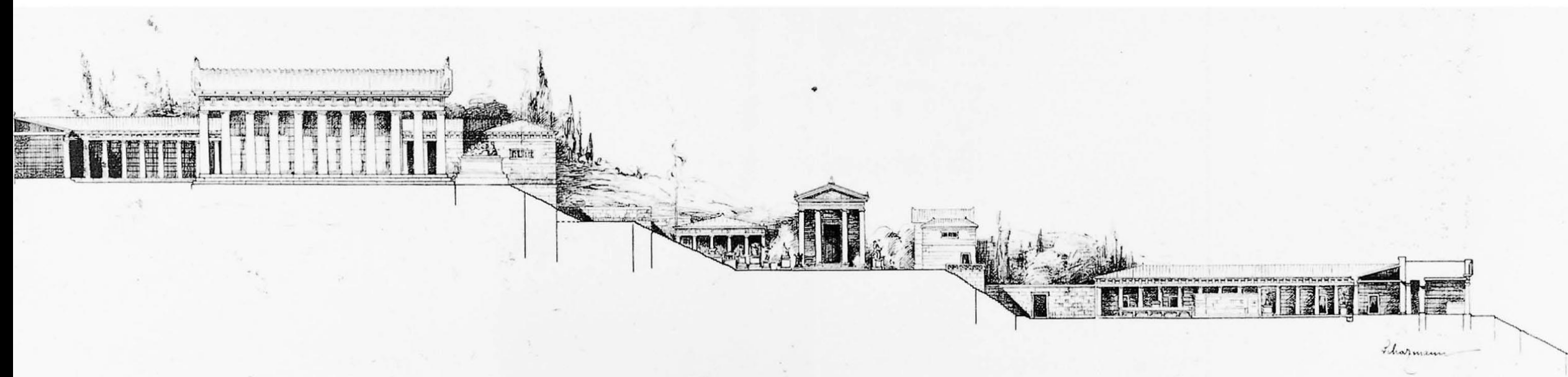
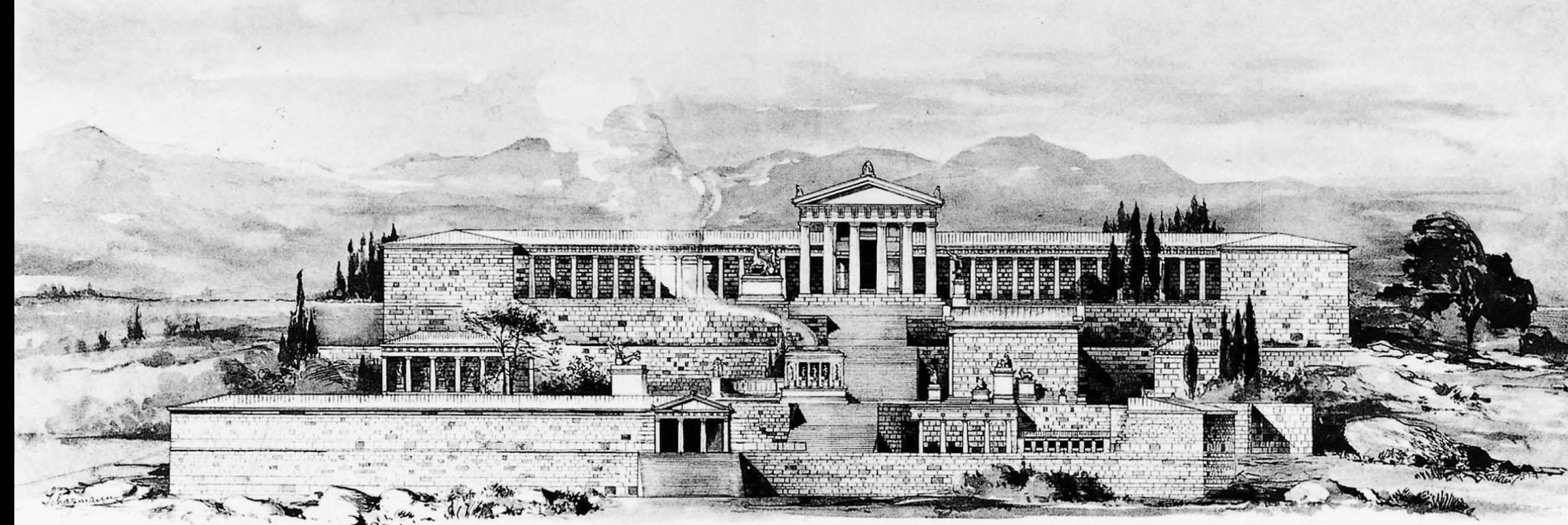


