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THE REFUTATION OF CALLICLES IN PLATO'S *GORGIAS*

By GEORGE KLOSKO

In a well-known article appearing in 1967, E. L. Harrison examines Plato's manipulation of Thrasymachos in the first book of the *Republic*. Harrison looks into certain peculiarities in the argument between Thrasymachos and Socrates and explores motives that may have led Plato to have Thrasymachos develop his doctrine in this particular fashion.¹ Though Harrison's conclusions are widely discussed and frequently accepted,² it strikes me as interesting that little scholarly attention has been focussed on equally striking features of the debate between Socrates and Callicles in the *Gorgias*. For I believe it can be shown that Plato's presentation of Callicles contains numerous peculiarities of its own, that the powerful, vigorously argued doctrine of immoralism enunciated by Callicles in a celebrated portion of the dialogue is actually infected with glaring weaknesses. I do not believe that these weaknesses have been satisfactorily accounted for, nor has the possibility been explored that Plato could have put them there intentionally.³ The purpose of this paper, then, is threefold: (a) to examine the nature of these flaws in Callicles' position; (b) to demonstrate their apparently odd and gratuitous character; and (c) to explore possible reasons Plato may have had for incorporating them into his presentation of Callicles in the *Gorgias*.

I

What Callicles is best known for is the moral position advanced in his great speech at *Gorgias* 482c–486d. The speech is composed of three parts: a statement of Callicles' ethical views; then a description of his opinion of the limited usefulness of an education in philosophy; and finally an exhortation for Socrates to give up his life dedicated to philosophy, in order to follow more practical pursuits. In this paper I will be concerned with only the first portion of Callicles' speech, the doctrine of immoralism presented in 482c–484c. But equally important, I will examine the arguments that Socrates brings forward at the close of his speech in order to overthrow and refute him. What is of special interest is the series of modifications and transformations Callicles is forced to make in order to withstand Socrates' dialectical assault. I believe it will be seen that some of these are uncalled for, while the specific form that particular ones take should most probably be viewed as nothing less than Plato's sabotage of Callicles.

The heart of Callicles' doctrine of immoralism is presented in the

incomparably vigorous passage from 483b–484c. Callicles begins by making the well-known distinction between ‘nature’ and ‘convention’ (*physis* and *nomos*). He argues that the predominance of existing moral customs and conventions (and the political laws as well, which are also included under the term *nomoi*) are not rooted in ‘nature’ but are the result of agreements, compacts, made by the weaker and inferior members of society in order to promote their own interests. Anticipating the claims of Nietzsche, Callicles accounts for the equality legislated by the many as arising from *ressentiment*.⁴ The many, who are naturally weak, are afraid of being taken advantage of by those stronger than themselves, and so call such self-aggrandizement disgraceful and unjust; they are well content to see themselves treated equally, when they are actually inferior. According to the morality of nature on the other hand, the strong should rule over the weak and have more. To substantiate this view, Callicles cites as natural the way things work in the animal kingdom and in the arena of international affairs. Finally, he describes the process through which the many are able to tame and enervate those who are naturally powerful, and to enthrall them with their talk of equality. However, when one of these is able to burst the bonds that hold him, to cast aside conventional laws and norms and to rise from being held down beneath the many to become their master, ‘there dawns the full light of natural justice’ (484a–b).

Once Callicles has outlined this conception of natural justice, Socrates attacks it by focussing upon its least clearly developed aspect. Callicles has used a variety of terms to refer to the ‘powerful’,⁵ and so Socrates demands clarification.⁶ Callicles is led eventually to reveal the powerful as ‘those who are wise as regards public affairs and the proper way of conducting them, and not only wise but manly, with ability to carry out their purpose to the full, and who will not falter through softness of soul’ (491b). Strength, then, for Callicles is described as a special combination of political talents, not unlike Machiavelli’s *virtu*.

Socrates begins his attack on Callicles’ revised position by shifting from the question of how according to natural justice the powerful will rule over others to whether they will rule over themselves. Socrates raises this question with a suddenness that causes most commentators to take notice. But more surprising than this shift in Socrates’ line of enquiry is the nature of Callicles’ response.

