PLATO AND THE POETS

Epistemological, Ethical and Ontological Arguments in the Dialogues

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PhD in Classics

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2008

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that the work carried out is my own and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis focuses on Plato's treatment of poetry in the *Ion*, *Gorgias* and *Republic* X. Although these discussions provide three quite different accounts of poets and their activity and have thus commonly not been associated, a similar objective may be detected in them: they all aim to *disqualify* poets, presenting them as incompetent in what they do or also (in the *Gorgias* and *Republic* X) as morally harmful. My aim is first to show how the three discussions differ from Plato's other major discussions of poetry in *Republic* II-III and *Laws* II and VII: while the former provide (disqualifying) answers to the *descriptive* questions of whether poets have relevant knowledge and how they morally affect their public, the latter are concerned with the *prescriptive* questions of what poets should do in their envisaged role as political instruments (Chapter I).

In the close study of the three discussions, my aim is to identify, critically examine and compare the 'disqualifying' strategies employed in them: I consider, on the one hand, how they substantiate the charges of poets' incompetence or moral harmfulness and on the other hand, how they counter and account for the widely shared appreciation of Homer and other poets (Chapters II-V). Before discussing *Republic* X, however, I consider separately the notion of poets' μίμησις (representation/ imitation), which in *Republic* X has a prominent role, but at the same time appears difficult to understand in itself as well as seemingly inconsistent with Plato's other arguments about poets' μίμησις, in particular in *Republic* III. Rejecting the widely accepted assumption of 'narrower' and 'wider' meanings of the term μίμησις respectively in Books III and X of the *Republic*, I analyse the notion of μίμησις in itself, and, following this I distinguish between three kinds of poets' μίμησις and define in what elements they differ (Chapter IV). In the final overview of the three discussions, I reconsider how successful are their disqualifying depictions of poets.

Chapter I

PLATO AND THE POETS[1]

Diverse arguments

Plato's interest in poetry may be detected throughout his work. Besides various passing references to poets, his dialogues contain some extensive discussions about them. In these discussions, poets – no differently from many other figures appearing in Plato's work: rhetoricians, sophists, politicians – do not feature as an object of disinterested observation;[2] rather, they are subjected to a committed and critical scrutiny. At first, however, Plato's attitude towards poets – if we assume that this attitude is represented by those interlocutors whose side Plato clearly takes as the author of the dialogues – strikes us as oddly ambivalent.

In the dialogues, various charges are brought against poets, among which two in particular are recurrent: poets are alleged to compose their works without the relevant knowledge (most often, knowledge of the matters about which they speak in their compositions) – as is the case in the *Apology*, *Ion*, *Meno*, *Republic*, and *Laws* – and further, they are accused of being potentially harmful to their public – as in the *Gorgias*, and again in the *Republic* and *Laws*. These charges are sometimes advanced with little or no justification,[3] but at other times – as we shall see, this is the case in the *Ion*, *Gorgias* and *Republic* X – they are defended with

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[1] A brief historical note on the notion of ποιητής and related notions is given in Excursus A. Note, however, that the noun 'poet' (and its cognates), as the translation of ποιητής (and cognate terms), is used here with an extended meaning, for it applies to composers not only of versed compositions (as 'poet' does in its ordinary meaning), but also of musical ones, as the Greek ποιητής did.

[2] By comparison, a disinterested and disengaged attitude towards poets is in my view characteristic of Aristotle's *Poetics*.

[3] Such 'unsupported' charges of incompetence are directed at poets, for example, in *Ap.* 22a8-23c6, *Men.* 99c11-d5 (implicitly), and *L.* VII 801b9-c5. Unsupported accusations of harmfulness, raised either against specific compositions or against poets in general, are found on various occasions in *Republic* II-III (*e.g.*, *Rep.* II 377b5-8) and *Laws* II and VII (*e.g.*, *L.* II 669b8-c3, VII 811a9-b5).

extensive arguments. Yet, alongside this adverse attitude towards poets, a more appreciative approach to them is also shown in the dialogues. Sometimes, poets are appealed to in support of the arguments sustained; at other times, seemingly genuine admiration is expressed for one poet or another, most often Homer, or even for poets in general.[4] But more significantly, in the *Republic* and *Laws*, two dialogues that aim to find an ideal, or optimal, political model, poets are entrusted with a notable – although strongly supervised – educational task in the political order traced out by the interlocutors of the discussion. This apparently ambivalent disposition towards poets may be encountered even within the range of one work: in the *Republic*, poets are first assigned the task of composing works to be studied by the prospective guards[5] of the envisaged ideal state (Books II-III), but later on they are accused of being incompetent as well as harmful to their listeners and, for this reason, should not be admitted into this state (Book X).

An initial difficulty we encounter in the study of Plato's treatment of poetry is thus its apparently 'capricious' attitude towards it, *i.e.* its shifting from occasional praise and admiration of poets, to the approval of some poetry, as in *Republic* II-III, *Laws* II and VII, and finally, to radical rejection by and large of all poetry, notoriously, in *Republic* X. In this chapter, I will thus first address this initial question of Plato's apparent ambivalence towards poets. I will first consider Plato's interest in poetry in the wider framework of his writings. By then identifying, and distinguishing between, two approaches in Plato's treatment of poets – descriptive and prescriptive, I will argue that different arguments about poets differ in their aims and the questions they address, but not in their evaluation of poets and their activity, and that they are therefore consistent. At the same time, the distinction between the two approaches will enable me to explain my choice of

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[4] *Cf. Charm.* 161a2-4, *Gorg.* 492e8-11, *Men.* 81a10-c4, where Socrates appeals, respectively, to Homer, Euripides, and Pindar. Homer, Hesiod and 'other good poets' are held in high esteem by Diotima in her speech recounted by Socrates, in *Symp.* 209c7-d4; even Socrates' criticism of Homer is sometimes accompanied by his confessed admiration for the poet, *e.g.*, in *Rep.* II 383a7-9, III 387b1-6, X 595b9-c3, 606e1-607a9.

[5] I adopt here Burnyeat's translation of φύλακες in place of the traditional 'guardians' ('Culture and Society in Plato's *Republic*', 257, n.3). As he points out (following Malcolm Schofield's suggestion), the φύλακες do not constitute only a defensive organ (against the external aggression), but also exercise internal control and repression (in the case of disobedience towards the law; *cf. Rep. III* 415e, IV, 424b-d); the latter aspect is rendered better with the term 'guards'.

arguments studied in the thesis; the *Ion*, *Gorgias* and *Republic* X will in fact be examined as the three cases of Plato's descriptive and disqualifying treatment of poets.

Poetry within the political frame

A fundamental question that perhaps needs to be asked first is the following: just why do poets matter to Plato at all? By identifying Plato's motives for dealing with poets, the aims of his arguments may also be understood and differentiated more clearly. A significant part of Plato's writing may be understood as a search for what is good, both for an individual as a member of a society and for society as a whole, and thus for what men should pursue and how they should live. The focus of this search is justice, which stands, it seems, as its fundamental value: what is sought for as a model of the good life, with respect to a single man or society, is in fact a model of the just life.[6] Such a model is presented explicitly in the *Republic* and *Laws*; in the first, in the form of an imaginary paradigm, and in the second, as a practicable proposal; however, these questions seem to be dealt with, in one way or another, in virtually all Plato's work. Inasmuch as these questions are concerned with what is good for a man *as* a member of a society (*i.e.* in his relationship with others), or for society as a whole, they may be described as moral questions, or in the latter case, more specifically, as political questions. Presumably like any argument addressing such questions, the dialogues do not merely convey certain views, but contain an inherent, even if not straightforward, appeal: they call upon their public to act and live in accordance with certain moral principles (and that is to say, to assume a certain moral disposition, or character). We could say, in other words, that the dialogues as a whole have, in this respect, an exhortative and not

[6] Letter VII, if it is authentic, also testifies to Plato's fundamental concern with justice: in his old age, Plato confesses in it that after his political disillusionment, '[he has] been forced to praise the right philosophy, as it is this one that makes it possible to discern what is just in all public matters and private matters'; in fact, he was dissuaded from taking up active political engagement by the contemporary political events, which he describes with indignation, among them, the trial of Socrates and his execution (*Ep.* VII 326a5-7: […] λέγειν τε ἠναγκάσθην, ἐπαινῶν τὴν ὀρθὴν φιλοσοφίαν, ὡς ἐκ ταύτης ἔστιν τά τε πολιτικὰ δίκαια καὶ τὰ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν πάντα κατιδεῖν).

declarative character: ultimately, they are not intended to persuade their audience about some matter or other, but rather, to persuade them to act and live in a certain way.

Now, bearing in mind that, through his dialogues, Plato was promoting certain principles of action and conduct, it becomes clearer what the various figures that find themselves under attack in the dialogues have in common. Politicians, rhetoricians, sophists and, indeed, poets, must have been Plato's potential antagonists inasmuch as they too were all, though from quite different positions and by quite different means, promoting moral – religious, theological, social, political – views and values, and presumably also 'shaped' the moral disposition and conduct of those whom their activities concerned. In fact, subjects such as justice and human excellence (ἀρετή), which are focal themes in the dialogues, are on various occasions indicated also as principal concerns of all these other figures.[7] Further, the dialogues themselves and other sources from the period provide evidence of how each of these various figures exercised influence in this, 'moral', domain. Rhetoricians, versed specifically in the subject of law and in legal practice, engaged in political, more specifically legislative, as well as didactic activities; as teachers of law and related subjects, they were also (moral) educators of prospective participants in politics. The *Gorgias* provides a mocking picture of all these rhetorical practices.[8] Sophists, whose activity was mainly didactic and private, dealt with very similar questions to Plato himself, among which moral questions were prominent; again, they and their activity are under attack in the *Sophist*. Last, poets also promoted moral views, values and principles; in particular their compositions must have reached quite a large part of the population, both in the course of education and at various public events and festivals.

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[7] See, for sophists, *Euthd.* 273d8-9, *Gorg.* 519c3-4, *Soph.* 223a3-4; for rhetoricians, *Gorg.* 454b5-7 (justice); for poets, *Rep.* II, 363a-366e, 365a-b, *Rep. X* 600e. On various occasions in the dialogues, Socrates also declares human excellence and justice to be his principal concerns; see, *e.g.*, *Ap.* 38a1-4, *Cr.* 53c6-8.

[8] The *Gorgias*' criticism of rhetoric is discussed in Chapter III. A brief historical note on rhetoric is given in Excursus B.

Poets' works may, in Plato's view, have a moral impact on their public in a variety of ways. Poets may straightforwardly state their moral views, make judgements of this kind, or appeal for moral principles, and, on the other hand, they may do all this in less direct ways, for example, by narrating (invented) stories about gods or men (inasmuch as god or men feature as moral agents).[9] Here, the poets' influence consists in conveying moral beliefs to their public; the 'preliminary' discussion on justice in *Republic* I as well as the discussion of 'what poets should say', in particular about gods and heroes, in *Republic* II-III provides several examples of poets indirectly conveying such views. A different sort of moral influence is attributed to poets' impersonation (*i.e.* μίμησις: representation/ imitation) of characters about whom they narrate, typically, for example, in dramatic compositions. The assumption is that spectators of theatrical performances (*Republic* X), and even more so the young who recite (as a didactic exercise) compositions that involve impersonation and thus in their turn also impersonate characters (*Republic* III), are influenced in that they tend to become *like* these characters in their moral conduct. A similar moral influence is attributed, perhaps somewhat surprisingly to us, to musical compositions: music, in its elements of harmony (or mode) and rhythm, is conceived of as mimetic, or imitative, of men's characters and modes of conduct (*e.g.*, courageous, cowardly, temperate, orderly) and is considered to affect its spectators and performers similarly to poets' impersonation of individual characters.[10]

In all these ways, then, poets can act upon, and shape, men's moral disposition: what, however, greatly contributes to this moral impact of poetry, as is often stressed in the dialogues, is its pleasantness. Pleasantness is sometimes attributed to poetry as such without much attempt being made to account for it, but at other times it is associated with specific aspects of poetry. In particular the musical elements of poetry, harmony and rhythm, are considered to be in themselves pleasant for men and thus 'reasons' for men's proneness to both listening to poets'

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[9] Also among these is Hesiod's narration about Cronus' castration of his father Uranus; Socrates' criticism of it is discussed in Excursus D.

[10] This understanding of harmony and rhythm, discussed in *Republic* III and *Laws* II and VII, will be considered in more detail in Chapter IV. *Cf. Rep.* III 399a5-c2, 399e8-40c5; *L.* II 655a9-b6 *et passim*.

works, and performing them (*Rep.* X 601b1-2, *L.* II 653e3-654a7 and VIII 802c4-d6). In *Republic* X, as we shall see in Chapter V, a peculiar type of pleasure is associated with poets' works that involve impersonation of characters, typically tragedy and comedy, which is judged to be inherently harmful for the public who experience it. In all these arguments it is assumed that, because of the pleasantness of poetry, men will also be more easily influenced by it in their moral beliefs and conduct.

On the other hand, nothing general can be said about the content of poets' moral influence: for poets were of course not an ideologically homogeneous group; in their compositions, they spoke about different matters, held different views and believed in different values and principles. Although the arguments concerned with some piece of poetry or other are most often critical of them, Plato's frequent disagreement with individual poets does not seem to be the only, or even the main, motive for his attempts to disqualify poets in general (in the *Ion*, *Gorgias* and *Republic* X). A more fundamental reason for these attempts seems to lie in Plato's understanding of how and by whom moral and specifically political questions should be dealt with within society.

In many of Plato's dialogues concerned with such issues, a very basic, yet also questionable, assumption may be found: the assumption that what well-being of men as members of a society, or as citizens, consists in is not a matter of individual, arbitrary judgement, but rather is independent of such a judgement, and is predetermined in a similar way to the well-being of the body, health; that is to say, a matter that cannot be *decided*, but can only be *discovered*, or *learned*. The comparison of the well-being of the citizens' 'soul', or of their justice, with the well-being of the body, which is first drawn in the *Crito*, is in fact a frequent one in the dialogues.[11] Although it is not possible to discuss here Plato's assumption that

[11] As observed by Kahn ('Plato's *Ion* and the Problem of *Techne*', 369-371), in the *Crito* such knowledge is for the first time envisaged as possible, while, for instance, in the *Gorgias* it is already posited as the knowledge that constitutes the political art (as later in various other dialogues by Plato; by contrast, in the *Ion* it is not yet contemplated). In the *Crito*, this kind of knowledge is introduced through the analogy of this (posited) knowledge with the knowledge of medicine (the analogy that is later especially prominent in the *Gorgias*; see, *e.g.*, 501a1-c6): if there were someone competent 'concerning just and unjust, ugly and fine, good and bad' (*Cr.* 47c; *cf.* 48a), we should follow his advice alone (and not that of the many) in order to safeguard that part of us that

there is such knowledge of 'what is good for men', it is worth mentioning Bambrough's insightful examination of this assumption ('Plato's Political Analogies'). In short, Bambrough disputes that questions such as what the men's well-being and good life consists in can be determined by the same method as questions such as what constitutes the body's well-being, inasmuch as ethical questions are not about *means* to achieve an already agreed end (*e.g.*, how to recover health, or how to reach a destination by sea), but are about *ends*.[12] And while there are 'agreed standards' by which *means* can be judged as being good, or advantageous (in fact, they are such with respect to a specific end), there are no agreed standards to evaluate different ends (*ibid.*, 198); for, we may say, it is ends themselves that set such standards.

Nonetheless, political views and models presented in various dialogues (*Gorgias*, *Republic*, *Laws*) seem to rely precisely on the premise that there is knowledge of what is good for men; it is described as the knowledge constituting the 'political art' (*Gorgias*), or knowledge of 'human excellence' (*Republic* X).[13] Thus in the political order designed in the *Republic*, the task of caring for the citizens' well-being, *i.e.* (by definition) the task of governing the society, belongs exclusively to those who have, to some extent at least, such 'specialised' knowledge. At the same time, the ability to acquire such knowledge, and therefore, to govern the society, is

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benefits from our being just and is harmed by being unjust, much as we follow advice from someone competent in medicine or bodily exercise in order to safeguard our body, which benefits from what is healthy and is damaged by what is noxious.

[12] Bambrough's crucial thesis is summarised well in the following passage: 'Ethical and political disagreement is different in logical kind from medical disagreement or disagreement between navigators [in *Rep.* VI, 488a-489a]. Ethical and political disagreement is radical and interminable in a sense in which scientific disagreement, or disagreement about the means for achieving an agreed end, is terminable by recognized procedures, such disagreement remains terminable in principle even when it is not terminated in fact. But ethical and political disagreement in its most characteristic forms is interminable, because it is not about means, but about ends' ('Plato's Political Analogies', 198). As Bambrough has suggested earlier on, there can be science, or a body of knowledge, about means, but there is no such thing as knowledge of ends (*ibid.*, 198). Distancing himself slightly from Bambrough, Sharples ('Plato on Democracy and Expertise', 55) does not exclude the possibility of such knowledge, but warns against a political order (seemingly promoted by Plato) which entitles the presumed possessors of such knowledge to the exclusive government of the society.

[13] On the other hand, Socrates famously, on many occasions in the dialogues, disclaims such knowledge. But even if the question of whether there is knowledge of what is good does not receive an unambiguous affirmative answer in the dialogues, the above-mentioned political models nonetheless rely on the premise that there is such knowledge.

credited only to a very limited number of individuals; in the *Republic*, for example, to those who have a particular 'philosophical' nature. By contrast, poets, rhetoricians, politicians and sophists, who in the existing societies *autonomously* engage in the moral and political domain, are in the fore-mentioned dialogues all accused of being incompetent in these moral matters, and thus also of being potentially harmful for the citizens.

From this perspective, in an ideally designed political order, poets (alongside these other figures) obviously cannot maintain their actual status as *autonomous* agents. However, that does not mean that there is no place for them at all in such an order: poets are welcome to join it as agents *subordinate* and *instrumental* to the governing body. In the political models drawn in the *Republic* and *Laws*, the task of educating members of the society so that they acquire the desired moral disposition, and that is to say, to turn them into law-abiding citizens, is in fact entrusted precisely to poets. Their task is therefore to compose such works as will promote those moral views, values, and principles that accord with the political order, their composing being subjected to close supervision and censorship by the ruling authority. Poets' fitness for this educative role in the envisaged state is due to the fore-mentioned agreeableness of poetry: as is assumed, composing under political supervision, poets will then be able to exercise the moral influence they already exercise in the existing communities; in the ideal, or optimal, order, however, it will lie with the leadership (credited with moral and political competence) to determine the content of this influence.[14] In this envisaged order, it is left to poets to make compositions within the framework given to them: for instance, when they narrate stories about gods, they may attribute to them any actions they will, on condition that these are virtuous actions (*Republic* II); when they impersonate characters about whom they narrate, they may impersonate whomsoever they please, provided that those impersonated are, again, virtuous

[14] A similar judgement is pronounced on rhetoricians by Socrates in the *Gorgias*: he credits rhetoricians with the power of persuasion, but regards them as incompetent in moral matters and specifically in justice, and judges them to be potentially harmful in the existing circumstances; if, however, rhetoricians acted under the direction of those competent in the true 'political art', Socrates considers that they could benefit citizens. Their task would consist in persuading them, in particular those who have offended the law, to abide by it, *e.g.*, to choose to serve the sentence imposed for the offence, rather than trying to evade it (480b7-d7).

characters engaging in virtuous actions (*Republic* III); when they make musical compositions, they may employ any musical modes (ἁρμονίαι) and rhythms they like, provided that these are mimetic of virtuous conduct (*Republic* III, *Laws* II and VII).

Descriptive and prescriptive approaches to poets

In the light of the above observations, the adverse and disqualifying attitude towards poets, displayed, for example, in *Republic* X, seems to be assumed towards poets in their actual position, in which they are perceived as antagonists in the moral and political domain, whereas the apparently appreciative approach in *Republic* II-III and the *Laws* seems to be assumed only towards poets in their envisaged instrumental role in education. I shall shortly differentiate between these two approaches in more detail, focusing first on the two discussions of poetry in the *Republic*, where the apparent inconsistency in the evaluation of poetry is most striking, and then I will apply the distinction to Plato's other discussions of poetry. But first I shall consider how the relation between the two discussions has been viewed by scholars.

The two discussions have provoked on one side severe criticism of what is judged to be an insolvable inconsistency, whereas on the other side, confident attempts have been made to reconcile them.[15] On the former side is, notably, Annas (*An Introduction to Plato's* Republic, 336), who judges the 'attack' on poetry in Book X of the *Republic* 'impossible to reconcile with Book 3', later on suggesting that 'Plato seems to hold two inconsistent views about poetry: that it is important and dangerous, and so should either be censored and tamed in the service of a truly moral life (Book 3) or expelled from the truly moral life altogether as being hopelessly untrustworthy (Book 10); and that it is trivial and fatuous thing, too pathetic even to be immoral' (where Annas is referring to the epistemological

[15] For a more extensive survey of scholarly views on the relation between the two discussions, see Levin, *The Ancient Quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry Revisited*, 152-153, and Naddaff *Exiling the Poets: the Production of Censorship in Plato's* Republic, 135, n.4.

argument in Book 10; *ibid.*, 342 and 336-344).[16] Among scholars on the other, 'conciliatory' side, Levin (*The Ancient Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry Revisited*, 166; *cf.* 152-153, 165-167) accounts for the different evaluation of poetry in the two discussions by pointing out a different social setting in them: she sees the second discussion as a further critical examination not of all poetry, but of the kind of poetry that was approved in the first discussion as educational 'material'; however, this poetry would now be viewed in its 'broader civic role', *i.e.* in its 'marking of important civic occasions' and ceremonies, and therefore further restricted to 'hymns to the gods and praises of good men' (*Rep.* X 607a4). Also in Halliwell's view (*Plato:* Republic *X*, 5), the second discussion would not disagree substantially with the first one, but would rather constitute a development and enlargement of the earlier criticism of poetry in the light of the arguments advanced in the central books of the *Republic*: 'Book 10 itself in fact picks up the earlier allegations of falsehood and psychological harm, but it enlarges and modifies the import of both, and thereby carries altogether further philosophy's 'quarrel' with poetry (607b5)'. Burnyeat ('Culture and Society in Plato's *Republic*') also defends the consistency of the two discussions in the *Republic*; yet quite differently from most scholars, he argues that they attack and reject the very same kind of poetry, *i.e.* dramatic poetry (*i.e.* 'poetry which is mimetic in the sense of Book III'; *ibid.*, 313) and that '[b]ook[17] X [...] is designed to be consistent with book III and to give a retrospective, theoretical commentary on its major claims' (*ibid.*, 319).[18]

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[16] Murray (*Plato on Poetry*, 1-32; see esp. 2 and 24) expresses a similar, though less critical view. Ferrari ('Plato and Poetry', 110) sees a break between the more appreciative attitude towards poetry in the *Republic* and the more radical earlier criticism of it (especially in the *Ion*, but also in the *Apology*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*): '[a]fter all, by acknowledging once more the didactic function of poetry (after the violent break of the earlier dialogues) Plato was to that extent returning to a traditional position […]'.

[17] Square brackets here (and in all similar cases) indicate the changed case of the letter in the brackets (upper case/ lower case).

[18] Tate (' "Imitation" in Plato's *Republic*') and, more recently, Büttner (*Die Literaturtheorie bei Platon und ihre anthropologische Begründung*, 170-214, esp. 208) also see as the target of *Republic* X only the kind of poetry that had already been rejected in *Republic* III, though they offer considerably different interpretations of the argument

However, the interpreters who see in the second discussion of poetry merely a modified continuation of the earlier assessment of poetry (Levin, Halliwell), or even a 'theoretical commentary' on it (Burnyeat) in my view underestimate some evident differences between them. For although the second discussion concludes with the admittance of 'hymns to the gods and praises of good men' (*Rep.* X 607a4) for the reformed state, the charge of incompetence in the first ('epistemological') argument is in my view undoubtedly launched against poets in general and shows no interest to 'spare' any of them from it: it is directed, for instance, at 'Homer or any other poet' (599b9-c1), at 'all poets starting from Homer' (600e6-7), or simply at a generic 'poet' (601a4); similarly, the conclusive 'apology' for the banning (*cf.* ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ἀπεστέλλομεν 607b2-3) is again addressed to 'poetry' without qualification, and moreover, to 'poetry' as the party having an old quarrel with philosophy (607b1-6). Agreeing with Annas, I thus believe that the attack and the final ban is general and not 'selective' (for instance, as Levin seems to suggest, concerned only with the already selected 'educative poetry', which would now be put to a further test in view of its 'wider civic role', for which it would then prove unsuitable). On the other hand, I agree with Burnyeat that these charges cannot refer to poetry that is to be used as educative material for the prospective guards in the envisaged state (whereas Halliwell seems to imply that they do); however, the reason for their exemption from it is not that poetry targeted in *Republic* X is of a different kind (*e.g.*, dramatic poetry, as Burnyeat suggests). More simply, I would suggest that such 'educative' poetry as well as 'hymns to the gods and praises of good men' are exempted from these charges because the poetry referred to here *does not exist yet*, that is to say: because *Republic* X is concerned with pre-existing poetry in the actual circumstances of the time, and not yet with the poetry of the envisaged state, which is to be composed anew and under considerably different conditions, *i.e.* under the direction, supervision and censorship of the political leadership of this envisaged state.

In fact, the aim of Book X is to discredit actual poets as autonomous agents and rivals in the moral field, showing them first as lacking knowledge about the matters of which they speak, among which, however, moral matters feature

prominently;[19] and secondly, as being harmful to their public. The whole discussion of poetry in Book X may in fact be divided into two separate arguments, 'epistemological' (595c-602b) and 'ethical' (602c-607a), as we may call them: the former aims to substantiate the charge of poets' lack of knowledge, whereas the latter, the charge of their harmfulness (as I shall argue, by the extent to which they engage in impersonation, *i.e.* because their poetry involves this kind of μίμησις). By contrast, in the setting of Books II-III, poets feature as agents *already subjected to* another authority credited with moral competence, *i.e.* the founders of the envisaged state, whose role the interlocutors themselves assume: in the envisaged order, poets act as an 'educational instrument' of the governing body. Or to put it differently: in an imaginary sequence of events, the second discussion of poetry in the *Republic* should precede the first discussion: poets are first to be cast out of the present, still unreformed state in which they act as autonomous agents, charged with moral incompetence and potential harmfulness (Book X); in the new political order, they will be assigned a place subordinate to the ruling philosophers, in order to serve its cause (Books II-III).

The case, then, is not that, in Books II-III, poets receive some credit, while in Book X they receive none. Neither discussion, in fact, credits them with any knowledge of moral matters nor, thus, with any ability to compose with a view to the (moral) benefit of their public: however, poets' incompetence in these matters features in the first discussion as a tacit assumption that legitimises the subordinated position of poets in any moral aspect of their composing, whereas in the second discussion it is an assumption that is yet to be proved by the argument. But while the two discussions rely on the same evaluation of poets, the fundamental difference between them lies in the kind of questions they are concerned with: the first discussion is concerned with the *prescriptive* question of *what poets*, within their subordinate role, *should do* in matters considered to be morally relevant; whereas the second discussion provides negative and disqualifying answers to the

[19] *i.e.* war, generalship, government of state, education, and lawgiving, are all regarded as matters related to human excellence (see 599c6-600e3).

descriptive questions of *whether poets have relevant knowledge* and *how they*, as autonomous agents, *morally act upon others*.[20]

Now, Plato's other discussions concerned with poets may be characterised in the same way as either 'descriptive' or 'prescriptive' in their approach: the *Ion* and *Gorgias* are examples of the former approach, while *Laws* II and VII are examples of the latter. Like the epistemological argument of *Republic* X, the *Ion* addresses the question *whether poets have knowledge of the matters they speak about* and aims to show that they do not (though then offering, on the premise of poets' ignorance, a considerably different account of their activity). And similarly to the second, ethical argument of *Republic* X, the short discussion of poets in the *Gorgias* (implicitly) addresses the question of *how poets morally act on their public*, providing an account (again different from the one developed in *Republic* X) that accuses them of not pursuing what is in fact morally best for their public, and thus of being potentially harmful for them. These three discussions each disqualify poets: the arguments provided are intended to *prove* their lack of relevant knowledge, as in the *Ion*, *Gorgias* and the epistemological argument in *Republic* X, or their potential moral harmfulness, as in the *Gorgias* and the ethical argument in *Republic* X.

Differently from these three discussions, but similarly to the first discussion of poetry in the *Republic*, the treatment of poets in the *Laws* (Books II and VII) focuses on the *prescriptive* question of *what poets should do* in the future political order; more specifically, its concern is what kind of musical compositions, both in content and form, will best contribute to developing, or just preserving, the desired moral disposition of the citizens, thus designing an entire system of controlled production and performance of poetry. Just as in *Republic* II-III, poets here no

[20] Previously, I defined the two types of questions as 'theoretical' (in place of 'descriptive') and 'pragmatic' (in place of 'prescriptive'); however, these terms proved to be misleading, for they wrongly suggested that the distinction concerned the *content* of the criticism of poets (*i.e.* what charges are raised against them; the distinction related to this content was and is that between 'epistemological' criticism and 'ethical' criticism). But in fact the distinction concerns the *type of inquiry*: I have defined the first type of inquiry as 'theoretical' or 'descriptive' inasmuch as it addresses questions of the form 'what is the case (about one thing or another)?' and the second type as 'pragmatic' or 'prescriptive' inasmuch as it addresses questions of the form 'what should be done (with regard to one thing or another)?'. In the first case, the inquiry provides a description of a state of affairs, in the second case it determines, or 'prescribes', how one should act.

longer feature as antagonists in the moral domain, whose imputed incompetence and harmfulness is yet to be proven, but instead as agents already at the service of the political leadership; here, their incompetence in moral matters, unlike in *Republic* II-III, is explicitly stated (as a granted assumption; see, *e.g.*, *L.* VII 801a-c).

Ion, Gorgias, Republic X*:* questions discussed

The focus of this thesis is Plato's discussions of poets that have been characterised above as descriptive and disqualifying in their approach: the *Ion*, *Gorgias* and *Republic* X. At first, however, the three discussions do not seem to have much in common: in the *Ion*, poets are portrayed as divinely inspired beings, who, although lacking relevant knowledge, deliver beautiful works through some godly assistance; in the *Gorgias*, they are, together with rhetoricians, compared with cooks who aim only to gratify men, but may for this reason actually be harmful to them; in *Republic* X, poets are compared with painters and alleged to make some sort of worthless 'images' that are perceived by naïve people as 'true things'. In particular the *Ion* and *Republic* X may appear to provide two contrasting views on poetry, and have been sometimes thus perceived. For example, Annas (*An Introduction to Plato's* Republic) suggests that we should not trust the (epistemological) argument in *Republic* X that accuses poetry of being 'a trivial and fatuous thing' and that '[t]o find Plato's views on poetry, we would do better to look at Book 3, the third argument of Book 10, and other dialogues such as the *Ion* and the *Phaedrus*' (*ibid.*, 342); in the latter two, '[...] though [Plato] is inclined to be sceptical about the poets' own attitude to their gifts, he takes poetry seriously in realizing that the good poet composes as the Muse or god' (*ibid.*, 343). Similarly, Murray (*Plato on Poetry*, 2) observes that 'in the *Ion* and the *Phaedrus* poets are described in what appear to be terms of extravagant praise, yet in the *Republic* poets are categorized as at best worthless, at worst dangerous, and expelled from the ideal society'. On the other hand, the brief argument about poetry in the *Gorgias* has most often been (dis)regarded as no more than a 'casual'

criticism of poetry's 'merely' pleasant character from which no substantial account of poetry can be derived.

In my view, however, there is some fundamental similarity between the *Ion*, the *Gorgias* and *Republic* X, which the variety of depictions of poetry in them seems to conceal. As I in fact hope will become more apparent in the course of this study, the three discussions, though employing very different arguments and further, 'embedding' these in very different imageries, are similar, as I suggested above, in their *aim*: they constitute three different attempts to disqualify poets, or more precisely, to deprive poets (in the *Gorgias*, alongside rhetoricians) of the authority and esteem they evidently had, especially in moral matters. In the following chapters, my aim will be to identify and critically examine, and finally to compare, the arguments that in separate discussions are employed to this purpose; on the one hand, they aim to show poets as incompetent or (also) morally harmful, while on the other hand, they each provide an explanation as to why we, their public, do not perceive poets as such, but may instead credit them with wisdom or even follow them as moral guides.

Chapter I discusses the *Ion*, in which poetry is for the first time approached as discourse on matters related to arts. As I shall argue, this approach, which will be adopted again in *Republic* X, enables Socrates to present poets as being incompetent in what they do and as speaking about matters that do not pertain to them. On the other hand, the picture of poets as divinely inspired 'deliverers' of poetry, which has often been regarded by scholars as the core of the *Ion*'s account of poetry, will appear to supply 'only' a half-serious explanation of how poets' alleged incompetence can go together with fineness of (some of) their works, which is still acknowledged in the *Ion* (unlike in *Republic* X, where it will be compromised).

Chapter II attempts an interpretation of the charge raised against poets in the *Gorgias* that they only pursue gratification for their public, but disregard what is best for them and may thus morally harm them. While this charge, which in the dialogue is primarily directed against rhetoricians, may at first sight seem to be quite straightforward, it turns out to be rather complex. After analysing the notion

of ‘gratifying the soul’ and pointing out the *cognitive* character of the ‘pleasure of the soul’, I shall argue that although the charge is apparently concerned with the *affective* impact of poetry (*i.e.* gratification), it may in fact be ‘translated’ into an *epistemological* criticism of poetry.

Chapters IV and V tackle what constitutes probably the most complex and difficult subject within Plato’s treatment of poets: the account of poetry as μίμησις, representation or imitation. The characterisation of poets’ activity as μίμησις is fundamental in the second discussion of poetry in the *Republic* and is closely related, in the first, epistemological, argument, to the allegation of poets’ incompetence, whereas in the subsequent, ethical, argument, it relates to the charge of their moral harmfulness. At the same time, however, poets’ μίμησις appears to be a very intricate notion in *Republic* X, for it is neither clear in what sense poetry is characterised here as μίμησις, nor how this account of poetry relates to the arguments about poets’ μίμησις in particular in Book III of the *Republic*, and also in the *Laws* and other dialogues. In fact, there seems to be an inconsistency between these arguments, most notably, between those in *Republic* III and the epistemological argument in *Republic* X: according to the former, for instance, only Homer’s impersonation of one character or another, *e.g.*, Chryses, counts as μίμησις, whereas according to the latter, Homer’s narration as such, *e.g.*, the entire *Iliad*, is characterised as μίμησις. While the problems related to poets’ μίμησις in the *Republic* have been extensively discussed by scholars, the solutions offered to them predominantly rely on the semantic assumption of ‘narrower’ and ‘wider’ meanings of the term μίμησις: the term would denote, in Book III, ‘impersonation’, whereas in Book X, ‘artistic depiction, or representation’. In Chapter IV, I first point out various ways in which this assumption appears unsatisfactory; on the basis of an analysis of the notion of μίμησις as such, I then propose a different interpretation of poets’ μίμησις in the *Republic* and some other dialogues: assuming a single meaning of the term μίμησις in these dialogues, I distinguish between three kinds of μίμησις attributed to poets in the *Republic*, which differ in the first place in being μιμήσεις of different objects.

In Chapter V, I examine separately the epistemological and ethical arguments in *Republic* X. Examining the former first, my aim is to clarify in what sense poets’

activity is characterised as μίμησις and exactly how the charge of poets' incompetence (granted through an analogous strategy as in the *Ion*) is related to this characterisation. For this purpose, I examine in detail the example of a painter who paints various craftsmen, which in the argument is employed as the model to explain what poets actually do. Rejecting the most common interpretation of this example as a deceptive *trompe l'oeil*, I propose a different one, according to which such a painting provides a deficient description of a craftsman, yet it may seem to provide one that is satisfactory, and then I apply this model to poetry. Finally, I interpret the μίμησις attributed to poets as being μίμησις of those who are competent in matters about which poets speak.

With regard to the ethical argument in *Republic* X, the purpose of which is to show the corrupting effect of 'mimetic' poetry, *i.e.* poetry that involves μίμησις, I first consider exactly which μίμησις this charge refers to. As I argue, there is a tacit shift of reference: the μίμησις relevant in the ethical argument is no longer that which was attributed to poets in the previous, epistemological, argument, but instead μίμησις through impersonation, *i.e.* the μίμησις that was first introduced in *Republic* III. Finally, I examine how successful the psychological model employed is in accounting for the spectators' response to this kind of μίμησις and in proving its alleged corrupting effect.

Last, there are six excursuses in the thesis. Excursuses A and C aim to elucidate the notions of ποιητής, 'poet', and of rhetoric respectively by providing brief historical surveys of these and some related notions. The other four excursuses deal with questions that are related, but are not directly relevant, to the subjects studied in the thesis: Excursus B examines the *Ion*'s principle of knowing by means of arts; Excursus D proposes an interpretation of Socrates' criticism of Hesiod's verses in *Republic* II; Excursus E examines the tri-grade ontological account in the opening of *Republic* X; and Excursus F discusses the account of sophists as μιμηταί in the *Sophist*.

Excursus A

Ποιητής

According to a common definition of a poet, though one that is often judged to be inadequate, a poet is a composer of versed compositions.[21] The noun 'poet' is the habitual translation of the Greek ποιητής, from which it is derived. The Greek noun, however, had a wider application than 'poet' does: ποιηταί were composers of both recited and musical (vocal, instrumental, or combined) compositions. Among these were paeans, hymns, dithyrambs, laudatory odes (ἐγκώμια), funeral songs (θρῆνοι), instrumental compositions that were played, *e.g.*, on the *kithara* or *aulos*, tragedy and comedy (which combined recited and sung parts) and recited compositions, *e.g.*, epic poems, elegy.[22]

The first documented use of the Greek verb ποιεῖν and cognate nouns ποιητής (*nomen agentis*), ποίησις (*nomen actionis*) and others with this narrower meaning 'to make/ compose poems', 'poet', 'poetry' *etc.*, as opposed to the more general meaning 'to make', 'maker', 'making', is found in Herodotus' *Histories*.[23] In the

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[21] *Cf.* the basic definition of a poet in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: 'one who composes poetry; a writer of poems; an author who writes in verse'. The lamentable inadequacy of such a definition arises from the merely 'formal' criterion applied in it: according to it, a poet is a kind of verbal composer, distinguished by the versed form of his compositions. The attempts to differently define the specific character of poetry, or more widely, literature, can be found in the whole tradition of theoretical thinking about these activities. The definition of ποίησις, 'poetry', as composing in verse had already been criticised by Aristotle in the *Poetics*, where he argued that verse does not constitute the distinctive character of compositions made by poets, but is even irrelevant for them (as he suggests, it would be appropriate to call someone who speaks about matters about nature or medicine in verses, as Empedocles does, a φυσιολόγος rather than a ποιητής, 'poet', for 'nothing except verse is common to Empedocles and Homer'; *cf. Poetica* 1, 1447b16-20). Aristotle provides a definition of poetry employing a different criterion, for which *cf.* Chapter IV, p. 117, n.150.

[22] Some of the compositions listed above are indicated in *Ion* 534c3-4 and *L.* III 700a9-b6.

[23] Note, however, that while the use of the noun ποίησις (besides, obviously, the verb ποιεῖν) in the wider sense ('making') is documented in Herodotus and other authors of the period, the first occurrences of ποιητής with the more general meaning 'maker' are found in texts dating from the time of Plato; this fact suggests the possibility that the agent noun ποιητής was first used (by Herodotus?) to designate specifically a poet. Lanata (*Poetica Pre-platonica*, 229-230) suggests that the older term ἀοιδός 'singer' (which will be discussed next) was replaced by ποιητής, as the

(presumably) post-Herodotean texts dating from the fifth and fourth centuries BC, there is an increasing use of the terms ποιητής and ποίησις to refer to a composer of versed or also musical compositions, and his activity.[24] In Plato's dialogues, such composers are regularly referred to as ποιηταί and their activity as ποίησις.

In the earlier tradition, various terms may be found that are close, in their meaning, to the later ποιητής, of which the earliest found in Homer's epics is ἀοιδός. A Homeric ἀοιδός is a 'singer', who is at the same time also a composer of the songs he performs.[25] In Homer's epic, the composer presents himself as being somehow both enabled and led by some divine agency: the Muses or a god, who is sometimes specified, and at other times not. Further, the ἀοιδός or the composer himself are presented as narrators of events that actually occurred, not invented (*i.e.* fictional) events. The role attributed to the divine agency is (also) to inform the composer about, or remind him of, these events and the individuals involved in

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former became inadequate to denote the composer of an epic poem, which was recited and not sung. Among many examples from Herodotus, *cf. Historiae* II 23, 1-4: Ὁ δὲ περὶ τοῦ Ὠκεανοῦ λέξας ἐς ἀφανὲς τὸν μῦθον ἀνενείκας οὐκ ἔχει ἔλεγχον· οὐ γάρ τινα ἔγωγε οἶδα ποταμὸν Ὠκεανὸν ἐόντα, Ὅμηρον δὲ ἤ τινα τῶν πρότερον γενομένων ποιητέων δοκέω τοὔνομα εὑρόντα ἐς ποίησιν ἐσενείκασθαι.

The narrower designation by the term ποίησις of only that part of the entire 'making' which is 'about musical <art/ practice> and verses', is mentioned also in Plato's *Symposium* (205c4-9): Ἀλλ' ὅμως, ἦ δ' ἥ, οἶσθ' ὅτι οὐ καλοῦνται ποιηταὶ ἀλλὰ ἄλλα ἔχουσιν ὀνόματα, ἀπὸ δὲ πάσης τῆς ποιήσεως ἓν μόριον ἀφορισθὲν τὸ περὶ τὴν μουσικὴν καὶ τὰ μέτρα τῷ τοῦ ὅλου ὀνόματι προσαγορεύεται. ποίησις γὰρ τοῦτο μόνον καλεῖται, καὶ οἱ ἔχοντες τοῦτο τὸ μόριον τῆς ποιήσεως ποιηταί.

[24] Some examples are found in: Thucydides, *Historiae* I 10, 3; Aristophanes, *Ranae* 71 *et passim* (in the form ποητής), *Thesmophoriazousae* 38 (πόησις); Xenophon, *Symposium* VIII 32, 5; Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum* 51, 4. Gorgias, *Fr.* XI 54-55 (*Encomium of Helen*), defines 'poetry' as 'discourse having metre': τὴν ποίησιν ἅπασαν καὶ νομίζω καὶ ὀνομάζω λόγον ἔχοντα μέτρον.

[25] As observed by Lanata (*Poetica Pre-platonica*, 7), ἀοιδός 'is in Homeric poems the only term used to designate poet'. The ἀοιδός may engage in singing and playing a *phormix* to accompany dancing (*Od.* XXIII 133), singing funeral laments (*Il.* XXIV 720; the only occurrence in the *Iliad*), and singing 'the glorious deeds of men' (*Od.* VIII 73). On various occasions, the ἀοιδός is quite clearly intended to mean the composer 'led by the Muses' of the compositions which he is singing, *e.g.*, in *Od.* VIII 43-45, 62-92, 477-522, XXII 345-348. The ἀοιδοί singing funeral laments in *Il.* XXIV 720, however, need not be the composers, but only performers of them. Differently from the noun ἀοιδός, the cognate verb ἀείδειν (Ionic poetic)/ ᾄδειν, 'to sing', on the other hand, does not seem to connote the activity of composing. In Plato's dialogues, the term ἀοιδός is found only in the quotation from Hesiod (*Opera et dies* 25-26) in *Lys.* 215c8.

them (*Il.* I 1, II 484-492; *Od.* I 1, I 10, VIII 73-74), or again to enable him to narrate them in an appropriate, well-arranged, order (*Od.* VIII 489).

The term ἀοιδός is also found in later texts up to the fourth century BC; in addition to it, some other, though rarer, terms can be found that refer to a (musical) composer: μουσοποιός (from μοῦσα, with the extended meaning 'song/singing', and ποιέω); μουσοπόλος, 'he who serves the Muses' (from μοῦσα, πολέω); ὑμνοποιός (from ὕμνος, ποιέω).[26] From the noun μοῦσα is also derived the adjective μουσικός, literally 'relating to the Muses', whose use is documented from the end of the sixth century BC, and which becomes quite frequent in the texts of the fifth and fourth century,[27] in particular in Platonic and Aristotelian texts. The adjective μουσικός(-ή, -όν), primarily denoting some person or thing's association with the Muses, thus applied to activities that were traditionally regarded as such (in the way just noted above), or to their practitioners: versed or (also) musical composing, as well as performing compositions of this kind, *i.e.* reciting, singing, playing instruments, dancing.[28]

The adjective μουσικός could, however, have either a narrower meaning or a wider one, and this applies in Plato's dialogues as well. For our purposes, it is important to distinguish between them. In its extended meaning, μουσικός is close to the English 'intellectual' or 'cultural', or, when referring to a person, 'educated/ learned'.[29] With this meaning, it could also apply to activities (or those

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[26] See Lanata, *Poetica Pre-platonica*, 172 and 229. Some examples of individual terms are: μουσοποιός Euripides, *Troiades* 1189; μουσοπόλος Euripides, *Alcestis* 445; ὑμνοποιός Euripides, *Supplices* 181.

[27] *Cf.* Ibycus. *Fr.* S255.4 []·μουσικη[(*Fragmenta*, ed. D. L. Page, *Supplementum lyricis Graecis*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974); Pindar, *O.* 1.15.

[28] A Platonic example of this use of the adjective is found in *Ion* 530a5-7: {ΣΩ.} Μῶν καὶ ῥαψῳδῶν ἀγῶνα τιθέασιν τῷ θεῷ οἱ Ἐπιδαύριοι; {ΙΩΝ.} Πάνυ γε, καὶ τῆς ἄλλης γε μουσικῆς. *Cf. L.* VI 764d5-e3.

[29] Possibly, the adjective acquired this meaning as a consequence of the fact that in basic education, compositions by poets (and therefore those properly 'relating to the Muses') were extensively employed.

engaging in them) that were not primarily associated with the Muses, *e.g.*, to philosophy, as in Plato's *Phaedo*.[30]

Finally, in its narrower meaning, μουσικός corresponds to the English 'musical', denoting in fact what relates specifically to music. When used in this sense, μουσικός therefore does not include the non-musical, *i.e.* merely recited, kind of poetry. Though the restricted meaning of the adjective is often uncertain (difficult to validate), an example of it seems to be found in Plato's *Symposium*: by pointing out the restricted application of the term ποίησις to one part only of the entire 'making', or production, this part is described as τὸ περὶ τὴν μουσικὴν καὶ τὰ μέτρα (*Symp.* 205c6).[31] Given that 'verses' are mentioned in addition to μουσική, the latter seems be intended in the 'musical', or narrower sense.[32] Further, in Books II and VII of the *Laws*, which are concerned above all with choral compositions and performances, the adjective μουσικός, used there very frequently, seems to be intended as 'musical'.

On various occasions in the dialogues, in particular in *Republic* III and *Laws* II and VII, the formal aspect of poets' activity is considered. The observations made, which are sometimes quite technical, in general do not seem to be original to Plato: some of them are presented as deriving from the musicologist Damon. Often, three elements are indicated as the components of poetry: the verbal element, λόγος, and the two non-verbal, *i.e.* musical elements; harmony, as arrangement (τάξις) of the pitch of sound, and rhythm as arrangement of the movement of sound (*cf.*

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[30] In the *Phaedo*, interestingly, Socrates is uncertain which of the two meanings (just indicated) the adjective μουσική has in the order he was given by the dream: μουσικὴν ποίει καὶ ἐργάζου (*Phd.* 60e6-7). Interpreting it at first in a wider sense, he had therefore engaged in philosophy as 'the greatest' kind of μουσική, whereas recently, he narrates, he has considered the possibility that the 'popular' (δημώδη) practice of μουσική was intended, and therefore obeyed the order by composing a poem dedicated to Apollo and putting in verses some of Aesop's stories (*cf. Phd.* 60c8-61b7).

[31] The entire passage from *Symposium* is quoted on p. 23, n.23. *Cf. Gorg.* 449d3-4: Οὐκοῦν καὶ ἡ μουσικὴ περὶ τὴν τῶν μελῶν ποίησιν;

[32] For the use of μέτρα in the sense of 'verses' *cf. Lys.* 205a9 (listed by LSJ).

Gorg. 502c5-7; *Rep.* III 398c11-d2, X 601a4-b1; *L.* II 669c3-670a3).[33] Importantly, both in *Republic* III and *Laws* II and VII, the two musical elements, harmony and rhythm, are understood as being mimetic of men's characters and modes of conduct (the 'musical' μίμησις is considered in more detail in Chapter IV). Non-musical compositions are approached as speech arranged in metre, or verse. The relation between metre and rhythm is not entirely clear: as in our use of the two terms, μέτρον seems to be applied mostly with reference to the spoken voice, whereas ῥυθμός is applied to any sound (vocal, whether spoken or sung, or again instrumental) or to movement of the body (*e.g.*, dance, marching).

In the dialogues, the arguments about poetry may concern a named, individual poet, *e.g.*, Homer, as in a large part of the *Ion*, or a particular kind of composition, *e.g.*, those speaking about gods, as in *Republic* II; choral songs, as in *Laws* II; or choral hymns, encomia, and dances accompanying choral songs, as in *Laws* VII. Last, the arguments found in the central part of the *Ion*, the *Gorgias*, Books II-III and Book X of the *Republic* by and large concern poets and poetry in general.

These arguments sometimes focus on the musical and dancing aspects of poets' compositions, and at other times on their verbal content, *i.e.* the content conveyed by λόγος. In the latter case, the activity of poets is approached as speaking (λέγειν) and their compositions as discourses, speeches (λόγοι), or things spoken (τὰ λεγόμενα); speaking by poets may then be examined from different angles, *e.g.*, what it is about, what it claims, how it is done. So, in the first argument of *Republic* X (595a1-602c3) and in the *Ion*, the inquiry is concerned with the verbal content of poets' compositions, whereas their musical or metric aspects are left aside. In *Republic* II-III, first, the verbal element of recited (non-musical) compositions is examined, in particular what they claim (about a particular subject matter: the divine) and the manner in which the verbal content is conveyed (narration through μίμησις or without it); afterwards, the two elements of musical compositions are examined separately (while the verbal element is considered not to differ from λόγος constituting non-musical compositions). In *Laws* II and VII,

[33] The most precise, 'technical' definition of harmony and rhythm is given in *Phlb.* 17c11-d6. *Cf. L.* II 653d7-a5, 664e8-665a3 and 672e8-9.

the compositions discussed are partly considered integrally and partly with regard to their separate verbal or musical and dance-accompaniment elements.

Chapter II

POETS IN THE *ION*

Introduction

The short dialogue *Ion* is generally accepted to be among Plato's earliest works and may thus be regarded as Plato's first extensive discussion about poets. The figure in its foreground is the rhapsode Ion,[34] but the dialogue implicitly also addresses important questions about poets and their works. As a result of Socrates' examination of Ion, both rhapsodes and poets are discredited: rhapsodes turn out to lack the knowledge required to interpret and adequately evaluate poets' works, and poets themselves are shown to lack the knowledge required to compose fine works. And yet, somewhat ironically, these charges of incompetence are coupled in the dialogue with an elaborate picture of divinely inspired poets and rhapsodes who excel while in this extraordinary state, the former at composing and the latter at reciting and interpreting poets' works.

How then is the charge of poets' incompetence advocated in the dialogue? According to a quite frequent interpretation, it is the divine inspiration into which poets and rhapsodes are drawn that is *the reason* why their activity cannot rely on knowledge and art, inasmuch as their being divinely inspired is said to involve losing reason (534b5) and being 'possessed' (536a7-b1). Thus, for example, Ferrari ('Plato and Poetry', 97) suggests that 'inspiration *disables* understanding in the poetic chain'; Naddaff (*Exiling the Poets: the Production of Censorship in Plato's* Republic, 59) briefly comments that '*[d]ivinely inspired*, the rhapsodist

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[34] The *Ion* is the major source of information we have about rhapsodes: however, neither this dialogue nor other preserved texts reveal what exactly the rhapsodic recitation and especially interpretation of poetry were like and what they involved. In the *Ion*, the demonstration of such an interpretation of Homer, which the rhapsode Ion offers, is twice thwarted by Socrates (*Ion* 530d6-531a1, 536d4-e1). A comprehensive discussion of the notion of ἑρμηνεύς (as rhapsodes are characterised) and the different meanings it may assume in the *Ion*, from 'interpreter' to 'mediator', is given by Capuccino, *Filosofi e Rapsodi*, 124-132.

possesses neither skill (*technē*) nor understanding'. Leszl ('Plato's Attitude to Poetry and the Fine Arts, and the Origins of Aesthetics. Part I', 197) suggests that '[t]he conclusion [of the dialogue] reached is the negative one that both the rhapsode and the poet do not possess a genuine art (*techne*), *for they work under a divine inspiration*, in a manner comparable to that of diviners or of other "possessed" people' (italics are mine).

Differently from this view, I shall argue that divine inspiration is given not as the reason why poets *do not rely on knowledge*, but rather as the reason why poets *can* compose fine works *despite* their lack of relevant knowledge; *i.e.* that the account of the divine origin of fine poetry is offered as a sort of substitutive explanation of its fineness, which is required once it is assumed that poets, alongside rhapsodes, are incompetent. On the other hand, the premises on which the charge of poets' (and rhapsodes') incompetence relies are in my view to be found in Socrates' two examinations of Ion (separated by Socrates' discourse on divine inspiration). In both, poetry is approached as speaking about some matter or other and these matters are assigned to specific arts; as I shall argue, this approach to poetry is crucial for the eventual epistemological disqualification of poets and rhapsodes. As we shall see in Chapter V, the same approach to poetry will be adopted again in *Republic* X, and there also with the purpose of depriving poets of knowledge of their subject matter.

In this chapter, I will first analyse the notion of τέχνη, 'art', as a central notion in the *Ion*, indicating two different aspects that the term τέχνη denotes (activity *vs.* ability), and then I will consider how 'arts' are conceived of in the dialogue. I will next examine exactly in what sense poets' activity may be understood as 'speaking about arts', and consider how this understanding of poetry leads to the depriving of both rhapsodes and poets of relevant knowledge in each of the two examinations. In Excursus B, I will examine the short theoretical digression on the principle that we cannot know the same things by means of different arts: this principle, introduced and employed in the second examination of Ion, receives an interesting theoretical justification, which, however, does not directly concern the discussion that follows, and will thus be discussed separately.

