
“Just for the Thrill”: Sycophantizing Aristotle’s *Poetics*

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WHY do human beings make poetry? is a question that Aristotle entertains in his *Poetics* and to which he gives essentially the same answer as Ray Charles. “Just for the thrill,” says Ray Charles in a somewhat different context,

You turned my night into day.
You made my heart stand still.
Just for the thrill.
Just for the thrill.

(Ray Charles, “Just for the Thrill”),

while Aristotle tells us it is an instinct of our human nature to find pleasure in *mimesis* (1448b). Aristotle’s subsequent account of the media, manner, and valuation of *mimesis* places a notable emphasis on its character as action or *praxis*. I do not find transparently clear what Aristotle says about *praxis* in its application to the dramatic arts, which are his main subject in *Poetics*, but I am provoked by the possibility of understanding mimetic *praxis* within the context of a genre that has not been obscured for us by Aristotle’s particular mode of clarification, namely, lyric poetry. And although the third book of *Poetics*, concerned with lyric imitation, is not extant, Aristotle himself might endorse an attempt to assess the *dynamis* of lyric *praxis* by studying its *energeia*. That the corpus of ancient lyric verse represents an open force field of mimetic energies becomes immediately clear to anyone who scrutinizes examples of its texts with appropriate care. Few readers do so; as Aristotle complains, “People nowadays sycophantize poetry” (καὶ ὡς νῦν συκοφαντοῦσιν τοὺς ποιητάς, 1456a), using a verb, *sykophantousin*, whose origin is debated but which appears to be

formed from the noun *sykon* meaning “fig” and the verb *phain-ein* meaning “to reveal” (c. *LSJ*). Fig-revealers were people who denounced anyone caught stealing, hoarding, or seeking to illicitly export figs. Fig-revealers were hasty, tendentious, negative people resembling literary critics in their inclination to, as the Chinese proverb puts it, “sell the dog’s body to feed its mouth.”

Aristotle’s charge of sycophantizing is directed generally against the poetic audience of his day, yet an objective reader of *Poetics* might be moved to wonder whether Aristotle’s own critical method of hit-and-run extrapolation from poetic texts for the purpose of citation by example does not have more than a little in common with the tactics of the fig-revealers—as, for instance, when he dismisses Euripides’ Iphigeneia begging for her life at Aulis as “inconsistent” (1543a31) or Sophocles’ Haemon feeling murderous toward his father as “untragic” (1454a2) or book 2 of Homer’s *Iliad* as “contrived” (1454b1). I suspect that a good deal could be learned about the critic and his figs if we were to reverse the authority-relation and subject Aristotle’s *Poetics* text to apparently random and irresponsible extrapolation in the interest of understanding what Aristotelian *mimesis* is, or would be, from the lyric point of view.

Appearances to the contrary, this reversal is not undertaken in an unphilosophical spirit; we are encouraged by *Poetics* 1451b to regard the study of probabilities, necessities, and universals as “more philosophical” than the apprehension of mere facts:

ἔστιν δὲ καθόλου μὲν, τῷ ποιῶ τὰ ποῖα ἅττα συμβαίνει
λέγειν ἢ πράττειν κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, οὗ στο-
χάζεται ἢ ποιήσις ὀνόματα ἐπιτιθεμένη.

(1451b8–10)

A universal means what sort of thing a certain sort of person would say or do in accordance with probability or necessity. This is what poetry aims at. It does so by affixing names.

Aristotle’s emphasis on names here suggests a good place to begin understanding *mimesis*. What’s in a name? is a question of universal importance for the poet, Aristotle implies. Elsewhere in *Poetics* Aristotle defines names for us:

ὄνομα δέ ἐστι φωνῆ συνθετὴ σημαντικὴ ἄνευ χρόνου ἧς
μέρος οὐδέν ἐστι καθ' αὐτὸ σημαντικόν.

(1457a10–14)

A name is a composite significant sound (or voice) lacking time of which no part in itself has meaning . . . e.g., in the name Theodoros, the *-dōros* ["gift"] part has no meaning.

This definition brings directly to mind a text of the poet Simonides:

Χαίρει τις, Θεόδωρος ἐπεὶ θάνον· ἄλλος ἐπ' αὐτῷ
χαίρησιν· θανάτῳ πάντες ὀφειλόμεθα.

