

FRIENDSHIP AND WAR: TRUE POLITICAL ART AS THE ALLIANCE OF PHILOSOPHY AND RHETORIC IN PLATO'S *GORGIAS**

*Amistad y guerra: el verdadero arte de la política como
alianza entre filosofía y retórica en el Gorgias de Platón*

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the relation between philosophy and rhetoric from a new perspective by highlighting the dramatic nature of the dialogue and paying attention not only to what is said about philosophy and rhetoric but also to what is shown, especially through Gorgias' intervention throughout the dialogue in order to save a community of dialogue that inquires into the good and the just. This re-conception of the relation between philosophy and rhetoric implies a re-conception of the practice of politics itself, rooted in a philosophy concerned with turning individual souls toward the good and a rhetoric that motivates individuals to be turned in the same direction by the words of others.

Keywords: Socrates, Gorgias, friendship, political philosophy, rhetoric.

RESUMEN

El artículo explora la relación entre filosofía y retórica desde una nueva perspectiva al enfatizar la naturaleza dramática del diálogo y, por tanto, poniéndole atención no sólo a lo que se dice sobre filosofía y retórica, sino también a lo que se muestra, especialmente por las intervenciones de Gorgias a lo largo del diálogo con el fin de salvar a la comunidad de diálogo que investiga lo bueno y lo justo. Esta reconcepción de la relación entre filosofía y retórica implica una reconcepción de la práctica de la política misma, fundada en una filosofía que busca girar las almas individuales hacia el bien y una retórica que motiva a los individuos a ser girados en esa misma dirección por las palabras de los otros.

Palabras clave: Sócrates, Gorgias, amistad, filosofía política, retórica.

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If two men go together, side by side, one man may spy a thing before his friend [...] And if a man spies something on his own[...]then he immediately goes around looking for some to show it to, to get some kind of information, and he keeps on looking until he finds someone.

Homer in Plato's *Protagoras* (348d1-9)

In the *Gorgias*, Socrates declares that he is one of the few Athenians, or perhaps the only one, that practices the true political art by speaking on every occasion with a view towards the good and the just (521d7-e1). This is the only place in the dialogues where Socrates recognizes himself as a true politician. Of course, the question is: what does Socrates mean by that declaration? What is the difference between a false political art and a true one?

Although it is perplexing to see how Socrates qualifies politics as true or false, it does seem that Socrates is not being ironic by saying to Callicles that he is a true politician. In order to understand what Socrates means by politics, the relationship between philosophy and rhetoric must be redefined. By so doing, we can understand not only what Socratic politics does and intends to do with the individuals with whom he is engaged in dialogical practices that inquire into the good and the just, but also what Platonic politics does and intends to do with the readers engaged in reading dialogues that try to flesh out the nature of the good.

The dramatic nature of the dialogue sheds new light on debates regarding the relation between rhetoric and politics, although this does not mean that what is shown in the dialogue, through the relationships among the different interlocutors, can be extrapolated to what happens to the relationship between the concepts discussed, especially rhetoric, philosophy and friendship. Rather, I want to suggest that the relationship of the interlocutors can be a new way to shed light on the debate over the relationship between rhetoric, philosophy, and the practice of Socratic politics. In this sense, my reading is just a suggestion that is grounded in a new wave of reading the dialogues, namely, an approach that emphasizes the dialogical nature of Plato's texts and the awareness that what happens and what is shown in the dialogues can have implications for what is discussed in the dialogues.

Thus, I will emphasize what is *shown* in the dialogue: the desire (βούλομαι) of Socrates to speak with Gorgias and finally the interventions of Gorgias throughout Socrates' dialogue with Polus and Callicles. I will argue that the dialogue itself, the relation between philosophy and rhetoric and the practice of politics, based on what is shown in the dialogue, oscillates in a thin line between friendship

and war. It is no coincidence that the first words of the dialogue are ‘in war and battle’ (πόλεμος) but immediately after we hear those words, the word “feast” comes into light as a reminder that what is at stake is not only a battle between old enemies (philosophy and rhetoric), but also a possible friendship that may lead to a reconception of politics. Thus the dialogue is trying to build a community that turns individuals toward the good and the just and that inquires through dialogue what the nature of the good is. This is the aim of a Socratic politics that is being reshaped by Socrates’ encounter with Gorgias and by what Socrates learned from Gorgias’ art. This dramatic interpretation construes the dialogue not as a dialogue about politics and philosophy (Vickers 103), or about the limitations and power of rhetoric (Nichols 1998), or about the good life (Klosko 1984), or about a particular period of Socrates’ life (Stauffer 8), but as a dialogue that has three intertwined layers: Socrates’s life, the relation between rhetoric and philosophy, and the practice of politics as the inquiry into the possibility of a community of dialogue. Hence, on my account, this is Ariadne’s thread for reading the *Gorgias*, a dialogue that starts with an allusion to war, makes its way to the possibility of friendship, and is silent about the possibility of constituting a community of dialogue aiming toward the good and grounded on philosophy and rhetoric.¹

Socrates’ Life: The Concern about the Other and about Oneself

At the end of the *Protagoras*, Socrates makes a statement that keeps its resonance in the *Gorgias* as well:

[I am] trying to think ahead, carefully, about the whole future course of my life that I take so much trouble over these things [...] it would be a real pleasure to have a thorough look into these things with you [Protagoras]. You more than anyone. (361d5-9)

This assertion is made at the moment in which Protagoras seems to re-evaluate and change his belief that the good (ἀρετή) can be taught, while Socrates appears to turn his belief in the opposite direction. Although at that moment Socrates was, more or less, in the middle of his life, he was concerned about its future. If we assume that his life had been an unconditional commitment to examining himself and turning other people’s souls toward an endless questioning

1 Stauffer has insightfully explained the necessity of reading Platonic dialogues as a sort of journey. In Stauffer’s words: “Plato’s dialogues [just as our lives] are unfolding dramas, full of puzzle, perplexities and even intentionally flawed arguments [...] they require readers to wonder, to question, even to speculate and then test speculations against later passages” (Stauffer 7).

and ceaseless investigation of the good, the just, the beautiful, and the truth, then his concern is not solely a selfish one. It also concerns the possibility of turning people's souls and constituting an involved community of dialogue formed by members that are open to being moved by others and able to reexamine themselves in the course of their conversations with others, as well as in the conversation with oneself. This is, on my account, the practice of Socratic politics.

In his conversation with Protagoras, Socrates acknowledges the possibility of the impossibility of turning others toward the good only by means of conversing with them. In other words, Socrates faces, on the one hand, the limitation of his philosophy of turning others toward the good, and, on the other, the need *either* to complement philosophy with a *certain kind* of rhetoric *or* to reconstruct the notion of philosophy by coming to terms with a noble rhetoric (*Grg.* 504d6-7) in order to have political effects. This is why in the *Gorgias* Socrates is the one who wants (βούλομαι)² to speak with Gorgias, and “learn from him what the power of the man's art is, and what it is that he professes and teaches” (447b9-10). This stands in contrast to the *Protagoras*, where Socrates went to speak to a rhetorician because he was concerned for Hippocrates (310d3-4); it stands in contrast to the *Republic* as well, where “Polemarchus must playfully compel Socrates to join the group whose leisurely discussion will investigate justice” (Nichols 131).