Τέχνη

With respect to the *Ion* as well as other dialogues that will be discussed later on, we may distinguish between two of the various meanings that the Greek noun τέχνη can assume. The noun can denote, on the one hand, an *activity* (practice, occupation) that involves a special ability; on the other hand, it can denote such *ability* itself: skill, competence, expertise. The English noun 'art' roughly corresponds to the Greek τέχνη: 'art' can in fact assume both these meanings and will therefore be used as a translation of the Greek term.[35] Unlike 'art', the nouns 'practice', 'occupation' and, on the other hand, 'skill', 'competence', 'expertise', all capture just one of the two aspects of τέχνη indicated, either activity or ability.[36]

In the *Ion*, the noun τέχνη is used, in different instances, in both the above senses. In many occurrences, neither meaning of the noun can be excluded; in some, however, τέχνη denotes specifically either activity or ability. For instance, in Socrates' initial praise of rhapsodes, the first occurrence of τέχνη can refer both to the practice of rhapsodes or their skill, whereas in the second occurrence, τέχνη seems to refer specifically to the rhapsodic practice (while the meaning of 'ability' remains latent):

Καὶ μὴν πολλάκις γε ἐζήλωσα ὑμᾶς τοὺς ῥαψῳδούς, ὦ Ἴων, τῆς <u>τέχνης</u>· τὸ γὰρ ἅμα μὲν τὸ σῶμα κεκοσμῆσθαι ἀεὶ πρέπον ὑμῶν εἶναι τῇ <u>τέχνῃ</u> καὶ ὡς καλλίστοις φαίνεσθαι, ἅμα δὲ ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι ἔν τε ἄλλοις ποιηταῖς διατρίβειν πολλοῖς καὶ ἀγαθοῖς καὶ δὴ καὶ μάλιστα ἐν Ὁμήρῳ,

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[35] *Cf. Oxford English Dictionary* 'art: skill, or its application'.

[36] Janaway (*Images of Excellence*, 15, n. 4; *cf. ibid.*, 39) judges 'craft' and 'expertise' as 'the least misleading translations and 'art' 'the most misleading'. However, he does not seem to take into consideration the two aspects of τέχνη, which only 'art' preserves. Just as for 'art', the nouns 'craft', 'profession', 'calling', 'vocation' can also denote both an activity and the ability for it, but they all have connotations extraneous to the Greek τέχνη.

τῷ ἀρίστῳ καὶ θειοτάτῳ τῶν ποιητῶν, καὶ τὴν τούτου διάνοιαν ἐκμανθάνειν, μὴ μόνον τὰ ἔπη, ζηλωτόν ἐστιν.

And I have often envied you rhapsodes, for your art. In fact, it is appropriate to your art to adorn your body and appear as beautiful as possible, and at the same time necessary [for your art] to spend your time with poets, many and good ones, and especially with Homer, the most beautiful and divine of the poets, and study thoroughly his meaning[37], not only his verses: all this is enviable. (530b5-c1)

By contrast, the noun τέχνη is used in the sense of 'ability' ('skill', 'competence', 'expertise') in the passage in which Socrates argues that Ion's ability to speak well about Homer cannot be due to τέχνη, given Ion's complete inability to speak well about all other poets (this argument will be considered in more detail later on). Socrates explains to Ion why he excels only in Homer as follows:

Οὐ χαλεπὸν τοῦτό γε εἰκάσαι, ὦ ἑταῖρε, ἀλλὰ παντὶ δῆλον ὅτι <u>τέχνῃ</u> καὶ ἐπιστήμῃ περὶ Ὁμήρου λέγειν ἀδύνατος εἶ· εἰ γὰρ <u>τέχνῃ</u> οἷός τε ἦσθα, καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ποιητῶν ἁπάντων λέγειν οἷός τ' ἂν ἦσθα· […].

It is actually not difficult to figure it out, friend, but it is evident to everyone that, by means of art and knowledge, you are unable to speak about Homer. If, in fact, you were capable by means of art, you would be able to speak about all other poets as well; […]. (532c5-8)

It is possible that, in the above passage, the hendiadys τέχνῃ καὶ ἐπιστήμῃ (two other occurrences of which are found at 536c1 and 541e2) is used precisely to

[37] I interpret διάνοια here and at 530c4 as the thought expressed, sense, meaning. For a similar use of the noun, see *Crat.* 418a7 τὰς τῶν ὀνομάτων διανοίας and *Crit.* 113a1-b1 ἑκάστου τὴν διάνοιαν ὀνόματος.

assign to τέχνη, in its first occurrence, the meaning of 'ability' (as opposed to 'activity'); the second term, ἐπιστήμη, which is supposedly explanatory, in fact denotes knowledge, or also competence, skill. In fact, τέχνη (clearly in the sense of 'ability') is described later on in the dialogue as knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of particular matters (537d5-6, 538b6).

\Arts in the *Ion*

In the *Ion*, several arts are named: the art of divination, the arithmetical art, or medicine, the art of painting,[38] or of coach driving, building, navigation, fishing, generalship. In addition to these, 'the rhapsodic art' as well as 'the art of poetry' are mentioned and discussed on various occasions; however, the characterisation of the practice of rhapsodes and, on other occasions, that of poets, as 'art' seems to be made only for the purposes of the argument, and is finally rejected: both the activity of rhapsodes and that of poets are in the course of the dialogue deprived of the status as an art (*i.e.* it is denied that they are activities involving specific competence, knowledge).[39]

Unlike in some other dialogues by Plato, the individual arts discussed are not defined in any way, such as, by indicating their specific subject matter.[40] Nor are the arts in the *Ion* classified in any respect, *e.g.*, by having or not having a material

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[38] Interestingly, in the *Ion*, *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*, the activity of painting is discussed as being equivalent to other crafts, whereas in *Republic* X and *the Sophist* it is presented as somehow less valuable than crafts, with the argument that its products are only images of products made by crafts (*e.g.*, carpentry). Of course, painting as the making of images, and therefore things that are 'less true' than the things whose images they are, serves in the latter two dialogues as a model for poetry and sophistry respectively, the practices that are the target of the attack and whose worthlessness the arguments aim to show. The two arguments are discussed in Chapter V.

[39] Stern-Gillet ('On (Mis)interpreting Plato's *Ion*', esp. 182-90) provides a convincing discussion of the question of the 'poetic' art, concluding that 'Socrates' single (probable) mention of such a *technē* in 532c8-9 is best interpreted as a tactical, as opposed to a sincere, assumption' (189).

[40] In other dialogues, individual arts are sometimes defined by specifying the subject matter of an art, or the object it applies to, or again the aim it pursues. For example, in the *Charmides*, the art of medicine is defined as the knowledge of what is salubrious and what is insalubrious (171a8-9), or again as the knowledge of what is salubrious, and which gives us health (165c10-14); in the *Gorgias*, it is defined as the art that takes care of the body and aims at its health (464b4-7, 504a3-b9).

product, in which the art of building may be distinguished from that of coach driving; or again, by being performed through speech, *i.e.* through a verbal activity, or as a non-verbal one, in which for instance the arithmetical art (as well as the practice of rhapsodes and that of poets, though they turn out not to be arts), may be distinguished from fishing or painting.[41]

The *Ion* focuses on the cognitive aspect of arts (art as knowledge) rather than on the pragmatic aspect of them (art as practice).[42] In fact, the principal question addressed in the discussion is whether rhapsodes can adequately understand (γιγνώσκειν, συνιέναι), explain (ἐξηγεῖσθαι) and judge (κρίνειν) poets' works. [43] An epistemological account of arts and how they differ from each other is provided in the second examination: as mentioned above, an art is described as knowledge of particular matters, whereas two arts are defined as being different inasmuch as they consist of knowledge of different matters (537d4-e1). Thus accounted for, arts (as abilities) may be conceived of as 'partitions' of knowledge, each covering particular matters different from other arts (though this description seems to fit some arts, *e.g.*, medicine, better than others*, e.g.*, painting).

Poetry as speaking about matters that pertain to arts

As already anticipated, in the dialogue both rhapsodes and poets turn out to lack the art, or arts, which would enable them to perform their activity well (instead, it

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[41] The first distinction is drawn in the *Charmides* (165e3-166b4), the second in the *Gorgias* (450c7-e2); a distinction similar to it, between theoretical and practical knowledge, is made and further developed in the *Politicus* (258d4-e5).

[42] Note that in the dialogues the activity of speaking can have both a cognitive character or a pragmatic one: while in the *Ion* various cognitive activities (discerning, explaining, judging) are at the same time verbal activities (*i.e.* they are performed through speaking), in the *Gorgias*, as we shall see, speaking (by rhetoricians and poets) will be examined in a pragmatic role, *i.e.* as acting upon others (their soul), in parallel with activities that affect the body (such as medicine and cookery). The latter dialogue, unlike the *Ion*, focuses on the relation between knowledge and action.

[43] The text of the dialogue abounds with verbs denoting cognitive activities or states, especially frequent are (δια)γιγνσώκειν and (δια)κρίνειν; besides them, ἐκμανθάνειν, εἴδεναι, σκοπεῖν, ἐπίστασθαι are also found in the text. The English rendering of the verb γιγνσώκειν (here: 'understand') depends on the context and will be translated as either 'understand' or 'know' in the present chapter.

is the divine agency that somehow enables them to do so). However, the assumption that seems to determine this negative outcome is a specific understanding of poets' activity that underlies the whole dialogue and is well displayed at the very beginning of Socrates' examination of Ion. When Ion claims to excel, as a rhapsode, in Homer, yet not in any other poet, Socrates' inquiry proceeds as follows:

{ΣΩ.} Ἔστι δὲ περὶ ὅτου Ὅμηρός τε καὶ Ἡσίοδος ταὐτὰ λέγετον; {ΙΩΝ.} Οἶμαι ἔγωγε καὶ πολλά. {ΣΩ.} Πότερον οὖν περὶ τούτων κάλλιον ἂν ἐξηγήσαιο ἃ Ὅμηρος λέγει ἢ ἃ Ἡσίοδος; {ΙΩΝ.} Ὁμοίως ἂν περί γε τούτων, ὦ Σώκρατες, περὶ ὧν ταὐτὰ λέγουσιν. {ΣΩ.} Τί δὲ ὧν πέρι μὴ ταὐτὰ λέγουσιν; οἷον περὶ μαντικῆς λέγει τι Ὅμηρός τε καὶ Ἡσίοδος. {ΙΩΝ.} Πάνυ γε. {ΣΩ.} Τί οὖν; ὅσα τε ὁμοίως καὶ ὅσα διαφόρως περὶ μαντικῆς λέγετον τὼ ποιητὰ τούτω, πότερον σὺ κάλλιον ἂν ἐξηγήσαιο ἢ τῶν μάντεών τις τῶν ἀγαθῶν; {ΙΩΝ.} Τῶν μάντεων. {ΣΩ.} Εἰ δὲ σὺ ἦσθα μάντις, οὐκ, εἴπερ περὶ τῶν ὁμοίως λεγομένων οἷός τ' ἦσθα ἐξηγήσασθαι, καὶ περὶ τῶν διαφόρως λεγομένων ἠπίστω ἂν ἐξηγεῖσθαι; {ΙΩΝ.} Δῆλον ὅτι.

Socrates: Is there anything about which Homer and Hesiod say the same?

Ion: I think there is – and many matters, too.

Socrates: And would you explain better what Homer says about these matters, or rather what Hesiod says about them?

Ion: At least concerning the matters about which they say the same – I would explain the things they say about them equally well, Socrates.

Socrates: What about the matters about which they do not say the same things? For example, both Homer and Hesiod say something about <the art of> divination.

Ion: Of course.

Socrates: And so, concerning the things they say about <the art of> divination that are the same as well as the things they say that are different, would you or one of the diviners explain them better?

Ion: One of the diviners.

Socrates: And if you were a diviner and able to explain the things they say that are the same, you would also be able to explain the things they say that are different, would you not?

Ion: Clearly yes. (531a5-b10)

Note first that poets' activity is viewed here as speaking about one matter or another, while other elements of poetry, such as verse, rhythm, and harmony are disregarded (the 'musical' aspect of poetry comes to the fore only in Socrates' central speech, where poets, as well as rhapsodes and their audience, are portrayed as singing, engaging in harmony and rhythm, dancing). But moreover, the matters poets speak about are referred to as pertaining to particular arts: Homer and Hesiod speak 'about <the art of> divination'; in the second examination, Homer is said to speak about numerous arts, among which are the art of chariot driving, medicine, fishing, and others.[44]

But in what way exactly do poets speak about arts? To clarify this important point, let us consider the example given later on of Homer speaking 'about medicine'. In the verses from the *Iliad* considered, 'Homer says how Hecamede, Nestor's concubine, gives *kikeon* to the wounded Machaon' (538b7-c1). In Socrates' 'free' quotation, Homer 'says something like'

[44] As anticipated, this approach to poetry will be found again in *Republic* X; it is critically discussed by Leszl, 'Plato's Attitude to Poetry and the Fine Arts, and the Origins of Aesthetics. Part II', 331-336. *Cf.* p. 42, n. 53.

οἴνῳ πραμνείῳ, φησίν, ἐπὶ δ' αἴγειον κνῆ τυρὸν/ κνήστι χαλκείῃ· παρὰ δὲ κρόμυον ποτῷ ὄψον

with the wine of Pramnus, he says, she grated over goat cheese/ with a bronze grater; together with onions, as an accompaniment to drinking (538c2-3).[45]

Homer thus speaks 'about medicine' in that he narrates about a particular action, Hecamede's preparation of *kikeon* for the wounded Machaon, which is evidently considered as a kind of action that belongs to the art (*i.e.* practice) of medicine. Now, just as in the above case of Homer's speaking about divination, it is agreed that the person most able to consider these verses will not be a rhapsode, but rather someone competent in the respective art, *i.e.* medicine;[46] on this occasion, the competent person will be able to discern well 'whether Homer says these things correctly or not' (538c4-6: ταῦτα εἴτε ὀρθῶς λέγει Ὅμηρος εἴτε μή, πότερον ἰατρικῆς ἐστι διαγνῶναι καλῶς ἢ ῥαψῳδικῆς;); before, and slightly differently, the ability considered was that of explaining the things Homer, or any other poet, says about a particular art.[47]

Now, it is obvious that it is not some 'historical' correctness that is intended to be verified here. In fact, the argument is clearly not concerned with the question of whether narrations by Homer and other poets are invented stories or they are referring to the events that have actually taken place (and if so, to what extent): this

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[45] *Cf. Il.* XI 639-640. The verses quoted in the *Ion* do not correspond to their order in the preserved Homeric text: v. 639 is followed by the first half of v. 640 and the second half of v. 630, with παρά instead of ἐπί.

[46] The argument that the diviner will explain better that Ion what the two poets say about divination already relies on the principle that will be presented in the second examination, that the same things cannot be discerned or judged by means of two different arts, in the present case the art of divination and the presumed rhapsodic art.

[47] Note that the question of knowing (γιγνώσκειν) something concerning Homer's verses is very often set in a qualified form, i.e. that of 'knowing well/ better' ('will a rhapsode or… know better …?'), and more rarely an absolute, unqualified form ('will a rhapsode or … know …?'). Perhaps, this is so inasmuch as a rhapsode, as someone incompetent in the art concerned, cannot be completely unable to judge the correctness of the verses, though obviously he cannot be nearly as able as someone having the pertinent art.

seems to be irrelevant for the kind of examination proposed by Socrates to be applicable to poets' works, *i.e.* the examination of how they speak about *arts*. Rather, which things exactly can be judged as correct or not by means of the art and knowledge of medicine in the above case? Earlier on Socrates suggested that someone competent in medicine will be able to judge whether someone speaks well about 'which kind of foods are salubrious' (531e4-9); in a similar way, we may suppose, someone competent in this art will be able to discern whether Homer says correctly, for example, that *kikeon* is salubrious for someone wounded,[48] or perhaps, that *kikeon* is prepared in the way Homer describes Hecamede preparing it. These, however, are not the things that Homer explicitly says, but rather the things that he implies by his narration: by narrating about that particular event, Homer implicitly makes general claims about matters that pertain to the art of medicine, *e.g.*, how someone wounded should be treated or how *kikeon* is prepared; claims that are comparable, in their generality, with speaking 'about which kind of foods are salubrious' (531e4-9). In a similar sense, supposedly, Homer and Hesiod may say the same or different things about some matter of divination: not in the sense that they narrate the same story, which is related to divination, or a different one, but in the sense that their narrations imply the same or different general claims, such as claims about 'what kinds of foods are salubrious'.

Various other verses by Homer brought into discussion are, on the basis of the same understanding, considered as verses about the art of chariot-driving, fishing, divination. More generally, then, Homer and other poets will typically speak 'about arts' in the way illustrated above: by narrating about kinds of actions,

[48] In *Rep.* III 405a1-406b2, Socrates laments the poor conditions of health in his time, mentioning maladies that had in his view not existed in the time of Trojan war. As evidence, he refers to the same episode from the *Iliad*, though Hecamede and Machaon are substituted with Patroclus and Eurypylus: Socrates seems to see an indication of their better conditions of health in their accepted custom of treating a wounded man with *kikeon*, which, as Socrates observes, 'seems to be inflammatory'. So in the present case from the *Ion*, the correctness intended to be examined could concern (also) the treatment of someone wounded with *kikeon*. Note also that in the *Republic* the events narrated by Homer are on this occasion presented as historical; however, on other occasions, his narration is considered as invented (*e.g.*, in *Rep.* II 382c6-d3, stories concerning the distant past). In the *Ion*, as argued above, Homer's narration seems to remain undefined in this respect.

things, or events, which pertain to particular arts and thereby implicitly making general claims about these arts.

It is worth pointing out that a similar approach to the works by Homer and other poets is found elsewhere in the dialogues, *i.e.* the approach that attributes to poets claims that are not explicitly stated but, it is assumed, are implied by their narrations. For example, in *Republic* II-III, discussing how poets speak about gods, Socrates suggests that by narrating about Cronus' revenge against his father Uranus, Hesiod implies that god is capable of evil and even that it is acceptable to 'punish one's father with extreme means' (*Rep.* II 378b3-4).[49] In fact, what motivates the interlocutors who are founding the state to look for suitable educative poetry is precisely the assumption that poetry 'shapes the mind' and that it does so in the first place by conveying beliefs that are implicit in it: their aim is thus to compel the poets of the envisaged state to convey an appropriate account of matters such as what a god's nature, or just conduct, is like to the prospective guards, but poets will evidently do so implicitly, by narrating about individual gods and their actions. The task that Socrates and, on this occasion, Adeimantus are engaging in as the founders of the state seems to exactly parallel the task that in the *Ion* is entrusted to various experts, a diviner, someone competent in medicine, and others: to judge whether Homer implicitly speaks correctly about matters they are competent in.

The understanding of poetry as speaking about matters pertaining to one art or another underlies the whole dialogue; however, as anticipated, in the first examination, it is agreed that all poets on the whole speak about the same matters, which would thus seem to be matters pertaining to the presumed 'poetic' art; however, in the second examination these same matters (as will be argued), found

[49] I discuss this passage from *Republic* II in Excursus D. Consider two further examples of this approach: in *Rep.* III 403e8-404c9, Socrates argues how one could learn about the appropriate diet for the guards from Homer, as 'on war expeditions, in the banquets of heroes, he does not feed them with fish […]'; in *Rep.* V 468c10-d3, Socrates concludes, from the fact that 'Homer says that Ajax, having distinguished himself in the war, was awarded a long chine' (the episode is found in *Il.* VII 321-322), that 'according to Homer, it is just to honour in such ways [*i.e.* with awards] those good among the young'.

in Homer's verses, are assigned to other arts, such as medicine, chariot-driving, fishing and others.

Ion's incompetence

The conclusion of the first examination, that Ion's rhapsodic activity does not rely on knowledge and art, is derived from the rhapsode's initial declaration that he excels in Homer, but not in any other poet (530c7-531a4). The same charge is raised against poets on a similar basis in Socrates' central speech, *i.e.* inasmuch as poets excel only in a few of the matters they speak about, or only in one genre, but not in others. What then is the line of reasoning leading to this conclusion; why is Ion's mastery of Homer alone, or, *e.g.*, a poet's mastery of tragedy alone, already a sufficient proof that the activity of one or the other does not rely on knowledge and art?

Let us first consider the case of Ion. While Ion confidently claims to have knowledge of Homer's work, Socrates argues that there cannot be such exclusive knowledge: if Ion indeed had it, he should have knowledge of other poets' work as well, and 'speak well' about them no less than about Homer. The argument with which Socrates justifies his objection is that Homer engages in the same kind of activity as other poets, later on in fact referred to as the 'poetic' activity[50], and crucially, that they all speak by and large about the same matters: all poets have narrated 'many things about war and about the relations between good men and bad men and between laymen and craftsmen; about gods' relations with each other and with men and what these relations are like; about the things that happen in the sky and in Hades, and about generations of gods and heroes' (531c4-d1).[51]

[50] At 532c8-9, Socrates refers to the activity common to all poets as ποιητική , though not calling it 'art'. The defining feature of poetry remains in the dialogue unspecified; however, with 'poetry' is evidently meant what is elsewhere defined as composing in speech, rhythm (or verse) and harmony. For the notion of ποιητής, see Excursus A.

[51] Some of these matters receive a lot of attention in designing models for educative poetry, in Books II-III of the *Republic* (as just observed): among the questions addressed are, *e.g.*, how poets should speak about gods and their conduct toward other gods and humans, about heroes and their conduct in war and other misfortunes, about Hades, or about men's conduct toward their superiors.

Although Ion replies that Homer speaks about these matters much better than other poets, he then reluctantly admits that this cannot be the reason for his incompetence concerning other poets. For as Socrates argues, a person who judges adequately one who speaks about some matter well will be equally able to judge adequately one who speaks about the same matter poorly: it is one and the same person judging, in one case 'someone who is competent in arithmetic', in another case 'someone competent in medicine' (or a 'doctor': ἰατρός), who will be able to judge adequately all those who speak about 'number' or, in the other case, all those who speak about 'which kind of foods are salubrious' (531e5). By the same token, Ion should be able to judge adequately all poets, granted that they speak about the same matters. But given that Ion is not able to do so, Socrates concludes that 'by means of art and knowledge, you are incapable of speaking about Homer' (532c6-7); that is to say, Socrates does not deny that Ion excels in Homer, but only that his excellence derives from art and knowledge.

Now, the above argument shows how the two interlocutors differ in the manner they perceive and evaluate poetry. Poetry, approached by Socrates as 'speaking about something', can on his account be evaluated in the same manner as speaking about number or salubrious foods can be: by the criterion of correctness (as seen above). Applying this criterion, speaking 'well' will consist in speaking 'correctly' about one matter or another, where this correctness can be measured adequately only by someone competent in the matter concerned; this approach is especially prominent in the second examination.[52] By contrast, Ion evidently does not judge Homer as the best among poets because of some correctness of this kind, but presumably for some value that is specific to poetry, and which may be defined as the 'poetic' value, even if it is difficult for us to define what exactly that is. Interestingly, ποιητικός is in fact sometimes used as a (positive) evaluative

[52] Interestingly, in a parallel argument from the *Charmides*, the 'things said' are to be judged as 'true' or not, whereas the 'things done' as 'correct' or not (whereas in the *Ion*, the category of correctness is applied to both); the discussion is between Socrates and Charmides: Οὐκοῦν ἐν τούτοις ἀναγκαῖον σκοπεῖν τὸν βουλόμενον ἰατρικὴν σκοπεῖν, ἐν οἷς ποτ' ἔστιν· οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἔν γε τοῖς ἔξω, ἐν οἷς οὐκ ἔστιν; Οὐ δῆτα. Ἐν τοῖς ὑγιεινοῖς ἄρα καὶ νοσώδεσιν ἐπισκέψεται τὸν ἰατρόν, ἢ ἰατρικός ἐστιν, ὁ ὀρθῶς σκοπούμενος. Ἔοικεν. Οὐκοῦν ἐν τοῖς οὕτως ἢ λεγομένοις ἢ πραττομένοις τὰ μὲν λεγόμενα, εἰ ἀληθῆ λέγεται, σκοπούμενος, τὰ δὲ πραττόμενα, εἰ ὀρθῶς πράττεται; (171a11-b9).

adjective that applies specifically to poetry. Thus, for example, in *Republic* X Socrates describes Homer as 'the most poetic and the first one of the composers of tragedy' (ποιητικώτατον καὶ πρῶτον τῶν τραγῳδοποιῶν 607a2-3). Or again, in *Republic* III, Socrates admits that compositions of Homer and other poets are ποιητικὰ καὶ ἡδέα τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀκούειν, 'poetic and pleasant to hear for many', but argues that they should be rejected for their corrupting effect, so much the more, the more poetic they are (ἀλλ' ὅσῳ ποιητικώτερα, τοσούτῳ ἧττον ἀκουστέον παισὶ καὶ ἀνδράσιν οὓς δεῖ ἐλευθέρους εἶναι, δουλείαν θανάτου μᾶλλον πεφοβημένους; 387b1-6).

In the two examinations of Ion, however, Socrates evaluates poetry by the criterion of correctness, and his approach to poetry prevails over Ion's in this argument as well as in the dialogue as a whole. The exception, though, seems to be Socrates' account of divine dispensation, for in it the 'fineness' of compositions appears to be intended precisely as the 'poetic' fineness, and not as correctness (as we shall see shortly).[53]

Now, endorsing Socrates' approach, exactly which art and knowledge turn out to be pertinent to works by Homer and other poets? Consider first the parallel example of those who speak, some of them better than others, about 'which kind of foods are salubrious'. The ability to judge any of these speakers adequately will depend upon having the art and knowledge to which their subject matter pertains: the art of medicine. Likewise, granted that the matters about which all poets speak are on the whole the same, the ability to judge (any) one of the poets implies the ability to judge any other poet as well. This ability, however, will again derive from the knowledge of the matters themselves about which poets speak, that is war and all other subjects listed as common to them all. Someone able to judge

[53] *Cf.* two other interpretations as to how the two perceptions (Socrates' and Ion's) of poetry differ: Ferrari ('Plato and Poetry', 95-98) proposes a distinction between the approach to poetry as 'performance' (Ion's) and the approach to it as 'speaking about something' (Socrates', or Plato's); Leszl ('Plato's Attitude to Poetry and the Fine Arts, and the Origins of Aesthetics. Part II', 331-336), finding the results of Socrates' approach in the *Ion* as well as in *Republic* X absurd (*i.e.* the craftsmen as being pertinent to judge Homer; the requirement that rhapsodes and poets should know the arts they speak about), derives it to a missed 'use of the distinction between contents ('the things to be said') and expression ('how they are to be said')' (335), where, as he suggests, rhapsodes and poets could well claim the latter kind of knowledge and should not be required to have the former kind of knowledge.

adequately all other poets no less than Homer will thus be someone who has knowledge of these matters. In the light of the second discussion, his judgment will supposedly concern the correctness of what Homer, or another poet, says about war and other matters indicated.

Now, a question that is not, but could be raised in the course of the first examination is whether poets themselves have knowledge of war and other matters about which they speak. For we may anticipate what will in fact be done by Socrates in the second examination: the matters that are here presented as pertaining to poetry, may well be assigned to other arts, which poets supposedly do not master, for example, war to the art of generalship (as is implied at 540d1-541b5); whereas 'the relations between good men and bad men and between laymen and craftsmen' could be differentiated into matters that pertain to various arts, such as chariot-driving, divination and others. This kind of differentiation is in fact explicitly made in the final part of the dialogue: when Ion attempts to claim for his presumed rhapsodic art at least the knowledge of 'what is appropriate to say' for a man, a woman, a slave, a free man, *etc.*, as separate from the knowledge of all other arts that have been found in Homer, Socrates draws a distinction between 'what it is appropriate to say' for a doctor speaking to his patient, 'what it is appropriate to say' for a general exhorting the soldiers, *etc.*, thus 'distributing', as it were, the knowledge of 'what is appropriate' for men in different social positions to say, to various arts: medicine, generalship, and others (540b3-d2).

Poets' incompetence

Once Ion admits lacking the knowledge and art pertinent to Homer's work, Socrates offers an alternative explanation of his mastery of the poet, the account of divine dispensation. But at the same time, he includes poets in this account as well, placing them at the centre of it: 'all these good composers of epic verses do not say all these fine poems (καλὰ ποιήματα) relying on art (ἐκ τέχνης), but by being inspired and possessed, and composers of songs likewise […]' (533e5-8). We will return to this account later on, as well as to the understanding of 'fineness' in it.

But first consider the argument Socrates provides to deny that poetry relies on art and knowledge:

ἅτε οὖν οὐ τέχνῃ ποιοῦντες καὶ πολλὰ λέγοντες καὶ καλὰ περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων, ὥσπερ σὺ περὶ Ὁμήρου, ἀλλὰ θείᾳ μοίρᾳ, τοῦτο μόνον οἷός τε ἕκαστος ποιεῖν καλῶς ἐφ' ὃ ἡ Μοῦσα αὐτὸν ὥρμησεν, ὁ μὲν διθυράμβους, ὁ δὲ ἐγκώμια, ὁ δὲ ὑπορχήματα, ὁ δ' ἔπη, ὁ δ' ἰάμβους· τὰ δ' ἄλλα φαῦλος αὐτῶν ἕκαστός ἐστιν. οὐ γὰρ τέχνῃ ταῦτα λέγουσιν ἀλλὰ θείᾳ δυνάμει, ἐπεί, εἰ περὶ ἑνὸς τέχνῃ καλῶς ἠπίσταντο λέγειν, κἂν περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων·

Since it is not by means of art that they [poets] compose and say many and fine things about matters – like you [Ion] about Homer – but by divine dispensation, each is able to compose finely only that to which the Muse has drawn him, someone dithyrambs, someone else laudatory odes, someone dance songs, someone epic and someone iambic poems; but concerning the others, each of them is inferior. They say these things, not in fact by means of art, but by means of divine force, for, if they were able to speak finely about one thing by means of art, they would be able to speak finely about everything else as well. (534b7-c7)

The argument is analogous to the earlier one denying that Ion possesses the art pertinent to poetry. Just as in Ion's case, the important assumption on which it depends is that there is a single art relative to all poetry, which, as it paradoxically turns out, no one of poets possesses. For without this assumption, one could credit a poet who excels, *e.g.*, only in the genre of tragedy, with the corresponding art and knowledge, *i.e.* that enabled him to master this genre, but not others. By contrast, the argument presupposes that the art that enables one to compose in one genre or about one among the various matters poets speak about, is the *same* that enables one to compose in all other genres as well, or about all other matters poets speak about; and that is to say, that there is a single art and knowledge to which all genres and all matters poets speak about pertain: the 'poetic' art, as it could be

called on the basis of the previously mentioned ποιητική (532c8). Yet, although the argument implicitly posits this art, poets are at the same time deprived of it, for no one of them can claim the excellence it promises, *i.e.* the excellence in all genres and in every subject matter of poetry: each of the poets speaks 'finely' about a few matters, but not about others, or masters one genre, but not others.

Now, the denial that poets have the relevant knowledge and art calls for an alternative explanation as to how they can excel at composing, and make fine compositions; the same question, of course, applies to Ion and his excellence concerning Homer. The mentioned account of divine dispensation serves this purpose; poets' confessions about divine agencies that guide them in their composing are skilfully manipulated and presented as evidence for it.[54] As the account proposes, the source of fine compositions is not the poets' own, but divine, whereas the role of poets is only to somehow receive and convey these compositions to others, to rhapsodes in the first place, who in their turn convey them to their public. Further, cunningly portraying poets (and rhapsodes) as being out of their mind and having lost their reason when they engage in this process (ἔκφρων 534b5; ὁ νοῦς μηκέτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνῇ 534b6), the account presents their alleged state as further evidence that poets do not rely on their own knowledge and art when composing (which can thus hardly be called by that name).

Leaving various other details of this account aside, it is important to note what status poets are given in it: although the account recognises the occasional excellence of poets and fineness of their works, it at the same time deprives poets of any active role and any merit for it; the fineness of poetry is to be accredited to another force and agency, which is separate from poets and unmanageable by them, unlike one's own abilities.[55]

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[54] As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, the account has often been interpreted as the *cause* of poets' lack of knowledge and art. It is generally agreed that the account misuses the traditional ideas on the subject to which it appeals. See Stern-Gillet ('On (Mis)interpreting Plato's *Ion*', 177-182) for a short but insightful analysis of the manipulations made. *Contra* Giuliano (*Platone e la* poesia, 137-219), who considers the account of divine dispensation as not being too unfair towards the tradition, nor too dismissive of poets.

[55] As we shall see, *Republic* X provides a different solution to virtually the same problem of accounting for the excellence of (some) poetry after declaring poets incompetent in matters they

Worth noting also are two other cases, found in the *Apology* and the *Meno*, where the account of divine dispensation is introduced with the same purpose as in the *Ion*: to provide an alternative explanation of someone's success, or excellence, once it has been denied that he has the pertinent knowledge. For there too, divine agency makes up for the lack of one's own ability: in the *Apology* (22a-c), Socrates reports how he concluded that poets 'do not know anything of what they say' and 'do not compose what they compose by means of wisdom, but by some natural disposition, and being inspired' when he witnessed that the poets whom he had considered the best were unable to explain what they were saying in their poems; in the final part of the *Meno* (99b-d), once it has become apparent that human excellence, ἀρετή, can be neither taught nor naturally given, Socrates suggests that successful politicians, evidently not relying on the knowledge of ἀρετή pertinent to governing, must instead have relied on divine dispensation whenever they acted or spoke appropriately, being inspired and not knowing anything of what they were saying ('like all poets', he adds).

As anticipated, another important aspect of this account is the evidently altered understanding of 'fineness' in reference to poets' compositions, with respect to the two examinations. The adjective καλός in a narrower sense corresponds to the English 'beautiful', but in a wider sense it may be used to give a positive evaluation to something in a variety of aspects, just as, in fact, the English adjectives 'fine' or 'good' do.[56] Now, in the two examinations, two other evaluative terms, εὖ and ὀρθῶς, are applied to poetry besides καλῶς, the three terms used clearly being interchangeable.[57] By contrast, in Socrates' central speech, poets' activity is consistently evaluated only in terms of 'fineness': poets

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speak about: instead of recognising the fineness of poetry, the epistemological argument in *Republic* X aims to show that this fineness is only apparent and deceptive.

[56] For this reason, I prefer to render in this context καλός with 'fine' rather than with 'beautiful'.

[57] In the two examinations, we find, among other examples: 532a7 τὸν μὲν εὖ γε, τοὺς δὲ χεῖρον; 537c1-2 τὰ ἔπη εἴτε ὀρθῶς λέγει Ὅμηρος εἴτε μή; 538c4 ταῦτα εἴτε ὀρθῶς λέγει Ὅμηρος εἴτε μή; 538d5 εἴτε καλῶς εἴτε μη.

are said to speak finely – but not correctly, or well – or not; their compositions are characterized only as fine or not.[58]

This terminological disparity proves to be significant. For the 'fineness' of the divinely inspired compositions is evidently not intended as 'correctness', as in the two examinations: rather, it seems to be intended in Ion's sense, indicated above, as – at last – the fineness specific to poetry, the 'poetic' fineness. Yet, the distinction between the two senses in which poets are said to speak 'finely', καλῶς, or not (*i.e.* 'poetically' and, on the other hand, 'correctly') in the dialogue is blurred, as it seems, intentionally so.[59]

However, the altered understanding of 'fineness' in the account of divine dispensation produces a certain incoherence of the argument. For when 'fineness' was intended as correctness, it was agreed that only someone having the art and knowledge of the matters a poet speaks about can be an 'adequate judge' (532b5) on whether he speaks 'finely' or not; but now that fineness is intended differently, this is no longer so: for it is clearly assumed that everybody, without having the pertinent art (*i.e.* which should presumably be the 'poetic' art) can adequately judge whether poets' works are 'fine' or not. For example, when Socrates points out the case of the poet Tynnicus as the ultimate proof that poets' excellence does not rely on the relevant art and knowledge, but derives from a divine source, he relies on the popular judgement as a completely pertinent one: as he reports, Tynnicus 'composed no other poem that anybody would consider worth

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[58] The occurrences of καλός in Socrates' central speech are at 533e7-8 τὰ καλὰ λέγουσι ποιήματα; 534a2 τὰ καλὰ μέλη ταῦτα ποιοῦσιν; 534b8-c1 πολλὰ λέγοντες καὶ καλὰ περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων; 534c2-c5 τοῦτο μόνον οἷός τε ἕκαστος ποιεῖν καλῶς ἐφ' ὃ ἡ Μοῦσα αὐτὸν ὥρμησεν, ὁ μὲν διθυράμβους, ὁ δὲ ἐγκώμια, ὁ δὲ ὑπορχήματα, ὁ δ' ἔπη, ὁ δ' ἰάμβους· τὰ δ' ἄλλα φαῦλος αὐτῶν ἕκαστός ἐστιν; 534c6-7 εἰ περὶ ἑνὸς τέχνη καλῶς ἠπίσταντο λέγειν, κἂν περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων; 534d8 πάντων μελῶν κάλλιστον).

[59] The oscillating meaning of καλός is also noted by Janaway (*Images of Excellence*, 33). *Contra* Giuliano (*Platone e la poesia*, 144-146), who rejects the change of meaning of καλός in Socrates' central speech, arguing that καλῶς λέγειν here, just as in the two examinations, involves ὀρθῶς λέγειν; on the understanding of 'speaking correctly' as speaking the truth, the divine provenance of poetry would in Giuliano's view guarantee its truthfulness.

remembering, except the paean that all people sing, probably the finest of all songs' (534d4-535a1).

Once more Ion's incompetence

Once Ion has accepted Socrates' account that he speaks well about Homer by virtue of divine cause rather than through his own abilities (though refusing Socrates' characterisation that he is mad and out of his mind when reciting), Socrates starts off another inquiry: 'which of the things Homer says [does Ion] speak well about?' (536e1-2). Once more Ion turns out to lack the knowledge and art required to 'speak well' about Homer's work, but as anticipated, this result is now reached by quite a different path.

In outline, the examination proceeds as follows. Ion's prompt reply that he speaks well about all Homer, whatever the poet happens to be speaking about, is refuted by Socrates on the basis of a crucial premise, with which Ion agrees, that 'Homer speaks a lot and on many occasions about arts' (537a1-2): in what follows, Socrates in fact argues that unless Ion happens to know these arts, he cannot speak well about the things Homer says about them. Various Homeric verses are brought into the discussion and approached in the manner seen above: as things said about matters pertaining to one art or another, which can, as such, be judged as correct or not; speaking 'well' or 'finely' from this perspective will consist in speaking correctly. As a consequence, the 'adequate judge' of Homer's work, and thus one who will 'speak well' about Homer, will in each case be one who has knowledge of the corresponding art, but not, or much less so, one who does not have this.

As is to be expected, Ion cannot claim competence in any of the Homeric verses quoted by Socrates, for the verses always turn out to pertain to some other art and not the presumed rhapsodic art. In order to secure this outcome, however, a principle is laid down, according to which ' the things we know by means of one art we will not know by another one' (538d2). This principle is then justified by another, seemingly more fundamental, principle that one art is different from

another art in that it consists of knowledge of different matters (538d4-e1).[60] As said earlier, this parenthetical justification is discussed separately in Excursus B.

According to the principle, particular Homeric verses can be adequately discerned, understood, or judged (as correct or not) by means of one art only, and not by two different arts; this art will be the one pertinent to the subject matter of the verses. So, inasmuch as Homer's verses about Nestor advising his son Antilochus how to drive the chariot (537a5-b5; verses are found, with some differences, in *Il.* XXIII 335-340) can be adequately judged by means of the art of chariot driving, they cannot at the same time be judged by means of some other art as well, *e.g.*, the art of medicine or indeed the presumed rhapsodic art (537c1-7).

Ion's acceptance of this principle forces him to cede parts of Homer's work one by one to other arts. In his last attempt to indicate a Homeric subject pertaining to the rhapsodic art, Ion declares that a rhapsode will know 'what kind of things are appropriate for a general to say when exhorting the soldiers' (540d1-2). But in accordance with the principle that 'the things that we know by means of one art, we will not know by means of a different one' (537d2), he is then forced to identify the rhapsodic art with the art of generalship, and therefore to proclaim himself a general, justifying his pretension with the argument that he has 'learned these things from the works of Homer' (541b4-5). This absurd claim to master the art of generalship, soon to be derided by Socrates, does not succeed in concealing the outcome of the second examination: that there is no part of Homer's work that Ion and rhapsodes in general can claim to understand and judge adequately, and thus to 'speak well' about.[61]

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[60] The principle must evidently be interpreted *distributively*, as stating that *each* of the things that is an object of knowledge constituting one art cannot be an object of knowledge that constitutes another art as well. The principle could be interpreted *collectively* as well, as stating that the things *taken all together* that are the object of knowledge constituting one art cannot be the object of knowledge constituting another art as well (thus implying that some matters could be objects of knowledge that constitutes two different arts). However, the context clearly excludes the collective reading of the principle.

[61] I disagree on this point with Stern-Gillet ('(Mis)interpreting Plato's *Ion*', 188), who sees the denial of any interpretative competence to rhapsodes as a result of the missed 'epistemic distinction between first-order applications and second-order exercises of the principles of a *technē*': as she suggests, a critic of the 'exercise of a particular *technē*' (who engages in a 'second-order discourse') must thus, in Socrates' view, 'be informed by mastery of the *technē* in question', rather than

Ion's pretended mastery of Homer is then undermined in the second examination by showing that Homer's work pertains to various other arts, but not to the supposed rhapsodic art, the only art Ion can claim. As anticipated, in this, *i.e.* in determining which art, or arts, Homer's work pertains to, this examination differs significantly from the first one. Before, Homer's work as a whole was discussed as pertaining to the 'poetic' practice and presumed art, *i.e.* poetry. Moreover, the matters Homer speaks about were considered by and large as being common to all poets. Now, however, Homer's work is divided into 'parts' that pertain to various arts, such as medicine, divination and others, inasmuch as Homer speaks – implicitly, as argued above – about all these arts. As suggested above, the case is not that the two different 'classifications' of Homer's work simply refer to different parts of it (*i.e.* the former to verses about matters within the domain of poetry, the latter to verses about matters belonging to other arts), but rather that the same matters that were listed before as those that poets, by and large, speak about are now assigned to specific arts.

Ultimately, the second examination deprives the rhapsodic practice and presumed art of its professed object of knowledge: poetry. For the same kind of classification 'by subject matter' as is applied to Homer's work can evidently also be applied to any other composition by poets, and thus be assigned to another art (or arts) as 'things said' about matters pertaining to it (or them). The new classification of Homer's work has similar consequences for poetry as well. For if in the first examination, poetry is discussed as an activity and discourse that has subject matter specific to it (even though in Socrates' central account poets turn out to lack knowledge of it), now it becomes evident that this subject matter can in every case be assigned to another art: Homer and poetry in general thus seem to be deprived of it, as the rhapsodic activity is in a more explicit way.

Moreover, the granted premise that Homer speaks 'about arts' by itself suggests that Homer does not have, nor rely, on knowledge of the matters he speaks about,

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'possessing a separate, additional *technē*'. In my view, however, such a distinction should in fact not be made, for to judge things *said about medicine* (no less than things *done* related to this art), one must in fact have knowledge of medicine and not a different, additional art. Rather, as I have argued, the conclusion that rhapsodes are incompetent to deal with poetry results from the very understanding of the works by poets as things said *about one art or another*.

although in the second discussion the question of his knowledge is once again not explicitly addressed. Nonetheless it is obvious that Homer, like anyone else, cannot master all the many arts he is considered to speak about.[62] In this case, however, Homer cannot 'speak well' about the matters that pertain to these arts, just as Ion in his turn cannot 'speak well' about the things Homer says about them. Approaching Homer's poetry as speaking about matters pertaining to one art or another thus inevitably leads to the conclusion that, in all probability, Homer speaks about matters of which he lacks knowledge and thus about which he cannot speak well. The same, of course, will apply equally to other poets.

On the other hand, even if Homer turns out to speak well, that is to say correctly, in the verses examined, his excellence must be attributed to his knowledge of the art to which the subject matter of the verses pertains, and not to some poetic art and knowledge (assuming that that there is such an art): for instance, if Homer turns out to speak well in the verses about Hecamede's preparation of *kikeon*, it must be concluded that he does so as a medical expert and *not as a poet*. An analogous example is in fact provided in the dialogue: even assuming that Ion knows 'what kind of things are appropriate for a general to say when exhorting the soldiers' (540d1-2), he knows it as someone competent in generalship (ἢ στρατηγικός 540e7-8). However, supposing that Ion knows this *as a rhapsode*, *i.e.* by virtue of having the rhapsodic art (as he claims), the two arts must coincide, according to the established principle that the same matters cannot be known through two different arts[63] (as Ion is forced to admit; 541a1-3). Or again, one who masters both the 'art of horsemanship' and the art of *kithara* will know things that pertain to either of the two arts, but he will know the things that pertain to the art of horsemanship (*e.g.*, identifying 'the horses that are riding well') by virtue of his having the art of

[62] Precisely this argument will in *Republic* X serve as evidence that Homer and other poets do not have knowledge of the matters they speak about, thus supporting the thesis that poets in fact cannot speak well about them.

[63] In line with the principle established earlier, the assumption here seems to be that if a particular matter ('what kind of things are appropriate for a general to say when exhorting the soldiers') turns out to pertain to two apparently different arts (*i.e.* to be an object of knowledge that constitutes one art as well as the other), all other matters that pertain to the one art will (necessarily) turn out to pertain to the other one as well, and the two arts will turn out to coincide.

horsemanship (ἢ ἱππεύς), and not by virtue of having the art of *kithara* (ἢ κιθαριστής 540d6-e6).

Yet the second discussion does not raise any explicit doubt about Homer's knowledge. Besides, even if we were to derive from it the conclusion that Homer is indeed incompetent in his subject matter, his poetry may once again be saved by considering it as 'divine', just as Ion's excellence in Homer is once again 'saved' by Socrates, who concedes him the title of 'divine' (θεῖος) although 'not competent' (μὴ τεχνικός) encomiast of Homer (542b3-4).

Last, it is important to note that nowhere in the *Ion* is the knowledge of moral matters posited: in the second examination, the matters poets speak about are 'split up' between various *instrumental* arts; *Republic* X, which will similarly assign the subject matter of poetry to various arts, will include in these both 'instrumental arts' such as medicine or leatherworking, and the knowledge of ἀρετή.[64] In *Republic* X, the principal charge against poets and Homer in particular will in fact be that they speak about matters such as 'wars and generalship, government of states, man's education […]' (599c-d) without having the relevant knowledge, and thus without knowing 'how to make men better', evidently regarded as pertinent to these matters. Obviously, the matters indicated in the *Ion* as being those that poets speak about all involve the moral aspect as well (simply inasmuch as all of these matters in one way or another concern men as members of society or society as a whole); among these matters, interestingly, 'war' and generalship will in *Republic* X as such be placed in the domain of ἀρετή.

[64] I define medicine, fishing, chariot-driving as 'instrumental' inasmuch as they are activities providing means for men's material well-being, as opposed to the practice whose concern is men's well-being as members of society, which may be defined as 'political'. A sharp distinction between the two groups is convincingly drawn by Bambrough ('Plato's Political Analogies', 195); as he argues, the task proper to the political domain is *deciding ends*, whereas the task of these other arts is *providing means* for agreed ends; *cf.* notes 11 and 12.

Conclusions

As I have argued, what paves the way to cognitive disqualification of poets in the *Ion* is the approach to poets' narrating about actions and events as their speaking about some matter or other and, moreover, the 'assignment' of these matters to specific arts; however, according to the first argument, these matters constitute the subject matter of poetry, whereas according to the second argument, they constitute the subject matter of various instrumental arts (*e.g.*, Homer's verses about Hecamede's preparation of *kikeon* is characterised as a matter pertaining to medicine). The two different approaches to the subject matter of poetry both lead to the conclusion that poets are incompetent in matters about which they speak, although the denial of knowledge is explicit only in the first argument. The argument posits the putative 'poetic' art as an art that enables one (a poet) to compose fine works on any of the subjects about which poets speak, or again in any of the genres in which they compose, but it does so only to show that no one poet masters such an art, for no one of them displays excellence and fineness in all the subjects he speaks about, or in all the genres he composes in, but (at best) only in a few of these.

By contrast, the second argument 'splits up' the matters poets speak about and assigns them to various instrumental arts, thereby implicitly presenting poets as speaking about matters that they, as poets, cannot be competent in. Moreover, the approach to poetry as discourse on matters related to arts also leads to assigning the evaluation of poets' works exclusively to those who master these arts; this, however, may have important implications in the moral and political field, although this field in the *Ion* (unlike in the *Gorgias* and *Republic* X, as we shall see) remains indistinct in the field of 'instrumental' arts. But in the first discussion of poetry in the *Republic*, such moral and political competence is posited and credited (at least to some extent) to the 'imaginary' founders of the envisaged state, whose role is assumed by Socrates, Glaucon and Adeimantus in the dialogue. In this fictional role, the three interlocutors engage precisely in the task that is in the *Ion* entrusted to experts in instrumental arts: designing the standards for the educational poetry of the envisaged political order, they evaluate (and will hypothetically censor and supervise) any moral elements of poets' works, just as,

in the *Ion*, for example, someone competent in medicine is called to evaluate Homer's verses on matters related to this art.

As I have also argued, the account of divine dispensation, which portrays poets as somehow receiving the fine works they deliver from a divine source, supplies an alternative explanation of their excellence, given their alleged lack of knowledge: though acknowledging that there is some excellent poetry, it deprives poets of their authorship of such poetry. It is worth anticipating how differently poets' excellence will be accounted for in *Republic* X: on the granted premise of poets' incompetence in their subject matter, *Republic* X will aim to show that the fineness of poetry is only apparent and in fact is deceptive, rather than acknowledging it (as the *Ion* does). Moreover, while the *Ion* implicitly suggests that the inferiority of poets' works consists in their potential *incorrectness* (which could be detected by the appropriate expert), *Republic* X, as I shall argue in Chapter V, will define this inferiority in more 'sophisticated' terms: the lowly value of poetry will be shown there to derive from its providing in the first place a *deficient* account of the matters it speaks about, which may also be, in addition, incorrect.

Excursus B

Ion 537c5-e8: we know different things by means of different arts

As observed above, in the course of the second examination Ion is forced to disclaim his competence in each part of Homer's work brought into discussion, inasmuch as he accepts, first, that the verses considered pertain to a specific art, and secondly, that the verses cannot pertain to the presumed rhapsodic art in addition to that art. Ion applies here (if reluctantly) the principle that the same matter cannot be known by means of two different arts. In this excursus, I will consider the brief discussion in which this principle is justified, with the specific aim of elucidating an epistemological distinction that seems to be implicit in it, but which has to my knowledge not yet been noted by other scholars: the distinction between 'having art (or knowledge)', *i.e.* a cognitive state, and 'knowing by means of art (or knowledge)', *i.e.* a cognitive activity. Such a distinction is found in two other dialogues by Plato: it is implicit in the *Euthydemus* and extensively discussed in the *Theaetetus.* I will focus in particular on the *Euthydemus*, as it seems to provide a close and elucidating parallel with the *Ion*.

The principle is introduced by Socrates after the first quotation of Homeric verses has been made (by Ion) and assigned to someone competent in chariot-driving rather than in medicine to judge their correctness:

{ΣΩ.} Οὐκοῦν ἑκάστῃ τῶν τεχνῶν ἀποδέδοταί τι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔργον οἵᾳ τε εἶναι γιγνώσκειν; οὐ γάρ που ἃ κυβερνητικῇ γιγνώσκομεν, γνωσόμεθα καὶ ἰατρικῇ. {ΙΩΝ.} Οὐ δῆτα. {ΣΩ.} Οὐδέ γε ἃ ἰατρικῇ, ταῦτα καὶ τεκτονικῇ. {ΙΩΝ.} Οὐ δῆτα. {ΣΩ.} Οὐκοῦν οὕτω καὶ κατὰ πασῶν τῶν τεχνῶν, ἃ τῇ ἑτέρᾳ τέχνῃ γιγνώσκομεν, οὐ γνωσόμεθα τῇ ἑτέρᾳ; […]

Socrates: ‘Is it not that, to each of the arts, something has been assigned by the god, as a task, for the art to be able to know it?[65] In fact, the things we know by means of the art of navigation, we will not know also by means of the art of medicine.’ Ion: ‘Certainly not.’ Socrates: ‘Nor in fact <will we know> the things that we know by means of the art of medicine, also by means of the art of building.’ Ion: ‘Certainly not.’ Socrates: ‘Is it not so also with all arts: the things that we know by means of one art, we will not know by means of a different one? […]’ (537c5-d2)

The above argument is concerned with γιγνώσκειν, ‘knowing’, by means of arts: however, what exactly this ‘knowing’ consists in will become clearer only later on. But let us consider first what is said about it here. As the first sentence implies, each art (as ability) is able to know (γιγνώσκειν) something (*i.e.* what has been assigned to it, as is somewhat oddly put, by the god). If we consider the argument in relation to an individual, we may say that one who has an art (τέχνην ἔχει) is able to know something (as is in fact said, in the negative form, a while later: *cf.* 538a5-7). But, moreover, by means of different arts, we know different things: ‘the things that we know by means of one art’, that is to say, *each of* these things, ‘we will not know by means of a different one’.[66] An example of such ‘knowing by means of an art’ is not given on the present occasion, but a while later: as Socrates, stretching out his hand, will observe, Ion and he both ‘know’ (γιγνώσκειν) that

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[65] A similar interpretation of ἔργον is given by Kahn (‘Plato’s *Ion* and the Problem of *Techne*’, 372): ‘Has not some specific task been assigned by the god to each of the τέχναι for it to have knowledge of?’ An alternative translation, usually adopted by the scholars, is: ‘Is it not that, to each of the arts, it has been conceded/assigned by the god to be able to know a certain matter/object?’ Differently from Kahn, I take ἔργον to be a complement of ἀποδιδόναι, predicative of τι (as the direct object of the verb). *Cf.* the similar construction ποϊά ἐστιν ἃ προσήκει αὐτῷ [τῷ μάντει] οἵῳ τ' εἶναι διαγιγνώσκειν (*Ion* 538e3-4). Other similar constructions of ‘giving as ἔργον’ are found in *Rep.* I 353b3, *Rep.* III 406c4, *Polit.* 259e6, *Nom.* VIII 833e6; for ‘giving/ conceding someone to be able to …’ *cf. Lys.* 204 c1-2. Plato often uses the noun ἔργον to refer to the task, purpose, or product (as a purpose) specific to an art. Among many examples, *cf. Ion* 530c7-8, *Charm.* 165e7 *et passim*, *Euthd.* 274e4 *et passim*, *Gorg.* 452a8 *et passim*, *Rep.* II 369e2 *et passim*, *Pol.* 259e6 *et passim*.

