

SOCRATES: A thing which you say—in the treatise which I read of late—"made art."
 POLUS: What thing do you mean?
 SOCRATES: I mean a certain habitude.
 POLUS: Then do you take rhetoric to be a habitude?

SOCRATES: I do, if you have no other suggestion.
 POLUS: Habitude of what?
 SOCRATES: Of producing a kind of gratification and pleasure.

POLUS: Then you take rhetoric to be something fine—an ability to gratify people?
 SOCRATES: How now, Polus? Have you as yet heard me tell you what I say it is, that you ask what should follow that—whether I do not take it to be fine?

POLUS: Why, did I not hear you call it a certain habitude?
 SOCRATES: Then, please—since you value "gratification"—be so good as gratify me in a small matter.

POLUS: I will.
 SOCRATES: Ask me now what art I take cookery to be.

POLUS: Then I ask you, what art is cookery?
 SOCRATES: None at all, Polus.

POLUS: Well, what is it? Tell me.
 SOCRATES: Then I reply, a certain habitude.
 POLUS: Of what? Tell me.

SOOCRATES: Then I reply, of production of gratification and pleasure, Polus.
 POLUS: So cookery and rhetoric are the same thing?

SOOCRATES: Not at all, only parts of the same practice.
 POLUS: What practice do you mean?

SOOCRATES: I fear it may be too rude to tell the truth; for I shrink from saying it on Gorgias' account, lest he suppose I am making satirical fun of his own profession. Yet indeed I do not know whether this is the rhetoric which Gorgias practices, for from our argument just now we got no very clear view as to how he conceives it; but what I call rhetoric is a part of a certain business which has nothing fine about it.
 SOOCRATES: What is that, Socrates? Tell us, without scruple on my account.
 SOOCRATES: It seems to me then, Gorgias, to be

SOCRATES: So now, take whichever course you like: either put questions, or answer them.
 POLUS: Well, I will do as you say. So answer me this, Socrates: since you think that Gorgias is at a loss about rhetoric, what is your own account of it?
 SOOCRATES: Are you asking what art I call it?
 POLUS: Yes.
 SOOCRATES: None at all, I consider, Polus, if you would have the honest truth.
 POLUS: But what do you consider rhetoric to be?

a pursuit that is not a matter of art, but showing a shrewd, gallant spirit which has a natural bent for clever dealing with mankind, and I sum up its substance in the name *flattery*. This practice, as I view it, has many branches, and one of them is cookery; which appears indeed to be an art but, by my account of it, is not an art but habitude or knack. I call rhetoric another branch of it, as also personal adornment and sophistry—four branches of it for four kinds of affairs. So if Polus would inquire, let him inquire: he has not yet been informed to what sort of branch of flattery I assign rhetoric; but without noticing that I have not yet answered that, he proceeds to ask whether I do not consider it a fine thing. But I am not going to reply to the question whether I consider rhetoric a fine or a base thing, until I have first answered what it is; for it would not be fair, Polus: but if you want the information, ask me what sort of branch of flattery I assert rhetoric to be.

POLUS: I ask you then; so answer, what sort of branch it is.
 SOCRATES: Now, will you understand when I answer? Rhetoric, by my account, is a semblance⁸ of a branch of politics.

POLUS: Well then, do you call it a fine or a base thing?
 SOCRATES: A base one. I call it—for all that is bad I call base—since I am to answer you as though you had already understood my meaning.

GORGAS: Nor do I myself, upon my word, Socrates, grasp your meaning either.
 SOCRATES: And no wonder, Gorgias, for as yet my statement is not at all clear; but Polus⁹ here is so young and fresh!

GORGAS: Ah, do not mind him; but tell me what you mean by rhetoric being a semblance of a branch of politics.
 SOCRATES: Well, I will try to express what rhetoric appears to me to be: if it is not in fact what I say, Polus here will refute me. There are things, I suppose, that you call body and soul?

GORGAS: Of course.
 SOCRATES: And each of these again you believe to have a good condition?

⁸I.e., an unreal image or counterfeit: Quintilian (ii. 15.25) renders *simulacrum*. [Tr.]
⁹Socrates alludes to the meaning of *πρόσθετος* (a colt). [Tr.]

"knack"

Socrates has just finished beating up Gorgias, a teacher of rhetoric, in a debate. Now Gorgias' student, Polus, intervenes to "help."