What Socrates will share with Gorgias in his conversation is the possibility of cultivating a friendship and creating a community of dialogue. Thus, the harmonious and respectful tone in which the dialogue between them develops shows a common concern, a shared aim: to constitute a community of dialogue in which friends are mutually concerned for each other and allow themselves to be vulnerable by risking their beliefs and ways of life to the persuasive appeals of others (*cf.* Colapietro 1988). In short, the members of a community driven by agents and patients are able to turn themselves and be turned by one another toward a questioning of the good. This is the feast that

2 The verb (βούλομαι) is a deponent verb in classical Greek, which means that it has a passive form but an active meaning. Hence it reveals, to a certain degree, that desire or want is only possible if one is an agent and a patient at the same time. Desire is something that comes to us and drags us to something else. If Socrates desires something from Gorgias, the grammatical structure suggests that both Socrates and Gorgias are patients and agents at the same time with respect to each other. Perhaps the friendly relation that would be formed between them, as I will argue in this paper, is captured in the way Plato uses this verb to motivate the event of the dialogue. *Socrates wants something from Gorgias* (βούλομαι γὰρ πυθέσθαι παρ' αὐτοῦ) (*Grg.* 504d6-7).

Socrates as well as Gorgias are longing for, but inevitably the framework of the dialogue –as marked by the first words that Callicles pronounces: in war and battle (*Grg.* 447a1)– puts forth the prejudice that Socrates' motivation is to prove the superiority of philosophy over rhetoric. In more general terms, the words expressed by Callicles reveal the preconception that any relation between philosophy and rhetoric is first and foremost agonistic and bellicose. Yet friendship, as Socrates acknowledges later in the dialogue, is necessary for communicating with one another:

Callicles, if human beings did not have some feeling [πάθος] that was the same [...] but if some one of us suffered some private feeling different from what the others feel, it would not be easy to point out one's own affection to the other [...] *we are two lovers.* (481c5-d3; italics mine)

This *shared* ἔρωϋ is the necessary common ground for, yet not the guarantee of, a community of dialogue and inquiry.

If war and battle provide the framework of the dialogue and the constitution of a community of dialogue identifies the motivation, then the dialogue will display, throughout its four stages (Socrates-Gorgias; Socrates-Polus; Socrates-Callicles; Socrates-Socrates), a tension between an *agonistic dialogue* which forestalls the possibility of a community of dialogue and a *filial dialogue* which is its precondition. These two oppositional but intertwined motifs (πόλεμος-φιλία) are what shape the *Gorgias* as a political dialogue. On the one hand, the community between philosophy and rhetoric forged by Gorgias and Socrates in the first part of the dialogue is gradually corrupted over the course of the dialogue, ending with a peculiar sort of dialogue between Socrates and himself about the afterlife. On the other hand, the initial concern of Socrates about the future of his life makes him also concerned about the others (Gorgias, Polus and Callicles). In the end, the concern about Socrates' own life cannot be separated from his concern for the soul of Callicles, whom Socrates proves incapable of moving. Only by taking part in a community of dialogue can one take part in the feast of one's life or in a political relation characterized by friendship and care. Callicles is the one who opens the dialogue and the one who closes it, but as Benardete has pointed out, "Callicles, who is not known from elsewhere, would thus represent the time without being *anyone* of the time"³(7; italics mine). I would add that *Callicles is nobody and everybody (Jedermann), the possible future reader, us.*³ Hence Socrates' concern for Callicles is

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 3 I am not attempting to make this identification on the basis of Callicles' beliefs, although they are quite pervasive in our days. Rather, I want to establish a comparison

Plato's concern for the reader: what is at stake is not only the turning of individual souls, but also the possibility of a political community of dialogue –not restricted to Athens– that questions the good and the just.⁴ Rhetoric and philosophy are perhaps two allies in the war against the breakdown and impossibility of *that* possibility, two allies in the struggle of building a political community in which the individual souls turn toward the good. Indeed, perhaps we should speak about a *Philosophical-Political-Rhetoric* that brings hope for the possibility of community in an age of cultural devastation (*cf.* Lear 2006).

Philosophy and Rhetoric: A Friendly Alliance

Platonic attacks against rhetoric are grounded in the claim that it pursues pleasure and not justice. Socrates' remark that rhetoric is mere flattery (κολακεία)⁵ (*Grg.* 502d7-8) has been taken as his hostile stance against rhetoric. Yet at some points of the dialogue Socrates opens the possibility for a re-construction of rhetoric, that is to say, the creation of a noble kind of rhetoric that instead of being mere flattery, would aim toward the good and the just. In Socrates' words: "one must use rhetoric thus, always aiming at what is just" (527c3-4). It is crucial to understand that putting this declaration at the end of the dialogue is not an arbitrary decision on Plato's part, but rather the manifestation that Socrates really received what he *wanted* at the

between Callicles' dogmatism in the sense that he is not able to re-evaluate his beliefs, and his shamelessness. My interpretation is not far from Ann Michelini's, who has asked in her article "On Rudeness and Irony in Plato's *Gorgias*": "Should we assume that Callicles is intended, in the context of the dialogue as a literary work, as an example, a warning to others?" (59). It seems to me that the fact that Callicles might be a fictional character reveals that the *Gorgias* is a dialogue that goes beyond its own epoch, a dialogue whose historicity and temporality reveal a timelessness that extends the dialogue through time endlessly.

- 4 Christopher Long has pointed out that in order to think Socratic and Platonic politics we have to distinguish two layers of interpretation. On the one hand, we have 'Socratic topology' which "points to the place (τόπος) where Socrates practices a way of speaking (λέγειν) that attempts to orient individuals and their relations to one another toward the just and the good [...] The topography of Platonic politics thus points to the place (τόπος) where Plato practices a way of writing (γράφειν) that attempts to turn the attention of the reader toward the question of the good and the just" (Long 2009).
- 5 Jacob has elucidated the meaning of the classical Greek word κολακεία, which, on his account, means "an excessive flattery that goes far beyond civility, respect and decency. It is almost always to be understood as motivated by a desire for underhanded gain and shames its practitioners. It carries a heavy burden of disdain: no one would want to be accused of it" (Jacob 82).

beginning of the dialogue, namely, to *learn*⁶ from Gorgias his art and the power of it (447c1-2).⁷ Nevertheless, one cannot stop thinking about what this philosophical-political-rhetoric would mean, as opposed to a flattering rhetoric. More importantly, we have to ask about the notion of rhetoric that is implied and constructed throughout the whole dialogue, so that it becomes an activity interrelated with philosophy. Socrates, as the ambassador of philosophy, *wants* to speak with Gorgias, the ambassador of rhetoric. Both activities will be transformed throughout the dialogue and, as an indication of that, we will have to trace the transformation suffered by Gorgias and Socrates after their dialogue, a transformation only made possible by their willingness and openness towards the other and a shared hospitality toward the new. In short, their dialogue and the community it constitutes is grounded in the spirit of hospitality (ξενία), just like the ambassadors of two cities at war. As Mark Munn has pointed out:

In dealings with representatives of other states, whether they were ambassadors of rival powers [...] or representatives of [...] allies [...], official transactions were facilitated by *personal ties of friendship among such men*. In some cases these ties were ancestral, having been formalized long ago in the rituals of ξενία, guest-friendship. (Munn 67; italics mine)

This guest-friendship between philosophy and rhetoric might facilitate a new relationship by redefining the practices of their disciplines and the relation of these practices to their political effects.

