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GORGIAS

GORGIAS

GORGIAS

GORGIAS

GORGIAS

GORGIAS

GORGIAS

INTRODUCTION

CONTENTS

.....

INTRODUCTION

vii

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

x

GORGIAS

3

friends! And if a man frequents the gymnasias, gets his body in first rate condition, becomes a prize-fighter, and then takes to beating his father and mother or his friends and relatives, that is no reason for detesting and banishing the trainers and teachers of the art of fighting! You can recognize that they imparted their instruction to be used rightly in self-defense against enemies and criminals; but the pupils perverted their own strength and skill to its wrong use. The teachers, therefore, are not evil, nor is their art responsible for these misdeeds, nor is it vicious in itself; those who misuse the art I hold to be responsible.

Exactly the same argument holds for rhetoric also. The rhetorician is capable of speaking against everyone else and on any subject you please in such a way that he can win over vast multitudes to anything, in a word, that he may desire. But the fact that he can rob doctors, or any other craftsmen, of the credit due them, is no reason why he should do so: he must use his skill justly, exactly as one should physical prowess. And if a man learns rhetoric, and then does injustice through the power of his art, we shall not be right, in my opinion, in detesting and banishing his teacher. For while the teacher imparted instruction to be used rightly, the pupil made a contrary use of it. Therefore it is only right to detest the misuser and banish and kill him, not his teacher.

Socr. I imagine, Gorgias, that you, too, have taken part in many discussions and have discovered in the course of them this peculiar situation arising: people do not find it easy by an exchange of views to arrive at a mutually satisfactory definition for the subjects under discussion, and in this way bring the argument to an agreeable end. Rather, when they disagree on any point, and one declares the other to be guilty of incorrect or vague statements, they grow angry and imagine that everything that is said proceeds from ill will, not from any concern about the matters under discussion. Some of these arguments end most disgracefully, breaking up in mutual vituperation to such an extent that the bystanders are annoyed at themselves for having become auditors of such people. Now why do I say this? Because at the moment you seem to me to be making statements which do not follow from, and are not consistent with, what you first

said about rhetoric. I hesitate, therefore, to embark on a refutation in the fear that you may imagine that I am speaking, not with a view to illuminating our subject, but to discredit you. Now if you are the sort of person I am, I shall gladly continue the questions and answers; if not, I shall let them go. And what sort of person am I? One of those who are happy to be refuted if they make a false statement, happy also to refute anyone else who may do the same, yet not less happy to be refuted than to refute. For I think the former a greater benefit, in proportion as it is of greater benefit to be oneself delivered from the greatest harm than to deliver another. No worse harm, it is true, can befall a man than to hold wrong opinions on the matters now under discussion between us. If, then, you declare yourself to be such a person as I am, let us continue the discussion; but if you think we ought to let it go, let us at once dismiss it and close the interview.

Gorg. But I do indeed nominate myself, Socrates, to be just such a person as you describe. Perhaps, however, we ought to give some consideration to the others here with us. For quite some time, you know, even before you came in, I had been delivering a long address to the company here; and now, perhaps, if we continue our discussion, it may be somewhat protracted. We should, then, consider whether we are not detaining some of the others who may wish to attend to some other business.

Chaer. You may judge from the applause, Gorgias and Socrates, that these gentlemen are eager to hear whatever you have to say. What I can certainly do is to speak for myself: I trust I may never be so pressed for time as to relinquish such an argument and one so well handled in the belief that anything else in the world is more advantageous.

Call. Yes, Chaerephon, I'll be bound I too have been present at many an argument, but not once did I ever enjoy myself as I'm doing now. As far as I'm concerned, if you want to go on talking the entire day, you'll only be doing me a favor.

Socr. Well, Callicles, from my point of view there's nothing to prevent it, if Gorgias is agreeable.