# The Art of Persuasion: Healers, Presocratics, Sophists

# Asklepios







# Healing Inscription

“Ambrosia from Athens, blind of one eye. She came as a suppliant to the god [i.e., Asklepios]. Going around the shrine she mocked some of the cures as incredible and impossible, [as] if the lame and blind could become whole by having a dream. **But when she slept in the shrine the god, standing over her, seemed to say that he would cure her, but that he would require her to donate to the temple a silver pig as a memorial of her unbelief.** Saying this, he cut open her diseased eye and poured in a drug. When day came she went away cured.” (*Inscriptiones Graecae*, IV<sup>2</sup> 1.121, trans. Hamilton, adapted).

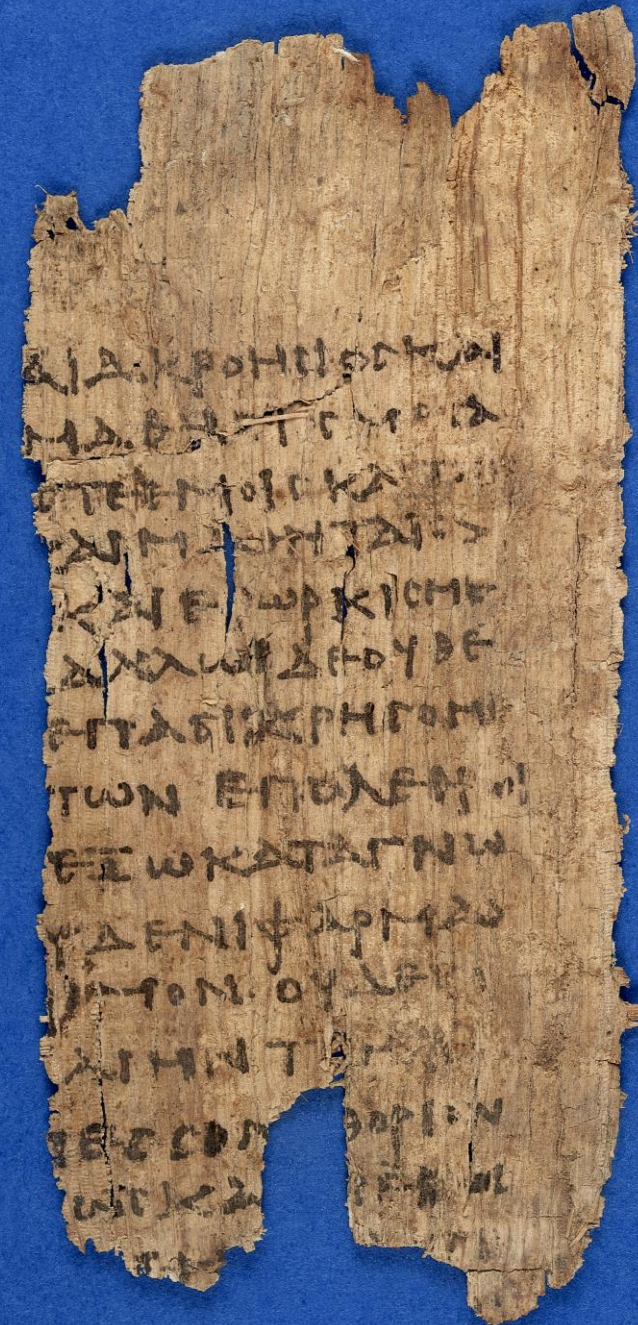
# Aelios Aristeides (2<sup>nd</sup> C CE) on Experience with Asklepios

