

Gorgias

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: CALLICLES, SOCRATES, CHAEREPHON, GORGIAS,
POLUS

447a CALLICLES:¹ In war and battle, they say, one must take part in this manner, Socrates.²

SOCRATES: Oh, so have we then come, as the saying goes, after the feast, and too late?³

CAL.: Yes, and a very urbane feast indeed; for Gorgias just a little while ago made a display for us of many fine things.⁴

1. Concerning Callicles, a young man near the beginning of his political career (see 515a), no record survives beyond what appears here. For this reason, many surmise that he may be one of the Platonic dialogues' relatively few fictitious characters. His name suggests beautiful fame or fame for beauty (see comment on *kalos* in note 4). Contradictory indications, unusual for Plato, make it impossible to determine a dramatic date for this dialogue: see most notably 470d and 503c and notes there.

2. The very first word of this dialogue on rhetoric is *war*.

3. Socrates evokes some Greek proverb that reminds the English reader of Falstaff's lines at the end of scene 2, act 4 of *The First Part of King Henry IV*: "To the latter end of a fray and the beginning of a feast / Fits a dull fighter and a keen guest."

4. The extant remains of Gorgias's speeches are mainly display or show pieces, what Aristotle calls epideictic rhetoric (also often called ceremonial). In the subsequent search for a definition of rhetoric, Socrates steers Gorgias away from epideictic toward political (or deliberative) and above all toward forensic rhetoric (to use Aristotle's terms again). Gorgias, a citizen of Leontini, about fourteen years older than Socrates, was one of the most famous teachers of rhetoric. Meno in Plato's dialogue of that name praises Gorgias for eschewing any claim to teach virtue (95c). Socrates names Gorgias as one of three examples of itinerant educators of the young in the *Apology* (19e).

The adjective *kalos* has the basic meaning "beautiful," with a wide range of meanings including "fine" and "noble." I have used all three in different contexts. (In the *Phaedrus* I

- soc.: For this, Callicles, Chaerephon⁵ here is to blame, since he forced us to fritter our time away in the agora.
- 447b CHAEREPHON: No matter, Socrates; for I shall cure it too. For Gorgias is a friend of mine, so that he will make a display for us now, if that seems good, or afterwards, if you wish.
- CAL.: What's this, Chaerephon? Does Socrates desire to listen to Gorgias?
- CHAE.: We are here for just this very purpose.
- CAL.: Well then, whenever you wish to come over to my place—for Gorgias is staying with me and will make a display for you.
- soc.: What you say is good, Callicles. But then, would he be willing
- 447c to talk with us?⁶ For I wish to learn from him what the power of the man's art⁷ is, and what it is that he professes and teaches. As for the other thing, the display, let him put it off until afterwards, as you are saying.
- CAL.: There's nothing like asking the man himself, Socrates. And indeed this was one aspect of his display; just now at any rate he was calling upon anyone of those inside to ask whatever he might wish, and he said he would answer everything.
- soc.: What you say is fine indeed. Chaerephon, ask him!
- CHAE.: What shall I ask?
- 447d soc.: Who he is.
- CHAE.: How do you mean that?
- soc.: Just as if he happened to be a craftsman of shoes, he would answer you, I suppose, "a cobbler." Or don't you understand what I'm saying?
- CHAE.: I understand and I'll ask. Tell me, Gorgias, is what Callicles

have done likewise, but there I use "beautiful" wherever possible.) Another word that means "noble," *gennaios*, I have rendered "nobly born," to distinguish from "noble" meaning *kalos* and to emphasize its etymological connection with birth, generation, descent.

5. Chaerephon is depicted by Aristophanes as Socrates' chief sidekick in the *Clouds*, and Plato has Socrates in the *Apology* relate that the impulsive, democratic Chaerephon inquired of the Delphic oracle whether there was anyone wiser than Socrates.

6. *Dialegesthai*, to converse, discuss, talk with, occurs here for the first time. It is related to *dialogos* (discussion, conversation, dialogue), to *dialektikos* (conversational, dialectical), etc., all which become themes of discussion later on, especially (as here) in comparison with rhetoric.

7. The Greek *technē* covers a broad range of meanings: art, skill, knowledge, craft, any ordered and teachable body of knowledge (productive, practical, or, sometimes, theoretical). The criteria for an art are discussed later, as in several places in Plato's dialogues. The word "man" here is the emphatically male *anēr*, not the more generic *anthrōpos*, which I have translated "human being" when possible.

- here says true, that you profess to answer whatever anyone asks you?
- 448a GORGIAS: True, Chaerephon. I was just now making exactly those professions; and I say that no one has yet asked me anything new for many years.
- CHAE.: Then doubtless you answer easily, Gorgias.
- GOR.: You may test this by experiment, Chaerephon.
- POLUS:⁸ By Zeus, Chaerephon, test me, if you wish! For Gorgias seems to me to be tired out indeed, for he has just gone through many things.
- CHAE.: What, Polus? Do you think you'll give finer answers than Gorgias?
- 448b POL.: And what of it, if they are sufficient for you?
- CHAE.: Nothing. So since you wish, answer.
- POL.: Ask.
- CHAE.: I'm asking now. If Gorgias happened to be a knower of his brother Herodicus's art, what would we justly name him? Wouldn't it be what that one is named?
- POL.: Certainly.
- CHAE.: In asserting that he is a doctor, then, we would be saying something fine.
- POL.: Yes.
- CHAE.: And if he were experienced in the art of Aristophon the son of Aglaophon or of his brother,⁹ what would we rightly call him?
- 448c POL.: A painter, clearly.
- CHAE.: Now then, since he is a knower of what art, what would we call him to call him rightly?
- POL.: Chaerephon, many arts have been discovered among men experimentally through experiences. For experience causes our life to proceed by art, whereas inexperience causes it to proceed by chance. Of each of these arts, various men variously partake of various ones, and the best men partake of the best; among these is Gorgias here, and he has a share in the finest of the arts.
- 448d SOC.: Polus appears to have equipped himself finely for speeches,¹⁰ Gorgias; however, he isn't doing what he promised Chaerephon.

8. Younger than Socrates, a student of Gorgias, and like his teacher a foreigner in Athens (see 487a–b), Polus was a teacher of rhetoric and author of a treatise.

