PLATONIC PARODY IN THE *GORGIAS*

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λέγεται δὲ ὡς καὶ ὁ Γοργίας αὐτὸς ἀναγνοὺς τὸν ὁμώνυμον αὐτῷ διάλογον πρὸς τοὺς συνήθεις ἔφη· ὡς καλῶς οἶδε Πλάτων ἰαμβίζειν.

It's said that even Gorgias himself, upon reading the dialogue named after him, said to his friends: "How well Plato knows how to lampoon!" (Ath. 11.505d [= DK 82 A 15a])

quo in libro in hoc maxime admirabar Platonem, quod mihi [in] oratoribus inridendis ipse esse orator summus videbatur.

In this work (*sc.* the *Gorgias*) I marveled greatly at Plato in this regard, that he himself seemed to me to be a consummate orator even as he was mocking the orators.
(Cic. *De or.* 1.11.47)

THE TESTIMONIUM FROM ATHENAEUS (while unlikely to be historical) and the reflection of Cicero indicate that in antiquity it was recognized that Plato's *Gorgias* functioned as a parody of the famous rhetorician. In this paper I argue that Plato's parody of Gorgias operates at a level of detail not yet recognized. Plato employs a specific rhetorical technique famously associated with and employed by the Sicilian in order to defeat him in the debate. In doing so, Plato thereby critiques both this technique and Gorgias' rhetorical mode of argumentation more generally.[1]

The overall joke made at Gorgias' expense is related to the fact that the dialogue's most famous figure debates with Socrates for only about a fifth of the work. Philostratus tells us that Gorgias made a name for himself by walking into the theatre at Athens and proclaiming to the crowd that he could answer any

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[1] My methodology is closest to that of Coulter (1964), who argues that Plato in the *Apology* alluded to Gorgias' *Palamedes* specifically in order to critique the rhetorical position of Gorgias. See also Kauffman 1979: 128 for the view that Socrates' own rhetorical failures to persuade his interlocutors are intended by Plato to reflect the limitations of rhetoric more generally. On the rhetorical character of Socrates' argumentative style, see Rossetti 1989, suggesting that Socrates "exploits macro- rather than micro-rhetorical devices" (235). Studies of the dialogue's rhetorical aspect tend to emphasise macro-rhetorical devices (e.g., Spitzer 1975; Rendall 1977; Roochnick 1995; Renaud 2001), especially the overall dramatic presentation of the characters. However, see Wardy 1996: 52–85 *passim* and Vickers 1988: 83–147 *passim* for a number of good observations on both levels. Compare also Rutherford 1995: 143: "[Socrates] himself waxes rhetorical within the dialogue (a fact on which he comments more than once; we can assume that Plato meant it to be noticed)" (e.g., 519e). Vickers (1988: 104) specifically describes the great set speech with which Socrates ends the dialogue as an "exercise in epideictic rhetoric." See also Michelini 1998. For a balanced overview of the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy generally in Plato, see Halliwell: 1994: 224–234.

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question.[2] Presumably this is a historical fact, and Plato has his own Gorgias say much the same thing in the dialogue (*Grg.* 447d–448a):

ΧΑΙ. Μανθάνω καὶ ἐρήσομαι. Εἰπέ μοι, ὦ Γοργία, ἀληθῆ λέγει Καλλικλῆς ὅδε ὅτι ἐπαγγέλλῃ ἀποκρίνεσθαι ὅτι ἄν τίς σε ἐρωτᾷ;

ΓΟΡ. Ἀληθῆ, ὦ Χαιρεφῶν· καὶ γὰρ νυνδὴ αὐτὰ ταῦτα ἐπηγελλόμην, καὶ λέγω ὅτι οὐδείς μέ πω ἠρώτηκε καινὸν οὐδὲν πολλῶν ἐτῶν.

Chaer. I understand and I'll ask. Tell me, Gorgias, does Callicles here rightly say that you promise to answer whatever anyone asks you?

Gor. It's true, Chaerephon; for indeed I proclaimed this very thing just now, and I say that no one yet has asked me anything new in many a year.

Yet in just under twelve Stephanus pages, the man who claims to teach others how to speak well, and in fact to be able to answer *any* question, is defeated in the argument and reduced to silence, unable, in fact, to answer a (seemingly) simple question about his own art.[3] Thus Plato's entire presentation of Gorgias' performance in the debate pokes fun at the sophist's own pretensions.

That Gorgias' reputation is at stake is indicated by a dramatic interruption in the debate between Socrates and Gorgias at 457c–458e. Just after Gorgias has given an impassioned defense of the teacher of rhetoric, saying that he is not responsible for his students if they misuse rhetoric, Socrates asks, in effect, whether Gorgias is willing to go on with the debate and their search for the truth, even if this entails Gorgias losing the argument. Gorgias claims that he is willing, but (perhaps disingenuously) asks whether their audience may not already be tired of the debate. The crowd, and Callicles in particular, urges them to continue, after which comes the following exchange (458d–e):

ΣΩ. Ἀλλὰ μήν, ὦ Καλλίκλεις, τό γ' ἐμὸν οὐδὲν κωλύει, εἴπερ ἐθέλει Γοργίας.

ΓΟΡ. Αἰσχρὸν δὴ τὸ λοιπόν, ὦ Σώκρατες, γίγνεται ἐμέ γε μὴ ἐθέλειν, αὐτὸν ἐπαγγειλάμενον ἐρωτᾶν ὅτι τις βούλεται. ἀλλ' εἰ δοκεῖ τουτοισί, διαλέγου τε καὶ ἐρώτα ὅτι βούλει.

Soc. Assuredly, Callicles. Nothing prevents my involvement, if Gorgias is willing.

Gor. It would indeed forever be a source of shame for *me* to be unwilling, Socrates, seeing as I myself promised to answer whatever anyone wished to ask. So if these people think it good, converse and ask what you wish.

Gorgias admits that it would be "shameful" (αἰσχρόν, with the word emphatically placed at the beginning of his response) if he were not willing to answer Socrates. Later both Polus and Callicles claim that Gorgias lost the argument with Socrates due to a feeling of shame at admitting that he did not teach his students "just and unjust things." This is a debatable point (see below, 213), but what is clear is that his loss in the debate is itself a potential source of embarrassment for Gorgias, the man who answers all questions.

