrates, when pressed to say what he thought Protagoras, as a sophist, would teach him, answered, "the science of making a person clever at speaking" (312d). Thus, *orthos*, as a standard of skillful speech, became closely associated with the new intellectualism of the sophists, an association that the orators understandably wished to avoid.

That Protagoras developed a standard of correctness, not truth, is particularly interesting in light of the fact that like Antiphon, he also wrote a work entitled ***Truth***, the opening sentence of which was his famous assertion that **"man is the measure (*metron*) of all things."** We will never know the precise meaning of this claim, or how Protagoras advised that things be measured, but the fact that there was a measure that could somehow be applied to things suggests that Protagoras envisaged a quasi-objective standard of truth, perhaps along the lines of the hedonistic calculus that Socrates develops in the last part of *Protagoras*. And the idea that things could be quantified and measured, and that *logos* could similarly be judged correct (as well as weak or strong) is reflected in the teachings offered to Strepsiades when he enters Socrates' *phrontistêrion* in the *Clouds*.

The figure of Socrates in the *Clouds* certainly has some attributes of the historical Socrates, but he also represents an amalgam of sophistic ideas and personal characteristics. In particular, the influence of Protagoras is evident throughout. The *phrontistêrion* teaches, among other things, how to measure very precisely -- the length of a flea's jump is one example -- and the correct genders of nouns, such as the nouns for rooster and hen. If we make allowance for the element of parody, the play clearly implies that the sophists' teachings emphasized objective and scientific measurement. Thus, Aristophanes is tapping into the popular conception of sophistic teaching, and especially Protagorean teaching, as a scientific measurement whose results (as he parodies them) range from trivial to absurd. And straightness or correctness was part of this public perception of sophistic teaching. The word *orthos* occurs eight times in the play, five times spoken by Socrates while he is teaching Strepsiades (228, 251, 659, 679, 742); once by the chorus of Clouds speaking to the audience in the *parabasis* (616), once by Pheidippides showing off his new learning (1186), and once by Strepsiades, ironically thanking Hermes of correct advice as he proceeds to burn down the *phrontistêrion*. Thus, *orthos* is always connected with the new learning. By contrast, *alêthês* is used five times, four times by Strepsiades when he is outside the context of the Thinking School, and once by the Chorus when they pledge to the audience that they will tell the truth at the beginning of the *parabasis*.

This connection with the new learning would explain why Antiphon is wary of *orthos* language. Not that he avoids it entirely. In fact, in the Tetralogies *orthos* is slightly more common than *alêthês* (15

occurrences versus 13). These works contain a good bit of what I have called metadiscourse -- discussion of the nature and validity of various arguments and of the verdict, which is commonly characterized as correct or not. But in Antiphon's three court speeches there are only 21 occurrences of *orthos* (which is proportionally fewer than in the much shorter Tetralogies), and a large majority of these come at the beginning and end of the speeches. In Antiphon 5, for example, *orthos* occurs twelve times -- twice in the prologue (1-7), six times in the epilogue (85-96) and only four times in the body of the speech. By comparison, *alêthês* occurs thirty-five times in this speech, mostly in the central arguments, and is common in Antiphon 1 and 6 too. Finally, in all the works, *orthos* most often qualifies speech, sometimes the verdict and occasionally a plan or a law. But twice it is used of acting correctly (*orthôs prattein*), both times when correct action is being contrasted with correct speech (5.5, 5.75). The pattern in Andocides is similar. *Orthos* occurs seven times in the three genuine speeches, always in the realm of *logos*, whereas *alêthês* occurs nineteen times, all but one of them in his speech *On the Mysteries*. In both orators, moreover, and in other texts of the period, to assert that an argument is correct normally implies that its content is true, and vice versa. But the connotations of the two standards remained different. The orators had to be sensitive to these, and so they used *orthos* only sparingly.

Protagoras, on the other hand, made *orthotês* the primary standard for many different areas of inquiry concerning *logos*. We have already seen his use of *orthos* in discussions of gender and syntax, poetic criticism, and legal argumentation. It is also quite possible that he contributed to (or perhaps even originated) the fifth-century debate about the origin of names -- whether words have a natural origin or a conventional origin -- and that *orthotês* had a place in this discussion too. As the debate is presented in Plato's *Cratylus*, it clearly has Protagorean roots, since Hermogenes' position that names are conventional contains clear echoes of Protagoras and is explicitly connected with Protagoras' man-measure declaration. This is not to say that Protagoras ever argued that "whatever each person says is the name of something, for him, that is its name," as Plato reports Hermogenes saying in *Cratylus* 385d (a clear echo of Protagoras), but he may perhaps have proposed something along the lines that the meanings of words have their origin in the community that uses them and whatever meaning a community gives to a word is that word's correct meaning.

But the most reliable sources for Protagoras' work in these areas suggest that he was best known for making highly provocative observations, aimed at stimulating others to question traditional views. Assertions such as that Homer made grammatical mistakes, that Simonides contradicted himself, or that the javelin itself could have been responsible for someone's accidental death, may have been in large part heuristic, intended to lead to further thinking about correctness in these and related areas. It is possible, therefore, that Protagoras did not develop his own views on any of these matters, and that whatever he said about the origin of names took the form of provocative observations, for example that different people use different words for the same thing or the same word for different things, to which he may have added comments on correctness, for example that Homer was wrong to call something X because its true name is Y.

Barring the discovery of Protagoras' actual works, we will never be able to ascertain whether he developed positive views on correct *logos*, but we can be quite certain that he raised the question of correctness in these areas, and was the first to discuss explicitly the issue of rules or standards in language. And by choosing *orthos* as the primary descriptive for correct *logos*, and by exploiting the broad range of objective and subjective meanings of this word, he established a basis for the scientific study of both grammar and rhetoric. For by posing questions about the correct rules of argument in the same terms as he questioned the correct rules of gender, Protagoras suggested that both areas were subjects for similar intellectual discussion and scientific study. In raising these issues, Protagoras directed his audience's attention not to what is really the case, but rather to what is correctly said or thought to be the case. This shift allowed him to adopt a subjective position but give it the appearance of objectivity that was probably very effective in stimulating debate. The orators, not surprisingly, were wary of relying on this slippery notion of correctness and put greater emphasis on truth as the standard of judging the facts of the case.