

A Hermeneutical Solution to the Problem of Philosophic Education

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral
Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Political Science

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract

This Thesis examines the problem of philosophic education. It outlines a problem of philosophic education that comes out of ancient and modern scholarship concerning the initiation into philosophy. Essentially every philosopher and scholar who has looked at it is unable to describe the conditions of what a philosophic education *is*. The problem gets originally illuminated out of the *Laws* and *Republic* of Plato. The final chapter of the thesis looks at the dialogue *Gorgias* and adopts a hermeneutical interpretation of the text to see what the conditions might be for a philosophic education to be possible.

Acknowledgments

I would especially like to thank Dr. Tom Darby, my supervisor, for his inspiration in completing this thesis and for his continuing encouragement over the last few years. I am grateful for his patience, and especially grateful for helping me engage in odysseys that have taken me down and up again in ancient Political Philosophy.

Thanks are also due to Dr. Waller Newell, Dr. Marc Hanvelt, Dr. Geoff Kellow and Dr. Gregory MacIsaac. Dr. Newell's great scholarship and pedagogy both stimulated my initial interest in liberal education and encouraged serious reflection on the question of philosophic education. I thank Dr. Hanvelt for encouraging me to reflect seriously on questions of method and the foundations of philosophy, and for his willingness to help me whenever I needed. I thank Dr. MacIsaac for his kindness and critical feedback through my writing process on Plato. Finally, I thank Dr. Kellow for his willingness to discuss Plato's *Laws* which informs much of my thoughts on Plato and education.

I owe much to two professors of my alma mater, MacEwan University. Dr. Gaelan Murphy and Dr. Edvard Lorkovik both have been excellent mentors and turned me in the right direction during my undergrad. Both were exemplar of pedagogy and philosophic questioning, and I will see them both as role models. I am especially grateful for their help with my interest in philosophic scholarship, and my admittance and pursuit of graduate studies.

I would not have completed this thesis without the help and support of my friends: Lucas Jerusalimiec, Marcus Charlesworth, Noah Schwartz, Rob Currie-Wood, Elsa Piersig, Avery Quesnel and Alexandra Bozinoff. Some special thanks go to Kaitie Jourdeuil, Peter Haskett, and Aaron Service who took their own time to look through my chapters.

Finally, eternal thanks to my family for their constant support, especially my mother and father, Jack and Joyce for always supporting me whenever I needed it and Thomas and Andrea Allison for allowing me to do research over the summer of 2017.

μετὰ ταῦτα δὴ, εἶπον, ἀπέικασοντιοῦτό πάθει τὴν ἡμετέραν φύσιν
παιδείας τε περὶ καὶ ἀπαιδευσίας.

Πλάτων

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Introduction

This thesis examines philosophic education, a persistent mystery in philosophic writing since Plato. It does this by asking the following question: what are the conditions that must pertain in order to make a philosopher? The method of this thesis will be to examine classical texts hermeneutically to better understand the political problems and solutions that they illustrate. The texts I have selected to characterize this particular problem are Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*. Both of these texts deal with education and the presence or absence of philosophy in its administration, but never isolate education outside of the political context. I contend that this problem is addressed in Plato's *Gorgias*; the final chapter of this thesis is a close reading of the *Gorgias* expounding that argument.

Using classical texts to discuss and investigate political and philosophical problems introduces some methodological problems for me. The first is the question of how to interpret a Platonic dialogue. This point is disputed among scholars and is too large of a problem to be dealt with solely in this thesis. However, an explanation of how we can approach these texts to understand permanent political problems over time is necessary to understand how these texts can help us comprehend education today. Three authors in particular lend to a reading of Platonic dialogues that can transcend the historical, hermeneutical, and philosophical problems of interpreting Plato: Jacob Klein, Leo Strauss and Hans-George Gadamer.

The first section of this thesis will look at a method to read Plato from Jacob Klein that incorporates as many of the elements of a platonic dialogue as possible instead of just focusing on its argumentation and dialectic. It will do this to show that this method

gets as close to possible to a complete meaning of the text. The remainder of the first section of the thesis will examine two questions: why can we use classical texts to talk about permanent problems and why should we turn to classical texts to answer these same problems? Through a hermeneutical account of interpretation from Hans-Georg Gadamer and the explanation of political problems from Strauss' *The City and Man*, we will see why an appropriate reading of a classical text will always go beyond the historical boundaries of the authors. Gadamer calls this the 'fusion of horizons' when appropriately reading a text. Along a similar note Strauss argues that some problems call for a return to classical social science. To return to the classical social sciences, to Plato and Aristotle for Strauss, is the fusion of horizons in action. Thus for Strauss some questions necessarily need to be illuminated in the light of antiquity. I contend that a complete account of the problem of philosophical education can be answered by a return to classical political philosophy and that the problem of the conditions of philosophical education is revealed in Plato's *Gorgias*.

The second section of this thesis examines the problem of the conditions of philosophic education and outlines this problem using texts from Plato. It then reviews a selection of the modern and classical literature on this topic to show that education has never exposed concretely the conditions of philosophic education. It looks at the classical texts with the principles outlined in the first section of the thesis. By examining two separate accounts of 'liberal education' in Plato's dialogues the second section of the thesis shows that Plato's two accounts are not the same: one is about philosophic education and the other about civic education. It then discusses the nebulous

characterization of philosophic education in Plato's work as well as in the work of some of the authors in modern scholarship.

The final section of my thesis will examine Plato's dialogue *Gorgias*. It does this by adopting the methodological points discussed in the first section of this thesis to interpret the dialogue. The interpretation will reveal a particular solution to the problem that gets outlined in the second section of this theses: the problem of the conditions of philosophic education. I will be examining the drama and the argumentation of the *Gorgias* to show that the *Gorgias*, among other things, is an example of an initiation into philosophy.

Chapter 1: Methodology

To start, I will examine some of the scholarship that discusses how to read a Platonic dialogue in conjunction with some articles that use interpretations of Plato that are methodologically diverse. I will then move on to a more complete account of how to read a Platonic dialogue from Jacob Klein. The articles I will look at demonstrate some good albeit problematic readings of Plato; however, my primary purpose is to demonstrate that there are many avenues of reading Plato and how just one or two small changes in interpretation can change the meaning of a text. I begin with William A. Johnson, who outlines the importance of the setting and framework of a dialogue as an interpretive point. Then I move onto Drew Hyland, who emphasizes the written dialogue form and its ability to entice us into philosophy. Finally, I look at two readings of Plato that focus on the modern conception of philosophy as argumentation. They examine specific arguments within dialogues and isolate them. This is usually termed the mouthpiece approach and imputes the arguments and positions of Plato's interlocutors onto Plato himself. I briefly discuss the problematic nature of this type of interpretation and then continue on with Klein's work, which considers and synthesizes all of these positions.

William Johnson provides an argument for the interconnectivity of the drama and argument in Platonic dialogues. He argues that the elaborate framing of the drama and the argumentation is an invitation to reflect on two things. The first point of reflection Johnson points towards is the differences between doing philosophy and the 'types of discussions' Plato represents in his dialogues. The second point of reflection, Johnson tells us, is an invitation to reflect on the sensible world over and against the realm of the

‘ideal’ in Plato’s “vision of Ideas”.¹ On the first point, the ‘types of discussions’ Johnson is referring to the argumentative style of the interlocutors in Plato’s dialogues. This is an understanding of philosophy as a type of argumentative contest. This position assumes that the best type of philosophy is the kind that creates logical arguments about the world. Johnson sees the dialogues as an invitation to mediate between this understanding of philosophy and philosophy as a way of life. This way of life is loosely defined as the general ignorance and curiosity by which a figure like Socrates approaches people in the dialogues; a genuine disposition of ignorance that is open to learning about the subject under discussion. The second point is the reflection on the sensible and the ideal. Johnson is talking about a common interpretation of Plato that mediates between a theorist of ideas and a hard systematic thinker who deals with forms. This is a common interpretation usually brought forward through a reading of *Republic* but Johnson never describes exactly where his position comes from in the dialogues (if that is where they are from). I would like to focus on the second element that Johnson claims the dialogues invite: reflection on the “perceptible and Ideal world as suggested in Plato’s vision of ideas.”²

Johnson's article focuses on four dialogues *Thaetetus*, *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, and *Parmenides*. For brevity’s sake I will focus on his interpretation of the *Thaetetus* and its relation to his ideas about dramatic frameworks. Johnson notes that the frame of the dialogue is a tragic one, but also one that has significance regarding memory and recollection. It is tragic because in the time when the dialogue opens Thaetetus has been

¹ William Johnson, “Dramatic Frame and Philosophic Idea in Plato” *The American Journal of Philosophy* 119, no. 4(1998): 577

² Johnson, “Dramatic Frame”, 577.

wounded in battle and is near death. The dialogue opens with a man Euclides reading a conversation between Socrates, Theatetus and Theodorus that was written down by a slave. Johnson rightly notes the importance of the points made about documented speech this section insofar as they point towards legitimate accuracy. The account is intended to be much more accurate, for it is being written rather than remembered. Plato, however, as Johnson tells us, includes a few points of friction: Euclides recalls that he took notes of the conversation, then recreated it, and then (nearly) reproduced the whole thing.³

Johnson analyses the frame for all four dialogues, but the strength of his points are the same. There are some dramatic elements intertwined with the framing of the dialogues that are essential to understanding how to read the rest of the dialogue. Though he emphasizes the dramatic elements of the framework of dialogues, one of Johnson's methodological points directs to a tension in his own work. His thesis tells us that the dialogue form invites reflection on the ideal world of forms and the perceptible world. It is problematic to impute the world of the 'ideal' or the theory of the 'forms' onto Platonic dialogues without having some kind of understanding about Plato that creates a system of philosophy. If you already understand Plato to have some kind of systematized philosophical system that you have expounded from one of his dialogues (presumably the *Republic*) and you are writing an article about the problem of the framing of the dialogues regarding arguments directly from Plato's mouth then it is probably worth remembering that the entirety of the *Republic* is a reflection and reproduction of Socrates. That is to say, the frame of the dialogue is extremely questionable as far as memory is

³ Johnson, "Dramatic Frame", 585-586

concerned. As such the entire 'system' of the ideal should not be placed onto Plato from the dialogues that we have that supposedly expound the 'vision of ideas'.

At the end of the *Theatetus* section of his article, Johnson tells us "The opening scene, as it were, asks the reader to recall, when picking up and reading a Socratic dialogue, that any such dialogue is at best a verified recollection of a report of the actual conversation".⁴ His point is that we cannot take verbatim these arguments and place them into Plato's (or any interlocutor who was a historical person's) mouth. However, the imputation of the 'vision of ideas' (or any kind of theory of the forms) as the overarching principle of interpretation and reflection violates this point he makes because it brings a system of philosophy as an initial assumption to Johnson's argument. It already assumes and imputes an entire system of ideas onto a thinker and treats it as a looking glass by which to read his dialogues. The idea that a dialogue is an invitation to philosophize about the content of the dialogue fits very well with his argument on the whole, but an invitation to reflect on an entire system of philosophy that could not exist without already having ideas about the systemization of philosophy from the dialogues, is a problematic interpretive framework that violates some of Johnson's own principles.

Drew Hyland's article *Why Plato Wrote Dialogues* discusses the dialogue form and the philosophical importance of interpreting a dialogue by understanding how important its form, dialogue, is to the framework by which we approach the dialogue. Hyland notes that Platonic scholars often point out that the dialogues are beautiful and that Plato was a masterful writer; however, they often simply note the significance of the

⁴ Johnson, "Dramatic Frame", 586

dramatic form without analysing it.⁵ This is a way of only looking at one part of a dialogue and mistaking it for the entirety of the thing. In response to this Hyland first examines the hermeneutics of interpreting the drama of a dialogue and then provides a short interpretation of Plato's *Crito*.

Hyland's analysis begins by examining the objection to writing that Socrates raises in the *Phaedrus*: namely, that writing makes us forgetful. Hyland deals with this on two levels, noting the superficiality that a treatise allows us to 'remember' a whole system of philosophy when our memory falters. More importantly to Hyland is the idea that the treatise or written form will cause us to forget to philosophize.⁶ With works of philosophy present before us it is easy to simply accept a philosophic system that someone already has given much thought to. The goal of a 'dialogue' or a discussion, however, is to go forward with your own thinking in conjunction with another person. Hyland's point is that this is precisely what the dialogue form facilitates: it allows someone to engage with it precisely because you cannot place the arguments or dramatic positions directly into the mouth of Plato. This leaves a space between the reader and the dialogue in which the reader is forced to mix himself with the work. In other words, the reader is forced to *think* about the work and come to their own conclusions.

In his analysis of the *Crito* Hyland is quick to point out some important elements and themes that come only from the dramatic setting of the dialogue. The general setting of the dialogue is that Socrates is in prison and Crito, his rich and loyal friend, has come to break Socrates free through bribery. Hyland notes that we are immediately faced with

⁵ Drew Hyland, "Why Plato Wrote Dialogues" *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 1, no. 1 (1968), 38

⁶ Hyland, "Why Plato Wrote Dialogues", 39-40.

a few dramatic points that starkly stand out when examining the *Crito*. The first is that *Crito* is a wealthy man and has been a good citizen to Athens. The second is that *Crito* is not a philosopher. What is at stake then in the whole dialogue is the problem of buying justice where the system of Athens has failed to provide it: in trying to overcome this through bribery *Crito* has unwittingly committed a grave injustice. The illumination of a point like this that is implied but never said, is the light by which we can interpret a dialogue like the *Crito* that can change the avenue of interpretation completely.⁷ This is the importance of the dialogue form that Hyland wants to emphasize: there are many factors like character and setting that get woven into the dialogue that can change or alter their meaning. To neglect these points completely is to mistake a small part of something, such as the arguments of characters in dialogues, for the whole of the dialogue itself.

Daniel Werner makes an argument about the role of rhetoric in Plato's *Phaedrus* in his article 'Rhetoric and Philosophy in Plato's "Phaedrus"'. He argues that Plato creates a strict criterion for 'true rhetoric' one that is probably out of reach of most human beings. Methodologically speaking, Werner takes for granted his ability to speak on behalf of Plato's intentions with the dialogue. He does this by saying that Plato is presenting an 'in house debate' with his contemporaries about oratory. Werner is presenting this in opposition to a reading of the *Phaedrus* as a manual for writing speeches, rather he is trying to say that the dialogue is something of philosophical and political significance that tells us about the nature of oratory itself.⁸

⁷ Hyland, "Why Plato Wrote Dialogues" 44-45

⁸ Daniel Werner, "Rhetoric and Philosophy in Plato's "Phaedrus"" *Greece and Rome*, Second Series Volume 1, no. 1 (April, 2010) 22

Werner does not take into consideration much of the drama of the dialogue, nor does he consider the context of the small section of the *Phaedrus* that he is working within.⁹ As such the arguments he is using are being adopted through a mouthpiece approach to reading Plato. He takes for granted that the arguments presented in the dialogue are attributable to Plato. One thing that is admirable about Werner's method is his attempt to solve the aim of the *Phaedrus* as a whole. While this is an extremely ambitious claim when only analyzing a very small part of the dialogue, the idea that the arguments within the text go beyond themselves to show something to the reader, to engage them in philosophy, is more consistent with the arguments about texts actually within the *Phaedrus*.

In the *Phaedrus* Socrates argues that the best written works are capable of saying different things to different readers. The best texts are supposed to engage a reader in a type of dialogue, something that facilitates a discussion between the reader and the texts. This is opposed to the view that the arguments from texts stand alone as things able to be subjected to logical rigour, and tests the arguments of Plato's interlocutors as much as the arguments of Plato 'himself'. At least Werner decides his conclusion cannot exist in isolation from the rest of the text. Werner seems to have an ambiguous middle road that attempts to claim that the arguments in the dialogue are from Plato, but at the same time makes those claims on behalf of the entirety of the dialogue (which by his own admissions contains much more).

⁹ I am aware that it can be problematic to try to always have a comprehensive interpretation of an entire dialogue. Sometimes with the limits of a journal article an author can only have so much space.

Mehmet Erginal writes a rigorous analysis and interpretation of Plato's *Republic* entitled 'Inconsistency and Ambiguity in *Republic IX*'. The analysis of the arguments is quite good, but the central thesis of this piece is to solve two charges that other scholars have leveled against Plato's 'third proof' that the just man is stronger than the unjust man. Erginal hopes to show that these criticisms, that the argument is inconsistent and involves a fatal ambiguity, are incorrect.¹⁰

Erginal's approach to the dialogues has many advantages and disadvantages. He takes for granted that the arguments presented in the *Republic* that come from Socrates are also indeed the arguments of Plato. This allows for some very strong analysis and logical rigour to be applied to the arguments presented in order to conclude if they are valid, consistent or sound. But there are so many reasons why this approach to the dialogues is dubious, no matter how polished the arguments of Plato are when scrutinized by logical rigour.

