Judicial Reform and the Meaning of the Eschatological Myth in the *Gorgias*

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Abstract: The paper focusses on the status and function of the eschatological myth in the *Gorgias.* The proposed analysis assumes that the narrative structure of the myth corresponds to the argumentation developed during the preceding discussion and that its characteristic tone resonates with the overall philosophic concern expressed in the discursive parts of the dialogue. On this ground, the paper characterises the mythical account as an attempt to visualise the inner dynamics of the soul. Given the intrinsic value of virtue (and the corresponding badness of vice), the paper proposes that the Platonic image is not restricted to the afterlife experience of the soul but is primarily related to the here-and-now perspective and represents an intensification of the human condition during this life. Here, the paper deals critically with the proposal that the myth conveys the belief that justice "pays in the end." Instead of the consequentialist vision of a post-mortem destiny punishing past wrongdoing, the proposed interpretation emphasises that the story reveals an actual concern in our present situation. In this context, the paper addresses the topic of the soul's judgment and confronts the image of judicial reform depicted in the myth with the motif of judgment and punishment widely discussed in the previous debate. Here, the psychological and therapeutic dimension of penalty is stressed. Along with this, the paper accentuates the topic of examination and instruction through speech and confronts Socratic dialogical practice with methods of contemporary rhetoric.

Keywords: Plato, myth, *Gorgias*, soul, judgment, punishment, rhetoric.

The eschatological myth that concludes the *Gorgias* (523a–527e) belongs to a broad and varied spectrum of narratives that frequently enter Plato's writing. In this sense, it is one of those challenging passages calling for adequate contextual comprehension. The present contribution raises the question of the status and function of the final myth within the argumentative structure of the dialogue. Specifically, it focusses on the topic of the soul's judgment and confronts the image of judicial reform depicted in the myth with the motif of judgment and punishment widely discussed in the previous debate. In this context, it also reflects the role of mythical imagination in Plato's literary strategies and examines how philosophical communication can work through narrative structures and poetic imagery.

Mythic imagery in Plato

Before addressing the topic indicated in the title, an introductory note should be devoted to the very presence of the mythical element in Plato's writing. Regarding research

in this area, Julia Annas previously pointed out a weak philosophical interest and reluctance to read the myths as a meaningful part of Plato's thought. According to her observations, the approach to the myths oscillated between considering them as attempts to grasp profound truths otherwise inaccessible to reason or refreshment in the course of the discussion and momentary abandonment of strict argumentation.[1] In any case, scholars have questioned whether the myths can be regarded as serious parts of the arguments in which they are presented.[2] However, there were voices attesting a fundamental role of myths in Plato's thinking.[3] In recent years, a comprehensive monograph, *Plato and Myth,* testified to a new wave of interest in this somewhat underestimated aspect of Plato's writing, and editors of the volume declared the reflection on the uses and the role of myth in Platonic thought as essential for understanding Plato's conception of philosophy as well as understanding the more complex relationship between philosophy and mythopoetic tradition.[4]

The use of mythic imagery is one of the specific strategies of Plato's literary communication drawing on and at the same time, critically responding to predominant literary genres of contemporary Greek culture. Together with Gerard Naddaf, we can also label these genres as "oral literature," recognising that in the Greek oral tradition, myths were communicated in the form of poetry.[5] Plato interacts intensively with this cultural practice.[6] His authorial strategy typically involves the selective use of traditional motifs and their transformation into a new context determined by his philosophical intention. Adopting traditional elements permits Plato to convey complex ideas effectively in a terse form. Further, in the course of the dialogue, a vivid and self-contained image can serve as a shortcut based on an associative mode of thought; in this way, culturally comprehensible hints can point to familiar images and sets of shared beliefs. It means that the names of traditional figures and places can resonate through the mind of a listener or a reader and evoke a range of relevant associations. For example, in setting the scene in the myth of the *Gorgias*, Plato relies on various traditional motifs with an eschatological touch (the Isles of the Blessed, the judgment

[1] Julia Annas, "Plato's Myths of Judgement," *Phronesis* 27, 1-2 (1982): 119; see also Álvaro Vallejo, "Myth and Rhetoric in the *Gorgias*," in *Gorgias – Menon. Selected Papers from the Seventh Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Michael Erler and Luc Brisson (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2007), 138: "The reception of Platonic thought in the history of philosophy has conferred myths with a diverse lot, from (a) those who sought to do away with it, stating, as Hegel did, that myths can be dismissed as alien to the true philosophy of Plato, to (b) those who have overvalued it, considering myths to be an exceptional path to gain access to certain problems that cannot be addressed through logos, thereby constituting the highest expression of Platonic metaphysics."