9. The more famous painter Polygnotus.

10. *Logos* has a broad range of meaning: speech in general, including talk or conversation; a formal, ordered speech; a reasoned speech as compared for instance to myth (see 523a); a

GOR.: How so, in particular, Socrates?

SOC.: He doesn't really appear to me to be answering what is asked.

GOR.: Well then you ask him, if you wish.

SOC.: No, at least not if you wish to answer yourself; it would be much more pleasant to ask you. For it is clear to me even from what he has said that Polus has practiced what is called rhetoric¹¹ rather than conversing.

448e POL.: How so, Socrates?

SOC.: Because, Polus, when Chaerephon asks of what art Gorgias is a knower, you extol his art as if someone were blaming it, but you did not answer what it is.

POL.: Didn't I answer that it was the finest?

SOC.: Very much so indeed. But no one asked what sort of art Gorgias's was, but what art, and what one ought to call Gorgias. Just as Chaerephon offered earlier examples and you answered him finely
449a and briefly, so now too say what art it is and what we must call Gorgias. Or rather, Gorgias, you tell us yourself what one must call you, as a knower of what art.

GOR.: Of rhetoric, Socrates.

SOC.: Then one must call you a rhetor?¹²

GOR.: And a good one, Socrates, if you wish to call me what I boast that I am, as Homer said.¹³

SOC.: But I do wish.

GOR.: Then call me so.

449b SOC.: So then should we assert that you are able to make others rhetors too?

GOR.: This indeed is what I proclaim, not only here but elsewhere too.

SOC.: Would you be willing then, Gorgias, to continue just as we are talking now, asking and answering, and to put off until afterwards

rational account or argument; reasoning itself. The connection between speech and reason suggested by the word *logos* plays an important role at several points in the arguments.

11. Socrates makes the first explicit mention of the dialogue's theme. The noun *rhētōr* means speaker, orator, rhetor (sometimes with the implication good speaker); the adjective *rhētorikos* means skilled in speaking, rhetorical, or (designating a person) rhetorician; with the feminine singular *rhētorikē* one supplies *technē* (or perhaps in certain contexts *epistēmē*) to understand the rhetorical art (or science), rhetoric.

12. *Rhētōr* can designate someone knowledgeable about speaking (whom one would tend to call a rhetorician) or a politician or statesman whose leadership stems from his speaking (whom one might want to call an orator); I avoid deciding each case by using the term "rhetor."

13. This stock Homeric formula can be found at *Iliad* 6.211, for instance.

this lengthiness of speech that Polus started? Don't play false with what you promise, but be willing to answer what is asked briefly.

GOR.: Some answers, Socrates, must necessarily be made in speeches of great length; but I shall nevertheless try, at least, to speak as briefly
449c as possible. For indeed this too is one of the things I assert, that no one could say the same things in briefer speeches than I.

SOC.: That is just what's needed, Gorgias. Make a display for me of precisely this, brief speaking, and put off the lengthy speaking until afterwards.

GOR.: I shall do so, and you will assert you've heard no one briefer of speech.

SOC.: Well then. You assert that you are a knower of the art of rhetoric and could make another a rhetor as well. What, of the things that
449d are, does rhetoric happen to be about? Just as weaving is about the production of clothing; isn't it?

GOR.: Yes.

SOC.: And then music is about the making of tunes?

GOR.: Yes.

SOC.: By Hera,¹⁴ Gorgias, I admire the answers, how you answer through the briefest ones possible!

GOR.: Indeed I think, Socrates, that I'm doing this quite suitably.

SOC.: What you say is good. Come then, answer me in this manner about rhetoric as well: about what, of the things that are, is it a science?

449e GOR.: About speeches.

SOC.: What sort of speeches, Gorgias? Those that make clear to the sick by what way of life they would be healthy?

GOR.: No.

SOC.: Then rhetoric is not about *all* speeches.

GOR.: No, it's not.

SOC.: Yet it does make men able to speak.

GOR.: Yes.

SOC.: And therefore able also to understand what they are speaking about?

GOR.: Indeed, how could it not?

450a SOC.: Well then, does the medical art that we were just now talking about make men able to understand and speak about the sick?

14. Hera, wife of Zeus, seems to be named as an oath most often by women.

GOR.: Necessarily.

SOC.: Then medicine too, as it seems, is about speeches.

GOR.: Yes.

SOC.: Those about diseases?

GOR.: Very much so.

SOC.: So then, is gymnastic too about speeches, those about the good and bad condition of bodies?

GOR.: Certainly.

SOC.: And indeed such is the case with the other arts too, Gorgias.

450b Each of them is about those speeches that happen to be about the business of which each is the art.

GOR.: Apparently.

SOC.: Why in the world then don't you call the other arts rhetorical, seeing that they are about speeches, if indeed you call this one rhetoric because it is about speeches?

450c GOR.: Because, Socrates, the whole science, one might say, of the other arts is concerned with manual skill and such actions, whereas in rhetoric there is no such handiwork, but its whole action and decisive effect are through speeches. For these reasons I claim that the art of rhetoric is concerned with speeches, and what I say is right, as I assert.

SOC.: So am I then beginning to understand what sort of thing you wish to call it? Well, perhaps I shall know more clearly. Answer then: we have arts, don't we?

GOR.: Yes.

450d SOC.: Now, taking all the arts, in some of them, I think, working is the major part and they need little¹⁵ speech (and some need no speech), but the business of the art would be accomplished even in silence, such as painting and sculpting and many others. You seem to me to mean such arts, with which you say rhetoric has nothing to do. Isn't that so?

GOR.: Your apprehension, Socrates, is certainly fine indeed.

SOC.: And then there are other arts that accomplish everything through speech, and need in addition almost no work or very little, such as arithmetic, calculation, and geometry, yes, and draught playing¹⁶ and many other arts. In some of these the speeches are approximately equal to the actions, but in many the speeches are greater,

15. "Little" here (and in Socrates' next speech) translates the same word that he used earlier in calling for "brief speaking."

16. A game that appears to have resembled checkers, played with partners against opponents (see *Republic* 333d). It seems often in Plato to be an image of dialectic, with the setting

450e and absolutely their whole action and decisive effect¹⁷ are through speeches. You seem to me to be saying that rhetoric is one of the arts of this sort.

GOR.: What you say is true.

