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COMIC AND SERIOUS IN GORGIAS' *ENCOMIUM OF HELEN* THE USE OF PARADOX

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Gorgias declares at the end of the *Encomium of Helen*:

ἐβουλήθην γράψαι τὸν λόγον Ἑλένης μὲν ἐγκώμιον, ἐμὸν δὲ
παίγνιον. (21)

I wanted to write the speech both as a praise of Helen and a diversion
for myself.

This phrase has puzzled scholars who have proposed different interpretations about it. Is the *Encomium* serious or must be taken as a joke? Charles P. Segal says: "A further problem encountered in an interpretation of Gorgias is the question of the seriousness with which the views expressed especially in the *Helen* and to a lesser extent in the *Palamedes* are to be taken. Gorgias himself admits at the very end of the *Helen* that it is a *paignion*, "a plaything" or "trifle".¹ Olof Gigon says regarding the word *paignion*: "*Die Helena ist ein παίγνιον, weil dem Verfasser am Gegestand, der Unschuld Helenas wirklich nicht das geringste liegt*",² ("the Helen is a *paignion* because the innocence of Helen is actually not in the least the point at issue for the author"). Segal explains the meaning of this statement, pointing out that the *Encomium of Helen* is a literary creation, not subject to a real circumstance or

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¹ SEGAL, CH. P. "Gorgias and the Psychology of the Logos", 100.

² GIGON, O. "Gorgias uber das Nichtsein", 190.

occasion, without any practical function.³ In fact, the interpretation of this word has generated different positions about the speech. H. Gompertz⁴ speaks of the complete “nihilism” of Gorgias, pointing out that Gorgias does not express positives theories in the speech at all and that the speech is a nonsense. On the opposite side are those critics who tried to rehabilitate Gorgias as a serious philosopher (Bruce Gronbeck,⁵ Richard Leo Enos,⁶ Steve Hays⁷). In a middle position, Segal asserts that “the absence of a systematic ontological theory in Gorgias does not preclude the presence of a real rhetorical-aesthetic theory with some psychological basis.”⁸ Besides, many critics have noticed the problems of argumentation and Gorgias’ lack of rhetorical ability in a genre (the epideictic) designed to expose these skills. Is this a paradox? Among critics who have tried to explain these problems, Poulakos rejects the possibility that the speech be a model, “the kind Gorgias’ students were supposedly expected to memorize and recite”⁹ because of the last phrase. How can a speech that is a model end with a phrase that explains that the hearer has been deceived because the speech is a *paignion*?¹⁰ Besides, Poulakos adds that the arguments are not very much effective. Of the four arguments, only one has force, that Helen is not blameworthy because she was seized by force, the others have no merit. But Poulakos does not agree either with those who interpret the encomium of Helen as a pretext for something else. For example, Versenyi¹¹ asserts that Gorgias introduces the defense of Helen as a pretext to show that *logos* has nothing to do with knowledge, intellect, reason, but move in a different realm. For Thomas Duncan, Gorgias is writing an encomium of

³ SEGAL, art. cit., 119.

⁴ GOMPERZ. *Sophistik und Rhetorik*, p. 35.

⁵ GRONBECK, B. “Gorgias on Rhetoric and Poetic: a Rehabilitation”, 38.

⁶ ENOS, R. “The Epistemology of Gorgias’ Rhetoric: A Re-examination”, 51.

⁷ HAYS, S. “On the Skeptical Influence of Gorgias’ *On Not Being*”, 329.

⁸ SEGAL, art. cit., 102.

⁹ POULAKOS, J. “Gorgias’ *Encomium to Helen* and the Defense of Rhetoric”, 3.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ VERSENYI, L. “Gorgias’s Helen Revisited”.

logos and of his own art. Poulakos does not see the necessity of a pretext to speak of something else. Why don't to speak directly of what one wants? So he proposes another interpretation: Gorgias introduces Helen as a personification of rhetoric. According to him, both Helen and rhetoric have common characteristics: both are attractive, unfaithful and have bad reputation. Consigny, on his part, proposes that Gorgias violates the conventional criteria used to assess reasoning and style in his epideictic orations and that he shows the skills prevailing in each discourse because each one possess its own protocol of reasoning and style.¹²

Therefore, as it is evident, the last phrase and the speech in general have created a puzzle of difficult resolution. Is the encomium a joke or can it be taken seriously? Even if the praise of Helen is a joke, there are other things in the speech that appear to be serious. In fact, when the reader has finished the speech, he has the impression that something important wanted to be said.