[2] See for example Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, *Myths of the Underworld Journey*: *Plato, Aristophanes, and the 'Orphic' Gold Tablets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 162 ff.

[3] Luc Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker* (Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); Brisson, "I Miti nel' Etica di Platone," in *Plato Ethicus. La filosofia è vita*, ed. Maurizio Migliori and Linda M. Napolitano Valditara (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2008).

[4] Catherine Collobert, Pierre Destrée, and Francisco J. Gonzalez, eds. *Plato and Myth. Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths*. Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012.

[5] Gerard Naddaf, "Introduction," in Luc Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker* (Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), x–xi.

[6] Multiple facets of Plato's engagement with the culturally powerful heritage of Greek poetic tradition are examined by Stephen Halliwell, "The subjection of *Muthos* to *Logos*: Plato's Citations of the Poets," *Classical Quarterly* 50, 1 (2000)." A comprehensive overview is offered by Pierre Destrée and Fritz-Gregor Herrmann, eds., *Plato and the Poets*. Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2011.

after death), and, by naming Aeacus or Minos in this context, he easily evokes complex associations of just behaviour and judging disputes, which fits within both the framework of cultural expectation of his audience and the overall design of the dialogue. Nevertheless, Plato restructures these associations to a considerable degree and fills them with new meaning.[7] Moreover, reshaping of the traditional motifs permits Plato to redefine the current system of values and shift cultural paradigms.

Such an adaptation and appropriation of cultural material provides new possibilities in pursuing philosophical concerns. Primarily, the transposition of mythical imagery into a philosophical set of ideas is a powerful device to visualise the invisible. As Catherine Collobert puts it, "While reading a Platonic myth, we come to grips with a specific issue, experiencing a way of looking at the issue and having a tangible and visible grasp of what is by nature invisible and intangible."[8] A significant issue that arises in this way before our eyes in many of Plato's texts is the life and dispositions of the soul. The invisible soul is made visible not only through the famous images revealing its structure and inner dynamics in the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*[9] but also through the eschatological narrations that end the *Republic*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Gorgias.* The latter will be the subject of my attention in the following analysis.

The judicial reform in the *Gorgias*

The concluding myth in the *Gorgias* has been subject to reservations similar to those raised by scholars against Platonic myths as a whole.[10] The scene of the final judgment of souls and the image of horrific punishment of the wicked has been interpreted as a threat of hell-fire designed to convince the stubborn Callicles that justice "pays in the end."[11] The myth has

[7] See Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, "Whip Scars on the Naked Soul: Myth and *Elenchos* in Plato's *Gorgias*," in *Plato and Myth. Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths*, eds. Catherine Collobert, Pierre Destrée, and Francisco J. Gonzalez (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012): 183. ("The support of the most authoritative voice in the tradition, whose tellings are familiar to nearly all of Plato's intended audience, shows that Plato's ideas fit within the framework of Greek culture, making them more acceptable and persuasive to his audience even as he engages in shifting their values and ideals.")

[8] Catherine Collobert, "The Platonic Art of Myth-Making: Myth as Informative *Phantasma*," in *Plato and Myth. Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths*, eds. Catherine Collobert, Pierre Destrée, and Francisco J. Gonzalez (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012), 102. The same can be stated about Plato´s famous images of the soul in the *Phaedrus* and in Book IX of the *Republic.* Characterizing these philosophical images as "informative *phantasmata*", Catherine Collobert makes this distinction: "a *doxastic phantasma* is an image of a sensible object, which is shaped out of a belief about what the object is, that is, an appearance, while an informative *phantasma* is an image of an *intelligible* object that is shaped out of knowledge about what the object is, that is, a sketch of the truth" (Collobert, 102).

[9] Plato, *Resp.* 588b–589b, *Phdr.* 246a–d.

