

On the truth in the rhetoric
- An adduction through a discussion of
Gorgias and Socrates point of views

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Abstract

The object of this treatise is a comparison between Gorgias and Socrates views on rhetoric, namely the truth in rhetoric.

The two prominent scholars of Greek antiquity, Gorgias as an expert on rhetoric and Socrates as a well-known philosopher, have attempted to examine the basics of rhetoric. Democracy has made rhetoric a high value of ancient Greek society, as well as an approach to enunciate, review and argue in public on various issues. As a tool of public communication, addressed to the attendees to convince them regarding an issue submitted for discussion and to fulfill its mission in the best to society, rhetoric should have support in the truth. This is the point at which both ancient scholars agree. But the issue is seen from a different point of view, and both defending their own views bring arguments and counter-arguments, which are worth even today.

The purpose of this paper is that, through confrontational approach and interpretation, to set diverse views and to reach a conclusion on the truth in rhetoric.

Keywords: *rhetoric, rhetorician, the truth, Socrates, Gorgias.*

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Introduction

The object of this paper is the inquiry between Gorgias and Socrates point of view on rhetoric, intended to set their diverse views, to reach a conclusion on the truth in rhetoric.

This purpose looks like an easy achievable target, but it is not. To understand how complicated the question of truth in rhetoric is, you have to remember the case of Socrates' trial, when the accusers Meletus, Anytus and Lycon succeed to manipulate a persuasion that confused the minds of the audience so much that they voted death penalty of Socrates, the most prominent philosopher, and one of the seven wise men of ancient Greece. The charges against Socrates were based on distortions, half-truths or slander, but all of them gave the impression as they were genuinely true. Socrates' accusers were rhetorician¹, or they used the rhetorical tools to create the impression that they are telling the truth, and in this way they invented a manipulated persuasion, as a consequence Socrates were sentenced to death for no crime.

Socrates had sensed that the truth, if it is not aimed by any one, may become perverted and distorted to such extent that it cannot be known at all. Socrates, since his formation as a philosopher until the end of his life, had tried to educate the Athenians for everything and in everything to tend the truth, as a measure to protect them from mistakes. His effort seemed intellectually to culminate with the critical discussion about the rhetoric, which had demonstrated the capacity to impact the

¹ The word rhetorician means a person who performs rhetoric professionally or whom publicly use rhetorical tools. Rhetoric is the discipline that deals with the theoretical study of the speeches, or public discourse. Aristotle, in *Topics* 149b25, gives this definition: "a rhetorician is the one who distinguishes that which can create persuasion in any situation, without excluding anything". In the electronic dictionary of Henry George Liddell & Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, gives an simple definition rhetorician is "the publik speaker".

thoughts and attitudes of the audience; the discussion that took place between Socrates and the master of rhetoric Gorgias. Both of them looked into the basics, the character and the role of rhetoric, aiming to set a philosophical attitude regarding to it, as well as to put solid, sound, based and helpful foundations of rhetoric to *the public*.

As it is known, the philosophy, attitudes and views of Socrates are portrayed in the works of Plato, e.g. *The Apology*, *Criton*, *Menexenus*, *Euthydemus*, *Phaedrus*, *The sophist*, expressing Socrates concerns with different aspects of rhetoric, whereas, at the work *Gorgias*, a dialogue between Socrates and Gorgias together with his disciples Callicles and Polus, sets somewhat summarized the rhetoric in optics of Socrates.

Since its birth, despite the times, conditions and political circumstances, however, the objective of rhetoric has remained the same: to create a persuasion in order to gain the trust of the audience, i.e. public. It is here, that raises a fundamental problem, which is noticed by Socrates: how to achieve the persuasion? Where should it be based on? What should be the character, the role and the way of using rhetoric? These are the main problems that have followed rhetoric since its inception, which are not outdated at all even today.

The rhetorician usually claims that the goal is "only the right and the true" as expressed by Gorgias in *Defense of Palamedes*², as well as the people are saying so even today and always, when they utter or communicate with the audience, i.e. public or opinion. It should be so, truly.

