

## Kryštof Boháček

### Between Truth and Beauty

#### Symposium *194e – 201c*

### Dramatic Charactes of Plato's Text

From all Plato's dialogues perhaps Symposium is determined with a dramatic frame in the most principal way.. The poet Agathon, together with his friends, is celebrating a victory in a dramatic contest. Particularly Greek drama, more precisely ancient tragedy, is a necessary key to the interpretation of the complicated composition of the file. The dialogue has three parts which correspond to three classic tragic episodes, each of twchich has a different protagonist, furthermore chorus passages, transition passages etc. In addition, the whole file is borne in the sign of Dionysus, the god of wine, but also ruling over a dramatic genre.<sup>i</sup> It is in honour of Dionysos that the present company, one by one, decide to give ceremonial speeches

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i To principal meaning of Dionysus metaphorica and to evident identification of a dialogue structure with a tragedy construction in general including consistent segmentation/ into chorus passages, episodes etc. see Wyller 1960, p. 30., including Appollo connotations of the central part .

which subject is meant to be another god, Eros. We gradually witness speeches of five (or six) participants expressing the same core from different perspectives, with different resources and approaches. Without doubt there is a range of mutual connection among the individual speakers on which base it is possible to create various models of dependency, parallels etc. But as Rehn notes critically, especially philologically orientated authors are sometimes attracted to overestimating and overloading the first part of *Symposium*.<sup>i</sup> The key question clearly remains who did Plato entrust the role of the protagonist to and therefore who is the main character of the first episode?

Despite the parallels between both poets, a close link of the first three speakers and indispensable role of Socrates I believe that, as in any of Plato's texts, in this one the resource of interpretation must also be the dramatic aspect. From this perspective the protagonist of the whole banquet explicitly appears to be Agathon, a talented, handsome, charming and honourable man who is the centre of attention of all present. Socrates is interested in him precisely: in the context of the society of typical representatives of Hellenic intellectual tradition, Agathon's speech is the only real alternative to Plato's philosophy, namely an alternative in

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i Rehn 1996, p.84

the form of a competitive rhetorical school.<sup>i</sup> The competition of different approaches is the basic motive of the first part and Plato leaves the first protagonist to form the main dramatic line: we are the witnesses of a court case in which there is a contest for wisdom.

### The Power of Beauty

From the very beginning Agathon (194 e -197 e) leaves a competent reader in no doubt as to “where the wind blows from”.<sup>ii</sup> He introduces his performance with methodological προοίμιον, typical for the Gorgias’ school, and he dedicates the following speech to the evidence of his principal thesis that reads: Eros is the most beautiful and the

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i To Gorgianic rhetoric as to philosophical alternative towards Plato's θεωρία see Boháček 2009, esp. p. 81-87, and p. 95-101. I give a detailed analysis of Gorgias’ philosophy of not-existence in Boháček 2004.

ii As early as the first one sentence can not be overlooked: Ἐγὼ δὲ δὴ βούλομαι πρῶτον μὲν εἰπεῖν ὥς χρή με εἰπεῖν, ἔπειτα εἰπεῖν (*Symp.* 194 e). Everyone who has read Helen by Gorgias at least once, remembers typical Gorgias’ onomatopoeic iteration straightaway and more knowledgeable readers of the text will also remember the second προοίμιον in § 2: Ἐγὼ δὲ βούλομαι... Next for example *Symp.* 195 a: τῶς ὁρθὸς παντὸς ... περὶ παντὸς, ..., οἷος οἶον ... ὦν.

best of all.<sup>i</sup> Immediately in the introduction the poet shows his confidence and creative autonomy – that is to say as the only relative Phaedrus' epic framework – and reveals it as only another construction among many, and quite straightforward. He demonstrates his right to measure all the aspects of older tradition with the present and the power of his inspiration (→195 c).<sup>ii</sup>

The basic hypothesis of Agathon's conception is Eros' gentleness and softness: he is characterised by the help of the Goddess Ate who tramples men's presence of mind down softly so finally they lose their heads not knowing how. It is probable that Ate serves here as a Homer double of a Gorgianic ἀπάτη,<sup>iii</sup> because her Hesiodus'

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i φημι ... πάντων θεῶν εὐδαιμόνων ὄντων Ἔρωτα, ..., εὐδαιμονέστατον εἶναι αὐτῶν, κάλλιστον ὄντα καὶ ἄριστον (*Symp.* 195 a). I offer the first plan translation in the sense that Eros is the most beautiful and the best of all the Gods (as well as the most blessed). However, nothing indicates that the interpretation of the subordinate clause necessarily refers to the qualities of all the gods. Therefore, I translate it as: Eros is the most blessed of all blessed gods because he is the most beautiful and the best of all. The thesis has, besides this explanation, a more general meaning and much greater brisance : that way Eros becomes the highest valued and criterion of all.