In attempting to reply, Callicles has trouble understanding what Socrates means by ‘one who rules himself’. Socrates explicates this as ‘merely what most people mean’, one who is temperate and master of his pleasures and desires (491d–e). Given this description of self-mastery, it is not surprising that Callicles rejects it; he sees temperance as merely another form of the subordination of *physis* to *nomos*, of

natural morality to the morality of the many. Callicles makes this case in a second highly impressive speech (491e–492c), which we will examine. But what is important to note here is that Callicles does more than reject the temperance of the many; he rejects the restraint of desire altogether. This is the first of a series of such apparently gratuitous overstatements on Callicles' part. Needless to say, insofar as his dialectical confrontation with Socrates is concerned, these responses are not only uncalled for but unwise. They present openings which Socrates is only too happy to exploit.

Callicles' speech here contains three basic points. First, he rejects the notion of temperance entirely. A man cannot be happy if he is a slave to anyone including himself. Thus it is just and noble according to nature (*to kata physin kalon kai dikaion*) to allow one's appetites to grow as strong as possible and not to restrain them, provided one has the wherewithal to be able to satisfy them when they are at their height. According to Callicles' second point, which recalls the thrust of his original speech, the many do not have the means to satisfy developed appetites. Thus, out of resentment, they legislate their impotence into moral law in the form of temperance. They call licentiousness ignoble, and so enslave the better type of men, as Callicles had said earlier. Finally, in his third point, Callicles declares his contempt for those fortunate enough to be able to rise above temperance and justice but who do not do so. The examples he mentions are possessors of political power. He says that for those with absolute power to be bridled by 'the law, the talk, and the rebuke of the multitude' would be disgraceful and unjust. For according to genuine morality: 'luxury and licentiousness and liberty, if they have the support of force, are virtue and happiness, and the rest of these embellishments – the unnatural covenants of mankind – are all mere stuff and nonsense' (492c). We turn now to the implications of Callicles' position.

II

Though much of what Callicles says in his account of temperance is consistent with his earlier arguments and also tactically to his advantage, I think it is clear that he also makes some rash and damaging statements, which we will examine in detail. However, before proceeding, it is perhaps advisable to say something about the status of the claims that will be made below.

I think it should be made clear from the outset that in the following pages I am in no way attempting to unearth Callicles' 'true position'. The Callicles of the *Gorgias* is Plato's character and the only positions he espouses are those Plato has put into his mouth. If Plato wishes for him to give voice to some foolish arguments, there is little the commen-

tator can do but report them. However, I think it is also important to indicate exactly where Callicles goes wrong. I think it can be seen that his major problems stem from errors of exaggeration and overstatement, and by toning these down in apparently slight and undramatic ways, he would be able to modify his position in fundamental respects, with the result being a view that is no easy prey for Socrates' refutations. By looking at some of these possible modifications, we will be able to see how unfortunate the direction in which Callicles chooses to go really is. In the next section we will also enquire into possible reasons Plato may have had for having Callicles develop his arguments as he does.

Returning to Callicles' speech, we have noted that the position to which he commits himself on the question of temperance is the rejection of all restraint of desire. He says that the powerful man should let his desires grow 'as strong as possible' (*hōs megistas*, 491e9; and 492d6–7), as long as he possesses the resources to minister to them. His meaning becomes fully clear in subsequent exchanges, when he says that his conception of the happy life involves having and satisfying hunger and thirst 'and all the other desires' (*tas allas epithumias hapasas*, 494b–c) – an 'all' which both he and Socrates take literally.

Admissions such as these are by no means inadvertent on Callicles' part, and under Socrates' questioning he assents to a number of similarly extreme propositions. Callicles' overall moral view is nowhere explicitly set forth in his exchanges with Socrates, and it is not possible to reconstruct its precise logical structure. But a broad outline of it is something along the following lines.

