

PARATRAGEDY IN PLATO'S *GORGIAS*

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[The] Platonic dialogue . . . was created by mixing all the available styles and forms together so that it hovers somewhere midway between narrative, lyric, and drama, between prose and poetry, thus breaking the strict older law about the unity of linguistic form . . . [It] was the boat on which the older forms of poetry . . . sought refuge after their shipwreck.

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RECENT scholarship on Plato's *Gorgias* has focused on three distinct axes of interpretation: first, the intractability of Callicles as an interlocutor and the limits of Socratic dialectic;² second, the function and meaning of the eschatological myth with which the dialogue ends;³ and third, the dialogue's relationship to tragedy and, in particular, to Euripides' *Antiope*, which is quoted and referenced at length.⁴ Though these three issues are seldom treated

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¹ F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings* [*Birth*], trans. R. Speirs (Cambridge, 1999), § 14.

² See G. Klosko, 'The Insufficiency of Reason in Plato's *Gorgias*' ['Insufficiency'], *Western Political Quarterly*, 36 (1983), 579–95; J. Gentzler, 'The Sophistic Cross-Examination of Callicles in the *Gorgias*' ['Cross-Examination'], *Ancient Philosophy*, 15 (1995), 17–43; D. Scott, 'Platonic Pessimism and Moral Education' ['Pessimism'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 17 (1999), 15–36; R. Woolf, 'Callicles and Socrates: Psychic (Dis)Harmony in the *Gorgias*' ['(Dis)Harmony'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 18 (2000), 1–40; A. Fussi, 'Why is the *Gorgias* So Bitter?' ['Bitter'], *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 33 (2000), 39–58; E. Buzzetti, 'The Injustice of Callicles and the Limits of Socrates's Ability to Educate a Young Politician' ['Injustice'], *Ancient Philosophy*, 25 (2005), 25–48.

³ See J. Annas, 'Plato's Myths of Judgment' ['Myths'], *Phronesis*, 27 (1982), 119–43; A. Fussi, 'The Myth of the Last Judgment in the *Gorgias*' ['Last Judgment'], *Review of Metaphysics*, 54 (2001), 529–52; D. C. Russell, 'Misunderstanding the Myth in the *Gorgias*' ['Misunderstanding'], *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 39 (2001), 557–73.

⁴ See A. Nightingale, 'Plato's *Gorgias* and Euripides' *Antiope*' ['*Antiope*'], *Classical Antiquity*, 11 (1992), 121–41; ead., *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* [*Genres*] (Cambridge, 1995); J. A. Arieti, 'Plato's Philosophical "An-

as interrelated, it is my contention that they are best understood together and, taking Plato's use of the *Antiope* as my starting-point, my interpretation attempts to do just that.⁵

Before I elaborate, it will be helpful to get a brief summary of the *Antiope*.⁶ Though the play is not extant, we have a sufficient number of fragments to reconstruct the broad outlines of the plot: Antiope escapes from servitude to Lycus and Dirce, the king and queen of Thebes. During her flight, she accidentally comes across her long-lost twin sons, Zethus and Amphion, who were fathered by Zeus and whom she abandoned when they were born. Once the brothers realize that Antiope is their mother, they assist her, first by killing Dirce and then by capturing Lycus in order to kill him. A *deus ex machina* resolves the final quarrel.⁷ Hermes appears to stay the brothers from killing Lycus, to reveal to them their divine birth, and to command the king to cede his throne to them. The tragedy featured, and was best remembered for, a debate between the brothers about the respective virtues of the practical and intellectual lives. In this article I argue that Plato's use of *Antiope* is an instance of *paratragedy*, that is, the non-parodic adaptation of a work or feature of tragedy in order to enrich the dramatic situation.⁸

tiopé": The "Gorgias" ['Antiope'], in G. A. Press (ed.), *Plato's Dialogues: New Studies and Interpretations* (Lanham, Md., 1993), 197–214.

⁵ Only Nightingale, to my knowledge, has made a substantive attempt to do this, and my fundamental disagreements with her interpretation will become clear in what follows. Other scholars have gestured at the relevance of tragedy without taking it very seriously: Klosko sees the *Gorgias* as the 'tragedy of philosophy', but he does not mention the *Antiope* motif ('Insufficiency', 593); J. Duchemin notices tragic parallels in *Gorgias* but does not pursue the point ('Remarques sur la composition du "Gorgias" ['Remarques'], *Revue des études grecques*, 56 (1945), 265–86 at 265–6.

⁶ For the evidence regarding individual fragments and a summary of the reconstructed play, see C. Collard, M. Cropp, and J. Gibert, *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays*, vol. ii [*Fragmentary Plays*] (Warminster, 2004), 259–325. Since much (though not all) of the evidence for the passages Plato borrows comes from the *Gorgias* itself, I have confined the reconstructed text to the footnotes. Those interested in the independent sources should consult Collard, Cropp, and Gibert's account of the evidence and their full bibliography. I follow their numbering for Euripides' fragments. They follow R. Kannicht (ed.), *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta*, vol. v [*TrGF*] (Göttingen, 2004). All translations are my own, except where noted.

⁷ Euripides may have invented the *deus ex machina*, and he was fond of this sort of ending: see A. Lesky, *A History of Greek Literature* (New York, 1966), 402; P. E. Easterling and B. M. W. Knox, *Greek Literature: Greek Drama*, vol. ii (Cambridge, 1989), 72. He uses this ending in the *Ion*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Helen*, and *Hypsipyle*, and in one version of *Iphigenia in Aulis*. By contrast, Aeschylus never uses it and Sophocles only once (in the *Philoctetes*).

⁸ See Arieti, 'Antiope'; Nightingale, *Genres*. The former recognizes that Plato

Plato, through his characters, uses the tragedy as a way to frame, contextualize, and constitute the terms of the debate between Socrates and Callicles about the best kind of life in the last part of the dialogue (481 B–527 E).

The suggestion that Plato might have looked favourably on a tragedy will no doubt surprise some—Plato's criticisms of tragedy are well known from the *Republic*, *Laws*, and indeed the *Gorgias* itself, where Socrates seems to regard it as 'flattery' (κολακεία: 502 B–D). The dominant position among scholars finds its clearest expression in Martha Nussbaum's *Fragility of Goodness*, wherein she argues that the theatre of the Platonic dialogue is 'anti-tragic', essentially because Plato is optimistic about the possibility of knowledge.⁹ My aim in this paper is to mitigate and substantially complicate this position by arguing that Plato did in fact incorporate some part of a tragic world-view, though, to be sure, not without critical divergence. One of the upshots of my interpretation is that it provides an explanation for the dark, acrimonious tone of the *Gorgias* as a whole and particularly the 'passionate bitterness' of Socrates.¹⁰

I first clarify what I mean by 'paratragedy', since it must be distinguished from parody of tragedy. I claim that Plato consciously and substantively borrows from the *Antiope* in the debate between

borrows from Euripides, but his analysis never moves beyond the literary to the philosophical. The latter recognizes the extent to which 'Plato deliberately appropriated fundamental thematic and structural elements from Euripides' *Antiope*', but she considers the appropriation to be parodic and thus misunderstands the dialogue's significance (*Genres*, 73).

⁹ M. C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy [Fragility]* (Cambridge, 1986), 122–35. For criticism of Nussbaum's position, see D. Roochnik, 'The Tragic Philosopher: A Critique of Martha Nussbaum', *Ancient Philosophy*, 8 (1988), 285–95; id., *The Tragedy of Reason: Towards a Platonic Conception of Logos [Tragedy]* (New York, 1990); D. A. Hyland, 'Philosophy and Tragedy in the Platonic Dialogues' ['Tragedy'], in N. Georgopoulos (ed.), *Tragedy and Philosophy* (Oxford, 1993), 123–38.

¹⁰ E. R. Dodds (ed.), *Plato: Gorgias [Gorgias]* (Oxford, 1959; repr. 1990), 16. This bitterness is often explained in terms of Plato's age or his development. The back cover of the Penguin edition of the *Gorgias* reads: 'to judge by its bitter tone Plato's *Gorgias* was probably written shortly after the death of Socrates'. Dodds, in the introduction to his commentary, asks, 'Why is the *Gorgias* so bitter?' and proceeds to speculate about the dialogue's date of composition (19–20). He more helpfully couples this bitterness with the 'tragic tone' that the last part of the dialogue assumes (19). Cf. Arieti, 'Antiope', 198–9. Fussi locates the bitterness in the aggressiveness of the disagreements, features of the dramatic setting, and Socrates' failure with Callicles. However, she sees the flattering rhetoric of tragedy only as providing a foil for the dialogue form ('Bitter', 52–3).

Socrates and Callicles in three main ways. First, Callicles introduces the motif and frames his initial defence of the practical life in the terms explicitly used by Zethus. Second, Socrates picks up on this motif and takes it over, responding to Callicles by taking on the role of Amphion. Third, despite nominally winning the argument, Socrates never does manage to persuade Callicles, and the myth functions as a *deus ex machina* providing a divine resolution to the debate's inconclusiveness. Next, I argue that Plato had good reason to borrow from the *Antiope* since that tragedy, rightly understood, provides an endorsement of the intellectual over the practical life. Finally, I argue that Plato, through the use of paratragedy, shows philosophy to be, in the relevantly qualified sense, tragic.

1. Definition of 'paratragedy'

In order to understand the point I am trying to make about Plato's use of Euripides' *Antiope*, it will be useful to provide a somewhat fuller characterization of the literary technique I am calling 'paratragedy'. I shall use the more familiar technique of 'parody' as a foil. Keeping these literary devices distinct is crucial, though they are often confused.¹¹ *Parody* is an imitation which *distorts* a target text, author, or genre, typically for the purposes of criticism.¹² By contrast, *paratragedy* is an imitation which *adapts* a specific literary work of tragedy or the diction, poetry, or tone of tragedy in order to construct and enrich the dramatic situation.

