THE CONFUSION BETWEEN MORAL AND AESTHETIC IDEAS IN GREEK LITERARY CRITICISM AND PHILOSOPHY.

After a brief introduction on the nature of 'aesthetic' and 'moralistic' criticism, the development of Greek literary criticism has been traced from its earliest beginnings in the invective of Xenophanes and Heraclitus as far as the age of Plotinus. The attempt has been made to show how philosophers, grammarians and poets all made their individual contributions towards the development of the science of literary criticism as the modern world knows it, and the progress has been viewed in the light of the gradual weakening of the hold of the moralistic attitude which informed the criticism of the early philosophers.

After the criticism of the early philosophic schools, the contributions of the Sophists towards literary studies and the criticism of Aristophanes and the Old Comedy have been briefly reviewed. The next two sections are devoted to the aesthetic theories of Plato and Aristotle respectively, and the last deals briefly with the later Peripatetics, the Alexandrian scholars, the Stoics and Epicureans, Longinus, and finally the Neo-Platonists.

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Thesis Presented by
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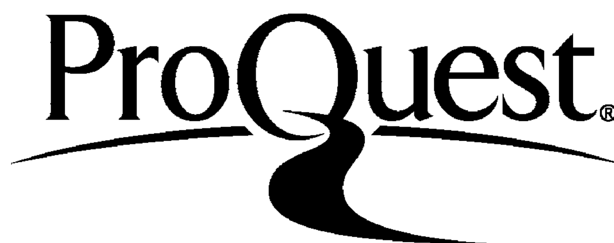

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INTRODUCTION.

It will not be inappropriate to preface this discussion with a short consideration of the term 'aesthetic'. A. C. Bradley has defined a poem as 'the succession of experiences - sounds, images, thoughts, emotions - through which we pass when we are reading as poetically as we can'.(1) 'What', he continues, 'does the formula 'Poetry for Poetry's Sake' tell us about this experience? It says, as I understand it, these things. First, this experience is an end in itself, is worth having on its own account, has an intrinsic value. Next, its poetic value is this intrinsic worth alone. Poetry may have also an ulterior value as a means to culture, or religion; because it conveys instruction or softens the passions, or furthers a good cause; because it brings the poet fame, or money, or a quiet conscience. So much the better: let it be valued for these reasons too. But its ulterior worth neither is nor can directly determine its poetic worth as a satisfying imaginative experience; and this is to be judged entirely from within .... The consideration of ulterior ends, whether by the poet in the act of composing or by the reader in the act of experiencing, tends to lower poetic value. It does so because it tends to change the nature of poetry by

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(1) <u>Oxford Lectures on Poetry</u>, 1909. p.4.

taking it out of its own atmosphere. For its nature is to be not a part, nor yet a copy, of the real world (as we commonly understand that phrase), but to be a world by itself, complete, autonomous.' A clearer guide than this to what is meant by an 'aesthetic' attitude would be far to seek. If poetry is a 'satisfying imaginative experience', if itis a 'world by itself, complete, autonomous', then the aesthetic attitude is that which finds it such, the simple acceptance of that experience in all its fulness, for its own sake, without the intrusion of utilitarian or any other considerations.

Now it is just this refusal to allow poetry to play through one's being as unconcernedly as the winds play through an Aeolian harp, which constitutes the age-long battle between Art and Morality. Men have thought that poetry is a 'copy' of this world of ordinary reality, without seeing that their respective realities lie on wholly different planes. So the events, deeds and thoughts which poetry makes use of have been weighed and judged and valued for their own sakes, as in ordinary life. Men have seen poetry, that is, as a conglomeration of events, moral and immoral, and wholly missed the 'imaginative experience' for which these are but the generating material.

Man has always felt that there is some real connection between art and morality; the consideration of that connection has been at the root of all the deepest aesthetic enquiry and

is indeed the very core of the problem of the nature of great art. Yet too often thinkers have made the mistake of regarding art as in one way or another the servant of morality, instead of seeing that they are co-ordinate, both revelations, in different media, of some abiding universal Truth. Of the various theories which have been put forward to explain exactly how the imaginative experience of poetry ennobles man's soul, from Plato's 'assimilation of the beautiful' and Aristotle's 'catharsis' to Robert Graves' theory of psycho-therapy,(1) this is not the place to speak. The difference which exists between the action of poetry and that of morality, however, is exactly expressed by Shelley in his Defence of Poetry. 'The whole objection of the immorality of poetry rests upon a misconception of the manner in which poetry acts to produce the moral improvement of man. Ethical science arranges the elements which poetry has created, and propounds schemes and proposes examples of civil and domestic life .... But poetry acts in another and a diviner manner ... A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of

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(1) On English Poetry. Section XXIX 29 'The Use of Poetry' 1922.

moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause .... A poet therefore would do ill to embody his own conceptions of right and wrong, which are usually those of his place and time, in his poetical creations, which participate in neither'.(1)

Having outlined the problem of the relation of art to morality, we come to the consideration of its expression in Greek literary criticism. First of all, 'literary criticism' must be defined, for the purposes of this discussion, as 'anything said about literature'. 'Literary criticism' as we understand it, is a comparatively modern science, demanding centuries of literary consciousness and a background of aesthetic theory. In literature, performance has always been in advance of theory; the Greeks produced eternal masterpieces of poetry before they had the slightest reflective idea of the nature and value of beauty. 'A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why'.(2) The principal sources of material for this study are the utterances of the philosophers, who came upon poetry incidentally in their search for

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(1) Prose Works. (ed. H.B.Forman) 1880. Vol.III. p.111

(2) ibid. p.109.

truth. Their preliminary labours laid the foundation of modern aesthetic criticism, for theirs were the vital, suggestive words which went to the formation of the mental attitude of the modern literary critic. The non-philosophical critics, Sophists, Gramma rians and the rest, devoted themselves more particularly to the mechanical tasks of classifying literary forms and evolving codes of rules.

The salient feature of such Greek literary criticism as exists is its strong moral tone. A moral attitude is the natural consequence of treating Art as if it were a copy of ordinary reality, of judging the poet's interpretation of life by laws framed for the government of the every-day world. It was only to be expected that the earliest Greek philosophers should adopt this attitude, since, having no conception of any reality beyond that of this world, they sought to explain the universe in terms of matter. Moreover, the issue is somewhat complicated by the fact that the substance of their earliest poetry was the very stuff of their religion, and a purely aesthetic attitude was, therefore, hardly possible. Yet it is not only in the earliest Greek philosophy that this attitude occurs. It will be seen that a moralistic element continued to exist in literary criticism throughout the whole length of Greek thought. Nor did it perish with the Greek world, but drew new strength from the advent of Christianity,

and even now dies very slowly. In the eighteenth century the admirable Mrs. Trimmer and the egregious Samuel Goodrich, known to fame as Peter Parley, waged war against fiction. So Mrs. Trimmer found Cinderella 'exceptionable', (1) and Mr. Goodrich decided that such tales as Bluebeard, Puss-in-Boots, and Jack-the-Giant-Killer were put in the hands of youth 'as if for the express purpose of reconciling them to vice and crime', (2) and that Little Red Riding-Hood was 'full of something very like lies, and those very shocking to the mind'. (3)

One other point should be mentioned before embarking on a survey of the available material. The truly moralistic attitude is that of the critic who fears that men's souls may be corrupted by the poetry they read. It is possible, however, for moral judgment to interfere with the aesthetic contemplation without there being any such underlying consideration. Unconsciously the individual's power of aesthetic appreciation seems to be largely determined by his personal morality, by his particular social environment and his own shibboleths and snobberies. The objection of Aristophanes and his conservative friends, for instance, to the dramatic representation of Phaedras & Sthenoboeas and other 'women in love', was probably

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(1) The Guardian of Education, conducted by Mrs. Trimmer. Vol. IV. (1805) Art. VIII. p.74.

(2) S.G.Goodrich. Recollections of a Lifetime. New York, 1857. Vol.I. p.166.

(3) ibid. p.167.

based as much on their dislike of what, by reason of their education and environment, they considered its unaesthetic quality, as upon their conscious apprehension of its undesirable effects upon the audience. This influence, which our moral outlook exerts, in spite of ourselves, upon our judgment of poetry, differs from the conscious moral-hunting of the thorough-going moralist.

Finally, the difficulty of disentangling the moral from the aesthetic in the criticism of tragedy, the novel, or any complex work of art, is symbolised by the reply of the Irish peasant who said to A. P. Graves, on hearing that he was the author of the song 'Father O'Flynn', 'Ye behaved well, sir, when ye wrote that one'.(1)

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(1) Robert Graves, <u>On English Poetry</u>. 1922. Section XXXVIII 'The Moral Question'.

EARLY THOUGHT.

'There are times when men's greatest need is
favouring winds, Times when they need most the sky-
waters, the rain-daughters of the Cloud:
But when with hard toil a man fareth gloriously,
Then honey-voicèd songs become to him the prelude of
a long-abiding record and a trusty pledge for the
remembrance of his greatest deeds of valour'.(1)

About the odes of Pindar there shines an aureole of triumph and splendour and fame. Life is a window of stained glass, its colours human courage and endeavour, while the streaming radiance which lights them is the greatness of the gods. Song is the mirror of its colourfulness. Song then is 'sweet' and 'honey-voiced' song is a 'gladdening flower'. Throughout the Odes the words recur, always sweetness and honey tones. Pindar is unaware of anything but the beauty and divinity of the Muses' gift. Before Pindar, Homer too had hymned his 'godlike singers', his 'lovely song', (no English word renders the beauty of ἱμερόεσσαν), that delights the hearts of men. In Hesiod the thought is the

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(1) Pindar, Olympians. X, 1-5. (Farnell's translation).

same, 'For though a man have sorrow and grief in his newly-troubled soul and live in dread because his heart is distressed, yet, when a singer, the servant of the Muses, chants the glorious deeds of men of old, the blessed gods who inhabit Olympus, at once he forgets his heaviness and remembers not his sorrows at all; but the gifts of the goddesses soon turn him away from these'.(1) Literary criticism was not yet born. The Muses were still enshrined on Helicon and men had not learnt to probe their gift; they accepted it and honoured it. Hesiod, it is true, framed in his verse ethical precepts and practical advice. Pindar's immediate aim was practical. Yet it was the joy of creating poetry that urged them to write, and it is the joy of poetry that they stress. The first Greek poets express an attitude of uncritical and straightforward aesthetic delight in poetry.

Even before Pindar, however, the attention of the philosophers had been turned upon literature. Greek philosophy began, it is said, with Thales, but the very earliest thinkers were occupied solely with the nature of the material world and not with the products of art and literature. From Xenophanes of Colophon(2) we get the first hint of literary

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(1) Hesiod. Theogony. 98-103. (Translated by Evelyn-White).

(2) fl. c.530 B.C.

criticism.[1] Diogenes Laertius says of him,[2] "His writings are in epic metre, as well as elegiacs and iambics attacking Hesiod and Homer, and denouncing what they said about the gods'. Two fragments are extant of Xenophanes' writings which have reference to literature. 'Homer and Hesiod have

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(1) Plutarch, however, records a story about Solon which is interesting. 'Thespis was now beginning to develop tragedy and the attempt attracted most people because of its novelty, although it was not yet made a matter of competitive contest. Solon, therefore, who was naturally fond of hearing and learning anything new, and who in his old age more than ever before indulged himself in leisurely amusement, Yes, and in wine and song, went to see Thespis act in his own play, as the custom of the ancient poets was. After the spectacle he accosted Thespis and asked him if he was not ashamed to tell such lies in the presence of so many people, Thespis answered that there was no harm in talking and acting that way in play, whereupon Solon smote the ground sharply with his staff and said: Soon, however, if we give play of this sort so much praise and honour, we shall find it in our solemn contracts'. <u>Plutarch's Life of Solon.</u> Ch. 29 4-5. Translation by Perrin.) This, then, if it is authentic, would seem to be the very earliest expression of the moralistic attitude. (Solon died c.559 B.C.)

(2) <u>D.L. IX.</u> 18. (Translated by Hicks.)

ascribed to the gods all things that are a shame and a disgrace among men, thefts and adulteries and deception of one another'.[1] The second echoes the words of the first: 'There was no godless deed they did not utter of the gods, thefts and adulteries and deception of one another'.[2] Xenophanes was primarily a moralist and a theologian. As a young man he saw the Persian conquest of Ionia, and perhaps the ease with which that conquest was effected turned his thoughts to moral degradation and its causes. He attributed it to wrong ways of thinking, and wrong conceptions about the gods. Therefore, he became a satirist, and directed the fire of his invective against the whole range of life, from the popular religion to the habits of the dinner table.

There is in Heraclitus too,[3] the same note of invective against the poets. 'The learning of many things teacheth not understanding, else it would have taught Hesiod and Pythargoras and again Xenophanes and Hekataios'.[4] 'Homer should be turned out of the lists and whipped, and Archilochus likewise'.[5]

Fragmente der Vorsokratiker.

(1) Diels. Berlin 1912. I. Fr. 11. p.59.

(2) ibid. Fr.12. p.60.

(3) Fl. c. 513 B.C.

(4) op. cit. Fr. 40. p.86.

(5) ibid. Fr. 42. p.86.

'Hesiod is most men's teacher. Men think he knew many things, a man who did not know day or night! They are one'.[1] 'For what thought or wisdom have they? They follow the poets and take the crowd as their teacher, not knowing that there are many bad and few good'.[2] One other fragment is interesting.

'Homer was wrong in saying "Would that strife might perish from among gods and men". For there would not be harmony without the high and the low, or living creatures without male and female, which are opposites'.[3] Heraclitus is here trying to make literature fit his physical theory of the universe. The kernel of Heraclitus' philosophy was the reconciliation of the One and the Many by the theory of perpetual flux. The world is an ever-living fire, which is always becoming all things, while all things are returning to it. Fire becomes moisture, and collects into water. Water becomes earth, Earth is in turn liquified, and fire is nourished from water. The whole universe then depends upon two opposite movements. These keep it in an equilibrium. So Strife is in another aspect Harmony. Strife is the secret of the Universe.