What, therefore, is the point at issue in this speech?

Aristotle says in the *Rhetoric* that Gorgias used to mix in his speeches both serious and comic.

περὶ δὲ τῶν γελοίων, ἐπειδὴ τινα δοκεῖ χρήσιν ἔχειν ἐν τοῖς ἀγῶσι, καὶ δεῖν ἔφη Γοργίας τὴν μὲν σπουδὴν διαφθεῖρειν τῶν ἐναντίων γέλῳτι τὸν δὲ γέλωτα σπουδῇ [...] (*Rhet.* 1419b.3)

As for jests, since some seem to have an utility in debates, Gorgias said that it was necessary to destroy the opponents' earnest with jest and jest with earnest.

If we consider again the last phrase of Gorgias' speech, it appears that it is in fact a paradox. Gorgias has written the speech both as diversion for himself and as an encomium of Helen, which is a contradiction. The *Encomium of Helen* is, indeed, a paradoxical encomium. Henry Knight Miller explains what this means: "The paradoxical encomium is a species of rhetorical jest or display piece which involves the praise of unworthy, unexpected, or trifling

¹² CONSIGNY, S. "Gorgias' Use of the Epideictic", 293.

objects, such as the praise of lying and envy or of the gout or of pots and pebbles."¹³

The humanist scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote also a paradoxical encomium in his *Morias Encomion* or *Stultitiae laus*. It is noteworthy that he says something very similar to the last phrase of Gorgias in the letter addressed to his friend Thomas More. He says that he has written the encomium as a sort of diversion for himself:

*Ergo quoniam omnino aliquid agendum duxi, et id tempus ad seriam commentationem parum uidebatur accommodatum, uisum est Moriae Encomium ludere.*¹⁴

Therefore, because I was completely convinced that something had to be done, and that time seemed little appropriate for a serious study, it seemed good to me to write the Praise of Folly as a diversion.

And then, further on in the letter, he adds:

*Namque tandem est iniquitas, cum omni uite instituto lusus concedamus, studiis nullum omnino lusum permittere, maxime si nuge seria ducant, atque ita tractentur ludicra ut ex his aliquanto plus frugis referat lector non omnino naris obese, quam ex quorundam tetricis ac splendidis argumentis.*¹⁵

For finally it is injustice, when we allow every course of life its recreation, not to allow at all recreation to study, especially if from a trifle serious things may derive, and playthings are so handled that the reader not completely of coarse nose (of keen nose) may get much

¹³ KNIGHT MILLER, H. "The paradoxical Encomium with special reference to its vogue in England, 1600-1800", 145.

¹⁴ ERASMUS, D. *Morias enkomion: stultitiae laudatio*, p. 2.

¹⁵ Ibid.

more benefit from these than from certain solemn and brilliant arguments.

In this way, as the reader of *Stultitiae Laus* can derive from trivial things other more serious ones, in the *Encomium of Helen* together with a trivial issue (the one concerning Helen) other serious considerations are presented.

My contention is that in the *Encomium of Helen* Gorgias has created a paradoxical encomium and is using this form of mock eloquence both as diversion for himself and to transmit other more serious question: the power of *logos*. He speaks through paradoxes which make the sense of the speech contradictory at any moment and, mixing comic and serious, he presents through deficiencies, contradictions and inconsistencies of argumentation the power of *logos*, which is also a paradox.

1. THE ENCOMIUM OF HELEN: A PARADOXICAL ENCOMIUM

Gorgias says at the beginning of the *Encomium of Helen*:

ἄνδρα δὲ καὶ γυναῖκα καὶ λόγον καὶ ἔργον καὶ πόλιν καὶ πρᾶγμα
 χρὴ τὸ μὲν ἄξιον ἐπαίνου ἐπαίνῳ τιμᾶν, τῷ δὲ ἀναξίῳ μῶμον
 ἐπιτιθέναι· ἴση γὰρ ἁμαρτία καὶ ἁμαθία μέμφεσθαι τε τὰ ἐπανετὰ
 καὶ ἐπαινεῖν τὰ μωμητά. (1)

It is necessary to honor with praise what is worthy of praise: a man, a woman, a speech, a deed, a city and an action, but to apply blame to the unworthy. For it is an equal error and ignorance to blame the praiseworthy and to praise the blameworthy.