[2] Philostr. *VS* 1.9.2 (= DK 82A1a)

[3] On the irony of Gorgias' boast, see Teloh 1986: 139.

After a number of attempts, Gorgias gives the following definition of the persuasion that rhetoric effects (454b):

ΓΟΡ. Ταύτης τοίνυν τῆς πειθοῦς λέγω, ὦ Σώκρατες, τῆς ἐν τοῖς δικαστηρίοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ὄχλοις, ὥσπερ καὶ ἄρτι ἔλεγον, καὶ περὶ τούτων ἃ ἐστι δίκαιά τε καὶ ἄδικα.

Gor. I mean this persuasion, the one in the law courts and among other crowds, as I was just now saying, and about those things which are just and unjust.

This definition is in many ways the most important one for the debate between Socrates and Gorgias, for it is Gorgias' statement that the persuasion of rhetoric is "about those things which are just and unjust" which will ultimately prove his undoing. Socrates will later argue as though Gorgias has claimed that his art knows and teaches the nature of justice, a position that will lead Gorgias into self-contradiction. Yet we should observe exactly what Gorgias is saying here concerning injustice and justice, since his answer is a highly conventional one.[4] Since Gorgias appends the clause ("about those things which are just and unjust") in order to gloss what he means by persuasion in the law courts and other crowds,[5] we can take it to refer to a common-sense, general knowledge of laws, customs, values and even the procedures that pertain in such circumstances. What the clause clearly does not refer to is the nature of justice itself, justice *qua* justice, as Socrates will later take it. Socrates will use this statement to argue that Gorgias has claimed that rhetoric is inherently ethical in nature and purpose; yet Gorgias' statement here only commits him to the position that rhetoric, since it is often used in law-courts, often deals with that which pertains to law-courts, which can be summarized in Greek by the phrase δίκαιά τε καὶ ἄδικα.[6]

That Gorgias is talking about a common-sense or consensual view of right and wrong, rather than making a claim to know the true nature of justice, is made clear from his response to Socrates' question about what he would do if a student came to him who did not know "just and unjust things" (460a):

[4] On the conventionality of Gorgias' morality in the *Gorgias*, see Cooper 1999: 41–42 and Wardy 1996: 68–69.

[5] This point is sometimes overlooked (e.g., by Friedländer 1964: 248, Rutherford 1995: 148), allowing for the view that Gorgias is claiming that rhetoric is directly or inherently ethical. On the lightness of this comment by Gorgias, see Plochmann and Robinson 1988: 30–31. Two points should be made. First, the phrase could well have been left out, and Gorgias' general point would have been clear. Secondly, the gloss is not complete: speeches "among other crowds" includes the Assembly (as repeatedly referred to in the dialogue, e.g., 456b–c), and thus should also include those things pertaining to advantage and disadvantage (see Arist. *Rh.* 1.3.5). Yet the inclusion of this point would only serve to highlight that the object of rhetoric is not *per se* the nature of justice, since it would show that rhetoric can treat of multiple subjects in multiple contexts.

[6] So also Irwin 1979: 126 and Beversluis 2000: 307. For a good discussion of the need to distinguish between how a particular premise is understood by Socrates' interlocutor and how Socrates himself understands it, see Klosko 1983.

ΓΟΡ. Ἀλλ' ἐγὼ μὲν οἶμαι, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐὰν τύχῃ μὴ εἰδώς, καὶ ταῦτα παρ' ἐμοῦ μαθήσεται.

Gor. But I suppose, Socrates, that if he in fact doesn't know, he will learn these things (i.e., things pertaining to justice and injustice) from me as well.

Later both Polus (461b–c) and Callicles (482c–d) will claim that Gorgias was too embarrassed to admit that he would not teach justice to his students if they did not already know it.[7] Yet there is no sign that Gorgias is meant to appear embarrassed here. The emphatic use of ἐγὼ suggests otherwise. Rather, he seems slightly incredulous.[8] If, as I have argued, Gorgias understands "unjust and just things" to refer to a common-sense understanding of things related to the law courts, the following paraphrase can be suggested: "Well, I suppose that if someone really doesn't know how to lodge a civil suit, or he really doesn't know the sort of things that are commonly viewed as just or unjust, for instance, that it is generally considered to be wrong for a son to beat his father, I will get him up to speed on these matters." As we have seen, the only thing that might embarrass him is the possibility that he may be shown up as not being able to answer any question, as he promised earlier.[9]

All but one element is now in place to allow Socrates to argue that Gorgias is inconsistent. The argument is as follows. Earlier, Gorgias made the claim that rhetoric was a value-neutral skill, neither good nor bad in itself, but that its morality was determined by the manner in which the individual in question used it (456c–457c). This was used as a defense of the teacher of rhetoric himself. Just as a boxing-trainer is not responsible if a student uses his skills to assault

[7] On shame in the dialogue, see Race 1979 and McKim 1988.

[8] So also Beversluis 2000: 308; Cooper 1999: 38; Plochmann and Robinson 1988: 47; Shorey 1933: 136.

[9] Kahn (1983: 79–84) argues that Gorgias insincerely agrees that he will teach the student about justice and injustice because to affirm the opposite and the concomitant notion of rhetoric as a completely value-neutral skill "would be socially and politically disastrous for Gorgias" (83). Kahn is correct to emphasize that both Polus and Callicles remark that it was a sense of shame that led to his defeat, but I think wrong to suggest that this shame results from a fear of acting in an immoral manner. Kahn suggests that if Gorgias should admit that he does not teach justice to his students, he would, as a foreigner, be run out of town. However, Gorgias is not speaking before the *demos* (who might well be the victims of an unscrupulous but rhetorically persuasive speaker), but before a smaller, aristocratic crowd, many of whom, like Callicles, are interested in Gorgias' rhetorical teaching for the power it would potentially give them (455c–d). Presumably the ethical use of rhetoric is not the key issue before such a crowd, and certainly less important than the issue of whether Gorgias' rhetoric is in fact *effective*, a question that will be answered in part by how he fares in his debate with Socrates. For a detailed rejection of the view that Gorgias has been defeated due to a sense of shame, see Cooper 1999: 46–51. For a similar view, see also Benardete 1991: 21. Benardete's further contention, that the "so-called Socratic thesis that virtue is knowledge is not the hypothesis Gorgias unwittingly accepts, but it is Gorgias' own hypothesis," while I think exaggerated, is an interesting one, considering the links that have been found between the Socratic paradox and Gorgias' own writings (in particular *Palamedes* [e.g., 26]; see Calogero 1957 and Coulter 1964). See also McKim 1988: 36 and *passim*, and Renaud 2001: 80.