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(1) Fr. 57. p.88.

(2) Fr. 104. p.98.

(3) Ritter et Preller. Historia Philosophiae Graecae, Gotha 1913. p.28. Fr. 43.

These two, Xenophanes the moralist and theologian, and Heraclitus the philosopher, express in their criticism of literature something that is characteristic of early thought, the tendency to see life simply in terms of the visible, tangible, reality of this world, as an undivided whole, with one set of values prevailing throughout. With Xenophanes this tendency becomes the practice of taking the poets' stories of the gods at their face value, as so many reproductions of moral and immoral acts. With Heraclitus, the philosopher, it is expressed in that co-ordination of the physical principle of Strife with the artistically portrayed War of Homer. Xenophanes quarrelled with the poets because they transgressed moral standards, and Heraclitus because they did not give expression to philosophical truths. Neither perceived that there may be some other facet of the ultimate truth which it is the aim of art to reveal, and that the standards to which poetry appeals may be different. It was their lack of aesthetic theory, which prompted their attitude rather than any confusion.

There is one other point which must be borne in mind in speaking of these early Greek philosophers. The poems of Homer and Hesiod were the expression, as it were, of the national mind, though an expression cast in the mould of individual genius, and therefore the purer and loftier and more significant. Their content therefore touched men nearly, and this perhaps gave rise, among other causes, to the tendency

discussed above. For the Homeric legends were, after all, to Xenophanes, the result of men's pondering on the physical universe around them. They were men's answers to the first problems of religion and metaphysics. Homer, it istrue, took them out of the region of primitive religion, and put them in the realm of eternal, universal, literature. To us it is easy to apprehend the transformation. It is no wonder, however, if Xenophanes did not realise what Homer had done with the national mythology, if he saw only the religious content, and not Homer's treatment, if, in a word, he judged it as religion and philosophy, and not aesthetically. The argument has veered to the former conclusion: although as poets the early Greeks might have a naïve joy in poetry, as philosophers they had no aesthetic theory, and this vitiated their criticism.

There was, however, a way of treating poetry which lessened the moralistic difficulty, the way of allegory, and this was practised from quite early times. Theagenes of Rhegium (1) is said to have been the first to write about Homer and to make use of allegory. (2) In the hands of the allegorists the strife of the gods became the strife between opposing natural elements, or qualities of mind. This method again showed

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(1) c.522 B.C.

(2) See Diels. Fragmente der Vorsokratiker II. p.206 1.8.

more religious zeal than feeling for literature or historical sense. The achievement of Homer was surely in his portrayal of men and human life. To turn his poems into contests of abstractions clothed in flesh and blood is to rob them of their vigour and their life. Yet this method persisted throughout the whole length of Greek thought, and one of the latest allegorical treatises, Porphyry's Cave of the Nymphs, is one of the worst examples. Among the early schools of philosophy, that of Anaxagoras is mentioned as having used allegory. Diogenes Laertius (1) says: 'Favorinus in his Miscellaneous History says Anaxagoras was the first to maintain that Homer in his poems treats of virtue and justice, and that this thesis was defended at greater length by his friend Metrodorus of Lampsacus, who was the first to busy himself with Homer's physical doctrine." Theagenes had combined two modes of allegorising, the moral and the physical. Hera, for example, was air, and Aphodite was love. Anaxagoras continued the moral allegorising, while Metrodorus developed the physical. (2)

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(1) D.L. II. ii. (Translation by Hicks.)

(2) See Jebb's 'Homer' Glasgow 1887. p.89.

Empedocles, also treated the popular gods as personifications of natural phenomena.[1] Aristotle calls the allegorists 'the old Homerists', and says that 'they see small resemblances but overlook large ones'.[2]

Apart from the lack of aesthetic appreciation, the fallacy of allegorisation lies in the failure to understand the difference between myths and allegory. It is largely the difference between two states of mind in a nation's development. Allegory is a conscious conception, myth an unconscious.

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(1) See Ritter & Peller p.130. 164.
'Hear first the four roots of all things: shining Zeus, life-bringing Hera, Aidoneus, and Nestis dripping with tears, the well-spring of mortals'.
Opinions as to the interpretation vary. Burnet (Early Greek Philosophy 1892. p.243) takes 'Nestis' to be water, 'Aidoneus' fire, 'Hera' earth, and 'Zeus' sky. These lines are quoted also in Diog. Laertius VIII, 76 and Plutarch, De Placit. Phil. Lib. I. 878A., and in each case interpreted differently.

(2) Metaph. 1093. a 27. cf. also Plato, Ion, 503. C-D. "Very true, Socrates, interpretation has certainly been the most laborious part of my art; and I believe myself able to speak about Homer better than any man, and that neither Metrodorus of Lampsacus nor Stesimbrotus of Thasos nor Glaucon, nor anyone else who ever was, had as good ideas about Homer, or as many of them as I have'. (Jowett's translation.)

'In the allegory the thought is grasped first and by itself, and is then arranged in a particular dress. In the myth, thought and form come into being together; the thought is the vital principle which shapes the forms; the form is the sensible image which displays the thought. The allegory is the conscious work of an individual, fashioning the image of a truth which he has seized. The myth is the unconscious growth of a common mind which witnesses to the fundamental laws by which its development is ruled'.(1) As Grote puts it:(2) 'In its essence and substance, in the mental tendencies by which it is created as well as in those by which it is judged and upheld, the myth is a popularised expression of the divine and heroic faith of the people'. While therefore the development of the myth began in religion, it shows a lack of historical sense to attempt to find in the later literary versions of it neat moral and philosophical allegories.

The treatment of allegory in Greek thought is a long subject; as far as the early philosophers are concerned this must suffice. One other school deserves mention with regard to aesthetics. The Pythagoreans do not appear to have been much concerned with literature. It seems probable, however,

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(1) Westcott: Essays in the history of Religious Thought In the West. See J.A. Stewart 'The Myths of Plato'. 1905. p.243.

(2) History of Greece. Part I. Chap. XVI. Vol.I. p.428. 1884.

that their attitude to Homer and Hesiod was the same as that of Xenophanes and Heraclitus. At least Diogenes Laertius records that when Pythagoras descended to Hades 'he saw the soul of Hesiod bound fast to a brazen pillar and gibbering, and the soul of Homer hung on a tree with serpents writhing about it, this being their punishment for what they had said about the gods'.[1] Such a tradition is very natural in a sect which combined strong moral and eschatological interests. If, however, their literary criticism represented no advance, yet their preoccupation with numerical relations and with the connection of music with numbers, indicates a breaking away from the old idea of ordinary reality as the ultimate standard, and so was likely to have influence upon the development of aesthetic theory.

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(1) Diog. Laert. VIII. 21. (Translation by Hicks.)

THE SOPHISTS.

The importance of the Sophistic movement in Greek life and culture demands that something should be said of the Sophists' attitude to literature. As professional educators their position was different both from that of the philosopher and from that of the poet. They approached literature from a purely scientific point of view, sincerely believing in the importance of the study of grammar and language in education. Protagoras is made to say: 'I am of opinion, Socrates, that skill in poetry is the principal part of education; and this I conceive to be the power of knowing what compositions of the poets are correct, and what are not, and how they are to be distinguished, and of explaining, when asked, the reason of the difference'.[1] Perhaps sometimes they fell into absurdities, as when, according to Aristotle,[2] Protagoras censured Homer for invoking the Muse with a command rather than with a prayer. Yet there is no doubt of the service they rendered to Greek literature in laying the foundations of grammar and philology. In particular their influence upon the development of Greek prose was considerable, and one might justly attribute to them the shaping of the instrument which Plato polished with such consummate art. From the point of view of this discussion, however, the fact of

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(1) Plato, Protagoras, 338 E - 339A. (Jowett's translation.)

(2) Poetics. 1456 b 15.

greatest importance is that they did not criticise literature from a moral standpoint. In view of their sceptical position with regard to philosophy and their lack of any strong ethical interest, this is not surprising. They aimed at inculcating, not truth, or wisdom, but 'virtue', meaning thereby, 'a capacity for civic life'. 'If he comes to me,' says Plato's Protagoras, 'he will learn that which he comes to learn. And this is prudence in affairs private as well as public; he will learn to order his own house in the best manner, and he will be able to speak and act for the best in the affairs of the state'.[1] In the face of an aim so realistic, the truth or falsehood of Homer's tales about the gods was not likely to weigh with them. Their thought was at once less fundamental than Xenophanes' and more ordered and discriminate.

Since the Sophists were not concerned with the philosophical aspect of literature, it is natural that we have no attempt at a theory of literature from their hands. There are, however, scattered remarks of Gorgias which foreshadow later theories. The Defence of Helen (although this treatise is not universally attributed to Gorgias) contains a discussion on the Word. It is 'a mighty ruler who, with the smallest and most invisible body, does the most divine deeds; for it can stop fear, remove sorrow, produce joy, increase confidence'.[2]

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(1) Plato, Protagoras. 318 E - 319 A. (Jowett's translation).

(2) Defence of Helen. 8. See Sikes, The Greek View of Poetry, p.29.

'The inspired chants uttered by means of words become bringers of pleasure, removers of pain; the power of the chant, joining with the opinion of the soul, charms and persuades and changes it (the soul) by its magic'.[1] Plutarch records that 'Gorgias used to call tragedy a deception wherein he who deceives is more honest than he who does not deceive, and he who is deceived is wiser than he who is not deceived'.[2] Gorgias then would seem to have been conscious of the world of art as different from the world of reality and governed by other laws. Thisis a very definite advance upon the attitude of the early thinkers. Moreover, in the <u>Defence of Helen</u> Gorgias says of poetry that its hearers are affected by 'shuddering awe and tearful pity, and a yearning for sorrow'.[3] The words recall immediately Aristotle's definition of Tragedy.

In so far, therefore, as it lost the moralistic attitude and applied itself disinterestedly to the study of literature, the Sophistic movement represented a real advance in literary criticism. The service it rendered lay, however, not so much in the actual criticism which it produced, for this was largely technical and linguistic, as in the fact that its scientific literary studies and disinterested approach must have done much to weaken the general moralistic attitude of mind, and so prepare the way for future thought.

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(1) <u>Defence of Helen</u>. 10. Sikes p.30.
(2) <u>De. Aud. Poet.</u> 15 D.4. (Babbitt's translation.)
(3) <u>Defence of Helen</u>. 9. Sikes. p.30.

THE OLD COMEDY.

Mount Helicon numbered among its goddesses no Muse of criticism, but in this there is nothing strange. Child as she is of philosophic speculation and literary study, it was natural that she should grow but slowly, and come of age long centuries after men enthroned the daughters of Mnemosyne. Philosophers and Sophists, it has been seen, made each their contribution, whether of aesthetic theory or grammatical research. To this was added the occasional utterances of literary men themselves. The greatest store of such criticism comes from the Old Comedy, which from its very nature was an opportune vehicle for topical allusion. It is proposed to survey quickly the material which remains, and then to consider how far this criticism is moralistic and how far aesthetic.

There are one or two references to literary men in the fragments of Cratinus. Three lines from the Herdsmen refer to an author 'who refused Sophocles' request for a chorus, but gave one to Cleomachus' son, whom I should think unfit to produce a play for me, even at the feast of Adonis'.[1] In another line, Cratinus describes someone as 'a subtle, logic-chopping, epigram-chasing, Euripidaristophanizer'.[2] A fragment from the Muses of Phrynichus commemorates Sophocles: 'Blessed is Sophocles, who passed so many years before his death, a happy man and brilliant, who wrote many beautiful tragedies and made a beautiful end of a life that knew no misfortune'.[3]

(1). Fr. 15. See Norwood, Greek Comedy, p.137.
(2) Fr.307. Norwood. p.138.
(3) Fr. 31. Norwood. p.152.

It may be that this comedy portrayed a contest between two poets, with the Muses as judges. Sophocles is eulogised in another fragment (1) in adjectives taken from various wines:

οὐ γλύξις οὐδ᾽ ὑπόχυτος ἀλλὰ Πράμνιος.

Pherecrates seems to have introduced Aeschylus into his play the Crapatali, for a scholium on line 748 of Aristophanes' Peace says that Pherecrates made Aeschylus say: 'Seeing that I handed down to them an art I had built up to majesty'. (2) Another fragment of Pherecrates describes early choruses: 'Their chorus wore dirty rugs and bedding ropes'. (3)

It is Aristophanes, however, who makes the greatest use of literary figures, comment and parody. The Acharnians (4) is the first play, so far as we know, which contains direct literary reference. The theme is political, but Euripides and his plays provide no small amount of incidental fun. Aristophanes is satirising Euripides' practice of introducing his heroes in piteous guise and dolorous circumstance. Dicaeopolis, threatened with death by the Acharnians, thinks he will gain a hearing if he appears in rags as Euripides' Telephus appeared before the Achaeans. He therefore calls upon Euripides.

E. "Rags! Rags! What rags? Mean you the rags wherein
The poor old Oeneus came upon the stage?

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(1) Fr.65. Norwood. p.153.
(2) Fr.94. Norwood. p.160.
(3) Fr.185. Norwood. p.160. Quoted by Eustathius, In Homerum, Vol.II. p.1369, 43.
(4) B.C.425.

D. Not Oeneus, no; a wretcheder man than he.

E. Those that blind Phoenix wore?

D. Not Phoenix, no.
Some other man still wretcheder than Phoenix.

E. What shreds of raiment can the fellow mean?
Can it be those of beggarly Philoctetes?

D. One far, far, far, more beggarly than he.

E. Can it be then the loathly gaberdine
Wherein the lame Bellerophon was clad?

D. Bellerophon? no; yet mine too limped and begged,
A terrible chap to talk. E. I know the man.
The Mysian Telephus. D. Telephus it is!
Lend me, I pray, that hero's swaddling clothes.

