

Socratic Rhetoric in the Gorgias

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Given that it seems uncontroversial that Socrates displays considerable contempt towards rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, the title of this paper might strike one as an oxymoron. Indeed, a reading of the text has more than once encouraged scholars to posit an opposition between the elenctic procedures championed by Socrates and the rhetorical procedures of his interlocutors. At least three features have been highlighted that seem to indicate this contrast:

1. the Socratic interest in short questions and answers versus his interlocutors' use of long speeches (*makrologia*);
2. the Socratic interest in truth regardless of the opinion of the many, the latter seeming an important concern of the rhetorician;
3. the supposed Socratic appeal to the intellectual powers of the interlocutor, which is usually contrasted with the appeal to the emotions which is distinctive of rhetoric.¹

1 For the first two points, see e.g. R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1953), 15-16, 82; T. Irwin, 'Coercion and Objectivity in Plato's Dialectic,' *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 156/7 (1986) 49-74; D. Zeyl, *Plato: Gorgias* (Indianapolis: Hackett 1987), x-xii; G. Vlastos, 'The Socratic Elenchus: Method is All,' in *Socratic Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994), 1-37 at 7, 13-14, 20; for the third, see e.g. R. Wardy, *The Birth of Rhetoric* (London: Routledge

In the light of this contrast, the procedures of philosophy and rhetoric might appear to be mutually exclusive. And yet it is odd to find Socrates himself, as we shall see, advocating a good kind of rhetoric, after he has gone to great lengths to criticize rhetoric as a form of flattery. It is clear that, when Socrates talks of his good kind of rhetoric, he thinks it is an art (*technê*); but it is not clear (or at least so I contend) to what extent the ‘flattering’ kind of rhetoric that he seems to attack, for example, in the discussion with Polus is to be rejected. After all, why group these two practices under the name of rhetoric, if Socrates does not believe that they have something in common?

In this paper I propose to argue — contrary to what some scholars have thought — that even the good, or technical, kind of rhetoric that Socrates advocates is one that does not exclude, but rather subordinates, certain procedures distinctive of the flattering kind.² This subordination has the effect of making those procedures pass from being something shameful to something good and useful to the philosophical cause. I shall focus, in particular, on the three types of procedure enumerated above, which will help us see significant similarities between the tactics of Socrates and those of his interlocutors.³ In an important sense, I contend, it is

1996), 83-4; and cf. also J. Cooper, ‘Socrates and Plato in Plato’s *Gorgias*,’ in *Reason and Emotion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1999), 29-75 and T. Penner, ‘Socrates,’ in C.J. Rowe and Malcolm Schofield, eds., *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000), 164. For an interesting historical discussion that qualifies the traditional distinction between the methods of Socrates and those of rhetoric and associated practices see A. Nehamas, ‘Eristic, Antilogic, Sophistic, Dialectic: Plato’s Demarcation of Philosophy from Sophistry,’ in *Virtues of Authenticity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1999), 108-22. For other studies that, from different perspectives, also query that distinction, cf. below, nn. 5, 6, 34, and 44, with my disagreements there.

- 2 Pace e.g. T. Irwin, *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1979), who claims that ‘someone becomes a “true rhetor” only insofar as he abandons rhetorical techniques,’ i.e. ‘he does not choose rhetorical methods for different ends’ (215); this attitude is echoed by B. Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1988), who takes it that for Socrates one must ‘give up rhetoric as a verbal art for philosophy’ (110).
- 3 One may wonder to what extent we can assume that Socrates’ interlocutors are advocates of the flattering kind of rhetoric, given that Socrates remarks to Gorgias that he is not necessarily a target in his criticism of rhetoric as flattery (462e-463a). Two things can be said in this regard. First, we can see at least both Polus and Callicles as endorsing that kind of practice in the fundamental sense that, with self-advantage ultimately in mind, it seeks to please the crowd by confirming their values (see, respectively, 473d-e, 481d-e, 484d, and below, n. 21). On the case of Callicles, see especially A. Saxonhouse, ‘An Unspoken Theme in Plato’s *Gorgias*:

possible to see Socrates himself as some kind of rhetorician who, despite criticizing his interlocutors as practitioners of rhetoric, also imitates many of their procedures in trying to attain persuasion through speech — a goal which he pursues no less than his opponents.⁴ But this imitation of rhetorical methods need not be, as some might think, mere hypocrisy or dishonesty on the part of Socrates.⁵ Nor need this be, as has also been proposed, an example of Socrates engaging deliberately in common sophistic practices just to show his opponent that he is able to use them if he wants, even though he cannot ultimately be interested in those practices given his overriding interest in truth and virtue.⁶ Instead, I hope to show how Socrates' use of some rhetorical devices can be integrated quite comfortably with his conception of truth as his final goal. This will go hand in hand with showing that he conceives of rhetoric in general as a means which, despite being ethically neutral as such, may be given a good purpose, and thus (in accordance with Socrates' criterion) become a genuine craft (*technê*) under the guidance of philosophy. In this way, his attempting to practice a certain kind of rhetoric will become performatively consistent with his postulation of a good version of it.

War, *Interpretation* 11 (1983) 139-69. Second, one must note that even Gorgias appears to endorse the pursuit of self-advantage through manipulation of the audience (452e) and disingenuous concern with image rather than real knowledge (459b-c) which Socrates will describe as characteristic of the flattering kind of rhetoric (464c-d, cf. 459d-e). It is, then, only because Gorgias seems to contradict himself later on even on those issues (cf. 460e-461a) that Socrates says he is not sure that his description of the flattering kind of rhetoric applies to him (cf. esp. 462e8-463a2).

- 4 In principle, I use the word 'opponents' for the rhetoricians contemporary to Socrates, including his interlocutors in the *Gorgias*, without assuming any contentious or *ad hominem* implications, but simply to the extent that they embody, in Socrates' eyes, a cause starkly opposed to his own — hence the energy that he spends in combating it in discussion. What this opposition consists in, however, still needs to be assessed.
- 5 As claimed by J. Beversluis, *Cross-Examining Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000), esp. 342-3.
- 6 For the latter view see J. Gentzler, who also examines ways in which Socrates can be seen to employ sophistic tactics other than those which will deserve our attention in this paper: 'The Sophistic Cross-Examination of Callicles,' *Ancient Philosophy* 15 (1995) 17-43, esp. 40-2.

I Dialectic as Rhetoric or Dialectic Versus Rhetoric?