Gorgias asserts here that one must praise what is worthy of praise. He will praise Helen who is not worthy of praise because she has been considered by all the literary tradition as the paradigm of unfaithful woman. Therefore Gorgias introduces the paradox. It is noteworthy that the title of the speech is

Encomium of Helen when Gorgias writes actually an apology of Helen. But this title “encomium” is important to build the paradox.

Beginning from this, other numerous paradoxes are present in the speech. In section 3 Gorgias presents Helen’s mythical origins:

δῆλον γὰρ ὡς μητρὸς μὲν Λήδας, πατρὸς δὲ τοῦ μὲν γενομένου θεοῦ, λεγομένου δὲ θνητοῦ. Τυνδάρεω καὶ Διός, ὧν ὁ μὲν διὰ τὸ εἶναι ἔδοξεν, ὁ δὲ διὰ τὸ φάναι ἡλέγχθη, καὶ ἦν ὁ μὲν ἀνδρῶν κρᾶτιστος ὁ δὲ πάντων τύραννος. (3)

For it is clear that her mother was Leda, and her actual father was a god and her reputed father a mortal, Tyndareos and Zeus, of whom the one was believed to be because he was and the other was rejected to be because he said he was, and the one was the best of men and the other the master of all.

MacDowell explains in the notes of his edition of the speech that ἐλέγχθη (‘was reputed’) is the reading of late manuscripts, “perhaps merely a medieval conjecture”.¹⁶ But he thinks it must be preferred to the oldest manuscripts ἡλέγχθη (‘was rejected’) which does not make sense. Porter disagrees with this reading of the text by defending that Gorgias is intentionally absurd. He asserts: “Gorgias [...] is entitled to his absurdity, which appears to be carefully calculated, consisting as it does in balanced nearcontradictions and in obscurities that, regardless of the solution we may opt for, simply won’t go away.”¹⁷ According to him, Gorgias is intentionally absurd to emphasize not the power but the vulnerability of speech, to show that “just to speak is to be open to devastating refutation”. I agree with him in the preference for the reading of the old manuscripts and the reason is that the old manuscripts conserve the paradox, which is a figure present throughout the speech and which gives sense to the whole work. But Gorgias does not intend to show the vulnerability

¹⁶ MACDOWELL, D.M. *Gorgias: Encomium of Helen, Translation and Commentary*, p. 34.

¹⁷ PORTER, J.L. “The Seductions of Gorgias”, 277.

of language. He is showing that the vulnerability of language is its power, to maintain the paradox. Language can persuade even being absurd.

Gorgias introduces the topic of *logos* in sections 8-14. Afterwards he speaks about the nature and effects of *eros* (sections 15-19).

1.1. THE PARADOX OF *LOGOS*

Gorgias says at the beginning of section 8 that λόγος is a powerful ruler.

λόγος δυνάστης μέγας ἐστίν, ὃς σμικροτάτῳ σώματι καὶ ἀφανεστάτῳ θειότατα ἔργα ἀποτελεῖ· δύναται γὰρ καὶ φόβον παῦσαι καὶ λύπην ἀφελεῖν καὶ χαρὰν ἐνεργάσασθαι καὶ ἔλεον ἐπαυξήσαι. (8)

Speech is a powerful ruler, which with a very little and invisible body accomplishes divine deeds; for it is able to stop fear and to remove sorrow and to create joy and to augment pity.

Gorgias presents here the paradox, the body of speech is minute and invisible but its deeds are divine! This paradox is fundamental for the understanding of the speech. The goal of speech is persuasion. Although it seems weak, it is a powerful weapon because it can generate reactions of the will: fear, sorrow, pity. Again, although it may seem vulnerable, *logos* is, in fact, powerful. What is its power? Persuasion.