Four points of contrast should suffice to differentiate parody from paratragedy more fully. First, paratragedy requires and implies a complex web of references, and it involves a sustained intertextual

¹¹ The difficulties here are both substantive and terminological. First, it has proved difficult to define parody clearly: on this, see M. A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern* (Cambridge, 1993). Second, 'paratragedy' has been used in the past to mean simply 'parody of tragedy', as e.g. P. Rau, *Paratragodia: Untersuchung einer komischen Form des Aristophanes* (Munich, 1967). In its *non-parodic* sense, 'paratragedy' is a relatively new term: see M. S. Silk, 'Aristophanic Paratragedy' ['Paratragedy'], in A. H. Sommerstein (ed.), *Tragedy, Comedy, and the Polis: Papers from the Greek Drama Conference, Nottingham, 18–20 July 1990* (Bari, 1993), 477–504. I want to keep 'parody' and 'paratragedy' conceptually distinct for clarity's sake.

¹² I do not think criticism is *essential* to parody, since some cases of parody seem to be merely 'in fun' and to imply no criticism at all. See my analysis of parody in F. Trivigno, 'The Rhetoric of Parody in Plato's *Menexenus*', *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 42 (2009), 29–58.

interaction in order to establish a significant narrative or thematic overlap. By contrast, parody can be accomplished by a single line. Second, paratragedy maintains some level of equality between itself and the object text, while parody elevates itself above the parodied genre or text.¹³ Third, paratragedy uses tragedy to focus our attention more squarely on an enriched dramatic present, whereas parody directs our attention away from the dramatic situation to the absent tragic target.¹⁴ Finally, the meaning or significance of paratragedy differs markedly from that of parody. Instead of speaking *against* another text, paratragedy speaks along *with* it. However, just as parody does not necessarily criticize or reject absolutely everything about the target text, paratragedy generally endorses only certain aspects of the tragic motif while rejecting or ignoring others.

Paratragedy is by no means a Platonic invention. Aristophanes uses paratragedy in order to focus his comedy's special relationship with tragedy.¹⁵ Indeed, he sometimes refers to his comic art as a comi-tragic hybrid, i.e. as *trugoidia*.¹⁶ His use of paratragedy is especially clear in the *Acharnians*, which borrows substantially from Euripides' *Telephus*.¹⁷ Nightingale describes 'Plato's relation to the genres he targets' as 'generally adversarial' and thus understands Plato's use of intertextuality in general as 'a species of parody'.¹⁸ In what follows I hope to show that this characterization is misguided. By ruling out the possibility of Platonic paratragedy, she misunder-

¹³ See Nightingale, *Genres*, 6–7, 7 n. 19, 148–9.

¹⁴ See Silk, 'Paratragedy', 482, 495; id., *Aristophanes and the Definition of Comedy* [*Comedy*] (Oxford, 2000), 351–2. Silk claims that parody requires a 'frame' within which the parody is signalled, oriented towards its target, and articulated. In the case of paratragedy, this frame is unnecessary because paratragedy already has the frame of the comedy whose action it serves to enrich.

¹⁵ See Silk, *Comedy*, 42–97.

¹⁶ Literally, 'wine song', a pun on and allusion to *tragoidia*, 'tragedy' or 'goat song'. See O. Taplin, 'Tragedy and Tragedy', *Classical Quarterly*, NS 33 (1983), 331–3.

¹⁷ Recently scholars have recognized that the treatment of the *Telephus* in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* is non-parodic: P. Pucci, *Aristofane ed Euripide: ricerche metriche e stilistiche* (Rome, 1961); R. M. Harriott, 'The Function of the Euripides Scene in Aristophanes' "Acharnians"', *Greece & Rome*, 2nd ser. 29 (1982), 35–41; Silk, 'Paratragedy'; H. P. Foley, 'Tragedy and Politics in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*', in E. Segal (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Aristophanes* (Oxford, 1996), 117–42; J. Henderson, 'Acharnians: Comic Hero, Comic Poet and Society', in *Aristophanes: Acharnians, Lysistrata, Clouds* (Newburyport, Mass., 1997), 13–21. As Silk succinctly puts the argument, if we are to understand parody as involving subversion, then the *Telephus* motif in *Acharnians* is not parody ('Paratragedy', 494). Aristophanic paratragedy is by no means limited to this work: the invocations of Euripides' *Helen*, *Andromeda*, and *Telephus* in the *Thesmophoriazusae* are also non-parodic; see Silk, 'Paratragedy', 494.

¹⁸ Nightingale, *Genres*, 7.

stands the significance of the *Antiope* motif in the *Gorgias*.¹⁹ On my view, Plato uses this tragedy *constructively* to constitute the terms of the central philosophical argument and to help articulate his understanding of philosophy.

2. Callicles' speech: a Zethean defence of the practical life

Callicles, a bystander to the earlier conversations in the *Gorgias*, enters into it as a response to Socrates' deeply counter-intuitive claim that one ought to ensure that the unjust deeds of one's friends are punished immediately and that those of one's enemy remain unpunished for as long as possible. Callicles asks whether Socrates is 'being serious or joking' and complains that he has life 'turned upside down' (481 B 6–7, C 3–4).²⁰ This dichotomy—between joking and being serious—launches two thematic threads in the *Gorgias*, one comic and one tragic.²¹ Here I shall deal only with the tragic thread.²² In Callicles' speech he attempts to demonstrate two propositions: (1) natural justice dictates that the strong rule over the weak;²³ (2) when one realizes this, one must abandon philosophy and enter the manly world of power politics.²⁴ Callicles draws on Pindar to make the first point and on Euripides to make

¹⁹ Nightingale changed her mind on this issue: see her treatments in 'Antiope' and *Genres*. The earlier article (which became a chapter in the book) sees *Gorgias* as producing a 'vigorous hybrid' of philosophy, tragedy, and comedy ('Antiope', 141). But in her book she focuses on Plato's 'quarrel' with tragedy and calls his use of *Antiope* a 'clear case of parody' (*Genres*, 91). Her earlier account, in my view, is more promising than her considered one.

²⁰ All translations of the *Gorgias* are my own.

²¹ See Nightingale, *Genres*, 89–91. As she rightly points out, Callicles 'goes to great lengths to portray Socrates as downright ridiculous', though 'Socrates turns the tables' on him, showing that Callicles is the truly ridiculous one (89–90). Cf. 484 E 1; 485 A 7; 509 A; 527 A.

²² An example of the comic thread: recalling Aristophanes' *Knights*, Socrates jokes that Callicles has two lovers, the Athenian *dēmos* and Demos, son of Pylilampes, and that Callicles' love makes him unable to contradict anything either claims (481 c 5 ff.). Socrates surely affirms the comedy's portrayal of both the demagogue and the *dēmos* itself by using it as a means to attack Callicles.

²³ For parallels to the Melian Dialogue in Thucydides 5, see Dodds, *Gorgias*, 268.

²⁴ See C. H. Kahn, 'Drama and Dialectic in Plato's *Gorgias*' ['Drama and Dialectic'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 1 (1983), 75–121 at 100 ff.; Woolf, '(Dis)Harmony', 2–6. Woolf argues that the two positions are inconsistent, the one being anti-conventional and the other being conventional. Kahn locates the conflict in Callicles' élitism, on the one hand, and need (in a democracy) to placate the *dēmos*, on the other (see esp. 100 with n. 47). What holds the two positions together,

the second. He invokes the speech of Zethus specifically in order to make the same arguments that the latter had made against his brother (485 E 4–5).

Philosophy, Callicles argues, is ruinous for the man who does not leave it behind to attend to more important practical matters, especially those of the city (484 C 4 ff.). Philosophy has no knowledge of laws, of business dealings, or of human pleasures and desires; Callicles glosses such ignorance as ignorance of human experience generally (484 D 2–7). Philosophy is fine for youths, but an old philosopher needs a beating (485 C 3–D 3). The ignorance of philosophers concerning political matters will cause them to appear ‘ridiculous’ in the public and political spheres, and this ridiculousness has deeply serious consequences. If Socrates were prosecuted by an utter scoundrel for some crime of which he is completely innocent, he would easily be convicted and sentenced to death (486 A 4 ff.). Through his ignorance, he ‘would become dizzy [*ἰλλυγιώψης*] and gape [*χασμῶο*] and have nothing to say’ if he had to defend himself (486 B 1–2). Worse, lacking physical and political prowess, Socrates would be, to use Callicles’ ‘rather coarse’ (*ἀγροικότερον*) phrase, ‘punched in the face with impunity’ (486 C 2–3). Conversely, the practical man will suffer no such political disadvantages.

Callicles initially introduces the *Antiope* to show that those who disdain the practical life are simply no good at it. He explicitly quotes a line from the play and attributes the view expressed to Euripides:

. . . λαμπρός τέ ἐστω ἕκαστος ἐν τούτῳ, καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦτ’ ἐπείγεται,
 νέμων τὸ πλείστον ἡμέρας τούτῳ μέρος,
 ὣν’ αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ τυγχάνει βέλτιστος ὢν.
 (484 E 4–7)²⁵

‘Each man shines in this, and strives towards this,’

Apportioning the greatest share of his days to this,
 Wherein he happens to be the best.

In other words, each man excels in and pursues that which he is

according to Socrates and Callicles, is their common concern with the attainment of power (510 A–B).