But Socrates, with his sharpness as a philosopher, had discerned another practice of the rhetorician, the distinction between declarative aspect and action to create a persuasion. He had understood the possibility to instrumentalize the rhetoric for

² Gorgias, Defence of Palamedes, §11.

achieving at any cost a given purpose of its user, i.e. intentionally to manipulate the public, in the interest of any group or particular individual. Such use of rhetoric turns it into a harmful activity against the public, that is to say, against the citizens and against the state itself. To look for a different perspective, more genuine, as Socrates is portrayed in the work of Plato *Gorgias*, with critical approaching and reviewing explores beyond the obvious, beyond the claiming, aiming to penetrate at the core of the matter: to distinguish the appearance or declaration of what it is, respectively, to distinguish the formal aspects of rhetoric, to enlighten them, to show the possibility of its instrumentalization and the damage it produces from such use, as well as, to set a theory for a genuine rhetoric.

The birth of democracy made the rhetoric a high value of ancient Greek society, as well as an access to submit, review and argue in public on various issues. As a tool of public communication, addressed to the participants to persuade them of discussing the issue and to fulfill its mission in the good of society, rhetoric should have been grounded in the truth. This is the point at which the two ancient scholars agree, but the issue is seen from different angles, bringing the arguments and counter-arguments which are worth even today.

Moreover, the broader aim of this paper is to expose through a comparative approach, the argumentative thoughts of the two greatest scholars, as well as through an interpretation of their points of view, to achieve the conclusion that the rhetoric, to become a real service to the public, should be imbued with truth and should be used in a correct way.

It is not just rhetoric that creates persuasion

In the debate between Socrates and Gorgias raises the question of what rhetoric creates³. The claim of Gorgias, that rhetoric creates the greatest good for the people rejects by Socrates claiming that the doctor, the gymnast and the businessman each of them pretend the same⁴. So Socrates shows that the claim is too broad, and as such it is untrue, that's why something more determined it is needed. Gorgias, as a master, postulates that the rhetoric use "the word which persuades"⁵. In accordance with this, Socrates specifies: "the rhetoric is a production of persuasion: that is all with which it has to do and this is the core of its task", specifying even more: it creates persuasion in the soul⁶ that is to say in the mind. Thereabout, Gorgias said the same thing, that the persuasive speech affects the soul⁷, stressing that "Persuasion belonging to discourse shapes the soul at will".⁸

Gorgias in *Encomium of Helen* expresses how huge the impact of persuasion has for the individual and consequently to the public, speaking of how the persuasive speech has cheated her [i.e. Helen's] soul and made her to take the action, that is to say, to leave her husband and go with Paris, which gave Agamemnon the motive to begin a disastrous war against Troy. Speaking of the power of rhetoric, among others, Gorgias states that "the necessary debates in which one discourse, artfully written, but not truthfully meant, delights and persuades a numerous crowd".⁹

³ Plato, Complete Works, *Gorgias*, p. v 400.

⁴ Ibid., p. 400-401.

⁵ Ibid., p. 400.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*, § 8-15.

⁸ Ibid., § 13.

⁹ Ibid.

It is true that the rhetoric creates persuasion, but it is not alone in doing this, as Gorgias claimed. To explain this, Socrates sets it as a problem by asking: "is the rhetoric the only artificer that creates persuasion?"¹⁰, and to shed light on the issue, he takes as an example the arithmetician who, for different mathematical size, produces persuasion dealing with a series of even and odd numbers¹¹, which leads to the conclusion: "Hereupon, rhetoric is not the only artificer of persuasion"¹².

That's why it is needed to determine more closely what kind of persuasion produces the rhetoric. Based on the writings of Gorgias as well as of the mentioned works of Plato, it can be said that the rhetoric through the speech, before all and above all, aim to persuade judges in lawsuits, members of the council and members of the people's assembly. Also the rhetoric has the ability to persuade any political assembly¹³; achieving the definition that the rhetoric creates political persuasion.