Logos in inspired incantations persuades the mind and is the cause of pleasure and the reducer of pain.

αἱ γὰρ ἐνθεοὶ διὰ λόγων ἐπαιδαὶ ἐπαγωγοὶ ἡδονῆς, ἀπαγωγοὶ λύπης γίνονται (10)

For inspired incantations through speeches are inducers of pleasures and reducers of sorrow.

On the other side poetry, which is *logos* with meter, persuades also the mind and provokes different effects.

τὴν ποίησιν ἅπασαν καὶ νομίζω καὶ ὀνομαζω λόγον ἔχοντα μέτρον
 ἥς τοὺς ἀκούοντας εἰσῆλθε καὶ φρίκη περίφοβος καὶ ἔλεος
 πολύδακρυς καὶ πόθος φίλο πενθής, ἐπ' ἄλλοτρίων τε πραγμάτων
 καὶ σωμάτων εὐτυχίαις καὶ δυσπραγίαις ἰδιόν τι πάθημα διὰ τῶν
 λόγων ἔπαθεν ἡ ψυχή. (9)

All poetry I consider and call speech with meter. Into those who hear it comes fearful fright and tearful pity and mournful longing, and at the successes and failures of others' affairs and persons the mind suffers, through speeches, a suffering of its own.

Here appears a relation between literary form and psychological effect. Poetry can generate different emotions like fear, pity, desire. Segal says about this: "[...] the *metron*, the formal aspect of the *logos*, seems to play a significant part in causing the emotive reactions upon which persuasions rests; and it is, therefore, natural that conscious formalism is so important in the carefully balanced antithesis, rhyming cola, calculated sound-effects, and metrical patterns in Gorgias own style."¹⁸ And he adds: "Gorgias, in fact, transfers the emotive devices and effects of poetry to his own prose, and in so doing he brings within the competence of the rhetor the power to move the psyche by those suprarational forces which Damon is said to have discerned in the rhythm and harmony of the formal structure of music."¹⁹ This is the great contribution of Segal: the remark that in Gorgias *logos* has persuasive power with and without reasoning. *Logos* without the force of reasoning can affect the psyche by its musicality and beauty. He underlines, also, that the *Encomium of Helen*, exploits this aspect of *logos*, while the *Palamedes* is built more on rational argumentation. This is also a good explanation for the so

¹⁸ SEGAL, art. cit., 127.

¹⁹ Ibid.

peculiar style of Gorgias. Gorgias plays with words to create sonorous impressions in the audience, as a way of persuasion.²⁰ Because *logos* persuades through delight (τέρψις).²¹

In section 6 Gorgias assimilates *logos* to force of violence. He enumerates the reasons why Helen did what she did:

ἡ γὰρ Τύχης βουλήμασι καὶ θεῶν βουλευμάσι καὶ Ἀνάγκης
ψηφίσμασιν ἔπραξεν ἃ ἔπραξεν, ἡ βίαι ἀρπασθεῖσα, ἡ λόγοις
πεισθεῖσα, <ἡ ἔρωτι ἀλοῦσα>.

For she did what she did because of the wishes of Chance and the purposes of the gods and the decrees of Necessity, or seized by force, or persuaded by speeches, or captivated by love.

O'Regan asserts: "Although it may appear that being snatched away by force is qualitatively different from being persuaded by words, the *Encomium* asserts the opposite: superhuman agency (chance, gods, necessity) and kidnapping parallel persuasion effectively and morally. Indeed, the former act as foils; listed separately, they work together to reveal the true dimensions of persuasive *logos*. Like the divine, the power of the word is irresistible; like

²⁰ Critics have punished Gorgias for his exaggerate and pompous style. R.C. Jebb (*The Attic Orators*, p. 126-127) remarks that Gorgias' "use of poetical words, and the use of symmetry and assonance between clauses" seem "incredibly tasteless now." K. Freeman (*The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, p. 364-365) asserts that "his main fault was his lack of restraint in the use of all these figures of speech." George Kennedy (*The Art of Persuasion in Greece*, p. 64-66), on his part, states: "In essence Gorgias simply borrowed a number of the techniques of poetry and developed to an extreme the natural Greek habit of antithesis [... yet] if the highest form of art is to conceal art [...] The devices hardly qualify, for they are extraordinarily conspicuous." S. Consigny (art. cit., 283) says: [...] Gorgias suggests that the criteria for assessing reasoning and style are relative to specific, arbitrarily accepted discourses of the culture."

