PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF ELENCHUS IN THE *GORGIAS*

DIMENSIONES PSICOLÓGICAS DEL *ELENCHOS* EN EL *GORGIAS*

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***Abstract*:** *In this article, I argue that, in showing inconsistency of beliefs, Socratic elenchus is showing incompatibility of the desires those beliefs express. This thesis explains Socrates' claim that, in refuting Callicles, he is also restraining his desires. The beliefs in question are about the best kind of life to lead; such beliefs express the second order desire to lead a life in which certain sorts of first order desires are satisfied. Socrates' elenchus shows that Callicles is caught between two incompatible second order desires: a desire to lead of life of enormous pleasure and a desire to lead a life in which his love of honor is satisfied. Socrates does not succeed with Callicles because the way out of this dilemma depends on a type of desire not found in the moral psychology of the Gorgias, i.e., a desire whose satisfaction is pleasure unmixed with pain, described in Republic 583c-585e and Philebus 50e-52b.*

***Keywords*:** *elenchus; consistency; belief; moral psychology; desire; pleasure.*

***Resumen*:** *En este artículo mantengo que al mostrar la inconsistencia de las creencias del interlocutor el elenchos socrático está mostrando la incompatibilidad de los deseos que esas creencias expresan. Esta tesis explica la declaración de Sócrates, cuando refuta a Calicles, de que él está también refrenando sus deseos. Las creencias en juego son respecto del mejor modo de vida; tales creencias expresan deseos de segundo orden para llevar a cabo una vida en la cual ciertas clases de deseos de primer orden son satisfechos. El elenchos de Sócrates*

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Gregory Vlastos has given us an account of elenchus that continues to prove fruitful. If we see Socratic refutation through the lens of deductive logic, its shortcomings are evident. Refutation can achieve only so much; it shows the interlocutor an inconsistency in his beliefs. However, inconsistency by itself cannot show which of two inconsistent beliefs is true—if indeed either is true. This result is the one we seem to find in the Gorgias; Socrates leads Callicles to the point of recognizing an inconsistency in his set of beliefs. It is clear which of the two beliefs Socrates thinks is true — and thus which Callicles ought to accept and which he ought to reject. However, Calicles does not follow suit; he continues to resist the conclusion that Socrates holds out as the correct one. If Vlastos' analysis is correct, Callicles is in an intellectual bind. He has recognized an inconsistency in his beliefs but he has no way to resolve it. Nothing in Socrates' elenchus points to which of the two incompatible beliefs is true—if indeed either is true.[1] However, as we shall see, Callicles' problem is not entirely a skeptical quandary—an inability to arrive at a further set of premises that will settle the issue by showing which of the two inconsistent beliefs is true. Rather, Callicles is invested in both beliefs and does not want to give up either. These beliefs embody his

1. VLASTOS, 1991, P. 111-115.

muestra que Calicles está atrapado entre dos tipos de deseos de segundo orden que son incompatibles: el deseo de llevar adelante una vida de enorme placer, y el deseo de llevar una vida en la cual su amor por el honor sea satisfecho. Sócrates no tiene éxito con Calicles porque la escapatoria a este dilema depende de un tipo de deseo que no se encuentra en la psicología moral del Gorgias, a saber, un deseo cuya satisfacción es el placer no combinado con el dolor que se describe en R. 583c-585e y Phlb. 50e-52b.

Palabras claves: *elenchos; consistencia; creencia; psicología moral; deseo; placer.*

ideal of what his life should be and articulate certain types of desire. To attack them is to attack an underlying desire. Given this dynamic, Socratic elenchus takes on another aspect. All of its deductive power is aimed at these fundamental desires in order to promote some and restrain others. However, even if we focus on this psychological aspect of Socratic elenchus, we have not thereby solved the problem that Vlastos pointed out. Callicles is still left with deciding what fundamental desire to promote and which to restrain.[2] Socrates lays the groundwork for understanding these desires in his elenchus of Polus.

The conversation between Polus and Socrates begins with the issue of the power and prestige of rhetoric. Polus holds the rhetoricians have the greatest power in the city because they, like the despots, can put to death whomever they wish (boulontai) and deprive of their property and exile from the city whomever it seems best to them *(hon an doke(i) autois)* to so treat *(466c)*. Securing Polus' agreement to the difference between what one wishes and what one thinks best, Socrates leads him to the conclusion that despots do not necessarily do what they want in doing what seems best to them (468e). While this argument has the classic form of an elenchus, Polus refuses to accept the final step; his resistance is not just a question of logic either. Thus, the conversation continues through two more stages. For our purposes, the most significant is the next where Socrates refutes Polus' belief that doing injustice is worse than suffering it (474c). This belief is important to Polus because it is integral to his profile of the rhetorician. He thinks the rhetorician is like the despot, who has the greatest liberty in the city. Since he thinks whether the despot acts justly or unjustly is immaterial, we can conclude that his liberty includes acting unjustly if he wants to (468e-469d). In turn, Polus is surely thinking that the rhetorician has similar liberty to do what he wants, whether it is just or not. Finally, we sense that Polus would like to be a rhetorician and therefore be able to act unjustly if that is what he wants to do.

However, in this stage of the elenchus, the dynamic between Socrates and Polus has shifted. In answering Socrates, Polus becomes canny, distancing himself from complete assent by such expressions as 'it appears so' *(phainetai)* and '...according to this argument' *(kata getouton ton logon)* (475e). Perhaps sensing this caution, when he approaches the conclusion of his elenchus, Socrates steps back from the substance of the argument and urges:

> *Do not shrink back from answering, Polus. You won't get hurt in any way. Submit yourself nobly to the argument, as you would to a doctor, and answer me. (475d-e)*[3]

While recognizing Polus' fear that elenchus might harm him in some way, Socrates tries to put it into a context of medical treatment. Polus seems to fear the psychological pain of admitting his error — i.e., admitting that doing wrong is worse than suffering contradicts his previous claim. It is not clear exactly what that pain is. It might be the shame of having to admit to error publicly, in the face of the assembled friends and colleagues. However, Socrates' reference to medical treatment points in another direction.