[66] As said earlier on (see p. 49, n. 60), the principle is clearly understood in the distributive (as opposed to collective) sense: there isn’t any matter that can be known by means of two different arts.

the fingers of the hand are five, and both know this same thing about the fingers by means of the same art, *i.e.* the art of arithmetic (537e4-8).[67]

Above, however, the principle of 'knowing by means of arts' is simply observed, but not yet given a justification, *i.e.* why it is not possible to know something by means of two different arts has not yet been explained. The remaining discussion about arts seems to provide such a justification. After Ion has agreed to 'consider one art to be one art and another <art> to be a different one', Socrates suggests what the criterion for distinguishing between them is:

{ΣΩ.} […] τὴν μὲν ἑτέραν φὴς εἶναί τινα τέχνην, τὴν δ' ἑτέραν; {ΙΩΝ.} Ναί. {ΣΩ.} Ἆρα ὥσπερ ἐγὼ τεκμαιρόμενος, ὅταν ἡ μὲν ἑτέρων πραγμάτων ᾖ ἐπιστήμη, ἡ δ' ἑτέρων, οὕτω καλῶ τὴν μὲν ἄλλην, τὴν δὲ ἄλλην τέχνην, οὕτω καὶ σύ; {ΙΩΝ.} Ναί. {ΣΩ.} Εἰ γάρ που τῶν αὐτῶν πραγμάτων ἐπιστήμη εἴη τις, τί ἂν τὴν μὲν ἑτέραν φαῖμεν εἶναι, τὴν δ' ἑτέραν, ὁπότε γε ταὐτὰ εἴη εἰδέναι ἀπ' ἀμφοτέρων; ὥσπερ ἐγώ τε γιγνώσκω ὅτι πέντε εἰσὶν οὗτοι οἱ δάκτυλοι, καὶ σύ, ὥσπερ ἐγώ, περὶ τούτων ταὐτὰ γιγνώσκεις· καὶ εἴ σε ἐγὼ ἐροίμην εἰ τῇ αὐτῇ τέχνῃ γιγνώσκομεν τῇ ἀριθμητικῇ τὰ αὐτὰ ἐγώ τε καὶ σὺ ἢ ἄλλῃ, φαίης ἂν δήπου τῇ αὐτῇ. {ΙΩΝ.} Ναί.

{ΣΩ.} Ὃ τοίνυν ἄρτι ἔμελλον ἐρήσεσθαί σε, νυνὶ εἰπέ, εἰ κατὰ πασῶν τῶν τεχνῶν οὕτω σοι δοκεῖ, τῇ μὲν αὐτῇ τέχνῃ τὰ αὐτὰ ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι γιγνώσκειν, τῇ δ' ἑτέρᾳ μὴ τὰ αὐτά, ἀλλ' εἴπερ ἄλλη ἐστίν, ἀναγκαῖον καὶ ἕτερα γιγνώσκειν.

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[67] According to Prof. Stalley's interpretation of the principle that 'each art is assigned one task (to know one thing)' at 537c5-6, the principle allows that 'several arts are assigned to the same subject matter' (*Notes on Ph.D Thesis*, 2). I disagree with this interpretation, for the two examples that are provided to illustrate the principle exclude this possibility (the matters known by the art of navigation cannot be known by means of medicine; the matters known by means of medicine cannot be known by means of the art of building), and so does the generalisation that follows; the generalisation seems to be given as a paraphrase of the principle that 'each art is assigned one task' ('Is it not so also with all arts: the things that we know by means of one art, we will not know by means of a different one?'). Thus, in my view the principle implies that if it turns out to be possible to know the same matters by what are considered to be two different arts, it must be concluded that in fact these two arts coincide.

Socrates: '[…] do you consider one art to be different from another <art>?' Ion: 'Yes.' Socrates: 'And do you reason in the way I do: when one <art> is knowledge of certain matters and the other < is knowledge> of some different <matters>, so I call the former one <art> and the latter another art; do you do so, too?' Ion: 'Yes.' Socrates: 'If indeed some knowledge happens to be of the same matters, why would we say that the former <art> is one art and the latter is a different one, when yet the knowledge of the same things can be derived from either of them? So, for example, I know that these fingers are five, you also, like me, know the same things about them. And if I were to ask you whether it is by means of the same art, namely the art of arithmetic, that I and you know these same things, or by means of a different art, you would surely say that it is by the same.' Ion: 'Yes.'

Socrates: 'So, what I just intended to ask you, tell me now: if it seems to you to be so with all arts, that it is necessary to know the same things by means of the same art, whereas, by means of a different one, not the same things, but, if the art is another one, it is necessary also to know different things <by means of it>.' (537d3-538a4)

Socrates introduces here another principle, which may be called the principle of 'differentiation between arts': according to it, one art is different from another inasmuch as it is, *i.e.* consists of, knowledge of different matters. If, by contrast, two arts, or rather, what are considered to be two arts, turn out to consist of knowledge of the same matters and if, as a consequence, it is possible to derive knowledge of the same things from either of them, then there are in fact no grounds for considering the two arts as different. In this case, presumably, we are unjustifiably calling one and the same art by two different names.

Once the principle of differentiation between arts is established, the earlier principle of knowing by means of arts is asserted again, this time presented as 'necessary', as if it has been made evident by the second principle. If so, how exactly does the second principle explain the first one?

Observe, first, how the two principles differ. In them, art is viewed from two different perspectives. While the former principle was concerned with what arts enable us to do, the latter considers what arts consist of. The former stated, to put it simply, that different arts enable us to know (γιγνώσκειν) different things (or, that by means of different arts we know different things), whereas the latter argues that different arts are, *i.e.* consist of, the knowledge, ἐπιστήμη, of different matters, or things. Considering the second principle in relation to an individual (as was done earlier with the first one), we may say that inasmuch as someone has an art, he has the knowledge of certain matters, *i.e.* the knowledge constituting this art.

The second principle thus seems to account for the first one in the following way: having an art, someone has knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of certain things, and that is why he is able to know (γιγνώσκειν) certain things; whereas, having a different art, someone has knowledge of different things, which therefore enables him to know different things. Or, to put it slightly differently, one cannot know (γιγνώσκειν) the same things by means of different arts because one cannot know the same things by means of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of different things.

What then obviously needs to be clarified is how having 'knowledge' (ἐπιστήμη) differs from 'knowing' (γιγνώσκειν). Observe, in fact, that unless there were a difference between these two notions, the first principle would not be dependent on the second, as the argument presents it, but, instead, nearly identical with it: for, in that case, 'knowing (γιγνώσκειν) different things by means of different arts' would amount to much the same as 'having knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of different things by having different arts'.

In order to clarify the difference between 'having knowledge' and 'knowing', it is helpful to consider the argument in the *Euthydemus*, in which this distinction seems to be articulated more explicitly. In the argument, Socrates points out two different meanings of μανθάνειν: learning and understanding (which is yet another distinction, not to be confused with the one we are concerned with). On this occasion, his interlocutor is the young Clinias, who, overlooking the difference

between the two meanings, was just taken in by the two sophists, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. Socrates thus instructs Clinias with the following:

ὃ δὴ καὶ ἐνδείκνυσθόν σοι τὼ ξένω, ὅτι οὐκ ᾔδησθα τὸ μανθάνειν ὅτι οἱ ἄνθρωποι καλοῦσι μὲν ἐπὶ τῷ τοιῷδε, ὅταν τις ἐξ ἀρχῆς μηδεμίαν ἔχων ἐπιστήμην περὶ πράγματός τινος ἔπειτα ὕστερον αὐτοῦ λαμβάνῃ τὴν ἐπιστήμην, καλοῦσι δὲ ταὐτὸν τοῦτο καὶ ἐπειδὰν ἔχων ἤδῃ τὴν ἐπιστήμην ταύτῃ τῇ ἐπιστήμῃ ταὐτὸν τοῦτο πρᾶγμα ἐπισκοπῇ ἢ πραττόμενον ἢ λεγόμενον - μᾶλλον μὲν αὐτὸ συνιέναι καλοῦσιν ἢ μανθάνειν, ἔστι δ' ὅτε καὶ μανθάνειν - σὲ δὲ τοῦτο, ὡς οὗτοι ἐνδείκνυνται, διαλέληθεν, ταὐτὸν ὄνομα ἐπ' ἀνθρώποις ἐναντίως ἔχουσιν κείμενον, τῷ τε εἰδότι καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ μή·

What the two visitors are in fact showing you is that you did not know that men use the word μανθάνειν in the case when one who at the beginning does not have any knowledge about a certain matter, later on acquires the knowledge of it, but they use this same word also when one who already has the knowledge considers, by means of this knowledge, this same matter, either done or said – they use the word συνιέναι (understand) more often, but on occasion, they may use μανθάνειν as well – whereas, as they show, this has escaped you: that the same word is given to men in the opposite condition, both to the one who knows and the other who does not. (277e5-278a7)

The case in which μανθάνειν assumes the meaning of ‘understand’, employed by the two sophists for their trick, is the one in which someone who, having knowledge of (ἐπίστασθαι) all the letters, understands (μανθάνει), at someone’s dictation, which letters are dictated. The explanation of when and how this understanding (συνιέναι, μανθάνειν) occurs is the following: ‘when one who already has the knowledge considers, by means of this knowledge, this same matter, either done or said’. The one who understands something, does so, first,

'having already the knowledge' (ἔχων ἤδη τὴν ἐπιστήμην) of that thing, and secondly, 'by means of this knowledge' (ταύτῃ τῇ ἐπιστήμῃ).

Attempting a complete account of the case, we may say that once one has learned some matter (*e.g.*, letters), *i.e.* one has acquired the knowledge of it, one has this knowledge, and has it continually. We may describe his 'having this knowledge' as his cognitive state, or condition. Now, possessing this knowledge continually, one 'occasionally' employs, or exercises it: precisely on those occasions when he (*e.g.*, the one who has the knowledge of letters) comes upon that same matter[68] that he has the knowledge of (*e.g.*, at dictation of letters) and considers it 'by means of this knowledge'. Considering the matter by means of (*i.e.* exercising) this knowledge results in, or perhaps coincides with, understanding it (*e.g.*, recognizing the letters dictated). As opposed to 'possessing knowledge', described above as a cognitive state, we may describe 'employing, or exercising, knowledge' as a cognitive activity.

Now, the situation of 'understanding something' seems to be parallel to the one of 'knowing' (γιγνώσκειν) in the *Ion*: the one who 'knows' something by means of an art (*e.g.*, the one who knows that there are five fingers on the hand shown), knows it 'having already the knowledge' (ἔχων ἤδη τὴν ἐπιστήμην) of that matter (*e.g.*, the knowledge that constitutes the art of arithmetic) and considering the matter 'by means of this knowledge' (ταύτῃ τῇ ἐπιστήμῃ) (*e.g.*, considering the given number of fingers 'by means of' the arithmetical knowledge, which one already has).

If so, then the argument in the *Euthydemus* indicates more clearly the distinction that seems to be inherent in the discussion about arts in the *Ion*: the distinction between having (or possessing) knowledge and, on the other hand, exercising (or employing) it. Considering the two principles of the *Ion* in the light of this

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[68] Note that the objects of perception and recognition (the letters dictated) are regarded here as the very same as the objects of the knowledge possessed (*cf.* ταὐτὸν τοῦτο πρᾶγμα), and not, *e.g.*, as instances that have 'the same form' (*cf.*, *e.g.*, *Euth.* 6d9-e6, which is about recognising instances that have the same form, *i.e.* pious actions, though the context is entirely different). The same assumption seems to underlie the discussion in the *Ion*. In the *Theaetetus*, the question of distinguishing between the former and the latter objects does not seem to be addressed.

distinction, we may thus say, in short, that the first one is concerned with the exercise, or the use, of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), whereas the second one with the (mere) possession of it. 'Knowing (γιγνώσκειν) by means of an art' may then be considered as a (cognitive) activity that involves, or consists in, considering something by means of, *i.e.* exercising, or employing, the knowledge that one already has, and which is a constitutive part of that art. The justification of the knowing by means of an art may then be spelled out as follows: because different arts just are (consist of) the knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of different things (the second principle), and because we know (γιγνώσκειν) the things that we come upon by considering them by means of (*i.e.* exercising) the knowledge, which we have, of these things (the argument from the *Euthydemus*), it is 'necessary' that different arts enable us to know (γιγνώσκειν) different things, or, that we know different things by means of different arts (the first principle, repeated at *Ion* 538a1-4).

Finally, we may also consider the argument from the *Theaetetus*. In view of the *Ion*, the argument is interesting in that the distinction between the possession of knowledge and the exercise of it features as its central subject, and further, in that the distinction is illustrated with an example concerning the art of arithmetic, very similar to the one provided in the *Ion*.[69]

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates draws the distinction between 'possessing knowledge' (τὸ κεκτῆσθαι τὴν ἐπιστήμην) and 'holding knowledge' (τὸ ἔχειν <τὴν ἐπιστήμην> 199a6-7). Explaining the difference between the two to Theaetetus, Socrates employs the image of an aviary as a model: in his comparison, possessing knowledge, once one has acquired it, corresponds to keeping birds in one's aviary, once one has caught them, whereas getting hold of the knowledge one already possesses corresponds to catching again the birds kept in the aviary: in both cases

[69] Other aspects of this complex argument will be left out of the present discussion, as they are not directly relevant to it. The argument found in *Tht.* 197a8-200d4 is concerned with the question of how it is possible to acquire a false belief about something of which one already has the knowledge, *e.g.*, when one who has the knowledge of all numbers, makes a false calculation (*e.g.*, 'that five and seven is eleven'). The aim of the discussion is to resolve the paradoxical consequence derived from such cases: 'not having the knowledge of the things that we have the knowledge of' (τὸ μὲν ἃ ἐπίστανται μὴ ἐπίστασθαι *Tht.* 199c5).

(birds and knowledge), what has once been acquired is kept at one's disposal to get hold of.

In Socrates' example concerning the art of arithmetic, an (accomplished) arithmetician possesses the knowledge of all numbers and will, on occasion, count 'either within himself, the numbers themselves, or something among the external things that have a number' (*i.e.* that are countable).[70] As is suggested, counting may be defined as 'examining how big some number happens to be'.[71] Socrates explains such counting by comparing it with a hunt of the birds from the aviary:

οὕτως δὲ καὶ ὧν πάλαι ἐπιστῆμαι ἦσαν αὐτῷ μαθόντι καὶ ἠπίστατο αὐτά, πάλιν ἔστι καταμανθάνειν ταὐτὰ ταῦτα ἀναλαμβάνοντα τὴν ἐπιστήμην ἑκάστου καὶ ἴσχοντα, ἣν ἐκέκτητο μὲν πάλαι, πρόχειρον δ' οὐκ εἶχε τῇ διανοίᾳ;

And in this way even with things you learned and got the knowledge of long ago and have known ever since, it is possible to learn them – these same things – all over again. You can take up again and 'have' that knowledge of each of them which you acquired long ago but had not ready to hand in your thought, can't you?' (*Theaetetus* 198d4-8, trans. M.J. Levett revised by M. Burnyeat)

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[70] The example from the *Ion* of counting the fingers may be regarded as the latter kind of counting.

[71] A controversial, but, as suggested, often heard account of the case is that 'he, therefore, examining what he has the knowledge of, appears not to have this knowledge; and he is the one about whom we have agreed that he has the knowledge of all numbers' (*Tht.* 198c7-9). Counting and reading, in the dialogue both explained as cases of 'holding the knowledge one already possesses', seem to have commonly featured as paradoxical cases of 'learning what one knows' (*Tht.* 198e1-199a3).

Chapter III

POETS IN THE *GORGIAS*

Introduction

The brief discussion of poetry in the *Gorgias* raises against poets a charge that may be described in similar terms to the charge raised against them in the *Ion*: that their activity is not an art, *i.e.* that it does not rely on knowledge. However, the more specific content of this charge proves to be significantly different in the two dialogues. First, in the *Gorgias*, the matters poets turn out to be incompetent in are different from those with which the *Ion* is concerned: these are no longer matters related to arts such as medicine, chariot-driving, fishing and others, but rather moral matters, *i.e.* men's well-being and the virtues required for it. In fact, while poets' activity is in the *Ion* ultimately 'located' in the vast domain that properly belongs to the former, 'instrumental' arts, in the *Gorgias* it is approached as a practice operating in the domain that properly pertains to the τέχνη πολιτική, the political art, whose concern in fact is citizens' well-being.[72] Secondly, and what is just as important, the question that will now be posed about poets extends beyond the correctness of what they say about their subject matter (as in the *Ion*): the question now is whether what they say and compose (also musically) is good or rather harmful for their listeners. Accordingly, while the proposed evaluation of poetry in the *Ion* is only of the veridical kind, *i.e.* concerned with the correctness of poets' claims, in the *Gorgias* it is also of the ethical kind, *i.e.* concerned with how poetry affects others. Thus, while the criticism of poets is in the *Ion* only epistemological, in the *Gorgias* it is ethical as well.

However, poetry features in the *Gorgias* as a marginal theme instrumental to the discussion of rhetoric, *i.e.* the ability and practice of persuasive speaking, as it may

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[72] For the distinction between 'instrumental' and 'political', see p. 52, n. 64.

be briefly defined, which is the main subject of the dialogue.[73] Presumably for this reason, the criticism of poets in the *Gorgias* has received relatively little attention within the study of Plato's treatment of poetry.[74] But although the explicit charges directed at poets do not say much by themselves, a specific account of poets' activity may be derived from them in the context of the dialogue; in fact, these charges are analogous to those raised against rhetoricians (more specifically those of them who participate in politics), which receive a much fuller backing by Socrates. The charge against poets, which Socrates raises in a brief discussion of poetry held with Callicles[75], is thus the following: poets aim only to 'gratify' (χαρίζεσθαι) men, or more precisely their soul (as opposed to the body), but do not pursue what is best (*i.e.* most valuable) for them, or, in similar terms, do not consider whether their activity is good (benefiting) or rather harmful for men (501b1-c1). Socrates thus characterises their activity as 'flattery' (κολακεία), *i.e.* a kind of activity that 'pursues what is pleasant without pursuing what is best' (465a1-2: […] τοῦ ἡδέος στοχάζεται ἄνευ τοῦ βελτίστου). He compares rhetoricians and (implicitly) poets as flatterers of the soul with cooks as flatterers of the body: cookery aims to provide the body with the tastiest, *i.e.* most pleasant,

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[73] A brief historical note on the practice of rhetoric in Plato's time is given in Excursus C.

[74] For illustration, in 'Plato and Poetry', Kennedy dedicates to the *Gorgias* just a very short comment of eight lines (99). Of recent studies, Janaway's 'Arts, Crafts, and the Production of Pleasure' in his *Images of Excellence* (36-57) is among the most extensive ones. Büttner (*Die Literaturtheorie bei Platon*, 229-232) briefly considers the question of what ideal poetry 'that aims at virtue' would be like according to the *Gorgias*. Giuliano (*Platone e la poesia*, 234-236 and 242-43), sees a parallel between the *Ion*, *Gorgias* and *Republic* X in that they all present poets as lacking 'technical knowledge' ('sapere tecnico' 236), and in the *Gorgias*, specifically, as engaging in a 'pseudo-*techne*' (236); in my view, however, the charge of poets' incompetence in the dialogue clearly concerns the political domain, not the instrumental one. Leszl ('Plato's Attitude to Poetry and the Fine Arts, and the Origins of Aesthetics. Part II', 295-300), associating 'Plato's critique of poetry' with his 'critique of democracy', sees the parallel between poets and rhetoricians in their complying with the wishes of the multitude, an attitude unacceptable for Plato.

[75] Callicles is the last of Socrates' three interlocutors, preceded by Gorgias and Polus. He could be an invented character; Irwin (*Plato's Ethics*, 95) sees in him a (fictional) advocate of Isocrates, noticing that 'several Isocrates' charges are presented by Callicles' and that 'in contrast to the shorter Socratic dialogues, in the *Gorgias* Plato defends Socratic philosophy and Socratic morality against Isocrates' criticism'. Polus seems to have been a real (historical) person, namely a student of Gorgias and then himself a teacher of rhetoric and writer on the subject (mentioned also in *Phdr.* 267b-c, as well as in the disputed *Theages,* at 127e). See Dodds, *Plato:* Gorgias, 6-17, for further historical information about characters. Socrates' friend Chaerophon, the last of the five characters of the dialogue, has a minor part in it.

food, but not with the food that is in fact best (most valuable) for it, *i.e.* healthy food.

In this chapter, my aim will be to clarify exactly how the characterisation of poetry, alongside rhetoric, as a kind of 'flattery' for the soul is to be understood. While Socrates' criticism that poets and rhetoricians do not pursue what is best for men obviously refers to their neglect of men's justice and temperance, it is more difficult to understand Socrates' claim that they aim only to 'gratify' men and that by doing so they may harm them. The examination of the pleasure of the soul' (in opposition to the pleasure of the body') that I will conduct will allow a specific interpretation of Socrates' notion of 'flattery' for the soul. In the light of the examination, I will argue that the purpose of Socrates' 'affective' characterisation of rhetoric and poetry as 'flattery', and his comparison of the two practices with cookery, entails an implicit epistemological disqualification of them, but I will also aim to show in what way this characterisation is misleading.

Rhetoricians and poets neglect what is best for men

What men's well-being and good life consists in is the central subject of contention between Socrates and his interlocutors. Socrates' firm conviction, which he fervently defends especially against Polus and Callicles,[76] is that justice towards others is men's highest good and a fundamental condition of a good life (470e9-11). By 'just', Socrates seems to intend simply 'law-abiding' (νόμιμοι 504d1-3), presumably identifying here justice towards others with observance of law.[77]

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[76] A thorough and astute analysis of Polus' and Callicles' ethical positions (and differences between them) and Socrates' refutation of them is made by Rudebusch, *Socrates, Pleasure and Value* (1999), 27-63.

[77] We may suppose that the relationship of justice and law will concern the 'art of lawgiving', mentioned by Socrates as the formative, or regulative branch of the political art (penal practice being its other, corrective, branch); the task of this art is in fact to provide citizens with laws that are just (464b7-8). However, the relationship of justice and law is discussed in the argument between Socrates and Callicles about justice 'by law' (or by 'convention') and justice 'by nature'. The distinction between the two is drawn by Callicles: both Socrates and Callicles understand justice by law as relying on the principle of all men having the same (τὸ ἴσον ἔχειν 489a3), whereas natural justice as consisting in the principle of the stronger having more (τὸ πλέον ἔχειν

Together with justice, Socrates often mentions temperance (σωφροσύνη) as another fundamental virtue. In short, temperance may be explained as a virtue that is complementary to justice: being intemperate consists in excessive wanting (493c4-7), but wanting is 'excessive' precisely inasmuch as realising what is wanted involves acting unjustly; someone who is intemperate leads 'a life of a thief' (507d6-e3).[78] According to his view of justice as men's greatest good, Socrates considers committing injustice to be the greatest harm for oneself and the unjust life to be the worst life; further, he regards a just punishment (for the injustice committed) as a means of somehow restoring one's justice, and as such, beneficial for one who is justly punished (504e6-505b12).

These views also determine Socrates' perception and evaluation of rhetoricians' and poets' practices: the neglect of 'what is best' for men, of which Socrates accuses them both, refers to the neglect of men's justice; their principal aim, in his view, should be to render those whom their practices concern, just (for rhetoricians, see 480b7-d6, 504d5-e3). Underlying this demand, however, there is evidently a specific perception of the role and influence rhetoricians and poets have in society: as in various other dialogues, both rhetoric and poetry are evidently considered as activities that have a strong 'formative' effect on men's moral disposition (and thus on their being just or unjust, temperate or intemperate). As anticipated, the rhetoricians Socrates refers to here are those who engage in rhetorical practice as part of their political engagement: typically, the aim of their public speaking is to persuade their public (constituting a political body) to approve a particular political proposal.[79] These politically active rhetoricians and,

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483c3-4, 489a3). Their debate, however, does not make it clear exactly how the two principles should be understood; Callicles' concept of natural justice (defended by him against justice by law) is shown by Socrates to be unsound, whereas the principle of all men having the same is not further explained.

[78] This intemperance in the domain of the 'soul' must be distinguished from intemperance in the domain of the body, *i.e.* if the object of wanting is something that affects the body. In that case, temperance, *i.e.* wanting that is not excessive, will be complementary to the body's health: intemperance, *i.e.* wanting that is excessive, will be such wanting that is harmful to one's health.

[79] As Gorgias in fact points out to Socrates, the building of arsenals, the Athenian walls and harbours was undertaken following the proposal by Themistocles and by Pericles. Gorgias is keen to state that, concerning these matters, 'it is rhetoricians who make proposals and make their opinion prevail' (456a2-3). On this occasion, he intends to prove that the rhetoricians are able to persuade their listeners even about matters in which they are incompetent, such as building.

on the other hand, poets, will exercise moral influence through publicly conveying beliefs about justice and other moral subjects, though they obviously do so in different ways and for different purposes. In fact, an important difference between the two figures is that while rhetoricians' public performance, *i.e.* making a political speech, has an instrumental character, poets' musical or dramatic performance does not: the former serves as a means for the realisation of an extrinsic end, *i.e.* a certain political plan (*e.g.*, construction of city walls, harbours, or arsenals), but the latter does not have any further aim extrinsic to the performance itself.[80] However, in addition to their 'discourses', rhetoricians' 'actions' and policies as a whole also 'shape' the moral disposition of the citizens, rather than being neutral in this respect: public infrastructure and services may themselves render the citizens (more) intemperate, and therefore more prone to act unjustly (504d5-e3); as Socrates argues, such was the tribute for public offices, introduced by Pericles, which made citizens greedy for money (515e2-7).

However, whatever rhetoricians deliver to the citizens and provide them with will be, in Socrates' view, worthless or even harmful to them, if citizens' use of it is not just. Consider his criticism of the famous Athenian rhetoricians Cimon, Miltiades, Themistocles and Pericles (503c1-3)[81]: at the time they held high political offices they 'filled up the city with harbours, ports, walls, tributes and such silly things – without temperance and justice' (519a1-4). But insofar as they did not render the citizens just, their achievements were worthless: 'no benefit comes from any other advantage, if the intent of those who are to get hold of great riches, or some command, or whatever other power, is not fair and good' (513e7-514a3).[82] The advantage and value of rhetoricians' achievements, consisting, for example, in

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[80] This difference is reflected also in the description of those whom the two practices concern: while poets' activity concerns and affects 'listeners' or 'spectators', rhetoricians' activity concerns and affects 'citizens'. The only exception where those whom rhetoricians' practice concerns are referred to as 'listeners' is in the argument subsequent to the discussion of poetry (502d10-503b3), where rhetoricians are in fact considered in their narrower role of public speakers and not in their wider political engagement.

[81] See, for Cimon and Miltiades *Gorg.* 503c2 et al., for Themistocles *Gorg.* 455e2 et al., for Pericles *Gorg.* 455e3 et al.

[82] A similar view is expressed by Socrates in the *Apology* (30b2-4). *Cf.* Burnyeat's interpretation of the passage in '*Apology* 30b 2-4: Socrates, money, and the grammar of γίγνεσθαι'.

greater safety (city walls, arsenals) and wealth (ports, public tributes) for the citizens, will therefore depend on the citizens' just use of them, and on their just conduct and life in general.

Poets' musical or dramatic performances are 'contributions' offered to the citizens of a quite different sort from the public infrastructure and services provided as a result of rhetoricians' political engagement. The former performances will be appreciated by the listeners as such, *i.e.* for their intrinsic (as opposed to instrumental) value; or we may say, for their 'poetic' value.[83] But again, their 'poetic' value alone is in Socrates' view not sufficient to render them valuable and advantageous for citizens: if poets are not concerned about how their performance will affect the listeners' disposition towards justice, their poetry may contribute to the listeners' becoming unjust (various alleged cases of such poetry are in fact discussed in *Republic* II-III), and is therefore harmful for them.

Gratifying the soul

Inasmuch as rhetoricians and poets do not aim to render men just, they in Socrates' view disregard 'what is best' for them; but moreover, as observed above, Socrates claims that the aim of both is only to 'gratify' men's soul (as opposed to men's body), without considering whether by gratification they benefit men or harm them. We have seen above what sort of things rhetoricians and poets provide to men: rhetoricians, things such as construction of city walls, arsenals, ports, or the introduction of tributes for public offices, whereas poets, public performances of their work. Evidently, it is these pursuits by the ones or the others that are by Socrates characterized as gratifying men. In fact, the achievements of the four (above mentioned) rhetoricians are paralleled with cooks' providing tasty food (517b2-519a7).[84] In the case of poets, it is their performances as such that 'gratify'

[83] For the notion of 'poetic', *cf.* Chapter II, pp. 41 ff.

[84] It could seem that 'what is pleasant' for the citizens is the rhetoricians' public performance (as opposed to city walls *etc.*); however, the extended and unambiguous comparison of the public infrastructure and services provided by rhetoricians with the food provided by cooks at 517b2-519a7 in my view clearly shows that it is these things that are intended to 'gratify' the citizens.

the public (501e-3 *et al.*). Instead of pursuing such gratification, their aim should be 'to try hard, if something is pleasant and gratifying for them, but harmful, not to say it, whereas if something happens to be unpleasant but beneficial, to say it and sing it, whether they [the spectators] enjoy it or not' (502b1-8), as Socrates suggests with regard to composers of tragedy. Let us now examine in what sense Socrates characterises these pursuits by rhetoricians or poets as things that 'gratify' men's soul.

Before examining the notion of 'gratifying the soul', it is helpful to briefly clarify the notion of soul itself. The existence of the soul, alongside the body, is an assumption granted by the interlocutors before the analogy between specific practices concerned with the one and the other is drawn by Socrates (464a1; I shall return to the analogy later on). The body and the soul seem to be most often approached as the two distinguishable aspects of ourselves, bodily and psychic, rather than the two separable parts of ourselves (as at 524b2-4). However, the question of how these two aspects are related or exactly how they (or their functions) can be distinguished is not addressed in the dialogue. The same applies also to the notion of the pleasure of the soul' (501b6): although it has a central role in the argument, not much is said about it; so it is not specified how it comes about or how it differs from the pleasure of the body (*cf.* 499b5-6).

In order to determine the nature of the pleasure of the soul, it is useful to compare it with the pleasure of the body. The pleasure of the body may be described as a kind of experience that consists of sensory perception, for example, a pleasant sensation produced by eating some food or other. On the other hand, the pleasure of the soul seems to be more difficult even to 'trace'. If such things as city walls, ports, arsenals, or tributes for public offices, or again, musical or dramatic performances, 'gratify' the soul, exactly how are they similar to things that gratify the body? Supposedly, in that they affect us so that we experience something similar to pleasure 'of the body' (*i.e.* a pleasant sensation). This experience, or

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Even on the occasion on which Socrates could be referring to rhetoricians' public speaking itself as gratifying (502d10-503a9), the pleasure of the listeners will supposedly derive from their *anticipation* of what the rhetoricians propose as a plan, as Irwin (*Plato's Ethics*, 108) seems to suggest: the orator 'offers us some *prospect* of satisfying a strong desire, if we do the action he recommends' (italics are mine).

disposition, inasmuch as it is 'of the soul', must differ from the pleasure of the body' precisely in that it is not *sensate*, *i.e.* it does not consist of sensate perception.[85] The same distinction may be drawn between the pain of the body and that of the soul, the first being a sensate and the second a non-sensate experience.

Now, if the pleasure (or the pain) of the soul is not constituted by sensory perception, how does it come about? Why is it that certain things gratify one's soul, or other things cause it pain? In contrast to the pleasure of the body', the pleasure of the soul' seems to rely on some reasoning and some such (reasoning) evaluation of ours, *i.e.* it seems to have a *cognitive* basis. While in the *Gorgias* this cognitive aspect of the pleasure of the soul is less apparent, it is clearly indicated in *Republic* X. On the occasion, Socrates suggests what the object of poets' representation is: 'the practice of representing, we say, represents men engaged in forced or voluntary actions, and who reckon to have fared well or ill as a result of this doing, and in all these things either suffer pain or feel pleasure' ([…] καὶ ἐκ τοῦ πράττειν ἢ εὖ οἰομένους ἢ κακῶς πεπραγέναι, καὶ ἐν τούτοις δὴ πᾶσιν ἢ λυπουμένους ἢ χαίροντας; *Rep.* X 603c4-7).[86] Leaving the context of the argument aside for a moment, it is important to note the correlation made between men's 'reckoning to have fared well or ill' and their 'feeling pleasure or suffering'; clearly, the latter is presented as a result of the former.

In general, then, something gratifies us in a non-sensate way *inasmuch as* we consider it to be *good* for us, being either valuable in itself or advantageous (promoting or contributing to something valuable); contrariwise, something afflicts us in a non-sensate way *inasmuch as* we consider it to be bad, harmful, or disadvantageous for us. It may further be supposed that pleasure, or pain, of the soul will always be a result of some such (cognitive) reckoning or judgement. By contrast, a sensate experience, either pleasant or painful, is *not mediated* by any such judgement: in fact, we cannot give any *reason* as to why something provides us with a sensate pleasure, or pain; moreover, even considering something that we

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[85] More precisely, although this experience involves sensory perception, as supposedly does all our experiencing and being, it is not limited to (contained in) sensory perception as such.

[86] The argument will be discussed in Chapter V.

find pleasant to be bad for us, *e.g.*, sweets, will not affect the pleasant sensation it provides (and the same applies to painful things). We may thus characterise the pleasure of the soul as cognitive and non-sensate, whereas the pleasure of the body is non-cognitive and sensate.[87] And while in the sensate and non-cognitive 'domain' (of the body), finding something pleasant can be 'separated' from reckoning it good for us (as in the case of sweets) and likewise painful from bad, in the non-sensate and cognitive domain (of the soul), these two always seem to be joined together: we cannot be gratified, 'pleased', by what we reckon to be bad, or disadvantageous, for us, or contrariwise, afflicted by what we reckon to be good or valuable for us.[88]

This explanation may now be applied also to the cases of 'pleasure, or pain, of the soul' from the *Gorgias*. So, to take first an example outside the field of rhetoric and poetry, cowards and brave men who, in battle, both (though cowards to a greater extent) experience pleasure (of the soul) at the enemy's retreat and pain at the enemy's advance (498a7-c1). Although how their experiencing pleasure or pain comes about in either case is not specified, we may say that it derives from their reckoning the enemy's retreat to be good for them and the enemy's advance to be bad for them. What about gratification by rhetoric or poetry? Whatever the pursuits of rhetoricians or poets, *e.g.*, the construction of city walls, harbours, the tributes *etc.*, and, on the other hand, musical or dramatic performances, rhetoricians and

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[87] The definition of 'pleasure' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* seems to cover these different aspects of the two pleasures: 'the condition or sensation induced by the experience or anticipation of what is felt to be good or desirable; a feeling of happy satisfaction or enjoyment; delight, gratification. Opposed to pain'.

[88] In distinguishing between sensate and non-sensate pleasures, I partly rely on Rudebusch's similar distinction in *Socrates, Pleasure and Value*. Rudebusch introduces the distinction between 'sensate' and 'modal' pleasures (following Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (VII 11.-14) as well as Gilbert Ryle, 'one of those responsible for reintroducing philosophy to this distinction'; 68), which to some extent corresponds to the *Gorgias*' distinction between the pleasure 'of the body' and the pleasure 'of the soul', in particular in that modal pleasure 'is not limited to the feeling of sensation' (68), but (typically) consists in an unimpeded activity, such as playing golf. However, Rudebusch does not seem to associate his distinction with the *Gorgias*' one (*ibid.*, 68-69). Rudebusch' ambition is to show the consistency of Socrates' ethical views in Plato's early dialogues, in particular, to reconcile Socrates' apparent hedonism in the *Protagoras* with his apparent rejection of it in the *Gorgias*. As Rudebusch argues, Socrates in the latter does not reject hedonism altogether, but holds a position that is consistent with 'modal hedonism'; in simplified terms, good would for Socrates consist in an unimpeded activity that exercises one's virtue or righteousness, and thus in what may be described as a kind of modal pleasure (*ibid.*, 79).

poets will 'gratify' those whom their activity concerns (the citizens, the public) *inasmuch as* the latter reckon these pursuits to be advantageous, or as such valuable, for them. As suggested, public 'infrastructure' and services are supposedly reckoned to be advantageous as means of contributing to citizens' safety and prosperity; as such, they will *gratify* the citizens. And again, poets' performances will be appreciated as such, for their 'poetic' value, and will thus be *enjoyable* for the public.

Citizens are mistaken about what is best for them

Let us now turn back to Socrates' criticism of the two practices. In the light of the above considerations, his charge that rhetoricians and poets engage in 'flattery', *i.e.* in an activity that 'pursues what is pleasant without pursuing what is best' (465a1-2), may now be understood as follows: they pursue what citizens *reckon to be best* for them (and what therefore gratifies them), but not what is in fact best for them. But if so, Socrates' charge implies that what citizens reckon to be best, *i.e.* most valuable, for them is different from what is in fact best for them, and therefore, that the citizens are *mistaken* about, and *do not know*, what is best for them. What they do not know is of course, on Socrates' account, that their justice, and thus whatever secures or promotes their justice, is best for them. The same implication of citizens' mistaken belief and ignorance is evident in Socrates' expectation that what in fact benefits the citizens will be painful for them (either to hear, if speech (502b6, 503a9), or to receive, if actions are carried out (479a5-c6)): for again, what is in fact best for them is painful for them, supposedly inasmuch as they reckon it to be disadvantageous and bad, and not best, for them. In their aim to gratify men and the citizens, rhetoricians and poets thus pursue whatever the citizens reckon to be best for them (and what they thus find gratifying), but inasmuch as the citizens *do not know* what is in fact best for them, these pursuits may in fact not be good, but even harmful, for them; as seen above, they will be harmful if they promote, or even involve, citizens' injustice. Importantly, however, it is assumed that rhetoricians and poets are do not know what is best for the citizens either, for they do not intend to harm them: they pursue what they (mistakenly, on Socrates'

account) believe is best for the citizens and are not concerned with promoting and securing their justice inasmuch as they *do not know* about the potential harmfulness of their pursuits, if citizens' justice is not secured.[89]

If that is so, however, Socrates' criticism does not at all concern the *affective* aspect of rhetoricians' or poets' pursuits, but rather the *cognitive* aspect: his charge is not simply that they aim to provide the citizens with what gratifies them, but rather that they aim to provide them with what gratifies them *unfoundedly*, *i.e.* they aim to provide the citizens with the things they (both rhetoricians, or poets, and the citizens) believe is valuable or good for them, but may in fact not be such (*i.e.* if not accompanied by their justice). However, if 'what gratifies the citizens' can be reduced to 'what the citizens reckon best for them', just why is 'gratification' introduced in the argument, *i.e.* why does Socrates consistently allege that rhetoric and poetry pursue 'what is pleasant, but not best', rather than simply 'what is reckoned best, but is in fact not best'? An answer could be the following: because once that rhetoricians' and poets' pursuits are characterised as being a kind of 'gratification', they may be presented as similar to the pursuits of gratifying the body, with which they are in fact repeatedly compared.

'Deceiving ignorance with what is pleasant'

In Socrates' elaborate analogy (the details of which I will leave aside here), rhetoricians who aim to provide the citizens with such things as city walls, ports, and tributes, but are not concerned with promoting or securing their justice, and (implicitly) poets who present their works without any regard for the moral impact of their performance on their public, are similar to cooks, whose only aim is to

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[89] Socrates does assume that rhetoricians and poets are 'well-intentioned', *i.e.* that they act for the good of the citizens. Supposing that, by contrast, rhetoricians did not care about their good, but pursue only their own benefit at the cost of causing harm to the citizens, their causing harm would again be, on Socrates' account, unintentional; for on the assumption that causing harm to the others (unjustly) is most harmful for oneself, and that nobody causes harm to oneself intentionally (468d1-4), such conduct by rhetoricians would turn out to derive from their ignorance of what is good for *themselves*. This explanation in fact applies to rhetoricians who employ rhetoric in the legal sphere with the aim of evading just punishment for the injustice committed.

provide tasty food to their customers. Just as cooks pursue what is pleasant for the body without any concern for its well-being, *i.e.* health, so rhetoricians and poets pursue what is pleasant for the (citizens') soul, without any concern for the citizens' well-being. Further, and importantly, it is suggested that those who favour tasty food do so because they mistakenly reckon tasty, *i.e.* pleasant, food to be the best food, *ignoring* what is in fact the best food for them (their bodies): cookery, as a kind of flattery, 'deceives the *ignorance*' (465d2);[90] likewise those, who in a state of illness refuse to undergo surgery, mistakenly reckon what is painful to be bad for them, '*ignoring*, as it seems, what heath and the excellence of the body is like' (479b3-4). This cognitive model is thus applied to citizens who are gratified by rhetoricians' or poets' achievements: just as those ignorant about what is best for their body are deceived by tasty food, reckoning it best, so the citizens who are ignorant about what is best for them are deceived by what 'gratifies' them, reckoning it best for them.

Now, upon closer examination, this comparison turns out to be misleading. Consider first the case of the body. It is obvious – and presented as such – to anybody with even a little medical knowledge that the things that give us sensate pleasure (*i.e.* of the body) may not benefit our body (*i.e.* contribute to our bodily well-being, or health), but may even harm us (sweets), and contrariwise, that the things that benefit our body may be painful for us (medication, surgery). For it just so happens that some pleasant things are harmful and some beneficial things are painful (in a sensate way) for us. For this reason, it is also obvious that any activity aiming only to give us sensate pleasure may well not benefit us, but even harm us, and thus that those who believe that such an activity, for example cookery, provides what is best for the body are mistaken; according to the account proposed,

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[90] That is to say, they are not 'overcome' by the food's tastiness and therefore act against their better knowledge; the account of conflicting desires, found in *Republic* IV, is not applied here. On other occasions in the *Gorgias*, however, Socrates speaks about appetites and the restraint of them (493a1-c7, 505a6-10). In Irwin's view (*Plato's Ethics*, 116-117), the argument about psychic order (504b4 ff.), together with that of restraint of appetites, presupposes the possibility of a psychic conflict, and therefore suggests a departure from the Socratic psychological eudaemonism (predominant in the dialogue) according to which we by nature want what is good for us and thus always do what we believe is such (468b1-8 *et al.*). Opposing Irwin, Carone ('Calculating Machines or Leaky Jars?', esp. 76-79) argues for a consistently 'monistic' picture of the soul in the dialogue.

they are deceived by what is pleasant, *i.e.* they misidentify what is pleasant as what is good, because they ignore what is truly best for their body.

However, this model cannot be transferred to the domain of the soul. In fact, there is a fundamental difference between those who greatly appreciate cooks and cookery and those who highly value rhetoricians or poets, although they are both gratified by what one or the other provide to them: while the former reckon the food provided by cooks to be good for them *inasmuch as* it provides (sensate) pleasure to them (it is tasty), the latter are gratified (in a non-sensate way) by what rhetoricians, or poets, provide for them *inasmuch as* they reckon it to be good, or valuable, for them. Or, in short: while in the case of cookery something is reckoned to be good *because* it is pleasant (for the body, in a sensate way), in the case of rhetoric or poetry something is pleasant (for the soul, in a non-sensate way) *because* it is reckoned good, or valuable. For as concluded above, what gratifies us in a non-sensate way does so inasmuch as we reckon it advantageous, or valuable for us, and contrariwise, what afflicts us in a non-sensate way does so inasmuch as we reckon it bad, or harmful for us. And, as argued earlier, what rhetoricians or poets provide for the citizens may be reckoned by them to be good for various reasons, *i.e.* city walls, because they contribute to their security; tributes, because they contribute to their wealth; and musical and dramatic performances are appreciated as such, for their intrinsic, 'poetic' value.

While it is thus obvious that those who reckon tasty food to be the best food are *mistaken* about what is truly best for the body, there seem to be *no grounds* to judge those who reckon the pursuits of poets or rhetoricians to be advantageous or valuable, for them, to be mistaken about what is best, *i.e.* most valuable, for the soul: in fact, in order to judge their view as mistaken, another and differing view of what is most valuable for men must be first posited *as* the *true* one, and that is to say as *knowledge*. As a matter of fact, it is the account of justice as men's highest good that is given the status as knowledge, more specifically the knowledge constituting the 'political art': throughout the dialogue, this art is presented as a counterpart of medicine as the knowledge of the body and its well-being. Further, it is Socrates who thus appears, at least on some occasions, to possess this art, although on some other occasions in the dialogue disclaims it (as we shall see

shortly). However, the problem pointed out already in Chapter I (following Bambrough) is whether such knowledge can be posited at all, *i.e.* whether the question of what is good for the 'soul' can be determined in the same way as the question of what is good for the body, and that is to say, whether it can be *learned* and *known*.[91]

Yet, Socrates' argument that rhetoricians and poets, and, on the other hand, the citizens, *unfoundedly* reckon things such as ports, city walls, tributes, or musical and dramatic performances to be things that are advantageous and valuable for them, inasmuch as they are *ignore* that their being just is most valuable for them (and therefore they ignore that rhetoricians' or poets' pursuits are advantageous or valuable only if they do not compromise, but contribute to, their justice), implicitly posits the account of justice as the true well-being of men as truth. However, on the whole, Socrates' attitude does seem to be ambivalent between being assertive and expressing doubt and uncertainty about his convictions. For on the one hand, Socrates presents the latter as parallel with the knowledge of medicine, comparing current politicians with cooks; he qualifies as a 'truth' that 'cannot be refuted' his thesis that those who are unjust are wretched, particularly if they have not received a just punishment for the injustice committed (473b10-11); he declares himself virtually the only true practitioner of the political art of his time, inasmuch as he alone in discussing with others 'aims at what is best and not at what is pleasantest' (521d6-e2);[92] he appeals to Polus and Callicles to submit themselves to his cure (475d7; 505c3-4). But on the other hand, Socrates also refuses to qualify his convictions as knowledge: 'I do not know how these things stand' (509a5), he confesses, though at the same time stressing that any different account (denying the utter harm of injustice for one who commits it) has always proven 'ridiculous'

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[91] Bambrough, 'Plato's Political Analogies', 198: 'Plato can say nothing in its [of the account of justice as men's well-being] defence that could not equally be said by a rival claimant to ultimate and absolute knowledge of the good, in defence of a different set of 'absolute' standards'. *Cf.* notes 11 and 12.

[92] By contrast, Socrates has earlier on declared himself incapable of engaging in current political affairs (473e6-474a1); these, however, on his account consist in 'flattery' and not in the true political art. Socrates' apparently paradoxical declarations are noted by Carone ('Calculating Machines or Leaky Jars?', 84, n. 73).

(509a6-7).[93] Socrates seems to admit here his inability to give a *positive proof* of his account, declaring, however, any different account to be indefensible.

Conclusions

Poets are accused by Socrates of potential harmfulness toward their public on the assumption that the highest good for the citizens is their justice, and inasmuch as poets are not concerned with promoting this in their works. However, as I argued, the charge that poets, alongside rhetoricians, pursue only what is *pleasant* for men, but not what is best for them, involves an *epistemological disqualification* of poets and rhetoricians, for it amounts to the charge that they pursue what their listeners or the citizens and, on the other hand, themselves, *believe* is best, or most valuable, for men (and therefore gratifies them), but what is in fact not best for men. The charge in fact relies on the questionable (as I argued, following Bambrough) positing of a specific account of what is good for men (justice and being just) as *knowledge* and a differing one (held by rhetoricians or poets, and by the citizens) as a *mistaken belief*. The very characterisation of rhetoricians' and poets' pursuits as 'gratification' of men, and therefore the comparison of their pursuits with the pursuits of gratifying the body seem to have the aim of *proving* both rhetoricians' and poets' ignorance of what is truly good and their potential harmfulness. As I argued, the comparison is misleading in that it suggests that those who appreciate rhetoric or poetry are 'deceived by what is pleasant', just as those who appreciate what gratifies the body; for while the latter reckon something to be good, or valuable, *because* it is pleasant for the body, being thus obviously mistaken and deceived, the former are gratified *because* they reckon something to be good, or valuable – and there is no criterion (such as the criterion of health, as the body's well-being) that could prove their reckoning to be mistaken.

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[93] On this passage (508e6-509b1), Irwin (*Plato's Ethics*, 122) comments: 'In this deliberate juxtaposition of his confident conclusion with his disavowal of knowledge, Socrates implies that his frequent disavowal of knowledge is not a disavowal of his positive convictions'. *Cf.* 508a9-b3

Excursus C

Rhetoric

In Greek texts dating from the fifth and fourth centuries BC, the noun ῥήτωρ (etymologically related to the verb εἰρεῖν, 'to speak') is used with the meaning of 'public speaker'; it may also connote the political function of such a speaker. While the earliest preserved occurrence of the noun, in the variant form ῥητῆρ, appears in Homer's *Iliad*[94], its cognate ῥητορικός (also in the feminine form ῥητορική, specifying the art) is first found, arguably, in the *Gorgias*.[95] In the dialogue (and in other Greek texts), the adjective ῥητορικός can assume a general meaning 'related to ῥήτωρ or his practice', or a more specific one 'skilled at speaking', whereas the name ἡ ῥητορικὴ τέχνη designates the art of a ῥήτωρ,[96] the art of (public) speaking.[97]

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[94] *Cf. Il.* IX 443: supplicating Achilles not to return home and help the Achaeans in the battle, Phoenix recounts how he was called upon by Achilles' father Peleus to raise Achilles into a 'speaker of words' and 'doer of deeds' (μύθων τε ῥητῆρ' ἔμεναι πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων). This is the only Homeric occurrence of the noun.

[95] Kennedy, *Klasična retorika*, 19. The adjective ῥητορικός appears also in the *Euthydemus* and *Menexenus* (besides some other dialogues by Plato commonly agreed to be of a later date), whose composition Dodds (*Plato:* Gorgias, 22-24) dated as close, but subsequent, to the composition of the *Gorgias*. The ῥητορικοί are mentioned also in two speeches by Isocrates (posterior to the mentioned dialogues by Plato), *Nicocles* and *Antidosis*, and defined there as 'those who are capable of speaking in public' (*Nic*. 8.4-5, and similarly in *Antid*. 256.5-6): […] ῥητορικοὺς μὲν καλοῦμεν τοὺς ἐν τῷ πλήθει δυναμένους λέγειν […]). Isocrates, Gorgias' pupil, a teacher as well as theoretician of rhetoric, who founded a school of rhetoric a few years before Plato's foundation of the Academy, is believed to have had a strained relationship with Plato (*cf.* Kennedy, *ibid.*, 59). Although without naming him, Isocrates seems to argue against Plato in some of his speeches: Dodds (*ibid.*, 27 and 27, n. 2) points out *Contra sophistas*, *Helena*, *Antidosis* and *Panathenaicus*. In Plato's *Phaedrus* (278e10-279b3), however, Socrates expresses his admiration for a still young Isocrates, rating his speeches higher than those by Lysias and foreseeing an important future for him.

[96] As already mentioned, the practice (and ability) considered by the three rhetoricians in the *Gorgias* as the rhetorical art is ultimately deprived of the status as an art by Socrates.

[97] According to Kennedy (*Klasična retorika*, p. 19), the skill and practice for which 'the rhetorical art' has become the conventional name in Plato's times, is the same that in earlier times was called πειθώ 'persuasion', as a practice or a capacity of persuading), or λόγος (as argument, reason). Before the established name for the art became the 'rhetorical' art, it had also been referred to as

Public speaking was first perceived as an art in the fifth century BC in Sicily, and thereafter in Athens and other Greek cities, *i.e.* it began to be studied, taught, discussed and written about, and given a theoretical framework. Earlier on, it was also referred to as 'the art(s) of speeches', whereas in Plato's time, the conventional name for it became 'the rhetorical art'. This development of rhetoric coincided with the democratisation of the political constitutions of these cities, which also involved a transformation of their judicial systems. The administration of the state was to a large extent in the competence of the democratic assembly (ἐκκλησία) and the council (βουλή), as the principal deliberative political bodies, and public debate was an essential element of their functioning. Moreover, in Athens, such public debate was open to all adult male citizens, as the participation in the Assembly was granted to them (as well as required).

Another institution in which public speaking took place was the legal court: again, every adult male citizen had the right to appeal to it, but at the same time, the obligation to participate in the trial himself (as either prosecutor or defendant). The parties involved were allowed, however, to consult an expert or commission a speech of prosecution or defence from one, called, in this capacity, a λογογράφος (*Phdr.* 257c6 *et passim*).

Outside the narrower political or legal sphere, public ceremonies (commemorative, funeral, festive and other) provided opportunities for another kind of public speaking, the ceremonial address.[98] In each of these contexts, the speaker was obviously in quite a different role, dealt with different matters and had a different aim: *e.g.*, a political address consisted of, typically, a proposal (συμβουλή, συμβουλεύειν; *cf. Gorg.* 455b4 *et passim*) for a certain action; a legal speech was

'the art(s) of speeches': *cf. Gorg.* 449e1 ff., where Gorgias first defines rhetoric as the art and knowledge 'about speeches' and *Phdr.* 266d5-6, where 'books written about the art of speeches' are mentioned). At the first mention of the practice in the *Gorgias*, it is referred to (by Socrates) as the practice 'that is called rhetorical' (*cf. Gorg.* 448d9): the reason could be that the name 'rhetorical' had not yet come into common linguistic use.

