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Grammata #7

Gorgias is the most persuasive when defending Helen on the grounds of violence. This reason is not only justified by Gorgias as “unjust,” but also in the eyes of the law. This addition of justification attaches a component of external validity to the argument. No longer is this defense subjective, but Gorgias creates an argument that alludes to the basic judicial structure of society which is perceived as objective. Another characteristic of this defense which makes it the most persuasive is that it is realistic in nature. An event where a woman is overpowered by a man is a plausible occurrence which may be witnessed first-hand.

On the other hand, the least persuasive defense that Gorgias makes is of persuasion. There is a fault in his logic which reveals itself as a logical fallacy – false analogy. Gorgias compares the power of speech to drugs as they have the same effect the soul and body, respectively. He comes to the conclusion that if Helen was persuaded, she “suffered misfortune” (15). This proposes the idea of an undeniable correlation between a soul and speech such as that of the body and drugs. Furthermore, this defense takes away the human element of choice which, as Gorgias suggests, Helen did not have.

The most controversial of Gorgias’s defenses of Helen is love. Love is a concept used overwhelmingly in our culture today, and like Gorgias suggests, many people might consider oneself powerless when it comes to love. Even Helen, a half-god, was swayed by the effects of love. However, his justification for why love asserts a grand power over humans alludes back to the gods. Again, many people can experience “love,” but may not directly justify the concept as god-made.