The QUARREL between POETRY and PHILOSOPHY

Edited by Alessandra Aloisi and Danilo Manca

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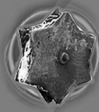
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Furor Divinus: *Creativity in Plato's Ion*

Andrew Benjamin

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to use the way creativity is understood within the argumentation of Plato's Ion to open up the possibility that Plato allows for a conception of a produced object – work of art – that can be judged even though its production is not regulated in advance by the 'idea' or the 'paradigm'. Central to the development of this position is Ficino's commentary on the Ion.

Restat ut in spiratione divina.
Marsilio Ficino

1.

Plato's *Ion* ends with Socrates offering the following description of Ion the rhapsode[1]. 'As a eulogist of Homer you are not skilled but divine' (θεῖον εἶναι καὶ μὴ τεχνικὸν περὶ Ὁμήρου ἐπαινέτην)[2]. While Socrates' closing remarks might be construed as having a slightly certain mocking tone, it is the distinction between the divine and the technical that is of far greater significance.

The question that guides the following engagement with Plato's *Ion* pertains to the nature of the concession that Socrates may have been making. And again it should be noted that the distinction between the divine and the technical is made in relation to Homer. Ion, the rhapsode, has already been described as 'possessed' or occupied by the poet. There are at least two elements of this formulation that are of interest. The first is that implicit within

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1 This paper is an edited version of a chapter of a book in progress entitled *Seeing Reading. Othering Hermeneutics*. Additional elements of this project that have been published thus far include, Benjamin (2014) and Benjamin (forthcoming).

2 Plato (1996), p. 542 B3. Translations that have been consulted are Saunders (2005) and Fowler (1925).

the lines cited above, and indeed implicit within the concerns of the dialogue as a whole, is, on the one hand, a distinction between creativity and the way it generates forms of understanding and judgment, and then, on the other, the conception of judgement that is defined almost uniquely in relation to *technê*[3].

Once this distinction is allowed, and this will be a crucial point that has to be explored, what is opened up is the possibility of a conception of judgment that is no longer delimited by the technical[4]. While Socrates' questioning in relation to the technical concerns evaluation, were there to be an account of the production of work other than the one delimited by an insistence on the technical, then the question of judgment would have to be rethought and thus reposed precisely because the primacy of the model would no longer hold[5]. The separation of one from the other would yield an opening.

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3   For the history of the distinction – or lack of it - in Greek thought prior to Plato see Murray (1981). See in particular the discussion of Democritus DK 21.

4   While the argument leads in a different direction Silke-Maria Weineck also finds an implicit theory of criticism (judgment) in the argumentation of the Ion. See Weineck (1998). For another discussion of the difficulties of securing a definition of inspiration or enthusiasm that holds it apart from madness see, Farness (1985), 167-8. It should also be noted that there would be an important link between enthusiasm, genius and melancholia. As that history unfolds the link to Plato and Ficino becomes more complex. See in the regard, Daval (2009).

5   Liebert (2013). Liebert draws a similar conclusion concerning the production of 'fiction' that is «distinct from – and potentially at odds with – the Platonic conception of mimesis», p. 213. The argument developed here is that this distancing does not of necessity involve the concept of fiction.

The model or more strictly the 'paradigm' (παράδειγμα) is a fundamental motif in Plato's thought. Even though its relation to the theory of ideas or forms is an area of contestation, at its most straightforward the paradigm or model functions within a causal relation to the identity of a particular. Note, for example, its role in the *Timaeus* 28A:

> But when the artificer (ὁ δημιουργὸς) of any object, in forming its shape and quality, keeps his gaze fixed on that which is uniform, using a model of this kind (παραδείγματι), that object, executed in this way, must of necessity be beautiful[6].

Creation here is linked to the presence of a paradigm and more crucially it is the paradigm that establishes the quality of the particular. Here the object is 'beautiful' as a result.

While the terminology of the 'paradigm' is not present in the *Phaedo* it can be suggested that there is a similar structure of argumentation. This can be located in the following claim made by Socrates in regards to the identity of a particular as beautiful.