The first question that Socrates poses to Gorgias through Chaerophon reveals two essential traits of friendship that point to a possible community of dialogue (a political community): (i) speaking on behalf of the other and (ii) questioning who the other is (ὅστις ἐστίν). On the one hand, Chaerophon, as a friend of Socrates, speaks on behalf of the latter, and Socrates lets Chaerophon speak on his behalf. To speak with one's voice is as vitally important as to let the other speak on behalf of oneself, because only thus may we undertake a communal articulation of *being together*. It is an acknowledgement

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- 6 The Greek verb that it is used in that phrase is πύθεσθαι (to learn from/ be taught). What strikes me as odd is that the traditional way to write that verb in Attic Greek is πειθέσθαι. The word for "being persuaded or to be persuaded by" is πείθεσθαι. Thus, there is a keen phonetic and grammatical similarity between to learn from and to be persuaded by. When Socrates says he wants to learn from Gorgias, there is a subtle allusion that he wants to be persuaded by him of the power of his art. From the very beginning, to persuade and to be persuaded by another is a constant in the dialogue.
- 7 This is what Stauffer has called the mystery of Socrates' interest in Gorgias (Stauffer 20). Throughout this paper, I will try to address the problem of this mystery, which is the very motivation of the dialogue.

that a sense of togetherness can only be achieved by speaking in one's own voice and relying on the other's utterances of one's own words. This relates to Socrates' *Apology* (17a1-18c8) where, as Stauffer points out, "the city's hostility towards him [was] in part because he was slandered many years *while no one spoke up on his behalf*" (Stauffer 10-11). Human transcendence, if such a thing is possible, is the attempt of being together and questioning the nature of the good and the just. Not only do Chaerophon and Polus speak on behalf of Socrates and Gorgias, but Socrates himself at one point speaks on behalf of Gorgias, though he demonstrates his awareness of this responsibility by feeling ashamed. Thus shame (αἰδώς/αἰσχύνη)⁸ appears to be crucial in the development of the dialogue (Race 1979) and more generally in the cultivation of a community of dialogue rooted in friendship and growing towards the good. Hence, when Socrates appears to the other (Gorgias) as someone who is not himself, he feels ashamed because he acknowledges that what is at stake is his friendship and the community raised by both at the beginning of the dialogue. Socrates says:

I am afraid it may be rather rude to tell the truth: *indeed I shrink from speaking on account of Gorgias, lest he think I am satirizing his pursuit. But whether the rhetoric that Gorgias pursues is this, I do not know.* (Grg. 462e5-7; italics mine)

Shame is not only a concern for how one appears to others, but also a concern for how one interprets the others by uttering their sayings in one's voice. Hence shame is a concern about oneself and about others, a concern that has to be emphasized if we are aiming at constituting a friendship and a community of dialogue to articulate and inquire after the good.⁹ To put the point more boldly, shame is the possibility of questioning oneself in the light of the other, and

8 Race has noted that the word "shame" appears seventy five times in the dialogue, becoming the most pervasive word in the dialogue. I agree with him when he says that "it is Plato's intention to restore the concept of shame to a place of importance in Socratic [politics]" (Race 198). He also points out that the sensitivity to shame is less notorious as the dialogue passes from one interlocutor to another. Hence Callicles is the one who has almost no sensitivity at all.

9 In Chapter 2 of the *Genesis* it is written that Adam and Eve "were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." But later in Chapter 3, after eating the apple of knowledge of good and evil, the shame was inevitable: "The eyes of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." (Citations of the Bible found in Velleman) To my mind, shame appears as a reminder of the fragility of community, and the dependence of a community on how one appears and lets others appear in it. The rational μῦθος that

questioning the other in one's own voice. It is the possibility of re-evaluating oneself by being flexible and responsive to the demands of the other. In the fragment quoted in the last paragraph, Socrates is *unsure* about the rhetoric that Gorgias is pursuing, he is *unsure* of whether his rhetoric is of the kind that sublimates pleasure above the just and good; his shame is rooted not only in how he is going to appear to others speaking their voice, but also in the fact that what he had learned from Gorgias is unintelligible for him at the moment.

As will be shown below, not only does Callicles become repulsive to this sensitivity of shame, but Socrates, while conversing with Callicles, also appears to be engaged in an agonistic dialogue by pushing aside his sense of shame: "Now continue as you began [Callicles], and do not hold back through shame. Nor it would appear, *must I hold back through shame* [ἀπαισχυνθῆναι]" (*Grg.* 494c4-6; italics mine). Here we can see that "Socrates is forced to be as shameless as Callicles", he is forced to risk the possibility of cultivating a community of dialogue with Callicles by not constantly worrying about how is he appearing to others and how is he uttering their voices.

The other trait of friendship that was mentioned is the importance of asking who is the other with whom I am going to forge a community of dialogue, and with whom I might be transformed by establishing a friendship. To know who the other is (ὅστις ἐστίν) is a question inseparable from what the other does; activity and character are entangled notions. The first thing that Socrates *wants from Gorgias is to ask him, through Chaerephon's voice, who he is*. Socrates desires not only to learn something from Gorgias' art, but also to know who he is; he is aware that a future friendship and alliance between them might flourish, therefore the question "ὅστις ἐστίν" constitutes the other precondition for being a part of and taking part in a community of dialogue and inquiry. What is perplexing is that the first question posed by Socrates indirectly to Gorgias is one of the questions that he has never been asked. Perhaps even Gorgias is not sure who he really is, but this is not detrimental to the exercise of dialogue. On the contrary, a "violent attachment to the self [can be] the constant source of all manner of misreading in every one of us [and misreading the other]" (*Lg.* 731e2). Nevertheless, Socrates' question has moved Gorgias toward the endless path of self-knowledge (γνώθι σεαυτὸν) and arranged the table for the shared feast between rhetoric and philosophy, that is to say, Socrates has begun his political practice with

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Socrates provides at the end of the dialogue thus seems to suggest the possibility of appearing completely naked to others in the afterlife, that is, perhaps as one truly is.

Gorgias, an individual with whom a friendship might flourish and who is beginning to engage in a self-knowledge process.