On the surface, the *Gorgias* does seem to provide evidence for the contrasts pointed out above between philosophy as understood by Socrates and rhetoric as exercised by his interlocutors. For in more than one place Socrates criticizes the appeal to witnesses, or in general to the opinion of the crowd, as a criterion for truth (471e-472c, cf. 473d, 474a). He opposes the use of long speeches, *makrologia*, to the brief exchange of questions and answers (cf. 448e-449d, 461d), and disparages the use of emotional devices, particularly in his exchange with Polus (473d). At the same time, however, Socrates will invoke popular belief; he will himself make use of long speeches in a way that elicits his interlocutor's criticism; and will resort to emotional devices in the manner of the rhetoricians. Let us take a closer look at these apparent tensions, to see if a solution can be offered which does not require us to assume insincerity or ulterior motive on the part of Socrates.

1. *Shall we believe what the many believe?*

Let us start with the appeal to the opinions of the many. In discussing the case of Archelaus, Socrates contends that if he is unjust, he is miserable. Finding this statement hard to accept, Polus sarcastically presents a narration of numerous outrageous deeds used by the tyrant to get to power, pointing out that many Athenians would prefer to be Archelaus. In response to this, Socrates tells Polus: 'You seem to me to be well trained in rhetoric, but to have neglected dialectical discussion' (*dialegesthai*, 471d; cf. 448d).⁷ Polus — he remarks — is trying to refute him rhetorically, as they do in the law courts, by bringing many false reputable witnesses, while Socrates defends a different kind of refutation, that which is based on truth no matter what the majority of people think, and which cares only about the testimony of his one interlocutor (471e-472c; cf. 475e-476a). Similarly, after Socrates claims that the unjust person who escapes the penalty is more miserable than the one who does not, Polus laughs at him for saying 'things that no human being would say' — to which Socrates replies: 'I know how to bring forward one witness of the things that I say, the very one to whom my argument is

7 'Dialectic' is a common denomination for Socratic method (see e.g. Vlastos, 4), and will be used in this context as no more than a translation for *dialegesthai*, which may also be rendered as 'the activity of dialogue' for the sake of truth, which is central to the philosophical enterprise as Socrates conceives it.

addressed; the many I dismiss' (474a). Accordingly, Socrates encourages Polus to subject himself to the elenctic procedure of question and answer (474b1-2). To this point, it would seem that we have good reason to understand the opposition between rhetoric (as practiced by Polus) and Socratic dialectic in terms of an opposition between giving weight to the opinions of the many and focussing on the agreement of one's interlocutor as a touchstone of truth.

And yet it seems striking that Socrates should, immediately after the last passage quoted above, proceed to cite, in support of his provocative views, the agreement of the many: 'For I think that I and you and the rest of humanity (*tous allous anthrôpous*) believe that to commit an injustice is worse than suffering it, and not to pay the penalty is worse than paying it' (474b2-5). (He puts this side by side with the contentious claim that he, Polus and all others (*hoi alloi pantes*) 'would choose to suffer an injustice rather than commit it' [474b6-10].) Furthermore, Socrates later on will use in his support Polus' concession that 'the majority of people' (*tôn pollôn anthrôpôn*) and himself believe that committing injustice is more shameful than being the victim of it (475d), to conclude: 'then I spoke the truth that neither I nor you nor any other person would choose to commit an injustice rather than suffer it; for it turns out to be worse' (475e).

These contentions seem at the very least paradoxical. For Socrates appears to be claiming that in many cases the many and his interlocutor believe the exact opposite of what they claim to believe. However, on close examination, it is possible to make some sense of Socrates' assertions, if we take into account that Polus is presenting himself as a mouthpiece for popular morality, with which Socrates must be acquainted (as confirmed later on by Callicles himself, when he accuses Socrates of having manipulated Polus' sense of shame, 482e, and when he declares that popular morality praises the laws out of shame, *aischunê*, 492a).⁸ So to a great extent Socrates can predict Polus' answer, on behalf of the majority of people, that committing injustice is more shameful (*aischron*) than suffering it (as he does admit to at 474c). But Socrates also wants to induce Polus into the awareness that, despite his (and the many's) admiration for injustice, Polus (and the many) must think that committing injustice, if more shameful, is in some sense also worse,⁹ and

8 Despite Callicles' initial contention, however, Socrates argues that popular morality's praise of justice is 'natural' and not artificial (cf. 488d). To that extent, Socrates may have reason to claim that such praise of justice must express what the many *really* believe and not merely what they are made to believe.

9 Cf. Vlastos, who draws a distinction between 'overt' and 'covert' beliefs (23); and

this is the point of Socrates' argument at 474-5, where he tries precisely to bring out that inference.¹⁰ While this Socratic move has aroused a great deal of discussion in the literature,¹¹ it has been less obvious to what extent these contentions can themselves be seen as borrowing rhetorical tactics so as to refute Polus on his own terms.¹²

T. Brickhouse and N. Smith, *Plato's Socrates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994), who point out that 'Polus actually believes both of a pair of contraries' at the outset of the exchange (76). C. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996), suggests that the claim that Polus believes the opposite of what he has just stated is only proleptic, as Polus does not believe it but would come to believe it if he understands what is at stake (140). However, no conditional tone surrounds Socrates' assertions; rather, Kahn himself talks of an 'innate moral sense' that would be shared by Polus and everyone else, and be manifested in their sense of shame (138). This gives us elements to believe that there is surely a side of Polus that already agrees with Socrates, much as Polus may at the same time hold beliefs contradictory to that (a contradiction that Kahn puts elsewhere [*Drama and Dialectic in Plato's Gorgias*, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1983) 75-121, at 95] as Polus' [and popular morality's] secret admiration for success and power, no matter how obtained, on the one hand, and the condemnation of unjust acts on the other). In any case, it is important in this regard that Socrates then need not be opposing one firmly established popular view by presenting one which is altogether alien to popular belief, but pursuing, and trying to validate, a line of thought that is entrenched in popular belief. For an argument in favour of the psychological force of Socrates' proof, insofar as it appeals to shame as a 'natural sign that deep down we really prefer virtue,' despite 'the artificial values imposed upon us from without by such corrupting influences as Gorgianic rhetorical education,' see R. McKim, 'Shame and Truth in Plato's *Gorgias*,' in C. Griswold, ed., *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings* (London: Routledge 1988), 34-48, at 39.