> I think that if anything is beautiful besides absolute beauty (αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν) it is beautiful for no other reason than because it partakes (μετέχει) of absolute beauty[7] (100C).

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6   References to the *Timaeus* are to the Loeb Edition.
7   References to the *Phaedo* are to the Loeb Edition. See Plato (1914).

The process of the particular partaking in 'absolute beauty' (αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν) is the identification of a causal relation in which the identity of the particular – here the particular's identity as beautiful – is dependent on the relation to a mode of externality. While in the *Republic* both forms of argumentation are present, the retention of the exact language of the paradigm or pattern can be identified in a discussion of the possibility of ideal as opposed to actual cites. Within that engagement the presence of the ideal is formulated in terms of a pattern.

> There is a paradigm (πάδειγμα) of it laid up in heaven for him who wishes to see it and so beholding to constitute himself its citizen[8].

It will be essential to return to the paradigm or model as that which in setting a limit, thus in constructing a threshold, allows for a form of transformation to be staged. To displace the primacy of one account of the generation of particulars would necessitate the move to the other conception of creativity at work in the dialogue. There would be the move from one form of judgment to another.

That transformation, which is being worked here, can be conceived in terms of the *othering* of judgment. This is a process that will open up the hermeneutic. *Othering* is a form of retained displacement. It occurs, as has been intimated, as a result of repositioning

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8 *Plato* (2013), p. 592A-B.

questions of interpretation and judgment beyond the domain delimited by the model[9]. The retention of the model retains a sense of judgment that would obviate the necessity of deliberation.

It would judgment as confirmation rather than judgment as a participatory process. What has been described as the *othering* of judgment would be the move from the singularity of confirmation to complex modes of judgment and relationality demanded by the participatory.

The possibility of this transformative potential is the opening to the second element that is inherent in the distinction between the divine and the technical. What occurs in that relation, and in the movement towards judgement, is what can be described as the suspended question of creativity.

In Ficino's reformulation of this position in his *Introduction to Plato's Ion* he describes the possession of Ion thus; 'occupation means the seizing of the soul and its conversion (*conversionem*) to the spirits of the Muses'[10]. (A position that is reiterated by Plato in the *Phaedrus* at 245A). Moreover, Ficino notes the connection that can be drawn between 'inspiration'

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9   While the argumentation is different there a sense in which Jean-Luc Nancy is also concerned with another conception of the hermeneutic. In his study of the Ion he argues as part of his conclusion that, «L'*hermeia* est l'announce de l'autre à l'autre, et elle l'est dans la measure où l'autre ne peut etre signifié, ni présentée, mais seulement annoncé. L'annonce est aussi le mode de la presence proper à l'autre. Ainsi l'hermenia est l'annonce de la finitude à la finitude : sa partition est infinite». See Nancy (1982), p. 88.
10 This text can be found in Ficino (2008).

and 'intoxication' at 534A in the *Ion*, if only then to go on and note that the latter is to be distinguished from *divino furor* which is defined on the text as the 'illumination of the rational soul'. The importance of poetry, and as noted, its link to *furor divinus*, is clear from both his *Introduction to Plato's Ion* and the *De Amore*. Within Ficino's project Platonism is bound up with the process of the soul's elevation[11].

Given that setting, what Ficino underscores is the possibility that the concerns of the dialogue are orientated far more towards the question of creation than they are the limiting of poetry by delimiting it in relation to other skills[12]. Indeed, Ficino's conclusion that Ion in regards to Homer 'does not judge by art' (*non arte iudicat*) allows for the possibility that not only is there a theory of creation there is also a conception of judgement that is not defined by a relation to

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11 Ficino (2012), p. 13-14.