Gorg. After all this, Socrates, it would certainly be disgraceful

482 speak true, that unless your favorites can be prevented from speaking as they do, neither can you. Imagine, then, that you are hearing just the same kind of excuse from me. Don't be surprised at my remarks, but rather prevent my love, Philosophy, from making them. It is she, my dear friend, who continues to say what you are hearing from me now; she is, in fact, far less capricious than any other love. For my Alcibiades says now one thing, now another; but Philosophy speaks always the same and, though you are now surprised at her words, you were present at the whole discourse. So either refute her on the point I just made and prove that wrongdoing, together with impunity from punishment, is not the very worst of all evils; or, if you are going to leave this unrefuted, Callicles, by the Dog, god of the Egyptians, Callicles will not agree with you and will be at variance with you your whole life long. And yet, for my part, dear friend, I do believe that it would be better for me that my lyre or a chorus I directed should be out of tune and loud with discord, and that multitudes of men should disagree with me rather than that my single self should be out of harmony with myself and contradict me.

Call. Socrates, you seem to me to be going mad with eloquence, like a true politician! And now you are prattling this way because Polus has fallen victim to the very treatment which he accused Gorgias of having received at your hands. For he said, I believe, that when Gorgias was questioned by you as to whether, when anyone came to him desiring to learn rhetoric but without a knowledge of justice, Gorgias grew ashamed and said he would teach him, complying with conventional morality, because people might grow indignant if he said he wouldn't; and it was through this very admission that he was forced to contradict himself, which is exactly what you are so fond of. On this occasion Polus was laughing at you, and rightly, too, as I think: but now, in his turn, he has suffered this same fate. From my point of view, what I cannot approve of in Polus' performance is precisely this: he conceded to you that doing wrong is uglier than suffering it, and it was from this concession that he got completely tangled up in the argument and, being ashamed to

say what he really thought, had his mouth gagged. Now, Socrates, you know you really do divert the argument into such cheap and vulgar paths, saying that you're pursuing the truth, but really getting us into what is beautiful, not by nature but by convention. Yet these two are for the most part opposed to each other, nature and convention; so that if a man is timid and doesn't have the courage to speak his mind, he must necessarily contradict himself. So this is the clever trick you have devised to cheat in your arguments: if a man makes his assertions according to convention, in your questions you slyly substitute 'according to nature,' and if he speaks according to nature, you reply according to convention. So in the present instance, when doing and suffering wrong were being examined, Polus spoke of what was uglier according to convention, but you followed it up as though it were a natural principle. By nature, in fact, everything that is worse is uglier, just as suffering wrong is; but to do wrong is uglier merely by convention. For to suffer wrong is not the part of a man at all, but that of a slave for whom it is better to be dead than alive, as it is for anyone who is unable to come either to his own assistance when he is wronged or mistreated or to that of anyone he cares about. I can quite imagine that the manufacturers of laws and conventions are the weak, the majority, in fact. It is for themselves and their own advantage that they make their laws and distribute their praises and their censures. It is to frighten men who are stronger than they and able to enforce superiority that they keep declaring, to prevent aggrandizement, that this is ugly and unjust, that injustice consists in seeking to get the better of one's neighbor. They are quite content, I suppose, to be on equal terms with others since they are themselves inferior.

This, then, is the reason why convention declares that it is unjust and ugly to seek to get the better of the majority. But my opinion is that nature herself reveals it to be only just and proper that the better man should lord it over his inferior: it will be the stronger over the weaker. Nature, further, makes it quite clear in a great many instances that this is the true state of affairs, not only in the other animals, but also in whole

states and communities. This is, in fact, how justice is determined: the stronger shall rule and have the advantage over his inferior. By what principle of justice, then, did Xerxes invade Greece or his father Scythia? One could, of course, cite innumerable examples of the same sort of thing. To my mind men are acting in accordance with natural justice when they perform such acts, and, by heaven, it is in accordance with law, too, the law of nature—though, no doubt, it hardly coincides with the one we frame when we mold the natures of the best and strongest among us, raising them from infancy by the incantations of a charmed voice, as men do lion cubs; we enslave them by repeating again and again that equality is morality and only this is beautiful and just. Yet I fancy that if a man appears of capacity sufficient to shake off and break through and escape from all these conventions, he will trample under foot our ordinances and charms and spells, all this mass of unnatural legislation; our slave will stand forth revealed as our master and the light of natural justice will shine forth!

