Mary Margaret McCabe attempts to develop an account of Plato's *Euthydemus* that will relieve it of its reputation for silliness and parody and will allow us to make sense of its complex structure and unity. She considers but rejects two other accounts of the dialogue, the "handbook of fallacy" account and the "good conscience view." Moving beyond these, McCabe invites us instead to consider the structure of the dialogue, with its outer and inner frames and the interplay between them. This structure allows Crito and Socrates in the outer frame to reflect upon the episodes of argument in the inner frame. The "philosophical business" of the dialogue is to be found in that interplay, the report of the sophistic arguments and the reflection upon them.

At the outset of the arguments in the inner frame, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are cast in the role of refuters, a role more often occupied in Plato's dialogues by Socrates. What kind of refuters are the brothers? They are, unsocratically, indifferent to what the interlocutor believes. Whatever the interlocutor may say, he will be refuted, they promise in advance. Unlike Socratic refutation, there is no risk that their style of refutation demands (to submit "what one really believes" to examination) and no benefit to the refutee is offered or expected.

Having noted this difference, McCabe goes on to the second sophistic episode, and it is here, in two passages (texts 2 and 3: 283e–284a and 285d–286b respectively), that she finds the key to her account of the dialogue. The two brothers show themselves committed to a logical or metaphysical principle that McCabe calls "cut off or clone." Every statement (λόγος) is about a "thing" (πρᾶγμα), and every "thing" a statement is about is one of the things *that are*, distinct from other things. So there can be no speaking of anything that *is not*, and hence no false speaking. McCabe diagnoses this argument and finds that it relies on an equivocation of "thing": it may be granted that every statement has a "thing" in the sense that it has an intentional object; there must be
something the statement is *about*. But for the conclusion to follow, the "thing" must be a state of affairs in the world, the "truth-maker" of the statement.

McCabe wonders how the sophists might conceive of this "thing." Suppose, she suggests, that they think of it as that which is *referred to*, or perhaps *named* by the statement; for example, the statement, "Tallulah trounced the trombonist" *names* the "thing" [Tallulah's-trouncing-of-the-trombonist]. If so, how does this support the argument against contradiction in text 3 (285d–286b)? Suppose that you say that Tallulah trounced the trombonist, and I say that Tallulah has been in bed all week with the flu, or that Tallulah didn't trounce the trombonist. Your statement refers to or names *one* of the things that are, namely [Tallulah's-trouncing-of-the-trombonist], and mine refers to or names *another* or *others*, namely [Tallulah's-having-been-in-bed-for-a-week] or [Tallulah's-nontrouncing-of-the-trombonist]. And if the sophists think of these objects of reference as discrete individuals the way we might think of Aristotelian individual substances, then these "things" have no relation to each other: they are monads or atoms out there in the world. Identity and difference are the only relations permitted among such monads—they do not interpenetrate or overlap. In like manner, the statements that name these "things" are related only in terms of identity or complete distinctness. Any two statements name either the same "thing" or different "things"; in the former case they are "clones" of each other and in the latter completely "cut off" from each other. No logical relationship among statements that are not clones will be possible. Hence not only is contradiction and refutation impossible, but logical relationships like entailment, consistency and inconsistency are equally impossible. And just as "things" are not embedded in other "things," so statements that reflect on other statements are also ruled out.

Socrates finds these consequences of "cut off or clone" unacceptable. They are not only counterintuitive; they undermine the entire philosophical enterprise. Somehow "cut off or clone" must be refuted; but how can it be, if according to that principle, refutation, etc., are impossible? Any refutation would beg the question.

If "cut off or clone" is invulnerable to external refutation, it may nevertheless be vulnerable to self-refutation, and this is the tack that, according to McCabe, Socrates takes. First, he charges (text 6: 287e–288a) that the brothers' position "overthrows itself": that "the claim that falsehood, contradiction and mistake are impossible is self-refuting." But that claim is not directly self-refuting, and, given the principle of "cut off or clone," it seems at first invulnerable to indirect argument. So this first