someone unjustly, so also the teacher of rhetoric is not responsible if his students use rhetoric in an unethical manner. Moreover, Gorgias has stated both that rhetoric is "about those things which are just and unjust" and that, if the student of rhetoric comes to him without this knowledge, he will teach it to him. Yet if Gorgias teaches "just and unjust things," Socrates argues that a student of his should never therefore act in an unjust manner, which is contrary to what he claimed earlier. The missing piece of the argument here is the Socratic principle that to know what is just is to act justly (460a–c):

ΣΩ. Ἔχε δή· καλῶς γὰρ λέγεις. ἐάνπερ ῥητορικὸν σύ τινα ποιήσῃς, ἀνάγκη αὐτὸν εἰδέναι τὰ δίκαια καὶ τὰ ἄδικα ἤτοι πρότερόν γε ἢ ὕστερον μαθόντα παρὰ σοῦ.
ΓΟΡ. Πάνυ γε.
ΣΩ. Τί οὖν; ὁ τὰ τεκτονικὰ μεμαθηκὼς τεκτονικός, ἢ οὔ;
ΓΟΡ. Ναί.
ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ ὁ τὰ μουσικὰ μουσικός;
ΓΟΡ. Ναί.
ΣΩ. Καὶ ὁ τὰ ἰατρικὰ ἰατρικός; καὶ τἆλλα οὕτω κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον, ὁ μεμαθηκὼς ἕκαστα τοιοῦτός ἐστιν οἷον ἡ ἐπιστήμη ἕκαστον ἀπεργάζεται;
ΓΟΡ. Πάνυ γε.
ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον καὶ ὁ τὰ δίκαια μεμαθηκὼς δίκαιος;
ΓΟΡ. Πάντως δήπου.
ΣΩ. Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος δίκαιά που πράττει.
ΓΟΡ. Ναί.
ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν ἀνάγκη τὸν ῥητορικὸν δίκαιον εἶναι, τὸν δὲ δίκαιον βούλεσθαι δίκαια πράττειν;
ΓΟΡ. Φαίνεταί γε.
[ΣΩ. Οὐδέποτε ἄρα βουλήσεται ὅ γε δίκαιος ἀδικεῖν.
ΓΟΡ. Ἀνάγκη.
ΣΩ. Τὸν δὲ ῥητορικὸν ἀνάγκη ἐκ τοῦ λόγου δίκαιον εἶναι.
ΓΟΡ. Ναί.][10]
ΣΩ. Οὐδέποτε ἄρα βουλήσεται ὁ ῥητορικὸς ἀδικεῖν.
ΓΟΡ. Οὐ φαίνεταί γε.

Soc. Hold on. For you speak well. If you make someone an orator, he must first know things pertaining to justice and injustice or learn it afterwards from you.
Gor. Certainly.
Soc. So? Is the one who has learned things pertaining to carpentry a carpenter, or not?
Gor. Yes.
Soc. And surely then the man who has learned things pertaining to music is a musician?
Gor. Yes.
Soc. And the man who has learned things pertaining to medicine is a doctor? And is it thus, by the same reasoning, for the other arts, that the one who has learned each art is the sort of individual which his expertise makes him?
Gor. Certainly.

[10] For the deletion of these redundant lines, which perhaps resulted from a gloss of the argument in syllogistic form, see Dodds 1959: 219–220.

Soc. Surely then, by this reasoning, the one who has learned just things is just?
Gor. Absolutely.
Soc. And I suppose the just man does just things?
Gor. Yes.
Soc. Surely then the orator must be just, and the just man must wish to do just things?
Gor. It at least seems so.
[Soc. Therefore the just individual will never be willing to act unjustly.
Gor. It must be the case.
Soc. And from the argument it must be the case that the orator is just.
Gor. Yes.]
Soc. Therefore the orator will never wish to perform an injustice.
Gor. It at least seems not.

Thus is Gorgias led into self-contradiction, since his concession that to know what is just is to act justly seemingly reveals him to hold both that rhetoric is value-neutral and that it makes its students just.[10] However, many scholars would question whether Gorgias is truly shown to hold self-contradictory views, and whether he is truly defeated in the debate, given that this self-contradiction is dependent upon the acceptance of the Socratic principle that to know what is just is to act justly.[11] Thus Irwin says, "The 'disharmony' is between Gorgias' views and Socrates' views, not internal to Gorgias' views."[12] As Irwin also emphasizes, this Socratic assumption is generally not supported in the dialogue. However, my present concern is the rhetorical strategy that Socrates employs in order to win this concession from Gorgias, as he wins the point not by logical argument, but, ironically, by rhetorical language that persuades without being true.

[10] Kahn (1983: 82–83, followed by Renaud 2001: 79) argues that this step of the argument (the application of the Socratic paradox) is not crucial to the refutation of Gorgias because "the pressure on Gorgias to claim to teach justice is precisely the pressure to claim that he trains only good men, who will not abuse their power" (82), but this appears to ignore the fact that Gorgias has *already* conceded (456c–457c) that not all those who train with him will use their skill justly (on this, see Cooper 1999: 47 and Plochmann and Robinson 1988: 36). The paradox is crucial to Gorgias' defeat since it makes the move from technical knowledge (which is Gorgias' understanding of the relationship between justice and rhetoric) to ethical practice (which is Socrates').