SOC.: But I do not think you wish to call any one of these rhetoric, notwithstanding that in your verbal statement you said that the art that has its decisive effect through speech is rhetoric, and someone might retort, if he wished to make difficulties in the argument, "Do you then say, Gorgias, that arithmetic is rhetoric?" But I do not think you are saying that either arithmetic or geometry is rhetoric.

451a GOR.: What you think is right, Socrates, and your apprehension is just.

SOC.: Come now, you too; provide a complete answer in the way I asked.¹⁸ Since rhetoric happens to be one of those arts that use speech for the most part, and other arts too happen to be of the same sort, try to say what rhetoric, which has its decisive effect in speeches, is about. Just as if someone asked me about any one of the arts that we

451b were just now talking about, "Socrates, what is the art of arithmetic?"

I should say to him, just as you recently did, that it is one of those that have their decisive effect through speech. And if he asked me further, "What are they about?" I should say it is one of those that are about the even and the odd, however large each happens to be. And again, if he asked, "What art do you call calculation?" I should say that it too is one of those that accomplish their whole decisive effect by speech. And if he asked further, "What is it about?" I should say, just

451c like those who write up proposals in the people's assembly,¹⁹ that in other respects calculation is just like arithmetic (for it is about the same thing, the even and the odd), but it differs to this extent, that calculation examines how great the odd and the even are in relation

down and movement of pieces resembling the positing and changing of suppositions in discussion.

17. "Decisive effect" translates *to kuros*, whose more basic meaning is supreme power or authority. The same translation was used at 450b for the less common *hē kurōsis*, which can mean ratification.

18. The translation follows Dodds's correction (E. R. Dodds, *Plato; Gorgias* [A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary] [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959]; the chief manuscript reading would appear to mean "provide a complete answer to what I asked.")

19. Later on Socrates starkly opposes his concerns and ways to those characteristic of politics, but here he compares his procedure to the work of politicians drafting proposed legislation. Perhaps he thus gently steers the conversation about rhetoric away from display speeches and toward political rhetoric. Writing or composing legislation plays a brief but crucial role in Socrates' discussion of writing in the *Phaedrus*, at 257c–258d, 277d, and 278c–e.

to themselves and to one another. And if someone asked about astronomy, and if, when I said that it too accomplishes all its decisive effects by speech, he said “What, Socrates, are the speeches of astronomy about?” I should say that they are about what speed the motions of stars, sun, and moon have in relation to one another.

GOR.: What you would say is right, Socrates.

451d SOC.: Come then, you too, Gorgias. For rhetoric happens to be one of the arts that carry out and accomplish all their decisive effects by speech, isn’t it?

GOR.: That is so.

SOC.: Then say, what are those arts about? Of the things that are, what is this thing that these speeches used by rhetoric are about?

GOR.: The greatest of human affairs, Socrates, and the best.

451e SOC.: But what you are saying now, Gorgias, is also debatable and is as yet nothing distinct. For I think that in drinking parties you have heard human beings singing this song, in which they enumerate in song that “being healthy is best, and second is to have become beautiful, and third,” as the poet who wrote the song says, “is being wealthy without fraud.”²⁰

GOR.: I have heard it; but to what purpose do you say this?

452a SOC.: Because if at this moment the craftsmen of those things praised by him who made the song stood by you—the doctor, the trainer, and the moneymaker—and first the doctor said, “Socrates, Gorgias is deceiving you; for his art is not concerned with the greatest good for human beings, but mine is.” If then I asked him, “Who are you that say these things?” he would probably say that he was a doctor. “What then are you saying? Is the work of your art the greatest good?” “How could it not be, Socrates,” he would probably say, “since its

452b work is health? What is a greater good for human beings than health?” And if after him the trainer in turn said, “I too should be amazed, Socrates, if Gorgias can display for you a greater good of his art than I can of mine,” I should in turn say to him as well, “You then, who are you, human being, and what is your work?” “A trainer,” he would say, “and my work is making human beings beautiful and strong in body.” After the trainer, the moneymaker would speak, de-

20. On the qualification “without fraud,” compare philosophizing without fraud at *Phaedrus* 249a. Dodds gives the full quatrain as quoted by the scholiast and notes that Socrates omits the song’s fourth good, “to be in the prime of youth with friends.” Socrates also drops the specification *phuan* from the third good: “beautiful in one’s nature (growth, stature).”

spising everyone very much, as I think: "Only look, Socrates, if anything manifests itself to you as a greater good than wealth, whether
 452c in Gorgias's possession or anybody else's." We should then say to him, "What's that? Are you a craftsman of this?" He would say yes. "Who are you?" "A moneymaker." "What then? Do you judge wealth to be the greatest good for human beings?" we will say. "How could it not be?" he will say. "And yet Gorgias here disputes that, arguing that the art in his possession is the cause of greater good than yours," we should say. So it is clear that after this he would ask, "And what
 452d is this good? Let Gorgias answer!" Come then, Gorgias: considering yourself asked both by those men and by me, answer what this is which you say is the greatest good for human beings and of which you are a craftsman.

GOR.: That which is in truth, Socrates, the greatest good and the cause both of freedom for human beings themselves and at the same time of rule over others in each man's own city.²¹

SOC.: What then do you say this is?

452e GOR.: I for one say it is being able to persuade by speeches judges in the law court, councillors in the council, assemblymen in the assembly, and in every other gathering whatsoever, when there is a political gathering.²² And indeed with this power you will have the doctor as your slave, and the trainer as your slave; and that moneymaker of yours will be plainly revealed to be making money for another and not for himself, but for you who can speak and persuade multitudes.

453a SOC.: You seem to me now, Gorgias, very nearly to have made clear what art you consider rhetoric to be, and if I understand anything, you're saying that rhetoric is a craftsman of persuasion, and its whole occupation and chief point ends in this. Or do you have anything further to say, which rhetoric can produce in the soul of the listeners, in addition to persuasion?

21. In Thucydides 3.45.6, Diodotus calls the greatest things freedom and rule over others. "City" translates *polis*, the self-sufficient, independent political community.

22. The notion of a law court as a political gathering would make obvious sense to an ancient Greek accustomed to large juries (or assemblies of judges), like the five hundred who heard the accusation against Socrates and found him guilty. In Socrates' suggested definition of rhetoric at *Phaedrus* 561a–b, rhetoric is emphatically not limited to addressing political groups. One imagines that Gorgias himself has intellectual interests beyond the political, but doubtless he singles out rhetoric's political power here to appeal to the chief concern of potential students.