At the beginning of their conversation, Socrates tells Polus that rhetoric is not as prestigious as he thinks. It is really a form of flattery *(kolasia)*. In explaining this shocking idea, Socrates elaborates an extensive schema, comparing techne to knack *(empeiria)* (463a-465d). He cites four technai. Two care for the body, physical training and medicine; two care for the soul, legislation and judging. Corresponding to these *technai* are four knacks; cosmetic and cookery for the body and sophistry and rhetoric for the soul. Technai are guided by

2. For an earlier version of this thesis, see Parry (1996, 50-57, and notes). In line with the work of others, I argued that elenchus in the Gorgias is not aimed just at consistency of beliefs but at compatibility of desires. However, the desires in question are not first order desires, e.g., for food and drink, but second order desires. For instance, the desire to lead a life of unrestrained satisfaction of appetites and the desire to lead a life of restrained and harmonious appetites are such second order desires. In turn, the beliefs, whose inconsistency is shown by elenchus, express such second order desires. In the Gorgias, then, Socrates sees elenchus as having the psychological function of restraining the former and promoting the latter by showing the inconsistency of the beliefs which express these desires. However, I also argued that just because Socrates shows the incompatibility of these two desires, by showing the inconsistency of the beliefs that express these desires, it is not clear how he can show which desire should be preferred.

3. All passages from the *Gorgias* are cited in D. Zeyl's translation, in Cooper (1997).

knowledge because they can give a grounded reason for their procedure. By contrast, knack aims not at what is best but only at pleasure; moreover, it has no account to give of its procedure but is based only on experience of what has happened in the past. Finally, knack is deceptive because it wears the mask of techne; although ignorant, it pretends to offer what is best. Since it substitutes pleasure for what is best, the suggestion is that what is best is not always pleasant. Socrates says that in a contest between a pastry cook and a doctor, before children or childish men, the pastry cook would win. When he invokes the image later, he makes clear that the reason is that doctors mete out painful treatment whereas pastry cooks provide (unhealthy) pleasure (521e-522a).

While Socrates will further refine this fourfold schema, we have enough to appreciate Socrates' exhortation to Polus. In comparing elenchus to medicine, he is explaining that its pain is therapeutic the way medical treatment is therapeutic. Of course, medicine treats the body, but Socrates' elenchus does not aim at treating Polus' body. Rather, Socrates is referring to the analogy between medicine and judging. The latter treats the soul. So the painful treatment of elenchus is aimed at Polus' soul, although exactly how is not clear at this point. Still, Socrates' elaboration, in the third stage of this conversation, on the function of judging offers some insight. In this stage, Socrates aims to refute Polus' belief that escaping punishment for doing injustice is better than undergoing it (474b). In rough outline, he argues, first of all, undergoing just punishment is the same as the wrong-doer being justly disciplined (476a). Since justice is fine, Socrates argues that just punishment is something fine. Thus, the one who undergoes just punishment suffers what is good for his soul; in fact, he is being relieved of vice (476b-477b). However, just as painful treatment is integral to medicine, so painful treatment is integral to undergoing punishment in the court—being chastised, rebuked, and paying the penalty *(houtosd'en ho nouthetoumenoste kai epiplettomenos kai dikendidous)* (478e). What is significant is the role of pain in ridding the soul of vice. Since Socrates does not explain how punishment can have this effect, he seems to assume a commonly accepted belief that the pain of punishment causes one to reconsider his actions, or even his attitudes. In any event, Socrates focuses not on the physical pain of punishment, as Polus does (473c-d). Rather, he talks about chastisement and rebuke, which are psychological; he seems to portray the shame experienced in a courtroom when condemnation is pronounced.

If we return to Socrates' exhortation to Polus, he implies that admitting error is painful but beneficial, like medical treatment. However, we can now see that the psychological pain of admitting error is closer to that of undergoing just punishment. Socrates, then, is suggesting a psychological benefit from admitting error. So, Socrates is describing his elenchus of Polus as implying more than the embarrassment of publicly admitting that he has contradicted himself. Rather, it should improve his soul by making him face a contradiction in his beliefs. Moreover, the analogy with judicial punishment, as Socrates conceives of it, implies that the psychological improvement goes beyond rendering Polus' beliefs consistent; it aims at his behavior and attitudes. These themes are explored in the conversation with Callicles.

The idea of elenchus as punishment is more pointed in the conversation with Callicles in that desire becomes its focus. This dramatic exchange begins with Socrates and Callicles sparing over the kind of life one ought to lead. Socrates follows philosophy, of course; and Callicles pursues political power through rhetoric. Callicles' interest leads Socrates to make a very serious charge, which is methodologically fraught. While Socrates is in love with Alcibiades and with philosophy, Callicles is in love with Demos, son of Pyrilampes, and the Athenian demos. Moreover, he is incapable of contradicting his beloved; if the assembly contradicts what he is saying, changing course he says what it wishes (481d-e). Besides insinuating the theme of flattery into the conversation, this charge implies what Callicles says is motivated by his desire to please the assembly. There is a causal link between what he professes to believe and what he desires. However, this banter will give way to a

more serious theme. Later in this section of their conversation, Socrates commends Callicles for his knowledge, good-will, and frankness because, together they test the soul concerning the correctness of one's life *(basaneinhikanos psyches periorthoszoes)* (486e-487a). He also says that Callicles challenges him on the issue of what kind of man he should be and what to pursue, and up to what point, throughout his life from youth to old age (487e-488a). Of course, we know that Socrates' elenchus will do the same for Callicles, testing and challenging him on these same topics.[4] The result is that Socrates is framing their conversation in terms of the kind of life one ought to lead. Socrates' refutation, then, does not just aim at Callicles' beliefs about a random topic but at his fundamental beliefs about the best way to live. At the same time, while Callicles couches his beliefs in general terms, Socrates places Callicles' beliefs in the frame of his love for the Athenian demos, thereby making clear that what is at stake is the way Callicles thinks he should live his own life.