- 10 Similarly, Socrates continues that if Polus and all others agree that committing injustice turns out to be worse than suffering it, then neither Polus nor anyone else would choose the former alternative over the latter (475d-e).
- 11 For further discussion of 474b, 475c and of Socrates' appeal to what the many believe see also R. Bolton, 'Aristotle's Account of the Socratic Elenchus,' *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1993) 185-95; H. Benson, 'The Dissolution of the Problem of the Elenchus,' *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 13 (1995) 45-112; T. Brickhouse and N. Smith, *The Philosophy of Socrates* (Boulder: Westview 2000), ch. 2; and the works mentioned in note 9 above.
- 12 The appeal to the opinion of the many recurs in the discussion with Callicles, when Socrates asserts that 'the many believe ... that to commit injustice is more shameful than to suffer it' (489a); and when he associates his views on *enkrateia* with what 'the many' mean (491d10). Why should Socrates invoke the opinion of the many despite previous dismissals? See here the historical perspective afforded by J. Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1999), who takes passages such as these to suggest a Socratic awareness that 'to inhabit the public domain of the democratic *polis* is to be affected by and borrow from the language, procedures, and assumptions of the *demos*' (214). But it is also important to note

But then, how can we reconcile these two apparently conflicting attitudes on the part of Socrates with regard to the beliefs of the many? We can say that Socrates' criticism of the appeal to the many is well grounded to the extent that he cannot argue with a multitude of people at once (cf. *pollois oude dialegomai*, 474b1 — hence his focussing on his interlocutor as 'one witness'). But this does not rule out that one can extract something of interest by examining such opinions, however confused or contradictory they may be — particularly when one's interlocutor is in effect their spokesman. Indeed, when analysed, it is possible to show how some of those beliefs imply conclusions which Socrates defends. The strategy of bringing one's opponent to realize that he is in fact no opponent of one's views appears in the *Euthydemus* in the mouth of Socrates' eristic contenders (295a), and in the *Gorgias* itself such a sentiment is originally put in the mouth of Polus (471e). While it is likely that here too Socrates is imitating Polus on one level,¹³ this procedure must in any case appeal to him, if he is interested in truth being the patrimony not just of one, but of many individuals, and if he thinks that the appropriate elenctic method is capable of uncovering it in the mind of any given discussant.¹⁴ We shall have to see, at a later stage, to what extent Socrates succeeds in giving us elements in the *Gorgias* that may justify the use of these tactics as noble, but let us for now focus on another example.

2. How long should one's speeches be?

Consider the use of long speeches, *makrologia*. From the beginning of the dialogue, we see Socrates praising brief responses to questions (448e-449a). Accordingly, he asks Gorgias to make use of his capacity for short rather than long speeches in his answers (*brachulogia*, 449c), which

that even Callicles is caught by such strictures (so Socrates can press him on this), if it is the case that there is a side of Callicles which (despite his scorn of popular morality, and rebuking Socrates for advising the opposite of what we ought to do at 481c) will agree with the Athenian demos, no matter what (as Socrates suggests at 481d-e; *pace* Brickhouse and Smith, who think that if Socrates has any grounds on which to accuse Callicles of self-contradiction at 482b-c, they are not afforded explicitly by his dialogue with him to this point [*Plato's Socrates*, 73]).

13 After all, from the beginning of their exchange Socrates self-consciously (albeit playfully) imitates even some of Polus' mannerisms, such as at 467b-c.

14 Thus Socrates may be here foreshadowing Plato's later presumption that truth is universal and in some sense within, so that anyone can reconnect with it if correctly guided by the *elenchos*, as will be suggested by the theory of recollection in the *Meno* (see esp. 81c5-7); cf. *Phaedo* 73a7-b2. Compare Vlastos (25, 29).

Gorgias subsequently displays in a way that earns Socrates' commendation (449d ff.).¹⁵ By contrast, at 461d he asks Polus to keep a check on his tendency to *makrologia*.

This is curious, since the speech by Polus that motivates Socrates' comments occupies 10 lines of Stephanus' text, which is no more and indeed rather less than the length that Socrates has been taking to ask Gorgias certain questions (cf. 457c-458b, where Socrates' intervention occupies nearly 30 lines, and 459c-460a, where it takes nearly 20). His apparent license to take greater length than he criticizes Polus for is evident also in Socrates' very exchange with him (see e.g. 461e1-462a6, where Socrates takes 11 lines of text soon after that criticism). Most strikingly, at 464b-466a Socrates himself takes no less than two and a half Stephanus pages to expound his views on rhetoric as a branch of flattery. What are we to make of this?

Socrates does recognize, at 465e, that it might seem absurd that of all people he, the arch-critic of long speeches, should have resorted to one; but he justifies his procedure as an attempt to get his interlocutor to understand, when the latter does not seem amenable to a short exchange of questions and answers. And he offers to Polus the possibility of using the same device: 'Now if when you reply not even I can make any use of it, then you too extend your speech; but if I am able to, then let me use it: for it is just (*dikaion*)' (465e6-466a2). We can see here how Socrates does seem to try fair play, by putting forward the view, which applies to both Polus and himself, that the use of *makrologia* might be justified under certain conditions. These conditions must pay heed to the goal of the exchange, which is in this case to promote mutual understanding; and to that end *makrologia* may serve as a useful means (cf. the insistence on 'use,' *chrêsthai*, at 466a). This mutual understanding, presumably, will bring them closer to the truth, which is the aim of the Socratic elenchus (cf. 471e7-472a1).

Socrates' appeal to long speeches is manifest also in the discussion with Callicles. At 517b ff., Socrates undertakes an extensive critique of Athenian politicians which occupies no less than three pages of text and leads Socrates to conclude that he has been forced to use 'popular oratory' (*dêmêgorein*, 519d5-6). Sarcastically, Callicles points out: 'And you are the one who could not speak unless somebody replied to you?' (519d8-9), to which Socrates answers: 'Apparently I can' (519e1). At this point, then, we must concede, as the interlocutors themselves do, that

15 See here Nehamas (110-11), who cites passages such as this as evidence that the ability to proceed by short questions and answers is not an exclusive feature of the Socratic elenchus.

the Socratic enterprise in the *Gorgias* would be inaccurately described as a mere exchange of short questions and answers for the sake of truth. Now even truth, while kept as the ultimate goal, appears to demand that longer speeches be used in some circumstances. The best example of the same phenomenon is provided by Socrates' appeal to a long myth at the end of the *Gorgias*, whereby he suspends dialogical exchange altogether.

The appeal to myth in the *Gorgias* is indeed novel on the part of Socrates. One may here note the contrast with dialogues such as the *Protagoras*, where it is the eponymous sophist who uses myth, in a context where Socrates explicitly criticizes *makrologia* (334c-d). Why should Socrates in the *Gorgias* then use the same kind of tactic that he elsewhere shows reservations about?¹⁶ His purpose in doing so seems clear: as Socrates states after presenting another myth, that of the leaky jars, he is seeking to *persuade* Callicles (493d1). But why myth? As a matter of fact, the myth of the leaky jars describes 'the part of the soul in which the appetites [or desires, *epithumiai*] reside' as 'persuadable' (493a), which raises the suspicion that now Socrates, side by side with his opponents, may be exploring linguistic devices which seem precisely designed to appeal not just to the cognitive powers but to the emotions of his interlocutors.¹⁷ To this I shall now turn.