12 For a detailed engagement both with the question of the possibility of a *techné* of poetry and the extent to which there is a defence of poetry in the Ion see Stern-Gillet (2004). Stern-Gillet is keen to argue that the Ion is «no eulogy of poetry». The project here is to see that there is a defense of poetry that is neither the one advanced by Shelley nor a mere incorporation of Romanticism. And yet, it depends upon reading Kant on genius as theory of non-mimetic production (where of course mimesis is understood strictly in Platonic terms.) What is identified therefore is a tension at the heart of Plato concerning the question of creation. Moreover there is an important affinity of project here with the way that Ernst Cassirer approaches Plato. He engages with the latter in terms of the attempt to account for why given the apparent condemnation of art and the practice of mimesis within Plato's writings was there constant recourse to those writings, from Ficino onwards, in order to think the particularity of art. Cassirer undertakes this work in his *Eidos und Eidolon*. See Cassirer (2004). For another interpretation of the Ion that seeks to distance the dialogue from Plato's expulsion of the poets and which is also concerned with the relation between Socrates and Homer see Freydberg (2000), p. 100-102.

a model[13]. This is not just Ficino's insight. It is a possibility that is there at the heart of the dialogue itself. To deploy a formulation of Kant's what comes into play as a result is a conception of creation, one named by Kant as 'genius' and which, in Kant's terms «everyone agrees[…] is entirely opposed to the spirit of imitation (*Nachahamungsgeiste*)»[14]. Of significance here is how the 'spirit of imitation' (*Nachahamungsgeiste*) is being understood and thus what an opposition to this 'spirit' would entail. Hence, the connection is not between Ficino and Kant as though there were a simple overlap of concerns.

On the contrary, what is of interest, and thus what will emerge in the argumentation to come, is the way that in both Kant and Ficino (and note that this is Ficino's interpretation of the *Ion*, and thus the uncovering of what he takes to be central to the dialogue) there is another conception of what will come to be termed a singularity and thus a radically different conception of the relationship between the singular and the model (universal) that is taken to figure both within Platonism more generally and in the *Ion* in particular.

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13 For an extensive discussion of the nature of the paradigm and its relation to Plato's more commented upon language of forms and ideas see, Perl (1999).

14 This is the position advanced by Kant in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. See Kant (2009). Central to the overall argument are the two claims that Kant makes. Firstly, at the beginning of §47 that: «Everyone agrees that genius is entirely opposed to the spirit of imitation.' A position that builds on the earlier (§46) definition of 'genius' as 'a talent for producing that for which no determinate rule can be given, not a predisposition of skill for that which can be learned», p.186-189.

While the connection between *techné* and interpretation has one outcome, what continues to endure is the possibility of a conception or theory of understanding, and its concomitant link to judgment, that is situated outside an already determined, and determining, relation to the model. Occurring beyond that hold is that which is, to cite Kant again, «entirely opposed to the spirit of imitation (*Nachahamungsgeiste*)».

Part of the argument to be advanced is that the move from the dominance of the model to its overcoming – which, as has been suggested, is a conception of *othering* that will open up the hermeneutic – and within which interpretation moves from immediacy to mediacy, the interpretive process, the hermeneutic as such, comes to adopt what will be called the temporality of reading. Following this path makes the question of whether or not poetry is a *techné* far less relevant.

The question of judgment, where judgement while present as a generality can for the most part be equated with confirmation, occurs at a number of precise points within the dialogue. As a way in, one particular use of the term will open up the issues that have overall centrality. If it can be assumed that the dialogue circulates not just around the interpretation of Homer but more significantly around, firstly, what is involved within such acts, and then secondly, what makes them possible and then

finally the status of the interpretive object within them, it should be clear as a result that the manner in which Socrates positions Homer is a decisive part of the argumentation.

Socrates cites several passages from Homer. Having quoted them he is then concerned with the question of who is their proper addressee and therefore who is best to judge them. For example, Socrates cites – or rather claims to be so doing – *Iliad* XI. 639-40. The lines are taken by Socrates to refer to the curative effects of Parmneian wine.

The questions that are then posed to Ion concern the one who is best positioned to judge as to whether this particular wine does indeed have such effects. Ion is quick to respond that any answer has to be the province of the doctor not the rhapsode. A mode of questioning and answering that is connected to a specific sense of both knowledge and propriety then continues. Each time a specific content can be identified with a particular skill or *techné*,

Ion is being positioned to argue that the one having the skill in question is best able to judge. Indeed, Socrates' method within the dialogue involves him dividing up the texts of Homer in order to locate in specific passages, in the lines that are cited, a set of different but nonetheless clearly identifiable skills. Socrates has of course laid a trap into which Ion will inevitably stumble. Given this frame of reference it cannot be true that the rhapsode has all these skills.