There is no reasonable way we can impute arguments onto Plato without considering who the interlocutors are in the dialogues. Certainly Socrates appears to be the primary discussion leaders in many dialogues, but there are many exceptions. In the *Clitophon* Socrates barely says anything but is berated for the entire dialogue because philosophy has no practical application. In the *Laws* he is not even present. Who then do we say speaks for Plato and why? In the *Republic* two of Plato's brothers are featured as interlocutors, why not either of them? To use the reasoning of the mouthpiece approach against itself, the most common, and the strongest, argument against this type of reading

¹⁰ Mehmet Erginel, "Inconsistency and Ambiguity in *Republic IX*" *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 61, no. 2 (December 2011), 493.

are the other things Socrates says. If we are willing to look outside of the *Republic* we only need to look to the *Phaedrus* in which Socrates makes the argument that written works are incapable of teaching. If, interpretively, we are not willing to look at other dialogues we only need to go back to the third book of the *Republic*. Socrates here tells us that there are two ways the investigation of the *Republic* can continue. There is a ‘longer more involved road’¹¹ or there is a simpler way that is less rigorous, but for brevity’s and understanding’s sake everyone will understand. Thus if we are saying that Socrates speaks for Plato, every argument and account given after that comment in the *Republic* is a weaker and diluted position that Plato’s Socrates ‘dumbs down’ for the sake of other interlocutors participating in the discussion.

Erginal’s position then is not meaningless, but it decontextualizes arguments from everything that surrounds them. This includes the drama, setting, character, even the previous statements by the interlocutor who presumably speaks for Plato. As such we only discover how the arguments from Socrates, a character who admits that his arguments aren’t the most precise way to talk about things, are not logically rigorous.

In his *Commentary on Plato’s Meno*,¹² Jacob Klein expounds the truth from the Platonic dialogue *Meno* through a mimetic method. Klein’s entire project revolves around understanding Plato on the text’s own terms. Klein seeks to avoid from the outset preconceptions, pre-decisions and questionable assumptions that we may have about Platonic dialogues (or, if they cannot be avoided, that readers should at least be aware of

¹¹ Plato, *Republic* Translated by Allan Bloom Chicago, Basic Books (435d) p. 114

¹² Klein translates the Greek directly from the *Meno* so there are no Stephany citations in this paper (since Klein did not publish a translation the references would not necessarily match). Each reference to analysis and summary in the commentary is about a particular Stephany section anyway, which is referenced in the margins of the commentary.

them).¹³ He does this by looking to the texts themselves, understanding why the form of dialogue might be important, and what it means for a text to mimic conversation. Klein's more general method—approaching a work regarding both its form and content—is the more wide spread application for this type of reading. The account of considering form and content allows us to interpret authors in a way that meets them on their own terms since we are considering both *how* they wrote something and *what* exactly they wrote; as I will explain below, however, it does not give us the same kind of philosophic invitation as the dialogue form.

The first large assumption Klein tackles is that Platonic dialogues, as books, do not speak for themselves. By this he means that the texts do not stand in isolation from one another; rather we ought to understand them as *mimetic* of real conversations that aim at teaching. Klein tells us that the form of a dialogue and its content are utterly inseparable since the content itself is reflective of conversation and dialectic.¹⁴ Literally, the form of talking between Socrates (or the other primary interlocutors, like the Athenian Stranger in Plato's *Laws*) and any other interlocutor is the exact same as the written form. Platonic dialogues contain dialogue. The dialogue form gives the dialogues a dramatic quality that opens new possibilities of interpretation.

Klein deplores this dramatic quality as too often talked about but not often taken up.¹⁵ A lot of the scholarship that uses Platonic interpretation ignores the dramatic aspect of the dialogues, as though Plato did not put them there intentionally. Klein's point is that

¹³ Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's Meno* (University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 3

¹⁴ Klein, *Commentary on Plato's Meno*, 4

¹⁵ Klein, *Commentary on Plato's Meno*, 5

often authors will focus too much on the argumentation within a text in isolation from the whole text, as we saw earlier with Erginal's piece. Another great example of this is the presentation of Plato's doctrine of forms in the *Republic*. While it may be so that Plato was aware of the forms theory and some kind of exposition does exist in the *Republic* through Socrates, the expounding of the divided line and the image of the sun at the end of the sixth book of the *Republic* exists in the context of the work as a whole.

Interpretations like this make a reader wonder why Plato would include the drama surrounding the entire teaching. Glaucon claims several times that he has no idea what Socrates is talking about: Glaucon's explicit incredulity and confusion during the discussion leads to the idea that these arguments and metaphors are not sufficiently fleshed out. Even beyond that Socrates himself puts the entire argument in the *Republic* in question: he claims the entire argument requires a longer and more involved exposition and that what he is presenting to them is a just a 'good enough' shortcut. Even if we were to take what the *Republic* says as verbatim the opinions and arguments of Plato, how can we simply ignore the statement that the character Socrates makes about the completeness of his position?

Klein tells us that it is best to decide why the dramatic quality of dialogues should be taken up by investigating the ironic nature of both Platonic characters and dialogues. The characters are often confronted with views that will get them laughed at if taken seriously or that will make them uncomfortable if taken as a joke.¹⁶ According to Klein, these ironic and dramatic elements presuppose a listener. By this he means that somebody has to understand these elements as dramatic and ironic in order for that irony to have

¹⁶ Klein, Commentary on Plato's *Meno*, 5

purpose. Socrates, Klein tells us, is not after his own satisfaction and, consequently, the irony is often lost on his interlocutors.¹⁷ Since the interlocutors do not perceive the irony and the elements involved in the dialogue presuppose a listener who is ‘outside’, the readers ought to be implicitly acting as listeners in the dialogue, hearing Socrates speech and the dramatic action as a part of the dialogue. The readers of the dialogue are presumably us.

It is not enough to passively listen to the dialogues, however: by accepting the premise that Socrates’ irony is meant for the reader, we implicitly place ourselves as participants in the dialogue. If it is the case that irony exists in the dialogues, then this irony must exist for someone to understand and interpret. The interlocutors, especially those that Socrates corners in argumentation, are often the gentle or hard butt of a joke when Socrates refutes them. For example, in the *Republic*, when Thrasymachus is forced to admit that the unjust man is more like the bad and unlearned than the good and wise, Socrates tells us that Thrasymachus is blushing *because it was very hot*.¹⁸ The reader knows that it was because Thrasymachus was embarrassed and ashamed of the conclusion of the argument, because if he maintains his position then he has been shown by his own words to be a bad person and a fool. But the irony is only for the reader of the dialogue, and thus for the irony to be present and mean something suggests that it was placed there for a reader *outside* of the dialogue. Klein says that we should take the dialogues as serious imitations of Socrates because they invite us to participate in them, and the irony is an avenue by which we can do that.¹⁹ Though we obviously cannot speak

¹⁷ Klein, Commentary on Plato’s *Meno*, 6

¹⁸ Plato, *Republic* Translated by Allan Bloom, (350d)

¹⁹ Klein, Commentary on Plato’s *Meno*, 8

to a dialogue in a direct way, we can listen to the argument and try to discern relationship between the drama and the spoken word. We are invited to accept our ignorance and escape our *aporia*, the state of being puzzled about something – in this case about the subject matter considered - if it is indeed possible to do so.

The dialogues are able to tell us ‘doctrinal’ assertions, but Klein makes it clear that the so called ‘philosophical system’ is wholly absent in Plato’s writings. What we do find instead are foundations and consequences of philosophical concepts; their ultimate conclusions, however, are never satisfied. It is rather, Klein tells us, up to us to engage in philosophy.²⁰ In doing so we are bound up in the same questions and tensions that the text presents to us.

Problematically, we again encounter the historicism Klein hoped to avoid in the beginning. Even though we would seem to be like Plato’s contemporaries, reading the dialogues aloud and participating in them, we are faced with a historical reality, namely the immense philosophical and philological tradition that stands between Plato and ourselves. Against this, Klein gives two warnings: the first, that we should not try to understand the dialogues as the chronologically progressive thought of Plato and the second, that we should try to ‘petrify’ the dialogues in the technical form of Aristotle’s terms and language.

In order to deal with both of these types of interpretation, Klein actually turns to Plato’s dialogue *Phaedrus*. Plato’s *Phaedrus* gives its readers a warning about the dangers of writing and the ability that writing has to teach.²¹ In the *Phaedrus* Socrates

²⁰ Klein, Commentary on Plato’s *Meno*, 9

²¹ Klein, Commentary on Plato’s *Meno*, 10

notes that the written word is like raising potted plants, and while it is in a way artful, it is never quite as serious as the business of farming. Writing is like a playful thing for amusement, but Socrates and Phaedrus agree in the dialogue that it is the highest form of play. The playfulness of writing comes from the very thing it is: an imitation of the spoken word. To ‘play’ or to imitate is to be something that you are not. Written words are imitating speech but they fail where spoken dialogue will prevail. Written works cannot answer questions or meet objections about their content, rather they always repeat their contents. Thus, they cannot defend themselves against abuse and misunderstanding and they cannot discriminate what they say to whom.²²

Klein’s commentary continues to discuss whether any written works escape this criticism. It seems that all works, past, present and future, are here being criticized, including the Platonic dialogues themselves. Socrates and Phaedrus qualify this even further: they tell us that the best types of written works can at best remind us of what written words are about, to which they agree that the best works are those that serve to remind someone to think about the content of a work.²³ What is true of the written word also becomes true of the spoken word, speech in the moment provokes thought and response, so good writing must initiate thought and response. Through further analysis, Phaedrus and Socrates conclude that the best spoken words convey their meaning by ‘implanting’ the idea under discussion into the mind of the listener. The best type of speech for learning, then, is dialectic.²⁴ Good writing imitates good speaking, so it reasonably follows that good writing imitates dialectic. The written words of a text

²² Klein, Commentary on Plato’s *Meno*, 11

²³ Klein, Commentary on Plato’s *Meno*, 12

²⁴ Klein, Commentary on Plato’s *Meno*, 13

cannot be taken at face value as ‘truth’ and still be considered a ‘good’ text, rather it must contain a ‘lively’ component like a real conversation. This then qualifies all Platonic dialogues as the ‘good’ type of writing by virtue of their form (dialogue) and content (dialogue) and the ironic, dramatic nuances only observable to a reader.

It follows, then, that a well-written text will contain a learning and understanding that overcomes its deficiencies. It will mimic the incompleteness inherent in a dialectical conversation by making the reader and the work ‘incomplete’ together in a way that leads the reader forward engaging in philosophy. That the activity of reading a dialogue can compel the reader into a philosophical question shows us the incompleteness inherent in both the reader and the written work. The work has provoked a response from the reader in a way that does not present a concise argument or position. Thus the onus of the reader to engage with the text to answer the question is created. Sometimes the answer to the incompleteness of the Platonic dialogues can be found in the action of the dialogue itself insofar as the dramatic action anticipates the spoken arguments.²⁵

Yet, again, the criticism in the *Phaedrus* tells us that a good work can only remind ‘those who know’. Klein then asks ‘Who are these people who know?’²⁶ It can be anyone who attentively participates in the dialogue, both the interlocutors of Socrates, and the silent interlocutors the dialogue, and the writer himself are inviting the readers to become participants by opening up the possibility of answering a question.²⁷ Whether it is justice, knowledge, piety or death if the dialogue, the interlocutors, Socrates or some component

²⁵ Klein, Commentary on Plato’s *Meno*, 17

²⁶ Klein, Commentary on Plato’s *Meno*, 20

²⁷ Klein, Commentary on Plato’s *Meno*, 21

of the drama inspires somebody to begin philosophizing about the subject matter at hand, then they are actively participating in the dialogue.

It is the combination of all of these considerations that allow us to successfully expound the truth of a Platonic dialogue. From the historical considerations of the character and setting of a dialogue we are able to understand the irony present in a lot of the interactions of the interlocutors. This reveals to us a tension in the text that would strongly be present in the minds of Socrates' contemporaries. By looking at the differences between the words given by the characters and the deeds they embody by virtue of reputation or statements made in dialogue we can understand the tensions Plato would have intended to permeate his own texts.

Why Plato can answer problems outside of the ancient Greek context:

While Klein deals with the ways we can read these texts to try to understand them on their own terms, Hans-Georg Gadamer's work *Truth and Method* shows us how we can approach these texts to understand permanent political problems. Gadamer's argument primarily pushes back against the historicist argument that classical works and authors cannot be understood outside of their own context. Klein's position allows us to potentially understand an author on their own terms but does not deal with the problem of historical context. This position allows someone to argue that Plato's dialogues can only be understood in the context of ancient Athens and the Peloponnesian War.

Gadamer argues that when we engage with a text we are never engaging perfectly with the position that the writer puts forward. This is precisely because consciousness is historically affected by the conditions in which it exists. This is true for both the author and the reader of a particular work. When someone reads a text and draws conclusions

from it, they are doing what Gadamer calls the ‘fusion of horizons’. These horizons are the historical conditions of both the consciousness and the work itself. For example, a reader of Plato’s *Republic* during the Chinese communist revolution in 1946 would likely draw very different conclusions than a Frenchman reading the same work during the Terror of Robespierre. What remains consistent in each case is the ability of the *Republic* to remain the same though the conclusion each reader comes to is radically different.

This does not mean that what a text has to offer in terms of truth is completely relative to the reader. The limit to the answers a text can possibly give are contained within the text itself. For example, you cannot turn to Hobbes’ *Leviathan* for instructions on how to bake bread, nor can you read Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* to understand the economy. These examples are hyperbolic, but it stands to reason that you can only deal with issues in a text that are present within that text itself. This is the primary limitation of hermeneutic interpretation: the boundaries of the text itself.

The fusion of horizons requires a specific set of conditions for genuine learning to occur. Gadamer characterizes this as a form of legitimate questioning, arguing that the question ontologically takes priority when genuinely reading a text. By this Gadamer means that a negativity exists in the mind of a reader: this negativity is ‘ignorance’ of what the text is going to present. The only way to genuinely ask a question about something is to admit an ignorance about the subject of the inquiry. A general example of this will make the point more clearly. A student of mine once approached me when I was teaching him Aristotle’s *Politics*. He asked me why we should take Aristotle seriously at all since he claims that women should be quiet when men are discussing politics. When trying to understand the home economics in the first section of the *Politics* up to and

including the accounts of polity and the regime types this student consistently argued that Aristotle made claims to equality but refuted himself on account of his sexism. Every time this young man turned towards Aristotle, he never tried to understand Aristotle on his own terms and he never tried to understand Aristotle's accounts of natural inequality. When this student approached the text, he only ever encountered his own biases and prejudices against it. To rephrase in Gadamer's terminology, the student only ever encountered his own horizon because he was not asking an open question.

Gadamer calls these questions ingenuine.²⁸ Ingenuine questions are those that have been misdirected by the intention of the questioner. When you possess the openness of negativity, an admission of ignorance, the possibility of what something is becomes knowable. A slanted question, however, does not possess this ignorance or negativity required in order for the fusion of horizons to occur. Thus, an ingenuine question is not a question at all but a construal of yourself onto the text being interpreted.

The philosophical experience of genuine questioning is necessary when approaching a historical text in order to learn something from it. Otherwise, the only things that a reader can encounter are their own prejudices or biases. Only genuine questioning creates the conditions for the possibility of using a Platonic dialogue as a text outside of its historical boundaries.

Klein's account tells us a lot about reading Platonic dialogues specifically and considers some arguments against the historical reading of these dialogues. Gadamer's account, however, justifies how we should be interpreting any text that has historical

²⁸ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Translated by Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall, (Bloomsbury 2004) p.372-373.

conditions, which, of course, all texts do. When we approach a text, we cannot be so certain of our methods and prejudices if we wish to obtain a meaning from a text. We must endeavor to understand ourselves and the text as merging to make a new meaning that is limited by the context of the work itself and the knowledge of the questioner. Otherwise when we interpret a text we run the risk of either reading too much of ourselves into a text or imputing too much onto an author.

How the problems of the past are still the same problems today:

Unlike Gadamer and Klein, Leo Strauss stresses the importance of the political problems faced by the ancients and how these are still problems that we should recognize today. He tells us that the modern accounts of political science are inadequate to address some of the problems presented to people in modern politics.²⁹ Without the ideas the ancients dealt with we would not be able to account for certain things that exist. Strauss' most famous demonstration of this is his work *On Tyranny*, which argues that our lack of understanding of the classical social sciences leads to our misunderstanding of the rise of a tyrant in the middle of the twentieth century. His work was an explanation of how we could have missed the rise of a tyrant in the middle of Europe even though we are the 'most enlightened' age.

Strauss illuminates why I am turning to Plato to answer the problem of the conditions of philosophical education. In *The City and Man*, Strauss argues that a return to classical philosophy is the only way to answer the question 'what is the fundamental relationship between the city and the person'. Strauss argues that modern science and natural right theorists have a skewed perspective on how to answer political problems. The only way

²⁹ Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (University of Chicago Press 1964) p.1, 11.

we can understand the ‘problem of the West’, as Strauss puts it, is to return to classical political philosophy.

The impulsion to return to the classics is driven by the inability of modern political philosophers to answer some types of questions. Strauss does not specify which modern philosophers he is talking about, but the types of problems he wishes to address are problems that were understood as perennial and permanent problems of philosophy. Strauss tells us that “An adequate understanding of the principles as elaborated by the classics may be the indispensable starting point for an adequate analysis...of present day society in its peculiar character, and the wise application...of these principles to our tasks.”³⁰ Though the perennial problems of political philosophy persist, they have a new context in which they are being understood. As such an understanding of philosophic education from the perspective of the ancients will help us understand how the problem of philosophic education relates to us today.

