

A RECONSIDERATION OF
PLATO'S OBJECTIONS TO POETRY
AS THEY ARE SET OUT
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Abstract:

Plato characterises poetry as mimesis. The term is applied in various ways in the argument, but in Book X the specification of the mimesis of the poet is such as to preclude reference to reality.

Plato's intellectual objections are aimed at poetry's mimesis of appearances. The relation between appearances and reality and the demarcation between the sensible and the intelligible and between mimesis of 'mere sensible appearances' and the interpretation of such appearances are discussed.

Plato's intellectual objections concern the mimesis of emotional actions, the mistaken mimesis of admirable characters, and the mimesis of situations. The ethos of Homer, when compared with that of the Republic, indicates discrepancies between Plato's morality and the morality presupposed by Homeric heroes.

Examination of the Iliad reveals a mimesis of social and moral outlook, involving associated honorific titles, with descriptions of men and actions earning them. The beliefs relevant to assessments of heroes presented by the poet in complete and persuasive form. The poetry evokes emotion and engenders a way of seeing situations which, although it is unlike Plato's morality, is nonetheless moral. But poet's aim appears to be entertainment, not to teach.

Insofar as poetry is mimetic, the question of the rela-

tion of poetic statements to truth is not eliminable. Poetry cannot have reference to truth in Plato's system; this suggests that Plato's dismissal of perception as a source of understanding is too summary. Poetic statements presuppose common modes of thinking and the intelligibility of accounts; again the demarcation between the poetic statement and truth is not a clear one. Moral effects of poetry are considered and regarded as different from and incommensurable with poetic effects.

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Introduction:

The primary purpose underlying this thesis is to expose and expound the reasons for Plato's objections to poetry. The arguments set out in the Republic are considered, exclusive of remarks about beauty, art, and poetry in the other dialogues; the argument of the Republic is, within its terms of reference, complete and it needs no supplementation from the other dialogues. The enquiry, then, is not concerned with what Plato thought about poetry in general, but rather with what conclusions may be drawn about poetry from the arguments set out in the Republic.

The questions raised in the Republic concern poetry as mimesis, its relation to truth and to morality. An exposition of the Iliad, a poem which can be seen to be mimetic in the way Plato delineates, suggests that ~~the~~ Plato's accusations, though they derive much of their force from the context of the Republic, are, even when considered apart from the metaphysical system which supports them in the Republic, peculiarly relevant to poetry as mimesis.

I. MIMESIS

The term central to Plato's account of poetry is 'mimesis'. The term occurs so frequently and in such a variety of contexts in the Republic that it might seem that Plato has chosen an unfortunate word and then overworked it. No single translation, e.g. 'imitation', 'representation', 'reproduction', or 'empathetic understanding' will bear the whole of the burden that Plato puts on mimesis. This suggests that to give a single, definite translation and to depend upon that translation is arbitrary or artificial or both. It would be arbitrary to stress one meaning at the expense of slighting, if not denying, others to which attention should also be given. It would be artificial to try to impute to the term a single, narrow precision which would lead to statements or implications in the translation which Plato did not intend to ~~formulate~~ in Greek. In such a situation there is the danger of confusing ^{the} which implications ^{which} have reference to what Plato has said ^{with} ~~which~~ to the connotations of the terminology chosen to translate what he has said.

'Mimesis' names a complex and general concept. Like so many of the other terms central to the doctrines of Plato it largely depends for its significance upon the context in which it is used. But apart from what is always to be expected of Plato's use of central terms, when it is remembered that the entire Greek vocabulary--to say nothing of its special critical terminology--

was far less detailed than the English vocabulary now in use, it is not so very surprising that this one word should be used in a greater variety of contexts than would a similar word in the contemporary English vocabulary. Yet the use of the one word and its verbal derivations also indicates that there may be some one principle of collection in the light of which all such uses can be seen to be connected. This being the situation, ^{in this thesis} the word 'mimesis' and a special verb, 'mime' will be used in all contexts where ^{words derived from mimesis} ~~the corresponding words~~ are used by Plato, leaving it to the reader to derive the meaning from the context rather than from a precise selection of words.

Among the aims of this thesis is to determine how, if mimesis is taken as in some way definitive of poetry, the application of the term can clarify, refine, and point out important characteristics of the poetic activity. What is sought is not the meaning of the word as such, but what it is that Plato is saying about art and poetry when he characterises various aspects of them as mimetic. This can only be made clear by organising his various uses of the word and not by trying to find a single one-word translation for it.

A) The various application of 'mimesis in Plato's exposition.

Havelock¹ points out that there are several different and seemingly dissimilar applications of the term 'mimesis'. in the Republic.

1. Havelock, Eric A. Preface to Plato. Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1963. pp. 20-31.

- a) 392d, 393d, 394b. Mimesis as composition in direct speech form.

When dramatic narrative is first contrasted with descriptive narrative, 'mimesis' defines the method of composition where the speech or dialogue of the characters is rendered as it would be spoken by the character. This method is contrasted with composition or parts of composition where the poet speaks or makes statements in his own person about his characters.

"Mimesis" here defines the form of composition in which the poet impersonates his character, and sets it apart from other ~~kinds.~~
forms.

- b) 393c. Mimesis as the poet's and the reciter's imitation of the character's personal style.

When a poet is making his voice or his words resemble or be like the words of some character, he is making himself resemble or be like that character.

Plato's example in Homer's mimesis of Chryses. The poet speaks in the character of Chryses and tries to make the reader feel that the speaker is not the poet, but the aged priest. In recording the speech of Chryses in first person direct speech as Chryses would speak it, rather than reporting it in third person indirect speech, the poet does not merely copy the style of the character, he assimilates himself to the speaker. Thus he 'mimes' a dialogue and presents several characters, each speaking as the character himself would speak and not as the poet would speak. This leads the reader to feel that the words are the words of the character, 'mimed' and not the words of the poet.

Here mimesis describes both the manner of composition in which the poet copies the style of speech and thought of his character, and the art of performance.

- c) 394. Mimesis as teaching and learning by example.

The young men who are being trained to be warriors are taught by example; they are given models and learn by assimilating themselves to the model.

Here mimesis indicates a pedagogical method and the learning frame of mind appropriate to it.

- d) 595. Mimesis as the poetic way of using language as if to convey truth.

In Book X mimesis is said to be the characteristic which distinguishes the way a poet uses language in giving an account or picture of reality from the other ways of using speech and words employed by non-poets to give such accounts.

Here mimesis covers all poetic activities as such, not merely dramatic representations as in a).

- e) 605. Mimesis as conveying and entertaining a sense of empathetic understanding.

Discussing poetry's appeal to the emotions, Plato relies upon the mimesis which characterised a person making himself to be like a model. This, he says, is the basis for the audience's feeling with or for the performance and the characters presented.

Here mimesis is the name of the way the spectator enters into the emotions of another.

- f) 597. Mimesis as purveying and entertaining an illusory sense of understanding reality.

Mimesis is used to name and also to account for the deception inherent in poetic statements and to set poetic statements apart from statements which appeal to the rational part of minds and have reference to truth.

B) Discrepancy between conclusions of Book III and Statements of Book X.

When Plato's Socrates takes up the discussion of poetry in Book Ten of the Republic, he reminds his interlocutors that they have already decided not to allow 'on any account' the poetry of dramatic mimesis. Yet what had been finally decided in Book III was:

"For our own benefit, we shall ^oemply the poets and story tellers of the more austere and less attractive type, who will 'mime' only the manner of a person of high character and, in the substance of their discourse, conform to those rules we laid down when we began the education of our warriors!"
398b.

If what was agreed upon was that no dramatic mimesis whatsoever would be allowed, then Socrates' statement here, viz. that the 'mimesis' of the manner of a person of high character would be permitted, appears to be an incorrect summary of what was decided.

Socrates cannot have made a slip in his Book X summing up of his Book III conclusions, in omitting to mention the admissibility of dramatic mimesis of persons of high character, for he here explicitly excludes all dramatic mimesis as such. Yet the burden of the discussion of Book III preceding the passage set out above has been to establish the admissibility of this particular kind of dramatic mimesis because it is beneficial. Thus there is an inconsistency between Book III and Book X.

The existence of this discrepancy signals the need for another examination of poetry. It seems likely that Plato took the considerations of Book III to be adequate for their context, though not be final, and to need revision in the wider context of Book X.

i) Consideration of mimesis in Book III

Book III was explicitly concerned with pedagogy. The problem was to devise a curriculum suitable for educating the children who were to become guardians. It was thought that, if they were to be instilled with the appropriate attitudes and with suitable temperaments, they should be given only specially selected examples to copy. Because the perfectly good is an unchanging Idea, once it is grasped or realised any changes will be for the worse, Hence change, variety, and variation are detrimental to a well-formed character. Thus those poets 'of such cunning' who are capable of 'making themselves into anything and imitating all objects' and of imposing corresponding responses in their audience must be discouraged. And because it is wrong to think that men can act unjustly with impunity, stories which suggest that one can act unjustly and escape harm must be cut out of the poems. These and similar instances of censorship were introduced in order to make poetry acceptable as a didactic device.

In the following books there is a discussion of the nature of knowledge culminating in the theory of Forms. There is also a discussion of the nature and parts of the soul culminating in the doctrine of the tri-partite soul under the authority of reason. So when Plato returns to the discussion of poetry in Book X, he has at his disposal the means to show what inadequacies there

are in poetry when it is considered as contributing to knowledge and virtue, and to bring out the discrepancies between what in fact are the usual manner and objects of a poet's mimesis and what ought to be. Plato could have proceeded to emphasize the gap between the usual and the ideal poetic practices, and to suggest ways to avoid the dangers inherent in poetic practice in order to achieve the ideal.

Plato, who relied upon myths in presenting his theory of Forms, his doctrine of the soul and of the superiority of the spiritual life, etc., and who was so skilled in the construction of dialogues and in the use of images, allegories, and similes, might be expected to make his spokesman, Socrates, draw a finer distinction between the poetic uses of language involving the play of imagination so evident in his own work, and more ordinary, non-poetic uses.

(ii) Developments to be expected, but not found in Plato's account of poetry.

One might also expect an elaboration of what was stated in Book III, that a good poet is the one who 'mimes' a person of high character. Such a poet would be good, he said there, because his mimesis would be beneficial to the individuals of the community. The model he has in mind here would seem to be the same as the one whereby the Gospels are thought to have provided for the imitation of Christ by Christians.

Plato's Phaedo might be set up as an example of such a mimesis

1.
 as is suggested by Daiches Raphael. This dialogue presents among others two people of high character, Socrates and Phaido. Both demonstrate that they are of high character by their behaviour in general, and in this particular instance by regarding death in the appropriate way. They are not overcome by pity or by grief. They think about philosophy and consider which life is the most conducive to well-being in this life and which is best as a preparation for the hereafter. The dialogue form, presenting the direct speech of the interlocutors, clearly provides a direct mimesis of the behaviour Plato was advocating as appropriate to the situation. The dialogue does not merely state propositions about how people ought to act, it shows them acting in that way. Not only the dialogue form, but also the order of the exposition suggests that the author's intentions were didactic. Phaido states early and explicitly the point to be illustrated in the dialogue, and the remainder of the dialogue gives substance and justification to his initial remarks.

Further, as Daiches Raphael shows clearly, the theme, the death of a good and great man, and also the formal organisation of the Phaedo, indicate that the dialogue's composition is in

1. Daiches Raphael. The Paradox of Tragedy.
 Allen and Unwin. 1960.

according^{and with} to the style of a tragedy. Plato uses a form closely similar to that of tragedy, yet he avoids, and he makes it perfectly clear that he means to avoid, the evocation of pity and fear in the hearers. Just as the characters themselves claim that pity and grief were not a part of their reaction to the death, so readers are meant to feel that the experience of such emotions would be an inappropriate response to the situation presented.

The theme and the formal organisation of the dialogue invite questions. Is this an example of mimesis? Is it dramatic mimesis? Is it the sort of mimesis solicited in Book III? If it is a mimesis at all, then it certainly is of the kind required in Book III. It shows Socrates unjustly found guilty by his judges, accepting the sentence of death with equanimity. He is not in the throes of passion, and his state of mind is not subject to changes and variation. Although the minor characters do experience exaltation and gloom alternately, Socrates' words and his actions make it quite clear which attitude ought to be maintained. The dialogue is concentrated upon the mimesis of Socrates, the man of high character, and it presents the fluctuations in the reactions of minor characters as a foil to the serenity of Socrates. The stability and equanimity of the central character affords an object of mimesis which could be taken as exemplary

by the people who heard the dialogue.

But one who is not prepared to see that the serenity of Socrates would be superior to the self-regarding considerations of the other characters of the dialogue, or one who reads inattentively, may miss the point which the mimesis was devised to put across. Though it is true that the Phaedo's mimesis ^{is} was in the appropriate manner and of the proper objects, it is nonetheless also true that this mimesis might have effects other than those intended by the author. Someone who did not understand or sympathise with the values and priorities advocated by Socrates might mistakenly take the Phaedo to be an illustration of the futility of the life of a visionary. Plato might have argued that the reader who thus misunderstands or misconstrues the point underlying the mimesis is prejudiced or inattentive and has not given enough care to seeing just what was the situation 'mimed' by the poet. But in the later section he seems to have decided that any mimesis which is a poetic mimesis, regardless the manner of mimesis and the object 'mimed', not only can confuse and mislead readers, but is bound to do so.

(ii) ^{In Book X a revised specification of mimesis as peculiarly applicable to poetry.}

In Book X ^{Plato} he abandons the distinction between good poets as opposed to bad ones, i.e. those who 'mime' the appropriate objects in the appropriate manner, and turns to a more damning demarcation between works which do and those which do not stand

up to the scrutiny of what is later specified as the dialectical method of thinking. Plato has given up speaking about what poetry might accomplish and has turned to a consideration of the nature of mimesis in order to show that whatever else poetry does do, it cannot do what ought to be done viz. educate the people and the guardians, efficiently and ^{accurately} with the required effect. Poetry must therefore be superseded by other activities which will be more instructive, though less 'delightful.'

Poetic mimesis can assist people in coming to understand the nature of things or the character of situations, etc., but because it is mimesis it can also be misleading. Wrong impressions and inadequate ~~notations~~ ^{notations} are corrected in the course of dialectical thinking when there is reference to the Forms. Plato says repeatedly that the meaning of his dialogues and myths, and this presumably includes the Phaedo as well, is to be not merely supplemented, but actually determined by the dialectical method of reasoning. It alone can determine their significance.

The poetry that remains in the ideal state, viz. the hymns to the gods and the eulogies of good men, is retained because it can be seen to be true and appropriate and because it does not involve impersonation. When put to the test, these poems can be seen to be in accord with the Good and the True. They will therefore be suitable as models for human behavior

and attitudes. As they do not require the poet or the reciter to assimilate himself to another, they do not involve the deceptions which are inextricably connected with impersonation.

The answer to the questions about the Phaedo, then, appears to be that insofar as the central object of the mimesis, viz. the high character of Socrates, can be referred to the Forms and the goodness of Socrates can be seen to be in accordance with the Form of the Good, the mimesis is a good one.

But then it is no longer a poetic mimesis, for poetry is what appeals to the emotions and to the senses and so ^{imposes itself on} subjects

those who hear it that they are no longer free. (III. 307B)

But if the object 'mimed' by the Phaedo can be considered in the light of the Forms, then the Phaedo does not rely upon the senses for its appeal but upon the reason.

(iv.) Book X account of poetic mimesis.

"It is clear," says Plato's Socrates in the ~~dialogue~~ Book X

"That such poetry must be firmly excluded." The interlocutors reply, "What makes you say so?" While this may be no more than another instance of their co-operative willingness to keep the dialogues running smoothly, it may be taken to suggest that they sense some new and stronger force in the arguments. In any case, Socrates takes the question as a request for a clearer and more refined account of the nature of poetry.

Socrates begins by assuming that there is a single, generic quality or characteristic common to all poetry, viz. that it is

a kind of mimesis. He makes a few remarks about mimesis in general and then expounds the notion of an artist's mimesis with reference to the painter's activities, and only then proceeds to show how what the poet does is analogous to his description of the painter's procedure.

In a quick resumé Socrates relies upon the arguments of the earlier parts of the Republic to support his remark that artistic mimesis represents reality, but from a long way off. There are two obvious questions for us to ask: could there be an art which does not represent reality at all, and could there be an art which did not represent reality from a long way off. The former is excluded by definition in this treatment of the artistic activity as mimesis. Socrates' arguments are directed to providing an answer to the second question. The answer will be that there could not, logically could not. The nature of objects represented and the character of the mimetic activity preclude the possibility.

By artistic mimesis Socrates means the technique of making one thing like or appear to be like another. When he comes to describe what the artist does, he concentrates upon that phase of activity when the artist is most actively and obviously making. He says nothing about how or why the artist should select one model or theme rather than another, one angle of vision for a painting, one beginning for a poem.

A mimetic account of art can emphasise the activity of

the artist in selecting, arranging, and rendering his materials in such a way as to engender an unaccustomed and especially instructive view of what would ordinarily be experienced in

a less ϕ illuminating way. Alternatively a mimetic account can emphasise the gap between the mimesis and whatever material object or actual state of affairs is 'mimed' so as to point up the priority of the object and the inadequacy of the mimesis in giving a satisfactory rendering of it, thus indicating the advantages of other activities over artistic ones in fostering understanding and insight into truth.