This has to be the case since what is central in any one act of judgement is the possession of the skill appropriate to the skill presented within the passage of the Homeric text under consideration. This is the skill the judgment of which is to take place. That it is any one specific skill is clear from that which attends the lines being cited. There needs to be an accord therefore on the level of *techné*.

There are passages within the Homeric texts whose content is such that only a seer or a general would be able to judge since, given the content of the passage, only they would possess the requisite *techné* to make a judgment. Moreover, it would be a *techné* that had been learnt. Skills are acquired. And yet, when Socrates asks Ion what should the rhapsode be able «to see and analyses better than all other people» (σκοπεῖσθαι καὶ διακρίνειν παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους) Ion's answer is emphatic. The object of the rhapsode's judgment is 'everything' (ἄπαντα). At that point Socrates has trapped Ion.

It cannot be the case that if, for example, the doctor is the only one competent to make judgments in relation to passages that pertain uniquely to the *techné* of medicine, that the rhapsode would then be able to make a similar judgment. The doctor is the only one to have the requisite skill.

Whatever the competencies the rhapsode may have they do not include skills for which training

has not been provided. The question is how then to understand Ion's claim that 'everything' (ἄπαντα) can be judged by the rhapsode. Delimitations are precise. In every instance Socrates' arguments conclude with the same exacting concision.

> I take it that what we come to know by the art of piloting we cannot also come to know by that of medicine (537C).

At stake here is a form of knowledge (γιγνώσκω). The project of knowledge, even as a generality, is linked to *techné*. There cannot be one without the other.

Moreover, the interplay between 'knowledge' and *techné* reinforces the equation of judgment with confirmation. Given the division with the realm of *techné* and thus both the limited and delimited nature of the object of any one skill, the question noted above endures: i.e. what, when Ion use the word, does 'everything' (ἄπαντα) mean? Leaving aside any possible foolishness on Ion's part a specific claim is being made.

Whether as the result of inadvertence or advertence the answer provided by Ion gestures to the distancing of the epistemological in the name of the hermeneutic and as a result the model ceding its place to another sense of judgment. This opening is the other possibility within the dialogue. The guiding question is clear: what does it means for something

to be an object of judgment – thus judgeable – when it is not the result of the *techné*? Not only is this one possible outcome to which Ficino has already been taken to be alluding, it is also the case that its force resides in its possibility as a question.

2.

If there is a beginning then it concerns the identification of Homer as «the best and divinest of poets» (τῷ ἀρίστῳ καὶ θειοτάτῳ τῶν ποιητῶν) 530B. This occurs as the dialogue starts. Homer's divinity is announced by Socrates in his first major speech. Here, what matters is not just the quality of Homer's poetry but his 'divinity'; the former is accounted for by the latter. *Techné* is already being distanced.

And yet quality – Homer is the 'best' – is being retained. Hence judgment endures. While the formulation in which Homer is presented as 'divine' can be taken as attesting to the beginnings of a tradition in which he figures as the 'divine Homer', a tradition with its own important continuity within Neo-Platonism and the latter's resurgence in the Renaissance, the contention here is that it is also productively read in relation to the description of

the role of the Muse at 533E[15].

The passage that is central is the following:

> In the same way the muse inspires (ἡ Μοῦσα ἐνθέους) and then by the means of those inspired (τῶν ἐνθέων) the inspiration (ἐνθουσιαζόντων) spreads to others and connects them all in a chain.

The passage continues with the related claim that all good poets recite poetry not as the result of skill 'but because they are used and possessed' (ἀλλ'ἔνθεοι ὄντες και κατεχόμενοι). If the link is between these different forms of the 'divine' – as substance and as a mode of presence – then there is a further connection to the other significant distinction that Socrates establishes at the beginning of the dialogue. He argues in that context that the good rhapsode is concerned not with mere 'words' (ἔπη), the lines of verse, but with the poet's 'thought' (διάνοια).