Before Socrates begins his conversation with Gorgias, he lays out one of the prejudices and misconceptions that have sustained the dichotomy between rhetoric and philosophy:

it is clear to me even from what he has said that Polus has practiced what is called rhetoric rather than conversing [...] no one asked what sort of art Gorgias' was, but what art, and what one ought to call Gorgias. (*Grg.* 448d3-448e7)

Philosophy, at least as Socrates understands and practices it, is an activity of dialogue that tries to answer questions of the sort *what is x?* rather than *what sort of thing is x?* This is one of the apparent *differences* between rhetoric and philosophy (Stauffer 20). The traditional distinction between both activities has been also stressed as the *difference* between the *play* of questions and short answers, and the *display* of lengthy speeches (μακρολογία). This is precisely why Socrates warns Gorgias to keep his displays elsewhere and stick with the game of questions and short answers that try to elucidate the matter discussed (*Grg.* 449b5-7). Finally, the opposition between both activities has been laid out in terms of “the supposed Socratic appeal to the intellectual powers of the interlocutor” (Carone 21) rather than the rhetorical appeal to the emotions of the interlocutor. These three *differences* will be overcome by reading the *Gorgias* with sensitivity to the philosophical implications of the dramatic context in which the dialogue is set.

First of all, it seems that Gorgias' brevity at the beginning shows that he is more concerned about the issues discussed than about his reputation, although there are parts of the conversation in which Gorgias puts forward his concern for reputation.¹⁰ I do not think, as Benardete argues, that Gorgias comes forward as more reasonable than Socrates, because Socrates' attempt to provoke Gorgias by praising him so extravagantly does not meet with any success (Benardete 13). In fact, if we look carefully at the text, Socrates is not praising Gorgias, but rather the way Gorgias is keeping his initial promise to give very short answers. Hence, both Gorgias and Socrates have set aside their reputation and are thus giving primacy to the matter discussed: what is the nature of rhetoric and what beneficial

10 As I will show, Gorgias is not concerned about being refuted by Socrates, but rather about the issues discussed not only by him, but also by Polus and Callicles. This is why, as I will show in this paper, he intervenes later at three critical stages in the dialogue (*Grg.* 497b5-6 and 506b1-3).

effect can it have with respect to the philosophical activity, and more specifically, to the way Socrates practices politics by turning individual souls toward the good and building a community of dialogue that inquires into the nature of the good.¹¹

The analogies between rhetoric and weaving and rhetoric and music reveal something crucial about the notion of rhetoric that is articulated by Socrates and approved by Gorgias. Weaving, as in the production of clothes, has two different purposes. On the one hand, clothes hide something and show that which is hidden as something different from itself; on the other hand, clothes protect the body. In a way, weaving is concerned *with how one appears to others*, and *how one can creatively appear in a way that is favorable*. This is not so distant from what Nichols has pointed out by characterizing rhetoric as “aiming at presenting one’s character in such a way as to dispose one’s hearers favorably” (Nichols 12). This is not a negative characteristic of rhetoric, but rather a positive one: a way of appearing to others in a way that is both intelligible and favorable. The need to wear clothes and the need to decorate λόγοι (speeches or sayings) imply that there is a latent shame every time we say something, a latent awareness of how others are going to hear and see us. This nuanced way of understanding and reconstructing the notion of rhetoric shows that as in philosophy, a noble rhetoric cares about the other and about the appearance of oneself. In this sense rhetoric is “the capacity to be moved by the other as a result of the persuasive appeal, rather than the brute force” (Colapietro 157). The difference between the capacity to turn or move individuals’ souls towards the good, and the receptivity to appear to others in a certain way and be moved by their persuasive appeal is nothing less than the intertwined relation between philosophy and rhetoric that is itself being woven throughout the dialogue and that is re-creating a notion of politics that is grounded in a friendship between rhetoric and philosophy, a notion of politics that is concerned both with the individual soul *and* the ability to *move* that individual soul toward the good.

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11 As Christopher Long has pointed out: “the nuanced and important relationship is lost when clouded by a simple dichotomy between philosophy –which is said to involve the use of λόγος in an attempt to articulate truth and rhetoric –which is said to involve the use of λόγος for the purpose of persuasion without an interest in the truth.” Christopher Long, “Lecture Notes Socratic Politics”(8). This tendency of establishing rigid distinctions between rhetoric and philosophy is one of the reasons why the *Gorgias* has not been read as a dialogue about friendship or about the reconstruction of rhetoric and community, but only as a dialogue of agonistic conversations whose aim is to expel rhetoric from the philosophical realm.

The analogy between music and rhetoric also reveals the emotional appeal or motivational component of rhetoric. Music not only sways our passions and thus moves us in certain directions, but can also produce harmony in the soul. Yet while rhetoric and music can move us in a certain direction, they cannot determine or, better stated, they are not fully and deeply concerned about the direction towards which the individual will be moved. In other words,

we are led to the suggestion that rhetoric more closely resembles an art that provides protection through the creation of cloaks and an art that sways man's passions than it does an art that might clarify the path to true health [to the good and the just]. (Stauffer 21)

Rhetoric can move but does not know where to move, while just conversing clarifies and inquires into the direction towards which we should walk together, but it lacks the powerful motivational appeal of rhetoric. Nevertheless, Socrates and Gorgias are becoming aware of what they lack and need. Hence, later in the dialogue, Gorgias will be concerned with protecting a community of dialogue that is directed toward the good and the just, while Socrates will be concerned about turning Polus and Callicles by persuading them to re-evaluate themselves and question the nature of the good and the just. Socrates and Gorgias are engaged in a common way of practicing politics: *the cultivation of a community of dialogue that inquires into the good and the just and whose members are able to move others and be moved by the persuasive appeal of the good and the just*. This is divergent from what Vickers has suggested in his book *In Defense of Rhetoric*, in which he states that according to Socrates, one “must give up rhetoric as verbal art for philosophy” (110). Carone is, however, more convincing when he says that Socrates “conceives rhetoric in general as a means which, despite being ethically neutral as such, may be given a good purpose, and thus become a genuine craft under the guidance of philosophy” (Carone 223). Even so, the instrumentalization and subordination of rhetoric to philosophy suggested by Carone fails to recognize the degree to which there is a reciprocal relation *between both rhetoric and philosophy*, in which both give to and take from each other in ways that enrich their meaning and open new possibilities for their practice.

As mentioned, there are moments in the conversation between Gorgias and Socrates in which Gorgias tends to answer Socrates on the basis of his concern for his reputation rather than of a concern for the importance of the matter discussed. When Socrates asks Gorgias what rhetoric is about, he answers: “that which is in truth, Socrates, the greatest good and the cause both of freedom for human beings themselves *and at the same time of rule over others in each man's own*

city” (*Grg.* 452d5-7; italics mine). The second part of this statement is not motivated by the common task undertaken by Gorgias and Socrates to cultivate a community of dialogue and a friendship that reflects upon the issues surrounding *being-with-others*; rather, it is motivated by an appeal to attract students to rhetoric, because they are looking to gain power over others and using rhetoric as a means to that goal (*cf.* Stauffer 26).