[10] The problem of using "non-rational appeals and extra-logical rhetorical devices" in Plato's dialogues is addressed by Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicolas D. Smith, "The Myth of the Afterlife in Plato's *Gorgias*," in *Gorgias – Menon. Selected Papers from the Seventh Symposium Platonicum*, eds. Michael Erler and Luc Brisson, (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2007).

[11] Julia Annas, "Plato's Myths of Judgement." *Phronesis* 27, 1-2 (1982): 125. ("The myth, then, is giving us a consequentialist reason to be just. Whether we take it as really threatening future punishment for wrongdoing, or demythologize the message as the claim that being wicked brings the punishment of a scarred and deformed soul now, its message is still that justice 'pays in the end', on a deeper level than

thus been seen as a failure of strict argumentation and withdrawal from strictly philosophical practice.[12] Further, if the dialogue so decisively promotes the value of a just life, suggesting that virtue is its own reward, it seemed strange that the final encouragement to justice would resort to such a consequentialist perspective and appeal to some system of compensation and splendid rewards in the hereafter.[13]

Nevertheless, introducing the mythical account, Socrates strongly asserts that for him, the myth is not fanciful but true evidence of the intrinsic value of virtue and equally the inherent badness of vice: "Give ear then—as they put it—to a very fine account. You'll think that it's a mere tale, I believe, although I think it's an account, for what I'm about to say I will tell you as true".[14] He explicitly presents the myth as a support of the claims that virtue inherently benefits us and badness inherently harms us. Let us take this assertion seriously.[15] In the following, I suppose that the myth is designed to amplify the arguments of the discussion and not to present ideas ungraspable by reason nor to supplement supposedly deficient arguments with threats of punishments or promises of rewards in the hereafter. My analysis is based on the assumption that the narrative structure of the myth corresponds to the previous argumentation developed in the course of the dialogue and that its characteristic tone is consistent with the overall philosophic concern expressed in the discursive parts of the Platonic text.

The link between the argumentative and the narrative part of the dialogue is the motif of judgment and is closely connected with the problem of corrective treatment. This topic is worked out within a fundamental debate on whether it is better to be punished for injustice or to escape punishment. The discussion draws attention to the process of judgment itself and the subsequent form and effects of due correction.

In the concluding myth, Plato sets this topic into the context of post-mortem destiny and elaborates a vivid scene of judgment of a person's whole life. It is centred around a picture of judicial reform and distinguishes the eras of the mythical reign of Cronus and Zeus. The impulse to the reform lies in recognising the defects of the former system of judgment responsible for the inadequate distribution of the deceased either to the Isles of the Blessed or to Tartarus:

> "The cases are being badly decided at this time because those being judged are judged fully dressed. They're being judged while they're still alive. Many […] whose souls are wicked are dressed in handsome bodies, good stock and wealth, and when the

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we can now see. The final judgement myth is a myth of moral optimism; being good will benefit you, if not now then 'in the end', in some more profound way than is recognized by Athenian judges.")

[12] Edmonds III, "Whip Scars," 165.

[13] Daniel C. Russell, "Misunderstanding the Myth in the *Gorgias*," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 39 (2001): 557.

[14] Plato, *Gorg.* 523a: ἄκουε δή, φασί, μάλα καλοῦ λόγου, ὃν σὺ μὲν ἡγήσῃ μῦθον, ὡς ἐγὼ οἶμαι, ἐγὼ δὲ λόγον: ὡς ἀληθῆ γὰρ ὄντα σοι λέξω ἃ μέλλω λέγειν. Translations from the *Gorgias* are by Donald J. Zeyl.

[15] We face a similar situation in the *Republic* where Socrates criticizes poetic praise of external benefits of justice (*Resp.* 362e–363e) and then tells the final myth about punishments and rewards (*Resp.* 614a *ad finem*). We can either complain about Plato's apparent inconsistency (unexpected in the author who is so concerned about consistency in thought and speech) or assume that there is no talk about post-mortem compensation.