GOR.: Not at all, Socrates; you seem to me to define it adequately, for this is its chief point.

453b SOC.: Now listen, Gorgias. For I—know it well—as I persuade myself, if ever anyone talks with someone else wishing to know the very thing that the speech is about, I too am one of these people, and I deem that you are too.

GOR.: What then, Socrates?

453c SOC.: Now I'll tell you. Know well that I do not distinctly know what in the world this persuasion from rhetoric is of which you are speaking, and what matters the persuasion is about—not but that I have a suspicion, at least, of what I think you are saying it is and what things it is about. But I shall nonetheless ask you what in the world you say this persuasion from rhetoric is, and what things it is about. On account of what do I, who have a suspicion, ask you and not say myself? Not on account of you, but on account of the argument, in order that it may go forward so as to make what is being talked about as manifest as possible to us. Now consider if I seem to you to question you justly: just as if I happened to be asking you who Zeuxis is among painters, if you said to me that he was one who painted living beings, wouldn't I justly ask you, one who painted what kinds of living beings and where?

GOR.: Certainly.

453d SOC.: Would it be for this reason, that there are other painters too, who paint many other living beings?

GOR.: Yes.

SOC.: But if no one other than Zeuxis painted,²³ your answer would have been fine?

GOR.: How could it not be?

SOC.: Come then, speak about rhetoric as well. Does rhetoric alone seem to you to produce persuasion or do other arts too? I am saying something of this sort: whenever anyone teaches any subject at all, does the one who teaches persuade or not?

GOR.: Absolutely yes, Socrates; he persuades most of all.

453e SOC.: Then let us speak again on the same arts as just now. Doesn't arithmetic teach us as many things as belong to number, and the arithmetical man does too?

23. The verb for "painted" here is *graphein*, to write; the word translated "painter" has the roots "write" and "living" (or life, alive, animal). On possible links among rhetoric, writing, and painting, see *Phaedrus* 275d.

GOR.: Certainly.

SOC.: And so it persuades too?

GOR.: Yes.

SOC.: Then arithmetic too is a craftsman of persuasion?

GOR.: Apparently.

SOC.: So then if someone asks us what sort of persuasion, and about what, we shall probably answer him that it is didactic, about the even
 454a and the odd, however large. And for all the other arts that we were just now talking about, we shall be able to show that they are craftsmen of persuasion, and what the persuasion is, and about what, won't we?

GOR.: Yes.

SOC.: Therefore rhetoric is not the only craftsman of persuasion.

GOR.: What you say is true.

SOC.: Since, therefore, not it alone but also others achieve this work, just as concerning the painter, we might after this justly ask the speaker further, "Of what sort of persuasion, and of persuasion about what, is rhetoric the art?" Or doesn't it seem to you just to ask further?

454b GOR.: It does to me, at any rate.

SOC.: Answer then, Gorgias, since it seems so to you too.

GOR.: I say then, Socrates, persuasion in law courts and in other mobs, as I was saying just a moment ago, and about those things that are just and unjust.²⁴

SOC.: And surely I had a suspicion that you meant this persuasion, and about these things, Gorgias. But so that you may not be amazed if again a little later I ask you some other such thing, which seems to
 454c be clear but which I ask about further—for, as I said, I ask for the sake of the argument's being brought to a conclusion in a consequential manner, not on account of you but so that we may not become accustomed to guessing and hastily snatching up each other's words, but so that you may bring your own views to a conclusion in accord with what you set down, in whatever way you wish.

GOR.: And in my opinion, Socrates, you are doing so rightly, at any rate.

SOC.: Come then, let us examine this as well. Do you call one thing "to have learned?"

24. Gorgias, perhaps still constrained by Socrates' demand for brevity, further narrows the focus of rhetoric here—perhaps also to emphasize a forensic rhetoric that is most in demand from students (consider Aristophanes' *Clouds*, vv. 98–99 and *passim*).

GOR.: Yes I do.

SOC.: And how about “to have believed?”

454d GOR.: I do.

SOC.: Now, do having learned and having believed, and learning and belief,²⁵ seem to you to be the same thing, or something different?

GOR.: Different, Socrates, I certainly think.

SOC.: Indeed, what you think is fine; and you will perceive it from this. For if someone asked you, “Is there, Gorgias, a false belief and a true one?” you would, as I think, say yes.

GOR.: Yes.

SOC.: And what about this: Is there false and true knowledge?

GOR.: Not at all.

SOC.: It is clear, therefore, that they are not the same thing.

GOR.: What you say is true.

454e SOC.: But surely both those who have learned and those who have believed are persuaded.

GOR.: That is so.

SOC.: Do you wish us then to set down two forms²⁶ of persuasion, one that provides belief without knowing, and one that provides knowledge?

GOR.: Certainly.

SOC.: Which persuasion, then, does rhetoric produce in law courts and the other mobs, about just and unjust things? The one from which believing comes into being without knowing, or the one from which knowing comes?

GOR.: It’s clear, I suppose, Socrates, that it’s the one from which believing comes.

455a SOC.: Rhetoric, then, as seems likely, is a craftsman of belief-inspiring but not didactic persuasion about the just and the unjust.²⁷

GOR.: Yes.

25. *Pistis*, belief (or conviction, trust) is used in the *Republic* to name the second part of the divided line (the level of our sense perceptions). Here it is distinguished from *mathēsis*.

26. The word is *eidos*, which means the looks, the form, the class character of a thing. I have translated it “form” wherever possible, and noted any variation from that. I have simply transliterated the related word *idea*. *Eidos* and *idea* designate the objects of genuine knowledge in, for example, *Republic* 7.

27. “Didactic” and “to teach” stem from the same root in Greek.