Gorgias’ concern for his reputation as the motivation of his statements is also revealed when he tells an anecdote that is fundamental to understanding his notion of rhetoric. In that fragment of the dialogue, Gorgias declares: “I shall indeed try, Socrates, clearly to uncover for you the whole power of rhetoric; for you yourself have beautifully led the way” (*Grg.* 455d7-8). This *overture* emphasizes the importance of what he will say and reveals his gratitude to his friend Socrates for leading the way beautifully to their communal articulation of rhetoric and its relation to philosophy. This friendly statement *shows* that Gorgias and Socrates are able to partake in a community of dialogue in a non-agonistic manner.

Gorgias begins to tell the story of when he went with his brother “to one of the sick who was unwilling either to drink a drug or to submit himself to the doctor for surgery and cautery; the doctor being unable to persuade him, I [Gorgias] persuaded him, by no other art than rhetoric” (456b 2-5).¹² This example, as Nichols has insightfully argued, reveals the nature of rhetoric, a nature that “need not always be mere flattery directed to base ends; it can assist the true expert in attaining the practical goal at which he aims but which he cannot attain by the means of his art alone” (Nichols 133). The story that Gorgias has told *retroactively* uncovers his answer at the beginning of the dialogue when Socrates asked him how he should be called (“Who are you?”), and Gorgias responded, “a *good* rhetor” (449a6). From the beginning, Gorgias was making a distinction between a *good* rhetor and a *bad* one, perhaps because he knew that rhetoric, as every art, can be used in a good or bad manner. What is crucial about the sick

12 There is a remarkable similarity between Gorgias’ anecdote and the *Seventh Letter* (330c-d), where Plato says: “When one is advising a sick man who is living in a way injurious to his health, must one not first of all tell him to change his way of life and give him further counsel *only if he is willing to obey*.” However, Plato is stressing that the patient’s willingness is crucial to shifting his sickened way of life towards a healthy one, while Gorgias is showing that rhetoric seems to be able to make this shift without the willingness of the patient to change his way of life. This, I think, is the power of rhetoric. On the other hand, later in the *Gorgias*, Socrates urges Polus to submit to his treatment, if he is an unjust person, as if he were a sick person that needed surgery to get better (*Grg.* 480c4-8).

person anecdote is that Gorgias persuaded him, because he was, in a way, concerned about the health of that person. Hence, he was not motivated to deceive the other, but rather to care for the other's well-being. Of greater salience here is the fact that Gorgias assisted the true physician, who made the diagnosis, in making effective that diagnosis by convincing the patient to take his medication, and, thus, making him aware of his actual condition as a sick person.

Rhetoric can assist philosophy in the sense that the latter's diagnoses can have a true effect or, in Gorgias' terms, can "come into being" (γίγνομαι/γέγονε). If we reduce philosophy solely to the activity of making diagnoses and questioning the good life and the base one, then rhetoric becomes effective and beneficial for that activity. Nevertheless, this is a narrow, reductionist conception of philosophy.¹³ Thus, Benardete does not parse the difference between rhetoric and philosophy quite properly when he asserts that we are in between "a dialectic [philosophy] that alters no one's convictions and a rhetoric that is effective but knows neither how it is effective nor what it effects [...] [r]ationality is empty; rhetoric is blind" (Benardete 13). Rather, if the philosopher is the doctor, then philosophy is *illuminating* the nature of the good life and the path we have to travel for it, while rhetoric is *fulfilling* in the sense that it persuades us to take that path. *Thus, philosophy is not empty, but illuminating; and rhetoric is not blind but fulfilling.* Now Gorgias' words become more meaningful: "I shall indeed try, Socrates, clearly to uncover for you the whole power of rhetoric; *for you yourself have beautifully led the way.*" (Grg. 455d7-8). This can also be understood as *you are beautifully leading the way towards the good life, but I, Socrates, have the power to persuade people to follow the path you are suggesting.*

However after uncovering the power of rhetoric and its usefulness for philosophy, Gorgias manifests ὄβρις by showing his concern for his reputation in front of his students (Stauffer 31) by saying:

And I assert further that, if a rhetorical man and doctor should go into any city you wish and should have a contest in speech [...] which of the two ought to be chosen doctor, the doctor would plainly be nowhere, but the man with power to speak would be chosen, if he wished. (Grg. 456b5-c3; italics mine)

13 Perhaps, one can read the *Gorgias* as a dialogue in which what is at stake is not only the relation between rhetoric and philosophy, but first and foremost the nature of philosophy as an emerging way of living and thinking which was not robustly created before by Plato. This is just a thought that might push things too far.

This highlights what would be a bad use of rhetoric, or a rhetoric that is mere flattery, namely, “the ability to win undeserved victories [...] [as] an ability that enables one not only to defeat other arts, but also triumph over justice itself” (Stauffer 31). In other words, a kind of rhetoric that aims towards overcoming the constraints of justice.

Although Gorgias is willing to cultivate a community of dialogue with Socrates, as has been shown, sometimes he still worries more about his reputation than about the matters discussed. Yet Socrates’ refutations will shift Gorgias towards a concern for the matters discussed and, more precisely, a concern for a rhetoric that aims toward justice. In short, Socrates has done with Gorgias what Gorgias has done with the sick person: persuade him to take the medication he needed for a good life. Only by carefully reading Gorgias’ interventions in Socrates’ conversation with Polus and Callicles will the outcome of their conversation come to light. And only by showing Socrates’ use of rhetoric in his conversation with Polus and, especially, with Callicles, will we see that Socrates was also persuaded by Gorgias and learned that “a philosopher would always need rhetoric if he is to be able to have any beneficial political effect at all” (Nichols 6).¹⁴

If the good, just as the truth, cannot be possessed (*Grg.* 344b10-c2) and remains somewhat indeterminate, though we may nevertheless strive hard for it as a lifelong project of moving toward it while questioning the path we are taking, then rhetoric becomes essential for turning individual souls. Socrates acknowledged that since we do not have a substantive and robust notion of the just and the good, we cannot turn people towards the good without the aid of a rhetoric that enhances the motivational and seductive component necessary to turn people toward the paths and activities of the just person. At the end of the dialogue, Socrates himself agrees that a certain kind of rhetoric is able to redirect (μεταβιβάζειν) the desires of the citizens: “as to leading desires in a different direction and not yielding, persuading

14 Carone has argued that Socrates’ “enterprise in the *Gorgias* would be inaccurately described as mere exchange of short questions and answers for the sake of the truth” (229). Rather, he also uses long speeches (μακρολογία) to make the other understand what he wants to state. Thus μακρολογία, as Carone sustains, is useful at times to articulate a common understanding of the matters discussed. In fact, the dialogue ends with the absolute suspension of the give and take of short questions and answers, because, at that point of the dialogue, the situation demands a μακρολογία to make Callicles understand the importance of what Socrates is trying to elucidate. Following Carone’s argument, the role that the *Protagoras* establishes for the rhetorician, as the one who creates μῦθος to illustrate his arguments, has been interchanged in the *Gorgias*, where Socrates, the philosopher, is the one that appeals to μῦθος to manifest his point (229).

and forcing them toward the condition in which the citizens were to be better, those early men [bad rhetoricians] excelled these in nothing” (517b6-c1). A good rhetorician or a philosophical rhetorician will redirect and lead the desires of the citizens toward the direction that will make them better than they are. This is not different from what Socrates is trying to do with each interlocutor throughout the whole dialogue; this is the political art that Socrates is practicing.