²⁵ The reconstructed text of the *Antiope* is as follows: ἐν τούτῳ (γέ τοι) | λαμπρός θ’ ἕκαστος κἀπὶ τοῦτ’ ἐπείγεται, | νέμων τὸ πλείστον ἡμέρας τούτῳ μέρος, | ὣν’ αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ τυγχάνει βέλτιστος ὢν (fr. 184). See Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, *Fragmentary Plays*, 272–3, 301.

naturally suited to succeed in. He will ‘avoid and revile whatever he’s bad at, and praise its opposite, out of affection for himself’ (485 A 1–3). This amounts to an essentially *ad hominem* argument directed at Socrates. Socrates’ disdain for sophistic rhetoric and practical considerations more generally, Callicles claims, flows not from any principled view but rather from his selfish desire to ‘praise himself’ by devaluing what he is not any good at (485 A 3).²⁶

Callicles argues for the superiority of the practical life by weaving the speech of Zethus into his own and placing Socrates in the role of Amphion: ‘Socrates, I am fairly friendly towards you. Thus, I find myself feeling towards you just as Zethus felt towards Amphion in Euripides’ play’ (485 E 3–5). This weaving encompasses paraphrase, quotation, and an imitation of the structure of Zethus’ argument. Callicles adapts Zethus’ speech thus:

ἀμελείς, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὃν δεῖ σε ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, καὶ φύσιν ψυχῆς ὄδε γενναίαν μεираκιώδει τινὶ διατρέπεις μορφώματι, καὶ οὔτ’ ἂν δίκης βουλαῖσι προσθεῖ’ ἂν ὀρθῶς λόγον, οὔτ’ εἰκὸς ἂν καὶ πιθανὸν ἂν λάκοις, οὔθ’ ὑπὲρ ἄλλου νεανικὸν βούλευμα βουλεύσαιο. (485 E 6–486 A 3)²⁷

Socrates, you are neglecting what you ought to care about; you undermine the noble nature of your soul by your childish appearance. You couldn’t properly contribute a word to deliberations in court, or utter something plausible and convincing; nor could you design a bold plan on someone else’s behalf.

Notice the similarity of Callicles’ criticisms to a Socratic exhortation to virtue. By casting himself as Socrates’ brother, Callicles provides a natural explanation for his interest in Socrates’ betterment. Otherwise, Callicles’ views seem to express no general benevolence towards humanity—rather the opposite. Callicles claims that Socrates neglects the most important matters in life. The stark disagreement concerns just what the proper concerns for a human being are. If Socrates continues his philosophical endeavours, Cal-

²⁶ The converse, that Callicles shuns philosophical debate because he is bad at it, also follows from the more general claim, but Callicles cuts off the significance of this implication by asserting the unequivocal superiority of the practical life.

²⁷ The reconstructed text of the *Antiope* is as follows: (ἀμελείς ὃν δεῖ σε ἐπιμελεῖσθαι) | ψυχῆς φύσιν (γὰρ) ὄδε γενναίαν (λαχὼν) | γυναικομίμῳ διατρέπεις μορφώματι | κοὔτ’ ἂν δίκης βουλαῖσι προσθεῖ’ ἂν λόγον | οὔτ’ εἰκὸς ἂν καὶ πιθανὸν (οὔδὲν) ἂν λάκοις | (x–v–x) κοὔτ’ ἂν ἀσπίδος κύτει | (καλῶς) ὀμιλήσει(α)ς οὔτ’ ἄλλων ὑπερ | νεανικὸν βούλευμα βουλεύσαιό(τι) (fr. 185). See Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, *Fragmentary Plays*, 273–4, 301.

licles warns, he will be subject to unjust prosecution, incarceration, and/or execution. Callicles wonders, again with Zethus:

καίτοι πῶς σοφὸν τοῦτό ἐστω, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἥτις εὐφυῆ λαβοῦσα τέχνη φῶτα ἔθηκε χείρονα. (486 B 5–6)²⁸

And yet how, Socrates, is this a wise thing, the skill which takes a naturally clever man and makes him inferior?

Callicles ends his speech with a rousing exhortation to Socrates to leave off from arguments and refutations (*ἐλέγχων*) and dedicate himself to the ‘sweet music of business [*πραγμάτων δ’ εὐμουσίαν*]’:

ἀλλ’ ὠγαθέ, ἐμοὶ πείθου, παῦσαι δὲ ἐλέγχων, πραγμάτων δ’ εὐμουσίαν ἄσκει, καὶ ἄσκει ὀπόθεν δόξεις φρονεῖν, ἄλλοις τὰ κομψὰ ταῦτα ἀφείς, εἴτε ληρήματα χρῆ φάναι εἶναι εἴτε φλυαρίας, ἐξ ὧν κενοῖσιν ἐγκατοικήσεις δόμοις. (486 C 4–8)²⁹

My good man, be persuaded by me and give up on arguments! Practise the sweet music of business, and do so where you will get a reputation for intelligence. To others leave these subtleties—you must admit that it’s either silly or utter nonsense—from which you will dwell in an empty house.

Callicles thus adds another dimension to his critique of the philosophical life. The subtleties with which philosophy is concerned have no appreciable financial benefit. By contrast, one could use one’s influence in the Assembly to pass decrees that benefit oneself and use one’s speaking ability in the law courts both to prosecute cases from which one stands to gain monetarily and to avoid prosecution in cases where some debt is owed to another.

Taken together with the defence of the might-makes-right position, the overall picture that emerges from Callicles’ speech serves as an endorsement of the life of the tyrant, which Polus had explicitly defended (see 466 B ff.). Callicles expands on Polus’ position by providing a more general picture of the human condition, from which the goodness of the life of the tyrant follows. In the context of Athenian democratic political life, the closest thing to a tyrant

²⁸ The reconstructed text of the *Antiope* is as follows: καὶ πῶς σοφὸν τοῦτ’ ἐστω, ἥτις εὐφυῆ | λαβοῦσα τέχνη φῶτ’ ἔθηκε χείρονα; (fr. 186). See Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, *Fragmentary Plays*, 274–5, 302.

²⁹ The reconstructed text of the *Antiope* is as follows: ἀλλ’ ἐμοὶ πείθου: | παῦσαι ματάξων καὶ πόνων εὐμουσίαν | ἄσκει τοιαῦτ’ ἄειδε καὶ δόξεις φρονεῖν, | σκάπτων, ἀρῶν γῆν, ποιμνίους ἐπιστατῶν, | ἄλλοις τὰ κομψὰ ταῦτ’ ἀφείς σοφίσματα, | ἐξ ὧν κενοῖσιν ἐγκατοικήσεις δόμοις (fr. 188). See Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, *Fragmentary Plays*, 274–7, 303–4.

is the demagogue, who attains power over the city through the use of his persuasive rhetoric.³⁰ The life of political engagement is, one might say, ‘on the way’ to attaining political power.³¹

3. A series of responses by a Euripidean Socrates

Socrates co-opts the Euripidean drama by taking over Amphion’s part of the argument. As he himself puts it, he attempts to ‘pay back to Callicles the speech of Amphion for that of Zethus’ (506 B 5–6).³² In doing so, Socrates adapts Amphion’s claims about the choiceworthiness of the intellectual over the practical life and, most crucially, the superior benefit of the intellectual both to his friends and to the city in general.³³ Further, Socrates subverts Callicles’ endorsement of the tragedy, not by overtly repudiating it but by rejecting the identification of Callicles–Zethus with Euripides.

During their discussion of the proper role of pleasure for a human life, Socrates, in recommending temperance over excessive indulgence, introduces the paradoxical view, held by the Pythagoreans, that the body is a tomb. He quotes from Euripides’ lost *Polyidus*:

τίς δ’ οἶδεν, εἰ τὸ ζῆν μὲν ἐστὶ καθανεῖν,
τὸ καθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν;
(fr. 638 = 492 E 10–11)

³⁰ Polus makes this connection earlier in the dialogue: ‘Don’t the orators, like the tyrants, put to death anyone they wish, and confiscate the property of anyone they see fit and banish them from their cities as well?’ (466 B 11–C 2).

³¹ Callicles endorses, albeit for different reasons, Pericles’ injunction against *apragmosunē*, the life of political disengagement; Pericles had made it an axiom of the democracy that the Athenians ‘do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; they say that he has no business at all’ (Thuc. 2. 40). On Zethus’ speech as an endorsement of *polupragmosunē*, see Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, *Fragmentary Plays*, 268; L. B. Carter, *The Quiet Athenian* (Oxford, 1986), 163–73.

³² Though Socrates takes up Amphion’s part of the argument, he does not immediately pick up the Amphion motif. In fact, Socrates devotes the first part of his reply to an analysis (and refutation) of what ‘[Callicles] and Pindar mean by natural right’ (488 B 2–3).

³³ Nightingale formulates the relation between Socrates and Amphion thus: ‘Just as Socrates is juxtaposed with the “hero” of the *Antiop.*, so also is true philosophy contrasted with the genre of tragedy as a whole’ (*Genes*, 72, emphasis added). The difference in the terms of the analogy exposes a real weakness in Nightingale’s argument: surely, Socrates’ juxtaposition with Amphion is positive, and if so, a ‘contrast’ between philosophy and tragedy is not what the incorporation of *Antiopē* accomplishes.

Who knows if life is death,
Or death, life?

Here, Socrates invokes Euripides in order to prepare Callicles for the paradoxical claim, not to mock or criticize the tragedian for offering such claims in his tragedies.³⁴ Socrates certainly has no interest in this context in subverting the possibility of paradox. The presence of this initial, less elaborate quotation should open up the possibility of and prepare us for the larger and more elaborate instance of Euripidean intertextuality, i.e. the paratragedy.