3. *Dialectic and emotion*

Are we really entitled to say that in the *Gorgias* Socrates tries to appeal to the emotions of the interlocutor? Isn't Socrates in this dialogue after all an extreme intellectualist, no different in that regard from the Socrates of dialogues such as the *Apology*, the *Euthyphro*, and the *Protagoras*?¹⁸ In fact,

16 On the sophistic appeal to myth in the *Protagoras* cf. K. Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000), esp. 153-4. For Protagoras himself being treated as a rhetor cf. *Phaedrus* 267c, and for the *Protagoras* myth as an example of 'allegorical narrative used rhetorically' see T. Cole, *The Origins of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1991), 60.

17 In this discussion, I use 'emotion,' 'desire,' and 'affect' as referring to states of the soul which have a felt quality, and which can generically be treated as *pathê*. (For an example of the way in which *pathos* seems contraposed to *logos* see the remark by Callicles at 513c.)

18 His profession of intellectualism (with the associated theses that no one does wrong willingly and knowledge is sufficient for virtue), as well as his expression of his desire to learn in order to avoid vice, seems no less prominent in this dialogue than in the others: see e.g. *Gorg.* 460b-c, 468b, 479b, 488a3, 519c-e, and compare *Ap.* 25e-26a, *Eut.* 4a, 15a-16a, *Prot.* 358c-d, *Meno* 77b-78b, *Euthydemus* 281b, *Rep.* I 351a.

there are interpreters, such as Robert Wardy and John Cooper, who along these lines believe that even in the *Gorgias* Socrates makes use of a radically rationalistic psychology, paying no heed to any affective factors.¹⁹ This view is not without some support, as Socrates may well believe that doing philosophy has little or nothing to do with how one feels, and should be entirely — if the distinction can be drawn — about what one thinks.²⁰ And typical examples of the sort we anticipated above could be used to suggest that Socrates is against the appeal to the audience's emotions that seems to be the rhetor's main business. Recall here how Polus tries to refute Socrates' point that the wrong-doer who is punished is less wretched than the one who is not. Polus proceeds to enumerate a series of horrendous punishments such as being put on the rack, being castrated, having one's eyes burnt out, and after suffering disgraceful treatments of every kind being finally impaled or pitched and burnt (473c) — an imagery whose tone seems precisely devised, by the pain that its representation provokes in the imagination of the audience, to make us associate those events with evil and thus think that it is indeed *not* better to suffer the punishment. Socrates clearly seems to disapprove of Polus' strategy, as he replies that Polus is 'spooking' him instead of 'refuting' him, and aligns this procedure with Polus' previous appeal to witnesses that had deserved equal contempt on his part (473d3-4).²¹ Laughter, Polus' next device, which seems

19 Thus Cooper claims that 'Socrates is assuming that someone might make someone a good and virtuous person simply by instructing them, through speeches of some sort, in how to behave' (65), thereby ignoring any other factors than the mind or understanding. Wardy, for his part, takes the Socrates of the *Gorgias* to have a 'radically rationalistic psychology' which he contrasts with the interest in rhetoric's emotional appeal under the guidance of philosophy in later dialogues such as the *Phaedrus* (83-4); while Penner claims that, at least for Socrates, '*only philosophical dialogue can improve one's fellow citizens*' (164) and that 'the only access to a person's moral character is by way of reason' (169). Of course these are not the only views. But where affective factors have been recognized, it has usually (though not universally: see e.g. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, 246-7) been difficult to square them with the Socratic intellectualism professed in the *Gorgias*; thus Irwin thinks that the recognition of soul division in the leaky jars passage makes the *Gorgias* 'internally inconsistent on this major issue' (*Plato's Ethics* [Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995], 116). For an extensive critical discussion of the state of the question on the *Gorgias*' moral psychology see my 'Calculating Machines or Leaky Jars? The Moral Psychology of Plato's *Gorgias*,' *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 24 (2004) 55-96.

20 As perhaps e.g. *Laches* 201b, *Gorgias* 489a might make one suppose. I have, however, queried this distinction as applicable to the moral psychology of the *Gorgias* in my 'Calculating Machines.'

21 That Socrates should align these two methods at once is quite telling, and makes

targeted at bringing out feelings of inadequacy in his opponent, is equally censured by Socrates (473e2-3).

But surely this cannot be the whole picture; and Socrates' exchange with Callicles is particularly illuminating in this regard.²² For, as I have emphasized elsewhere, Socrates starts the exchange with Callicles by appealing to a common love (*erôs*) that both feel (481c-d): Socrates is enamoured of Alcibiades and of philosophy, while Callicles' *erôs* is directed to the populace and to Demos. In fact, Socrates goes as far as suggesting that if people did not have common feelings such as this one, but each a private one, human communication would not be easy (481c-d).²³ In this way, he is making their shared *erôs* the cornerstone on which they can try to build fruitful exchange. Even though language — speeches — is still the means by which Socrates tries to reach Callicles' emotions, it is interesting now that Socrates is clearly *addressing those emotions* rather than simply the logical powers of his interlocutor.²⁴ The

one think that Polus may provide a good illustration of Socrates' intriguing remark that the rhetoric that he despises is a form of flattery, solely aimed at producing pleasure. For, in principle, Polus is appealing to very horrendous and painful imaginary scenarios (just as Greek tragedy can do, which Socrates, however, also classifies as flattery aiming to gratify rather than improve the spectator, 502b-c). How can a form of speech which arouses or can arouse pain count as flattery? We can say that the appeal to pleasure here is of the second order: that is, the rhetorician can still be seen as providing pleasure to the crowd by making them feel their values confirmed (cf. Gentzler (19); and on how Greek tragedy does so for Plato see S. Halliwell, 'Plato's Repudiation of the Tragic,' in M.S. Silk, ed., *Tragedy and the Tragic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996), 332-49, esp. 333-5). Thus even if it is painful to imagine having one's eyes burnt out, the person who is part of the crowd will at the same time be relieved by agreeing with Polus that one would never willingly choose that alternative over its opposite. (And the trick, Polus can hope, might work on Socrates precisely by making him uncomfortable as long as he doesn't agree with the crowd.)

22 Even though Socrates had already alluded to his own affective responses to dialogical exchange by referring, for example, to the 'pleasure' that he obtains in discussion; see 458a3 and 462d5-6.

23 According to common Athenian rhetorical procedures, 'the introduction of any speech must establish a bond between speaker and audience if the rest of the speech is to do its work,' as C. Carey puts it, 'Rhetorical Means of Persuasion,' in I. Worthington, ed., *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action* (London: Routledge 1994), 26-45, at 29.