The consequence of this designation is it delimits the propriety of the rhapsode, namely, that the rhapsode is the one concerned with 'thought' rather than mere lines of verse. Hence, distanced in advance is the supposition that the poem could ever have been identical to its presence in these lines.

The move from words to thought also generates the rhapsode's related task. In regards to the latter Socrates is unequivocal. The task is clear:

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15 For a systematic investigation of the 'divine Homer' see Lamberton (1989).

the rhapsode has to be an interpreter of the poet's thought (ἑρμηνέα δεῖ τοῦ ποιητοῦ τῆς διανοίας) to the audience (530C).

At this precise point the dialogue becomes more complex since another form of relationality is positioned. The introduction of the word ἑρμνεύς occurs in the context of an evocation of necessary movement and thus a form of passage.

The evocation of Hermes is clear. Within this setting however the movement is neither between Gods, nor Gods and mortals. Rather the movement in question is between the mind of the poet and the audience. The rhapsode is the mediating figure. The question to which it is important to be attentive concerns what it is that the rhapsode carries? The task of the rhapsode is connected, from the start, with this movement, with a carrying over.

Recalled here with the question of what the rhapsode carries is, of course, the delimitation of what identifies the project of the 'good rhapsode' (ἀγαθὸς ῥαψῳδός). What the latter has to covey is the 'thought' (διάνοια). 'Thought' is therefore present in its irreducibility to lines of verse. The force of this distinction is clear. The distinction announces an opening in which both the subject and the object and thus their relation are transformed.

More specifically, it stages and thus this is what needs to be explained, a non-necessary relation

between 'thought' and expression, which here can be understood in terms of a distinction between the presence of 'thought' and the lines in which it is expressed. However, 'thought' is not in the lines of the poem; 'thought' is not present within them in any simplistic way.

Presence is complicated in advance. Hence, if the lines were equated with form, then 'thought' does not stand apart from form, rather it is that which informs form. No matter how plastic form may be, form cannot function as an end in itself. (The evocation of the merely plastic is therefore no more than a promulgation of an empty formalism).

Opening up a concern with form as always already informed, formed within relations of indetermination, is both the predicament and the possibility of the hermeneutic[16]. Irreducibility and mediation work together. They stand opposed to the immediacy of the relations that are sanctioned by techné and which equates judgment with confirmation.

Moreover, if seeing has a form of immediacy then immediacy can be given neither explanatory nor temporal priority. Rather, immediacy needs to

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16 The relationship between allegory and allegoresis forms a fundamental element of the larger project of which this paper forms a part. The difficulty inherent in allegory is that while the allegorical resists the literal there is a tendency to attribute a singular meaning to the allegory. It is as though an allegory has a literal meaning. What the term allegoresis signals is the potential within any allegory for it to continue to be allegorized and thus to resist its reduction to a singular literal attribution of meaning. Clearly this argument bears an important relation to the way the distinction between the immediate and the mediate is understood in the context of this paper.

be understood as **im-**mediacy, namely as a produced state. While this begins to give an account of the object, what occurs at the same time is the need to take up as a domain of inquiry the temporality of mediacy. Recalled within such a setting is what can be described, again, as the temporality of reading.

Reading opposes seeing. Or, rather, reading incorporates seeing within processes of mediation. Moreover, once mediacy obtains then judgment cannot be separated from contestability. Reading as a form of mediation incorporates both deliberation and the structure of the self/other relation that is necessitated by that incorporation.

Once the dialogue is taken as whole it should be clear from the outset that the hermeneutic is the process of mediation that is sustained by the rhapsode and which brings a structure of deliberation into play. To follow the suggestion noted above, deliberation however can be recast in this context in terms of reading.

There is a further consideration that needs to be introduced at this point. If the hermeneutic has its own object, then it is not given by an identification of a set of lines with their immediate content. (As though there were ever just immediate content, as opposed, of course to **im-**mediate content).

On the contrary, allowing for the hermeneutic in the way the term has been developed thus far means

that indetermination precedes determination. What has to be located is an opening in which immediacy yields to mediacy.