[11] Dodds (1959: 218) in his argument that the identification of the knowledge of the just with just action was generally an acceptable one to the Greeks, notes that Protagoras (*Prt.* 352c) also accepts the principle (Canto [1993: 321] makes the same point). However, Protagoras specifically claims to teach excellence (e.g., *Prt.* 319a), whereas Gorgias' pupil Meno states that Gorgias did not profess to teach excellence, and laughed at those who did (*Meno* 95c). It is common to note (e.g., Dodds 1959: 218 and Canto 1993: 320–321) that the Greeks had no conception of the will. But in fact the notion that to know the good is not necessarily to be able to do it can be found in the works of Gorgias himself. In *Hel.* 16–17 Gorgias talks of how the sight of something fearful "makes people disregard both the honour awarded by custom and the good occurring through justice" (ἐποίησεν ἀμελῆσαι καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ τοῦ διὰ τὸν νόμον κρινομένου καὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ διὰ τὴν νίκην γινομένου), and of how "fear drove out thought" (ἐξήλασεν ὁ φόβος νόημα). Hence Gorgias is not, in contrast to Protagoras, a good example of a Greek who would accept that ethical activity was something that could be learned and applied like a skill. See also Saunders 1985: 211–214.

[12] Irwin 1979: 128. See also Teloh 1986: 143 and Beversluis 2000: 306–308.

The argument Socrates employs here is in the basic form "the one who has learned x is an x-er." This involves the use of the rhetorical figure of polyptoton, the repetition of a word in different cases and/or genders, to add persuasive force.[13] The identification between object of knowledge and practitioner is clearly strengthened by the repetition of the same adjective. If I know τὰ τεκτονικά, clearly, the form of the argument suggests, I am a τεκτονικός. If I know τὰ μουσικά, then I am a μουσικός. And finally if I know τὰ ἰατρικά, then I am an ἰατρικός. Note that Plato has deliberately sought after this rhetorical effect, since he could have used, for instance, the more familiar τέκτων to refer to a carpenter instead of τεκτονικός, but this would not have preserved the rhetorical figure. The same is true of the one who learns τὰ ἰατρικά, since Plato could have just as easily have used the more common noun ἰατρός.

The adoption of this rhetorical figure allows Socrates to perform two important verbal manoeuvers that gain the concession he needs to refute Gorgias. Having established the general formula, and following the same verbal pattern based upon the use of polyptoton, Socrates argues that the one who knows just things is just (ὁ τὰ δίκαια μεμαθηκὼς δίκαιος). However, Gorgias said that he would teach "things which are just *and* unjust" (τὰ δίκαια καὶ τὰ ἄδικα) to the ignorant student, not simply "just things."[14] Yet Socrates mentions only τὰ δίκαια, for of course if he were to use the full formula, the conclusion would have to be, "the one who has learned just and unjust things is just *and* unjust." The point is not a minor one, for the full formulation shows that what has been learnt is a body of knowledge, not an ethical ability to choose between better and worse options.[15]

The second verbal manoeuver is even more revealing, and resides in the descriptions of the individuals who have learned certain things. In all of Socrates' examples leading up to his statement that "the one who has learned just things is just," the word used to describe the individual refers to a profession or occupation. The adjective τεκτονικός means "of building," but it is also used as a substantive to refer to a carpenter.[16] Similarly, μουσικός, which means "of the Muse,"

[13] Cooper is the only scholar I am aware of who has commented on the rhetorical aspect of Socrates' proof, describing it as "a verbally impressive induction—more impressive in its Greek formulation than anything modern English easily allows as a translation" (1999: 42). On the rhetorical form of polyptoton, see Lausberg 1998: 288–292 (with full list of ancient references) and Gygli-Wyss 1966: 13–16. The technique was derived from poetry (Denniston 1952: 11–12; Dover 1997: 136–137). Gorgias' rhetorical style was later criticized for its excessiveness: cf., e.g., Arist. *Rhet.* 1404a24–28 (= DK 82 A 29); Diod. Sic. 12.53.4 (= DK 82A4); Cic. *Orat.* 52.175 (= DK 82A32). On Gorgias not being the literal originator of the so-called Gorgianic figures, but rather the individual who employed them most consistently and so most famously in prose, see Finley 1939: 38–62.

[14] Benardete 1991: 29: "If his argument were sound, the pupil would be both just and unjust; if Socrates' argument is to be saved, 'just' must be of the same order as 'physician,' and as the latter is not healthy through his knowledge, so the former is not just through his."

[15] See Irwin 1979: 126–128.

[16] LSJ s.v. τεκτονικός.

could be used to refer to a lyric poet or a professional musician.[17] Finally, ἰατρικός means "of a doctor," being specifically formed from a noun denoting a profession, and here means the same as ἰατρός.[18] Yet when we come to the important step, that he who has learned just things is just, a word is used which does not denote a profession. Rather, δίκαιος refers to an ethical quality of an agent.[19]

It is also important to note that Socrates has had to suppress a term in order to make his point. Following the rhetorical structure of his argument, he states that the one who has learned just things is just, thereby maintaining an identity of form by using the same adjective, δίκαιος, to describe both the things learned and the individual.[20] Yet if he were to maintain consistency in the reference of his words, rather than merely their morphology, based on the paradigm of the earlier examples he would have to state that the one who learns just things is a *judge*, a δικαστής. That is, an individual who learns about things pertaining to justice and injustice is some sort of professional practitioner of this knowledge.[21] It is worth pausing for a moment over this suppressed term δικαστής, as it may well be a joke. For while the general term in Greek for a professional who deals with τὰ δίκαια καὶ τὰ ἄδικα is δικαστής, in Athens a δικαστής of course referred not simply to a judge, but to a juryman. And in fifth- and fourth-century Athens, an Athenian jury, with its mob-mentality and its love of melodrama, spectacle, and flattery, was not a simple or easy choice for the epithet "just" (perhaps all the less in a dialogue by Plato). Thus the reaction of those who perceived the suppressed term may well have been similar to the many today who would respond to the argument that "a lawyer studies matters pertaining to justice, so lawyers themselves must be just"—that is, with a snort of disbelief.

I will not investigate the larger philosophical question of whether to know what is just is to act justly. Rather, for my argument the important point is that, as most commentators agree, the argument is not fully defended, and this

[17] LSJ s.v. μουσικός II 1.

