

The Profession of Friendship : Callicles, Democratic Politics, and Rhetorical
Education in Plato's *Gorgias*

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Near the beginning of his exchange with Callicles in the *Gorgias*, Socrates delivers a puzzling little speech:

Callicles, if there were not some experience (πάθος) common to humans, one to some, another to others, but one of us had his own private experience, different from the others, it would not be easy to reveal his experience to another. I say this having considered that I and you are now experiencing the same thing, the both of us being lovers, each of two [objects] (ἐρῶντε δύο ὄντε δυοῖν ἑκάτερος): I, of both Alcibiades the son of Cleinias and philosophy, and you, of the Athenian people (δήμου) and of Pylilampes' [son Demos]. I notice that, even though you are clever (δεινοῦ), because you cannot contradict whatever your favourite (τὰ παιδικά) says and however he says it, you are always changing completely: both when you say something in the assembly if the Athenian people says it is not so, you change over and say whatever it wishes, and with Pylilampes' pretty boy you have had other such experiences. You are unable to oppose the decisions of your favorite, so that, if anyone should wonder at you always saying what you say on his account, because what you say

is strange (ἄτοπα), you would likely say, if you wanted to speak the truth, that unless someone stops your favourite from saying these things, neither will you stop saying them. Consider then that you must hear other such things from me too, and do not wonder that I say the same things, but stop philosophy, my favorite, from saying them. For [philosophy], my friend, always says what you now hear from me, and is a much less capricious favorite than my other one. For while that son of Cleinias belongs at one time to some views and at other times to others, philosophy is always of the same, and says the same things at which you now wonder--and you were present for the things that were said. Or else refute what I just said--that to do wrong, and when you do wrong not to pay the penalty, is the worst of all evils. Or if you will let it go unrefuted, by the dog, the Egyptian god, Callicles will not agree with you, Callicles, but will be out of tune in every aspect of life. And furthermore, I think, my good man, that it is better that my lyre be discordant and out of tune with me, and some chorus which I might lead, and most people not agree with me but speak in opposition to me, rather than that I, even though I am one, be out of tune with myself and speak against myself. (*Gorgias* 481c5-482c3)¹

The puzzle in a nutshell is this: what warrants Socrates' characterization of Callicles in this speech? To begin with, Callicles has not yet said much of

anything, so pronouncements on his speech seem premature.² When Callicles does speak, he looks to be an unlikely lover of the people. He expresses contempt for the many,³ calling them a rabble of slaves (489c4) and their democratic ideal of equality a conspiracy of the weak (483b5); his hero is a tyrant who takes as much as possible for himself (483e-484b, 491e-492b); he uses the terms of popular leadership as abuses--for example when he calls Socrates a popular orator (δημηγόρος, 482c5, 494d1).⁴ Further, if Callicles says what the people want him to in the assembly, and as a result becomes powerful enough to get whatever he likes for himself, how does that make him the people's *lover*? And why the *people's* lover, rather than a lover of rhetoric (his profession), pleasure (his professed aim), the body (whose desires he says he gratifies), or the doctrine of 'might makes right' (which he espouses)? 'Lover of the people' is not a throwaway insult, for Socrates purports to explain Callicles' opinions and their inconsistency by his alleged love of the people--since Callicles is in love with the people, he is bound to say what they do; since their minds are always changing, so will Callicles'.⁵ But how does this fit with the freedom of speech (παρρησιᾶ) on which Callicles prides himself (482c-486c, 491e-492c), and for which Socrates praises him since it enables genuine soul-testing (487a-d)?⁶ Finally, what exactly is wrong with being a lover of the people?

A quick overview of what the commentators have to say about this passage will help to sharpen the questions I have just raised and to show precisely what needs explaining. According to E. R. Dodds, Socrates' point here is that 'neither he nor Callicles is his own master, but while Callicles, like all politicians

in a democracy, has to reflect and justify mass opinion . . . Socrates is the servant of truth and so must follow the argument wherever it leads him. The penalty of not doing so is an inharmonious life!⁷ Charles Kahn fleshes out the lack of harmony: ‘the passage sets out one element in the latent inconsistency in Callicles’ personal position. As an ambitious politician in a democracy, he is obliged to be a lover of the demos and an endorser of popular views. . . But he is himself an aristocrat who despises the ‘base mechanics’. . . and has nothing but contempt for the egalitarian principles of democracy.’⁸

Kahn's gloss raises the question of what the connection is between being an ambitious politician in a democracy and being a lover of the demos--for surely the way in which an ambitious politician needs to endorse popular views is by making pandering public speeches in order to gain power so that he can pursue his own goals, whatever they are. But in this case, what would be the inconsistency in the ambitious politician’s or Callicles’ position? According to Kahn, Socrates uses the elenchus *ad hominem*, to expose inconsistencies in an interlocutor's thesis, life, and between his thesis and life.⁹ So Gorgias and Polus are refuted not because of any inconsistency in their beliefs, but because what they feel compelled to say before their audiences (Gorgias that he teaches virtue, Polus that doing injustice is more shameful than suffering it) conflicts with other things they assert (Gorgias that his students may use their learning for unjust purposes, Polus that doing injustice is better than suffering it).¹⁰ On Kahn's view, there is a similar inconsistency between Callicles’ (alleged) public endorsements of popular views and his private elitism. But Callicles is frank and shameless,¹¹ so it is

unclear why the inconsistency identified by Kahn, 'the conflict between his élitist convictions and his political role as friend and flatterer of the Athenian demos',¹² should trouble Callicles if he can pretend to befriend and flatter the people in order to become powerful and get what he likes. Why can't Callicles, within the closed aristocratic circle in which the conversation of the *Gorgias* takes place, distance himself from the popular views and explain that he professes them only in order to manipulate the people into supporting him? Philosophy is Socrates' beloved and master because he earnestly follows its guidance; could one say the same of the relationship between the people and Callicles?

T. H. Irwin suggests that Callicles may be a lover of honor, dependent on the people because the people can give or withhold honor. Irwin sees, in '[t]he partly playful comparison' between Socrates the lover of philosophy and Callicles the lover of the people, 'a striking anticipation of Plato's later theory, when he suggests that someone's aim and ultimate attachment in his life is his 'love;' men are taken to be lovers of power, honour, or (if rightly directed) virtue and wisdom . . .'¹³ Irwin also discusses the puzzle about Socrates' characterization of Callicles with which we are concerned: 'Socrates emphasizes Callicles' readiness to follow the whims of the people, when Callicles is about to profess contempt for the masses and their conventional views; cf. 482bc. But his policy does not seem inconsistent; for flattery is his method to win power for himself.'¹⁴ On behalf of Socrates, Irwin suggests that Callicles may be a lover of the people insofar as he cares about being honoured: 'Though he has just spoken contemptuously of conventional rules and opinions, now he is guided by them at least to some extent,

when he values good reputation'; 'Callicles . . . [emphasizes the philosopher's or recluse's] failure to acquire the reputation and honour demanded by a real man.

We might find this incongruous with Callicles' contempt for popular opinions and sanctions, expressed in 483e-484a. We might ask if his preferred way of life would still be worth while apart from popular admiration. . . If admiration matters a lot, then perhaps Callicles is not as free and self-respecting as he claims to be . .