“When I came out of the bath, all my skin shone and my body was light everywhere. And there was much shouting from those present, shouting that much-hymned phrase, ‘Great is Asklepios!’ And who could declare what came next? For the whole rest of the day and the night until bed I maintained my condition after the bath, **and neither did I feel that my body was drier or wetter; nor did any of the warmth leave, nor was any added, nor was the warmth the kind that comes from human contrivance, but it was a continuous [source of] warmth, bringing an even power (*dynamis*) through my whole body and that period of time.** And my mind was similar ... There was an indescribable contentment (*arrhetos euthumia*), making everything secondary to the present moment, **so that I seemed, as I looked at other things, not to see them. Wholly, I was with the god** (*pas ên pros tôi theôi*).” (Sacred Logos, 2.22-23, trans. Brod, adapted)



# Hippokrates of Kos

“I swear by Apollo the healer,  
Asklepios, Hygieia, and  
Panacia, and I take to witness  
all the gods, all the goddesses,  
to keep according to my ability  
and my judgment the  
following oath and agreement  
...”



# Medical Science

*Melancholy, phlegmatic, sanguine, choleric*

“When this person returns to her right mind, women give to Artemis various offerings, especially the most valuable of women’s robes, following the orders of oracles, **but they are deceived. The fact is that the disorder is cured when nothing impedes the downward flow of blood.**”  
(Hippokrates, *On Virgins*, 8.466 trans. Lefkowitz and Fant)





# Presocratics

Xenophanes, b. 570 BCE in Colophon (Ionia)

“Mortals believe that gods are begotten  
And have clothing, voice, and body like their own.  
... But if oxen and horses and lions had hands  
And so could draw and make works of art like men,  
Horses would draw pictures of gods like horses,  
And oxen like oxen, and they would make their bodies  
In accordance with the form they themselves  
severally possess” (Fr. 14-15 D-K)



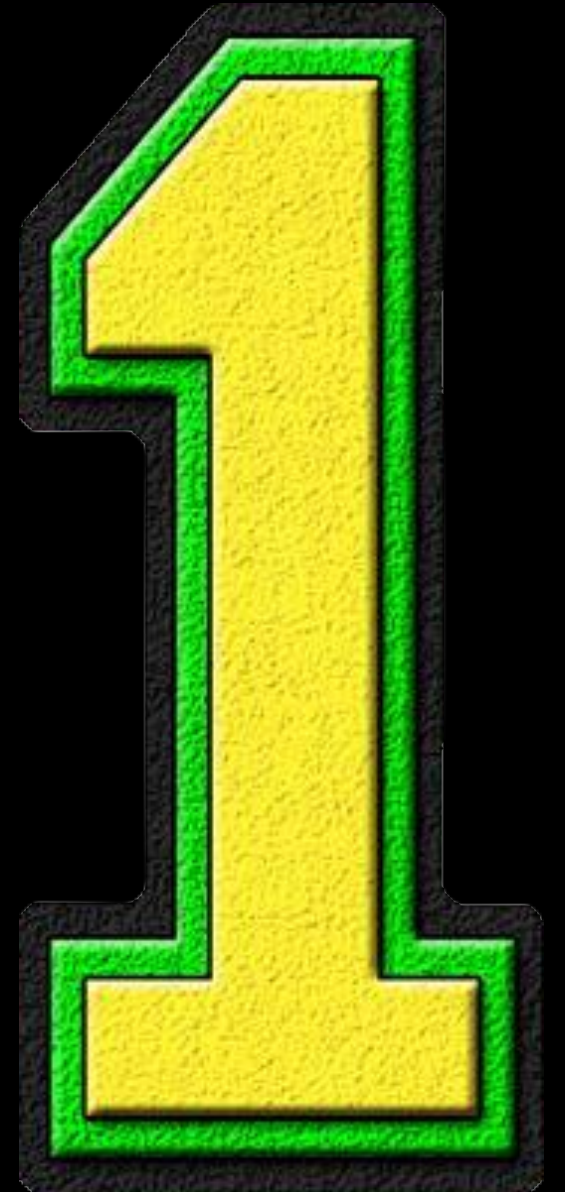


# Monism? Xenophanes (continued)

“There is one god, greatest among  
gods and human beings,  
Not at all like mortals in form nor yet  
in mind.

All of him sees, all of him thinks, all  
of him hears.”