[18] LSJ s.v. ἰατρικός II 1.

[19] It might be objected that τὰ δίκαια are also not the same as, say, τὰ ἰατρικά, and that thus, since τὰ δίκαια and δίκαιος both refer to an ethical quality (rather than a technical skill), the formulation is legitimate. However, I have argued that for Gorgias τὰ δίκαια *does* represent technical knowledge. Moreover, for the analogy to work, τὰ δίκαια should be the same as τὰ ἰατρικά. On this sort of switch from an obvious analogy to a more controversial one as typical of Socrates' rhetoric, see Rossetti: 1989: 232. Callicles refers to it himself at 490e.

[20] Note that Socrates may even humorously refer to his use of polyptoton in the argument. The phrase κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον means simply "by the same reasoning" (see Robinson 1953: 35), but we could also take it more literally to mean "by the same word," thereby referring to the fact that it is only by use of polyptoton that the argument proceeds, that is, by the repetition of the same word.

[21] Contrast *Plt.* 303e–305e, where the Visitor specifically describes the function of a judge as a practical one whereby he ensures that disputes are decided in accordance with the laws, which are established by the statesman, not the judge.

raises the question of why it should convince Gorgias—or rather, why Plato should present it as convincing him.[22] The answer I am arguing for is that it is in large part the rhetorical aspect of Socrates' argument that wins him the debate with Gorgias. This answers the question of why Gorgias should ever have accepted doctrines that are clearly Socratic and not Gorgianic, a question that has been variously, but unsatisfactorily, answered.[23] However, I am not interested in criticizing Socrates' argument because of its rhetorical nature, but rather in examining how his argument, which uses a recognised rhetorical figure to win him the debate, functions as a parody of Gorgias' own argumentative practice. For the joke involved here is that Socrates defeats the fictional Gorgias by using a rhetorical figure closely associated with the historical Gorgias himself. Finally, this parody will be seen to have philosophical purpose, since it is used to critique Gorgias' own tendency at times in his works to allow formal elements to substitute for intellectual validity.

The view that the argumentation of the debate here is parodic can first be supported by evidence internal to the dialogue. For Socrates has specifically reproached rhetoric for being a skill that persuades without possessing true knowledge: "there is no need for it to know how these [various] matters really are, but only to discover a means of persuasion" (αὐτὰ μὲν τὰ πράγματα οὐδὲν δεῖ αὐτὴν εἰδέναι ὅπως ἔχει, μηχανὴν δέ τινα πειθοῦς ηὑρηκέναι, 459b–c). This is just what Socrates has done in his defeat of Gorgias. He has employed "a means of persuasion" (specifically, the use of the rhetorical figure of polyptoton) in order to convince Gorgias of the validity of the Socratic principle that to know what is just is to act justly, without having truly supported or proven it.[24]

We might complain that this is not truly the rhetorical view of the historical Gorgias, since the definition that is turned against Gorgias is one that has been supplied by Plato, not by the historical Gorgias. Indeed, it is very doubtful that the historical Gorgias would have made the sort of claim to complete ignorance

[22] Renaud 2001: 72: "Il ne suffit donc pas de poser la question logique—et philosophique—de savoir si un argument est valide ou non. Il faut également se demander pourquoi Platon met dans la bouche d'un personnage tel argument à tel moment." Turner (1993: 75–76) argues that Plato has constructed the dialogue in such a way as to invite the reader to question Socrates' conclusions. On the parodic nature of Gorgias' own works, see Consigny 2001: 167–176.

[23] Compare Beversluis 2000: 311: "In view of the crucial role these premises play (i.e., that to learn what is just is to be just, and that the just man necessarily wishes to be just) in Socrates' argument, it is surprising that he introduces them so casually. And in view of the fact that Gorgias' speech clearly presupposes that rhetoric can be misused, it is equally surprising that he assents to them so readily." Beversluis' answer (2000: 311, n. 38) that "Plato can make [the characters] say whatever he wants them to say" is overly reductive. Compare also Irwin 1979: 125: "Why should Gorgias obligingly give the answer that causes him trouble?," and Teloh 1986: 142: "he (*sc.* Gorgias) is very confused." Vickers (1988: 96) describes it as a "free gift" for Socrates.

[24] I am not claiming that Socrates did not *himself* believe in the principle that to know what is just is to act justly, only that he, or more precisely Plato, parodies and criticizes Gorgias by "proving" the principle by means of Gorgias' own art. See Dodds 1959: 218 on the historical validity of this view being held by Socrates himself.

that he makes in the dialogue.[25] However, the specific rhetorical trope that Socrates uses to defeat Gorgias is one that the historical Gorgias used himself in his writings.[26] I shall argue that Plato strives in 460a–c to sustain his use of the rhetorical figure in a manner very similar to the historical Gorgias' own use.

The rhetorical figure of polyptoton is highlighted early in the dialogue. Polus, a follower of Gorgias and a teacher of rhetoric in his own right,[27] interrupts the beginning of the discussion to give his own views. But when asked for a definition of Gorgias' art, he instead gives the following encomium (448c):

ΠΩΛ. ὦ Χαιρεφῶν, πολλαὶ τέχναι ἐν ἀνθρώποις εἰσὶν ἐκ τῶν ἐμπειριῶν ἐμπείρως ηὑρημέναι· ἐμπειρία μὲν γὰρ ποιεῖ τὸν αἰῶνα ἡμῶν πορεύεσθαι κατὰ τέχνην, ἀπειρία δὲ κατὰ τύχην. ἑκάστων δὲ τούτων μεταλαμβάνουσιν ἄλλοι ἄλλων ἄλλως, τῶν δὲ ἀρίστων οἱ ἄριστοι· ὧν καὶ Γοργίας ἐστὶν ὅδε, καὶ μετέχει τῆς καλλίστης τῶν τεχνῶν.

Pol. Chaerephon, many are the skills among humankind, discovered empirically from their experiences. For experience makes our life journey by skill, but a lack of experience makes it journey by chance. Different individuals partake of each of these different skills differently. And the best individuals partake of the best skills. And Gorgias here is one of these, and he partakes of the finest of the skills.