[98] In *Fr*. 6, 1-6 DK (PLANUD. ad Hermog. V 548 Walz), Gorgias is reported to have made mostly 'epidictic' speeches, fewer 'political' and none 'legal': Διονύσιος ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἐν τῶι δευτέρωι Περὶ χαρακτήρων περὶ Γοργίου λέγων τάδε φησίν· "δικανικοῖς μὲν οὖν οὐ περιέτυχον αὐτοῦ λόγοις, δημηγορικοῖς δὲ ὀλίγοις καί τισι καὶ τέχναις, τοῖς δὲ πλείοσιν ἐπιδεικτικοῖς. τῆς δὲ ἰδέας αὐτοῦ τῶν λόγων τοιοῦτος ὁ χαρακτήρ (ἐγκωμιάζει δὲ τοὺς ἐν πολέμοις ἀριστεύσαντας Ἀθηναίων)· […]".

either an accusation of a committed injustice or a defence against it (κατηγορεῖν, ἀπολογεῖσθαι; *cf. Gorg.* 521e3-522a7); a ceremonial address could be, *e.g.*, a festive or funeral oration (ἐπιτάφιος λόγος).[99] In every case, however, in order to achieve what the speaker intended (*e.g.*, the acceptance of his proposal, proving his innocence in the case, showing someone as a virtuous person), he had to persuade his audience of the truth of what he was saying. Hence, often persuasiveness was esteemed as the most important quality of public speaking and the rhetorical art was defined (as it still is today) as the art of persuasive speaking.[100]

The *Gorgias* is concerned with rhetoric as a practice exercised in the political and legal spheres rather than in the ceremonial; by contrast, rhetoric as a ceremonial practice is discussed in the *Menexenus*.[101]

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[99] Neither in the *Gorgias* (452e1-4) nor elsewhere in Plato's work is the practice of rhetoric clearly differentiated, though on two occasions, the distinction seems to be suggested between the 'forensic' (δικανική) and 'political' (δημηγορική) kinds of rhetoric (see *Rep.* II 365d4-5, *Soph.* 222c9-d1). The classification of the rhetorical art into three kinds, 'forensic', 'advisory' and 'epidictic', was first made by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* (I 3, 1358a36-b8).

[100] Such an understanding of rhetoric is attributed to Gorgias in the eponymous dialogue, and is likely to rely on the views of the historical Gorgias: in the dialogue, Gorgias introduces the notion of persuasion in his second attempt to define rhetoric, defining it as the art that enables one to persuade with speeches the judges in the court, the members of the council or the assembly or the participants of any other political gathering (see *Gorg.* 452e1-4); in what follows, however, rhetoric understood thus is subjected to Socrates' further examination, which proves the rhetorical persuasion to be of very little value. *Cf.* also Isocrates, *Fr.* 1.3.1 (G. Mathieu and É. Brémond, *Isocrate. Discours*, vol. 4. Paris: Les belles lettres, 1962) Ἰσοκράτης φησὶ μηδὲν ἄλλο ἐπιτηδεύειν τοὺς ῥητόρας ἢ ἐπιστήμην πειθοῦς (Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos*, II, 62, p. 301 F.)

[101] In the opening scene of the dialogue, Menexenus reports to Socrates how the council is about to choose the rhetorician to deliver a funeral speech for those fallen in the war; in what follows, Socrates recites, at Menexenus' request, the funeral speech (ἐπιτάφιος λόγος) that he presents as being composed by Aspasia as a sort of sample of the speech for the same occasion.

Excursus D

Republic II: how poets should speak about gods[102]

The first discussion of poetry in the *Republic*, as suggested in Chapter I, is of a prescriptive character: more specifically, it is concerned with the question of what kind of poetry should be used as educative material for the prospective guards of the envisaged state. For this purpose, various examples of pre-existing poetry are considered and most often are judged to be unsuitable in one way or another, and therefore used as sorts of 'negative examples' in designing new standards to which the envisaged poetry should conform. Here, I will consider a puzzling criticism that Socrates directs at one of these pre-existing examples of poetry: Hesiod's narration about the deeds by Uranus and his descendants. Socrates' criticism is the following:

Πρῶτον μέν, [...], τὸ μέγιστον καὶ περὶ τῶν μεγίστων ψεῦδος ὁ εἰπὼν οὐ καλῶς ἐψεύσατο ὡς Οὐρανός τε ἠργάσατο ἃ φησι δρᾶσαι αὐτὸν Ἡσίοδος, ὅ τε αὖ Κρόνος ὡς ἐτιμωρήσατο αὐτόν.

First, [we will say,] [...] the one who spoke the greatest falsehood about the greatest [gods] did not speak falsely well, when he said that Uranus accomplished the things that Hesiod says he did, and what Hesiod says Cronus did in turn, that he took revenge on him.[103] (377e6-378a1)

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[102] A version of this excursus has been published in Slovene as the article 'Kako naj pesniki govorijo o bogovih. Platon, *Država* II 377e6-378a1' (*Keria* VI/2(2004), pp.121-131).

[103] I follow Adam (*The Republic of Plato*, 112), in taking τῶν μεγίστων as masculine, not neuter, *i.e.* referring to gods, mentioned previously. I take the conjunction ὡς in both instances as synonymous with ὅτι, *i.e.* introducing a substantive clause, and not as a modal conjunction synonymous with ὅπως *i.e.* introducing an adverbial clause. *Contra* Jowett and Campbell (*Plato's* Republic, 98), who interpret the second ὡς as 'in what way'.

Socrates' reproach is then that the poet 'did not speak falsely well': οὐ καλῶς ἐψεύσατο. We may find this criticism surprising: Hesiod is not accused, simply, of speaking falsely, but rather of not speaking falsely well. It seems, thus, that Hesiod's speaking falsely as such is not the object of Socrates' criticism: Socrates would approve of Hesiod, if he, when speaking falsely, spoke falsely well.

Socrates' criticism has been often seen as 'ethical', that is, not concerned with the falsity of the story, but with its moral inadequacy. Thus Murray (*Plato on Poetry*, 252) suggests that 'the objection to a myth such us this (the story of Cronus and what Zeus did to him) is not that it is untrue in terms of factual accuracy, but that it would set the wrong ethical example'.[104] Some other scholars have suggested, differently, that the object of Socrates' criticism is primarily misrepresentation of the *nature* of the divine, without offering, however, an interpretation of Socrates' criticism οὐ καλῶς ἐψεύσατο.[105] Adhering to the latter view, my aim here is to clarify how this criticism is to be understood. I will first examine what it means for Hesiod 'to speak falsely' (as opposed to 'speaking the truth'), and therefore, what it means for him 'not to speak falsely well' (as opposed to 'speaking falsely well').

Socrates criticises what Hesiod says about Uranus and Cronus in the *Theogony*, but relates the story Hesiod told about these two gods in a rather elliptic way (purposely, it seems, for he later remarks that the mention of such deeds would be best avoided, even if gods had in fact committed them). The narration Socrates is evidently referring to is the one in which Hesiod says, with regard to Uranus, that he hated his children, generated from his union with Gaia, and kept them hidden in Gaia's depths (*Theog.* 158); while, with regard to Cronus, Hesiod says that he, one

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[104] For similar views, see Adam (*The* Republic *of Plato*, 112), Ferrari ('Plato and Poetry', 113), Halliwell ('The *Republic*'s Two Critiques of Poetry', 319-320).

[105] See Moravcsik ('On Correcting the Poets', 39-41), followed explicitly by Janaway (*Images of Excellence*, 89-91), and by Büttner (*Die Literaturtheorie bei Platon und ihre anthropologische Begründung*, 146-147). Different from all the fore-mentioned views is Page's interpretation ('The Truth about Lies in Plato's *Republic*', 9-10), according to which Socrates would criticise Hesiod for revealing 'the inhumanness of the cosmos', which Socrates himself would surmise; this interpretation, however, goes against the theological and cosmological views expressed here and in Plato's other dialogues, notably in the *Timaeus*.

of Gaia's children, castrated his father Uranus, and that he did so in order to take revenge on Uranus for his deeds, following the instruction given by his mother (*Theog*. 159-182).

Now, by characterising Hesiod's narration as false, Socrates makes Hesiod no exception. For Socrates has in the earlier conversation with Adeimantus characterised poets' composing of stories (μῦθοι) in general as a kind of speaking falsely, and stories as false discourses:

Λόγων δὲ διττὸν εἶδος, τὸ μὲν ἀληθές, ψεῦδος δ' ἕτερον;

Ναί.

Παιδευτέον δ' ἐν ἀμφοτέροις, πρότερον δ' ἐν τοῖς ψευδέσιν;

Οὐ μανθάνω, ἔφη, πῶς λέγεις.

Οὐ μανθάνεις, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὅτι πρῶτον τοῖς παιδίοις μύθους

λέγομεν; τοῦτο δέ που ὡς τὸ ὅλον εἰπεῖν ψεῦδος, ἔνι δὲ καὶ ἀληθῆ.

'Are there then two kinds of discourses, one true, the other false?'

'Yes.'

'Is it then necessary to educate in both, but first in the false ones?'

'I do not understand, [Adeimantus] said, what you mean by that.'

'Do you not understand', I said, 'that we first tell stories to children? And this is somehow, taken as a whole, falsehood, but there is also some truth in there.' (376e11-377a6)

Poets, then, inasmuch as they compose stories, speak falsely: though not altogether so, since they, in a certain way, speak the truth as well. The kind of false discourse in which poets engage may presumably be characterised as invention: for poets speak falsely in that they narrate stories, and that is to say, they speak of subjects or events that have in fact not taken place.[106] But what is the purpose and justification of such speaking falsely? The stories that Socrates introduces here are those that aim at the youngest children, and thus, at listeners who are able to acquire certain beliefs only through stories that somehow imply them. The 'truth' that stories contain, though being as a whole false, which seems to be mentioned by way of justifying the employment of falsehood in education, presumably refers precisely to such (implicit) beliefs.

What, then, may the 'truth' with which stories are credited, be? Less likely, in my view, the truth meant is of the historical, or factual kind, as has been suggested by some scholars[107]: such cases, however, would be those in which the subjects or events that poets speak about have in fact taken place. It seems more likely, as has also been suggested,[108] that the 'truth' concerned is of the moral or religious nature: for acquiring moral or religious beliefs, children will also develop a specific moral disposition, and this is what Socrates is concerned with in the discussion. What is important, in any case, is that the interlocutors evidently consider this kind of speaking falsely to the children as nothing reproachable in itself, but rather, because of the children's limited understanding, a necessary means of their education.

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[106] The activity of ψεῦδεσθαι or 'speaking falsely' may be differentiated by various criteria: for example, with regard to the intention of the speaker, into lying, mistaking, telling stories (in the last two, one who is speaking falsely does not intend to deceive); with regard to the object of speaking, as factual (speaking falsely about facts, *i.e.* about what has actually occurred) and fictional speaking (*i.e.* inventing). For similar distinctions, see, *e.g.*, Plantinga ('Possible but Unactual Objects: On What There Isn't') and Gill ('Plato on Falsehood – not Fiction', 39). The categories of false discourse and the criteria for distinguishing between them raise several theoretical problems, and are 'highly debatable' not only when applied to the ancient (as Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 135, notices) but also to the modern world, and have been studied in the context of logic, aesthetics and literary history. For the study of the subject within the ancient context, see Gill and Wisemann, *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, and, for the study of these issues specifically in Plato, Gill 'Plato on Falsehood – not Fiction' in the same volume).

[107] Adam, *The* Republic *of Plato*, 110.

[108] Murray, *Plato on Poetry*, 135.

Turning back to Hesiod's story about Uranus and Cronus, however, there is a further reason why Hesiod could not do otherwise than speak falsely. His narration is in fact about what some particular gods, Uranus and Cronus, did. This, however, is no longer a subject accessible to men. Socrates provides the reason for this later on in the discussion: 'there is no knowing what the truth is concerning antiquity', that is to say divine matters, considered to have taken place in the distant past:[109] for lacking the knowledge, so to speak historical knowledge, about what gods did, it is possible to speak about this only through μῦθοι, and thus speak falsely. That is why Hesiod, speaking about what gods did, could not have done otherwise: whatever other actions he had attributed to Uranus and Cronus, he would have had to invent them, and thus speak falsely.[110] Speaking falsely about what gods did is then again not in itself reproachable, since because of the lack of relevant knowledge, it is not possible to speak the truth about it.

However, Hesiod is accused of not speaking falsely *well*: what then does 'not well', οὐ καλῶς, mean? Socrates actually explains this just before addressing his criticism at Hesiod, suggesting that someone does not speak falsely well

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[109] Τί δὲ δὴ τὸ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις [ψεῦδος]; πότε καὶ τῷ χρήσιμον, ὥστε μὴ ἄξιον εἶναι μίσους; ἆρ' οὐ πρός τε τοὺς πολεμίους καὶ τῶν καλουμένων φίλων, ὅταν διὰ μανίαν ἤ τινα ἄνοιαν κακόν τι ἐπιχειρῶσιν πράττειν, τότε ἀποτροπῆς ἕνεκα ὡς φάρμακον χρήσιμον γίγνεται; καὶ ἐν αἷς νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν ταῖς μυθολογίαις, διὰ τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι ὅπῃ τἀληθὲς ἔχει περὶ τῶν παλαιῶν, ἀφομοιοῦντες τῷ ἀληθεῖ τὸ ψεῦδος ὅτι μάλιστα, οὕτω χρήσιμον ποιοῦμεν;

And the [falsehood] in discourses? When and for whom is it useful, so as not to deserve hatred? Or is it not useful when used against enemies, and also in the well known case of friends, whenever they attempt to do something bad because of insanity or foolishness; then it becomes useful for the sake of averting evil, like a medicine? And in the telling of stories, which we just talked about, because there is no knowing what the truth is concerning antiquity, in making the falsehood as similar as possible to the truth, we make it useful in that way? (*Rep.* II 382c6-382d3)

[110] It is important to notice that antiquity, as the time in which the events narrated by poets took place in stories, remains entirely unspecified in the discussion; by acknowledging human ignorance concerning antiquity, Socrates does not throw discredit only on the actions attributed to gods, but also on the very existence of the gods that poets speak about. See *Tim.* 40d-41a, and *L.* X 886b-d, where little or no credibility is given to the cosmogonies and divine genealogies narrated by poets.

[ο῎]ταν εἰκάζῃ τις κακῶς [οὐσίαν] τῷ λόγῳ, περὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἡρώων οἵοί εἰσιν, ὥσπερ γραφεὺς μηδὲν ἐοικότα γράφων οἷς ἂν ὅμοια βουληθῇ γράψαι.

'[w]hen someone depicts badly in speech, what gods and heroes are like, just as a painter paints things with an intended likeness, but does not achieve resemblance at all' (377e1-3).

In what way, then, did Hesiod badly depict what gods are like? Hesiod related that Uranus did certain things and that Cronus took revenge on him. A while later, such actions are judged by Socrates as utterly unjust or, at any rate, as unacceptable. By attributing them to gods, Hesiod thus spoke of gods as being capable of acting unjustly, or, ultimately, as capable of evil. Now, if *what gods did* belongs to the realm of the past, concerning which humans lack any knowledge, *what gods are like* does not belong to this realm. For Socrates, in fact, the nature of the divine is the subject of a different kind of perception and 'knowledge', which is, as he implies, to an extent accessible to humans. The fundamental thesis about the nature of the divine that Socrates puts forward later in the discussion is that the god is good.[111] Interestingly, Socrates introduces this thesis, not naming a particular god, nor speaking of gods in plural, but of 'the god', ὁ θεός. Whether this is a generic name, designating any god as such, or the name of the one god there is, is

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[111] Οὐκοῦν ἀγαθὸς ὅ γε θεὸς τῷ ὄντι τε καὶ λεκτέον οὕτω; Τί μήν; Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδέν γε τῶν ἀγαθῶν βλαβερόν· ἢ γάρ; Οὔ μοι δοκεῖ. Ἆρ' οὖν ὃ μὴ βλαβερὸν βλάπτει; Οὐδαμῶς. Ὃ δὲ μὴ βλάπτει κακόν τι ποιεῖ; Οὐδὲ τοῦτο. Ὃ δέ γε μηδὲν κακὸν ποιεῖ οὐδ' ἄν τινος εἴη κακοῦ αἴτιον; Πῶς γάρ; Τί δέ; ὠφέλιμον τὸ ἀγαθόν; Ναί. Αἴτιον ἄρα εὐπραγίας; Ναί. Οὐκ ἄρα πάντων γε αἴτιον τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν εὖ ἐχόντων αἴτιον, τῶν δὲ κακῶν ἀναίτιον.

'Is not the god good and must one not so speak of him?' 'Of course.' 'But certainly none of the things that are good is harmful, is it?' 'I do not think so.' 'And does that which is not harmful harm?' 'In no way.' 'And does that which does not harm do anything evil?' 'No again.' 'And that which does not do anything evil cannot be the cause of anything evil?' 'How indeed can it be?' 'Again: is not what is good beneficial? 'Yes.' 'And therefore the cause of well-being?' 'Yes.' 'What is good, therefore, is not the cause of everything, but it will be the cause of things that are well, yet not the cause of bad things' (*Rep.* II 379b1-16).

impossible to determine, and this may not be accidental.[112] However, as the discussion is concerned with the nature of the divine and not with its plural or unique existence, this has no bearing on the argument.

Now, from the thesis that the god is good, Socrates draws a further conclusion that the god, being good, cannot cause anything evil, but only good. In his story, Hesiod spoke about gods as being capable of evil, and therefore he spoke about gods *as in fact they are not*. The belief that his story will thus convey, the belief that gods are capable of evil, is a false belief concerning the nature of gods. It may therefore be concluded, from the fundamental premise about what gods are like it is not possible to infer what gods did, and thus, it is not possible to gain any positive *historical* knowledge concerning them: it is possible, however, to infer what they *could have done*, namely good actions, and what they could not have done, namely bad actions. Thus, even though poets, and humans in general, do not have any positive historical knowledge concerning gods, this does not justify just any kind of speaking falsely about what they did: a poet will speak falsely well, if he attributes to gods such actions as they could in fact have done; if, instead, a poet attributes to them – as Hesiod did – such actions as they could not have done, he will not speak falsely well.

More generally, Socrates' criticism of Hesiod illustrates well in which domain poets will be allowed to operate autonomously in the envisaged political order: while it will be in the competence of its leadership alone to pronounce on religious and moral beliefs and principles, the task of poets will be to mould and invent stories out of them.

[112] Although there are places, within the *Republic*, where a monotheistic view seems to be argued for, here such a view is not unequivocally expressed.

Chapter IV

POETS AND ΜΙΜΗΣΙΣ IN THE DIALOGUES

Introduction

While in the *Ion*, the *Gorgias*, and Plato's other early dialogues, poets are never considered to engage in μίμησις (*i.e.* representation, or imitation)[113], in his later dialogues poets' activity is characterised as μίμησις very often, both in passing references and in some more extensive discussions of poetry; in particular, this is the case in Books III and X of the *Republic* and Books II and VII of the *Laws*. In these discussions, however, we do not find a single and uniform account of when and how poets engage in μίμησις, but various and diverse, even apparently inconsistent, arguments on the subject. In the discussion of poetry in *Republic* X, which will be considered in detail in the next chapter, the notion of μίμησις has a prominent role; at the same time, however, the characterisation of poets' activity as μίμησις there appears not only very intricate in itself, but also difficult to reconcile with other discussions concerned with poets' μίμησις, above all in *Republic* III, but also in the *Laws*.

These problems have been extensively discussed by scholars. The solutions I will propose on the one hand to the question of consistency between the arguments concerning poets' μίμησις, and on the other to 'internal' problems within the discussion of poetry in *Republic* X, rely on an understanding of μίμησις that I will argue for in this chapter and which in some aspects differs from the understanding of this notion that is most often assumed. After presenting some prominent interpretations that have been offered on the subject, I will thus consider the activity of μίμησις as well as the verb μιμεῖσθαι in relevant aspects. The distinctions will allow me to show exactly what renders each of the poets'

[113] The issue of translation of the verb μιμεῖσθαι and its cognates will be discussed later on.

activities concerned (in the *Republic* and *Laws*) a kind of μίμησις, and to suggest exactly how they differ.

Problems and solutions proposed

As becomes immediately obvious, in different arguments in the *Republic*, even within Book III alone, it is not one and the same activity, but various activities of poets that are characterised as μίμησις. As is often the case in the dialogues, here the activity of performing (reciting, singing, playing an instrument, dancing) is not viewed as separate from that of composing, but instead as part of it. As is thus first suggested in Book III, in that a poet speaks 'as if he were' (393a and c), *i.e.* impersonates, one individual or another about whom he narrates, a poet engages in a μίμησις of this individual, that is, he represents, or imitates, him: *e.g.*, Homer engages in a μίμησις of Chryses soon after the beginning of the *Iliad*, when he impersonates Chryses imploring the Achaeans to release his daughter, whereas just before that, Homer narrates in the first person, as Homer, and thus without engaging in μίμησις of Chryses or of any other individual about whom he is narrating. The other activity of poets that is characterised in Book III as μίμησις is musical composing, *i.e.* the making of compositions that are not recited, but sung or (also) played on an instrument.[114] According to the account the interlocutors associate with the musicologist Damon[115], harmony and rhythm, the two elements specific to musical compositions, represent (*i.e.* are μιμήματα of) respectively in pitch and pace of the sound, men engaged in a particular activity or behaviour, and having a particular style, or mode, of living: for example, particular musical modes may represent sounds of lamenting or of brave fighting (398d-e, 399a); particular rhythms may represent an ordered and brave life, or again, a violent or frantic one (399e-400b).[116]

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[114] For the notion of μουσική, see Excursus A.

[115] See *Rep.* III 400b and 400c. Another reference to Damon is made in *Rep.* IV 424c.

[116] A more precise account of harmony and rhythm, which *Republic* III lacks, is found in the *Laws* (II, 653d, 664e-665a) and a technical definition of them in *Phlb.* 17c-d.

It may be noted here that the same understanding of music is found in the *Laws*. The discussion of poetry in the *Laws*, which is prescriptive in its aim, focuses on the musical forms of poetry, especially choral poetry, and the formative effect it has. In the dialogue, the 'musical' art (μουσική) is conceived of as inherently mimetic; as I will argue, the 'musical' art seems to be intended here in the narrower sense, *i.e.* including only 'properly' musical poetry, and the mimetic nature of poetry seems to be attributed to the elements of harmony and rhythm. Just as in *Republic* III, these two attributes are presented as the elements that constitute (acoustic) μιμήματα of men's moral character or conduct (*L.* II, 668b-c). This understanding of the practice of μουσική is presented in the *Laws* as being generally known and accepted, and not as original (though here it is not associated with Damon, who is not mentioned at all). Consider, for instance, the rhetorical question 'Do we not say that the entire musical art is figurative and mimetic?' (Οὐκοῦν μουσικήν γε πᾶσάν φαμεν εἰκαστικήν τε εἶναι καὶ μιμητικήν*; L.* II, 668a6-8).

Turning back to Book III of the *Republic*, the two cases of μίμησις discussed in it, one 'through impersonation' and the other 'by musical composing' can easily be distinguished. For while a poet engages in the former μίμησις through discourse, *i.e.* the *verbal* element of his activity (composing), he engages in the latter μίμησις through composing in harmony and rhythm, *i.e.* the two *non-verbal* elements of his activity. For the same reason, the characterisation of poets' musical composing as μίμησις does not interfere with the arguments about poets' μίμησις in Book X, for there again it is poets' verbal (and not musical) activity that is characterised as μίμησις. By contrast, the characterisation of poets' impersonation of characters as μίμησις does interfere with the mentioned arguments in Book X. For in the first, epistemological argument, by and large all poetry, viewed in its verbal aspect (*i.e.* as speaking or narrating), is characterised as μίμησις – on what grounds will be examined in detail in the next chapter – and Homer's poetry features as its most prominent example. Thus, for example, while according to Book III, Homer engages in μίμησις only occasionally, and more specifically, in μίμησις of one individual or another about whom he is narrating, in the epistemological argument of Book X Homer's entire activity of composing

(in its verbal aspect) is characterised as μίμησις, evidently regardless of whether or not, in composing, he is impersonating one individual or another about whom he is narrating. Moreover, and importantly, while the μίμησις attributed to Homer in Book III is treated as such neutrally, in the epistemological argument in Book X the very characterisation of the activity by Homer and other poets as μίμησις is disqualifying: for this characterisation, as we shall see, relies on the assumption that poets lack knowledge of the matters they speak about. How, then, should this μίμησις by poets be understood, and how does it differ from the μίμησις consisting in impersonation of individuals about whom poets narrate, given that the two can occur, it seems, in the very same instance of a poet's (verbal) activity, for example, in Homer's narrating the story of the *Iliad*?

The problem is in fact well known and widely studied. Most of the solutions proposed by scholars rely on the same 'semantic' assumption concerning the term μίμησις in the two books: given that, according to Book III, we must consider only some of poets' verbal composing (*i.e.* that in which they impersonate individuals about whom they narrate) as μίμησις, whereas following the epistemological argument in Book X, we must regard as μίμησις their (verbal) composing as such, the conclusion that has commonly been drawn is that the term μίμησις in the two books is used with a different meaning. Thus, among others, Julia Annas (*An Introduction to Plato's* Republic, 336) argues that 'in Book 3 only *some* poetry was mimetic. Here *all* poetry is, but we soon see that something different is meant by "imitation" '. The meaning that has thus been commonly attributed to the term μίμησις in the context of *Republic* X is 'artistic representation or depiction'; supposedly, this meaning has been derived from the facts that μίμησις is described there as the making of images and that both painters and poets are said to engage in it. This interpretation has been amply presented by Stephen Halliwell, both in his earlier *Plato:* Republic *X* (1998) and his later *The Aesthetics of Mimesis* (2002). As some basic assumptions of Halliwell's account are widely accepted, it is worth considering it in more detail.

Halliwell (*Plato:* Republic *X*, 5) indicates as a change between Books II-III and X, 'the shift in the use of the mimesis word-group from denoting dramatic enactment through direct speech (3.392d5 ff.) to meaning artistic representation or depiction

in a much broader sense'. As he further suggests, in the case of poetry, this μίμησις would thus consist in 'something comparable to what the painter does in his [medium]; the poet offers verbal images of men, gods, objects and events, just as the painter does in visual form'. Moreover, Halliwell (*The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 56) considers poets' μίμησις as discussed in *Republic* X as being the same as that (poets' μίμησις) discussed previously both in the *Republic* (in at least two places) and in other dialogues, for example in the *Laws* and *Timaeus*: '[i]nstead of book 3's restriction to the dramatic mode, book 10 (re)expands the concept of mimesis to cover *all* representation in both poetry and visual arts – not as disquieting change of terminology and focus as many have found it, because even in book 2-3, as I noted earlier, the language of mimesis is used in both broader and narrower senses' (*cf. ibid.*, 44-48 for the relation of *Republic* X and *Cratylus* concerning poets' μίμησις). Or again, he suggests that '[t]he assumption found in bk. 10 that virtually all poetry is mimetic (see on 595a5) becomes invariable in Plato's later works (*e.g. Tim.* 19d-e, *L.* 2.668a-b), as does the notion of a fundamental analogy between the status and aims of poetry and painting' (*Plato:* Republic *X*, 5).

Moreover, in Halliwell's view the account in *Republic* X of poetry as μίμησις is not new, but draws upon an earlier tradition, which would already conceive of poets' activity as a kind of 'artistic representation or depiction', as Halliwell interprets μίμησις in *Republic* X: 'In constructing his arguments in *Rep.* 10, Plato makes use of already existing attitudes towards art, and attempts to show the adverse conclusions which can be drawn from them. Greek artistic practice and theory alike accepted that poetry and visual arts in some sense represented, depicted or dramatised reality (whether actual or potential). […] a view, which by Plato's time was generally expressed in the language of *mimesis* […]' (*Plato:* Republic *X*, 7; *cf. The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 22).

Importantly, in Halliwell's view, among these 'adverse conclusions' drawn in *Republic* X, the fundamental one would be the claim that the (thus understood) mimetic nature of poetry renders it incapable of attaining the truth: '[…] the apparently comprehensive familiarity with the phenomenal world, with the "surfaces" of life, exhibited in the works of Homer and others (598e) cannot in

itself vouch for anything that deserves to be regarded as knowledge or wisdom' (*The Aesthetics of Mimesis*; 59; *cf.* 64). Or, as Halliwell suggests in his earlier work (*Plato:* Republic *X*, 10): '[…] Plato's fundamental allegation against the artist, implicit in the maker/user/imitator scheme as well as separately stated, remains that his concern with "appearances" and "simulacra" prevents him from obtaining any real hold on the truth'. The 'artist' is understood here to be either a painter or a poet.

The supposed 'broader' meaning of the term μίμησις in *Republic* X, rendered by Halliwell as 'artistic presentation and depiction', has also been explained in similar terms by some other scholars. Christopher Janaway and Fabio M. Giuliano seem to see the mimetic character of poetry (more explicitly than Halliwell does) in the 'fictionality' (as opposed to factuality) of poets' discourse. Thus Janaway (*Images of Excellence*, 125-129) suggests that 'presumably what Plato thinks the generic poet 'makes' […] is an imaginary scene containing characters, actions, and so forth. Poetry makes its own world, presenting before the receptive imagination Chryses, Agamemnon, the city of Troy, the Greek ships […]' (128). Similarly, Giuliano (*Platone e la poesia*, 74-77) understands this μίμησις by poets as the 'remaking of a particular reality' ('riproduzone di una realtà', 75) through describing men, things and events.

Now, an objection that may promptly be raised to the relating of the mimetic nature attributed to poetry to its supposed fictionality is that in *Republic* X, the fictional, or imaginary, nature of poets' discourse does not seem to play any role whatsoever in the argument, nor is there any indication that such a nature is even attributed to it. Besides, it may be pointed out that in the very similar argument in the *Sophist*, sophists' discourse is (on the assumption that they lack knowledge about the matters of which they speak) characterised as μίμησις and as a sort of 'image making' comparable with painting: but surely such fictionality is not characteristic of sophists' discourse and thus cannot be the reason for attributing to it a mimetic character.[117] On the other hand, the 'falsity' attributed to poets' narrations in *Republic* II, which is in my view to be interpreted indeed as

[117] This argument from the *Sophist* is discussed in Excursus F.

'fictionality' (or 'inventiveness'), is not characterized or associated with μίμησις there at all.[118] But even more importantly, Halliwell's, Janaway's and Giuliano's interpretations all seem to take the characterisation of poetry as μίμησις (whatever it may consist in) in *Republic* X as a neutral *observation* of some (even generally acknowledged, according to Halliwell) feature of poetry, whereas in fact, this characterisation is offered there as a sort of (discrediting) *discovery* that yet *reveals* the true nature of poets' works, which is by most people, namely those who highly value poets and their works, not perceived:

δεῖ δὴ ἐπισκέψασθαι πότερον μιμηταῖς τούτοις οὗτοι ἐντυχόντες ἐξηπάτηνται καὶ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν ὁρῶντες οὐκ αἰσθάνονται τριττὰ ἀπέχοντα τοῦ ὄντος καὶ ῥᾴδια ποιεῖν μὴ εἰδότι τὴν ἀλήθειαν - φαντάσματα γὰρ ἀλλ' οὐκ ὄντα ποιοῦσιν - ἤ τι καὶ λέγουσιν καὶ τῷ ὄντι οἱ ἀγαθοὶ ποιηταὶ ἴσασιν περὶ ὧν δοκοῦσιν τοῖς πολλοῖς εὖ λέγειν.

It is necessary to examine, then, whether these people [who credit Homer and other 'good' poets with knowledge] have been deceived through having met these imitators, and who when looking at their works *do not perceive* that these are at the third remove from what is true and are easy to make for someone who does not know the truth – for they make appearances, but do not make true things –, or there is indeed something in what these people are saying and good poets truly do know the things about which they seem to many to speak well. (*Rep.* X 598e-599a)[119]

The above suggestion that poets must be in fact μιμηταί is made once it has been established that poets *cannot* have comprehensive knowledge concerning the subjects they (individually) speak about, since these subjects are too many and diverse, and therefore, that they *cannot* speak well about these subjects: it is *inasmuch as* it does not rely on knowledge that their activity is characterised as

[118] The subject is briefly discussed in Excursus D.

[119] A more extensive comment on this passage is given in Chapter V (see pp. 125 ff.).

μίμησις and is compared with making painted images instead of true things. Where exactly this similarity lies is, of course, a complex question, and one which will be addressed in the next chapter; but it is nonetheless clear, I believe, that the characterisation of poetry as μίμησις and 'image making' in the above argument is not at all presented as a generally known and accepted view, but rather as a provocative original suggestion. Thus, the case is not that the conclusion that poets are not able to 'obtain any real hold on the truth', or 'knowledge or wisdom' is drawn from the premise that their 'concern is with "appearances" and "simulacra"' (as Halliwell suggests); quite on the contrary, from the (independently established) assumption that poets cannot, and therefore do not, have knowledge about the variety of matters they speak about, it is concluded that their works must be 'images' and their activity μίμησις (although many people 'do not perceive' this).

In addition to raising these argument-related problems, the above interpretations of poets' μίμησις as a sort of verbal 'representation or depiction' of men, gods, objects and events, seems also to rely on what is in my view a false semantic assumption, *i.e.* the assumption that the meaning of the verb μιμεῖσθαι in *Republic* X is 'represent' in the sense of '*describe*'; as I shall argue, there is no pre-Platonic or Platonic evidence for such a use of μιμεῖσθαι.

Against the interpretations of poets' μίμησις in *Republic* X presented above, I thus agree with Annas' judgement that it is far from clear what this μίμησις consists in: 'Plato just assumes that he can talk of poetry as being "mere image", "at the third remove from real nature", and the like, without considering that these terms have only been given their sense within the metaphysical picture of Form, particular, and painting, and that this model does not fit poetry in any obvious way' (*An Introduction to Plato's* Republic, 337). Although Annas adheres to the common view that there is a shift in the concept of μίμησις from impersonation to 'image making' (as seen above), she (unlike Halliwell) finds the characterisation of poetry as image making not only new (as opposed to traditional), but also unfounded and unconvincing. For similar reasons, Burnyeat rejects even the 'semantic' assumption of the shift of the concept of μίμησις ('Culture and Society in Plato's *Republic*', esp. 286-300): countering it, he aims to show that the kind of poetry under attack in Book X is the very same as that in Book III, *i.e.* 'poetry that

is mimetic in the sense of book III' (313). On Burnyeat's account, this, 'mimetic', poetry includes those genres that characteristically consist in impersonation, *i.e.* tragedy and comedy (*ibid.*, 290-291). Pointing out various other inconsistencies within *Republic* X that arise if the change of the concept of μίμησις is assumed, Burnyeat concludes that '[n]o one should accept that Plato made such a mess of things without looking hard for an alternative interpretation' (*ibid.*, 311). However, Burnyeat's own interpretation (*ibid.*, 292-300), according to which Books III and X are concerned with the same μίμησις by poets (*i.e.* μίμησις of characters about whom poets narrate), although it has the advantage of avoiding the terminological inconsistency of the term, in my view cannot be sustained either. For two crucial elements in the epistemological argument in *Republic* X, which are in fact not addressed by Burnyeat (similarly to Halliwell and other scholars mentioned above) seem to speak decisively against this interpretation: first, Socrates' clear indication that poets' μίμησις is not perceived by most people (who hold poets in high esteem), whereas poets' μίμησις 'through impersonation' is surely evident to everybody; and secondly, poets' activity is characterised as μίμησις only on the premise that poets do not have knowledge about the matters of which they speak; they are thus no less μιμηταί if they speak in their own name, *i.e.* without impersonating the characters about whom they narrate.

Although I do not agree with Burnyeat's account, I adhere to his criticism of the attempts to solve the apparent inconsistencies in the argument between the two books simply by attributing to the term μίμησις in them a different meaning; for these attempts in a way get rid of these 'argument-related' inconsistencies at the cost of 'acquiring' terminological ones. Against this terminological solution and the interpretations relying on it, I will argue that the term μίμησις is used in the two books with exactly the same meaning, and that the μίμησις of Book III consisting in the above-mentioned impersonation and, on the other hand, the discrediting μίμησις of the epistemological argument in Book X, differ in the first place simply in being μιμήσεις of different *objects*. While in this chapter I distinguish between three kinds of poets' μίμησις, all of which are discussed in the *Republic* (and the musical kind also in the *Laws*), in the next chapter I will argue that even *Republic* X discusses two different kinds of poets' μίμησις, *i.e.*

that the 'ethical' argument in that book silently shifts back to the μίμησις of impersonation introduced in *Republic* III. As I hope the account below will also show, the μίμησις attributed to poets in the epistemological argument in *Republic* X cannot be understood as a kind of 'artistic depiction' of men, gods, events *etc.*, nor can it be identified with the μίμησις attributed to poets in the *Laws* or even traced to an earlier pre-Platonic tradition (as Halliwell suggests).

The notion of μίμησις: origins and definition

The original meaning of the verb μιμεῖσθαι and its cognates is uncertain. The word-group supposedly derives from the noun μίμος, which, according to Koller, originally denoted 'the actor or the mask of the Dionysian cult-drama'; the verb μιμεῖσθαι would have been thus primarily used in the context of ritual performance denoting 'representation through dance'.[120] According to Else ('"Imitation" in the Fifth Century', 76 and 78), the noun μίμος originally denoted the act of 'mimicking or miming', which later became the name for Sicilian mime, whereas the terms μίμησις and μιμεῖσθαι would have denoted a 'dramatic or quasi-dramatic representation'. The use of the verb μιμεῖσθαι and cognate terms is relatively well documented from the sixth century BC onwards. However, as it is possible to conclude from the occurrences found in texts dating from sixth century BC up to Plato's time, the verb in this period acquired a much wider application.[121]

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[120] Koller, *Die Mimesis in der Antike* (1954), 119. Koller's seminal study of the notion of μίμησις has been followed by, among others, Goran Sörbom, *Mimesis and Art. Studies in the Origin and Early Development of an Aesthetic Vocabulary* (1966); Giuseppe Ledda, 'Verità e poesia nella Poetica di Aristotele' (1990); Maria Kardaun, *Der Mimesisbegriff in der griechischen* Antike (1993), and Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis* (2002). Unlike the historical approach common to these authors, the grammatical analysis of Ledda of the verb μιμεῖσθαι adopts a theoretical approach. Ledda's work has in many respects (which will be indicated in the following paragraphs) been the basis for the present study of μίμησις.

[121] Arguably one of the earliest preserved instances of the verb is found in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, dated to the sixth century BC: the maidens of Delos singing a hymn 'can represent the tongues of all men and their clattering speech: each would say that he himself were singing, so much their sweet song matches them' (πάντων δ' ἀνθρώπων φωνὰς καὶ βαμβαλιαστὺν / μιμεῖσθ' ἴσασιν· φαίη δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἕκαστος / φθέγγεσθ'· οὕτω σφιν καλὴ συνάρηρεν ἀοιδή. (*Hymni Homerici* 3, vv. 162-163).

Relying on these occurrences, we may attempt the following definition of μίμησις: doing or making something that is like, and is intended to be like (*i.e.* it imitates), something else in one aspect or another. The English verbs that are closest in meaning to the verb μιμεῖσθαι, are 'imitate' and 'represent' (depending on the context).

It is worth noting here that by characterising an activity as μίμησις we do not attribute to it an inherent, but rather a *relational* property, *i.e.* we do not specify what the activity consists in, but assert its particular relation to something else (*i.e.* that of likeness). In fact, we typically determine what the activity characterised as μίμησις consists in only by indicating the *object* of μίμησις. For example, by saying that an actor engages in μίμησις, just as by saying that an actor engages in imitation, or representation, we say only that his activity relates to something else in a specific way, *i.e.* that it is intentionally like something else; whereas by saying that an actor engages in a μίμησις of a soldier (or even: a soldier fighting), we specify also what the 'content', as it were, of the actor's activity is. For this reason, it may be rather 'risky' to speak simply of 'mimetic' poetry, or of poets' μίμησις; for by characterising poetry as being as a whole, or involving, μίμησις, or again by referring to poets' activity as μίμησις, we do not specify what the *object* of its μίμησις is. This, however, may easily lead to confusion over the different kinds of μίμησις attributed to poets; I believe, and will argue below in more detail, that such confusion has been the reason why Halliwell and other scholars wrongly identified the poets' μίμησις discussed in the epistemological argument in *Republic* X with the poets' μίμησις discussed in the *Laws* and other places indicated above.

An activity characterised as μίμησις may be virtually of any kind and complexity, *e.g.*, bodily, verbal, musical, social, military, political and so on. Consider the following examples. In Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*, Orestes explains his ferocious plan to murder his mother Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus, the ruler of Mycenae, in order to avenge the murder of his father Agamemnon: he and his friend Pylades will enter the palace pretending to be travellers from Phokis: 'Both of us will speak the speech of Parnassus, imitating the utterance of a Phocian tongue' (ἄμφω δὲ φωνὴν ἥσομεν Παρνησίδα,/ γλώσσης ἀυτὴν Φωκίδος

μιμουμένω; *Choephoroi* 563-64). In the pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus,* the Trojan hero Dolon is going to put on a wolf's skin and 'imitate the four-footed animal' (τετράπουν μιμήσομαι) so as to disguise himself in front of the Achaeans whom he is going to spy on (*Rhesus* 211); in the *Histories*, Herodotus narrates how Aruandes imitated Darius (ἐμιμέετο τοῦτον), in that he had a memorial built for himself after learning and seeing that Darius desired to leave a memorial such as had not been wrought for any other king (*Historiae* IV, 166, 3-6); in Euripides' *Electra*, Clytemnestra justifies her betrayal of Agamemnon, saying that 'when […] a husband does wrong, rejecting his wife at home, the woman is apt to imitate the man (μιμεῖσθαι θέλει γυνὴ τὸν ἄνδρα) and acquire another lover' (*Electra* 1036-38); in Plato's *Republic*, it is considered whether the prospective guards should engage in μίμησις of various craftsmen and specialist workers, including a μίμησις of the rowers of triremes (*Rep. III* 396b); in the *Gorgias*, it is argued that a man desiring to become a friend of the rude and uneducated tyrant must become as like him as possible, and thus engage in a μίμησις of the tyrant's conduct and way of living (*Gorg.* 510b-511a).

Figurative and non-figurative μίμησις

These examples of μίμησις may first be differentiated in one important, 'ontological' respect,[122] which can be illustrated using the examples above from Euripides' *Electra* and Plato's *Republic*. As is clear from the context, following her husband's adultery, the betrayed woman will in her turn engage in such conduct: her activity, referred to as a μίμησις of her husband's activity, will be an instance of adultery no less than her husband's, the activity imitated. That is to say, the woman's μίμησις consists in a *true* (or *real*)[123] adultery. By contrast, the activity of the children, referred to as μίμησις of rowing, is not in its turn an instance of rowing, like the activity imitated: instead, their activity constitutes a *figure* of the

[122] This ontological distinction has been pointed out already by Russell (*Criticism in Antiquity*, 101), followed by Ledda, 'Verità e poesia nella *Poetica* di Aristotele', 19, n.36.

[123] For the use of 'true' and 'real', see p. 125, n. 157.

activity of rowing; the children do not *truly* row, but *represent* men rowing. In what exactly, then, are these two cases of μίμησις similar and in what do they differ?

What 'qualifies' either of the two activities for μίμησις is their intentional likeness to another activity. However, the woman's activity is like the activity imitated, her husband's adultery, in an *essential* aspect of this activity, *i.e.* in that aspect by virtue of which the activity constitutes an adultery. By contrast, the children's activity is not like the activity imitated, rowing, in some *essential* aspect of this activity (for example, it is not carried out with oars in a boat floating in the water), but in some *non-essential* aspect of the activity, for example in the manner of moving, which is, however, performed on the ground. But importantly, the aspect in which the children's activity is like the one imitated is one *by virtue of which* the children's activity *refers to*, or *stands for*, rowing, and that is: the aspect by virtue of which the children's activity constitutes a *figure* of rowing. The children's activity may thus be more precisely characterised as figurative μίμησις, whereas the woman's activity is non-figurative μίμησις.[124]

Now, figurative μίμησις is ontologically similar to any other 'representation', or 'sign', *i.e.* something that stands for, or refers to, something else. In order to see its 'figurative' character clearly, it is helpful to consider Nelson Goodman's study of 'languages of art'.[125] Applying his account of (pictorial) figures, we may say that an activity constituting a figure (by virtue of some non-essential likeness to the object to which it refers) is on the one hand something in itself; on the other hand, it refers to, or stands for, something else: thus the children's activity, as a figure of rowing, is on the one hand a specific kind of figure, *i.e.* a figure-of-rowing, and on

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[124] The distinction between figurative and non-figurative μίμησις can be well illustrated using the example from the *Cratylus* (though the verb used is not μιμεῖσθαι, but ἀπεικάζειν), where making something that is like Cratylus only in colour and shape is contrasted with (some god's) making something like Cratylus in 'all things that Cratylus has': while the first one will be a 'likeness (εἰκών) of Cratylus', the second one will not be that, but another Cratylus (432b-c). This is, however, an example of 'productive' μίμησις, which I discuss below.

[125] See Goodman, *Languages of Art*, esp. 21-26, and Ledda, 'Verità e poesia nella *Poetica* di Aristotele', 18-24: Ledda analyses figurative μίμησις taking into consideration Goodman's account of pictorial representation.

the other hand stands for, or refers to, (true) rowing.[126] As has been pointed out by Giuseppe Ledda ('Verità e poesia nella *Poetica* di Aristotele', 19), these two aspects are characteristic of figurative μίμησις in general: 'It is always producing (or effectuating) something: a conduct, a sound, an action, a gesture, a figure, a concrete object, *etc*. This something is produced by imitating or referring to something else, which exists prior to this new production'. As we shall see shortly, this 'figurative' or 'representational' character is reflected in a particular syntactical ambiguity of the expressions denoting figures, noted by both Goodman and Ledda.

The distinction between figurative and non-figurative μίμησις may also be applied to the other fore-mentioned examples: the Orestes' and Pylades' μίμησις of travellers from Phokis (Aeshylus' *Choephoroi*) and Dolon's μίμησις of a wolf's walking (*Rhesus*) are of the figurative kind; whereas Aruandes' μίμησις of Darius described by Herodotus, and the μίμησις of the tyrant from the *Gorgias*, are of the 'non-figurative' kind. As we shall see, all cases of μίμησις attributed to poets in the *Republic* and the *Laws* are clearly of the figurative kind.[127]

It may be added that in Plato's dialogues, the majority of activities referred to as μίμησις are cases of figurative μίμησις.[128] The cases of non-figurative μίμησις

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[126] As will become clearer shortly, in the expression 'picture (or figure) of a man', 'a man' is ambiguous as it could refer to both the object referred to by the picture (or figure) and the figure itself. In order to refer unambiguously to the latter alone, Goodman uses the expression 'man-representing-picture', or 'man-picture' (*Languages of Art*, 22), whereas Ledda ('Verità e poesia nella *Poetica* di Aristotele', 20), following Goodman, 'figure-of-man'. I adopt Ledda's signification.

[127] Prof. Stalley (*Notes on Ph.D thesis*, 4) suggested that the formative effect attributed to poets' μίμησις (more precisely, to the μίμησις through impersonation and to musical μίμησις) in these arguments could derive from Plato's either overlooking or rejecting the distinction between figurative and non-figurative μίμησις. However, overlooking the difference between these two kind of μίμησις is in my view very unlikely; for how could one consider, for example, a figure of fighting as equivalent to true fighting, or a figure of a couch as equivalent to a true couch? On the other hand, it is in my view not necessary for Plato to 'reject' the distinction between figurative and non-figurative μίμησις in order to attribute a formative effect to figurative μίμησις of individuals and types of characters.

[128] In the discussion of 'what μίμησις is' (*Rep.* X 595c7) in *Republic* X, μίμησις is clearly intended exclusively as the activity that has been defined above as 'figurative' μίμησις. By

mentioned are often passing references[129] and are relatively rarely central to the argument. Among such (rare) examples is the μίμησις of the tyrant in the *Gorgias* (already referred to above): the conduct of someone aiming to become a friend of the tyrant's by μίμησις of his conduct will obviously not be a figure of the tyrant's conduct (as would be, for example, a dramatic performance by an actor playing the tyrant), but will be like the tyrant's conduct in an essential respect: *i.e.* it will consist in a 'true' (genuine) sequestration of property and other 'tyrannical' acts.

Productive and non-productive μίμησις

Another distinction, which turns out to be relevant in particular for the comparison of a painter and a poet in *Republic* X, is between productive and non-productive μίμησις.[130] In all the examples considered above, the activities referred to as μίμησις are non-productive: they do not have a material result. However, a productive activity, *e.g.*, painting, sculpture, embroidery, may also be characterised as μίμησις.[131] The textual evidence suggests that the use of μίμησις and its cognates with reference to productive activities is of a later date and is relatively rare in pre-Platonic texts; moreover, in the preserved texts, there are (to my knowledge) no reliable examples of non-figurative productive μίμησις.[132] Now, it is important to note that in the case of non-productive figurative μίμησις, one who engages in it, a μιμητής, typically constitutes himself a figure of the agent who is

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contrast, the cases that belong, in view of the above distinction, to 'non-figurative' μίμησις, would in the context of *Republic* X clearly not be considered as cases of μίμησις at all.

[129] *E.g.*, *Phd.* 105b6, *Tht.* 148d4, *Phlb.* 13d3, *Euthd.* 288b8, 301b2, 303e8.

[130] This distinction corresponds to the one briefly mentioned in the *Sophist*, between μίμησις 'through instruments' and μίμησις by 'employing oneself as an instrument' (267a).

[131] Each of these activities is by its nature figurative μίμησις.

[132] The only potential example of a non-figurative productive μίμησις I have found, though not very reliable for the lack of context, is the fragment of Aeschylus in which *chiton* is said to be 'an imitation of Liburnian coat': Λιβυρνικῆς μίμημα μανδύης χιτών (*Fr.* 44A711-712a4). At the same time, this is also the earliest preserved instance of the noun μίμημα referring to a material product (a cloak); the verb μιμεῖσθαι is first used to refer to a productive activity by Herodotus, in either passive or middle form (see *Historiae* 2.78.3, 2.86.3, 2.132.4, 2.169.22, 3.37.8).

the object of μίμησις: for example, the children constitute figures of rowers; Orestes and Pylades will constitute figures of travellers from Phokis; Dolon (*Rhesus*) constitutes a figure of a wolf. By contrast, with productive figurative μίμησις it is typically only the material result of the activity that constitutes a figure, whereas neither the μιμητής nor his activity itself has a figurative character. To take an example from *Republic* X, by painting a couch, a painter engages in μίμησις, but it is only the result of his activity, the painting, that constitutes a figure, namely a figure of a couch (by virtue of some non-essential, in this visual, likeness to a couch). However, the painter as a μιμητής and his activity as μίμησις will typically not (and are not intended to) be figurative: for instance, a painter of a couch obviously does not constitute a figure of a couch-maker, nor his activity a figure of couch making (although the result, the painting, constitutes a figure of a couch). As poetry is as such a non-productive activity, the μίμησις attributed to poets on different occasions in the dialogues is obviously always of the non-productive kind.

Figurative μίμησις and deception

Finally, the distinction that will turn out to be crucial for the comparison of the μίμησις by poets in Books III and X is one that concerns only the figurative kind of μίμησις: this μίμησις can be either deceptive or non-deceptive. As observed earlier, in the case of figurative μίμησις, the activity itself constitutes a figure of another activity, or its material result constitutes a figure of something: however, this figure (in one case an activity performed and in the other case an object made) can be perceived, by one who observes it, in fact as a figure, or by contrast, it can be perceived, mistakenly, to be the thing itself whose figure it is. In the example from Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*, Orestes and Pylades engaging in a μίμησις of Phocians through μίμησις of their speech, obviously do not intend to be perceived as engaging in such μίμησις and thus as figures of Phocians; they want to be (and eventually are, by Clytemnestra) perceived as (true) Phocians. By contrast, the figurative μίμησις of rowing performed by the young wards (*Republic* III) is supposedly intended to be, and will be, perceived as a figure of rowing and not as a

true instance of rowing. An example of figurative productive μίμησις that deceives (intentionally) is found in Euripides' *Helen*: a μίμημα (*Helena* 74 and 875) of Helen is fashioned by Hera (in the role of the μιμητής) to induce Paris to abduct the μίμημα, *i.e.* the figure, of Helen, instead of Helen herself.

The kind of figurative μίμησις that is likely to deceive may thus be called '*deceptive*', and the other kind '*non-deceptive*'. As I shall argue, the μίμησις attributed to poets in *Republic* III is figurative and non-deceptive, whereas the μίμησις attributed to them in the epistemological argument in *Republic* X (as well as the μίμησις attributed to sophists in the *Sophist*), is figurative, but deceptive.

The verb μιμεῖσθαι and its cognates: grammatical analysis[133]

Goodman and later Ledda both point out a particular syntactical ambiguity of expressions denoting figures. As suggested by Goodman (*Languages of Art*, 22), 'saying that a picture represents a so-and-so is thus highly ambiguous as between saying what the picture denotes and what kind of picture it is'. More precisely, the ambiguity concerns 'so-and-so': for example, in the expression 'a picture represents a man', 'a man' can refer to the object the picture refers to, or stands for (*i.e.* 'what the picture denotes') or to the figure itself the picture constitutes, a figure-of-a-man (or, as Goodman describes it, a 'man-representing-picture', or a 'man-picture').

This ambiguity is characteristic also of the expressions denoting figurative μίμησις, as Ledda's study of the verb μιμεῖσθαι ('Verità e poesia nella *Poetica* di Aristotele', 17-24) clearly shows. So in the expression μιμεῖσθαί τι, the direct object τι can refer to the object imitated and referred to by the activity expressed by the verb and thus feature as an *affected* object of the verb; but it can also refer to the object made or done (performed) by this activity, *i.e.* the figure, and thus

[133] In the analysis of the direct object of the verb μιμεῖσθαι, I follow closely the study by Giuseppe Ledda, 'Verità e poesia nella *Poetica* di Aristotele', 15-24), differing slightly from his model of μίμησις, which is based on the productive kind of μίμησις.

feature as an *effected* object of the verb (Ledda, *ibid.*, 18, n. 33). The ambiguity of the phrase μιμεῖσθαί τι also applies to cognate expressions such as μίμησίς τινος (*nomen actionis*), μίμημά τινος (*nomen rei actae*) and μιμητής τινος (*nomen agentis*; Ledda, *ibid.*, 15, n. 23).[134]

The syntactical ambiguity, which characterises any expression that refers to figurative μίμησις, may be illustrated with the above mentioned example the *Rhesus*, in which Dolon plans to disguise himself from the Achaeans as a wolf: in the expression τετράπουν μιμήσομαι, 'I will imitate the four-footed animal', τετράπουν can be both an affected object and an effected one: it can refer to an existing (unspecified) four-footed animal, imitated by the μιμητής (Dolon), as well as to a figure constituted by him through his engaging in μίμησις. By contrast, in the example of non-figurative μίμησις from Euripides' *Electra*, in which Clytemnestra argues that the woman betrayed by her husband 'is apt to imitate the man and acquire another lover', in the expression μιμεῖσθαι θέλει γυνὴ τὸν ἄνδρα the object of the verb is not ambiguous: τὸν ἄνδρα is an affected object, which refers to an existent (unspecified) individual, imitated by the woman (γυνή) as the μιμητής.