It seems to me that philosophy and rhetoric together *will show a way of having the good, without possessing it* (cf. Gonzalez 20). In short, if we do not have complete access to the notions of *good* and *just*, if those notions are *in between* a complete indeterminacy and an elusive determinacy, we need something apart from philosophy to persuade people to take one path rather than another, or, at the very least, a re-conception of philosophy that encompasses a persuasive appeal and a motivational component characteristic of the rhetorical art in order to have political effects. We have to distance ourselves from a detached theoretical reflection on the good, and rather engage in an unending process of questioning what it would mean to be good and just. This requires us to be open and responsive to the appeals of others that claim different approaches to that question. I hold that the conversation between Socrates and Gorgias is forging a friendship that might even become an alliance of two disciplines that need each other (Stauffer 38) to undertake the unending and life-long human project of being *in between* the good as something indeterminate yet desired.

Gorgias' Interventions

The first time that Gorgias intervenes in the dialogue, is when Socrates is explaining to Polus that for him rhetoric is a phantom of politics (*Grg.* 463d2-3) and a skill at guessing for the sake of flattery (463a8-9). Socrates lays out those two conceptions –or misconceptions– of rhetoric, when he attempts to speak on behalf of Gorgias. However, Socrates explains this by assuming that Polus already knows this, that is, as if Polus knew what conception of rhetoric Socrates has developed through his conversation with Gorgias. At this point, Gorgias intervenes by saying: “But by Zeus, Socrates, even I myself do not comprehend what you’re saying!” (463d7-8). In other words, Gorgias is forcing Socrates to clarify his statement, not only because *accountability and being intelligible to the other* are two necessary conditions to maintain the community of dialogue that they have cultivated, but also because Gorgias is *surprised* that Socrates is holding that conception of rhetoric after what he had said to him. Gorgias’ intervention is intended, on the one hand, to demand that Socrates justify his assertion, and on the other hand, it is an exhortation to

Socrates to re-evaluate his conception of rhetoric as mere flattery and a mere ghostly part of politics. Socrates acknowledges that he is being unclear and is grateful to Gorgias for letting him know that.

The friendship and the community of dialogue that Gorgias and Socrates have cultivated becomes tangible not only in Gorgias' first intervention, but also in Socrates' remark before conversing with Polus, a remark that reminds him what it means to be part of the community of dialogue that he and Gorgias have created together:

If you are speaking at length and are unwilling to answer what is asked, would I on the other hand not suffer terrible things, if it will not be allowed me to go away and not to listen to you? But if something in the argument that has been stated bothers you and you wish to set it upright, as I was just saying, take back what seems good to you, and, in your turn asking and being asked, *just as Gorgias and I, refute and be refuted.* (*Grg.* 461e4-462a5; italics mine)

Socrates is inducing Polus to fit the standard of the dialogue that he and Gorgias established, a dialogue which, as Socrates points out, was a *transformative one*. It was an interaction in which both participants, while refuting and being refuted, changed their original positions for a more inclusive one.

The second time that Gorgias intervenes has a more dramatic effect than the first time, because it demonstrates, on the one hand, that Gorgias has overcome his concern for his reputation, and is only concerned about the matter discussed and the community of dialogue in which all of them –Socrates, Polus, Callicles and him– are participating. On the other hand, it is an intervention that takes place at a critical moment of the dialogue, a moment in which the conversation between Callicles and Socrates is about to breakdown, because both of them are conversing in an agonistic manner. Therefore, the community of inquiry and dialogue is close to dissolving and reveals itself as utterly fragile. Socrates accuses Callicles of being coy, whereas Callicles stresses that Socrates is saying silly things (*Grg.* 497a9-11). At the moment when each of them is disqualifying the other's attitude or arguments –perhaps with good reason– Gorgias intervenes and urges Callicles to continue the conversation by saying, “Don't Callicles; but answer for our sake too so that the argument may be brought to an end” (497b5-6). The emphasis on the community is more than evident, because what is at stake is neither Gorgias' reputation, nor that of Callicles or Socrates; rather, it is the community of dialogue and inquiry that they have established and cultivated. Let me repeat the phrase, “*is for our sake too*”. What matters for Gorgias is the matter discussed, because he knows that justice and the good are the greatest

good for human beings and the cause of their freedom; hence, he immediately warns Callicles that what is at stake “is not at all your honor [θεμιτόν][...] Submit to Socrates’ refuting however he wishes” (497b9-11). The honor of the participants that undertake a communal articulation and questioning of the good and the just has to be put aside if their examination and re-evaluation is going to continue. In short, without risking oneself, there is no point in entering into a communal dialogue and inquiry.

Before explaining the reason for Gorgias’ last intervention, it is necessary to describe the context in which it happens, because it marks the transition from the conversation between Socrates and Callicles to the Socratic monologue or soliloquy. The hard time that Socrates has in turning Callicles’ soul so that he remain in the community of dialogue without his agonistic and antagonistic remarks and attitude against Socrates can be shown in his allusion to the necessity of punishing Callicles for his own soul’s benefit. It seems to me that at that point of the conversation Socrates’ friendship with Callicles is transformed into a possible impossibility. Socrates has foreseen that a community of dialogue with Callicles will remain as an optimistic hope that appears not to be possible under those circumstances. Callicles does not even want to continue the conversation, and thus threatens Socrates by saying, “if you are persuaded by me, you’ll bid this argument farewell, or else you’ll converse with someone else” (*Grg.* 305d4-6). What does it mean to say that if Callicles persuades Socrates he will have to throw away his argument or converse with other people? Callicles appears not to have even the most remote concern about his discussion with Socrates; one might even say that he has no concern for elucidating and questioning the nature of the good and the just as something other than an orientation to gain pleasure and possess the things that he wishes to have. As was suggested at the beginning, Callicles is *nobody and everybody*, and thus he is “willing to say what other people think but not dare to admit” (Klosko 136).¹⁵

If Socrates is persuaded to say farewell to the conversation, Callicles will have made him acknowledge that every genuine dialogue and shared community of inquiry, including the one that he and Gorgias have forged together, requires two conditions to flourish and grow: (i) that a person is willing, or is able to be moved by the other and (ii) that a person possesses a sense of shame. Callicles is