While it has been suggested that this passage might be a direct quote taken from a work on rhetoric written by the historical Polus, Dodds recognized the similarities to Gorgias' own writings and argued that it is more likely to be a parody, adding that "the style is in any case Gorgian to the point of grotesqueness."[28]

Consider the following example of repeated polyptoton in Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* (11):

ὅσοι δὲ ὅσους περὶ ὅσων καὶ ἔπεισαν καὶ πείθουσι δὲ ψευδῆ λογον πλάσαντες. εἰ μὲν γὰρ πάντες περὶ πάντων εἶχον τῶν <τε> παροιχομένων μνήμην τῶν τε παρόντων <ἔννοιαν> τῶν τε μελλόντων πρόνοιαν, οὐκ ἂν ὁμοίως ὅμοιος ἦν ὁ λόγος ...

[25] See Irwin 1979: 123–124; Cole 1991: 152–153; Vickers 1988: 93–95; Beversluis 2000: 303–305; Renaud 2001: 71.

[26] On the preponderance of word repetition in Gorgias in comparison to other prose writers of the fifth and fourth centuries, see Dover 1997: 134, table 7.1, and in particular 137, table 7.2 for "close repetition," under which belongs the figure of polyptoton. See also Gigli-Wyss 1966: 134–136.

[27] On Polus the historical figure and the character, see Dodds 1959: 11–12. On his close relationship to Gorgias, as suggested by the dialogue itself, see Plochmann and Robinson 1988: 17. On the relationship between Plato's dramatic characters and historical individuals generally, see Blondell 2002: 31–37.

[28] Dodds 1959: 192. So also many others, for example, Benardete 1991: 12 and Wardy 1996: 59. Canto (1993: 314) understands the passage as a parody of Polus' own rhetorical style. This could also be the case, but since we have no certain examples of his writing, and since the Gorgianic connections are obvious, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not Plato is parodying Polus' own style of speaking, in so far as it differed from Gorgias'. For Plato's critique of the genre of encomia more generally, see Nightingale 1995: 93–132.

So many people have persuaded and do persuade so many others about so many things by fashioning a false *logos*! For if everyone, about everything, had memory of the past, awareness of the present, and foresight into the future, *logos* would not be similarly similar . . .

Both passages are marked by their exaggerated use of polypoton, with (as just one instance) Polus' threefold ἄλλοι ἄλλων ἄλλως being quite similar to Gorgias' ὅσοι δὲ ὅσους περὶ ὅσων in the *Encomium*.[29] Given that Polus is actually discussing Gorgias and his art, it is fitting that he adopts his mentor's style of speaking. Clearly the parody in Polus' speech exists primarily on the formal level, in that it is the highly distinctive use of language that marks the passage as Gorgianic. However, given that Polus' answer is immediately criticized by Socrates for missing the point of his question, we also have an early suggestion that the parody points out an intellectual deficiency that resides within such rhetorical techniques.[30]

It is easy to assume that this and other rhetorical techniques were employed primarily or even solely for aesthetic reasons.[31] Yet there was clearly an argumentative purpose to this style as well, since the various "Gorgianic figures," as they were later termed, can be understood as an attempt to present ideas in a highly structured form, by balancing clauses and sentences, and by the repetition of words and sounds. I suggest that the desired effect is that every word appears to be residing in its proper place, and that this sense of overall order imparts a sense that the *ideas* expressed by the words are thereby themselves orderly or correct.[32] The highly balanced and structured form of Gorgias' prose may have

[29] The similarity is noted by Denniston (1956: 133) and Dodds (1959: 192), who also cites Gorg. *Hel.* 11. On Plato's familiarity with the works of Gorgias, see Hays 1990, and for evidence from the *Gorgias* itself, see Coulter 1964: 51–57. Plato's familiarity with the rhetorical manner of Gorgias is clearly shown by the Gorgianic speech of Agathon in *Symp.* 194e–197e; Socrates makes the connection to Gorgias at 198c. Use of polyptoton is frequent in that speech (e.g., 195b, 195e, 196d).

[30] Literary and linguistic parody are quite common in the *Gorgias*. Most prominent is Plato's use of Euripides' play *Antiope*, repeatedly referred to or quoted in the course of Socrates' and Callicles' debate (484e, 485e–486a, 486b, 486c): see further Nightingale 1995: 79–87. Dodds (1959: 235) also notes a parody, overtly referred to as such, at 467b (μὴ κακηγόρει, ὦ λῷστε Πῶλε, ἵνα προσείπω σε κατὰ σέ·). Such an example is revealing, since it shows how even a single phrase was recognizable as embodying a certain rhetorical style. Friedländer (1964: 247) remarked how Gorgias' exaggerated use of concision in his acquiescence to Plato's request that there be no long speeches is itself a "caricature of Socratic dialectics." See also Renaud 2001: 74.

[31] Denniston's rhetorically incisive but unfair dismissal is often quoted: "Starting with the initial advantage of having nothing in particular to say, he was able to concentrate all his energies upon saying it" (1952: 12). For a more favorable account of Gorgias' style, see Schiappa 1999: 85–113. On the modern reduction of rhetoric to style, see Rossetti 1989: 237, n. 7.

[32] Similarly Cole (1991: 73) describes sophistic rhetoric as "a prose of information and ideas." Order is central to Gorgias' typical argumentative procedure, prominently found in his two extant works (*Encomium of Helen*, *Palamedes*) and in our paraphrases of his now lost *On Not-Being*. This procedure can be termed an exhaustive enumerative epagoge: the argument goes through an exhaustive list of possibilities required individually or collectively for something to be true, disproving each in order to

served to convince the listener or reader that the content possessed the same sort of precision and accuracy.[33] Concern for this sort of balance is, of course, inherent to the Greek language, as common as a μέν ... δέ construction.