In this context, clarifies another important issue: Socrates tries to understand the role of various experts in the creation of persuasion. He mentions cases that the assemblies of people invited experts for advice on different fields, such as, for example, when needed to build the walls, to make ports or shipyards at that time they invited craftsmen of their respective construction. Have these experts, perhaps persuaded them to build those? Gorgias gives the answer: regarding the political persuasion, rhetorician does not speak on expert's matters; they speak on the issue itself. He said: "The walls of Athens and construction of ports were made by the advices of Themistocles and partly of Pericles and not by the advices of experts" of

¹⁰ Plato, Complete Works, Gorgias, p. 402.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 402.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., p. 401.

construction¹⁴. Socrates, as a philosopher, who accepts the persuasive arguments, agrees with this counter-argument that the rhetoricians are those who create political persuasion which leads to the decisions, and when it comes to their particular realization, the relevant experts may be invited for professional advice.

Rhetoric plays a role where there is uncertainty

A separate issue is the extent, conditions and circumstances, namely in the context in which the rhetoric may play its role, also to produce persuasion. From the example above regarding the building of Athens' walls to two nearby towns, there is a subtext that shows when the persuasion can be created to the public, but it is not clearly stated.

The persuasion can be created only on the issues when and where there is uncertainty. When the public is not sure about something, there might be a smart and talented rhetorician to create persuasion. The question of Socrates that "to what extent the rhetorician can say the most", Faidros answers: of course "where we are uncertain"¹⁵, and to understand this, the rhetorician must discern the contexts where the audience is unsure¹⁶ and where is not. To have success, namely to create persuasion, the rhetorician should be focused on the context where uncertainty is, because there and only there he has to say something by himself.

According to the concepts of Socrates, where the truth is known there is no uncertainty, but the uncertainty is there where

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 405. The walls between Athens and Piraeus and the Athens dhe Faleron raised during the years 461-456 BC.

¹⁵ Plato, Complete Works, *Faidros*, p. 1118.

¹⁶ Ibid.

there is an opinion, also the view that does not match reality or facts.

The difference between the declarative and the substantial side

After agreeing to the fact that the rhetorician creates persuasion, that was not all for Socrates: he wanted to know more. That's the reason why Socrates asks Gorgias: "which sort of persuasion does rhetoric create... [persuasion] which gives belief without knowledge, or which gives knowledge?"¹⁷. Such setting up of the problem affects the core of the issue under discussion. Gorgias gives a meaningful answer: "it generates confidence"¹⁸. In other words, the rhetorician is not the producer of the persuasions that generate knowledge, but that generates confidence, probability or chance that something might be what it seems like or as it is laid down, but do not produce knowledge or without reference to any knowledge - it remains substantially vague and potentially wrong.

It has to be understood, of course, as an issue that sets the substance and not exclusivity of the one against the other, to highlight the formal character of rhetoric as practiced mostly in people's assemblies at the time. From the example above about the role of Themistocles and of Pericles regarding the protective walls of Athens, it can be concluded that knowledge and belief often are merged into one. Here is outstanding the discerning aspect because the confusion of both of them. Such a confusion stemming from the formal rules, which are negligible, becomes a risk of producing manipulation.

¹⁷ Plato, Complete Works, *Gorgias*, p. 404.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Certainly, if questioned, none of those who exercise the rhetoric would say that they believe in unsustainable and untrue conjectures. Gorgias affirms this: "One must believe, not conjecture, but the truth"¹⁹. He reaffirms the same elsewhere too, more specifically still: "The proper order... to a discourse [is] the truth"²⁰.

Despite such statements as that the rhetorician had to rely on the truth as Gorgias says, for the most of the time the rhetorician creates persuasion or beliefs, even when the content of them is such that "yet they have hardly uttered a word of truth" as Socrates says to his accusers in *The Apology*²¹, which expresses to what extent the belief may seem like the truth, although it is totally contrary to it. This was a substantial difference, because declaratively hold forth the truth as a decor, but substantially smuggled the untrue.