²¹ Segal points out that in the *Palamedes* Gorgias show another aspect of persuasion. more logical and rationalistic. (SEGAL, art. cit., 129).

force, it is compulsive.”²² The conventional opposition between violence and speech is, therefore, broken. And at the end of section 12 Gorgias says:

ὁ μὲν οὖν πείσας ὥς ἀναγκάσας ἀδικεῖ, ἡ δὲ πεισθεῖσα ὥς ἀναγκασθεῖσα τῷ λόγῳ μάτην ἀκούει κακῶς.

Therefore the persuader, because he compelled, does wrong, and she who was persuaded, because she was compelled by words is blamed without reason.

This claim which makes *logos* synonym of persuasion clears Helen absolutely of guilt because volition is no longer active. But before, in section 9, we have just seen that Gorgias had attributed power to speech because it was capable of creating joy, removing sorrow and augmenting pity, therefore, it was able to produce reactions of the will. It is noteworthy the antithesis between the soul experiencing at the successes and failures of others' affairs and persons (ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίων τε πραγμάτων εὐτυχίας καὶ δυσπραγίαις) a suffering of its own (ἰδίον τι πάθημα). It seems to be, in fact, an active participation of the deceived in the act of deception. Segal says: "There is [...] the suggestion of greater complexity in Gorgias' conception of *peitho*, that the process is not simply the conquest of a weaker subject by a stronger force, but that the persuaded is himself an accomplice to the act of persuasion, that he allows himself to be persuaded, and that persuasion is thus inseparably connected with the emotions aroused by the aesthetic process."²³ Therefore, if we agree with this, we must conclude that in the process of persuasion, the deceiver deceives by force but the deceived is deceived by will. And this is also a paradox!

In section 14 Gorgias introduces the comparison between *logos* and drugs. Our souls as powerless to resist words as our bodies are to resist drugs.

²² O'REGAN, DAPHNE ELIZABETH. *Rhetoric, comedy and the violence of language in Aristophanes' Clouds*. Oxford: University Press, 1992, p. 14.

²³ SEGAL, art. cit., 122.

τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ λόγον ἔχει ἢ τε τοῦ λόγου δύναμις πρὸς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς τάξιν ἢ τε τῶν φαρμάκων τάξεις πρὸς τὴν τῶν σωμάτων φύσιν. ὥσπερ γὰρ τῶν φαρμάκων ἄλλους ἄλλα χυμοὺς ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ἐξάγει, καὶ τὰ μὲν νόσου τὰ δὲ βίου παύει, οὕτω καὶ τῶν λόγων οἱ μὲν ἐλύπησαν, οἱ δὲ ἔτερψαν, οἱ δὲ ἐφόβησαν, οἱ δὲ θάρσος κατέστησαν τοὺς ἀκούοντας, οἱ δὲ πειθοὶ τινι κακῇ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐφαρμάκευσαν καὶ ἐξεγοήτευσαν. (14)

The power of speech bears the same relation to the ordering of the mind as the ordering of drugs bears to the constitution of the bodies. Just as different drugs expel different humors from the body, and some stop it from being ill but others stop it from living, so to some speeches cause sorrow, some cause pleasure, some cause fear, some give the hearers confidence, some drug and bewitch the mind with an evil persuasion.

Here the psyche is equated to the body. The parallel goes further and the effect of the *pharmakon* on the disease (*nosos*) and life of the body is equated to the effect of *logoi* on the psyche and the emotions. Segal says: "The processes of the psyche are thus treated as a quasi physical reality and, perhaps more significant, as being susceptible to the same kind of control and manipulation by a rational agent as the body by the drugs of the doctor."²⁴ The force of *logos* has a direct and physical impact on the psyche. This is the interpretation of Charles Segal. He says: "It is thus apparent that Gorgias regarded his rhetoric as having more than a superficial effect on the ear, as actually reaching and 'impressing' the psuche of the hearer. All persuasion is thus action upon and manipulation of the psyche of the audience; and the *dynamis* of the *logos* (Hel. 14) acts like a real drug affecting the state of the psyche. Thus the *techne* of Gorgias rests upon a 'psychological' foundation: it is at least assumed that the psyche has an independent life and area of activity of which the rhetor must learn and which to some extent he must be able to

