

Czech Plato Society  
University Centre for the Study of Ancient and Medieval Thought  
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University

invites you for a public lecture  
**commemorating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
of 17<sup>th</sup> November 1989**

# **Socrates and the weakness of the strong man: The rhetoric of the true politician**

delivered by

**Prof. Michael Erler**

Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg

**Where: Villa Lanna**, Praha 6, V Sadech 1

**When: 13. 11. 2019, 17:30**

The lecture is a part of XIIth Symposium Platonicum Pragense  
[www.platonskaspolecnost.cz](http://www.platonskaspolecnost.cz)

# **Plato's Gorgias**

**XII<sup>th</sup> Symposium  
Platonicum Pragense  
Prague, Villa Lanna**

Praha 6, V Sadech 1  
**November 13–15, 2019**



FACULTY OF ARTS  
Charles University



Czech Plato Society | Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts,  
Charles University | University Centre for the Study of Ancient and Medieval Thought

VILLA LAMNA

## Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> of November

Chair: **Filip Karfík** (Prague/Fribourg)

14:00–15:00 **Kryštof Boháček** (Prague) | Ethical or aesthetic criterion in *Gorg.* 447a-448e and 523a-527e?  
Two underlying concepts of *kosmos*

15:15–16:15 **Vladimír Mikeš** (Prague) | Is ethically neutral rhetoric (460c-461a) a real option for Plato and if not why?

17:30–19:00 Public Key Note Lecture: **Michael Erler** (Würzburg)  
| Socrates and the weakness of the strong man:  
The rhetoric of the true politician

The *Gorgias* is one of the most extensive and richest of Plato's dialogues but also one of the most relevant to our contemporary situation. Two concepts of life are up for discussion – that of the traditional politician and orator, who is focussing on increasing his or her own power and influence, and the life of the philosopher or – to put it in modern terms – the intellectual, which is regarded as alien, apolitical and too weak for self-help, and therefore becomes the subject of the mockery of comedy. Plato's *Gorgias* reacts to such attacks by showing that traditional politicians or even the tyrants are weak, because they do not have the knowledge which is necessary to distinguish between good and bad. They therefore fail to achieve what really is good for them. Plato's Socrates offers a new understanding of what he calls true politics and true rhetoric, which is bound by norms and focuses on people, the addresses or audiences, rather than on one's own benefits. This new focus requires a fundamental reorientation and transformation of traditional political and rhetorical concepts and instruments, but also helps to understand Socrates' claim that those true politicians or rhetoricians, i.e. philosophers or intellectuals, are not weak but do have power. Plato thus reacts to developments in his own time like the growing theatricality of politics as described by Thucydides which might look familiar to us in times when populism and anti-intellectualism seem to gain importance.

## Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> of November

Chair: **Jakub Jirsa** (Prague)

09:30–10:30 **Panos Dimas** (Oslo) | Justice, happiness and desire in the *Gorgias*

10:45–11:45 **Tushar Irani** (Middletown) | Socrates' great speech in the *Gorgias*

12:00–13:00 **Naly Thaler** (Jerusalem) | Socrates and Calicles on pleasure and intrinsic value

Chair: **Karel Thein** (Prague)

15:00–16:00 **Marie-Pierre Noël** (Paris) | De l'Amphion d'Euripide au Socrate de Platon: la construction de l'héroïsme philosophique dans le *Gorgias*

16:15–17:15 **Emilia Cucinotta** (Pisa) | The perils of *phronesis*. The import of the *Gorgias* in Socrates' understanding of human excellence

18:00–19:00 Meeting of the Czech Plato Society

## Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> of November

Chair: **István Bodnár** (Budapest)

09:30–10:30 **Marta Jimenez** (Atlanta) | *Empeiria* in Olympiodorus' commentary to the *Gorgias*

10:45–11:45 **Jamie Dow** (Leeds) | What is true rhetoric in Plato's *Gorgias*?

12:00–13:00 **David Machek** (Bern) | Warum ist Unrecht tun schlimmer als Unrecht leiden?

Chair: **Michael Erler** (Würzburg)

15:00–16:00 **Frisbee Sheffield** (Cambridge) | Desire, friendship and community in Plato's *Gorgias*

16:15–17:15 **Louis-André Dorion** (Montréal) | Se délivrer du mal: *elenchos* et châtement dans le *Gorgias*