Callicles is a hedonist. He has a view of pleasure to back up his view of temperance. When Socrates asks him if someone who has many appetites which he must constantly strive to satisfy, does not find himself in a painful state, Callicles replies that someone who is no longer in need, who has taken his fill once and for all, no longer experiences the pleasure that accompanies the satisfaction of appetites. Making the assumption that the satisfaction of appetites gives pleasure (see 494a), Callicles argues that having large appetites is necessary for the enjoyment of great pleasures. He states this too in an exaggerated form. He declares that a pleasant life consists in 'the largest possible' (*hōs pleiston*) amount of inflow (494b). Basing his position on the further assumption that pleasure is good – and is in fact identical with good⁷ – Callicles is not able to differentiate between good and bad pleasures (495a, 495d). Because he believes that pleasure comes from the satisfaction of appetites, he is logically committed to the view that the satisfaction of *all* appetites is good (494c). Accordingly, he believes that the strong man's appetites should be allowed to grow as strongly as possible. Callicles' views justify his rejection of any restraint of appetite. By

restraining any desire whatsoever, the powerful individual would be depriving himself of a source of pleasure.

Thus when Callicles' view is brought to its conclusion, it is seen to be an exaggerated form of hedonism. Callicles is allowed to make no distinctions between pleasures; his strong man is committed to a ceaseless quest for every and all forms of pleasure. This is of course an extreme position, and unfortunately for Callicles, because he has committed himself to it the striking and provocative immoralism enunciated in his original speech is able to be brushed aside, and Socrates is able to deal with him as simply a radical – and somewhat simpleminded – hedonist.

Given the nature of the position Callicles now occupies, it is not surprising that Socrates is able to crush him with a series of dialectical arguments (495e–499b). These need not be examined here,⁸ but it is important to note that the target of Socrates' attack is Callicles' identification of pleasure and the good. By 499b this position is overthrown. Callicles is forced to admit that some pleasures are bad, and so that the good and the pleasant are not identical. Having dispensed with Callicles' moral position in this way, Socrates is able to go on and devote the remainder of the *Gorgias* to developing the outlines of an alternative view, which prefigures the central political teaching of the *Republic*.

As should be clear at this point, I believe it is somewhat unfair on Plato's part to dismiss Callicles' immoralism in this fashion. Though not without inconsistencies and other flaws, it is doubtless a serious moral position that is worthy of serious consideration. Though Callicles' immoralism can no doubt assume a form in which it is closely connected with hedonism, this connection is by no means necessary, while even if one were to espouse immoralism in connection with hedonism, I see no reason why this hedonism should be of the extreme form advocated by Callicles. Thus I believe that the inexorable process through which Callicles is led to divulge his deepest convictions is in actuality anything but inexorable. Callicles is repeatedly induced to reveal more of his basic assumptions. On each of these occasions he has the opportunity to offer a variety of responses to Socrates' questions, yet each time he makes an unfortunate choice, with the cumulative result as we have seen. The most important concessions Callicles makes can be expressed in the form of propositions to which he commits himself:

- (C.1) *Any* restraint of desire is undesirable for the strong man.
- (C.2) The strong man should allow his desires to grow *as strong as possible*.
- (C.3) The strong man should allow *all* his desires to grow.
- (C.4) The satisfaction of *all* desires is pleasant.⁹
- (C.5) Pleasure is *identical* with good.

It seems to me that by modifying these propositions in some fairly obvious and commonsensical respects, Callicles would be able to improve his resulting moral position considerably. For reasons of space, I will concentrate on (C.1)–(C.3), which bear more intimate connections with Callicles' immoralism than the hedonism expressed in (C.4) and (C.5). As Plato has presented Callicles, his adherence to (C.1)–(C.3) rests on his commitment to (C.4) and (C.5). However, if (C.1), (C.2), and (C.3) were toned down in some appropriate manner, (C.4) and (C.5) could be dispensed with, with the resulting moral view representing a far more defensible position than the one Callicles actually espouses.

Before proceeding to examine (C.1)–(C.3) in detail, it is necessary briefly to say something about (C.4) and (C.5). The point to note here, which is powerful evidence of Plato's manipulation of Callicles, is the unsophisticated nature of the hedonism Callicles presents. For it is so obviously wrongheaded that Callicles himself is presented as not really adhering to it (495a–c, 499b).