- C) Whereas in Book III Plato's account of poetry seems at least open to develop^{ment} along the former lines, in Book X he severely restricts the scope of poetic mimesis to preclude the possibility that it could 'mime' reality.

That Socrates' account will follow the latter course unwaveringly is assured by his initial assumptions.

- a) He assumes but does not pause to argue that the 'mimeses' produced by the artist though they are of an order radically different from that of material objects, which are themselves of an order radically different from but are imperfect mimeses of, the real, are to be judged nonetheless by their capacity to 'mime' the real. He relies upon the theory of Forms to give substance to his confidence that the hierarchy described therein will give an adequate account of the artist's activities. Thus he assumes that the artist can only provide sensible copies of \times non-sensible ~~objects~~ objects.
- b) He restricts his attention to mimesis in the literal sense of copying, assuming without supporting with argument that it is 'mere outer appearances' that are rendered, and stressing the allegedly unavoidable deception engendered. He overlooks the possibility of a mimesis whereby what is essential might be singled out and made apparent as constituting the resemblance between the material object apparent to sense-perception and what it is the appearance of. What he assumes here is that the artist's mimesis copies one of the sensible appearances of non-sensible objects.
- c) In concentrating on the notion of the artist's attempting

truths simply by the use of
 1 sensible copies and thereby necessarily lending himself to deception, Socrates implicitly denies the possibility that the artist, by choosing what he will 'mime' with his images and how he will make his mimesis, in a deliberate way, might be able through his work to give some sort of knowledge. He might, by citing particulars in such a way as to remind the spectator of the universal, educate rather than deceive. For the particulars could in this way be related by resemblance to an object of another order and have in that resemblance the ground of their value as particulars.
 Here he assumes that the sensible copies of sensible appearances of non-sensible objects cannot but be deceptive if presented as copies of the reality.

These assumptions make it clear that the considerations of artistic mimesis will be restricted to relating and contrasting the way artists 'mime' reality with the way the theory of Forms presents reality. This severe restriction upon the scope of artistic mimesis makes it quite clear that Plato is ruling out from the beginning the possibility of justifying a claim that the product of mimesis could be of greater interest than the material object or situation of which it is a mimesis.

Among numerous
 There is an instance of artistic mimesis patently not a 'mere copy' of sensible appearances, ^{is one} which, had it been considered by Plato, would surely have been seen to be damaging to his thesis. Plato, born in 429 B.C., must have known of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, (468-460 B.C.)

The Western pediment features the godlike figure of Apollo who guides and determines the outcome of the battle ^a by his ^{of Centaurs and Lapiths}

presence alone. Apollo, calm and serene, does not enter into the fray; he quells the strike^f of the battle by extending his arm in a majestic gesture. Similarly, Plato fails to consider a view such as that implied in a remark of Aeschylus comparing the mimesis of old and new statues. This remark is set down in Porphyry's "On Abstinence" ~~as~~^{and} mentioned by Theophrastus and it is unlikely that Plato did not know of such views. Aeschylus says that, although the old statues were simple in workmanship, they had about them something superhuman. The new ones, though elaborate in workmanship, had lost this element of the superhuman. Here again the suggestion that artistic mimesis might be more than a mere sensible copy of sensible appearances is not discussed, nor dismissed as metaphysical nonsense; it is simply ignored by Plato.

It is sometimes suggested that Plato was provoked into an attack on all art by his objection to the illusionistic art of his time. Steven,¹ for example, suggests that Plato objected to the reliance of contemporary artists upon tricks to produce perspective in painting and to their use of shading and colour to produce a plastic effect. But if these suggestions are to be taken as explanations for Plato's attitude to art, one might ask why examples such as those cited above were not equally taken into account in any general thesis about art which Plato meant to develop.

1. R. G. Steven: Plato and the Art of his Time. Classical Quarterly 27 (1933) pp. 149-155.

It seems, rather, that Plato, having decided that reality pre-exists any representation of it and as such is attainable by rational thought alone, wants to stress the inadequacy and ambiguity of any artistic mimesis, regardless of whether it is a mimesis provided in a sensible ^{copy} of a non-sensible object or of the sensible appearances of those non-sensible objects. Moreover, because pictorial art, sculpture, and poetry appeal to the senses in what he sees as a direct and therefore an undisciplined and unordered way, ~~they~~ of all arts are most detrimental to the establishment and maintenance of the purely rational way of thinking which alone is capable of truth. Accordingly, music, though treated in Book III, need not be considered again in Book X. In Book III it was decided that music would be important in the educational curriculum because melody and rhythm can ~~be~~ directly influence practical attitudes. But music, unlike poetry, has no reference to theoretical beliefs and therefore cannot deceive in the way that poetry can. There is nothing in the books intervening that would undermine this conclusion, so music is not considered again.

The arguments of the intervening books do, however, suggest that poetry and painting and sculpture should be considered again. The poets, with whom Plato was mostly concerned, not only told stories which were radically different from the stories Plato thought should be told, they also,

in telling them, set out models ^{which could} ~~to~~ be used in ways of thinking which were radically different from the way in which Plato thought that thinking ought to proceed. The painters and sculptors, with whose work Plato would be acquainted, took their subjects from mythological stories. They illustrated the characteristics and qualities which the poets ascribed to the men and the gods they 'mimed'. Plato was particularly anxious to discount both poetry and painting as false and also as injurious to the intellect. He avoided all considerations which might open up the possibility of a case for saying that poetry and painting might in any way be instructive or beneficial. The possibility that a product of mimesis could legitimately be of greater interest than that of which it is a mimesis is dismissed by the assertion that although a product of mimesis may have an independent interest for its observers, it should not do so for this would ^{reinforce} ~~re-enforce~~ its power as an illusion of the truth. No right-minded person would entertain ^{such} interest at the expense of subjection to illusion.

D) Questions about Plato's account of art as mimesis could be dealt with in at least two ways. One way would be to explain how the strictures upon poetry are mutually dependent upon the theory of Forms and upon the nature of man as expounded in the Republic. One could begin with the theory of Forms and the notion of mimesis so integrally related to it, and consider how the theory of Forms assists the argument

about poetry by imparting greater plausibility to the suggestion that there is a single, essential, and isolable quality distinguishing poetry from other kinds of writing and performance. It would be seen that the theory of Form assists the argument by providing the rigid structure without which this particular notion of mimesis cannot be set out with such clarity and conviction and by setting up the standards of truth and reality against which can be measured the fictions and fantasies of poetry.

But although the theory of Forms may be accepted as fundamental, and the function of poetry defined in relation to it, this is not the only way to deal with the account of poetry in Book X. One could begin with poetry, asking what is it about poetry that makes Socrates argue that it is capable of grasping only a small part of any object or situation. Then what would be sought is not so much a vindication of the application of the notion of mimesis to poetry, but rather an investigation into how, if it is taken as definitive, the notion of poetry as mimesis may clarify, refine, and point up important characteristics of the activity it defines.

II. THE INTELLECTUAL OBJECTIONS:

In Book X Plato's Socrates has two aims. He wants to explain the mode of mimesis which he takes to be characteristic of the artist's activities; and he wants to show why, in Book X, he has decided that this activity is inherently unworthy. In pursuit of these two aims he relates poetry to the standards of truth and reality established by the theory of Forms. If, in the course of these explanations, he can refer to the theory of Forms, he can show that his objections are not ad hoc but follow a serious enquiry into truth and into the nature of mimesis, and if the support he has elicited for the Form of the Good, whose supremacy is analytic, and for the superiority of a life led in accordance with it and in pursuit of it, can be used to supplement the allegations of ordinary misrepresentation by poets, his argument against poetry is shown to be not only consistent with but an enforcement of the ways of thinking propounded in the Republic.

A) Plato's Socrates argues that the artist's mimesis is at the third remove from Reality.

In earlier passages when Socrates referred to Forms he cited those corresponding with the general moral or aesthetic notions, viz. the Good and the Beautiful. But if he were to use these Forms as examples in trying to make the three-removes-from-Reality argument a convincing one, his job

would be a very difficult one. For each time he has spoken of the Form of the Good or of the Beautiful he has had great difficulty in specifying in what way the Form is related to particular instances. Rather than stay with this sort of general notion and forfeit making a clear case, he chooses to work with a type of Form which has not as yet been mentioned in the Republic, the Form of a manufactured article. With this example he can draw attention away from the general problem of the characterisation of the relation of Forms to their empirical instances and simply assume, as is more plausible in this instance, that there is such a relation with a more or less definite character. And, indeed, if ever ^{we are} ~~one~~ is to understand what the Form must be, this is the sort of case which will give ^{us} the chance to do so. For, if the Form is a universal and in some way determines the properties or characteristics which in turn determine what a particular thing essentially is, then none could be more straightforward than this one, the Form of what is an ordinary purposively designed article.

This example will be helpful, too, in setting out convincingly what Socrates is already assuming, that the model for purposive production is the craftsman's working to specifications laid down by the Form. The Form provides the criteria for deciding whether something is an appropriate

object for the purpose it was designed to serve and is
 therefore the sort of object
 ^ alleged to be. It is plausible to regard foreknowledge
 of these criteria as a necessary condition of satisfactory
 production. But Socrates goes on from this point to
 develop his thesis that, whenever a craftsman makes ^a his
 object he has the Form before his mind, ^{whereas} ~~but that~~ the
 artist, who makes a picture, thereby allegedly 'making' a
 bed^s, only copies ^{to} their appearances^s, and that such copying
 therefore goes on without reference to the Forms. These
 remarks are not set out as general observations describing
 what happens when craftsmen make beds or when artists make
 pictures or poems. They are definitional: they set down
 rules according to which these activities are defined.
 Socrates may be granted his point that, insofar as a man
 is a craftsman, he is a man who works according to rules
 and specifications. But what grounds has he for assuming
 that the purposive production of the artist must be
 analogous to the purposive production of the craftsman, and
 for assuming definitionally, as a necessary truth, that the
 mimesis of the artist has reference to the 'mere sensible
 appearances' of things and therefore not merely does not,
 but cannot, have reference to the Forms?

We can only conclude that Socrates is intent upon ~~des-~~
^{defining}
 cribing the technique of artistic mimesis in such a way
 that it will be seen to be a pointless activity.

B) The artist's mimesis of 'mere sensible appearances'.

When he comes to describe the artist's mimesis, Socrates wants to mark a clear difference between the activities of the craftsman and those of the artist, the former having reference to knowledge or at least to right opinion, and the latter having reference to what appears. He elaborates as paradigmatic of mimesis the type of pictorial representation where the picture is like a mirror-image of the thing painted, and that a familiar thing, viz. a bed. He implies that this is a typical instance of pictorial representation. When the issue is put like this, it may well be asked what interest or value such a representation could have.

But the paradigm chosen by Socrates is not typical of the artist's mimesis, and what is more important, it could not be typical. Socrates uses the example in order to illustrate what he is already assuming, that when a painter 'mimes' the appearance of a bed he can only 'mime' what it looks like. This statement, that the painter can only 'mime' what an object looks like, may be trivial for in a way it is tautological to say that it is outer appearances that are 'mimed' in a picture. But it is clear that Socrates does not mean the statement to be trivial, for it is the mimesis of appearances that defines artistic mimesis and removes it from the possibility of reference to Forms.

Socrates wants rather to imply some sort of a distinction between ^{paintable} sense-datum and ^{significant} interpretation. But this distinction will not hold. A mimesis of the appearance of an object must be a mimesis from one point of view or angle rather than another. If it is true that the artist did choose, or could have chosen, to 'mime' an appearance from one angle rather than another, then the distinction between any 'mere' appearance and an interpretation of it is already blurred.

In speaking of the artist's mimesis of the 'mere sensible appearance' of the object Socrates assumes that the painter 'mimes' only the appearance of the object, the appearance which he 'mimes' presumably being opposed to the history of the object, its significance to him etc. If there is any force in this argument it derives from the peculiar example chosen. The implied suggestion, that a line could be drawn between 'mere sensible appearances' and the interpretation of such appearances, is more plausible when the example considered is a bed. An artist could attend to and 'mime' the 'sensible appearances' of a bed with less ^{specifically intended significance} bias or partiality than he could 'mime' most other objects. Yet even this is questionable when the many representations of beds in Expressionist paintings are considered. A good example of the blurred distinction between the visual appearance of an object and the artist's subjective view of

it, is Van Gogh's study of the bed at St. Rémy. What that painting 'mimes' is not the 'mere visual appearance of a bed,' but the stability and solidity that the bed and the other furniture of the room represent for Van Gogh.

The extent to which sensible appearances can be kept separate from interpretations of them varies according to the nature of the object 'mimed' and the nature of the painter. But this ^{would} still leave open the possibility that, if there could be found a means of producing mimeses which could 'mime' without ^{selective significance} ~~partiality~~, then there could be the kind of mimesis of 'mere sensible appearances' which Socrates seems to have in mind. A photograph 'mimes' visual appearances, and because a camera has no memory and no consciousness it ~~presumably~~ might be thought that its mimesis would be impartial in a way that an artist's cannot be. But if the mimesis provided by the photograph is to avoid the ^{intentionality} ~~ideosyncrasies~~ which would ^{make it a selective significant} ~~give a biased, partial~~ photograph, then it must be ^a ~~the~~ photograph on an arbitrarily chosen and exposed film made by an arbitrarily lighted, arbitrarily positioned camera. The photograph produced in such conditions would be impartial in the sense that it was not taken from any particular point of view and was not of a specially ^{framed and positioned} ~~chosen~~ object, etc. But it would not be impartial in that, insofar as the photograph is a mimesis of the appearance of an object, it either gives a picture of

what the object would look like from an ordinary point of view, or it does not. Some photographs are better mimesis of visual appearances than others; photography, like representational painting, cannot help but be an art, some mimeses being better as mimeses than others.

Thus the assertion that what the painter 'mimes' is 'mere sensible appearances' is untenable. The distinction between sensible appearances and alleged interpretation of them will not hold, not only because men who 'mime' objects have memories and accustomed ways of seeing things, but also because the term mimesis has reference to the product as well as to the process of making appearances. If the product cannot be seen to resemble the object, then it is not a mimesis. Interpretation is involved in the artist's mimesis when he selects the object, the aspect, etc., of his mimesis. But interpretation is also involved in the spectator's reaction to the mimesis, for he must be able to construe the sensible appearances as the appearances of the object 'mimed.'

Were Socrates to try to account for paintings of other kinds of objects, the inadequacy of this simple-minded account would become more obvious. If, for example, a painter wishes to paint a man, it is difficult to see how he could paint 'merely' the appearance if this is to have any general validity, for as ^{the} eyes change the direction of their glance

or gaze, or as the mouth changes from smiling to frowning, the whole face looks different. Some features must be selected and emphasised, others neglected or minimised in order to present a clear pictorial account of the figure as it was seen by the artist and could--insofar as the painting is a representational one--be seen by others to be a pictorial account. But to present an appearance of this sort involves more than attention to appearances. It requires reflection, selection, and composition as well.

A mimesis which does present an appearance which can be seen to be a resemblance is an achievement. Not every one of a series of frames from a motion picture will provide a good mimesis of the 'natural' appearance of a face. In order to present the appearance of the facial expression 'mimed' the film, ^{must be viewed in the appropriate manner, i.e. it} requires a quick succession of stills. Any one taken out of that time sequence and studied on its own will look 'frozen' and quite unlike what would be thought to be the 'natural' appearance of the face. If satisfactory mimesis were not an achievement then any one of the stills should be as good as another in 'miming' an appearance. That this is not the case, again, suggests that miming of appearances requires skill in the artist's selection and execution.

Apart from the question of the significance of individual portraits, the painter's ability to paint even the figure

of a man and to produce a convincing sensible appearance which will not be mistaken as a representation of something else-- a god, a woman, a monkey or a scarecrow,--is itself a form of mimetic understanding, not reducible to theoretical knowledge ^{about men} such as Plato's knowledge or right opinion would consist in.

When Socrates defined the mimesis of artists as mimesis of sensible appearances such that it does not and could not have reference to the Forms, he contrasted the artist's mimesis with the production of craftsmen which, he was careful to point out, presupposes some reference to Forms. But it seems that he was mistaken in holding that the artist's mimesis has reference to appearances alone, when such appearances are taken to be sense-data exclusive of interpretation, and he ignores the kind of understanding of an object evidenced by the production of a convincing mimesis of it.

C) The relation of artistic mimesis to the standards of truth set out in the theory of Forms.

It was argued in the section above that Socrates was wrong in holding that the artist's mimesis was a production of mirror-image paintings. That a painting might be something other than a mirror-image might open up a possibility that ^{artists} mimesis of ~~the artist~~ might give insight ⁱⁿ to truth.

Before going on to consider the general plausibility of

such a notion it is important to see why Plato's Socrates is so anxious to deny it. It is true that his denial will have peculiar relevance to the theory of Forms, but it may have general relevance as well.