15 In a few words, Callicles’ claims regarding hedonism and his critique of Socratic justice and politics could be the claims of almost any reader. Hence, perhaps Socrates’ effort to turn Callicles’ soul, could be interpreted as Plato’s effort to turn some of his most dogmatic readers.

neither willing to be moved by Socrates' utterances to reevaluate his own position, nor does he possess a sense of shame. In short, what is at stake at that moment is the very limits of the community based on friendship that Gorgias and Socrates managed to shape. If that community faces a person with the those characteristics, it is very difficult for Socratic politics and Gorgianic noble rhetoric to turn that individual toward the good, that is, to make him acknowledge the pervasive fallibility of his beliefs. Perhaps Socrates was wrong when he thought that between him and Callicles there was a common ground upon which a transformative dialogue could emerge. Socrates noted that Callicles cares about something other than himself: the Athenian people and the son of Pyrilampes (*Grg.* 481d5-6). In fact, Callicles shows concern for his friendship with Gorgias, because he is conversing with Socrates just because Gorgias asked him to. Yet this filial dimension shared apparently by Socrates and Callicles is so fragile, and maybe inexistent, that the possibility of a friendship between them, as the soil upon which a community of dialogue can emerge, is precluded. This is something which Plato is silent about.

This silence reinforces the idea that the *Gorgias* is a dialogue that it is silent about the constitution of a community of dialogue. The harmonious conversation with Gorgias, deteriorated into an impersonal dialogue with Polus, which, in its turn, falls into an utterly agonistic dialogue with a shameless Callicles. And ultimately it deteriorates into a monologue displayed by Socrates when the possibility of a community of dialogue appears to breakdown. Yet Socrates' final words bear some hope for making possible what seemed impossible, words that emphasize a *we-consciousness*, a sense of togetherness, a shared inquiry that aims at urging others to join the community of dialogue and to live and die for the good life:

Let us then use the argument that has now revealed itself like a leader, which indicates to us that this way of life is the best: to live and die practicing both justice and the rest of virtue. Let us then follow this argument, and let us urge the others on to it, not to that one which you believe Callicles. (*Grg.* 527e2-6)

With this statement Socrates revives the possibility of doing what he said before in the dialogue: I want to "persuade you to change your position, and instead of the insatiable and intemperate life to choose the orderly life. Well, am I persuading you?" (*Grg.* 493c6-d2). That is the question that every reader has when faced with the last words of the dialogue: has Socrates, through the use of his noble rhetoric, persuaded Callicles to turn his position or not?

The moment when Socrates hesitates, deciding whether he should leave or not, Gorgias intervenes for the last time and declares:

But it doesn't seem to me, Socrates, that we should go away yet; rather, you should finish going through the argument. And it appears to me that it seems to the others too. I myself, in any case, wish to hear you go through the remaining things by yourself. (*Grg.* 506a9-b3)

At first glance it seems that Gorgias is motivating Socrates to remain in the community and not make effective the cowardice that Callicles pressed on Socrates in the first lines of the dialogue. Hence Gorgias' intervention is crucial in the sense that it saves Socrates from becoming a coward by destroying the community of dialogue that they have forged together. In other words, Gorgias is manifesting a gesture of friendship in a framework of war, a gesture that will perhaps save the community's breakdown.

The third intervention shows that Gorgias has taken the medication that Socrates persuaded him to take, proving that a true friendship emerged between them. Gorgias is persuading Socrates to keep the dialogue going, and Socrates is being responsive to Gorgias' words by continuing the dialogue by himself, if there is no other choice. This time it is Gorgias who *wants* (βούλομαι) something from Socrates, he wants Socrates to save the community of dialogue that is at stake, he *wants* a philosophical rhetoric and a rhetorical philosophy to be able to turn an individual soul that is incapable of being turned. Callicles' soul and his threat to a community of dialogue is the *Political Problem* for a rhetoric rooted in philosophy and a philosophy rooted in rhetoric. In short, Callicles has a destructive notion of community, one that is "an available means to the rhetor's private ends" (Kastely 99).

As has been shown, Gorgias' interventions are crucial for sustaining the community of dialogue and inquiry that had been cultivated. As Kastely has noted: "Gorgias' role is not simply to be the foil who makes errors that Socrates can then point out, rather it is to be a dedicated rhetorician whose conversation reveals his social commitment" (Kastely 99).

Socratic Persuasion and the True Political Art

The distinction that emerges in the dialogue between a rhetoric that is mere flattery and a noble kind of rhetoric is based on "the difference between aiming at pleasure and struggling to make the citizens good" (Stauffer 127).¹⁶ If we consider Socrates as a rhetor he would be a good one,

.....
16 Even Callicles is willing to accept that distinction between a rhetoric aimed at pleasing others and oneself and a rhetoric aimed at cultivating justice; in his words,

because he is always aiming to turn individual souls toward the good and thus inviting them to participate in a community of dialogue that questions and discusses the important matters of our being in the world, and, more specifically, of our being with others in the world. However, he warns us that this noble rhetoric has not yet come into being, or in his words, the rhetoric that makes preparations for the citizens' souls in order to make them as good as possible: "*you have never yet seen*" (*Grg.*503a7-b2). Perhaps this means that the concept of a philosophical rhetoric or a noble rhetoric is just emerging in this dialogue after Socrates established a friendship and an alliance with Gorgias. Callicles himself acknowledges that he cannot mention anyone that has used rhetoric for the sake of the other's soul and the city where he lives¹⁷ instead of for his own private purposes. In fact, he cannot think of anybody who is able to lead the citizens' desires in certain direction, "forcing them toward the condition in which the citizens were to be better" (517b6-10). This leads us to the famous passage in which Socrates declares that he is one of the few Athenians, or perhaps the only one, that practices the true political art by speaking with a view towards the good and the just on every occasion (521d7-e1). This passage suggests that Socrates might be the person that Callicles is not naming; in other words, this passage suggest that every time Socrates tries to persuade somebody, his attempt is always aiming at the good and the just. My claim is that only after establishing a friendship between philosophy and rhetoric can the true political art, which Socrates claims to practice, come to light. The true political art is grounded in a philosophical rhetoric and a rhetorical philosophy, the true political art involves trying to create a community of dialogue that inquires into the nature of the good and whose members are disposed to be moved by the good. The true political practice is a dialogical practice in a community that tries to lead the way toward the good and the just. This is why Socrates is perhaps the only Athenian who practices such an art, one whose content is not big speeches (*μακρολογία*) but endless dialogues (*διαλέγεσθαι*).

Returning to Gorgias' anecdote about the sick person, one might say that his persuasion of the patient and the use of rhetoric at that moment aimed toward the good. Likewise, Socrates' use of rhetoric with Polus and Callicles is aimed at their taking their soul's medi-

.....
 "there are some [*rhetors*] who care about the citizens when they say what they say, and there are also such as you say [who just want to gratify the citizens as if they were little children]" (*Grg.* 503a1-3).