The ambiguity of the expressions that denote figurative μίμησις is relevant to the question of translation of the verb μιμεῖσθαι and its cognates, favouring the verb 'represent' over the verb 'imitate'. In fact, the verb 'represent' is ambiguous in the same way as the Greek μιμεῖσθαι, and thus preserves (also) the productive, 'effected', aspect of this verb; by contrast, the verb 'imitate', having only an affected object, captures only its imitative, or referential, aspect (*cf.* Ledda, 'Verità e poesia nella *Poetica* di Aristotele', 18, n. 33). However, unlike the Greek μιμεῖσθαι, the verb 'represent' cannot be used to denote non-figurative μίμησις, for the notion of non-figurative is incompatible with that of representation (as standing for something); in this case, the verb 'imitate', which has an unambiguous affected object, makes an adequate translation. Nor can the verb 'represent' be used to refer to figurative 'deceptive' μίμησις, which, as we shall see, *Republic* X

[134] It is worth noting that some other verbs denoting activities with a figurative character (and which may thus be considered as kinds of μιμεῖσθαι) for example, γράφειν, εἰκάζειν, also have an ambiguous object.

is concerned with. Further, the verb 'represent' does not connote the aspect of likening, resembling: in this respect, the Greek verb is better matched by the verb 'imitate'.

It is worth noting here that the question of translation of the term μίμησις has often accompanied the study of the notion itself. Starting from Koller (*Die Mimesis in der Antike*), many scholars have argued against the traditional rendering of figurative μίμησις as 'imitation'. In my view, however, only Ledda's grammatical analysis makes it clear, by identifying the ambiguous object of the verb μιμεῖσθαι, in what precisely (*i.e.* in having only an affected object) the verb 'imitate' is an inadequate translation of it. Admittedly, similar, but less conclusive, grammatical observations concerning the verb μιμεῖσθαι have previously been made by Koller and later by Dupont-Roc and Lallot (*Aristote: La* Poétique, 1980). According to Koller, the verb originally had the meaning 'represent' ('darstellen'), and its application was limited to 'representation', or performance of dance and music, whereas later on, it also assumed the meaning of 'imitate' ('nachahmen'). Koller (*Die Mimesis in der Antike*, 120) describes this change as 'a passage from effected to affected object' ('Übergang vom effizierten zum affizierten Objekt'), but does not seem to consider the possibility of the verb having an 'ambiguous object'. The ambiguity of the object of the verb μιμεῖσθαι had been later noticed (but not further accounted for) by Dupont-Roc/ Lallot. The authors (quoted by Ledda) translate 'représenter', arguing that 'les connotations théâtrales de cet verbe et surtout la possibilité de lui donner pour complément, comme à *mimeisthai*, indifféremment l'objet- 'modâle' et l'objet produit - au lieu qu' 'imiter' excluait ce dernier, le plus important - ne pouvaient qu' emporter la décision' (*ibid.*, 20).

However, as anticipated, there is another important difference between the verbs μιμεῖσθαι and 'represent', which in my view also counters the interpretation of poets' μίμησις as 'verbal representation or depiction' of men, events. *etc.* (defended, with different arguments, by Halliwell, Janaway, Giuliano). In English, 'to represent Chryses', may mean to *be* a figure of Chryses (*i.e.* to enact him), or to *make* a figure of Chryses (*e.g.*, to paint him), but also to *describe* Chryses, *i.e.* to 'represent', or 'depict' him verbally. By contrast, the Greek expression μιμεῖσθαί τι can be used with the first two meanings, but *not* with the last one: there is in my

view no evidence, in either Platonic or pre-Platonic texts, for the expressions of the form μιμεῖσθαί τι having the meaning of 'describe something' – but precisely this meaning of the verb seems to be presupposed in interpreting μίμησις in *Republic* X as 'verbal representation' of men, events, *etc.*

For comparison, unlike μιμεῖσθαι, the verb εἰκάζειν can be used with the meaning of 'describe' (or 'depict' verbally), as in the following example from the first discussion of poetry in the *Republic*: Socrates criticises poets for not to saying 'false things well' about gods and heroes, then explains his reproach by comparing their narration with an unfaithful painting: 'When someone depicts badly in speech, what gods and heroes are like, just as a painter paints things with an intended likeness, but does not achieve resemblance at all' (Ὅταν εἰκάζῃ τις κακῶς [οὐσίαν] τῷ λόγῳ, περὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἡρώων οἵοί εἰσιν, ὥσπερ γραφεὺς μηδὲν ἐοικότα γράφων οἷς ἂν ὅμοια βουληθῇ γράψαι. *Republic* II 377e1-3). On my understanding of the verb μιμεῖσθαι, it could not replace the verb εἰκάζειν in the present example.

The occurrences outside *Republic* X that in Halliwell's view (*The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 51 n.35) demonstrate the understanding of poets' μίμησις as verbal depiction of men, gods, events, *etc.* (a 'wider sense' of μίμησις) in my view all need to be interpreted differently. *Republic* II, 373b5 indicates as μιμηταί only 'those concerned with the music' (in the narrower sense), οἱ περὶ μουσικήν, but not 'poets' and the others mentioned next;[135] *Republic* III 401b8 characterises as μιμήματα of 'temperate and good character' the musical elements harmony and rhythm; at *L.* II 668b9-c2, the μίμησις intended is obviously the one extensively discussed in what follows, *i.e.* 'musical' μίμησις of moral characters and conduct. So while in all three cases the practice of μουσική as a whole indeed features as μίμησις, this μίμησις concerns harmony and rhythm as μιμήματα of moral characters and conduct, but does not involve the verbal element of poetry, and thus cannot be interpreted as the 'verbal depiction of men, gods', *etc.* While these three

[135] *Rep.* II 373b5-c1: οἷον οἵ τε θηρευταὶ πάντες οἵ τε μιμηταί, πολλοὶ μὲν οἱ περὶ τὰ σχήματά τε καὶ χρώματα, πολλοὶ δὲ οἱ περὶ μουσικήν, ποιηταί τε καὶ τούτων ὑπηρέται, ῥαψῳδοί, ὑποκριταί, χορευταί, ἐργολάβοι, σκευῶν τε παντοδαπῶν δημιουργοί, τῶν τε ἄλλων καὶ τῶν περὶ τὸν γυναικεῖον κόσμον.

instances concern musical μίμησις, the other examples indicated by Halliwell in my view refer to μίμησις 'through impersonation'; these are *Republic* III 388c3, where the example quoted is about Homer speaking as if he were Zeus, and also three other (indicated as 'arguable') places in *Republic* III: 396b, 397a and 398a2. *Tim.* 19d-e (which is indicated in his earlier *Plato:* Republic *X*, 5) is more difficult to understand; but this instance could refer to dramatic poetry and thus to μίμησις through impersonation.

Ways of expressing the object of μίμησις

Finally, it is useful to make another grammatical observation concerning the object of μίμησις: when the object of μίμησις is an activity, as opposed to a static object, the object of μίμησις *expressed in speech* may either be the agent performing the activity or the activity itself, or again an aspect of this activity (*e.g.*, its result). A good example of such a variation is found in *Republic* III, where the same kind of μίμησις is described in both ways. In both cases, the argument is about vocal μίμησις of various animals, besides other inanimate forces; however, the μίμησις is described in one case as a μίμησις of these animals and forces that make sounds, but in the other as a μίμησις of these sounds themselves. In the first case, it is suggested that the prospective guards should not 'represent', among other things, 'horses neighing', 'bulls lowing', (Τί δέ; ἵππους χρεμετίζοντας καὶ ταύρους μυκωμένους [...] ἢ μιμήσονται; 396b5-7). In the second case, such vocal μίμησις of animals is attributed to a base narrator; he 'will try to represent everything seriously and in front of the many, even what we said just now, […] and cries of dogs, sheep and birds' (ὥστε πάντα ἐπιχειρήσει μιμεῖσθαι σπουδῇ τε καὶ ἐναντίον πολλῶν, καὶ ἃ νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν, καὶ ἔτι κυνῶν καὶ προβάτων καὶ ὀρνέων φθόγγους 397a1-7). In both cases, the μίμησις discussed is of various animals producing their characteristic sounds; however, the object of μίμησις *expressed* is in the first case the *agent* (thought not human) of this vocal activity ('horses neighing', 'bulls lowing'), whereas in the second case it is the *result*, or the effect of this activity ('cries of dogs, sheep and birds').

As we shall see, the μίμησις attributed to poets (the object of this μίμησις is in all cases an activity and not a static object) is in different arguments described in both these ways; sometimes by indicating the agent, at other times by indicating the agent's activity or its result. Being aware of this variation will be helpful for the comparison between different cases of poets' μίμησις.

Three kinds of poets' μίμησις in the dialogues

As observed in the beginning of the chapter, in different arguments in the dialogues there are various activities of poets that are characterised as μίμησις: poets' impersonation of characters about whom they narrate in *Republic* III and, as I shall argue in Chapter V, also in the ethical argument in *Republic* X; poets' musical composing in *Republic* III and the *Laws*; poets' activity altogether, on the assumption that it does not rely on relevant knowledge in the epistemological argument in *Republic* X. Applying the above distinctions, I will now suggest how these activities may be classified into three kinds of μίμησις, which differ, first (and what is quite obvious), in taking place one in the musical elements and the other two in the verbal element of composing, but further, in having different objects and in being the first two non-deceptive and the last one deceptive. In this classification, however, I will have to anticipate some conclusions from the next chapter.

Μίμησις through impersonation

As argued in Chapter I, the first discussion of poetry in the *Republic* has a prescriptive (as opposed to descriptive) character: in setting standards for the 'educative' poetry of the envisaged order, the interlocutors inquire also *how* poets should speak (*Rep.* III 392c). As is in fact suggested, poets speak, or narrate, about events and actions, and thus about individuals involved in them, but they can do so in different ways: 'by simple narration, or through μίμησις, or again through both of them' (*Rep.* III 392d). When a poet 'comes in narration upon [someone's] action

or speech' (*Rep.* III 396b-c), a poet can narrate about it either by speaking as himself, in the first person, or alternatively, as if he were that individual and therefore, in the third person; for example, at 'coming upon' Chryses' action of imploring the Achaeans to release his daughter, Homer narrates about it as if he were Chryses himself (*Il.* I 17-21).[136] In the former case, a poet's narration is 'simple' (*i.e.* without μίμησις), in the latter case, a poet is engaging in a μίμησις of that individual: the poet's speaking as if he were someone else is in fact a kind of 'likening oneself to someone else, either in voice or gesture'.[137]

As mentioned above, Homer, as a composer, is approached here as if he were at the same time performing and reciting what he is composing, and thus also actually enacting, for example, the character Chryses. However, it seems more difficult to maintain this approach to poetry with 'dramatic' compositions, *i.e.* those in which a poet engages in μίμησις of individual characters and occasionally even a group of them (chorus) throughout his narration. It thus seems useful to distinguish between 'virtual' narration and the μίμησις that it may involve ('virtual', inasmuch as it is only assumed, but need not actually take place) and 'actual' narration: the dramatist's μίμησις of characters can only be virtual, whereas the μίμησις of these characters by the actors performing the tragedy will be actual. Similarly, Homer's narration and μίμησις may be viewed as only virtual, as opposed to one in fact performed, for example, by a rhapsode.[138]

Now, Homer's impersonation of Chryses may be described as an activity (narrating or speaking) that is (intentionally) like another activity, *i.e.* Chryses'

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[136] In the argument, the question of Chryses' historical existence is never raised; he is not treated any differently from existent (unspecified) individuals, who are also considered as objects of μίμησις (*Rep.* III 395b8-396e2).

[137] *Rep.* III 393c5-6: Οὐκοῦν τό γε ὁμοιοῦν ἑαυτὸν ἄλλῳ ἢ κατὰ φωνὴν ἢ κατὰ σχῆμα μιμεῖσθαί ἐστιν ἐκεῖνον ᾧ ἄν τις ὁμοιοῖ; The manner in which poets' narration is characterised as μίμησις suggests its novelty. *Contra* Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 51, n.35.

[138] Note that Plato himself, as a composer of dialogues, fits the description of a narrator 'through μίμησις ': he engages in turn in μίμησις of various characters he narrates about, while the only (preserved) compositions in which he narrates 'without μίμησις' will be his letters, namely those of them (if any) that are authentic. Note also that, in a sense, we may consider rhapsodes and actors, in their roles of reciters and performers of poets' works, as μιμηταί of these poets, and their performance as μίμησις of poets' composing.

speaking: as such it may be characterised as μίμησις, and more precisely, as a μίμησις whose object is Chryses (expressing the agent), or Chryses' speaking, or discourse (expressing the activity). Further, this μίμησις is of the *figurative* kind. For Homer's speaking is like Chryses' speaking in some aspects by virtue of which Homer's speaking constitutes a *figure* of Chryses' speaking, and Homer himself constitutes a *figure* of Chryses.[139] These 'like' (resembling) aspects through which the figurativeness of Homer's speaking is obtained evidently concern the manner of his speaking, both its verbal (or semantic) and non-verbal elements: for Homer's speaking is on the verbal level like Chryses' speaking in that it consists of conveying, or saying things as if Homer were Chryses (as signalled at 393c11-394b1);[140] its most distinctive feature will be that of referring to Chryses as if Chryses were himself, Homer; whereas on the non-verbal level, it is like Chryses' speaking in 'voice' and 'gesture' (as suggested at 393c5-6).

Further, and importantly, Homer's μίμησις of Chryses is evidently non-deceptive, for by engaging in it, Homer is not perceived, nor does he intend to be perceived, as Chryses, but indeed as a figure of Chryses. That must be so even though Homer is described, when speaking as if he were Chryses, as trying 'as much as possible to make it seem to us that the one speaking is not Homer, but that it is the old priest' (393a-b), and later on (implicitly) as hiding himself (393c). The intention attributed to Homer (by Socrates) in fact cannot be that of making his (Homer's) public believe that he is Chryses himself: for given that Homer has spoken as himself, as Homer, just beforehand, even 'announcing'[141] the character in whose

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[139] Homer's figurative μίμησις of Chryses may be contrasted with examples of *non-figurative* μίμησις of Proteus and Menelaus (again characters about whom Homer narrates) found in *Euthd.* 288b7-c2: Socrates jokingly accuses the visitors Euthydemus and Dionysodorus of imitating Proteus in evading answering the question they have been asked, and encourages his companions to imitate Menelaus in not letting them go before receiving an answer (evoking the episode from *Od.* IV 351-570).

[140] In grammatical terms, this means that Homer refers to Chryses by speaking in the first person (*e.g.*, using 'I'). This 'grammatical' aspect of μίμησις is illustrated in Socrates' paraphrase of Homer's narration recounted 'without μίμησις': in it, Socrates narrates Chryses' and Agamemnon's speeches referring to them in the third person, differently from Homer, who narrates the two speeches in the first person (*Rep.* III 393c11-394b1).

[141] *Rep.* III 393c1-3: Ἀλλ' ὅταν γέ τινα λέγῃ ῥῆσιν ὡς τις ἄλλος ὤν, ἆρ' οὐ τότε ὁμοιοῦν αὐτὸν φήσομεν ὅτι μάλιστα τὴν αὑτοῦ λέξιν ἑκάστῳ ὃν ἂν προείπῃ ὡς ἐροῦντα;

name he will speak next, such an intention would obviously be vain and thus unreasonable. Instead, the intention attributed to Homer is presumably that of seeming, or looking to his public, as if he were Chryses (and not Homer), *despite* their *knowing* that he is not (and that he is in fact Homer). To sum up, a poet's impersonating a character about whom he is narrating may be characterised as figurative non-deceptive μίμησις of this character in that a poet's activity (narration) is intentionally *like* this character's activity (speaking) and constitutes by virtue of this likeness a figure of it and is also perceived as such.

Last, some observations may be made about the evaluation of this μίμησις by poets. In view of the set educative objectives, this μίμησις as such is neither rejected nor approved. Given that by reciting poets' compositions,[142] the young wards will in their turn engage in (obviously figurative) μίμησις whenever poets have originally done so, and further, on the crucial assumption that μίμησις has a formative effect on those who persistently engage in it (395d), the μίμησις to be allowed the future guards is of individuals of such exemplary character as they should themselves display: men who are brave, temperate, and pious (395c).[143] As a consequence, the μίμησις of such individuals is the only one that poets should be allowed in the first place. That is to say, in short, when a poet comes in his narration upon a speech or an action by a good and temperate individual, he should engage in a μίμησις of him, whereas he should narrate about men of base character, social status or profession, without engaging in μίμησις of them (394e-396e). Though poets' μίμησις of such, virtuous, men is admitted to be much less pleasurable than varied μίμησις of all sorts of men, it is considered to be the only one that will benefit the young wards. It is quite evident that hardly any of the pre-

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[142] Evidence that education at the time involved reciting, singing poets' compositions, and learning them by heart is found in *Prot.* 325d-326b, *Laws* II and VII; learning poems by heart is discussed in *L.* VII 810b-811a.

[143] Evidence that the wards' μίμησις is figurative is found also in Socrates' contrasting their 'imitating/ representing' (μιμεῖσθαι) certain things with doing (πράττειν, ποιεῖν) them (*Rep.* III 395b8-d3). Of course, the young wards may well engage also in a non-figurative μίμησις of these characters, *i.e.* emulate them: to do so will be easier for them than emulating the characters who have not already been 'offered to them' as figures performed/ enacted by poets (as objects of their figurative μίμησις). Such non-figurative μίμησις by children of individuals about whom poets narrate seems to be discussed in *Prot.* 326a3.

existing works by poets will satisfy these conditions, for the μίμησις poets predominately engage in is varied and unselective. Moreover, as may be anticipated, μίμησις of good, temperate men, the only type permitted to the poets of the envisaged state here, will in the light of the second, 'ethical', argument in Book X turn out to be virtually impracticable: μίμησις of a calm, temperate and consistent character, proper to such men, will be judged difficult both to carry out, and to be understood by a vast public.

Musical μίμησις

Both *Republic* III and the *Laws* discuss musical poetry relying on an account according to which such poetry is inherently mimetic. The account in both discussions is derived from an earlier tradition (in one associated with Damon and in the other unnamed). In this account, as anticipated, the mimetic character is attributed to the two musical elements of poetry, harmony and rhythm. In what way exactly then may musical composing or performing be qualified as μίμησις; what are the objects of this μίμησις and what kind of μίμησις is it?

In *Republic* III, musical poetry (ᾠδαί, μέλη), discussed after recitative poetry, is thus approached as poetry that involves, beside the verbal element, λόγος, also harmony and rhythm (398b6-c2): these two musical elements are considered separately in the discussion. Harmony and rhythm are not defined here; in the *Laws*, however, harmony is defined as the arrangement, or orderliness (τάξις), of the pitch of voice (or sound) and rhythm as 'the arrangement of movement', both of the body and voice (*L.* II 672e8-9).[144] Importantly, the classification of musical modes and rhythms both in *Republic* III and the *Laws* concerns the *moral* character

[144] *L.* II 664e8-665a3: τῇ δὴ τῆς κινήσεως τάξει ῥυθμὸς ὄνομα εἴη, τῇ δὲ αὖ τῆς φωνῆς, τοῦ τε ὀξέος ἅμα καὶ βαρέος συγκερανυμένων, ἁρμονία ὄνομα προσαγορεύοιτο […]. The arrangement is here contrasted with the disorderliness of voice and movement, characteristic of animals and still uneducated children; men's ability to perceive the orderliness and discern it from disorderliness in voice and movement distinguishes them from other animals (*L.* II 653d7-a5; for a more precise technical definition of harmony and rhythm, *Phlb.* 17c11-d6).

and conduct represented by them, for example cowardly or courageous, orderly or licentious.

In *Republic* III, Glaucon in the role of an expert in musical theory (*Rep.* III 3981-2), 'matches' different musical modes with the types of conduct they represent: the 'mixolydian' and the 'syntonolydian' musical modes are characterised by him as 'lament-like musical modes' (θρηνώδεις ἁρμονίαι *Republic* III 398e1-2), which are evidently musical modes that constitute μιμήσεις of lamentation; whereas 'Doric' and 'Phrygian' musical modes are characterised as constituting respectively the μίμησις of courageous conduct in fighting and other actions imposed by adverse conditions, and the μίμησις of temperate conduct in voluntary actions (*Rep.* III 399a5-c4). Although it is difficult to imagine exactly how this mimetic effect was achieved, the likeness of musical composition with one type of conduct or another must have in any case concerned the vocal, or acoustic aspect of the conduct imitated: objects of μίμησις that a particular harmony constitutes are in fact φθόγγοι, *i.e.* 'voices (or sounds)' of men behaving in one way or another.[145] While harmony concerns the pitch of sound, rhythm concerns its pace, or movement: as such, different rhythms, though the interlocutors admit to being unable to identify them, are nonetheless considered by them to be μιμήματα of different modes, or styles of living, *e.g.*, the orderly and brave life (*Rep.* III 399e10-400a1), or again the base and licentious life (400b2).

A poet's musical composing may thus be viewed as an activity that is (intentionally) like a particular kind of moral conduct in some vocal, or acoustic aspect of such conduct. By virtue of this acoustic likeness a poet's composition constitutes a *figure* of some moral conduct; for example, a musical piece composed in a lament-like harmony will constitute a figure of lamentation. As such, poet's musical composing may be characterised as figurative μίμησις whose objects are different types of moral conduct. Clearly, this μίμησις is non-deceptive. It may also be noted that this μίμησις concerns only the two musical elements of poetry:

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[145] *Rep.* III 399c1-4: ταύτας δύο ἁρμονίας, βίαιον, ἑκούσιον, δυστυχούντων, εὐτυχούντων, σωφρόνων, ἀνδρείων [ἁρμονίας] αἵτινες φθόγγους μιμήσονται κάλλιστα, ταύτας λεῖπε.

we may suppose that if a poet's composition involves speech (λόγος) as well (as it often does), his musical μίμησις may accompany his verbal μίμησις of one character or another about whom he narrates (*e.g.*, a poet may speak as if he were a woman lamenting as well as 'arranging' his speaking into a lament-like melody); but it is also possible that a poet's musical composition may in its verbal part be a 'simple narration' that does not involve μίμησις of characters about whom he narrates.[146]

What does the discussion of poetry in the *Laws* add to the account of musical μίμησις discussed above, derived from *Republic* III? This discussion, which is also concerned with the moral impact of poetry, focuses on particular types of musical compositions: Book II, on choral dance (χορεία), which combines dancing (ὄρχησις) and singing (ᾠδή; 654b3-4);[147] Book VII on dance, as a part of gymnastic training but still a comprising part of the 'musical' art (795d6-e1, 813a5-817e3). Perhaps the most noticeable difference to *Republic* III is that here, it is not only 'harmony' and 'rhythm' that are characterised as μιμήματα, but the practice of μουσική as such is characterised as 'figurative' and 'mimetic' on various occasions.[148] However, the whole context suggests that the practice of μουσική is intended here in a narrower sense, *i.e.* as a practice that 'is about

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[146] In a jocular remark in *L.* II 669b5-670a3, poets are criticised for 'inconsistent' μίμησις: when composing words of men, poets give them the colour and the melody of women (what Muses themselves would never do, it is said), and further, for making their compositions either just verbal (not musical) or just musical (non-verbal), with the argument that it is very difficult to know, in this latter case, what the rhythm and melody without λόγος stand for (*i.e.* what they are μιμήματα and figures of).

[147] As can be derived from the discussion, choral dance was often part of public religious festivities and could take the form of a contest dedicated to a particular god; it could be performed, it seems, by both genders and by people of all ages, children, young people and adults (*L.* II 653c7-654a7 *et al.*).

[148] *L.* II 668a6-7: Οὐκοῦν μουσικήν γε πᾶσάν φαμεν εἰκαστικήν τε εἶναι καὶ μιμητικήν;

L. II 668b9-c2: Καὶ μὴν τοῦτό γε πᾶς ἂν ὁμολογοῖ περὶ τῆς μουσικῆς, ὅτι πάντα τὰ περὶ αὐτήν ἐστιν ποιήματα μίμησίς τε καὶ ἀπεικασία· καὶ τοῦτό γε μῶν οὐκ ἂν σύμπαντες ὁμολογοῖεν ποιηταί τε καὶ ἀκροαταὶ καὶ ὑποκριταί;,

L. VII 789d7-e1: Τί οὖν; τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λόγοις πιστεύομεν, οἷς ἐλέγομεν ὡς τὰ περὶ τοὺς ῥυθμοὺς καὶ πᾶσαν μουσικήν ἐστιν τρόπων μιμήματα βελτιόνων καὶ χειρόνων ἀνθρώπων; ἢ πῶς;

rhythm and harmony' ([…] περὶ ῥυθμὸν καὶ ἁρμονίαν οὔσης τῆς μουσικῆς […] *L.* II 655a5-6), and hence as a practice concerned by and large with *musical* (not recited) poetry.[149] In fact, the μίμησις that is here regarded as inherent in the practice of μουσική seems to be the very same one that in *Republic* III is attributed more specifically to the musical elements, harmony and rhythm: for example, there is a 'figure of movement (or gesture)' and 'melody' (and therefore harmony; *L.* II 660a7-8) proper to cowardly men, and different ones proper to courageous men (*L.* II 655a8-9: τὸ δὲ τοῦ δειλοῦ τε καὶ ἀνδρείου σχῆμα ἢ μέλος ἔστιν). By virtue of these two elements, parts (or pieces) of choral dance are thus 'representations' of men's character and modes of conduct (*L.* II 655d5: μιμήματα τρόπων ἐστὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς χορείας).[150]

As for μίμησις occurring in the verbal part of these compositions, *i.e.* μίμησις through impersonation, not much is said; as suggested, in the verbal part of composing, a poet may engage in μίμησις of women or men, free men or slaves, in composing discourses ('words') typical of each of these groups (*L.* II 660a3-8, 669c3-d2, VII 802 d8-e11). It is not obvious, however, to what extent poets do so, rather than composing verbally without engaging in such μίμησις.

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[149] For different meanings that the adjective μουσικός can assume, see Excursus A. Intended in the wider sense, μουσική would involve all activities 'associated with the Muses', and therefore all kinds of compositions by poets. In this case, it would not be obvious in what way non-musical, recitative compositions are inherently mimetic. It is significant, however, that non-musical compositions by poets are discussed separately from choral songs and dances, as if they do not belong to the realm of μουσική, and are grouped together with non-versified compositions as γράμματα, 'things written', intended to be studied in the course of one's education (*L.* VII 809b3-812a3). In my view, μουσική is also to be interpreted in this narrower sense in some other places in which it is characterised as mimetic, *e.g.*, in *Crat.* 423d1, *Pol.* 288c3 and 306d2, *Rep.* II 373b5.

[150] Aristotle's characterisation of poetry as inherently mimetic evokes the account of the practice of μουσική from the *Laws*. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle defines as the distinctive character of poetry (which includes 'the composition of epics, the composition of tragedy and comedy, that of dithyramb, the greatest part of that relative to *aulos*- and *kithara*-playing') its mimetic nature: the various kinds of ποίησις 'are on the whole all representations', μιμήσεις (*cf. Poetica* 1, 1447a13-b23). Aristotle indicates as the objects of this μίμησις (as he seems to suggest, these are common to all kinds of ποίησις, and explicitly attributed to those kinds that involve dancing) characters, actions undergone and actions undertaken (*Poetica* 1, 1447a27-28: καὶ γὰρ οὗτοι διὰ τῶν σχηματιζομένων ῥυθμῶν μιμοῦνται καὶ ἤθη καὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις). However, Aristotle's account does raise a question, which will not be addressed here, as to how non-musical kinds of poetry, such as epic poetry, are inherently mimetic.

As may be recalled, the mimetic character considered in the *Laws* as being inherent in the practice of μουσική has sometimes been associated with the characterisation of poetry as a whole as μίμησις in the epistemological argument in *Republic* X, and the two μιμήσεις have been (implicitly or explicitly) identified:[151] yet, according to the account I propose, these are two quite different kinds of μίμησις, although poets' composing, if it involves both musical and verbal elements, may be characterised as both the former kind of μίμησις (in its musical elements) and the latter (in its verbal element, as narration, on the assumption that it does not rely on relevant knowledge).

Last, the evaluation of musical μίμησις, just as of the verbal μίμησις through impersonation, is subjected to the educative or formative requirements to which poetry should conform, though the framework of the discussion in *Republic* III and the *Laws* is slightly different: the *Republic* is concerned with the education of prospective guards of the envisaged state, whereas the *Laws* discusses the 'education' of citizens of all ages in actual or future states.[152] Both discussions approve only those poets' musical compositions, or elements of them, that are mimetic of virtuous characters and conduct: 'temperate, courageous and in all ways good men' (*Laws* II 660a3-8), but not inferior, for example, cowardly, men (*L.* II 655a8-b6). This evaluation in the *Laws* relies on the same assumptions as does *Republic* III about the moral impact that figurative μίμησις has for both those engaging in it, or even for those only in attendance.

Μίμησις in the epistemological argument in *Republic* X

In the first, epistemological argument about poetry in *Republic* X, by and large all poetry is characterised as μίμησις. However, unlike in the other two cases of

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[151] See, for example, Halliwell, *Plato:* Republic *X*, 5; Ferrari, 'Plato and Poetry', 110 and 120; Giuliano, *Platone e la poesia*, 98-99.

[152] More precisely, the unnamed Athenian leading the discussion, the Cretan Clinias and the Spartan Megillus discuss a specific task originally entrusted to Clinias (among others) by the state of Cnossos: that of producing appropriate legislation for a colony of Cnossos that is to be founded in the near future (*L.* III 702b4-e2).

poets' μίμησις considered above, here it is never clearly indicated what the object of this μίμησις is, and thus just in what sense poets' activity is qualified as such. These questions will be examined in detail in the next chapter; here, however, the solutions proposed concerning this μίμησις may be outlined.

As anticipated, poets are characterised as μιμηταί on the premise that they lack relevant knowledge. Just as in the *Ion*, poets' incompetence is granted through approaching poetry as discourse on various arts, which poets evidently do not master. Now, as I shall suggest in Chapter V, on the premise of poets' incompetence, poets' activity, for example, Homer's, may be described as follows. When Homer narrates about Hecamede's preparation of *kikeon* for the wounded Machaon, Homer implicitly speaks about matters related to medicine, *e.g.*, how *kikeon* is prepared or how someone wounded is cured: in doing so, he is *like* someone practicing medicine, for it is those who practice the art of medicine that both deal with and speak about such matters. But *unlike* such a practitioner, Homer speaks about matters related to medicine without relying on the knowledge of these matters; *unlike* such a practitioner, Homer therefore cannot provide an adequate account of them, but rather a *deficient* one. By virtue of this likeness (in being a discourse on medical matters), Homer's narration about preparing *kikeon*, constitutes a *figure* of an *adequate* discourse on medical matters, that is, a figure of a 'medical discourse' (*Rep.* X 599c2). But moreover, this figure is *deceptive*, inasmuch as it is perceived to be an adequate discourse, which relies on knowledge (*i.e.* Homer is judged to speak *well*) and Homer himself constitutes a *deceptive* figure of someone competent in matters related to medicine, inasmuch as he is perceived as someone with such competence. Homer's discourse on matters related to medicine may thus be characterised as μίμησις of 'medical discourses' and Homer as a μιμητής of such discourses (expressing the *result* of the activity that is in fact the object of μίμησις), or also as a μιμητής of someone competent in medicine (expressing the agent of this activity); this μίμησις is figurative and deceptive. It is important to notice how this μίμησις differs from Homer's figurative *non-deceptive* μίμησις of Chryses: while nobody mistakes Homer for Chryses, when Homer speaks like Chryses, naïve people will mistake Homer for

someone competent in medicine, when he speaks like someone competent in this art (*i.e.* when he speaks about matters related to medicine).

On this account, then, the term μίμησις in the argument has no different meaning from the meaning it has in *Republic* III or in the *Laws*: it equally well denotes an activity that is like (and intends to be like) another activity. More generally, by narrating about events and actions related to one art or another without being competent in the respective art, poets engage in figurative deceptive μίμησις of those who are competent in these arts. Of course, when thus narrating, they may at the same time *also* engage in a (figurative non-deceptive) μίμησις of one character or another about whom they narrate, or choose not to do so; and further, they may engage in a μίμησις of a particular type of moral character or conduct (courageous, temperate) by 'arranging' their narration into a particular melodic and rhythmical composition.

As to the derivation of the three characterisations of poets' activity as μίμησις, the account of its musical elements as μίμησις of moral characters and conduct seems to be pre-Platonic, whereas the other two seem to be originally Platonic; however, while the characterisation of poets' impersonation of characters as μίμησις of these characters is so to speak factual and uncontroversial, the characterisation of poets' activity as μίμησις of those competent in their subject matter relies on the controversial and discrediting assumption that poets are incompetent in matters they speak about.

Chapter V

POETS IN BOOK X OF THE *REPUBLIC*

Introduction

Republic X, it is generally agreed, contains the most engaged and passionate attack on poets to be found in Plato's dialogues: in a mocking and at times offensive manner, poets are accused in it of incompetence as well as moral harmfulness. As we have seen, these charges have already been brought against poets, in one form or another, in the *Ion* and the *Gorgias*: in the *Ion*, the subject matter of poetry was 'placed' in the domain of instrumental arts (medicine, chariot-driving and others) and poets were shown to be incompetent in these arts; the *Gorgias*, quite differently from the *Ion*, approached poetry as a practice operating in the moral, or political domain: it accused poets of being potentially harmful to their public (inasmuch as they do not aim to render them temperate and just) and aimed to show that their pursuits rely on a mistaken perception of what benefits men and their ignorance of what is truly beneficial. The series of similar charges that is launched against poets in *Republic* X may be divided into two separate arguments: the first, 'epistemological', argument (595c-602b) accuses poets of incompetence concerning their subject matter, which now includes both matters related to the 'instrumental' arts and those belonging to the political, or moral sphere; the subsequent 'ethical' argument (602c-607a), accuses poets, to the extent that their poetry is 'mimetic'[153], of morally corrupting their public and thus of being harmful to them. However, these charges in *Republic* X are 'embedded' in a considerably different picture of poetry from either of the earlier two dialogues: poets' activity, on the assumption that it does not rely on knowledge, is characterised as μίμησις and poets' works are compared with painted images, where it is not at all clear

[153] As I will argue, the μίμησις that the charge of corruption is addressed to is the μίμησις 'through impersonation' described in Book III, not the μίμησις introduced in the 'epistemological' argument in Book X.

what this alleged μίμησις consists in, nor exactly how poets' works are similar to paintings; whereas the charge of the corrupting effect of poets' μίμησις (through impersonation, as I shall argue), which is said to consist in strengthening spectators' 'affective', rather than 'rational' conduct, is now based on a specific account of the soul.

The discussion of poetry in *Republic* X raises several problems of interpretation not only in itself, but also in relation to arguments found earlier on in the *Republic*: while now, by and large, all poetry seems to be discredited and rejected, poets have earlier on been involved with in the educational system of the envisaged state; further, the poets' μίμησις introduced in Book X is evidently different from the poets' μίμησις discussed in Book III, yet this shift seems to take place tacitly; again, the discussion of how 'mimetic' poetry affects men's souls follows on from the differentiation of the soul into parts made in Book IV, yet it does not seem to maintain the model of the soul developed there. Apart from the arguments concerning poetry, the tri-grade ontological picture drawn in the first part of Book X is at odds with the ontology of the central books of the *Republic* and also seems to be untenable in itself.

As this last ontological subject does not directly affect the subsequent discussion of poetry, it will be confronted separately in Excursus E. Some of the other problems listed above have already been discussed in previous chapters. In Chapter I, the apparently inconsistent evaluation of poets in the two discussions has been considered. As may be recalled, this apparent inconsistency has received quite diverse interpretations. Annas (*An Introduction to Plato's* Republic, 336-344) judged it to be in fact capricious and unjustifiable, whereas various scholars have proposed various solutions to reconcile the two discussions: Tate ('"Imitation" in Plato's *Republic*'), Burnyeat ('Culture and Society in Plato's *Republic*', 292-300) and Büttner (*Die Literaturtheorie bei Platon und ihre anthropologische Begründung*, 170-214, esp. 208), though using considerably different arguments, aim to show that the target of the attack in the second discussion is in fact not all poetry, but only the kind of poetry that was previously rejected in Book III; or again Levin (*The Ancient Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry Revisited*, 152-153, 165-167) explains the supposedly different evaluation of poetry by relating it

to the different social setting in which poetry is examined, as its addressees are no longer the prospective guards, but citizens in general. As an alternative to these solutions, I have suggested that the second discussion differs from the first one in *the questions it aims to answer*, rather than in the evaluation of poetry. In fact, poets only apparently receive more credit in the first discussion than in the second, whereas in fact neither discussion credits poets with any competence (in particular in moral matters) or with any ability of their own to morally benefit their public. However, on these 'negative' assumptions about poets, the first discussion deprives poets of their autonomy and renders them *instrumental* to the governing body of the envisaged state (the latter being credited with moral and political competence) in exercising the task of education; the discussion is concerned with the *prescriptive* question of *what poets should do* in the educational role assigned to them in this state. By contrast, the aim of the second discussion is to *prove* the above negative assumptions about poets, *i.e.* poets' moral (and other) incompetence and their potential harmfulness in their actual *autonomous* role (as opposed to the envisaged subordinate and instrumental one); the questions it addresses are therefore *whether poets have relevant knowledge* and *how they morally affect their public*, which are *descriptive* questions (to which answers are provided that are discrediting for poets).

The question of how the poets' μίμησις introduced in Book X differs from the poets' μίμησις discussed in Book III has been addressed in the previous chapter. Against the quite common assumption of the 'narrower and wider' meanings of the term μίμησις in the two books, rendered respectively as 'impersonation' and 'artistic depiction, or representation', I have argued that the μίμησις attributed to poets in *Republic* X can be consistently interpreted by maintaining a single meaning of the term μίμησις; as I have suggested, the term denotes an activity that may be defined as doing something that is intentionally like something else. I have thus identified three kinds of μίμησις attributed to poets in the *Republic* and suggested how they differ, anticipating some conclusions about poets' μίμησις in the epistemological argument in Book X.

In this chapter, my aim is to show what has been anticipated there: that it is poets' speaking about some matter or other, on the premise that it does not rely on

knowledge, which is characterised as μίμησις, and that this μίμησις is, more precisely, figurative μίμησις of those who are competent in the matters poets speak about (incompetently); this μίμησις is moreover deceptive, inasmuch as many people judge (various) poets to speak 'well' and to have knowledge about their subject matter. Together with proposing this interpretation, I will examine exactly how poets' activity is similar to the activity of painting, to which it is compared in the argument. In the second part of the chapter, I will consider the subsequent, 'ethical' argument, in which 'mimetic' poetry is accused of causing moral harm to its public. My aim will first be to show (as anticipated) that the kind of μίμησις the ethical argument is concerned with is again μίμησις 'through impersonation' as introduced in Book III, and that the change of reference once again occurs without notice. I will then examine how well-grounded are the psychological arguments provided to show the harmfulness of this μίμησις.

The epistemological argument

The characterisation of poetry as μίμησις

The second discussion of poetry in the *Republic* opens with Socrates' stated intention to show that their earlier decision of 'not accepting as much of [poetry] as is mimetic', was appropriate. The 'mimetic' poetry referred to here must thus be that which was rejected in the first discussion. Although the discussion in Book III does not mention 'mimetic' poetry, it does mention a 'mimetic' poet or person in general, suggesting that he is someone who 'engages a lot in representing/ imitating' (πολλὰ μιμήσεται; *Rep. III* 395a2, *cf.* 394e1-9) and his μίμησις is also unselective. An extreme case of a poet of this kind is described with much disdain at 397a-b: a poet who engages in frequent and unselective μίμησις of men of all kinds, and further, of animals and even inanimate things that produce sounds. 'Mimetic' poetry, we may thus suppose, is the corresponding kind of poetry, *i.e.* poetry that involves frequent and unselective μίμησις of characters narrated about, *i.e.* μίμησις 'through impersonation'. Socrates' aim is to show the damaging effect of such poetry in the light of the differentiation of the soul into parts, which

has been made in the meantime (595a).[154] However, it will not be until the second, 'ethical' argument that this subject will be confronted. What immediately follows is the complex and controversial ontological discussion of couch-making and a painting (considered in Excursus E), which eventually turns to the subject of poetry. Once the interlocutors establish, against the belief of the many, that poets cannot be competent in the matters about which they speak, they are compared with the painter, who has been introduced beforehand, and characterised as μιμηταί who somehow deceive their public into crediting them with great knowledge and wisdom:

δεῖ δὴ ἐπισκέψασθαι πότερον μιμηταῖς τούτοις οὗτοι ἐντυχόντες ἐξηπάτηνται καὶ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν ὁρῶντες οὐκ αἰσθάνονται τριττὰ ἀπέχοντα τοῦ ὄντος καὶ ῥᾴδια ποιεῖν μὴ εἰδότι τὴν ἀλήθειαν – φαντάσματα γὰρ ἀλλ' οὐκ ὄντα ποιοῦσιν – ἤ τι καὶ λέγουσιν καὶ τῷ ὄντι οἱ ἀγαθοὶ ποιηταὶ ἴσασιν περὶ ὧν δοκοῦσιν τοῖς πολλοῖς εὖ λέγειν.

It is necessary to examine, then, whether these people [who credit Homer and other 'good' poets with knowledge] have been deceived through having met these[155] imitators, and who when looking at their works *do not perceive* that these are at the third remove from what is true[156] and are easy to make for someone who does not know the truth – for they make appearances, but do not make true things –, or there is indeed something in what these people are saying and good poets truly do know the things about which they seem to many to speak well. (598e-599a)[157]

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[154] Socrates' reference evidently relates to the discussion in Book IV (435b-441c).

[155] 'These', *i.e.* the imitators mentioned in the previous paragraph; *Rep.* X 598c-d.

[156] The tri-grade ontological scheme is discussed in Excursus E.

[157] The adjective ἀληθής and cognate terms are in the thesis consistently rendered with 'true' and its cognates, though 'real' would be in some cases more appropriate. In Plato's dialogues, ἀληθής may be applied both to objects (typically, as antonymous with φαινόμενος) and to discourse (as antonymous with ψευδής); whereas English typically, but not strictly, applies the antonyms real/ apparent to things and the antonyms true/ false to a discourse, thus distinguishing terminologically between 'ontological' and 'non-ontological', *i.e.* discursive or propositional, truth. By translating

In what follows, the suggestion that poets are in fact μιμηταί will of course prevail, whereas the widely held belief in poets' knowledge and wisdom, which is here (rhetorically) still allowed of, will not only be rejected, but also presented as a naïve judgement resulting from a particular deception produced by poetry. Yet, it is not obvious just in what sense poetry is characterised as μίμησις, nor exactly what is deceptive about it: this is explained only in subsequent arguments, and even there, in good part, through the comparison of poets with painters. Before examining these arguments, however, it is important to consider first how the allegation of poets' incompetence is granted in the argument.

Poetry as discourse on arts

The argument that disproves poets' knowledge relies on the same approach to poetry as was adopted already in the *Ion*: poetry is viewed as speaking about matters related to one art and branch of knowledge or another, or in short, about one art or another. Thus Socrates initially observes how poets are credited by their admirers with the knowledge of 'all the arts, as well as all human things concerning excellence and vice, and divine things no less' (598e),[158] evidently on the understanding that these constitute the subject matter of poets' compositions (and inasmuch as poets make fine compositions about them). Later on, the approach to poetry as discourse on arts is even more explicit: any poet, and in

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ἀληθής with 'true', which may in English be used (though it is less common) in the ontological sense as well (*e.g.*, a true couch), I avoid predetermining the sense of ἀληθής in particular occurrences. The differentiation between non-ontological and ontological sense of ἀληθής will turn out to be relevant for my interpretation of the epistemological argument.

[158] Leszl ('Plato's Attitude to Poetry and the Fine Arts, and the Origins of Aesthetics. Part II', 332-336, and 'Plato's Attitude to Poetry and the Fine Arts, and the Origins of Aesthetics. Part III', 292-296) has pointed out 'the illegitimate transition' of this argument from 'human excellence and vice and divine things' to 'all the arts': as he convincingly argues, while poets must have been regarded as authorities in the former matters, there is no firm evidence, nor is it likely, that they were regarded as competent in arts such as medicine, generalship, *etc*. By contrast, Giuliano (*Platone e la poesia*, 87-90) seems to defend the 'transition' as legitimate.

particular Homer, is challenged to prove that he has knowledge not so much of medicine and 'other arts' as of '[…] the greatest and most beautiful things Homer undertakes to speak about, wars and generalship, government of states, man's education […]' (599c-d); or again, Socrates mentions poets' speaking about 'leatherworking' and 'generalship' (601a-b).

However, unlike the *Ion*, the present argument does not make it clear exactly in what sense poets speak about arts. It is thus useful to briefly recall the analogous approach to poetry in the *Ion*. As observed in Chapter II, it is a poet's narrating about facts, events, and actions, that counts as speaking about one art or another: Homer speaks about medicine, for example, when in the *Iliad* he narrates 'how Hecamede, Nestor's concubine, gives *kikeon* to the wounded Machaon', evidently inasmuch as Hecamede's preparation of *kikeon* for the wounded Machaon is an action of the medical kind, *i.e.* an action for which some medical knowledge is required (*Ion* 538b-c). Likewise, Homer's verses about Nestor's giving advice to his son Antilochus that he should be 'careful of the turn at the horserace in honour of Patroclus' count as verses about the art of chariot-driving (*Ion* 537a-c), and again some other verses by Homer as verses about fishing (*Ion* 538c-d) and divination (*Ion* 538e-539d).

On this understanding, as is obvious, the arts poets speak about will turn out to be numerous. Now, this approach to poetry, which seems to be adopted in *Republic* X as well, enables a certain reformulation of the question of poets' knowledge. In fact, the question as to whether poets know about the matters of which they speak is translated into the question of whether poets are competent in the arts to which the facts, actions, and events narrated by them, are related. Thus, if Homer happens to be incompetent in the art of medicine, he will turn out to be speaking about matters in which he is not competent, when he narrates about Hecamede's preparing *kikeon* for the wounded Machaon. Relying on this understanding of poets' activity, the discussion provides two arguments to show that poets are in fact not competent in the arts related to the matters they speak about. First, the knowledge that poets should, individually, possess is simply too vast, for it

comprises numerous arts and matters, about which other people have only selective and limited knowledge (598c-d). And secondly, while Homer and other poets speak of matters related to various arts, no one of them has ever proved himself as competent by engaging in actions that require competence in these arts, for example, neither Homer nor any other poet is known to have cured anybody (599c), nor, much more importantly, for having contributed to the better government of any state (599d-e), for having been a guide in educating men in private (600a-e), for having led a war (600a), and so on. The latter occupations are in fact characterised as being concerned with human 'excellence' (ἀρετή), inasmuch as their aim is to make men (as citizens) better: poets would prove their competence in excellence, and thus their ability 'to discern which occupations make men better or worse in private and in public' (599d) only through their successful engagement in the field of politics or education.

Unlike the *Ion*, then, the subject matter of poetry is here placed not only in the domain of instrumental arts, but also in the moral domain of ἀρετή. At the same time, the knowledge of ἀρετή is posited in parallel with knowledge constituting instrumental arts and poets are deprived of both kinds of knowledge so to speak in a 'single move': the argument of 'excessive knowledge' and that of 'lack of practical evidence' appear sufficient to conclude that poets must in fact lack both knowledge of instrumental arts and knowledge of ἀρετή, and therefore, that they are incompetent in matters about which they speak (as matters pertaining to these arts and branches of knowledge). Now, once poets' incompetence is granted, poets' activity is presented in a new and discrediting light. From the premise of poets' incompetence it follows that poets *cannot* speak 'well' about their subject matter. Accordingly, the impression that poets do speak well about their subject matter, and that they are therefore competent in it, is thus by Socrates judged to be mistaken and a result of some deception. The allegedly false impression that poets speak well is later on, rather dismissively, attributed by Socrates to the musical elements of a poet's discourse; as he suggests, in conversation with Glaucon,

[...] ὥστε ἑτέροις τοιούτοις ἐκ τῶν λόγων θεωροῦσι δοκεῖν, ἐάντε περὶ σκυτοτομίας τις λέγῃ ἐν μέτρῳ καὶ ῥυθμῷ καὶ ἁρμονίᾳ, πάνυ εὖ δοκεῖν λέγεσθαι, ἐάντε περὶ στρατηγίας ἐάντε περὶ ἄλλου ὁτουοῦν· οὕτω φύσει αὐτὰ ταῦτα μεγάλην τινὰ κήλησιν ἔχειν. ἐπεὶ γυμνωθέντα γε τῶν τῆς μουσικῆς χρωμάτων τὰ τῶν ποιητῶν, αὐτὰ ἐφ' αὑτῶν λεγόμενα, οἶμαί σε εἰδέναι οἷα φαίνεται. τεθέασαι γάρ που.

Ἔγωγ', ἔφη.

Οὐκοῦν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἔοικεν τοῖς τῶν ὡραίων προσώποις, καλῶν δὲ μή, οἷα γίγνεται ἰδεῖν ὅταν αὐτὰ τὸ ἄνθος προλίπῃ;

'[…] to other such people [*i.e.* incompetent in the art concerned][159], who judge from words, it seems, if someone speaks about leatherworking in verse and rhythm and harmony, that he speaks very well, or again, about generalship or whatever else; for these things as such have by nature enormous charm. However, once that poets' works are stripped of the colours of music, taken as things said themselves by themselves, I think you know what they look like. In fact, you have seen them already.'

'I have indeed', he said.

'Do they not', I said, 'resemble the faces of the young, but not of those who are beautiful, as they come to look once the bloom has left them?' (601a- 601b)

That is to say, the musical elements, namely verse, rhythm and harmony, as it were 'cover up' the inferiority of the things that poets say about matters related to one art or another: by employing these means poets wrongly seem, to people who are themselves incompetent in the art concerned, to speak well about these matters. As

[159] The listeners to a poet's composition are compared here with the viewers of a painted leatherworker who are themselves incompetent in this art. I will return to this example shortly.

a consequence, these people will credit poets with knowledge of the respective arts: they will consider poets as competent in these arts.

However, the crucial question to be addressed now concerns the allegation that poets do not speak 'well' (εὖ): what exactly does 'not well' mean here? In other words, just how do things said by poets about one art or another differ from the things said about this art by someone competent in it, who alone would speak 'well' about them, and in what are the former inferior to the latter? For example, how is Homer's narration about Hecamede preparing *kikeon* for the wounded Machaon inferior to a discourse given by someone competent in medicine about how *kikeon* is prepared, or how someone wounded should be treated? We might expect that this not speaking 'well' about an art consists, in this case, in not speaking about it correctly, saying incorrect, false things about it; for in the *Ion*, precisely the possibility that poets do not speak about arts correctly is implied. However, as I shall argue, the main fault poets are charged with in *Republic* X is another one: the 'deficiency' of their discourse on arts. This deficiency is in fact not stated explicitly, but may be derived only from the comparison of poets' discourse on arts with a painter who paints craftsmen; a poet's similarity with such a painter is indicated by metaphorically describing a poet as 'apply[ing] [...] colours of each of the arts' (601a). I shall thus now examine in detail the case of the painter and therefore suggest how this metaphor about what poets do should be intended, *i.e.* how they are similar to a painter of craftsmen.

A painting of a couch as 'far from what is true'

The activity of painting is introduced in the discussion as a paradigmatic example of (figurative) μίμησις and contrasted with making of artefacts. A painting of a couch is thus examined in relation to a manufactured couch (598a-b). As is first observed, a couch, viewed from different sides, only appears different, but 'it does not differ from itself in anything'. A painter, however, will paint a couch (*i.e.* a figure) as it 'appears' (φαίνεται) from a particular viewpoint, *i.e.* the painting will capture one particular visual 'appearance' (φάντασμα) of the couch. The

painter's μίμησις is thus 'relative to what appears, as it appears', and not 'relative to what is, as it is': his μίμησις is of 'appearance' and not of 'the truth' (ἀλήθεια; 598b1-4).

How exactly the difference between 'truth' and 'appearance' is intended, and thus what μίμησις of 'the truth' in particular would consist in, becomes clearer in the subsequent argument; however, 'the truth' (*i.e.* things as they are) seems to be excluded as the possible object of the painter's μίμησις, and presumably of μίμησις in general. The suggestion seems to be that (the painter's) μίμησις is *inherently* of 'appearance'. Now, the conclusion drawn from these observations is the following:

Πόρρω ἄρα που τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἡ μιμητική ἐστιν καί, ὡς ἔοικεν, διὰ τοῦτο πάντα ἀπεργάζεται, ὅτι σμικρόν τι ἑκάστου ἐφάπτεται, καὶ τοῦτο εἴδωλον.

The practice of μίμησις is then far from what is true and, as it seems, fabricates everything because of this: because it captures something little of each thing, and this is an image. (598b6-8)

The above argument seems to refer to μίμησις in general, and not only to painting; although the thing it 'captures' is described as 'image', this term, as well as 'appearance', φάντασμα, will later on be used metaphorically for μιμήματα in general, even if they are not visually perceptible, and in particular for μιμήματα made by poets. Importantly, however, the argument indicates exactly in what sense the things painted are not 'true things' (596e4 ὄντα, e8 ἀληθῆ). After characterising the practice of μίμησις as being 'far from what is true', it is in fact suggested that 'it captures *something little* of each thing'. That is to say, supposedly, that the object this practice makes (fabricates) is like the object it imitates only in 'something little', *i.e.* in a particular (minor) part, or aspect, of the

object imitated. In the case of painting, the 'little thing' captured is evidently one particular visual appearance of the object imitated, *e.g.*, a visual appearance of a couch (by virtue of which the object made by a painter refers to a couch and constitutes a figure of it). By contrast, the object made by a painter, *i.e.* an image of a couch, is in (many) other aspects not like a couch. Importantly, it is not like a couch in those aspects by virtue of which a couch is a couch, *i.e.* in the essential aspects of a couch.[160] If it were, the object made would not be an image of a couch but itself a couch.[161] As observed in Chapter IV, this non-essential likeness is characteristic of 'figurative' μίμησις in general: what is performed or made is like what is imitated only in some non-essential respect (in the case of painting, in its visual appearance), and is, by virtue of this likeness, a figure of it.