24 Doesn't Socrates' engagement with a person's emotions conflict with his professions of intellectualism recorded in n. 18? As I have argued at some length in my 'Calculating Machines,' the fact that Socrates is appealing to emotions through *logos* betrays his belief that the former are after all amenable to reason (compare the reference even to one's appetites or *epithumiai* as persuadable at 493a); so that the

extent to which this can be seen as borrowing common rhetorical procedures is revealed by Callicles himself, when, precisely after Socrates' appeal to Callicles' emotions that invokes their common *erôs*, he calls Socrates, rather pejoratively, 'a popular orator' (482c5). Immediately afterwards, at 482c-e, Callicles mentions how Socrates has got Gorgias and Polus to concede his points by manipulating their sense of shame (an emotion recorded by Aristotle as a target of rhetorical practices in *Rhetoric* II 6;²⁵ cf. Callicles' description of Socrates' tactics as *dêmêgorika* at 482e4). Whether or not Socrates would endorse such a description,²⁶ we can still invoke more examples of his use of emotional devices, as this kind of technique is also evident in his employment of myth, in a way

Gorgias' intellectualism, properly understood, is not one that excludes affective elements in one's personality. And even though the dialogue later seems to present this *erôs* as a *pathos* that prevents Callicles from being persuaded of Socrates' *logoi* (513c), Socrates still believes that a more frequent and better application of his method will succeed (513c7-d1) — a method that would presumably include channelling that *erôs* towards a worthwhile goal (rather than suppressing, ignoring or annihilating it) as is distinctive of the good rhetorician at 517b.

25 On Aristotle see G. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1963), 95. On the appeal to the emotions as a common rhetorical procedure see also Cole (144) and Carey (26-32).

26 See in particular Callicles' allegation, in this passage, that Socrates falls into lowly *dêmêgoria* 'while professing to pursue the truth' (482e4), as if Socrates' methods were insincere. But Socrates can of course say that even if (or to the extent that) he does appeal to shame, it is in a manner that he takes to be consistent with truth and reason and not (in the common eristic manner) at the expense of truth (after all, at 455c-d he had pointed out to Gorgias that emotions such as *aischunê* can get in the way of genuine dialogical exchange; cf. the expression of a similar concern at 487a-b). Such a procedure would be in line with the intertwining of reason and affect that I presented as characteristic of the Socratic intellectualist position in the *Gorgias* in my 'Calculating Machines.' Certainly, Socrates tells Callicles not to be moved by shame at 489a, which could be taken to signal a 'radical intellectualist' view that denies that the emotions should play any role in argument, and thus (if it is true after all that Socrates appeals to shame, as Callicles suggested at 482c-d) to betray an inconsistency between what Socrates preaches and what he practices. This conclusion, however, need not follow. For Socrates may be advising Callicles not to follow his sense of shame if such a sense is corrupted (as *thumos* can be at *Rep.* IV 441a; after all, it was Callicles himself who complained that certain things are *aischra* only by convention, not by nature, 483a); or he may be trying to force Callicles to see that he is disagreeing with himself if he thinks that he is not prey to such emotion, as is shown later on by Callicles' calling Socrates 'shameless' (494e) and by his eventually having to abandon the equation of indiscriminate pleasure with the good that would lead to the embarrassing concession that the pleasures of the catamite are good. For other discussions of the role of shame in the *Gorgias* see McKim, Irwin (*Plato's Ethics*, 123-4), Kahn (*Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, 138-42); cf. also above, n. 9.

that might seem to clash with his previous criticism of Polus' methods.²⁷ In the final myth of the *Gorgias*, in particular, we see him present very vivid and repulsive images of the unjust soul (e.g. when speaking of the severe scourges and scars that such a soul exhibits through the effect of injustice and the punishments that it deserves, 524e-525a) — a technique that seems to *borrow* rather than discard the procedures that he had previously criticised Polus for, as spooking him (473d). In fact, the myth appears precisely to invite the interlocutor to see the consequences of injustice in an intuitive and immediate manner, through the pain that such a picture occasions rather than by the mediation of reasoning.²⁸ The myth of the leaky jars too, which shows us what it is like to be the victim of greed and unlimited desire, can be seen as intended to excite an emotional response to the issues raised by the dialogical exchange (cf. 492e-494a), and to persuade us about how *painful* that form of life is (see esp. 493e6-494a1).²⁹

II Resolving the Tension

By now it should be clear, I hope, that Socrates cannot consistently present himself as a critic of the use of his interlocutors' rhetorical methods as such. But neither do we need to read that into the text. What our analysis does reveal is that the Socratic dialectic defended in the *Gorgias* is a rather more complex affair than it initially appeared. Cer-

27 See also Socrates' appeal to Callicles' good will (*eunoia*) at 487a and 487d; for the appeal to this emotion as a typical rhetorical practice to secure trust and bond with the audience see Carey (27-9), who also mentions among such practices the appeal to one's good character (*ethos*) (34-6); compare here Socrates' self-description to Gorgias as the kind of man who would not be moved by competitiveness but by a desire to know the truth of the matter at 458a-b, which immediately gains Gorgias' adherence; and a similar appeal to character in the exchange with Callicles e.g. at 487e-488b.

28 Further, Socrates' very description of his myth as a true story (523a) may be intended to counteract, on the same plane, Polus' appeal to the story of Archelaus at 471a-d (which Socrates' myth reverses, by presenting Archelaus as an example of the most miserable man at 525c-d).

29 Compare here, in particular, how Socrates uses this picture with the hope of persuading Callicles that the life of unrestraint could not be *happier* than its opposite (494a2-3), in a way that seems to take up directly Polus' similar appeal to painful imaginary scenarios to show that the person who undergoes the punishment could not be *happier* than the one who does not (473c5).

tainly, Socrates retains in the *Gorgias* his interest in truth as the primary goal of the *elenchos*, which is explicitly opposed to the eristic purpose of winning an argument; thus Socrates describes himself to Gorgias as driven to dialectic (*dialegesthai*) through a desire to know the truth of the matter (453b, cf. 458a-b), and rejects competitiveness and desire for victory as the right kind of motivation for engaging in conversation (457d-e, 515b).³⁰ Now, granted that, one can still detect a distinctive move in the *Gorgias*, where not only Socrates' words but also his actions are most likely meant to teach us something about rhetoric. Such a move can be interpreted as an attempt by Plato to incorporate even his opponents' weapons where appropriate so that one utilizes all possible means of attaining persuasion. For there is no question that in this dialogue Socrates seeks to persuade no less than the rhetoricians do. Socrates himself, as we have seen, often describes his own activity as trying to persuade his interlocutor (cf. 513c7-d1).³¹ In doing so, he may align his attempt at persuasion with arts such as mathematics, which also try to persuade about what they teach in a way that seeks to elicit knowledge rather than mere belief (453e, 454d-e).³² And yet it seems that persuasion itself is most effective by appealing to a person's emotions — as when Gorgias takes pride in his ability, through his rhetorical skills, to change the patient's *desires* more successfully than a trained physician (456b). But why shouldn't it add to the skill of a doctor if he can also predispose his patient emotionally to the treatment?³³ If the doctor does so, he can hardly be upbraided for it, assuming that he has knowledge and that he is seeking the welfare of the patient (cf. 455b, 503e-504b). Socrates himself talks later on of the right kind of rhetoric as being able to *change* (in the sense of re-directing — *metabibazein* — rather than suppressing) the

30 But note how Socrates can also be seen as trying to re-orient that contentious drive to the right goal, rather than suppress it altogether, by telling Callicles that they must compete (cf. *philonikôs*) to know what is true and what is false with regard to their argument at 505e4-5.