Struck by Socrates’ open attack on rhetors a bit further on, one easily overlooks his own important resemblance to them. Given his often-admitted lack of knowledge and his denial that he teaches (e.g., at *Apology* 33a), he could be understood, like them, to produce nondidactic persuasion.

soc.: The rhetor, therefore, is not didactic with law courts and the other mobs about 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 a short time.²⁸

GOR.: Indeed not.

soc.: Come then, let us see what we are really saying about rhetoric;
 455b for indeed I am myself as yet unable fully to understand what I am saying. When the city has a gathering concerned with the choice of doctors or shipwrights or some other craftsmanlike tribe, the rhetorician then will not give counsel, will he? For it is clear that in each choice one must choose the most artful. Nor when it concerns the building of walls or the preparation of harbors and dockyards, but rather architects; nor, again, when there is deliberation about the
 455c choice of generals or some disposition of troops against enemies or the seizing of territories, but then those skilled in generalship will give counsel, and rhetoricians will not. Or what do you say, Gorgias, about such things? For since you say that you are yourself a rhetor and make others rhetoricians, it is well to learn the things of your art from you. And consider that I am now eagerly promoting your affair too. For perhaps some one of those inside happens to wish to become a student of yours, as I perceive some, indeed quite a large number,
 455d who perhaps would be ashamed to ask you. So, being asked by me, consider that you are asked by them too: "What will be ours, Gorgias, if we associate with you? About what things will we be able to give counsel to the city? About the just and unjust alone, or also about the things of which Socrates was speaking just now?" So try to answer them.

GOR.: I shall indeed try, Socrates, clearly to uncover for you the whole power of rhetoric; for you yourself have beautifully led the way. For
 455e you know, I suppose, that these dockyards and the Athenians' walls and the preparation of the harbors came into being from Themistocles' counsel, and others from Pericles',²⁹ but not from the craftsmen.

28. Could one imagine a more tactful way of bringing up the rhetor's lack of concern for conveying knowledge about issues of justice? At *Apology* 37a–b, Socrates explains his own failure to persuade his judges through the shortness of time available and praises the practice elsewhere of allowing several days for a capital case. On the importance of adequate time for judicial proceedings, see *Laws* 766e.

29. Gorgias gives as examples the leading founder and the most prominent developer of Athens's imperial power. See Thucydides' accounts and judgments of these figures in books 1 and 2 of his *History of the Peloponnesian War*.

soc.: These things are said, Gorgias, about Themistocles; and Pericles I heard myself when he gave us counsel about the middle wall.

456a gor.: And whenever there is a choice involving the things you were just now speaking of, Socrates, you see that the rhetors are the ones who give counsel and victoriously carry their resolutions about these things.

soc.: And it is in amazement at these things, Gorgias, that I have long been asking what in the world the power of rhetoric is. For it manifestly appears to me as a power demonic in greatness, when I consider it in this way.

gor.: If only you knew the whole of it, Socrates—that it gathers together and holds under itself all powers, so to speak. I shall relate to
 456b you a great piece of evidence. On many occasions now I have gone in with my brother and with other doctors to one of the sick who was unwilling either to drink a drug or to submit himself to the doctor for surgery or cautery; the doctor being unable to persuade him, I persuaded him, by no other art than rhetoric. And I assert further that, if a rhetorical man and a doctor should go into any city you wish and should have to contest in speech, in the assembly or in some other
 456c gathering, which of the two ought to be chosen doctor, the doctor would plainly be nowhere, but the man with power to speak would be chosen, if he wished. And if he should contest against any other craftsman whatsoever, the rhetorician rather than anyone else would persuade them to choose himself. For there is nothing about which the rhetorician would not speak more persuasively than any other of the craftsmen in a multitude. The power of the art, then, is so great and of such a sort; one must, however, use rhetoric, Socrates, just as every
 456d other competitive skill. For one must not use other competitive skills against all human beings on this account, that one has learned boxing and *pankration*³⁰ and fighting in heavy armor, so as to be stronger than both friends and enemies—one must not on this account either beat or stab and kill friends. Nor, by Zeus, if someone who has frequented a wrestling-school, is in good bodily condition, and has become skilled in boxing, then beats his father and mother or some
 456e other relative or friend, one must not on this account hate the trainers and those who teach fighting in heavy armor, and expel them

30. *Pankration*, whose roots mean “all” and “power,” was a combination of wrestling and boxing.

from the cities. For they imparted their skill to these men to use justly against enemies and doers of injustice, in defending themselves, not
 457a in starting something; but these men, perverting it, use the might and the art incorrectly. Those who taught are therefore not base, nor is the art either blameworthy or base on this account, but, I think, those who do not use it correctly. The very same argument applies to rhetoric as well. For the rhetor has power to speak against all men and
 457b about everything, so as to be more persuasive in multitudes about, in brief, whatever he wishes; but it nonetheless does not follow that one must on this account deprive the doctors of reputation—for he could do this—nor the other craftsmen, but one must use rhetoric justly too, just as competitive skill. And, I think, if someone has become a rhetorician and then does injustice with this power and art,³¹ one must not hate the man who taught him and expel him from the cities. For
 457c that man imparted it for just use, and the other used it in the opposite way. It is just, then, to hate, expel, and kill the one who uses it not correctly, but not the one who taught it.

soc.: I think, Gorgias, that you too have had experience of many arguments and have observed in them something of the following sort, that they cannot easily define for each other the things that they endeavor to talk about, and learn and teach each other, and in this manner break off the conversations; but when they disagree about something and one says the other is not speaking correctly or not clearly, they become sorely angry and think the other is speaking from envy of themselves, loving victory but not seeking the subject proposed in the argument. And some in the end give over most shamefully,³² having reviled each other and said and heard about themselves such things that even those present are annoyed with themselves, because
 457d they thought it worthwhile to become the audience of such human beings. On account of what, then, do I say these things? Because now
 457e you seem to me to be saying things not quite consequent upon nor consistent with what you were saying at first about rhetoric. So I'm afraid to refute you, lest you suppose that I speak from love of victory, not in regard to the subject's becoming manifest, but in regard

31. Gorgias's awareness that rhetoric like any other skill may be used unjustly as well as justly is doubtless linked with his reportedly not promising that he taught virtue, unlike other sophists, but even ridiculing that claim (*Meno* 96c).

32. This adverb in the superlative derives from *aischros*, the opposite of *kalos* (see note 4 at 447a); I translate with either "ugly" or "shameful."

458a to you. Now then, if you too are one of the human beings of whom I am also one, I would with pleasure question you further; and if not, I would let it drop. And of what men am I one? Those who are refuted with pleasure if I say something not true, and who refute with pleasure if someone should say something not true—and indeed not with less pleasure to be refuted than to refute. For I consider it a greater good, to the extent that it is a greater good to be released oneself from the greatest evil than to release another. For I think that
 458b nothing is so great an evil for a human being as false opinion about the things that our argument now happens to be about. So if you too say you are such a one, let us converse; but if indeed it seems that we must let it drop, let us forthwith bid it farewell and break off the argument.