This is the reason why we can turn to a Platonic dialogue to show us something about philosophic education. The problem of the conditions necessary for a philosophic education to occur have been nebulous since Plato. It is not a problem that has a boundary within a specific time and place and thus needs an answer that transcends these same types of boundaries.

In this chapter, I looked at Jacob Klein’s method of how to read a Platonic dialogue in order to show a strong way to expound the truth from Plato’s works. This was to show that elements of the dialogue are often overlooked and ignored, intentionally or not, in favour of the rigour of the argumentation between the interlocutors. I then

³⁰ Strauss, *The City and Man* p.11

examined Hans Georg Gadamer's presentation of the hermeneutic priority of the question to show why we can turn to classic texts to answer problems about today. Gadamer's account of the fusion of horizons shows us that a work that persists through time says different things to different people, but consistently retains the content from the original author. Thus, when an interpreter approaches a text open to the possibility that the text can answer a question, it increases the possibility of learning from the text about the present. The horizon of what the historical work is fuses with the horizon of the interpreter creating the possibility of a text informing readers and problems outside of its own historical context. The mixing of the past with the present is what makes a genuine contribution possible from classical texts to perennial problems. Finally, I looked at Leo Strauss and his account of political problems from *The City and Man*. Strauss' accounts of political problems being permanent and perennial are what allows us to not only use classical texts to elucidate solutions to problems that are persistent through history, but to also understand the problems themselves.

Chapter 2: The Problem of Philosophic Education

To begin applying a close reading of classical texts, I will identify the problem of philosophic education in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* by comparing the two accounts of education given in the dialogues. The remainder of this chapter will illuminate the problem in modern scholarship in order to demonstrate that this problem has persisted since Plato's time and remains a topic worthy of investigation today. I will be looking at accounts of education from Plato, Aristotle, Jacques Maritain, Leo Strauss, Jacob Klein, and Joseph Pieper. To this end, I will be showing that the accounts of philosophic education that exist are quite nebulous; consequently, an exact definition of the conditions of philosophic education does not exist.

Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* provide two competing accounts of liberal education. In the account in book VII of the *Republic*, Plato describes a cave as an "Image of our nature in our education and want of education".³¹ The image of the cave in the *Republic* is a metaphorical account of education. In this account Socrates speaks of a prisoner who is bound and then liberated from a cave. The cave is filled with men who discuss politics, and the person who is freed from the cave turns away from politics and *leaves* to see it in the light of the sun. The sun presumably being what allows this man to see something of the truth. In the *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger describes a different image of liberal education: "the education from childhood to virtue, that makes one desire and love to become a perfect citizen who know how to rule and be ruled with justice".³² He then gives an image of divine puppeteers controlling peoples desires for pleasure and pain so

³¹ Plato, *Republic*, 2nd Edition, trans. Allan Bloom (Basic Books, 1968), (514a).

³² Plato, *Laws*, trans. Thomas Pangle (The University of Chicago Press, 1988), (643e-644a) p. 24

that the people rule themselves well. According to the Athenian Stranger, calculation against human passion is the common law of the city. In this account, the divine puppets are supposed to be representative of good intellect which rules over and reorders the passions of the soul to cultivate good citizenship.

The account of liberal education from Plato's *Laws* is inherently political because it liberates its citizens from their own passions to cultivate a love of good citizenship. Contra to this, the account of liberal education from Plato's *Republic* is apolitical because it shows how someone turns away from politics to better understand the ordering of the city; as such, it shows a philosopher the relationship between the city and man. These two accounts of liberal education indicate that while we can create the conditions for an account of education that will instill citizenship, it seems that the conditions surrounding the philosophic account of liberal education cannot be talked about substantially.

When The Stranger gives an account of liberal education and its benefits to his two Lacedaimonian interlocutors Kleinias and Megillos, in the *Laws*, he notes that of the many offices appointed in the city, the greatest and highest office is the Supervisor of Education in General for men and women.³³ Education is designed to direct the management of two opposite qualities in people: goodness and badness.³⁴ In the context of the conversation about education, the Athenian Stranger defines the good as those who can rule themselves and the bad as those who cannot.³⁵ This is the point of liberal education in the *Laws*: to create citizens that love goodness and desire to be good citizens who can rule themselves and others justly in turn. As a political end, this is the necessary

³³ Plato, *Laws*, (765d-e) p. 152

³⁴ Plato, *Laws*, (644a-b) p. 24

³⁵ Plato, *Laws*, (644b)

condition of education for a man or a woman to become a citizen able to rule themselves in the interest of the city. This is not just training for political leaders, however; it is training for all members of the city.

As the discussion of education continues, the Athenian Stranger draws on an account of human nature that dichotomizes pleasure and pain. He tells his interlocutors that pleasure and pain are ‘imprudent councillors’ that guide action in a single person. When many people share the same fear or the same expectation of pleasure and pain these feelings get formed into opinions and then laws for the city.³⁶ Calculation, weighing the expectations of pleasure and pain to exercise judgement, is supposed to rule these ‘imprudent councillors’ in creating the laws of the city based on what people expect from the future. Unfortunately, this account proves difficult for the interlocutors to follow: Megillius and Kleinias both admit they do not understand the argument as it is presented. To correct this, the Athenian Stranger represents the account of pleasure, pain and calculation again in the form of a myth.

The Athenian Stranger tells us that all people are puppets of the divine, and that the intentions of the divine are unknown but either playful or serious.³⁷ As puppets, people have passions which pull them in certain directions like strings. All people in a city should only follow the pull of a single cord which the Athenian Stranger calls the golden cord of calculation. This golden cord represents the law and is supposed to be softer than the other cords. Thus, calculation needs the assistance of the puppets because it is so much gentler than the hard pull of the passions. This account has the puppets

³⁶ Plato, *Laws*, (644d) p. 24

³⁷ Plato, *Laws* (644d-e) p.24-25

learning from a ‘knower of these things,’ so this education is not for the knower, but those who need to be taught to help the pull of the golden cord.³⁸

This account of liberal education always focuses on the correct management of a single citizen’s soul in accordance with the laws of the city. This person is tugged in many directions by the passions that they have, things that bring them pleasure in some capacity. Whether it be money, honour, power or virtue, something always pulls a citizen in a certain direction. The correct management of these passions is to live in accordance with the general law of the city, as the law frees the citizen from their passions and instills in them the desire to be a good citizen. Thus, this education is only for the citizen within the city, since it helps them to understand their relationship to the city and makes them go beyond their own passions to fulfill their civic capacity as a human being.

The variety of natures that people can be born with — brave, intelligent, immoderate, etc. — needs to be managed in certain ways to create good citizens. This is what the iron strings are supposed to indicate, namely, that people are born with passions that pull them away from ruling themselves. Liberal education is supposed to free the citizens from their own passions and show them a higher calling. Reason exists above and outside of the lesser passions and gives the lesser passions a place within the city. The role of calculation is supposed to be the law of the city,³⁹ as the law’s educational elements free the citizens from their own passions. Both the Athenian Stranger’s accounts indicate that the common law of the city is the mechanism that liberates the citizens from their own desires. In both cases calculation is placed above the passions in order that it

³⁸ Plato, *Laws* (645a-b) p.25

³⁹ Plato, *Laws* (644d & 645a) p.25

might rule over them. The largest difference is that in the myth calculation is explicitly divine, whereas the relationship between calculation and the divine in the initial argument is interspersed throughout the dialogue.

In the *Republic*, we get an image of “education and a want of education”⁴⁰. Socrates describes the image as follows: human beings are bound in a cave for their entire lives, fixated on a wall unable to turn their heads to look at anything else. The cave’s entrance is far away and light cannot break into the chamber where the prisoners are bound.⁴¹ Behind them is a fire, in front of which is a wall.⁴² On the wall men are able to walk back and forth carrying objects in their hands creating flickering shadows on the wall that the prisoners are compelled to look at.⁴³ The men who are bound will only ever be able to see the shadows cast by the fire. These shadows will be the only representation that they have of reality.⁴⁴

As the myth continues Socrates describes what would happen should one of the bound men get become free. Socrates tells us that the bound man is released and turns around to walk towards the opening of the cave.⁴⁵ This man is blinded and dazzled such that he can no longer discern the shapes of the things he had known before. Should he be asked, Socrates notes, he may even deny what he is seeing now as false and reckon that what he had known for so long as true.⁴⁶ Socrates then describes what would happen if someone were to forcefully drag the stunned man out of the cave. His eyes would be

⁴⁰ Plato, *Republic*, 514a

⁴¹ Plato, *Republic*, 514a

⁴² Plato, *Republic*, 514b

⁴³ Plato, *Republic*, 514c

⁴⁴ Plato, *Republic*, 515c

⁴⁵ Plato, *Republic*, 515c

⁴⁶ Plato, *Republic*, 515d

blinded by the light, he would be in pain and distressed and would not recognize anything he has ‘seen’ outside of the cave.⁴⁷ But after a while, his eyes would adjust, and he would be able to discern the stars and the heavens and the sun. Using these he would be able to understand the seasons and years and everything in the visible world.⁴⁸ The stars, heaven and the sun are supposed to be stable patterns by which the philosopher can understand everything in the visible realm.

Socrates then tells us that the man outside of the cave would consider himself happy when reflecting on the cave. He would pity those inside the cave and their inability to distinguish what the shadows *are*.⁴⁹ The people in the cave argue over shadows, awarding praises and honours for those who can predict the next shadows that will come along. The man who left the cave pities their ignorance. Socrates then compares the man who left the cave to Achilles in the *Odyssey*. The ghost of Achilles tells Odysseus that he would rather be a slave in the world of the living than a king of the underworld. The man who left the cave would rather endure any torment than opine about the shadows on the cave wall in ignorance.⁵⁰ If the man were to return to the cave, Socrates tells us, his eyes would fill with darkness if he contended with the men about the shadows on the cave wall. Those in the cave would laugh at him and call him corrupted and even kill him if they could.⁵¹ They would do this even though the man who has gone outside of the cave has recognized a pattern in the sun and stars outside of the cave that can show him what the shadows truly are.

⁴⁷ Plato, *Republic*, 516a

⁴⁸ Plato, *Republic*, 516b

⁴⁹ Plato, *Republic*, 516c

⁵⁰ Plato, *Republic*, 516d

⁵¹ Plato, *Republic*, 517a

The image is meant to be a story about ‘our education and lack of education’. To rephrase, it is about our *desire* for education, which means that it is an image of something that we do not possess. On the surface, it is paradoxical to have both education and a lack thereof in a single image. The absurdity of the initial characterization of the image as both education and a lack of education forces us to question the text. The image is also supposed to represent an ascent of the rulers of the city in speech; at the same time, however, Socrates describes the men in the cave as being “like us”.⁵² The cave story seems to be operating at two levels: that of the city in speech and that of the conversation in the dialogue. When Socrates tells us that the men in the cave are similar to us, instead of ‘strange’ as Glaucon describes them, we are invited to reflect not simply on the education of the guardians and the auxiliaries, but also on the education of both Socrates and his contemporaries.

The account of education given here is liberal insofar as man is liberated from his bonds within the cave. The account of the man who turns around and is liberated from the politics of the city learns from the light of the sun about stable objects. Using this knowledge, he returns to the cave and talks to people about politics. This education is liberal because the man must break out of the discussions of the city in order to become a philosopher. This education is not for everyone within the city, however, and what causes the man to break away (his liberation and education) is not actually clear. When Socrates discusses the point in the myth when the man is freed from his bonds there is simply no explanation for why he turns around: he is just somehow released. Socrates tells his interlocutors “take a man who is released and suddenly compelled to stand up, to

⁵² Plato, *Republic*, 519c

turn his neck around.”⁵³ Something shakes and compels him to stand and change his fixed perspective from the wall of the cave. The man is forced somehow to change the viewpoint he has had his entire life and lead himself out of the cave.

Looking at the two accounts of education side by side, the *Laws* shows us that elevating citizens beyond creatures of mere passion by liberating them from their desires is a necessary component of civic education. The education of the citizens allows for the city to become virtuous and leads them to hold the perfection of their own citizenship as a higher value. The account from the *Republic* gives an image of education that occurs almost spontaneously and inexplicably. What exactly sparks liberation from the bonds of the cave and inspires someone to leave is not made clear; rather, this education appears to rely on chance to liberate a single citizen from politics into philosophy.

These two separate accounts of education illuminate the two halves of human nature in Plato that are reemphasized by Aristotle: the philosophic and the political. Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and *Politics* provide two competing definitions of mankind. The *Metaphysics* gives an account of man that points us towards the education described in the *Republic*. Aristotle opens his work with “All men naturally desire knowledge.”⁵⁴ Contrary to this account, Aristotle tells us in the *Politics* that “the city-state is a natural growth, and that man is by nature a political animal”.⁵⁵ The accounts from Plato’s *Laws* and *Republic* are contrasted nicely by what Aristotle has to say about the creation of philosopher in the *Metaphysics* and liberal education in the *Politics*.

⁵³ Plato, *Republic*, 515c

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Tredennick, (Harvard University Press, 1933) 980a 22

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, trans H. Rackham (Harvard University Press, 1932) Book 1 9

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle analyses being in a way that certainly is not useful or pragmatic: it only fulfills the human desire to know. For Aristotle, an account of an education that goes beyond self-sufficiency but does not contribute to knowledge for its own sake is a noble endeavour. This education, an education inspired by philosophy, is good for its own sake. What is unusual about this type of education, however, is what causes it. Aristotle tells us that “it is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophize, wondering in the first place at obvious perplexities, and then by gradual progression raising questions about the greater matters too”.⁵⁶ This account of wonder implies a kind of shock that occurs in a person. It is a marvel at some particular experience, Aristotle tells us, that instills a recognition ignorance in the person so that they become a philosopher.⁵⁷ The precise conditions that must pertain in order to create this ignorance and wonder are not specified.

In the *Politics*, Aristotle defines man as a political animal. He argues that although the collection of human beings is a necessary condition for self-sufficiency, this partnership is by nature for the sake of the good life: it necessarily points beyond self-sufficiency, it is not enough for people to only subsist. In this definition Aristotle is talking about single citizens collecting into a city by nature for the sake of something higher than themselves, in this case the good life. This mirrors the account given by the Stranger in the *Laws* about servile versus liberal education. It is not an education in a trade that gives you self-sufficiency; it is the education that makes you go beyond yourself into the city by creating the desire to become a perfect citizen. These two aspects

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I II 8-10, p. 13

⁵⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I II 10-11, p. 13

of human nature—the philosophic and the political—are intertwined in the liberal and noble ends of education for Aristotle.

This is later reemphasized in the *Politics* when Aristotle outlines the distinction between liberal and servile education. He discusses the four primary arts that are normally taught among the Greeks: writing and reading, gymnastic, drawing, and music. The first three arts are all intrinsically useful, but an education in music is not.⁵⁸ This, Aristotle tells us, is an indication that education must also have elements that are liberal and noble rather than merely useful and necessary. The dichotomy between these elements in liberal education is apparent in this general analysis of Greek education. Education is supposed to draw citizens towards excellence and self-sufficiency.

Even when supplemented by Aristotle, the gap in the account of liberal education persists just like in the cave in Plato's *Republic*. According to Socrates', a man seems to be liberated and turn, somehow seeing the light and returning to the cave. The conditions that he was in that caused him to leave are apparently the exact same as other people in the cave, yet they do not turn. The causal mechanism for what exactly needs to happen is not clear. For Aristotle, a philosopher will simply be struck by wonder, somehow. This wonder will induce ignorance about something causing them to begin asking questions that lead them to higher bodies of knowledge. The account of 'wonder' might actually be sparser than the account of the cave from *Republic*. With Plato and Aristotle, then, we see that philosophic education is accounted for in a very nebulous way. As such, now I will look at some modern accounts of education from Jacques Maritain, Leo Strauss, Jacob

⁵⁸ Aristotle, *Politics* VIII. II 4-III, p. 642-643

Klein and Joseph Pieper to see if anything more concrete comes out of their own expositions.

Jacques Maritain argues in *Education at the Crossroads* that liberal education is about emboldening man's 'personality' and the specialization of education into vocations takes away from a person's role in human work and human leisure and emphasizes 'individuality'.⁵⁹ This parallels the Athenian Stranger's lament of vocational training in the *Laws*. For Maritain, education is an 'education of man' insofar as man has individuality and personality. Individuality is what Maritain calls the material element of man. It is the material element of man insofar as he is an animal who needs to eat, sleep, and survive. Maritain tells us that the education of man is not sufficiently captured by the care of these things for human beings. He claims that these elements or training are not specifically human and that the education of man is a human awakening.⁶⁰ The education of the individual is servile education insofar as the vocation only serves the necessary aspects of a person's survival. Education must cater to the other half of human beings, which Maritain calls personality, as well. This is the 'human' half of education that looks outside of necessity and self sufficiency. It is the immaterial will and knowledge gathered by studies in theology, philosophy and history. It allows a person to be fulfilled by their community and orients a person towards the good and the whole.⁶¹

Maritain reads Plato's *Laws* as an authoritarian and stifling account of education. He accuses Plato's account of being merely political and producing only one kind of

⁵⁹ Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, (Yale University Press, 1943), p.64-65

⁶⁰ Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, p. 9

⁶¹ Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, p. 8

person in a society, a type of cultural perpetuation.⁶² Maritain even says that education in the *Laws* forces people into a mold. This is a heavy-handed reading of the *Laws* and appears to ignore the general account of the aim of education at the beginning of the dialogue. The Athenian Stranger tells us that education ideally ought to aim at creating a citizen who loves goodness and desires to become perfect. This education, just like Maritain's, aims beyond the individual and emboldens them to find completion as human beings in politics. The Athenian Stranger's account of education frees people from their own passions and allows them to participate in virtue. When we see both side by side it seems off the mark to call Plato's account a stifling account of education, especially considering both accounts seem to embolden people to go beyond themselves. What we see in Maritain's account is an understanding of the human being that has personality and individuality.