E. Boy, fetch him out the rags of Telephus.
They lie above the Thyesteian rags.
'Twixt those and Ino's'.(1)

Dicaeopolis continues to put forward his requests, for a Mysian cap, a beggar's staff, a broken basket, and so on, until Euripides exclaims: 'You'll slay me! Here! My Plays are disappearing'.(2) Dicaeopolis finishes with the familiar jest about Euripides' mother and her market gardening.

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(1) Acharnians 418-434. Rogers' translation.

(2) 1.470 Rogers' translation.

The scene is very effective as comedy, and a clever caricature of Euripides, for within the space of twenty-five lines, Aristophanes contrives to parade before the minds of the audience six of Euripides' heroes and one of his heroines, hitting off the likeness of each with one deft stroke.

The Clouds (1) contains a reference to Aeschylus and Euripides. The young man Pheidippides pours scorn upon Aeschylus as 'that rough, unpolished, turgid bard, that mouther of bombast', (2) while Strepsiades, his father, expresses his dislike of Euripides.

'When he said this, my heart began to heave extremely fast;
Yet still I kept my passion down, and said, 'Then prithee, you
Sing one of those new-fangled songs which modern striplings do'.
And he began the shameful tale Euripides has told,
How a brother and a sister lived incestuous lives of old.
Then, then I could no more restrain, but first, I must confess,
With strong abuse I loaded him, and so, as you may guess,
We stormed and bandied threat for threat; till out at last he flew
And smashed and thrashed and thumped and bumped and bruised me black and blue'. (3)

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(1) B.C. 423.
(2) l. 1367. Rogers' translation.
(3) ll.1368 - 76. Rogers' translation. The reference is to the marriage of Macareus and Canace in the Aeolus of Euripides. Aristophanes alludes to this play also in the Frogs, lines 850, 1081, 1475.

Strepsiades' attitude towards Euripides is more fully expressed in the Thesmophoriazusae,[1] where Euripides is the central figure of the play. The Athenian women are incensed with the poet for his imputations on their morality, and plan revenge.

'In truth it makes my poor blood boil to see
How all this time this man Euripides,
This offspring of a vegetable wife,
Has been besmirching our fair characters
And calling us all manner of foul names.
What sin has he not plastered over us?
Where has he not defamed us? - everywhere,
To put it briefly, where spectators are,
And choruses, and tragic actors play.
Adultresses he calls us, and men-mad,
And tipplers, chatter-boxes, traitresses,
Unbalanced creatures, and the bane of men'.[2]

The whole play, therefore, is in itself a piece of literary criticism. In addition to the evidence afforded by the theme of the play, two individual passages are interesting. Mnesilochus says:[3] 'Well, remember how, his mind swore, but his tongue has not sworn, nor have I bound him by oath'. This is plainly a travesty of the celebrated line in the Hippolytus,[4] 'my tongue swore, but my mind is unsworn', which impressed the

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(1) B.C. 410.
(2) Thesmophoriazusae ll. 384-94.
(3) ll. 275-6.
(4) l.612. See Frogs. 101, 1471: Plato Theaet. 154 D. Symp. 199A; Arist. Rhet.III 94; Cicero De Off. iii 29 etc.

Greeks so deeply. It showed a lack of feeling for literature in them, a failure to appreciate the niceties of character-drawing and the reactions of character to situation, thus to isolate a passage. Literary criticism, however, it cannot be stated too emphatically, was then but in its infancy; even now men have not altogether put aside this practice.[1] The other noteworthy passage is one where Agathon is made to say[2] that Phryhichus composed beautiful dramas because his own person and dress were beautiful; Philocles and Xenocles wrote badly because they were worthless. Theognis, being frigid, could only write frigidly. There was a fairly widespread belief among the ancients that only a good man could write good poetry.[3] Aristophanes would seem to be parodying this belief, or perhaps humorously subscribing to it.

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(1) Lascelles Abercrombie, The Theory of Poetry, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York. 1926. p.43.

'What a voluminous and various critic has been made out in Shakespeare! ..... Indeed so various is his criticism that it is capable of quite irreconcilable extremes, for at one moment

'There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will',

and at another

'As flies to wanton boys are, we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport'.

(2) Thesmophoriazusae ll. 164-170.

(3) cf. Strabo, 1, 2, 5. 'It is not possible for anyone to be a good poet unless he is first a good man'.

The *Frogs*.[1] has a quasi-literary theme. One feels it necessary to qualify the adjective because beneath the story of Dionysus' journey and the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides, there undoubtedly lies a social and political significance. The winter of 406-5 was a gloomy time for Athens. The execution of the generals after Aegospotami had left a bitter taste; the length of the struggle was telling upon resources and morale; above all there was a lack of strong and trustworthy leadership. At such a time Aristophanes would not directly attack politics or morals, yet the intention is no less sincere for being overlaid. He pleads for the employment of Athens' best and truest citizens:

> 'Even now, o race demented, there is time to change your ways;
> Use once more what's worth the using. If we 'scape the mere the praise
> That we fought our fight with wisdom; or, if all is lost for good,
> Let the tree on which they hang us be, at least of decent wood!'[2]

The attack upon Euripides, moreover, is as much a denunciation of contemporary morals as a literary review.

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(1) B.C. 405.

(2) ll. 734-7. Gilbert Murray's translation.

The poetical contest between Aeschylus and Euripides occupies the latter half of the play. Since almost the whole of this passage is apposite, [1] it will be possible to give only a brief summary of the criticisms it contains. Euripides' case against Aeschylus consists largely in criticism of language and technique. His loftydiction tends to become bombastic, extravagant and far-fetched. [2] It is entirely divorced from every-day life. [3] His prologues are obscure and tautological. [4] His characters are stately and grand to the detriment of action. [5] He himself, on the other hand, Euripides contends, has brought tragedy within the compass of everyman's appreciation and understanding, [6] and so has educated men. [7]

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(1) ll. 830 - 1533.
(2) ll. 836-9; 924-6; 928-30; 937-8.
(3) ll. 1056-8.
(4) l.1122; 1154; 1173-4.
(5) ll.911 - 13.
(6) 9. ll. 948-50; 959-63.
(7) 956-8; 971-9.

Aeschylus heartily agrees with Euripides' claims. He has indeed brought tragedy down to the level of every-day life and taught men to prate.[1] Instead of making his audience honest and vigorous and warlike[2] he has encouraged them to become idle and argumentative and insubordinate.[3] By introducing Phaedras and Sthenoboeas,[4] and low, beggarly creatures,[5] by staying, in fact, every kind of immorality and indelicacy,[6] he has lowered the moral tone of the city.[7] As for his language, his prologues are trivial[8] and monotonous.[9] His choice songs are incongruous in subject and metrically inaccurate.[10] He has introduced the Cretan monody[11] and made it a thing of jingles[12] and florid music,[13] of muddled metres and trivial and inconsequent scenes.

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(1) ll. 954-5.
(2) 1013-17.
(3) 1069-72.
(4) 1043-4.
(5) l.846: 1066.
(6) l.850: 1078-82.
(7) ll. 1050-1; 1065; 1082-88.
(8) ll.1202-4.
(9) 1206-47.
(10) ll. 1309-23.
(11) 849; 1331-66.
(12) 1338; 1354; 1355.
(13) 1349.

Having thus briefly surveyed the extant material, we pass to the consideration of its general character. The quotations from Cratinus, Phrynichus and Pherecrates are too fragmentary and too few for any conclusions to be drawn from them. Literary criticism in the Old Comedy must, therefore, for our purpose be the criticism of Aristophanes. It is obvious that this criticism is essentially unlike any which has as yet been considered. If the aim of the critic is primarily to amuse, as the aim of Aristophanes undoubtedly was, even though moral fervour and personal criticism directed his attitude, then it follows that the scope of his criticism is necessarily limited. He must enlarge and exaggerate in order to make his point; he must often wilfully misunderstand his subject's intention; above all he must be in harmony with the feelings of the general public if his play is to succeed. One must expect, therefore, rather the few broad strokes of the caricaturist than the studied lines of the portrait painter.

If then, bearing this preliminary warning in mind, one considers Aristophanes' criticism, it is at once apparent that two strands of thought are interwoven. On the one hand we have the pure aesthetic criticism which deals with language and literary technique and general treatment of subject. Into this class one might put all the discussions of languages in the Frogs, together with the whole question, to which they

are germane, of realism as opposed to heroic convention. It is this question which underlies the satirisation of Euripides' beggar-heroes in the *Acharnians*, as well as much of Aeschylus' criticism in the *Frogs*. This is all undoubtedly pure aesthetic criticism. Apart from this, however, a great deal of stress is laid upon Euripides' choice of subject matter. It is the central theme of the *Thesmophoriazusae* and plays an important part in the criticism directed against Euripides in the *Frogs*. It appeared also, as has been seen, in the *Clouds*. Euripides, Aristophanes contends, has put upon the stage immoral situations and contemptible characters. This is clearly moralistic criticism. Although Aristophanes replies only jestingly when Euripides asks what harm his Phaedras and Sthenoboeas have done,(1) yet he is attacking contemporary morals, the new spirit, the growing scepticism, in the person of Euripides, whom he selects as representative of all he dislikes.

Yet perhaps there is not quite so clear cut a distinction between Aristophanes' aesthetic and his moralistic criticism. For on the one hand, part of the criticism of Euripides' evil influence upon public morals is bound up with the denunciation of his realism, the moralistic with the aesthetic.(2) On the other, the *Thesmophoriazusae*, though it deals with the Phaedras and the Sthenoboeas, is not concerned with the corruption of

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(1) Frogs. 1049-51.

(2) Frogs. 948 foll.

the Athenian populace. It was said in the introduction that it is possible for one's moral sense to interfere with one's aesthetic appreciation even if one has no moralising intention. It would seem as if in this instance Aristophanes is regarding the unaesthetic quality of Euripides' plots rather than their corruptive tendency. In other words, his criticism is here aesthetic rather than moralistic. In conclusion, Aristophanes' criticism is a considerable advance upon that of the early philosophers. Yet he is by no means free from the old moralistic attitude. Indeed he himself says that a poet should be admired

> 'If his art is true and his counsel sound; and if
> he brings help to the nation
> By making men better in some respect'. (1)

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(1) **Frogs**. 1009-10. Gilbert Murray's translation.

PLATO.

It may be said at the outset that we have no true literary criticism from the hand of Plato. Literature does indeed enter frequently into the pages of his dialogues but it is rarely, if ever, discussed for its own sake. It is regarded for the most part as a means to an end. The criticism is, therefore, incomplete and one-sided.

All Plato's treatment of the beautiful and of art bears a close relation to his philosophical system, and in the light of that system becomes coherent and comprehensible. The highest reality of all was for Plato the Idea of Good, and education was the turning round of the soul 'from the perishable world, until it be enabled to endure the contemplation of the real world, and the brightest part thereof, which, according to us, is the Form of Good'.(1) Now the Good appeals to the human soul in three differing aspects, as aesthetic, as moral, and as intellectual good, the modern triad of beauty, goodness and truth. Plato does not thus separate these three or see them always as three distinct realities, but speaks of them in different ways according as he is regarding the Idea of Good differently. The principle which underlies all his view of education, however, is that the beauty of form is most easily apprehended by the soul. There is a passage in the *Phaedrus*(2) where he says: 'But

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(1) Rep. 518 C. Davies and Vaughan. (This translation will be used throughout the section.)
(2) 250 D. Jowett.

of beauty I repeat again that we saw her there shining in company with the celestial forms; and coming to earth we find her here too, shining in clearness through the clearest apperture of sense. For sight is the keenest of our bodily senses, though not by that is wisdom seen; her loveliness would have been transporting if there had been a visible image of her, and the same is true of the loveliness of the other ideas as well. But this is the privilege of beauty, that she is the loveliest and also the most palpable to sight."

The first stage of education, therefore, is the fostering of a love of the beautiful in men's souls. Thisis a sort of unconscious assimilation of atmosphere. Later, however, when the soul is more mature it passes to the apprehension of the intellectual beauty which is expressed in reason and truth". "And the true order of going or being led by another to the things of love, is to use the beauties of earth as steps along which he mounts upwards for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is.'(1)

The earlier stage of education in fact presents to the soul in various imaginative forms the good which it afterwards apprehends by a rational process. The earlier is the

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(1) Symposium 211 C. Jowett.

education by means of μουσική and the latter that by means of science and dialectic. It is only the earlier therefore which concerns this discussion.

The aim of μουσική, which Plato uses in a wide sense to denote all that concerns the Muses, is to surround the soul with objects which are beautiful, for the human soul is deeply responsive to atmosphere, and imitative of its surroundings. Though in the passage from the Phaedrus cited above Plato used beauty to express merely the beauty of sight, and contrasted it with moral virtues, yet when he is speaking of education in the Republic there is no doubt that he means beauty to include not only the beauty of material objects but moral and spiritual beauty too as it is expressed in human character and conduct. So 'no one who isnot endowed with an extraordinary nature can ever become a good man unless from earliest childhood he plays among beautiful objects and studies all beautiful things.'[1]

It is thus wholly from the point of view of education that Plato views literature and art. He takes the literature of his time and considers how it falls short of the standard he has set. First of all the content of poetry comes under review. If one reads what Homer and Hesiod said of the gods, what does one find? The gods are represented as full of evil

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(1) Rep. 558 B.

passions. 'Gods wage war against gods, and intrigue and fight among themselves'.[1] They are responsible for human ills,[2] and they practise deception upon men.[3] God, however, for Plato is Good. No evil comes from God, and there is no falsehood in the divine nature. Evil is attributed either to Necessity (Timaeus) or to a malevolent world-soul, (The Laws). If disasters and calamities are the work of a god, then it must be that 'what the god did was righteous and good and the sufferers were chastened for their profit'.[4] Similarly the idea of Good is essentially uniform and changeless. Yet the gods of Homer and Hesiod assume many shapes. To Plato God is perfect. He cannot change for the better and he would not voluntarily change for the worse. 'Then my dear friend, let no poet tell us that

> 'Gods in the likeness of wandering strangers
> Bodied in manifold forms, go roaming from city to city'.[5]

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(1) Rep. 378 B-C.
(2) *ibid.* 379 D.
(3) *ibid.* 382 A-E.
(4) *ibid.* 380 B.
(5) Rep. 381 D. Quotation from *Odyssey* XVII, 485.