31 This is independent of the fact that Callicles thinks Socrates does not succeed: see e.g. 494a6, 501c7-8, 513c4-6.

32 Indeed, we are told at 453d-454a that anyone who teaches persuades about what he teaches (and this persuasion is treated as 'the instructive kind': *tês didaskalikês*, 453e7). At 453a-b Socrates talks of 'persuading himself' that he is the kind of man who would not undertake dialogue from any other desire than to know the truth of the matter.

33 I have explained how this is also likely to be the case with regard to the learning of crafts such as arithmetic or carpentry in my (2004: 60-61).

citizens' desires (517b), and this recognition of two kinds of rhetoric (a true or good one on the one hand, and a merely flattering one on the other) is crucial to our argument.

For the rhetoric and kind of persuasion that Socrates criticizes is the one that is targeted to producing beliefs which may be false (454d-e), and to manipulating the feelings of the audience (through the production of instant gratification) for self-advantage rather than for their good (502e). This he had criticized as mere flattery, ignoble and illiberal, which proceeds at random and could thus never aspire to the status of a craft or *technê*. For it belongs to the latter to operate according to order and planning, seeking the real good of the object under its care, and with knowledge rather than by mere guesswork (462c-d, 463a, 464c-465a). To this extent, the 'flattering' kind of rhetoric is contrasted with a 'true,' 'good,' or 'technical' kind, which is interested in the common good and seeks to make the citizens better by promoting virtue and order in their souls (502e-503a, 504d, 517a). As opposed to the flattering kind (517a), the technical kind of rhetoric is presented as something of a normative ideal (cf. 515b-c with 503a).

It is quite possible, in this regard, that Socrates may consider himself an example of someone who attempts to employ the true art of rhetoric — as when he tells Callicles (at 521d) that he is one of the few Athenians, if not the only one, who undertakes to exercise the true political art (politics and rhetoric, we must note, going very much hand in hand in this context).³⁴ Socrates may indeed believe he is far from doing that successfully,³⁵ but yet what matters here is his intent, in a way that, as

34 Insofar as rhetoric was 'indeed the main tool of politics in Athenian democracy,' in the words of Vickers (84). For politics being associated with rhetoric in Socrates' Athens, see e.g. *Gorg.* 500c-d, 513b, and Ober (206-9). Cf. E.R. Dodds, *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1959), 4. For Socrates' characterizing rhetoric and politics, on an ideal plane, in terms of the same goal (the improvement of the citizens) cf. 503a, 504d-e and 515c. North confirms this line when pointing out that 'Socrates is able to make this statement [i.e. that he is the only Athenian that attempts to practice true politics] because he now admits the theoretical possibility of a noble art of rhetoric,' even though she thinks, contrary to what I am arguing here, that 'how such a noble rhetoric would actually operate the *Gorgias* does not reveal' (H. North, 'Combing and Curling: *Orator Summus Plato*,' *Illinois Classical Studies* [1991] 201-19, at 210).

35 After all, he only says that he tries (or attempts, *epicheirein*, d7) to employ the true political art: cf. Irwin (*Plato: Gorgias*, 240). (*Pace* Beversluis, for whom 'Socrates claims that he alone practices the true political art' [365].) Similarly, after Callicles confesses that he is not persuaded, Socrates indicates that Callicles will be if they examine the matter 'better' (513c), which is consistent with his previous professions of ignorance (488a), just as when he tells Callicles that he has never seen the good

we have seen, seeks to incorporate rather than reject at least some of the procedures of the flattering kind.

In this regard, we may profit from looking at the distinction between instrumental and master arts at 517 ff. This passage is illuminating in that practices that had before been aligned with rhetoric, condemned as mere forms of flattery and denied the status of an art, such as cooking and cosmetics,³⁶ are now treated as subservient or instrumental arts (*diakonikas*), under the guidance of master arts (*despoinas*) such as medicine and gymnastics. Even though it is still denied that *by themselves* they can take proper care of the body — and to that extent they are still illiberal and menial — it is conceded that it belongs to the master arts to rule all those arts (*archein pasôn tôn technôn*) and make use (*chrêsthai*) of their works (517e). This suggests that cooking, cosmetics, and by implication rhetoric (if ‘the same applies to the soul,’ 518a5), which had previously been criticized as pseudo-arts and treated as ignoble in their attempt to take on the appearance of an art (465a-c), can now become real arts — albeit of a subordinate nature — if they are put to serve the goals of their respective master arts. For the latter *know* (rather than merely guess) the good in each case: health for the body in the case of medicine and gymnastics (517e-518a), virtue for the soul in the case of philosophy/politics, here probably implicitly equated with the ‘true’ or ‘good’ kind of rhetoric in a way that anticipates the ideal of the philosopher-ruler in the *Republic*.³⁷ The *Phaedrus* will likewise insist on the importance of subordinating rhetoric to philosophy (260d ff.),³⁸ and the *Gorgias* itself

kind of rhetoric (503b1). The fact that Socrates does not claim to be a master of the art that he tries to put into practice safeguards him against the charge of insincerity.

36 In fact, the specific example given is clothing, but note that clothing had before been treated as part of cosmetics, at 465b4.

37 For how the true kind of rhetoric advocated in the *Gorgias* anticipates the marriage of philosophy and politics in the *Republic* see e.g. Irwin (*Plato: Gorgias*, 215-16); Kahn (*Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, 131); R. Parry, *Plato's Craft of Justice* (Albany: SUNY Press 1996), 12 ff. This kind of politics will probably subsume the institutions of legislation and justice that were said to take real care of the soul in the discussion with Polus, at 464a-c.

38 In fact, rhetorical procedures are in the *Phaedrus* said to be an indispensable preliminary to the possession of the *technê* (269a-c), in line with the *Gorgias*' suggestion that the subservient arts are instrumental to the goals of their respective master arts. But the *Phaedrus* too acknowledges that without knowledge (as would be afforded by a dialectical examination of the nature of the soul, its various species, and the kinds of speech suited to each, as well by an adequate grasp of the truth), rhetoric can hardly be called a *technê*, much as the possessor of the ‘truly rhetorical and persuasive art’ (269c-d) needs to make use of common rhetorical procedures in

moves on to point out how past politicians have only promoted an apparent good, not a real good, in the soul of their citizens (518b ff.), which is what true politics must do (515c). But this is, indeed, what we see Socrates himself attempt to do when, for example, declaring that he is trying to 'restrain' (*kolazein*) Callicles so that he may opt for a life of moderation (505c).