Maritain does not explicitly talk about the philosophic account of education in the *Republic*. However, he does outline an account of Platonic learning using the image of a 'sleeping angel'.⁶³ The imagery he uses is the awakening of a student to ascend towards knowing, an unmistakable allusion to the image of the cave. Maritain ties this account of the 'sleeping angel' to the account of the education in the *Laws*. Maritain conflates the moral liberation of the civic education in the *Laws* with the account of awakening education given in the *Republic*. The sleeping student is similar to the man in the cave who somehow turns around and ascends into the light. However, Maritain quickly elevates this account of the 'sleeping angel' and calls Plato's education in the *Laws*

⁶² Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, p.100

⁶³ Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, p.29

authoritarian. It seems clear to me that education in Platonic dialogues can not be so simply written off when the parallels between Maritain's account and Plato's account in *Republic* are so strong.

In his final analysis on liberal education, Maritain calls the highest goal of liberal education the 'awakening' of the students. This is an education in philosophy that has the immediate effect of learning a particular philosopher from a teacher in a formal setting but the secondary effect of instilling reason and the desire to learn in a student.⁶⁴ The precise conditions for how this should occur are not outlined, but Maritain takes care to note the dangers of adopting too closely the position of a teacher. It is the responsibility of the student to free themselves from the teacher of philosophy. In order to "posses the foundations of wisdom", it appears that a student must awaken their own reason to engage with these thinkers on their own terms.⁶⁵

While Maritain rejects the political calling of the *Laws*, he seems to promote a specific goal of liberal education: the fulfilment of a human being in individual and personal life. His account of the sleeping angel does appear to allude to cave allegory because the cave allegory is about a person who is disturbed in his bonds and forced to turn around. In Maritain's account there is a lot of reliance on metaphor to describe the conditions for 'waking up'. Even though Maritain specifies that the student must be careful not to adopt his teachers 'system' and free himself, there is not a lot to guarantee a philosophic liberal education. It still appears that there are no hard conditions that determine the 'turn' towards philosophy. Or at least it seems that sitting in a formal

⁶⁴ Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, p.71-72

⁶⁵ Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, p.71

classroom setting and learning about a philosopher's teaching is not sufficient to awaken someone and have them begin philosophizing.

Maritain's account of education has a focus on the education of the whole person, with their individuality, along a similar vein as Joseph Pieper. It is problematic when the individual gets focused too much in education, creating the conditions for simply a type of professional training or vocational school. Joseph Pieper rails against the very same thing: he is extremely concerned with human spiritual well being in education. In *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, Pieper outlines the distinction between the liberal and the servile arts and argues that education, while maintaining a focus on servile arts for the maintenance of the state and private lives, is necessarily incomplete when it focuses on servility. Pieper is responding to the rebuilding of Germany after the Second World War and wants to create a defense of leisure for the intellectual, spiritual and moral rebuilding of a nation.⁶⁶ He gives us an account of man as a complete being, saying that both servile and liberal aspects of man must be accounted for.⁶⁷ A person is not restricted to their functional purpose in any particular society but requires a grasping of the world's wholeness to fulfill his potential as a 'complete being' within it.⁶⁸ Pieper's account speaks to the liberal nature of a political education in the *Laws*, in that we are freed through education to reach complete wholeness. Like Maritain's account, it also considers liberal education to have both a private and public aspect of fulfilment; Pieper, however, has a more exact account of the philosophical liberation.

⁶⁶ Joseph Pieper, *Leisure The Basis of Culture*, P. 19

⁶⁷ Pieper, *Leisure The Basis of Culture*, P. 39

⁶⁸ Pieper, *Leisure The Basis of Culture*, P. 50

If we recall the mandate of education provided by the Athenian Stranger, to have people in a city who love and desire to be good citizens, we see that accounting for leisure in completing the moral and spiritual rebuilding of a nation has a similar aim to liberal education in the *Laws*. Pieper's concerns with servile education also mirror the Athenian Stranger's sentiments on servile education. Pieper is worried that skilled education will come to encompass the whole of man's desire to be educated. Consequently, people would lose the common human connections that binds them together spiritually and instead be bound by technique. The world of work for Pieper cannot account for a complete idea of human beings since it leaves out too much of the spiritual and moral to fulfill mankind. Leisure allows citizens time to reflect on the intellectual, moral and spiritual relationship they have to public life, and is therefore necessary for a citizen to be properly human for Pieper. The Athenian Stranger says something similar about education. The Stranger says that the liberal education in pleasure and pains slackens in human beings over time.⁶⁹ So the Stranger says that god creates holidays as time for rest with the citizens. Essentially Pieper is saying that leisure is an essentially part of our spiritual communal and civic education. This is constituted for Pieper by a rest day, and for the Athenian Stranger a day of rest to connect with the gods and community. Leisure is for both a type of civic education that binds together the community and gives time for reflection.

In *The Philosophical Act*, Joseph Pieper argues that philosophy, the act of philosophizing, is transcending the 'workaday world'.⁷⁰ Here, Pieper creates a parallel

⁶⁹ Plato, *Laws* 653c-653d p.33

⁷⁰ Pieper, 'The Philosophical Act'. In *Leisure The Basis of Culture*, P. 77-78

very close with the cave image in the *Republic*. He tells us “the act of philosophizing, genuine poetry, any aesthetic encounter, in fact, as well as prayer, springs from some shock.”⁷¹ All these things are supposed to shake somebody into asking a genuine question that pulls them out of the workaday world. The important element here is the shock: the experience that causes the ‘philosophical act’ must be unexpected to the person engaging in transcendence.

This transcendence will be different from leisure in his initial essay as it situates man outside of his completeness, even briefly, in an experience similar to that of the philosopher escaping the cave. Leisure, on the other hand, is incorporated into the complete social and political aspects of man’s being according to Pieper. It fulfills man insofar as he is a part of a political community allowing contemplation and reflection on the relationship between man and the world of which he is a part. The piercing of the workaday world, though, fundamentally shakes the person who philosophizes because it is the new perspective gained from looking at yourself and your conditions that have shocked you from the outside. The philosophical act is separate from leisure because it forces the actor to consider themselves outside of their political community, while leisure strengthens and helps people understand their relationship to that community. However again we are faced with a bit of a mysterious condition for being initiated into the philosophical act. Being ‘shocked’ into a new perspective does not have clear conditions regarding how to bring it about, only that it must surprise people.

Pieper’s account does bear some similarities regarding the accounts of liberal education in the *Laws* and *Republic* in his account of leisure and the philosophical act.

⁷¹ Pieper, ‘The Philosophical Act’, p.81

His account of being shocked into the philosophical act still does not specify exactly what conditions are needed for someone to turn towards philosophy. His account is a bit more specific than the compulsion discussed by Plato, the wonder of Aristotle, and the sleeping angel of Maritain, insofar as it points to poetry, aesthetics and prayer; however, these conditions are only sufficient and not necessary for the philosophical experience.

In Leo Strauss' compiled work, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*, Strauss discusses the education of the philosopher and the relationship it has to political communities and organization. Leo Strauss conflates liberal education with the education of a prince.⁷² This account is not so different from what we see in Plato's *Laws* insofar as it creates citizens who desire to go beyond themselves but understands this education to be for a particular group of people rather than all the citizens. Strauss makes it the explicit goal of liberal education to found an aristocracy within a democracy. However, in his essay "Liberal Education and Responsibility", Strauss outlines both a philosophic account of education and its tension with the education of a good statesman. He writes about two separate ends for education in general: as a requirement for civic responsibility because it creates gentlemen who will set the tone for society, as well as a preparatory study for philosophy.⁷³

Strauss is drawing two separate accounts of liberal education — the philosophic and the political. Strauss' original account of liberal education is political: it fosters civic responsibility and sets the tone for society. In fact, it is required for the exercise of civic responsibility. Strauss is talking about a liberal education that allows a citizen to rule well

⁷² Pieper, 'The Philosophical Act' p. 129

⁷³ Leo Strauss, 'Liberal Education and Responsibility', in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*. P. 13

over others and be ruled in turn.⁷⁴ Liberal education is the only thing that can give citizens access to the political arts, and the knowledge of the political art is what allows them to be good citizens because it frees them from themselves. If we recall the account of liberal education in the *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger tells us that the citizens will love to be perfect citizens and learn to rule and be ruled in turn. The political art will give rulers and citizens the desire to be good statesmen and citizens.

Strauss also outlines the philosophic half of liberal education. Liberal education in this sense is not different in content or presentation from his definition of political liberal education; rather, liberal education will affect those with the best natures differently than it will affect those destined to become rulers or citizens. The role of liberal education is preparation for philosophy, the life of the questioning and searching for knowledge. Liberal education only philosophically affects those whose nature is predisposed towards questioning, otherwise they are simply pushed towards virtue. This account of education points towards the account of the cave in the *Republic* in two important ways. First, it accounts for the chance required for someone to become a philosopher. Second, it shows that liberal education exists independent of the outcome of becoming a philosopher and most of the time will produce rulers and citizens. Occasionally, however, when someone's nature is appropriate it will cause them to turn around and liberate themselves from the political conditions of their experience and education. For Strauss, it is by random chance that someone becomes a philosopher and it is not a necessary outcome of liberal education. Citizens who are ruled and capable of ruling themselves and the rulers

⁷⁴ Leo Strauss, 'Liberal Education and Responsibility' P.13

will come out of a liberal education. Whether you become one or the other depends on your natural disposition according to Strauss.

Jacob Klein builds on this ‘chance’ of gaining a liberal education for the sake of philosophy. In his essay, “The Idea of Liberal Education”, he discusses the foremost problem with education: the intertwining interests of the state in liberal education. The purpose of education in the everyday man’s eyes is a means to get some sort of vocation to function in modern life. According to Klein, it is only with “radical, metastrophic questioning, when we free ourselves from the ever-present concern that the burden of life imposes upon us, that formal education becomes *liberal education*”.⁷⁵ He characterizes the philosophical aspect of liberal education as a turning or conversion away from the burdens of necessity. Political education insofar as it accounts for necessity by satisfying self-sufficiency and philosophic education are at odds in Klein’s account.

Klein says that the state interfering with liberal education for the sake of its own ends is one of the foremost problems in education. While liberal education can give a student access to the noble and the philosophic, its end in the liberation of the civic or philosophic element of mankind is skewed when education serves the interest of the state. Klein thinks that any kind of direction from the state to create certain citizens is against liberal education. If the state sets out to shape a citizen towards any particular point of view or bias the liberating nature of liberal education is compromised. For Klein, what is essential for a liberal education to occur is the liberation from such a viewpoint as one imposed by the state by questioning it. The criticism Klein has of the state is somewhat similar to Maritain’s criticism of Plato’s *Laws* as authoritarian, insofar as the

⁷⁵ Klein ‘The Idea of Liberal Education’, in *Lectures and Essays* p.164-165

authoritarian nature of Plato's *Laws* appears to indoctrinate people into loving the state without any self reflection (according to Maritain). Maritain neglects the distinction between a philosophical liberal education and an education that liberates people from their own passions. Klein thinks that the civic role of education will be fulfilled not by liberating people from their desires, but as a standard function of formative education. Thus, since he does not consider civic education to be liberal education, he makes a distinction in liberal education where Strauss does not. For Klein, education for is only liberal when it serves the function of causing someone to engage in philosophy, whereas for Strauss liberal education and civic education are the same thing, the only difference being the outcome as either a philosopher or a good citizen.

Klein's account of liberal education really points to the account of liberal education in the *Republic*. Klein says that the conditions required for the metaphoric questions are unclear, but they do require a turn from our own experience. True philosophic liberal education will cause us to question our role in relationship to the city. Klein describes this true liberal education as the strangeness of having everything familiar that we would have learned in our formal education getting called into question. These conditions cannot be contrived, Klein tells us, but are dependent on the questioner. Exactly what conditions will make someone question the relationship they have to the world, including themselves, is various. For Klein, we cannot create these conditions, or simply equate them to something like an education in the liberal arts. They have to come about by chance, much like Strauss, and Pieper emphasize.

This account is the similar to the image we see in the cave. There is a group of men who are bound and looking at the wall interpreting the shadows. But only one of the

men of the cave somehow turns around and exits. What all the men in the cave would have learned, including the one who left, was an education in the history, art, music and culture of a city. But despite these similar conditions, very few of the men will get thrown into what Klein calls ‘radical metastrophic questioning’. Thus, Klein’s account of liberal education is very much like Plato’s in the *Republic* because it is a liberation from political and formal education systems.

In conclusion, liberal education appears to be both political and philosophic since it liberates these two aspects of human nature. In the political sense, it liberates us from our own desires in order to facilitate good citizenship, restraint, and excellence. In the philosophic sense, it liberates us from the political to allow us to see the relationship between the city and man. In both instances, liberal education is not servile but always speaks to what is outside of ourselves, be it the excellence of the city or our standing in relation to the city. The *Laws* is an explicitly political account of liberal education which brings citizens outside of themselves for the sake of excellence within the city, whereas the *Republic* shows the chance education of a person being liberated from politics as such and coming to understand the relationship between himself and the city. In none of the accounts of liberal education do we receive concrete conditions of what would need to occur to have a person liberated into philosophy. The possibility of wilfully enacting an education that can change someone into a philosopher seems unlikely, as the conclusions generally point to chance. It may be the case that the turn to philosophy requires more luck than deliberate education, but the shock, wonder, awakening or turn still is a liberal education in every case.

When I looked at Plato I came to the conclusion that two accounts of liberal education existed in the *Laws* and *Republic* respectively. The *Laws* had an account of civic education that ordered a citizen's passions through reason and the *Republic* had an account of philosophic education presented as 'a turn'. After this I saw that the state of wonder, for Aristotle, is just as nebulous as the 'turn' in the *Republic*. However, the account of liberal education taking man as a 'political animal', insofar as the political community pushes someone beyond their own desires, is more concrete with Aristotle's account of music as a necessary component of education in the *Politics* because it is a liberal and noble art. With Maritain, we see an account of liberal education that mirrors the conclusions I came to about the *Laws* and the *Republic* insofar as Maritain recognizes a stark difference between civic and philosophic education. He does not see the liberal education present in Plato's *Laws* but comes to similar conclusions about education in his discussions on individuality and personality. Like the Athenian Stranger's myth of puppets, the education of personality emphasizes the spirit of the community. However, Maritain considers Plato's account of education authoritarian and came to these conclusions independent of the account of liberal education in the *Laws*. Pieper's account is fairly commensurate with the conclusions I drew, especially regarding the philosophical turn and the uncertain nature of the conditions it needs to occur. Strauss takes account of the chance required by any education to create the conditions for a philosophic liberal education which is consistent with what I have examined. Finally, Jacob Klein's account of liberal education focuses primarily on the philosophic turn or metastrophic questioning but contrasts with my conclusions about the *Laws* because Klein thinks that the ends of the state and liberal education are incompatible. None of the

accounts of liberal education provide a clear account of what conditions must pertain for a philosophical liberation to occur.

When we look at all of the accounts of education put forth by the authors above we can see that a question still remains. What are the conditions that must pertain in order to become a philosopher? We can see from the competing accounts of education in the *Republic* and *Laws* that philosophic education is nebulous in its presence and presentation. This persists in the modern scholarship as well. From the openness provided to us by the accounts from ancient and modern scholarship, the final section of this thesis will look at another one of Plato's dialogues that revolves around politics: *Gorgias*. The *Gorgias* is special when compared to *Republic* and *Laws*. The *Laws* and the *Republic* talk about education in relation to the formation and foundation of citizens and city states. In each case education is being defined for the respective component of politics and philosophy within the cities. The *Gorgias*, on the other hand dramatizes the relationship and implications between a student and a teacher and what is owed between the two. As such, education is not presented with as much baggage, but more naturally in the student-teacher relationship.

This way, education is present throughout the discussion of the *Gorgias* and the initiation into philosophy is just as present as well. We will see in the drama of the *Gorgias* a change of perspective from Gorgias, the titular interlocutor. Gorgias presents a position near the beginning of the dialogue about the responsibility a teacher has for the actions of their students. He tells his listeners that no one should blame a boxing teacher when a student of boxing goes home and beats up his parents. The onus of responsibility should be on the action of the individual transgressor, not the one responsible for

teaching the technique of boxing. The theme of the responsibility of an educator is persistent throughout the *Gorgias* and my reading of the dialogue in the final chapter of this thesis will show that Gorgias receives a philosophic education. What it will show is the particular conditions of one person and their initiation into philosophy and exactly what it means to experience ‘wonder, a break from the workaday world, a turn, the awakening etc’.