As a consequence the always already indeterminate, what can be provisionally identified as the *to-be-determined*, as both an ontological and semantic consideration, can be attributed primacy. All of these terms – e.g. indetermination, the hermeneutic, *to-be-determined* – do not close down the question of judgment. On the contrary, they establish, firstly, the terms in which judgment has another possibility, such that, secondly, what counts as the judgeable then has a different quality. In both instances the judgeable located in its separation from the effective presence of either a paradigm or a *techné*.

Another set of connections is established; pursuing them necessitates a return to the way what has already been identified as the 'divine' figures. The presence of the divine is given in relation to another possibility for judgment. Socrates is clear that Ion's ability to praise Homer is not located in a *techné* but from a divine dispensation.

His language is unequivocal - οὐ τέχνη ἀλλὰ θεία μοίρα 536D. What needs to be recalled of course is the description of Homer as divine. The question, as has been intimated, is what does divine mean or entail in such circumstances.

3.

Such a return becomes possible once the affinity between the language used to describe Homer and the language of inspiration itself is noted[17]. There are two related positions insofar as that which is inspired (ἔνθεος) and to be inspired (ἐνθεάζω) are both explicable in terms of being charged with the presence of the divine.

In order to understand what such an explication entails it is essential to look in more detail at how *techné* is understood, since *techné* stands opposed to the divine in terms of the subject/object relation it engenders and thus, as has been suggested, the conceptions of both subject and object that are themselves related within the structure of the hermeneutic.

Each *techné*, cannot be separated from a specific practice and which in turn is connected to a specific form of knowledge. As the *techné* changes so does its object. In the context of the *Ion* the position is announced clearly:

> by the same skill (τέχνη) we must know the same things, and by a different skill things that

17 For a general discussion of this topic in ancient thought see Murray (2015).

are not the same; but if the skill is other, the things we know by it must be different also (538A).

Without here entering into the question of what defines the essential nature of a specific domain of knowledge, it remains the case that what is significant is that any one instance of a practice – e.g. general, seer, doctor – is recognized as such insofar as it is a particular instance of the general. In other words, it is recognized as such in relation to an organizational model. (To which it should be added that what this also entails is that each *techné* could not itself be a locus of disputation concerning its nature).

While this position can be ascribed a form of generality such that as a position it draws together ostensibly metaphysical concerns, which here means the relationship between the universal (equally the model or paradigm) and particulars, with epistemological ones, where the latter are defined by the knowledge of the identity of a given particular, what is at work within such a setup, while still involving these concerns, is importantly different.

In the case of the exchanges between Ion and Socrates the object around which their discussion turns is not poetry *qua* poetry but rather the poetic text, more specifically texts by Homer. Whether it is recognized or not what is under discussion is a complex relationship between reading and performing. Ion reads texts. Read texts are performed.

The lines he cites were initially read. Socrates counters with the citations of texts – perhaps cited from memory and thus in part misremembered – that were themselves also initially read. Given that what is involved is reading, the performing of the read, the question to be addressed concerns the nature of the link between *techné* and reading.

The importance of that specific question hinges, of course, on the possibility that it is only in the move from the model/particular relation and thus towards the hermeneutic that the centrality of reading can emerge[18]. Reading names as much an occurrence, an act that occurs *in silentio*, as it does a subject/object relation. Reading announces a relation to its literal presence at the same time as it allows for the impossibility of that reduction.

As the interchange between Socrates and Ion unfolds Homer continues to be cited. Homer is read. Ion cites, by memory, a passage whose ostensible concern is horse racing. At stake within the passage, as a beginning, is the care that needs to be shown at the 'turning post'. Ion cites at Socrates prompting:

> Bend thyself in the polished car slightly to the left of them; and call to the right-hand horse and goad him on, while your hand slackens his reins. And at the post let your left-hand horse

18 While the detail cannot be pursued here for an investigation of the status of reading in Ancient Greece see, Knox (1968) and Svenbro (1992).

swerve close, so that the nave of the well-
wrought wheel may seem to come up to the edge
of the stone, which yet avoid to touch (537A-B).

Socrates stops Ion reciting. It is as though he has
said enough. What Socrates wants explained, and
for Socrates it is the question the passage generates,
is who is in a position to know what is being said
«in these lines». To be more precise the question
pertains to the one best placed to know if Homer
'speaks correctly' (ὀρθῶς λέγει).

