

Reading 'Gorgias' (449a–461a)

We can study the first part of *Gorgias* with *only* the questions that Socrates asks. How does Gorgias answer them? How would *we* answer them? Is the incoherence (461a) unavoidable (and how is it reached)? Here are the key questions; fold back along the curvy line if you would like to try out Gorgias' position!

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Gorgias' Answers</i>
1 Gorgias, what is your area of expertise, and what shall we call you?	449a (rhetoric)
2 Should we also attribute the ability to train other people in rhetoric to you?	449b (yes)
3 What aspect of life is rhetoric concerned with?	449e (speaking, <i>logos</i>)
4 Do you mean explaining to people when they are ill what regimen to follow to get better?	449e (no)
5 Does rhetoric make people competent at understanding what they are speaking about?	449e (yes)
6 Is it not expertise in medicine, which makes one competent at understanding and speaking about people who are ill?	450a (yes)
7 Is physical education also concerned with speaking (about physical fitness and unfitness)?	450a (yes)
8 Should we describe any form of expertise as rhetoric, since expertise and speaking always go together?	450b–c (no: has no manual element)
9 What aspect of life is the rhetorical use of the spoken word concerned with?	451d (most valuable and important)
10 What is this thing which is the greatest blessing people can have, and which you can procure for them?	452d (responsible for freedom and power) 452e (use spoken word to persuade)
11 Is rhetoric the only area of expertise whose product is persuasion?	453d, 454a (no)
12 What kind of persuasion does rhetoric produce?	454b (right and wrong)
13 Is knowledge and conviction the same?	454d (no)
14 When they are assembled in lawcourts, which of the two kinds of persuasion in the province of right and wrong is the effect rhetoric has on people?	454e (conviction)
Gorgias's long and important speech	456a–457c

15	Can you train anyone who is prepared to listen to your teaching as a rhetor?	458e (yes)
16	Can you teach them all he needs to know to persuade a crowd of people?	458e (yes)
17	Are rhetors more persuasive than doctors even when health is the issue?	459a (qualified yes)
18	Does 'speaking in front of a crowd' mean 'speaking in front of non-experts'?	459a (yes)
19	If he is more persuasive than a doctor, is the rhetor more persuasive than an expert?	459a (yes)
20	Are rhetors doctors?	459b (no)
21	Are non-doctors ignorant about a doctor's expertise?	459b (yes)
22	Rhetors are non-experts yet more persuasive than experts in front of an audience of non-experts, right?	459b (yes)
23	Is the rhetor in just this situation with regards to any area of expertise?	459c (not quite)
24	More specifically, is the rhetor in this situation with regards to right and wrong, morality and immorality, good and bad?	
25	Do rhetors also teach morality, or does a student of rhetoric have to know about morality beforehand?	460a (yes to both)
26	What is a person who has come to understand building; and what is someone who has come to understand music?	460b (builder, musician, etc.)
27	Is someone who has come to understand morality (justice) moral (just)?	460b (yes)
28	Does a moral person behave morally?	460c (yes)
29	Do moral persons want to behave morally (justly)?	460c (yes)
30	Are rhetors moral?	460c (yes)
31	Could rhetors do wrong intentionally?	460c (seems so)
32	Could rhetoric ever be an immoral business?	
	Gorgias's position looks incoherent	461a