Chapter 3 A Potential Solution: A Reading of Plato's *Gorgias*

While Plato's *Gorgias* is usually characterized as a display of arguments and oratory by Socrates' interlocutors, it also touches on themes of justice, politics, friendship and argumentation. Scholars tend to focus on the arguments given by Gorgias' students, especially the 'Calliclean' position, which centers around justice as the advantage of the stronger. This focus in the scholarship makes it easy to forget the dramatic setting and rich interplay between the interlocutors present in the Platonic dialogues. At the beginning of the *Gorgias*, readers are faced with a meeting of teachers and students, not an account of power politics. Socrates arrives at Gorgias' display with his student Charephon, and Gorgias is already present with his two students, Polus and Callicles. This meeting alone is rich with dramatic elements and allusions to the later points in the dialogue, and without analyzing it interpretively, a huge part of the meaning of the dialogue is lost. To start, Socrates and Chaerephon arrive as a minority as they are just two and Gorgias has a crowd of followers in addition to Polus and Callicles. This places Socrates and Chaerephon in a position of physical weakness right from the beginning of the dialogue. This argument that the many are stronger than a 'stronger man by nature' is precisely the position Callicles despises towards the end of the dialogue. The political significance of the will of the majority in democratic politics is consistently at stake in Plato's political dialogues and will be a significant issue when discussing rhetoric later in this chapter.

Beyond that, the dialogue is framed with a discussion between Chaerephon and Polus concerning what Gorgias' art is. It is a brief exchange, but it demonstrates two different styles of asking questions that will be flipped throughout the rest of the dialogue. It's almost a play fight between the students that shows a failed form of

discussion and the success of oratory over philosophy. However, the short and unruly interlude between Chaerephon and Polus is also exemplary of two of the running themes that the dialogue will deal with as Socrates engages with each interlocutor. The interplay between engaging in philosophy and performing rhetorical flourishes is set up by these two young students. In this particular exchange, Polus comes out on top quite handily giving Chaerephon a persuasive flourish about Gorgias' art. The point though is well made that a real inquiry into what a thing *is* is not what Gorgias is teaching his students. The application of question and answer in dialogue is the point that Socrates will emphasize whenever he can with Gorgias' students. But before we turn to my analysis, I will present some positions of major interpretations of the *Gorgias*.

Seth Benardete's book *The Rhetoric and Morality of Philosophy* gives an interpretation of two Platonic dialogues: the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*. Benardete provides some very clear and concise insights into the structure of the dialogue as a whole and the general degradation of the quality of conversation between Polus, Callicles, and Gorgias.⁷⁶ Benardete's section-by-section account of the *Gorgias* is comprehensive. He focuses on the overall implication of the arguments and the drama in the dialogue and draws some fascinating conclusions regarding the relationship between literal speech and rhetoric.⁷⁷ His interpretation is quite rich overall but in the sections of the dialogue concerning the method of the conversation, which Plato took the time to emphasize with every interlocutor, however, Benardete's interpretation is limited.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Seth Benardete, *The Rhetoric and Morality of Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press 1991) p. 2

⁷⁷ Benardete *The Rhetoric and Morality of Philosophy* 15-16

⁷⁸ Benardete *The Rhetoric and Morality of Philosophy* see 17-18, 32-33

Benardete also claims that Gorgias, Polus and Callicles are all not persuaded by Socrates by the end of the dialogue, a claim which my interpretation will dispute.

The methodological considerations of how the discussion should proceed are taken up by Socrates with Gorgias, Polus and Callicles. They are a small portion of the dialogue as a whole but they characterize much of the conversation and even some of the drama presented later in the dialogue. How much of the methodological considerations the interlocutors adhere to also affects the outcome of their conversation, as I will show in my interpretation. This is why Benardete's interpretation could use some supplementation with my own account. It will also show us why Gorgias is actually persuaded by Socrates at the end of the dialogue, since in the concluding segments Gorgias attempts to convince Callicles and Polus to adhere to Socrates' position.

Benardete gives a robust account of an exchange between Gorgias and Socrates about who Socrates is and whether Gorgias is like Socrates in the same way. They are alike in the sense that they are willing to refute others and be refuted in turn if they hold an incorrect opinion. I take this claim up later as a serious part of the drama and methodological consideration between Gorgias and Socrates - it even hinges on Gorgias' initiation into philosophic questioning. However, Benardete presents it as a kind of philological trick, like a joke that Socrates is playing on Gorgias. Socrates asks Gorgias if he is a man like himself: someone willing to engage in learning, to refute and be refuted for the sake of learning about the subject matter at hand. Benardete uses the Greek translation to make his distinction between Socrates making a polite claim versus a

combative one.⁷⁹ His aim is to make Socrates look disingenuous in his discussion with Gorgias, as though Socrates is the one trying to trick Gorgias with persuasion.

Benardete's interpretation here neglects two important points in this exchange which change his conclusions about Gorgias. Benardete does not mention that Gorgias agrees to Socrates' conditions, nor that he is the kind of man who wants his positions tested and refuted if they are incorrect. This omission construes the discussion as antagonistic as it creates the conditions for a 'fight with words' between Socrates and Gorgias. It is this reading of the dialogue which neglects not only certain parts of the discussion (Gorgias' assent) but also the entire dramatic action of the dialogue. I will argue below that the antagonism of the discussion between Socrates and Gorgias presented by Benardete is contradicted by the actions of Gorgias in the dialogue. My interpretation will use the argument and drama of *Gorgias* to show that though Polus and Callicles are not persuaded, Gorgias very clearly is — as is evident by his interventions with the other interlocutors later in the dialogue. If we recall the methods chapter of this thesis, Jacob Klein laments the way Benardete approaches the dialogue in his *Commentary on Plato's Meno*. Klein notes that authors will often *prima facie* acknowledge the importance of the dramatic elements of the dialogue but as their interpretation continues, the presence and implication of the drama often loses force, if it gets mentioned at all.

James Nichols also has a comprehensive account of the *Gorgias* in combination with Plato's *Phaedrus*. Nichol's introductory essay about the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* examines broad questions concerning rhetoric in philosophy generally and in relation to a

⁷⁹ Benardete *The Rhetoric and Morality of Philosophy*, 18

few specific dialogues. Nichols provides some illuminating insights into the nature of dialectic present in the *Gorgias*, which Benardete claims are absent from the dialogue entirely. Nichols also notes the importance of Socrates' dialectical method, which we will see later on is key for understanding the pedagogical drama present in the *Gorgias*.⁸⁰ As I mentioned above, Nichols also regards the dialogue as divided, claiming each interlocutor represents a position of crucial importance that needs to be considered.

Nichols engages well with the drama of the text, noting a distinction between Socrates in the *Republic* and Socrates in the *Gorgias*. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates is interested in actually engaging with Gorgias. Unlike in the *Republic*, where Socrates wants to dismiss Polemarchus and continue on his way to Athens, Chaerephon and Socrates specifically seek out Gorgias to speak with him.⁸¹ Polemarchus tells Socrates that he must either prove stronger than all the men present, or come to the festival with them. Socrates replies "Isn't there still one possibility, our persuading you that you must let us go?" to which Polemarchus retorts "Could you really persuade, if we *don't listen?*"⁸² (emphasis mine) Persuasion, justice, and method in conversation is also at stake in this scene when Socrates asks Polemarchus if he could be persuaded to let them go. Polemarchus, however, tells Socrates that him and his companions simply will not listen. Conversely, Gorgias most emphatically does end up listening to Socrates in the dialogue and even encouraging the discussion forward with the other interlocutors, a point I will return to shortly in my interpretation.

⁸⁰ James Nichols, *Gorgias and Phaedrus* (Cornell University Press 1998) p.16

⁸¹ James Nichols, *Gorgias and Phaedrus* 131

⁸² Plato, *Republic*, translated by Allan Bloom 327c p.3-4

One thing that Nichols notes about the discussion with Gorgias in comparison to other interlocutors is that Socrates is quite sympathetic towards Gorgias as an interlocutor. He does not attack Gorgias and goes out of his way to broach the conversation politely.⁸³ Nichols observes that Socrates has a level of respect and importance towards Gorgias. This respect really comes out of the adherence Gorgias has to the method Socrates proposes at the beginning of the dialogue. The back and forth is contrasted especially well with the later characters in the dialogue, Polus and Callicles, who either outright ignore the rules of engaging in conversation or try to sabotage the conversation altogether. We will see that Polus and Callicles, though students of Gorgias, did not inherit his good disposition in conversation.

Nichols rightly observes the relationship between the student and the teacher. In Nichols' essay on the *Gorgias* the dialogue's emphasis on education is clear to him. Nichols argues that what is at stake right from the beginning of the dialogue is the ability of a teacher to transmit their teaching to their students.⁸⁴ This is especially apparent with Gorgias, Callicles, and Polus later in the dialogue, but what can be easily overlooked by interpreters is Socrates' ability to impute upon Chaerephon the capability to ask questions and recognize rhetoric. We should be reminded of Gadamer from the first chapter of this thesis who emphasized the importance of asking the correct types of questions when engaging in dialogue and dialectic. In a lot of ways, asking questions and recognizing answers is Gadamer's answer to what philosophy is and Socrates cannot create the desire to ask questions any better than Gorgias can. This again just illuminates the unclear

⁸³ James Nichols *Gorgias and Phaedrus* p.131

⁸⁴ James Nichols *Gorgias and Phaedrus* p.132

conditions surrounding an initiation into philosophy, and the inability of teachers to pass on traits to their students.

Nichols notes the very gentle way that Socrates deals with the arguments that Gorgias presents.⁸⁵ During their discussion of rhetoric, Socrates notes to Gorgias that a rhetorician could not teach a jury or a crowd about an important matter like justice in so short a time. Gorgias has just agreed that the rhetor produces belief that a position is correct, rather than knowledge that something is correct. Socrates tells us “The rhetor, therefore, is not didactic with law courts and the other mobs about the just and unjust things, but persuasive only; for he would not be able, I suppose, to teach so large a mob such great matters in so short a time.”⁸⁶ This is contrary to some much more obvious and harsh realities of a rhetor, like unjustly desiring to persuade a crowd for his own benefit or winning a court case for the reputation and profit of speaking well in the courts. Socrates, for Nichols, gently guides Gorgias into philosophy. This is not inconsistent with some other accounts of initiation into philosophy present in the Platonic dialogues. For example, in Plato's *Thaetetus* we are introduced to another account of how not to guide someone into philosophy. When Socrates is pretending to be Protagoras he tells Theodorus how some people who engage in argumentation create enemies of philosophy.⁸⁷ They do this by simply being too harsh when examining someone's opinion. Socrates, as Protagoras, warns Theodorus that in discussion a person should not be so harsh with the person with whom they are discussing because it can make a person feel tricked, enraged, or insufficient to engage in philosophy. This is a subtle point, but it

⁸⁵ James Nichols *Gorgias and Phaedrus* p.136

⁸⁶ Plato, *Gorgias*, Trans. James Nichols, in *Gorgias and Phaedrus*. 455a p. 37.

⁸⁷ Plato, *Thaetetus* Trans. M. J. Levett ad rev. Myles Burnyeat 168 a-b 186-187

is worth noting that Theodorus thrice shies away from engaging with Socrates. It is not until Socrates reminds Theodorus (while pretending to be Protagoras) about how to conduct a friendly conversation that Theodorus actually engages Socrates. Theodorus needed to be persuaded that Socrates would not be harsh with him. This is what Nichols thinks is happening in the *Gorgias*. Socrates is simply trying not to be too harsh to embarrass or push Gorgias away. Being gentle with Gorgias is not enough for dialectic to take place however, Gorgias at the same time needs to be receptive to being examined by Socrates through dialectic.

Nichols does well to notice the dramatic action of Gorgias in the dialogue and even notes his investment in the conversation.⁸⁸ Each author engages rigorously with the dialogue, but what gets taken up in a lackluster way by Benardete is the relationship between the drama and the arguments and what meaning that has for the dialogue as a whole. Nichols takes up these points well, but he illuminates a general commentary on the entire dialogue. He does not say enough about the interplay within the dialogue between the argument and the drama, but he does say *something*. His essay is much too short to deal completely with *Phaedrus* and *Gorgias*. As such, my reading of the *Gorgias* will attempt to synthesize the action of dialogue, what Gorgias does, with the argument given by the interlocutors. This way I can incorporate as many parts of the dialogue as possible given space constraints and try to understand the *Gorgias* as a whole.

In the *Gorgias*, Socrates and his interlocutors discuss oratory and how it should be used. The interlocutors Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles each engage with Socrates dialogically but the conversations all end quite differently. Gorgias' conversation ends in

⁸⁸ James Nichols, *Gorgias and Phaedrus*, p.137

a rumination about the possibility of the just orator, but this is interrupted by Gorgias' young student Polus who is not willing to give up the argument so easily. Polus does not believe that Socrates could actually hold the position that he does, and that he only got Gorgias to concede the argument out of shame. Socrates does not do as well with Polus, and their conversation ends with Polus in absolute disbelief of Socrates' position that it is better to be unjustly done upon than be unjust. At this point, Callicles interjects even more strongly than Polus did, loudly imploring to Chaerephon whether or not Socrates actually believes the arguments he is presenting. With Callicles the discussion goes even more poorly than Polus': Callicles' discussion ends with Socrates continuing the conversation on his own because Callicles refuses to continue once his position is cornered - even after Gorgias compels Callicles to continue with Socrates. Plato has written these three conversations beginning and ending differently but they all have the consistent element of Socrates engaging his interlocutors with dialectic, successfully or not. This chapter will argue that the drama of the *Gorgias* shows us Gorgias' initiation in to philosophy and demonstrates the conditions of his 'turn'. The argument and drama of the *Gorgias* shows us that the interlocutors Polus and Callicles do not trust arguments to show them how to live, and because of this they do not get what they really want. But Gorgias, the dramatic character, learns that what he is doing is unjust. What we get in this analysis is a pedagogical shift from Gorgias. Polus and Callicles do not get what they 'want' because they do not have the knowledge of what is good for them. They do not even get pleasure, which is what Callicles and Polus see fit to do, because Socrates 'treats them' with arguments causing shame. This will be shown by an analysis of the desires that each interlocutor has and demonstrating how they do not fulfill these desires in the

action of the dialogue. When we examine what they desire and what they do, we see that they do not do what they want because they do not trust argument to understand their own desires. What makes this analysis especially interesting is the radical change it effects in Gorgias: Gorgias actually changes his perspective on educating his students. He forces his own students to disengage from his own teachings in order that they may be put under the direction of Socrates and dialectic.

Gorgias desires to use rhetoric justly. He trusts the arguments between Socrates and himself to show him something about oratory. We can see this by examining the method that Socrates applies to Gorgias at the beginning of the dialogue. This is evident when Gorgias tells us what oratory is and what it is good for. Gorgias says that oratory is “...in actual fact the greatest good, Socrates. It is the source for freedom of humankind itself and at the same time it is for each person the source of rule over others in one’s own city”.⁸⁹ His account of oratory is supposed to provide all people both with freedom, and with the ability to rule others. However, oratory should not be used arbitrarily, Gorgias tells us: “[one] should use oratory justly, as [one] would any competitive skill”.⁹⁰ The orator needs to know how to restrain his own freedom, and when to exercise rule over others to maintain justice in the city. While it is without a doubt a great source of freedom, the emphasis that Gorgias places on oratory is restraint. It should not be wantonly abused.

Gorgias and Socrates establish three methodological points in their conversation. First, Socrates asks Gorgias to shorten his style of speech and to answer any of Socrates’

⁸⁹ Plato, *Gorgias*, 452d, trans. Donald J. Zeyl, in *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), p. 798

⁹⁰ Plato, *Gorgias*, 457b, p. 802

questions. Second, Gorgias claims to answer any questions posed to him and to be the most capable of speaking briefly. His brevity and willingness to answer questions allows Socrates to engage with Gorgias interrogatively and begin the investigation. Third, Socrates asks Gorgias if he is a man like himself, “One of those who would be pleased to be refuted if I say anything untrue, and who would be pleased to refute anyone who says anything untrue; one who, however, wouldn’t be any less pleased to be refuted than to refute”.⁹¹ By asking this, Socrates wants to ensure that Gorgias is going to continue the conversation in a dialogical, refutational fashion. Socrates wants the position Gorgias presents to come under scrutiny so that they can both learn from the argument. Gorgias needs to be open to the possibility of possessing an incorrect opinion in order to come under scrutiny; he must trust that argument will show him truth or falsity about the opinions he already has.

Later, Socrates is wary that despite these methodological considerations Gorgias still conceives of oratory as a competitive skill. Socrates wants him to proceed in the discussion without trying to win, but to search for what is true.⁹² Gorgias agrees that he wants to continue the discussion, and the discussion can continue once Gorgias ensures the onlookers are okay with it.⁹³ This exchange shows us the carefully created conditions Socrates desires in order to talk to Gorgias. Socrates is very conscious that Gorgias is a rhetor and uses speech in a very specific way: to persuade people. Speech is not just for the sake of persuasion and winning a conversation though, Socrates needs Gorgias to be willing to learn from the argument as well.

