

Agata Marciniak, **The Analysis of Eristic Feints in Three of Plato's Dialogues –
*Protagoras, Gorgias and Theaetetus***

Dialogues by Plato are utterly unique works, combining the sophistication of speculative thought with true art of rhetoric. Thus it should come as no surprise that *Dialogues* have been a subject of numerous dissertations by various researchers. Obviously, theses on *Dialogues* were mainly aimed at examining the philosophical thought of Plato and recognising its influence on later works by his spiritual successors as well as his opponents.

Attractive to a potential audience, the liveliness and authenticity of the disputes led by colourful debaters are engendered not only by the curious questions touched upon in Plato's works, but also by a reason which proves quite unusual for philosophical texts. Namely, the eristic aspect of arguments presented by disputants – the aspect which has become the very basis of my doctoral thesis. The actual goal of conducting an analysis of Plato's *Dialogues*, i.e. *Protagoras, Gorgias* and *Theaetetus*, is to find in them something which could elude the standard analysis of a philosophical publication.

The submitted dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, which also serves as a summary, and a list of references.

The first chapter briefly introduces the ancient origin of eristic. First, I differentiate between key concepts - 'dialectic', 'rhetoric', 'eristic' and 'sophistic' - to ultimately focus on presenting the eristic techniques known from literature. Although the main core of the catalogue I have collected comprises of the feints described by Arthur Schopenhauer in *The Art of Being Right*, I could not refrain from including the findings established by experts in the field of social communication, such as Kevin Hogan or Marek Kochan, argumentation theory, such as Robert Mayer or Krzysztof Szymanek, or social psychology, such as Robert Cialdini, Dariusz Doliński and Marek Tokarz, as well as describing the techniques distinguished by them. The list I have compiled exceeds the requirements posed by the act of analysing Plato's *Dialogues* to a considerable degree; nonetheless, including all the techniques was necessary to fully reflect the persuasive impact displayed by Plato in his texts.

The second, third and fourth chapters are dedicated to the analysis of, respectively, *Protagoras, Gorgias* and *Theaetetus*. Each dialogue is subjected to a detailed analysis, with the content expressed in it taken into consideration. This is quite necessary, as it is impossible to discuss the application of a given eristic technique in isolation from the arguments conveyed by opponents. Whereas restricting oneself to the views expressed in each *Dialogue* need not require presentation of the context, the eristic analysis cannot forgo said context; it is vital to

incorporate the interests represented by the debaters as well as their motives, which drive them to defend certain ideas, and not others. Therefore, each of the chapters is provided with a succinct, essential presentation of the characters participating in the given discussion and the outline of the situation in which the characters participate. Each of the three analyses is concluded with the thesis regarding the situation discussed. The final conclusion brings all these theses together into a comprehensive whole.

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