(frg. 139D)

Someone rejoices that I Theodoros am dead. Another will rejoice over him. We are all debts owed to death.

Clearly Aristotle hits the nail on the head when he says that Theodoros is a voice outside time whose parts have no meaning. Simonides' epigram is a mournful play upon this very meaninglessness, especially poignant in the case of a man whose name means "gift of God." No gift can divert death from his usury, Simonides implies, no name can buy Theodoros time. Time belongs not to names but to the verb.

Names meanwhile are subject to inflection (*πτῶσις* in Greek, *casus* in Latin: literally a "falling"), which, Aristotle explains, (*πτῶσις δ' ἐστὶν ὀνόματος ἢ ῥήματος ἢ μὲν κατὰ τὸ τούτου ἢ τούτῳ σημαίνον καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα, ἢ δὲ κατὰ τὸ ἐνὶ ἢ πολλοῖς, οἷον ἄνθρωποι ἢ ἄνθρωπος*: 1457a18) affects the meaning of a name in two ways. Inflection indicates whether a name is nominative, genitive, or dative, and so on; inflection indicates whether a name is singular or plural, many men or one man. It may be that Aristotle here has in mind another epigram of Simonides in which inflection acts in all of these ways at once upon its fallen subject:

Σάμα τόδε Σπίνθηρ Σπίνθηρ' ἐπέθηκε θανόντι.

(frg. 133D)

Here is the tomb that Spinther upon Spinther set having died.

Spinther seems to have been a man who commissioned his own tombstone. Thus *Spinthēr* in the nominative case stands as subject of the sentence directly beside *Spinthēri* (here elided to *Spinthēr*) in the dative case as indirect object of the sentence. Spinther's action as agent of the verb *epethēke* is to confer a tomb or *sēma* (here in the Doric form *sāma*) upon his own dead self. The Greek word *sēma* also means "sign": Spinther's epitaph signifies that in some sense he is not after all a dead object, for the syntax of his relationship to mortality is changed by the action of the verse. Metrics require Spinther's name in the dative case (*Spintheri*) to be elided of its final vowel before conjunction with the verb *epethēke*. The orthographic result of this elision is to reinflect *Spinthēr*' from dative dependence on death to double subjectivity in his own sentence. According to Aristotle, "names are of two kinds, single . . . and double" (Ὀνόματος δὲ εἶδη τὸ μὲν ἀπλοῦν, ἀπλοῦν δὲ λέγω ὃ μὴ ἐκ σημαίνοντων σύγκειται, οἷον γῆ, τὸ δὲ διπλοῦν· 1457a31). Spinther is both. *Spinthēr Spinthēr*' imitates himself in a semantic friction that generates two lives from one death and two men from one name. The name itself is also the Greek word for "spark" — a spark struck by the imitative action of Simonides' poem and sent flying forward to perpetuate Spinther's meaning beyond the grave.

To emit sparks beyond the grave is the aim of many a lyric poem. But poetic immortality may hinge upon considerations of the finest detail. Aristotle's sensitivity to such detail emerges unmistakably in his discussion of poetic diction, which begins with minute definition of the radical elements vowel, semi-vowel, consonant, and syllable:

συλλαβὴ δὲ ἐστὶν φωνὴ ἄσημος συνθετὴ ἐξ ἀφώνου καὶ φωνῆν ἔχοντος· καὶ γὰρ τὸ ΓΡ ἄνευ τοῦ Α συλλαβὴ καὶ μετὰ τοῦ Α, οἷον τὸ ΓΡΑ. ἀλλὰ καὶ τούτων θεωρῆσαι τὰς διαφορὰς τῆς μετρικῆς ἐστίν.

(1456b34–37)

A syllable is a composite meaningless sound composed of a consonant and an element having sound. For in fact *gr*

without an *a* is a syllable and *gr* with an *a* is a syllable, as in *gra*. But research into these distinctions is a matter belonging to metrics.

