but also took the lead in fashioning the style of their time. Their influence in these respects was weighty and import­ant. Whereas when sophistry began prose composition was hardly practised in central Greece, the sophists were still the leaders in literature and oratory when Plato wrote the *Republic,* and they had hardly lost their position when Demosthenes delivered the *Philippics.* In fact, it is not too much to say that it was the sophists who provided those great masters with their consummate instrument, and it detracts but little from the merit of the makers if they were themselves unable to draw from it its finer tones.

The relation of sophistry to philosophy was throughout one of pronounced hostility. From the days of Protagoras, when this hostility was triumphant and contemptuous, to the days of Isocrates, when it was jealous and bitter, the sophists were declared and consistent sceptics. But, al­though Protagoras and Gorgias had examined the teaching of their predecessors so far as to satisfy themselves of its futility and to draw the sceptical inference, their study of the great problem of the day was preliminary to their sophistry rather than a part of it; and, as the overthrow of philosophy was complete and the attractions of sophistry were all-powerful, the question, “What is knowledge?” ceased for a time to claim or to receive attention. There is then no such thing as a “ sophistical theory of know­ledge.” Similarly, the recognition of a “sophistical ethic ” is, to say the least, misleading. It may have been that the sophists’ preference of seeming to reality, of success to truth, had a mischievous effect upon the morality of the time ; but it is clear that they had no common theory of ethics, and there is no warrant for the assumption that a sophist, as such, specially interested himself in ethical questions. When Protagoras asserted “ civic excellence ” or “ virtue ” to be the end of education, he neither expressed nor implied a theory of morality. Prodicus in his platitudes reflected the customary morality of the time. Gorgias said plainly that he did not teach “ virtue.” If Hippias, Polus, and Thrasymachus defied conventional morality, they did so independently of one another, and in this, as in other matters, they were disputants maintaining paradoxical theses, rather than thinkers announcing heretical convictions. The morality of Isocrates bore a certain resemblance to that of Socrates. In short, the attitude of the sophists towards inquiry in general precluded them, collectively and individually, from attachment to any particular theory. Yet among the so-called sophists there were two who had philosophical leanings, as appears in their willingness to be called by the title of philosopher. First, Socrates, whilst he conceived that the physicists had mistaken the field of inquiry, absolute truth being unattainable, maintained, as has been seen, that one opinion was better than another, and that consistency of opinion, resulting in consistency of action, was the end which the human intellect properly proposes to itself. Hence, though an agnostic, he was not unwilling to be called a philosopher, in so far as he pursued such truth as was attainable by man. Secondly, when sophistry had begun to fall into contempt, the political rhetorician Isocrates claimed for himself the time- honoured designation of philosopher, “herein,” says Plato, “ resembling some tinker, bald-pated and short of stature, who, having made money, knocks off his chains, goes to the bath, buys a new suit, and then takes advantage of the poverty and desolation of his master’s daughter to urge upon her his odious addresses” *(Rep.,* vi. 495 E). It will be seen, however, that neither Socrates nor Isocrates was philosopher in any strict sense of the word, the speculative aims of physicists and metaphysicians being foreign to the practical theories both of the one and of the other.

As for the classification of sophistical methods, so for their criticism, the testimony of Plato is all-important. It may he conjectured that, when he emerged from the purely Socratic phase of his earlier years, Plato gave himself to the study of contemporary methods of education and to the elaboration of an educational system of his own, and that it was in this way that he came to the metaphysical speculations of his maturity. It may be imagined further that, when he established himself at the Academy, his first care was to draw up a scheme of education, including arithmetic, geometry (plane and solid), astronomy, harmonics, and dialectic, and that it was not until he had arranged for the carrying out of this programme that he devoted himself to the special functions of professor of philosophy. However this may be, we find amongst his writings,—intermediate, as it would seem, between the Socratic conversations of his first period of literary activity and the meta­physical disquisitions of a later time,—a series of dialogues which, however varied their ostensible subjects, agree in having a direct bearing upon education. Thus the *Protagoras* brings the educa­tional theory of Protagoras and the sophists of culture face to face with the educational theory of Socrates, so as to expose the limita­tions of both ; the *Gorgias* deals with the moral aspect of the teach­ings of the forensic rhetorician Gorgias and the political rhetorician Isocrates, and the intellectual aspect of their respective theories of education is handled in the *Phædrus* ; the *Meno* on the one hand exhibits the strength and the weakness of the teaching of Socrates, and on the other brings into view the makeshift method of those who, despising systematic teaching, regarded the practical poli­tician as the true educator ; the *Euthydemus* has for its subject the eristical method; finally, having in these dialogues characterized the current theories of education, Plato proceeds in the *Republic* to develop an original scheme. Plato’s criticisms of the sophists are then, in the opinion of the present writer, no mere *obiter dicta,* introduced for purposes of literary adornment or dramatic effect, but rather the expressions of profound and reasoned convic­tion, and, as such, entitled at any rate to respect. For the details of Plato’s critique, the reader should go, not to the summaries of commentators, but to the dialogues themselves. In this place it is sufficient to say that, while Plato accounts no education satis­factory which has not knowledge for its basis, he emphatically prefers the scepticism of Socrates, which, despairing of knowledge, seeks right opinion, to the scepticism of the sophists, which, de­spairing of knowledge, abandons the attempt to better existing beliefs.

(3) *The Theory of Grote.—*The post-Platonic historians and critics, who, while they knew the earlier sophistry only through tradition, were eye-witnesses of the sophistry of the decadence, were more alive to the faults than to the virtues of the movement. Overlooking the differences which separated the humanists from the eristics, and both of these from the rhetoricians, and taking no account of Socrates, whom they regarded as a philosopher, they forgot the services which Protagoras and Prodicus, Gorgias and Isocrates, had rendered to education and to literature, and included the whole profession in an indiscriminate and contemptuous censure. This prejudice, establishing itself in familiar speech, has descended from antiquity to modern times, colouring, when it does not distort, the narratives of biographers and the criticisms of commentators. “The sophists,” says Grote, “are spoken of as a new class of men, or sometimes in language which implies a new doctrinal sect or school, as if they then sprang up in Greece for the first time—ostentatious impostors, flattering and duping the rich youth for their own personal gain, under­mining the morality of Athens, public and private, and encouraging their pupils to the unscrupulous prosecution of ambition and cupidity. They are even affirmed to have succeeded in corrupting the general morality, so that Athens had become miserably degenerated and vicious in the latter years of the Peloponnesian War, as compared with what she was in the time of Miltiades and Aristeides and, although amongst the pre-Grotian scholars there were some who saw as clearly as Grote himself that “ the sophists are a much-calumniated race ” (G. H. Lewes), it is certain that historians of philosophy, and editors of Plato, especially the “acumen plumbeum Stallbaumii,” had given ample occasion for the energetic protest contained in the famous sixty-seventh chapter of Grote’s *History of Greece.* Amongst the many merits of that admirable