⁹¹ Plato, *Gorgias*, 458a, p.802

⁹² Plato, *Gorgias*, 457 d-e, p. 802

⁹³ Plato, *Gorgias*, 458b-d, p. 803

Gorgias' commitment is to learning evident when he engages with Socrates and pushes forward in the dialogue. After Gorgias' discussion, Callicles and Polus each engage with Socrates. After each discussion is in course for a while, both begin to become disengaged with Socrates. Socrates is concerned with shaming and making fun of Gorgias when he is talking to Polus. In response to Socrates' concern, Gorgias interjects and tells Socrates to not spare his feelings but to continue the argument.⁹⁴ Here Gorgias is reaffirming his desire to 'refute and be refuted' in the interest of seeing where the argument leads. When Polus is too quick to ask Socrates questions without considering what his answers mean, Gorgias reigns in the conversation.⁹⁵ In an interesting turn of the dramatic action of the dialogue, he limits Polus' freedom: Gorgias rules Polus in a way that might benefit him by hearing Socrates out.

Later, when Callicles plays coy with Socrates, Gorgias steps in once again to ensure the argument continues.⁹⁶ Gorgias scolds Callicles and forces him to answer Socrates' questions, moving the argument forward. Gorgias again intercedes when Callicles refuses to continue with Socrates in conversation, imploring Socrates to complete his thought.⁹⁷ It appears, then, that Gorgias learns from Socrates and is committed to trusting argumentation. However, this eagerness is complicated by the fact that he has already committed injustices by training Polus and Callicles in oratory despite their intent to use it unjustly.

⁹⁴ Plato, *Gorgias*, 463a, p. 807

⁹⁵ Plato, *Gorgias*, 463e, p. 808

⁹⁶ Plato, *Gorgias*, 497b, p. 840

⁹⁷ Plato, *Gorgias*, 506b, p. 850

What we can see in the drama of Gorgias then is that his actions appear to compel him towards a change. Whereas before Gorgias appears to have been fine teaching his students rhetoric, and justice if necessary, he has been shown by Socrates that he has in fact never been teaching justice at all because he does not know it. Now Gorgias has been called to account for his art, what it is and what responsibility it has towards justice and his students. Gorgias appears to have shifted his mindset: after he had agreed to the methodological points that Socrates had laid out he seems genuinely interested in continuing the conversation with Socrates. It is not just Gorgias adhering to the method that Socrates provides that creates dialogue and dialectic to learn something about oratory, Gorgias is also invested in how the conversation will affect him.

When Socrates is examining Gorgias, they come to three methodological points to which they both can agree. Gorgias is willing to engage in the question and answer format, will not obscure his position by giving a long speech, and he is willing to have his position refuted to search for the truth. Gorgias' actions later in the dialogue dramatically show that he is using his own definition of ruling over others for their own sake to restrain Callicles and Polus. On the one hand, Gorgias trusts the argument to show him something about oratory and how he should conduct himself; on the other hand, he has already committed an injustice by training Polus and Callicles.

The injustice of training Callicles and Polus was not apparent to Gorgias before he had his discussion with Socrates. Gorgias discussed the example of a boxer's teacher, as he himself had understood himself this way. Like a boxing trainer who denies being responsible for his student beating up other people, he did not see himself as acting unjustly by teaching young men to take power, even if they meant to do great harm to the

city. What the example shows us is the moral mindset that Gorgias had before he had talked with Socrates. However, the conversation quickly progresses to a point where Gorgias admits that he does not know what justice is, and therefore can not teach it to his student. The conversation even concludes with Gorgias stating that the rhetor must necessarily be just, at which point he and Socrates begin to examine how that would look.

This moment in the conversation is what orients Gorgias towards inquiry into rhetoric. Here, he relaxes his posturing and boastfulness regarding his ability to answer any question that anyone asks him. This opens the possibility of the conversation that gets alluded to but never conducted: the conversation concerning the necessarily just orator. Waller Newell discusses this conversation's absence in his work *Ruling Passions: The Erotics of Statecraft in Platonic Political Philosophy* indicating that there is no evidence that the character or the man Gorgias takes up the role of a just orator after the dialogue has taken place. However, Newell does admit that Gorgias' interest in the conversation is clearly aroused.⁹⁸ Newell's account of the education of Gorgias is that Socrates is trying to reach Gorgias through his discussion with Callicles. Newell notes that Gorgias' restraint of Callicles indicates Callicles' submission to the power of Gorgias and that this submission demonstrates the appropriate relationship that philosophy has to rhetoric. Gorgias, the true rhetorician, aids philosophy in restraining Callicles, a man full of *thumos* and *eros* and leads him towards civic virtue. Newell expounds the role of Callicles throughout his book, but his specific role in the education of Gorgias is a slight one. For Newell, at least regarding Gorgias' education, Callicles is just a medium to spare

⁹⁸ Waller Newell, *Ruling Passion: The Erotics of Statecraft in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers INC 2000) p.131-132

Gorgias from his own shame. In dealing with Callicles Socrates is potentially reaching Gorgias without ruining his reputation and good standing among the bystanders.

Newell is very focused on statecraft and discusses Callicles masterfully throughout his book, but what is missing regarding the considerations of Gorgias is an analysis of Polus' drama, who did not even appear in the index of Newell's *Ruling Passions*. It may be the case that Socrates attempted go through Callicles to get to Gorgias and that by restraining Callicles Gorgias shows a vested interest in helping philosophy rule over *eros*, but this account says nothing of Polus and the role his drama may have to play in Gorgias' education. Admittedly, Newell's focus is not on education and his focus statecraft and *eros* demands an extensive discussion about Callicles given Callicles' character, arguments and nature. However, Polus claims that he desires tyranny for his own gratification which is well within the realm of erotics and statecraft, so I find his omission of Polus curious. Newell's work is an example of one of the accounts of the Gorgias that emphasizes the 'Calliclean' position as the thrust and purpose of the dialogue. While it makes sense that time needs to be spent on Callicles because his conversation takes up a bit more than the latter half of the dialogue, it leaves the role of Polus's arguments, drama, and his relationship to Gorgias, untouched interpretively.

Alternatively, Thomas Lewis offers an interpretation that Gorgias is compelled through shame into the discussion with Socrates and that Gorgias is unwilling to continue the discussion. Lewis' thesis is that the crowd present in the Gorgias is the primary object of education in the *Gorgias*. Lewis argues that when Socrates engages with the interlocutors he is showing rhetoric as an indecent act to the potential students among

young men that have been drawn to Gorgias' display.⁹⁹ For Lewis the three interlocutors of Socrates are not educated nor even persuaded.¹⁰⁰

Differing from Newell and myself, Lewis does not think Gorgias is interested in the conversation. Lewis construes Gorgias as disinterested and looking for a way out of the discussion. According to Lewis, Socrates' use of the crowd has forced Gorgias to maintain the discussion with Socrates out of shame. To show this, Lewis notes Gorgias' hesitation to continue the conversation in the case that the man around them will be uninterested.¹⁰¹ Dwelling on this one passage does seem to indicate a level of disinterest from Gorgias, even fatigue, since as Polus noted at the beginning of the dialogue Gorgias may be tired. However, similar to Newell, Lewis does not interpret much the section of the *Gorgias* where Socrates engages with Polus. In fact, he covers it in a half page,¹⁰² with the remainder of his article focusing on Callicles.

Given Lewis' interest in the role of the crowd interpretively, I also find this omission curious. This is because Polus' position relies heavily on the opinion of the unnamed 'many'. In fact, I would go as far to point out that Polus embraces the crowd in many of his arguments,¹⁰³ while Calicles promptly dismisses them.¹⁰⁴ The idea of the role of the many playing an interpretive role is fascinating though, and probably intentional, and Lewis rightly emphasized this at the end of his article.¹⁰⁵ We only have to

⁹⁹ Thomas Lewis "Refutative Rhetoric as True Rhetoric", *Interpretation* Volume 14, 2 & 3, (1986): 196

¹⁰⁰ Lewis "Refutative Rhetoric", P.195

¹⁰¹ Plato, *Gorgias*, 458b, p. 803

¹⁰² Lewis "Refutative Rhetoric", P. 202

¹⁰³ Plato, *Gorgias*, see 470c, 471c, 473e, 474b, 475d-e. pp.814, 815, 818, 819, 820.

¹⁰⁴ Plato, *Gorgias*, 489c, p.833

¹⁰⁵ Lewis "Refutative Rhetoric", p. 210

recall the named but silent interlocutors in the *Republic*¹⁰⁶ and the unnamed, present, but forgotten speechmakers present in the *Symposium*.¹⁰⁷ Plato wanted his readers aware that people were present who were named or unnamed listening to the dialogue but the role they must play is never obvious. Lewis uses Polus to stage Callicles' entrance, arguing that Polus is used to incite Callicles into discussion. For Lewis Polus is a short stepping stone to the real fight in which Socrates will show a crowd the shortcomings of rhetoric. It is to Polus' section that I will now return to.

Socrates and Gorgias are about to jump into an investigation about the necessarily just orator when the discussion is diverted by Polus.¹⁰⁸ The beginning of the conversation shows us that Gorgias has been shaken by the short conversation that he has had with Socrates and that he desires to hear more about Socrates' take on rhetoric. Socrates goes out of his way to spare Gorgias' feelings, when telling Polus exactly what he thinks oratory *is*. Socrates says "I hesitate to do so for Gorgias' sake...I don't know whether this is the kind of oratory that Gorgias practices...what I call oratory is a part of some business that is not admirable at all".¹⁰⁹ Gorgias is not disturbed, however, and he urges Socrates to "Say it, and don't spare my [Gorgias'] feelings".¹¹⁰ The reveal that Socrates gives Gorgias is that oratory is a type of flattery, it is an image of a part of politics. Gorgias then admits that he does not understand, that he has no idea what Socrates is talking about. He does not just say it, he exclaims it and swears on the god.¹¹¹ He *emphatically*

¹⁰⁶ Plato, *Republic*, 327c and 328b p. 3, 4

¹⁰⁷ Plato, *Symposium*, 178a, trans. Alexander Nehemas and Paul Woodruff in *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), p. 463

¹⁰⁸ Plato, *Gorgias*, 461a-b, p. 805

¹⁰⁹ Plato, *Gorgias*, 462e-463a p. 807

¹¹⁰ Plato, *Gorgias*, 463a p. 807

¹¹¹ Plato, *Gorgias*, 463d p. 807

declares his ignorance to all the men around him, which is a stark shift from before when he timidly asked the bystanders if they wanted himself and Socrates to continue the conversation. The knowledge that he has acted responsibly as a teacher and the knowledge that his art is a sham in the image of a part of politics has shaken Gorgias and changed his conduct in the conversation. He has turned philosophically towards the inquiry into oratory and will maintain the desire for the conversation to continue for the remainder of the dialogue.

To explain oratory as the image of a part of politics Socrates ends up giving a long speech expounding the relationship between the soul and the body and the parallel arts that correspond to each other but exist in relationship to both. Politics is care for the soul, and gymnastic is the corresponding art for the body.¹¹² Correspondingly rhetoric is like baking sweets, it pours pleasure into the soul the way that eating sweets makes the body feel good even though it does not actually make it and better. True rhetoric, the necessarily just rhetor that Socrates and Gorgias' conversation had alluded to, would always make someone more just. This account seems to be taking the conversation back in a direction that would discuss oratory in more depth, but philosophic inquiry is interrupted again by Polus.

When the conversation turns back to Polus, he desires to show how oratory is a use for himself and everyone in the city because it is utilized for the gratification of an individual person. He tells Socrates that he thinks oratory is an admirable thing since it can give gratification to people.¹¹³ For Polus, oratory's use is for personal satisfaction, to

¹¹² Plato, *Gorgias*, 464c p.808

¹¹³ Plato, *Gorgias*, 462c, p. 806

achieve the ends that gratify you.¹¹⁴ Polus wants to be an orator because of the political power it provides him with in the city because wants to have the power to do whatever what he sees fit.¹¹⁵

The above position contrasts quite a bit with Gorgias'. Unlike his teacher, there is no account of restraint in his definition: he is very much like the boxing student Gorgias tried to separate himself from in his conversation with Socrates. Gorgias does however want oratory to do good and wanted to use it to help people. We can see this by his desire to convince patients to take their medicine, or by his desire to keep citizens free in the city. Earlier in the dialogue Socrates asks Gorgias about the use of his art and Gorgias tells him that he often uses it with his brother who is a doctor to get people to take their medicine. Polus simply desires to do as he sees fit, even if it means harming other citizens within the city. It also becomes clear during his discussion with Socrates that the desires of Polus are so great that he would commit injustice for his own gratification.

Socrates begins the discussion with Polus by making some methodological points, but not the same ones that he made with Gorgias. The tension between the method Socrates wishes to employ and Polus' desire to do as he sees fit is evident from the methodological exchange between Polus and Socrates. Socrates wants Polus to 'curb his long speech'.¹¹⁶ This is problematic for Polus because he wants to speak as much as he should like. Socrates even points out that even if he were willing to give Polus the freedom to speak as he should like, Socrates would also be free not to listen. Socrates is removing Polus' power to obtain what he wants by simply not listening to him. Socrates

¹¹⁴ Plato, *Gorgias*, 466b, p.810

¹¹⁵ Plato, *Gorgias*, 466b, p.810

¹¹⁶ Plato, *Gorgias*, 461d-e, p. 806

wants to continue the discussion on the same terms as he had with Gorgias to facilitate the question and answer format. Socrates ends up goading Polus into answering questions by asking if Polus is like Gorgias, insofar as he would be willing to be asked any questions.

Two crucial elements are missing from Polus' conversation: the first that Polus attempts to be the questioner, which does not work out well, and the second, that Polus has not agreed to 'being a man like Socrates'. Unlike Gorgias, Polus is not someone who is willing to refute and be refuted for the sake of the truth. The conversation goes nowhere when Polus is asking questions, and when Socrates engages Polus dialogically, the conversation ends in Polus' disbelief.¹¹⁷ Polus does not know how to investigate an idea, he only knows how to assert an opinion with rhetoric. Without the insight to see how an idea can be incorrect or absurd, Polus is astounded and confused when the conclusions of his discussion with Socrates are opposite to the opinions that he holds.

When Polus attempts to engage in question and answer with Socrates, he fails when asking his own questions, forcing Gorgias to take over his role as an interlocutor to Socrates.¹¹⁸ Comically, when Polus is misusing the question and answer method, Socrates even encourages Polus to ask him the correct questions.¹¹⁹ Methodologically, Polus has a lot of trouble asking questions and continuing the argument. He never specifies the division he wants to make when he is asking Socrates about oratory, and he jumps to a conclusion about oratory being admirable because it is associated with gratification. This leads Socrates to take over the role of the questioner for the sake of the discussion. Now

¹¹⁷ Plato, *Gorgias*, 480 e, p. 825

¹¹⁸ Plato, *Gorgias*, 466a-b, 463d, p. 807, 809

¹¹⁹ Plato, *Gorgias*, 462 d-e, p.807

being questioned, Polus soon agrees that having great power is good for the one who has it, and a discussion of whether orators and tyrants do what they want or what they see fit ensues.¹²⁰ With a proper teacher Polus' speech is finally aimed at something beyond his own desires, which allows the discussion to shine some light on just what these desires might be. On his own, Polus used speech simply for the assertion of his own opinion and the overtaking of his opponent. Under the yoke of Socrates, and with the help of Gorgias, the discussion Polus and Socrates have is allowed to continue.

Once Polus is put under examination, the distinction between what someone wants and what someone sees fit to do is examined. Socrates establishes with Polus that people do things for the sake of good things.¹²¹ He then establishes that knowledge of what will benefit you is needed by an actor to determine whether your actions will benefit you or not. Thus, the tyrant and the orator need knowledge of good and bad to execute their power in a way that is 'what they want'. Polus agrees to all of this.¹²² This conclusion, contrasted with Polus' desire to do what he sees fit, shows that as an actor Polus lacks the knowledge of what good things are. This is further emphasised by all of Socrates' points, which he agrees to, and which directly counteract his own position. He knows so little about the good that he does not even understand that he is contradicting himself. By doing what he sees fit, he is potentially doing what harms himself. Here is the end of refutation in Polus' section of the dialogue until Socrates 'restarts' the discussion.¹²³

¹²⁰ Plato, *Gorgias*, 466 d-e, p.810

¹²¹ Plato, *Gorgias*, 468 a-b, p.812

¹²² Plato, *Gorgias*, 468 d, p.812

¹²³ Plato, *Gorgias*, 474c, p.818

The middle part of the discussion shows Polus' viciousness in conversation and his different understanding of refutation and truth. Polus' viciousness and his reputational standards will be from the opinion of the many. To this extent Polus attacks Socrates and accuses him of being disingenuous because he contradicts 'what everybody knows'. Polus thinks that Socrates is making a claim that he does not actually believe, namely that Socrates would pity someone who used their power unjustly. Polus tells Socrates he would be envious if he saw someone with the power to do as he sees fit in a city.¹²⁴ Socrates would not envy the man who unjustly acted in his city. Socrates is not envious of this man because he is unjust and doing injustice is worse than suffering it.¹²⁵ The accusation that Polus throws at Socrates shows his lack of trust in the arguments put forward by Socrates, and in Socrates himself. Polus does not trust Socrates to truly represent himself nor the method he is employing to show Polus anything about oratory or justice and injustice.