In fact, Socrates leads Callicles to make a declaration about the best kind of life. Callicles starts by saying that nature itself shows clearly that it is just for the better to have more than the worse and the more able than the less (483c-d). We have no doubt that Callicles sees himself as better and more able; and it is rhetoric that makes him so. Socrates sets about undermining Callicles' claim, focusing on the notions of the powerful, better, and stronger since Callicles slides from one notion to the other. Callicles, reflecting Socrates' original characterization, changes his account until they arrive at the idea that the stronger are intelligent *(phronimoi)* in the affairs of the city, in the way it should be managed; not only intelligent but brave, able to achieve what they intend—not flinching through softness of soul (491a-b). While this summary begins in an unsurprising way, it ends on a sinister note. What softness of soul is needing to be overcome? One might suspect Callicles is referring to the conventional notions of justice that he previously dismissed—the ones implanted in the souls of the naturally stronger in order to subdue them (483b-484a). In any event, he claims these determined individuals should rule in the city and should, according to natural justice, have more than the others, i.e., the ruled (491c-d).

The dramatic artistry of the next question reveals that Socrates understands Callicles to be enunciating his own ideal of living. In asking whether these naturally suited rulers should rule over themselves as well as others, Socrates is asking whether his ideal entails Callicles ruling over himself. By self-rule, he clarifies that he means moderation and self-control, ruling over one's own pleasures and desires *(ton hedonon kai epithumionarchonta ton enheautou)* (491d-e). This line of inquiry introduces the notion of desire and pleasure into the discourse—themes that will be central for the rest of the dialogue. It also provokes an explosive response from Callicles that leaves no doubt that he sees Socrates' question about self-rule as aimed at himself—and not just at an abstract claim about the best kind of life to lead. He asks how a man who is enslaved to anyone at all could be happy. He replies to this rhetorical question by invoking what is admirable and just according to nature.

> *CI The man who'll live correctly ought to allow his own appetites to get as large as possible and not restrain them. And when they are as large as possible, he ought to be competent to devote himself to them by virtue of his bravery and intelligence (phronesin), and to fill them with whatever he may have an appetite for at the time. (491e-492a)*

CI is a universal statement about all men who would live correctly. As such it applies to Callicles himself; and he cannot but mean for it to apply to himself. It is not just an observation but is also a declaration of aspiration or even intent. Moreover, by repeating the notions of intelligence and bravery, Callicles links this hedonistic manifesto to his account of those who are stronger. Previously, he was veiled in his reference to the object of their intelligence and bravery—what they intended to achieve, pushing aside their softness of soul. Now we see that they must be intelligent and brave with respect to their desires. Being knowledgeable about their desires, they will understand them apart from

4. Cf. BRICKHOUSE & SMITH, 1991, p. 136-140.

the conventions about moderation, to allow them to grow as large as possible. Then they must be brave enough to provide these unrestrained desires with what they need. Of course, it is understood that satisfying such desires is pleasurable. He charges that most people are incapable of this kind of life "because they lack the ability to provide for themselves fulfillment of their pleasures."

As the rest of the conversation shows, Callicles has not thought through what a life of unrestrained desire would actually entail. His lack of philosophical thoroughness is all too evident. Nevertheless, he is holding out a kind of hedonistic ideal, one that has a prima facie plausibility. Desire is a kind of need or emptiness whose filling is pleasurable. The greater the need the greater the pleasure. Restraining desire means restraining the need and limiting the pleasure. But restraining the desire is unnatural and forecloses the possibility of the greatest possible pleasure. People restrain desire only because they are afraid of the consequences; their fear is borne of ignorance and cowardice. But for those who are capable, it is possible to pursue pleasure without restraint. The obstacles to doing so are not internal and natural but external and conventional. Thus, one needs something like rhetoric to acquire the power to defy the external and conventional restraints on the project of following the desires where they naturally lead.

Against this ideal of endless pleasure, Socrates poses the prospect of endless servitude to desire. Seizing on Callicles' idea that pleasure comes from filling desire, he retells a story, by a clever Sicilian or Italian, that uses the image of jars. The part of the soul where desires are found he says is persuadable and changes back and forth. In Greek this description allows the pun that this part of the soul is a jar. The relation between desires and persuasion deserves serious attention. We do not know the kind of desire in question; they might be anything from bodily appetites to desires for a state of affairs—e.g., the desire to be powerful in the city. In any event, the juxtaposition of desires and persuasion is not accidental; in this part of the soul, beliefs, opinions, even appearances are unstable, presumably because they are affected by the instability of desire. In this part of the soul, then, what one believes depends on what one desires. It is hard not to see Socrates as aiming his remarks at Callicles' fascination with desire; he is warning him about being in a region where illusion is rife. The story-teller says that in the uninitiated, i.e., the thoughtless, this part of the soul, where the desires are, is unrestrained *(akolaston)* and not tightly closed; so he calls it a leaky jar, because it is insatiable. In the rest of the story, the uninitiated are condemned to fill the leaky jar using a sieve (493a-c).