> judgment takes place they have many witnesses appear to testify that they have lived just lives. Now the judges are awestruck by these things and pass judgment at a time when they themselves are fully dressed, too, having put their eyes and ears and their whole bodies up as screens in front of their souls. All these things, their own clothing and that of those being judged, have proved to be obstructive to them." (*Gorg.* 523c–d)

The core of the reform depicted in the myth lies in these radical changes made by Zeus:

> "What we must do first […] is to stop them from knowing their death ahead of time. Now they do have that knowledge […] Next, they must be judged when they're stripped naked of all these things, for they should be judged when they're dead. The judge, too, should be naked, and dead, and with only his soul he should study only the soul of each person immediately upon his death, when he's isolated from all his kinsmen and has left behind on earth all that adornment, so that the judgment may be a just one." (*Gorg.* 523d–e)

Thus, Aeacus, Minos and Rhadamanthus are appointed judges over human deeds; they are expected to thoroughly examine the souls of the deceased. At first sight, by this narrative, the problem of judgment and punishment is transferred to the afterlife. However, there are indications that the dialogue adopts a double perspective by creating a parallel between the afterlife judgment and the contemporary situation of the interlocutors:

> "Those who are benefited, who are made to pay their due by gods *and men*, are the ones whose errors are curable; even so, their benefit comes to them, *both here* and in Hades, by way of pain and suffering, for there is no other possible way to get rid of injustice." (*Gorg.* 525b)[16]

Here, the punishment by gods in the nether world parallels the punishment by men in this world. An earlier quote from Euripides has already prepared this dual reference to a this-world and the-other-world perspective: "But who knows whether being alive is being dead, and being dead being alive?" (492e10–11). These hints suggest that the image of the afterlife is not limited to life after death but is decisively related to the human condition during this life.

Moreover, if the text is read through the lens of the interlocutors' current situation, it can be seen that the topic of judgment and punishment operates on two levels. It repeatedly plays with a parallel between body and soul, which, at the same time, evokes a more general relationship between exteriority and interiority. Furthermore, elaboration of this parallelism is closely related to the principal metaphor governing the overall tone of the whole dialogue, which is a medical metaphor of diagnosis and healing.

Therapy of the soul

Socrates explicitly introduces the medical metaphor in his debate with Polus on whether it is better to suffer or to commit injustice and whether it is better to be punished or

[16] εἰσὶν δὲ οἱ μὲν ὠφελούμενοί τε καὶ δίκην διδόντες ὑπὸ θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων οὗτοι οἳ ἂν ἰάσιμα ἁμαρτήματα ἁμάρτωσιν: ὅμως δὲ δι᾽ἀλγηδόνων καὶ ὀδυνῶν γίγνεται αὐτοῖς ἡ ὠφελία καὶ ἐνθάδε καὶ ἐν Ἅιδου: οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε ἄλλως ἀδικίας ἀπαλλάττεσθαι.

to escape punishment. The effect of the metaphor lies in an elaborate analogy between soul and body – namely between the constitutive and restorative arts responsible for a good condition of the soul and the body, respectively. Socrates gradually develops an analogy between legislation and justice on the one side and gymnastics and medicine on the other. After contrasting these arts with their defective and pandering counterparts, he complements the analogy by establishing a similar relationship between sophistry and rhetoric operating on the plane of the soul and cosmetics and cookery working on the plane of the body. Translated into the language of geometric relations: "what cosmetics is to gymnastics, sophistry is to legislation, and what pastry baking is to medicine, oratory is to justice" (465c).

It can be seen that the relevance of medical treatment and its role in this complex scheme has been partly signalled already in the previous conversation containing repeated allusions to medicine and medical care.[17] Moreover, a series of these subtle hints evoking the topic of a remedy can be traced back to the opening passage of the dialogue. Meanwhile, initial anticipation of the vital role of healing can be detected in the opening exchange between Socrates, Callicles and Chaerephon. Responding to Callicles, Socrates says, "Did we 'arrive when the feast was over,' as the saying goes?" The feast here implies Gorgias' splendid rhetorical performance. To explain his late arrival, Socrates blames Chaerephon, and Chaerephon promises a cure in return: "That's no problem, Socrates. I'll make up for it, too (ἐγὼ γὰρ καὶ ἰάσομαι, 447b1)." At the verbal level, these proleptic hints evoke the contrast between mastery of rhetorical skills, which resembles a banquet satisfying the public through sophisticated culinary skills and proper dietary procedures of real medical art corresponding to Socratic dialogical practice.[18] However, the full meaning of the therapeutic process will be apparent only through further elaboration, representing Socrates as a physician of the soul.[19]

The intense effort to evoke the motif of healing, i.e., restoring a healthy state, reveals that this is one of the focal points of the dialogue. It is particularly important if we consider the analogy between possible conditions of soul and body together with an *internalist* conception of injustice, conceived as a bad condition of the soul (477b). Like the disease of the body, the wickedness of the soul needs proper diagnosis and corrective treatment. This brings us back to the problem of judgment. The dialogue describes this process both in its defective and its due form. In doing so, it draws attention to the risks of concealment, threatening to obscure and distort the actual state of the matter under consideration.