What Socrates' opponents seem to handle well, in particular, is the appeal to one's emotions; it will then be a matter of borrowing these tactics if they can be put to good use. What makes the difference, though, is that the choice and use of these devices is now subordinated to the ends that are distinctive of philosophy, which provides the criterion to assess whether the former are rightly or wrongly employed. Thus Socrates can still rebuke Polus at 473d, if the basis for approval or disapproval is provided by the nature of the goal pursued in each case. At any rate, it seems that whoever has a clear conception of the goal can indeed learn a great deal from common practitioners of rhetoric, however misguided their intent may be. In this regard we see that there may be truth in Callicles' description of Socrates' methods as those of a popular orator (482c5, cf. 519d5-6). In using them, and in doing so self-consciously (cf. 519d-e), Socrates seems to betray the presumption that the human being is something rather more complex than a dry intellect. Perhaps the goal can in this sense be described as submitting the emotions to the domain of reason, but without ignoring them.³⁹ It is then no

his art (269b-270b, 270e-272b, 273d-e). The goal of true rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*, as in the *Gorgias*, involves implanting virtue in the soul through persuasion (270b, 271a). In this manner the philosopher emerges in the *Phaedrus* as the true rhetorician, in a way that is continuous with the positive use that we have seen Socrates contemplate for rhetoric in the *Gorgias*. Thus I take issue with those studies which have contrasted the *Gorgias* with the *Phaedrus* precisely in this regard, either by treating Socrates' critique of rhetoric as flattery in the *Gorgias* as an attack on the 'nature' of rhetoric (as if something were intrinsically wrong with it: see e.g. Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, 97 and 368 n. 6), or, in general, by attributing to Plato an intransigent attitude towards rhetoric in that dialogue (such as J. de Romilly, *The Great Sophists in Periclean Athens* [Oxford: Oxford University Press 1992], 71; G. Nicholson, *Plato's Phaedrus* [West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press 1999], 51; M. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986), who claims that the *Phaedrus* departs from the *Gorgias*' 'very general condemnation of rhetoric' [227]; and J. Cooper, *Plato: Complete Works* [Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997], who claims 'whereas in *Gorgias* Socrates paints an unrelievedly negative picture of the practice of rhetoric, in *Phaedrus* he finds legitimate uses for it, so long as it is kept properly subordinate to philosophy' [792]).

39 I have analysed this essential feature of the moral psychology of the *Gorgias* in my 'Calculating Machines.' For suggestions that the *Gorgias* represents an important

accident that the *Republic* will pass on to emphasize the persuasive power of myths in the education of children⁴⁰ and the adequate training of one's emotions. This will in turn constitute an indispensable step towards the successful use of the *elenchos* and of dialectic at a later stage (cf. *Rep.* VII 537c-539e).

Thus we should not be misled by the sharply critical tone that accompanies Socrates' description of rhetoric as ignoble flattery (464c ff., 465a-b). For Socrates' tone, it should by now be clear, concerns not so much his opponents' methods as such, as the use of such methods when they do not follow the goals of reason.⁴¹ This hypothesis is reinforced by its bringing consistency to Socrates' various and apparently conflicting remarks, such as his condemnation of cookery and the like in the discussion with Polus and his subsequent presentation of them as instrumental arts in the discussion with Callicles. But just as Socrates affirms that what we want when we act is not what we do, but that for the sake of which we do everything we do (467c),⁴² we can say that rhetoric, and its

stage in Plato's growing awareness of the role played by emotive or sub-rational factors in one's psyche see e.g. G. Klosko, *The Development of Plato's Political Theory* (New York: Methuen 1986), 50-4; and D. Scott, 'Platonic Pessimism and Moral Education,' *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 17 (1999) 15-36, even though I disagree with their (and a widespread) view that the *Gorgias* marks a transition towards the acknowledgement of irrational affective elements in one's personality (possibly intransigent to reason) which would represent an abandonment of Socratic intellectualism. See here again my 'Calculating Machines'; on why I do not believe we need to read such a view into the *Republic* see my 'Akrasia in the *Republic*: Does Plato Change His Mind?' *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 20 (2001), 107-48.

40 Cf. *Rep.* II 377b ff.

41 Pace Gentzler, who claims that 'Sophistic tactics cannot be used to achieve the goals that Socrates professes' (24); and those scholars mentioned in n. 2 above. But see below, n. 42.

42 Dodds was already disturbed by this statement, which, he claimed, would have thereafter 'a long and shocking history' (236). Do we have reason to be disturbed? If the end justifies the means, then even lying, or using logical fallacies, may be justified for the sake of attaining persuasion, much as the goal is now called good. I am not here dealing with this larger problem, which would also involve analysing whether Socrates thinks that all or only some of the procedures of the flattering kind of rhetoric can be subordinated to a good goal. But one can immediately see that, even within the coordinates of the theory just laid out, Socrates may object to certain practices (such as implanting falsehoods in one's soul, 458a, or pandering to every whim of the beloved, 481d-482c) on the grounds that no real benefit can be derived from them — just as not anything can count as a means towards a goal (e.g. contaminated food can never be used for healthy cooking). Thus the subordination of rhetoric to philosophy will have the effect, to a great extent, of *transforming* the

common procedures, would be approved of if they can be made instrumental to the philosophical cause. In other words, it is possible to see at least some of the procedures of rhetoric, considered by themselves, as value-neutral, so that they take on a positive or a negative value depending on how they are used.⁴³ Thus Socrates had categorized instrumental actions as ‘sometimes good, sometimes bad’ (467e7-468a1), and remarked that we do want to do them *if* they are beneficial (468c2-5),⁴⁴ later moving on to treat the practice of rhetoric itself as instrumental (*diakonikê*, cf. 518a).⁴⁵

The same can be said of Socrates’ critique of rhetoric, in his exchange with Polus, as a habitude of producing pleasure; for even there we are told that it is not the search after pleasure as such, but pleasure without consideration for the best, that resists the treatment of an art (465a; cf. 501c-d). After all, some pleasures are later on said to ‘produce’ — note: not merely to accompany — some good, such as bodily health, strength or other excellences — and to that extent those pleasures themselves can be called ‘good’ or ‘beneficial’ (499c-d). We are told, then, that one must choose the right kind of pleasure and pain, given that the good is the goal (*telos*) of all actions, and one must do everything else for its sake (499e-500a). The need for a technician who would distinguish between good and bad pleasures is in this passage, however, emphasized (500a), in a way that points again to the importance of subordinating the choice of pleasures to the right criterion and the proper art. Likewise, even though

nature of rhetoric (and even dropping some of the procedures that it employs when put to bad use), rather than keeping it intact by merely superimposing a new goal.

