

## Why does Plato use pleasure to persuade people to attain the good?

*Beatriz Bossi (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)*

In the *Gorgias* Plato shows that rhetoric is different from knowledge for it aims at getting pleasure, while knowledge aims at attaining the good. Then he takes pains to demonstrate that pleasure and the good are different, and that the end of life is the good, and that pleasure should be taken inasmuch as it makes oneself a better person.

However, in the *Republic* IX, Plato appeals to pleasure to persuade the people who choose a life for satisfying their appetites and those who choose a life for honour and reputation to seek the philosopher's life. The king's life is 729 times more pleasant than the tyrant's. (The *metretike techne* necessary to calculate authentic pleasures of the end of the *Protagoras* comes back in the *Republic*). And the philosopher's pleasures are said to be better, purer and more stable than any other's. Moreover, the wise man is in the position to administrate his psychic energy so as to fulfil every desire (even the appetites and the desire for honour) in the best possible way attainable to men.

The goal of this paper is to determine:

1. whether Plato changed his mind about rhetoric at the stage of the *Republic* and
2. the sense in which he allows himself to appeal to pleasure, despite his general rejection of it in terms of sensitive satisfaction.

If this rhetoric were a new strategy, could it be justified by Plato's own standards? Does it anticipate the 'noble' rhetoric of the *Sophist*? If he is using the argument for pleasure as a tool to persuade those who do not know how to get happiness and take pleasure as the higher goal, is he betraying his own convictions, by assuming *their* goal? Does he really expect to be listened to by the ignorant and lower classes? Does he contradict his own anti-hedonistic principles?

Against the generalized view, I will attempt to show evidence of the following theses:

1. the conflictive psychology of the *Republic* does not mean the abandonment of the so-called 'intellectualistic' approach, in the sense that, if the ignorant came to know i.e. came to *experience* the highest pleasure they would embrace the contemplative life;
2. as a consequence, the fact that Plato keeps a so-called 'intellectualistic' approach does not mean, against the Aristotelian reading, that he ignores the possibility of conflicts and *akrasia*;
3. with regard to his use of pleasure as a 'carrot' to attract the ignorant, Plato's consistency can be saved as long as one distinguishes his perspective *tout court* from his perspective as a 'teacher', for
4. Plato is fully convinced that the good is *always*, in the long run, for the wise, a source of pleasure and that authentic pure pleasure, which derives from contact with what is ontologically *more* in itself, is one with the good.