So ill does the existing literature prepare the soul for the later apprehension of the Idea of Good. Moreover, not only do the poets falsify the divine nature and fail to represent absolute goodness, but they do not even represent it by setting forth heroes in whose characters and conduct goodness is expressed. Plato, therefore, condemns all undignified behaviour, all unrestraint, whether of sorrow or joy, all falsehood, intemperance, venality or irascibility.(1) 'Such language is pernicious to the hearers, for everyone will be indulgent to vice in himself if he is convinced that such were and still are the practices of those who are

'Kinsfolk of gods, not far from Zeus himself,
Whose is the altar to ancestral Zeus
Upon the hill of Ida, in the sky;
And still within their veins flows blood divine?(2)

Lastly if the poets are to teach men to be brave they must not nourish that dread of death, which if unchecked will shackle courage and dwarf men's souls. All mention therefore of Hades and its terrors, of Cocytuses and Styxes, even of mournings and lamentations for the dead, must be ruthlessly expunged from the pages of poetry.

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(1) Rep. 388 A - 391 E.
(2) Rep. 391 E. Quotation from Niobe of Aeschylus.
(3) Rep. 386 A - 387 E.

Thus would Plato emend the national literature. Now in all his, Plato undoubtedly shows no sense of literary criticism. It is not so much Homer, as the development of the national consciousness expressed in the popular theology, that he is criticising. For Homer took the popular legends, which represented, as it were, the thought of primitive minds, took them in all their crude barbarity, and by his own genius expressed them anew and re-created them. John Masefield says in his little essay on 'Poetry' (1) 'The great man holds what his race holds and makes a splendid use of it; he does supremely what all are doing about him in some measure. Each great poet should have behind him the power of a national or tribal thought which has made his fables simple and brought near the presence of his gods'. Plato, in criticising merely the subject matter, is but criticising popular theology and legend, and all that is Homer's own, all the beauty of expression, all the fiery spirit and grandeur of conception, all that the poem means when taken as a whole, he fails to appreciate. Aristotle shows a truer sense of literary criticism when he says that 'the tales about Gods may be wrong, as Xenophanes thinks, neither truer nor the better thing to say, but they are certainly in accordance with opinion.' (2) It cannot be stated too emphatically, however, that Plato is considering literature solely from the point of view of education, and from

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(1) p.10. Heinemann 1931.
(2) Poetics 1460 b.36 Bywater's translation.

that point of view of course he is right. If Homer is to be taken as a hand-book on morality and conduct, then Plato's criticisms are justified. Modern generations, for whom Homer could never be the direct expression of religion and philosophy, but only an indirect inspiration through its aesthetic appeal, through its exposition of a grand and epic humanism, may possibly find it difficult to understand the place Homer held in Greek life, and difficult therefore to appreciate the censures of Plato.

It is not only the content of poetry, however, that Plato criticises, but also the form. In the third book of the Republic he discusses the nature of poetry and defines the various poetic forms in terms of narration and imitation, that is, he defines dithyrambic poetry as being the simple recital of the poet in his own person, dramatic poetry as the imitation of his characters by the poet, and epic as employing both recital and imitation. This was a definite contribution to aesthetic theory. It is not, however, in the aesthetic question of the respective literary merits of the various poetic forms that Plato isinterested, but in the moral question of the effect of imitation upon men. The human soul is naturally imitative; 'imitation whether of bodily gestures, tones of voice or modes of thought, if they be persevered in from an early age, are apt to grow into habits and a second nature'.[1] Literature, therefore, must put before the soul

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(1) Rep. 395 D.

only objects which are worthy of imitation. The use of the term mimesis by Greek philosophers is difficult and confusing. Plato must mean here that when men act or read poetry they reproduce within themselves the feelings and the characters represented. The guardians therefore, of whom Plato is specifically speaking, must not be allowed to reproduce any and everything within their souls, for that would destroy their single-mindedness of purpose. 'If then we are to maintain the first view, that the guardians ought to be released from every other craft, that they may acquire consummate skill in the art of creating their country's freedom, and may follow no other occupation but such as tends to this result, it will not be desirable for them either to practise or to imitate anything else'.(1)

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(1) Rep. 395 C - [illegible]. Perhaps Plato is thinking here of that quality of volatility, that mobility which characterised the Athenians. Pater in his Plato & Platonism, (Macmillan 1928) p.17. says: 'Their boundless impatience, that passion for novelty noted in them by St. Paul, had been a matter of radical character. Their varied natural gifts did but concentrate themselves now and then to an effective centre, that they might be dissipated again, towards every side, in daring adventure, alike of action and of thought.' Pater considers that Plato saw in this quality the danger point for Athens and

Footnote 1. contd.

the Athenians.

cf. Rep. 561 C The democratical man 'lives from day to day to the end, in the gratification of the casual appetite, - now drinking himself drunk to the sound of music, and presently putting himself under training; - sometimes idling and neglecting everything, and then living like a student of philosophy. And often he takes a part in public affairs, and starting up, speaks and acts according to the impulse of the movement. Now he follows eagerly in the steps of certain great generals, because he covets their distinctions; and anon he takes to trade, because he envies the successful trader. And there is no order or constraining rule in his life; but he calls this life of his pleasant, and liberal, and happy, and follows it out to the end'.

Moreover, since imitation is apt to become the reality, they must not imitate any sort of baseness, but only 'what is proper to their profession - brave, sober, religious, honourable men and the like'.(1) Plato gives a comprehensive list of people and phenomena which the man of well regulated character will not be willing to imitate, but there is little point in quoting it.(2) He also - and this is particularly interesting - applies exactly the same rules to melodies and rhythms.(3) Music was held by the Greeks to be greatly expressive of passions and emotions. This may be due partly to the fact that Greek music was restricted to simple tunes and so was more obviously representative than modern music. It may also partly be due to the fact that music was very largely connected with songs and dancing in the minds of the Greeks and it was only comparatively late that ~~music~~ it began to develop independently.

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(1) 395 C.

(2) 395 D - 397 A.

(3) 398 C - 401 A.

So must art surround the soul with beautiful objects, that by loving and 'imitating' beauty it may grow to the recognition of beauty itself. In language which resembles the passage from the Symposium, Plato utters perhaps the noblest encomium of art which has ever been uttered. 'Ought we not' he says 'to superintend all artists and forbid them to impress those signs of an evil nature, of dissoluteness, of meanness, and of ungracefulness, either on the likenesses of living creatures, or on buildings, or any other work of their hands', altogether interdicting such as cannot do otherwise from working in our city, that our guardians may not be reared amongst images of vice, as upon unwholesome pastures, culling much every day little by little from many places, and feeding upon it, until they insensibly accumulate a large mass of evil in their inmost souls. Ought we not on the contrary to seek out artists of another stamp, who by the power of genius can trace out the nature of the fair and graceful, that our young men, dwelling as it were in a healthful region, may drink in good from every quarter whence any emanation from noble works may strike upon their eye or their ear like a gale wafting health from salubrious lands, and win them imperceptably from their earliest childhood into resemblance, love and harmony with the true beauty of reason.'[1]

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(1) Rep. 401 B.- D.

In the tenth book of the Republic Plato renews his criticism of poetry. The introduction of this subject at this point is unexpected. It has been surmised from the polemical tone of the discussion that Plato is replying to attacks which had been made upon him for his earlier censure of the poets. He begins by saying that he feels most strongly that they were unquestionably right in refusing to admit 'that branch of poetry which is imitative'.[1] There is a difficulty about this, for Plato had not refused to admit all imitative poetry, but only that which imitated baseness. Moreover in the tenth book itself he admits 'hymns to the gods and paneygrics on the good',[2] The explanation must be that Plato is thinking on the one hand of poetry which imitates indiscriminately and is expressive of a ctual life in all its variety, and on the other of poetry which imitates simply the good man. Now if men imitate only good men they are merely expressing all that is best in their own nature and living up to their highest ideal. In a sense therefore such poetry is not 'imitative'. Plato is limiting the application of μιμητική.

Plato seems to be replying to critics who have urged that 'Homer and the dramatic poets are acquainted not only with all arts, but with all things human which bear upon virtue and vice and also with things divine'.[3] To this Plato replies

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(1) 595 A.
(2) 607 A.
(3) Rep. 598 E.

that the poets know nothing of that about which they write. He illustrates his meaning from the art of painting. Painters, he says, copy the objects of ordinary reality without *knowing* anything about them. Moreover the objects themselves are but copies of the true reality, so that art produces copies of copies, twice removed from reality. Mimesis is used here not in the sense it had in Book III of 'expressing' or 'representing' but simply as 'copying', with that derogatory sense which attaches to our use of the word 'imitation'. One gathers from other contexts that the word usually had this sense. In the *Gorgias*,(1) Socrates says that in order to please the demos, one must be not a mere μιμητής, but αὐτοφυῶς ὅμοιος. In the *Politicus*,(2) Plato says 'When men of skill and scientific knowledge imitate the true polity, the resulting constitution is not an imitation but the genuine article'. Moreover in the *Memorabilia*(3) Xenophon relates the surprise of Parrhasius and of the sculptor Cleitophon when Socrates used the word mimesis as meaning the expression of the invisible. So in this context, it is the ordinary, rather derogatory sense of 'imitation' which Plato is using to pour scorn on the products of art. Now in just the same way, poets 'imitate' things in their poetry without having any real knowledge. In the *Phaedrus*(4)

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(1) 513 B.
(2) 300 E.
(3) 3.10.1. seq.
(4) 276 C - E.

Plato considers that literary skill is not to be compared with philosophical insight and dialectical subtlety, that the written word is worth nothing except as a record of the truth which the writer has present in his mind. In other words, unless an author writes to communicate knowledge, he is not worth serious consideration. The idea is the same in this context, with the further notion that deeds are more valuable than words and that 'if a man were truly instructed as to the nature of the things which he imitates, he would bestow far more industry upon real actions than upon the imitations, and he would endeavour to leave behind him a number of excellent works as memorials of himself, and would be more anxious to be the panegyrised than the panegyrist'.[1] Just, then, as painters put before men's eyes merely the superficial appearances of objects, so poets give people a superficial picture of life <u>as being of value in itself</u>. 'Then must we not conclude that all writers of poetry beginning with Homer, copy unsubstantial images of every subject about which they write, including virtue, and do not grasp the truth'.[2]

Plato is of opinion that the poet should have apprehended the Idea of Good, and should understand and be able to explain the things of this life in the light of his

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(1) <u>Rep</u>. 599 B.

(2) <u>Rep</u>. 600 E.

knowledge. His attitude is exactly the same with regard to the statesman; no one can be a good statesmen unless he has seen the Truth. The matter is summed up neatly in the Phaedrus. 'And now the play is played out, and of rhetoric enough. Go and tell Lysias that to the fountain and school of the Nymphs we went down, and were bidden by them to convey a message to him and to other composers of speeches - to Homer and other writers of poems, whether set to music or not; to Solon and others who have composed writings which they term laws - to all of them we are to say that if their compositions are based on knowledge of the truth, and they can defend or prove them, when they are put to the test, by spoken arguments, which leave their writings poor in comparison of them, then they are not only poets, orators, legislators, but worthy of a higher name'.[1] The higher name is the title of philosopher. Plato does not seem to recognise that great poets may perhaps by some marvellous gift know intuitively the reason and truth that lie behindthis world's appearance. He acknowledges the 'inspiration' of the poet. The Ion, though a mixture of jest and earnest somewhat difficult to resolve, does propound the theory of poetic inspiration. This inspiration, however, he places below the reasoned knowledge of the philosopher. For Plato reason is ever paramount. 'Then I knew without going further that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a

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(1) 278 B - D. Jowett.

sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners or soothsayers who also say many fine things, but do not understand the meaning of them . --- So I departed, conceiving myself to be superior to them for the same reason that I was superior to the politicans'.(1)

There is another point raised by Plato's use of 'imitation' in the tenth book. By taking painting as his analogy he was able to press the idea of mere purposeless copying further than he would probably have been able had he, for instance, used music. The point is, however, that it does not seem to occur to him that there might be such a thing as creative imagination. He is quite sure that painters and poets copy the ordinary reality of this world. The idea of a poet's creating something new, or of using his medium to express some idea, is never developed. It is true that in the <u>Republic</u>(2) he says 'Do you think any the worse of the merits of an artist who has painted an ideal of human beauty because he cannot prove that such a man might possibly exist?' He does not, however, follow this up.(3)

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(1) <u>Apology</u>. 22B - B-C. Jowett.

(2) 472 D.

(3) Cf. Aristotle - <u>Poetics</u> (Bywater's trans.) 1461 b 12. 'And if men such as Zeuxis depicted be impossible, the answer is that it is better they should be like that, as the artist ought to improve on his model'. This, however, is hardly the idea of a creative imagination.

Plato now passes to a criticism of poetry which depends upon what has immediately preceded but approaches more nearly to the criticism of the third book in being moral in tone. He points out that the success of painting depends upon deceiving the human eye, and that man's reason must be in abeyance if painting is to exercise its influence. Painting therefore 'associates with that part of us which is far removed from wisdom'.(1) In just the same way poetry appeals to our lower nature. For when calamities overtake us our soul is torn between the impulse to give way to grief and the knowledge that we ought to refrain. 'Instead of hugging the wounded part, like children after a fall, we ought ever to habituate the soul to turn with all speed to the task of healing and righting the fallen and diseased part, thus putting a stop to lamentation by the aid of medicine'.(2) Yet it is this peevish side of human nature which most lends itself to imitation, and is most easily understood by the general public. So the poet resembles the painter in 'producing things that are worthless when tried by the standard of truth, and he resembles him also in this, that he holds intercourse with a part of the soul which is like himself, and not with the best part. And, this being the case, we shall henceforth be justified in refusing to admit him into a state that would fain enjoy a good constitution, because he excites and feeds

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(1) Rep. 603 A-B.