I am not sure what Aristotle means by this. The Arabic text of *Poetics* has a negative adverb in the first clause of the second sentence, and that may be right. Or it may be that Aristotle is referring to certain metrical procedures like elision, which, as we saw above in *Spinthēr Spinthēr' epethēke*, can be of mortal significance in a poetic text. Or it may be he has in mind various other prosodic techniques for adjusting syllabic quantity like diaeresis, synaeresis, syncphonesis, crasis. At any rate, no reader of lyric verse could disapprove of Aristotle's method of exactitude in matters of this kind, for a lyric poem is a highly concentrated action in which every letter and syllable counts. For example, consider Sappho's poem in which a single consonant rises up and obliterates the life of the poem's addressee:

καθάνοισα δὲ κείσῃ οὐδέ ποτα μναμοσύνα σέθεν
 ἔσσειτ' οὐδὲ πόθα εἰς ὕστερον· οὐ γὰρ πεδέχῃς βρόδων
 τῶν ἐκ Πιερίας, ἀλλ' ἀφάνης κὰν Ἄϊδα δόμῳ
 φοιτάσῃς πεδ' ἀμαύρων νεκῶν ἐκπεποταμένα.

(frg. 55 LP)

Dead you will lie and not ever memory of you will
 be nor desire into the aftertime. For you will have no
 share
 in the roses of Pieria but invisible *too* in the house
 of Hades
 you will go your way among the blotted dead—
 an exhalation.

It is a poem of resentment that, ancient editors tell us, was directed by Sappho at a woman of considerable wealth who had no interest in music, poetry, or knowledge (here symbolized by "the roses of Pieria"). It is a poem concerned to describe how the present affects the future but also to cause that affect imitatively. The text that lies before us renders some woman nameless to this day. When we look at the words we experience neither memory nor desire for her, we see an empty room through which she passed leaving no imprint. We see her invisibility.

But at the same time we experience its cause. For we are her. The second person singular verbs of the poem locate us within some woman by calling her “you.” You transact your own invisibility by living in the present as if you were already dead—which, by the time you realize it, you are. The poem sets forth, in four verbs referring to the future, a somewhat unsurprising prediction: when you die you will be blotted out. But placed within these future references, like a trap of the kind called a “deadfall,” is a much more surprising inference. Your trap is the small Greek word *kai*, a conjunction meaning “and,” which appears in verse 3 abbreviated to a single *k* and conjoined by crasis to the preposition *en* following it: *kan*.

Now crasis is a metrical license permitting the compression of two open vowels into one long syllable for time-saving purposes. Crasis quickens the connective action of the conjunction *kai* and syncopates your posthumous nonentity upon its counterpart in present life. By the time you realize the retroactive force of this conjunction, you have already floated forward to verse 4 and to your darkening future, leaving behind you, lodged in a single kappa, the whole implication of your life without roses. Aristotle defines “conjunction” for us as follows:

σύνδεσμος δέ ἐστιν φωνῆ ἄσημος ἢ λόγου ἀρχὴν ἢ τέλος
ἢ διορισμὸν δηλοῖ [οἷον τὸ ἀμφὶ καὶ τὸ περὶ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα.
(1457a7–9)

A conjunction is a meaningless sound which makes clear the beginning, end, or definition of an utterance.

So in fragment 55, Sappho has used the conjunctive action of *kai* to imitate an almost imperceptible causal connection between the beginning, end, and definition of some woman’s meaningless life. She has used the syncopating action of *crasis* to speed up the meaninglessness and to introduce a lurch of hindsight into the reasoning process of her poem. You may think “reasoning process” is an inappropriate description of Sappho’s fragment 55. But Aristotle tells us that “all the affects produced by words fall under the category of reasoning or *dianoia*” (ἔστι δὲ κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν ταῦτα, ὅσα ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου δεῖ παρασκευασθῆναι. 1456a36–37). The words of Sappho’s poem move your mind through an action of reasoning that is,

nonetheless, distinct from other types of *dianoia* in virtue of its thrill. There is a classical Chinese proverb that says, “The closer you look at a word the more distantly it looks back at you.” The thrill of lyric *mimesis* has something importantly to do with this collaboration of distance and closeness, whereby they approach, meet, and seem almost about to interchange, like a man shaking hands with himself in a mirror. Aristotle says the best mimetic actions are the ones that happen “contrary to expectation and through one another” (ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐ μόνον τελείας ἐστὶ πράξεως ἢ μίμησις ἀλλὰ καὶ φοβερῶν καὶ ἐλεινῶν, ταῦτα δὲ γίνεται καὶ μάλιστα [καὶ μάλλον] ὅταν γένηται παρὰ τὴν δόξαν δι’ ἄλληλα· 1452a4). One further example from Sappho may help us focus this observation.

φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν
 ἔμμεν’ ὦνηρ, ὅστις ἐνάντιός τοι
 ἰσθάνει καὶ πλάσιον ἄδου φωνεί-
 σας ὑπακούει

καὶ γελαίσας ἰμέροεν, τό μ’ ἦ μὰν
 καρδίαν ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτόαισεν·
 ὡς γὰρ ἔξ σ’ ἴδω βρόχε’, ὡς με φώναι-
 σ’ οὐδ’ ἐν ἔτ’ εἴκει,

ἀλλ’ ἄκαν μὲν γλώσσα †ἔαγε†, λέπτον
 δ’ αὐτικά χροῦ πῦρ ὑπαδεδρόμηκεν,
 ὀππάτεσσι δ’ οὐδ’ ἐν ὄρημ’, ἐπιρρόμ-
 βεισι δ’ ἄκουαι,

καὶ δὲ μ’ ἴδρω ψυχρὸς ἔχει, τρόμος δὲ
 παῖσαν ἄγρει, χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας
 ἔμμι, τεθνάκη δ’ ὀλίγω ’πιδεύης
 φαίνομ’ ἔμ’ αὐτ[α].

(frg. 31 LP)

He seems to me equal to the gods that man
 whoever he is who opposite you
 sits and listens close
 to your sweet speaking

and lovely laughing—oh it
 puts the heart in my chest on wings
 for when I look at you, a moment, then no speaking
 is left in me

no: tongue breaks and thin
 fire is racing under skin
 and in eyes no sight and drumming
 fills ears

and cold sweat holds me and shaking
 grips me all, greener than grass
 I am and dead—or almost
 I seem to me.

It is a strangely theatrical poem, as brightly lit as a stage set and much concerned with the problem of seeming. It begins and ends with a form of the verb *phainesthai*, “to appear”: *phainetai* (v. 1) “he seems,” *phainomai* (v. 16) “I seem.” Seeming is an activity that ordinarily posits a cast of two. The person who seems and the person to whom she seems. But on Sappho’s stage the action is triangular, at least to begin with, for the opening stanza features three actors, “that man” and “you” and “me.” And although Sappho immediately sets about reducing the cast to “you” and “me” in the second stanza and then “me” alone in the remaining verses, phenomena double and triple themselves insistently throughout the poem.

Duality is asserted in sound and syntax by verbal resonances like *phainetai . . . phainomai* (1 and 16); *emmen’ . . . emmi* (2 and 15); *phōneisas . . . phōnaisa* (3 and 7); *hōs . . . hōs* (7); *hypakouei . . . akouai* (4 and 12). Sappho’s catalogue of erotic reactions, on the other hand, is organized in sets of three. A triple physiological affect is three times recorded, each time in the same order—visual, oral/aural, tactile. So we find: “he seems” (1); “he listens to your voice” (4); “my heart is on wings” (6); “I look” (7); “no speaking is in me . . . tongue breaks” (7–9); “fire runs under my skin” (10); “no sight is in my eyes” (11); “drumming is in my ears” (11–12); “cold sweat holds me” (13). At the end of the catalogue, unity is reasserted by the protagonist; Sappho says, “. . . shaking grips the whole me . . .” (13–14). It is apparently a matter of some importance

to her to gather the data of outer sense into one being. Aristotle agrees that an imitative poet should focus her imitation on one thing, not three:

ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἔστι μιμητῆς ὁ ποιητῆς ὡσπερανεὶ ζωγράφος ἢ
τις ἄλλος εἰκονοποιός, ἀνάγκη μιμεῖσθαι τριῶν ὄντων τὸν
ἀριθμὸν ἓν τι ἀεὶ, ἢ γὰρ οἷα ἦν ἢ ἔστιν, ἢ οἷά φασι καὶ
δοκεῖ, [ἢ] οἷα εἶναι δεῖ.

(1460b8–11)

For a poet is an imitator like a painter or any image maker and it is necessary for him to imitate out of three things one at any given time: things as they are, things as they are said or seem to be, things as they ought to be.