(frr. 23-24 D-K)



# Thales, Heraclitus, Anaximander

- Origins and Elements:  
Water? Fire? Earth? Air?
- *To apeiron*
- Humans - Fish
- *atoma*
- Heraclitus: “You cannot step into the same river twice.” (fr. 91+12)
- Logos: “word, order, meaning”



# Rationalizing Belief?

“... when the laws prevented men from open deeds of violence, but they continued to commit them in secret, I believe that a man of shrewd and subtle mind invented for humans the fear of the gods, so that there might be something to frighten the wicked even if they acted, spoke, or thought in secret ... So, I think, did someone persuade people to believe that there exists a race of gods.”

(fragmentary play called *Sisyphos* = Diels-Kranz 88 B25, trans. Guthrie, adapted)



# Sophists

- *Sophos* → “wise”
- *Sophistês* → “a wise man” → “wise guy”
- Abbie Hoffman (1936-89 CE):
  - “An expert is a fast-talking guy from out of town.”
- Sophistry, sophistic
- **Two Important Facts about Sophists:**
  - Not part of one philosophical “school”
  - Took a fee for their services

# “Useful Majors”?

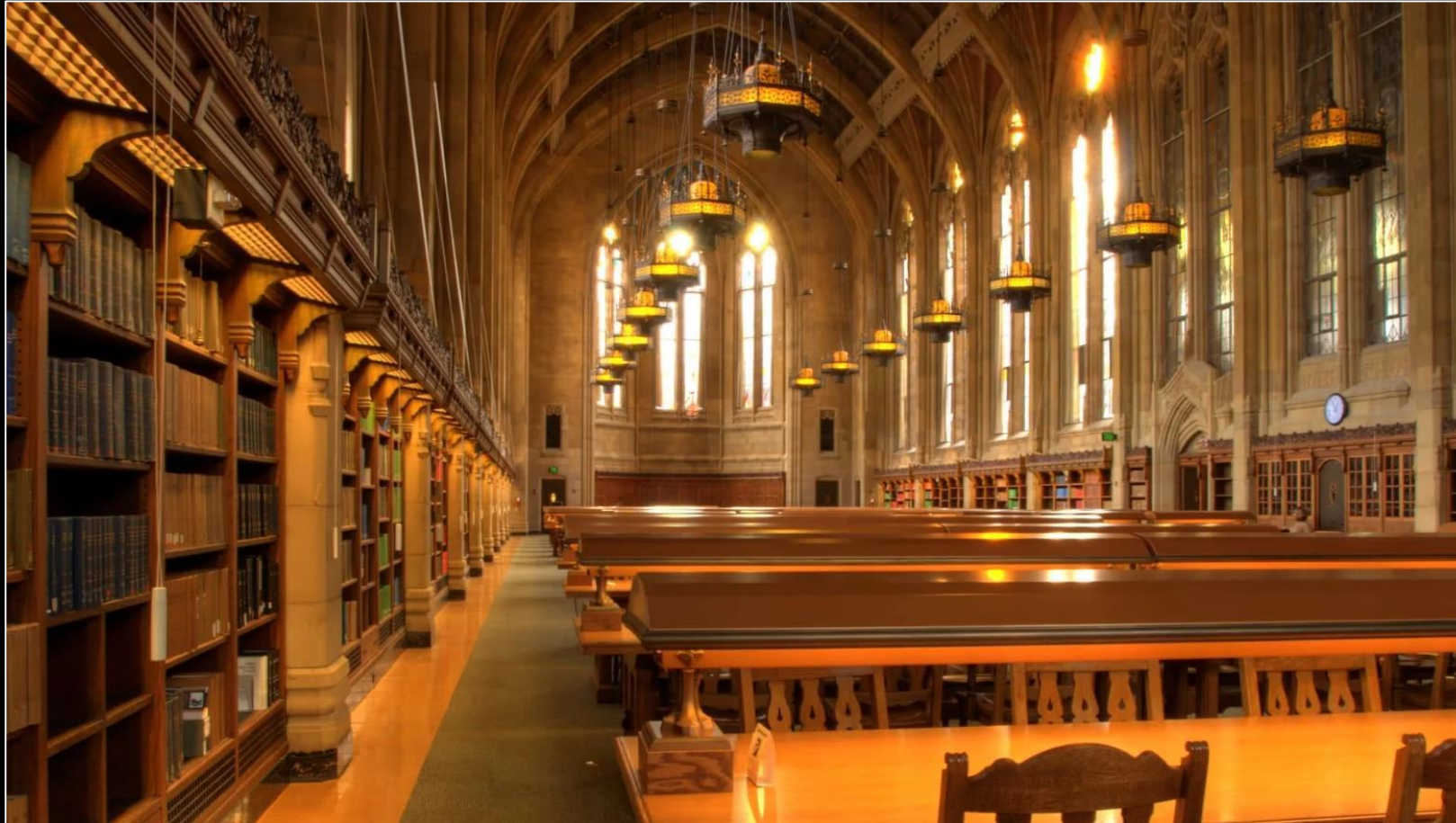
- Pupils willing to pay high fees because sophists’ “courses” were considered pathways to success
- Assembly and law courts → Persuasiveness
- Linguistics, rhetoric, geometry, music theory, and *eristics*
- *Eristics* (debate): “Black is white,  $1+1 = 3$ , the sun is actually the moon, the weaker argument is the stronger,” etc.
- Protagoras (490-420 BCE) → “Man is the measure of all things.”
- “As to the gods, I do not know whether they exist or not.”