The 'words' (ἔπη) themselves are the locus of
correctness. The supposition therefore has to be
that the lines are explicable, perhaps only really
explicable, on the level of *techné*. An explication
that would always have to take place such that the
indetermination of reading did not occur.

Both Ion and Socrates agree that the charioteer
is best placed to know the answer to the question
of correctness. The reason is straightforward.
The charioteer has the appropriate *techné*. It is not
difficult to identify the structure of interpretation
that is at work here. The content of words can only
be identified as having been used correctly if the act
of identification deploys the *techné* appropriate to the
content of the *techné* stated by the words.

Were the words to misstate that which is proper
to a given *techné* then the one possessing it would
recognize that misstatement. In both the positive

and negative instances therefore what occurs has a twofold quality. In the first instance it is a relation on the level of *techné*. While in the second there is an immediacy of presentation insofar as the 'correctness' of the words is given within them. Truth is always there in the content.

There is a clear pedagogical correlate here since the role of education then becomes the teaching of the skill in which that truth can be recovered[19]. Epistemology would always be given precedence. Deliberation would hinder a project whose truth would have to be there immediately.

The pedagogical is important here as what it opens up is transmission as a problem. (Transmission as a subject/object relation and not as a historical passage). If the lines can be equated with their content then the relationship between lines and knowledge is such that any set of lines is identified with the knowledge that they are taken to be staging – e.g. *Iliad* XXIII, *335 passim* is actually about the care needed to be shown in horse racing.

As a result knowledge claims within any given set of lines would then always need to be explicable

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19 The argument in the Republic concerning myth is relevant here:
«"Don't you understand," I said, "that we begin by telling children fables, and the fable is, taken as a whole, false, but there is truth in it also?" (οὐ μανθάνεις, ἦν δ'ἐγώ, ὅτι πρῶτον τοῖς παιδίοις μύθους)». Discerning the truth would be the moment at which the ostensibly epistemological took precedence over the hermeneutic. See Plato (2013), p. 377A.

in terms of the object's self-presentation. The presence of the truth (or falsehood) will then be immediately clear to whomsoever is best placed to make that judgment. Within this structure judgments are contestable purely within the ambit of the epistemological rather than a domain of deliberation. As has already been intimated judgment within the former setting confirms truth, while in the latter it demands the adducing of argument and a certain constancy of consideration[20].

As a result a different temporal configuration would be involved. Deliberation takes place over time. Deliberation is placed. While time and place and with them the inscription of a philosophical anthropology defined by *being-in-place* occur as a result, acquire centrality, it should not be thought that responding to the primacy of the epistemological need take the form of the refusal of knowledge[21].

Rather the argument has to be that the lines by Homer are not to be equated with their content (if content is delimited by the presence of a certain *techné*, one *techné* as opposed to another). In other words, what Socrates demands is both a conception of knowledge and an understanding of its presentation within words – here lines of poetry – that will be complicated by the emergence of allegory and thus

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20 On the complex question of truth in Plato see Tsagdis (2015).

21 I have developed this aspect of a philosophical anthropology in a number of contexts. See Benjamin (2016b), Benjamin (2015) and Benjamin (2010).

an ensuing insistence on the allegorical status of texts. This is not to argue that Plato is unaware of the allegorical. On the contrary, the claim is that with the emergence of the allegorical as a mode of textual interpretation there is a transformation in how the text is understood.

While historically this can be traced in the move from Plato to Philo, within which what is transformed in the process is the presence of Homer, what the recasting of the text in terms of allegory sanctions is the claim of an original irreducibility[22]. (The general argument has to be that allegory cannot footstall processes of allegoresis). What this entails is that even if there is a knowledge claim, the text cannot be accounted for in terms of that claim's presence or, as significantly, the text equated with that which presents such claims.