. .¹⁵

But is Callicles a lover of honor or admiration from the very people he disdains? In the first of the passages cited by Irwin (484c-d), Callicles says that if one studies philosophy too long, one ends up inexperienced in those matters in which a man who is 'admirable and good and well thought of' (καλὸν καὶ γαθὸν καὶ εὐδόκιμον) is supposed to be experienced. But perhaps, in addition to viewing reputation as an instrument of power, Callicles regards being admirable and well thought of as a consequence of, or a concomitant that is evidence of, being in a good condition (which is the condition of being powerful)--on the assumption that people generally admire those who are in a good condition. So this passage does not commit Callicles to the view that being admired and well-thought of is constitutive of being in a good condition. In the second passage (485d-e), Callicles says that the older man who continues to study philosophy becomes unmanly and flees city centers and marketplaces, where men become distinguished (ἀριπρεπεῖς). But here distinction need not consist in recognition; it may consist instead in power, with city center and marketplace being the spheres which afford the most possibilities for the exercise of power. So neither

passage shows Callicles seeking the good opinion of the people for its own sake. Given that Callicles expresses contempt for the people, and given the lack of decisive evidence that Callicles values honor for its own sake, we cannot explain Callicles' being a lover of the people in terms of his wanting above all to be honored by them. The fact that he needs the approval or admiration of the people in order to exercise power may warrant Socrates calling him a 'servant' of the people, but not a 'lover'. Our puzzle about what warrants Socrates' claim that Callicles is a lover of the people still remains unresolved.

Josiah Ober argues that Callicles' love of the people is shown by his parroting their views even when he thinks he is being anti-conventional: where Callicles says that the democracy and its laws protect the many weak from the few strong, 'any reader familiar with either the critical tradition or with Athenian courtroom rhetoric will immediately see that Callicles' position on the relationship between the many and the potentially powerful few is deeply conventional.'¹⁶

But Callicles' position is not deeply conventional, at least not within the Athenian democracy. Convention may have it that the democracy's laws protect the weak from predators, but what Callicles is claiming is that these laws, and the democracy itself, are an artifice and a ruse which violate a higher natural order: they go against what is admirable and just by nature (τὸ κατὰ φύσιν καλὸν καὶ δίκαιον, 491e7). This type of sentiment may be found in pseudo-Xenophon or Thrasymachus, but it is hardly a conventional democratic sentiment--democrats might instead characterize their laws, or what is the case by convention (νόμῳ), as

an expression of rationality. Ober argues further that Callicles is enslaved to the demos on the basis of his 'worr[ies] about personal reputation, polis law, contracts, pleasures, and desires'; and that his distrust of philosophy (i.e. of the very thing which could help him to break free of democratic ideology) is itself a part of that ideology.¹⁷ Ober does not, however, explain why this supposed identity of concerns between Callicles and the demos is evidence of enslavement or love rather than a coincidence. Instead, he elaborates one of Socrates' metaphors, 'Socrates quickly shows that the impulse to maximize desire and pleasure logically results in the lifestyle of the penetration-loving homosexual (*kinaidos*)'; thus Socrates depicts Callicles, 'the would-be tyrant-orator, being endlessly penetrated sexually due to his bottomless desires.'¹⁸ But Socrates does not imply (much less logically demonstrate) that Callicles, or the tyrant, or the orator, is a catamite, only that Callicles' hedonism deprives him of the resources by which to distinguish the life of the catamite from the good life he envisions. Ober unwarrantedly inverts Socrates' erotic metaphor here in order to make the point that the demos is Callicles' educator, thus senior partner in love--but Socrates calls *Callicles* the lover, and the people (δημος) his darling (παιδικός). So Callicles must be the active partner, and even if Callicles is in some sense educated by the people, its hold on him must be, as Irwin suggests, that of a beloved, of the object of love on the lover. To understand Socrates' claim that Callicles is a lover of the people, we need to look into what kind of a hold it is that the people exert on him.¹⁹

I have dwelt upon the interpretations of Callicles' love of the people offered by Dodds, Kahn, Irwin, and Ober because they all take as their explanandum Callicles' relationship of love of and servitude *to the people*. Various other facts about Callicles that might seem pertinent fail even to address this relationship. For instance, one might think that in pursuing pleasure, Callicles is not doing what he wants, in the technical sense Socrates specifies for 'wanting' at *Gorgias* 466d-468d. According to that passage, we all want what is truly good, but the pleasures that seem good to Callicles are not truly good, so pursuing pleasure is not what Callicles wants (468b-c); he pursues it contrary to his wants and so unwillingly (509d-e). But this only shows that Callicles lacks the ability to do what he wants—that is, that Callicles is 'slavish'; it does not say anything about whose power he is under, of whom he is a slave. So it does not explain why Callicles is a servant or lover of the people.

One might also suppose that whereas what Callicles desires is his own pleasure, his relationship with the people forces him to pursue their pleasure in preference to his own, and so he is their servant in the straightforward sense of having to subordinate his preferences to theirs. But Socrates does not make this (internal) criticism; instead, he associates the pursuit of pleasure, whether one's own or that of others, with servitude to the people, so that competition between pursuing one's own pleasure and that of others never becomes an issue. So Socrates characterizes Callicles' view as the view that virtue consists in the satisfaction of his own desires and those of others (503c4-5), a characterization to which Callicles does not object. And when Callicles proposes that

Themistocles,²⁰ Cimon, Miltiades and Pericles, because they cared for the well-being of the Athenians, were good citizens, Socrates replies,

. . . you say that there have been people who were noble and good citizens (ἄνθρωποι καλοὶ καὶ ἀγαθοὶ πολῖται) in the city, and then when I ask you who they are, . . . you tell me of servants (διακόνους) and men who provide for the appetites, who know nothing noble and good . . . (518a7-c4)

Socrates characterizes these highly acclaimed Athenian leaders as servants of the city (ὥς γε διακόνους . . . πόλεως), because they provided the city with what it desired (ὧν ἐπεθύμει) (517b2-5), and says that their rule was fit for slaves, servile and unfree (δουλοπρεπεῖς καὶ διακονικὰς καὶ ἀνελευθέρους) (518a2). They failed to make the citizens better (503c, 515c-17c).²¹ If these political leaders and Callicles are equally servants of the people, Callicles' servitude to the people cannot consist in his being compelled to pursue the people's pleasures in preference to his own, for Callicles assumes (and Socrates does not disagree) that the political leaders wanted to pursue the people's pleasure. Further, Socrates does not argue that Callicles will fail to obtain pleasure as a leader of the Athenian people (although he does paint an unattractive picture of the replenishment of insistent desires [493b-94a]). We are to assume that even the successful manipulator is a servant and lover of the people. In other words, the element of compulsion in being the people's lover and servant is not due to one's having to deny one's own pleasures for the sake of theirs.

Perhaps, then, servitude to the people consists simply in pursuing the people's pleasure, for whatever reason: if Callicles were truly masterful, he wouldn't have to pander to the people.²² His ideal of power is the strong individual who exercises power by single-handedly destroying the democracy's laws; his examples of the truly masterful type are lions and Heracles stealing Geryon's cattle. (484a-b) But this suggestion might explain why *Callicles* should accept that he is, on his own terms, a servant of the people; it does not explain why Plato or Socrates should call him a servant of the people, nor does it explain why the reader should accept this characterization. Do Plato and/or Socrates share Callicles' ideal of mastery? Against this possibility, we might note that Socrates contrasts the democratic politicians who served the people's pleasure with the good citizen who would make them better by persuasion as well as compulsion (517bc); the fact that a politician must use persuasion does not make him a servant in Socrates' eyes. But if Socrates and Plato have independent reasons for thinking that anyone who pursues the pleasure of the people, for whatever reason, is *the people's* servant (as opposed to, say, a servant of pleasure), what are these? And why is someone who pursues the people's well-being (as opposed to their pleasure) not their servant?