If there were mirror-image paintings such as Socrates assumes all paintings to be, these images as Socrates characterises them could not present truth; by attending to them alone ~~no one~~ ^{could not} ~~can~~ get to truth. Truth and reality, as established by the theory of Forms, are such that anyone who identifies, e.g., bedhood or beauty or goodness with perceptibly evident features of beds and beauty or goodness will fail to learn what determines or constitutes 'bed' or 'goodness' or 'beauty', for this is a non-sensible set of relations or conditions laid down by the Form. Reliance on ^{the} senses, therefore, ~~can never~~ ^{prevents} ~~achieve~~ ^{proper} ~~accurate~~ understanding of such universal terms. An indication of the gap Plato held to obtain between what is sensible and what is intelligible is his denial that relations could be seen.¹

But ~~although~~ only understanding of the general universal terms can properly be called knowledge; people who depend upon their senses, limited as they are to the observable characteristics of a material particular ^{thing} and solely concerned

1. Republic VII 522-524.

with the evident common features of things, will tend to identify a general term with the evident common characteristics of its instances. Insofar as they rely strictly upon their senses, they will either succumb to relativism or else they will be inclined to take as most significant whatever group of characteristics is empirically most vivid. From this practice they will derive a distorted conception of the nature of things, for from this point of view it is much more obvious that grass like this is and must be green like this than that there is and must be an order of Forms, into which the Forms of Grass and Greenness fit, if thought and perception are to be possible at all.

Having followed and become accustomed to such a way of thinking, people will be unable to think of justice, goodness, beauty, or bed or grass, as the single, abstract, intelligible principles they are. For them such notions will be not essentially singular, but a number of more or less specific principles. Their way of thinking precludes their seeing that the latter derive from the former. They are satisfied because their notions are more or less workable in practice, but they cannot see that this is because they in some way follow from the single principle.

The relation between the Forms and their particular instances is said to be one of mimesis, but there are two

ways of viewing the mimesis of the Forms, the general concepts, by particulars. In Book X Socrates deliberately lays stress on the way which recognises and emphasises the gap between general concepts as Forms and the 'common natures' thought of in ordinary and uncritical experience. He does not consider the alternative interpretation of the relation, viz. that general concepts in some way or another inhere in particulars, the particulars giving them their objective content or reference. Socrates is calling attention to what he alleges to be the inherently inadequate manner in which painted images can provide semblances of, i.e. correspond with, objects, and the similarly inherently inadequate manner in which objects provide semblances of Forms. He thereby discourages thinking along the lines whereby, though the ^{per} ~~con~~ceptions entertained by the common man, and the empirically evident features which he sees as common to the things to which he applies the concept, cannot logically be identified with the general concept which so applies to them, they can nonetheless be truly said to be related to it as cases of its application.

D) Summary of Intellectual Objections and a consideration of their relevance to Plato's general theory and of their relevance to a general view of poetry as mimesis.

The force of Plato's intellectual objections depends upon ~~his overlooking~~ ^{our rejecting} the interpretation of the mimetic relation

according to which general concepts are said in some way to inhere in particulars. He must overlook the possibility that the sensible particular might provide an insight into the nature of the universal if he is to keep the transcendent reality of the non-sensible immune from the evanescence of the sensible, ~~and the per~~ This immunity is important for his general theory, and the definition of poetry and the strictures on poetry rely heavily upon it.

The mimeses made by the poets in telling their stories are likened to pictorial mimeses in order to emphasise their quasi-sensible vividness. What Plato wants to do is to account for the appeal poetry has, and at the same time to show why it is a danger to the mind. This he can do if he can show that the object 'mimed' is merely an appearance. For if it is an appearance that is 'mimed', by referring to the general tenet that all appearances are misleading, he can show that poetry as mimesis is deceptive. And by characterising poetry with reference to its appeal to the senses he can account for its power of illusion which is likely to so subject the reader that he is not 'free' to consider critically the poet's statements in the light of what he knows to be true. Moreover, insofar as he can maintain that the appeal of poetry is to the senses, Plato can make out his case that enjoyment of poetry, like any appetite, must be controlled.

If the pleasures afforded by poetry are dependent upon

the reader's entertainment of mistaken beliefs, then poetry must be abandoned in the pursuit of more rigorous thought. The poets are also said to represent appearances rather than what truly is, in that their mimesis of situations, of men's actions, and of their characters do not correspond with what is laid down by the Forms. The poets 'mime' men as lordly or brilliant or godlike, base or glorious or shameful. But when the objects 'mimed' are referred to the appropriate Forms it is seen that the ^P/~~P~~oet has misapplied the descriptions. The poet's mistaken claims that the men in the mimesis are lordly, etc., cannot be vindicated with reference to the Forms; thus the poets tell lies about the men they 'mime'. But men hearing the poems do not refer the objects 'mimed' by the poets to the appropriate Forms and so long as they do not do this, and the difference between what men commonly think of as, e.g. lordly behaviour, and what lordly behaviour actually is and should be thought to be passes unnoticed and unchecked, men impressed by the poet's tales as pictures of truth will direct their lives and their judgments according to mistaken notions.

To this accusation, viz. that the poets deceive people by presenting mistaken notions in the guise of truth, there are two possible replies:

- (a) What the poets present is not a deceptive image, but truth.

(b) What the poets present is not a deceptive image and not truth, but fiction.

If the first reply is ~~taken seriously~~^{proposed}, it will require a specification of the kind of truth to be expected from poetic statements, and an explanation of how, if such statements are true, they can be seen to be true, how they are to be tested or verified. But it must also be shown that Plato's strictures miss their mark; for Plato has claimed that poetry is a mimesis and ^{that} a mimesis as such is deceptive.

The second reply avoids the question of the truth or falsity of the poet's statement but opens up another one, viz. a definition of fiction. If to regard poetry as fiction is to put it into a class of statements of which claims of truth and falsity are inappropriate then the intellectual objection that poets statements are illusions presented in the guise of truth is misplaced. But insofar as fiction is a poetic mimesis it, like all other instances of mimesis can fail as well as succeed in achieving a convincing likeness, a convincing likeness being one which ^{can be seen} in some way ^{to} corresponds with its object, it would seem that the question of truth cannot be finally dismissed.

The intellectual objections are integrally related to Plato's own theory of truth and of knowledge, but they are nonetheless pertinent to a general consideration of

poetry quite apart from the theory with which Plato introduces them and to which he relates them. But before considering their force, further objections concerned with the emotional effects of poetry will be dealt with. In specifying the appeal that poetry makes to what he rather roughly calls 'the emotions,' Plato makes clearer why he thinks that poetry is peculiarly deceptive. And since both the suggested replies to Plato's intellectual objections would deny that the poetic image is deceptive, it is important to get clear why Plato thought it was deceptive.

The assessment of Plato's emotional objections to poetry will be strengthened by a consideration in some detail of some aspects of the Iliad of Homer. It is far from clear in what way Plato's objections are relevant to the poetry he is attacking. What must be determined is

- a) what it is that the poet 'mimes' and how he 'mimes' it
- b) what purpose, if any, such a mimesis serves.

Homer's poem is a good example to take for this enquiry, not only because it was the main target of Plato's objections, but also because it provides material for dealing with the questions raised by Plato: whether the poet's accounts are true or false or fictional, whether the poet can be seen to intend to teach the values and attitudes embodied in his utterances,

or subscribe to them himself,
or teach them, or merely to use them uncritically for
his own poetic purposes.

III. EMOTIONAL OBJECTIONS.

Plato's second set of objections is concentrated upon the poets' exploitation of 'a weakness in our nature.' This alleged weakness, the emotional element of the soul, can be defined most clearly by contrasting it with the reasoning and calculating element. The latter is ^{said to be} law-abiding; it alone has access to the truth. Whatever confusions arise in the mind are due to the fact that the senses give what Plato calls "contradictory evidences." Confusions arising from sense impressions can only be sorted out by the faculty which is capable of calculating and reasoning in accordance with the Forms. But since Plato has decided that the part of the soul which entertains contradictory or mistaken beliefs cannot be the same part as the one which determines what is the case,¹ he relegates the confusions and mistaken beliefs to the emotional element, saying that they arise in and are fostered by that part.

Poets also directly appeal to the emotions by ~~representing~~ ^{'miming'} men in emotional situations, playing on their audiences' powers of emotional response and the pleasure they take in emotional excitement for its own sake. Moreover, violently emotional states, giving rise to exaggerated gesture and speech and uninhibited behavior,

1. Rep. IV 425-7.

are more easily and vividly reproduced in mimesis and more strikingly evocative of audience-response. They are therefore favourite subjects for the poets. But Plato holds that emotional states both as ^{'mimed'} ~~represented~~ by the poets and as felt by their audience are to be avoided because they resist clear definition as to their basis in beliefs about, and their rational appropriateness to, the situation calling them forth.

A) The ^{at actions} Emotions ^{actions in accordance with reason} are contrasted with ^{reason}.

When men act, they experience inner conflicts, and they act with what Plato calls 'divided minds.' Though they may be inclined to act in accordance with "the devices and desires of the heart," they should not give way to these tendencies to excessive and emotional action, but should resist them and, Plato says, listen to the 'authority of reason.' Plato does not deny that there is a conflict for most men, but he stresses that the wise, just, and virtuous man will be able to act rightly, i.e. in accordance with the "authority" of reason, with more equanimity than most people, for he has become accustomed to acting virtuously and has established a harmony under the authority of reason in his soul.

But poetry disrupts such an order. The poets delight in making mimeses of men of irascible temperament in the

throes of their passions. Their plights, deliberations, and emotional displays are subject to the poets' mimesis both because the sensational has more popular appeal and because displays of emotion lend themselves more readily to mimesis. But, Plato insists, a mimesis of emotion both implies real emotions on the part of the poet and the performers themselves if it is to be convincing, and encourages emotional reactions in the audience, and this merely for the sake of the sensation.

The grief, joy, fury, and pride of the heroes which the poets ^{'mime'} ~~present in mimesis~~ are disruptive of the right kind of thinking and action. Plato sees emotions as a kind of undirected mental disturbance, something which occurs independently of and even despite the workings of the reasoning and judging part of the soul. Such disturbances cannot but impair the proper functioning of the reasoning part and must therefore be checked.

Apart from its mimesis of people in highly emotional states, poetry is a mimesis of men acting in accordance with their emotions. Here emotions are not only disruptive mental phenomena but also irrational inclinations or tendencies to action. It is the reasonable part of the soul which determines how a man ought to act. It is the 'law-abiding element' ~~of a man~~ which is prepared to listen

to the authority of reason. But when men act in such a way as to pursue what are for Plato ~~the~~ clearly mistaken notions of 'honour' or 'privilege' or 'duty', ^{notions which are} presented as power ^{for} motives for the Homeric heroes ^{their} ~~such~~ actions cannot ex hypothesi derive from the reason because they are in accordance with mistaken notions. They must therefore derive from the appetitive or the spirited element of the soul. When Plato charged poetry with appealing to the emotions and not to the reason he referred not only to those instances where the heroes display horror of death, or unmanly or immoderate emotion, but also to those passages and, indeed, to the ethos of those compositions wherein actions are justified by claims of self-interested expediency, self aggrandizement and privilege. Such actions spring from the unruly spirited, or even from the appetitive, element, and not from the rational, regulative element of the soul.

The poet's mimesis is generally of men, even those allegedly of high character, acting not in accordance with what reason would set down as the right course of action, but in accordance with tendencies to action based upon unexamined beliefs. When a man acts from such emotional motivations his inclinations should be inhibited and checked, for even though such actions may by chance be

effectively those which rational deliberation would dictate, they are not in fact the outcome of deliberation. The reasons given in justification would differ from the reasons given for an action which was the outcome of deliberation, so that though the action of a man subject to impulses may in some ways appear to resemble the action of a man whose action is dictated by rational deliberation, it is more likely that, in general, impulsive action will be at variance with action dictated by rational deliberation because emotions and impulses are not reliable in establishing the appropriate conception of the situation, or the appropriate response to it.

On Plato's analysis, then, an emotional action, based as it is upon implicit beliefs, is likely to fall short of being a just action,

- (a) because its performance arises from an impulsive part of the soul which is not only most subject to deception but even fosters deceptions.
- (b) because, if based upon a belief, that belief is an unexamined and uncriticised one and therefore is likely to be false.

B) The Poet's mimesis of allegedly ^{admirable} venerable characters and their ^{unadmirably} emotional actions.

That the questions brought up by these objections are parallel to those brought up by the intellectual ones is clear when possible replies are considered. If the poet's

aim is presentation of truth, ^{as Plato conceives it,} then the fact that he misrepresents lordly, brilliant, or glorious behaviour will be, ^{for Plato} a serious fault in his writing. If Agamemnon, claimed to be 'lordly', can quarrel from greedy motives^{1.} with Kalchas because Kalchas has reported what he was ordered to report,^{2.} and then with Achilles; and if 'brilliant' and 'godlike' Achilles can first become childishly angry with Agamemnon,^{3.} insulting him wantonly,^{4.} and then, in a fit of spite become angry with the whole Achaian army,^{5.} and ^{later so} ~~then~~ to give himself over to grief that he will neither eat nor sleep^{6.} but exhaust himself in a furious, brutal, and futile revenge;^{7.} if Priam can so submit himself to grief that he covers himself in dung,^{8.} and if even Hera can in anger fly so impetuously at Zeus that she does not use his name or title courteously (as is customary in speech between equals and required when addressing superiors) but rails at him "Traacherous one, what god has been plotting counsels with you?"^{9.} and if at the same time these can be presented by Homer as men and gods of high and even divine character, to be venerated

1. Iliad l. 102-115.
2. " l. 85-91.
3. " l. 149-171.
4. " l. 225
5. " l. 239-244.

6. Iliad XXIII. 1-53.
7. " XXIV 53-4
8. " XXIV 160-165.
9. " l. 536-540

accordingly, then either Homer has mistaken ideas of what constitutes lofty character and praiseworthy actions or else he has made some serious mistakes in the mimesis of these characters. ^{This is what Plato has stated} ~~As stated in~~ ^{his} intellectual objections. ~~and~~ ^{his} in either case ~~the~~ emotional objection is that ~~he~~ ^{Homer} is encouraging his readers to venerate unvenerable characters.

Plato is assuming that the objects 'mimed' by Homer are the characters of men. Because he thinks that Homer's aim is to show, by means of his poem, ^{the heroic qualities of} ~~what are~~ heroic characters and ^{the greatness and goodness of} ~~great~~ men and to 'mime' behaviour consistent with ^{such attributes,} ~~greatness,~~ he applies to Homer's mimesis of character the standards for judging characters derived from his moral system. He decides that the ^{implied} ~~statements~~ made by Homer about what is lordly behaviour or what characterises, e.g. a godlike nature, are false.

But what grounds has he for assuming that what Homer has presented is best described-- or even properly described-- as a disjointed collection of character-portraits rather than ^{an integral} ~~a~~ mimesis of a series of events and actions in complex relations to one another. If what Homer 'mimed' is a quarrel and its influence upon and relation to events following, then the situation 'mimed' is not clearly separable from ^{the} ~~a~~ mimesis of it. When the issue is the character appropriately ascribed to men, then the standards used in non-poetic assessments will be the same as those

applicable to the characters in poetic mimesis. But if the mimesis is a mimesis not of character types but of the relation of events, it is not so clear what kind of standards would be relevant to determining the appropriateness of ^{the mimesis.} ~~what is mimed.~~ If Homer's aim was not, or need not be thought of as ^{being to make} ~~making~~ a mimesis of character-traits appropriate to certain types of individuals in such a way as to inspire appropriate feelings toward them in the audience, then at least a part of Plato's objection is misplaced in that he has mistaken the aim of at least some poetic mimesis.

c) Emotional actions not necessarily irrational.

Further, Plato objects that the actions done by Homeric heroes are performed on the basis of emotions, i.e. motivated by the passions and therefore not, ^{such as would be the outcome of rational} ~~by reasonable and reasoned~~ considerations. But they may not in fact be as unreasonable as Plato holds them to be.

When characters in the Iliad refer to the reason for Achilles' refusal to fight in aid of the Achaians they refer to the 'wrath of Achilles.' It might appear that the only reason to be given for Achilles withholding his support was that he was angry. But there is a longer account, and the longer one is the more accurate one. Achilles remembers that the Trojan War was undertaken in order to restore honour to Menelaus whose wife had been taken by Paris. In general he entered the war out of

friendship to Menelaus and to Agamemnon, Menelaus' brother, but he also entered in order to win honour for himself. But Agamemnon is so intent upon maintaining his own honour that, when one of his prizes from the battle must be forfeited, completely disregarding what he and his brother owe to Achilles and to the other Greek leaders, he demands the prize given to Achilles. In doing this he takes back what was originally granted by the army as a prize in recognition of Achilles' valour in the battle. And because material recognition is in the Homeric ethos not merely a token but a great part of the substance of honour, he has in fact withdrawn some of the honour due to Achilles. He presses this insult by asserting his greater authority.

".....but I shall take the fair-cheeked Briseis, your prize, I myself going to your shelter, that you may learn well How much greater I am than you, and another man may shrink back from likening himself to me and contending against me." l. 184-187.

It is true that Agamemnon is the king, and that because he is the king he is in Homeric thought "the greatest." But it is not true that he is a better fighter than Achilles is, nor is it true that he is better in all ways than his other men. He himself admits later that Nestor is superior in wisdom and Odysseus in resourcefulness. Diomedes clearly excels him in courage. Here he is over-estimating his qualities, and claims as his warrant the fact that he is the king.