It seems to me that Pindar, too, illustrates my point of view in the ode in which he declares that

Convention is the Lord of all
Mortals and immortals;

and it, he continues,

Justifies the utmost violence
With sovereign hand. My witness is
The deeds of Heracles, for without payment—

I am only quoting approximately, for I don't know the whole poem by heart. But he does say that Heracles didn't pay for the cattle nor did Geryon give them to him when he drove them off, as though it were by right of nature that the better and stronger should possess the herds and all the rest of the property of his inferiors, those weaker than himself.

Here, then, you have the truth of the matter. You will become convinced of it if you only let philosophy alone and pass on to more important considerations. Of course, Socrates, philosophy does have a certain charm if one engages with it in one's youth

and in moderation; but if one dallies overlong, it's the ruin of a fellow. If a man, however well endowed, goes on philosophizing throughout his life, he will never come to taste the experiences which a man must have if he's going to be a gentleman and have the world look up to him. You know perfectly well that philosophers know nothing about state laws and regulations. They are equally ignorant of the conversational standards that we have to adopt in dealing with our fellow men at home and abroad. Why, they are inexperienced even in human pleasures and desires! In a word, they are totally innocent of all human character. So, when they come to take part in either a private or a public affair, they make themselves ridiculous—just as ridiculous, I dare say, as men of affairs may be when they get involved in your quibbles, your 'debates.' Euripides put his finger on it when he wrote:

Each shines in that which can attract him most,
The task on which he spends the livelong day,
The work in which he can surpass himself . . .

whereas a man shuns and vilifies whatever he can't do well, but praises his other work out of regard for himself, with the notion that this is the way to praise himself.

But the best course, no doubt, is to be a participant in both. It's an excellent thing to grasp as much philosophy as one needs for an education, and it's no disgrace to play the philosopher while you're young; but if one grows up and becomes a man and still continues in the subject, why, the whole thing becomes ridiculous, Socrates. My own feeling toward its practitioners is very much the same as the way I feel toward men who lisp and prattle like a child. When I see a child, who ought to be talking that way, lisping and prattling, I'm pleased, it strikes me as a pleasant sign of good breeding and suitable to the child's age; and when I hear a little lad speaking distinctly, it seems to me disagreeable and offends my ears as a mark of servile origin. So, too, when I hear a grown man prattling and lisping, it seems ridiculous and unmanly; one would like to strike him hard! And this is exactly the feeling I have about students of philos-

whether the audience likes it or not? Which attitude do you believe to be displayed by tragic poetry?

Call. Why, it seems quite obvious, Socrates, that the effort is rather toward pleasure and the gratification of the spectator.

Socr. Did we not assert just now, Callicles, that such an attitude was flattery?

Call. Quite.

Socr. Suppose we examine any sort of poetry: if one were to strip away the music and the rhythm and the meter, would there be anything left but bare prose?

Call. Nothing, of course.

Socr. Is this bare prose to be directed at great crowds of people?

Call. It is.

Socr. Then poetry is a kind of public address.

Call. So it seems.

Socr. It should, consequently, be a rhetorical kind of public address; for you do think, do you not, that poets make use of rhetoric in their plays?

Call. I do.

Socr. Then we have now hit upon a kind of rhetoric addressed to a crowd of people made up of men and women and children alike, of slaves as well as free men. We are not able to admire it very much because we maintain that it is a form of flattery.

Call. Quite.

Socr. Good. What, then, is the nature of the rhetoric addressed to the people of Athens and of the other cities of free men? Does it seem to you that orators always speak with an eye on what is best and aim at this: that their fellow citizens may receive the maximum improvement through their words? Or do they, like the poets, strive to gratify their fellows and, in seeking their own private interest, do they neglect the common good, dealing with public assemblies as though the constituents were children, trying only to gratify them, and caring not at all whether this procedure makes them better or makes them worse?