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At the same time heard here is an echo of Gorgias' programme competing with poetry here, see for example Gorgias, DK 82 B 11 § 9.

iii See Gorgias' theory of dual discursus ἀπάτη and πειθώ, with the stress on the first one of them in Gorgias, DK 82 B 11 § 8-10.

personification, pre-Olympian (pre-celestial) goddess of mischief and delusion, has such a negative attribute that it cannot be used for ἐγκώμιον.<sup>i</sup> Therefore, Agathon's Eros is ἀπαλός and μαλακός, which on one side takes away his typical attributes of manhood,<sup>ii</sup> and on the other gives him indomitable power. In this conception Eros is basically a wizard who σμικροτάτῳ σώματι θεϊότατα ἔργα ἀποτελεῖ,<sup>iii</sup> but instead of physical trifles, Agathon introduces his gentle and lovely figure, which is incapable of fight and of any violence. However, Eros's gentleness and softness does not mean that the god is weak and vulnerable – exactly the opposite! A soft and slippery god is able to penetrate everyone's most vulnerable place, their heart (→ 196 b). For his “fluidity” that happens so unnoticed and secretly (analogy to Gorgianic ἀφανεστάτῳ □). There he rules with a strong hand and completely irreconcilably! The peculiarity and certain awesomeness of Eros's power lies in indomitable incidence somehow “from within”, through the capture of an acting person's soul and resulting changes in

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i Above all it is one of the oldest godhead, the daughter of the Night, which is in contrast to Agathon's conception of Eros, is constantly in irony towards the character of Agathon himself, see Rowe 1998, p. 161-162.

ii And therefore it is in direct contrast to historical appearance of Socrates's and Diotimas' conception of Eros. However, it does not steer away from the frame of Homer's metaphoric which knows fine but dangerous men (archer Paris or even Apollo).

iii Gorgias, DK 82 B 11 § 8.

his own attitude. Eros' smooth beauty and the overall impression of proper orderliness (σύμμετρος, εὐσχημοσύνη) are so evil-eyed that Eros never meets with any resistance and does not commit any injustice.<sup>i</sup> Everything that is done to his will is actually done voluntarily. This is possible thanks to his “bravery” that he carries with him into every situation (197 e) and he achieves to “snuggle to the nature of the moment” (περιπτύσσεσθαι). Therefore, Eros is the only power that stands above violence: there is nobody who would resist him, that is why he controls all the others, including the most powerful Gods (→ 196 d).<sup>ii</sup> Once again he does not control them only from the outside but much deeper, by his σοφία . Agathon tries to

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i Neither he can stand it: οὐτ' ἄδικεῖ οὐτ' ἀδικεῖται (*Symp.* 196 b). He is out of Plato's conception of justice and injustice because he does not submit to any moral order according to which the extent of justice could be determined: the injustice here is perceived as real violence against the will of the concerned. This basically psychological conception of justice is probably one of the most irreconcilable conflicts between the Gorgianic school and Plato: basic experience of the world moenas for Gorgias violence in all shapes the world, violence not founded in any order. . Violence is a token of power which has the right due to its dominance. Therefore, justice is purely human category and in political field it is a part of a traditional concept ἀξιότης, distinctly represented by laws. That is why the quotation of Gorgias's pupil Alcidas will not surprise us (see Guthrie 1971, p. 274). cp. also Rowe 1998, p. 164 (with reference to Aristotle: *Rhet.* 1406 A).

ii He overrules, not reigns, though. Plato deliberately uses the expression κρατεῖν, which suggests absolute dominion of the strongest but morally unjustifiable reign personifying cosmic order.

show a universal character of Eros' kairotic empathy for which is a typical upholding of anything without an element of necessity. Such a generalized patronage is related to all creative and intuitive aspects of each field, starting with Apollo's shooting and ending with Zeus's "steerage".<sup>i</sup> At that Eros is not only an experienced practitioner but also the greatest schoolmaster: not until due to his credit the qualities of other Gods come into their own (197 a), so the grandiose κεφάλαιον proves the introductory thesis that Eros is the most beautiful and the best (→ 197 e).