Our questions require us to work out the connections between persuasive speech in democratic politics, pleasure, and the love of and servitude to the people, with which Plato is operating in the *Gorgias*. Now the pursuit of political power is one salient commonality between Callicles, whom Socrates calls a 'lover of the people' on the grounds that he is bound to say what they say, and the

democratic statesmen whom Socrates calls 'servants of the people' on the grounds that they only provided the city with what it desired (517b2-5). But why would aspirants to political power be lovers or servants of the city or the people?

3

Let us begin by putting Socrates' talk of Calicles' love of the people into its proper discursive context. Significant classical scholarship draws our attention to the fifth- and fourth-century recognition of the role of friendship in politics and details how this played out in the context of the Athenian democracy. In *The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens*, W.R. Connor shows how a new style of politics emerged in fifth-century Athens in which politicians applied the terms and gestures of friendship, previously used in oligarchic political alliances, to their relationship with the people.²³ Connor provides two striking examples. Pericles attached himself to the people by refusing to dine with his family and personal friends ($\varphi \lambda \omicron \iota$) and declining all invitations to social gatherings, thereby reassuring the people of his greater loyalty to them.²⁴ (By contrast, the old-style politician Themistocles' stated desire was to benefit his friends more than anyone else while in office.²⁵) Cleon, one better than Pericles, publicly gathered together his $\varphi \lambda \omicron \iota$ upon entering politics and renounced his friendship ($\varphi \iota \lambda \alpha$) for them as something that could interfere with his making just choices in political matters. Cleon's gesture signaled not only his undivided loyalty to the people, but also his complete dependence on them.²⁶ So, Connor suggests, when in Aristophanes' *Knights* Demos' servant Paphlagon grovels and says that he is Demos' lover, Aristophanes is caricaturing Cleon by taking his professions to the people

literally.²⁷ Socrates' speech at *Gorgias* 481c-482a seems to be recycling Aristophanes' joke. While gestures like Pericles' and Cleon's would have expressed various aspects of friendship or political alliance between political leaders and the people, the criticism of this new kind of political relationship focussed on the politician's dependence on the people.

If in the fifth century talk of friendship with the people was a way for the politician to create and invoke a new kind of political alliance, between the politician and the people rather than among elites, by the fourth century politicians would have had to use the language of friendship with the people to have any hope of success in the democracy. In *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, Ober argues that fourth century political leaders in Athens rose to power on the strength of their mass appeal and were thoroughly dependent on the people. Within the Athenian democracy, the power of even the most organized elite groups was limited: political decisions were taken by the Assembly, the membership of which was in principle open to all citizens and in fact largely non-elite; the Council, which set the agenda for the Assembly, was selected by lot and was reasonably representative of the citizen population.²⁸ Even though ordinary citizens were not themselves politically organized, it was their votes that rival politicians competed for, and the favorite of one assembly might find himself ignored, or heckled, or even scapegoated at the next.²⁹

The language of fourth-century political oratory reflects these features of the relationships between politicians and the people: as is typical in fourth-century forensic speeches, Isocrates' *Concerning a Team of Horses* concludes a

speech, the body of which describes Alcibiades' love for Athens and enumerates Alcibiades' and his ancestors' benefactions to Athens, with a statement of his dependence on the people.³⁰

But you [jurors], I trust (ἀξιῶ) you not to deliver me to my enemies nor throw me into irreparable misfortunes. For even now I am sufficiently experienced in evils, having been left an orphan right at birth through my father's exile and my mother's death; and I was not yet four years old when my life was endangered because of my father's exile; and while still a boy I was banished from the city by the Thirty (45-46).

The implication of the speaker's orphanage is that his only φίλοι are his co-citizens;³¹ they must stand in for his family. At the close of Demosthenes' *Against Stephanus* the speaker tells the jurors that his father left him to 'you,' the jury, as his helpers and friends (βοήθους καὶ φίλους). Then he lists his father's benefactions to the city: shields, triremes, and so on. But, he concludes, he does not consider that the people are indebted to his family for these favours; rather, his family have benefited from the people (οὐκ ὄφε λειν ὑμᾶς νομ ζων χάριν . . . ἡμεῖς γὰρ ὄφε λομεν ὑμῖν).³² Similarly, Andocides concludes his defense by listing his family's benefactions to Athens and then asks, 'Whom will I bring forward to plead on my behalf? My father? But he is dead. Then my brothers? But there are none. Then my sons? But they are not yet born. You take the place of my father and my brothers and my sons . . .'³³ In each of these speeches, as if according to some formula, the speakers follow up a reminder of their aristocratic

largesse to the people with an acknowledgement of their dependence on the people.

Such statements attesting to the orator-politician's dependence on the people may help to explain the slide that their critics make from their professed friendship (φιλα) with the people and love (ἔρωος) of Athens to their alleged love (ἔρωος) for the people (δῆμος).³⁴ The slide carries significant implications: professions of friendship are professions of shared goals, loyalty, commitment; professions of love also suggest (especially given the classical stereotype of love as a kind of debilitating disease) diminished self-control, and dependence on the beloved. And while there may be no shame in admitting one's love for and dependence on one's city-state, to admit one's dependence on the people is to admit that one has surrendered one's independence to, and subordinated oneself to, a none-too-reputable subsection of the citizen-body, putting them in a position to direct and use one.³⁵

Now we have already seen that in the *Gorgias*, Plato does not reserve the use of friendship-terms or love-terms for any peculiarly 'Platonic' type of friendship or love or even for a relationship of mutual benefit or good intentions.³⁶ Instead, he seems to draw upon the associations of friendship and love current in the political discourse we have briefly surveyed. In that discourse, someone may be called a friend or lover of the people on the grounds that he seeks to possess and control the people, that he seeks to please the people, even if for some ulterior motive, that his words and actions are guided by the people. Someone might object that in calling Callicles a friend and lover of the people, Socrates is being

ironic, because Callicles, since he doesn't benefit the people, is no friend of theirs at all whereas Socrates, since he does benefit the people, is a true friend of the people.³⁷ But the extent to which Socrates works out the ways in which Callicles has the characteristics of a lover of the people suggests that if there is irony here, it is not simply a matter of Socrates saying the opposite of what he means. If there is irony here, it is of the variety Gregory Vlastos called 'complex irony': what Socrates says is literally true in one sense and false in another.³⁸

I will be arguing that the sense in which we should take Socrates' claim that Callicles is a lover of the people to be literally true is that Callicles (like democratic leaders generally) is assimilating his character to the people's, like the lover or admirer of something who has to try to become like it (cf. *Republic* 500c). Now that principle—that we try to imitate or produce that which we admire—does not directly apply to our situation, for Callicles' becoming like the people may not be the result of his trying to be like them, and even if it is, there may be other causes than admiration for this. Nevertheless, the form of criticism is familiar: if A's (always, or typically) display behavior B, then one may say, by way of criticizing some C who is displaying behavior B, 'you're an A.' So since lovers become like the objects of their love, one way of criticizing someone who is becoming like some object is to say that he is a lover of that object.