Since the story does not phase Callicles, Socrates tells a different version, which elaborates on the image of jars. An unstrained life and a moderate one are represented as two men with jars needing to be filled, with wine, honey, milk, and other unspecified stuff. The moderate man has sound and filled jars. Although the commodities are scarce and obtained only by difficult effort, he does not pour any more in, once filled. No longer thinking about them, he enjoys calm about the matter. The unrestrained man, like the other, finds the sources possible but difficult; however, his jars being leaky and rotten, he is forced to fill them day and night or suffer the greatest pains (493e-494a). Socrates asks Callicles, in the face of this story, whether the orderly life is better than the unrestrained. Callicles rejects the suggestion because he takes the jars to stand for desire. Since pleasure comes from filling desire, the man with the filled jars has no pleasure; he is like a stone. The ideal is the greatest amount of inflow (494a-b). Callicles has alighted on an awkward feature of Socrates' story. Without explicitly making the comparison, he has invited Callicles to think of the jars as desire and, thus, of their filling as pleasure. The story, then, suggests a desire can be filled once and for all, thus ending all pleasure. However, we will not dwell on Callicles' objection to Socrates but will pursue the refutation that is about to unfold. It begins with Callicles' admission that he holds pleasure and the good are the same (495a). In the longer argument that finally leads Callicles to change his position, at 499b-c, he claims that some pleasures are better and some are worse. With this concession, Socrates gets

him to agree that some pleasures are beneficial and some are harmful (499d). Then he reintroduces the fourfold schema of technai and knacks, now revised so as to be relevant to the issue of choosing which pleasures are good and which are bad (500a).

At first, Socrates distinguishes between cookery and medicine on the basis that medicine investigates the nature of the person it treats and the reason for what it does; it has an account to give of each. He assumes what he said before, that this knowledge aims at what is best for the body, whereas cookery aims only at bodily pleasure. Because it has no account to give, Socrates implies it does not care about what is best for the body. Next, he turns this distinction between medicine and cookery into an analogy for two occupations aimed at the soul. Some are knowledgeable, exercising forethought about what is best for the soul; others dismiss this and consider only the pleasure of the soul, and how to provide it, without investigating which pleasures are better and worse (501a-c). One of the latter types of occupation is rhetoric, as we know from the conversation with Polus. Now, however, Socrates is developing the idea that it provides a kind of pleasure to the soul, analogous to the way cookery provides pleasure to the body. Since Callicles is aware of the aim of this analogy, he becomes reserved in his responses. Nevertheless, Socrates forges ahead in his account of the way rhetoric provides only pleasure without regard for what is best for the soul.

Socrates' first examples of pleasures of the soul are those of music and poetry. We can see that such pleasures are different from the pleasures of eating and drinking. Of course, music might be thought to belong only to the ear and, thus, to be only bodily. However, the pleasure of poetry seems more likely to be psychological than bodily, recounting and provoking, as it does, the emotions of love, hatred, fear, and joy. In the Republic, Socrates says that poetry, in gratifying the emotion of grief, provides pleasure. These sorts of pleasures are clearly different from the pleasures of bodily appetite; with pleasures of the soul, the idea of filling what is empty becomes metaphorical, as in being thirsty for crying (R. 606a-b). Nevertheless, Socrates, in introducing a different kind of pleasure, suggests a different kind of desire, internally more complex than bodily thirst. Crying over the situation of a protagonist in a drama already implies that the object of the emotion has a structure, e.g., the protagonist has suffered a loss. Taking pleasure in crying over this situation implies another structural layer.

In any event, Socrates focuses on the issue of the way poetry conveys this pleasure, in particular whether it merely gratifies or not. He posits the possibility that tragic poetry might leave aside something gratifying but bad for the audience. It might even say what is unpleasant but beneficial (502b-c). Of course, this possibility is denied; but it presages a very important theme, that there is a type of discourse that does not just gratify its audience and even tells it unpleasant but beneficial things. Socrates, in fact, asks whether there is a type of rhetoric that tries to make the souls of the citizens as good as possible, striving to say what is best, whether it is more pleasant or more unpleasant for the audience (503a-b). Callicles does not directly answer but cites what he thinks are examples of orators who have improved Athens—Themistocles, Cimon, Miltiades, and Pericles. Socrates' answer returns to the idea of desire and pleasure. These figures, he claims, filled their own desires and those of others; however, that is different from the techne that satisfies those desires whose satisfaction makes men better and does not satisfy those that make them worse (503c-d). Later in their conversation, Socrates returns to these orators. He ironically commends them for having been better able to provide what the city desires than the orators of his day (mallonhoioiteekporizeinte(i) poleihonepethumei). What the Athenians then desired were ships, walls, arsenals, and other such things. However, these orators failed in the other task of diverting these desires *(metabibazeintasepithumias)* rather than yielding to them, and persuading and forcing the Athenians to what would make them better citizens (517b-c). This sort of desire, which is the target of the older rhetoricians, shows another kind of complexity. First of all, the object of the desire is most plausibly seen as a state of affairs, i.e., that

the Athens have defensive walls. Desiring a state of affairs is very different from desiring a glass of water, as we shall see. Second, when he refers to diverting this sort of desire, Socrates suggests that the Athenians desire walls as a means to a goal. If the Athenians desire walls as a means to the goal of defense, then their desire can be diverted to other objects, if these are better means to the goal. Socrates, of course, has a more complex goal in mind than the merely physical defenses of the city.