The above opposition between 'appearance' and 'truth', the former applying to the object made by painting (or μίμησις in general) and the latter to the object imitated by it, thus seems to be intended as the opposition between ontological deficiency (or incompleteness, partiality) and completeness: the deficiency and partiality of a painting of a couch with respect to a couch consists in its being like a couch only in 'something little', *i.e.* in a particular non-essential aspect, of a couch. The characterisation of painted images as not being 'true things' and the practice of μίμησις as being 'far from what is true' may be understood in this, 'ontological' sense.[162] However, as we shall see shortly, in what follows the characterisation of not being 'true' is used in another sense: 'descriptive'.

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[160] Or we could say, with the ontology of the *Meno* and *Cratylus*, it does not have the form of couch; see *Men.* 72a-76a, *Crat.* 389a-390a.

[161] The distinction corresponds to the distinction mentioned in Chapter IV between making a likeness (εἰκών) of Cratylus and another Cratylus (*Crat.* 432b-c); see p.101, n. 124. See Janaway, *Images of Excellence*, 114-115, for a similar understanding of μίμησις of appearance as opposed to μίμησις of the truth.

[162] It is important not to confuse the notion of 'appearance', denoting a figure *ontologically* deficient with respect to the object it refers to, with the notion of misrepresentation, denoting a figure *descriptively (or propositionally, in a veridical sense*) *false* with respect to the object it refers to. I disagree with the interpretation according to which μίμησις of 'appearance' is misrepresentation. For instance, according to Moss ('What is Mimetic Poetry and Why Is It Bad?', 642), the 'mimetic art', being 'of appearance', consists in 'copying the way the things appear, at the cost of misrepresenting the way things are', where misrepresentation would consist, for example, in

As to the μίμησις of 'the truth', it is not obvious how it is intended. It could perhaps consist in what has been defined in Chapter IV as non-figurative μίμησις. For if μίμησις 'relative to what is, as it is', is understood, *e.g.*, as μίμησις of a couch in its being a couch, then this μίμησις can only consist in making something that is like a couch in the essential aspects of a couch (*i.e.* in those aspects by virtue of which something is a couch), and that is: manufacturing another couch by imitating one (in the essential aspects of a couch).[163] Although such an activity would certainly not count as μίμησις in the present context, in other places in the dialogues there are examples of μίμησις that is 'non-figurative', or (if understood as indicated) as μίμησις of 'the truth'.[164]

'Seeming to be truly a carpenter' and descriptive truth

Now, the ontological 'deficiency' of paintings with respect to 'true' things to which they refer proves fundamental in the next step, in which, as I shall argue, the ontological truth is 'translated' into the 'descriptive' truth. The discussion now focuses on the question of a painter's knowledge. The objects painted are now various craftsmen ('replacing' the earlier couch). Importantly, a painter is able to paint one or other of them without being competent in the respective art:

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the altered proportions of the object represented. However, in my view it is quite clear that at this stage the argument is not concerned with the *correctness* of the image (μίμημα) in relation to the object it refers to (in its proportions), but rather with the *ontological* status of the image in relation to this object, *i.e.* not with the 'propositional' but rather with the 'ontological' truth (the two will be discussed later on). Note also that, on this ('propositional') reading, a painting of a couch that maintains the proportions of the model (*i.e.* an εἰκών, thus defined in the *Sophist*; *cf. Soph.* 235d-236b), and even more an accurate sculpture of a couch, should presumably not be considered as a μίμησις (or μίμημα) of appearance and thus as an εἴδωλον – but that evidently cannot be the case.

[163] Imitating a couch in its essential respect may be described as imitating a couch in its form, and coincides with what earlier on in *Republic* X as well as in the *Cratylus* was described as 'looking to the form (or idea) of couch/ weaving shuttle' (*Rep. X* 596b7: πρὸς τὴν ἰδέαν βλέπων; *Crat.* 389b2-3 πρός […] τὸ εἶδος [βλέπων]). *Cf.* Janaway, *Images of Excellence*, 115.

[164] Some Platonic examples of non-figurative μίμησις are indicated in Chapter IV; see p. 103, n. 129. The making of Cratylus' double may also be considered as a case of such μίμησις, although the term itself is not applied.

οἷον ὁ ζωγράφος, φαμέν, ζωγραφήσει ἡμῖν σκυτοτόμον, τέκτονα, τοὺς ἄλλους δημιουργούς, περὶ οὐδενὸς τούτων ἐπαΐων τῶν τεχνῶν· ἀλλ' ὅμως παῖδάς γε καὶ ἄφρονας ἀνθρώπους, εἰ ἀγαθὸς εἴη ζωγράφος, γράψας ἂν τέκτονα καὶ πόρρωθεν ἐπιδεικνὺς ἐξαπατῷ ἂν τῷ δοκεῖν ὡς ἀληθῶς τέκτονα εἶναι.

Thus a painter, we say, will paint a leatherworker, a carpenter and other craftsmen, being competent in none of these arts; but all the same, if he is a good painter, having painted a carpenter and showing [the painting] from afar, [the painter] will deceive children and naïve people with him [the figure], seeming to them to be truly a carpenter. (598b8-c4)

As anticipated, it is in particular with this painter, *i.e.* one painting a craftsman, that poets' speaking about arts will later on be compared explicitly (600e8-601a6). It may be supposed first that the painting of a carpenter will be a painting of someone engaging in one activity or another to do with carpentry, for example, manufacturing a couch, in some specific moment of that activity. This painting may again be described as an object made by μίμησις of a carpenter *as he visually appears* and thus like a carpenter (the object imitated and referred to) only in 'something little', *i.e.* in his visual appearance alone. By virtue of this likeness, the painting constitutes an 'image' and a figure of a carpenter. Ontologically, the painting will not differ from the painting examined earlier of a couch (or of Cratylus); the image (or figure) of a carpenter is 'ontologically deficient', *i.e.* not true, with respect to a carpenter, the object it refers to. In the language of Book X, it constitutes an apparent carpenter, not a true carpenter (*cf.* 596e10).

The above argument, however, is concerned with the epistemological, rather than ontological, aspect of painting a craftsman: as argued, a painter will paint various craftsmen without being competent in their respective arts. This epistemological condition of a painter seems to be quite obvious: for inasmuch as an image is like

the object it imitates, and refers to, (by definition) only in the visual appearance of this object, making an image of it will of course not require any arts that are related to this object itself in other ways; for example, making an image of someone manufacturing a couch, or again an image of a couch, or of reins, or of a bit (*cf.* 601c6), does not require the art needed to make a couch, or reins, or a bit. The art required for making an image of any of these objects (regardless of what the object is) is the art of painting alone.

However, as is then suggested, a painting of a craftsman (if skilfully painted and shown from afar), even though it is made by a painter incompetent in carpentry, can produce a particular deception: to naïve viewers, or more precisely those not competent in the respective art (as specified at 601a1-2, where an analogous example is given), the painted carpenter will wrongly seem 'to be truly a carpenter'. What exactly then does this deception consist in? With (to my knowledge) two exceptions, it has been generally assumed that the deception consists in mistaking the figure of a carpenter for a true one; consequently, the example has been understood to be about a 'painter-illusionist' and a '*trompe l'oeil*'.[165] However, this admittedly unconvincing interpretation relies on the '*ontological*' reading of the phrase 'seeming to be truly a carpenter' (and 'what seems to be a leatherworker' at 600e9-601a1). More precisely, the implied claim that the carpenter painted is in fact not 'truly' a carpenter, is understood as saying that the painted carpenter is not a true carpenter, but only an image, or a figure of one. Hence, those to whom the painted carpenter seems 'to be truly a carpenter' would mistake the figure of a carpenter for a true one. But in fact, the implied claim that the carpenter painted is not 'truly' a carpenter, but may only seem 'to be truly' one, may be understood in an non-ontological sense as well, *i.e.* as saying that the painted carpenter is in fact not, but only seems to be, *such as* a carpenter *is*; that is to say, that the painting does not represent a carpenter truthfully. Now, as we shall see shortly, even this 'non-ontological' reading allows of two different

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[165] Annas (*An Introduction to Plato's* Republic, 336 and 340), Janaway (*Images of Excellence*, 134 and 136), Murray (*Plato on Poetry,* 200), Halliwell (*The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 134), Moss ('What is Mimetic Poetry and Why Is It Bad?', 643 and 650) all find the example of 'trompe l'oeil' rather implausible, but do not suggest an alternative interpretation.

interpretations: 'veridical', suggested by E. Belfiore, and 'descriptive', which I shall endorse.[166]

Grammatically, the two examples (of a carpenter at 598c1-4 and a leatherworker at 600e-601a) seem to allow either of the alternative readings: 'ontological' (mistaking the image for a true thing) and non-ontological (either 'veridical' or 'descriptive'). However, the argument in favour of the non-ontological interpretation against the ontological one is not only the obvious unlikelihood of mistaking a painting of a carpenter (or a leatherworker at 600e9-601a2) for a true one. The crucial argument can be retrieved from the generalisation drawn from the example in the next paragraph (598c6-d5): as a consequence of the same kind of deception, a μιμητής will seem, to someone naïve, to be 'knowledgeable about all crafts' and 'omniscient'. Now, if the deception from the example consists in mistaking the image of carpenter for a true carpenter, it cannot provide a model for the deception that results in crediting the maker of the image with respective knowledge. By contrast, adopting non-ontological interpretation, the deception from the example functions perfectly well as a model for the generalisation made.[167]

Now, on the 'descriptive' reading, the painted carpenter is not such as a carpenter *is*, but only such as a carpenter visually *appears*. Let us consider this possibility closely. For the sake of argument, we may imagine a highly accurate painting of a carpenter manufacturing a couch (*e.g.*, comparable to a reflection in a mirror; see 596d-e): an image that is, so to speak, in every detail like a particular visual appearance of a carpenter at work. But even in this case, the image will capture

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[166] To my knowledge, the 'ontological' reading was first contested by Belfiore ('Plato's Greatest Accusation against Poetry', 44-47); her 'veridical' interpretation is presented below; however, her convincing arguments against the ontological reading seem to have remained ignored or at least not adequately appreciated. More recently, the ontological reading has been rejected also by Burnyeat ('Culture and Society in Plato's *Republic*', 302-305; without reference to Belfiore's article). I have developed my 'descriptive' interpretative solution, which differs from Belfiore's ('veridical'), following a suggestion made by Fritz-Gregor Herrmann.

[167] See Burnyeat, 'Culture and Society in Plato's *Republic'*, 304-305, for a similar objection. Slightly different arguments against the ontological reading are given by Belfiore ('Plato's Greatest Accusation against Poetry', 44-46). Both scholars reject also the ontological reading of the parallel example of the painter's deception in the *Sophist* (234b), yet in my view this reading cannot be excluded there.

only one particular visual appearance of a carpenter at work, *i.e.* the painted carpenter will be (exactly) such as a carpenter visually *appears*.

Now, we may take a further step and imagine a description of what is in the painting. It is obvious that a description of someone manufacturing a couch, derived from the painting, will not be an adequate and complete description of the carpenter's manufacturing a couch, to which the painting refers. If it were, it may be argued, it could be successfully used as an instruction of how to make a couch, but that is evidently not the case. Instead, the painting will 'provide' only a description of how a carpenter's work visually appears. As such, the painting will thus provide an incomplete, or deficient description of a carpenter's activity to which it refers. By contrast, the description of someone's manufacturing a couch that relies on relevant knowledge will provide a satisfactory, or complete, description of a carpenter's manufacturing a couch.

In the descriptive sense, then, a carpenter painted is not 'truly a carpenter' in that the painting does not provide (or is not equivalent to) 'the whole truth', as it were, about what carpenter does: it does not provide a description of a carpenter '*as he is*', but merely provides a description of a carpenter '*as he (visually) appears*'. Relying on this reading, a viewer to whom the painted carpenter mistakenly seems 'to be truly a carpenter' will take the painting as equivalent to a complete and adequate *description* of a carpenter at work, for example, of a carpenter manufacturing a couch. However, such a deception may be produced only in a 'naïve' viewer, such as one incompetent in carpentry (*cf.* 601a1-2); by contrast, a viewer competent in carpentry, for example, one who has knowledge of couch manufacturing, cannot be deceived into taking the painting as equivalent to such (complete and adequate) a description.

It is also important to note that even if a painter happened to be competent in carpentry, he could not paint what is 'truly a carpenter' (in the descriptive sense), due to the very nature itself of paintings, and more generally figures: for even the most accurate painting of a carpenter will capture no more than an exact particular appearance, *i.e.* 'something little', of the object it imitates and refers to, thus corresponding to a description of the appearance only. Now, if the painting of a

carpenter is less than accurate, *i.e.* if, in one aspect or another, it is not like a particular visual appearance of a carpenter at work, the painted carpenter will not even be *exactly* such as a carpenter visually appears; *e.g.*, the tools (used by a carpenter) painted may not have the same shape as the true ones. Only in this respect, supposedly, competence in carpentry could be relevant, inasmuch as it involves knowledge of how the tools appear (look like). It may be that the possible 'incorrectness' of the image, in one aspect or another, with respect to the visual appearance of the object it refers to, is pointed at in the later argument at 601c6-602b3: it is argued there that a painter does not even have to take into account the use of the artefact (reins, a bit) whose image he makes; whereas for manufacturing an artefact, the 'correct belief' of how the artefact is used is required and is gained from a user of the artefact who in fact has knowledge of its use. In this case, we may say, the painting will be equivalent to a description of a carpenter that is incorrect, in addition to being deficient (*i.e.* of the visual appearance only).

Now, according to Belfiore's above-mentioned 'veridical' interpretation of the argument, the painted carpenter is not 'truly a carpenter' precisely insofar as a carpenter is painted *incorrectly* (in the way indicated above): 'Plato's painted carpenter is a painting that appears to the ignorant to represent someone *doing carpentry*, someone who functions well as a carpenter, while actually it represents someone doing things no skilled carpenter would do' ('Plato's Greatest Accusation against Poetry', 44-45). Consequently, Belfiore maintains that a painting of what is 'truly a carpenter', *i.e.* 'a representation, made by someone with knowledge, of a person who is actually doing carpentry' is possible (*ibid.*, 46). However, this account is in my view too narrow for the reasons already given above. A painting whose object imitated is a (skilled) carpenter and which is as accurate as a reflection in a mirror (yet, as argued above, such a painting can presumably be made just as well by someone incompetent in carpentry) will surely represent – but crucially, represent only by virtue of being like an *appearance* of a skilled carpenter – someone doing things that a skilled carpenter would do; on Belfiore's account, in that case the painted carpenter will count as being 'truly a carpenter'. The argument, by contrast, indicates that it is due to the nature itself of a painting,

which captures only ‘something little’ of him, his appearance, that a carpenter painted is not ‘truly a carpenter’.

Poets ‘applying colours of arts’

Poets, it may be recalled, inasmuch as they are incompetent in the arts about which they speak, cannot speak ‘well’ about them; instead, they do something similar to what the above painter does: a poet ‘applies, with words and phrases, colours of each of the arts’ (601a4-6). It is now possible to clarify exactly what poets are in this metaphorical description alleged to do: by narrating, a poet says about matters related to one art or another as little (and further, speaking as correctly) as, for example, a painter ‘says’ about a carpenter’s couch manufacturing by making a painting of a carpenter engaging in this activity. That is to say, just as such a painting will provide a deficient, or even incorrect, description of a carpenter’s work, so too will a poet’s narration. By narrating about Hecamede preparing *kikeon* for the wounded Machaon, Homer does not provide an adequate, satisfactory description of such matters as how *kikeon* is prepared or how someone wounded is cured, but a deficient, or even incorrect, description of these matters: it is in this sense that his narration consists in ‘applying colours’ of medicine. One would not be able to prepare *kikeon* or, even less so, to cure a wounded man, by relying on his narration; yet, to those incompetent in medicine, who will thus judge Homer’s narration only ‘from words’, as these are embellished by verse, rhythm and harmony (601a7-b2), Homer will seem to speak ‘very well’, *i.e.* to provide an adequate, satisfactory, account of these matters, and therefore to be competent in medicine, whereas in fact, Homer does not have such competence (as has been established through the arguments of ‘excessive knowledge’ and ‘lack of practical evidence’). These incompetent hearers, in that they perceive Homer’s narration as such, in no way deficient, account of matters related to medicine, are in their turn similar to the viewers to whom the painted leatherworker ‘seems to be a leatherworker’, *i.e.* the viewers who perceive such a painting as providing a complete description of what a leatherworker does; the deception is here also due

to these viewers' incompetence in the art concerned and their judging only 'from colours and shapes' (601a2).

Poets as μιμηταί of 'medical discourses'

It is now possible to interpret the initial allegation that poets are μιμηταί and that their admirers, 'looking at their works do not perceive that these are at the third remove from what is true and are things that are easy to make for someone without knowing the truth – for they make appearances, but do not make true things' (598e-599a). In what sense, then, are poets' works 'appearances', and that is to say, figurative μιμήματα (*cf.* 599b5 ἐπὶ τοῖς μιμήμασι), and further, in what sense are they mistaken, by poets' admirers, for 'true things'? Observe first that poets' '*works*', characterised as 'appearances' and μιμήματα, must evidently be poets' *compositions*, and not, what has often been assumed (as seen above), men, gods, objects, events, about which poets narrate; how indeed could the latter be referred to as 'poets' works (ἔργα)'?

.Now, the argument does not specify what exactly the 'true things', as counterparts of 'appearances', or μιμήματα, made by poets, are; that is to say, what the object of poets' alleged μίμησις is. However, the argument suggests that those who credit poets with knowledge about the matters of which they speak do so inasmuch as they 'do not perceive' that poets' works are 'appearances' and not 'true things'; that means, supposedly, that they mistake poets' works, which are in fact μιμήματα, for the things themselves of which they are μιμήματα. What may be inferred, therefore, is that the 'things' poets' works are mistaken for are the things whose making requires precisely the knowledge that is mistakenly attributed to poets.

Now, as Socrates suggests in the argument, poets are credited with knowledge of the arts they speak about (through narrating about actions, events and other matters related to one art or another), this being a result of the deceptive impression that they speak 'very well' about these arts. It is thus poets' works, being viewed as things said about matters related to one art or another, that are characterised as

μιμήματα, whereas their true counterparts, which poets' compositions only resemble, will be things said about these matters that rely on the relevant knowledge. This interpretation of poets' μίμησις seems to be validated also in Socrates' rhetorical challenge launched at Homer and all other poets who speak about matters related to medicine: he asks them to prove that they are each 'competent in medicine' (ἰατρικός) by indicating actions that require such competence; whereas not having engaged in such actions, each of them must be considered as a 'μιμητής of medical discourses' (μιμητὴς μόνον ἰατρικῶν λόγων 599c2); 'medical discourses' are evidently discourses about matters related to the art of medicine that, unlike poets' discourses on these matters, rely on relevant knowledge. Poets' narrations then stand in relation to such 'medical discourses' just as painted images stand in relation to the things whose images they are: poets' narrations are only *like* them 'in something little'. More precisely, poets' narrations about actions, events and matters related to the art of medicine will be *like* medical discourses in that they are about the same matters (for example, about how someone wounded is cured); however, as concluded above, poets' narrations will provide deficient, or even incorrect, account of these matters, and are thus in 'something little' like discourses relying on the relevant knowledge, which provide adequate descriptions of these matters. But moreover, poets' works are deceptive μιμήματα of discourses that rely on knowledge: their deceptive character is evidently due to the poetic elements of poets' works: because of these, things said by poets about matters related to 'leatherworking' or 'generalship' or some other art, will seem, to those incompetent in the arts concerned, to be adequate, and not deficient, descriptions of such matters, *i.e.* these people will perceive them as 'true things'. To these people, poets' works would reveal themselves as inferior and deficient if they were stripped of the poetic elements.

As the argument suggests, like the painter, poets do not know 'the truth (ἀλήθεια)' (599a2), nor make 'true things (ὄντα)' (599a2-3), or again, they do not 'capture' the truth (600e8). However, here too we may distinguish between two senses of 'truth' involved. A poet's narration 'does not capture the truth' primarily in the *descriptive* sense, *i.e.* in that it is a deficient description of the matters related to arts (*e.g.*, how someone wounded is cured, how a battle is conducted). On the

other hand, poets' narrations may be described as *ontologically* not true, *i.e.* as φαντάσματα, or μιμήματα, with respect to discourses that rely on knowledge of the subject matter (*e.g.*, 'medical discourses'), which are their true counterparts (ὄντα).

Homer: a μιμητής of Chryses and of the ἰατρικός

Finally, in order to compare this μίμησις with poets' μίμησις of characters about whom they narrate from *Republic* III, we may describe it in slightly different terms, that is, by indicating the *agent* of the activity that is as a whole the object of their μίμησις: instead of describing poets as deceptive μιμηταί of discourses about arts that rely on the relevant knowledge, for example as μιμηταί of medical discourses, they may be described as μιμηταί of those who are competent in the arts poets speak about, for example as μιμηταί of ἰατρικοί (599c1-2), *i.e.* of those who are competent in medicine. A poet will be (only) *like* someone competent in medicine in that he will speak about the same matters as such a person, and will thereby constitute a figure of such a person; but moreover, inasmuch as a poet is perceived, not as a μιμητής and a *figure* of someone competent in medicine, but as being in fact competent in medicine, his μίμησις is deceptive.[168]

So, inasmuch as Homer narrates seemingly well, but in fact deficiently, about actions and events related to medicine, his narration constitutes a deceptive μίμησις of someone competent in medicine. However, by thus narrating, Homer may *at the same time* impersonate one character or another involved in these actions: in this case, his narration will constitute also a non-deceptive μίμησις of this character. While in fact nobody will mistake Homer for Chryses, when he is impersonating this character, the listeners who are themselves incompetent in medicine will mistake Homer for someone competent in this art, when he narrates

[168] As already mentioned in Chapter IV, in the *Sophist*, in a similar way, the sophist is characterised as a 'μιμητής of a wise man (σοφός)' and contrasted with the wise man (*Soph.* 268b-c), inasmuch as he is not competent in the matters he debates about, yet seems to be competent in whatever happens to be the subject of the debate; his μίμησις is thus evidently also deceptive.

about matters related to it. These two kinds of μίμησις thus differ, in the first place, in having a different object, and secondly, in being the one non-deceptive and the other deceptive: in the first case, Homer is for example, a non-deceptive μιμητής of Chryses imploring the Achaeans to release his daughter; in the second case, Homer is a deceptive μιμητής of someone competent in medicine speaking about how a wounded man is treated. As we shall see in the next section, the 'ethical' argument in *Republic* X is again concerned with the μίμησις 'through impersonation', where this shift of reference remains tacit.

While the picture of poets as μιμηταί of characters about whom they narrate is in itself neutral, the one that portrays them as deceptive μιμηταί of competent speakers is of course discrediting for poets, for it shows them as incompetent speakers who may be mistaken for wise men only by those who are themselves naïve. But while it would in fact be naïve to consider, for example, Homer's narration about one battle or another as (sufficiently) instructive concerning matters of war strategy, and to consider Homer himself as competent in this art,[169] *Republic* X ultimately suggests it is equally 'naïve' to consider poets' narrations about education, government of state, wars and any other human affairs as 'instructive' about moral matters and to consider poets as being wise in such subjects.[170] However, the claim that their narrations about these matters are in fact only 'images of excellence' (599d2-3, 600e7), *i.e.* deficient in what they say and teach about what is good for men and what they should therefore pursue, relies on the fundamental assumption that *there is knowledge* of human excellence, *i.e.* the knowledge, ultimately, of what is good for men, and that such knowledge can be acquired much as strategy of war or appropriate medical treatment can be learned. Yet, as suggested by Bambrough, it is precisely this sort of knowledge, of which

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[169] As Ion does, claiming that he has learned the art of generalship from Homer (*Ion* 541b4-5). But as suggested by Leszl (see p. 126, n. 158), it is highly unlikely that this was a widely shared belief.

[170] *Cf.* Ferrari, 'Plato and Poetry', 130: 'What is to become of poetry, we want to protest, if it is to be measured by the yardstick of such grossly practical results [*i.e.* poets' engagement in actions they speak about]? But Plato is not saying that we should apply so practical a yardstick to poetry; he is saying that, indeed, we should not, but that, if we suppose poets to have a user's rather than an imitator's skill on the question of how to live in society, we would be compelled to do so; for that is the yardstick we customarily apply to those we hold to be so endowed'.

poets are in the argument deprived with greatest vehemence, that cannot be posited at all.

Vagueness of the term μίμησις

As I suggested in Chapter IV, scholars' speaking about 'mimetic' poetry or about poets' μίμησις without specifying the object of the μίμησις referred to may easily lead to confusion over the different kinds of μίμησις that are attributed to poets in the dialogues. Yet, this 'vagueness' concerning poets' μίμησις may be found not only in the scholarship on the subject, but in *Republic* X itself; here, however, it seems to be intentional, for it allows the argument to shift from one kind of μίμησις to another. As I shall now argue, such a shift occurs twice: in the beginning of *Republic* X, the argument shifts from the non-deceptive μίμησις of characters to the deceptive μίμησις of those competent in the subject matter of poetry, and in the beginning of the ethical argument again from the latter μίμησις back to the former μίμησις.

The argument first speaks of much poetry as 'mimetic' (μιμητική 595a5) and specifically of composers of tragedy as being mimetic (μιμητικοί 595b5) or being μιμηταί (597e6, e8), leaving the object of the μίμησις attributed to poets unspecified, yet implicitly referring to the μίμησις (discussed in Book III) of individuals about whom poets narrate, for that is the only kind of poets' verbal μίμησις discussed thus far. In this respect, the mention of composers of tragedy is significant, for tragedy, like comedy, is precisely that genre that may be characterised *as a whole* as the first kind of μίμησις and equally well as the second kind of μίμησις: according to Book III, a tragedy constitutes a poet's μίμησις of characters about whom he narrates (*Rep. III* 394b-c), whereas according to the account that appears later in Book X, a tragedy constitutes a poet's μίμησις of someone competent in the subject matter of the composition, on the premise that the poet is incompetent in it.

But during the course of the argument, for the first time unambiguously at 598e, reference tacitly shifts from the kind of μίμησις already discussed (*i.e.* through

impersonation) to a different kind of μίμησις: the deceptive μίμησις of those competent in the subject matter of their narrations.[171] And that is to say, the point of reference imperceptibly shifts from the obvious non-deceptive μίμησις of characters about whom they narrate, recalled at the opening of Book X, to the discrediting (implying poets' incompetence), but still unproven deceptive μίμησις of, in short, relevant experts. However, after this shift has taken place in the course of the epistemological argument, the former μίμησις is, again without notice, reintroduced in the subsequent, ethical, argument: aiming to prove the harmfulness of this μίμησις, the argument at last turns to what was announced at the opening of Book X (595a5-b1). In this argument, as we shall see, Homer will again, as in Book III, feature as a μιμητής, for example, of a hero grieving and lamenting (605c11-d3) and no longer as a μιμητής of someone competent in medicine or some other art.

If that is so, however, Book X truly contains quite a 'mess' concerning poets' μίμησις: not, however, a terminological confusion about the term μίμησις (the assumption of which is somewhat mockingly rejected by Burnyeat)[172], but rather an intentional merging of the two kinds of poets' μίμησις, shifting from one to the other as if they were one and the same. Granted this, what is the purpose of such a strategy? In my view, the purpose is, ultimately, to strengthen – illicitly – the claim of poets' incompetence. It is as if the argument were inviting us to reason in the following manner: first, we should recall what has been agreed in Book III, that poets' works are on the whole 'mimetic', *i.e.* they involve, to a lesser or greater extent, μίμησις (595b4-5); and secondly, we should accept Socrates' suggestion that poets are either competent in their subject matter or they engage in μίμησις, and their works are μιμήματα (598e5-599a4); hence, we should conclude that

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[171] In particular the characterisation of composers of tragedy as μιμηταί at 597e seems to be intentionally ambiguous: it may be understood as either an already agreed observation (*i.e.* referring to the former μίμησις) or, on the other hand, a still unproven allegation (*i.e.* referring, by anticipation, to the latter μίμησις): 'That will be the composer of tragedy as well, if he is indeed a μιμητής (εἰπερ μιμητής ἐστι), someone by nature at the third remove from the king and the truth, and so all other μιμηταί'. For 'if he is indeed a μιμητής' could also indicate a fact, not only a possibility.

[172] For Burnyeat's interpretation, see p. 96.

poets must indeed be incompetent, for they engage in μίμησις to a greater or lesser extent (as established in Book III). But of course, such a reasoning confuses the two kinds of μίμησις attributed to poets: for being 'mimetic' of characters about whom a poet narrates is different from being 'mimetic' of those competent in the subject matter of which a poet speaks, and only the first 'mimetic' activity of poets has so far been agreed on, whereas the second one, which is discrediting for poets, is as yet unproven. Poets' activity may in fact be characterised as μίμησις of those competent in the subject matter of their narrations only *inasmuch as* poets turn out to be incompetent in it. But as seen above, the claim of poets' incompetence in their subject matter is justified by another questionable strategy: by viewing poets' narrations as implicit discourses about arts, and thereby showing that poets themselves do not master these arts.

The ethical argument

Μίμησις through impersonation again

The discussion of the moral harm of 'mimetic' poetry is promised by Socrates at the beginning of Book X, where the 'mimetic' poetry supposedly refers to the kind of poetry that involves much unselective μίμησις of characters about whom a poet narrates, which was rejected in Book III. After addressing a rather different question, *i.e.* that of poets' knowledge, the discussion now turns to the 'ethical' subject announced at the beginning. Although the ethical argument returns to discussing poets' μίμησις through impersonation, it addresses a different question from Book III. Book III, being concerned with poetry destined for the prospective guards of the envisaged state, inquires whether or not poets (in this state) should engage in such μίμησις, and if so, in what kind of it (of which moral characters and conduct). This *prescriptive* inquiry already relies on a particular assumption of how such μίμησις morally affects those who engage in it, specifically the young wards when they recite poetry: the assumption that if one, especially a young person, engages often in it, it influences one's moral character and conduct. By contrast, the 'ethical' argument addresses precisely the question to which an

answer is assumed as granted in Book III, *i.e.* the *descriptive* question of what the moral impact of this kind of μίμησις is on those who are present at it. The ethical argument in Book X differs from Book III also in its setting: for it is concerned with poets as autonomous agents in the current circumstances and focuses on the public performance of their works, rather than on the employment of poetry within education. As we shall see, poets' μίμησις of good men, which was approved in Book III because of its expected positive moral impact on the young wards, will now be seen as difficult both to carry out and to be understood by the vast public, whereas the μίμησις of excitable and 'expressive' characters, thus most suited to performance, will be accused of being corrupting for those who attend, *i.e.* the spectators. In fact, in the light of the bi-partite model of the soul provided, this μίμησις will be alleged to appeal to the inferior part of their soul.

The 'ethical' argument has received quite some criticism from scholars, in particular for modifying the tri-partite model of the soul from Book IV without any explicit justification, and further, for comparing (once again) 'mimetic' poetry with painting in a rather forceful and unconvincing manner: both are alleged to appeal to the inferior part of the soul. Thus Annas (*An Introduction to Plato's* Republic, 339) argues that '[t]he argument from painting does not carry over to poetry because the parts of the soul distinguished are not the same in both cases'. Likewise Halliwell (*Plato:* Republic X, 11) considers that 'the coupling of poetry and painting is weaker here than earlier in bk.10 [...]. The two cases, as presented, are scarcely comparable at all'. While agreeing that the comparison between painting and 'mimetic' poetry is rather arbitrary, I do not find this comparison very important for the ethical criticism directed at 'mimetic' poetry. What is in my view important, as I pointed out above, is that the object of this criticism is no longer by and large all poetry, 'mimetic' of those who are competent in the subject matter, which has been targeted in the previous, epistemological argument, but only the kind of poetry that is 'mimetic' (also) of characters about whom poets narrate. Yet this tacit, but in my view nonetheless evident, shift from poetry in general to poetry that involves impersonation (and thus at the same time the shift from one kind of poets' μίμησις to another), has rarely been noticed: for instance, Annas' discussion of the 'ethical' argument (*ibid.*, 338-344) does not mention it at all;

Halliwell (*The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, 111) seems to assume that the poets' μίμησις now discussed is the same as from the previous argument, which he understands as 'verbal depiction of men' *etc.*, and which would now somehow be considered in its most engaging and realistic form: 'If poetry manipulates a world of illusions or simulations, then it will become most dangerous at just the point at which those illusions involve things that are taken, by the makers and audiences of mimetic art, with the greatest seriousness'. By contrast, the return to the poets' μίμησις through impersonation is detected by Giuliano (*Platone e la poesia*, 104-106), though, differently from myself, he understands it as a subspecies of the poets' μίμησις discussed in the preceding (epistemological) argument. On the other hand, as seen in Chapter IV, Burnyeat assumes that the entire second discussion of poetry deals with the μίμησις through impersonation; and, accordingly, that in the 'ethical' argument 'Socrates fulfils the promise made at the start of book X, to demonstrate the mind damaging effects of dramatic μίμησις' ('Culture and Society in Plato's *Republic*', 319). In the following section, my aim will be to show clearly that the poets' μίμησις now discussed is that of impersonation, and to examine critically the psychological arguments employed in order to prove its moral harmfulness for the audience.

Sight and painting

The differentiation of the soul into two parts is first made relying on an argument concerning vision and visual perception of paintings. Socrates first observes that sight (vision) is a source of a certain 'confusion' (ταραχή) of ours: by sight, the same magnitude does not appear equal to us from near and afar, and further, 'the same things appear bent and straight by watching them in the water and outside it, and again, the same things appear concave and convex, because of the failure of sight related to colours' (602c10-12). This nature of visual perception, as suggested, is somehow manipulated by the practice of painting; exactly how painting does this will be considered shortly. Now, given that, in changed conditions, the same things visually appear to have, but obviously cannot really have, a different magnitude, shape, and perhaps other properties, the account

provided of them by our sight is evidently unreliable and confusing. To counteract this confusion, we in fact turn to measuring, counting, weighing: by means of these, things can be reliably declared, for example, bigger, or smaller than, or equal to, other things, independently of, and sometimes indeed contrary to, how they appear to our sight. Such conflicting judgements are thus presented as sufficient evidence for the existence of distinct parts of the soul. Before focusing on Socrates' differentiation of the soul, however, it is useful to consider how the soul and its relation to the body are understood in the dialogue.

As in other dialogues, in the *Republic* the body and the soul are approached as the two constitutive parts of a human being. The soul becomes the subject of discussion on quite a few occasions in the dialogue; however, its relation to the body (*e.g.*, to the sensory organs) is not discussed here in more detail.[173] Importantly, however, the soul features as the seat, or subject, not only of faculties that are regarded as specific to the soul, *e.g.*, reasoning, learning and understanding,[174] but also of faculties that are in some way related to the body, for example, desires for food, drink, warmth, sexual desires, and on the other hand, pleasures related to the satisfaction of these desires. These latter faculties seem to be distinguished from the former in that they are somehow mediated by the body to the soul. For example, in Book IX, the 'bodily' pleasures are described as 'those reaching, through the body, the soul' (αἵ γε διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τείνουσαι καὶ λεγόμεναι ἡδοναί *Rep.* IX 584c4-5). In Book V, they are similarly referred to as pleasures 'through the body' (διὰ τοῦ σώματος) and contrasted with the pleasure relative to learning, the latter being described as 'the

[173] In the *Theaetetus* (see esp. 184b4-186e12), this relation is discussed with regard to sensory perception and in the *Philebus* with regard to pleasure, pain and desire.

[174] *Cf. Rep.* VII 518c4-519a1, where the soul is considered to be the instrument with which each man learns and understands, and these faculties are regarded as by nature belonging to the soul. Further, in *Rep.* I 353d3-7, the faculties of management, government and deliberation are considered as specific to the soul: as suggested there, they are all relative to that function that one could not perform with anything else except the soul, just as one could not 'exercise' the function of seeing with anything else except eyes.

pleasure of the soul itself by itself' (τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς [...] ἡδονὴν αὐτῆς καθ' αὑτήν *Rep.* V 485d11-12).[175]

Returning to Book X, the faculty of sensory perception discussed in Book X may be understood as also somehow reaching the soul 'through the body': for, as is evidently assumed, it is our soul (or more precisely, as will turn out, only an element of it) to which something appears (through the faculty of sight), for example, bigger than something else (*Rep.* X 602e4-6).[176] As already observed, such a perception of ours may conflict with our measurement: 'to someone who has measured and declared certain things bigger or smaller than, or equal to, certain others, the opposite often appears at the same time, about the same things' (602e4-6). Now, the fundamental principle, which was, in a slightly different form, relied on previously in Book IV for differentiating the soul into 'types', or 'parts', is appealed to here as well, *i.e.* the principle that 'it is impossible for the same <subject> to hold opposite beliefs at the same time about the same things' ([ο]ὐκοῦν ἔφαμεν τῷ αὐτῷ ἅμα περὶ ταὐτὰ ἐναντία δοξάζειν ἀδύνατον εἶναι; 602e8-9).[177] On the basis of this principle, two separate elements of the soul

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[175] As observed in Chapter III, the *Gorgias* is not concerned with distinguishing between the functions of the two parts, body and soul, and thus with defining clearly the 'subject' of such desires as hunger, thirst *etc.*; at 465c8-d7, 517c7-d5 these desires seem to be attributed to the body, whereas (as Prof. Stalley pointed out in *Notes on Ph.D Thesis*, 5) at 493a1-b3 to the soul. In the *Philebus*, the question whether the desires such as thirst and hunger belong to the body or the soul becomes the subject of discussion: these desires are attributed to the soul, inasmuch as they rely on the memory of the object desired (*i.e.* providing the satisfaction of a desire having occurred previously), which is assumed to belong to the soul (34c10-35d6).

[176] As is suggested in *Rep.* VII 523a10-524d5, the sight and other sensory faculties convey to or show the soul what is perceived. In Book VII, however, the problem dealt with is of course different from the one concerning the unreliability of sight in Book X (as is explicitly indicated at 523b5-7). In the argument from *Republic* VII, the same magnitude (or weight, or texture) appears to be both long and short not because of viewing it once from close by and the other time from far away (*i.e.* because of different conditions of perception), but inasmuch as it is viewed in relation to something smaller and something bigger. As Fine ('The One over Many', 239) comments upon the argument, 'even in the most favorable circumstances, three inches is both long and short'.

[177] *Cf. Rep.* IV 436b8-9: '[…] the same thing cannot want to do or undergo opposites in the same respect in relation to the same thing and at the same time […]' ([...] ταὐτὸν τἀναντία ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν κατὰ ταὐτόν γε καὶ πρὸς ταὐτὸν οὐκ ἐθελήσει ἅμα [...]). Shorey (*Plato:* Republic, v. I, 382 n. b) interprets κατὰ ταὐτόν as 'in the same part of or aspect of itself' and πρὸς ταὐτόν as 'in relation to the same (other) thing'. Note, however, that the two 'variants' of the principle are concerned with two different faculties of the soul: one in Book IV with wanting (to do or undergo), the other in Book X with holding beliefs.

are thus posited, the one 'believing against the measurement' and the other 'according to the measurement', wherein the latter, inasmuch as it is 'trusting the measurement and calculation' is recognised as the 'rational element' (τὸ λογιστικόν 602e1) of the soul, which was individuated and defined as the best type, or part, of the soul already in Book IV; whereas the former, inasmuch as it is opposed to it, is characterised as 'one of the inferior elements in us', without being given a specific name (603a1-8).

As may be noted, something (visually) 'appearing' (φαίνεται 602c8, d9) to someone to be in a certain way is later on substituted with someone 'believing' (δοξάζειν 602e8, 603a1) that something is in that way. For this reason, the case has sometimes been understood as an example of holding two opposite beliefs at the same time. However, the explanation may be simpler than that: we may assume that the belief corresponding to this visual perception is this one, whether it is actually entertained or not. For when someone believes, relying on measurement, that something is bigger than something else, but at the same time this thing *visually appears* to him (independently of the measurement) smaller, he obviously does not also actually *believe* that it is smaller (in addition to believing that it is bigger): he would, however, believe that it is smaller, if he had not measured the two objects but relied solely on what visually appears to him.

As may also be pointed out, while the present differentiation of the soul into parts is made in view of a certain cognitive faculty of ours (*i.e.* learning about magnitude and other such properties of things), the tri-partition of the soul in Book IV was made in view of, we may say, our action (acting): in the former case, the soul is approached as a subject of cognition, in the latter as an agent. Now, although the parts of the soul that are identified in the two arguments are different both in number (three *vs.* two) and in faculties attributed to them ('action-inducing' powers *vs.* cognitive faculties), τὸ λογιστικόν, 'the rational element', is in both cases indicated as the best part of the soul, inasmuch as it relies on λογισμός, reasoning or calculation. But again, the 'content' of this 'calculation' is considerably different in the two cases: the calculation may in one case be, for example, that it is not salubrious to drink in the given circumstances, whereas in the other case it may be that something is bigger than something else. Nonetheless,

the suggestion seems to be that it is the same part of our soul with which we perform these two evidently different kinds of reasoning: the former reasoning results in taking a certain action and the latter one in knowing (having a reliable account of) the magnitude, weight, *etc.* of things. As for the element of the soul that is visually perceptive, it is only relevant to the argument to show that it is separate from, and inferior to, the element that exercises reasoning and calculation, but not, on the other hand, how it is related to other 'inferior elements' of the soul, such as those entertaining the desires, or wants, that come 'through the body' and that constitute, according to Book IV, its 'appetitive part', τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν (*Rep.* IV 441a6 *et al.*).[178] The faculty of desiring is again evoked in the subsequent argument concerning poetry: we will consider it in more detail later on.

As for the painting, it is argued that this activity 'relates to something in us that is far from reason' (603a10-b1); in particular shadow-painting[179], being directed at the 'weakness of our nature' related to the faculty of sight, makes an abundant use of trickery (γοητεία; 602d1-4). But exactly in what way does painting achieve this? As has already been established in the earlier discussion, an image captures a particular (visual) appearance of the object whose image it is, for example, an image of a couch captures the appearance that a couch has, *i.e.* the way it looks (appears), from a certain viewpoint (598a5-b8).

Now, an image will succeed in being *like* such an appearance all the more by the use of the above-mentioned 'trickery'. As may be supposed (for the argument does not specify it), this trickery might involve such things as the following: making a

[178] The 'appetitive part', as the seat of these wants, is in Book IV separated from the rational part, inasmuch as conflict may occur between, *e.g.*, our wanting to drink (*i.e.* having thirst) and not wanting to do so on the basis of the 'reasoning' that drinking is not healthy in given circumstances; according to the principle, the two opposite inclinations must be held by two separate elements, and given that it is by reasoning that the choice for the better (healthier, in the given example) option is made, the part exercising it is superior to the one that is the seat of thirst and other such wants. The third part of the soul individuated in Book IV is 'the spirited part', τὸ θυμοειδές (*Rep.* IV 441a2 *et al.*), which can, in the case of a conflict between the two other parts, join either of these two (*i.e.* sharing the will of one part and fighting against the other). Among the attempts to understand the significance of this third part of the soul is Penner's 'Thought and Desire in Plato', arguing that the positing of the 'spirited part' is not justified by the argument and is motivated by the aim to establish a symmetry of the soul with the three-classed structure of the state.

[179] As may be deduced from *Tht.* 208e7-10, images made using the technique of σκιαγραφία were perceived clearly from afar, but not from close by.

figure (a μίμημα) appear concave or convex (as seems to be suggested, such an effect is obtained by a particular use of colours); further, making certain parts (or objects) of the μίμημα appear more distant than others (by painting the former smaller in relation to the latter); or again, to take a more complicated example from the *Sophist*, making a large figure of an object so that, from a certain viewpoint, its proportions appear to correspond to the proportions of that object itself (and is thus beautiful), while it is actually not (for the parts standing closer to the viewer are made relatively smaller, whereas those farther from the viewer are relatively bigger, than those of the original object; note that this method is the exact opposite of the previous one).[180]

Now, painting as such, *i.e.* as the making of (visual) images, reproduces (is μίμησις of) that aspect of things that is accessible to us by visual perception, which, as seen above, is cognitively unreliable in comparison with measurement, calculation and the like. But furthermore, in its aim to capture the visual appearance of things, painting may purposely make its product such that it (visually) appears in some way as this product is actually not, *e.g.*: it may make a figure (a μίμημα) so that it appears convex, while in fact it is flat, or again, so that certain parts of the painted figure appear more distant than others, while in fact they are not; it makes a (large) figure so that it appears to be of specific proportions, whereas it is actually not.[181] The subject to whom these images falsely appear to be like this, is of course ourselves, but more precisely, that element of our soul that is visually perceptive. In making such figures (falsely appearing to be convex, or of certain proportions), the painter then in a way relies upon and exploits the fallibility of our faculty of sight.

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[180] See *Soph.* 235e5-236a6: in what follows, this kind of μίμησις in painting is defined as φανταστική and contrasted with εἰκαστική, the kind of μίμησις that preserves the features such as proportions and colours of the original object. The argument is treated in more detail in Excursus F.

[181] In the last two cases, the image does not preserve the proportions of the original object, *i.e.* in the terminology of the *Sophist* it is a φάντασμα (as opposed to εἰκών; *cf.* the previous note). But while the preoccupation of the *Sophist* is the (missing) correspondence of such properties of the figure with the ones of the original object, the present argument of *Republic* X does not seem to be concerned with this, but rather with the merely 'apparent' properties of the figure itself (apart from their missed correspondence with the properties of the original object), *e.g.*, being convex, being of certain proportions, which are the appearance obtained by the use of 'trickery'.

Poets' μίμησις of men's fortunes and misfortunes

As a counterpart to painting, which features as an example of the practice of μίμησις that is 'relative to sight', the practice of μίμησις 'relative to hearing' is now considered as being the one specific to poetry (ἡ τῆς ποιήσεως μιμητική *Rep.* X 603c1). Without yet specifying which kind of poets' μίμησις the argument is about, Socrates expresses his expectation that it will turn out to relate to some inferior element of the soul as well. With the purpose of validating this assumption, Socrates first indicates, as if reminding his interlocutors of what has already been established, exactly in what the practice of μίμησις consists in the case of poetry. Here it becomes evident that the kind of poets' μίμησις now discussed is again that through impersonation:

πράττοντας, φαμέν, ἀνθρώπους μιμεῖται ἡ μιμητικὴ βιαίους ἢ ἑκουσίας πράξεις, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ πράττειν ἢ εὖ οἰομένους ἢ κακῶς πεπραγέναι, καὶ ἐν τούτοις δὴ πᾶσιν ἢ λυπουμένους ἢ χαίροντας.

The practice of representing, we say, represents men engaged in forced or voluntary actions, and who reckon to have fared well or ill as a result of so doing, and in all these things either suffer pain or feel pleasure. (603c4-7)

Now the μίμησις here considered, that of 'men engaged in forced or voluntary actions',[182] is clearly the figurative non-deceptive μίμησις of characters about

[182] Interestingly, in the discussion of musical μίμησις in *Republic* III, the actions that may be objects of this μίμησις are differentiated into 'forced' and 'voluntary' as well: forced actions include military activities, being injured or encountering other misfortunes, whereas 'peaceful' or 'voluntary actions' include persuading or imploring someone (a god, through a prayer; a man, through either teaching or admonition) or being oneself persuaded *etc.* (*Rep.* III 399a5-c4). See also *L.* VII 815c7-816c1, where dancing, conceived of as μίμησις, is distinguished also into dance of war and dance of peace: the two evidently represent two different kinds of conduct and movement, combative and peaceful.

whom poets narrate, and no longer the figurative deceptive μίμησις of those who are competent in the subject matter of poetry, attributed to poets in the epistemological argument. That the talk is now of the former μίμησις is even more evident from the example of it given later on, *i.e.* that of 'Homer or another one of composers of tragedy, engaging in μίμησις of one of the heroes grieving and making a long speech of laments' (605c10-d2). The action referred to is evidently Homer's impersonation of one hero or another, which is an example of the same kind of μίμησις as Homer's impersonation of Chryses imploring the Achaeans to release his daughter.

Book X, as suggested earlier on, is concerned with the perception of this μίμησις by the vast public in attendance and its moral impact on them: in the light of the psychological model introduced, this question 'translates' into the question of what aspect of men (their soul) this μίμησις appeals to and, as a consequence, acts upon. As seen above, the objects of the μίμησις now considered are 'men engaged in forced or voluntary actions, and who reckon to have fared well or ill as a result of this doing, and in all these things either suffer pain or feel pleasure'. Of course, these 'actions' may be both figures constituted by poets' (or performers') activity and (true) actions imitated and referred to by these figures. The 'psychological' analysis that follows focuses first on the latter, *i.e.* it inquires how, in 'true' life, men perceive and respond to the actions and events that they reckon bad for them, and therefore examines and evaluates poets' μίμησις of this.

Two elements of the soul

Among the actions and events that bring distress and suffering to men, Socrates considers an extreme case: the loss of one's own son or of someone else dear to one. As he then argues, although a misfortune will inevitably provoke pain on the part of the sufferer, a virtuous man will at the same time fight against this pain and resist it, all the more so in the presence of other people.[183] Relying on this example,

[183] A response by a virtuous man has already been described in similar terms in *Rep.* III 387d5-e8: this response is now going to be explained through the account of separate parts of the soul.

a particular model of the soul is constructed. Two opposite tendencies in one's response to such a misfortune are identified, and therefore attributed to two separate elements of the soul: the tendency to grieve and lament, and the other which resists this. The two responses to a misfortune are first compared with two opposite responses to an event causing bodily pain: an injury. As suggested, those who, after they have lost someone close or have undergone some similar misfortune, continue to grieve and lament, are like children who, having stumbled, keep on crying, holding the injured part (604c5-d2).[184] Analysing the example further, we may observe that an injury, apart from obviously being painful, is also something bad for one's body (as may be recalled from the *Gorgias*, painfulness itself does not imply harmfulness; for example, there are painful medical cures), for it damages one's health, the body's well-being. As is again obvious in the case of an injury, the action that will benefit the body is the one that will contribute to restoring its health, and that is, an appropriate medical cure. On the other hand, reactions such as holding what is hurting us, crying, lamenting (typical of children), is what we are by nature inclined to do when we feel pain. All this will of course not contribute to our recovery, nor will it contribute to the ceasing of, or even alleviating, the pain felt. Now, one who has been injured may respond to the incident in the way just described, *i.e.* do nothing else except what one's feeling of pain somehow induces one to do: to hold the painful part, to cry and lament. Alternatively (as is suggested implicitly), one may act aiming to have one's injury healed and health restored, and despite one's feelings of pain, not cry and lament, or at least not as much as children do. Of course, the majority of people will respond in the latter way. Presumably, they will do so on the basis of certain reasoning and consideration such as, that what is best for them is to recover their health, and that it is by means of some medical cure that they can achieve that. At the same time, despite their being inclined to cry and lament at feeling pain, they are evidently able not to do so, as we may again suppose, on the basis of some consideration such as, that crying would not in the least contribute to their healing or to the ceasing of the pain.

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[184] As observed in Chapter III, a similar approach of comparing the soul with the body is found in the *Gorgias*.

Note, now, that these two responses are induced, or 'driven', by two different causes: it is the aim of healing – importantly, the aim established, or deliberated, by reasoning what is best to do in a given situation –, that drives, or induces, one response, and, by contrast, the feeling of pain itself that drives the other one: that of lamenting and crying, typical of children. While the first response is driven by a certain (deliberate) aim, or end (and thus 'driven', inasmuch as led or guided), and is therefore intentional, the second one is not driven by any purpose; it is not intended, but rather brought on, caused by the feeling of pain. The latter response, inasmuch as it is unintended, can hardly even be regarded as an action.

The comparison of facing a misfortune with being injured (though it may seem somewhat inappropriate) evidently concerns the painfulness of both incidents: while an injury causes pain to one's body (or in terms of the *Republic*, it causes pain, through one's body, to one's soul; *i.e.* it is perceived as painful), the loss of someone close provokes pain to one's soul. Yet, there is an important difference in how the pain comes about in the two cases, which was already considered in the discussion of the *Gorgias* in Chapter III: while bodily pain arises and is perceived and felt independently of one's thought, or cognition (it comes about in the same way as, *e.g.*, visual perception), pain related to the soul is a result of one's considering and believing that one has 'fared ill' (603c6), *i.e.* it depends on one's *reckoning* an action or event to have been bad for one. That is to say, pain (and pleasure) of the body is by nature sensate and non-cognitive, whereas pain (and pleasure) of the soul is by nature non-sensate and cognitive. The 'origin' of a bodily pain, for example an injury, a disease, *etc*., may thus be characterised as the *cause* of pain, whereas the 'origin' of pain of the soul, *i.e.* any unfortunate event, for example an event such as the loss of someone close, may be characterised as the *reason*, or *motive*, for pain (related to the soul).

Now, though not denying the gravity of such misfortunes, Socrates nonetheless suggests that the evil related to an event such as the loss of someone close might not be as great as is thought by those for whom it is the reason for extreme

suffering: as he has argued earlier on[185] and again here, 'it is not clear what is the good and the bad arising from such things, […] nor is any of the human things worthy of great concern' (604b-10c1). In any case, however, the distress provoked by such an event will upset one's life: the recovery to well-being is compared with the healing of an injury ('curing and straightening what has been hurt in a fall' (604d1-2), which will in this case consist, it seems to be suggested, in resuming the life style disrupted by the event. But, just as in the case of an injury, one may respond to a misfortune in two different ways: one that leads to such a recovery and the other that hinders it. One may, in fact, continually recall the event that provoked pain, and thus keep on suffering, crying and lamenting, while remaining otherwise inert (604d8-10): but such a response evidently does not lead to recovery, nor, on the other hand, to the ceasing of distress and suffering. By contrast, one may act aiming to recover from one's suffering and to resume the life that has been upset, and again, despite one's inclination to keep thinking of the event, and to lament and cry, not to do so. Such a response to a misfortune will be a result of one's reasoning and considering that this, carrying on with one's life, is what is best for one, and that remembering the event, lamenting and crying, will not contribute to, but rather hamper, one's recovery and prolong suffering, instead of diminishing it (604b6-d2). Now, just as in the case of an injury, the two responses to a misfortune are induced by two different causes: one is driven by the feeling of pain, whereas the other is induced by a certain aim, decided by one's deliberating and reasoning what is best to do in the given situation. While the latter response is a purposeful, intentional, action, the former is a response not evoked by an end, but impelled by the feeling of pain.