The reactions of the listeners explicitly show that the first episode has reached its peak. The main hero of the whole celebration adds to his victory in a tragic contest an undeniable laurel for the most proper speech which catches the present atmosphere the best and is connected with his speaker the best at the same time. That way the young poet in his eulogy personalizes the same qualities which he glorifies.

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i The choice of term can be connected with Plato's conception of steersman art as a practical ability to retain unanimity during collective work on the board, which is always improvisation; namely it is the art to resist with the ship to any situation which can occur. All that but with a strictly restricted horizon of one board where the obvious default "Vorverständnis" is an effort to reach the coast safely. Though, as we know from *Gorg.* 511 c- 512 b, according to Plato it is not always necessary to rescue your own passengers from drowning.

## The Violent Truth

However, Socrates arrives (199 c – 201 c) and already during the interlude (198 a – 199 c) he totally ruins the celebration in progress. He refuses to take part in the organised contest because after the performance of the first actor he would have to act the part of a mere extra without any chance to shine.<sup>i</sup> Therefore, he introduces new rules wilfully and instead of expected ἐγκώμιον he starts with his usual dialogue, in addition with a dogmatically given point of view in full so that fair speech cares for the truth, not for beauty. That way Socrates personalizes the exact opposite principle of violent logos which serves as a coercive means to accepting predefined resources.<sup>ii</sup> From the metaphoric

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i If Plato's philosopher does not have any arguments, he does not escape the perspective of necessity anyway: free possibility of choice according to individual nature (clearly to taste here) is not acceptable because the opponent could be more persuasive. Socrates already uses this rhetoric strategy in *Gorg.* 447 a-c: Socrates comes to see tired Gorgias after the talk in which he would beat him and firmly demands from him, and also from Polus, to adhere to his rules which he then breaks himself (465 e).

ii And he also appeals to the others that way: Agathon gives up after a short conversation believing that Socrates is a stronger debater. That changes nothing from Agathon's point of view – he is put to silence with *elenchos*. However he is not persuaded. See Rowe 1998, p. 172. Socrates's *elenchos* appeals sophistically and that is a serious problem – historically Socrates does not have a speech which would



point of view Socrates' violence then shows a radical break up from the cultural frame towards which the philosopher expresses himself only negatively: the former of love is systematically interchanged with his poetic personification, namely with love that he evokes in other human beings.<sup>i</sup> The consequences of such manipulation are of course unsolvable conflicts, which is a classical result of Socrates elenctic dialectic of his early dialogues. However, in contrast to early dialogues the philosopher's key confession appears after partner's confessed aporia (201 b-c):

**Καὶ μὴν καλῶς γε εἶπες ὦ Ἀγάθων**

The key question of a careful reader is why does Plato do such a thing? Why does he perform a sequence of mutually competitive conceptions on one theme that culminates by the main character in the first dialogue, and then he leaves Socrates appear in the role of a dark shadow who unsuitably debates and chews over the tragedian's

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convince (positively) his listeners. (Socrates, of so called transitive dialogues, has at least a personal example.)

i The idea that Eros, as the author and source of all love, feels love towards something else than himself, is totally incompatible with the epic frame which is represented by Faidros, and does not appear in any of the previous speeches. In mythology Eros does not figure as a personification of love “during work” (that is Aphrodite), but he figures a personification of the author of love, thus its ignition or awakening.

brilliant and impressive performance and turns it into his right opposite, protracted and unoriginal tract. While the poet's excited hymnic eulogy is non-repetitive, an inspired act worth remembering, the following Socrates *elenchos* is a routine repetitive whenever and under any circumstances, which result is firmly set beforehand: the partner admits οὐδὲν οἶδα. At the same time it is clear that classical Socrates dialogue will not interest other participants of the symposium and surely will not be able to compete with Agathon. In spite of Socrates emphatic negation he surely must – what else does a speaker seek in any society if not the attention of their audience, their trust and appreciation? Of course, Socrates does not refrain from evaluating and comparing previous speakers. And of course, he has to admit that Agathon is beyond him: even though he manages to show that tragic speech is not truer, he must come to terms with the fact that it is much more beautiful than Socrates' ἔλεγχος. And that is the major problem!

