

Class 6  
Plato's *Gorgias* & Figures of  
Style II  
21W.747  
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# Gorgias

- Written soon after death of Socrates
- Underlying the whole dialogue is the *Nomos / Physis* debate
- Also underlying it is a debate about the *demos* and democracy.

# The Trial of Socrates

# Background

# Socrates and Plato Hated

- Hoi Polloi

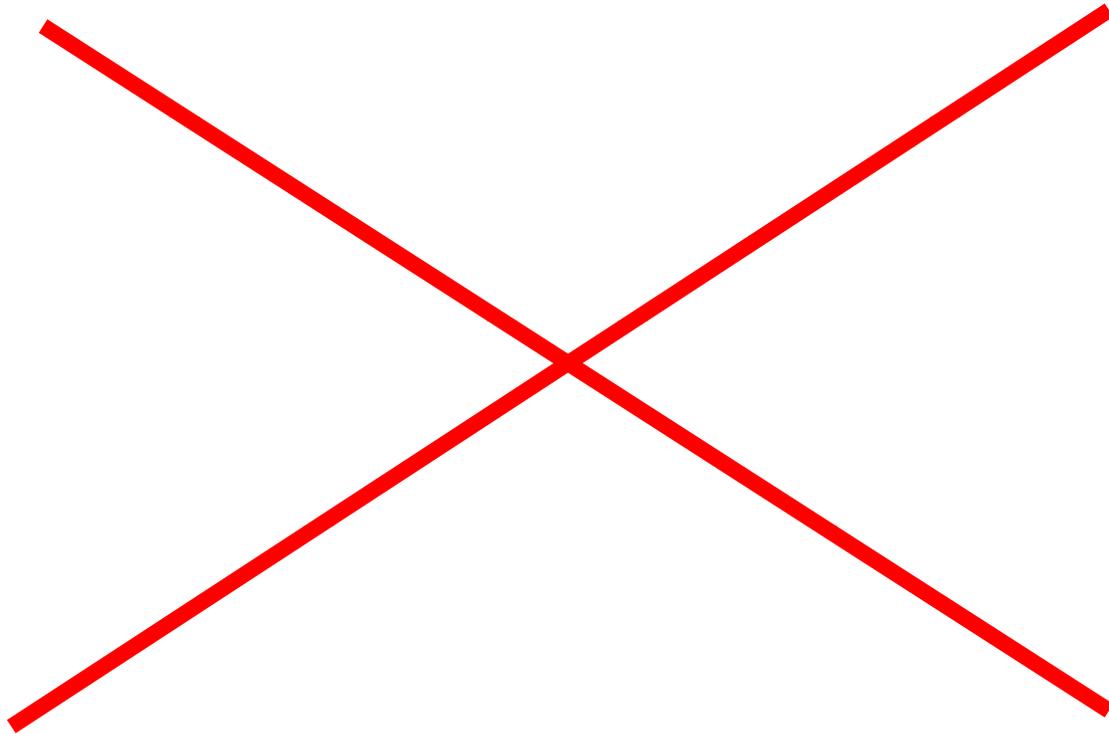
# Plato was an Aristocrat and Socrates in his Teaching:

- Believed that the *one* or *few* who *Knew* should be the Philosopher / King or Kings
- Oligarchy rather than democracy
- The *hoi polloi* are always wrong

# Three recent attempts at aristocratic oligarchy

- In 411 BC, aristocrats led by Alcibiades overthrew the democracy in June and set up rule by the Council of 400, which was overthrown in September.
- In 404 BC, Athens surrendered and a Spartan garrison supported rule by *The Thirty* led by Plato's cousin and Socrates' disciple Critias and Plato's uncle Charmides
- In 401 BC, the remnants of *The Thirty* tried to set up a dictatorship in Eleusis and were defeated by the democrats who declared an amnesty

Athens Had Complete Free Speech



But Socrates was against it

Eight hundred years later  
Libanius of Antioch writes a new  
*Apology* for Socrates based on free  
speech

# Churchill

- “Democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”
- “The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter.”

# Characters

- Socrates
- Gorgias -- Great Sophist
- Chaerephon Disciple of Socrates
- Polus “Colt”
- Calicles Hedonist

# The Structure of *The Gorgias*

# Beginning

- Gorgias just gave oratory demo
- Going to Callicles house
- Callicles offers another demo
- Socrates want Gorgias to answer question: what sort of man he is
  - What does he do?

# Socrates Question

- What “art” *techne* does he practice
  - Doctors
  - Painter
  - Oratory?

# With what is rhetoric concerned?

- Weaving → clothes
- Music → melodies
- Oratory → Speech
  - but what kind of speech
- Other *techne* have discourse
  - Medicine
  - Trainer

# Gorgias – rhetoric gives an individual freedom

- Power to rule over others
- Rhetoric produces belief
  - but so do other arts
- Knowledge and Belief are different
- Oratory is concerned with belief not knowledge

# Argument Continued

- Gorgias – Rhetoric is like Martial Arts
- Soc: Rhetoric convinces the mob – not wise people
- Teaching righteousness will make someone always act rightly
- Does rhetoric teach righteousness?