(2) Rep. 604 C-D.

and strengthens this worthless part of the soul, and thus destroys the rational part; ..... he likewise implants an evil constitution in the soul of each individual by gratifying that senseless part which instead of distinguishing the greater from the less, regards the same things now as great and now as small, and manufactures fantastic phantoms that are very widely removed from truth'.(1)

This leads Plato to what he considers the heaviest point in his indictment. Poetry appeals to the emotional side of our nature, and keeps reason, which should restrain emotion, in abeyance. Here occur Plato's famous words: 'And in the case of love and anger, and all the mental sensations of desire grief and pleasure, which, as we hold, accompany all our actions, is it not true that poetic imitation waters and cherishes these emotions, which ought to wither with drought, and constitues them our rulers, when they ought to be our subjects, if we wish to become better and happier instead of worse and more miserable?'(2)

The conclusion is that 'if you determine to admit the highly seasoned muse of lyric or epic poetry, pleasure and pain will have sovereign power in your state, instead of law and those principles which, by the general consent of all time, are most conformable to reason'.(3)

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(1) ibid. 605 B.
(2) Rep. 606 D.
(3) 607 A.

The point is particularly interesting in view of Aristotle's doctrine of catharsis, which may well be a reply to Plato's strictures. Both points of view are justifiably tenable. It is true that art, as Plato says, excites our emotions, and that we find pleasure in being thus stimulated. The question is: does it appeal to emotions which we should be ashamed to feel in everyday life, or does it 'give to pity and fear something worth pitying and something worth fearing for'?[1] Shelley says:[2] 'A man to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively'. Plato distrusts the sympathetic alliance of soul with soul, the raising of the emotions. As reasoned knowledge is greater than poetic inspiration, so the apprehension of Truth is greater than aesthetic appreciation. Reason, Plato feels, is the highest part of the human soul, and reason should rule.

With regard, however, to the difference between the theories of Plato and Aristotle, as Nettleship points out,[3] Plato has set himself to write an indictment of art, and therefore he is dealing rather with its perversions, whereas 'Aristotle's treatise (so far as it refers to the same subject) may be said to aim at a definition of Tragedy as it is in its

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(1) R.L. Nettleship. Lectures on the Republic of Plato. 1901. p.352.

(2) Defence of Poetry. Prose Works. ed. H.B. Forman, 1880. Vol. III. p.iii

(3) op. cit. p.343.

essence and at its best. It is a matter of indifference to him whether there ever was a tragedy answering to his definition; he wants to get at the typical or ideal nature of Tragedy'.

Throughout this study reference has been made chiefly to the *Republic*, since it is there one finds the most sustained consideration of the nature of art, its purpose and its effects. Elsewhere there are sporadic references which simply echo for the most part the doctrines of the *Republic*. In the *Gorgias*, for instance,[1] Plato complains that dithyrambic poetry, and Tragedy and Rhetoric all aim merely at giving pleasure to the multitude, and later[2] he says that the true aim of rhetoric is to implant justice in the souls of men. In the *Protagoras*[3] he gives expression to the view that great poets are mines of information and storehouses of virtuous example, and[4] speaksof the educational function of lyric poetry.

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(1) *Gorgias*. 502 A - E.

(2) 504 D-E. 527 C.

(3) *Protagoras* 326 A.

(4) *Ibid.* 326 B.

There is also a long discussion on a line of poetry which is[1] interesting as an illustration of the attitude which sought for instruction and edification in the poets. The *Laws*, finally, reiterates the conclusion of the *Republic* that 'the true legislator will persuade, and if he cannot persuade, will compel the poet to express as he ought, by fair and noble words in his rhythms the figures, and in his melodies the music, of temperate and brave and in every way good men'.[2]

There is thusno doubt that Plato speaks always from the point of view of an educationalist. He expects the poet to be a teacher, and the theatre a school, and purely aesthetic considerations he entirely neglects. Or rather it would be true to say that he deliberately suppresses them. Plato himself had the liveliest and deepest appreciation of art. Here and there one glimpses his love of poetry beneath the heavier cloak of moralising criticism. 'For we are conscious of being enchanted by such poetry ourselves.....Am I not right in supposing that you, my friend, are enchanted by poetry, especially when you contemplate it under Homer's guidance?'[3] One feels that Plato's own response to poetry is so great that he fears its power and force. 'These verses and all that are like them, we shall entreat Homer and the other poets not to

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(1) *Protagoras* c.340.

(2) *Laws* 660 A - Jowett - see also 817.

(3) *Rep.* 607 C - D.

be angry if we erase, not because they are unpoetical, or otherwise than agreeable to the ear of most men, but because in proportion as they are more poetical, so much the less ought they to be recited in the hearing of boys and men whom we require to be freemen, but fearing slavery more than death'.[1] His very censure is thus in a way but a tribute to poetry, for he would not stress its educational value if he were not deeply conscious of its potency. 'Styles of music are never disturbed without affecting the most important political institutions'.[2] It is the very acuteness of his feeling for art that leads him to suppress his aesthetic tastes and take up a moral standpoint.

The curious thing about Plato's treatment of literature is that what he asks of poetry is in essentials what men do ask of the greatest poetry, and great poets themselves have echoed his sentiments.[3] Plato, however, did not think that the poetry he envisaged had ever been written, or at least not extensively. Yet later ages and men of all nations have agreed in regarding the poetry of Plato's race as some of the greatest the world has ever known. It is an interesting problem. Perhaps Plato was too near to regard the poems as artistic wholes, and the gods and the demi-gods loomed too

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(1) (1) Rep. 387 B.

(2) ibid. 424 C.

(3) Milton - The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty. Bk. II. Prose Works ed. J.A. St. John 1883. Vol.II. p.479

Footnote (3) (contd.)

'The poet's abilities wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God, rarely bestowed, yet to some (though most abuse) in every nation; and are of power, beside the office of a pulpit, to inbreed and cherish in a great people, the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune; to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what he works ..... Lastly whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave, whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and refluxes of man's thought from withim; all these things with a solid or treatable smoothness to paint out or describe'.

large. We, from a greater distance, can survey them more impartially and weigh the artistic values more impassively. Certainly Plato felt the subject matter far more intimately than we do. Perhaps again, we have learned, with the experience of centuries, to regard literature with more subtlety, and Plato sought too naïvely for his virtues. Lastly, of course, there is always this, that Plato was to all intents and purposes, seeking out the worst features in contemporary art.

Plato's was the most thorough-going denunciation of poetry which had ever been delivered. Yet it is likely that it did service to the cause of literary criticism. On the one hand it formulated the moralistic attitude in such a way as to stimulate reflexion.. On the other, though it might appear that such a vigorous attack would consolidate the position of the moralistic critics, yet it is possible that it dealt that attitude no inconsiderable blow. For by carrying the moralistic reasoning to its logical conclusion, Plato revealed the underlying insecurity. Plato's trenchant moralistic criticism was in fact a sort of reductio ad absurdum of moralistic criticisms. The common attitude of the times was one of deep veneration for Homer and other poets. Plato said: by all means study the poets but first make sure that they are worthy of it. His own decision was that they knew nothing, and therefore he excluded them from his Republic. By so doing he may have discredited the moralistic attitude in the

minds of those who recognised the truth of his logic, and the soundness of his position philosophically, but who nevertheless were unwilling to acquiesce in his ban. After Plato they could go no further with moralistic criticism. Either they had to agree with him in condemning nearly all poetry, or they were driven to question the fundamental premise, that the aim of poetry is instruction and moral improvement. This is conjecture, yet it seems reasonable enough. Certainly, as will be seen, Aristotle, the next critic in point of time, definitely considers pleasure to be the aim of poetry.

A R I S T O T L E.

'The mighty Stagyrite first left the shore,
Spread all his sails and durst the deep explore;
He steer'd securely and discovered far,
Led by the light of the Maeonian star.
Poets, a race long unconfined and free,
Still fond of proud and savage liberty,
Received his laws and stood convinc'd 'twas fit
Who conquer'd Nature should preside o'er Wit'.

(Essay on Criticism. Bk.III. line 85 seq.)

The gaiety of Pope's fluent lines does no violence to their truth. After the pronouncements of the statesman, and the diatribes of the social reformer, we get from Aristotle, the first detached and systematic study of an aesthetic subject. The time was ripe for such an undertaking. In the poetry of fifth century Athens there was superb material to hand for survey and reflexion; Plato's treatment of literature had revealed the fundamental problem to be resolved. Now 'to the greatest of originators there succeeded the greatest of investigators'.(1)

The treatise Περὶ Ποιητικῆς as the name implies, is concerned only with literature, and of all the branches of

(1) Bosanquet: History of Aesthetic. 1904. p.55.

literature, chiefly with Tragedy and Epic, for the second book, in which Comedy was treated at length, has not come down to us. The scope, therefore, of Aristotle's discussion is limited. Moreover it is concerned only with Greek thought and Greek literature. Such, however, is the conscientiousness of Aristotle's attempt to define the subject, such his ability for raising suggestive questions, that this slight treatise has been the most stimulating work of literary criticism which the world has ever known. Certainly no other has caused more controversies or won more exponents, and although today the Poetics no longer appear "as infallible as the elements of Euclid', [1] they are still invaluable as a basis for the discussion of Poetry. For it matters not so much that Aristotle gave the right answers as that he asked the right questions.

Aristotle plunges at once into his subject and sets out clearly how he is going to treat it. 'Our subject being poetry, I propose to speak not only of the art in general but also of its species and their respective capacities; of the structure of plot required for a good poem; of the number and nature of the constituent parts of a poem; and likewise of any other matters in the same line of inquiry. Let us follow the natural order and begin with the primary facts'. [2]

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(1) Lessing. See F. L. Lucas. Tragedy in relation to Aristotle's Poetics. p.12.

(2) 1447 a 8. Bywater. (This translation will be used throughout the section.)

In this paragraph he strikes the keynote of the whole disquisition. Throughout he is essentially the scientific investigator exploring given facts. Poetry for Aristotle exists; he does not question its right to exist; he simply examines it as he might examine any natural object and records the results of his observations. The Poetics is a scientific and disinterested study and is intended to be a practical guide to the composition of poetry.(1) In conception it is uninfluenced by moral considerations. In details it will be found that moral considerations do play their part. They intrude unknown to Aristotle, for they are the legacy of national thought. Aristotle has broken away from the conception of the poet as a teacher, but he has not altogether broken free.

Aristotle's treatment of literature in the Poetics may be set down under two main headings, his conception of the nature of poetry and his conception of its function. Unfortunately he leaves us in some doubt as to his exact meaning on both these points. Two important terms, mimesis and catharsis, are never explained, and there is some confusion in the use of mimesis. There has been much conjecture built up around the Poetics, and wide diversities of interpretation. One must try to penetrate through the accumulations of

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(1) cf. 1454 b 9. 'ἡμᾶς' — i.e. 'we poets'.

centuries of study, much of it firmly encrusted and as deeply venerated as the original, and recapture Aristotle's intention. His definition of the nature of poetry centres in mimesis. 'Epic[1] poetry and Tragedy, as also Comedy, Dithyrambic poetry, and most flute-playing and lyre-playing are all viewed as a whole, modes of imitation'. He goes on to show that these branches of Poetry differ from one another in their use of the means of imitation, rhythm, language and harmony (tune).[2] The term mimesis arouses our interest at once because of its associations with the Republic. Plato had made it the centre of his condemnation of art, though his use of the term seemed to vary so that now it approximated to our 'expression' and now to 'duplication'. With Plato's strictures in our minds it is interesting to meet the term in Aristotle. Yet we shall be disappointed if we look for an explanation of his meaning. Aristotle nowhere explains it. Indeed he is careless in his use of it.[3] It is likely that it was

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(1) 1447 a 13. Bywater.

(2) This recalls Plato's definition of song. Rep. 398 D. cf. Laws. 661 C and 669 D.

(3) In 1448 a 21 he includes narrative in his mimesis and in 1460 a 7 he excludes it. Plato distinguished between narration and imitation, that is, he defined dithyrambic poetry as the simple recital of the poet in his own person, dramatic poetry as the imitation of his characters by the poet, and epic as a compound of recital and imitation.

one of the stock terms of literary criticism, the usual definition of 'fine art'. At any rate Aristotle seems to expect it to be understood. Since, however, he says that the poet may imitate things 'as they ought to be'[(1)] and, moreover, compares poetry with music and dancing',[(2)] he must mean by 'imitation' something in the nature of our 'express'.

The objects of this imitation are 'men in action'.[(3)] Aristotle now goes on to distinguish between Tragedy and Comedy apparently in terms of morality. 'The objects the imitator represents are actions, with agents who are necessarily either good men or bad - the diversities of human character being nearly always derivative from this primary distinction ..... It follows therefore that the agents represented must be either above our own level of goodness or beneath it, or just such as we are; ...... This difference it is that distinguishes Tragedy and Comedy, the one would make its personages worse, and the other better than the man of the present day'.[(4)] The suggestion is of such importance for our subject that it deserves closer consideration. It seems on the face of it as if Aristotle is not free from the old moralistic obsession, and

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(1) 1460 b 11.

(2) 1447 a 27.

(3) 1448a 1.

(4) ibid.

this inference is further borne out by the echo which he raises of the belief that a good poet must be a good man.[1] Yet perhaps more lies behind these statements than at first appears. Comedy is defined more fully in a later passage. 'As for Comedy it is (as has been observed) an imitation of men worse than the average; worse, however, not as regards any and every sort of fault, but only as regards one particular kind, the Ridiculous, which is a species of the Ugly'.[2] This passage clearly throws new light on Aristotle's meaning, since it reveals that when, in striving to define the peculiar quality of the comic character, for lack of terminology he applies the word 'badness', he does not mean moral badness. The suggestiveness of this paragraph encourages still further study of Aristotle's terms. The question turns largely on the meaning of σπουδαίος . There is no doubt that in the first passage quoted above[3] Aristotle uses the adjective in a moral sense; the parenthesis 'since the line between

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(1) 1448 b 24. 'Poetry however soom broke up into two kinds according to the differences of character in the individual poets; for the graver among them would represent noble actions and those of noble personages; and the meaner sort the actions of the ignoble'.

