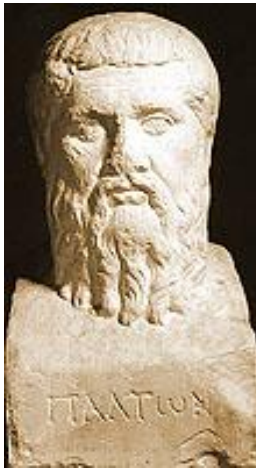


427 BCE- Gorgias' visit to Athens

Figure 1: Plato Head on Herm.
(Image from:
<http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/XDB/ASP/recordDetails.asp?recordCount=1&start=0>)



According to some ancient sources, Gorgias was the 'father' of the Sophist movement (Enos, 1992, p.1), and others like Plato present him as a rhetorician (Plat, 449a). His presence within the works themselves demonstrates that Gorgias held a great deal of influence and certainly made an impact. He was the century's most celebrated rhetorician and his visit to Athens made him a very prominent person in the development of the sophistic Athenian movement (Taylor, 2005). Rhetoric was a speech-based artform and Gorgias was considered a master of the subject (Plat, 451a). A fact further evidenced in Plato's representation of Gorgias' visit within his Socratic Dialogue (Szlezák, 2006; Plat, 447b).

However, the evidence for his visit to Athens is scattered and not enough to really delve into the accuracy of Plato's representation. (Enos, 1992, p.1). But there were clearly both political and intellectual reasons for Gorgias' trip to Athens (Enos, 1992, p.1). For example, one of Gorgias' reasons for coming to Athens was to plead for aid against Syracuse (Narcy, 2006). Furthermore, his arrival to Athens in 427 BCE was as one of an Ambassador (Woodruff, 1999, p.351). Thusly indicating that he was of an older age during this period (Narcy, 2006).

Gorgias was a Greek Sophist from Leontini (Woodruff, 1999, p.351). But he was not only an important figure as a thinker, he was too as a stylist within the movement (Russell, 2012). In fact, within the history of the art of rhetoric, 427 BCE is traditionally seen as a landmark year due to Gorgias' visit and his subsequent influence with the art (Russell, 2012). This is likely because Gorgias was a very influential figure- so much so that at one point making a speech was known as 'gorgianizing' (Narcy, 2006).

His style of oratory was different to the Athenians, and as such when he came, he introduced them to Sicilian techniques (Russell, 2012). Due to his prowess in the art form, Gorgias and anyone who learnt such was seen as a master of persuasion, something which could be seen in both a positive and negative light (Plat, 452e). This made him stand out and as such, made his visit one which was to be remembered as these techniques persisted in Athens even after his departure, his style being one which was commonly imitated (Woodruff, 1999, p.351).



Figure 2: Athens Acropolis. (Image from:
<http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/record/12CC01D4-A37F-4B2B-8C1E-FA9FDF9ED171>)

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