1. This translation and all others are taken from R. Lattimore's translation published by the University of Chicago Press. 1951.

Agamemnon's actions and attitudes make Achilles angry. In his anger he retires from the assembly and the subsequent fighting. But this is not to say that in this he acted unreasonably, for although his withdrawal was not dispassionate, it was not obviously different from what would, when considered impartially, be judged to be the right action. It may be that reason would determine that it is Achilles's duty to fight in the aid of the Achaians and to ignore the alleged insult upon personal honour. Perhaps Achilles should behave as Hektor does, putting down whatever hesitations he has with firm resolution. But even if this is what the authority of reason would lay down as the appropriate thing to do, it is not clearly so. Hektor, unlike Achilles, is defending the honour of his family, trying to avert the defeat of his city and the captivity of his wife and son; the authority of reason ought to acknowledge this difference of circumstances in the two cases.

D) The successfully lifelike mimesis of situation such as is presented in the Iliad is such that the reader is deliberately confused in his judgments of right and wrong conduct.

Not only the portrayal of individual incidents but also the whole complex fabric of the world of the Iliad presupposes a moral outlook whereby questions about what ought to be done are not of the kind which could have demonstrably 'wrong' or 'right' solutions. Helen and her possessions are in Troy with Paris. The insult to Menelaus is such that a simple return of

'borrowed goods' cannot make restitution for honour lost. Paris has wronged Menelaus. Restitution is impossible. Even if Helen and her possessions were returned to Menelaus, the damaged, if not lost, honour of Menelaus could not be restored with a return to the situation as it was before Paris took Helen. The affront to Menelaus is also an affront to his brother Agamemnon and to the princes of the Achaians who support him. They can only demonstrate that such affronts are not warranted by forcing a revocation, not merely obtaining it on request, and by punishing the aggressors. Thus the Achaians are fighting for the honour of their king and for that of their homeland; the Trojans fight in defence of their city and to preclude the dishonour of defeat and captivity. It is difficult to see what kind of a 'right' solution would deal adequately with each of the entangled and involved claims for justice.

In some instances, even though there has been a wrong action, a settlement is possible. Agamemnon's original refusal to comply with the request of Chryses the priest of Apollo for the return of his daughter was clearly wrong. In refusing ransom and disregarding a plea backed by Apollo in attempting to retain the girl Agamemnon ignored the voice of the army and the power of Apollo. But the restitution forced by Apollo with his plague did end the matter between the priest and Agamemnon.

Paris' seizure of Helen was also plainly a wrong action. But his situation is dissimilar to Agamemnon's in that a restitution, whether forced or voluntary, cannot ^{honourably} end the contention between Menelaus and Paris and between the Trojans and the Achaians. The priest asks for the return of his daughter, and Menelaus demands the return of his wife. But the priest's honour is not at stake, indeed it is doubtful whether, as he is not a prince, he has any honour ^{to be} at stake at all. Again, the priest makes it clear by his offer of ransom that he is not challenging the honour of Agamemnon, but appealing to his clemency. In this instance, as with the offer of ransom by Priam for the body of Hector, it is not honour that is at issue, but courtesy, clemency, and a bargain. It is true that Agamemnon and his army are punished for his wrongful refusal of the priest's request by the onset of the plague, just as Paris and all the Trojans are punished by the onslaught of the battle. But the difference is that Agamemnon could have averted the plague by giving in to the request of the army and of the priest. Paris, even if he were to return Helen, would not sidestep the fact that he has offended the honour of Menelaus and will have to take the consequences of having given that offence. Thus, although there are situations in which a 'right' solution can be envisaged, this one is not one of them. Similarly there is no clearly right way for Zeus

to deal with Thetis' requests to make the Achaians regret bitterly the withdrawal of Achilles from the fighting.¹

From an objective point of view there seems to be no good reason why he should lend support either to the Achaians or to the Trojans. But even Zeus cannot be impartial in this situation because he already has obligations.

Thetis saved his son Briareus from 'shameful destruction' and for this favour he should be grateful. He could

~~deny~~^{ignore} this obligation, or he could claim that it is superseded by some other one. But, as Thetis reminds him, if he does this she will be the least in honour of all gods. She would lose honour not merely because Zeus decided without explanation to ignore what would otherwise be acknowledged as indebtedness incurred by her service to him, but also because such a denial coming from Zeus would be known by all the gods. On the other hand if Zeus should decide to grant Thetis' requests he would commit himself to punishing the Achaians whom he has no other reason to punish, and he ~~will~~^{would} antagonise Hera and Athene. But Athene and Hera are already angry with Zeus for the assistance he has ^{already} given the Trojans, and they have reason to be wary of Thetis because when she freed the son of Zeus she freed him from the bindings which they had put on him. Thus in giving his assent to assist Thetis in the restoration of

1. Book 1 (500-530)

her son's honour, Zeus must alienate Hera and Athena^e.

Again it is by no means clear what action could provide a satisfactory answer to this set of conflicting demands.

E) Review of emotional objections.

The issues raised by the emotional objections are these:

- a) that the heroes as 'mimed' by the poet do not have the qualities they are said to have and are not admirable.
- b) that the heroes 'mimed' are acting under the influence of emotions, and this is tantamount to acting irrationally.
- c) that poets present appearances of situations in such a way that the reader is deliberately confused in his emotional response ~~to it~~.

Much of the force of these objections comes from the allegation of 'weakness' of the emotional element of the soul and the associated notion that emotional behaviour cannot but be irrational. It was suggested that although Homer's heroes are said to act under the influence of emotions, they are not subject to mental states which are completely undirected and unwarranted by the facts of the situation. Thus, as was shown with the example of Achilles' anger, the poet's statement that the motive for the hero's action was anger may be taken to be an elliptical statement, for anger is a slightly misleading description of the set of reasons for the action.

But even though it is not always true that when the heroes act emotionally their actions are irrational, it is nonetheless true that the poets do 'mime' men in emotional states more frequently than they 'mime' men in equanimity. Homer's mimeses of Nestor and of Zeus provide two exceptions, but they are exceptions.

The lively accounts of Hera's anger and Achilles' insults, etc., attest both that the exaggerated speech and uninhibited behaviour of men and gods in violently emotional states lend themselves more readily to poetic mimesis and that they provide sensations for the audience. But even these thrills, though they are primarily emotional ones, are not, as Plato claims, wholly undirected. They have some relation to the situation evoking them. Amusement is an appropriate reaction to ^{the remark that the plume of} ~~the scene where~~ Hector's shining helm terrifies his young son, sorrow or hilarity would not be.

But the suggestion that the emotions evoked by the poem are appropriate to ^{the situation as depicted} ~~it~~ will not dismiss Plato's stricture. For what he objects to is the fact that the poet presents a situation in such a way that the reader can have a mere sense of pride, of fear, love, courage, etc., without realising what these really are. The poet 'mimes' the empirically evident features of e.g. [^] proud man or a frightened one, and the spectators ~~x~~ draw on their experience to identify and classify the object. But both the artist's

mimesis and the spectator's understanding of it have reference to what is commonly thought or believed to be constitutive of fear, etc. There is no reference to the Forms.

Further, situations as 'mimed' by poets could not be referred to the Forms. The poets' 'mime' men acting emotionally in the sense of acting in accordance with unexamined and probably mistaken beliefs.

The kind of dilemma that arises in the Iliad, Plato would say, can only be seen as a dilemma so long as the reader persists in seeing and thinking about situations as the poet has presented them. But that is a mistaken and irrelevant way. With proper insight into the Form of the Good one is capable of knowing ^{whether} ~~that~~ an object or any action is good or not bad. One is capable of knowing whether a ^{man or a} character ^{from fiction} is acting in accordance with ^{what} that ~~ought~~ to be done. And yet readers persist in looking for goodness or badness in what they see ^{in the mimesis of} of the situation and the character without reference to the invisible single immutable Form of the Good. Readers should, presumably, regard Achilles' refusal to fight for the Achaians as an example of a wrong action, insofar as in refusing to fight he refuses to help the restitution to a man of what is rightfully his. But the poet presents Achilles' refusal to fight for the restoration to Menelaus of what ^{is} rightfully ^{his} ~~should~~ be Menelaus' as bound up with his own anger at being deprived of what he thinks (perhaps mistakenly) is rightfully his.

Plato would ^{perhaps} say that the poet is confusing justice with personal and petty interests, and that in presenting Achilles' situation in such a way that the issue is complicated by this sort of ^{consideration} ~~problem~~ and, presumably, in selecting this sort of situation as a ~~fit~~ subject for mimesis in the first place, the poet obscures the truth about what ought to be done and writes poetry that will ~~feed on and~~ provoke ^{and nourish} the emotions which engender and entertain such confusions as these are.

This train of thought refers back to Republic Book I 489 where Plato has determined that an object or situation is one thing for one part of the soul and is another thing for another part. One ought to attend to what a thing really is and not persist in seeing x's as having the appearance of y's. One ought not to do this because the part of the soul which comes to grips with what x's really are is the superior part just because it deals with what really is the case and not with what appears to be so.

At this point the emotional objections ^{reinforce} re-enforce the intellectual ones. Poetry, ⁱⁿ appealing to the senses, prevents the proper functioning of the reason. And the poets, 'miming' allegedly good men acting on the basis of mistaken beliefs both mistake the qualities constitutive of goodness in men and engender wrong ways of thinking in their readers.

Thus among the objections Plato directs at poetry is that the

poets present situations in such a way that the reader is confused. The reader is actually deceived by the quasi-sensible vividness of the situation as presented by the poet. He thinks that the account given by the poet has a finality, being the most appropriate one, indeed the complete one, for that type of situation. If he is not completely deceived the reader is at least prepared to set aside the considerations he would bring to a non-poetic account and to rely upon the poet's description and appraisal of the situation, regardless ^{of} how mistaken it may be.

Such charges are particularly relevant to the poetry of Homer, and this may account for the frequent reference Plato makes to Homer in passages concerning the content of the statements made by the poets.

It may be that the allegations of mis-representation were strengthened by the fact that Homer's characters were historical figures. Homer composed his poem with reference to what the Greeks regarded (rightly we now think, though this is immaterial to the argument) was an event in history. Independently of Homer's work the Greeks knew who Agamemnon, Achilles, Odysseus, Ajax, Diomedes, Priam, Hector and Paris were. They knew more than their names; they knew roughly what sort of men they were and what they did at Troy. If Plato is thinking of these men as historical figures who, in their lives, established the standard of which descriptions were and which were not true of them,

then his remark that the poets misrepresent, though it refers primarily to the fact that they present types of situations (e.g. the refusal to force restoration to a man of what is rightly his) in such a way that the reader does not or cannot see the real issue involved, ~~but it~~ may derive some of its cogency from the fact that the events 'mimed' by Homer were events which could be referred to and thought about independently ^{of the selection of relevant features imposed by} of his mimesis of them.

The two issues here, viz. a) how a reader can be expected to react to a poet's description of events and characters and b) the relevance of applying moral or historical criteria in assessing the appropriateness of mimeses in the Iliad, can be dealt with only after investigating just what is the target of Plato's stricture here and whether that target coincides with Homer's poems. What follows, then, is a consideration of the ethos embodied in the Iliad compared and contrasted with that advocated by Plato in the Republic.

F) The ethos embodied in the poetry of Homer contrasted with Plato's morality.

The term agathos can be taken as a formal term indicating 'good' or 'great' (man). But when it is used in assessments and evaluation it is not merely a formal term of general commendation. It indicates that the man to which it is applied has certain characteristics which the user takes to

be the criteria for deciding that he deserves commendation as agathos. In a similar manner, arete indicates that the characteristic called a 'virtue' or 'excellence' has a certain functional efficiency for which it deserves commendation as a 'virtue/excellence.' The concepts are applied to Homeric characters in a way that presupposes certain beliefs about action in general, ^{and} about the social setting in which the actions are done. Within the framework of these beliefs we can delineate what are and what are not relevant considerations to the assessment of actions and agents.

In his book Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values¹. Adkins shows that general beliefs about action and society, about the nature of the universe and the gods thought to be active in it or absent from it, provide the conceptual setting determining the criteria for applying the terms 'good/great' and 'virtue/excellence' at different stages of the development of Greek thought; and that whereas Homer's work embodied a certain fairly definite conceptual setting and associated criteria for 'good/great' and 'virtue/excellence', Plato wanted to advocate a new set of criteria, intended to supersede the traditional system embodied in the poetry of Homer. This confrontation of moral outlooks

1. A. W. H. Adkins, Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values. Oxford at the Clarendon Press. 1960.

provides a large part of the substance of the quarrel between Plato and Homer.

What Plato has outlined in the Republic is a general definition of 'good' and of 'just' which absolutely and unambiguously applies to all the actions which can correctly be said to be good or just. Plato's morality is a morality which should be deductively derived from a comprehensive notion of 'the good' which notion alone is sufficient to specify a particular solution for any particular situation. With such a morality there would be no need to present situations and their solutions as illustrative or exemplary. The appropriate solution to any problem or situation which arises could be derived from the Form of the Good.

But this is not the logic with which the moral terms are used in Homer. His heroes patently do not, and it is indeed questionable that it would make sense to suggest that they could, derive or deduce from a unitary Idea the solutions to their particular problems. What maxims are adduced as relevant to the making of decisions are usually uncertain in their instruction and inadequate; it is not clear whether the problem faced is of the kind specified by the maxim nor is it clear, even if the maxim is relevant, that it is the only one relevant.

- e.g. (i) Achilles listens to the cautionary tale told by Phoinix in Book IX, and concludes that the tale, though it might have its point, is not totally relevant to his situation.
- (ii) In Book I 126 Achilles' remark: 'It is unbecoming for the people to call back things once given' has the air of a maxim. It is not clear whether 'the people' should include a king, the top king, or not. That there is some problem here is indicated by Nestor's remark l. 275, "Great man that you are, yet do not take the girl away."
- (iii) The maxim remembered or thought up by Agamemnon in Book XIV 81 "The man does better who runs from disaster than he who is caught by it" is answered by the resolution of Diomedes that they will go back into the fighting even though wounds were sustained. "We have to."

What these examples indicate is that, if it appears that a maxim might be applicable to a situation, judgment and discretion are required to know if the situation is such that such a maxim does indeed provide the solution here and, further, if the agent is to see how the abstract rule or guide is to be applied to the particular circumstances.

The maxims cited as examples above, though they do not at once finally determine what should be done, do serve a very important purpose. They help to give some structure to the situation so that what is and what is not appropriate to it can ultimately be determined, when all such relevant maxims have been considered.

Agamemnon's suggestion to run away from disaster ^{depends on} ~~states~~ one way of looking at the situation, and once it is realised that this is one way of regarding the situation the possibilities fall more clearly into outline. Diomedes' remark "We have to" refers not only to what honour demands that they should do, but also to the fact that once the alternative of running away is set down and considered, it must be obvious that it must be rejected. The only possibility remaining, viz. to stay and fight must be recognised as necessary.

Similarly, after Phoinix has set out one mode of acting once honour has been restored, Achilles can say with greater clarity why his honour would not be restored by ~~similar~~ ^{that kind of} restitutions.

Once the principle "It is unbecoming for the people to call back things once given" has been stated, the particular situation can be measured against that principle. But the question is not simply whether this principle is relevant in the determination of what ought to be done, but whether it is the only relevant one.

If there is a philosophical lesson to be learned here it is that the lessons which special circumstances appear to enforce are shown up to be peculiarly relevant to those circumstances and lacking in just that kind of pervading universality demanded by Plato's morality. If there is a

morality in the Iliad, it is a morality of judgment in knowing how to apply very general principles to particular complex situations. It is not by chance that the man who excels in this kind of 'know how', Nestor, is elderly as well as resourceful, and thus has seen a ~~large number~~ ^{many} and variety ^{ious} of situations and their consequences.

From the standpoint of his own view of morality Plato inevitably charges the morality embodied in the Homeric poem with failing to recognise the importance and authority of ^{reference to the Form of the Good and rational principles derived from it} principles in the making of decisions. Another point of difference is the importance of public opinion. Plato's Socrates advocates justice solely on the grounds that it is a constituent or an essential means to a state of well-being in life, where the just life is a state of well-being, even if the just man has the worst possible reputation among his fellows and is hated and reviled by them. It is a cardinal point of Plato's morality that the benefits of justice in no way depend upon public opinion, though of course the just man may be rewarded and honoured for his character. But that he is so honoured follows upon and does not determine his being just and the benefits this necessarily confers.

But in the Homeric epics 'good/great' is almost a public constitutional characteristic involving commendation

as the type of man who is as a matter of fact admired in Homeric society. He is the man who is thought to possess the skills and qualities of a war lord capable of securing the prosperity and peace of his community and of striking fear and submission into enemies.

He must be known as brave and successful in war, but he must also possess the wealth and occupy the social position to enable him to have had the training and equipment ~~and~~ to maintain the reputation and state necessary for such success. That is to say, what matters above all is that he should be seen and acknowledged to be 'good/great', and what contributes above all to this is social standing based on ~~reputation for~~ wealth and power. And the constitutional status is more directly important than the actual wealth and power. But to say of any Greek character, Homeric or otherwise, that he is 'good/great' is to apply to him a powerful term of value which seems to be ultimate.