# Sophists were important in part because there were no lawyers

- Litigants brought their own cases
- Represented themselves
- Might have delivered speech written by a *logographos*
- But people also wrote their own and delivered them
- Content and oratorical ability may be shaped by training from a sophist



# Antiphon (480-411 BCE), *The Tetralogies*



# Smart ≠ Wise?

*Tiresias (addressing Pentheus):*

“Your tongue is fluent and you sound so smart,  
But there is no true wisdom in your words.”

(268-9)

Pentheus: You mean you saw this “god”? What was he like?

D: It's not for me to say. He chose his look.

P: Again, you side-stepped with an empty phrase!

D: It looks like folly to talk sense to fools. ...

P: Are your rites done at night, or in the day?

D: Mostly at night. Darkness is magical.

P: Dirty tricks, just to seduce our women!

D: People act badly in the daylight, too.

P: You'll have to pay the price for your smart tongue!

D: And you for ignorant blasphemy to the god.

P: What bare-faced brashness! What a practiced sophist [“not uneducated in speech-making”]!

(Euripides, *Bacchae* lines 475-91)





# What is *logos*?

“Logos is a great ruler (*dynastês*), who with the smallest and least visible body accomplishes *divine* works: for *logos* is able (*dunatai*) to stop fear, remove pain, create joy, and increase pity.”

(Gorgias, *Praise of Helen*, 8,  
trans. Kirkland)



# Logos as unmoored from truth?

“As many who have persuaded and do persuade others concerning various things do so by molding a false (*pseudê*) logos. For if all people had memory of the things that came before, and a conception of the things that are now, and a presentiment of the things that are to come, logos would not be similarly similar. For the ones now there is no easy way (*euporôs*) to recall the past, to see the present, or to prophesy the future. Accordingly, most people, concerning most things, allow belief (*doxa*) to be their soul’s advisor” (Gorgias, *Praise of Helen* 11, trans. NBK).

# Pretty words about Helen

Helen had godlike beauty, which, **taking and not mistaking**, she kept. Among many she created desire for her love, and with her one body she brought together many bodies of men.

- Gorgias, *Praise of Helen* 4

For either it was by the will of fate and the wishes of the gods and the votes of necessity that she did what she did, **or by force reduced or by words seduced. Now, if through the first, it is right for the responsible to be held responsible** ... If then on fate and the gods one must place blame, Helen from disgrace one must free. [6]



## *Praise of Helen (continued)*

How then can one regard the blame on Helen  
as right, seeing that, **whether she did what she  
did**

**by love overpowered or by speech persuaded,  
or by force compelled, she is utterly  
acquitted of all charge?**



**I have through speech removed ill fame from a  
woman. [20]**

# Aristotle on Rhetoric and Truth

- Originally, Aristotle says that rhetoric is about **persuasion** (*peithô*) instead of truth (1356b 10-11, 25-26), meaning rhetoric is about knowing **what an audience believes**.
- Rhetoric is concerned with persuasion through **general beliefs** (*koina*) and beliefs **already widely accepted** (*endoxa*).

→ *Similar to Gorgias' statements*

# But Aristotle goes on to say ...

“Humans have a natural disposition for the true and to a large extent hit on the truth; **thus an ability to aim at commonly held opinions is a characteristic of one who *also* has a similar ability with regard to the truth**” (1355a 14-18).

→ **Different** from Gorgias' statements