While Socrates in the *Gorgias* does not use exactly the same words as Amphion in the *Antiope*, the overall intentions of the rebuttals and central thematic elements of their conclusions are the same. To Callicles–Zethus' objection that the intellectual will live in poverty (486 C 4–8~fr. 188) Socrates–Amphion replies that the practical person leads a vicious, intemperate, and ultimately unsatisfying life (492 E ff.~fr. 194, 198, 201). To Callicles–Zethus' assertion that physical strength and political power are the ultimate arbiters of human virtue (482 C 4 ff.~fr. 186) Socrates–Amphion argue that intellectual power is stronger and more choiceworthy than physical power (489 D 1 ff.~fr. 199, 200, 202). To Callicles–Zethus' argument that the intellectual, removed from political engagement, will be unable to help his friends and his city (485 E 3 ff.~fr. 187) Socrates–Amphion argue that, as Amphion puts it, the 'quiet man is both a steady friend to his friends and the best friend of the city' (fr. 194). This last reminiscence provides the strongest evidence of argumentative similarity, since both make the counter-intuitive claim that it is not the overtly political man but rather the intellectual who practises, as Socrates puts it, 'the true art of politics' (515 A ff., 521 D). I shall come back to this point in Section 5.

When Socrates summarizes the question, he does so in terms prefigured by the contest in the *Antiope*. Recalling Callicles' pointed entrance into the discussion, Socrates begs Callicles 'in the name of friendship' not to joke around but rather to be serious (500 B 5–C 1). They are discussing, Socrates avers, a subject to be taken very seriously: 'in what manner one should live' (500 C 3–4). Socrates reiterates the choices:

Is [one to adopt this life] which you urge on me, engaging in these 'manly'

³⁴ Aristophanes parodies this line in the *Frogs* as an example of Euripides' predilection for paradox (1082, 1477).

activities, such as making speeches to the *dēmos* and practising oratory and doing politics in the manner that you people now employ, or instead this other life, the one spent doing philosophy? (500 c 4–8)

The question constitutes both a perennial Socratic concern and a restatement of the question that drives the *Antiopē* motif in the *Gorgias*. The centrality of this question to the conversation as such and the framing of it in terms of *Antiopē* ensure its endurance as a background motif.

Further, Socrates casts himself in the role of Amphion over an extended period of time. When Callicles attempts to extricate himself from the conversation (497 B, 506 B), Socrates describes his own desire to finish the conversation with Callicles in order to ‘pay back to Callicles the speech of Amphion for that of Zethus’ (506 B 5–6). Thus, Socrates characterizes what he has said up to that point and what he will say after—in other words, *all of his remarks*—as part of his response to Zethus–Callicles in his role as Amphion.

Pulling along (one might say bullying: on this, see below) a deeply resentful and utterly unwilling Callicles, Socrates concludes that human virtue consists in a beautiful and harmonious ordering of the soul, which can be achieved only through moderation and discipline. Socrates articulates the consequence of his views about the necessity of a harmonious soul: it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong (508 B 3–C 3). An implication of this is that Callicles’ concerns that Socrates might be punched in the face, prosecuted, and even put to death are all wrong-headed and based on a faulty conception of the human good. This conclusion validates the intellectual life and marks the victory of Socrates–Amphion. At this point, we have come full circle in the discussion, and the counter-intuitive claim that Callicles initially scorned has now been validated.

Socrates successfully subverts the intention of Callicles’ introduction of the *Antiopē* motif; instead of giving up on argument and refutation, as Callicles–Zethus requested, Socrates turns Callicles’ dialectical strategy against him and the result is an affirmation of the philosophical life. When Socrates declares that these conclusions are ‘bound and held down by iron and adamant arguments’ (508 E 7–509 A 2), one would think that the conversation should, or at least could, come to an end. That it does not requires some explanation. In fact, the dialogue continues for another eighteen Stephanus pages. In order to broach this question of why the firmest of conclu-

sions fails to end the discussion, we must turn to the eschatological myth with which Socrates concludes his arguments.

4. The eschatological myth as a *deus ex machina*

As many commentators have noted, Socrates never does manage to convince Callicles of the falseness of his view and the disadvantageousness of the practical life. The victory, as I call it above, seems hollow because Callicles never really agrees with it. He never becomes a 'witness' for Socrates' arguments.³⁵ He continues the conversation unwillingly in order to gratify Gorgias, giving empty answers contrary to his established views. Callicles amplifies his dissatisfaction by voicing it more frequently towards the end of the conversation.³⁶ Socrates' myth at the end of the *Gorgias* functions as a *deus ex machina* by resolving the seemingly unresolvable struggle between Socrates and Callicles.³⁷ In the *Antiopé*, and elsewhere, Euripides utilizes this device to provide an essentially *ad hoc* divine solution to the insoluble difficulties dramatized in the tragedy.

³⁵ Remarking on his goals, Socrates claims: 'If I cannot bring forward you yourself as a single witness who agrees with what I am saying, then I shall think that I have achieved nothing worthy of note in the matter under consideration' (472 B 6–c 1). Kahn claims that the refutation proper of Callicles ends at 499 B, when he begins to 'play along' and ceases to participate in good faith: 'Throughout this final section [499 B ff.] Callicles is no longer a real adversary but a passive, often silent interlocutor' ('Drama and Dialectic', 98).

³⁶ At one point (510 A–B) Callicles offers an emphatic affirmation of Socrates' claim that the avoidance of suffering requires pandering and assimilation to the ruling class—Callicles does agree with this but Socrates offers it only as part of a world-view to be undermined. When Callicles understands that Socrates is offering a critique of this assimilation, he protests that Socrates 'always contrive[s] to turn things upside down' (511 A).

³⁷ Nightingale, *Genres*, 73, 85–6. My interpretation of the myth is quite close to hers. However, while we agree that for the closing myth 'Plato borrows and transforms Euripides' *deus ex machina*' to provide a 'divine vindication of Socrates', she insists that the use of the tragic device serves an 'anti-tragic' purpose (85 with n. 66). Kahn suggests that the closing myth functions like 'an Aristophanic parabasis' ('Drama and Dialectic', 104), but this would assume (I take it) a too literal understanding of the myth. By proposing the interpretation of the *Gorgias* myth as a *deus ex machina*, I by no means intend to suggest this as a general interpretative framework or model for understanding all of the myths in Plato. The literature on Platonic myth is vast: J. A. Stewart, *The Myths of Plato* (London, 1905); P. Frutiger, *Les Mythes de Platon* (Paris, 1930); L. Edelstein, 'The Function of Myth in Plato's Philosophy', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 10 (1949), 463–81; P. Friedländer, *Plato: An Introduction*, trans. H. Meyerhoff (New York, 1958); Annas, 'Myths'; L. Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker*, trans. G. Naddaf (Chicago, 2000).

Throughout the conversation, Callicles repeatedly appeals to the harm that can be inflicted upon any citizen not capable of defending himself (511 A, 521 B–C, 522 B–C), reiterating the very crux of the argument with which he began (482 c ff.).³⁸ Socrates appears particularly frustrated with Callicles' penultimate appeal (521 B–C), interrupting the latter before he can even make the point and sarcastically calling himself a 'fool' in response to Callicles' claim that Socrates is sure that he will not be brought to court 'perhaps by some very corrupt and inferior man' (521 c 2–D 4). Finally, when Callicles repeats the point one last time (522 c), Socrates, perhaps resigned to the fact that he will never convince his stubborn interlocutor, turns to a mythological explanation for the preferability of the just and philosophical life. Socrates' failure in this dialogue to persuade Callicles thus calls for a *deus ex machina* solution.

In both the *Gorgias* and the *Antiope*, in order to validate decisively the claims of the dramatic contestants, an appeal to a divine authority is made. In both cases the *deus ex machina* divinely vindicates the Socrates–Amphion position, which holds that the life of the intellectual, though not primarily oriented towards the city, provides the citizens with the greatest benefits.³⁹ In *Antiope* the god Hermes grants pride of place to Amphion, whose very music will build the city's walls (fr. 223). Thus, Zeus grants victory to Amphion in civic, political terms. In the *Gorgias* Socrates' myth undermines Callicles' claim that Socrates would be 'dizzy and gape and have nothing to say' if he had to defend himself in court by appealing to a higher, divinely sanctioned tribunal, which ensures the execution of justice. After death, the virtuous are rewarded and the vicious are punished.⁴⁰ The judges themselves are divine: the sons of Zeus, in carrying out their father's justice, determine that the life

³⁸ See D. Stauffer, *The Unity of Plato's Gorgias: Rhetoric, Justice, and the Philosophic Life* (Cambridge, 2006), 167–8. He also understands the myth as a response to Callicles' refusal to budge from his initial position.

³⁹ Arieti does not acknowledge the divine mythic validation of Socrates' position as parallel to the *deus ex machina* of the *Antiope*; he claims that, in the play, 'by the intervention of a god . . . the contemplative life prevailed. But, of course, in the lives of us non-mythological people, the gods don't generally intervene' (*Antiope*, 201).

⁴⁰ See Annas, 'Myths'; Fussi, 'Last Judgment'; Russell, 'Misunderstanding'. Russell persuasively argues that the divine rewards of living the virtuous life are not external and thus do not undermine Socrates' claim that virtue is its own reward; rather, the virtuous are rewarded with an afterlife of virtuous living (557–67).

of the philosopher is decidedly superior to that of the tyrant.⁴¹ In that court, Callicles will be the one who gapes and cannot defend himself because the clever machinations of rhetoric will not be able to help him there (526 E 6–527 A 4). The philosopher's benefit to the city consists in his assistance in persuading the citizens that they should concern themselves with the higher divine court and not the human courts, and preparing them for their post-mortem tribunal; the practical man, by contrast, in persuading the citizens to concentrate on their rhetorical ability to manipulate human judges to their own advantage, leaves them ill-prepared for a divine court which is focused wholly on justice and impervious to sly rhetorical nuance.

What is worrying about the mythic validation of these claims is that Socrates abandons argument—and, it would seem, philosophy—to secure their ultimate affirmation. This suggests that the *deus ex machina* ending to the *Gorgias* points to a deeper philosophical problem—it suggests that the contest between the practical life and the philosophical life cannot be decisively won by philosophy. I elaborate on this suggestion in the last section.