The final myth demonstrates this point in a complex form. As David Sedley and others after him have suggested, the distinction between judgment before and judgment after Zeus' reform corresponds to the difference between two systems of judging. These are associated with two types of speech practice of contemporary Athens elaborated on earlier in the dialogue: the law-court rhetoric on the one side and Socratic dialogical method on the other.[20]

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[17] See Plato, *Gorg.* 448b, 456b, 459a–b, 464d–e; see also 475e, 478a, 479a, 521e.

[18] The choice of cookery as a counterpart to medicine is understandable given the nature of ancient medicine, which largely uses dietary practices and diet regimen.

[19] The relevance of opening scenes in Platonic dialogues is carefully analyzed by Myles Burnyeat, "First Words. A Valedictory Lecture," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 43 (1997). The opening scene of the *Gorgias* is a subject of James Doyle, "On the First Eight Lines of Plato's *Gorgias*," *The Classical Quarterly* 56, 2 (2006). However, Doyle disregards Charmides' verbal cue to curing.

[20] David Sedley, "Myth, Punishment and Politics in the *Gorgias*," in *Plato's Myths*, ed. Catalin Partenie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 58: "[…] the regime of Zeus, with its advances over the

The myth concisely represents the characteristics of both types of speech: like judging under Cronus, the contemporary law-court rhetoric manifests itself in establishing the most positive outer appearance of the defendant, and relies on witnesses and elaborate speeches and appeals to the masses. Furthermore, by creating a good impression, it promises to protect the defendant against impending punishment. This practice corresponds to the contemporary way of conducting a lawsuit.[21] Moreover, the court's decision was not based on material evidence but consisted primarily of the assessment of the character of both opponents. Each side, therefore, tried to utter a court speech presenting its party as a blameless and orderly citizen. The role of witnesses was essential. However, they were not expected to provide impartial testimony but to strengthen the positive image of the party involved. Their task was primarily to confirm the status and good reputation of the litigant within the social networks of his relatives and friends.

Contrary to this law-court practice, the Socratic dialogical method offers different procedures similar to the face-to-face examination of mythical judges under Zeus. Let us remember that in the absence of factual evidence, the search for the truth during the decision-making process in the Athenian court relied on "looking at a man's nature and the life he leads" (εἰς ἀνδρὸς φύσιν σκοπῶν δίαιτάν θ᾽ ἥντιν᾽ ἡμερεύεται).[22] Socrates maintains the goal to examine a person's way of life (just as the aim of the reformed judgment in the myth remains the assessment of human life) but completely transforms the methods of how to achieve it effectively. The Socratic examination avoids the risks of concealment and strips the person examined of all the glitter of external impression. Thus, what remains hidden behind high self-esteem and public reputation becomes apparent in a similar way as the unjust deeds are made visible as scars and deformities of the naked soul in front of the mythical judges. In the myth, the invisible is presented in graphic form through the vivid image of the soul displaying her qualities through her visible condition and fitness.[23] The Socratic dialogical practice corresponds to this model. It appeals to individuals and calls only the interlocutor himself as a witness. Now what is significant is not how one appears in the eyes of others but who one really is.[24] Therefore, the Socratic method disregards status, reputation and external qualities and only asks how consistent are the attitudes and opinions of the person under examination. Like the reformed practice in the myth, it focusses solely on the inspection of the soul itself.

Cronus regime, symbolizes a method of examining and improving souls which we are being asked to recognize as superior to the current Athenian political and judicial system. And that method is, in spirit, both Socratic and dialectical." See Edmonds III, "Whip Scars," 170 nn.; Christopher Rowe, "The Status of the Myth of the *Gorgias*, or: Taking Plato Seriously," in *Plato and Myth. Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths*, eds. Catherine Collobert, Pierre Destrée, and Francisco J. Gonzalez (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012), 189 nn.