What Plato seems to be trying to do in the Republic is to make a radical change in the criteria for the application of the term, but nonetheless to retain the term 'good/great' as a powerful, indeed the ultimate term of value. But in Plato's ^{the} application ^{of} 'good/great' ^{will depend on} ~~will be applied~~ for different reasons and, unlike the traditional application, it will be with-held when the actions of the man in question might seem

to be at odds with his reputation and his constitutional claims to be 'good/great'.

Homer uses the term 'good/great' in the traditional manner, applying it to noble, great, or lordly men. But are the men, as described in his work, said to be 'good/great' when they abuse their position? And what effect does morally bad behaviour have upon their claims to be 'good/great.'?

When Nestor wants to restrain Agamemnon, he says to him:

"You, 'good/great'^{man} that you are, yet do not take the girl away, But let her be, a prize as the sons of the Achaians gave her first."

I 275-8

Nestor is wise enough to see that Agamemnon is concerned with the material evidence of honour, and this is among the reasons for his demanding the girl. But Nestor is also wise enough to see that appeasement of Achilles is, apart from the question of its rightness, necessary if the war is to be won. So he chooses some word to flatter Agamemnon rather than antagonising him with an accusation or abuse as Achilles did, saying "You wine sack, with a dog's eyes, with a deer's heart," or something of that kind. But it is nonetheless remarkable that Nestor should choose this word, for clearly in this situation Agamemnon is not 'great' or 'good' ~~one~~ in our sense of the word, or, what is more important, in Plato's sense. He has been greedy and arrogant in ignoring the army's

request and refusing to return Chryseis to her father, ~~and accept ransom from the priest her father.~~ When it is discovered that this wrong action is the cause of the plague, he returns her begrudgingly and immediately demands a replacement. He has become angry with insufficient reason. Were he an ordinary soldier one could say that he was behaving like a spoilt bully. If he were a prince he would be said to be flaunting his rights. But because he is the top king, he can make some demands, however injudicious, that would be denied to others. Is this one of them? It seems that if there was a way for Nestor to explain that the claims ^{to be "}of the agathos" could be over-ridden, he would take it. For what he is pointing out is that the prize is already the possession of Achilles. In saying this he supports Achilles' remark that it is unbecoming to take back what has already been given and that even though Agamemnon has power, he should step down over this matter.

The difference between the use of 'good/great' in Homer and the use advocated in the Republic is clear.

Thus the emotional objections culminate in the discrepancy between Homer's use of the terms Agathos, arete, etc. and the use of commendatory terms advocated by Plato. Plato, wanting to show that ^{Homer's} ~~Homer~~ ^{are} ~~mimeses~~ ^{clearly} ~~are~~ mistaken, relies upon the theory of Forms to substantiate his claim that 'Good/Great' and 'Virtue/Excellence' are appropriately

IV. applied not to what people ordinarily commend as 'good/great' and 'virtue/excellence' etc., but to what is seen by reason to be in accord with the appropriate Form. Alleging that the poets appeal to the emotions in representing the appearances of things, he develops the argument against poetry as an argument against reliance upon the senses for obtaining truth. The poets' mimesis seems to be convincing, or have a semblance of truth, only so long as it is referred to the mistaken set of beliefs embodied in and presupposed by it.

On the other hand, Plato's more general emotional objection to Homer is that the mimesis appeals to the emotions in that it 'mimes' situations which would appeal to the emotional part of the soul and in 'miming' from a point of view such that any reference to truth is precluded. But poetic mimesis also evokes emotions in its provision of performances of emotional behaviour such that the sympathetic response of the audience is invited. This emotional response of the audience is like all emotional responses in that the reader is 'sub-jected' and does not--and in Plato's view could not--pause to consider that the emotions evinced are not the proper response to the object and that ~~the~~ only when the object is 'mimed' in this peculiar way, viz. as something to be 'sensed' rather than discovered by rational enquiries, can responses to it be emotional ones.

IV. CLOSER EXAMINATION OF POET'S MIMESIS IN EPIC.

A) Intention discerned in poem as basis for judgments of it.

A question raised in the sections previous, and, as yet not determined, is the intention to be presumed in Homer's poem. As the judgment of the work will have reference to the underlying purpose and insofar as it can be seen to direct, and unify and determine the development of the work, it is important to get clear whether the poet's main purpose was to tell the truth, or to provide moral education, or to provide a powerful, attractive fiction. If the poem was meant to provide, e.g. a series of portraits of admirable or despicable character types, then the set of criteria applicable in establishing the appropriateness or correctness would differ from the set applied to the poem if it is taken to be an account of a related series of events such that ~~the complicated effects of one decision are 'mimed' as related to each other and to their cause in such a way that~~ the mimesis has the air of presenting an intelligible ^{and complete} sequence. If the latter is the aim, then the criteria of appropriateness or correctness will relate more directly to the intelligibility, comprehensibility, and convincingness of the pattern 'mimed' and have less reference to the correspondence between the mimesis and

some set of beliefs or state of affairs to which the mimesis might be taken to refer.

In the previous section it was noted that Plato thought that Homer's use of terms like 'lordly' or 'shameful' etc., had reference to the appearances (or to what could be taken in the terms of his system as analogous to the appearances of things) for they were in accordance with the ordinarily and allegedly mistakenly accepted views of such qualities and not ^{with qualities which} to ~~what~~ would properly warrant such commendatory ^{and} descriptions. What is yet to be settled is whether, in using such terminology, Homer ^{is} unconcerned with the question of whether or not this particular system of evaluation is a desirable one, ^{and} is merely reflecting the values accepted at the time of his writing, or ^{whether he} is he teaching ~~what~~ these values, are, perhaps even trying to instill~~ed~~ them through his narrative. And finally, is Plato right in thinking that ~~the~~ ^{'s Iliad} poems of Homer presents an answer to the question 'How ought a man to act/live' which is in conflict with the answer given in the Republic?

- B) Epic poet 'mimes' social and moral outlook, involving the association of honorific ^{if} titles with descriptions of men and actions earning them.

It is not yet necessary to decide whether or not the poet wrote with the intention that his work should serve a didactic purpose. What is relevant here is what Plato correctly

notes, viz. that Homer uses a number of commendatory words in moral contexts. In telling his story Homer makes clear not only what the agents did, but also why they acted in that way. The extension and detail of the accounts is such that the reader can understand the actions not merely as isolated events but as the moral solutions of agents to moral problems posed by situations as those agents conceive them to be. This, ^{the} mimesis of an action, or a related group of actions regarded by the characters as occurring not as isolated, random events but as the outcome or result of previous decisions, actions, and circumstances, enables the reader to discern in the poem the moral and social systems presupposed by the characters presented.

The number of heroes and variety of situations in the epic gives scope for the elaboration of actions performed, and the significance ascribed to them, on the social scale, with ~~its~~ ^{their} reflection back on the character and reputation of the agents concerned. The Iliad is detailed in such a way that the data relevant to such understanding and assessment of actions is given. Because one is able to work out answers with strict reference to the text, it makes good sense to ask questions about the moral worth of the agents, whether or not their actions in the conception under which they undertook them can be justified, and what bearing the actions have upon character and reputation.

We can ask and find answers to such questions as:

Was Agamemnon justified in taking the girl from Achilles, was Achilles justified in with-holding his help from the Achaians, was Achilles justified in insulting the corpse of Hektor, or in accepting ransom for ^{the} his body, were Ajax and Odysseus wrong in not speaking up for Achilles in the council when the quarrel broke out, etc.

Epic poetry because it is on so vast a scale is especially susceptible ^{to} to this kind of examination and, ^{is} pregnant with a corresponding effect. It provides a historical background for the situation, ^{and} more or less detailed account of the agents' propensities, and accounts of what thoughts and attitudes are entertained by the characters with reference to their own actions and to those taken by others. It is true that such facts and considerations can also be presented in drama, but because drama, especially Greek drama, allows much less extensive presentation, the amount of information relevant to assessment is correspondingly limited.

C) Epic different from tragedy as Aristotle views it^{1.}
and as seems typical of Sophoclean tragedy at least.

In his comparison of tragedy with ^{the} Epic Aristotle^{2.} remarks that the actual action 'mimed' by the Iliad and by the Odyssey

1. I am accepting Aristotle's account of tragedy and in the remarks am concerned only with the tragedies that run or would run true to Aristotle's type. It is certainly true that there are few perfect specimens of the type he specifies, and many critics would say that there are none. But this, I think, does not affect the issue presented here.
2. Poetics, chapter 23.

is composed in the same way that the action of a dramatic mimesis is composed; nor does ^{this} ~~the~~ action ⁱⁿ ~~of~~ the epics exceed tragic limitations. But though epic is like tragedy in giving an account of a single action ~~done~~ through its consequences until they are worked out to some sort of finality, the elaboration provided by epic of that action and of the character who does it differs from the elaboration which tragedy can provide. In tragedy as in epic the character of the agents is revealed in speech and in action. But in tragedy character is drawn in such ^{isolated} ~~general~~ ^{relation} ~~terms~~ ^{to a single} ~~terms~~ ^{action} that the presentation of character, when contrasted with the presentation of character in epic, seems rather schematic. The tragic hero is presented in his speech and action in a single specific situation. In his one definitive action he realises those tendencies he is said to have; that one action, being a vital and serious one, is such as will bring all his powers of response into play.

The epic hero, however, is 'mimed' in the course of a number of activities, no one of which can be singled out as finally definitive of his character. The mimesis of epic characters is not so schematic and concentrated as that of tragic characters. The one central action of the epic hero is like the one single action of the tragic hero in that it is the clearest and most vivid crystallisation of

the tendencies he has to act in certain ways. But the mimesis of it is unlike the mimesis of the tragic hero's action in that the former is contrasted and compared with other activities and with the activities of other characters in the work. Thus it can be seen in the context of general social activity, the consequences of the action being shown as affecting, both privately and publicly, a large number of individuals who are 'mimed' as they consider, ~~praise~~, or criticise the action and its results. Epic can recount both the personal and the social significances of the action done. Tragedy, limited as it is in length and in the number of characters, cannot present this kind of close and detailed mimesis of minor occurrences to be contrasted with the single central decision and the deliberations leading up to it. But though tragedy is limited in scope, its presentation both of the conditions in which the action has to be decided and of the effects of that action, once decided, are clear. The effects of an action must be susceptible to ~~fairly~~ clear assessment, ~~for~~ this condition is necessary for the presentation of characteristically tragic action, viz. those in which the decision taken has surprising, but intelligible, consequences and is therefore the wrong one.

Homer's mimesis of Agamemnon is an account of his actions, his encounters with other men. But it is not only through other characters that the reader learns about Agamemnon. He is 'mimed' in his actions; he is reviled by and argues with Achilles, reviled by Thersites, reproached^y by Odysseus, by Diomedes, and by Nestor. Similarly Achilles is 'mimed' as he becomes angry with Agamemnon and again in furious anger with Hektor. The poet's mimesis of these incidents permits the reader to see for himself the pattern emerging in which he discerns the character of the man as it is built up from and is revealed by his actions. The mimesis of these subsidiary incidents gives perspective to the main quarrel. For in relating these incidents to the main one, the reader can come to see just what was at issue when Agamemnon quarreled with Achilles.

The focus of the mimesis both in tragedy and in epic, then, is the action performed by the agent. But if we accept Aristotle's view of tragedy, and it is faithful to at least the central Sophoclean type of tragedy, then in tragedy it is fairly clear what is the character of the action as taken (and ^{of} the agent ^s taking it). What is to be shown is the passage from ignorance to knowledge of the truth. In Aristotle's favourite type of tragedy the agent, when he performs the action, is not in full possession of all the relevant facts, or he is in a

state of mind which prevents him from recognising them. The action involves his discovery ^{that} what he thought he was doing was not in fact what he did or intended to do, that what he did in terms of the action as observed by anyone in possession of all the relevant facts and what he did in terms of the conception under which he took the action diverge tragically. The point which provides ^{the} object of mimesis is the divergence between what is intended and what is accomplished, a divergence which can be plainly seen in a well constructed tragedy.

In epic the mimesis is of the whole social situation which leads up to the action and how it is affected by the results which that action has. For this reason it is difficult for the reader and difficult for the characters 'mimed' to get clear just what is at issue, what are the alternative courses of action, how the action can best and most appropriately be described, and what way effects ^{ramifications} and/will result from the action once taken.

Whether or not the decision made by a tragic hero was a right one is determined, typically, by the emergence of some relevant fact, the identity of some person, or some fact about that person or about the agent, or even a fact about an object. But it is not so clear in epic what would determine whether or not the action taken is

the right one.

In one fairly obvious sense of 'right'

There are clear standards for determining whether the
 decision made by a tragic hero is or is not a right one.

He is acting in order to achieve some clearly specifiable
 end or goal. The right decision is the one which would

enable him to achieve that goal. In epic it is not so
even in this restricted sense
 clear whether *the action taken is the right one.* This

is partly because the situations arising in epic ~~are~~
have a nearer to real life social complexity
such that there is no right solution. The agent is not

and
 isolated *independent* but involved in a complex network of
 commitments. The epic hero cannot arrive at a satisfactory

solution or compromise until he has determined the nature
and these are presented on a much wider scale than in tragedy.
 and force of the various claims made upon him. He must

therefore first
make clear to himself the nature of the situation which

gives rise to the set of conflicting demands. This is

itself a moral problem requiring sagacity and experience

if proper ~~and due~~ attention is to be given to all the

considerations relevant, and if each of those considerations

is to be given its proper weight. But in addition to these

two obstacles to final assessment of the 'rightness' of

the action, the epic, presenting the vast social setting

of the action, makes it impossible for the agent when acting

to estimate the final effects of an action. For the agent

~~and the reader~~ at the time of the action and, indeed, *for the reader*, until

the conclusion of the poem, the assessment *of the* rightness or

or wrongness of his decision cannot be determined.

D) Homer's presentation of situation and action

Most of the actions 'mimed' in the Iliad are actions done where the intention is the maintenance of honour. The beliefs which the agents have, whether specifically moral ones or those concerned with value in general, must be incorporated into the poem if there is to be any hope of determining the agent's success in achieving his goal. For it is those beliefs which give structure to and reinforce the judgments and decisions of the agents and render them intelligible to the reader. The agent's assessment of his position takes its form in the features he abstracts as characterising the situation and his reaction to it. And insofar as his judgments and decisions are vindicated, it is with reference to what he and his associates believe to be of value.

As it appears in the epic, the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles introduces two sets of difficulties: one for the characters and one for the readers. Agamemnon and Achilles are contesting the acknowledgement of honour; it is impossible to let Agamemnon have the honour which he, as top king, demands while not retracting the honour due to Achilles who is the warrior distinguished in skill and success. The one difficulty is the problem faced by the characters: given this conflict of demands what can or ought to be done. The other difficulty is the reader's: he must get clear both what is happening and

also how the agents see and characterise what is happening. Homer introduces his epic heroes in accordance with epic tradition, with formal epithets, e. g. "Atreus' son, the lord of men" and "brilliant Achilles" and "Alexandros the godlike" and "glorious Hektor," etc. He then 'mimes' the persons who bear these names and titles. He gives accounts of their actions and of their reputations and thus provides by implication the conception of social types which conditions the judgments expressed of performance and reputation.

The poet draws out the significance of the issue between Agamemnon and Achilles by marking a number of other quarrels to which the Agamemnon-Achilles quarrel can be related and contrasted. By this means he deals with the two difficulties stated above. In entering into the stories of various quarrels in the Iliad and getting a sense of the subtly varied points of similarity and difference between them, the reader can come to understand in its full complexity the pattern of the differences between Agamemnon and Achilles, ~~and~~ why they made their claims in the first place, and why they pressed them as they did. ^{And} ~~And~~ through the contrast between the actions and performances characteristic of Agamemnon with those of Achilles and, again, the contrast between each of these figures with relevantly similar minor characters, the reader can come to understand how it is that characters honour one another according to a social and moral system in which both the occupant of an aristocratic status and the proponent of a practical ideal of human excell-

ence necessarily command honour.

We can work out the details of the social and moral system presupposed in the Iliad, but such studious scrutiny is not necessary if the system is to be understood. For uncritical familiarity with and love of the poem, alone, might be expected to give rise to an internal understanding and acceptance of its presuppositions, including this complex system of social and moral values; ~~and~~ such understanding is especially to be expected when the members of the society are subjected to frequent and extensive and solemnly received recitations of it. Here the purely poetic excellence of the work is of direct moral relevance in its persuasive effectiveness. This was undoubtedly the case in ancient Greece. The epics of Homer were central^r in the education of all Greek children. Adults, too, were prone to quote or recite passages from them and they heard them quoted or recited frequently. Familiarity with their form, content, and type of thought was widespread and thorough. It is not therefore surprising that, whatever Homer's actual intention or purpose in composing the epics was, Plato's criticism^{ises} them fundamentally as didactic instruments teaching a code of morality radically different from the one which he took to be correct.

E) Detailed exposition of the main quarrel and contrasts drawn with other quarrels.

(i) Moral assessment of Agamemnon in the Iliad.

The poet's first mention of Agamemnon is in the seventh

line of the first book. He refers there to "Atreus' son the lord of men." But no reason for the title is given until line 279 where it is stated that Agamemnon's power is inherited. Thyestes gave the sceptre to him to carry and so to be lord of many islands and over all Argos. Agamemnon does not hesitate to assert his status as king.