According to Callicles' hedonism, the satisfaction of *all* desires is pleasant and so good. As Socrates points out, Callicles is unable to distinguish between good and bad pleasures (495a) – and so good and bad desires. What is important to note is that in the *Protagoras*, which most scholars believe to predate the *Gorgias*,¹⁰ Plato presents a detailed account of how good and bad pleasures can be distinguished, and does so without departing from an overall framework of ethical hedonism. The argument in the *Protagoras* is based on a crude felicific calculus. The Socrates of the *Protagoras* explains how what are ordinarily taken to be bad pleasures, e.g., eating sweets, are actually *unpleasant* over the long run. Eating large quantities of ice cream, for example, might seem pleasant for the moment, but since it leads to indigestion, tooth decay, and overweight in the future, it gives more pain than pleasure over the course of time – which accounts for its bad reputation. Along similar lines, the good pain, e.g., a trip to the dentist, yields more pleasure than pain over the long run.¹¹ Callicles' view, however, is less developed. He pays no mind to Bentham's familiar variables – intensity, duration, etc.¹² Caring only for the brute existence of pleasure, Callicles holds that the satisfaction of any desire, no matter how fleeting, is pleasant and good, regardless of consequences. Socrates does not hesitate to point out the absurdity of this view (494b–e). To go Socrates one better, Callicles is committed to the view that drinking cyanide is pleasant and good, provided one has a craving for the taste of bitter almonds.

I think it is clear, then, that Callicles' hedonism is an extremely poor position, which Plato has foisted on him. Had Plato wished to strengthen his position, he had only to allow Callicles to use portions of the

felicific calculus presented in the *Protagoras*. But Plato obviously did not wish to do so, and we will discuss possible reasons for this below.

Returning to (C.1)–(C.3), the connection between Callicles' position on temperance and his immoralism has been seen. Just as he casts aside the many's conception of justice as an artificial imposition of *nomos* upon *physis*, so he rejects conventional temperance too as an attempt to bridle the naturally powerful individual, which is rooted in the weakness of the many. The similarity between conventional temperance and conventional justice is pointed out in Callicles' speech (492a–b), and so in light of his commitment to natural morality, Callicles has sound reasons for rejecting the restraint of desire advocated by the many.

The mistake Callicles makes, however, is rejecting the restraint of desire altogether. (C.1) is by no means the sole alternative to the many's conception of temperance. Any conception of temperance entails two things: (a) that certain desires must be restrained; and (b) a specification of which these are, and which other desires should be allowed to grow and be satisfied. Insofar as the many understand temperance to entail a specific mode of life, Callicles' strong man should reject it. The many live as they do because they have no choice. The strong man, who does have a choice, would be foolish to settle for the appetites they allow themselves. Thus the many's view of permissible appetites should be rejected. But having rejected this, Callicles has numerous possibilities as to what to put in its place, and the choice he makes, (C.1), is extremely poor. An indication of how poor it is is seen in Irwin's recent attempt to defend it. In response to the question why anyone who rejects conventional justice must also accept Callicles' conception of a good life, Irwin concludes:

Perhaps Plato believes that someone who rejects *nomos* and its conception of justice as a whole can justify himself only by advocating the complete self-indulgence supported by Callicles. Plato does not show that Callicles' ground is the only reasonable ground for a general criticism of *nomos*; it is up to Plato's opponent to find a more defensible ground if Callicles is refuted.¹³

This is notably weak. Rather than pointing out the connections between Callicles' views, Irwin (a) suggests that Plato may have believed there were such connections; (b) says that Plato has not shown them; and (c) leaves it to some future opponent to discover these and restate Callicles' case. I think it is clear that Irwin is not able to give a satisfactory explanation for Callicles' strategy.

In order to demonstrate just how odd Callicles' position is, I will show how easy it is to modify it to make it stronger. The general thrust of the modifications I have in mind strikes me as so obvious that the fact that Plato does not have Callicles assume this sort of position seems to me to require explanation. To begin with, I believe it would be to

Callicles' advantage not to espouse (C.1), but rather to choose a somewhat different proposition such as the following, which I construct for the purpose:

(C.1 mod.) The restraint of desires as *prescribed by the many* is undesirable for the strong man.