In the *Gorgias*, Socrates claims that in order to have political power, or even to avoid suffering injustices at the hands of the regime, one must either be the ruler oneself, or a friend and follower of the regime (τῆς ὑπαρχούσης πολιτείας ἑταῖρον εἶναι, 510a9-10).³⁹ Callicles enthusiastically endorses this

claim (510a11-b1), which is surprising in the light of Callicles' ideal of the master-by-nature, who seems to rise to the top by purely noncooperative and destructive means (484ab). One might suppose that Callicles acknowledges his own distance from that ideal, and thinks of friendship with the regime as a purely tactical matter, involving no real commitments, no dependence, no affection, but simply enabling the politically ambitious to get to the top—for which the flattering of audiences is a useful, if somewhat distasteful, means. But Socrates takes his claim, that to gain power one must befriend the regime, to imply that in order to be dear to and thus empowered by the Athenian people, one must become like them--and like them not merely by imitation but genuinely, in one's character (οὐ γὰρ μιμητὴν δεῖ εἶναι ἀλλ' αὐτοφυῶς ὅμοιον τούτοις, 513b3-4).⁴⁰ If one wants power, one must habituate oneself from one's youth to enjoy and hate the same things as the ruler (ἐκ νέου ἐθ ζειν αὐτὸν τοῖς αὐτοῖς χα ρειν καὶ ἄχθεσθαι τῷ δεσπότῃ, 510d 6-7). So we can infer from this that Socrates believes (for reasons as yet to be determined) that in order to become powerful in a democracy, one must become like the democratic regime (whatever that comes to) or like the people, who are allegedly in power in the democracy, in the sense of loving and hating the same things as them.

One reason this might be so is, as the author of the *Seventh Letter* puts it, that in politics it is impossible to do anything without friends and followers whom one can trust (οὔτε γὰρ ἄνευ φ λων καὶ ἑταίρων πιστῶν οἶον τ' εἶναι πράττειν) (325cd, cf. *Gorgias* 527d); consequently, those in power look for and empower others who are like-minded.

Socrates says that his claim, that to gain political power one must genuinely become like the regime, is based on the ancient sages' principle that one is most of all a friend to another like oneself (φίλος μοι δοκεῖ ἕκαστος ἑκάστῳ εἶναι ὡς οἶόν τε μάλιστα. ὄνπερ οἱ παλαιοὶ τε καὶ σοφοὶ λέγουσιν, ὁ ὅμοιος τ' ὁμοῦ) (510b2-4). To illustrate, he applies the principle to the tyrant's friendships. An uncultivated and uneducated tyrant will not want friends who are better than he is--for he fears them--nor will he want friends who are worse than himself--for he despises them. He will only befriend a person who is like him in character and in his likes and dislikes, but is also willing to be his subordinate (510a8-511a3).⁴¹

When fleshed out, this claim has some psychological plausibility. The tyrant needs political allies, and so will choose men he is best able to rely on. And he can best rely on men like himself: even if their likeness results in their competing in the pursuit of some of their goals (e.g. completely controlling a given subordinate), the likeness of their characters and ends gives him insight into their thoughts and plans by way of his knowledge of his own; further, the similarity of their values make it possible and desirable for him to rely on their judgments about what to do or pursue, and by what means.⁴² As *Letter VII*'s story of the failed attempts at friendship between Dionysius tyrant of Syracuse and Plato illustrates, the friendship the tyrant fears most is not friendship with people whose reasons to harm him he understands, but friendship with people whose goals and principles he simply cannot understand, and whose actions he therefore cannot predict and manipulate.⁴³

But why does the seeker after political power require genuine, rather than feigned, likeness with the regime? Why couldn't he, say, conceal his antidemocratic goals and pretend to share the democracy's in order to come to power, and then once in power, establish a regime of another kind?

One might reply on Socrates' behalf that those in power, whether tyrants or the majority, are not easily fooled: they know what type of character will preserve their form of government, and they will bring people of this type to power. So Hyperides says that no individual can hope to deceive the masses (1.14); the pseudo-Xenophon *Constitution of Athens* says that although the people know who is good (χρηστο) and bad (πονερο), they love (φιλοῦσιν) those who are friendly or serviceable (ἐπιτηδεους) and advantageous (συμφόρους) to themselves (2.19). But Herodotus tells us that Deioces first practiced justice and handed down just judgments to win the Medes' trust, and then, when they had grown dependent on his judgments, demanded the powers and privileges of tyrant (1.96-100). Does Socrates have a good reason for discounting or disregarding such a possibility?

Socrates can respond in two ways to the case of Deioces. First, the example of Deioces may not be a counterexample to the theory that aspirants to political power must become like the regime in order to succeed. For if likeness to the regime is a matter of loving and hating the same things as those in power, a closeted democrat might not be so different from a tyrant, for the tyrant and the democrat might value the very same things as good, differing only on how these things ought to be distributed. Plato's discussion of the democratic and tyrannical

constitutions and characters in the *Republic* supports this thought. The democratic value of freedom as the highest good (562b-63d), becomes, in the character of the democratic individual, a non-discriminating pursuit of desire-satisfaction (561bd). Perhaps because freedom by itself cannot provide a criterion by which to distinguish between desires so that one might repress some for the sake of others, someone whose sole value is freedom is led to gratify each desire. So democrats disapprove of self-control as slavery (563d) and consider moderation cowardice (560d). This is obviously an unstable situation, and so the democrat inevitably starts to fall prey to his more insistent desires. Encouraged by outside influences, his appetites grow as big as possible, and he banishes from his soul any shame and moderation that might stand in the way of their gratification (573a). On the *Republic* account, tyranny is an inevitable consequence of democracy: both regimes value the same thing, the fulfillment of all desires, and the natural consequence of valuing the fulfillment of all desires is that the more insistent and unruly desires take over. Callicles in the *Gorgias* also slides from a democratic⁴⁴ into a tyrannical relationship to the good: he too starts out with an ideal of freedom and conceives of the good as desire-fulfillment; when asked to consider whether his vision includes self-control, he says he considers this to be slavery; finally, he comes up with his conception of the good as the gratification of great and intense desires (491e-94c).

Second, consideration of the case of Deioces shows that whether one is like the regime or not, or becoming like the regime or not, is not at all an obvious matter. It is difficult for us (Plato's modern and ancient audiences) to think about

why we love and hate what we do, and whether we should: our desires and aversions have a self-justifying appearance; the forces that lead us to love and hate what we do are usually difficult to pin down; asking what it would be right to love and hate, and why, leads us into the difficult terrain of philosophy. So while history may throw up Deioceses, it will not throw up leaders who are secretly critical of the conception of the good with which they have grown up. That takes philosophy.

4

We can now begin to understand why Socrates suggests that Callicles (and democratic politicians generally, including the great Athenian statesmen) rise to power by becoming like the constitution genuinely--rather than by pretending to.⁴⁵ They see no reason to resist the popular conception of the good and have no resources by which they could resist it if they wanted to.