"...that you may learn well how much greater I am than you, and another man may shrink back ~~as~~ from likening himself to me and contending against me." I 185-187.

"And let him yield place to me, inasmuch as I am the kinglier and inasmuch as I can call myself born the elder." IX 160-161.

And the other Achaians acknowledge his status.

"Son of Atreus; now my lord.." (Odysseus) II 284.

"Come, my lord,..." (Nestor) II 360.

"Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men..." (Nestor) IX 96.

Agamemnon is called the lord, the leader, the shepherd. The epithet 'powerful' is ascribed to him. Plato's complaint is that Homer's Agamemnon does not live up to his reputation. Is Plato right?

It is clear from the poem that the actions of Homeric men were judged by their results, so that in determining whether or not Agamemnon deserved his reputation in the eyes of his own society, attention must concentrate upon what he did and was seen to ~~have~~ ^{have} done, and not upon what might be called an 'inside story' about what he felt about his activities.¹ Nor are any emotional or psychological states to be regarded as

1. John Jones. *Aristotle and Greek Tragedy*.
Chatto and Windus, 1962.

radically qualifying the actions. Agamemnon's character, then, is not to be described in terms of an inferiority complex, or an inability to face reality, or a sequence of petty anxieties and annoyances, etc., for such descriptions would belong to an 'inside story' which Homeric society would regard as irrelevant to assessment of character except insofar as they are manifested in observable gestures and movements or in speech.

Nor is this emphasis on what is done as a basis of character assessment peculiar to Homer. It is typical of Greek thought in general, and not merely of primitive Homeric forms of it. Aristotle, returning from the more inward-looking view taken by Plato, stresses the action done in his account of action and character. In Homer it is certainly true that so long as they do not actually find their expression in action, whatever tendencies a man may have are negligible in the assessment of ~~a man's~~ ^{his} character. 'Character' in the full and proper sense occurs only in habits of action. In determining whether or not Agamemnon lives up to the reputation he bears, reference must be restricted to the things he does, and we must not take into account the things he thinks or wishes except insofar as he gives expression to them. For Agamemnon's character is defined with reference to the 'outward nexus of habit' not the 'inner consciousness of the agent.'¹

The criteria for kingly or heroic behaviour relevant to the moral assessment of Agamemnon in the Iliad concern what he does.

1. John Jones Aristotle and Greek Tragedy Chatto and Windus 1962.

But the character of Agamemnon as revealed by his actions is only a part of what is questioned. The other part is his reputation and how far he lives up to it. To determine this attention will have to be given not only to the actions of Agamemnon, but ~~also~~^{also} to what the other characters say about what he does and ^{to} what other characters say about other people who act in the same way Agamemnon does.

(ii) Agamemnon-Achilles quarrel

Agamemnon first appears in conflict with Achilles. Achilles has called an assembly in order to determine the cause of the plague which is killing the Achaian men. Kalchas, the best of the bird interpreters, knows the reason for the plague. He is afraid to tell it, for what he has to say will make the king of the Achaians angry and the king, when angry with a man under him 'is too strong'. (I 75-83) He refuse^s to speak until Achilles swears to protect him from that anger. Achilles so swears and Kalchas proceeds to explain that the plague is sent by Apollo because when his priest came with a ransom for his daughter Chryseis, taken prisoner by Agamemnon, Agamemnon defied Apollo and the wishes of the army and sent the priest away without the girl, making angry threats.

When it is determined that the plague will end only if Agamemnon returns the girl to her father he agrees to let her go. But in the next breath he demands another prize since to go without would be 'unfitting.' (I 118-119) Achilles replies with ironic respect for the title of Agamemnon, but with scorn

For his attitudes:

"Son of Atreus, most lordly, greediest for gain of all men,
how shall the great-hearted Achaians give you a prize now?"
I 122-123.

He explains that there are no prizes left in store: all have been distributed. It would be 'unbecoming' (I 126) ~~he~~^{he} says, to call back any prize that has already been given but, if the Achaians can plunder Troy, they will pay him three or four times over what he has given up. But Agamemnon sees the loss of his girl and Achilles' refusal to compensate for it by giving over his own as a slight on his honour. He decides that Achilles wants to cheat him; he will not go without a prize when Achilles has one, and is angry because Achilles' speech is an insolent attempt to give him orders.

Agamemnon then threatens to choose and take a girl for himself if the Achaians will not give him one. Achilles retorts that Agamemnon is shameless because he thinks primarily of gain and is thus not a proper leader of the men who have travelled so far and fought so valiantly for his honour. The others, he says, have come to Troy to support him and to win honour for him and for Menelaus, but he has forgotten all this, or else it does not matter to him.

This challenge to his authority and to his worthiness as a leader only increases Agamemnon's determination to assert his right, ~~or even to~~ He does not appeal to the army to enforce his right, or even to support it, he assumes it. He de-

mands Briseis and claims that he will simply take her.

"I myself going to your shelter, that you may learn well how much greater I am than you, and another man may shrink back from likening himself to me and contending against me."

I 185-188.

At the first opportunity anyone has had to intervene, Nestor asks each of the men to consider what they have said. He seems to assent to Agamemnon's way of thinking about his status, but supports Achilles' claim to Briseis.

"You great/good man that you are, yet do not take ~~the~~ ^{the} girl away but let her be, a prize as the sons of the Achaians gave her first."

I 275-277.

The words 'good/great' man that you are' operate in two ways. They indicate to Agamemnon and to the assembly that everyone recognises his status. Followed as they are by the phrase 'yet do not take the girl away' they indicate to Agamemnon that, even if the girl should remain with Achilles, he would remain great. Next he acknowledges Agamemnon's rights to power, reminding Achilles, and we may assume, reassuring Agamemnon at the same time, that his power is given by Zeus and ~~is~~ thus is not such as to be measured against the power other people display. Stressing the incommensurability, he adds that although Achilles is stronger and of an immortal mother, Agamemnon is lord.

Nestor concludes with a practical reason for the placation of Achilles^e. He stands as a great bulwark of battle over all the Achaians. But this last piece of ^a advice Agamemnon ignores as, indeed, he seems to have ignored the greater part of

Nestor's speech. For although he overtly acknowledges it as 'fair and orderly' (I 286), he stubbornly reiterates that Achilles wants to be above everyone else and give the orders. Agamemnon says that military proficiency gives no right to abusive speech.

Achilles declares that he will not obey Agamemnon any longer. He will not fight to keep the girl but he will fight to keep the other possessions. With the threat that, if Agamemnon tries to take any other thing he will fight for blood, Achilles withdraws.

It looks at first sight as though Agamemnon and Achilles are quarrelling over the possession of a girl, "one single girl," as Ajax ruefully remarks (IX 637). But the argument suggests that the possession of the girl is an integral part of, but not the substance of, the issue between them. That there is more to such issues is pointed up by their recurrence in the Iliad; this quarrel can be set alongside the question of the return of Chryseis to Chryses and indeed of Helen to Menelaus.

(iii) Agamemnon-Chryses quarrel

Agamemnon refused to return Chryseis to her father in exchange for ransom because, as he plainly says in the assembly (I 113) he likes her better than his lawful wife, Clytemnestra. He promptly gives reasons for his choice, listing her merits.

By contrast Achilles cannot refuse to give Briseis to Agamemnon, because the demands of the top king over-ride the claims of the princes. He, unlike Agamemnon, is not primarily

interested in the girl herself. He says nothing about her appearance or skills, and not until Book IX 340-343 does he reveal affection for the girl. What Achilles resents is the loss of honour which is signalled by the loss of the girl. Agamemnon's honour is not destroyed by the return of Chryse^{is}~~is~~ to her father because a ransom was offered and in return; the transac^c_htion was looked upon as a bargain. Achilles' honour is diminished because no recompense is offered; the transaction ~~is~~ clearly regarded as an affair of honour.

That Achilles is agreeing to give her over only because he knows that he can do nothing else, and that he would like to contest the king's right to take the girl ~~is~~ indicated by his insistence that Agamemnon shall not lay claim to his other property. Some of this, presumably, is booty from the same campaign that won him Briseis, and he is maintaining what he maintained in line 126, that it is unbecoming for people to take back things once they have been given. He appears to be maintaining that this principle, viz. respect for the property and possessions of others, should take priority over the rights and ~~V~~privileges of kings.

(iv) Paris-Menelaus quarrel

Controversies over the possession of a girl, or over prizes generally, and the maintenance of honour that such possession involves abound in the Iliad, where the basic theme pre-supposed is, of course, the contest between Menelaus and Paris over Helen.

Helen was Menelaus' wife and belonged to him. When Paris took her away he offended Menelaus' honour just as Agamemnon offended Achilles' honour in taking Briseis. But taking the lawful wife of another man is not like taking away a woman won in combat. Here again Achilles' remarks are relevant, for when he says that he loved Briseis like a wife even though he won her by the ~~x~~ sword, he marks one aspect of this difference. The surprising emotional subtlety of Achilles' remark also makes Agamemnon's statement that he liked Chryseis better than his lawful wife a peculiarly shallow and crude one.

Agamemnon said of Chryseis:

"...for in truth she is in no way inferior
neither in build nor stature nor wit, nor in accomplishment.
Still I am willing to give her back ~~if~~ such is the best way."
I 114-116.

but immediately in line 117 he demands

"Find me then some prize that shall be my own, lest I only
among the Argives go without...."

It is true that, as Chryseis is not his wife, there is no reason why he should love her like a wife and he would not, in ordinary circumstances, be subject to criticism for demanding a replacement. But the demand, following as it does on a statement that he loved her like a wife, signals a coarser type of motivation and emotion than that manifested by Achilles. For when Achilles remarks that he loved Briseis like a wife, ^{he is} meaning, presumably, that he loved her fairly stably, solidly, respectfully, individually, and exclusively, as would be proper in a stable constitutionally established relationship.

There seems to be a difference in emotional relationships based on the difference in the constitutional relationship. The poet has subtly marked the ~~coarser~~^{coarser} type of motivation and emotion characteristic of Agamemnon and contrasted with it the finer, more discriminating feelings characteristic of Achilles; again, the effect is one obtainable in epic because of the breadth of treatment possible.

The emotional distinction marked by Achilles must be founded on a difference in the relationships of a man and his wife as against a man and his war-captive. The difference between the seizure of a wife and the seizure of a girl captured in war is such that, in the latter case if Agamemnon would return Briseis along with gifts and an apology, the honour of Achilles would be restored, whereas the offence to Menelaus' honour is not such as could be so easily restored. Homer makes clear these differences in the course of the narrative.

When (in Book IX) Agamemnon comes to see that he has made a mistake in taking Briseis from Achilles, recognising that Achilles is beloved of Zeus and therefore worth many men, he sees that amends can and must be made. Nestor, who is advising him, suggests that they should try to make amends with words of supplication and with gifts of friendship. Such gifts would not, of course, be merely tokens of friendship, but marks of public recognition; it was as such that Briseis was first given to Achilles by the army; she represented a transférable unit of honour.

Agamemnon replies:

"I am willing to make all good and give back gifts in abundance."
IX 120.

And, indeed, the gifts he offers are glorious and unprecedented ones. But again he insists upon an act of submission from Achilles, adding at the end of the speech:

"Let him yield place to me, inasmuch as I am the kinglier and inasmuch as I can call myself born the elder."

Nestor replies that no one could scorn the gifts offered to Achilles by Agamemnon and does not mention the gentle words again. But this, the lack of gentle words, coupled with Agamemnon's demand that his authority be acknowledged, is what Achilles resents when he rejects the offer and the lesson which Phoenix tries to teach him.

(ix.529-599)

Phoenix¹ recalls the example of Meleager, a man who, though he stubbornly rejected honourable promises of gifts if he should defend his country, eventually had to defend it without the honour of gifts. But Achilles rejects this example and discounts this sort of public recognition of honour, making an almost Platonic stand:

"Such honour is a thing I need not." IX 607-8.

What he is objecting to in the story and in the advice implied is the notion that the gifts which Meleager deprived himself of constituted public recognition and that to go into battle without gifts, i. e. as Meleager did, would be to have less honour. Gifts might constitute honour of a sort, but not the honour

in which Achilles now is interested. Achilles does not want the sort of public recognition constituted in gifts. He wants an apology from Agamemnon.

The insult of Agamemnon to Achilles, though it involves public recognition attested by gifts, is nevertheless a personal insult which could be redeemed by Agamemnon's personal behaviour. But Paris' insult to Menelaus involves not only a family, but a king's family, and therefore the whole polity of the Achaians as well. Restitution could not be accomplished with a return of the woman along with her possessions, even if apologies were made.

The issue between Achilles and Agamemnon could be resolved with an apology from Agamemnon. In a similar instance Agamemnon apologises readily to Odysseus. Why will he not apologise to Achilles? A consideration of the two instances may indicate the reason.

(v) Agamemnon-Odysseus quarrel

In Book IV Agamemnon is trying to rouse his men for battle, Odysseus among them. He goes among them scolding, using the same words to them as Achilles had ~~said~~^{said}, abusively to him: "You, with your mind forever on profit," and accusing them of sneaking away at ^a ~~the~~ time of danger. Odysseus is displeased by this and "looked at Agamemnon darkly" but he is not carried away by his anger. He rejects Agamemnon's accusations and invites him to watch him engage the enemy in battle. But he adds:

"Your talk is wind and no meaning." (IV 355) Agamemnon is usually quick to take offence and it is to be expected that he should become angry with this reply. But rather, "Powerful Agamemnon in turn answered him, laughing, seeing that he was angered, and taking back the word spoken." (IV 356-7) Then he retracts his accusations with an apology and an offer of recompense:

"Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus:
I must not be niggling with you, nor yet give you orders,
since I know how the spirit in your secret heart knows
ideas of kindness only; for what you think is what I think.
Come now, I will make it good hereafter, if anything evil
has been said; let the gods ~~make~~^{make} all this come to nothing."
IV 355-363.

It is clear that Odysseus is right and Agamemnon wrong and that Odysseus can, though angry, point out Agamemnon's unfairness in so abusing him; in a similar position (though one where right was less clearly located) Achilles gave way to his anger and spoke abusively to Agamemnon. It is also ^{possible} ~~true~~ that Agamemnon may have learned from his previous experience and knows that to antagonise a fighter is to risk losing him, and knows also that he cannot risk the loss of another of his best fighters, ~~but~~ **if** increased wisdom and prudence are the reasons behind this apology it might seem strange that, in Book IX, he cannot see that an apology as well as gifts are required in making amends to Achilles. ~~But~~ **it** is doubtful that these are the only reasons for his apology to Odysseus.

If Agamemnon's apology is mainly due to his realisation that he is in the wrong in accusing Odysseus and his realisation that this is a risky policy, then he would not immediately repeat the same policy in accusing ^DXiomedes (370ff.) It seems more likely that Agamemnon and Achilles are temperamentally incompatible. Achilles is courageous and proud and potentially insubordinate. He accuses Agamemnon and reviles him in the assembly. Odysseus is neither overly proud nor so openly abusive. Though he does correct Agamemnon, he does not challenge his authority. Agamemnon can retain his status in apologising for his hasty words when they are reprovved in private. It is difficult to see how he could retain his status and apologise to Achilles after ^{Achilles} he has abused him in the assembly.

But there is another feature of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles which is pointed up when that quarrel is contrasted with the rebukes Hektor levels at Paris because, though he is the one who brought the war to the Trojans, he shrinks from the battle. Though Hektor is clearly justified in this rebuke, yet he speaks almost apologetically:

"You yourself would fight with another
whom you saw anywhere hanging back from the hateful encounter."
II 329-330.

This attitude ^{is} has the direct result of maintaining good relations, for Paris replies:

Hektor, seeing you have scolded me rightly, not beyond
measure...

This indicates that Hektor, unlike Agamemnon, has the judgment

required for successfully rallying his men; it is a typical example of his powers of leadership as contrasted with Agamemnon's.

It might seem, at first sight, that Agamemnon might similarly have made an apology to Achilles, regardless the rights and wrongs of the issues involved in the quarrel, in order to resume good relations and get Achilles back to fight for the Achaeans. But the rebuke of Hektor to Paris was the private rebuke of one man to another. Also if they are not of the same status, then Hektor is superior to Paris. But Agamemnon is superior to Achilles in status; he is king, Achilles is a prince. He will not apologise to Achilles for what he took to be not merely a personal insult but a threat to his authority. That he has not changed his thinking about this is indicated by the speech he makes later which echoes the concluding remarks of the speech that brought on the wrath of Achilles.

"And let him yield place to me, inasmuch as I am the kinglier and inasmuch as I can call myself born the elder.."

(X 160-161)

repeating

"...that you may learn well how much greater I am than you, and another man may shrink back from likening himself to me and contending against me."

(I 185-188)

It is worth noting, too, that his remarks on the later occasion are not the literal repetition of the ones used on the first

occasion. If Agamemnon had done no thinking about the issue, one would expect the kind of literal repetition characteristic of repeated orders, or dreams narrated. Agamemnon is firmly and consciously insisting upon the finality of his authority;

In the main quarrel Achilles has spoken abusively to Agamemnon, calling him greedy and intent upon gain, a "wine sack with a dog's eyes, with a deer's heart," and one who shirks from battle. Two questions arise: the ~~first~~ first, whether the accusations are true, is overshadowed by the second, whether Achilles has any right to utter them. Light is thrown on this latter question by a further incident.