Though I do not contend that this is the only alternative open to Callicles, or necessarily the best, (C.1 mod.) seems to me to possess the advantages of (C.1) without its grievous disadvantages. Similarly, the exaggerated view of desire presented in (C.2) and (C.3) is gratuitous and foolish. Callicles believes that, because of their weakness, the many are forced to restrain numerous desires they would rather indulge. He also believes that the strong man is in the enviable position of being able to indulge himself; he can afford to have desires that are stronger than the many's and a variety wider than the many's. But the strong man has no reason to commit himself to the satisfaction of every conceivable passion, each of which is brought to its strongest possible state. This would be merely to substitute the tyranny of (literally) unbridled passion for the tyranny of conventional morality. Instead, Callicles could easily choose principles such as these (again constructed for the present purpose):

(C.2 mod.) The strong man should have desires that are *stronger than those of the many*.

(C.3 mod.) The strong man should have *more desires than the many have*. The position represented by these two propositions fits together neatly with (C.1 mod.), and all three taken together seem to me to accomplish Callicles' main end. He believes that pleasure comes from the satisfaction of desire, and that a life filled with great pleasures is worthy of choice. Accordingly, in (C.1 mod.) he sets aside the strong man's limiting himself to the desires permitted by the many. In (C.2 mod.) and (C.3 mod.) he advocates the strong man's being equipped with a large variety of strong desires. Since he has the means to satisfy these, the strong man will enjoy a life filled with delights. And he will do so without being forced to give equal time to the hideous desires Socrates is able to call forth.

It seems to me that if Callicles had responded to Socrates with a position constructed from these modified propositions, he would have been far better able to withstand Socrates' dialectical assault. Moreover, this strikes me as a plausible position for Callicles because it is able to fulfil one function that the position he actually assumes is not. According to Socrates, Callicles' statements concerning desire express what the rest of the world also thinks but is not willing to say (492d). However, the rest of the world wants something closer to the modified position I have sketched than to Callicles' own.

A wonderfully clear account of the aspirations of ordinary men is given by Glaucon in Book 2 of the *Republic*. Glaucon's remarks are, of course, presented in the role of devil's advocate, attacking justice. Having described the origin of justice – in a contract for self-protection not unlike the one Callicles describes in his opening speech – Glaucon goes on to argue that all men abide by this agreement unwillingly. What interests us in Glaucon's presentation here is his description of people's desires. He says that people practise justice unwillingly, from want of power to commit injustice with impunity (*Rep.* 359b). Had they this power, they would behave after the manner of Gyges; each would take what he wished from the marketplace, have sexual relations with whom-ever he wished, and slay and loose from bonds whomever he wished (*Rep.* 360b–c). Similarly, according to Glaucon, the benefits the perfectly unjust man enjoys are success in business, marrying well, and having his children marry well, good reputation, and the ability to reward and punish whomever he pleases (*Rep.* 362b–c). Glaucon says that anyone having the ability to commit injustice – and reap its rewards – who refrained from doing so must be mad (*mainesthai.*, *Rep.* 359b).

Thus, according to Glaucon, the happiness that power brings lies in its giving its holder more of the good things in life. It is important to note that the goods represented by Glaucon as the objects of people's wishes are those commonly regarded as such – money, honour, sexual pleasure, etc. Glaucon does not say anything about people wishing to satisfy *all* their appetites; people simply want *more* of what satisfies their existing appetites.¹⁴

One other aspect of Glaucon's view bears mention. Commentators have frequently noted that Callicles seems in various ways close to Plato's heart. According to these scholars, though Plato doubtless disapproves of much of what Callicles stands for, he presents Callicles with such vividness as to betray a certain sympathy.¹⁵ There clearly are numerous respects in which Callicles and Plato hold similar views. Like Callicles, Plato stands opposed to conventional morality and advocates in its place the propagation of supremely desirable human qualities – though of course the qualities he has in mind are different. Plato too believes that the individuals with these traits, in his case the philosophers, should rule. Moreover, in the *Republic*, not only are the philosophers to rule over others inferior to themselves, but the inferior must be ruled as slaves (*Rep.* 590c–d). The similarity between Plato and Callicles breaks down here in that Plato holds that such rule is necessary in order to benefit the inferior, while Callicles has quite different plans for the lesser folk. But again the overall nature of his moral position has these similarities with that of Plato.