5. Plato's interest in Euripides' *Antiope*

In order to make a proper assessment of Callicles' claim that Euripides is a partisan of the practical life, we need to look briefly at our fragmentary evidence for the *Antiope* itself so that we may gauge, as best we can, the thematic intentions of that work. If the *Antiope* were an unequivocal affirmation of the practical life, then we would expect the *Gorgias* to take a fully critical stance against it. Nightingale argues that Zethus wins the debate proper in the tragedy (though she acknowledges that Amphion is the hero), and she understands the *Gorgias* as undermining that victory through critical parody. Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, on the other hand, argue that Amphion wins the debate in addition to being the tragedy's hero.⁴² As I argue above, Callicles' invocation of the motif is successfully inverted by Socrates. What I want to argue now is that

⁴¹ Nightingale rightly emphasizes the parallel between the divine judges in the myth and the role of Hermes in *Antiope* (*Genres*, 86–7).

⁴² While Collard, Cropp, and Gibert claim that Amphion's role in the ensuing action indicates 'a partial concession' to his brother, Nightingale takes the ensuing action as decisive evidence of Zethus' victory. See Nightingale, *Genres*, 79–80; Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, *Fragmentary Plays*, 262, 266–8.

Socrates' interpretation of *Antiope* is, given our evidence, more plausible than Callicles'.

Our best evidence for the outlook of the tragedy as a whole comes from our knowledge of the plot, wherein Amphion is the clear hero who dominates the action of the play. At the very end, Amphion's position is affirmed and validated by Zeus through the message of Hermes, who intervenes to stop the brothers from killing King Lycus. He calls on Amphion thus:

λύραν ἄνωγα διὰ χερῶν ὠπλισμένον
 μέλπειν θεοῦς ᾠδαῖσιν· ἔφονται δέ σοι
 πέτραι τ' ἔρυμναὶ μουσικῇ κηλούμεναι
 δένδρη τε μητρὸς ἐκλιπόνθ' ἐδώλια,
 ὥστ' εὐμάρειαν τεκτόνων θήσῃ χερί.
 (fr. 223. 91–5)⁴³

Arm yourself with lyre in hand
 and sing tunefully of the gods;
 bewitched by your music, solid rocks will follow you
 and trees leave their seat in mother earth,
 so you will make light work for the builders' hands.

Though the two brothers will rule Thebes jointly, Zeus grants Amphion priority and prominence by having his music effect the building of the Theban citadel.

Though Nightingale insists that the judgement of Hermes 'reverses the verdict' of the debate,⁴⁴ there are good reasons for thinking that Amphion wins the debate as well. First, Amphion spoke second in the debate, which means he is the 'sympathetic figure' and the 'winner' in the typical Euripidean agon.⁴⁵ Zethus, acting as 'plaintiff', initiates the debate by laying out his accusations, to which Amphion, as defendant, responds in turn.⁴⁶ While Nightingale accepts this general framework, she does not appreciate the im-

⁴³ Small parts of the text are uncertain due to difficulty in reading the papyrus; see Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, *Fragmentary Plays*, 292. The line-numbering for fr. 223 in their edition differs here from Kannicht, *TrGF*: lines 91–5 in the former correspond to lines 120–4 in the latter. The translation is modified from Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, *Fragmentary Plays*, 293.

⁴⁴ Nightingale, *Genres*, 80.

⁴⁵ M. Lloyd, *The Agon in Euripides [Agon]* (Oxford, 1992), 16–17.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 17. Though there seems to be general agreement as to who initiated the debate, there is 'considerable disagreement' as to the precise ordering of the individual fragments: see Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, *Fragmentary Plays*, 267, 267 n. 2.

plications for understanding the outcome of the debate.⁴⁷ Second, Zethus is probably played by a mute actor after the debate, which presents strong evidence in favour of Amphion's victory.⁴⁸

Further, a choral fragment, which most scholars attribute to *Antiopé*, contains 'praise of quiet metaphysical contemplation'.⁴⁹ It might belong to the chorus's first stasimon following the debate, and thus be an immediate endorsement of Amphion's argument:

ὄλβιος ὅστις τῆς ἱστορίας
 ἔσχε μάθησιν,
 μήτε πολιτῶν ἐπὶ πημοσύνην
 μήτ' εἰς ἀδίκους πράξεις ὀρμῶν,
 ἀλλ' ἀθανάτου καθορῶν φύσεως
 κόσμον ἀγήρων, πῆ τε συνέστη
 χῶθεν χῶπως.
 τοῖς δὲ τοιούτοις οὐδέποτ' αἰσχρῶν
 ἔργων μελέδημα προσίξει.
 (fr. 910)

Blessed is the man who
 Possesses knowledge through enquiry,
 Setting out neither to harm citizens
 Nor to commit unjust acts,
 But beholding the ageless order
 Of immortal nature, the manner of its creation—
 Both where and how.
 Such men never in shameful
 Deeds have any interest.

Even if the fragment does not follow the debate directly, it certainly seems to be the chorus's endorsement of Amphion's view, since it speaks so directly to the terms of the debate. Striking as well is how closely the fragment relates political ambition to injustice and intellectual enquiry to political quietism with an attendant absence of injustice. If the *Antiopé* endorses something like this, then it would be difficult to find reasons for Plato to parody it, given its close-

⁴⁷ Nightingale, *Genres*, 75 with n. 41.

⁴⁸ Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, *Fragmentary Plays*, 262–3.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 262, 324–5. For metrical reasons, we can be certain that this fragment does not come from the debate itself, which like nearly all tragic dialogue, was written in iambic trimeters. The anapaestic metre of this fragment has caused scholars to attribute it to a choral stasimon, though they disagree over the part of the play to which it belongs. The translation is modified from Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, *Fragmentary Plays*, 297.

ness to the position defended by Socrates in the *Gorgias*. Nightingale's interpretation does not even mention this fragment, much less account for it. Some scholars place the fragment after the point where Amphion rescues his mother and takes vengeance on Dirce, signalling his ultimate victory in the tragedy as a whole; on this placement, the fragment provides an even stronger endorsement of Amphion's view.⁵⁰

In sum, Euripides' *Antiope* presents a competition between the intellectual life—the life dedicated to learning and enquiry—and the practical life dedicated to power and politics, in which the former wins, albeit with the aid of divine intervention. If this analysis is correct, then it is easy to see why Plato chose it for adaptation.⁵¹ That said, the most stunning and unambiguous coincidence between the *Antiope* and the *Gorgias* is the way in which both subvert the allure of the political life by arguing, paradoxically enough, that the intellectual is the true statesman.

Recall that, in *Antiope*, the 'quiet man is both a steady friend to his friends and the best friend of the city' (fr. 194) and that, in *Gorgias*, Socrates remarkably claims that he—the philosopher—'attempts the true political art and practises genuine politics' (521 D 6–8).⁵² For either claim to be comprehensible, one must reorient the political and recast political action.⁵³ Socrates proposes just such a reorientation based on a distinction between good political

⁵⁰ Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, *Fragmentary Plays*, 262, 324–5.

⁵¹ It would go too far to say that Amphion or *Antiope* endorses the *philosophical* life in exactly this sense. For instance, Amphion seems to argue also that the quiet life is more pleasurable (fr. 193, 196)—Socrates might agree, but that would not be a *decisive* consideration for him.

⁵² Many have argued that Socrates models the political art on *technē*: see e.g. J. L. Wiser, 'Philosophy as Political Action: A Reading of the *Gorgias*' ['Political Action'], *American Journal of Political Science*, 19 (1975), 313–22; R. K. Sprague, *Plato's Philosopher-King: A Study of the Theoretical Background* (Columbia, SC, 1976); T. Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford, 1995). I am inclined to agree with Roochnik, who argues that *technē* plays an important, though very different, role in the dialogue (and in Plato more generally): see D. Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Technē* (University Park, Pa., 1996), 179–211. For the view that, for Plato, *technē* overcomes tragedy, see Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 83–4. For an opposing view, see Roochnik, *Tragedy*.

⁵³ See Wiser, 'Political Action'. Indeed, Socrates' radical recasting of the political is evidenced by Callicles' exclamation that Socrates has 'turned the lives of men upside down, since [they] apparently do everything in an opposite manner to the way that they should!' (481 c 1–4). Kahn claims that 'the positive exposition of politics is spread throughout the dialogue' ('Drama and Dialectic', 101). Cf. Klosko, 'Insufficiency', 583–4; L. J. Samons, *What's Wrong with Democracy? From Athenian Practice to American Worship* (Berkeley, 2004), 191–8. Samons argues that Socrates

rhetoric and flattery (first made at 464 B ff.)—the former ‘tries to make the souls of the citizens as good as possible [ὡς βέλτισται] and strives earnestly to say what is best, whether it is pleasing or not to the listeners’ (503 A 7–9).⁵⁴ The goal is to promote virtue: a soul that is harmonious and well ordered (see 493 C–494 A; 503 E–504 D; 506 E–507 A).⁵⁵ Further, an individual with a harmonious soul will exist harmoniously with others as well, making genuine friendship and community possible. By contrast, as both *Antiope* and *Gorgias* show, the political life cannot really account for genuine friendship, since another politician can only be, in the end, a rival in the pursuit of power;⁵⁶ further, political life contains inbuilt temptations to vice, and political power, ample opportunity for it (fr. 910; 526 B). Callicles’ paradigm—the intemperate man who indulges all of his desires—‘is dear neither to his fellow man nor to the gods. He is incapable of community [κοινωνεῖν] and . . . there can be no friendship [φιλία] with him’ (507 E 3–6). On the other hand, the philosophical life seems to be inherently co-operative, and wisdom, a shared good. Socrates several times stresses the co-operative nature of philosophical enquiry.⁵⁷ For example, when Callicles contemptuously asks Socrates to finish the argument himself, the latter, quoting the comedian Epicharmus, describes conducting an argument alone as ‘one man sufficing for what two men said before’ (505 E 1–2). He then invents an interlocutor and conducts a dialogue with himself, even while proclaiming to Callicles their common interest in the

totally reorients political action, though his analysis focuses on the *Apology* (see e.g. *Ap.* 29 D–30 B).