The mechanism that creates the impression

If the rhetoric is a producer of the persuasion that generate unsustainable beliefs on genuine evidence, then follows that it is simply a kind of mechanism, some kind of instrument, which has the capacity to produce persuasion.

Exactly this kind of rhetoric wisecracked Socrates when he said that "the rhetorician does not need to know the truth about things"²². Meaning that Gorgias' rhetoric and his school's, namely the formal rhetoric, do not deal with the content of what is raised as an issue on the agenda, namely to uncover the truth, but deals with beliefs or assumptions, or with something that looks like true without being so.

¹⁹ Gorgias, *Defence of Palamedes*, §8

²⁰ Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*, §1.

²¹ Plato, Complete Works, *The Apology*, p. 40.

²² Plato, Complete Works, *Gorgias*, p. 410.

Then, how does the rhetoric work? Socrates has an explanation: the rhetoric has found "some way of persuading"²³, a way of producing persuasion. With such mechanism the rhetorician makes the impression, respectively a different appearance than what it is in the reality. This is done in two ways. First one: using the way of creating persuasion before an ignorant rhetorician seems to know more than those who know²⁴; and the other: the instructor, e.g. Gorgias, to the young rhetorician, his students, gives the impression [to them and to others] they know things that really do not know²⁵.

Obviously, everybody cannot do this. Because to create such an impression is "the habit of a bold and ready wit, which knows how to manage mankind"²⁶, which exactly had made them prominent and had given authority to the rhetorician.

Regarding the substance of the formal rhetoric, beliefs that create a persuasion which are produced by rhetorician is an unsustainable belief, it is indeed just an impression they create.²⁷

Formal mastery, without any genuine principle

Socrates is not satisfied with the simply stating that rhetoric is a way for the creation of persuasion to impress on the audience; he goes further and wants to find out why it is such. To this purpose, he compares it with cooking. Cooking is pretended to be like the medicine regarding the health of the human body, so the chef could persuade a lot of people that he knows better than the doctor does about the need of human health²⁸, since he makes

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 411.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 416.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 418.

food that the human body likes. But such impression is wrong, because it creates the belief that a chef knows more than the physician, which is not true. The chef and the rhetorician resemble for the effects they achieve: cooking causes pleasure and enjoyment for the human body, but it is simply an "experience"²⁹, likewise the rhetoric: "only an experience or routine"³⁰. The analogy is this: the chef adjusts the food with the tastes of particular person's desires, so the rhetorician aims to produce persuasion to particular cases or contexts, hinting that he is not impartial.

With this example, Socrates highlights that rhetoric lacks something very serious, it lacks a basic principle. Therefore, in such a state, "I do not call it art", said, Socrates and continues, "but only an experience, because it is unable to explain or to give a reason of the nature of its own applications. And I do not call any irrational thing an art"³¹.

In the absence of a such principle flows that the rhetoric creates partial images of reality, namely "the ghost or counterfeit of a part of politics"³², which means that it does not penetrate to the core of what it treats and does not take it as a whole, which as such cannot be complete, and may not lead to true statements but only to opinions.³³

He expressed a criticism, a sustainable one, toward the rhetoric in the state in which it was, simply based on specific skills, a formal rhetoric. Giving the impression that the formal criteria is met, the rhetorician could achieve conclusions that do not touch the truth, becoming a tool for manipulation, respectively, as Socrates pointed out, becoming a way of

²⁹ Ibid., p. 415.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 416.

³¹ Ibid., p. 418.

³² Ibid., p. 416.

³³ Ibid., p. 438.

producing persuasions or impressions that things are in a such way without being substantially such. Precisely for this reason, Socrates says to Callicles, who as a disciple defends his teacher Gorgias, that "for a moment you say that something is so, the next moment that it is different"³⁴, highlighting the inconsistency of what he says, and due to the lack of a principle.

Seeking a regulatory principle

The critical approach serves Socrates to investigate the weaknesses, shortcomings and deficiencies that have accompanied the rhetoric. With his criticism Socrates highlights its potentially manipulative character. Therefore, as the exercise of rhetoric publicly has a special importance for the society, especially the great impact on politics, his criticism serves to argue its inconsistency and then to pass in the other enterprise: trying to change it, to improve it and to make it be such a beneficial function to society, i.e. the state, the politics.