There is one other possible similarity to which I would call attention,

though this is not pursued by Callicles. It seems to me that Callicles very well could – and, I believe, should – take his stand upon a certain conception of moral autonomy. As we have seen, he rejects the choice of desires recommended by the many, in favour of the indiscriminate pursuit of all desires. What I think Callicles should stress instead is that his way of life allows the strong man to reject the desires advocated by the many in favour of those *he* chooses to indulge. This seems to me to be the sentiment secretly harboured in the many's hearts, to which Callicles supposedly gives voice (cf. 492d). As evidence for this, a look at Glaucon's view shows that the ring of Gyges gives its possessor the ability to appropriate *what he wishes* from the marketplace, to have sexual relations *with whomever he wishes*, and to slay and free *whomever he chooses* (*Rep.* 360b–c). Similarly, according to Polus, the tyrant's power is supremely desirable because it allows him to do whatever he thinks fit in his city (*Grg.* 466b–467a; esp. 467a2).

That this is similar to one of Plato's cherished moral ideas is clear. In the *Crito* Socrates declares his moral independence as follows (46b): 'I am not only now but always a man who follows nothing but the *logos* which on consideration seems to me best.' Similarly, I believe Callicles should emphasize his strong man's independence. Rather than living as the multitude dictates, the strong man does as he pleases. He recognizes no principles higher than those he chooses to follow. And whereas Socrates' independence is in the final analysis backed up only by his willingness to die for his convictions, Callicles' strong man can exercise unaccountable power, doing as he pleases, while being safe from the onslaughts of resentful others.

Thus according to the modification of Callicles' view I have set forth, the strong man uses his power to get more of life's goods. He does not have to settle for the allotments offered by the many. He takes what he pleases from whomever he pleases and allows his desires to grow, secure in his ability to satisfy them. Because *all* his appetites are not given free rein, he stands immune from Socrates' initial line of attack (494b–c). The course he chooses is not a plover's existence, but a life of unexcelled delights.

Had Callicles chosen this view, Socrates would have had no easy time refuting him. Socrates' most obvious line of attack is that such a life must lead to a chaos of competing, insatiable appetites, as the life of the democratic man described in *Republic* 8 inevitably bears fruit in the hellish condition of the tyrannic man described in Book 9. But this argument depends upon a number of complex assumptions about the nature of pleasure and desire that Socrates would have no easy time proving (on this more below).

That a man could live enjoyably giving in to whatever desires he

chose is not obviously absurd, while the fact that such a life expresses the aspirations of the many can only make it more plausible. Portions of Callicles' remarks are in fact similar to this view (esp. 492b–c), while earlier in the *Gorgias* Polus expresses what is clearly the true state of affairs when he says that almost nobody would prefer the Socratic alternative of having wrong done to one to a life of such rewards, no matter how unjustly earned (471a–474b).¹⁷ Thus it is not easy to know how Socrates could proceed. Through his use of the *elenchos*, Socrates is able to refute people in either of two ways. He is able to focus on inconsistencies in the opinions they hold; or he is able to draw consequences from their views that are otherwise unacceptable, generally because they seem obviously absurd.¹⁸ Callicles would be able to resist both strategies. The majority of Socrates' interlocutors are ignorant about moral questions and, never having thought seriously about such matters, can be led to contradict themselves quite easily. Callicles, on the other hand, has been exposed to a philosophical education (see 485a–c). He has thought about moral questions and has developed his distinctive brand of immoralism. Thus, holding what appears to be a reasonably consistent moral view, Callicles would not simply stumble into self-contradiction. Moreover, unlike Gorgias and Polus, who are unwilling to admit the full implications of their views and so fall into contradiction out of shame, Callicles has no shame. He is willing to say what other people think but dare not admit. Perhaps Socrates could attempt to force Callicles to specify the desires his strong man would indulge, hoping thereby to show some unfavourable consequences from these, perhaps that no one who hoped to rule others could at the same time afford to indulge his appetites. But Callicles could easily resist this line of attack. It is conventional political wisdom that the successful ruler must avoid certain passions and excesses that are capable of bringing him to ruin.¹⁹ And someone of the kind Callicles has in mind – not only knowledgeable about political affairs, but resolute of purpose and not soft of soul (491b) – would not so indulge. Barring this, Callicles' modified position seems strong. To sum up, then, the line of defence sketched here, which seems to me an obvious one, presents itself as an attractive alternative to the view Callicles actually chooses and would seem to cause Socrates formidable dialectical difficulties. I do not believe we would be amiss in wondering why Callicles does not pursue it.