However, it is within one person that the two opposite inclinations are (in most cases) both present, the one to respond in the way the feeling of pain impels and the other to respond in the way that has by reasoning been concluded to be the best (604a10-b1). But that means, in accordance with the principle established in Book IV that 'the same thing cannot want to do or undergo opposites in the same respect

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[185] See again *Rep.* III 387d5-e8, where it is argued that a virtuous man should not regard death as something terrible for another virtuous man, who is also a friend of his, and further, that such a man is as much as possible self-sufficient: being deprived of someone dear to him will thus be for him, of all people, the least terrible.

in relation to the same thing and at the same time' (*Rep.* IV 436b8-9), that the two opposite inclinations, or tendencies, cannot belong to the same 'subject' (in this case, we may say, in the role of 'agent'), but to two separate ones, *i.e.* two separate elements of the soul. The element liable to be driven by pain is named 'the irritable element', τὸ ἀγανακτητικόν, and is described also as 'irrational', 'inert' and 'being friends with cowardice' (604d8-11); the other element, liable to be driven, or rather guided, by a (deliberate) aim, and therefore the one relying on reasoning, is again recognised as 'the rational element' (605b4-5). Of course, it is this latter element that is regarded as the superior one, and the one that should therefore overpower the irritable one: for it is evidently the response and action led by reasoning and reason that will be for the best. Such a response is at the same time that which has been praised and attributed to a virtuous man already on earlier occasions (in quite similar terms in Book III); now, however, it is explained as someone's rational element prevailing over the irritable one (in his response to such events). Moreover, conduct 'led by reason' is presented as that approved by society in general, *i.e.* by the 'law' or 'custom', whereas conduct 'led by pain' is disdained by it: in fact, one would be ashamed to cry and lament in front of others and, by contrast, proud to act 'with reason', staying thus calm and restrained (604a1-8, 605d7-e2).

The irritable element

Now, before considering how all this concerns the μίμησις by poets, it is important to look more closely at the nature of the 'irritable element'. In fact, the argument seems to suggest two different understandings of it: for the response drawn by it, *i.e.* crying and lamenting because of a misfortune incurred is first compared with children's crying because of an injury (as seen above), but later on, though only implicitly, with satisfying such desires as thirst or hunger. As may be recalled, the 'doleful' response to a misfortune has turned out to be similar to children's response to an injury in that they are both induced by pain, and not led by a purpose (they are so to speak 'aimless'), and further, do not contribute to the recovery, nor to the ceasing, or even diminishing, of pain. In what follows,

however, the 'irritable' element, as the 'agent' of such a response, is characterised in a somewhat different way. When it is posited as a separate element of the soul, it is described as 'the element that insatiably leads to recollection of the painful event and to lamentation' ([τ]ὸ δὲ πρὸς τὰς ἀναμνήσεις τε τοῦ πάθους καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ὀδυρμοὺς ἄγον καὶ ἀπλήστως ἔχον αὐτῶν […] 604d8-9). Later on, similarly, it is pictured as the element that 'craves weeping, wailing, and fulfilment, being naturally desirous of such things' (πεπεινηκὸς τοῦ δακρῦσαί τε καὶ ἀποδύρασθαι ἱκανῶς καὶ ἀποπλησθῆναι, φύσει ὂν τοιοῦτον οἷον τούτων ἐπιθυμεῖν [...] 606a4-6). As these two arguments suggest, by remembering the event that has provoked pain in us, and lamenting, weeping, wailing, *etc.*, we realise a certain desire of ours (*i.e.* of an element of us). Moreover, a realisation of this desire is associated with some state of being 'filled up' with what is desired, while the desiring itself, it seems, is equated with some state of emptiness (*cf.* ἀπλήστως ἔχον, πεπεινηκός). Now, this characterisation of the 'doleful' tendency of ours clearly evokes the characterisation of the tendencies to realise desires 'relative to our body', especially thirst and hunger; these two feature as paradigms in the treatment of the bodily desires on various occasions in the dialogue (the states of emptiness and being filled-up, which are associated with desires and their realisation in general, are in fact the states obviously related to hunger and thirst, and the realisation of them, but not necessarily to other bodily desires as well, *e.g.*, the desire for warmth). It is worth looking briefly at these various arguments about bodily desires, their coming about and their realisation.

An implicit account of how bodily desires come about is found in Book IX: as is suggested, hunger and thirst are 'certain vacuities of the state of the body' (κενώσεις τινές εἰσιν τῆς περὶ τὸ σῶμα ἕξεως *Rep.* IX 585b1), whereas nutrition (with food or drink) consists in filling these up (*cf. Rep.* IX 585a8-b10). The state of (a specific) vacuity (or emptiness) may then be regarded as the affection, πάθος, which in some way brings about thirst; or, we may perhaps say, the bodily state of a certain vacuity *is perceived* as thirst. Thirst, however, is a

specific pain,[186] which induces one to drink.[187] By drinking, the body will pass into the state of a certain fulfilment (being filled up), which will, in turn, bring about pleasure, or at least the cessation of pain.[188]

Turning back to the 'irritable' element, the characterisation of it as having 'insatiable' desires of (memories and) lamentations, 'starving for weeping, wailing and being filled up, being by nature such as to desire these things', quite obviously reflects the descriptions of bodily desires just considered. Though it is not explicitly stated, it seems to be implied that remembering the event, lamenting, and all that one is inclined to do when facing a misfortune brings about some pleasure, or at least alleviates the pain, inasmuch as such a response constitutes filling up some vacuum, and realising a specific desire.[189]

But to what extent is the suggested analogy grounded in facts, *i.e.* to what extent, to put it crudely, is one's remembering the painful event, lamenting and crying

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[186] Thirst, hunger and other bodily desires are clearly conceived of as different kinds of pain; see in particular the discussion in *Rep.* IX 583c3-585e4. In the *Republic*, however, the relation between (experience of) pain or pleasure and, on the other hand, specific states of the body is evidently assumed, but not explicitly defined (see, *e.g.*, *Rep.* IV 439d1-2 and d8, *Rep.* IV 442a6-b1, *Rep.* IX 585a9-b10). This relationship is clearly indicated, *e.g.*, in *Phlb.* 42c9-d3, where the corruption of the nature of each living creature (which may be due to various processes, including both evacuation and filling up) is said to bring about pain and suffering.

[187] Thirst and other desires are discussed as the causes that induce one to drink and to take other corresponding actions in Book IV (see in particular 439a9-b5). Again in Book IV, the fact that one may decide not to drink despite being thirsty (*e.g.*, because it would not be salubrious) is employed as a proof in the argument that there are two separate elements of the soul, to which these two opposite tendencies belong: the 'appetitive' and the 'rational'.

[188] In *Rep.* IX 585d11, after specific desires have been attributed to each of the three parts of the soul (posited in Book IV), it is argued that 'being fulfilled with the things that are by nature appropriate to one, is pleasant' (τὸ πληροῦσθαι τῶν φύσει προσηκόντων ἡδύ ἐστι). On the other hand, however, in the discussion pleasures related to the satisfaction of bodily desires are argued to be least true, and in fact only cessations of pain. The argument (see again *Rep.* IX 583c3-585e4) in fact differentiates ontologically pleasures specific to each part of the soul, in accordance with the ontological status of the objects that provide pleasure (relying on the ontological account developed in the central books of the *Republic*). That the filling-up brings about pleasure is suggested on various occasions in Book IV (*e.g.*, *Rep.* IV 439d8). A similar understanding of satisfying desires as filling up a vacuum is found also in the *Gorgias*, and illustrated there by Socrates using the simile of filling up jugs with different liquids (492d1-494c3).

[189] The understanding of crying and lamentation as somehow pleasurable is not original to Plato, but is found by various authors starting from Homer. See, for example: *Il.* XXIII 10: αὐτὰρ ἐπεί κ' ὀλοοῖο τεταρπώμεσθα γόοιο (*cf. Il.* XXIII 98, *Od.* XI 212); Euripides, *Troiades* 608: ὡς ἡδὺ δάκρυα τοῖς κακῶς πεπραγόσι.

similar to satisfying desires such as thirst, by drinking? We may say that both of these are responses driven by a certain feeling of pain caused by some πάθος affecting one's soul (a misfortune) in one case and one's body (a certain vacuity) in the other. However, there seems to be a fundamental difference in what, in either case, the response brings about, or results in: while drinking brings about the cessation of pain, or even pleasure, remembering the misfortune, lamenting and crying certainly do not result in any such thing. One's pain does not cease, or diminish, by remembering the event, crying and lamenting (or, in any case, to no greater extent than by opposing, with reason, such a response), just as, indeed, crying does not stop or alleviate the pain caused by an injury. In fact, the example of the children's response to being injured, which was first provided as a model of a 'doleful' response to a misfortune, seems to be in this important respect different from the satisfaction of bodily desires, which is now offered as a model of a 'doleful' response.

Perhaps, a certain pleasure that comes about through crying and lamenting may be explained differently, *i.e.* as a result of the realisation of a particular desire, or inclination, to cry and lament, the desire that is caused by a certain pain (of either the body or the soul). But the realisation of this desire does not bring about the ceasing or even alleviation of the pain itself. However, the account of lamentation and crying as alleviating pain, or even as being gratifying, is perhaps proposed in view of another fact: the fact that a poet's μίμησις of a character, in particular a virtuous character or a 'hero', who is incurring a misfortune, provokes in the public, for some reason that is in fact not at all obvious, both pain and pleasure of some kind, here too inducing crying, weeping, *etc.* in the audience.

Poets' μίμησις appeals to the irritable element

Let us then finally consider how the above psychological picture concerns the μίμησις by poets. As may be recalled, poets engage in μίμησις of men engaged in specific actions, and 'who reckon to have fared well or ill as a result of this doing, and in all these things either suffer pain or feel pleasure.' In the argument

that followed this description, as we have seen, two opposite responses of men 'who reckon to have fared ill' and therefore 'suffer', were distinguished: the one driven by the pain provoked and the other led by reason, the first response being disdained and the second one approved of. Now, men who, led by reason, resist what the pain induces in them, *i.e.* remembering the action that provoked their pain, lamenting and crying, will therefore in such circumstances 'act with calmness' (604b9-10): but such men assuming such conduct simply do not lend themselves to the μίμησις of the kind poets engage in: 'a temperate and calm character, being always nearly the same, is neither easy to represent nor, when it is represented, easy to be understood, especially at celebrations and among people of all kinds gathered in theatres; for them, in fact, the representation is of something happening to somebody else' (τὸ δὲ φρόνιμόν τε καὶ ἡσύχιον ἦθος, παρα πλήσιον ὂν ἀεὶ αὐτὸ αὑτῷ, οὔτε ῥᾴδιον μιμήσασθαι οὔτε μιμουμένου εὐπετὲς καταμαθεῖν, ἄλλως τε καὶ πανηγύρει καὶ παντοδαποῖς ἀνθρώποις εἰς θέατρα συλλεγομένοις· ἀλλοτρίου γάρ που πάθους ἡ μίμησις αὐτοῖς γίγνεται. 604e2-6).

By contrast, the 'irritable' character, *i.e.* the one driven by pain into lamentation, crying, wailing, *etc.*, having a multifarious nature (ποικίλον, as opposed to being calm and equable), is the character well fitted for the μίμησις directed at the motley crowd of spectators. Thus, if poets are to engage at all in the μίμησις of men going through misfortunes, it is nearly inevitable for them, due to the nature of this μίμησις itself, to engage in the μίμησις of men of (prevailing) irritable character and therefore of – according to the argument – blameworthy conduct. So, the alleged harmfulness of 'mimetic' poetry derives from the fact that it will most likely be mimetic of characters of 'irritable' nature; but exactly in what way will poets' μίμησις of them corrupt the spectators?

It is important to note first that, in the argument, viewing poets' μίμησις of men and their actions is understood simply as witnessing 'extraneous things', or 'things happening to others' (ἀλλότρια πάθη 606b1; *cf.* 604e5-6).[190] Thus, as seems to

[190] A similar understanding is found in Book II of the *Laws*: there, being a spectator of choral dances, viewed as μιμήματα of characters and moral conduct, is regarded as a way of being in

be assumed, one perceives (figurative) μίμησις of such actions and events (*i.e.* figures of actions) in the same way as one perceives true actions (misfortunes, in the case considered), which, however, involve men or things that are not 'of great importance' to oneself (603e4), but to someone else, *e.g.*, a tragic hero, who has lost his friend (605c10-d2; *cf. Rep.* III 387d4-6). Relying on this assumption, it is suggested that one's response to the misfortunes incurred by other people is not substantially different from the response to those incurred by oneself: one will 'suffer together', or sympathise (συμπάσχοντες 605d4) with those to whom the misfortune has happened, and will therefore, if to a lesser degree, also experience pain. However, it is argued, by experiencing pain 'for' someone else (as opposed to oneself), one will be much more inclined to be driven by the feeling of pain, and therefore to cry, lament, *etc.*, than to be led by reason, whereby one would resist what the pain provoked by the event induces in one, as well as disdaining the 'doleful' response (*i.e.* induced by pain) of the one incurring the misfortune (606a3-b5).

After implicitly suggesting that the 'doleful' response to one's own misfortunes brings about pleasure, the 'doleful' response to poets' μίμησις of misfortunes, these being viewed as misfortunes 'incurred by others', is equally explicitly characterised as somehow pleasurable: the element that is 'naturally desirous of such things [weeping, wailing, and fulfilment], is the one filled up by poets, and that rejoices' (606a6-7), or again, by pitying someone else who is lamenting, one 'thinks to gain pleasure' (606b2-4 and 605c10-d5). The effects of such a response, seem again to be compared with those related to satisfying a bodily desire such as hunger and thirst: not only do crying and lamentation – when one is suffering together with someone else in misfortune – satisfy a certain desire of ours, and thereby bring about pleasure, but they also make one's desire for them stronger and greater (more insatiable). And, again to risk a crude analogy, just as by regularly and abundantly satisfying hunger, it becomes ever more difficult to resist eating, *i.e.* what hunger induces one to do, so one's responding to misfortunes (someone else's, but, supposedly, one's own as well) in the way that the pain provoked impels one, *i.e.* by lamenting and crying, renders it ever more difficult to oppose,

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company with men of some character or other, *i.e.* men imitated and referred to by the dancing figures (656b1-7).

by relying on reason, one's own inclination to do so (and therefore to act aiming at what is best). Such an analogy seems in fact to be suggested by the concluding claim that 'having nurtured the pitiable element making it strong during [other people's misfortunes], it is not easy to keep it down during one's own misfortunes' (606b7-8).

The argument then does provide an account of the intriguing pleasure that somehow comes about by suffering at poets' μίμησις of (virtuous) men incurring misfortunes; this pleasure, however, is not considered to be of any peculiar kind (*e.g.*, such as can arise only by witnessing μιμήματα and figures of such misfortunes, but not by witnessing true misfortunes), but is instead conceived of as pleasure that accompanies one's 'doleful' response (lamenting, crying, *etc.*) as such, regardless of what has provoked one's pain,[191] and one that is comparable with the pleasures that result from the satisfaction of bodily desires.[192]

In the final step of the argument, however, the charge of the corrupting effect of poets' μίμησις is generalised: it concerns not only the μίμησις of misfortunes, and therefore of what provokes pity and is in fact characteristic of tragedy and Homer's epic (605c10-d5), but the μίμησις of other kinds of actions as well, *e.g.*, of those that provoke laughter, characteristic of comedy, and of others that provoke sexual pleasures, anger and other desires, pains and pleasures (606c2-d4). All these

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[191] Likewise in the *Philebus*, lamenting and crying as such are regarded as providing some pleasure, whether at 'tragic spectacles' or at true events. This pleasure is considered there as an example of 'mixtures of pleasure and pain', among which anger, fear, love passion, *etc.*, are mentioned (*Phlb.* 47d5-48a6).

[192] The pleasure that somehow comes about, together with the pain provoked by the actions and events represented, or only narrated, by poets has been a subject of philosophical examination especially from the eighteenth century onwards; among others, by Edmund Burke, David Hume, Gotthold Lessing, and in the twentieth century, especially in psychoanalytical philosophy and analytic aesthetics. Among the ancient authors, it has also been considered by Gorgias, who attributes to poetry the ability to provoke 'trembling with fear, pity full of tears, longing to give way to pain' (καὶ φρίκη περίφοβος καὶ ἔλεος πολύδακρυς καὶ πόθος φιλοπενθής *Fr.*B11.9DK), and more extensively by Aristotle. In his *Poetics*, the pleasure 'specific to tragedy' is defined as the pleasure deriving from the pity and fear that a poet provides through representation (*Poetica* 13, 1453b10-14). The *Poetics* seems to associate this pleasure with 'the κάθαρσις of such affections', *i.e.* pity and fear (*cf. Poetica* 4, 1449b22-28), yet it is not obvious how exactly this sort of 'purification' is understood, although a partial explanation of κάθαρσις through music is given in *Politica* VIII 1342a5-17. In discussing these questions, Aristotle may well also be reacting to the views sustained in *Republic* X; however, this issue will not be discussed here.

affections, either painful or pleasurable, are evidently provoked in those who witness the μίμησις in the same way as the affections of pity and sympathy are aroused: by 'being affected together with' characters represented who are engaging in specific actions (and likely responding to them as the feeling of pain or pleasure provoked impels them). And as is once again assumed, when witnessing actions that do not concern oneself, but others, one is inclined to respond in whatever way the affection, painful or pleasant, impels one, thereby making this inclination ever stronger and likelier to prevail, in one's own life, over one's inclination to follow reason. And given that it is by pursuing aims deliberated by reasoning that one will act for what is best, whereas poets' μίμησις of characters whose actions are driven by affection makes those who witness it ultimately less prone to act relying on reason, this μίμησις does not contribute to their happiness, leading them instead towards greater misery (606d4-7).

Conclusions

As I have argued, the discussion of poetry in *Republic* X may be divided into two arguments: the first aims to show poets' incompetence in the matters of which they speak, in particular moral matters; the second one aims to show, more specifically, moral harmfulness of poets' impersonation of characters about whom they narrate.

With regard to the first, epistemological, argument, I aimed to clarify exactly in what sense poets are characterised as μιμηταί and exactly how this characterisation is related to the charge of poets' incompetence, for both these fundamental question appeared quite intricate and various solutions to them (considered already in Chapter IV) not satisfactory. According to the interpretation I have proposed, the μίμησις poets are alleged to engage in consists in their speaking about matters in which they are, as is assumed, incompetent: for the compositions they thus make provide only a deficient and possibly incorrect account of these matters; as I suggested, it is in this that poets' works are similar to painted images of craftsmen, with which they are compared. Thus, poets' works relate to adequate and complete discourses, which rely on knowledge, as painted

images relate to true things. And further, the deceptive character of poets' alleged μίμησις (poets' admirers 'do not notice' that their works are 'images' and μιμήματα, and not 'true things') concerns the public's perception of poets as competent in their subject matter, when poets are in fact incompetent in it, and of their works as fine and valuable, when in fact they are deficient and of little value in comparison with discourses relying on knowledge; as such, poets may be characterised as deceptive *figures* and μιμηταί of those who are competent in matters they speak about and their works as deceptive *figures* of discourses relying on knowledge.

As I have also argued, this clearly discrediting account of poets relies on the questionable assumption that poets speak 'about arts', for on this assumption they of course turn out to be incompetent in their subject matter. But while it would in fact be naïve to consider Homer's narrations about one battle or another as (sufficiently) instructive concerning matters of generalship, and to consider Homer himself as competent in this art (as Ion does; *Ion* 541b4-5), the account ultimately suggests it is equally 'naïve' to consider poets' narrations about wars and any other human affairs as 'instructive' about moral matters and to consider poets as wise in such subjects. However, the claim that their narrations about these matters are in fact only 'images of excellence', *i.e.* deficient in what they say and teach about what is good for men and what they should therefore pursue, relies on an even more questionable grouping of 'human things concerning excellence and vice' together with instrumental 'arts' as simply different objects of *knowledge* (*Rep.* X 598e1-5).

The second, 'ethical', argument has turned out to be considerably less intricate than the 'epistemological' one. As I aimed to show first, its concern is with poets' μίμησις of characters about whom poets narrate, no longer poets' μίμησις of those competent in the subject matter of their poetry, though this shift of reference takes place tacitly. In the light of the bi-partite model of the soul, the alleged harmfulness of this μίμησις, being most often of excitable and expressive characters (inasmuch as such characters are most comprehensible for the motley crowd) concerns the response it typically provokes in those who witness it, its public: the response induced by the affection, either painful or pleasant, provoked

by the events incurred, rather than the response led by reasoning and deliberation over what is best. Various difficulties that have been found in this account concern its explanation of how the pleasure that the response induced by painful affections, *i.e.* lamenting, crying, weeping, is brought about: there do not seem to be any convincing argument for comparing the 'doleful' response with the satisfying of a bodily desire such as hunger, which brings about pleasure. Moreover, the difference between thus responding to a μίμησις and, on the other hand, a true event, does not seem to bear much importance in the argument; although only the former seems to bring about pleasure, the 'doleful' response is characterised as being in general somehow pleasurable.

Last, this charge of harmfulness of 'mimetic' poetry may be considered in the light of the apparently similar charge from the *Gorgias* of the potential harmfulness of poetry in general. However, the content of the two charges turns out to be rather different. Not only is the poetry targeted in the two dialogues different – in the *Gorgias*, it is all poetry, musical and non-musical, whereas in *Republic* X, it is only poetry that involves μίμησις of characters about whom poets narrate –, but also the harmfulness attributed to poetry in the two dialogues is of a different kind: in the *Gorgias*, poets in general are accused of being potentially harmful inasmuch as they are not at all concerned to render their public just, and thus to strengthen their disposition to act justly (as is implicit in the argument), whereas in *Republic* X the alleged harmful impact of 'mimetic' poets on their public consists in weakening their disposition to act rationally and strengthening their disposition to act affectively.

Excursus E

Republic X: couches and the form of couch

Introduction

As we have seen in the previous chapter, *Republic* X examines the ontological relationship between a painting of a couch and a 'true' (or real) couch: a painting is 'far from the truth' inasmuch as it is like a (true) couch only in 'something little', in a specific visual appearance of a couch (by virtue of this likeness, as I have suggested, a painting refers to a couch, and therefore constitutes a figure of it). However, besides a painting of a couch and a couch, there is a third object posited in the argument: the form of couch. First, the making of a couch is described as somehow guided by this form; but then, a couch is in its turn characterised as something less true than the form of couch, while the latter alone is said to be completely true. This rather strange ontological picture becomes even stranger in what follows, where it is suggested that the form of couch is made by God. All these bold ontological claims are launched one after another in a brief and rather jocular conversation between Socrates and Glaucon, which concludes with placing a painter, as a maker of 'images' (*i.e.* figures) and as a model of μιμηταί in general, 'at the third remove from nature', or from 'truth' (597e3-4). In the subsequent arguments, the tri-grade ontological scheme seems to be left aside, while the distinction central to the argument remains that between images, or more generally figures, and objects referred to by figures.

Because of the oddities indicated above and the jocular style in which they are presented, the predominant view among scholars is that the discussion is not to be taken too seriously. It has in fact received much less attention than some other ontological arguments in the dialogues.[193] In my analysis of the discussion in

[193] Among more extensive studies on the subject that will be considered here may be mentioned: Smith, 'General relative clauses in Greek' (1917); Cherniss, 'On Plato's *Republic* X 597 B' (1932); Vlastos, 'Degrees of Reality in Plato' (1965); Fine, *The One over Many* (1980).

Republic X, I will follow Gail Fine's interpretation in her article 'The One over Many'. Fine shows a fundamental inconsistency between the tri-grade ontological scheme and the posited form of couch that occupies the 'highest' position in it, at the same time tracking down the different 'provenience' of these two notions in Plato's earlier dialogues. While Fine's principal concern is the ontological status of forms in the argument, I will consider in more detail the argument about the role of forms in the making of artefacts. In my interpretation, I will rely on epistemological arguments about forms in the *Euthyphro* and *Meno*, and arguments about forms as guiding the making of artefacts in the *Cratylus*.

Making of a couch and the form of couch

The ontological discussion opens with Socrates' proposal to start the investigation 'in accordance with the accustomed method', reminding his interlocutor Glaucon that 'we are somehow in the habit of positing one form for each case of many things to which we give the same name' (εἶδος γάρ πού τι ἓν ἕκαστον εἰώθαμεν τίθεσθαι περὶ ἕκαστα τὰ πολλά, οἷς ταὐτὸν ὄνομα ἐπιφέρομεν 596a6-7).[194] This principle, 'to posit a form for each case of the many things to which we give the same name', is simply stated, though Socrates' referring to it as habitual should evidently remind one of the earlier arguments that justify it (which arguments could be alluded to here will be considered later on). Socrates next indicates, as examples of things that are many, tables and couches, therefore concluding, on the basis of the principle just stated, that there is a single

[194] An alternative reading of this sentence (which will, however, not be endorsed here) has been given by Smith, 'General Relative Clauses in Greek': 'for we are, as you know, in the habit of assuming [as a rule or procedure] that the Idea which corresponds to a group of particulars, each to each, is always one, in which case [or, and in that case] we call the group of particulars by a common name', where 'common name' would refer to 'the name of εἶδος' (70). The crucial difference in Smith's reading is in his taking the clause οἷς ταὐτὸν ὄνομα ἐπιφέρομεν as 'a mere addition' or 'parenthetic remark', instead of as a general relative clause that 'characterises or determines a fixed collection of groups as its antecedent' (*ibid.*, 70). The advantage of Smith's reading is that it avoids the consequence of the argument, of positing an idea for every common name; Smith's concern, in fact, is the proliferation of ideas, which follows from the traditional rendering of the sentence and from taking 'common name' literally, *i.e.* so that it involves also negative terms. Yet, however the argument is interpreted, it will not change the fact that the form of couch (and other artefacts) is posited in it, and my concern here is with this form.

idea[195] for each group of these many things: 'a single idea of couch', 'a single idea of table'. Now Socrates turns to the making of these artefacts. The account of the carpenter's activity is also introduced as one already familiar to the interlocutors:

Οὐκοῦν καὶ εἰώθαμεν λέγειν ὅτι ὁ δημιουργὸς ἑκατέρου τοῦ σκεύους πρὸς τὴν ἰδέαν βλέπων οὕτω ποιεῖ ὁ μὲν τὰς κλίνας, ὁ δὲ τὰς τραπέζας, αἷς ἡμεῖς χρώμεθα, καὶ τἆλλα κατὰ ταὐτά; οὐ γάρ που τήν γε ἰδέαν αὐτὴν δημιουργεῖ οὐδεὶς τῶν δημιουργῶν· πῶς γάρ;

Are we not also accustomed to say that the craftsman of each artefact looks to the idea and makes in this way, the one the couches, the other the tables, which we use, and all other things in the same manner? In fact, none of the craftsmen supposedly crafts the idea itself: in what way, in fact, could he?' (596b6-10)

So, after the 'idea of couch' has been posited for the many objects to which we give the same (generic) name 'couch', this same idea is now given a specific role in the making of couches (and the same with tables): it is what is looked to in order to make these artefacts. At this point, the argument takes a strange turn. Socrates first introduces the case of a painter: he characterises the objects made by him, paintings, as 'apparent things', contrasting them with 'true things', among which he names also artefacts (597d8-e10). But in what follows, Socrates suggests – and Glaucon accepts this puzzling suggestion – that neither are couches and all other artefacts entirely true things:

Τί δὲ ὁ κλινοποιός; οὐκ ἄρτι μέντοι ἔλεγες ὅτι οὐ τὸ εἶδος ποιεῖ, ὃ δή φαμεν εἶναι ὃ ἔστι κλίνη, ἀλλὰ κλίνην τινά;

Ἔλεγον γάρ.

[195] The nouns εἶδος and ἰδέα are in the discussion clearly used synonymously.

Οὐκοῦν εἰ μὴ ὃ ἔστιν ποιεῖ, οὐκ ἂν τὸ ὂν ποιοῖ, ἀλλά τι τοιοῦτον οἷον τὸ ὄν, ὂν δὲ οὔ· τελέως δὲ εἶναι ὂν τὸ τοῦ κλινουργοῦ ἔργον ἢ ἄλλου τινὸς χειροτέχνου εἴ τις φαίη, κινδυνεύει οὐκ ἂν ἀληθῆ λέγειν;

Οὔκουν, ἔφη, ὥς γ' ἂν δόξειεν τοῖς περὶ τοὺς τοιούσδε λόγους διατρίβουσιν.

Μηδὲν ἄρα θαυμάζωμεν εἰ καὶ τοῦτο ἀμυδρόν τι τυγχάνει ὂν πρὸς ἀλήθειαν.

'What about the couch-maker? Did you not say just now that he does not make the form, what we say is what is couch, but a certain couch?'

'I said so indeed.'

'Is it not that if he does not make what is, he will not make something true[196], but something such as what is true, yet not true: if one claimed that the product of the couch-maker is completely true, or of some other handicraft worker, is it likely that one would be saying things that are not true?'

'Not true indeed,' he said, 'at least as it would seem to those who engage in arguments of this sort.'

"Let us not be surprised then if this also happens to be something dim in relation to truth[197]." ' (597a1-11)

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[196] I interpret the participle ὂν here as 'true', as antonymic with 'apparent' (φαινόμενον), and not as 'existent': the opposition of ὄντα and φαινόμενα in fact occur just a little earlier (596e4) as well as later on, though the opposition is applied there to different objects, *i.e.* things in the world, including man-made artefacts, and on the other hand, visual (natural and painted) images of them. As is observed by Vlastos ('Degrees of Reality in Plato', 223), the existential value of the verb εἶναι in this and the following occurrences would not make sense in the present context, given that the discussion distinguishes between different grades of εἶναι: something can be 'completely ὂν', or not completely so. In fact, different grades of existence seem to be inconceivable. In what sense a couch is 'not completely true' of course needs to be clarified and will be discussed later on.

[197] As I have noted in Chapter V (see p. 125, n. 157), I translate the term ἀληθής and terms cognate with it always as 'true' and cognate terms, although 'real' or 'reality' would be more

As is now suggested, again merely with an implicit appeal to the custom ('we say'), it is the form of couch, as opposed to a particular couch, that is 'what is couch'. From this claim, however, an unexpected conclusion is drawn, *i.e.*: that a manufactured couch is somehow not 'completely true'; by contrast, what is (completely) true is 'the form of couch' – or at least, that seems to be implicit in the argument. Yet again, the conclusion is granted by an appeal to some unspecified 'arguments' familiar to the interlocutors and this time alluded to by Glaucon. Now, following closer examination of the argument, this final and 'unexpected' conclusion about the truth of a couch appears to be drawn illicitly. In fact, as has been convincingly argued by Gail Fine ('The One Over Many'), it seems to be derived from a different ontological account from the one that underlies the preceding arguments about the form of couch: while these arguments seem to accord with the ontological views found in the *Meno*, *Euthyphro* and *Cratylus*[198], the final conclusion evidently rests on the ontological account exposed in the central books of the *Republic* and the *Phaedo*.

Form as essential character

Consider first the principle stated at the opening of the argument, of positing 'a form for each case of the many things to which we give the same name'. In order to clarify the notion of form involved here, it is helpful to consider the *Meno*: in it, forms are posited in accordance with this principle as well, but moreover, the principle itself of 'positing a form' is discussed. In the attempt to define excellence, it turns out that various things are called 'excellence', *e.g.*, a man's ability in dealing with public affairs, a woman's competent administration of the

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appropriate when the term refers to an ontological, as opposed to propositional, truth (as in the above case). I have decided to do so in order to avoid predetermining the sense (ontological or propositional) of the term in some occurrences (especially in *Republic* X) in which it is not obvious.

[198] There are various and considerably different views concerning the date of the composition of the *Cratylus* (see Fine, 'The One over Many', 235 n. 58, for a brief survey of these views). My working assumption is that the dialogue was written earlier than the *Republic*: as I will attempt to show, the arguments from the *Cratylus* here discussed have parallels in the *Euthyphro* and *Meno*.

household (or, by a different account, justice, courage, wisdom and others). The same holds for other things, which are called by the same name, but happen to be different in certain respects, *e.g.*, bees and (geometric) shapes. What must therefore be found in order to tell what each excellence, or bee, or shape is, is that 'thing' by virtue of which each of them is an excellence, or a bee, or a shape, and therefore that in which excellences, or bees, or shapes do not differ from one another, but are all the same. Thus, Socrates suggests, someone inquiring what shape is, and receiving the answer that shape is roundness, but further, it is straightness (and also some other things), would then probably ask the following:

Ἀεὶ εἰς πολλὰ ἀφικνούμεθα, ἀλλὰ μή μοι οὕτως, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ τὰ πολλὰ ταῦτα ἑνί τινι προσαγορεύεις ὀνοματι, καὶ φὴς οὐδὲν αὐτῶν ὅτι οὐ σχῆμα εἶναι, καὶ ταῦτα καὶ ἐναντία ὄντα ἀλλήλοις, ὅτι ἐστὶν τοῦτο ὃ οὐδὲν ἧττον κατέχει τὸ στρογγύλον ἢ τὸ εὐθύ, ὃ δὴ ὀνομάζεις σχῆμα καὶ οὐδὲν μᾶλλον φὴς τὸ στρογγύλον σχῆμα εἶναι ἢ τὸ εὐθύ;

We always end up with the many, but this way does not work for me; however, since you call these many by a single name, and you say of none of them that it is not a shape, even though these contrast one with the other, what is this that contains the round no less than the straight, that you call 'shape', saying that roundness is a shape no more than straightness? (*Men.* 74d4-e2)

It may be added that Socrates later on provides a definition of shape as 'that in which the solid ends', or 'the limit of solid'. Now, what is described here as 'this that contains the round no less than the straight, that you call "shape" ' is an example of what has been earlier on referred to as 'form'; in this case, thus, it may be described as the form relative to shapes, or the form of shape. Consider the analogous procedure by means of which, Socrates suggests, one could find out what excellence is:

Οὕτω δὴ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν· κἂν εἰ πολλαὶ καὶ παντοδαπαί εἰσιν, ἕν γέ τι εἶδος ταὐτὸν ἅπασαι ἔχουσιν δι' ὃ εἰσὶν ἀρεταί, εἰς ὃ καλῶς που ἔχει ἀποβλέψαντα τὸν ἀποκρινόμενον τῷ ἐρωτήσαντι ἐκεῖνο δηλῶσαι, ὃ τυγχάνει οὖσα ἀρετή· […]

Is it not the same concerning excellences? Although they are many and manifold, they nonetheless all have some one and the same form, by virtue of which they are excellences, looking to which someone is in a good position to answer another who has asked him to reveal what excellence is; […]. (*Men.* 72c6-d1)[199]

Both procedures, finding out what shape and, in the other case, excellence, is, may be considered as two particular cases of the general principle of positing 'a form for each case of the many things to which we give the same name', stated in *Republic* X. For defining what shape, or excellence, is, evidently involves 'looking to' the form relative to them (*i.e.* that by virtue of which all shapes are shapes, or all excellences are excellences, and therefore that which they all have in common): and this 'looking to the form' will certainly involve, or even coincide with, positing it. Now, it may be argued that looking to the form (*e.g.*, in defining what shape is) will consist in considering all and only those features of all (different) shapes by virtue of which each of them is a shape, and that is: those features that are essential to being a shape. Thus, form, in this context, may be understood as the essential character of things: that by virtue of which each thing is that thing.

In view of the different understanding of form that we will come upon in *Republic* X, it may be noted that here no doubt is raised about the truth (or reality) of the many things considered each time: the many bees, or shapes, or excellences and, on the other hand, the forms related to them seem all to be regarded as true, and that is, equally true and completely so. Furthermore, the distinction between the

[199] Consider a parallel case from the *Euthyphro*, concerned with defining piety: there, Socrates asks Euthyphro to teach him the form 'by virtue of which all pious actions are pious', 'so that, looking to it and employing it as a paradigm, [Socrates] can proclaim, among the actions that [Euthyphro] or someone else does, an action that is of this kind to be pious, and deny this, if an action is not of this kind' (6d9-e6).

many things and their respective form does not involve the distinction between sensible and intelligible: the latter distinction is simply not contemplated; accordingly, it is not specified of what kind, mental or visual, 'looking to the form' is.[200]

Turning back now to *Republic* X, in the light of the above observations, the form of couch will be that by virtue of which every couch is a couch and therefore that which all couches have. This must obviously hold for any future couch as well, any couch still to be made. Without yet considering what the form of couch consists of, it is evident that in order to make a couch, one must make an object that will have this form, by virtue of which it will be a couch: that is why a carpenter must look to, or consider, this form, to make any number of couches.[201] Now, in order to understand what the form of couch consists of, we may first observe, about artefacts in general, that they are by definition objects serving a specific use: a couch is what one can sit or lie on; it is by virtue of serving this specific use that every couch is a couch. Making a couch thus just means making an object that will serve this specific use. Something similar is suggested by Socrates later on in *Republic* X:

οὐκοῦν ἀρετὴ καὶ κάλλος καὶ ὀρθότης ἑκάστου σκεύους καὶ ζῴου καὶ πράξεως οὐ πρὸς ἄλλο τι ἢ τὴν χρείαν ἐστίν, πρὸς ἣν ἂν ἕκαστον ἢ πεποιημένον ἢ πεφυκός;

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[200] That the argument does not specify whether or not forms are accessible to sensory perception is pointed out by Fine, 'The One over Many', 228.

[201] Note that the task of making something that has a specific form (such as a couch in *Republic* X) and, on the other hand, the task of finding a definition of the many things that have the same form (as bee, excellence, shape in the *Meno*), or again the task of identifying, among things, those that have the same form (*e.g.*, identifying, among all actions, those that are pious, as in the *Euthyphro*), all involve looking to the respective form.

So do not excellence, fineness and correctness of every artefact and creature and action stand in relation to nothing else but the use, with a view to which each thing has been made or generated? (601d4-5).[202]

As is suggested here, a tool is made with a view to some use, and its excellence, fineness and correctness are determined in relation to this use only. That is to say, a tool will be correct (*i.e.* adequate), fine, or excellent, to the extent that it succeeds in serving the use it is made and intended for. A couch evidently serves its specific use and purpose by virtue of its specific structure and size, the material it is made of, and other such elements. These features are thus essential to being a couch; it seems, therefore, that they may be regarded as constitutive of the form of couch. Such an understanding of the form relative to objects serving some use is in fact found in the *Cratylus*.[203] Let us then consider the argument about tool making (*i.e.* objects used to perform specific actions) from this dialogue: in it, the relation between the form and the use the object serves is in focus. With regard to the making of a weaving shuttle, it is suggested that by making it, a carpenter looks to 'something such that it is fitted to weave', *i.e.* something that will serve a specific use, and further, that by doing so he looks to a specific form, which is evidently the form by virtue of which an object having it is fitted to weave: it is thus the form that all shuttles, as objects fitted to weave, have, and, on the other hand, the form that all shuttles in the making must 'receive', or 'be given', in order to become shuttles. This form is thus called 'the form of shuttle' (*Crat.* 389a6-b6). This

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[202] A parallel understanding of the making of an artefact, and its excellence, is found in *Gorg.* 503d-506e4.

[203] In the dialogue, Socrates is called to assist in the dispute between Hermogenes and Cratylus concerning the correctness of names (or 'terms': ὀνόματα), according to Hermogenes, names are arbitrarily given; by contrast, Cratylus, though unwilling to offer a justification for his view, claims that there is, for each thing, a name that is fitted for it by nature, the actual names being therefore given to things either correctly or incorrectly (*i.e.* either according to their nature or not). In the attempt to provide a justification for Cratylus' thesis, Socrates compares the employment of names in order to designate things, with actions such as cutting, drilling, weaving, and thus comparing names with the tools employed in these actions. Showing that there is correctness specific to tools, Socrates will attempt to prove that there must be correctness specific to names as well. Once the discussion about tools is concluded, the two interlocutors will inquire, on Hermogenes' request, what this presumed correctness of names may consist in.

understanding of the making of an object that serves a specific use recalls the one found in *Republic* X. Additionally, the argument from the *Cratylus* considers features that are not relevant for a tool's fitness to perform a specific action, and which are therefore not essential to being such a tool: among these features is, in the case of a drill, the provenience of material of which it is made (*e.g.*, drills made of iron of foreign provenience are equally drills, as the provenience of iron is not relevant to their fitness to drill).[204] By contrast, among features that are essential to being a drill will supposedly be particular shape, size, solidness, and any other features without which a drill would not be fitted for drilling (*Crat.* 389b8-390a2). The form of drill will thus supposedly involve the latter features, but not the former ones. The same may be said about the form of couch: it will involve those features by virtue of which a couch serves the use specific to couches (*e.g.*, being sat or lain upon), but not any other features (*e.g.*, colour).

In *Republic* X, Socrates' next suggestion is that a carpenter 'does not make the form, what we say is what is couch, but a certain couch'.[205] The claim that only the form of couch, but not any particular couch, can be characterised as being 'what is couch', can again be elucidated by the *Meno*. As seen above, defining what excellence, or shape, is, involves 'looking to' the form that all the various things each called (an) 'excellence', or (a) 'shape', have and by virtue of which each of them is an excellence, or a shape. By contrast, one would evidently not be able to tell what excellence is by looking to, or considering, justice alone, or what shape is by looking to the rounded shape (roundness) alone. The definition thus given would in fact be of some particular excellence or shape, but not of excellence or

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[204] The fact that tools of the same kind (*i.e.* having the same function, or use) can be made from materials of different provenience ('in this place or among foreigners') is used as an argument in support of what Socrates intends to prove about names. In the analogy drawn between names and tools, sounds and syllables that constitute names, obviously different from one language to another, are paralleled with the material constituting tools (*Crat.* 389d4-390a7). It follows, therefore, that the correctness of names will not depend on specific sounds and syllables the name is composed of (different in every language), but instead solely on the form of the name, as that by virtue of which the name is fitted to designate something, assumed to be in every language the same (whatever the form may turn out to consist of in the case of names; *Crat.* 390d9-e4).

[205] *Cf. Crat.* 389b5-6, where Socrates similarly suggests that it is the form of shuttle 'which we would most justly call that which is shuttle' (οὐκοῦν ἐκεῖνο δικαιότατ' ἂν αὐτὸ ὃ ἔστιν κερκὶς καλέσαιμεν;).

shape as such (and would therefore not apply to every excellence or shape). As is in fact suggested later on, it is because there are other shapes besides the rounded shape (which are in certain respects different from it, *e.g.*, the straight-sided shape) that one should say, concerning the rounded shape, 'that it is *a* shape, but not simply [that it is] shape'.[206] By contrast, it may be supposed that one should say about the form of shape, that 'it is simply shape': in fact, it coincides with that which is the same for all shapes and must therefore consist of all and only those features that are essential to being a shape. Unlike the form, particular shapes have other features as well. In the light of the *Meno*, it may thus be argued that the form of couch is 'what is couch' inasmuch as it coincides with that which is the same for all couches, and therefore consists of all and only those features that are essential to being a couch; by contrast, each particular couch cannot be defined as 'simply couch', as it has features that other things that 'qualify' for couches do not have (*i.e.* they are features that are not essential to being a couch).

Couches are not completely true either

The arguments so far considered about the form of couch seem to rely on the same notion of form as is found in the dialogues *Euthyphro*, *Meno* and *Cratylus*. But in what follows, the discussion seems to 'jump' into a different conceptual framework in which the form of couch does not fit any longer. As may again be recalled, from the claim that a carpenter makes a couch, and not the form of it, and from the claim that 'what is couch' is the form of couch, it is concluded that a carpenter does not make 'what is'; that he therefore does not make 'what is true', but 'something such as what is true, yet not true'; or again, that it may well be wrong to say that 'the product of a carpenter or another craftsman is completely true'; and finally, that it should not be surprising if 'this [*i.e.* a couch, or perhaps any artefact] happens to be something dim in relation to truth'. The 'degraded'

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[206] *Men.* 73e3-6: '[…] about roundness I should say that it is *a* shape, but not simply [that it is] shape. For these reasons I should speak in this way, because there are other shapes as well' ([…] στρογγυλότητος πέρι εἴποιμ' ἂν ἔγωγε ὅτι σχῆμά τί ἐστιν, οὐχ οὕτως ἁπλῶς ὅτι σχῆμα. διὰ ταῦτα δὲ οὕτως ἂν εἴποιμι, ὅτι καὶ ἄλλα ἔστι σχήματα).

ontological status of a couch, *i.e.* its not being completely true, is in the argument ultimately derived from its not being 'what is couch'. Although the status of the form of couch is not stated explicitly, it seems to be implied: being 'what is couch', the form of couch must be 'something true', or 'completely true'. In the subsequent discussion, it is in fact described as such, *i.e.* as the couch that is 'in nature', or the couch that 'truly is'.

Now, there seem to be no obvious grounds, either it *Republic* X itself or in the dialogues considered, for the inference made: as already observed, in the *Cratylus*, *Euthyphro* and *Meno*, things that have the same form are not characterised as any less true than the form itself specific to them, but seem to be regarded as equally true. In fact, the differentiation between 'true' and 'something such as what is true, but not true', or between 'truth' and 'something faint in relation to [it]' evokes a different ontological picture: that developed in the central books of the *Republic*, in which such ontological distinctions are introduced and recurrently explained using the analogies of light and sight. Here, these complex and extensive arguments will not be examined in detail. It is important to recall, however, on what grounds forms are posited and characterised as 'completely true', and which forms these are.

The starting point of the inquiry that leads to positing forms is now not whichever 'set' of 'the many things to which we give the same name' (such as the many couches or the many tables), but instead, only sets such as the many beautiful things, the many good things, the many just things, and, on the other hand, the many double things, big things, small things, light things, heavy things (*Rep.* V 476e9-476a7, 478e7-479b10).[207] The crucial argument for considering these things as not being completely true is their alleged controversial nature. In all these cases, it is in fact argued that things appear what they are as much as the opposite of what

[207] The predicate 'beautiful' and others in the former group is characterised by Fine ('The One over Many', 228-230) as 'moral-aesthetic', whereas the predicate 'double', 'big' and others are characterised as 'relative' or 'incomplete' (for something is double, big, light, always in relation to something else; see *Rep.* VII 523d). Both are defined by her as 'disputed predicates' (inasmuch as their opposite can always be predicated of the same thing, as we shall see in the following), as opposed to predicates such as 'finger' (*Rep.* VII 523c-d), which are non-disputed (inasmuch as their opposite cannot be predicated of the same thing).

they are: the same things will appear both beautiful and ugly (*e.g.*, in different surroundings), or again, as both doubles and halves (in relation to what is their half and, on the other hand, their double), both light and heavy (in relation to something heavier or, as the case may be, something lighter). But while all things perceived by sight and other senses 'coincide with their opposites' (*Rep.* VII 524d) in the sense just illustrated, the mind is able to perceive each of the opposites as distinct and separate from the other: the things so perceived are then called 'beautiful itself', 'good itself', or also 'the form (or idea) of beautiful, or good', or again 'the big', 'the small' (*Rep.* VII 524c).[208] On these premises, a distinction is drawn between the realm of visible, or more generally, sensate, and the realm of intelligible. While sensate things have a controversial, and thus indeterminable, nature, those that are intelligible are 'always remaining the same and unchanged' (*Rep.* V 479a; trans. Shorey). Having such a nature, the latter, *i.e.* 'forms', are thus characterised as true, or completely true (*Rep.* V 480a), whereas sensate things are characterised as not completely, or not purely, true and as being controversial manifestations of forms:

[…] αὐτὸ μὲν ἓν ἕκαστον εἶναι, τῇ δὲ τῶν πράξεων καὶ σωμάτων καὶ ἀλλήλων κοινωνίᾳ πανταχοῦ φανταζόμενα πολλὰ φαίνεσθαι ἕκαστον.

[...] each of them [the forms] is one, but by virtue of the communion with actions and bodies and each other appearing everywhere, each appears as many. (*Rep.* V 476a5-7)

Now, in the light of this account, a particular couch of *Republic* X, being a sensate object, could be characterised as not completely true, inasmuch as it can appear both as a big thing and a small thing, both a heavy thing and a light thing, or again, both a beautiful thing and an ugly thing. However, what should then be posited,

[208] A debated question, which I will only point to here, is whether the forms of ugly, unjust, and bad, which are not explicitly named in the argument, should also be posited.

given this controversial nature of a couch, is big itself, small itself, beautiful itself, as (only) intelligible objects of unchanging nature, and therefore true; whereas each of these, as it manifests itself 'in the communion' with a couch, as a sensate object, coincides with its opposite. By contrast, according to this account, the form of couch of course cannot be posited, for viewed *as a couch*, a couch does not appear also the opposite of a couch (*i.e.* its being a couch is not controversial).[209] In the arguments concerning forms in the central books of the *Republic*, in fact, no forms relative to such things as couches, shapes, or bees, are posited. And yet, what is in *Republic* X implicitly posited as 'completely true', in opposition to a particular couch, is 'the form of couch'. As must then be concluded, the discussion has tacitly shifted to another ontological model – doing so precisely at the point of deriving from the earlier claim that a couch-maker does not make 'what is couch' the claim that he does not make 'what is' and therefore 'something true' (at line 597a4) – and illicitly projected the form of couch into it. The outcome of this 'amalgamation' is the tri-grade 'ontological' scheme of, first, the form of couch, as the couch 'that is in nature', the one completely true – the maker of which is said to be God himself–, next the couch made by a couch-maker, as less true than the form of couch, and last, the couch made by a painter, placed 'at the third remove from nature', or from 'truth'.

Just what could be the purpose of proposing this tri-grade, – and as it has turned out, inconsistent – ontological picture? For the impression is that it would be sufficient, for the purposes of the argument, to draw only the latter ontological distinction, *i.e.* between a couch and a painted image of it; in fact, only this distinction will be applied later on, when poets' works (as works not relying on relevant knowledge) will be compared with painted images and characterised as being φαντάσματα and μιμήματα, but not ὄντα (599a2-3, b5). By contrast, the degraded ontological status of craftsmen's products does not seem to play any role in the arguments about poetry that follow. Besides, it may be recalled that a parallel argument in the *Sophist*, in which sophists' discourses are also assumed not to rely on relevant knowledge and as such are compared with painted images,

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[209] As is in fact pointed out about shuttles by Fine, 'The One over Many', 237.

distinguishes only between two ontological types, things themselves and images of them (*Soph.* 234b7).[210]

Perhaps, however, the arguments of the central books, in which the sensate realm has been consistently shown as not completely true, do not allow any simpler an ontological picture in Book X: characterising a couch as true and contrasting it with a painted one which is only apparent could in fact appear inaccurate in the light of what has earlier on been (implicitly) established about the truth (or reality) of couches. But then again, would it be worth reaching accordance with the earlier ontological account at the cost of employing a flawed argument? Whatever the reasons for it may be, perhaps, the attribution of the authorship of the form of couch and other forms to God, unique in the dialogues, is intended as no more than a jocular acknowledgement of the illicit steps taken.[211]

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[210] Interestingly, *Republic* VI, *Republic* X and the *Sophist* all draw an ontological (hierarchic) distinction between, on the one hand, things that are naturally (or divinely) generated or produced by men, and on the other, visual images of them. While in *Republic* VI (509d6-510a6) and *Republic* X (596de1-4), they occupy the two sections of the sensate realm in the tetra-grade and the tri-grade ontological model respectively, in the *Sophist* a further 'transversal' distinction is introduced between divine and human production (265e3-266e1): inanimate and animate nature and, on the other hand, images such as dreams, shadows, reflections, are divinely made, whereas artefacts and painted images are men's products. A more detailed discussion of the argument in the *Sophist* is provided in Excursus F.

[211] There have been some attempts to reconcile Socrates' claim that God is the maker of 'the form of couch' and other forms, with the notion of forms as intelligible, 'un-made', eternal, and unchanging, found in the ontological account in the central books of the *Republic* and other dialogues (but not, of course, in the ontology of the early dialogues, whose notion of the form has been discussed above). These attempts are convincingly criticised by Cherniss ('On Plato's *Republic* X 597b'). Cherniss instead interprets the controversies as intentional and playing a specific role in the argument: as he argues, they are offered as a sort of rhetorical substitution for a longer proof, *i.e.* a proof concerning God's making of the world; such a proof, in Cherniss' view, would take the argument too far from its aim, which is 'merely' to prove that 'the mimetic arts [are] far from the truth' (242).

Excursus F

The *Sophist*: sophists, images and appearances

Introduction

Republic X and the *Sophist* contain a striking parallel: in both dialogues the same basic model of a painter is employed to illustrate what poets, or in the other case, sophists do and thus to characterise their activity as a kind of μίμησις. In the *Sophist*, however, the comparison of sophists with the painter is developed further: like poets in *Republic* X, sophists are first alleged to be incompetent in matters they speak about and thus compared with the painter as a maker of 'images' (εἴδωλα); but later, sophists are once again compared with painters and sculptors of a particular kind, those who, because of the large size of the image they are making, do not maintain the original proportions of the model but adjust them in such a way that, from a certain viewpoint, the image does not appear disproportionate but beautiful. The images thus made are named φαντάσματα, 'appearances'[212], whereas those preserving the original proportions and colours of the model are named εἰκόνες, 'resemblances'. The disqualification of sophists in the dialogue thus seems to 'recycle' and further develop the strategy that in *Republic* X was employed against poets. However, the twofold comparison of sophists with painters proves to be even more intricate than the parallel one from *Republic* X: while according to the account proposed, sophists seem to be similar to the maker of painted 'images' in nearly the same way as poets in *Republic* X were, it is not obvious how sophists are similar specifically to the maker of 'appearances' (and how they are different from the maker of 'resemblances').

My aim here will be to clarify both these comparisons. In fact, although the distinction between the two kinds of painting, 'eicastic' and 'fantastic' is often

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[212] Note that in the present argument in the *Sophist*, φάντασμα is not synonymous with εἴδωλον, as it was in *Republic* X, but denotes only a particular kind of εἴδωλον, the kind described above.

mentioned by scholars in connection with Plato's treatment of art, the question of how the sophist's activity is similar to them has rarely been fully addressed.[213] On the other hand, this argument has also remained rather marginal in studies that focus on the central issue of the dialogue: the question of the being of 'what is not' (τὸ μὴ ὄν [237a3]), which in fact emerges in the course of the discussion about sophists and painters. For even the 'appearing and seeming, but not being' (236e1-2), which turns out to be somehow inherent in images, presupposes that 'what is not' is: in what way the being of 'what is not' is at all possible is discussed in the remainder of the dialogue.