This elaboration of the practice of the older orators suggests the way in which they were crowd-pleasers. If the Athenians wanted ships, walls, and arsenals, then giving them such things would please them. But, of course, a speech in the assembly by itself would not give them ships, walls, and arsenals and thus would not satisfy the desire and provide pleasure. However, Socrates claims that it is what the rhetoricians say that is pleasing. Furthermore, the desire for this war-making equipment is not fundamental; it is based on a more basic desire, say, to be secure or even to be a hegemonic power in the whole of Greece. Of course, a speech cannot satisfy those desires either. Rather, a speech provides a kind of psychological pleasure by telling an audience what it wants to hear. If the Athenians want to be secure or to be a hegemonic power, what they want to hear is that ships, walls, and arsenals will make them secure and a hegemonic power; or that being secure and a hegemonic power in this way is a good idea. An orator who claimed that kind of thing would definitely provide them a kind of psychological pleasure. However, that kind of speech might gratify a desire that ought not to be gratified. If ships, walls, and arsenals do not provide security and hegemony or if that kind of security and hegemony is not good for the city, the desire to hear those sorts of claim made and defended ought not to be gratified. According to Socrates, a good orator would tell the disappointing and unpleasant truth. For instance, he might have to say that only virtue can provide the kind of security and hegemony that is good for the city.

At this point, their conversation is reaching a crisis. Socrates starts to make his account of techne even more pointed. The good man, who speaks for what is best, does not say what he says at random, but with a view to some goal. Just as all craftsmen have in view their own goal, each aims at some form for what it works on. Painters, house-builders, shipwrights, each brings a certain form to what he makes; he forces the different parts to suit one another and to harmonize until he has made the whole into an organized and well-ordered product. Finally, physical trainers and physicians also make bodies organized and well-ordered (503d-504a). In this speech Socrates is developing his account of techne by characterizing the good that it accomplishes. He portrays what techne works on as made of parts that have a certain resistance to being brought together. House-builders and shipwrights, especially, have to fashion their materials into a certain shape and then fasten them together. The timbers in ships, for instance, must be bent and curved to form a hull. So, force is necessary to make a harmonized and well-ordered whole. This theme of forcing parts together picks up the idea that techne must do what is unpleasant. If medicine and judging have to administer unpleasant treatment, part of the unpleasantness might be forcing disparate parts of body or soul to harmonize.

Next, Socrates turns to the body and the soul in order to apply to them what he has said about order and regularity. If a house or a ship has these qualities, it is good. Socrates asks whether the same holds for bodies and souls. To this question Callicles agrees in a reluctant and conditional reply. Nevertheless, Socrates pushes ahead. Callicles readily admits that in the body regularity and order are strength and health. He seems to have in mind the regularity of the parts of the body and their relation to one another. But then Socrates moves to more contentious territory by asking him to name regularity and order in the soul. When Callicles balks, Socrates supplies the answer. In the soul these states are called lawful and law, whereby one becomes law-abiding and orderly. That whereby one becomes law-abiding and orderly are justice and self-control (504b-d).Callicles refused to answer because he anticipated this result, which calls into question his earlier claim that self-control is foolishness (491e). If he continues down this

road, he might have to admit that his ideal of a life characterized by self-indulgence, liberty, and license is really lawless and disorderly. So, Socrates will now turn the screw a little tighter.

> *So this is what the skilled and good orator will look to when he applies to people's souls whatever speeches he makes as well as all of his actions, and any gift he makes or any confiscation he carries out. He will always give his attention to how justice may come to exist in the souls of his fellow citizens and injustice be gotten rid of, how self-control may come to exist there and lack of discipline be gotten rid of, and how the rest of excellence may come into being there and badness may depart. Do you agree or not? (504d-e)*

To this question, Callicles agrees without apparent demure. But then Socrates switches back to the analogy with medicine in order to reintroduce the topic of desire. It does no good to give a sick body lots of even the most pleasant of food and drink if doing so will not benefit it more than doing the opposite. In fact, physicians allow the healthy to satisfy their hunger and thirst as much as they like; but they practically never allow the sick to fill their appetites. After Callicles' agreement, Socrates then alleges something analogous for souls.

> *As long as it's corrupt, in that it's foolish, undisciplined, unjust and impious, it should be kept away from its appetites and not be permitted to do anything other than what will make it better. (505 b)*

Although Callicles again agrees, he is about to withdraw from this conversation. Claiming that keeping it away from its appetites is restraining or disciplining appetites, Socrates concludes that restraining is better for the soul than lack of restraint, adding that Callicles had just maintained the opposite (505b-c).

At this point Callicles abruptly breaks off the conversation. Socrates' pregnant reply is that Callicles cannot endure being made better by undergoing what they were just talking about, being restrained *(kolazemenos)* (505c). What appears to be almost an aside actually brings together in a revealing way several themes. First, by invoking not just the idea of restraint but also the context of that idea in the analogy with medicine, Socrates compares his elenchus to a techne that restrains and disciplines. Clearly, it is not restraining a bodily appetite, the way medicine does. Socrates' refutation is like the techne that restrains the soul in order to make it better. In that regard, he is characterizing his refutation of Callicles in therapeutic terms just as he did with Polus (475d-e). Second, in the conversation with Callicles, the idea of restraining has become the idea of restraining desire. Socrates has just asked whether holding someone back from *(eirgein)* his desires is restraining *(kolazein)* him. Upon Callicles' agreement, Socrates asks whether restraining is better for the soul than unrestraint. When Callicles balks, Socrates accuses him of refusing to be restrained. Socrates leaves hanging in the air the modus tollens move. If Callicles' desires are held back, he is restrained; so, if he refuses to be restrained, his desires are not held back. Thus, this elenchus is not just showing Callicles that he holds contradictory beliefs; admitting to contradictory beliefs also restrains or disciplines this desire, or these desires. The idea that elenchus is a therapy aimed at restraining desire is confirmed by the outrageous claim that Socrates makes toward the end of the monologue that completes this conversation. Alluding to his unflattering assessment of Athenian statesmen, he says about himself:

> *I believe that I'm one of a few Athenians — so as not to say I'm the only one, but the only one among our contemporaries — to take up the true political craft and practice true politics. This is because the speeches I make on each occasion do not aim at gratification but at what's best. They don't aim at what's most pleasant. (521d-e)*

Socrates' speeches are not speeches in the usual sense but are his refutations. Clearly, they are not pleasant; as we can see in the case of Polus and Callicles, the pain consists in having to admit to contradicting oneself. In his claim about politics, Socrates implies that elenchus does not gratify. It does not just fail to please; it causes pain by not

fulfilling a desire. If being refuted fails to gratify in this way, it does so because it disappoints some expectation. It has thwarted Callicles by depriving him of something he wanted.

We have already noted that Socrates' elenchus aims at fundamental beliefs about the kind of life one ought to lead. However, Socrates' aligning elenchus with technai, like medicine, that have a therapeutic function, opens up a new dimension of elenchus. It does not just challenge these beliefs, it also restrains desire.[5] In the medical analogy, the desire to be restrained is a bodily appetite; it is an emptiness that needs to be filled. At first, one might think that the desire of Callicles that is to be restrained is some appetite that he has allowed to grow as large as possible. However, we have no reason to believe that Callicles actually has such a desire, even if he wants to be the sort of person who has such appetites. Socrates has argued that, besides those occupations like cookery that aim at pleasures of the body, there are others like poetry that aim at pleasures of the soul. He put rhetoric into this second category although he also posited a kind of rhetoric that does more than gratify its audience. Since Socrates clearly had his own elenchus in mind, we can understand his treatment of Callicles in that context. His elenchus is unpleasant not for the body but for the soul. Throughout the dialogue, pleasure is assumed to be satisfaction of desire. What follows is that pleasure of the soul is satisfaction of a desire of the soul; pain in the soul is not satisfying a desire of the soul. Of course, Socrates does not elaborate such a distinction between bodily and psychological desires. It is nevertheless open to the reader to see the psychological pain of elenchus as deriving from the disciplining of a desire that belongs properly to the soul. What that desire might be is not at all clear.

Since refuting beliefs restrains desire, we are forced to the conclusion that the belief refuted and the desire restrained are articulated with one another. We know that Socrates' refutation aims at the belief that to live correctly one ought to allow his appetites to grow as large as possible and not restrain them. What it will show is that Callicles holds beliefs (or agrees to propositions) that imply unrestrained desire is the opposite of the way to live correctly; thus, he holds beliefs that contradict something articulated in CI (505b-c). The elenchus is aimed at this belief. However, if the elenchus also restrains a desire — as Socrates says it does — it can do so only if the belief also expresses a desire to lead a life of unrestrained bodily appetites. Socratic elenchus can target the desire to lead such a life only if CI expresses this desire. So, when Callicles says that the man who'll live correctly ought to allow his own appetites to get as large as possible, his belief also expresses a desire to live that kind of life. Then when Socrates shows that this belief is inconsistent with another belief Callicles holds, he is also targeting the desire to lead this kind of life.

Thus, the kind of desire that Socrates is targeting is one whose content is a state of affairs. In English, this sort of desire can be expressed by the verb 'want' and an infinitive. One can say, "I want him to leave." or "I want the New York Yankees to lose." The range of the verb can vary in extent. For instance, "I want to lead a life of unrestrained bodily appetites" ranges over a whole life. There is a difference between an appetite for something to drink and the desire to be a certain type of person who has that appetite. It is the latter kind of desire that can be restrained by Socratic elenchus. As we shall see in more detail below, Socrates will focus on Callicles' other desire, to be a brave man. If Callicles wants to lead a life of unrestrained appetites and if he also wants to be a brave man, then he is vulnerable to Socratic elenchus if it shows leading a life of unrestrained appetites is incompatible with being a brave man. Further, if the elenchus shows that he has reason to want to be brave rather than to lead a life of unrestrained appetite, then it restrains the desire to lead a life of unrestrained appetite. So, Socratic elenchus can restrain desire only if the desire is a desire for a state of affairs. If so, Socrates has opened the scope of elenchus by introducing into the soul desire for states of affairs.

However, if he introduces such desires he must also introduce a type of belief that expresses the desirability of such states of affairs. It is this kind

5. See Carone (2004, p. 55-96), where she maintains that there is an intimate connection between belief and desire (p. 68-70); and this connection explains why elenchus is effective in promoting virtue (p. 79-81). While her interpretation is aimed at showing that the moral psychology in the Gorgias does not imply two kinds of motivation, one rational and the other non-rational, the present investigation does not pursue those issues.

of belief that will be the material of his elenchus; it is these beliefs whose consistency or inconsistency is at stake. In turn, their inconsistency will show that the desires they express are incompatible. If desires are shown to be incompatible, one cannot fulfill both. If someone, in Kierkegaard's Denmark, wants to be a minister of religion and a stage actor, both desires are for a way of life. Reflection on these two desires, in the cultural context, shows that one cannot follow both ways of life. The two desires, then, are incompatible; and one cannot fulfill both. Similarly, if Socrates shows Callicles that the life of enormous pleasure is inconsistent with being a brave man, he shows that Callicles' desire to lead a life of enormous pleasure is incompatible with his desire to be a brave man. He cannot fulfill both desires.[6] Of course, we know that realizing the incompatibility does not itself show Callicles which type of life is more desirable.[7] Even if we could solve this puzzle, we are left with a further puzzle, how to construe the resolution of incompatible desires as restraining one of them. However, we can put these puzzles aside because Callicles, even if he sees the incompatibility of these two desires, does not attempt to resolve it; nor does he restrain the desire at which Socrates is aiming, i.e., the desire to lead a life of enormous pleasure. So, the solution of these puzzles is beyond the scope of the conversation; our analysis of the elenchus must remain at the point where Callicles stops.