The identification of the text, more accurately discrete passages cited in terms of their capacity to stage a given *techné,* with a conception of content that is explicable in terms of *techné* is itself the after-effect of an original irreducibility that attends the texts. Anoriginal irreducibility, i.e. an irreducibility that pertains at the original pertains here precisely because there is the insistent openness between thought and words[23]. The further point is that the

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22 The connection between Homer and Philo and the transformation of the status of the Homeric texts is demonstrated by Niehoff (2014).

23 The formulation 'anoriginal irreducibility' is a central element of the philosophical project of which this paper forms a part. For a development of

equation of text with content, (an equation that literalizes content), is itself the effacing of the preconditions for the hermeneutic. That precondition, in attending the text, attending it to be read, is the text's own irreducibility (a reduction of itself to itself). Identifying that always already attendant irreducibility, while a claim about the status of the text, and thus about the ontological status of the interpretive object, not only brings about significant changes in terms of how the object is understood, it is a change that has a necessary correlate in regards to the status of the subject. The transformation of the subject – a transformation occasioned by the nature of the object is from a subject who sees to one who reads[24].

This is the point at which it is possible to respond to the question that emerged in relation to Ion's use of the term 'everything' (ἄπαντα). To recall the position: the object of the rhapsode's engagement, what the rhapsode understands best, is, according to Ion 'everything' (ἄπαντα). It should be clear that this is a position that can only emerge once the possibility of judgment and thus of an object being judgeable is not set by *techné*. As a result what Ion is allowing for is a conception of judgment that is

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these term see, *inter alia*, Benjamin, (1993) and Benjamin (2015).

24 I have attempted to trace the move from seeing to reading in the context of Philo in Benjamin (2016a).

no longer delimited by a set of specific relations. Once it is possible that lines of text – in this context they are instances of poetry - in which what would seem to be ostensibly the province of the charioteer can be judged by one who is not a charioteer, then the immediate relation between lines and thought is broken. It must be remembered that what is at stake here is the response to lines of poetry. If Ion can be understood as saying that for a rhapsode 'everything' (ἅπαντα) can be judged, then the claim is that all lines of poetry are judgeable, not in terms of the presence of a *techné*, but as lines of poetry. This does not occur independently of epistemological concerns, it is rather that epistemological concerns figure within an opening; an opening which is itself given by what has already been identified as the anoriginal irreducibility of words and thought.

While Ficino was concerned to 'paint a portrait of Plato as close as possible to the Christian truth' what occurred at the same time was the recovery of the Plato that was more compatible with the project of poetry and art[25]. The compatibility lay, firstly, in the presence of the 'divine' and then, secondly, in the way the divine is linked to a conception of creation that occurs without a model.

Terms such as ἔνθεος and ἐνθεάζω make it clear that the language of inspiration cannot be

25 Ficino (2001), p. 11.

separated from the inhabitation of the self by the divine. While this opens clearly in the direction that Ficino will have wanted, what it also recognizes is that there is a conception of creativity and thus a related conception of judgment that resist imitation to the extent that the latter is understood in terms of either a paradigm or the conventional understanding of the idea/form found in other dialogues by Plato.

Insisting on this point is to maintain what has already been referred to as opening up the suspended question of creativity. This is of course the link to Kant. Kant's concern was to develop a conception of creativity that was not rule following and thus broke with the 'spirit of imitation'.

For Kant 'nonsense' (*Unsinn*) is avoided by an insistence on judgment. Equally both Plato and Ficino recognized that once imitation is distanced then there is a problem of nonsense. The important point is that while creativity did not demand the following of rules judgment was the *techné* that emerged in relation to what had been created in this way. It was a conception of judgement that was not determined by a reciprocity or correspondence on the level of *techné*. This is the setting of the hermeneutic.

Finally, therefore, if the rhapsode carries from the poet to the audience, then what is carried is the indeterminate relation between thought and words. The rhapsode is engaging (carrying) continually

with that which is already there *to-be-determined*. Perhaps it is possible to go further and suggest that the rhapsode tarries with the *to-be-determined*. The rhapsode remains the reader. Moreover, in reciting works, in every performance, the rhapsode is continually providing readings.

Reading now as that which will have always been attended in advance by the ineliminability of the need for and thus the practice of judgment. These readings inspire. Equally they call for judgement. Readings demand readings.

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