### Tragic Thought

Agathon namely represents the two most powerful trends of period thought, tragic poetry and Gorgias' rhetoric. Both are based on a totally different basis and give a certain interpretation of world, which is incompatible with

Plato's and therefore, according to Plato, non-philosophical. Despite that, both trends are absolutely dominant and have an incomparable influence on the whole of Hellenic culture. Through the character of Agathon, Plato shows very successfully<sup>i</sup> that in reality it is the only trend and that rhetoric and tragic dramas are merely other expressions of the same tragic thought<sup>ii</sup> of which essence is given to us with Agathon's speech. Although the young poet rhapsodises in ecstasy, his speech is inspired in a unique way which is by no means accidental, naive or without basis.<sup>iii</sup> It is more or less the opposite. Agathon shows proper rhetorical education and with his own stress on the elegance and fluency, he strongly reminds us of Isocrates.<sup>iv</sup> Most importantly his speech is in harmony with everything that can be read about Gorgias' school in Plato's previous

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i And by all accounts also historically authentic. About the historical character Agathon. more Rowe 1998,ps. 161-162.

ii Cp. Johnson 1959,ps. 173-176, emphasised Isocrates.

iii As he thinks naively, Rehn 1996, p. 83. If the situation was really as simple as Rhen imagines, why would Plato picture the tragedian as the winner of the contest and why could Socrates not make Diotimina's speech himself?

iv Plato's criticism is evidently meant to affect not only Isocrates but also Agathonas the historical character and probably a number of other, less important characters influenced by the Gorgianic school. Nevertheless, the core of the philosophical conflict is necessary to follow to Gorgias.

dialogues *Gorgias*, *Menexenos* a *Menon*. Therefore it is not by chance that Agathon's speech begins with criticism of Parmenides and Hesiod, it is full of Gorgias' *schemes* and without Gorgianic-Empedoclen psychology it would be unthinkable.<sup>i</sup> In contrast to the *logos* of Gorgias' *Helen*, the effect of senses onto the soul is crucial for the poet, director and scenographer, Agathon; Eros' power comes from experience of the power of the theatrical actor over the audience during a performance. This magic of physical bewitchment is the same magic which evokes a sudden burst of love, and as we know from *Helen*, it works as a similar mechanism similar to a magic speech ἀπάτη (which obviously for Gorgias characterizes exactly tragic poetry). It is evidence of Plato's mastership that in his paraphrase of *Helen* he developed the third piece of proof<sup>ii</sup> according to the example of *Excursus about logos*<sup>iii</sup> and contrary to that

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i More detailed Boháček 2011, p. 27-35.

ii i.e. a piece of evidence of Helen's innocence in case she would be defeated by the power of Eros, consists of psychological and erotic argument. Gorgias, DK 82 B 11 § 15-19.

iii Extensive excursus about *logos*, it stands in the place of the second piece of evidence of Helen's innocence in case she would be defeated by the power of word, it gives us the core of Gorgias' tragic philosophy of *logos*. It consists of a tract about a magic speech ἀπάτη (the first argument, Helen was bewitched and betrayed) and an argumentative speech, πειθώ (the second argument, she was persuaded). Gorgias, DK 82 B 11 § 8-15.

he interpreted *logos* as an analogic area of action of the same δύναμις.<sup>i</sup>

So we have here reliable text evidence of Plato's knowledge of Gorgias' philosophical theory about *logos*. The analysis of Agathon's speech shows that it is not a loose parody, casually piling up Gorgianic characters and making fun of the most famous extracts from *Helen* – vice versa, it is about Plato's well thought out reconstruction of basic philosophical position, which is according to Plato the common base of tragic poetry and also Gorgias' rhetoric.<sup>ii</sup> Plato actually cared for us to understand Agathon's speech in this sense so much so that he made sure he included the picture of Gorgias' head<sup>iii</sup> in the speech.