III

Though most scholars view the different portions of Callicles' position as fitting together to form an organic whole,²⁰ I think it has been seen that there is no necessary connection between his immoralism and his

views concerning temperance and pleasure. As the weakness of Irwin's attempt shows, Callicles' distinctive brand of hedonism cannot be justified as necessary to support his immoralism, and so his reason for holding it must be sought elsewhere, most likely in Plato's literary intentions in the *Gorgias*. Two considerations especially spring to mind, and I will discuss them briefly, as a conclusion to this paper.

First, I think it is probable that Plato has Callicles develop his views as he does, in order to enable Socrates to connect up with and elaborate upon important themes discussed earlier in the *Gorgias*. As scholars have long noted, the *Gorgias* revolves around two different questions: (a) the nature of rhetoric and its connection with democratic politics; and (b) the nature of the moral life, i.e., how we should live.²¹ The basis of Socrates' definition and criticism of rhetoric in the earlier portions of the dialogue is that it is a form of 'flattery' (*kolakeia*); it is an inferior technique, aiming at what is pleasant not what is good. Once Socrates has defined rhetoric in this way, the topic of the dialogue becomes its value and gradually evolves into a discussion of how men should live. This, of course, is the topic of discussion between Socrates and Callicles so far as we have followed them. The connection with the earlier portions of the dialogue is established, then, by making Callicles a hedonist. If rhetoric is an art aiming only at pleasure, the worth of pleasure must be discussed. And so in criticizing Callicles' hedonism, Socrates is able to return to his denunciation of the false politics of a democratic system, in which the rulers pander to the masses by offering them what is pleasant, not what is good.

But even more than this it seems to me that Plato reveals Callicles as an *extreme* hedonist in order to enable Socrates to deal with hedonism effectively. It seems clear that, at least through the middle dialogues, Plato is firmly convinced that ethical hedonism is false. Plato believes that pleasure is not the good, and he is convinced that a life of physical pleasure cannot possibly be a happy one.²² In close company with these beliefs, Plato thinks that physical desire is by its very nature insatiable, that any attempt to satisfy it must be futile. This belief finds graphic, mythic expression in the *Gorgias*, in Socrates' parables of the water-carriers and of the leaky jars (493a–494a). Accordingly, Plato believes that insofar as Callicles' strong man will live a life of physical pleasure, he is destined for unhappiness. In the terms used earlier in the *Gorgias*, his power will give him 'only what seems best to him', not 'what he actually wishes for' – what is truly in his interest (see esp. 467b). The problem, however, is that the *Gorgias* is not the place to prove all of this. A proof that a life of physical pleasure is less happy than a just life would be a long and difficult argument, requiring detailed discussion of numerous complex moral and psychological matters. Even if Plato had

all of this supporting material worked out when he wrote the *Gorgias*, which is not certain,^{2,3} in the *Gorgias* he has other fish to fry. And so, in order to allow Socrates to demonstrate the unsatisfactory results of a life of physical pleasure, Callicles is led to hold an extreme and indefensible doctrine in support of such a life. A more detailed and rigorous discussion of the comparative advantages of lives devoted to physical appetite and to justice must wait until the *Republic*.

NOTES

1. 'Plato's Manipulation of Thrasymachus', *Phoenix* 21 (1967); similarly, J. P. Maguire, 'Thrasymachus . . . or Plato?', *Phronesis* 16 (1971).

2. See, e.g., Maguire, 142 n. 3; cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1962–81), III. p. 96.

3. See below n. 20.

4. See the Appendix in E. R. Dodds, *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford, 1959): 'Socrates, Callicles, and Nietzsche'.

5. E.g., *beltion, ameinōn, ischuroteron, kreittōn*; for a brief explication of these, see Dodds, *Gorgias*, pp. 284–85.

6. Esp. 489c4–7; G. Santas *Socrates: Philosophy in Plato's Early Dialogues* (London, 1979), pp. 261–66 is especially good on the argument in 488b–491a.

7. See T. Irwin, *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 197–200, for as precise an account of Callicles' hedonism as can be given.