(vi) Agamemnon-Thersites quarrel

In the poem heroes are shown acting basely for once, or approaching base actions or accusing others of shamefulnes or baseness. In this passage (II 211-277) baseness, presented in the characterisation of Thersites, is dealt with appropriately by Odysseus.

Thersites indirectly abuses Agamemnon. He levels a number of ironical and rhetorical questions at Agamemnon with telling effect. In this indirect method of speaking he provides a striking parallel to Ajax' view of wily Odysseus. He indirectly accuses Agamemnon of piling up gold and women, thereby making remarks which might support Achilles' allegations of the greediness of Agamemnon. He scorns the army for sheepishly following 'the shepherd' and suggests that they should desert Agamemnon's cause. In this suggesting he provides a

clear parallel of Agamemnon's view of Achilles. In suggesting that the men should leave Agamemnon so that he, without any men, would be helpless and in withdrawing himself in resentful indignation he, again, repeats the sentiments of Achilles who withdrew from the battle in order that Agamemnon should be forced to realise how vital was his ^{own} contribution to the forces.

But Thersites is ugly and lame and thus is radically different from Achilles and Odysseus. He is base and they are honoured men, thus Thersites, unlike Odysseus and Achilles can be treated with physical violence. Odysseus does not reply to his speech, he does not assert Agamemnon's authority, nor does he refute the accusations. He calls them scandalous and then beats the man who makes them. The one remark ^Y he makes which even approaches an answer is that there is no 'worse man' than the one who makes these remarks. ^{Among the things he means by this is} ~~By this he means both~~ that the man is of low social standing, for ~~he~~ is not a prince. Odysseus may also be stressing the contrast between Thersites and Achilles who, when he was abusing Agamemnon, referred to himself as the "best of the Achaians." (I 244.) Odysseus emphasises the notion that Thersites is unworthy; not being a prince, he has no right to speak at the assembly, and being lame, he cannot be much of a fighter. He therefore has no right to criticise Agamemnon. Thersites' presumptions contrast strikingly with Nestor's words to Agamemnon and Achilles when he credits them both with sur-

passing all the Danaans in council/counsel and in fighting ((I 258).

What is made quite clear in this incident is the importance of a man's status in determining the treatment he shall receive and, therefore, his honour. The treatment received is independent of actual behaviour but has an immediate effect upon it. That Thersites' ^{unattractive} physical appearance and ^{low social} status determined the treatment he received and the fact that Thersites' appearance was remarkably similar to what is reported as Socrates' appearance suggests that Plato might not have been amused by Homer's mimesis ^{of him.} It is worth noting, too, that this portrayal corresponds with Aristotle's specification of the ridiculous and seems to be ^{what would have been} a fairly commonly accepted ^{ed as a} presentation of a basically unworthy man.

A further striking example of the importance of treatment of status and, therefore, honour, independent of actual behaviour but having immediate effect upon actual behaviour, is provided in the "historical" story told by Herodotus (Histories: Book IV). The slaves of the Scythians ~~who~~ married their mistresses and acted as free men while their ^Smasters were away on wars of conquest; they promptly defeated the returning victorious army until one of these suggested that they should stop using spears and bows and go for their ex-slaves with horse-whips, because "when they saw us armed, they naturally felt that they were as good men as we are, and were meeting us on equal terms; but when

they see us coming with whips, instead, they will remember ^{they} ~~that~~ are slaves. Once they admit that, they will never try to stand up to us." The plan succeeded; the slaves who had fought victoriously ~~§~~ against armed men fled from the whips.

In quashing Thersites Odysseus does give a practical reason for supporting Agamemnon, saying that ^{in many cases} it is not clear what will happen to the Achaians, and ~~the~~ if Agamemnon is deposed, disorder will further impair the worth of the forces. But neither side has a chance to argue over the matter, for Odysseus precludes further words by beating the man. It is significant that the multitude, i. e. the soldiers, support Odysseus' action. They are pleased to see "the braggart" thrown out of the assembly. And this would seem to indicate that they are glad to have the right of the princes and a fortiori the dignity of the king upheld against abuse. Their failure to consider the justification of such abuse might have been an indication of their refusal to think about the situation. But it seems that it is rather a general refusal to allow such remarks at all. A further incident can be invoked to show that this is not merely because of the baseness of the speaker.

(vii) Agamemnon-Diomedes quarrel

Immediately after having insulted Odysseus in Book IV 338-348 and having been forced to take back his words in line 362-3, Agamemnon ~~proceeds~~ proceeds in lines 370-400 to compare Diomedes very unfavourably, and again very unsatisfactorily, with his

honoured and heroic father, and this despite his renowned and proved valour (never really questioned, and exemplified frequently throughout the Iliad.) But when Diomedes is wrongly accused by Agamemnon, he gives no answer:

"and strong Diomedes gave no answer
in awe before the majesty of the king's rebuking."

IV 401

and when his friend Sthenelos speaks up indignantly for him Diomedes tells him to remain silent and not to accuse Agamemnon, for he is right to try to rally his men to action.

It would therefore seem that whether or not Achilles' accusations are vindicated in the sense of being based on facts, they are misplaced. For such is the rank of king that no one has the right to abuse him or to challenge his authority.

F) Uncertain dependence of rights on social status.

Is it true, then, that the rights of the king are such that no one can challenge him? And in general are all rights dependent on social status of one sort of another? **Against** this conclusion there are certain passages suggesting appeals to laws basic to society as such and applying to all men, irrespective of rank. When Achilles says that it is unbecoming for the people (demos) to take back things they have given, it appears that he is stating a ^{law}~~law~~ basic to society, such that violation of it would impair the cohesion of society. And Agamemnon appears to be appealing to another such law when, in

the assembly, he says:

"it is well to listen to the speaker, it is not becoming to break in on him."

XIX 79-80

for he prefaces this statement with an address "My friends, Danaan warriors, squires of Ares," which seems an indication ~~that~~ ^{that} the requirement applies to all, irrespective ~~of~~ rank.

It is true that some passages seem to indicate special requirements or expectations of those of high rank, e. g. in Book II when Odysseus is preventing the flight of the soldiers; on encountering some king or man of influence, i. e. a man of status, he addressed him:

"Excellency! It does not become you to be ^rflinched like any coward.", II 190

whereas he struck men of the people with the staff and told them to sit and listen to the orders and suggestions of men who were better than they. But this is not so much an indication that what is or is not becoming action is a matter of the status of the man acting, as that the men of status are, even in flight, more likely to rally to an appeal to what is expected of them than are the common soldiers. It is also an indication that reference to what is becoming is usually effective.

But Agamemnon is not merely a warrior or a squire. He is the king. And it is not yet clear that there is any rule placing a limitation on his power as ruler. It is worth noting that when Agamemnon first presses his claim for Briseis despite Achilles' protestations that it is unbecoming so to press it,

Achilles does not follow up his protest by asserting that he has no right to take Briseis. Achilles does imply that he has no right to anything other than Briseis, so it seems that he is in doubt as to Agamemnon's rights to the girl.

Another suggestion of a natural law concerns the treatment of enemies' corpses. Achilles, in dragging Hektor's corpse around the camp, disregards the pity due to Hektor's relatives as to all who are bereaved. The body should be given to the bereaved to mourn over and in order that they may give an honourable funeral. ^{Further,} There is some justice to be done to Hektor, too, who was always a valiant fighter. He has paid the price for killing Patroklos with his life in honourable battle and does not deserve the dishonour to his corpse. Third, Achilles is so overcome with grief over the death of his friend that he behaves in an unmanly and inhuman fashion. Apollo, though he disapproves of Achilles' malicious treatment of the corpse, cannot deny Achilles' honour even though his behaviour is not seemly in a good/great man. He says merely:

"Good/great as he is, let him take care not to make us angry; for see, he does dishonour to the dumb earth in his fury."

XIV 53-54a

What seems to be brought out here is that although there is no rule according to which Achilles must not take unlimited advantage of his power and status as a great/good (man) there are, nonetheless, good reasons why he should not.

A similar situation arises when Zeus considers whether he may over-ride Fate or destiny by releasing a man from death.

Twice he considers this possibility and twice he is discouraged.

"In turn the lady Hera of the ox eyes answered him: majesty, son of Kronos, what sort of thing have you spoken? Do you wish to bring back a man who is mortal, one long since doomed by his destiny, from ill-sounding death and release him? Do it then; but not all the rest of us gods shall approve you."

XVI 439-443

"Then in answer the goddess grey-eyed Athene spoke to him: Father of the shining bolt, dark misted, what is this you said? Do you wish to bring back a man who is mortal, one long since doomed by his destiny, from ill-sounding death and release him? Do it then; but not all the rest of us gods shall approve you."

XXII 177-181

When

~~When~~ Hera expresses her distress that Zeus should entertain such a notion she says first (as above) that he should respect the order set down by Fate; but she goes on to say that if Zeus gives in to this temptation to rescue his own son Sarpedon, the other gods will want to follow him and do the same for their sons. Athene does not give any supplementary reasons. She merely expresses her disapproval of the suggestion. Though it is clear that Zeus has a choice, it is no more clear whether he is morally obliged to obey fate than it was clear that Agamemnon was morally ~~not~~ obliged to observe the agreement about property and possessions, or Achilles morally obliged to restrain his excessive hatred of Hektor. This uncertainty is the source of the difficulty in deciding what ~~one~~ ought to be done. For if there were unambiguous general rules to be applied to actions irrespective of the status of the agent it ~~is~~ could be ascertained

in a once-for-all manner than Agamemnon was, or was not, acting within his rights in demanding the girl from Achilles.

Agamemnon comes to see that he has done the wrong thing and he acknowledges it. (IX 115ff, XIX 78ff.) But the wrongness of the action ~~does~~ ^{seems to} not derive from what he did, but from its ~~results~~ ^{results}. He says (IX 119-120) that his treatment of Achilles was mad, the result of madness was that he did not account for the fact that Achilles is beloved of Zeus and, therefore, worth many fighters. Agamemnon sees that he has done the wrong thing, but by this he means that he did not pay due attention to the effect of the loss of Achilles to the Achaians. But it might equally be held, and the remarks of Phoenix and of Ajax in the embassy scene suggest, that Agamemnon was not merely mistaken about the consequences, but that he pushed his claims of priority too far.

On the other hand they also state explicitly that Achilles has done the wrong thing. Odysseus says that Achilles hates Agamemnon too much, and that he should accept the gifts and fight, or at least take pity upon the Achaians. (IX 299-303) Phoenix tells Achilles that he should quell his anger for it is not his place to have a pitiless heart; even the gods listen to supplications; but Achilles refuses to. (496-501) Ajax says that Achilles has made his spirit savage, and will not recall the respect and honour rendered to him by friends. Other men accept recompense for the loss of a brother or child, but Achilles will not accept recompense for a mere girl-captive. But in all this it is still not clear whether Achilles is doing the wrong thing because he has not observed the dividing line between reasonable and

excessive action, or because his actions have disastrous results for his comrades and for himself, or for some other reason.

I suspect that there is an answer to this uncertainty, but it is an indirect one. The answer consists in assembling groups of similar, but contrasting situations, and bringing out the way in which general rules have been held to apply in them till the relevant application in the current situation becomes clear. In the comparison of the Achilles-Agamemnon quarrel with other controversies over the possession of a girl it was seen how the general rules about honour, the loss of honour, and the appropriate ways to make restitutions for honour lost were held to apply in each of the particular situations cited. In the account of the contests and games at the funeral of Patroklos (Book XXIII) 275ff) a further instructive parallel is given which can be seen to be relevant to the Homeric assessment of excellence/virtue and to the status of the good/great man.

It is typical in Homer and, presumably, of the moral thinking of the Homeric period, that the citing of relevant general rules in justifying particular actions requires extensive experience and the gift of sagacity as well. It is not enough for the people making moral decisions and judgments to know ~~the~~ the general rules, they must also be able to decide when exceptions might, and do, occur. The context of the games, in which the contests are in a certain way unserious and are carried on between friends with a minimum degree of honour at stake, is an excellent one for the development of reasoning about the due distribution of prizes or rewards and penalties.

G) Distribution of Rewards and Penalties^S at the Games (Book XXIII)

At the onset of the contests it looks as if the results of the trials and the distribution of prizes may depend upon more than the performances of the competitors. Achilles announces that if he were to compete he would take the first prize. But he will not compete, so contests must be held to determine winners. Accordingly a chariot race is run, but when Eumelos comes in last Achilles nevertheless ~~N~~ calls him 'the best ~~X~~ man' and suggests that a prize should be given him "and well he deserves it." (XXIII 530-538) He does not take back the first prize from Diomedes who came in first and immediately ~~see~~ seized his prize.(511), but states that the second should be given to Eumelos. The others assembled agree, but Antilochos, who in fact finished second, protests that his prize should not be taken away.

The situation here is similar to the conflict between Agamemnon's and Achilles' claims to Briseis in that Achilles clearly had a claim to Briseis as a prize for his performance in battle, but that claim was over-ridden by the ability of the king to demand what he wishes because he is king.

But the situation between Agamemnon and Achilles differs from that between Eumelos and Antilochos in important ways. Antilochos does not challenge the generally accepted assessment that Eumelos is 'best,' though Achilles did challenge Agamemnon's claim to be the best. In this challenge Achilles wanted to assert that the title of 'best' should belong at least as much to one like himself who excelled in physical strength and heroic valour and fought hardest in battle as to the constitutional ruler as such. What Achilles advocates is tantamount to a

revision of the standards determining who is best. Similarly, the standard by which Eumelos is judged to be best is not that of winning races, so Antilochos^{chos}~~os~~ does not complain that whatever honour he deserves for winning is slighted because Eumelos is said to be best. For nobody is concerned with performances in the race when they claim that Eumelos is best. But Antilochos is concerned with the distribution of prizes. He convinced^s Achilles that the prizes for the race should be awarded in accordance with performances and that honour merited on other grounds should be signaled in another way.

Antilochos is similar to Achilles, too, in treating prizes as prizes and honour as something independent of prizes. He places more importance on the prize itself than upon the monetary value of it. It does not matter to him what is the worth of other prizes offered to Eumelos, but he is very anxious to keep that prize set out as the second prize. It was not Achilles, the most distinguished warrior, who asserted his right to keep a captive concubine as a token of glory, it was the king, Agamemnon, who demanded a girl to replace the one he forfeited.

Achilles was not tempted by Agamemnon's offer to return gifts and other women as well as Briseis. He demanded an apology for having taken Briseis after she had been awarded by the army.

This disagreement between Antilochus and Eumelos shows that, even in a race, a man's virtue/ excellence rather than the results of the race may be regarded as determining the distribution of prizes, but it also shows that there is room for disputing this by the man who has won the prize in the ordinary way.

After Antilochos has received his prize, Menelaus complains that Antilochos' driving had been dangerous and that in contravening the rules of good horsemanship he had put Menelaus to shame by thwarting his horses. At first he is inclined to rely upon his strength as leader, but then he appeals to the assembly to judge between Antilochos and himself. He suggests that he might assert himself as the mightier in worth and in power, but if the rights and wrongs of the issue are not sorted out, the Danaans would later reproach him and say either that he lied about the race or that, relying upon his status, he demanded what was not his in virtue of performance. He concludes by challenging Antilochos to swear an oath that he did not use guile in overcoming Menelaus. This, says Menelaus, is justice.

Here again there are echoes of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles. Menelaus points out that he could invoke his position and power, which is what Agamemnon did. But it is not only the prospect of an undesirable reputation which might follow upon such an enforcement of privilege that deters him from pressing those claims. In this situation there is another way to settle whether or not what he claims is due.

Antilochos can be asked to swear that he did not interfere by guile with the course of Menelaus' chariot in the race. Not only in recognition of Menelaus' superiority in age and ~~in~~rank, but also because he feels that he may be in the wrong (it not being clear whether when he 'took advantage' Antilochos was demonstrating cunning horsemanship or driving dangerously, the line between the one and the

other well known ~~to~~ to be a subjective one), Antilochos acknowledges that he has done the wrong thing and offers to make restitutions.

Here again the situation is not an exact parallel with the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles. There was no clear and finally decisive way to prove to Achilles that he was in the wrong in trying to resist the claims of ~~his~~ ^{the} king, and there is no question of guile or unfair tactics. Further, the status of Agamemnon is among the things which Achilles is questioning, whereas not only rank, but also ^{marked} ^{a difference in} age, mark a clear difference between Antilochos and Menelaus, and the acknowledged junior status of Antilochos contributes to the ease of that restitution.

Nonetheless in Menelaus' concluding remarks to Antilochos there is a suggestion of an attitude on the part of Agamemnon might have led to a reconciliation:

Antilochos,

"I myself, who was angry, now will give way before you, since you were not formerly loose-minded or vain. It is only that this time your youth got the better of your intelligence. Beware another time of playing tricks on your betters. Any other man of the Achaians might not have appeased me. But you have suffered much for me, and done much hard work, and your noble father, too, and your brother for my sake. Therefore I will be ruled by your supplication. I will even give you the mare, though she is mine, so that these men too may be witnesses that my heart is not stubborn within me."

XXIII 601-611.