⁵⁴ Socrates’ language here about making men in the city better—βελτίους (cf. 503 B 7)—recalls Ar. *Frogs* 1008–9 and *Ach.* 650; Aristophanes also claims to say what is best for the audience whether they like it or not (*Ach.* 656–8). For Socrates’ talk of the role of admonition—νουθέτησις—see 488 A–B.

⁵⁵ Socrates says: ‘I would rather that my lyre or my chorus be unharmonious and dissonant and that most people disagree with and contradict me than to have that one person, myself, in discord and contradicting me’ (482 B–C). See Woolf, ‘(Dis)Harmony’, 12. The theme of music and order also has resonance in the *Antiope*: the musical hero literally builds the walls of the city (fr. 223), and the intellectual contemplates the order of the divine cosmos (fr. 910). If the *Antiope* recasts political action, it is in these terms.

⁵⁶ Thus, Callicles’ own appeals to friendship generally (e.g. 483 B 4, 492 C 2–3) and brotherly affection and good will towards Socrates (e.g. 485 E 3, 486 A 4) cannot withstand the weight of his own position. See R. Duncan, ‘“Philia” in the *Gorgias*’, *Apeiron*, 8 (1974), 23–5 at 24; Woolf, ‘(Dis)Harmony’, 1–4, esp. 2 n. 3.

⁵⁷ See S. Rendall, ‘Dialogue, Philosophy, and Rhetoric: The Example of Plato’s *Gorgias*’ [‘Rhetoric’], *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 10 (1977), 165–79 at 165–6; Woolf, ‘(Dis)Harmony’, 9–17.

truth (505 E–507 B). Since Socrates seems to conceive of philosophical enquiry as *inherently* co-operative, the political art is not extrinsic to it—something one does when not doing philosophy—but rather an integral part.⁵⁸ If this is right, then the good of others is intimately tied to the good of self.⁵⁹

Perhaps it should not be surprising that an intellectual like Euripides, known in antiquity for his reclusiveness and unwillingness to engage in political affairs (quite unlike Sophocles, for example), wrote a tragedy that validated the intellectual lifestyle and, in the end, its greater usefulness for the city. In fact, we find in several Euripidean dramas a marked suspicion of political and especially tyrannical power.⁶⁰ If these considerations are decisive and the *Gorgias* appropriates rather than parodies the *Antiope*, then we might ask whether Plato's positive use of this particular tragedy betokens a more fundamental engagement with the *tragic* world-view. To precisely this task I now turn.

6. The tragedy of the human condition

Halliwell persuasively argues that Plato's conception of 'the tragic' amounts to a general, proto-philosophical conception of the human condition.⁶¹ Given my analysis of Plato's use of the *Antiope*,

⁵⁸ Even at the end, after Socrates abandons dialogue altogether, he invites Callicles to 'join [him] in the pursuit of what . . . will make you happy . . . Let us follow the way of [moderation and the rest of virtue] and urge others to follow it' (527 c 4–6; 527 e 5–6). It seems that part of the political art of philosophy involves converting others *who will then convert still others*. In the *Euthydemus* the discussion of the kingly art founders just at the point where its recursive nature becomes clear: 'shall we go on to say that [those in possession of the kingly art] will make others good and that these others will do the same to still others?' (292 d 8–9). The problem in that dialogue is that they have not yet adequately clarified what the good consists in.

⁵⁹ See F. C. White, 'The Good in Plato's *Gorgias*', *Phronesis*, 35 (1990), 117–27 at 117–20. He argues that 'Socrates implicitly asserts many times over that virtue includes concern for others' (118). Woolf makes the connection between the two goods extrinsic ('(Dis)Harmony', 14 ff.). He also does not take recasting of the political seriously enough in claiming that the result of the political art will be a 'well-structured community' (14–15). It is unclear what kind of community he has in mind, but his remarks seem to indicate that he means a (traditionally understood) political community (see 19–20), in which case I disagree.

⁶⁰ Cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 1012; *Ion* 621; *Tro.* 1169; *Antiope* fr. 172. See Collard, Cropp, and Gibert, *Fragmentary Plays*, 303.

⁶¹ I am going to assume that Plato had a conception of the 'tragic'. For a fuller defence of this claim, see S. Halliwell, 'Plato's Repudiation of the 'Tragic' ['Repudiation']', in M. S. Silk (ed.), *Tragedy and the Tragic* (Oxford, 1999), 332–57. He refers

we might speculate that, for Plato, the tragic is defined by two features: (1) a conception of the good life for man, and (2) an acknowledgement of necessary and insurmountable constraints on living that life.⁶² The first feature can be seen from the *Antiope*'s explicit emphasis on the best kind of life, and the second from the characters' inability to live that life without divine intervention. What sense, then, would it make to say that the life of philosophy is tragic? If, as I argue above, the good life will be spent in the co-operative pursuit of wisdom, then the relevant limitations will be those that impede our attempts to live that life. The co-operative pursuit of wisdom itself runs up against two limits in the *Gorgias*. The first is human obstinacy, the refusal to co-operate and recognize the force of argument; the second is the uncertainty built into the nature of argument itself. The first limit reveals itself in Callicles' stubborn refusal to recognize the force of Socrates' arguments, the second, more indirectly, in Socrates' temptation to proclaim—tyrant-like—that his argument is sound. If this is right, then Plato does not deny the tragic character of the human condition, but instead relocates it.

The first impediment to the philosophical life can in principle be overcome, in the sense that an interlocutor can be convinced that he

to the 'tragic' as 'an essential metaphysical significance at the core of tragedy' (332), and argues that Plato was the first to have such a conception. For him, Plato's 'special motivation was to challenge and contest it on the deepest level of philosophical belief' (333). Despite this, Halliwell does recognize that Plato, at least in *Lysis* 7, assimilates philosophy and tragedy (338–9).

⁶² See Hyland, 'Tragedy', 127; Halliwell, 'Repudiation', 339–40. Both give four criteria for the tragic in Plato. Hyland's are: (1) the tragic figure is subject to a fate outside his control; (2) he strives to overcome this fate; (3) striving to overcome condemns him to it; (4) he understands his situation darkly until the very end. Halliwell's are: (1) tragedy is a medium for a world-view; (2) tragedy takes on an embodied perspective, excluding divine truth; (3) tragedy implicitly expresses ultimate values, and a best life; (4) tragedy is obsessed with death as central to the outlook. Both, I think, are too complicated, but for different reasons: Hyland's because it relies heavily on the paradigm of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and Halliwell's because it is drawn from discussions of tragedy in varying contexts across different dialogues. My account is simpler, while at the same time preserving the insights of both of the other accounts. My two criteria accommodate Hyland's first three and Halliwell's first, third, and perhaps fourth, if death can be generalized as necessary and insurmountable constraint. Hyland's last criterion seems too particular to the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Halliwell's second is, in my view, insufficiently established from a *Cratylus* etymology of doubtful seriousness (*Crat.* 408 B–D). That said, as I shall show, the tragedy of the human condition for Plato entails that we cannot overcome our human embodied perspective and reach divine knowledge. But this is not built into the nature of the tragic itself—it is, more precisely, Plato's philosophical interpretation of it.

should participate in philosophical dialogue. Socrates' own efforts in the dialogues meet with varying degrees of success, or perhaps better, varying degrees of failure. The possibility of success is parasitic on having a certain kind of interlocutor—one who is willing, or becomes willing, to change and/or even let go of his entrenched beliefs in the face of effective criticism.⁶³ The difficulty, however, is insurmountable with an intractable interlocutor such as Callicles, who steadfastly refuses to acknowledge the force of Socrates' arguments and face up to his own contradictions.⁶⁴ At one point, Callicles softens and even admits that 'Socrates speaks well', yet he resolutely maintains his stance (513 C 4–6). Such an argumentative impasse cannot itself be surmounted by further argument. Throughout the dialogue, Socrates tries and abandons multiple dialectical strategies (e.g. 492 E, 493 D, 494 A), but in the end he simply abandons dialectical argument altogether and expounds a rather lengthy mythic monologue (523 A–527 D).⁶⁵ Socrates' defence of the philosophical life and its orientation towards wisdom is pointedly unsuccessful with Callicles. Just as Euripides settles the struggle in the *Antiope* with a *deus ex machina*, so too, I claimed, does Plato end the dispute between Socrates and Callicles with a kind of *deus ex machina* in the form of the long eschatological myth. This 'solution' to the argumentative impasses reveals a genuine limitation on the philosophical life. Socrates has no means of arguing away Callicles' refusal to participate in good faith, though he certainly does not lack persistence in the attempt.⁶⁶ But as an impediment to philosophical dialogue, Callicles is entrenched, and Socrates' aban-

⁶³ For an excellent discussion, see Scott, 'Pessimism', 15–25. He argues that Plato is pessimistic about moral education to the extent that 'there is a certain type of interlocutor for whom mere dialectic will be ineffectual' (16). On his view, the primary stumbling-block is 'intransigent beliefs', and in *Gorgias* 'Plato is deliberately drawing our attention to the problem of intransigence' (25).

⁶⁴ See Rendall, 'Rhetoric', 167; Klosko, 'Insufficiency', 582; R. McKim, 'Shame and Truth in Plato's *Gorgias*', in C. L. Griswold (ed.), *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings* (New York, 1988), 34–48 at 40–1. Klosko claims that the dialogue 'draws its considerable dramatic power from Socrates' valiant, doomed attempt to sway an interlocutor who simply refuses to listen' ('Insufficiency', 582).