17 James Kastely has pointed out that the *Gorgias* can be read as an "empirical investigation that seeks a non-corrupt rhetor" (99). Perhaps more than an investigation that seeks a good rhetor, the dialogue can be read as a manifestation of Socrates becoming one.

cation, and thus become good citizens, that is, citizens who do not believe that the existence of the community is to satisfy one's desires or "that all public relations are merely a mask of private interests" (Kastely 99). Socrates is being both, Gorgias' brother and Gorgias himself,¹⁸ because he is not only diagnosing how Polus and Callicles should live their lives in a community, but also trying to persuade them to take the medication that he had prescribed.¹⁹

In the conversation between Socrates and Polus, the former was not sure what he had learned from Gorgias, or, at least, it was unintelligible for him at that moment in the dialogue. Nevertheless, in his conversation with Callicles he is not only performing a rhetorical art aimed at turning individuals toward the question of the good and the just, but he is also aware of what would it mean to be a good rhetor. Socrates is now articulating what seemed to him unintelligible. He is arguing that

a rhetor –the artful and good one– will look toward these things [soul's arrangement], when he applies to souls both the speeches that he speaks and all actions; and when he gives something as a gift, he will give it, and when he takes something away, he will take it away, always directing his mind toward how he may get justice to come into being [again the vocabulary of γίγνομαι] in the citizens' souls and injustice to be removed. (*Grg.* 504d1-e2)

This is nothing less than the statement of what Socrates has learned from Gorgias' art, a statement that elucidates his reference to a noble rhetoric aiming always toward the best (*Grg.* 527c3-4). I believe that in the dialogue with Polus and, in a way, with Callicles, Socrates has made use of this noble rhetoric, which is not aimed at multitudes but at individuals; this noble rhetoric or philosophical rhetoric is precisely what I understand Socratic politics to be.

Recall the moment in which Socrates explicitly reveals to Callicles that he is trying to *persuade* him, just as Gorgias tried to persuade the sick person to take his medication. Socrates is tuning his lyre so that the music of his utterances is able to move and rearrange Callicles' soul in an orderly and proportional manner; in other words, Socrates is weaving a cloak for Callicles to protect his soul from the suffering he will face in the afterlife (*Grg.* 523c2-525a8). Socrates says to Callicles: I want "to persuade you to change your position, and instead of the

18 Since Christopher Long has pointed out that the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy might go beyond how I have conceived it, perhaps the friendship between Socrates and Gorgias is essentially a *brotherhood*.

19 A couple of times in this dialogue Socrates compares himself with a physician, see *Grg.* 522a4-5 and 480c5-7.

insatiable and intemperate life to choose the orderly, sufficient and satisfied with the things that are ever at hand” (493c6-d1). However, Socrates’ intention to turn Callicles might fail, as I have pointed out, yet he will use any means possible to change his position. The myth of the afterlife illustrates that Socrates is giving up the *elenchus* to turn Callicles, he is giving up the possibility to turn his soul by the means of dialogue. The creation of dreary imagery exemplified in the myth is the last means that Socrates has for that purpose. *What is at stake with Callicles is the power of rhetoric and philosophy combined together for the exercise of the true political art.* If Callicles remains as he is, then neither rhetoric nor philosophy, nor the two of them together have unlimited power; if Callicles maintains his aggressive position, then philosophy and rhetoric face a limit to their exercise in political affairs: a person that is not willing to be moved by another’s persuasive appeal and a person that is not able to risk himself by re-evaluating his beliefs and commitments.

The range of the transformative capacity of dialogue and rhetoric is what we as readers cannot but question: Is Callicles moved in any way by Socrates? Did Socrates redirect his desires and make him walk the path of striving to be a good citizen? Socrates’ concern for Callicles is intrinsically related to his concern for his own life, because the goal of his philosophical life was precisely to live “straining to direct all one’s own and the city’s things toward this, that justice and moderation will be present in them” (507d7-e1). In a way, Socrates’ concern for his life might be interpreted as a concern that his activity and his practice of politics might encounter an insuperable boundary; philosophy and rhetoric together might not be as powerful as Socrates and Gorgias wanted them to be, and, surely, as most of us wanted them to be. This is why if we take the “logographic necessity” (Strauss 42) seriously, Plato is not telling us something irrelevant and arbitrary when he ends the dialogue with the word ‘Callicles’ and with no response to Socrates’ myth.

The Silence about Turning Callicles and the Limits of Socratic Politics

Socrates is well aware that any community of dialogue and inquiry has to be grounded on a certain kind of friendship. Somebody who is unable to be turned by the other and that does not show hospitality towards the other’s utterances is a limitation to any community. In Socrates’ terms, “he would be unable to share in common, and he in whom there is no community would not have friendship” (*Grg* 507e5-6). Callicles is perhaps that person who does not have hospitality for the other’s sayings and for sharing something in common with Socrates.

James Kastely has argued that what is at stake with Callicles is the effect of Socratic politics, because “his project of radical political reform, if successful, would invert Callicles’ world redefining what noble life is” (Kastely 101). Although Callicles should not be the criterion by which we judge whether Socrates is practicing successfully the political art rooted in philosophy and rhetoric, even so, Callicles might be the limit case that a politics of noble rhetoric and philosophy has to acknowledge. The monologue might be a sign that the community that had been established is about to breakdown, that neither Socrates nor Gorgias are able to keep the community of dialogue and inquiry alive.

Philosophy rooted in rhetoric and rhetoric rooted in philosophy are what has emerged in the dialogue, what emerged from the friendship that Gorgias and Socrates established. The feast of friendship between rhetoric and philosophy created a new way of conceiving politics, a politics of moving the other through persuasive appeal and engaging with the other in a shared dialogue that questions the nature of the good and the just. Although this feast is framed in the context of a battle, a limitation to the flourishing and cultivation of the community of dialogue has also emerged in the dialogue with Callicles. It seems that there is a lot to say about the shift from dialogue to *μῦθος*, from *ἔλεγχος* to a narrative form. Yet the monologue shows that Socrates still hopes that Callicles’ soul might be moved with the myth; Socrates still hopes that the true political art encompassing rhetoric and philosophy has no limitations. In other words, Socrates and Gorgias are willing to unify refutation and persuasion, diagnosis and medication, reflection and motivation. But still, Callicles, a name that resembles the Greek word *καλός* (beauty), might be the unbreakable wall for any practice of politics, yet Plato’s silence at the end exhorts us to consider if it is a true limitation or not. Socrates’ last words are precisely the final attempt to turn Callicles’ soul: “Be persuaded, then, and follow me there where, having arrived, you will be happy both living and when you have come to your end” (527c5-6).

“Be persuaded and follow me”. This is the declaration of a Socrates that has learned something from Gorgias. *If Callicles follows him, then we are witnessing a rhetoric that has never yet been seen. If so, Callicles can finally mention Socrates as one of the philosophical rhetors or as one of the few Athenians that practices the true political art making citizens as good as possible.*

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