Call. This question you are asking is no longer a simple one. There are, in fact, some orators who say what they say with

deep concern for their fellow citizens; but there are also others such as you describe.

Socr. That's good enough. For if this matter is really two-fold, part of it will doubtless be a form of flattery and a shameless method of addressing the public; the other may well be beautiful, a genuine attempt to make the souls of one's fellows as excellent as may be, a striving always to say what is best, whatever the degree of pleasure or pain it may afford the audience. But a rhetoric such as this you have never encountered. Or, if you are able to mention such an orator, why have you not already told me his name?

Call. Well. . . . I swear I can't name a single one, at least among the orators of today.

Socr. Are you then able to mention any of the older statesmen through the influence of whose public career the Athenians became better than they were before? For my part, I haven't a notion who such a man might be.

Call. What! Have you never heard what a good man Themistocles was? And Cimon and Miltiades and our Pericles, who died only recently and you yourself heard him speak?

Socr. Yes, Callicles, if the definition you once gave of virtue is really true: to fulfill desires, both one's own and those of others. But if it is not true, if we must substitute what we were compelled to accept in the subsequent discussion, that we should fulfill only those desires which make a man better, not those which make him worse, and suppose this to be an art—I am unable to name such a man from the group you proposed.

Call. If you only looked hard enough, you could.

Socr. Then let us examine the question impartially to see if this is so. Consider: will a good man, whose speeches are for the maximum improvement of his fellows, say anything at random? Will he not always have some definite end in view? Just as all other craftsmen keep their eye on the task in hand and select and apply nothing at random, but only such things as may bring about the special form he is bent upon effecting. Consider, if you like, painters and architects and shipwrights and any other craftsman you please; each one of them disposes

tion took place before many or before only a few, or even man to man; and if it were this inability that brought me to my death, I should be very sorry indeed. If, on the other hand, it is merely through lack of the art of flattery that I meet my end, I am perfectly certain that you will see me face death with composure. Of death itself surely no one who is not an absolute fool or coward can be afraid; it is to do injustice that men fear. And if the soul arrives in Hades burdened with a load of iniquities, that is the worst and last of all evils. And now, if you are agreeable, I should like to tell you a story to show that this is true.

X
523 *Call.* Well, since you've got through all the rest, you may as well finish this, too.

Socr. Then listen, as they say, to a very fine tale, which you may consider a myth, but I regard as a true story; for I want you to take everything I shall say as strict truth.

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When, as Homer says, Zeus and Poseidon and Pluto took over the rule of the universe from their father, they divided it among themselves. Now in the time of Cronus there was a law concerning mankind, which holds to this very day among the gods, that any man who had passed his life in a just and holy fashion should at his death proceed to the Islands of the Blessed and dwell there in complete happiness out of the reach of evil; while the doer of evil and impious deeds should be sent to a prisonhouse of retribution and judgment; and this they call Tartarus. Now in the time of Cronus and in the earlier portion of Zeus' reign the judges were living men who judged their fellows while they too were still alive, since the arraignment of a man was held on that day when he was about to die; and for this reason the judgment was conducted badly. So both Pluto and the overseers of the Islands of the Blessed came to Zeus and reported that improper persons were being sent to both places. Then Zeus said: "I shall put a stop to this proceeding. It is quite true that the judgments are now conducted badly, for the defendants are brought to trial clothed and judgment is passed while they are still alive. There are many," he said, "who have wicked souls, but are clad in beautiful bodies and pride of race and wealth and, when judgment comes, many witnesses advance to their aid, testifying to the justice of their