GORGAS: I do.

SOCRATES: And again, a good condition that may seem so, but is not? As an example, let me give the following: many people seem to be in good bodily condition when it would not be easy for anyone but a doctor, or one of the athletic trainers, to perceive that they are not so.

GORGAS: You are right.

SOCRATES: Something of this sort I say there is in body and in soul, which makes the body or the soul seem to be in good condition, though it is none the more so in fact.

GORGAS: Quite so.

SOCRATES: Now let me see if I can explain my meaning to you more clearly. There are two different affairs to which I assign two different arts: the one, which has to do with the soul, I call politics; the other, which concerns the body, though I cannot give you a single name for it offhand, is all one business, the tendance of the body, which I can designate in two branches as gymnastic and medicine. Under politics I set legislation in the place of gymnastic, and justice to match medicine. In each of these pairs, of course—medicine and gymnastic, justice and legislation—there is some intercommunication, as both deal with the same thing; at the same time they have certain differences. Now these four, which always bestow their care for the best advantage respectively of the body and the soul, are noticed by the art of flattery which, I do not say with knowledge, but by speculation, divides herself into four parts, and then, insinuating herself into each of those branches, pretends to be that into which she has crept, and cares nothing for what is the best, but dangles what is most pleasant for the moment as a bait for folly, and deceives it into thinking that she is of the highest value. Thus cookery assumes the form of medicine, and pretends to know what foods are best for the body; so that if a cook and a doctor had to contend before boys, or before men as foolish as boys, as to which of the two, the doctor or the cook, understands the question of sound and noxious foods, the doctor would starve to death. Flattery, however, is what I call it, and I say that this sort of thing is a disgrace, Polus—for here I address you—because it aims at the pleasant and ignores the best; and I say it is not an art, but a habitude, since it has no

account to give of the real nature of the things it applies, and so cannot tell the cause of any of them. I refuse to give the name of art to anything that is irrational: if you dispute my views, I am ready to give my reasons. However, as I put it, cookery is flattery disguised as medicine; and in just the same manner self-adornment personates gymnastic: with its rascally, deceitful, ignoble, and illiberal nature it deceives men by forms and colors, polish and dress, so as to make them, in the effort of assuming an extraneous beauty, neglect the native sort that comes through gymnastic. Well, to avoid prolixity, I am willing to put it to you like a *göometer*¹⁰—for by this time I expect you can follow me: as self-adornment is to gymnastic, so is sophistry to legislation; and as cookery is to medicine, so is rhetoric to justice.¹¹ But although, as I say, there is this natural distinction between them,¹² they are so nearly related that sophists and orators are jumbled up as having the same field and dealing with the same subjects, and neither can they tell what to make of each other, nor the world at large what to make of them. For indeed, if the soul were not in command of the body, but the latter had charge of itself, and so cookery and medicine were not surveyed and distinguished by the soul, but the body itself were the judge, forming its own estimate of them by the gratifications they gave it, we should have a fine instance of what Anaxagoras described, my dear Polus—for you are versed in these matters: everything would be jumbled together, without distinction as between medicinal and healthful and tasty concoctions. Well now, you have heard what I state rhetoric to be—the counterpart of cookery in the soul, acting here as that does on the body. It may, indeed, be absurd of me, when I do not allow you to make long speeches, to have extended mine to so considerable a length. However, I can fairly claim indulgence: for when I spoke briefly you did not understand me; you were unable to make any use of the answer I gave you, but required a full exposition. Now if I on my part cannot tell what use

¹⁰I.e., in the concise mathematical manner, such as that which later appeared in the writings of Euclid. [Tr.]

¹¹Administrative justice is here specially meant. [Tr.]

¹²I.e., sophistry and rhetoric. [Tr.]

to make of any answers you may give me, you shall extend your speech also; but if I can make some use of them, allow me to do it; that will only be fair. And now, if you can make any use of this answer of mine, do so.

POLUS: Then what is it you say? Do you take rhetoric to be flattery?

SOCRATES: Well, I said rather a branch of flattery. Why, at your age, Polus, have you no memory? What will you do later on?

POLUS: Then do you think that good orators are considered to be flatterers in their cities, and so worthless?

SOCRATES: Is that a question you are asking, or are you beginning a speech?

POLUS: I am asking a question.

SOCRATES: To my mind, they are not considered at all.