The main aim of Socrates is to find and clearly express "an order"³⁵, a principle really lacked of rhetoric, although it claimed declaratively. Such a regulative principle, according to the concepts of Socrates, was determinative to a field that should deal a discipline or an art as usually called them, because "what makes a thing good is the proper order inhering in each thing"³⁶. And Socrates attempts to find out and to determine such a regulative principle that should be applied by rhetoric, so that it could be genuinely in a good service to the society.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 477.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 489.

³⁶ Ibid.

For genuine usefulness of the rhetoric

The rhetoric has a capacity to be useful to the public, the mere fact that it has the skills and the tools suitable to create persuasion. Its usefulness remains instant or conjectural, depending on how it is used in the interests of certain individuals or groups. Socrates wanted to turn it into a grounded usefulness, substantive, proper for the public or for the common good.

His idea of the genuine usefulness of the rhetoric, Socrates develops it in two points: pleasure – good, and justice - injustice.

The first point: the relation pleasure - good. Polos, a disciple of Gorgias, defends the viewpoint that the rhetoric is something beautiful, because it brings people a sort of delight and pleasure³⁷. However, according to Socrates “good is not the same as pleasure”³⁸, then not every pleasure and enjoyment is good. “Good, said Socrates to Callicles, “is called the good because it has a presence of something good in them”³⁹. Based on that, the achieved conclusion is that a pleasure or enjoyment is useful only if in itself is a presence of the good and as long as it is present. The rhetoric to be beautiful must contain the beauty, which is such only when it contains in itself and to the extent that contains a certain good.

The second point, the usefulness in relation to justice - injustice. To make the opponent, specifically Polos, to understand the genuine usefulness from the surrogate one, Socrates draws a parallel between the patients with physical and mental diseases. Physical disease may often be cured with medications that do not bring pleasure, but restores health. With that example, Socrates argues that for every person the

³⁷ Ibid., p. 415.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 473.

³⁹ Ibid.

usefulness is not always the same as pleasure. The same thing happens with mental health: anyone who has done something injustice, he is sick in the spirit. There may not be something genuinely useful to him that cannot bring his spiritual healing. And this healing can be achieved by disbursing for the injustice he has done, namely acting with justice⁴⁰ against the injustice-maker. All this leads to the conclusion that the rhetoric "does not bring any benefit to us... when it comes to protecting an injustice when it is done by ourselves, our parents, friends or children or our country"⁴¹. And not as it has been considered before that "the rhetoric to be useful" had to be in defense even of those who made injustice and crime⁴², in the sense that even when they are guilty through the use of rhetoric to be acquitted. Socrates openly committed for rhetoric in defense of the right, as the only possible useful action, since justice brings spiritual healing to the individual but also to society. The "punishment... [is] a deliverance from the greatest of evils"⁴³. And the same applies to avoid commission of the crime through injustice trial.

In other words, the rhetoric to be truly useful it must cause or bring pleasure and enjoyment containing the good, as well as to defend the right, because this is the cure for mental health and medical healing of the soul both for the individual and for the society.

The Rhetoric must be based on truth

Trying to persuade Socrates, Polos asserts that "many men who have done wrong are happy"⁴⁴. Socrates did not agree with him,

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 446.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 448.

⁴² Ibid., p. 449.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 445.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 428.

and Polos says to him: "That is because you will not; for you surely must think as I do"⁴⁵. Socrates replies: " you will refute me after the manner which rhetoricians practice in courts of law... this kind of proof is of no value where the truth aims... if you will, the whole house of Pericles, or any other great Athenian family whom you choose; – they will all agree with you: I only, am left alone and cannot agree, for you do not convince me"⁴⁶.

Later, having conversed with the other disciple of Gorgiasit, Callicles, when considering the effects of prominent politicians, namely Pericles, to whom Socrates addresses much criticism, Callicles asks whether he is required to agree with these criticisms, Socrates gives this response: "If you think I am telling the truth"⁴⁷.