Socrates indicates that Callicles' pursuit of power in the democracy shows that he has already begun assimilating his character to the people's.⁴⁶ Socrates says that one's soul will be corrupted on account of one's imitation of the tyrant and his power (511a1-3)—presumably because one's actions accrue virtue or vice to one's soul.⁴⁷ But he also suggests that one's willingness to engage in actions of a certain type already reveals that one has a character of that type. Knowing that to have power in a tyranny, one has to prepare oneself to do the greatest possible wrong (510e4-8), one does not have to wait to execute the tyrant's orders to become like him; deciding to pursue power in the tyranny is already an assimilation to the tyrant's character.

Further, Callicles, despite his contempt for the people, has a competitive conception of success which reveals that he values as good the same things as the people, for as he sees it, the strong man gets more by taking away from his competitors, and at least one of the competitors is the people, the many weak united together. Callicles as yet sees no reason to resist the conception of the good of those in power in Athens, the people. Despite being independent-minded enough to reject the democratic ideal of political equality, and holding instead that the superior by nature should have more, Callicles has never thought critically about what good(s) the superior by nature, or even he himself, should have more of. When Socrates first asks Callicles to identify the superior, the unsatisfactory synonyms Callicles is able to provide--stronger, more intelligent, more courageous--all boil down to 'able to get more'.⁴⁸ Even though the strength, intelligence, and courage that comprise Callicles' ideal are somehow supposed to entitle their possessors to more, Callicles is unable to articulate any non-instrumental value for these character-traits. And when Socrates asks, 'more of what?' Callicles is unable to give a satisfactory answer. Hard pressed to say what he thinks is ultimately good, Callicles comes up with pleasure, the satisfaction of desires.

This account of the good has the appeal of making the good easy to determine—one can determine what pleases one can by attending to experience⁴⁹—and thereby of shielding Callicles from the Socratic demand that he turn to philosophy to investigate what the good is. For the same reason, Callicles cannot allow that the good life includes self-control, because he would then have to say

which desires should be pursued in the long-run, which repressed for their sake, and why.⁵⁰ And he is, after all, not as deeply committed to hedonism as to his view that the superior should have more of whatever is good (an ordering of commitments that is made psychologically plausible by the likelihood that he would have had to defend the latter but probably not the former against democratic challenges). He says that he equates pleasure and the good in order to avoid contradiction (495a, even though Socrates has just shown that this equation commits him to commending the life of scratching itches and being the sexually passive partner); when Socrates shows that if pleasure is the good then intelligence and courage are no more important for happiness than foolishness and cowardice, he retreats to saying that there are some good and some bad pleasures (499b-e). But he never retreats from his claim that it is just by nature that the superior have more.

To this extent, Callicles is like Polus and Gorgias: Gorgias thinks that the ability to persuade is the greatest good (451d-452d), but all he can say about its goodness is that it is instrumentally valuable no matter what one's ends: the power to persuade enables one to make the doctor, physical trainer or financial expert one's slave (452e). Likewise, Polus, who thinks that political power is a great good, values it instrumentally, on the grounds that it allows its possessor to do whatever he wants, or in Socrates' corrected expression, whatever seems best to him (466b-468d). Socrates' point, to the embarrassment of each of his interlocutors, who have proceeded confidently as if they knew what they wanted, i.e., what was good, is that they have neglected the first order of business for any

life: looking into the nature of the good or what it is that one wants, trying to find out what to desire.

But the point made with Callicles is not just that he has overlooked the important question; it is that in overlooking it, he has adopted for it the answer given by those in power, the people, and to this extent, he has let himself be guided by them. Callicles may have thought he could use the people purely as a tool; Socrates points out that the people, however much Callicles despises them, also direct him.⁵¹ To establish this, Socrates has drawn out of Callicles that what he most desires is what appears good to the people, pleasure. Callicles does not, of course, consciously desire what appears good to the people under that description; nevertheless, what matters most to him is what matters most to the people, for his conception of what to desire comes from the people. So Socrates has shown that although Callicles has παρρησιᾶ, in the sense that he is not ashamed to say what he likes for fear that others will disapprove, what he likes to say--his own ultimate aims and judgments of what is good, espoused in private or in the aristocratic setting of the *Gorgias* where he can exercise his παρρησιᾶ—is what the people say.

Early in the dialogue, Socrates brings out the fact that rhetoric may teach its students how to persuade the assembly, but it does not teach them what is good and bad (455a, 456d-457c, cf. 460a-461c).⁵² Dodds writes in his introduction to Plato's *Gorgias*, 'Gorgias' teaching is the seed of which the Calliclean way of life is the poisonous fruit.⁵³ It is not immediately obvious why a purely instrumental education in rhetoric like Gorgias' should bear the responsibility for views like

Callicles' that the superior should wield power so that they can gratify their own great desires, without regard for those they dominate. At least initially, one is tempted to protest on Gorgias' behalf (as does Polus), that rhetoric only makes its students effective persuaders, leaving their morals untouched (*Gorgias* 452de, 461bc, cf. *Meno* 95c).

But Socrates is right: by ignoring the fundamental question of what is good and what to desire, a purely instrumental education like Gorgias' rhetorical education delivers its pupils over to the going conception of the good, the going views about what to desire. It suggests that the good is not a something to investigate deeply, that what it is is obvious and in most people's possession. Further, the rhetorical education endows its student with a skill which makes him take on the people's mindset to accomplish his goals. Even if he intends to do this only to figure out what is most persuasive, it will be unlikely that he will want to or be able to resist their judgments.⁵⁴ This, I think, vindicates Dodds's claim.

My answer to the question why Socrates can justifiably call a self-described exploiter of the people a lover of the people shares something with Dodds's answer. Callicles is indeed dependent on the people, although the significant sense in which he is dependent on them is not that he must make pandering speeches, but that he has adopted their conception of the good, and because he has adopted it unreflectively, in fact, on their authority. And this enables us to identify the inconsistency in Callicles' position sought by Kahn. Like most of us, Callicles has learned what to desire from those who dominate in his society. But since Callicles disdains the people, he should not take the

people's desires as evidence of the goodness of their objects; he should not be making himself more and more like the people.

My answer also shares something Ober's answer. Although Callicles does not adhere to democratic ideology or convention in general, he does share the people's conception of what is good (pleasure, desire-fulfillment) because, like the people, he has never given much thought to what else it could be. And this has led him not only to reject philosophy too early but also to be satisfied that what the people seek is, after all, good.

Finally, answer shares something with Irwin's answer. Although Callicles does not desire the people or their admiration for their own sake as he would an ultimate goal, the people do play the role of an ultimate goal in Callicles' life by guiding his actions, because their conception of the good determines his.

Towards the end of his discussion with Socrates, Callicles has a moment of self-recognition:⁵⁵ he says that while Socrates seems to him to be right, he still has the feelings of the many (πέπονθα δὲ τὸ τῶν πολλῶν πάθος) and is not persuaded.⁵⁶ Socrates immediately replies, 'The love of the people, Callicles, in your soul, opposes me.' (Ὁ δήμου γὰρ ἔρωσ. ὦ Καλλ κλεις. ἐνὼν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τῇ σῇ ἀντιστατεῖ μοι) (513c4-7). The love of the people, manifested in the way the people guide his desires and aversions, has turned out to be the most basic of Callicles' commitments.⁵⁷

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¹ Translations in this paper, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

² I assume here that Callicles does not figure in Plato's *Gorgias* as a historical person but as a character, and a character of a particular type. Even if there really was a Callicles who behaved as Socrates says (as an anonymous referee for *Ancient Philosophy* suggests), the fact that Plato is writing a dialogue requires him to show Callicles behaving as Socrates says he does, or at least as capable of behaving and motivated to behave as Socrates says; if Plato does none of these, then his readers should ask: what is Plato's point in having Socrates say what he does?