(2) 1449 a 32.

(3) 1448 a 1.

virtue and vice is one dividing the whole of mankind' seems to demand that interpretation. Moreover, in speaking of individual characters he uses χρηστός , and says that a χρηστὸν ἦθος depends on a χρηστὴ προαίρεσις . 'In the Characters there are four points to aim at. First and foremost, that they shall be <u>good.</u> There will be an element of character in the play if what a personage says or does reveals a certain moral purpose; and <u>a good element of character if the purpose so revealed is good</u>'.[1]

Yet the moral sense cannot be applied throughout the <u>Poetics.</u> In contrasting Tragedy and Comedy (2) Aristotle draws an analogy from painting: 'in the same way as, with the painters, the personages of Polygnotus are better than we are, those of Pauson worse, and those of Dionysius just like ourselves'. He evidently means to distinguish between an idealistic treatment, a realistic, and a tendency to caricature. These are not ethical distinctions, but aesthetic. It may be, however, that Aristotle applies this analogy without perceiving the difference between the painter's idealisation of his subject and the dramatist's representation of moral goodness. The difficulty may be resolved by the later passage in which he treats tragic characters in detail. Here again, however,

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(1) 1454 a 16.
cf. the σπουδαία προαίρεσις of <u>Nic.</u> <u>Eth.</u> vi.2.1139 a 25.

(2) 1448 a 1

we find the analogy from painting. 'As Tragedy is an imitation of personages better than the ordinary man, we in our way should follow the example of good portrait-painters, who reproduce the distinctive features of a man, and at the same time, without losing the likeness, make him handsomer than he is. The poet in like manner, in portraying men quick or slow to anger, or with similar infirmities of character, must know how to represent them as such, and at the same time as good men, as Agathon and Homer have represented Achilles'.(1) It becomes clear that in demanding 'goodness' of tragic heroes Aristotle is feeling after some idea of grandeur or elevation of character. If moral imperfections need not spoil the 'goodness' of a character, then it is plainly no unaspiring virtue which Aristotle has in mind, but a 'goodness' of a heroic order. The examples which he adduces give force to thissuggestion. Achilles is the perfect Epic hero, in Tragedy, Oedipus, Thyestes, 'and the men of note of similar families'.(2) It is not outstanding virtue and justice which are required(3) but a reasonable degree of integrity in a hero drawn from 'the number of those in the enjoyment of great reputation and prosperity'.(4) Throughout his discussion of the perfect

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(1) 1454 b 8.
(2) 1453 a 11.
(3) 1453 a 8.
(4) 1453 a 10.

plot the emphasis is on 'greatness' in an aesthetic sense. 'Great' prosperity must crumble in 'great' error, and 'great' suffering follow. If Aristotle began by laying down that tragedy shall represent 'good' men, the subsequent discussions reveal that a host of dim and unformed ideas lie concealed behind the seeming clearness of this screen. The moral formula is strained to the breaking point.

There is further evidence for this confusion of thought in the use of the adjective σπουδαῖος as applied to action and plot. A tragedy is 'μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας'[1] One can say that tragedy imitates 'good' men, but it must surely be the imitation of a 'serious' or a 'grand' action.[2] If Aristotle can pass lightly from σπουδαίους μιμεῖται to μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας then the ambiguity of his use of the word is proved. Finally, the famous definition of poetry as a thing 'φιλοσοφώτερον' and 'σπουδαιότερον' than history,[3] places beyond doubt the fact that Aristotle does at times use the word σπουδαῖος without any moral

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(1) 1449 b 24. cf. 1449 b 9 and 1448 b 34 where it is used with reference to Epic.

(2) Mr. R.P. Hardie (Mind Vol. IV.(N.S.) No. 15.p.357) argues that σπουδαία must have the same meaning in this definition that σπουδαῖος bore in the preceding divisions, on the grounds that 'it breaks the rules of scientific procedure if one translates the two differently' This does not appear an unassailable objection.

(3) 1451 b 6.

or ethical meaning. Art imitates τὸ καθόλου. It deals with types and universal principles.[1] It is, therefore, more philosophical and 'higher in the scale'[2] than history, which treats of the individual, the fortuitous and the capricious.

The origin of poetry is to be sought, in Aristotle's view, in man's delight in imitation, coupled with his sense of rhythm and harmony.[3] Although this passage is muddled, so that the intellectual pleasure of discovering the meaning of a work of art, and aesthetic delight in its execution, are thrown together without proper connection or explanation, it constitutes,

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(1) Aristotle, of course, theorises from the Greek drama, whose characters were 'types' rather than individuals. cf. 1455 b 2, where he reduces the story of Iphigenia to its universal form.

(2) Not 'more serious', as Butcher (Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, 1895, p.179) points out, since the word applies to Comedy as well as to Tragedy, but 'higher in the scale' as dealing with a higher subject matter. cf. Eth. Nic. VI. 7. 1141 a 20, where σοφία is preferred to φρόνησις because it deals with universal principles. It is 'σπουδαιοτέρα'?

(3) 1448 b 4 - 24.
This isButcher's interpretation. Bywater, objecting to the abruptness with which the instinct for harmony and rhythm is introduced, takes the two causes to be the imitative instinct and the delight in works of imitation. The difficulty of this view is that these are not two independent causes, but two tendencies depending on one cause.

none the less, an important advance in aesthetic theory. For Aristotle recognises that the aesthetic appeal of a work of art does not depend upon the appeal of the original object.

Was in Leben uns verdriesst,
Man in Bilde gern geniesst. (1)

It matters not that Aristotle's explanation of this fact does not go very deep. He attributes it simply to our delight in recognising the artist's subject, as if, like Fra Lippo Lippi's monks, we always stood round and exclaimed only: 'It's the life'. (2) It is his recognition of the fact which matters. We are on the verge of the breakdown of the moralistic attitude towards art when we see that works of art are judged by other canons than those which are valid for ordinary reality. Plato had stressed the place of beauty in human life, but erred in supposing that in art beauty is only the representation of the beautiful. Aristotle is moving towards a fuller comprehension of the question: What is beauty?

The attribution of the growth of the poetic art to two kinds of pleasure leads us to Aristotle's conception of the function of poetry. He sees in it no instructive or ethical

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(1) cf. also Rhet.1.11. 1371 b 4. & De Part. An. 15.645 a 11.

(2) Browning. Fra Lippo Lippi - line 172.

aim. He makes no moralistic demands. Epic, Tragedy and Comedy should all produce their 'proper pleasure'.[1] These statements are definite enough. There are, however, many indirect indications that Aristotle regards poetry from a purely aesthetic standpoint. He says, for instance, 'There are some plays in which both incidents and names are of the poet's invention; and it is no less delightful on that account',[2] and the marvellous is required in both Tragedy and Epic, 'for the marvellous is a cause of pleasure'.[3] The discussion as to whether Tragedy or Epic is the highest form of art is conducted wholly with arguments of aesthetic import.[4] The palm is given to Tragedy because it can be read as well as acted and because it has the addition of music, 'a very real factor in the pleasure of the drama'. It is moreover more compact, and its more concentrated effect 'gives greater pleasure than one with a large admixture of time to dilute it'. Finally, it realises the end of poetry, the proper pleasure, more successfully than Epic.

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(1) 1453 b 10 : 'Not every kind of pleasure should be required of Tragedy, but only its own proper pleasure'.
1453 a 35: 'But the pleasure here is not that of Tragedy. It belongs rather to Comedy .....'
1459 a 23: 'As for the poetry which merely narrates ... the construction of its stories should clearly be like that in a drama; they should be based on a single action, one that is a complete whole in itself, with a beginning, middle and end, so as to enable the work to produce its own proper pleasure with all the organic unity of a living creature'.

(2) 1451 b 21.

(3) 1460 a 17.

(4) 1461 b 26 - 62 b 15.

The 'proper pleasure' of Comedy is not discussed; it was presumably treated in the second book of the Poetics. The pleasure of Tragedy and Epic is the same, [1] and is further explained. It lies in the excitement of the emotions of pity and fear. [2] It seems amazing that in spite of Aristotle's definite correlation of pleasure with these emotions, critics have sought to argue for Aristotle a moralistic intention. The famous definition of Tragedy as 'through pity and fear effecting its proper purgation of such emotions' [3] has been throughout the centuries the battle-ground for two schools of thought, that which took catharsis to be a metaphor from the religious rite of lustration, meaning 'purification', and the one which saw in it a physiological metaphor meaning 'evacuation'. The former of these, the moralistic interpretation, was adopted by Heinsius, Milton and Lessing amongst others. The assumption was that certain passions required purification from something in the nature of an impurity, and various explanations were put forward as to how these emotions were supposed to become 'pure'. Milton and Lessing considered that the raising of the emotions in the theatre tends to moderate them.

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(1) see 1462 b 13.

(2) 1453 b 11. 'The tragic pleasure is that of pity & fear'.

(3) 1449 b 27.

Bywater[1] considers this the only moralistic explanation worth consideration, and points out that it confuses two distinct things, the purification of a feeling and the purification of a soul from a feeling. It confuses also the ideas of 'pure' and 'moderate' although there is no direct logical or other relation between them.[2] Moreover, it rests on a false hypothesis as to the position of tragedy in the social life of Greece, since performances were too occasional to have an abiding effect on the moral characters of the hearers. Finally, there is no reason to suppose that the habitual indulgence of strong emotion weakens its force. 'We should not fortify a man against a night-watch with a dismal treatise, nor steel him against pity with a tale of tears'[3] Nor would one imagine that there is need to weaken the strength of pity in this world.

The medical or pathological explanation rests upon firmer grounds. Aristotle's words are : 'its catharsis of such emotions'. The implication is that the cathartic effect is not confined to Tragedy, and the text is seen to stand in close relation to the passage in the Politics[4] in which the

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(1) Aristotle on the Art of Poetry: p.152 - 161.

(2) Milton is so far confused as to translate the passage into English as 'to purge the mind of those and such like passions' and to render it into Latin as 'per misericordiam et metum perficiens talium affectuum lustrationem'.

(3) Carritt, The Theory of Beauty (1928) p.67.

(4) 8.7. 1341 b 32.

existence of several forms of catharsis is affirmed. Aristotle explains that there are certain emotions which arise in men's souls, sometimes in a disquieting degree. Experience shows that the enthusiastic music has a salutary effect on those subject to accesses of enthusiasm, restoring them to a normal condition of calm and peace just as though they had undergone a cure or catharsis at the hands of a physician. The same sort of treatment is required by other emotional natures also, for example, by those liable to accesses of pity and fear, and by the rest of mankind likewise in so far as they have a share in these feelings: all want a certain catharsis, a pleasurable relief from emotion. It seems certain that the term must be a metaphor from medicine, for Aristotle makes it a synonym for ἰατρεία, and uses in the same context many words which have, or may have, a medical meaning. It must surely be an error to see in Aristotle's use of catharsis a moral meaning. The end of Tragedy is, in his belief, to excite pity and fear, and to procure the pleasure that accompanies such excitement. In the Politics, where he speaks as a statesman, he recognises that tragedy, by exciting these emotions, may be morally beneficial to its hearers, and so replies to Plato's objection that it 'waters and cherishes' the worse part of man's soul. As a philosopher and literary critic, however, he is not concerned with the moral or immoral effects of tragedy.

Having laid down what is the function of tragedy, Aristotle goes through the several departments of the tragic art in consistency with this premise. There is no doubt whatever about his attitude. The problem for him is: how best can the tragedian produce this tragic effect, and no other considerations weigh with him except as they affect this main issue. The perfect plot then will be one which produces pity and fear. For this end it must represent not a good man passing from happiness to misery, which is simply odious, nor a bad man passing from misery to happiness, which is the most untragic of all, because it produces neither pity nor fear nor any human feeling at all, and it must not represent a bad man falling from happiness into misery, for this again, though it may rouse a human feeling in us, moves neither pity nor fear. The perfect situation is that which shows a man who is not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose fortunes change from happiness to misery, and the cause of this change must lie, not in depravity on his part, but in some great error.(1)

It has been urged that Aristotle is here moved by moral considerations. There is undoubtedly a consciousness of men's moral susceptibilities but there is no moralistic aim. Aristotle understands that a work of art may fail of its aesthetic effect if it shocks the moral sense. To that

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(1) 1452 b 28 - 1453 a 39.

extent therefore he is mindful of the proprieties. This, however, is the point of view of an artist. It is not the same as that of the moralist, who treats literature as primarily the vehicle of moral lessons. Aristotle's criticism is aesthetic, but he stresses the fact that generally speaking the theatrical public is normal in its moral instincts and sympathies, and bids the poet bear this in mind. True pity, he says, is roused only by undeserved misfortune, therefore the cause of the tragedy must be error, not depravity.[1] Unnecessary evil Aristotle condemns, citing the baseness of Menelaus in the *Orestes*.[2] This is all aesthetic criticism, though it deals with morality, for Aristotle is thinking solely of the tragic effect.[3]

Aristotle makes two statements which indicate an advance in literary criticism. He says that if the poet's description be criticised as not true to fact, one may perhaps urge that the object ought to be as described. If the description be neither true, nor of the thing as it ought to be, the answer must be that it is in accordance with opinion.

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(1) 1453 a 8
(2) 1454 a 28 & 1461 b 19

(3) It is interesting to see that Aristotle (1453 a 29) calls Euripides the most tragic of the poets, praising his plots. There is no hint of the moralistic attitude which produces Aristophanes' gibes.