⁶⁵ Socrates had been forced to speak alone earlier in the dialogue (506 C–509 C), but managed to lure Callicles back into the conversation. After this but before the myth, Socrates gives two long speeches (511 C–513 C; 517 B–519 D). At the end of the latter, Socrates blames Callicles' refusals to answer for making him 'speak like a mob orator' (*δημηγορεῖν*), to which Callicles sarcastically replies: 'Weren't you the one who wouldn't be able to speak unless someone answered?' (519 D 5–9).

⁶⁶ See Klosko, 'Insufficiency', 586. He claims that 'Socrates cannot use his powers of persuasion to *establish* the necessary conditions for logical discussion. Their

donment of dialogue at the end is an admission of his failure.⁶⁷ The use of myth, then, indicates a genuine failure of dialectic. Unless certain minimal premisses are granted by the interlocutor, dialectic simply cannot get off the ground.⁶⁸

Such a situation is tragic both for Socrates, who understands that the good life requires willing and able interlocutors, and for his interlocutors, who have a willing interlocutor in front of them but fail to recognize what he offers them: nothing less than the possibility of the good life. Though the interlocutor seems worse off here, Socrates cannot simply circumvent the issue by ignoring intractable interlocutors such as Callicles. For, even when such minimal conditions are present, the maximal conditions for the success of dialectic rarely, if ever, obtain. Socrates fails to persuade even Theaetetus, one of Socrates' most promising young interlocutors, to devote his life to philosophy. In the *Gorgias* Socrates sets the bar for a good interlocutor surprisingly high. He describes Callicles as the ideal interlocutor because he possesses three qualities: knowledge, good will, and frankness (*ἐπιστήμην τε καὶ εὐνοίαν καὶ παρρησίαν*: 487 A 2–3). There is good reason to think that this is ironic praise, but of a protreptic sort.⁶⁹ If the criteria are indeed legitimate, then it is certainly plausible to think that Socrates, as

very absence renders persuasion ineffective.' Klosko sees this situation as tragic (586, 593).

⁶⁷ Klosko calls it a 'crushing defeat' ('Insufficiency', 589). On Arieti's view, Callicles begins as a friendly and accommodating host but is transformed into an 'angry, sullen [and] belligerent man'. He thus claims that Socrates' failure is so profound that Callicles is actually made 'into a *less virtuous person*' ('Antiope', 198–9, emphasis original). Cf. Fussi, 'Bitter', 51, 57 n. 16; Buzzetti, 'Injustice'. Socrates' failure here is underlined by the references to Alcibiades, Socrates' most notorious failure (481 D; 519 A), but it contrasts with his comparative success (and more cordial tone) earlier in the dialogue with Gorgias and especially Polus. See e.g. Duchemin, 'Remarques', 280–1; T. L. Pangle, 'Plato's *Gorgias* as a Vindication of Socratic Education', *Polis*, 10 (1991), 3–21 at 15. Of course, Socrates is not really effective in persuading any of them: see S. Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy: Plato's Gorgias and Phaedrus* (Chicago, 1991), 5; R. Weiss, 'Oh, Brother! The Fraternity of Rhetoric and Philosophy in Plato's *Gorgias*' ['Oh, Brother!'], *Interpretation*, 30 (2003), 195–206 at 204–5.

⁶⁸ See C. Kauffman, 'Enactment as Argument in the *Gorgias*', *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 12 (1979), 114–29 at 127. These minimal premisses may have to do with, for example, having logical consistency as a goal: see Woolf, '(Dis)Harmony', 24–32. On Klosko's view, in the case of Callicles, since 'the necessary conditions for logical persuasion do not exist . . . the dialectical relationship *does not exist*' ('Insufficiency', 586, emphasis original).

⁶⁹ Callicles' shifting ground (491 B–C; 499 C) shows he lacks the first; his pointed lack of interest and contempt for Socrates (e.g. 501 C; 505 C; 510 A) shows he lacks

he insists in the *Apology* (21 B ff.), has never come across anyone who satisfied the knowledge criterion. To put this point another way, Socrates' interlocutors embody varying degrees of unsuitability for dialectic. If this is right, then this tragic dimension is more pointed.

The second limitation on the philosophical life, the uncertainty built into the nature of argument, is related to the first in that one of the temptations of the failure to persuade is the tyrannical impulse to impose one's views on others. Once such a tyranny has been established, dialogue gives way to monologue as the dominant idiom. Such compulsion would be justifiable only if one were *infallibly secure* in the soundness of an argument. Tragedy, for its part, portrays a 'fragile' world in which no mortal, however powerful, can escape his destined fall.⁷⁰ As the *Antiope* and many other tragedies show, not even a king, one at the zenith of human power, can reliably insulate his rule. What then to make of Socrates' tyrannical behaviour in the *Gorgias*, in particular with Callicles?⁷¹ Despite his avowed commitment to and encouragement of short question and answer, Socrates gives several quite long speeches in the *Gorgias*.⁷² In addition, he utters his much-discussed claim that his conclusions 'are bound and held down by iron and adamant arguments' (508 E 7–509 A 2).⁷³ Socrates literally expresses himself like a tyrant: Dionysius I of Syracuse claimed that his authority over Syracuse

the second; and his refusal to say what he really believes (e.g. 495 A; 499 B) shows he lacks the third.

⁷⁰ See Nussbaum, *Fragility*.

⁷¹ See Gentzler, 'Cross-Examination', 17. She argues that Socrates breaks from his standard method and plays the sophist, but only in order to show Callicles that he is a competent orator and beat him at his own game. Socrates ridicules Callicles' position (490 B–E) and insults him, both with thinly veiled irony (494 D) and openly (515 A). Callicles, for his part, accuses Socrates of being a mob-orator (494 D), of twisting the arguments (490 A–E; 511 B), and of being a bully (505 D) and victory-loving (515 A). By contrast, Socrates is rather gentle with Gorgias: see Klosko, 'Insufficiency', 587; Weiss, 'Oh, Brother!', 200.

⁷² The speeches get longer and more frequent in the discussion with Callicles: Socrates gives two short speeches to Gorgias (452 A–D; 457 C–458 B), one fairly long speech to Polus (464 B–466 B), and several long speeches to Callicles (487 A–488 B; 507 A–509 C; 511 E–513 C; 517 B–519 D; 523 A–527 E).

⁷³ Analysis of this passage, along with several others from the *Gorgias* (esp. 479 E), forms the heart of Vlastos's famous paper on the elenchus. See G. Vlastos, 'The Socratic Elenchus', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 1 (1983), 27–58; id., 'Afterthoughts on the Socratic Elenchus', *ibid.* 71–4. It has for some interpreters marked a transitional point in the character of Socrates: see e.g. Klosko, 'Insufficiency', 580.

was 'held by adamantine bonds'.⁷⁴ But he immediately backs off from his forceful assertion—'it would seem so at any rate' (509 A 2)—and soon after professes his own ignorance: 'I do not know [*οὐκ οἶδα*] how these things are' (509 A 5).⁷⁵ Scholars have puzzled over the inconsistency.⁷⁶ Socrates' hubris derives, in part, from speaking alone.⁷⁷ He calls his bold assertion 'rather coarse' (*ἀγροικότερον*), explicitly recalling Callicles' own rather coarse phrase ('punched in the face with impunity', 486 C 3). Socrates here slaps Callicles with impunity, not physically but verbally, by asserting dogmatically that his own position is correct. The initial reason for his boldness is that no one has been able to refute his view (509 A 5–7). But then Socrates remembers that no argument is ever final; just as social station is always subject to displacement, so too is any given argument. Socrates cannot be *certain* that he will be able to defeat all comers in the tribunal of argument. Indeed, even at the end of the dialogue, after the myth, Socrates still invites Callicles to investigate these matters along with him (527 A–E).⁷⁸ In showing such certainty and security to be unjustified—even concerning arguments whose conclusions seem to be the deeply cherished beliefs of their author—Plato acknowledges what one might call the *fragility of argument*. To put the implication of this somewhat bluntly, the pursuit of wisdom is bound to fail.

Nietzsche considered Plato to be a 'theoretical optimist', a description which seems to encompass a commitment to two basic claims: (1) moral knowledge can insulate our fate from luck, and (2) such knowledge is attainable.⁷⁹ Such optimism would obviously rule out Plato as a tragic thinker, as a tragic world-view would insist on something like the chorus's characterization of Oedipus as representative of the human condition in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*:

⁷⁴ From Diodorus, quoted in Dodds, *Gorgias*, 341.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Gorg.* 506 A.

⁷⁶ See T. Irwin (trans. and ed.), *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford, 1979), 228. Dodds remarks that the 'Socratic profession of ignorance comes in oddly after the confident assertion in the preceding sentence. It is as if Plato had belatedly remembered to make his hero speak in character' (*Gorgias*, 341).

⁷⁷ One way of imposing a check upon despotic claims is to have a willing and critical interlocutor. Note that Socrates' very strong claim comes after Callicles has refused to continue the argument (505 D 8–9); Socrates first conducts a self-dialogue (506 C–507 B), which he abandons for monologue (507 C–509 C).

⁷⁸ The last line is addressed particularly to him, and the last word of the dialogue is *Καλλίκλεις* (527 E 7).

⁷⁹ See Nietzsche, *Birth*, § 15.