²⁴ Ibid., 104.

control.”²⁵ Without going so far as to construct a theory of the soul, what appears as sure is that words by their beauty and by their sounds and combination have an effect on the soul and causes reactions of the will.²⁶

1.2. THE PARADOX OF *EROS*

Near the end of the speech, Gorgias introduces the nature and effects of *eros* to explain how persuasion must be achieved also by sight, not only by hearing. The sight of the beloved person is assimilated to a picture and distinguished from the sight of enemies and hostile armament. The beloved person attracts by sight, the enemies and arms, on the contrary, produce fear and desire of flight.

αὐτίκα γὰρ ὅταν πολέμια σώματα [καὶ] πολέμιον ἐπὶ πολεμίοις ὀπλίῃσι κόσμον χαλκοῦ καὶ σιδήρου, τοῦ μὲν ἀλεξητήριον τοῦ δὲ ἰ προβλήματα, εἰ θεάσασθαι ἢ ὄψις, ἐταράχθη καὶ ἐτάραξε τὴν ψυχὴν, ὥστε πολλάκις κινδύνου τοῦ μέλλοντος <ὡς> ὄντος φεύγουσιν ἐκπλαγέντες (16)

For immediately when the sight sees hostile persons and a hostile array of bronze and iron for hostile armament, offensive array of the one and shields of the other, it is alarmed, and it alarms the mind, so that often people flee in panic when some danger is imminent as if it were present.

Segal asserts about this: “Here at least is evidence of a positive ‘scientific’ speculation of Gorgias which touches upon a theme in his epideitic

²⁵ Ibid., 105.

²⁶ Aristotle will later speak in the *Poetics* of the effects of poetry on the souls, in the *Politics* of the effect of music in them.

writing.”²⁷ Then he adds: “The interaction between the physic-subjective and physical – objective spheres of activity appears with especial clarity from Gorgias’ treatment of *opsis* in the last part of the *Helen*. By its very nature, *opsis* is in immediate contact with the physical world, and, as fragment B4 shows, Gorgias perhaps regarded vision as itself a physical and material process. And yet he treats it in a fashion analogous to the psyche and *peitho*: it is through *opsis* that the psyche is ‘impressed’ and ‘molded’ [...].”²⁸

The beloved person is then compared to a picture.

ἀλλὰ μὴν οἱ γραφεῖς ὅταν ἐκ πολλῶν χρωμάτων καὶ σωμάτων ἐν σῶμα καὶ σχῆμα τελείως ἀπεργάσωνται, τέρπουσι τὴν ὄψιν· ἡ δὲ τῶν ἀνδριάντων ποίησις καὶ ἡ τῶν ἀγαλμάτων ἐργασία νόσον ἡδεῖαν παρέσχετο τοῖς ὄμμασιν. (18)

But when painters make completely from many colors and objects a single object and form, they please the sight. The creation of figures and the making of statues provides a pleasant disease for the eyes.

Opsis is the mean which transmits the stimulus to the mind as *logos* transmits the stimulus to the mind but through hearing. At the end of section 19 Gorgias defines the characteristics and power of *eros*. It is a disease and has the power of necessity.

ὅς εἰ μὲν θεὸς <ὦν ἔχει> θεῶν θεῖαν δύναμιν, πῶς ἂν ὁ ἥσων εἴη τοῦτον ἀπώσασθαι καὶ ἀμύνασθαι δυνατός; εἰ δ’ ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπινον νόσημα καὶ ψυχῆς ἀγνόημα, οὐχ ὥς ἀμάρτημα μεμπτέον ἀλλ’ ὥς ἀτύχημα νομιστέον· ἦλθε γάρ, ὥς ἦλθε, ψυχῆς ἀγρεύμασιν, οὐ γνώμης βουλευμασιν, καὶ ἔρωτος ἀνάγκαις, οὐ τέχνης παρασκευαῖς. (19)

²⁷ SEGAL, art. cit, 101.