'The[1] tales about Gods, for instance, may be wrong as Xenophanes thinks, neither true nor the better thing to say; but they are certainly in accordance with opinion.' This shows a truer appreciation of the position of Epic than earlier critics had had. A little later he says:[2] 'As for the question whether something said or done in a poem is morally right or not, in dealing with that one should consider not only the intrinsic quality of the actual word or deed, but also the person to whom he says or does it, the time, the means, and the motive of the agent - whether he does it to attain a greater good, or to avoid a greater evil'. In thus advising men to try to understand the poet's aims, and to relate everything to its context, Aristotle is expressing genuine aesthetic criticism, and a feeling for literature which had been absent from Greek thought.

The importance of the Poetics in the history of Greek literary criticism and aesthetic theory can hardly be overstated. It marks the first real breach in the moralistic prejudice, for it treats literature for its own sake, apart from its educational possibilities, seeing within the art itself its proper justification, and applying to it its own peculiar laws.

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(1) 1460 b 35

(2) 1461 a 4.

LITERARY CRITICISM AFTER ARISTOTLE.

Thus far it has been possible to trace the steady development of Greek literary criticism from its birth in pure moralising criticism to the almost purely aesthetic criticism of Aristotle. After Aristotle, however, the chain of progress in aesthetic theory isnot so clearly defined, but overlaid by abundance of petty scholarship, or thwarted by the claims of varying creeds. It was not, of course, likely that with the diffusion of scholarship and learning which followed the widening of the boundaries of the Greek world, there would be one tradition of reflection, one single trend of thought. One must expect, therefore, to find differences of theory, and varying standpoints, here an advance and there a retrogression. For this reason it is difficult to talk about the general character of Greek literary criticism after Aristotle. Moreover, the world was in the melting pot; old values and old loyalties were being superseded; it was an age of widening issues and confused aims, a chaotic age of spiritual turmoil. Constructive thought, therefore, is hardly likely to be found. Criticism tended to deal chiefly with the linguistic and technical aspect of literature, and the philosophic side was neglected, so that while real advance was made in textual criticism and such like studies, there was but little progress in pure aesthetic theory. On

the whole, later Greek criticism, though extensive, tends to be uninspired and barren. There is careful scholarship, it istrue, and occasionally fine sensibility, but one misses the quickening breath of genius which played through earlier Greek thought. It is not surprising that one fails to find it. Genius would hardly flower in an age of reconstruction and revaluation. All the inspirition of the city state had gone, and as yet there was nothing to take its place.

The influence of Aristotle's literary criticism on the Peripatetic school seems to have been, as far as one can tell, on the technical and linguistic side. There were innumerable works produced on 'style', 'poetry' and the like.(1) The greatest of the Peripatetics after Aristotle was undoubtedly Theophrastus, and fragments of his book '<u>On Style</u>' are extant. They reveal a delicate feeling for the Greek language and a sympathetic appreciation of the ancient Attic orators, but they contribute nothing to aesthetic theory. The general tendency of the school seems to have been to regard poetry as a sub-species of rhetoric, whose aim was primarily to persuade. Their studies, however, were devoted rather to the Word - both in itself and in composition - than to the articulation of their views on aesthetics. They seem, so far as it is possible to judge, to be undisturbed by moralistic considerations.

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(1) e.g. among Peripatetics: Heracleides Ponticus, - who wrote on Poetry and Poets, Homeric Problems, Sophocles and Euripides, etc., etc. Chamaeleon. Praxiphanes. Demetrius of Phalewum etc. etc.

After Theophrastus, Aristotle's Poetics appear to have been neglected. Plato's ideas on poetry were much discussed, but Aristotle's are mentioned only three or four times in six centuries.(1)

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(1) a. Diogenes Laertius, Bk. V. 24.

'A treatise on the Art of Poetry,' two books.

b. Alexander Aphrodisiensis. In Sophisticos Elenchos, (Arist. 4. p. 166 b 1.) ed. Wallies Berlin 1898 p.33

ἐπιδιορθοῦται δὲ τούτους ἐν τῷ περὶ Ποιητικῆς, ὡς αὐτὸς Ἀριστοτέλης ἐν τῇ Ῥητορικῇ φησιν, Ἱππίας ὁ Θάσιος.

There is no reference to Hippias in the Rhetoric, but there is in the Poetics, (1461 a 21), so that it seems as though Alexander meant ἐν τῇ Ποιητικῇ.

c. Simplicius, ad Categorias. (v. Scholia in Aristot. ed. Brandis, tom. I. p.43 a 12).

' καὶ γὰρ καὶ ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης ἐν τῷ περὶ Ποιητικῆς συνώνυμα εἶπεν εἶναι ....'

There is, however, no mention of synonyms in the Poetics as we know them.

These seem to be the only definite references to the Poetics.

Alexandrian criticism was progressive on its grammatical side, but towards the subject matter of poetry the majority of scholars seem to have adopted a conservative moralistic tone. Either they had recourse to allegory to explain what did not please them in Homer, or they rejected such passages as unworthy or spurious. With a lack of historic sense they expected Homer to conform to the moral standards of their own day. They sought for 'τὸ πρέπον', 'decorum', by which they meant consistencey with their ideas of what was appropriate to a particular character.(1) Perhaps nothing shows more clearly the unhappiness of some Alexandrian criticism than the fate of poor Nausicaa. She was the subject of much controversy because she innocently prayed for a husband like(2) Odysseus. Aristarchus rejected these lines and those in the seventh book in which Alcinous offers his daughter to Odysseus,(3) as offences against decorum.

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(1) For τὸ πρέπον see Dion. Hal. ars rhet ix. 4 and schol. on Il. 24, 130. See also Cicero De. Off. 1,28,97, for the Latin equivalent, 'decorum'.

(2) Od. VI. 244-254.

(3) Od. VII. 311-316. Unfortunately the effect of Aristarchus' disapproval has sometimes been the complete loss of certain lines from the manuscripts. See Plutarch De Aud. Poet 26 F. 'Then again, Phoenix, cursed by his father on account of the concubine, says:

Footnote (3) contd.

'True in my heart I had purposed to slay him with keen-pointed dagger,
Save that one of the deathless gods put an end to my anger,
Bringing to mind the people's talk and men's many reproaches,
Lest I be known among the Greeks as my father's slayer'.

Now Aristarchus removed these lines from the text through fear, but they are right in view of the occasion, since Phoenix istrying to teach Achilles what sort of a thing anger is, and how many wild deeds men are ready to do from temper, if they do not use reason or hearken to those who try to soothe them'. (Babbitt's translation.)

The note in Babbitt's edition of the Moralia says:

'These lines are not found in any M.S. of Homer, but on the authority of this quotation they have been printed in practically all editions since that of Barnes (1711) as lines 458-61 of Iliad IX'.

The subject of Nausicaa's conduct was probably one of the stock questions for discussion. Plutarch [1] refers to it, and apologises for her, saying that if she recognised Odysseus' character, and admired hisintelligence, she was to be praised for preferring him to some sailor among her own people. Later still, St. Basil took up her cause, [2] and explained that Odysseus, naked and shipwrecked, was clothed in his virtue, and so won the reverence of Nausicaa. The whole subject well illustrated the barrenness of some later Greek criticism.

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(1) De Aud. Poet. 27 A.

(2) Basil. On the Use of Greek Literature.
ed. E.R. Maloney, New York, 1901, Ch. 5. p.22

One scholar, however, at least stood out from the general company in claiming that poetry aims at transport, and not at instruction. It was Eratosthenes of Greece, one of the most remarkable scholars of the third century, who thus followed the path Aristotle had pointed. Strabo says of him (1): 'He contends that the aim of every poet is to entertain, not to instruct', and again, 'You are wrong, Eratosthenes, when you deny to Homer the possession of vast learning, and go on to declare that poetry is a fable-prating old wife, who has been permitted to invent (as you call it) whatever she deems suitable for purposes of entertainment'. With a praiseworthy literary and historic sense, Eratosthenes refused to treat Homer as a historian and geographer. 'The wanderings of Odysseus will be charted when you find the cobbler who sewed up the bag of the winds' (2).

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(1) 1. 2. 3.

(2) 1. 2. 15.

On the whole, the Alexandrian school was a School of verbal criticism. Herodicus of Babylon described the followers of Aristarchus as 'buzzing in corners and busy with monosyllables'.(1)

They deserve the gratitude of the modern world for criticising and classifying the literature of the golden age of Greece, and handing it down to posterity. They were not, however, philosophic speculators. In Alexandria scholarship was first developed for its own sake, and the professional scholar first appeared. Under the old order of the city state, on the other hand, it had been the sense of the vital connection between art and life which had prompted aesthetic inquiry. Herein lies the difference between the literary criticism of the golden age, and that of Alexandria.

The attitude of the philosophic schools towards literature was little more progressive. One might have expected from the hedonistic doctrine of the Epicureans a recognition of the aesthetic pleasure to be derived from poetry. The system, however, disowns literature completely. For Epicurus himself poetry seems to have had no appeal whatever, and he therefore made no attempt to fit it into his scheme of life. Diogenes Laertius(2) records that he warned his followers to avoid all education 'by taking to the boats',

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(1) Athen. p.222 A.

(2) X.6.

as if culture were a sinking ship. Plutarch[1] asks whether we are 'to put our young men into Epicurus' boat, wherein, having their ears stopped with wax, as those of the men of Ithaca were, they shall be obliged tosail by, and not so much as touch at poetry'. The reasons for his rejection seem to have been that poetry was for him only a species of rhetoric, and therefore unworthy of a philosopher,[2] and that it was bound up with the myth, which as the foe of scientific truth must be swept away. In short he appears to have had complete contempt for aesthetic values. The only pleasure to which he attached real importance is that which is due to right action. The Epicureans in general seem to have followed their master in his scorn of literature. The most distinsuished of them, Metrodorus, is said by Plutarch[3] to have 'libelled Homer in many books', and to have said:[4] 'Wherefore let it never disturb you, if you know not either what side Hector was of, or the first verses in Homer's poem, or again what is in its middle'. H.H.A. Duening in his edition of the fragments of Metrodorus suggests that this is but another exposition of the old theme that the poet is a teacher, saying

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(1) De. Aud. poet. 15 D.

(2) Plutarch. adv. Colot. 1127 A.

(3) Non posse suav. viv. 1087 A.

(4) ibid. 1094 E.

that Metrodorus is not defending the total neglect of Homer, but only advocating the proper way of reading him - 'immo attente eos perscrutare versus, unde tibi aliquid commodi enascatur, sive quod animum iuvet, sive quod modo quopiam ad beatudinem spectet'. This, however, does not accord with the statement quoted above, that Metrodorus 'libelled' Homer, or with the passage which Plutarch puts into the mouth of Metrodorus about the pleasures of the flesh.(1) 'And the wise Metrodorus believes that this should be so, for he says 'All the fine, subtle, and ingenious inventions, of the soul have been found out for the pleasure and delight of the flesh, or for the hopes of attaining to it, and enjoying it, and every act which tends not to this end is vain and unprofitable'. The conclusion seems to be that the Epicureans made no new contribution to aesthetic theory; They did not even afford instances of the old confusion between moral and aesthetic ideas; they neglected aesthetics entirely. Philodemus wrote that 'music is irrational and cannot affect the soul or the emotions and is no more an expressive art than cookery.(2)

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(1) Plutarch. adv. Colot. 1125 B.

(2) See Bosanquet. History of Aesthetic. p. 100.

This is a backward step which vitiates all the advance made by Plato and Aristotle in aesthetic theory. Cicero seems to indicate[1] that for an Epicurean to be a literary man was an unusual occurrence; wherefore it is all the more remarkable that such a philosophy inspired a Lucretius.

The Stoics on the other hand considered that in poetry we have a pleasurable presentation of philosophic truths. In accordance with this view they allegorised Homer and Hesiod extensively.[2] They did not deny the delightfulness of poetry. Strabo says[3] that the pleasure of poetry acts like a love philtre in stimulating the desire of knowledge.[4] They made it subserve the moral purpose by rendering instruction attractive. Of course there are degrees of intensity of belief among the various Stoics.

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(1) In Pison. 29

est autem de quo loquor non philosophia solum sed etiam ceteris studies quae fere Epicureos neglegere dicunt perpolitus. poema porro facit ita festivum, ita concinnum ita elegans, ut nihil fieri possit argutius.

(2) For Zeno's allegorisation of Homer and Hesiod see Dio Chrys. Or 53 p.275 & Diog. VII.4. For Cleanthes' see Diog. VII. 175 and Plutarch De Aud. Poet. 31 E. etc. Cicero says N.D.I. 41 (ch.15) that Chrysippus' interpretation of poetry made even the oldest poets appear to have been Stoics though they never dreamed of such doctrines.

(3) 1. 2. 8.

(4) See Plut. De Aud. Poet. 14 F.

From Philodemus' essay '<u>On Poetry</u>'(1a) we gather the views of Ariston of Chios, who was a moderate Stoic and one of the teachers of Eratosthenes, and of Neoptolemus of Parium. Ariston rejected the 'physical' interpretation of the myths, but contended that the poet should combine good thoughts with good style. Neoptolemus held that the function of poetry is twofold, to charm the spirit of the hearers, and to give good and profitable teaching. Homer, he considered, had generally succeeded in combining instruction with delight. Cleanthes held the view that poetry is superior to philosophic discourse as a vehicle for expressing the highest truths of philosophy, and that 'metre and song and rhythm come nearest to the truth in the contemplation of the divine'.(1) Cleanthes however was a poet himself, and had a deeper and finer aesthetic appreciation than the average Stoic.

The orthodox Stoic position is probably well represented by Strabo. The wise man, he says, alone is a poet. Homer is not the ideal Stoic wise man. He does however impart knowledge to us through allegories.(2) His method of instruction is to gild historic events and philosophic truths with the adornment of myth,(3) and his poetry is, according to the common and correct opinion, a philosophical treatise.(4) Yet the Stoics considered that there were times when Homer nodded, and

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(1) Philodemus - <u>De Mus</u>. Vol. Herc. I. col. 28.
(2) 1. 2. 7 ; 1. 1. 10.
(3) 1. 2. 9.
(4) 1. 2. 17.