'I count no mortal blessed' (1196).⁸⁰ If my analysis of the *Gorgias* is correct, then at least in this dialogue Plato is no optimist, theoretical or otherwise. This is so because no mortal can fully attain the good for humans, that is, philosophical wisdom. It has long been recognized that Plato set the bar for knowledge extremely high. If psychological certainty is a necessary condition for knowledge, and such certainty cannot be attained even through repeated testing of the argument, it is hard to see how the conditions for knowledge could be met by human beings. The consequences of such human fallibility, what I am calling the fragility of argument, are quite significant. It means that philosophy, in the end, agrees with tragedy's world-view in so far as no mortal is entirely blessed, that is, wise. Even though there are no grounds for optimism regarding the results of dialectical enquiry—for it will turn out that enquiry even in the best of conditions will fail to generate certain knowledge—the best thing to do is to search regardless. If the life of achieved wisdom is unattainable, the best life for man is that of the pursuit of wisdom. Following another path may indeed provide more overall desire-satisfaction, and one might be more content with this life, but one will not be happy, not at least in the sense of *eudaimōn*, since one will necessarily be attaching value to the wrong things (power or money, for example) and thus be in error. The tragic character of the philosophical life does not end with this perpetual dissatisfaction, however. Even in the *pursuit* of wisdom, we are significantly limited. The conduct of this pursuit is itself limited by the willing participation of interlocutors, and as we have seen most explicitly in the case of Callicles, this is a surmountable, but not an inconsequential, limitation. Thus, for Plato, human control is limited, and luck is a persistent feature of the human condition.

Does this make Plato a *pessimist*, as some (e.g. Scott) have claimed? Must Plato, along with the chorus of Theban elders, 'count [human] lives as equal | to nothingness itself' (*Soph. OT* 1187–8)? Halliwell notes that fourth-century culture tended to regard 'the manifestation of unqualified pessimism as an archetypally tragic phenomenon'.⁸¹ The dark character of the dialogue and the bitterness of Socrates would seem to suggest that this is correct.

⁸⁰ Nietzsche speaks of the 'eternal struggle between the *theoretical* and the *tragic* views of the world' (*Birth*, § 17).

⁸¹ Halliwell, 'Repudiation', 334. He is surely right that Plato, in the *Republic*, is critical of a 'corrosive pessimism about human possibilities' and that part of what he wants to resist is the effect of encouraging 'permanent surrender' (345–6).

However, I want to resist this as a characterization of Plato, if for no other reason than it fails to capture the spirit of his portrayal of Socrates. It is part of the mystery of Socrates—both his strangeness and his nobility—that, despite his knowledge of this condition, he can cheerfully soldier on. He does not succumb to the temptation to resign or give in.⁸² This is why, in the *Gorgias*, it is shocking to see him so frustrated with Callicles, and why we need a special explanation for Socrates' acrimonious behaviour. Socrates, perhaps in a moment of weakness, expresses his frustration by slapping Callicles around in argument and then abandoning argument. But both his backing off from his aggressive tyranny and his final invitation to Callicles to investigate the question of the best life show that Socrates renounces bitterness and transcends such pessimism and resignation. To give an account of how and why Socrates is able to transcend pessimism requires us to leave tragedy behind.⁸³

An obvious objection to my position finally needs to be addressed. My account seems flatly incompatible with Socrates' seemingly staunch criticism of tragedy as flattery (502c 3–4).⁸⁴ If Socrates thinks that *all tragedy* is flattery, this would seem to invalidate my interpretation, or at least render it seriously implausible. Plato's attitude towards the *Antiope*, one might protest, must be wholly critical. In my view, Socrates' claim should not be taken as a categorical description of all tragedy. The criticism must be understood in the context of the criticism of oratory, of which it is a part. As I emphasize above, Socrates contends that rhetoric has two parts, one that is 'flattery and shameful demagoguery', and another that 'tries to make the souls of the citizens as good as possible and strives earnestly to say what is best, whether it is pleasing or not to the listeners' (503a 5–9). If there is conceptual space for good and bad political rhetoric, then, since tragedy here is being treated as a kind of rhetoric (502c–d), there will be good and bad tragedy as well. Thus, when Socrates asks whether tragedy intends 'merely to gratify the audience' or to 'strive earnestly not to say anything

⁸² Cf. *Phaedo* 89d–91c, where Socrates warns against the dangers of misology, or hatred of argument, which might result from the persistent failure of arguments.

⁸³ I shall only suggest here that Socrates remains the ironist, and the ironist is a figure from comedy: see F. M. Cornford, *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (London, 1914; repr. Garden City, NY, 1961), 119–22. See also Nightingale, *Genres*, 87–92.

⁸⁴ Nightingale takes Socrates' anti-tragic remarks as decisive and imports more robust conceptions and criticisms of tragedy from other dialogues in order to understand the role that the *Antiope* plays in the *Gorgias* (*Genres*, 87–9).

depraved, even if it is pleasant and gratifying, and to say and sing whatever happens to be unpleasant but beneficial, whether the audience is gratified or not' (502 B 1–7), we need not understand him to be posing two exclusive alternatives. Indeed, Callicles' answer, which he expressly gives in order to 'expedite [Socrates'] argument' (501 C), makes a comparative claim: 'it's clear that tragedy strives *more* [μᾶλλον] to give pleasure and to gratify the audience' (502 B 9–C 1).⁸⁵ This comparative response leaves open two possibilities: first, that there are cases of 'good' tragedy, though most, perhaps even the vast majority, are directed towards gratifying the audience; second, that some tragedies are better than others in that they do more to attempt to benefit the audience, though perhaps without fully eliminating considerations of pleasure. In either case, logical space has been opened up for a positive valuation of Euripides' *Antiope*. Even if Plato does not consider it a fully 'good' tragedy, he might certainly have thought it *better* than others and decided to integrate it into his *Gorgias* for the positive reasons I lay out above. If this is right, then a further similarity between philosophy and 'good' tragedy may be formulated: in portraying the human condition and its limitations, both good tragedy and philosophy practise the political art and aim to improve their respective audiences.⁸⁶ Of course, it is precisely through this identification that

⁸⁵ On μᾶλλον, see LSJ 1076. It can be argued that here μᾶλλον should be translated as 'rather' instead of 'more' (II.3). Though most translators seem to take it this way, the fact that there is no δέ here speaks against this reading; even if there were an implied δέ, μᾶλλον δέ can also mean 'much more', and there do not seem to be independent grounds for distinguishing between the two. My understanding of the term preserves the comparative sense, and this, in my view, is the most natural reading of the text. Donald Zeyl's Hackett translation reflects this comparative sense as well: see J. M. Cooper (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis, 1997), 846. My interpretation does not hang on this point, since the space for good and bad tragedy is already opened up by the analysis of good and bad rhetoric. If I am right, however, then the point is both more subtle and more plausible.

⁸⁶ This normative standard is not necessarily *external* to tragedy, imposed on it by philosophy, but rather may be part of how 5th-cent. Greeks conceived of tragedy. If so, then tragedy is not living up to *its own standards*. In the *Frogs* Aeschylus and Euripides both agree that 'skill [δεξιότητος] and admonition [νουθεσίας] are the qualities by which a good poet 'makes men better [βελτίους] in their cities' (*Frogs* 1009–10). Aristophanes not only seems to agree, but also to hold Old Comedy to exactly the same standards (see n. 54 above). On this account, poetic skill and advisory censure are the means of educating the citizen audience (see e.g. *Frogs* 1055), and they are the criteria by which a tragedian, or any poet, ought to be judged. While affirming the idea that tragedy has an ethical vocation, Aristophanes also criticizes the actual practice of his contemporary tragedians for failing to perform it (*Frogs* 83 ff.). So it is no contradiction for Plato to have Socrates consider most

philosophy seeks to supplant tragedy as the proper locus for practical wisdom.

7. Conclusion

I hope to have shown that the three distinct interpretative concerns that have motivated recent scholarship on the *Gorgias* (i.e. Callicles' intractability and the limits of dialectic; the meaning of the eschatological myth; and the dialogue's relationship to tragedy) are best understood as part of a single, interrelated whole. In short, the failure of Socrates to convince Callicles—even despite 'winning' the argument—forces Socrates to abandon dialectical enquiry altogether and resort to a monologue, first in a pseudo-dialogue and then in a myth, and this failure reveals a tragic dimension to the philosophical life. The tragic dimension, in my view, reveals the limitations on living the good life for the philosopher in two ways. First, because of what I have called the fragility of argument, full-blown philosophical wisdom is inaccessible. Second, though the philosopher ought nevertheless to engage in the co-operative pursuit of wisdom, intractable interlocutors such as Callicles make philosophical dialogue impossible.

Though Socrates' final *muthos* abandons dialogue, he inverts the standard typology by insisting that it is a *logos* (523 A). He justifies this move by asserting that what he will say is true, thus elevating the truth of what is said over the rigid categorization of speeches. The 'truth' that his mythic *logos* embodies, like that of the *Antiope* and perhaps even the *Gorgias* itself, consists in its affirmation of the value and goodness of the intellectual life, the one (in Plato's terms) dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom and virtue. At the same time, by assimilating *logos* and *muthos*, Socrates calls attention to the limitations of *logoi* in general. The 'truth' of the myths and the arguments alike cannot be assumed or taken for granted—they must be continually examined, critiqued, and defended. Indeed, this is just what Socrates invites Callicles to do at the end of the myth (527 C 4–E 6), and what Plato perhaps hopes his readers will do after reading the *Gorgias*. In this way, both Plato and Socrates are practising the political art, attempt-

actual tragic practice as a species of pandering while at the same time conceiving of tragedy as having a serious ethical vocation.

ing to make their respective audiences as good as humanly possible.

I hope to have shown that Euripides' *Antiope* provided Plato with a rich context for framing the debate between Callicles and Socrates on the practical and intellectual lives and bringing to light these limitations on the life of the philosopher. Further, I hope to have shown that Plato's *Gorgias* contains an acknowledgement of the possibility of good tragedy and that his use of Euripides' *Antiope* amounts to a qualified endorsement of both the tragedy and the tragic world-view. To put the last point another way, Plato understood the *Antiope* to be a philosophical tragedy, and so used it in the *Gorgias* to articulate a tragic philosophy.

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