lives. The judges are overawed by these; furthermore, they themselves are clothed, with the veil of eyes and ears and indeed the whole body interposed before their souls as they sit in judgment. All this becomes an obstacle for them, both their own clothing and that of those they judge. Now first," said he, "we must terminate men's foreknowledge of death, which they now possess. I have already given orders to Prometheus to put an end to it. Next, they must all be judged in nakedness, for judgment must not be passed till they are dead. The judge also must be naked and dead in order that the judgment shall be just, his very soul contemplating the naked soul of each man who has died without warning, bereft of all his kin, and all his trappings left behind him upon earth. Accordingly, since I recognized this state of affairs even before the rest of you, I have appointed my own sons to be judges, two of them from Asia, Minos and Rhadamanthys, and one from Europe, Aeacus. So these, when they are dead, shall give judgment in the Meadow at the Crossroads from which the Two Roads lead, one to the Islands of the Blessed, the other to Tartarus. And Rhadamanthys shall judge those from Asia and Aeacus those from Europe; but to Minos I shall give the prerogative of passing sentence on appeal when the other two have any doubts. And so the judgment as to a man's last journey shall be rendered with the utmost justice."

524 This, Callicles, is what I have heard and I believe it to be true; and from the narrative I draw some such inference as this: Death, as I think, turns out to be merely a divorce of two things, the soul and the body; and when they have been separated one from the other, each of them still retains much the same condition as it had while the man was alive. The body retains its natural contours with the marks of its upbringing and its experiences quite manifest. For example, if a man's body was quite large while he was alive, either naturally, or as a result of diet, or both, when he dies his corpse will be large; if he was fat, the corpse will be fat; and so on. If, again, he used to wear his hair long, the corpse will have long hair. Or if he used to be beaten and had the marks and scars of lashes or blows or other wounds on his body while he was alive, these may all be seen on the body when he is dead. Or if he had any

limbs broken or distorted during life, in death the same are plainly visible. In a word, whatever characteristics a man's body presented in life, these remain visible in death, either all of them, or most of them for some little time.

Now this same state of affairs appears to me to hold true for the soul also, Callicles. When it has been stripped of the body, everything in it becomes visible, all its natural traits as well as those acquired from every habit and each pursuit. When, therefore, the dead appear before the judge, those from Asia before Rhadamanthys, he causes them to halt before him and examines each soul with no knowledge of its identity; often indeed, he has laid hold on the King of Persia or some other monarch or despot and discerned nothing sound in the soul; for it is deeply scarred by the whip and full of festering wounds brought on by perjury and crime, the imprint on the soul of its every act. He sees all of it twisted by lies and impostures, crooked because it has received no nourishment from truth; he sees it compact of distortion and hideousness by reason of the irresponsibility and licentiousness, the insolence and intemperance of its acts. And when he has seen such a soul, he sends it, in all dishonor, straight off to the prison where it is destined to enter and undergo the sufferings that are its due.

Everyone who is punished, and rightly punished, ought either to be benefited and become better, or serve as an example to others that they may behold these sufferings and through fear become better. Those who are benefited by their punishment at the hands of men and gods are they that have committed only curable sins; none the less their improvement must come through the pangs of suffering both here and in Hades. Only in this way can they be rid of their wrongdoing. But those who have committed the extreme of injustice, and have thus become incurable, serve as an example to others; they themselves benefit not at all, since they are incurable, yet others may do so when they observe these malefactors suffering in the greatest, the most painful, and the most fearful torments because of their sins, strung up forever in that prisonhouse of Hades, an example, a portent, and a warning to the unjust as they arrive below.

And one of these I say Archelaus will be, if what Polus tells about him is true, and any other tyrant who resembles him. One may believe, in fact, that most of these dread examples are drawn from tyrants and kings, despots and politicians, for it is they who, through irresponsible power, commit the most fearful and incurable crimes. Homer also is a witness to this, for he has represented kings and despots, Tantalus, Sisyphus, Tityus, as the ones who suffer eternal punishment in Hades; but no one has represented Thersites and other wicked persons of private status as suffering great torments on the ground that they are incurable. [A private person has not the power for great sin, and in this he is more fortunate than those who have.] ²⁶ It is, Callicles, from the ranks of the powerful that the supremely wicked are drawn. Yet there is nothing to prevent good men from being found in this class also; and they, when they occur, are entirely admirable, for it is both difficult and most praiseworthy, Callicles, to live a just life when one has great opportunities to do wrong. Few, therefore, have survived this test, yet here and elsewhere they have sprung up in the past and there will, I don't doubt, be further examples in the future, honorable men endowed with the virtue of administering justly whatever one places in their charge. One most praiseworthy example, famed throughout Greece, was Aristides the son of Lysimachus; on the other hand, my dear friend, most powerful men become evil.