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i Unless Plato does not based it on some non-surviving Gorgias' text book (e.g. known tract Τέχνη), possibly one of many text books of his pupils (thanks to Platos' Gorgias we know about Polus' text book, some dramatic application may have been by Agathon himself, who was just specializing in the effect of the performance side of a tragedy ...)

ii Philosophically and in the sense of the genre and terminology it is seized only by Gorgias – he is not mentioned as the first theorist of tragedy and perhaps an aesthetics of all by accident. Untersteiner 1954, s. 159-161; cp. Scholten 2003, p. 91-93.

iii In the first place the metaphor compares rhetoric to the hypnotic power of Medusa (cp. picture of Socrates as a ray). Presumably also an allusion to typical Gorgianic structure including τὸ κεφάλαιον in conclusion, a kind of emphatic summary.

However Socrates remembers Gorgias' "head" (ἀνεμίμνησκεν)! Plato gives us another clear clue then: we build on the conclusions from *Menon* 97 b - 100 c, and it is necessary to bare in mind *Gorgias and Menexenus*. After Agathon's performance is awarded with loud applause Socrates is in a similar situation, as during the dialogue with Menon: he should explain that not every plausible interpretation is the right one, and he should also prove that Plato's philosophy, among other plausible interpretations "knows" only the right one. Agathon's speech is therefore surely plausible, but untrue.

### **Philosophical Tragedy: Plato Between the Truth and the Beauty**

We have already heard a number of such speeches in *Symposium* that aspired to validity. In Agathon's previous speakers' speeches it is possible to identify the typical style and also the basic resources of substantial phases of Hellenistic thought. In Phaedrus' work we find a picture of a fixed epic poetry myth, Pausanias personalizes wisdom and a discipline of law-making Wise men,<sup>i</sup> Eryximachos mentions

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i With an important parallel between Pausanias's division of Eros and Hesiodos's division of Eris in *Pracíh a dnech* see F. Novotný: *O platoovi III. Filosofie*, Praha 1949, 171. Among the Wise

most of all grotesquely twisted essence of a Presocratic and Aristophanes quite clearly combines features of a sophist and a comedian into one character. During the four performances Plato presents the oldest Greek and European intellectual progress to us. Of course, this picture is brief and incomplete, on the other side it is necessary to bear in mind that every speaker captures the conceptual schemes of their own philosophical discourse and in this sense Plato's performance is likely to be admirable. He presents us with a daring interpretation of the past and traditions as the struggle of wisdom among several, more or less framed and closed periods.<sup>i</sup> However, in the background of this “historical construction”<sup>ii</sup> there lies an ongoing struggle between Plato and Gorgianic philosophy.

In the wholedrama, Agathon acts as ὑποκριτής because according to Plato he represents a dual shape of the top phase of the whole contest, namely tragic poetry and

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men and educational lyrical poetry it is also possible to find features of educational rural Hesiodosus epic (however, not Hesiodos cosmology!).

i Therefore each phase represents a single/separate discourse with central right for wisdom.

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K. Navratil had a similar view to ours, on the other hand W. Liebich comprehends the first part as a parody of tragedians' duel based on Aristophanes' *Frogs*. For more details Wipperfurth 1965, p. 144 rem. 9.

rhetoric. Precisely due to the fact that Plato considers both of the trends as the most powerful shoot of the highest outburst of the whole Hellenic tradition, it is given so much attention to their philosophical base.<sup>i</sup> The truth is that Plato is not alone in who sees the success and persuasive force of practical rhetoric philosophy and also attic tragedy – it is a *common sense* of his period, persuasively expressed in the text by of applause from an ordinary audience (175 e) plus the enthusiastic nodding of a professional audience. That way tragic thought is introduced as unrivalled hegemon of general knowledge as well as of social institutionalised intellectuals.<sup>ii</sup> The general dominance of tragic philosophy

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i Philosophical base in the sense of style and terminology, corresponding with Plato's ideas about philosophy; however, every single one of the five concepts in the first part, different from each other, proves necessary by its classification into “elite selection” in a kind of philosophical way: because each of them stakes their claims to relevance in the explanation of the world and consequences consequent upon the world, especially justification and foundation of a certain human type and point of view characterised just for the respective concept. All that is quite independently based on parallel ongoing religious tradition (even if penetration and connections are omnipresent).

ii The whole *agon* takes place in a well-educated society and every single speaker represents certain trends or social groups (there is an explicit connection to the last dialogue of the transitive group here *Prot.* 314 c-e): Phaedrus can be Hippias's pupil and as a young man he represents the most traditional wisdom; Pausanias from Kerameik is sometimes classed as Prodicus' pupil and his whole speech has a strongly traditionalist and patriotic character (it would not be surprising if it a soldier with the reference to



continues in public as well as in the intellectual area – despite Plato's effort in *Gorgias*, *Menexenos* and also *Meno*!