8. They are carefully analysed by Irwin (*Gorgias*, pp. 201–4) and Santas (*Socrates*, pp. 266–86) and shown to be fallacious by both.

9. In constructing (C.4), I combine two propositions, that pleasure comes from the satisfaction of desires, and that the strong man should satisfy all his desires; both are found in 494c.

10. See Dodds, *Gorgias*, pp. 21–22; Guthrie, *History*, IV. p. 214; both of these contain numerous further references; cf. A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work*, 6th ed. (Cleveland, 1956), p. 235; G. M. A. Grube, *Plato's Thought* (1935; rpt. Boston, 1958), p. xii.

11. See *Protagoras* 353c–355a; on this, see C. C. W. Taylor, *Plato: Protagoras* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 174–79; cf. Irwin, *Gorgias*, pp. 196–99.

12. J. Bentham, *The Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Ch. IV.

13. Irwin, *Gorgias*, pp. 192–93; see also pp. 196–97; and see below n. 20.

14. Similarly in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle gives the desire for more of the goods men covet – 'those they pray for and pursue' (1129b4) – as the motive for injustice. These goods are such things as honour, money, and security (1130a32–b5). Cf. the aspirations seen in Polus' remarks at *Grg.* 466c; and in those of Thrasymachos at *Rep.* 344b–c.

15. See, e.g., W. Jaeger, *Paideia* (Oxford, 1939–45), I. p. 324; J. Skemp, *Plato's Statesman* (London, 1952), p. 29.

16. In 46b4 Burnet changes the generally accepted reading, *ou monon nun*, to *ou nun proton*; see his note, *Plato's Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, and Crito* (Oxford, 1924), ad loc. Cf., e.g., J. Adam, *Platonis Crito*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1891), text and ad loc.

17. Cf. Callicles' remarks at 483a–b.

18. On the *elenchos*, see R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1953), Ch. II.

19. A number of examples of princes brought down by their passions are collected by Aristotle in the *Politics*, Bk. 5, Ch. 8; see 1311b40–1312a14; 1312b17–25; cf. 1314b28–36.

20. See, e.g., Jaeger, *Paideia*, II. pp. 140–41; P. Friedländer, *Plato* (Princeton, 1958–69), II. p. 262; E. Barker, *Greek Political Theory*, p. 161. Dodds (*Gorgias*, p. 291) sees the immoralism and view on temperance as linked by opposition to conventional morality. Attempts to demonstrate the connection are made by Santas (*Socrates*, pp. 256–57, 266) and Irwin (*Gorgias*, pp. 192–93, 196–97) (see above, p. 132). The difficulty of proving this is seen in the weakness of Irwin's arguments. Of commentators I have consulted, only T. Gomperz, (*The Greek Thinkers* (London, 1901–12)) seems

fully aware of the arbitrary connections in Callicles' position; see I. pp. 405–7; II. pp. 335, 351–52. Had Gomperz consolidated these findings, he would have come close to the argument of this paper. The arbitrariness is noted in passing by, e.g., Grube (*Plato's Thought*, p. 56 n.1) and Taylor (*Plato*, p. 116). H. Raeder notes the suddenness of the shift between immoralism and temperance, though without noting any difficulties in Callicles' doctrine (*Platons philosophische Entwicklung* (Leipzig, 1905), p. 119).

21. On these see Dodds, *Gorgias*, pp. 1–4.

22. As P. Shorey says, one of Plato's fundamental ethical doctrines is the 'negativity of sensual pleasure' (*What Plato Said* (Chicago, 1933), p. 145).

23. There is good evidence that, by the time he wrote the *Gorgias*, Plato had developed the moral psychology of the middle dialogues. For the moral psychology of the early dialogues, of 'Socrates', see G. Klosko, 'On the Analysis of *Protagoras* 351B-360E', *Phoenix* 34 (1980). For non-Socratic elements in the *Gorgias*, see Irwin, *Gorgias*, on 491d4, 493a, 499e–500a, 505b–c, 507a–b. It is argued by many scholars that the psychological views presented in the *Gorgias* are intended as a direct criticism of the views presented in earlier works; see, e.g., M. Pohlenz, *Aus Platos Werdezeit* (Berlin, 1913), pp. 156–57.