If this account of elenchus is correct, Socrates is aiming to change what Callicles wants his life to be. However, it is clear that Socrates is not successful. Callicles is angry, annoyed, and even resentful; but he does not reconsider CI. It is worth trying to find out why. If we start with CI, we can see that it harbors two different sorts of desire to lead a kind of life. The first desire is expressed in the first claim in CI: the man who'll live correctly ought to allow his own appetites to get as large as possible and not restrain them. The second desire is expressed in the following claim: and when they are as large as possible, he ought to be competent to devote himself to them by virtue of his bravery and intelligence *(phronesin)*, and to fill them with whatever he may have an appetite for at the time. We might say that Callicles wants a life of enormous pleasure but he wants to be someone who is also brave in the pursuit of pleasure. So, not just any headlong pursuit of a life of enormous pleasure will do. It must be intelligent and brave. This sort of bravery is clever enough to see through the conventions of justice which are only the self-interested rules the weak contrive. The inferior sort lack the ability to achieve such pleasure; they praise justice and temperance because of their cowardice (491e--492b). Callicles' sort of bravery pushes aside these rules in spite of conventional censure.

This idea of bravery seems quite powerful. One can imagine Callicles thinking that it would inspire admiration in some quarters, its audacious disregard of justice and temperance seeming heroic. At this point, one is tempted to ask how far Callicles might go in kicking over the traces of convention. For instance, in one account, the catamite could be considered brave in the pursuit of pleasure by disregarding the conventions of manliness. Again, the coward in battle might feel relief at the withdrawal of the enemy because he values the life of enormous pleasure more than the honor of dying in war. In one account, he is as good as the brave man who is also relieved, but presumably for different reasons. As Socrates shows, Callicles is not prepared to accept either account. The reason is that his notion of bravery is conventional, although at first it looks anything but conventional. Bravery that pushes aside justice is certainly not everyone's idea of being brave. Still, there are other ways in which Callicles' notion of bravery is quite conventional.[8] In the refutation of Callicles, Socrates uses two examples, to which we have just alluded: the catamite (494c-495a) and the coward (497d-499d). The life of a catamite violates the conventions of manliness; the conventions about bravery rest on a sharp distinction from cowardice. Callicles may think bravery in the service of pleasure will disregard the conventions about what is unjust; but he does not think that bravery in the pursuit of pleasure will disregard the conventions about what is manly in eros. Nor can he countenance the thought that the brave man is as good as the coward; he adheres to the conventional distinction between bravery and cowardice in battle.

6. Charles Kahn argues that Socratic elenchus' ability to establish one belief over another depends on everyone's desire for the good. Since the object of this desire is really virtue, elenchus is able to show that beliefs like CI are incompatible with virtue. Of course, if elenchus works in this way, it must somehow be effective even though Callicles is unaware that his desire for the good is really a desire for virtue. Kahn says the desire for the good is an unconscious desire for virtue. He allows that the reader—if not Callicles—sees in Socrates' refutation a distinction between two conceptions of desire. Finally, he claims that, in the Gorgias, Plato is unable to resolve the issue, which awaits developments in the Republic and Symposium. Cf. KAHN, 1983, p. 114-121.

7. Some commentators argue that, while Socrates may employ elenchus with his interlocutors, he also uses shame as an extra-rational motivation. See for instance Moss (2005, p. 137-170). My interpretation is consistent with Callicles' feeling shame at the prospect of being (seen as) a coward. However, it still supports the role of elenchus as showing Callicles holds inconsistent beliefs. One of those beliefs, about the difference between being brave and cowardly, is intimately connected with his desire to be (seen as) brave; this desire is doubtless rooted in his sense of honor. So, he might well feel shame at the prospect that he might not be brave in some context. Still, the elenchus works by showing inconsistent beliefs that express incompatible desires. See also Futter (2009, p. 451-461).

8. See Woolf (2000, p. 1-40), where he argues that Callicles holds contradictory beliefs but is unable to resolve the contradiction because more than logic is at issue. He locates this extra-logical factor in Callicles' love (eros) for the Athenian demos (p. 24-32). Woolf even alleges that Callicles is so conflicted that we can think of there being a Callicles 1 (who seeks self-fulfillment in defiance of society's conventions) and a Callicles 2 (who seeks validation from society) (p. 1-5). While this interpretation is in line with the one advocated here, it does not exploit what Socrates says about the relation between elenchus and desire.