And so, as I was saying, the mighty Rhadamanthys receives such a man, knowing nothing else about him, neither name nor lineage, but only that he is bad; and on perceiving this he packs him off to Tartarus, putting a mark upon him to indicate whether he seems curable or not; and the criminal proceeds to prison and suffers whatever is his due. On occasion the judge may perceive a soul that has lived in holiness and truth, the soul of some private person or another; but most often, Callicles, as I should say, it will be the soul of a philosopher who has kept to his own business and has not meddled with others' affairs during his lifetime. Whereupon the judge is struck with admiration and sends him on to the Islands of the Blessed. Aeacus' role is just the same, [each of

²⁶ The bracketed words are probably an interpolation.

them sits in judgment with a staff in his hand] ²⁷ while Minos, as overseer, sits apart; he alone has a golden scepter, just as Homer's Odysseus says he saw him,

Holding a scepter of gold and judging among the dead.²⁸

So, Callicles, I have been convinced by these accounts; it has become my concern how I may present to the judge my soul in its healthiest condition. I relinquish, therefore, the honors that most men pursue and shall endeavor, by cultivating the truth, to be as good as I may during my life and, when I come to die, in my dying. And insofar as I am able I urge all other men (and you in particular I summon, thus countering your former summons to me) to such a life and such a contest as this, which I affirm to be worth all the contests here on earth put together. And I retort to your reproaches that it is you who will be unable to help yourself when that trial and that judgment which I have just described comes upon you. You will have to appear before the judge, Aegina's son; when he lay hands upon you and drags you before him, it is you who will stand there with gaping mouth and reeling head no less than I here; and it will be you, perhaps, whom they will shamefully slap in the face and mistreat with every indignity.

It is quite possible that all this may seem to you only a myth, an old wives' tale, and you will despise it; nor would your contempt be surprising if with all our searching we could find anything better or truer than this account. But as it is, you will observe that the three of you, the wisest of all the Greeks alive at this moment, you and Polus and Gorgias, are unable to demonstrate the necessity of living any other life than this, which clearly brings advantage after death as well. Yes, in all our long discussion the other arguments have been refuted and this alone stands immovable: doing wrong must be avoided more sedulously than suffering it. Above all else, a man must study, not how to seem good, but to be so, both in public and in private life. And if he grows bad in any way, he must be punished; for this is the good which is to be rated second after being just: to become so

²⁷ The bracketed words are probably an interpolation.

²⁸ *Od.* xi, 569.

through making amends by punishment. Flattery of every kind, whether of oneself or of others, whether of the few or of the many, is to be avoided; and so rhetoric, like every other practice, is always to be used to serve the ends of justice, and for that alone.

Then join with me and be my companion on the journey to the place where, as the argument shows, you will be happy both in life and in death. And let others, if they like, despise you for a fool and insult you; even, God help us, confidently endure from them that ignominious slap on the cheek. There will be nothing terrible in this experience if you are a truly honorable man in the pursuit of virtue. Then at length, when we have really practiced virtue together as we should, we may, if it seems appropriate, apply ourselves to politics or deliberate about whatever else may attract us; for then we shall be better fitted for such deliberation than we are now. It would be disgraceful for men in what appears to be our present condition to put on airs as though we amounted to something, we who never hold twice the same opinion about the same subjects, and that, too, though they are of the greatest importance. Such are the depths to which our lack of true education has brought us. For our guidance, then, let us make use of the argument which has now revealed itself, declaring that this is the best way to spend one's days: to live and die in the pursuit of justice and the other virtues. Let us follow it, then, and urge on everyone else to do the same and to abandon that way in which you put your confidence and your exhortations; for your way, Callicles, has no value whatever.