So indirectly it is made an allusion to the need of new foundations for rhetoric, that all its activity to be concentrated regarding the truth, because that is the only way it can fulfill its mission and be at the service of citizens and the state, or the public. Otherwise, the rhetoric may produce contrary effects. Earlier it was emphasized the fact that the formal rhetoric does not capture the entirety of the reviewed subject and does not touch the core, but only create images, moreover the partial images.⁴⁸

As such, it can achieve certain effects, creating the persuasion that leads to any decision-making, which is likely to be wrong and injustice. The ability of the rhetorician that a distorted truth to portray persuasively like a genuine truth, as illustrated so beautifully in the opening speech of Socrates in *The Apology* addressed to his compatriots in his defending speech: "Athenians" - says Socrates " I do not know what impression do

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 430.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 430-431.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 598.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 417.

you have on my accusers, I cannot tell; but I know that they almost made me forget who I was – so persuasively did they speak; and yet they have hardly uttered a word of truth"⁴⁹.

This context relates to the Socrates concept of the new foundation of rhetoric which he was looking for, expressed already in the work of Plato's *The Apology* but clearly formulated in Gorgias work. Socrates utters it clearly: he considers a skilled rhetorician only one "who is telling the truth"⁵⁰, and only in such sense he would accept to be called rhetorician, otherwise not.

How must a rhetorician be like?

The proper rhetorician should be the one who tells the truth, as Socrates says, although it may seem bitter at the time when expressed, but being true, is better than the image or opinion to be false, with false persuasion and false impression.

In *The Apology*, from the quotation above, is noted that the charges against Socrates were so persuasive, which almost persuade himself that those were true! This highlights the fascinating power of rhetoric to influence people. Imagine if something so persuasive was telling the truth. But it was quite the opposite: "yet they [the accusers against Socrates]_have hardly uttered a word of truth"⁵¹.

The accusers, who served with rhetorical tools, "they have scarcely spoken the truth at all" says Socrates⁵². Well, how could they achieve such an effect, how could they create such an impression and persuasion to the attendees against Socrates? Socrates says that they used their manner in a set oration duly

⁴⁹ Plato, Complete Works, *The Apology*, p. 40.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

ornamented with words and phrases⁵³, also decorated the words and phrases beautifully, although they had distorted the truth until disfigurement. It happened as Gorgias postulated: "a simple speech, written with art, but not telling the truth, can captivate and persuade a large number [of crowds]"⁵⁴. The public was also manipulated with the statements that seemed to be true, namely instrumentalizing the rhetoric.

To not achieve the opposite effect of the good of citizens and against the justice, Socrates states that it is necessary for a rhetorician to be right and the right is necessary to act with justice⁵⁵. Thus, Socrates says that the rhetorician must necessarily be different from that which was then characterized by manipulation and abuse. Consequently, such a rhetorician "would never want to act with injustice"⁵⁶.

For somebody to be a genuine rhetorician, as Gorgias disciple, Polos states, should have knowledge of the justice, beauty and good⁵⁷. Once submitted views on the right, the justice and right action as a value against the wrong, injustice and wrong action [as "injustice is the greatest evil to the doer of injustice" but the evil is greater when "anyone who has wronged remain unpunished"⁵⁸ alluding that rhetorician make greater evil when they serve to injustice or untruth], Socrates says plainly: "He who wishes to become a proper rhetorician he should be right and have knowledge of what is justice".⁵⁹

Based on the principle of truth and justice, which Socrates sets as a principle of rhetoric in *The Apology*. There he had stated decisively that "let the speaker speak truly and the judge decide

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*, §13.

⁵⁵ Platon, *Complete Works*, *Gorgias*, p. 412.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 413.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 492.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 491.

justly"⁶⁰. In other words, this means that a rhetorician must be considered skillful, not only how he manages to create a persuasion to the public on the issue that he speaks, but to the extent that he is telling the truth and on this basis creates right persuasion to the public. This is a new model of the rhetorician in the Socrates philosophical optics.