GOR.: But I say that I myself, Socrates, am also such a one as you indicate; but perhaps we must nevertheless give thought also to the situation of those present. Quite a while ago, you see, before you came, I made a display for those present of many things, and now perhaps we
 458c shall prolong it too far, if we converse. We must, then, consider their situation, lest we detain some of them who wish to do something else.
 CHAE.: You yourselves, Gorgias and Socrates, hear the uproar³³ from these men, wishing to hear what you'll say. And as for me, may I not have so great a lack of leisure as to pass up such arguments, spoken in such a manner, so that doing something else becomes more important to me!

458d CAL.: By the gods, Chaerephon, yes indeed, and I too have by now been present at many arguments, and I don't know if I have ever had such pleasure as now. So for me, even if you should want to converse the whole day long, you'll be gratifying me.

soc.: Indeed, Callicles, for my part nothing prevents it, if Gorgias is willing.

GOR.: It would indeed be shameful after all this, Socrates, for me to be unwilling, since I myself made the proclamation to ask whatever anyone wishes. Well then, if it seems good to these men, converse and
 458e ask what you wish.

soc.: Hear then, Gorgias, the things I was amazed at in what you said; for perhaps what you are saying is correct but I am not appre-

33. *Thorubos* can be the noise of approval, as here, or of disapproval, like the noise made against certain things that Socrates said at his trial (*Apology* 17d, 20e, 21a, 27b, and 30c).

hending it correctly. Do you say that you can make someone a rhetorician, if he wishes to learn from you?

GOR.: Yes.

soc.: And so as to be persuasive in a mob about all things, not by teaching but by persuading?

459a GOR.: Yes, certainly.

soc.: Then you were saying just now that the rhetor will be more persuasive than the doctor even about the healthy.

GOR.: Yes I was—that is, in a mob.

soc.: So then, does the “in a mob” amount to this: among those who don’t know? For among those who know, at any rate, I don’t suppose he will be more persuasive than the doctor.

GOR.: What you say is true.

soc.: So then if he’ll be more persuasive than the doctor, does he become more persuasive than the one who knows?

GOR.: Certainly.

459b soc.: Since he’s not a doctor, at any rate; is he?

GOR.: No.

soc.: And the nondoctor, I suppose, is a nonknower of the things of which the doctor is a knower.

GOR.: Clearly so.

soc.: The one who does not know, therefore, will be more persuasive than the one who knows among those who don’t know, whenever the rhetor is more persuasive than the doctor. Is this what happens, or something else?

GOR.: In this case, at least, that is what happens.

459c soc.: So then is the rhetor, and rhetoric, in the same situation in regard to all the other arts as well? It does not at all need to know how the matters themselves stand, but to have discovered a certain device of persuasion so as to appear to know more than those who know, to those who don’t know.

GOR.: Does not much ease in doing things thus come about, Socrates, in that one who has not learned the other arts but only this one, in no way gets the worst of it from the craftsmen?

459d soc.: Whether the rhetor gets the worst of it or not from the others through being thus, we shall examine presently, if it should have something to do with our argument. But now let us first consider the following. Does the rhetorician happen to be in this same situation in regard to the just and the unjust, the shameful and the noble, and

good and bad, as he is in regard to the healthy and the other things belonging to the other arts: not knowing the things themselves—what is good or what bad or what noble or what shameful or just or unjust—but having devised persuasion about them so as, though not
 459e knowing, to seem to know more than the one who knows, among those who don't know? Or is it necessary to know, and must the one who is going to learn rhetoric know these things before coming to you? And if not, will you, the teacher of rhetoric, teach him who comes nothing of these things—for it is not your work—and will you make him who doesn't know such things seem among the many to know, and seem to be good although he isn't? Or will you be wholly unable to teach him rhetoric, unless he knows the truth about these things
 460a beforehand? Or what is the case with such things, Gorgias? And by Zeus, uncover rhetoric, as you were recently saying, and say what in the world its power is.

GOR.: Well I think, Socrates, if he happens not to know, he will learn these things too from me.

SOC.: Stop there, for what you say is fine. If you make someone a rhetorician, he must of necessity know the just and the unjust things, either beforehand or by learning them later from you.

GOR.: Certainly.

460b SOC.: What about this, then? Is the one who has learned the things of carpentry a carpenter?

GOR.: Yes.

SOC.: So too, then, is the one who has learned the musical things musical?

GOR.: Yes.

SOC.: And is the one who has learned the medical things a doctor? And thus for the other things according to the same argument, is the one who has learned each set of things such as the science makes each man?

GOR.: Certainly.

SOC.: So then according to this argument, is also the one who has learned the just things just?

GOR.: Quite so, I suppose.

SOC.: And the just man does just things, I suppose.

GOR.: Yes.

460c SOC.: So then is it necessary that the rhetorician be just, and that the just man wish to do just things?

GOR.: Apparently, at least.

SOC.: Therefore the just man will never wish to do injustice.

GOR.: Necessarily.

SOC.: And it's necessary from the argument that the rhetorician be just.

GOR.: Yes.

SOC.: Therefore the rhetorician will never wish to do injustice.

GOR.: Apparently not, at least.³⁴

SOC.: Now then, do you remember saying a little while ago that one must not bring charges against the trainers and expel them from the cities, if the boxer uses the art of boxing and does injustice, and thus
460d also, in the same way, if the rhetor uses rhetoric unjustly, one must not bring charges against the one who taught and drive him out of the city, but against the one who does injustice and does not use rhetoric rightly? Were these things said, or not?

GOR.: They were said.

SOC.: But now, at any rate, this same man, the rhetorician, is manifestly one who would never do injustice. Isn't he?
460e

GOR.: Apparently.

SOC.: And in the first speeches, at least, Gorgias, it was said that rhetoric was concerned with speeches not about the even and odd, but about the just and unjust. Wasn't it?

GOR.: Yes.

SOC.: Accordingly, when you were then saying these things, I supposed that rhetoric would never be an unjust business, since indeed it always makes speeches about justice; but since a little later you
461a said that the rhetor might use rhetoric unjustly as well, I was thus amazed and thought that the things said did not harmonize, and so I made those speeches, that if you thought, just as I do, that it is a gain to be refuted, it would be worthwhile to discuss, but if not, let's bid it farewell. And from our later investigation you too see now for yourself that once again it is agreed that the rhetorician is powerless
461b to use rhetoric unjustly and to want to do injustice. So then, what in the world is the case with these things, by the dog,³⁵ Gorgias, is a matter for no little conversation, so as to examine it adequately.