[21] Edmonds III, "Whip Scars," 168–169.

[22] Aeschines, *Contra Timarch*. 152.

[23] Here, the aesthetic appearance, worthy of a free citizen, is at the same time a sign of moral quality, both of which fall within the semantic field of *kalos.*

[24] The difference between appearance and truth, understood as a difference between social mask and personal identity, is stressed by Alessandra Fussi, "The Myth of the Last Judgment in the *Gorgias*," *The Review of Metaphysics* 54 (2001).

Confronting these two types of speech – Athenian forensic rhetoric and Socratic elenctic dialogue – Plato contrasts two kinds of evidence: one focused on the outer impression and consensus of the majority and the other centred on the personal character and inner coherence. The latter is associated with the Socratic dialogical method, and Socrates himself repeatedly points out this kind of witness in discussion with his partners.[25]

Along with the transformation of the mechanism of judgment, the concept of punishment is also changing. Contrary to the conviction of exponents of clever law-court rhetoric that it is desirable to avoid being punished, Socrates stresses that punishment is a necessary therapeutic agent.[26] Just as medical treatment positively affects the body, the penalty positively affects the corrupted soul. Therefore, it would be foolish to try to escape punishment like a child who avoids the doctor for fear of painful treatment.[27]

Let us consider how Socratic questioning combines the element of diagnosis with that of healing. The effect of Socratic *elenchus* lies precisely in determining crooked opinions leading to errors in one's life and in confronting the examined person with the contradictions into which he or she falls. At the same time, the exposure to the inconsistencies in one's speech and life in front of an audience is embarrassing for the loser. In Greek competitive culture, public defeat is usually accompanied by a feeling of shame.[28] In the Socratic dialogue, the shame caused by the awareness of one's deficiencies represents the moment of reflexivity, which may prove pivotal for a person's further attitude. Here, the painful experience of shame that the interlocutor feels as he loses the argument corresponds to the punishment of the judged soul in the afterlife. Transposed to the perspective of this life, the painful experience of *elenchus* may serve as a kind of "bitter medicine" given to those whose soul is in an inappropriate state. In this way, the *elenchus* works as a *pharmakon* that brings about the change of the "present order of things." On the individual level, this change affects the actual disposition of the soul, while on the social level, it stimulates a shift in the cultural paradigm.

It is from this point of view that Christopher Rowe speaks about a redefinition of the concept of punishment detectable in the *Gorgias*.[29] Instead of the conventional concept of penalty, including imprisonment, fines, exile or execution, there is the Socratic version of it: from the perspective of Socratic dialogical strategies, the process of punishment coincides with the laborious process of examination and instruction through speech.[30]

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[25] *Gorg.* 458a–b; 471e–472c; 473d; 473e–474b; 506a.

[26] The positive impact of punishment is firmly stated in *Gorg.* 472e, 473b, 476a, 478e–479d.

[27] See *Gorg.* 479b–c.

[28] Radcliffe Edmonds remarks: "The Attic *elenchos* is generally used in the specific sense of a legal or rhetorical refutation, in contrast to the broader epic sense of shame, but the sense of failing a test or contest always underlies this refutation. To lose a contest or to fail a test, particularly in a public arena such as a lawcourt or even a street corner in front of a crowd, inevitably produces shame for the loser" (Edmonds III, "Whip Scars," 167, note 6). [[Incidentally, I noticed that Edmonds uses the Greek script for *elenchos* in the note you are quoting. I don't know if that matters. I will also note that here you have *elench**o**s* but in the body of the paper have *elench**u**s*. That too may be not important but I'm flagging these typographic things just in case.]]

[29] Rowe, "The Status of the Myth," 189 nn.