Socrates' elenchus aims right at the way these conventional notions work in Callicles' thinking. Drawing out the consequences of the desire to lead a life of enormous pleasure, Socrates reaches the point where he says that the regular and well-ordered soul is lawful. What he says is aimed at Callicles' notion of what conforms to convention. While implying that the soul that lacks order, because its desires are unrestrained, is lawless, he is warning Callicles, if he achieves his ideal life of enormous pleasure, he will himself become lawless and contravene convention (504b-d). However, as we have seen, Callicles fully intends to violate what is lawful with respect to justice and temperance; this consequence is even desirable. This part of the elenchus, then, will have purchase on Callicles only if what is lawful refers to the conventions about the catamite and the coward that Socrates has just highlighted—in which the pursuit of pleasure, or the avoidance of pain, causes one to violate what is lawful. While Callicles does not explicitly say so, it is clear that both lives are abhorrent to him. This kind of lawlessness is not the sort that Callicles' bravery entails. In neither case does Callicles offer a justification for his rejection of these two kinds of life or for his adherence to the conventions about them. Nor does Socrates seek one. It seems clear that whatever justification he might offer would be given in terms of honor, of his standing in the culture to which he belongs.

What follows is that, if Socrates has shown the inconsistency of the life of enormous pleasure and the life of conventional honor, he has revealed an incompatibility in Callicles' desires; he wants to lead a life of enormous pleasure — but one that will be recognized as intelligent and brave. And Socrates has tried to show that he cannot satisfy both desires. Of course, Callicles may not be totally convinced but he is at least faced with a problem where none existed before. His problem is that Socrates has shown a clash between two large-scale desires that have different sources. His desire to lead a life of enormous pleasure is rooted in his appetite; it is an ideal of life devoted to the cultivation and satisfaction of appetite. His desire to be intelligent and brave is rooted in his love of honor, to be recognized by others as intelligent and brave. In its essence, Socrates is posing the problem of reconciling appetite and love of honor.

Callicles' dilemma is usually taken to be a puzzle to be solved by a more complex moral psychology. While Callicles harbors in his soul appetitive desire and love of honor, any other kind of desire is at best shadowy. The solution usually proposed is the tripartite soul propounded in *Republic* 4, where Socrates introduces the reasoning part, whose interest transcends that of appetite and of love of honor. Without gainsaying that well-attested tradition, I would like to propose another way to think about Callicles' dilemma. We can appreciate the reason the desire to lead a life of enormous pleasure and the love of honor might pose a dilemma for Callicles by considering a somewhat strange type of desire that Socrates describes in the *Republic* (583c-585e) and in the *Philebus* (50c--52b). He wants to point out the existence of a kind of pleasure that is unmixed with pain. For our purposes, we can look at the Philebus passage, without undertaking an exhaustive analysis. Socrates cites, among others, examples of pleasures associated with most smells and sounds.

> *…and in general all those that are based on imperceptible and painless lacks (endeias), while their fulfillments (pleroseis) are perceptible and pleasant. (51b)*[9]

The talk of lack (emptiness) and fulfillment (filling) shows the notion of desire as emptiness and its filling as pleasure is still at work. What is odd, of course, is the notion that the lack is unperceived; this sounds like a desire that one is unaware of until the moment it is being satisfied. However, this odd notion is needed if Socrates is to make good on his claim about pleasure unmixed with pain, since perception of emptiness is painful. This relation between desire as painful emptiness and pleasure as fulfilling is confirmed and extended in what he says about the pure pleasure of knowing:

> *Then let us also add to these the pleasures of learning (peri ta mathemata), if indeed we are agreed that there is no such thing as hunger (peinas) for learning*

9. Passages from the *Philebus* are cited in D. Frede's translation, in Cooper (1997).

connected with them, nor any pains that have their source in hunger for learning (51e-52a)

Denying that there is a hunger for learning may strike the reader as even more odd than unperceived lack. We will not consider Socrates' attempt to explain the oddness away. For our purposes what is important is the reference to a desire like hunger, i.e., an appetite. Socrates cannot be denying that we desire to learn; rather, he is denying that the desire is like hunger, i.e., experienced as painful. But even this description sounds odd. Perhaps, he means (something like) the pleasure of learning the proof of the Pythagorean theorem arises when we begin to understand what we do not know just as we are filling the lack.

This awkward notion, however, has one important consequence for our understanding the ways in which one might desire a character trait, like bravery. In one case, one might desire to have a character trait in such a way that satisfying the desire leads to pleasure mixed with pain. For instance, if love of honor is the reason one desires to be brave then the desire for honor — for recognition — is experienced as painful; its satisfaction mixes pain and pleasure. One desires to be brave because being brave satisfies the hunger for honor. In the second case, one might desire to have a character trait in such a way that satisfying the desire is pure pleasure; one desires to be brave, but not because being brave satisfies a hunger for recognition, or any need like it. One is not aware of this kind of desire as a painful lack. This is a desire that breaks through the veil, so to speak, of neediness found in other kinds of desire. Then one can desire being bravebecause it is worthy to be desired as such, beyond the need that comes from the love of honor. Of course, being brave satisfies another kind of need but one that does not distort what is needed by confusing it with what is needed to relieve pain. In Socrates' account, this feature means the pleasure of satisfying this other need is pure, unmixed with pain. My proposal is that Socrates' odd notions of unperceived desire and pure pleasure is a way of talking about a desire to be brave that transcends the need to be recognized by others as brave. This combination shifts the focus from the need to be recognized to something like pure delight in the goodness of being brave, in the way it completes the soul in a way not yet expected.

Assuming this proposal is correct, we can see why elenchus does not succeed with Callicles. For him, elenchus could not make clear the choice between the desire for a life of enormous pleasure and the desire to be a brave person because, to him, both desires were a painful lack. The first is based on the lack of maximum pleasure; the second on the lack of recognition, of being honored. Both are painful to him; both cannot be satisfied. That is what elenchus shows. However, suppose Callicles had come to realize that he had another kind of desire for being brave — one whose awareness did not start with the pain of need but with the recognition of a need that he understands only as it is being satisfied. One can appreciate why uncovering this kind of desire is beyond the reach of Socrates' elenchus in the Gorgias.

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