²⁸ Ibid., 106.

If love is a god with divine power, how would the weaker be able to repel and resist it? But if it is a human malady and ignorance of mind, it should not be blamed as a fault but considered as an adversity; for it comes, when it does come, through deceptions of mind, non intentions of thought, and through compulsions of love, non contrivances of skill.

Therefore love acts by compulsion like *logos* but the one who falls in love acts by his own will. Like persuasion by *logos*, persuasion by sight is a paradox because the one persuaded participates actively in the process of persuasion.

1.3. THE PARADOX OF THE STYLE

Critics have also punished Gorgias for his exaggerate and pompous style. Jebb remarks that Gorgias' "use of poetical words, and the use of symmetry and assonance between clauses" seem "incredibly tasteless now."²⁹ Freeman asserts that "his main fault was his lack of restraint in the use of all these figures of speech."³⁰ Kennedy, on his part, states: "In essence Gorgias simply borrowed a number of the techniques of poetry and developed to an extreme the natural Greek habit of antithesis [... yet] if the highest form of art is to conceal art [...]. The devices hardly qualify, for they are extraordinarily conspicuous."³¹ We have commented how Segal asserts that the *metron* has a significant role in persuasion and that the carefully balanced antithesis, rhyming cola, calculated sound-effects and metrical patterns are fundamental features of Gorgias' style because of their being the cause of the persuasion. Consigny, on his part, sustains, arguing against those critics who assert that

²⁹ JEBB, R.C. *The Attic Orators*, p. 126-127.

³⁰ FREEMAN, K. *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, p.364-365.

³¹ KENNEDY, G. *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*, p. 64-66.

Gorgias is a mere stylist unconcerned with content that "as a hermeneutic thinker Gorgias would not draw a rigorous distinction between 'style' and 'content', between *how* something is said and *what* is said." That last statement is really interesting because in fact Gorgias' style and content function together. His stylistic features are fundamental for persuasion and are also expression of the paradox. In fact, it is a paradox that a style so well-constructed, full of parallelisms, isocola and balanced antithesis, a style which is supposed to be the most clear is, on the contrary, the most confuse.

2. CONCLUSIÓN

The *Encomium of Helen* is paradoxically a joke and must also be taken seriously. Even if the praise of Helen is a joke, Gorgias introduces other problems in the speech that must be considered seriously: *logos* has the power of persuasion; using *logos*, men can not communicate realities (because words have no connection with reality) but they can deceive and persuade others to do what they want; *doxa* which is unstable and deceptive is the only possible human knowledge.

Gorgias' confusion is intentionally created. His paradoxes are calculated. By the inconsistencies in argumentation and by the absurdities present in the text he paradoxically speaks of the power of *logos*. His style contributes also to this: the great number of balanced antithesis, the plays of words, chiasmus, etc. form a style that seems clear but is actually obscure. Other figures like *pariosis* and *homoioteleuton* contribute to create sonorous effects and to build the musicality of speech, so important for persuasion. For persuasion is definitely the great issue of the *Encomium of Helen* and can be achieved by argumentation or by delight, through the beauty and musicality of language, it does not matter. And it can be achieved even through paradoxes.

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RESUMEN: En el *Encomio a Helena* Gorgias ha creado un encomio paradójico como diversión para sí mismo y con el fin de transmitir otra cuestión más seria: el poder del *logos*. Habla a través de paradojas que hacen el sentido del discurso contradictorio en todo momento y, mezclando lo cómico con lo serio, presenta, por medio de deficiencias, contradicciones e inconsistencias en la argumentación, el poder del *logos*, lo cual es claramente una paradoja.

Palabras-Clave: Gorgias; paradoja; discurso; *logos*.

SUMMARY: In the *Encomium of Helen* Gorgias has created a paradoxical encomium both as a diversion for himself and to transmit other more serious question: the power of *logos*. He speaks through paradoxes which make the sense of the speech contradictory at any moment and, mixing comic and serious, he presents, through deficiencies, contradictions and inconsistencies of argumentations, the power of *logos*, which is clearly a paradox.

Keywords: Gorgias; paradox; speech; *logos*.