[30] A similar assumption of coincidence between punishment and instruction through speech may be observed in the *Euthyphro.* There Socrates claims that if he gains knowledge of piety, he should be

The method of Socratic *elenchus* has the same double effect as the penalties imposed on the wrongdoers according to the reformed judgment in the myth:

> "It is appropriate for everyone who is subject to punishment rightly inflicted by another either to become better and profit from it, or else to be made an example for others, so that when they see him suffering whatever it is he suffers, they may be afraid and become better. Those who are benefited, who are made to pay their due by gods and men, are the ones whose errors are curable; even so, their benefit comes to them, both here and in Hades, by way of pain and suffering, for there is no other possible way to get rid of injustice. From among those who have committed the ultimate wrongs and who because of such crimes have become incurable come the ones who are made examples of. These persons themselves no longer derive any profit from their punishment, because they're incurable. Others, however, do profit from it when they see them undergoing for all time the most grievous, intensely painful and frightening sufferings for their errors, simply strung up there in the prison in Hades as examples, visible warnings to unjust men who are ever arriving." (*Gorg.* 525b–d)

The double effect of punishment, which means either benefiting by becoming better or by becoming an example to others,[31] is consistent with the medical metaphor distinguishing the curable and incurable cases. It applies both to the level of this world and the other world: the destiny of the curable ones manifests how one can profit in the here-and-now perspective from the philosophic examination; meanwhile, the fate of the incurable ones demonstrates the un-philosophical way of life of those who, in a Calliclean manner, avoid any outside restraint and maximise their usurpatory tendencies and desire for power. As Radcliffe Edmonds puts it, "Their inconsistent and irrational lifestyle actually inflicts continuous suffering upon them, and their souls are so deformed from the way they have lived that they can only continue, in the afterlife, the kind of life they lived when alive."[32]

It is only in light of such considerations that Socrates' enigmatic remarks – which sound so provocative to Callicles and initiate his engagement in the discussion – become intelligible:

> "And, on the other hand, to reverse the case, suppose a man had to harm someone, an enemy or anybody at all, provided that he didn't suffer anything unjust from this enemy himself—for this is something to be on guard against—if the enemy did

able to secure his acquittal on charges of impiety. How is it meant? G. Fay Edwards proposes a reading according to which Socrates believes that this knowledge will make him pious henceforth and that his instruction in piety is itself a suitable punishment for any past impiety. In such an innovative sense, the process of reforming a wrongdoer through successful teaching – in the form of a philosophical dialogue – constitutes due punishment. G. F. Edwards, "How to Escape Indictment for Impiety: Teaching as Punishment in the *Euthyphro*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 54, 1 (2016).

[31] See Plato, *Prot.* 324a–b, 325a; *Leg.* 854d–855a.

[32] Edmonds III, "Whip Scars," 179. Cf. Plato, *Tht.* 176e–177a: "My friend, there are two patterns set up in reality. One is divine and supremely happy; the other has nothing of God in it, and is the pattern of the deepest unhappiness. This truth the evildoer does not see; blinded by folly and utter lack of understanding, he fails to perceive that the effect of his unjust practices is to make him grow more and more like the one, and less and less like the other. For this he pays the penalty of living the life that corresponds to the pattern he is coming to resemble. And if we tell him that, unless he is delivered from this 'ability' of his, when he dies the place that is pure of all evil will not receive him; that he will forever go on living in this world a life after his own likeness—a bad man tied to bad company."

> something unjust against another person, then our man should see to it in every way, both in what he does and what he says, that his enemy does not go to the judge and pay his due. And if he does go, he should scheme to get his enemy off without paying what's due […] And if his crimes merit the death penalty, he should scheme to keep him from being executed, preferably never to die at all but *to live forever in corruption*, but failing that, to have him live as long as possible in that condition." (*Gorg.* 480e–481a)

The initially incomprehensible proposal to harm one's enemies by letting them go unpunished for their crimes is a hypothetical suggestion that complements the previous appeal for avoiding injustice and accusing oneself and any of one's friends who may be guilty of committing injustice:

> "And if [a man] or anyone else he cares about acts unjustly, he should voluntarily go to the place where he'll pay his due as soon as possible; he should go to the judge as though he were going to a doctor, anxious that the disease of injustice shouldn't be protracted and cause his soul to fester incurably." (*Gorg.* 480c–d)

In this context, the inverted image of an *immortal criminal* is a powerful one. In terms of the medical metaphor adopted in the discussion and preserved in the final myth, the image of the *deathless wrongdoer* is not a purposeless provocation. It is an intensified representation of the most definite conviction that the worst evil is to remain in a permanent state of inner psychic disorder and be deprived of any remedy.[33]

Conclusion

In this way, the myth amplifies and sharpens the central message of the dialogue. It makes visible the inner life of the soul and the variants of its condition manifested in certain lifestyles. In doing so, it interacts with the authoritative voice of an older poetic tradition, while critically responding to current social, intellectual and political tendencies in contemporary Athens. Such a strategy creates a complex web of meaning. Far from being a mere fancy, the myth incorporated into the structure of the dialogue helps to reshape mental schemes and offers an alternative mode of promoting good, both on the individual and political level.