The rhetoric - to make the citizens better

The proper rhetorician can play an important role in society, which Socrates has noticed and was trying to create the genuine basics of rhetoric, so that, based on them, the rhetorician not conjecturally, but in the long term and stable, to be useful or to do useful deeds for society.

From the debate developed between Socrates with Gorgias, Calicles and Polos, reached the conclusion that "there are two ways to handle any particular occurrence, whether physical or spiritual: to engage in creating pleasure, and the other one aims the better without looking for pleasure, but firmly makes an effort for the best"⁶¹. And being so, the benefit with injustice (in the sense of making wealth, to take power, to eliminate opponents) seemed to bring pleasure to some, was not sustainable and had negative effects, which Socrates regarded as a crime, or as a disease of the soul, reaching the conclusion that we "must commit for the state and citizens in a way to make them as good as it is possible".⁶²

⁶⁰ Plato, Complete Works, *The Apology*, p. 40.

⁶¹ Plato, Complete Works, *Gorgias*, p. 497.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 497.

Conclusion

From all this, derives the conclusion that Socrates succeeds to argue the deficiencies and shortcomings of formal rhetoric implemented as well by Gorgias, which had all the predispositions to turn into manipulative, to err the public for any narrow interest related to the questions that must be judged or decided.

Socrates has shown in a sustainable way that the main disadvantage is the lack of a regulative principle or a genuine basis of the formal rhetoric, which stated declaratively a such principle, but in practice acted differently based on cases, conjunctures or according to narrow interests, and therefore, it became instrumentalized, being used as a mechanism to create persuasion based on belief, in a context where public is uncertain in the absence of data or knowledge of the truth. In such a climate, the rhetorician can make not only the public, but also the person to whom the finger is directed to not recognize himself as Socrates already declared for the impression that had left to him the charges. The accusing case against Socrates is drastic, although typical to show the manipulative character or the possibility for the rhetoric and its tools to become instrumentalized.

Such behavior alludes Socrates when he claims that the rhetorician is "playing with the people", that is to say the audience, the public, the opinion, "as [with] children, just trying to satisfy them careless if they become better or worse"⁶³. The effect of pleasure is achieved by speaking as they want a rhetorician to speak, rather than how the truth and justice are, which often may not be wanted, especially for those who may be affected or violated by it. Such rhetorician is irresponsible,

⁶³ Plato, Complete Works, Gorgias, p. 483.

because he does not care if the citizens become better, moreover, he is not worried if they become even worse, because he has only a goal: to achieve success in the service of whom (individual or group interest) he is, despite the possible consequences.

Thus, the criticism of Socrates to the formal rhetoric of his time put in dialogue with Gorgias and his disciples Callicles and Polos, arguing its shortcomings. Those are precisely which makes the formal rhetoric manipulative and instrumentalized. The criticism of Socrates aimed at improving, respectively searching a sustainable foundation, to turn the rhetoric into a discipline or art for which it had the capacity and to become useful not only for the individual or conjuncture, but for the truth, the right and the good in general, to the public.

To make the rhetoric as such, Socrates restructures it, by laying the new foundations, which put out the discrepancy between the declaration and the action, becoming coherent declaration with action, theory with practice. The basic and regulative principle must be the truth, and the truth is always right, both in theory and in practice these two principles should be combined to yield the proper result.

The rhetorician that is guided by such principles of rhetoric, that is imbued with the truth and right, aims 'the training and improvement of the souls of the citizens, and strives to say what is best, whether welcome or unwelcome, for the audience'⁶⁴.

Finally, it can be said that the philosophy of Socrates on rhetoric as a tool of the public institution of communication, although posed twenty-four-five centuries ago, is an ideal that remains a challenge, to show how healthy a society is, not in appearance but in content. There are so many centuries that it speaks to us, appears to us, but we feign as though do not hear, do not see even if the society in the age of globalization needs

⁶⁴ Ibid.

more than ever a public communication based on the truth and justice.

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