(1a) See <u>Classical Quarterly</u> - 1928. J. Tate. 'Horace and the Moral Function of Poetry'. p.66.

Strabo says he must be pardoned for introducing pure fiction either to fill up by conjecture the deficiencies of his knowledge or to impress and convince the minds of the vulgar.[1]

In an interesting article on Cornutus and the Poets,[2] Mr. J. Tate explains how Cornutus differed from the earlier Stoic philosopher in his attitude to the poets. Far from commending them for an exposition of Stoic doctrine, Cornutus censured them for having, without understanding them, taken and buried in a mass of irrelevant fiction, the doctrines which certain pre-Homeric philosophers - 'no ordinary men, but able to understand the nature of the universe and given to philosophising concerning it in symbols and enigmas' - had expressed in mythical form. He therefore disagrees[3] with the lengths to which Cleanthes and Chrysippus carried their allegorising tendencies. This, however, is no more helpful towards the advancement of literary criticism than the ordinary Stoic attitude. It would be true to say that Stoicism represented no advance whatever in aesthetic theory. Egger points out[4] the difference between Plato's proscription of art and the Stoic allegorising. The one is a tribute to the power of art: S'il ne l'àccepte pas avec toutes

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(1) 1, 1, 10; 1, 2, 3; 1, 2, 9; 1, 2, 17.

(2) _Classical Quarterly_ 1929.

(3) _Treatise on Greek Theology_. c.35.

(4) A. Emile Egger - _L'Histoire de La Critique chez les Grecs_. Paris 1887. p. 358.

ses libertés, du moins il sent qu'il ne saurait se passer d'elle sans exposer les citoyens de son Etat imaginaire à déchoir de leur dignité d'homme et à tomber dans la barbarie. The other makes of poetry but a metrical imitation of the actions of gods and men: 'c'est à dire qu'ils la suppriment ou l'amoindrissent de peur qu'elle ne porte atteinte a cet ombrageux despotisme de la raison sur lequel repose toute leur morale'. Stoicism as a philosophy was incomplete, and therefore perished. The lack of aesthetic considerations was one of its weaknesses.

Of these two philosophics, it was Stoicism which predominated in the Empire. Stoic doctrines therefore continued to be apparent in Greek literary criticism, though generally interfused with other philosophic ideas. In the philosophy and literary criticism of Plutarch, for instance, there is a strong strain of Stoicism. Plutarch is an interesting figure. 'Cet écrivain aura eu le signalier honneur d'obtenir une renommée populaire et immortelle sans avoir éclairé le monde par la grande lumiere du génie'.[1] Men of all ages and countries, and of widely differing types have read him and loved him. "Montaigne called the '<u>Lives</u>' his 'breviary'. Madame Roland styled them 'the pasture of great souls', and Emerson says: 'Plutarch will be perpetually rediscovered from time to time as long as books last'."[2]

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(1) Egger, <u>op. cit.</u> p.425.

(2) F.A.Wright. <u>A History of Later Greek Literature</u>. p.210.

Genius he had not, but his great gift of portraiture has given the Lives their imperishable attraction, while the Moralia, which form a complement to the Lives, 'setting forth what the ancients had accomplished in the world of thought, whereas the Lives show what they had done in the world of action', (1) have a fresh and vivid charm.

Plutarch's literary criticism well illustrates his eclecticism. He was not a deep or original thinker. He never touches the fundamentals of aesthetics, but merely works upon the surface. He accepts the existing literature, and proceeds to justify it by ingenious means. Dr. Westaway neatly contrasts Plutarch's literary criticism with that of Plato and Aristotle. In discussing the character of Achilles, 'Plato', she says 'is thinking chiefly of Homer and poets generally, Aristotle of Achilles and literary characters generally, Plutarch of himself and his essay De Cohibenda Ira. Plato is concerned with a great end in view, Aristotle with his means, while Plutarch hardly looks beyond the material to his hand'. (2) Yet Plutarch does not approach literature in quite the same way as the Stoic moralists. He is not as whole-hearted as they. He recognises firstly, the aesthetic appeal of poetry. (3) He is interested in purely literary questions, as when, for instance, he discusses whether didactic verse may be called poetry. (4) He is Aristotelian enough to

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(1) Trench, quoted by Westaway, "The Educational Theory of Plutarch, chapter 3, p.29.
(2) op. cit. p.92.
(3) De Aud. Poet. 15 F.
(4) Ibid. 16 C.

discuss the problem of the representation of ugliness in art.(1) Throughout the De Audiendis Poetis he is aware of the distinction between artistic and ethical values.(2) Moreover he does not approve of allegorisation. The stories of the poets are not to be taken as symbolic, but at their face value as simple narration. Goodness will inspire and even evil cannot hurt. 'If we remind our sons that authors write wicked sentiments not because they commend or approve them but with the idea of investing mean and unnatural characters and persons with unnatural and mean sentiments, they could not be harmed by the opinions of the poets'.(3) It follows from this that he refuses to consider the poets as completely inspired and infallible. He advises men to read poetry with critical and impartial minds, and appreciate the good that is in it, but he deprecates the policy of 'tremblingly adoring all one meets with, like a superstitious person in a temple',(4) of carrying one's admiration to the point, as it were, of imitating 'Plato's stoop or Aristotle's lisp'.(5)

The central theme, however, still remains. 'Poetry inclines the soul of a young man to receive the impressions of philosophical precepts'.(6) The idea is Platonic, but not so

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(1) Symp. 5.1. 673 D. and De Aud. Poet. 18 A.
(2) See 18 D.
(3) De Aud. Poet. 18 F. (Babbitt.)
(4) Ibid. 26 B. ed. W.W. Goodwin 1870.
(5) Ibid. 26 B. (Babbitt.)
(6) Ibid. 36 D. (Goodwin.)

the plausible justification of existing literature. One cannot but smile at Plutarch's ingenuity. A discreet use of imagination and philolgy works wonders in restoring to a doubtful passage its proper moral tone. For instance, 'There is yet another way of improving poems, taught us well by Chrysippus, which is, by accommodation of any saying, to transfer that which is useful and serviceable in it to divers things of the same kind ..... The reproof which Ulysses gives Achilles when he found him sitting in Scyrus in the apartment of the young ladies,

> Thou who from noblest Greeks deriv'st thy race
> Dost thou with spinning wool thy birth disgrace?

may be as well given to the prodigal, ... thus,

> 'Thou who from noblest Greeks deriv'st thy race,
> Dost thou with fuddling thy high birth disgrace?' (1)

Plutarch's literary criticism is not a well thought out, coherent exposition of aesthetic theory. The various strands of thought are never properly fused or interrelated. Moreover Plutarch is never bold. He does not boldly condemn Homer and Hesiod as Plato did, or boldly demand of literature its proper pleasure, as Aristotle did. He does not, like the Stoics, boldly allegorise. He is an interesting illustration of a confusion between moral and aesthetic ideas which arises, not within some philosophical system, but from an ill-assorted

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(1) ibid. 34 B. and 34 D. ed. W.W. Goodwin 1870 Vol.II.p.87.

mélange of systems. It is, however, that moderate, almost fatherly, practical criticism which contributes to the charm of the Moralia.

If Plutarch inherits the old moralistic thesis, the Peripatetic tradition of pure verbal criticism, on the other hand, is well maintained and developed in Roman times. Dionysśus of Halicarnassus, who was teaching in Rome during the Augustan Age, made a real contribution to the study of literary style with his treatise 'On the arrangement of words'. The range, it is true, is limited. He is concerned, not with general aesthetic theory, nor with the spiritual side of style. Yet his criticism brought back men's notice to the question of style. Similarly the treatise 'On Style', ascribed to one Demetrius, is a simple, clear, and instructive manual on the art of writing. The author is unconscious of any message or moral to be derived from literature; he is interested in the subject of style for its own sake. His view of literature is not strikingly original, but the treatise is a workmanlike production, and is of value, moreover, in preserving some part of the Peripatetic tradition. The greatest work of Greek literary criticism of the period, however, indeed the greatest since the time of Aristotle, is the treatise 'On the Sublime' concerning whose date and authorship nothing definite is known, but which seems from internal evidence to have been written during the first century. A.D.

It has been universally recognised as one of the deepest and finest pieces of literary criticism that has ever been produced. It is different from all the innumerable works which had been poured forth since the time of Aristotle. It is different because it goes back to the broad, deep, philosophical view of literature which Plato and Aristotle had, but which was lost with the close of the Golden Age. Plato had grappled with the problem of the nature of art and its relation to reality. Aristotle tried to define Tragedy philosophically and psychologically. After Aristotle, however, no criticism went deep enough to reach the fundamental problems. The Stoics walked happily along upon the paving of allegory which they had arbitrarily laid. The scholars dug the surface of literature and produced modest plants of formal and verbal criticism. Longinus goes deeper. The Sublime, he says, depends on five things, grandeur of conception, intensity of emotion, the proper employment of figures of speech, nobility of expression and dignity of composition. Grandeur of conception, which can only be obtained by 'nourishing' a soul to greatness' comes first, and is illustrated from the <u>Iliad</u>, from Sappho's <u>Ode to Anactoria</u>, and from the Jewish law-giver, 'no ordinary man', who said 'God said – what? 'Let there be light', and there was light. 'Let there be earth' and there was earth.' Nobility of expression comes next, 'for beautiful words are in deed and in fact the very light of the spirit'. Dignity

of composition is then considered, and the treatise ends with an interesting chapter on the decay of literature in the author's time.

All this is unlike anything that had been written before. It is the Peripatetic criticism treated with the breadth and vision of an Aristotle, and without the incubus, moreover, of the belief that the aim of poetry is education which vitiated much of the earlier criticism. Literary criticism has been seen slowly developing, for the most part hand in hand with philosophy, from the earliest times until the time of Aristotle. After Aristotle its course became chequered and its progress slow. The development, however, did not cease. Longinus inherits from Plato and Aristotle the inspiration of their thought, while he owes to all the countless scholars in the following centuries the creation of a literary criticism untouched by considerations of morality. Greek criticism awaited someone who would fuse the two, who would breathe into the lifeless stylistic criticism the vital breath of aesthetic appreciation and inquiry. Such was the achievement of Longinus; in him the long slow development of Greek literary criticism reaches its climax.

With Longinus the history of Greek literary criticism virtually ends. There continued to be criticism of a sort, but none of it is very original or helpful, and finally it dies away. Dio Chrysostom wrote sensitive, sympathetic, but conventional criticism. The old conflict between morality

and aesthetic pleasure he leaves undetermined. The great sophists and rhetoricians of the 2nd Century A.D. do not seem to have produced any noteworthy criticism. Indeed, Maximus of Tyre is said to have identified poetry with philosophy, 'a worse error than Plato's solution of their ancient quarrel'.(1) No criticism approaches that of the author of the treatise '<u>On the Sublime</u>'. One last contribution was made, however, to aesthetic theory, by the Neo-Platonists. Under the Stoics and Epicureans, who were pre-occupied with action, aesthetic theory made no advance, but it was natural enough that a philosophy which held man's highest activity to be contemplation, as the Neo-Platonists held, should make some contribution. The sophist Philostratus had, in his <u>Life of Apollonius of Tyana</u>(2) uttered the noteworthy dictum: 'It was imagination that wrought these works, (i.e. statues like those of Pheidias and Praxiteles) a more cunning artist than imitation. Imitation will make what it has seen, but imagination will make what it has not seen'. Then the Neo-Platonist Plotinus dealt the final blow at the theory of imitation.

'Still the arts are not to be slighted on the ground that they create by imitation of natural objects; for to begin with, these natural objects are themselves imitations; then, we must recognise that they give no bare

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(1) See Sikes: <u>Greek View of Poetry</u>, p.243.
(2) VI. 19.

reproduction of the thing seen but go back to the Ideas from which Nature itself derives, and furthermore, that much of their work is all their own; they are holders of beauty and add where nature is lacking. Thus Pheidias wrought the Zeus upon no model among things of sense but by apprehending what form Zeus must take if he chose to become manifest to sight'.(1)

'No doubt the wisdom of the artist may be the guide of the work; it is sufficient explanation of the wisdom exhibited in the arts; but the artist himself, goes back, after all to that wisdom in Nature which is embodied in himself'.(2)

The true artist does not copy nature. He tries to draw inspiration from the spiritual power which created natural beauty. Art is still an image, but it is an image issuing from reason, and it appeals to the soul through reason. This is the answer to the old problem of mimesis which played so large a part in Plato's aesthetics. Plotinus does not develop its implications, but it is clear that such a conception will destroy the moralistic confusion. If art goes back to the ultimate spirit, then it is an independent activity existing in its own right and therefore not called upon to reproduce the laws of morality operative at any particular period in the phenomenal World. Art, that is, uses earthly

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(1) Enneads V. viii. 1.
(2) ibid. V. viii. 5. Mackenna's translation.

media, it is true. 'The imitative arts follow models found in sense, since they copy forms and movements and reproduce seen symmetries'.(1) Yet in so doing they are bringing the eternal reason down into contact with the world of sense, and through the reason principle in humanity man is able to apprehend the reason in them. Art therefore is not imitative, but symbolic. This puts an end to the criticisms which the imitative theory engendered. The creations of art are no longer so many reproductions of ordinary reality, affecting the soul in the same way as ordinary reality. 'We might just as well judge the square moral or the triangle immoral as the Francesca of Dante immoral or the Cordelia of Shakespeare moral, for these have a purely artistic function, they are like musical notes in the souls of Dante and of Shakespeare'.(2) The expression is modern, but the germ of the thought is in Plotinus.

Neo-Platonism was the last creative impulse of Greek Philosophy, and with it this discussion ends. The bounds of the confusion between moral and aesthetic ideas have proved to be the bounds of Greek literary criticism and philosophy themselves.

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(1) Enneads V. 9.11.

(2) Croce: The Essence of Aesthetic. 1921. p.14.

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