



# Gorgias and the New Sophistic Rhetoric (Rhetorical Philosophy & Theory)

*Professor Bruce McComiskey*

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In *Gorgias and the New Sophistic Rhetoric*, Bruce McComiskey achieves three rhetorical goals: he treats a single sophist's rhetorical *technê* (art) in the context of the intellectual upheavals of fifth-century bce Greece, thus avoiding the problem of generalizing about a disparate group of individuals; he argues that we must abandon Platonic assumptions regarding the sophists in general and Gorgias in particular, opting instead for a holistic reading of the Gorgianic fragments; and he reexamines the practice of appropriating sophistic doctrines, particularly those of Gorgias, in light of the new interpretation of Gorgianic rhetoric offered in this book.

In the first two chapters, McComiskey deals with a misconception based on selective and Platonic readings of the extant fragments: that Gorgias's rhetorical *technê* involves the deceptive practice of manipulating public opinion. This popular and ultimately misleading interpretation of Gorgianic doctrines has been the basis for many neosophistic appropriations. The final three chapters deal with the nature and scope of neosophistic rhetoric in light of the non-Platonic and holistic interpretation of Gorgianic rhetoric McComiskey postulates in his opening chapters. He concludes by examining the future of communication studies to discover what roles neosophistic doctrines might play in the twenty-first century.

McComiskey also provides a selective bibliography of scholarship on sophistic rhetoric and philosophy in English since 1900.

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