Sappho proceeds in fragment 31 as if she has in mind these same three registers of discourse: the real, the apparent, the ideal. She disposes of ideality fairly early in the poem. "That man equal to the gods whoever he is" ceases to exist as soon as we do not care to know his name; the indefinite pronoun *ottis*, "whoever," obliterates him. The rest of the poem is a research through appearance to reality, beginning and ending (as we have already noted) with forms of the verb *phainesthai* and framing a revelation at the core. The action of the poem is in a true sense spectacular. We see the modes of perception reduced to dysfunction one by one; we see the objects of outer sense disappear, and on the brightly lit stage at the center of her being we see Sappho recognize herself: *emmi*, "I am," she asserts at verse 15.

"Seeing" or "spectacle" or *opsis* is the "most ravishing" aspect of dramatic *mimesis* according to Aristotle (ἢ δὲ ὄψις ψυχαγωγικόν, 1450b17). He applies to visual spectacle the adjective *psychagogikon*, which means something like "it kidnaps your soul." So too is Sappho's soul kidnapped by the spectacle of her own *mimesis*, or so it seems. "I am greener than grass," she says at verse 15, predicating of her own being an attribute observable only from outside her own body. The experience Sappho describes is one well known to Greek aesthetic theory and commended by Aristotle. It is the condition called *ekstasis*, "standing outside oneself," widely regarded as characteristic of madmen, geniuses, or lovers and ascribed particularly to poets by Aristotle at *Poetics* 1455a22–24.

διὸ εὐφροῦς ἢ ποιητικὴ ἐστὶν ἢ μανικοῦ· τούτων γὰρ οἱ
μὲν εὐπλάστοι οἱ δὲ ἐκστατικοί εἰσιν.

Thus the art of poetry belongs either to geniuses or madmen. For of these the former are good plastic, the latter able to stand out of themselves.

It is nonetheless noteworthy that Sappho's *ekstasis* does not clear the stage at the center of her being. On the contrary, as she stands outside her own body looking in, a mysterious figure seems to be coming into focus there. "To have died — or almost, I seem to myself," she says (v. 16), implying at least two and possibly three actors engaged in this final episode of the action. There is Sappho the subject, Sappho the object, and perhaps also Sappho the word that separates subject and object by naming them. But this third presence remains problematic.

The problem of the third actor is a real and controversial one for the history of the Greek theater, which Aristotle treats in the opening chapters of *Poetics* (1449a). Yet it must be admitted that Sappho leaves it unclear, at the end of fragment 31, just how many people she imagines herself to be. "Only the shallow know themselves," Oscar Wilde has said. Aristotle offers a more substantial explanation for this and other unclarities of poetic exposition:

πρὸς δὲ τούτοις οὐχ ἡ αὐτὴ ορθότης ἐστὶν τῆς πολιτικῆς
καὶ τῆς ποιητικῆς οὐδὲ ἄλλης τέχνης καὶ ποιητικῆς.
(1460b14–15)

There is not the same correctness in the art of political life nor in any other art as in that of poetry.

It was not surprising to Aristotle that poets make mistakes, nor that they enjoy it, nor that such errors can sometimes be more true than correct information. Indeed, one could describe *mimesis* lightly as a single sustained mistake of this kind, insofar as a perfect imitation would be a contradiction in terms, or at least a contradiction of Aristotelian pleasure. However that may be, Aristotle offers us detailed instructions on how best to enjoy the true mistakes of poetry:

αὐτῆς δὲ τῆς ποιητικῆς διττὴ ἁμαρτία, ἢ μὲν γὰρ καθ’
αὐτήν, ἢ δὲ κατὰ συμβεβηκός. εἰ μὲν γὰρ προεῖλετο μιμη-
σασθαι * * ἀδυναμίαν, αὐτῆς ἡ ἁμαρτία.

(1460b15–17)

Error in the art of poetry is of two kinds, essential and incidental. For if [a poet] chose to imitate incapacity, that would be an error of [the poetry] itself . . .

This text is fairly universally condemned as unintelligible, lacunary, and in need of supplementation, for example, by adding various words before *adynamian*. But to take Aristotle literally may give us a stronger reading in relation to available lyric examples. The text says, “error *kath’hautēn* would occur if a poet chose to imitate *adynamian*.” “Error *kath’hautēn*” is sometimes translated as “essential error” but should mean something like “error in accordance with the poetry itself.” *Adynamia* is a word denoting “incapacity” of all kinds—physical, moral, or mental; it could as well describe a man unable to count from one to four as a man powerless to get enough to eat. For example, in fragment 20 of Alkman:

ῶρας δ’ ἔσηκε τρεῖς, θέρος
καὶ χειμα κώπωραν τρίταν
καὶ τέτρατον τὸ Φῆρ, ὄκα
σάλλει μὲν, ἐσθίην δ’ ἄδαν
οὐκ ἔστι.