By examining these perspectives, the dialogue implicitly answers Callicles' question: "Tell me, Socrates, are we to take you as being in earnest now, or joking? For if you *are* in

[33] The image of a wrongdoer, continuously experiencing his own wickedness, returns in more detail in the final myth of the *Phaedo.* An impressive image of an incurable criminal cast into the bottomless abyss of Tartarus shows the permanent suffering of a paradigmatic wrongdoer imprisoned in an extremely turbulent environment, full of wild storms of water and wind oscillating up and down without any fixed point. Playing with the perspective of life and death, the image of a deathless wrongdoer translates itself into the image of a soul permanently experiencing the violent pulsation of Tartarus, corresponding to the disturbed and corrupted nature of the soul itself. Consider also the verbal correspondence of *anô kai katô metaballomenou* ("shifting back and forth", *Gorg.* 481e) describing Callicles' adaptability to the mood of the crowd, or *metapiptein anô katô* ("shift back and forth", *Gorg.* 493a) describing unstable appetites prone to easy manipulation in the *Gorgias* and *kymainei anô kai katô* ("oscillates up and down in waves", *Phd.* 112b) describing the restless pulsation of Tartarus in the *Phaedo.*

earnest, and these things you're saying are really true, won't this human life of ours be turned upside down, and won't everything we do evidently be the opposite of what we should do?" (*Gorg.* 481b–c). In response, Plato designs the dialogue to show the risks of an ambitious lifestyle threatening both the individual soul and the political community. On a personal level, he portrays the character of Callicles as a proponent of unrestrained hedonism and an untamed desire for power and domination. On the political level, he points to similar tendencies expressed in Athenian aggressive foreign policy. The dark side of Callicles' glorification of the life of a mob orator is the subjection to the ever-changing moods of the crowd. The rhetorician simply vocalizes the desires of the majority. In this regard, he has no choice but to satisfy the appetites of the crowd just as a cook satisfies the tastes of banquet guests.

At this point, several indications continuously present in the dialogue begin to converge. The ever-present desire for dominance has its historical manifestation in the Athenian military expedition against Sicily, fuelled by the escalated appetites of the crowd fostered by political rhetoric. The "Sicilian motif" combines the topic of pleasing rhetoric (embodied in the figure of Gorgias, the Sicilian rhetorician)[34] and military disaster of Athens during the Sicilian expedition. Repeated allusions to warfare go back to the very first words of the dialogue whose opening phrase "war and a battle" (πολέμου καὶ μάχης) shapes the background of the whole discussion.[35]

Perils of a lifestyle ruled by the ideology of expansion and domination at the expense of others – hidden already in Callicles' opening phrase – are gradually revealed in the next debate. In sharp contrast to the ideal of ambitious life stands the wretchedness of unchecked a life of tyrannical ambitions promoted by clever rhetorical skills. In the most graphic form, this is demonstrated in the concluding myth. Through this subtle web of meaning permeating the whole text, the message of the dialogue links its beginning to its end. In this way, the final myth functions as an integral part of the dialogue, fitting well into the structure of its dialogical argumentation.

If the proposed interpretation is plausible, we can conclude that Plato's use of mythical narration in the *Gorgias* proves to be an effective way to carry out philosophical communication not only through intellectual reasoning but also through mythical imagination.[36]

[34] A minor hint even playfully introduces the motif of Sicilian cookery (*Gorg.* 518b), which fits nicely into the parallel between cookery and rhetoric.

[35] In a short remark on the *Gorgias*, Myles Burnyeat stresses a verbal hint to the principal subject of the debate which is "Callicles' view of life as itself a battle, a war for advantage" (Burnyeat, "First Words," 11). The reading proposed in this chapter extends the cue to cover not only the level of personal lifestyle but also the political dimension of the issue.

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