³ An anonymous referee for *Ancient Philosophy* points out that according to Nietzsche, truly great love includes contempt. That contempt goes along with a wish for the beloved to become greater, however, and Callicles does not seem to have any such wish for the people—but perhaps Socrates and Plato do. Pursuing this rich line of inquiry would take me too far afield from the main argument of this paper.

⁴ A further oddity: Callicles never denies Socrates' claims about his love of the people. He does criticize Socrates' love, philosophy, at 484c-486d, and in the course of doing so, opposes to it the political life he prefers, which he characterizes in non-democratic terms. But towards the end of his discussion with Socrates, he admits to having the feelings of the many, which Socrates' puts down to his love of the many (513c).

⁵ This is why I reject the suggestion of an anonymous referee for *Ancient Philosophy* that it is Callicles' being a *lover* (and thus, in line with the popular conception of love, distracted, confused, conflicted) that explains his abandoning what he ought to know (because he is naturally noble) to be his own good. Socrates too is a lover, and he explicitly puts Callicles' behavior down to the identity and nature of his beloved. As for Callicles' natural nobility, we may need to assume this in order to explain the trouble Socrates takes over him, but unlike the referee, I do not believe that Plato regards contempt for ordinary people as any indication of natural nobility or latent subscription to 'higher values'.

⁶In fourth-century Athens, freedom of speech (παρρησι α) is seen as a private as well as political virtue. On the two kinds of freedom of speech, ἰσηγορι α

(citizens' equal access to public speech) and παρρησιάζεσθαι, and on the part played by freedom of speech in political freedom as a democratic virtue (ἐλευθερία), see Momigliano 1973. Although Plato shows a low regard for παρρησιάζεσθαι in some other contexts--for example, taking it as mere license in speech, one of the many faults of democracies (*Republic* 557b, 567b)--in this context it is a desideratum of discussion (*Gorgias* 487a, 492d): a lack of inhibition, opposed to shame (αἰσχύνη) (487b, d). In the *Laws*, the lack of inhibition is opposed to fear: one of Cyrus' good qualities as a king was that he allowed παρρησιάζεσθαι among his citizens and valued those who could contribute to formulating policy. In a couple of contexts Plato uses the word to refer to saying what one believes: Socrates encourages Callicles to finish off their discussion as they have begun it, παρρησιάζεσθαι (*Gorgias* 521d); in the *Laches*, Lysimachus contrasts παρρησιάζεσθαι with speaking contrary to one's own opinion and instead aiming to say what one thinks one's interlocutor wants to hear (178a-c); in the *Laws*, the Athenian contrasts the naturally just atheist, who displays παρρησιάζεσθαι about gods, sacrifices and oaths with the unjust atheist who conceals his views (908c). Common to all these uses is the conception of παρρησιάζεσθαι as a lack of inhibition (cf. also *Symposium* 222c, *Laws* 649b, 671b, 835c), which Plato seems to think is appropriate for some people and in some contexts (*Laches* 189a, *Laws* 806d, 811a, 829d-e).

⁷Dodds 1959, 260 (481b *ad loc.*)

⁸Kahn 1983, 100

⁹Kahn 1983, 76, 110

¹⁰Kahn 1983, 80-84, 94-97

¹¹Kahn 1983, 105 says that Callicles is shamed by Socrates' objection that on Callicles' hedonism, the catamite's life is a good life. But Callicles asks if Socrates is not ashamed of himself, and while he is clearly displeased by the objection, it is not clear that what he feels is shame; further, even if he did feel shame, it is not clear that this should lead him to change his position rather than to stamp out the feeling of shame.

¹²Kahn 1983, 107

¹³ Irwin 1979, 169 (481d *ad loc.*)

¹⁴Irwin 1979, 169

¹⁵Irwin 1979, 179-80. If we adopt Irwin's suggestion, we will see Callicles as a psychologically complex character: rather than being someone who wants honour only as a means to power, and is therefore dependent on those who can honour or dishonour him, Callicles may be someone who finds a life of power without the admiration of those over whom he wields power (for example, power wielded exclusively through force and fear) unattractive.

¹⁶Ober 1998, 199

¹⁷Ober 1998, 201, cf. 202

¹⁸Ober 1998, 205

¹⁹To be fair, Ober's purpose is not to find the warrants for Socrates' description of Callicles, but rather to depict and explain Plato's increasingly wholesale rejection of democratic politics, and he sees Plato in the *Gorgias* showing how ideology prevents philosophy from reforming citizens through persuasion--thus motivating

the programme of the *Republic*. I agree that something like unwitting adherence to democratic ideology is at the bottom of Socrates' characterization of Callicles as a lover and slave of the people, but in this paper, I hope to spell out just how.

²⁰Above, I adduced Themistocles' announcement that he wished to benefit his friends while in office as exemplifying the type of oligarchic politics that was replaced by a politics in which the politician named the people as his friends. I do not think Socrates is proposing a return to oligarchic politics either, for the oligarchy's politicians are just as ignorant of and unreflective about the good as the democracy's.

²¹ According to an anonymous referee for *Ancient Philosophy*, Pericles built the Long Walls in the face of Athenian opposition to the project, so it would be wrong to characterize at least him as slavishly pandering to the people's opinions. Does this show that Socrates' characterization of the relationship between the democratic politician and the people as one of servitude is oversimplified? I don't think so. Although Socrates' first speech to Callicles suggests that the democratic politician is just a ventriloquist for the people's changing opinions, the real basis of the charge of love, servitude and dependency is (as I argue below) that the democratic politician acquires his conception of the good from the people, so even if he is sacrificing their short-term desire-satisfaction for the sake of their long-term security interests, the fact is that he can only conceive of the citizens' interests in bodily terms and hasn't tried to make the citizens good. It is worth noting that in his Funeral Oration, Pericles contrasts Athenian courage with

Spartan as natural rather than produced by state education. See Thucydides 2.39, in Smith 1951-1958.

²² This suggestion is due to another anonymous referee for *Ancient Philosophy*.

²³ See Connor 1992, 87-136. In these contexts an orator would claim to be a φ λος, ἔτα ρος, or ἐπιτήδειος of the people.

²⁴ Plutarch *Pericles* 7; cf. 33 in Perrin 1951; cf. Thucydides 2.13.1.

²⁵ Plutarch, *Precepts of Statecraft, Moralia* 806f-807b in Fowler 1927. Cf. Connor 1992, 91-94, 118

²⁶ Cf. Thucydides 3.37.

²⁷ Aristophanes, *Knights* 732, in Rogers 1950; cf. Connor 1992 96-98. Cf. Nightingale 1995, 187-90.

²⁸ On mass participation in the Assembly and Council, see Ober 1989, 127-141, and Finley 1983, 70-84. Popular participation in politics increased through the fifth century with the growth of the empire and Athens' increasing dependence on its non-elite navy. Integrating these non-elites into the political process was one way of securing their loyalty. Members of the Council, juries, and eventually, the Assembly, received a modest sum of money for attendance--an incentive to participate for the less-than-wealthy. Such people would have been suspicious of elites who managed politics through their networks of personal connections. A politician might, in this context, achieve influence by appealing directly to the mass of citizens instead of through his friendship network of elites; alternatively, he might use such appeals to complement the power won through his friendships.