POL.: What's this, Socrates? Do you too actually hold such an opinion

34. Many editors suspect some interpolation in this apparently over-elaborated set of exchanges, and drop one or two of them.

35. When he uses this unusual oath again at 482b, Socrates indicates that "the dog" was an Egyptian god (the dog-headed god Anubis).

about rhetoric as you are now saying? Or do you think—because Gorgias was ashamed not to agree further with you that the rhetorical man also knows the just, noble, and good things, and if he came to him not knowing these things, that he himself would teach them, and then from this agreement perhaps some contradiction came about
 461c in the speeches (this you are really fond of, when you yourself have led people on to such questions)—for who do you think would utterly deny both that he knows the just things and that he would teach others? But it is much rudeness to lead arguments into such things.
 soc.: Most noble Polus, surely it is on purpose that we acquire companions and sons, so that when we ourselves, having become older, are tripped up, you younger ones who are present might set our life
 461d upright again, both in deeds and in speeches. And so now if Gorgias and I are being tripped up in the speeches on some point, you who are present set us upright—and so you are just—and if something of what has been agreed on seems to you not to have been agreed on finely, I am willing for you to take back whatever you wish,³⁶ if you guard against only one thing for me.

POL.: What do you mean by this?

soc.: That you confine the lengthiness of speech, Polus, that you attempted to use at first.

POL.: What's this? Will it not be allowed me to say as much as I wish?

461e soc.: You would certainly suffer terrible things, best of men, if you came to Athens, where there is the most freedom to speak in Greece, and then you alone had the misfortune not to get any there. But then set against it this: if you are speaking at length and are unwilling to answer what is asked, would I on the other hand not suffer terrible
 462a things, if it will not be allowed me to go away and not to listen to you? But if something in the argument that has been stated bothers you and you wish to set it upright, as I was just now saying, take back what seems good to you, and, in your turn asking and being asked, just as Gorgias and I, refute and be refuted. For you assert, I suppose, that you too know the things that Gorgias knows, don't you?

POL.: I do.

soc.: So then do you too on each occasion bid one to ask you whatever one wishes, on the grounds that you know what to answer?

POL.: Yes, certainly.

462b soc.: And now then, do whichever of these you wish, ask or answer.

36. The phrase appears to be a metaphor from draught playing; see note at 450d.

POL.: Well, I shall do this. And answer me, Socrates: since Gorgias in your opinion is at a loss concerning rhetoric, what do you say it is?

SOC.: Are you then asking me what art I say it is?

POL.: I am.

SOC.: In my opinion at least, it is no art, Polus, to tell you the truth.

POL.: But what in your opinion is rhetoric?

SOC.: A business that you say makes art,³⁷ in the writing that I have
462c lately read.

POL.: What do you mean by this?

SOC.: I mean a certain experience.

POL.: Then rhetoric in your opinion is experience?

SOC.: In my opinion, at any rate, unless you say something else.

POL.: Experience of what?

SOC.: Of the production of a certain grace and pleasure.

POL.: So then isn't rhetoric in your opinion a fine thing, since it's able to gratify human beings?

SOC.: What, Polus? Have you already learned from me what I say it
462d is, so that you are asking what comes after this, if it isn't fine in my opinion?

POL.: Well, haven't I learned that you say it is a certain experience?

SOC.: Do you wish then, since you honor gratifying, to gratify me in a small matter?

POL.: I do.

SOC.: Ask me now, what art is cookery in my opinion.

POL.: I am asking then, what art is cookery?

SOC.: No art, Polus. Well, say, "But what is it?"

POL.: I am saying it.

SOC.: A certain experience. Say, "Of what?"

POL.: I am saying it.

462e SOC.: Of the production of grace and pleasure, Polus.

POL.: Is cookery therefore the same thing as rhetoric?

SOC.: Not at all, but certainly a part of the same pursuit.

POL.: What pursuit do you say this is?

SOC.: I'm afraid it may be rather rude to tell the truth; indeed I shrink from speaking on account of Gorgias, lest he think I am satirizing³⁸ his pursuit. But whether the rhetoric that Gorgias pursues is this, I

37. Dodds argues for an alternative meaning: a business "of which you claim to have made an art in your treatise."

38. The Greek word (*diakōmōdein*) contains the word for "comedy."

463a do not know—for from our recent argument, what in the world he considers it to be did not at all become manifest to us—but what I call rhetoric is part of a certain business that is not one of the fine ones.

GOR.: What business, Socrates? Speak, without feeling ashamed before me.

soc.: In my opinion, then, Gorgias, it is a certain pursuit that is not artful but belongs to a soul that is skilled at guessing, courageous,³⁹ and terribly clever by nature at associating with human beings; and
 463b I call its chief point flattery. Of this pursuit there are, in my opinion, many various parts, and one of them is cookery; it seems to be an art, but—as my argument goes—is not an art but experience and routine. I also call rhetoric a part of this pursuit, and cosmetic too and sophistry, these four parts directed to four kinds of business. So then if
 463c Polus wishes to learn, let him learn; for he has not yet learned what sort of part of flattery I say rhetoric is, but my not yet answering has escaped his notice, and he is asking further whether I do not consider it to be a fine thing. But I shall not answer him whether I consider rhetoric to be a fine or a shameful thing before I first answer what it is. For it's not just, Polus; but if you wish to learn, ask what sort of part of flattery I say rhetoric is.

POL.: I am asking then, so answer what sort of part.

463d soc.: Well now, would you then understand when I've answered? For rhetoric according to my argument is a phantom of a part of politics.⁴⁰

POL.: What then? Do you say it is a fine or a shameful thing?

soc.: I say shameful—for I call bad things shameful—since I must answer you as if you already knew what I'm saying.

GOR.: But by Zeus, Socrates, even I myself do not comprehend what you're saying!

463e soc.: Quite likely, Gorgias, for I am not yet saying anything clear, but Polus here is young and swift.⁴¹

39. *Andreios*, "courageous," comes from *anēr*, an emphatically male man, and might well be translated "manly." *Anthrōpos* (which at the cost of occasional awkwardness I have translated "human being") refers more broadly to any member of the human species.