43 See especially the contrast between ‘fine’ (*kalon*) and ‘base’ (*aischron*) at 503a, where the very practice that we saw Socrates at one point attempt, that of *dêmêgoria* or popular oratory, is condemned as base precisely insofar as it lacks ‘the preoccupation to make the citizens’ souls as good as possible’ (503a7-8).

44 On this issue see T. Penner, ‘Desire and Power in Socrates,’ *Apeiron* 24 (1991), 147-201, esp. 177-80, 196. Socrates does not say that we do bad things (such as killing) for the sake of good ones; rather, he treats the instrumental actions (such as killing itself) as beneficial if they bring about some good (498c). Accordingly, it is wrong to claim that ‘even though rhetoric in itself is a bad, even shameful, thing, it might still be able to serve what is good’ (R. Weiss, ‘Oh, Brother! The Fraternity of Philosophy and Rhetoric in Plato’s *Gorgias*,’ *Interpretation* 30 [2003] 195-206, at 205). The point is rather that, if rhetoric can be put to a good end, it will have turned out to be beneficial.

45 For the ambivalent use of rhetoric in this regard cf. 517a5-6; for how this kind of practice can be ‘subservient’ (*diakonikê*) either to knowledge or to ignorant and harmful pandering contrast 518a1-5 with 517b3-5, 518c-d; and for how rhetoric, as any other action, must be used for the sake of the just see 527c, cf. 480d.

rhetoric is criticized because of its appeal to the appetites of the person (518e2-3, 517b3-5), it is made clear none the less that the true kind of rhetoric will be capable of re-directing, or channeling, her appetites (517b), in such a way (we may infer) that she takes pleasure in the right thing.⁴⁶ After all, Socrates had earlier portrayed himself as the kind of person who takes pleasure in being refuted (458a3), just as we can imagine a patient taking pleasure in eating frugally with the prospect of health.

With these elements in mind, we can now make better sense of Socrates' own use of myth as a legitimate tool to try to foster in his interlocutor the cultivation of the right kind of disposition, or to change his feelings altogether when they get in the way of appreciating the force of a philosophical argument (as implied at 513c7-8). In this respect, the *Gorgias* may represent a point in Plato's career where he is particularly aware of the possible usefulness of this kind of strategy. Even though the appeal to the emotions in previous dialogues had been described partly as a sophistic or rhetorical tactic, involving some kind of 'charm' (cf. *Menexenus* 235b-c; *Euthydemus* 289e-290a; *Prot.* 315a8-b1), Socratic method itself is on occasion described in terms of a charm,⁴⁷ and Plato will, after the *Gorgias*, often refer to his own myths as 'charms.'⁴⁸ Here

46 See here my 'Calculating Machines,' 83-7.

47 See *Charm.* 156d-157c, *Meno* 80a, *Theaetetus* 157c-d. As I argue in 'Calculating Machines' (92-4), the *Gorgias* may press particularly strongly the question how that charm can be most successfully utilised, so that philosophical method will get to produce persuasion and lasting effects on the soul. The 'charming' effect of philosophical *logos* (intended to counteract the seductive effects of bad poetry) is restated at *Rep.* X 608a-b, as if philosophy itself could provide therapy to the psyche: see here Bennett Simon, *Mind and Madness in Ancient Greece: The Classical Roots of Modern Psychiatry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1978), 182-6. Presumably, the power of a charm is to make a person behave as one wants her to behave: think of cases of hypnosis, which have been used by psychologists to alter forms of behaviour in the patient. Also, a charm can be used to cause or dispel certain feelings: thus, at *Phaedo* 77d5-78a2 it is implied that Socrates' words are a charm which will have the effect of dispelling fear, while in the *Symposium* (215c-216a) Alcibiades describes Socrates' bewitching effect and how his words get to his feelings more than Pericles' or any other rhetorician's.

48 See *Phaedo* 114d1-7, *Laws* VIII 840b5-c3, X 903a10-b2, cf. X 887c7-d5; in the *Laws*, charms are said to promote psychic harmony, especially if administered from infancy (II 659e1-5). Pace E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1951), 212 with 226, n. 20, who contends that a charm is some irrational resort to magic, one should note that these 'charms' are to a large extent accompanied by *logoi* even in Plato's final work: on the *Laws*, see G. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1960), 310. On the relation between myth and persuasion see *Rep.* X 621b8-c1, III 415c7; on the relation between

again what marks the difference between Socratic and sophistic use of charm is the goal thereby pursued. Towards the end of the *Gorgias* we see Socrates combine two methods that he had used separately before: *makrologia* (without myth) on the one hand, myth (of a briefer kind — recall the leaky jars) on the other. It has thus become readily apparent that the positive kind of rhetoric that Socrates defends in this dialogue does not exclude, but rather subordinates, procedures which seemed distinctive of the opposite kind.

Let us finally take a bird's eye view of what happens after the *Gorgias*: we get more and more exposition (what Socrates in the *Gorgias* would have called *makrologia*) and less genuine dialogical exchange; we are told that one should not mind the length or brevity of speech as long as it is appropriate;⁴⁹ myths will abound, hand in hand with the overt recognition that there is more to the person than his or her reason (so that one will need to 'persuade' one's emotions to follow the latter);⁵⁰ and rhetoric will be explicitly presented as subservient to the philosophical or true political cause.⁵¹ While these facts are easily recognizable features of the evolution of Platonic thought, it has not been so obvious to what extent they may be seen as concessions (or even positive debts) to the kind of rhetoric practiced by Plato's opponents as criticized in the *Gorgias*, and how those concessions arguably constitute a noteworthy aspect of the *Gorgias* itself.⁵²

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myth, persuasion and incantation see e.g. *Phaedrus* 265b-c and L. Brisson, *Platon, les mots et les mythes* (Paris: F. Maspero 1982), 93-105. The emotional appeal of myths has also been explored by, among others, J. Elias, *Plato's Defence of Poetry* (New York: SUNY Press 1984).

49 Cf. e.g. *Pol.* 286b ff., *Laws* IV 722a-b.

50 Just as in the *Gorgias* one's *epithumiai* are described as 'persuadable' at 493a (even though this is probably said in a context that alludes to the effect of flattering rhetoric on one's emotions). In the *Republic* we are told that the best way to 'hold in check' one's appetites is by 'persuading' them that it is better not to be fulfilled or by taming them with argument, rather than by compulsion and fear (VIII 554c-d; cf. VIII 548b7-8 and IX 586d4-e2).

51 Cf. *Phaedrus* 260d ff., *Politicus* 304c-d.

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