# Argument continued

- Rhetoric is a knack gained by experience
- Knack giving gratification and pleasure
- Rhetoric is a subspecies of pandering
  - cooking ≠ medicine
  - beauty culture ≠ athletic trainer
  - Rhetoric ≠ knowledge of government
- Example of Pericles as Sheppard of Men

# Final Arguments

- Rhetoric is a spurious counterfeit of the art of government
- Rhetoric is to the soul what cookery is to the body
- Orators have great power
- But the greatest of all misfortunes is to do wrong

# Joseph Goebbels – The Big Lie

- never allow the public to cool off;
- never admit a fault or wrong; never concede that there may be some good in your enemy;
- never leave room for alternatives;
- never accept blame;
- concentrate on one enemy at a time and blame him for everything that goes wrong;
- people will believe a big lie sooner than a little one;
- if you repeat the lie frequently enough people will sooner or later believe it

# Group Work

- Form groups and develop a list of specific persuasive communications (speeches, articles, mailings, advertisements, etc.) that produce belief but not knowledge.  
For each item try to determine if it is *bullshit* or a lie.

# More Rhetorical Figures

# Isocolon

- A series of similarly structured elements having roughly the same length. A kind of parallelism.

# Isocolon Example

This struggle was protracted and fierce.

Suddenly the scene has cleared, the crash and thunder has for the moment-but only for the moment-died away. A miracle of deliverance, achieved by valor, by perseverance, by perfect discipline, by faultless service, by resource, by skill, by unconquerable fidelity, is manifest to us all.

--Winston Churchill

# Scesis Onomaton

- Figure of repetition in which a set of two or more different words having the same (or very nearly the same) meaning occurs within the same sentence; a successive series of words or phrases whose meanings are generally equivalent.

# Scesis Onomaton Example

- There is no room in this country for any flag except our own. There is no room for the red flag. It is opposed to everything our government stands for. It stands for **anarchy**, **chaos**, and **ruin**. Smash it."  
– Leonard Wood

# Scesis Onomaton Example

- Let there be no illusions about the difficulty of forming this kind of a national community. It's **tough, difficult, not easy**. But a spirit of harmony will survive in America only if each of us remembers that we share a common destiny"
  - Barbara Jordan

# Asyndeton

Figure of omission in which normally occurring conjunctions (and, or, but, for, nor, so, yet) are intentionally omitted in successive phrases, or clauses; a string of words not separated by normally occurring conjunctions.

# Asyndeton

"The union survival, its very existence, sent out a signal to all Hispanics that we were fighting for our dignity, that we were challenging and overcoming injustice, that we were empowering **the least educated among us, the poorest among us**. The message was clear. If it could happen in the fields, it could happen anywhere: in the cities, in the courts, **in the city councils, in the state legislatures**."

--Cesar Chavez

# Polysyndeton

- Figure of addition and emphasis which intentionally employs a series of conjunctions (and, or, but, for, nor, so, yet) not normally found in successive words, phrases, or clauses; the deliberate and excessive use of conjunctions in successive words or clauses.

# Polysyndeton Example

- "We must change that deleterious environment of the 80's, that environment which was characterized by greed **and** hatred **and** selfishness **and** mega-mergers **and** debt overhang...."

-- Barbara Jordan

# Euphemismos

- Figure used to transform an unpleasant, distasteful or repulsive expression into more socially acceptable terms.
  - “That person is veracity challenged.”

# Euphemismos Example

- "Some pundits said our programs would result in catastrophe. The fact is what they called 'radical' was really 'right.' What they called 'dangerous' was just 'desperately needed.'"
  - Ronald Reagan, Farewell Address

# Euphemismos Example

- Now, this is about protecting our citizens. And all countries have an obligation to work together to do everything we can within the law to ensure the safety and security of our people. This is a global war on terrorism, and we work cooperatively with many nations. And we respect the sovereignty of each nation. And we have and we will continue to do so. It is their choice as to how they want to -- it is their choice in terms of how they want to participate. But in terms of renditions and talking in any specific way about it, I'm just not going to do it. I'm not going to get into talking about these issues because it could compromise things in an ongoing war on terrorism. And we're not going to do that.

– [Press Briefing by Scott McClellan](#)

# Anesis

- A figure of addition that occurs when a concluding sentence, clause, or phrase is added to a statement which purposely diminishes the effect of what has been previously stated.