²⁹On the other side, these leaders could be the sort of full-time, professional politicians the Athenian democracy really needed to advise it on its increasingly complex foreign affairs, domestic business, and so on. The relationship was one of mutual benefit--although for any individual politician it was also fragile--within the constraints of continuing upper-class monopoly of status, wealth, and political prominence. Tensions caused by this upper-class monopoly of resources and its resulting inequalities could have been smoothed over by the rhetoric of friendship. See Ober 1989. Making a profession of friendship in this context is not just making a declaration of friendship, but also representing the friendship as constitutive of one's job (a double entendre which doesn't translate into Greek). It would take me too far afield here to develop an account of the professionalization of the politician that was one very important dimension of the new style of politics; for that, see Kamtekar 2005 (forthcoming).

³⁰Isocrates 16, in Norlin 1928-1954. Alcibiades, the speaker says, risked himself and suffered for the city; he suffered at the people's hands, but remained loyal. When Athens invited him back after having banished him, he came straight back without any resentment about the past or thought for the future (19). There is something of the lover's madness in Alcibiades' devotion, the speaker suggests, and a desperation about his desire for Athens which, because shared by the Athenian people, excuses his more dubious alliances:

From which you must take to heart (ἐνθυμειῖσθαί) how each of you was affected, what thoughts you had, and what danger you would not have endured so as to end your banishment and to return to your homeland, and

to avenge yourself on those who banished you. To what city, or friend, or stranger did you not go, entreating them to join you in getting you back? From whom [or what means] did you turn away in trying to return? (12-13, cf. 14).

On Alcibiades' ἔρωσ for Athens, see also Thucydides 6.92, where Alcibiades, speaking to the Spartans, says that the person who really loves his country is not the one who refuses to attack it, but whose desire for it is so strong he will shrink from nothing in his effort to get it back. See also Wohl 1999.

³¹ On the persisting sense of the φ λον as something relied on for one's continued existence, see Adkins 1963.

³² Demosthenes, *Against Stephanus I* (=45).85 in Murray 1956.

³³ Andocides, *On the Mysteries* (=1).148-149; cf. Antiphon *Prosecution of the Stepmother for Poisoning* (=1).4 in Maidment 1953.

³⁴ Cf. Connor 1992 on the parallel in Aristophanes, above. While an orator might call himself a φ λος of the people, he would not say he was their ἐραστής. In his famous Funeral Oration, Pericles urges his listeners to become lovers (ἐραστα) of Athens, but not of the δῆμος. (Thucydides 2.43.1)

³⁵ Demosthenes says that he has no personal end, but only the ends of the people, and that the worth of an orator consists precisely in his support of the people's choices (18.280-81).

³⁶ For example, in the very beginning, Chaerophon says that Gorgias is his friend (φ λος, 447b2), even though he is Socrates' pupil. However, Plato does sometimes use friendship terms normatively, cf. 487e5-6, 499c, 507e3-508a4.

Plato's criticism of political friendships in the *Gorgias* contrasts sharply with the more common attitude of Isocrates, who, bemoaning the deterioration of the Athenian constitution and the quality of its leadership, complains that now, those who speak in the assembly (δημηγορούντων, *On the Peace* [=8].75, in Norlin 1928-1954) only say they love the people (φιλεῖν μὲν τὸν δῆμον φάσκουσιν) (121), but are all the while busy lining their pockets (126). Their attitude is a false imitation of Pericles' genuine love for the people: here was a leader of the people (δημᾶγογος) who really neglected his private affairs for the sake of his public office. Callicles seems to share this judgment, at 517a-b, but Socrates says the difference between the generation of Pericles and the present generation of politicians is only that they were better servants, more capable of satisfying the city's appetites--but they were not better at 'true politics', i.e. improving citizens by persuasion and constraint, 517b.

³⁷So Euben 1997, 204.

³⁸Vlastos 1991, 31.

³⁹In early times, ἑταῖροι were friends from the elite who ate, drank and entertained themselves together. Some of the groups of ἑταῖροι also engaged in political activity. Any politically ambitious individual would have had an incentive to join such a friendship-group, or ἑταιρεία, since it would enable him to supplement the resources and connexions afforded him by his family. These groups had no real political platform or ideology, and no official machinery; they seem to have coalesced around one prominent individual and dissolved upon his leaving politics. Consequently, writers refer to such groups as οἱ περὶ τινα

ἑταῖροι. The Aristotelian *Constitution of Athens* refers to a struggle between Isagoras' and Cleisthenes' ἑταῖροι before the founding of the Athenian democracy. (Kenyon 1920, 20.1) Although the most famous ἑταῖροι are the oligarchs behind the Athenian coups of 411 and 404 B. C., the ἑταῖροι were not generally organized to overthrow or even oppose the democracy, even if they publicly acted out their anti-democratic sentiments. Alcibiades, accused of mutilating the Herms and desecrating the Mysteries along with his φίλοι, was acquitted and remained a leader and darling of the people. The people were acquitting Alcibiades and his ἑταῖροι of these misdeeds presumably with the background understanding that most ἑταῖροι-activity was not a danger to democracy. Alcibiades' group later supported the democracy (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 19, 27 in Perrin 1951). We should not confuse the upper-class nature of ἑταῖροι-membership and activities with the (relatively rare) plots to overthrow the democracy. On ἑταῖροί in politics see Calhoun 1913, Connor 1992 and Murray 1990.

⁴⁰ For a parallel to this contrast, see *Laws* 642c8, where Megillus remarks on the virtue of the Athenians, which the Athenians have ἀυτοφυῶς and without compulsion, and which is true and not counterfeit.

⁴¹ The tyrant's unwillingness to associate with any but those who are as bad as himself is a notorious extreme, and it may be thought that his relationships are not friendships at all. At *Republic* 567b-568a, Plato seems to deny that tyrants have friends at all, for their companions hate them (567d3). But note that the tyrant's political supporters, at least in the beginning, are the people, who put him in

power as their special champion [562c]. And perhaps this is because they are most like each other, at least in the sense of what they consider good; see below. However, this is compatible with the general principle of the *Gorgias*, which is relative--likes are most of all friends to each other--as well as with its particular application to the tyrant, for the tyrant is most of all a friend to one like himself (that is, perhaps not at all, but more so than he is to one unlike himself). The tyrant's contradictory wishes are similar to those Duncan 1974 finds in Calicles: he wants to be friends with Socrates (485e, 487ce, 492c), but cannot, because he also wants to overreach him in the argument. (495a, 499c) Perhaps Plato is not committed to the existence of such a person as the tyrant's friend (which would solve the problem of the contradictory requirements that such a friend be both power-seeking and submissive); a parallel to this hypothetical specification of the non-existent tyrant's friend would be that of the skilled doer of injustice in the *Hippias Minor*.

⁴²The underlying view here would be that the knowledge of character justifies or warrants the attitude of trust about particular decisions and actions where information is lacking. On our need to trust others in order to make practical judgments, see Millgram 1997, 141-71.