That is why the whole tract is dedicated to reconcile to Gorgias' tragic thought and all his influence on Isocrates, Thukydide, Agathon and not least Greece in general in the first place. Therefore, in the first plan, it is also discussed as a rhetorically influenced tragic drama, however of which the basic constructive element in Plato consists of ἐγκώμιον, a genre that was discovered and made famous for prose by Gorgias. That is why the first part of the piece in Gorgianic style is dedicated to a list of mutual contradiction and untrustworthiness of existing philosophical tradition. Subsequently the piece is set into a festive atmosphere in which the rhetoric as well as tragic poetry has a chance to excel, which is why the piece has an imperishable character of tragedy.

In the first place the tragic hero is Agathon, an educated and beautiful young man, who dedicates his indubitable talent to the service of rhetoric and poetry. His performances are so convincing that his unique success among audiences must persuade him about the correctness of behaviour as well as attitude. We can see the speaker and

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Thukydides' hero of the same name); Eryximachus represents the medical profession (it is possible that he is a state doctor), Aristophanes together with Agathon present themselves as great characters, still readable in Plato's presence.

poet then as he together with his listeners lies unconsciously even to himself. He stands somewhere between knowing and unknowing, between wisdom of actual inspiration on one side and immorality and egoism on the other. In contrast to the members of the board, Agathon is really touching the divine and compared to Aristophanes he does not decide for purely private utilitarian use in the name of comfortable survival. He is a real author serving to his inscrutable inspiration, which is a demonstration of sovereign and supernatural power.<sup>i</sup> As the right/true Gorgias' pupil and an artist he longs to achieve great things and he uses his abilities to do so – his *eukairia* tells him that it is necessary to use the right moment because it will not be repeated.

Gorgias comprehends the world as the unsteady work of our soul, which creates a pliable scene of self-revelation of the φύσις that (which) is not.<sup>ii</sup> Φύσις approves of indomitable power with which it enters our construct - τάξις of words as well as things - and it changes them with

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i Plato as well as Gorgias do not agree on it: the creator is only a provider and user of godly power, not its source. While Gorgias considers such nature to be the greatest gift, Plato identifies it as unconscious madness.

ii Cp. Esp. The second and the third part of Gorgias' writing *On Not-being*, de MXG 980 a 8 – b 17. For more detail Boháček 2004, esp. p. 106-170, and then p. 216-233.

the pressure of immediate coming. Tyrannical break into illusory coherency of meaning causes the end, change, instability and also destruction,<sup>i</sup> and the indomitable δύναμις reveals as force everywhere where it meets opposition and effort to persist or even to deflect the course of its coming.<sup>ii</sup>

However, it is possible to adjust intuitively to wilful invasion of natural powers “to be at service of the moment” and use its power to creation. Every destruction is also a production of something new, unprecedented, unexpected and unrepeatable. Therefore Gorgianic persuasion is not only perception of power, which can not be resisted. It is also comprehension of the fact that this power is beautiful itself, and that everywhere where it was successful to capture a certain moment in harmony with its effectiveness, this power creates beauty. And the very aesthetic point of view is represented by Agathon in a tragic conflict of perishable mortality knowing and immortal grasp of the power of the moment in a godly beautiful creative act. The poet, which longs for immortality, is wholly concentrated

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i It is basically the tragic-philosophical resource of science about *logos from Helen*.

ii The explanation of Gorgias’ philosophy as endeavour to cultivate forced nature and creation of artificial cultural space as the autonomous human world, in which force/violence φύσις is reduced to beauty of words, see Boháček 2011, p. 35-40.

on immediate incidence on his soul because according to Gorgias' school only there can we meet the beauty.