The discussion continues as Socrates presents Polus with a hypothetical example of the power to kill whomever he wants. He tells Polus that anyone wields the power to kill whomever they want when they are simply in a crowd with a hidden knife.¹²⁶ This example is not sufficient for Polus, because he is concerned about getting punished for unjust actions. The carrier of the knife will certainly be punished after he commits injustice. For Polus the truer power is the power to kill whomever you want with impunity. This shows Socrates that Polus only desires what is beneficial to himself. He is concerned with doing what he sees fit and not suffering any kind of punishment, he has

¹²⁴ Plato, *Gorgias*, 468e, p.812

¹²⁵ Plato, *Gorgias*, 469 b, p.813

¹²⁶ Plato, *Gorgias*, 469e, p.813

no concern for justice and injustice in his actions. It is more beneficial to do whatever you see fit if you are not harmed, because if you are harmed you will be unhappy. Polus and Socrates disagree on this point: namely, the nature of benefit and whether being punished is beneficial.

At this point, a few of the problems with the drama and agreements of the dialogue reveal themselves. From here, Polus will continue to violate the premises of argumentation established at the beginning of the dialogue. He breaks his short style of speech and stops answering Socrates' questions. Polus begins to exercise his freedom of speech and at the same time denigrates the conversation. Polus is not learning from the discussion with Socrates; he rejects or ignores the conclusions that he and Socrates come to even though they were his own answers that lead to the conclusions drawn. Polus wants to do as he sees fit and benefit himself, but he lacks the knowledge of what is good for him. In his ignorance Polus will constantly attempt to drag down the refutational elements of the discussion and continually pretend to refute Socrates by citing the common opinion of the crowd.

The conversation continues to break down because Polus and Socrates have different standards of refutation. Polus attacks Socrates oratorically, saying that a child could refute him by simply knowing what everyone else would say. Polus then uses the historical example of a tyrant, Archelaus, to refute Socrates.¹²⁷ Archelaus, whom Polus claims is happy, is a Macedonian tyrant who murdered several family members to gain political power. Polus claims that this example is a 'refutation', even though it is not: he is simply denying what Socrates has been showing him—that this man, Archelaus, is

¹²⁷ Plato, *Gorgias*, 471a-d p.815

happy because he does what he sees fit and became a tyrant in a city. Polus tells Socrates that all the people in Athens would agree that Archelaus is happy. This shows Polus' reliance on the opinion of the many: his account of refutation is simply what everybody generally agrees with and those whose opinion does not match everyone else's are refuted.

This leads Socrates to a methodological point about the types of refutation Polus needs to understand. Socrates denounces Polus' reliance on the opinion of the many through the analogy of a legal proceeding. Polus' style of refutation is to appeal to a commonly held opinion that is contrary to Socrates'. Socrates compares this to the calling of many witnesses: oratorical refutation supports its claim by calling many reputable witnesses to back up the argument. This style of refutation is worthless according to Socrates; since it never actually looks at the argument itself, many witnesses can speak false opinion.¹²⁸

Polus only believes in the common held opinion of the many. He produces witnesses and tells Socrates that "no doubt there are some [men] in Athens, beginning with yourself, who'd prefer to be any other Macedonian at all to being Archelaus."¹²⁹ Polus believes that he is beginning from self evident conclusions that everyone holds. We can see this when he tells Socrates "You're just unwilling to admit it. You really do think it's the way it is."¹³⁰ Polus is trying to draw the opinion of the many out of Socrates. This is again apparent when he says, "even a child could refute you and show that what you're

¹²⁸ Plato, *Gorgias*, 471e-472a p.816

¹²⁹ Plato, *Gorgias*, 471c-d p. 815

¹³⁰ Plato, *Gorgias*, 471 e, p.815

saying isn't true!"¹³¹ Polus refuses to believe that it is possible for Socrates to stray from common opinion. He has assumed that Socrates, as a member of the public, must be part of the thinking of the public and that he holds these things to be true. Thus, by comparing Socrates' opinions to the opinions of the many, Polus believes he has refuted him.

Though this conversation looks a lot like the one Gorgias and Socrates were having, the end of the discussion is quite different because they have different understandings for standards of refutation from the beginning.

As the argument continues, Socrates discusses the happiness and misery of the just and unjust man. Polus maintains that a man is miserable when he is punished, whereas Socrates insists that correction makes a man better. Polus asserts that he *truly* believes his own claim.¹³² He gives Socrates an example of a man getting tortured as punishment as a new 'refutation' of Socrates' claim. Socrates responds by saying that if the man was unjust then he would be better and miserable. The tyrant who gets away with unjust deeds though would be worse because he lacks punishment and is therefore *more* miserable.

In this exchange, Polus starts laughing, and again claims to have refuted Socrates because he is "saying things the likes of which no human being would maintain".¹³³ He even implores Socrates to question any member of the crowd. Here, Polus' conflicting accounts of refutation and standards of truth come into view. The universal nature of Polus' claims come out when he speaks against Socrates' claim that it is better to suffer injustice than to do it. He says: "I don't [believe this claim], and that no other person does

¹³¹ Plato, *Gorgias* 470c p.814

¹³² Plato, *Gorgias* 470c p.817

¹³³ Plato, *Gorgias* 473 d-e p.817

either.”¹³⁴ Polus has taken nothing new from the methodological exchange with Socrates. He does not trust the argument to show him anything true, despite the conclusions that follow from his own answers.

After this impassioned stalling of the conversation, Socrates proposes that the conversation should begin again as if new and Polus agrees.¹³⁵ Socrates and Polus establish that neither the admirable and good, nor the bad and shameful, are the same.¹³⁶ They then quickly find that the admirable is pleasant and good, and the shameful is painful and bad.¹³⁷ Things are shameful or admirable depending on how much pain/badness or pleasure/goodness they have. Since doing unjust deeds does not surpass suffering injustice in pain, it must surpass it in badness. From there, Socrates points out that Polus also earlier agreed that the majority of mankind said that doing what is unjust is more shameful than suffering it.¹³⁸

Polus admits that he would not welcome what is worse, and, if the argument is correct in conjunction with Polus’ earlier claim, then everyone else would agree with this as well.¹³⁹ This leads Socrates to make another methodological point about refutation, telling Polus that all he needs to examine when looking for truth in argument is a single discussant. The truth can be reached through discussion about the matters at hand, the opinions that many people find agreeable are not a good standard for refutation. This is

¹³⁴ Plato, *Gorgias* 474b p.818

¹³⁵ Plato, *Gorgias* 474c p. 818

¹³⁶ Plato, *Gorgias* 474 c-d p.818

¹³⁷ Plato, *Gorgias* 475 a p. 819

¹³⁸ Plato, *Gorgias* 475 c-d p.819

¹³⁹ Plato, *Gorgias* 475 e p.820

what Socrates has been trying to show Polus about refutation, but it does not end up mattering in the final conclusions of their discussion.

The refutation of the ‘common opinion’ of the many cows Polus: his answers get shorter and his laughter and outbursts subside for the remainder of the conversation. Socrates and Polus establish that when things get acted upon the actor is acting in the same way (for example, when a doctor is cauterizing a wound, something is getting cauterized).¹⁴⁰ This is compared to someone who is punishing correctly. When someone is punishing correctly, they are punishing justly. So, Polus agrees that being disciplined correctly is a just practice. This image of helping someone become better by causing them pain is an important dramatic element in this part of the dialogue. Polus desires to do what he sees fit to gratify himself but lacks the knowledge to do what is *good* for him. What we see play out in the drama of the argument is Socrates ‘curing’ Polus through argumentation. He is causing Polus to suffer the unpleasant, public shame of being refuted in order to show him that it is better to be unjustly done upon than to be unjust. The conclusion is that not suffering the consequences of unjust action is the worst thing of all, which was the point of contention about Archelaus between Polus and Socrates.¹⁴¹

Another comedic element of the drama of the dialogue is the emphasis the Polus section places on the dichotomy between the young and the old. As we saw above, Polus constantly tells Socrates that children could refute him. We are also reminded right at the beginning of the exchange between Polus and Socrates that the youth and young sons are a great way to correct the wrong opinions of the elderly.¹⁴² This dichotomy between the

¹⁴⁰ Plato, *Gorgias* 476 d, p.820

¹⁴¹ Plato, *Gorgias* 479 d-e p.824

¹⁴² Plato, *Gorgias* 461 c-d p. 805-6

experienced and the inexperienced is comedically exacerbated when we look at how the conversation played out and what we know about children conventionally. Children do not listen, tend to hate taking their medicine, and hate it when they do not get their own way. We are also reminded by Socrates light jest against Polus when he calls him a youth for not understanding the first explanation of rhetoric.¹⁴³ The dramatic upshot here is that in the exchange between Polus and Socrates is that Polus *is* acting like a child and is also in fact quite young. Whenever he is claiming that ‘even a child could refute you Socrates!’ we should be reminded that though Polus is not quite a child, he is quite childish. Not only this, but he does not refute Socrates and does not even accept the outcome of the argument.

However, Polus does not believe Socrates’ refutation. He does not trust the conclusion of the argument. Therefore, by only doing what he sees fit, Polus does not get what he wants, and he never trusts the argument that Socrates has brought forward against him. The last thing Polus says in his discussion with Socrates is “I think these statements are absurd, Socrates, though no doubt *you* think they agree with those expressed earlier” (emphasis mine).¹⁴⁴ Polus has never let the conversation change his opinions although all the answers given were his own. There was no truth at stake when Polus was engaging with Socrates because he never trusted the argument or Socrates to show him something of the truth. Polus wants to be gratified and victorious in conversation, but Socrates leads him into embarrassment and even refutes the opinion of not only Polus himself but ‘all the men around him’. Polus is not gratified in conversation

¹⁴³ Plato, *Gorgias* 463 e p. 809

¹⁴⁴ Plato, *Gorgias* 480e p. 825

with Socrates; rather he gets administered an unpleasant treatment of argumentation, even if he does not accept it.

Contrary to the conversation that Socrates had with Gorgias, the impression that Polus gives us is someone who does not trust the conclusions at which they have arrived. Though he was willing to be subjected to Socrates' questions, and had himself been questioned just as much as Gorgias, he does not appear to have a desire to see the discussion continue. He has not been sufficiently 'shaken' to be sympathetic to philosophic questioning. Unlike Gorgias, Polus has not received a philosophic education, and has not been sparked to ask questions and inquire into things, despite having almost the same experience that Gorgias has had. We will see something very similar with Callicles.

Both Gorgias and Polus have their conversations controlled by Socrates in order to pursue a truth. Gorgias' conversation is disrupted by Polus, but the conversation indicated that Gorgias wanted to continue the discussion. Not only that, but when Polus fails in the discussion it is Gorgias who steps in to keep the conversation going. By the end of Polus' discussion, his own answers establish that it is better to have injustice done upon you than to commit injustice; however, Polus outright refuses to accept the conclusions of the argument because he is not a man who wants to refute and be refuted. Callicles then disrupts the conversation because he thought that the whole thing was a joke. He asks Chaerephon loudly if Socrates is in earnest and bursts in with a long speech.¹⁴⁵ With Callicles, no methodological consideration gets deliberated beforehand like with Gorgias and Polus, but the question and answer format does begin after

¹⁴⁵ Plato, *Gorgias* 481 b p.825

Callicles gives a long monologue. Callicles never agrees to abide by anything like Polus and Gorgias. Callicles is like Polus before Socrates refutes the position of the many: he is consistently contentious and insulting towards Socrates and does not trust that Socrates actually believes the position he is presenting. Unlike Polus, Callicles does not resort back to the position of the many for refutational purposes; instead, he immediately tries to overcome Socrates through long speeches, consistently changing his position and outright dishonesty. Socrates often attempts to get Callicles to engage with him in genuine question and answer, but Callicles desires to be the better man. As such, Callicles desires to ‘win’ the conversation and ends up being dishonest with Socrates about many of his answers and opinions.

Callicles’ desires are shown in the long speech he gives at the beginning of his discussion with Socrates. He begins with a monologue about justice by nature being the advantage of the better and more capable over the worse and less capable.¹⁴⁶ In this speech, Callicles desires to show how oratory is just by nature. It is for the superior to take by force what belongs to the inferior and the better should rule the worse with the worthier having a greater share than the unworthy.¹⁴⁷ Callicles explicitly separates himself from Polus by rejecting the many as the weaker when he describes them as those who restrain the strong.¹⁴⁸ While oratory is still for the sake of gratification, it is for the stronger to rule over the weaker. Callicles desires to be the superior man—the man that is just by nature.

¹⁴⁶ Plato, *Gorgias* 483d p. 828

¹⁴⁷ Plato, *Gorgias* 488b p. 831

¹⁴⁸ Plato, *Gorgias* 483b p. 827

Callicles ignores the rules that have been set out so far in the dialogue and gives the longest monologue since the conversation started. He has a disregard for precision and brevity with words in this speech. This is evident by the speech's sheer length and his inability to remember exactly how Pindar discussed the more just by nature.¹⁴⁹ As the monologue continues, Callicles also calls on Socrates to stop refuting and to stop engaging in philosophy.¹⁵⁰ There is no indication that Callicles is following any of the methodological points laid out in the previous discussions. His monologue suggests that he abhors rules, laws and conventions as restraints on the stronger. Callicles also holds a disregard for philosophy, refutation and perhaps even words in general. From this long monologue, there are some aspects Callicles' speech that Socrates praises: his frankness, honesty, and wisdom. Socrates claims that these qualities will lead them to "really lay hold of the truth in the end".¹⁵¹ This somehow pulls Callicles back into the argument, even though he just implored Socrates to stop refutation and philosophy. Despite Callicles' resistance to argumentation, Socrates brings him into the question and answer format and believes he can hold him to being honest, frank and wise in conversation.

Callicles quickly reveals that his commitment to frankness, honesty and wisdom is fragile, as his nature in conversation is revealed to be quite combative. During the initial discussion of natural versus conventional law, Callicles accuses Socrates of talking nonsense; he says that Socrates is "grabbing at words and tripping up phrases".¹⁵² Socrates attempts to define how the many are superior to the few in strength to show

¹⁴⁹ Plato, *Gorgias*, 484b p.828

¹⁵⁰ Plato, *Gorgias*, 486c p.830

¹⁵¹ Plato, *Gorgias* 487e p. 831

¹⁵² Plato, *Gorgias* 489b-c p.832

Callicles that the weaker are not restraining the stronger with the introduction of laws and conventions. This leads to Callicles' redefinition of the better, superior and stronger: Callicles is forced to drop the 'stronger' and precisely define the better and superior. Here, Callicles' lack of the qualities Socrates admires in him is shown. He is not very *frank* nor precise in his definition initially, and constantly accuses Socrates of being ironic and nonsensical: he is also not very trusting in the conversation. Callicles accuses Socrates of grabbing at his words, indicating that he believes Socrates is only trying to beat him rather than learn anything from the discussion about oratory.

Callicles continues to misunderstand Socrates' arguments and to misrepresent himself. Socrates tries to ask Callicles how it is that a superior man deserves more. Socrates points to many mundane things like clothes, drink, food, and farm seed to understand what exactly it is that the superior man gets *more* of. Callicles, however, calls Socrates' argument nonsense because he does not understand the analogies that Socrates is making, thus showing himself to not be very *wise*.¹⁵³ Eventually, Callicles makes clear who he means by superior men: those who are intelligent in the affairs of the city, brave and hard in spirit.¹⁵⁴ The real clarity, however, comes from Socrates' inquiry into whether these men ought to rule themselves, to which Callicles promptly responds that no man would be happy if he were a slave. The superior, better man will have the freedom to satisfy all his desires, and to commit no rule over himself. To define the better and the happy, Callicles tells Socrates that wantonness, lack of discipline, and freedom are excellence and happiness. In opposition to arguments for restraint, and discipline

¹⁵³ Plato, *Gorgias* 490 e p. 834

¹⁵⁴ Plato, *Gorgias* 491 a-b p. 834

regarding virtue and happiness Callicles says: “as for these other things, these fancy phrases, these contracts of men that go against nature, they’re worthless nonsense”.¹⁵⁵

Callicles does not even trust arguments that defy his own gratification and wanton freedom as sensible. This is a big hint that Callicles is not going to be persuaded by argument in the discussion because he considers Socrates’ words and restrictions to be worthless nonsense. To be ruled by anything other than your own gratification is the life of a slave according to Callicles.