⁴³Dionysius desires the reputation of being a philosopher (338d-e, 345b-d), and so wants Plato to praise him and to consider him his friend more than he does Dion (330a). But he refuses the best means to this, which is to listen to and learn what Plato tells him about philosophy (330b), because he is afraid that it may turn out to be a trap that will strip him of his power or require him to abandon some of his

ends. Desirous of a friendship with Plato but unable to have it because he rejects Plato's ends (wisdom and virtue), Dionysius throughout this relationship alternates between bribing and bullying, promising and betraying. Because he cannot avail himself of the only sure means to Plato's friendship, his attempts to win this friendship by other means are marked by great insecurity. He exiles Dion, although Dion desires the best for him, because he sees him as his rival in power and in Plato's affection. Having exiled Dion, Dionysius recognizes that his actions have frightened Dion's friends, and treats them kindly, especially Plato, whom he begs to remain in Syracuse. His pleas, however, are backed up by force--he imprisons Plato inside the citadel. As Plato says, 'we know that the pleas of tyrants are mingled with compulsion' (329d7).

It should be underscored that Dionysius, as depicted in *Letter VII*, is not simply a lying, cheating, power-and-pleasure-hungry man interested in Plato only because his approval can improve Dionysius' reputation and augment his power. According to Plato, the truth of the matter is that Dionysius grew more and more attached to him over time, as he became acquainted with Plato's ways and character (330a). Dionysius' messenger conveys to Plato Dionysius' final sentiment when the two are no longer on speaking terms: 'He [Dionysius] ordered me to tell you that you are not doing right in always preferring Dion and Dion's friends to him.' (349e) Dionysius' attachment is jealous, vainly competitive, and genuine. Dionysius' inability or unwillingness to channel his affection for Plato into a commitment to a joint project with Plato is reminiscent of another such failure: the failure of Alcibiades to translate his desire for Socrates into a desire

to embark on the path of philosophy with him. In *Alcibiades I*, Socrates, who has opened the conversation with a promise to explain why he alone of all Alcibiades' lovers still loves him, tells Alcibiades that it is because he alone loves the true Alcibiades, Alcibiades' soul, rather than his possessions or body. This true love is not unconditional, for 'He who loves your soul will not go away, as long as you go towards what is better' (131d). But Socrates worries, '...unless you are destroyed by the Athenian people and become ugly, I will not leave you. But this is what I fear most of all. . .' (132a). The worry continues through to the end of the dialogue, when Alcibiades agrees that the love Socrates has given him should be cared for (θεραπεύσεται) by him. Alcibiades promises, 'Yes. . .and I will begin to care for justice from now on.' (135e) When we read the *Symposium* we find that Socrates' worry was well-founded, that the moment of Alcibiades' choosing to follow virtue did not last. In the *Symposium*, he is still passionately and confusedly in love with Socrates, but has not made any progress towards the pursuit of virtue (209a-c).

⁴⁴That Callicles is not an oligarchic sympathizer is made clear by his comment about cauliflower ears (515e and Dodds 1959, ad loc.). Not that Callicles is one to uphold the democratic constitution--none of the character-types associated with particular constitutions are sincere supporters of their constitution in the *Republic*. The connexion between political constitution and psychological character-type is found in their conception of the good.

⁴⁵ For Plato's assessment of our vulnerability to absorbing the characters we imitate, see *Republic* 396c&sq.

⁴⁶ So the pursuit of political power can't be the first cause of Callicles' corruption. Indeed, the first cause may very well have been something as innocuous as trying to avoid suffering injustice. The Thirty seemed to have realized the corrupting potential of this motivation, using it to involve others in, and so to share the responsibility for, their activities, for example when they tried to get Socrates to participate in arresting Leon of Salamis.

⁴⁷ This is why accepting punishment is good for the person who has committed injustice, cf. *Gorgias* 473de, 477ab, 478d-480d, 524b-25b.

⁴⁸ So although Callicles offers 'more intelligent and more courageous' as an alternative to 'stronger' because Socrates has shown that the many are in fact stronger since they possess power, he does not thereby avoid Socrates' criticism.

⁴⁹ As Kahn 1983 points out, the attraction of hedonism is that it solves the problem of determining what is good by appealing to unmistakable facts about pleasure.

⁵⁰ Rudebusch 1992, 55-56 calls the position that the good is any and every pleasure 'indiscriminate hedonism'. Rudebusch objects to this characterization of Callicles' view on the grounds that it is a straw man, leaving calculating orators and tyrants untouched, and of little independent philosophical interest. Instead, Rudebusch argues, Callicles should be seen as holding that the good is (short-term) desire-satisfaction, where one's desire makes its object (felt to be) intrinsically desirable (67). For this view see also Gosling and Taylor 1982, 70-71. I agree that indiscriminate hedonism is philosophically unsatisfactory, but I also think it is a prevalent view, and one that Plato explicitly attributes to inhabitants of democracies (*Republic* 561bd). It isn't clear to me how important a

feeling (sensation) of pleasure is for the view that the good is pleasure or for the association of the pursuit of pleasure with the people—the pleasant here might be the same as the apparently good.

⁵¹One might want to deny that tools are merely instrumental. I am opposed to the use of guns and would not go out and buy one to protect myself, but if I was to be attacked and a gun was around, I might well use it. The kinds of tools one equips oneself with affect what one does because they open up particular possibilities for action.

⁵²Cf. 521c-522e; however, there is a right use of rhetoric (504d-e) directed at making the citizens law-abiding and orderly, making their souls just and self-controlled, but this must be subordinated to the truth-and-good-seeking crafts, legislation and the administration of justice. But this kind of rhetoric can't be practiced in democratic politics.

⁵³Dodds, *Gorgias*, p. 15. Dodds says, variously, that Plato regarded Gorgias' education as 'inadequate and dangerous' because it was unscientific and morally neutral, putting the tools of domination into the hands of the morally ignorant (p. 10) for the corruption of a morally immature people (p. 15), or that it shared the responsibility for producing men like Callicles with the false conception of statesmanship that dominated Athens since the Persian Wars--i.e. ruling for the sake of material well-being alone (p. 15, 33). I do not think Plato shares Dodds's belief in 'traditional moral standards' (p. 34) as an antidote to a value-neutral education. In any case, once the false conception of statesmanship is introduced

as partly responsible for men like Callicles, it needs to be shown how Gorgias' education can be held responsible at all.

⁵⁴ For this he needs philosophy, an education that can teach him to examine his ends, i.e., getting him to articulate his judgments about what is good and then to test these judgments for their coherence, comprehensiveness, and consistency.

⁵⁵ Commentators (e.g. Cooper 1999, 64-65, Kahn 1983, 76) sometimes say that Socrates fails to refute Callicles in the *Gorgias*, and that after some point (495a, 497a, or 499b), Callicles is not really engaged in the argument. As this passage shows, Callicles can be engaged with the discussion all the way to the end. He temporarily refuses to engage when he says he is identifying the good and pleasure to keep from being inconsistent (495a), but cares enough to be displeased when this view is refuted (497a); he corrects Socrates' characterization of orators as neglecting the common good for the sake of their private good, when he says that there are two kinds of users of rhetoric, those who use it for their own private ends and those who care for the citizens (503a); he protests against Socrates' blanket condemnation of Athenian politicians that Themistocles, Cimon, Miltiades and Pericles were good men (503c). As late as 510a, Callicles applauds Socrates' claim about the need to befriend the regime in order to avoid suffering injustice.

⁵⁶As Dodds 1959 (*ad loc.*) points out, there is a parallel here with *Meno* 95c8. Meno is asked whether he thinks the sophists are teachers, and he says that like most people, he thinks at times that they are, and at times that they are not.

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