While leaving this difficult subject aside, I will examine here 'images' and 'appearances' as models of the sophist's discourse. As I will argue, images and appearances provide models of two different kinds of 'not being true', which are both applied to the sophist's discourse: this discourse is similar to painted images, inasmuch as it is 'not true' in the *ontological* sense (as a 'thing'); whereas it is similar to painted 'appearances', inasmuch as it is 'not true' in the *propositional* sense (as stating, or claiming). Together with proposing this interpretation, I will consider how the account of sophists in the dialogue differs from the account of poets in *Republic* X.

First comparison: sophist and painter

The visitor from Elea and Theaetetus, the two main interlocutors of the *Sophist*, have undertaken the task of defining sophists' activity. Assuming that the sophist is someone in possession of an art (τέχνη), they begin their investigation trying to identify this art; yet, while looking for one art, they find many. Distrustful of someone who appears to practice such a variety of arts, they decide to bring the presumed expert under closer examination (232a1-b3) by taking up one of the arts

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[213] Some recent studies that, somewhat obliquely, discuss the subject are: Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis* (62-67, 127-129); Nightingale, 'Distant Views: "Realistic" and "Fantastic" Mimesis in Plato'; Giuliano, *Platone e la poesia* (94-95, 100). Nightingale explores how the two kinds of μίμησις ('realistic' and 'fantastic') can be applied to fictional discourse, but not to the sophist's discourse.

the sophist seems to be competent in: the art of contradicting his interlocutors in disputations (ἡ ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη 232e3 *et passim*; ἀντιλέγειν 233d9; ἀντειπεῖν 232c9). But once again, the sophist turns out to be a suspicious figure: he seems to have the ability to contradict, on virtually any subject, even those competent in the subject discussed. As a result, the sophist is credited with knowledge of all the different matters he debates on, at least by those willing to pay for his teaching: in fact, as a professional teacher, the sophist promises to impart this ability to his students as well. However, as the two interlocutors soon conclude, the high reputation sophists enjoy cannot be deserved, for the knowledge sophists should, individually, possess is simply too vast to be mastered by a single person. The argument of the excessiveness of the presumed knowledge is thus presented as a sufficient proof that the sophist's practice of contradicting others in debates in fact does not rely on knowledge about matters debated.[214] From this premise, it is then deduced that the sophist cannot be saying anything 'sound' (ὑγιές [233a6]) in contradicting even those competent in the subject of the debate; accordingly, the impression of the sophist's students that he contradicts 'correctly' (233b3) on the matters debated and that he must thus be competent and wise, is evidently false. This false impression, it is therefore suggested, is due to some deception similar to that which may take place in painting.

The painter is thus introduced in the discussion as a counterpart of the sophist, and at the same time as a figure that is easier to scrutinise than he, the sophist, is. The two figures, as is pointed out immediately, differ in that the activity of the former consists in making whereas that of the latter in speaking (233d9-10). It is suggested, however, that the sophist's claim to be able to *speak* and contradict others on any subject is comparable to a painter's (hypothetical) claim to be able to *make* anything, for example, men, animals, plants, the sea, Earth, the sky and gods:

Οὐκοῦν τόν γ' ὑπισχνούμενον δυνατὸν εἶναι μιᾷ τέχνῃ πάντα ποιεῖν γιγνώσκομέν που τοῦτο, ὅτι μιμήματα καὶ ὁμώνυμα τῶν ὄντων

[214] It may be recalled that the same argument of 'excessive' knowledge is employed in *Republic* X to deny that poets are competent in their subject matter.

ἀπεργαζόμενος τῇ γραφικῇ τέχνῃ δυνατὸς ἔσται τοὺς ἀνοήτους τῶν νέων παίδων, πόρρωθεν τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐπιδεικνύς, λανθάνειν ὡς ὅτιπερ ἂν βουληθῇ δρᾶν, τοῦτο ἱκανώτατος ὢν ἀποτελεῖν ἔργῳ.

If then someone professes to be able to make anything by means of one art, we know this: that by means of the art of painting he fabricates μιμήματα, and things that have the same name, of true things[215], and will thus be able to deceive the naïve among young children, by showing from afar the things painted, that he is most capable of carrying out in deed whatever he wishes to do. (234b5-10)

The argument bears an evident resemblance to *Republic* X, though in some respects it differs from it as well. As suggested, if someone were to profess to be able to make animals, plants, men, *etc.* by means of one art, it would of course be naïve to credit him with the ability to make these things themselves; instead, he should be considered as a maker of μιμήματα, or *figures*, of these things, which can in fact be referred to with the same names (or expressions) as the 'true things' themselves of which they are images.[216] Now, it may be supposed that paintings, inasmuch as they are μιμήματα τῶν ὄντων, cannot be characterised as τὰ ὄντα, 'true things'. Further, the sense in which they are not 'true things' must be the same sense in which a painting of a couch in *Republic* X is 'far from truth', *i.e.* in the sense that they are *figures*: as I have suggested, a painting of a couch is far from truth inasmuch as it is far from being a couch; in fact, it is like a couch only in 'something little', *i.e.* in a particular (visual) aspect (by virtue of which it constitutes an image of a couch), but not in those aspects that are essential to being a couch (by virtue of which it would be a couch). A μίμημα is thus 'far from truth', or simply not true, in relation to the object whose μίμημα it is; this sense of not being 'true', inasmuch as it typically concerns things (as opposed to claims,

[215] The adjective 'true' and its cognates will be employed here in translations of the nominalised participle τὰ ὄντα ('true things') as well as of the adjective ἀληθές and cognate terms.

[216] In *Republic* X, a painter is likewise introduced as a 'craftsman' who makes all things that other craftsmen make selectively, and then revealed to be only a maker of painted images of these things, and thus of an 'apparent couch', not a 'true' couch.

propositions), was defined in Chapter V as 'ontological'. As we shall see, another sense of 'not being true' will be considered later on: an image that is a φάντασμα, an appearance, is 'not true' also in the 'propositional' sense (whereas an εἰκών is).

Inasmuch as a painting is like the object it refers to only in a particular visual aspect, it is also obvious that the art required to make the painting is indeed the art of painting, but not the art required to make that object itself. It is less clear, however, exactly how a painter deceives naïve young viewers of his paintings into crediting him with the ability to make anything he wishes: do the viewers (unlike those in *Republic* X) mistake painted images for the things themselves whose images they are, or do they only mistakenly believe that one who is able to make images will be able to make the things images refer to 'in deed'?[217] While the parallel example in *Republic* X, as I argued, virtually excludes the first possibility, the present example does not seem to exclude either possibility. Whatever the case may be, however, the mistake will lead to crediting such a painter with the ability to 'do anything he wishes' (either inducing it from images perceived *as true things*, or from images perceived *as images*). In what follows, a parallel is drawn with the sophist and his young students: just as a painter may deceive naïve children so that they credit him with the ability to *make* everything, so the sophist might somehow deceive his students so that they credit him with the knowledge of all things:

{ΞΕ.} Τί δὲ δή; περὶ τοὺς λόγους ἆρ' οὐ προσδοκῶμεν εἶναί τινα ἄλλην τέχνην, ᾗ αὖ δυνατὸν <ὂν> [αὖ] τυγχάνει τοὺς νέους καὶ ἔτι πόρρω τῶν πραγμάτων τῆς ἀληθείας ἀφεστῶτας διὰ τῶν ὤτων τοῖς λόγοις γοητεύειν, δεικνύντας εἴδωλα λεγόμενα περὶ πάντων, ὥστε ποιεῖν ἀληθῆ δοκεῖν λέγεσθαι καὶ τὸν λέγοντα δὴ σοφώτατον πάντων ἅπαντ' εἶναι;

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[217] Both Belfiore ('The Greatest Accusation Against Poetry', 48) and Burnyeat ('Culture and Society in Plato's *Republic*', 303), the two scholars who reject the first ('ontological') possibility in the parallel example in *Republic* X, reject it here as well; see p. 136, n. 166.

Visitor: What then? With regard to discourses, shall we not assume some other art, by means of which it is again possible to trick through ears and with discourses, those who are young and still stand far away from the truth of things, by showing spoken images about all things, so as to make it seem that true things are said and that the speaker is the wisest of all concerning all things? (234c2-7)

In the above argument, the sophist's activity, which consists in speaking, is presented as some sort of making as well, a making whose (non-material) products are discourses (λόγοι), or things said (or spoken). These verbal 'products' are presented as counterparts of a painter's products, *i.e.* images: they are metaphorically described as 'spoken images' (εἴδωλα λεγόμενα) that the sophist shows just as the painter shows 'things painted' (τὰ γεγραμμένα); further, the sophist deceives 'through ears, with discourses', just as the painter, supposedly, deceives through eyes, with paintings. Once the above analogy is agreed to be valid, the sophist is also characterised as a 'μιμητής […] of true things' (μιμητὴς ὢν τῶν ὄντων 235a1) and his activity as a sort of μίμησις. The things said by him, described metaphorically above as 'spoken images', may thus be characterised as μιμήματα.

But in what sense is the sophist's activity characterised as μίμησις, and the things said by him 'images', or μιμήματα? And further, about what exactly is this activity deceptive? Importantly, later on it is suggested that the sophist is a deceiver and a 'μιμητής […] of true things', precisely inasmuch as he does not truly have knowledge of the matters which he seems to be able to contradict.[218] So, the sophist's activity, his speaking, is a kind of μίμησις, inasmuch as it does not rely on knowledge of his subject matter. If so, the 'true' counterparts of his discourses will supposedly be discourses that do rely on relevant knowledge, and the 'maker' of these 'true' counterparts will be someone who has such knowledge.

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[218] *Soph.* 234e7-a4: περὶ δ' οὖν τοῦ σοφιστοῦ τόδε μοι λέγε· πότερον ἤδη τοῦτο σαφές, ὅτι τῶν γοήτων ἐστί τις, μιμητὴς ὢν τῶν ὄντων, ἢ διστάζομεν ἔτι μὴ περὶ ὅσωνπερ ἀντιλέγειν δοκεῖ δυνατὸς εἶναι, περὶ τοσούτων καὶ τὰς ἐπιστήμας ἀληθῶς ἔχων τυγχάνει;

This seems to be confirmed at the end of the dialogue as well, where the sophist is characterised more precisely as a 'μιμητής […] of a wise man' (μιμητὴς δ' ὢν τοῦ σοφοῦ 268c1), *i.e.* a μιμητής of someone competent in numerous matters (about which the sophist speaks).[219] But moreover, the sophist is perceived by his students as 'the wisest of all concerning all things': his discourses must then so closely resemble those delivered by someone competent in the subject matter that they are mistaken for such discourses, and the sophist himself for someone competent in all the matters he speaks about. Inasmuch as the sophist, being only a μιμητής and a *figure* of a wise man, is perceived as 'the wisest of all concerning all things', or indeed as a wise man, his μίμησις is of the *deceptive* kind.

The sophist's discourses are thus here approached as things that are not true in the ontological sense: they stand in relation to the discourses that rely on relevant knowledge just as painted images stand in relation to true things whose images they are. So, for instance, when the sophist, being incompetent in wrestling, debates on this subject (*cf.* 232d9), his discourse is only *like* a discourse on wrestling that relies on relevant knowledge, but cannot be a *true* discourse on wrestling that relies on such knowledge; for only someone competent in wrestling is able to deliver such a discourse (just as only someone competent in housebuilding can make a true house, whereas a 'house' made by someone incompetent in this art cannot be a true house, yet it can be an image of a house; 266c7-9). But if sophists' discourses are only somehow *like* discourses relying on knowledge, exactly how do they differ from them?

Before addressing this question, it is worth recalling how poets and their discourses are described in *Republic* X, for up to this point, sophists have received very similar treatment. As I argued in Chapter V, poets engage in deceptive μίμησις of those competent in arts about which they implicitly speak in their works. Poets' works differ from discourses relying on knowledge primarily in that they provide a *deficient* account of matters related to arts: by narrating, a poet 'applies, with

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[219] Note that the object of μίμησις here specified is the *agent* ('a wise man') of the activity that is as a whole the object of μίμησις: a wise man's speaking and debating. The issue of different ways of specifying the object of μίμησις is discussed in Chapter IV.

words and phrases, colours of each of the arts' (601a), *i.e.* he says as little about an art as a painter 'says' about couch making by painting a carpenter making a couch. Sophists' discourses, however, seem to differ from discourses that rely on knowledge primarily in another respect. Unlike poets' works, charged primarily with the 'deficiency' described above, and only secondarily with a possible incorrectness (which is supposedly synonymous with falsehood), sophists' discourses seem to be accused precisely of (propositional) *falsehood*, *i.e.* of saying false things, and moreover, at the same time seeming to say true things. In fact, as we shall now see, in speaking falsely, but seeming to speak the truth, sophists' discourses are like 'appearances' (as opposed to 'resemblances') made by painters. The comparison of the sophist's discourses with appearances will concern the other sense of 'not being true': propositional.

Second comparison: sophist and appearance-maker

As anticipated, after the sophist has been compared with a painter as a maker of images, he is once more compared with a particular kind of painter or sculptor, one who, when making the image, adjusts the proportions of the model. As a matter of fact, the sophist will be grouped together with this kind of image-maker only much later in the dialogue, for before the second parallel is completed, the argument is interrupted by the problem of 'not being' that has emerged from it. At this point, however, the distinction is introduced between this kind of image-making, *i.e.* with 'adjustment', and on the other hand, image-making that maintains the (true) proportions and colours of the model.

The former kind of image-making is characteristic of those who make paintings or sculptures of large dimensions, for 'if they rendered the true proportion of the beautiful objects (τὴν τῶν καλῶν ἀληθινὴν συμμετρίαν), […] the upper parts would appear smaller than they should, while the lower parts would appear larger [than they should], due to our seeing the one from afar and the other from close by' (235e8-236a2). To avoid this visual effect, painters and sculptors change the original proportions, *i.e.* they presumably make the parts that stand closer to the

viewer relatively smaller, whereas those that are farther from the viewer are made relatively bigger, than those of the model. An image that preserves the proportions of its model will be 'similar' (εἰκός), in its proportions, to it. By contrast, an image with adjusted proportions will not be similar, in this respect, to its model; however, from a particular viewpoint, the image will appear 'to be similar to the beautiful object' (ἐοικέναι τῷ καλῷ), *i.e.* to its model (236b4-7).[220] An image of the latter kind, as it only 'appears' (φαίνεται) to be similar, is thus defined as a φάντασμα, an 'appearance', whereas an image of the former kind, being in fact similar to its model, is defined as an εἰκών, a 'resemblance' (236a8-b7). Now, it is crucial to consider how the making of appearances is evaluated with regard to 'truth':

Ἆρ' οὖν οὐ χαίρειν τὸ ἀληθὲς ἐάσαντες οἱ δημιουργοὶ νῦν οὐ τὰς οὔσας συμμετρίας ἀλλὰ τὰς δοξούσας εἶναι καλὰς τοῖς εἰδώλοις ἐναπεργάζονται;

So is it not that these craftsmen let the truth go by working into images not the true proportions but the proportions that will seem to be beautiful? (236a4-6)

So, making an image that is dissimilar, in its proportions, to the model counts here as 'letting the truth (τὸ ἀληθές) go'. Accordingly, we may suppose, making an image that is similar, in its proportions and colours, to the model will count as maintaining the truth. But exactly in what sense is the truth maintained or let go by making the one kind of image or the other?

By way of illustration, we may imagine two paintings of Theaetetus (*cf.* 233e5), one that maintains the true colour of his eyes, for example light, and another that

[220] The deception produced in this case is of course of a different kind from mistaking an image for the object whose image it is, which has been – arguably – contemplated earlier on: in the present case, the deceived viewer misperceives the image as similar (in its proportions) to the object it refers to, but of course *does not* mistake the image for the object whose image it is.

does not maintain it (more precisely, the part of painting that constitutes a figure of Theaetetus' eyes is in the first case of a similar colour to Theaetetus' eyes, and in the second case it is dissimilar). In both cases, what is painted will, by virtue of its visual likeness to Theaetetus (in other respects, *e.g.*, in proportions), refer to Theaetetus and constitute a figure of him, or more precisely a figure-of-Theaetetus (*i.e.* this kind of figure). However, the first painting attributes to Theaetetus light colour of eyes: it does so by referring to Theaetetus and at same time being a figure-of-Theaetetus-with-light-eyes (*i.e.* being this kind of figure). By contrast, the second painting attributes to Theaetetus dark colour of eyes, inasmuch as it both refers to Theaetetus and is at the same time a figure-of-Theaetetus-with-dark-eyes.[221] Regarding the two paintings, it may be supposed that the first one (or its maker) maintains the truth, more precisely the truth about the colour of Theaetetus' eyes, whereas the second one lets this truth go. Now, it is evidently possible to assign to the two paintings of Theaetetus their respective counterparts in discourse: supposedly, the figure-of-Theaetetus-with-light-eyes will correspond to saying, or stating, that Theaetetus has light eyes, and therefore telling the truth, whereas the figure-of-Theaetetus-with-dark-eyes will correspond to claiming that Theaetetus has dark eyes, and therefore to saying a falsehood.

Granted this, we may characterise images as either 'being true' or 'not being true' in another sense: 'propositional' (as opposed to 'ontological'). The 'truth' which an image can either maintain or let go has in fact turned out to be truth in a propositional sense, *i.e.* truth as, paradigmatically, a property of a statement or proposition. Images maintain the truth or let it go in the propositional sense in that they correspond, respectively, to speaking the truth and speaking a falsehood. In this (propositional) sense, an image can be true (*i.e.* as corresponding to speaking the truth), although not being a true thing (*i.e.* not 'true' in the ontological sense).

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[221] A clear formal analysis of the notion of 'representing something as' (which may be applied to the example above of presenting Theaetetus as having light eyes) is provided by Goodman (*Languages of Art*, 28-29, quoted by Ledda, 'Verità e poesia nella *Poetica* di Aristotele', 26): 'an object *k* is represented as a so-and-so by a picture *p* if and only if *p* is or contains a picture that as a whole both represents *k* and is a so-and-so picture'. Ledda (*ibid.*, 24-33) also provides an insightful analysis of this notion ('representation of something as').

However, the 'appearances' that the argument is concerned with are still more complex than the painting of Theaetetus that is propositionally false ('lets the truth go'). This painting, while not being similar to Theaetetus in the colour of his eyes, does *not appear* similar to him in this respect either. For surely, its 'letting the truth go' will be easily perceived by a viewer who has previously seen Theaetetus. By contrast, an appearance (or its maker) lets the truth go in such a way that this cannot be perceived by the viewer from his viewpoint: the image, though not actually being, in its proportions, similar to the object it refers to, *does appear* to be similar to it in this respect.[222] So, the counterpart of an appearance in discourse will evidently consist in saying a falsehood that is perceived by the listener as speaking the truth.

The sophist, we may thus conclude, will be similar to makers of appearances in that he speaks falsely, while seeming to speak the truth. This is in fact what the sophist has been by the visitor accused of even before appearance-makers are introduced in the argument: the sophist makes it seem, to his students, 'that true things are said' (234c6-7), or again, by imparting to his students 'beliefs' that are evidently false, the sophist delivers 'appearances in discourses':

Τοὺς πολλοὺς οὖν, ὦ Θεαίτητε, τῶν τότε ἀκουόντων ἆρ' οὐκ ἀνάγκη χρόνου τε ἐπελθόντος αὐτοῖς ἱκανοῦ καὶ προϊούσης ἡλικίας τοῖς τε οὖσι προσπίπτοντας ἐγγύθεν καὶ διὰ παθημάτων ἀναγκαζομένους ἐναργῶς ἐφάπτεσθαι τῶν ὄντων, μεταβάλλειν τὰς τότε γενομένας δόξας, ὥστε σμικρὰ μὲν φαίνεσθαι τὰ μεγάλα, χαλεπὰ δὲ τὰ ῥᾴδια, καὶ πάντα

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[222] The relation between true and false λόγος and 'resemblances' (εἰκόνες) is discussed in *Phlb.* 38b12-39c6: in it, a painter is placed in the soul, painting resemblances in it. This 'painter' is at work 'whenever one somehow sees in oneself resemblances of what is being said and thought, although he is holding his thoughts or discourses away from the sight and any other perception' (39b9-c2). These resemblances are either true or false, just as the λόγοι or δόξαι whose εἰκόνες they are. In the *Sophist*, such psychological explanation, which seems to concern appearances in discourses, may be found at 263d6-264b3; in the passage, the faculty of imagination (φαντασία) is discussed, as a mixture of perception and belief (as faculties), which seems to have appearances as its objects. However, the subject is just touched upon and nothing certain can be concluded from the discussion.

πάντῃ ἀνατετράφθαι τὰ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις φαντάσματα ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν ἔργων παραγενομένων;

Is it then not inevitable, Theaetetus, for the majority of those who were then listening, when sufficient time has passed for them and they have advanced in age – as they have a close encounter with true things and are forced by experience to grasp true things –, that they change the beliefs that came about at that time, so that great things reveal themselves as being small, easy things as being difficult, and the appearances in discourses are all overturned in every way by the facts that have come to light in their actions? (234d2-e2)[223]

The sophist then provides his listeners with 'appearances in discourses' (τὰ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις φαντάσματα): as suggested, by doing so the sophist will impart false beliefs, δόξαι, to his young listeners. But in order to acquire them, the latter must perceive the δόξαι conveyed by the sophist as true; *i.e.* they credit the sophist with speaking the truth, whereas in fact, he says false things. These young people who listen to the sophist reveal themselves, with hindsight, as being very similar to the viewer of a painted or sculpted appearance: the latter, as is suggested later on, misperceives the image as being similar to the (beautiful) object it refers to 'because of the viewpoint that is not beautiful, whereas if one could acquire the ability to see things of that size adequately', one would notice the dissimilarity (236b4-7). And just as a painted appearance would reveal itself as an 'appearance' (*i.e.* in its proportions, dissimilar to the object it refers to) from an adequate position, so the δόξαι conveyed by the sophist will reveal themselves as false to the listeners once they come to know, through time and experience, the truth about things.

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[223] Notice the parallelism of the two descriptions: 'the appearances in discourses' anticipate the painted and sculpted 'appearances'; the inadequacy of the pupils' age seems to have its parallel in the spatial inadequacy of the viewer (in order to overcome the deception, the listeners will need 'sufficient' (ἱκανοῦ) time, while the viewer would need to gain a position from which he can see the image 'adequately' ἱκανῶς); just as the deception of the viewer concerns the relative size of things, so does – probably in a figurative sense – the deception of the listeners, for later on in their life 'big things appear [*i.e.* turn out] to be small'.

Εἴδωλα and ὄντα, φαντάσματα and εἰκόνες

We may now consider once again how the 'ontological' sense and 'propositional' sense of 'not being true' concern the painter and the sophist. With regard to painting, both pairs of opposites, εἴδωλα and ὄντα, and φαντάσματα and εἰκόνες, involve the opposition between being true and not being true. Neither a resemblance nor an appearance is ontologically true, for they are both images and as such not true in relation to the objects whose images they are (*i.e.* as a μίμημα in relation to τὸ ὄν). On the other hand, a resemblance is propositionally true and an appearance is not (but false), inasmuch as they correspond to saying the truth (about something) and saying a falsehood respectively.

As I have argued, the distinction between ontological and propositional truth may also be applied to the sophist's activity. As may be recalled, the sophist is accused of contradicting and speaking about virtually all things without being competent in them. Given his incompetence, the sophist on the whole cannot say true things about the matters he speaks about, but evidently only seems, to his students, to say true things as well as to have knowledge of these matters. If the sophist's activity is viewed as stating, or claiming, it is comparable to making appearances, as opposed to making resemblances. In this sense, the sophist's activity is not true in the *propositional* sense: the sophist *says* things that are not true, but false. If, on the other hand, the sophist's activity is approached as a kind of making, *i.e.* making of discourses, it may be described as making discourses that do not rely on knowledge: but given that they are mistaken (by young listeners) for such discourses, they are evidently *like* discourses that rely on knowledge: as such, the sophist's discourses may be characterised as deceptive figures and μιμήματα of discourses that rely on knowledge, and thus not 'true' in the *ontological* sense.

Last, it is worth considering the characterisation of poets as μιμηταί in *Republic* X in the light of the discussed argument in the *Sophist*. As it has turned out, sophists are in the dialogue alleged to engage in virtually the same kind of μίμησις as was attributed to poets in *Republic* X, *i.e.* deceptive figurative

μίμησις of those who are competent in the subject matter of their discourses. Yet the disqualification of sophists seems to be more extreme than that of poets in *Republic* X, for while poets' works are shown to be in the first place 'deficient', and in the second place, possibly 'incorrect', or 'false', sophists are presented as saying on the whole false things about everything. In both cases, however, the high esteem that poets, or sophists, receive from their listeners, is presented as a result of deception to which the listeners succumb because of their own lack of knowledge.

CONCLUSIONS

The focus of the study carried out has been Plato's discussions of poets in the *Ion*, *Gorgias* and *Republic* X. In Chapter I, my aim was to show how these differ from Plato's other discussions about poetry, and thereby also to justify my choice of them as the principal subject of the thesis. I started from the assumption that the *Ion*, *Gorgias* and *Republic* X constitute three different attempts to disqualify poets: while each aims to show that poets lack relevant knowledge, the *Gorgias* and *Republic* X moreover present poets as morally harmful. As I argued, the three discussions thus provide (disqualifying) answers to the *descriptive* questions of *whether poets are competent in what they do* (*Ion*, *Gorgias*, *Republic* X) and also *how they morally act upon others* (*Gorgias*, *Republic* X). Their descriptive approach is what fundamentally distinguishes them from the treatment of poetry in *Republic* II-III and *Laws* II and VII, which is, by contrast, concerned with the *prescriptive* question of *what poets should do* within the educational role assigned to them in the political orders envisaged in the two dialogues. Moreover, the apparent (evaluative) inconsistency between the disqualification of poetry in the former three discussions and the 'conditional' approval of it in the latter treatment, to which various solutions have been proposed by scholars, has been resolved here by distinguishing between the settings of the descriptive and prescriptive discussions of poetry: while the disqualification concerns poets in the current circumstances and their being viewed as *autonomous* agents as well as Plato's antagonists in the moral domain, the approval concerns poetry in its *instrumental* role within the envisaged state, in which it is meant to serve the educational ends determined by the political leadership, and to be composed under its direction and control.

The common starting point that may be detected in the discussions of poets in the *Ion*, *Gorgias* (where this applies to rhetoricians in the first place) and *Republic* X, is the perception of poets as authoritative figures in society and the intention to deprive them of such authority. In fact, the three discussions display an analogous

pattern: their aim is on the one hand to prove poets' lack of relevant knowledge, and in two cases also their moral harmfulness, and on the other hand to account for the high esteem of (at least some) poets from many of their listeners, as a result of some misjudgement or deception due to the listeners' naivety and lack of knowledge. It is in pursuit of this 'twofold' objective that the three diverse pictures of poets appear to be drawn: poets as mere mediators of fine works who in truth draw from some divine source; poets as 'cooks for the soul' and as potentially harmful flatterers; and last, poets as the counterparts of painters and makers of deceptive images, and moreover, as corrupting gratifiers of their public. In Chapters II-V, I have studied closely these diverse images in order to identify, critically examine and compare the epistemological or ethical disqualifications of poets that are embedded in them.

The *Ion* is concerned with the cognitive side of poetry, rather than with its moral impact: it shows poets as incompetent in matters about which they speak. As I argued in Chapter II, the fundamental move that secures this outcome is the approach to poets' compositions as 'things said' about matters related to one art or another. However, as I pointed out, the two arguments that aim to show poets' incompetence classify these matters differently: in the former, these diverse matters (*e.g.*, wars, relations between laymen and craftsmen, gods) constitute the subject matter of poetry (as matters about which by and large all poets speak); whereas in the latter, these matters are assigned to various 'instrumental' arts such as medicine, chariot-driving, fishing, *etc.*; so for example, Homer's narration about a particular battle is still a discourse within the domain of poetry according to the first argument, whereas according to the second argument, it must be classified as a discourse on generalship. Importantly, in this second argument the subject matter of poetry is placed entirely in the domain of 'instrumental' arts, whereas no 'special' moral, or political, domain is marked off to be associated with the subject matter of poetry, as is done, by contrast, in *Republic* X. Both arguments in the *Ion*, however, deprive poets of knowledge concerning matters about which they narrate by showing that poets do not master the art, or arts, that these matters have been 'assigned' to. In the first argument, poets all turn out to lack the putative 'poetic' art inasmuch as they do not excel in all of its subjects (and also in all genres), but

at best only in a few of them. In the second argument, poets' incompetence in matters about which they narrate is not explicitly stated, yet it is implicit in the assigning of these matters to other (instrumental) arts, and consequently, crediting the ability to evaluate poetry exclusively to experts in these arts; so that, for example, Homer's narration about Hecamede's preparation of *kikeon* for the wounded Machaon can only be adequately judged by someone competent in medicine. The consequences of poets' alleged incompetence for their works are again merely implied: they could well speak *incorrectly* about matters related to arts (for it is the correctness of what poets say about these matters that experts are supposed to judge); supposedly, by narrating the above episode, Homer could turn out to speak incorrectly about how *kikeon* is prepared or how someone wounded should be treated. By comparison, *Republic* X appeared to raise against poets a different, more sophisticated charge: in it, poets are accused of speaking in the first place *deficiently* about arts, and only secondarily also (possibly) incorrectly.

As I also suggested, the *Ion* may be seen as providing an anticipatory model for the assessment of poetry conducted in *Republic* II-III, where, however, the judgement is not concerned with what poets say on matters related to instrumental arts, but rather with what they say on moral, and in particular theological, matters. The judges there, *i.e.* the interlocutors themselves in the role of the imagined founders of the state, are thus implicitly credited with the ability to make judgements on such, moral, matters, and therefore with at least some knowledge of these matters.

However, although in the *Ion* poets twice turn out to be incompetent in matters about which they speak and the possibility of their speaking incorrectly about arts is implied, their works are spared criticism. As I argued, the purpose of the account of the divine origin of fine poetry is precisely to account for the fineness of (some) poetry in view of the alleged incompetence of its deliverers: fine poetry is simply attributed to another, *i.e.* divine, 'agency', whereas the role of poets is degraded to mere mediation of such poetry; the high esteem of (at least some) poets as composers of such fine works thus turns out to be ungrounded and 'unmerited'. Again, by comparison, *Republic* X goes further than just depriving poets of any merit for their excellence and for the fineness of their works, for it aims to show

that such excellence and fineness are only *apparent*, and in fact even the poetry that seems to be most highly valued is practically worthless.

While the moral content and effect of poetry in the *Ion* remain unexpressed, in the *Gorgias* poetry is considered precisely as a practice operating in the moral domain: in it, poets are accused by Socrates of aiming only to gratify their public, while disregarding what is best for them, and thereby being potentially harmful to them. In Chapter III, I attempted an interpretation of this charge, aiming to show how its expressed ethical disqualification of poets also involves an implicit epistemological disqualification of them, and further, to show how this epistemological disqualification is problematic.

The 'second' part of the charge, *i.e.* the allegation of poets' neglect of what is best for their listeners, clearly refers to poets' disregard for their justice (*i.e.* their being just), for according to the view advocated by Socrates in the dialogue, justice is the fundamental condition of men's well-being and thus is men's most valuable virtue. What is not clear, however, is exactly how the first part of the charge, *i.e.* the allegation that poets only pursue gratification for their listeners, or more precisely for their 'soul' (as opposed to their body), should be understood. In order to understand this allegation more clearly, it was crucial to consider the nature of the pleasure of the soul': as I suggested relying also on the relevant argument in *Republic* X, this pleasure is cognitive and non-sensate, *i.e.* it does not derive from sensory perception (although it involves it), but from reckoning, or appreciating, that something is beneficial (*i.e.* good for something), or valuable (*i.e.* good in itself) for us. By contrast, the pleasure of the body is sensate and non-cognitive, *i.e.* it derives from sensory perception alone. On this consideration, gratifying one's soul turned out to be equivalent to providing what one reckons and appreciates as benefiting, or valuable for one. As I thus argued, Socrates' claim that poets only pursue gratification for their listeners can be 'translated' into the *epistemological* claim that poets aim to deliver works that their listeners will reckon or appreciate as valuable (regardless of exactly what this, *i.e.* 'poetic', value consists in). In fact, it is only as a *result* of such appreciation (*i.e.* of a particular cognitive activity) that poets' listeners experience pleasure. Granted this, Socrates' charge against poets turned out to imply a cognitive disqualification of both the poets' listeners and

poets themselves: for if poets pursue what their listeners reckon to be valuable (the first part of the charge), but in fact this is *not* best, *i.e.* most valuable, but may in fact even be harmful for them (the second part of the charge), it follows that poets' listeners are *mistaken* about what is most valuable for them and *do not know* what is truly such. The same, however, applies also to poets, for the argument makes it clear that they do not intend to harm their listeners. This implicit (dis)qualification of the view held by poets and their listeners of what is most valuable, as a *mistaken belief* is so to speak 'complementary' to the qualification of the view that justice and being just is what is best, or most valuable, for men, as *knowledge*: in the dialogue, this view is in fact presented as knowledge constituting the (true) 'political art'.

Relying on Bambrough, I then questioned the legitimacy of the assumption on which this epistemological categorisation relies, *i.e.* the assumption that what is good for men can be determined and *known* in the same way as, for example, what is good for one's body can be determined, and that is to say, that there can be *knowledge* of what is good for men. The *Gorgias*, however, aims to show that there can be such knowledge. As I argued, Socrates' elaborate comparison, on the one hand, of rhetoricians and implicitly also poets with cooks, and on the other hand, of those whose aim is to render men just, with doctors, serves precisely this purpose, *i.e.* it aims to consolidate the status of one view as knowledge and the other as a mistaken belief, and consequently, of the potential harm of poetry or rhetoric as practices that act upon mistaken belief. Poets and rhetoricians are presented as counterparts of cooks, who aim solely to gratify men (their body), and who may seem, to those ignorant about the body's true well-being, to provide what is best for them. As the comparison suggests, those who highly appreciate poets' works (like rhetoricians') succumb to a deception analogous to those who appreciate tasty, pleasant food, more than the food offered to them by doctors; in both cases, those deceived would *misidentify* what is pleasant as what is good, *not knowing* what is truly good.

Relying on the distinction between gratification of the body and of the soul, I aimed to show in what way this comparison is misleading. The comparison presents high appreciation of poets' works as a *consequence* of the gratification

that these works provide, just as high appreciation of tasty food is a *consequence* of the gratification it offers. But in fact, in the case of poetry (or of rhetoric), high appreciation of its works is not a *consequence*, but instead the *reason* for the pleasure that the listeners experience (for this pleasure is non-sensate and cognitive, whereas the pleasure provided by cookery is sensate and non-cognitive). And while the appreciation of tasty food as the most valuable is evidently a misjudgement, due to ignorance of which food is truly valuable for our bodily well-being, there are no grounds for considering the appreciation of poets' works, accompanied by pleasure at listening to them, to be a misjudgement. In fact, it is only on the *assumption* that the listeners are *mistaken* about what is best, or most valuable, for them that it is concluded that what gratifies them may in fact not be good, but even harmful for them; but this assumption already depends on positing a specific view of men's well-being that is different from the one attributed to poets' listeners and poets themselves, as *knowledge*. Contrary to what the comparison of poets (alongside rhetoricians) with cooks suggests, poets' (alleged) aim of only gratifying their listeners does not show that poets do not pursue what is best and that they may thus be morally harmful to the listeners.

Of the three disqualifying discussions of poets, the one in *Republic* X is the most forthright as well as the most complex, raising against poets charges of both incompetence and moral harmfulness. What in particular distinguishes *Republic* X from the other two discussions of poetry, is its understanding of poetry as μίμησις. Because of the various problems that arise from this understanding of poetry, most notably its apparent inconsistency with the account of poets' μίμησις as impersonation in *Republic* III, I considered it necessary to first clarify the notion of μίμησις as such. In Chapter IV, I initially pointed out various difficulties attached to the widely accepted 'semantic' assumption of the two meanings of the term μίμησις in Book III and Book X of the *Republic* (explicitly rejected, to my knowledge, only by Burnyeat): the term being assumed to be used in *Republic* III with the 'narrower' meaning of 'impersonation', whereas in *Republic* X, with the 'wider' meaning of 'artistic representation, or depiction'. As I argued, this assumption tackles an apparent 'argument-related' inconsistency simply by 'turning it into' an assumed terminological inconsistency.

Attempting a different solution to the problem, I argued that the three principal discussions of poets' μίμησις (*Republic* III and X, as well as the *Laws*) use the term μίμησις with a single meaning, and that the cases of poets' μίμησις discussed in separate arguments, more specifically μίμησις through impersonation (*Republic* III), musical μίμησις (*Republic* III and the *Laws*) and μίμησις discussed in the epistemological argument in *Republic* X, can be accounted for simply as three *kinds* of μίμησις, which differ in various respects: obviously, in taking place in different elements of poets' activity (verbal *vs.* musical), in being μιμήσεις of different *objects* and last in one being deceptive and the other two non-deceptive. I first analysed the notion of μίμησις in various relevant aspects. Assuming the definition of μίμησις as an activity that is, and is intended to be, like (*i.e.* it imitates) something else, typically another activity, in one aspect or another, I pointed out the fundamental ontological distinction (previously noted by Russell and Ledda) between 'non-figurative' μίμησις, where the activity of μίμησις constitutes another instance of the same kind as what is imitated, and 'figurative' μίμησις, where the activity of μίμησις (or its material result) constitutes a *figure* of what is imitated, *i.e.* it stands for, or refers to, it. As I then pointed out relying on Ledda, the 'representational' character of figurative μίμησις is reflected also in the grammar of the verb μιμεῖσθαι, when it refers to this kind of μίμησις: in the expression μιμεῖσθαί τι, the direct object τι can be both an *affected* object, *i.e.* referring to the object imitated, or referred to, by the activity of μίμησις, and an *effected* object, *i.e.* referring to the object performed, or made, *i.e.* the figure itself. This ambiguity of the direct object is preserved in the verb 'represent' (but not in 'imitate'), although 'represent' does not match the Greek μιμεῖσθαι in some other aspects: it cannot be used to refer to non-figurative μίμησις, nor to deceptive figurative μίμησις.

What, however, turned out to be very important, yet seems to be widely disregarded, unlike 'represent', the Greek μιμεῖσθαι (as opposed to, for example, the verb εἰκάζειν) cannot be used with the meaning of 'describe': thus, for example, μιμεῖσθαί τινα can refer to the activity of impersonating someone, or again to making a material μίμημα of someone (*e.g.*, a painting), but *cannot* refer to the activity of *describing* someone, or *narrating about* someone; as I argued,

there is no evidence of this use of the verb in Platonic or pre-Platonic texts. However, the commonly accepted interpretation of poets' μίμησις in *Republic* X as 'verbal representation, or depiction' of men, gods, *etc.* seems to presuppose precisely this use of the verb μιμεῖσθαι in the argument (besides raising other difficulties which were pointed out in the chapter).

The activity of μίμησις was differentiated also into productive (*i.e.* having a material result, *e.g.*, a painting) and non-productive kinds; all cases of poets' μίμησις are obviously non-productive. A final distinction was made between the non-deceptive kind of figurative μίμησις, where the figure performed or made is (and is intended to be) perceived *as a figure*, and the deceptive kind of figurative μίμησις, where the figure performed or made is not (nor is intended to be) perceived *as a figure*, but instead as the object itself whose figure it is; importantly, as I argued, the μίμησις attributed to poets in the epistemological argument in *Republic* X is distinctive for its deception.

Applying these distinctions, I thus interpreted μίμησις through impersonation as figurative non-deceptive μίμησις of one individual or another about whom a poet narrates (*e.g.*, when Homer narrates impersonating Chryses, Homer constitutes a non-deceptive figure of Chryses); musical μίμησις as figurative non-deceptive μίμησις of a particular moral character or conduct (*e.g.*, when a poet composes in a specific harmony and rhythm, his non-verbal activity constitutes a μίμησις and non-deceptive figure of someone lamenting); and last, I interpreted (anticipating the conclusions drawn in Chapter V) the μίμησις attributed to poets in the epistemological argument in *Republic* X as figurative *deceptive* μίμησις of one kind of expert or another; *e.g.*, when Homer narrates about actions and events related to medicine without being competent in this art, but is nonetheless perceived as someone competent in it, Homer constitutes a *deceptive* figure of someone competent in medicine. Homer may thus at the same time engage in two different kinds of μίμησις; for example, when he is narrating about actions and events related to chariot-driving and is perceived as being competent in this art, though he is not, his activity may be characterised as a figurative deceptive μίμησις of someone competent in chariot-driving; however, Homer is at the same time impersonating a character involved in the action about which he is narrating,

namely Antilochus, and his activity may thus be characterised *also* as a figurative non-deceptive μίμησις of this character (*Ion* 537a5-b5).

For the above interpretation of the three kind of poets' μίμησις, I also took into account a particular grammatical aspect of μίμησις: the object of μίμησις *expressed* may refer to the *agent* of the activity that is as a whole the object of μίμησις (*e.g.*, μίμησις of 'Chryses'), or to the activity itself, its result, or again some other aspect of it (*e.g.*, μίμησις of 'lamentation', or of 'discourses'). As I suggested, one reason why the μίμησις attributed to poets in the epistemological argument in *Republic* X may seem to be conceived of differently from the μίμησις discussed in *Republic* III (as 'verbal depiction, or representation', as opposed to impersonation) is perhaps also the fact that in *Republic* X, the object of poets' μίμησις is not expressed 'through' the agent, but only through the result of the activity that is as a whole the object of μίμησις; for example, Homer is alleged to be a μιμητής of 'medical discourses' (but not of 'someone competent in medicine'), whereas in *Republic* III, the object of μίμησις is expressed through the agent, for example, Homer is described as a μιμητής of 'Chryses' (but not, for example, of 'Chryses' discourse', or of 'Chryses' imploration').

In Chapter V, the discussion of poetry in *Republic* X was first divided into two parts, inasmuch as each raises a different charge against poets: the first, 'epistemological' argument presents poets as lacking knowledge of their subject matter, whereas the second, ethical argument shows poets whose poetry is 'mimetic' as morally harmful to their public. The two arguments are not directly interdependent; moreover, as I argued, although the two arguments are concerned with two different kinds of poets' μίμησις – the former, with poets' μίμησις of experts, whereas the latter is concerned with poets' μίμησις of characters about whom they narrate –, the two arguments merge these two kinds into one.

The epistemological argument presents poets as incompetent in their subject matter by employing a strategy analogous to that used in the *Ion*; however, on the assumption of poets' incompetence, the *Ion* just deprived poets of the authorship of fine poetry (crediting it to the divine), whereas *Republic* X denies that poetry is fine and valuable at all: as I aimed to show, the entire account of poets as *deceptive*

μιμηταί – on the interpretation suggested, *deceptive* μιμηταί of those competent in the relevant subject matter – is designed precisely to show how those who find poetry fine and valuable are in fact deceived by it, in a similar way as those who consider painted images of craftsmen to provide satisfactory and complete accounts of their crafts.

As in the *Ion*, poets' incompetence is granted by defining first the domain in which poets operate as the domain pertaining to various arts; unlike in the *Ion*, however, these do not include only instrumental arts and knowledge such as medicine or leatherworking, but also knowledge of ἀρετή, 'human excellence', *i.e.* knowledge of moral matters, which is now explicitly posited: poets' narrations about 'wars and generalship, government of states, man's education', insofar as they are about 'what makes men better' (599c-d), are in fact placed in the domain of ἀρετή. The two arguments provided to prove poets' incompetence in their subject matter thus depend on the viewing of poetry as discourse about arts: the first is that such knowledge, comprising numerous arts, is too huge for a single man to possess, and the second is that poets have not engaged in actions for which such knowledge (either of instrumental arts or of ἀρετή) is required.

Poets' activity is characterised as μίμησις and their works as 'appearances' that are perceived by poets' admirers as 'true things' *only on the granted assumption* that poets are indeed incompetent in their subject matter. As I argued, this course of the argument is important, for it shows that the μίμησις poets are alleged here to engage in, however one may interpret it, cannot be any sort of μίμησις that was traditionally attributed to poets, as Halliwell and some other scholars have argued; for in fact, the characterisation of poets' activity as μίμησις does not feature as a widely accepted neutral *observation* on the nature of poetry, but instead as a provocative and in itself disqualifying *suggestion* (as in fact Annas sees it), for it *presupposes* poets' incompetence in their subject matter. However, the suggestion that poetry is in fact μίμησις leaves it unclear exactly in what sense poetry is characterised as μίμησις, as well as exactly how its alleged mimetic character is related to poets' alleged lack of knowledge. The key to clarifying what this μίμησις consists in proved to be the figure of a painter who paints various

craftsmen, which throughout the argument is employed as the model that shows what poets actually do.

The analysis of the case of the painter first showed that there are two senses, both contemplated in the argument, in which an image of something is not 'true' with respect to the object whose image it is. *Ontologically*, a painting of a couch is not a true couch, but is only in 'something little', *i.e.* in a particular visual appearance, like a couch. But consequently, a painting of a couch does not provide a *satisfactory*, but only a partial and *deficient*, presentation of a couch, which is, as I suggested, equivalent to a partial and deficient *description* of it; a painted couch may thus also be characterised as not being a true couch in another, *descriptive*, sense. The same holds, of course, for a painting of a carpenter, which, in the crucial example provided, 'seems' to those who are naïve 'to be truly a carpenter', although a painter does not require any knowledge of carpentry in order to make such a painting. Contrary to the widespread 'ontological' interpretation (rejected only by Belfiore and Burnyeat to my knowledge), according to which naïve people misperceive such an image as a true, actual carpenter, I suggested a 'descriptive' interpretation, according to which naïve people misperceive the painting as providing a satisfactory, as opposed to deficient, description of a carpenter (at work). A poet, inasmuch as he is incompetent in the art he is speaking about, thus turns out to be similar to the above painter (who, incompetent in carpentry, is nonetheless able to paint a carpenter) in that he speaks about the art concerned *deficiently*; it is in this sense that a poet 'applies […] colours of each of the arts'. For example, by narrating about Hecamede's preparation of *kikeon* for the wounded Machaon, Homer speaks *deficiently* about matters such as how *kikeon* is prepared or how someone wounded is cured. In this light, high esteem of Homer and other poets is thus 'explained away' as a misjudgement arising from the musical elements of poets' discourse, but also dependent on the lack of knowledge of poets' admirers in their turn. Contrary to what could be expected relying on the *Ion*, where poets do not speak well inasmuch as they do not speak *correctly*, in *Republic* X poets' not speaking 'well' turned out to consist in their speaking in the first place deficiently of their subject matter; only secondarily, poets may also

speak incorrectly, as the subsequent argument about the lack even of 'correct belief' on the part of the μιμητής could suggest, as I argued.

Relying on this interpretation, I lastly suggested in what sense poets' activity is characterised as μίμησις in the epistemological argument: poets are, for example, μιμηταί of 'medical discourses' inasmuch as they narrate about matters related to the art of medicine, but they do not speak well, and instead *deficiently*, about such matters; the counterparts of their narrations are 'true' medical discourses, which provide satisfactory accounts of matters related to medicine, inasmuch as they rely on relevant knowledge, *i.e.* they are discourses about medicine that are made by those competent in this art. Poets' narrations are thus only 'like' discourses relying on knowledge and stand in relation to them as a painted image stands in relation to the original. On this account, for example, Homer's narration about Hecamede preparing *kikeon* for the wounded Machaon may be characterised as a μίμησις of 'medical discourses', or indeed as a μίμησις of someone competent in medicine (indicating the agent of the activity that is as a whole the object of μίμησις); this μίμησις is of course figurative, for Homer does not deliver 'true' medical discourses, but only discourses about medicine that are *like* them. But further, Homer's μίμησις is also *deceptive*, inasmuch as Homer seems, to many, to *speak well* and in no way deficiently about such matters and thus, to be competent in the relevant art: Homer is thus a deceptive *figure* of someone competent in this art and his narrations are deceptive figures of fine, satisfactory, discourses relying on knowledge. As I suggested, additional evidence for this interpretation can be found in the *Sophist*, where the sophist, also accused of being in fact incompetent in his subject matter and of only seeming, to his young and naïve students, to be wise about everything, is characterised as a 'μιμητής of a wise man'.

Both with regard to the *Ion* and the epistemological argument in *Republic* X, we may find the approach to poetry as discourse on matters related to one art or another questionable, and we may consider the charge that poets may speak about arts potentially incorrectly (the *Ion*), or deficiently (*Republic* X), to be irrelevant; for contrary to Socrates' suggestion, generally those who listen to poets are presumably not so naïve as to regard, for example, Homer and his poetry as a source of knowledge concerning medicine, leatherwork, generalship *etc.* However,

what *Republic* X in particular seems to suggest, ultimately, is that the listeners are no less naïve to see in poets a source of moral wisdom, for just as poets provide only 'images' of carpentry or medicine, just why would they provide anything more than 'images of excellence'; *i.e.* they give deficient accounts equally of the former and the latter matters. But as observed above, depriving poets of the knowledge of moral matters, which is clearly what matters most in the argument, depends on first positing such knowledge; I adhered to Bambrough' view that such knowledge in fact cannot be posited at all.

In Chapter V, I next examined the charge of harmfulness of 'mimetic' poetry in the 'ethical' argument in *Republic* X. I first pointed out that poets' μίμησις to which the charge applies is not the μίμησις attributed to poets in the previous, epistemological argument, but instead the μίμησις 'through impersonation' from Book III. The shift of reference is tacit and has generally passed unnoticed, yet it is in my view obvious: the descriptions alone of this μίμησις as being of 'men engaged in forced or voluntary actions', or of 'one of the heroes grieving' make it clear that the μίμησις concerned here is figurative non-deceptive μίμησις of characters about whom poets narrate, and no longer figurative deceptive μίμησις of experts (*e.g.*, a μίμησις of someone competent in medicine, *i.e.* of 'medical discourses').

Although the charge of moral harmfulness of μίμησις 'through impersonation' may seem to deny the assumption in Book III of its potentially positive moral influence on the prospective guards (who are to engage in it when reciting poetry), the two arguments can be reconciled. In fact, while in Book III the morally-benefiting effect is attributed only to μίμησις of virtuous individuals engaging in virtuous actions, which thus is to be employed in the envisaged educative poetry, the alleged harmfulness of μίμησις through impersonation under the current circumstances is due to poets' choice of characters for this μίμησις: these are, out of 'practical' necessity, men of multifarious, irritable character, as they are the most expressive and thus well fitted for the μίμησις that needs to be comprehensible to the motley crowd of spectators. The ethical argument provides a psychological explanation as to why μίμησις of this sort of individual is

inevitably morally corrupting. In the examination of this account, I pointed out some difficulties that arise from it.

In the light of the bi-partite model of the soul, individuals of such irritable character are those who are prone to respond to the events they incur, typically to misfortunes, as painful affection provoked by the event impels, *i.e.* crying and lamenting), and not, by contrast, as they reckon to be best by reasoning, *i.e.* attempting to restore the life style disrupted by the misfortune. But likewise, the spectators who merely witness poets' μίμησις of this kind of individuals will typically respond as the affection, which they also experience together with these individuals, impels, *i.e.* by crying and lamenting, and thereby also are somehow gratified. The alleged corrupting effect of poets' μίμησις consists in its supposed strengthening spectators' disposition to conduct and life driven by affections, rather than led by reason. As I pointed out, the intricate pleasure that accompanies such 'doleful' response is accounted for by employing the model of bodily desires discussed on various earlier occasions in the *Republic*, in particular those of hunger and thirst: crying and lamenting, remembering a misfortune is presented as equivalent to the realisation of a bodily desire, such realisation (*e.g.*, eating, drinking) being considered as pleasant, whereas the desire itself is deemed painful. As I argued, one difficulty of this 'biological' explanation lies in the fact that it makes no distinction between the sufferer and the witness; crying, lamenting, *etc.*, in response to the pain provoked by the event, are viewed *as realisation of a desire* and thus as being *as such pleasant*, regardless of whether one only witnesses or suffers the misfortune. The only difference indicated between the two concerns the inclination to a 'doleful response', which would be stronger in the case of only witnessing misfortunes incurred by others. Contrary to this explanation, however, the doleful response on the part of the *sufferer* in particular does not seem to alleviate, still less cure, one's pain – as indeed the comparison of this response with crying when one has been injured implies (this comparison thus seemingly disagrees with the 'biological' explanation). A further difficulty of the explanation appeared to be that it does not distinguish between witnessing true misfortunes and, on the other hand, μιμήματα of them, for they both count as attending misfortunes incurred by others; yet, the pleasure accompanying the spectators'

doleful response seems to depend on their perception of the misfortunes as being figurative and not true.

Last, the alleged harmfulness of 'mimetic' poetry appeared to be quite different from that attributed to poetry in general in the *Gorgias*: by not cultivating their listeners' justice, the poets of the *Gorgias* may ultimately render them unjust and prone to act unjustly, whereas poets' μίμησις of 'irritable' individuals in *Republic* X renders them less able even to act, *i.e.* to respond reasonably to events incurred, and more prone to 'abandon themselves' to painful or pleasant affections.

Plato's arguments that attempt to show poets as incompetent or also as morally harmful have in this study appeared to contain various questionable approaches (poetry as discourse about arts), ungrounded analogies (gratifying the body and gratifying the soul) and tacit illicit shifts of reference (from one kind of μίμησις to another). However, despite the extensive arguments in the *Ion* and *Republic* X that aim to show poets' lack of instrumental knowledge, this does not seem to be the true concern of these arguments – for after all, what need would there be to prove what seems to be self-evident –; the true concern in all three discussions, though in the *Ion* it is only implicit, appears to be to *prove* poets' incompetence to deal with moral, and more specifically, religious and political questions. Yet, as I argued following Bambrough, this attempt is just as questionable as the attempt to prove that competence in these matters can be gained and learned. Perhaps, Plato's diverse, repeated and on occasion slippery endeavours to substantiate and prove the charges he raises against poets indicate that he himself was doubtful of how successful his project could be.

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