As the discussion continues, Socrates attempts to see if Callicles believes that the pleasant and the good are the same thing—an action that ends up revealing Callicles’ dishonesty. Socrates discusses the image of a leaky jar as analogical to the life that Callicles is describing. A controlled person would have a jar that once full, would be finished fulfilling itself. Conversely, the leaky jar would need to be continuously filled with pleasure; it is designed for maximum pleasures in and out, or else the person would feel extreme pain.¹⁵⁶ Socrates then asks Callicles if the pleasure of scratching yourself and the life of a catamite is a happy life. By analogy Socrates explains that the man who continues scratching an itch for life, or engages in the activity of a catamite, will be the happy kind of life that Callicles describes. Here, another problem in the conversation between Callicles and Socrates appears. Regarding the shameful examples of scratching an itch and being a catamite, Socrates asks Callicles if he distinguishes between higher and lower pleasures. Callicles responds: “to keep my argument from being inconsistent if I say that they’re different, I say they’re the same”.¹⁵⁷ Callicles is not looking to bring his

¹⁵⁵ Plato, *Gorgias* 492 c p.835

¹⁵⁶ Plato, *Gorgias* 493e-494a p.837

¹⁵⁷ Plato, *Gorgias* 495 a p. 838

opinion forward into the truth, he is still merely trying to get the better of Socrates in the argument. Callicles wants his argument to beat Socrates' to gratify himself and show that he is the superior man. He has violated the last thing Socrates praised him for: he is not *honest*, he is simply trying to say what is necessary to win. Socrates replies: "you'd no longer be adequately inquiring into the truth about of the matter with me if you speak contrary to what you think".¹⁵⁸ We can see here that Socrates and Callicles are not doing the same thing when they engage with each other in discussion. Socrates' aim is for the argument to show his interlocutors something, whereas Callicles treats it like a game he needs to win.

Callicles tells us that pleasure and goodness are the same, but that knowledge and bravery are different. Socrates does not agree, and he sees that once Callicles examines himself rightly he will not believe these things either.¹⁵⁹ Socrates establishes that opposite qualities cannot persist in a thing like health and sickness in a person. Analogously, the good and the bad are like this, for a man can not be both at the same time. Socrates cross examines this with hunger and eating. Hunger is equated with pain and satiation of hunger with the pleasant. Socrates tells Callicles that a person can feel pleasure and pain at the same time: when they eat, they satisfy the hunger but are hungry simultaneously.¹⁶⁰

At this point in the argument, Callicles sees that his position on the pleasant and the good is coming undone. To defend himself, he plays coy and pretends to not understand Socrates. Socrates asks him directly if he agreed that someone who is doing well cannot at the same time doing badly, and contrasts this with Callicles' agreement

¹⁵⁸ Plato, *Gorgias* 495 a p. 838

¹⁵⁹ Plato, *Gorgias* 495 d-e p. 838-839

¹⁶⁰ Plato, *Gorgias* 497a p. 840

that you can feel pleasure and pain at the same time. Callicles' response is: "I don't know what your clever remarks amount to, Socrates."¹⁶¹ This response prompts Gorgias to interject in the conversation: he scolds Callicles and tells him to continue the conversation for the benefit of everyone.¹⁶² Here, Callicles is forced to do what he does not want to; he is restrained and bound by Gorgias to continue the conversation. Callicles is thus shown to be the inferior man by nature because he is a slave to Gorgias and was beaten by Socrates in conversation. Later on, we will even see that Callicles is deliberately dishonest in his answers even though Gorgias has forced him forward for his own sake.¹⁶³

Not only does Socrates refute Callicles, but Callicles' deeds demonstrate that he is not the man stronger by nature. Callicles is easily restrained by Gorgias simply asking him to continue the argument, demonstrating that he is actually meek and servile to Gorgias. He is compelled by Gorgias to finish out a lengthy conversation with Socrates, despite his ideas of the superior by nature. Thus, Callicles is restrained by the words he detests he does not indeed do what he said with words when he detested argumentation and the 'contracts of men'. Callicles was never even close to attempting to listen to the arguments of Socrates. Throughout the discussion Callicles is generally only trying to beat Socrates in argument for the sake of his own superiority. He even attempts to play coy for the last part of the discussion and refuses to answer. In no way does Callicles shift his perspective on asking philosophical questions. Even though his own beliefs and conditions have been questioned by Socrates there does not seem to be any change in

¹⁶¹ Plato, *Gorgias* 497a p. 840

¹⁶² Plato, *Gorgias* 497b p.840

¹⁶³ Plato, *Gorgias* 499 b p.843

Callicles' perspective. This is how we can tell that Callicles was never taken by philosophy even though he received an extremely similar experience to that which Gorgias did.

Interestingly, when we take the dialogue and re-examine Gorgias' desire to use rhetoric justly, we see that he does what he wants in the drama of the dialogue after his discussion, even though he committed injustices before. In the conversation with Socrates, Gorgias wants to use oratory justly to rule over others. When he gives his examples of this, it is of an orator in the city either helping build walls, or ports with the advisory of artisans. Another example he gives is of himself with a doctor, persuading a patient that he needs to take some medicine. What we see is that when Gorgias is paired with Socrates, a knower (an artisan of the soul, like the doctor is an artisan of the body) who is showing Polus and Callicles how they ought to be acting to be just, Gorgias ends up helping Socrates teach Polus and Callicles justice—or he at least gets them to submit to the 'treatment' Socrates has for them in refutation. In his actions we can see that Gorgias has been *changed* and has been initiated into what would appear to be a philosophical way of thinking. Even if he has not become a philosopher, he has gained the desire to question what he was doing and at least attempts to get his students to see the same thing.

In each case, the interlocutors do not get what they desire. Gorgias does not conduct himself justly by training Callicles and Polus as orators, but he realizes that what he was doing was unjust and changes his own perspective towards education. He is liberated from the way that he looks at this teaching and receives a philosophic education. Polus does not get what he wants because he is shamed by Socrates in conversation and is

exposed to unpleasantness. Callicles does not get what he wants because he is so easily enslaved by Gorgias and Socrates. Thus, he is compelled to be enslaved and is not the superior man. In the latter two cases, the interlocutors do not trust the conclusions of the argument. Gorgias does trust the conclusion of the argument but appears to have already committed an injustice by training Callicles and Polus. The interlocutors in the argument do not end up doing what they want because they require the argument and Socratic method to show them what they really want, as opposed to what they see fit. The only interlocutor among the three who got what he wanted or received any kind of education from Socrates was Gorgias, despite the experience being very similar. Unfortunately, this revelation is overshadowed by his unjust pupils for whom he does not want to take responsibility.

The *Gorgias* shows us an account of the philosophic education of Gorgias insofar as he interacts with Socrates and his interlocutors. While the conditions in the *Gorgias* are contrived by Plato and too particular to give a general account of philosophic education, they do provide us with a nice example of an educational framework that fits with the metaphors and general accounts expounded by the philosophers I discussed in my second chapter. Gorgias was a teacher of rhetoric who was brought to speak with Socrates, a man who was famous for his ability to refute others and implore men towards virtue. The jarring presence of Socrates confronting his understanding of rhetoric induces Gorgias into philosophy.

When we consider the conditions under which Gorgias is initiated into philosophic inquiry, we can see that a lot of the descriptions used by Maritain, Strauss, Aristotle, Plato, Klein, and Pieper to describe the conditions under which someone is

initiated into philosophy apply. Gorgias is convinced by his own account of rhetoric, especially insofar as it is able to secure a man's freedom and protect him from the tyranny of others. Gorgias is also convinced that a man is not responsible for the actions of his students. Socrates forces Gorgias to confront his own belief about rhetoric and the responsibility teachers have towards justice and politics. Whether it is wonder, shock, a turn, a metastrophic question, the awakening of a sleeping angel, or just luck, Gorgias has been changed from someone who 'knows' about oratory and justice, into someone who desires to know.

Now, this situation is contrived by Plato and has intentionally portrayed this kind of change in the character of Gorgias, but it displays a point about philosophy that can only be obtained by experience. The exact conditions of an education into philosophy are not describable because they revolve around the particular conditions in which a person exists. They must somehow be shocked into questioning something they hold to be true. It is not enough to simply refute someone: Plato shows us many examples whereby students simply do not take to philosophy. We only need to think about the examples of Callicles and Polus above who, despite being refuted, do not actually trust Socrates or argumentation to show them anything.

Where exactly this trust comes from is the mystery of the conditions of philosophic education. It may be the case that Gorgias listens to Socrates, but if he does not have a genuine belief that what Socrates is doing will show him something about his life, he would not be invested in inquiring about rhetoric. Gorgias first needed to trust argumentation to show him something about the truth in order to realize that what he was teaching his students was leading to injustices that he would be responsible for.

When Gorgias realized this, he was eager to hear out the arguments that Socrates would put forward about justice and injustice and the nature of pleasure and rhetoric. We can see this by the way he interjected during Callicles' and Polus' conversations with Socrates. Gorgias became invested in philosophy when he realized that engaging in it would lead him to be a good citizen, which is precisely what he promised to teach his students. It is this realization that mimics the accounts of philosophic education I was discussing above. Gorgias was forced to call into question his own art, his students, and himself. As a result, he had the desire to know where the argument was going to lead. This sudden desire to know is a philosophic education initiated by the experience of Socrates questioning his art.

The particular conditions of philosophic education are mysterious precisely because they relate to individuals. Something has to happen that forces us all to call ourselves into question, something that throws us out of our own 'familiarity' with our everyday world. This is why the conditions surrounding the description of philosophic education tend to be very general and metaphorical. It is precisely our own condition that must be questioned in order to be called into philosophy. For Gorgias it was the art of oratory, a defining characteristic of both himself and his art, and the relationship it had to justice and education that pulled him into asking questions.

We can even see this type of initiation outlined for Socrates in some of the Platonic dialogues. We ought to be reminded of the Delphic quest he discusses during the Apology. It was not until some kind of divine message reached Socrates to make him aware of his ignorance that he began asking questions about philosophy. His friend Chaerephon (who is Socrates' lifelong friend and also his companion in the Gorgias) had

gone to the oracle to ask if anyone was wiser than Socrates. Socrates really is shocked that the oracle said something like this and even continues to inquire about his supposedly wise fellow citizens. He discovers that each holds an opinion that can not hold up to his questions. Socrates was initiated into philosophic inquiry because he thought that he could find people in Athens who were more just than himself. His perplexity and desire to know came to characterize his entire life. The shaking the foundations of what he thought about himself led him into the life of questioning.

As a result, there is no apparent universal way to deliberately create the conditions for teaching someone to 'become' a philosopher. The initiation into philosophy is a lived experience that requires specific conditions that relate to each person differently.

Conclusion

When I examined the *Republic* and *Laws* I saw two images that described civic education and philosophic education respectively. In the *Republic* I found a strange account of education that was substantiated as the image of a man in a cave. The education is described by Socrates absurdly as an image of ‘our education and lack of education’. This account of the cave, I argued, is philosophic and does not well explain the conditions by which a turn is substantiated to make a person engage in philosophy. The man in the cave is bound for his whole life discussing politics and something simply *happens* causing him to be freed from his bonds and gradually leave the cave. Whatever it is that causes the man to turn is not described in this image. The man initially learns a negative knowledge: the moment he ‘turns’ he learns that the shadows are not what they have always been claimed to be. This is what allows him to ask a genuine question about politics and to engage in philosophy.

The account of the *Laws* is a more concrete and less philosophic myth than the image of the cave. In the myth people are guided by strings that are controlled by the gods or by fate, but these strings represent the different things that can guide the soul. The string that is best supposed to guide the soul is the golden string of calculation which will moderate all the other strings. This moderation is supposed to free people from their own desires to make them better citizens. This is a description that allows a citizen to overcome their own desires to elevate their civic virtue for the betterment of the city. The ‘golden string’ is presumably put in place by a philosopher, someone who knows

something about the soul, to help these disordered citizens achieve virtue. The education, while coming from a philosopher, is not aimed at getting people to engage in philosophy; rather it is aimed at getting people to become good citizens.

The relationship between these two accounts is the difference between the different accounts of 'liberation'. In the cave analogy the man is liberated from politics and sees something that gives him the negative knowledge to ask genuine questions about the shadows on the cave wall. When he ascends out of the cave he receives knowledge that allows him to order the citizens he left behind. The liberation in the puppet myth seems to free people from their own desires and elevates their status as citizens in the eyes of civic virtue and responsibility. The education discussed in the *Republic* gives knowledge which allows the instruction of others, which they probably will not listen to, and the education in the *Laws* restricts the desires of people and moderates them to make them better citizens. These dialogues have competing accounts of education that are not incommensurate: they describe different stages of education coming from a philosopher down to citizens.

The *Gorgias* is related to these two accounts in two ways. On the one hand civic education has some obvious role to play in the discussion that Socrates has with Polus, Callicles and Gorgias, on the other hand there is a lot of philosophic methodological considerations laid out and applied with each interlocutor. Present in the *Gorgias* is the relationship between the students and the teacher: pedagogy gets dramatized right at the beginning of the dialogue, and the role and responsibility of a teacher is always silently present after Gorgias gives his analogy of a student of boxing who beats up his parents. It is especially present in the conversations with Polus and Callicles when they claim to

desire to enslave the demos. The relationship that the *Gorgias* has to the accounts of education above is one that is demonstrative of the experience of the turn in the cave through the character Gorgias, but also demonstrative of the golden chord of intellect leading citizens to practice virtue. The dialogue shows Socrates and Gorgias working in tandem to tame Polus and Callicles: Socrates engaging with them philosophically and Gorgias overpowering them in conversation. The only thing that makes this possible is Gorgias' investment in the inquiry of the conversation. Socrates does not ask Gorgias to intervene with Polus or Callicles, Gorgias interrupts the conversation for the sake of his investment in the question concerning oratory. After Gorgias has realized the civic responsibility he has for his students Socrates proposes an inquiry that demonstrates that the orator is necessarily just. This would be extremely beneficial both to philosophy and justice if both the crowd and Gorgias' students were to hear it, but they never get the chance because Polus interrupts. The very least that Gorgias can do in the context of the conversation is have Polus and Callicles hear Socrates out, which is exactly how the drama of the remainder of the dialogue continues.

When we recall the methodological considerations of Klein, who emphasised an analysis of the drama present within a platonic dialogue, we can see the importance of the interjections of Gorgias with his interlocutors. Polus is unable to follow the points in the discussion, nor is he capable of asking questions in a way that illuminates anything about rhetoric. The conversation stalls because Polus is incapable of the most rudimentary elements of dialectic. As a result, Gorgias steps in to take over the conversation with Socrates. This is quite different from when Gorgias steps in to reign in Callicles. Callicles makes a choice to not engage in the conversation with Socrates; once the

conversation has Callicles backed into a corner Callicles simply disengages. Gorgias needs to take power over him to complete the conversation and the civic aspect of his education.

Gorgias' investment in a real inquiry into oratory and an account of civic education lead by reason is evident by the drama of Polus and Callicles. When we consider the drama of the dialogue as capable of showing us something about what the dialogue means we have to consider why Gorgias acts the way he does and not another. This is why an analysis of the drama is so important for understanding the relationship that *Gorgias* has to *Republic* and *Laws*. As an educator, Gorgias has failed his students. Gorgias can see that by talking to Socrates, or at least by being subjected to him, there is a potential for his students to be more just than they were before.

Further, when we consider Gadamer's points about hermeneutics and interpretation we can see a parallel between asking genuine questions of a text and Gorgias engaging in philosophy with Socrates. Gadamer shows us that when consulting a text, you must be open to the possibility of learning something from that text. If you approach the text assuming that you already know what it is going to tell you, you have failed as a student and will only see yourself reflected in the answers you come to. Engaging in a dialogue is much the same way. At the beginning of the discussion of Gorgias and Socrates Gorgias boasts and elevates his position by making promises to Socrates about how he can answer any question. Gorgias very much considers himself a master of his craft, and by extension because of his understanding of rhetoric a master of all, as does not think that Socrates will be able to do anything to undermine his reputation or ability. The conversation does not really play out the way that Gorgias wants it to and

he is confronted with his inability to teach his students justice. This experience clears the way for Gorgias to desire to know what an inquiry into oratory would look like.

Tantalizingly, we are offered the possibility of a discussion about the necessarily just orator.

This is what facilitates the turn for Gorgias and shows an experience of philosophic education. When we look at Gorgias' experience with Socrates learning that he should be teaching his students to be just and that rhetoric is a sham art we see that Gorgias' action changes henceforth in the dialogue. The drama of Gorgias exclamation of ignorance, and his interjections with Polus and Callicles both point to this interpretation. The interjections of Gorgias both point towards the civic education presented in the *Laws*: Callicles and Polus are both made to listen to Socrates. The admission of Gorgias' ignorance and his exposure to rhetoric as a sham shake his perspective of himself and oratory very much like the account of turning given in the *Republic*. This realization of Gorgias that he does not understand what rhetoric is allows him to ask questions about it because he is newly ignorant: he has become genuinely open to the possibility of learning from Socrates.

This thesis asked the question what are the conditions that must pertain in order to make a philosopher? To do this I looked at the *Republic* and the *Laws* and the accounts of philosophic education they presented in order show the nebulous nature of philosophic education. To solve this I adopted a method that uses the drama of the platonic dialogue *Gorgias* interpretively to show that the experience of Gorgias is that of a turning towards philosophy. This method, along with the hermeneutical account that came from Gadamer, let me look to the platonic dialogues to understand how they can solve perennial problems

in philosophy. The research I did to understand the problem of philosophic education seemed to point to no general concrete condition that created philosophers: what amounted to a philosophic turn seemed to come down to a personal experience that would shake somebody. This is what my thesis shows through Gorgias, what the experience of the nebulous turn towards philosophy might look like for someone, it shows the conditions that must have pertained in one instance for someone to become a philosopher.

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