Consistent terminology can, of course, convey a consistency in the content to which the terms refer.[34] Consider the opening of the *Encomium of Helen* (1):

κόσμος πόλει μὲν εὐανδρία, σώματι δὲ κάλλος, ψυχῇ δὲ σοφία, πράγματι δὲ ἀρετή, λόγῳ δὲ ἀλήθεια· τὰ δὲ ἐναντία τούτων ἀκοσμία. ἄνδρα δὲ καὶ γυναῖκα καὶ λόγον καὶ ἔργον καὶ πόλιν καὶ πρᾶγμα χρὴ τὸ μὲν ἄξιον ἐπαίνου ἐπαίνῳ τιμᾶν, τῷ δὲ ἀναξίῳ μῶμον ἐπιτιθέναι· ἴση γὰρ ἁμαρτία καὶ ἀμαθία μέμφεσθαί τε τὰ ἐπαινετὰ καὶ ἐπαινεῖν τὰ μωμητά.

Order for a city is courage, for a body beauty, for a soul wisdom, for an action excellence, and for a speech truth. But their opposites are disorder. It is necessary to praise man and woman and speech and deed and city and action when they are worthy of praise, and to reproach the unworthy; for it is equally mistaken and ignorant to blame praiseworthy things and to praise blameworthy things.

There is nothing contentious about Gorgias' reasoning here. He begins by stating that each thing has a proper quality that renders this thing orderly or fine in nature. His list of examples ends with the position that for speech to be orderly/good, it must be truthful. It follows that it is necessary to render praise to that which is deserving of praise, and to blame that which is deserving of reproach, since to render or withhold praise in this manner is to ensure that an epideictic speech, i.e., a speech of praise or blame of the sort that Gorgias is making, will be truthful in its content. He strengthens the force of his argument by use of polyptoton and word repetition more generally.[35] The polyptoton of the phrase τὸ μὲν ἄξιον ἐπαίνου ἐπαίνῳ τιμᾶν makes it seem that much more obvious that the thing

disprove the refutand. For a good discussion of the basic technique, see Long 1984. On the generally "rationalistic" nature of Gorgias' work, see Kerferd 1955 and 1981: 80–82; Schiappa 1999: 121–124; Wardy 1996: 30–31; Spatharas 2001. Gorgias seems to have been conversant with philosophy of his day. For instance, the anonymous author of the Aristotelean *De Xenophane*, which contains one of our two paraphrases of Gorgias' *On Not-Being*, specifically situates Gorgias' arguments within the Eleatic tradition (979a13–18, 979a21–24). Similarly, see Saunders 1985 for the view that Gorgias raised the issue of determinism and in this regard influenced Democritus. See also Barnes 1982: 523–530 and Hankinson 1998: 74–76. For Gorgias' relation to Presocratic philosophy generally, see Newiger 1979. For a critique of the philosophical quality of Gorgias' works, see Robinson 1973.

[33] Schiappa (1999: 104) quotes Verdenius' reminder that for the Greeks the artistic beauty of words was often seen as a guarantee of the validity of their content.

[34] As seen in Plato's *Cratylus* and elsewhere, there was a keen interest in the fifth century in trying to fix words to specific referents, in order to rein in their potential ambiguity. On the issue generally, see Guthrie 1971: 204–219; Classen 1976; and Kerferd 1981: 68–77.

[35] For a detailed discussion of the overlap of rhetorical and logical argumentation generally in Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*, see Adkins (1983: 108–118), who notes that "the rhetorical figures and the language in general subserve the interests of the arguments" (126). See also Consigny 2001: 186–188.

worthy of praise should be honoured with praise, but the rhetorical flourish does not distort the argument.

However, sometimes Gorgias' use of the figure is such that it supplements an argument to the point that it appears stronger than in fact it is. Consider an example noted by Denniston (1952: 133) in Gorgias' *Defense of Palamedes* (12):

ἐν οἷς <πάντες> πάντας ὁρῶσι καὶ πάντες ὑπὸ πάντων ὁρῶνται. πάντως ἄρα καὶ πάντῃ πάντα πράττειν ἀδύνατον ἦν μοι.

In which (*sc.* life under arms) everyone sees everyone and everyone is seen by everyone. And so it was altogether and in every way impossible for me to do all these things.

Palamedes is defending himself against a charge by Odysseus of having plotted to betray the Greeks at Troy. In the first part of his speech Palamedes argues, using the famous argument from probability also associated with Gorgias,[36] that it was unlikely that he had the opportunity to commit the supposed act of treason. He ends this section with the above quote. Assuming the addition by Reiske to be correct (which seems guaranteed by the structure of the sentence), we have no less than seven instances of the same stem being used in two sentences made up of nineteen words. This heavy use of polyptoton is clearly designed to bolster the argument beyond what it will bear. Given that this entire section is based upon the argument from probability, it is not legitimate to conclude that it was *impossible* for Palamedes to have committed treason—only unlikely or improbable. Indeed, if we were to accept the argument as necessary, then we would have to conclude that no one ever performed an act of treason from within an armed camp, something that is clearly false. Yet Palamedes' repeated use of the adjective stem πάντ- allows him to suggest that it was impossible for him to commit the deed, when the the argument only allows the conclusion that it was improbable.

The use of polyptoton, and of repeated terms generally, is of course not simply Gorgianic in nature, but is a feature of the Greek language, and in particular of poetry. Rather, what is particularly Gorgianic is the exaggerated and systematic use of this rhetorical figure in prose.[37] And it is important to note that Plato himself uses the figure at times.[38] Is Plato's use of polyptoton in Socrates' defeat of Gorgias sufficiently distinctive, then, to justify asserting that the passage is intended to be recognized as a technique adopted by Socrates to criticise the rhetorical technique of his opponent?[39] The positive evidence has been examined

[36] Pl. *Phdr.* 267a–b.

[37] Cf. MacDowell 1993: 18 and 34.

[38] See Denniston 1952: 132–134. Denniston notes that the technique was used more often by Plato, Xenophon, and the sophists than by the orators.