40. *Politikē* could also be translated "statesmanship" or "the political art." Because Socrates is calling into question whether a given pursuit is or is not an art, I have at this point preferred "politics" so as to leave the question open for now.

41. Socrates' reference to youth and swiftness may evoke a pun on Polus's name, which means "colt."

GOR.: Well, leave him be, and tell me what you mean in saying that rhetoric is a phantom of a part of politics.

464a SOC.: Well, I shall try to declare what rhetoric is, as it appears to me; and if it happens not to be this, Polus here will refute it. You call something body, I suppose, and soul?

GOR.: Indeed, how could I not?

SOC.: So then, do you also think there is a certain good condition of each of these?

GOR.: I do.

SOC.: What about this? Do you think there is a good condition that seems to be, but is not? I mean, for instance, something of this sort: many seem to be in good bodily condition, whom one would not easily perceive not to be in good condition, but a doctor and one of those skilled in gymnastic would.

GOR.: What you say is true.

464b SOC.: I say that such a thing exists both in body and in soul, which makes the body and the soul seem to be in good condition, but they nonetheless are not.

GOR.: These things are so.

464c SOC.: Now then, if I can, I shall more clearly display to you what I'm saying. Since there are two kinds of business, I say there are two arts. The one directed to the soul I call politics; the one directed to the body I am unable to name for you in this way, but I say that, while the care of the body is one, it has two parts, gymnastic and medicine; and that of politics, the legislative art is comparable to gymnastic, and justice⁴² is the counterpart to medicine. On the one hand, each of these two share something in common with each other, seeing that they are about the same thing, medicine with gymnastic and justice with the legislative art; on the other hand, they nevertheless differ somewhat from each other. Now these are four, and always take care—some of the body, the others of the soul—in accord with what is best. But flattery⁴³ perceived this (I do not mean by knowing but by guessing), divided itself into four, and slipped in under each of the
464d parts; it pretends to be this that it has slipped in under, and gives no heed to the best but hunts after folly with what is ever most pleasant,

42. Reading *dikaiousunē*; an alternate reading, *dikastikē*, could be translated "the judge's art," as at 520b.

43. Socrates uses feminine singular *kolakeutikē*; were it not for the context, my usual practice would lead me to translate "the art of flattery."

and deceives, so as to seem to be worth very much. So cookery has slipped in under medicine and pretends to know the best foods for the body, so that, if the cook and the doctor had to contest among children or among men as thoughtless as children which of the two, the doctor or the cook, has understanding about useful and bad foods, the doctor would die of hunger. This, therefore, I call flattery, and I assert that such a thing is shameful, Polus—for I am saying this to you—because it guesses at the pleasant without the best. And I assert that it is not art but experience, because it has no reasoned account, in regard to the thing to which it administers or the things that it administers, of what sort of things they are in their nature; and so it cannot state the cause of each thing. And I do not call art, a business that lacks a reasoned account. But if you disagree about these things, I am willing to provide a reasoned account.

465b Beneath medicine, therefore, as I'm saying, lies the flattery of cookery; and beneath gymnastic, according to this same manner, lies cosmetic, in that it is evildoing, deceitful, ignoble, and unfree, deceiving with shapes, colors, smoothness, and garments, so as to make them, as they take upon themselves an alien beauty, neglect their own beauty that comes through gymnastic. So in order not to speak at length, I want to speak to you just as the geometers do—for perhaps you are already following me—saying that as cosmetic is to gymnastic, so is cookery to medicine; or rather thus: as cosmetic is to gymnastic, so is sophistry to the legislative art; and as cookery is to medicine, so is rhetoric to justice. As I was saying, however, this is the way they differ by nature, but—inasmuch as they are closely related—sophists and rhetors are mixed together in the same place and about the same things, and they do not know what use to make of themselves nor do other human beings know what use to make of them.

465d For indeed if the soul were not set over the body, but the body were set over itself, and if cookery and medicine were not contemplated and distinguished by the soul, but the body itself decided, measuring by the gratifications for itself, the saying of Anaxagoras⁴⁴ would be much to the point, Polus my friend—for you are experienced in these

44. The pre-Socratic philosopher Anaxagoras appears to have taught that some amount of each material is present in every thing. Socrates names him as a crucial influence on Pericles at *Phaedrus* 270a and quotes this same saying in *Phaedo* 72c. When Meletus says that Socrates teaches that the sun is a stone and the moon earth, Socrates belittles the accusation by asking Meletus whether he thinks he is accusing Anaxagoras (*Apology* 26d). In his brief

things—all matters would be mixed up together in the same place, with the things of medicine, health, and cookery indistinguishable.

So then, you have heard what I say rhetoric is: the counterpart of cookery in the soul, as that [is the counterpart of rhetoric] in the body.

465e Perhaps, then, I have done a strange thing in that, not permitting you to make lengthy speeches, I have myself extended a long speech. It is then appropriate to pardon me; for when I spoke briefly, you did not understand, and you were able to make no use of the answer that I gave you, but needed a full description. So then, when you are answering, if I too do not know what use to make of it, you too extend
466a your speech; but if I do, let me make use of it; for that is just. And now, if you can make some use of this answer, do so.

POL.: What then are you saying? Does rhetoric seem to you to be flattery?

SOC.: Nay rather I said a part of flattery. But do you not remember at your age, Polus? What will you do later?

POL.: So, do good rhetors therefore seem to you to be esteemed as lowly flatterers in the cities?

SOC.: Do you ask this as a question or are you stating the beginning
466b of some speech?

POL.: I am asking.

SOC.: In my opinion, at any rate, they are not even esteemed.

POL.: What do you mean, not esteemed? Do they not have the greatest power in the cities?

SOC.: No, at least if you say that having power is something good for him who has it.

POL.: Indeed, I certainly do say so.

SOC.: Well then, rhetors seem to me to have the least power of those in the city.

POL.: What's this? Do they not, just like tyrants, kill whomever they
466c wish, and confiscate possessions, and expel from the cities whomever it seems good to them⁴⁵?

SOC.: By the dog, I am certainly of two minds, Polus, on each thing you say, whether you yourself are saying these things and revealing your own opinion, or whether you are asking me.

intellectual autobiography (*Phaedo* 97b–98c), Socrates recounts his intense interest, followed by disappointment, in Anaxagoras.

45. This phrase is regularly used for resolutions of the council and assembly in Athens; more literally it says, simply, "it seems to them."