[?] made three seasons, summer
and winter and autumn third
and fourth spring when
there is blooming but to eat enough
is not.

Clearly, Alkman’s error is of the essential kind. He is imitating the possibility of starvation. For a poor Spartan poet with nothing left in his cupboard at the end of winter, spring comes along like an afterthought of the natural economy, unbalancing his checkbook and enjamming his verse. The poem leaves us three-quarters of the way into an iambic metron, hungry for an explanation of where spring came from and resentful of its

intrusion into the poetic account.

The intrusiveness of truth into a poetic account is an imitative affect that Aristotle admires intensely and recommends widely to the user of words, for it puts the soul in conversation with itself at a dramatic juncture. The method and psychology of this technique are specified in *Rhetoric*:

ἔστι δὲ καὶ τὰ ἀστεῖα τὰ πλεῖστα διὰ μεταφορᾶς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ προσεξαπατᾶν· μᾶλλον γὰρ γίγνεται δῆλον ὅτι ἔμαθε παρὰ τὸ ἐναντίως ἔχειν, καὶ ἔοικε λέγειν ἢ ψυχή “ὡς ἀληθῶς, ἐγὼ δ’ ἤμαρτον”.

(*Rhet.* 3.11.6)

Most witticism comes about through metaphor and from deceiving [the reader or listener] beforehand. For it gradually becomes clear [to the reader] that he has learned, because of the contradiction. And the soul seems to say: *How true, but I missed it!*

We recognize the structure of this mental event from Aristotle’s discussion of tragic *mimesis* in *Poetics*:

καλλίστη δὲ ἀναγνώρισις, ὅταν ἅμα περιπέτεια γίνωνται.

(1452a33)

A recognition is finest when it happens at the same time as a reversal.

But the question of what exactly it is we enjoy in the experience of recognizing our own error, at that moment when the soul turns to look at its own reasoning process like an actor upon a stage and intervenes just in time to forestall kidnap, seems to be a question fundamental to our understanding of Aristotle’s understanding of what poetry is. “No brush can write two words at the same time,” says the classical Chinese proverb. Yet Aristotelian *mimesis* is just such a brush, able to paint knowledge and error shaking hands with one another in a mirror.

Aristotle seems undismayed by the necessarily bifocal character of this mimetic image. It represents for him a faculty of our human nature no more problematic than using two eyes to see

one world. As Empedokles says:

μία γίνεται ἀμφοτέρων ὄψ.
(frg. 88 DK = *Poet.* 1458ab)

From the two comes one seeing.

Aristotle quotes this verse of Empedokles, amidst a discussion of how poets use nouns (1458a), and tastefully refrains from observing that Empedokles' noun *ops* is in itself a kind of double exposure, for it has the meaning "eye, sight, appearance" but also the meaning "voice, sound, word" (c. *LSJ*). It is a fact the noun *ops* is never used elsewhere in the nominative case to mean "voice, sound, word." And it is probable that Empedokles intended no pun whatsoever when he chose this term. And it may be necessary to doubt that Aristotle thought twice about the meanings of *ops* when he quoted Empedokles, a poet whose verse, we are informed in the opening chapters of *Poetics* (1447b), has nothing more in common with real poetic imitation than its metre. But these opening chapters of *Poetics* also inform us that imitation is "not of men but of action and life" (1450a16–17). The obscure, incomplete, and unmetrical verse of Empedokles that Aristotle cites out of context to illustrate an argument about the use of abbreviated nouns in poetry does serve to bring together, in an action that from a lyric point of view characterizes both and imitates their relation, the least poetic of the poets of philosophy and the most philosophical of the philosophers of poetry. From the two comes one *ops*. Neither of its eyes is gazing out at you, yet you may feel yourself involved in a profound activity of seeing and being seen. For *mimesis* is an experience that takes you in (as we say) — in to the thrilling depths of yourself where every surface is as polished as a mirror and the meaning of things seems just about to walk up and shake your hand.