[39] The general issue of whether Plato intends the reader to recognise Socrates' fallacious arguments is a difficult one. There are two questions involved here. The first is whether the flaw in the argument was recognised by Plato, and the second is what was Plato's purpose in including a flawed argument. With Klosko (1983: 372) I think that the first question must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Yet we can also use the second question of purpose to help with the first question of awareness: if, as I

above, but the following passage from the *Euthyphro* may serve as a useful comparison (13a–b):

ΣΩ. οὐ γάρ που λέγεις γε, οἷαίπερ καὶ αἱ περὶ τὰ ἄλλα θεραπεῖαί εἰσιν, τοιαύτην καὶ περὶ θεούς—λέγομεν γάρ που—οἷόν φαμεν ἵππους οὐ πᾶς ἐπίσταται θεραπεύειν ἀλλὰ ὁ ἱππικός· ἦ γάρ;
ΕΥΘ. Πάνυ γε.
ΣΩ. Ἡ γάρ που ἱππικὴ ἵππων θεραπεία.
ΕΥΘ. Ναί.
ΣΩ. Οὐδέ γε κύνας πᾶς ἐπίσταται θεραπεύειν ἀλλὰ ὁ κυνηγετικός.
ΕΥΘ. Οὕτω.
ΣΩ. Ἡ γάρ που κυνηγετικὴ κυνῶν θεραπεία.
ΕΥΘ. Ναί.
ΣΩ. Ἡ δέ γε βοηλατικὴ βοῶν.
ΕΥΘ. Πάνυ γε.
ΣΩ. Ἡ δὲ δὴ ὁσιότης τε καὶ εὐσέβεια θεῶν, ὦ Εὐθύφρων: οὕτω λέγεις;
ΕΥΘ. Ἔγωγε.

Soc. You don't mean that care for the gods is like care for other things, like, as we say, it is not everyone, but the expert in horses, who knows how to care for horses?
Euth. Yes, that's just what I mean.
Soc. And I suppose the care of horses is the horseman's art?
Euth. Yes.
Soc. And it is no other than the hunter who knows how to care for dogs.
Euth. That's right.
Soc. So the care of dogs is the hunter's art.
Euth. Yes.
Soc. And the one of cattle is the art of tending cattle.
Euph. Very much so.
Soc. And then is holiness and piety (care) of the gods? Is this what you mean?
Euth. That's what I mean.

The argument here is similar to that of the *Gorgias*, in so far as the name of the profession and its art is morphologically linked with the object of its knowledge. However, in contrast to the *Gorgias* passage, here Plato employs greater variation, using similar terms to help support the connection made between the entity cared for and the name of the one giving the care, but not in fact employing strict

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will argue below in the specific case of *Grg.* 460a–c, there is some philosophical purpose in including a flawed argument, this can be used to argue that the flaw is intentional. For generally similar views, see McKim 1988: 46 and Arieti 1991: 83. Klosko (1987) suggests as a general rule that Socrates uses intentional fallacy in his arguments when he is involved in eristic debates (such as in the *Euthydemus* and *Protagoras*) because such arguments were accepted in this sort of verbal combat. This does not seem to be the case in the *Gorgias*, no matter how ugly things get between the interlocutors, since Socrates emphasises that he is talking with Gorgias in order to discover the truth about Gorgias' art and not to defeat him in the debate (457c–458b). By my account of *Grg.* 460a–c, a distinctive formal element of the argument is meant to draw the reader's attention to difficulties involved in the content of this argument.

polyptoton.[40] The greatest variation is found at the end of the passage, since there is no morphological link between the terms for care of the gods (ὁσιότης, εὐσέβεια) and the gods themselves (θεῶν). And this is just to Plato's purpose, for his argument will be that care of the gods is not in fact like other acts of care, since the observance of religious duty does not improve the gods in the way that the horse expert cares for horses in order to improve them (13c–d).[41]

I conclude that the use of the figure in 460a–c is distinctive both in itself and by its relationship to the rest of the dialogue. Plato has Socrates defeat Gorgias in the argument by means of a rhetorical technique that, while not the sole property of Gorgias, was used by Gorgias in its most exaggerated manner. However, Socrates' use of this rhetorical technique conceals from Gorgias a flaw in the argument, or at least an avenue of refutation available to Gorgias to resist the argument. And this flaw, while unseen by Gorgias, is nonetheless meant to be recognized by the reader. Thus the man most famed for his ability to argue successfully due to his rhetorical technique is defeated in a debate by means of the very technique which was most often associated with him.

However, it is important to recognise that this parody serves a philosophical purpose. As Socrates emphasizes throughout the dialogue, he sees rhetoric as no true skill because it persuades others without itself possessing real knowledge. Hence he points out the problem that rhetorical language might persuade by its flattering nature (presumably the pleasing nature of its formal elements, just such as the so-called Gorgianic figures) without being true in its content. And this charge, as we saw from the examples taken from Gorgias' own works, is at least in part a just one. It is certainly not the case that Gorgias' mode of argumentation is *only* formally pleasing without any convincing content, since, as we saw, his rhetorical techniques are used to support or augment valid arguments. However, Gorgias sometimes allows the technique of polyptoton to supplement—or even to substitute for—a valid argument. And given that the use of repeated terms is not an unfamiliar one in Greek, and that Plato himself employed the figure at times, the particular point of the parody is that Gorgias *overextends* (in Plato's opinion) this linguistic technique typical of the Greek language to the point where it threatens to distort the truth. Plato's point is that morphological similarity between words can suggest a similarity in their contents that is not in fact warranted, and that in his own highly rhetorical form of argumentation Gorgias failed to recognise and deal with this potential rift between form and content.

[40] Dover (1997: 138) suggests that Plato's "naturalness" of conversational style is largely achieved by adopting a middle position that avoids both excessive repetition such as Gorgias' and the excessive avoidance of repetition found, for example, in Thucydides.

[41] Compare another very similar type of passage at *Prt.* 311b–312a, where Socrates argues that by going to a sophist for learning, the youth Hippocrates must actually want to become a sophist. Here Plato employs strict consistency in terms to refer to the three professions in the argument (ἰατρός, ἀγαλματοποιός, σοφιστής), but does not use repeated instances of the terms in close succession for rhetorical effect.

The point is an important one to make in a culture that tended to view the formal beauty of verbal statements as support for the validity of their content. Finally, Plato's proof that supports his criticism of Gorgias is a performative one: Socrates' ability to convince Gorgias of something he does not believe and which has not been proven, by means of his own rhetorical technique, is eloquently expressive of the problems involved in persuasion produced only or primarily by rhetorical form.

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