# Anesis Example

- "This year's space budget is three times what it was in January 1961, and it is greater than the space budget of the previous eight years combined. That budget now stands at 5 billion-400 million dollars a year -- a staggering sum, **though somewhat less than we pay for cigarettes and cigars every year.**"
  - John F. Kennedy  
Rice University Address on Space Exploration

# Anesis Example

- "We are here today and have been this week for one single reason -- because the Soviet Union secretly introduced this menacing offensive military buildup into the island of Cuba while assuring the world that nothing was further from their thoughts. The argument, in its essence, of the Soviet Union is that it was not the Soviet Union which created this threat to peace by secretly installing these weapons in Cuba, but that it was the United States which created this crisis by discovering and reporting these installations. **This is the first time, I confess, that I have ever heard it said that the crime is not the burglar but the discovery of the burglar.**"
  - Adlai Stevenson, Address to the United Nations Security Council on Soviet Missiles in Cuba

# Hyperbole

- Deliberate exaggeration of a person, thing, quality, event to emphasize a point external to the object of exaggeration; intentional exaggeration for rhetorical effect.

# Hyperbole Example

- **"The only place  
where democracy  
comes before work  
is in the dictionary."**  
-- Ralph Nader, *2000  
NAACP Address*

# Hyperbole Example

- "My senior year, I received a tele phone call from a gentleman by the name of Mr. Gil Brandt of the Dallas Cowboys. And he stated that the Cowboys was interested in drafting me, and I couldn't ignore it. I decided to attend the Cowboys training camp. That year, 1967, the Dallas Cowboys had 137 rookies in training camp. **Gil Brandt was signing everybody that could walk.** Only five made the team that year, and I was one of the five."

- Larry Rayfield Wright

# Metaphor

- Figure of explication occurring when a comparison made by speaking of one thing in terms of another; an implied comparison between two *different* things which share at least one attribute in common; an association between two unlike things (A vs. B) achieved by borrowing the language that refers to thing A and applying it to thing B. (not to be confused with simile)

# Metaphor Example

"With this faith we will  
be able to transform  
the jangling  
discords of our  
nation into a  
beautiful symphony  
of brotherhood."

Martin Luther King, /  
*Have a Dream*

# Metaphor Example

- "At the dawn of spring last year, a single act of terror brought forth the long, cold winter in our hearts. The people of Oklahoma City are mourning still."
  - Al Gore, *Oklahoma Bombing Memorial Address*

# Paradox

- Figure that employs an apparent contradiction which, nonetheless, evokes some measure of truth; a statement which seems at one level to be nonsensical because it moves against a normalcy. At another level, however, the figure conjures a new way of seeing or understanding, a novel meaning.
  - Example: "I don't hustle with people who are dishonest."

# Paradox Example

- "Paradox has been defined as 'Truth standing on her head to attract attention.' But it must be admitted that writers, like other mendicants and mountebanks, frequently do try to attract attention. They set out conspicuously, in a single line in a play, or at the head or tail of a paragraph, remarks of this challenging kind; as when Mr. Bernard Shaw wrote: **'The Golden Rule is that there is no Golden Rule.'**; or Oscar Wilde observed: **'I can resist everything except temptation'**; or as a duller scribe (not to be named with these and now doing penance for his earlier vices in the nobler toil of celebrating the virtues of Mr. Pond) said in defense of hobbies and amateurs and general duffers like himself: **'If a thing is worth doing, it's worth doing badly.'** To these things do writers sink."
  - G.K. Chesterton, When Doctors Agree (

# Oxymoron

- Figure that binds together TWO words that are ordinarily contradictory; a TWO WORD paradox; two words with contrary or apparently contradictory meanings occurring next to each other, and, which, nonetheless, evoke some measure of truth; the figure conjures a new way of seeing or understanding, a novel meaning.

# Oxymoron Example

- "**Safe sex** -- now there's an oxymoron.  
That's like '**tactical Nuke**' or '**adult male.**'"

# Aposiopesis

- Figure in which the speaker abruptly stops or falls short of completing a statement; stopping short of completing a statement.

# Aposiopesis Example

- "At this juncture I want to get into -- By the way I was told to give you some advice about the media. You don't know how small I feel giving you advice, but I'll be glad to anyway since I've been asked to."
  - Rush Limbaugh, Address to the incoming House GOP Freshmen

# Rhetorical Question

- Figure which asks a question, not for the purpose of further discussion, but to assert or deny an answer implicitly; a question whose answer is obvious or implied.

# Rhetorical Question Example

- Can anyone look at the record of this Administration and say, "Well done"?
  - Can anyone compare the state of our economy when the Carter Administration took office with where we are today and say, "Keep up the good work"?
  - Can anyone look at our reduced standing in the world today and say, "Let's have four more years of this"?
- Ronald Reagan, 1980 Republican National Convention Acceptance Address

# Rhetorical Question Example

- "It really is time to ask ourselves, 'How can we allow the rich and powerful, not only to rip off people as consumers, but to continue to rip them off as taxpayers?'"

-- Ralph Nader, 2000 NAACP  
Convention Address

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