The roles of talented Aristophanes and the other speakers are undoubtedly tragic as obviously there is no-one to lead them and who are not able to agree, on the basis of older approaches, on the key to universally acceptable values as well as political order. The character of Socrates also appears tragic here, who, under certain circumstances, is not able to offer more to the present company than “a cold shower”, and even he as the only one senses drawbacks of previous attitudes from the very beginning, he manages to realize this point of view only privately, speaking for himself with the experience of his personal life (which surely is not too little, but true personal examples can not testify at the celebration). From this point of view Socrates can be shown as an ordinary member of a tragic community, another lost “sophist” offering other un-satisfying conceptual schemes to the list of the previous ones. And Socrates really proved necessary that way to the contemporary members of the jury of 501 judges at Aeropag, or present Aristophanes.

However, Socrates brings his knowledge of tragic situation to the community, of which he is not a member. Therefore he can not be classed as a *protagonist* of Agathon's calibre. It is probably also because we already know his character and so it is sufficient for Plato to only

drop a clue about him at first. We know very well from *Apology* that Socrates is a tragic character, who puts all the weight of unchangeable and therefore immortal points of view focused on philosophy on his mortal shoulders of this life and demands daimonic moral from a mortal, to whom after the end of his earthly “purgatory” no certain award nods. Socrates's tragedy lies in an immortal act of a moral gesture then, which can gain unique importance only from the mortality of a participant.<sup>i</sup> That is why Socrates is tragic Silen, who, with his body and soul, is so focused and concentrated on absolute responsibility of his absolute right here, in this inconsistent world, in rough and sensuous body, that his own gold *daimon* keeps hidden. So we confirm that Socrates plays a role of some ghost or shadow of the main hero who hides himself in the community – it is a kind of tragedian's subconscious alter ego and together the characters express Plato's interpretation of Gorgias' philosophy<sup>ii</sup> about the ungraspable nature of the world:

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i        God would not actually risk anything with such a decision. On the other hand, a mortal risks everything he has and that is only because of very vague “Goodness“, of which interpretation is on the top of that a question of quite problematic evidence, see *Meno* 81 b-e and next 86 b-c.

ii       Gorgias, DK 82 B 26.

τὸ μὲν εἶναι ἀφανὲς μὴ τυχὸν τοῦ δοκεῖν,  
τὸ δὲ δοκεῖν ἀσθενὲς μὴ τυχὸν τοῦ εἶναι.

Agathon does not believe in permanen being of anything and he changes his youth as well as the peak of charm and natural powers into one great καιρός, which we are just witnessing.<sup>i</sup> We are reminded of the fact that this happy moment just passes by Socrates, an old and ugly man, who is totally devoted to unity and general perspective of life, so he totally neglects the magic of the moment and sacrifices it consciously in favour of a general sense of his being. Contrary to that Agathon does not believe in any permanent sense and therefore he sacrifices it in favour of immediate beauty. At the end of the first episode of *Symposium* we are exactly in the place where *Gorgias* ended,<sup>ii</sup> however, thanks to *Menon*, which was written in

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i At the same time this peak is a metaphor for the top of classical Greek culture: Plato indicates that in the tragic thought and Gorgianic rhetoric it blossomed into a beautiful flower – but which cannot last in its beauty and has to fade and die pointlessly. On the contrary, philosophy has to bear good fruit. If we wanted to express ourselves into gender categories, rhetoric would have to be labelled as male and philosophy as a female model. Plato represents Diotima here...

ii In *Gorg.* 526 d – 527 e we have two philosophical concepts and views of life ahead of us from which neither of them manages to disprove the other convincingly: Socrates is surely pictured as sympathetic, although not as victorious Kallikles's rival, who simply does not believe in the only world order, recognizability of all things and Godly based moral principles. Although Socrates acts towards

the meantime, we also know that Socrates is right. It is not by chance that we are the witnesses in a lawsuit about wisdom, where the presiding judge is the god of death and rebirth. All the members of the community together with all Plato's society – all of them will have to make a decision as well as us, the readers. The decision will cost us something important anyway. Who will pay the bill of Greek culture? We find ourselves in a situation of a tragic choice: Socrates is right, but the choice that he represents is not a beautiful one...

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Gorgianic rhetoric from the position of dialectics in the beginning, in the end he is not left with anything but threat of punishment out of this world (valid to the ones who are willing to believe) and emotively exalted appeal expressing concern about his friend's destiny. It is obvious that neither Kallikles's nor Gorgianic educated readers are concerned about any of them very much. However, in contrast to Gorgias, in *Symposium*, ugly and unscrupulously ironic Socrates is not alone: Irresistible Diotima comes!