When Ajax and Odysseus wrestle neither can get the advantage, and because they seem to be of equal strength and rank Achilles interrupts the fighting and declares that victory is with both of them. Fortunately the prizes for the contest are such as can be divided equally. Here again the situation is unlike that between Agamemnon and Achilles. For it was impossible for them to split the prize, and there was not anything

that could be produced as an equivalent or duplication of the prize. What is more important, during the course of the quarrel the issue of honour becomes contested in such a way that there can be no ~~such~~ settlement, whatever prizes might have been available to offer.

When Achilles insists that he is the best, and therefore Agamemnon is cowardly and greedy, and Agamemnon insists that he cares nothing at all for Achilles, then there can be no settlement. Odysseus and Ajax engaged in a battle of strength can be content with a draw; Agamemnon and Achilles cannot.

The last contest, the one for spear-throwers, is between Agamemnon and Meriones. Achilles suggests that the first prize should go to Meriones, the warrior, even though Agamemnon is the better. Agamemnon consents. It is never doubted that Agamemnon might demand the prize, for he is both the ~~more~~ noble and lordly of the two and he is also the best spear-thrower. Whichever of the two operative standards in the distribution of prizes is to determine who gets the spear, he will deserve it. But for no apparent reason Achilles suggests that he should concede it, and this he does with grace. It may be that he has learned not to demand his rights in all circumstances, to practice courtesy and good will to his men, and to take suggestions from Achilles as well as from Nestor and Odysseus. And perhaps Achilles has learned to respect and acknowledge the authority and virtue/excellence of king. He uses words of reconciliation something like the statement of submission demanded by Agamemnon:

"Son of Atreus, for we know how much you surpass all others,
by how much you are greatest for strength among the spear-throwers,"
XXIII 890-891.

But another interpretation which seems to be equally warranted is that Achilles has learned that tests of strength with Agamemnon should be avoided and in this situation he uses tact ~~is~~ in order to avoid the actual staging of a contest. He makes a suggestion such that Agamemnon can ~~by~~ submit with good nature because his honour is not questioned. Similarly Agamemnon might be said to have learned that it is better for him to refrain from entering into contests, for when he engages in them he usually loses and recovers his honour only with the assertion of privilege.

Achilles' words of reconciliation, though they may constitute the ~~an~~ act of submission required by Agamemnon, they may also be seen as a rather limited submission. For in admitting that Agamemnon "surpasses all others" Achilles may be paying homage. But he might just be stating the fact that Agamemnon as king has rights and enforces them. His might and the spear-throwing ability might be taken as ^{two} ~~two~~ of many instances of the excellence of Agamemnon, but it is also possible that they are specified by Achilles in an attempt to limit rather than extend his praise of the king.

Agamemnon has no speech of reconciliation for Achilles. He never admits that Achilles is anything but a good fighter. The one instance where someone acknowledges that something is due to Achilles is Odysseus' assurance (XIX 180) that he will lack nothing that is due to him. But the reference is not to what is due as a measure of honour as Achilles

demanded in Book I, but what is due in the fulfillment of Agamemnon's offer in Book IX.

The contests of Book XXIII have been staged so that each man may demonstrate his skill. Prizes are distributed with reference to, if not always in strict accordance with, the results of the contests. Though prizes are given to Nestor who has not **competed** at all, and to Eumelos who came in last, and though second prize is awarded to Agamemnon who, had he competed, would probably have won the first prize, in general the prizes go to those who won matches.

The demonstration of skill in the contests may be compared to the demonstration of prowess in battles; the prizes in recognition of good performance in games can be compared with the honour a man wins in battle. The importance of recognition of achievement in both instances is indicated in that a victory without honour was thought to be no victory at all. Just as Stenelos does not lose any time before collecting the prize he won in the chariot race, so the warrior seizes the armour of the opponent he has killed on the battle field so that he can display a trophy of his achievement. But prizes from games are unlike prizes from battles in that it is fairly clear what the prize won in the course of the games is a prize for. Either a man has performed well or else he is awarded a prize in recognition of his status. In the battle the demarcation is not so clear. Even though the prizes can to some extent to be set out in advance of the engagement, the final division of the booty must depend upon what in fact can be taken. Second, conflicting demands for any ~~specific~~ specific prize cannot be settled with strict reference to performances because it cannot be deter -

mined what in fact any single man accomplished; even taking the time and incurring the risks of stripping^g armour from the most important of the defeated fo^es endangers one's own life and jeopardises the fate of the whole expedition. But the number of shields, weapons, etc., collected in a campaign is only one of a number of relevant considerations in distributing prizes on the basis of skill displayed. But most important is the fact that the status of the war lord_x is such that his deserts are not calculated on the basis of his performance, but are due to his constitutional status. Nonetheless the war lord is the man who is assumed to possess those skills and qualities required in battle. o/a

The cross-relevance of these factors in the distribution of the prizes won in battle preclude^s any clearly, finally appropriate allocation. In the games, disputes arising from distribution of prizes can be settled; after the battle, rules of settlement are such that the possibility of a complaint such as Achilles', ^{viz.} that the demands of ^{the war lord,} the king, were excessive and that due honour was withheld from a prince who earned honour and respect on the strength of his prowess, cannot be precluded.

When the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles is compared and contrast^ted with the quarrels of others in the narrative ~~an~~ the standards which are relevant to judging types of characters and their performances emerge. In the system of values embodied in the poem there is no attempt to assess actions simply or even primarily on the basis of what has been done. The status of the agent is important too. Unless the praise of actions bears at least some relation to what is done,

there is not much point in praising or honouring at all, but at the same time if the warlike Homeric society is to flourish, ^{the} virtue/excellence of its constitutional leaders must be acknowledged. The doubts and confusions and arguments that inevitably arise from this tangle ^{of values} come clearly into the open in the games. But in the games only a part of a man's valour is being tested, and games are held at a time when men are in co-operative spirit. Concessions and courtesies are more important than prizes and the acknowledgement of virtue/excellence. The federation of princes is presented as a proper federation at the death of Patroklos because there is mutual respect for rights and honours. But the same federation was threatened when, in the quarrel, Achilles challenged the whole system itself. Agamemnon would not permit Achilles to retain the honour that had been awarded to him and took back what was given by the army. Achilles would not bow down to authority, but abused the king and withdrew. The results were disastrous, but it is difficult to see how they could have been avoided. When the social and moral system is such that it treats both an aristocratic status and a practical ideal of human excellence as ultimately commendable, clashes are inevitable.

H) Recapitulation of purpose of examination of the Iliad.

The quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles was introduced and contrasted with others not primarily in order to show up the confusion of Homeric morals but rather to show that the relevant moral and social beliefs are presented in the poem in a complete and persuasive, if complex and obscure, form. Their presentation is complete in that

whatever must be known in order to understand what the characters are doing and why they act and describe their acts as they do, is worked into the fabric of the poem. The morality incorporated in the epic is persuasive in that the situations selected or constructed by the poet as the subject for his mimesis, and his mode of 'miming' them embody a moral outlook whereby moral problems are, typically, dilemmas which have to be argued through. The points of view 'mimed' and the words and speeches used by the author and projected on to the characters give such force to the mimesis that the reader, his interest held by the liveliness of the presentation and the violence of the conflicts, may be led to accept the mimesis of Homer as showing what actions and men in their activities are like.

But this is the point at which Plato's objections were directed. He concluded in Book III that the story-tellers who would remain in the state would be the 'more austere and less attractive type,' for besides imitating only men of high character, they would not employ exaggerated and varying styles in making their poems. The greater the poetic appeal of the work, Plato says here, the greater is its danger. And Homer's poem, presenting intrigues and quarrels, misrepresentations of gods and men, and, in general 'miming' things not in their proper form as it would appear to the intellect but in their changing and variable appearances is stimulating and strengthening the element which threatens to undermine reason.

That the poem does appeal to the emotions is suggested not only by such isolated poignant passages as Hektor's parting from Andromache, or

Achilles' ^lcourteous and gentle kindness to Priam, or such lively exchanges as the initial quarrel or the row between Aias and Idomeneus over the chariot race, and not only by the suspense built up in scenes of battle or the sensationalism of ^{e.g.,} Hektor's storming the wall. For the whole poem consists in conflicts, conflicts of passionate conviction and conflicts of physical violence. Plato's special concern apart, we can surely recognise that the inclusion of these scenes and conflicts is not in the service of an aim of moral instruction or education, but for the power that they give the poetry.

It is true that the poem was used for instruction, and it is also true that parts of it might well be taken to be instructive. But it is highly doubtful that the poet's primary purpose in writing was moral edification. The poet presents his situations in such a manner that they are ambiguous. He makes no comment upon them. It is never made explicitly clear, for example, whether Achilles ought not to have stood up to Agamemnon in the first place, or whether Paris, having done the wrong thing in taking Helen, ought to have given her back again, or whether Hektor's courage served any purpose. Had the poet's intention been a didactic one, such situations would not have been left ambiguous.

It is true, of course, that there are some examples and sayings in the work which are peculiarly memorable, the mutual respect of Andromache and Hektor, the wisdom of Nestor, the leadership of Hektor. Sayings, too, may be picked out from the poem to be applied as rules of thumb in ordinary circumstances. But the point remains, whether the

rules are applied to situations in the poem or to situations in ordinary experience, that they are not universally applicable principles, but rules of thumb. And this emphasises a point which Plato is denying, that moral justification is moral justification of particular cases, by reference to general rules of thumb no doubt, but such reference requires a new exercise of judgment in each particular case. Agamemnon's suggestion that it is better to run from ~~dis~~^{dis}aster than to be caught up in it will not justify his avoidance of battle. But it will explain Phoenix' flight to avoid committing parricide and it will justify Patroklos' flight to avoid punishment for killing a man unwittingly. But to see in what way the rule can apply in justifying any particular action requires experience and a gift of sagacity.

One might argue that the Iliad provides a number of edifying examples, and that reading the story and seeing how the situations are discriminated one from another and how they must be judged with due attention to their individuality is ~~in itself~~^{in itself} instructive. But this is not pre-requisite to the enjoyment and understanding of the poem, and would appear to be subsidiary rather than the constitutive purpose of the poem.

~~It~~^{It} would seem, then, that Homer's intention was not primarily to tell the truth and not ~~is~~ primarily to give moral instruction, but to tell an exciting story. There is little to suggest that he was trying to instil moral virtues or moral values in writing the poem, for it is by no means clear which

values and virtues are advocated. If ~~his~~ his intention was to teach those values which were in fact accepted by his society, then he would incorporate them in the poem as he has done, but it would seem likely that he would either have criticised or praised them, or else in some other way made it more clear that these were his terms of value. For as the narrative stands, most of the apparently most commendatory terms, e. g. 'lordly', 'glorious', 'resourceful' are for the most part used in the same way as purely descriptive ones, e. g. 'flowing-haired,'* or 'breaker of horses', or 'of the shining helm,' in the titular formulae. If the purpose was to teach values it is surely unlikely that the terms of value would be thus carelessly used in the titular formula.

Conclusions

A) Poetry and Truth

The preliminary question raised by Plato's attack is how ought poetry to be judged. Plato discounts what he calls the 'charm' of poetry and judges it according to the standards of truth and reality established by the theory of Forms. Apart from the fact that no poetic mimesis could, on Plato's final view of mimesis, be an appropriate representation of truth or reality, this judgment by the standard of truth would mean that any particular instance would be judged as if its aim were to make intelligible what is otherwise confused or overlooked altogether. Plato's complaint that the poets misrepresent is a complaint that the poets do not aim at a making truth intelligible by showing how actions are in fact connected, how characters and actions should in fact be assessed, and how honorific names and titles should in fact be given.

In assuming that the mimesis is to be judged according to its presentation of such truths, Plato chooses to ignore the possibility of other functional definition of artistic activity whereby if the poet is said to 'mime' human life and such 'mimesis' is held to have some relation to what can truly be said about actions and situations, this may not be the rather rigid relation he envisages.

The examinations of the poetry of Homer would suggest that his mimesis of human life is aimed not at truth but at 'giving its own special enjoyment.'¹ In order to provide that pleasure he uses the mimesis of actions and situations, but does not present them simply as mimeses of actions and situations, but rather as elements in a very complex and intriguing pattern.

Both the composition of such a pattern and the communication of it presuppose that people can, in general, make actions and situations intelligible to themselves and to others. The fact that people do, in general, find the actions of other people and of themselves intelligible and the fact that there is or can be this common understanding about them make it possible for the poet to compose a coherent, striking, and intelligible fiction and expect others to understand it. Fiction might, of course, be valued for the accuracy with which it 'mimes' what people or situations are thought to be like, or it might be valued for the lesson it teaches. But it can also be valued for the enjoyment derived from its presentation of pattern, for the intricacy and subtlety of details, and for their relation to and reflection upon the main themes, for the cohesion of the parts and their inter-relation, and for the skillful use of language in reproducing speeches, describing appearances, and drawing contrasts in the ~~partic~~ presentation of a clearly ordered and neatly constructed account of a situation.

1. cf. Aristotle: Poetics. ch. 14.

It might appear that if poetry is not aiming at truth, as Plato describes it, and if the mimeses of human life are used by the poet in building up an organised whole which has no clear reference to truth, then the enjoyment of the poem is not dependent upon the accuracy of the mimesis or the relation between the mimesis and some external state of affairs, and in judging the value of the poem the fact that it is a mimesis can be ignored.

But this is not possible. For poetry, dealing as it does with actions, thoughts, and speeches of men and using words to give these accounts, presupposes the meaning and reference of words and the intelligibility of events. The intelligibility of the mimesis of events depends upon the existence and general concurrence of beliefs about connections between what men say and do and how they can be described, and beliefs about connections between actions and their consequences. Unless the pattern developed in the poem is in accordance with these general beliefs so that it can be seen to hang together as a mimesis of action and situation, it cannot be understood at all. And unless the general framework^R of ~~the~~^{this} mimesis is established by the author in such a way that it can be felt to underlie both the mimesis and the world as the reader can experience it, then again the mimesis will not work as a mimesis at all.

Furthermore, characterising the poet's activities as mimesis stresses the reliance of the poet on the fact that words used in the standard serious non-poetic context have meaning, and that one such standard use of them is to make statements about things and situations and actions, and that though such statements derive from different people's experiences, they can nonetheless be related as relevant and similar to, and influential upon one another. But the poet uses his words and accounts in building up an account of a situation in which, by skillful selection, arrangement, and rendering, he can engender an unaccustomed and especially instructive view of what would ordinarily be experienced in a less ^{illuminating} ~~attentive~~ way. So that, though he may not be interested in truth or enlightenment, he may in this very special way contribute to it. And though he may reject criticisms on the basis of truth, he may invite criticisms on this special basis.

Homer's mimesis accomplishes these aims by clear, precise, descriptions of situations, ingenious use of imagery, and intricate, subtle comparisons and contrasts of character, situation, and action.

B) Poetry and Plato's truth

In so 'miming' men's actions and presenting them in a structured, orderly way so that a complex and subtle picture emerges of situations and reactions to them, Homer might well be said to have demonstrated a profound insight into human relationships. But knowledge for Plato is universal

and systematic, understanding must be understanding of the Forms. Thus there is in Plato's system no possibility that a man could demonstrate his understanding by ordering any set of particulars without reference to the abstract Form.

That the poet can, in his 'sensible copy' indicate a relation or an interconnection which can be recognised by the readers and enjoyed as a particularly interesting mimesis of human life would seem to indicate that, contrary to Plato's theory, there is a kind of reality which, if not disclosed by perception, can be disclosed by an ordering of perceptions. Plato assumes, or wants to press the assumption, that there is some one, final and definitive system according to which the world must be described; but no a priori system can take into account all the possibilities of patterns to be imposed upon or seen in the world. Plato's system cannot otherwise account for the deliberate composition of poetry concerned with particular instances and their relation to general truths which are not at the same time abstract, logical truths associated with the Forms, so he characterises it as deceptive, an appearance of truth. Because an account of the artist's activities which would acknowledge the possibility that the artist may, by citing particulars in a striking way, remind readers of some general truth would undermine the sharp--and necessarily sharp--line dividing what is sensible from what is intelligible, Plato carefully defines artistic activity so as to pre-

clude the possibility.

Convinced that reality is rational, scientific, logical, Plato cannot entertain the notion that a thing, seen from a point of view, is no less the real for having been seen empirically from a point of view rather than apprehended by conceptual thought, nor can he make room in his theory for a content of the poetic mimesis other than the commonplace mimesis of ordinary commonplace objects of perception. Perception for Plato is such that it could not apprehend anything pertaining to reality.

C) Poetry and deception

The deception of the poet is, in its simplest form, the poet's making his words or his voice resemble or be like the words or voice of some other person in order to make his readers feel that it is not the poet who is speaking, but the character himself. But the deception of the poet is also evident in the presentation of situations and, indeed, of extensive moral and social outlooks such that the reader is made to feel that the outlook 'mimed' is the appropriate one, and this despite any moral beliefs he might otherwise entertain. It is difficult to draw a line marking the simpler from the more complicated deception for both arise from the same source, viz. the poet's dependence upon the fact that there is knowledge, that people do account for actions and situations, and his ability to rely on ^a ~~any~~ common mode of thinking in the presentation of his poem.

Plato's first objection to the poets' play upon what is not, strictly, true is that it misleads men as any lie would mislead them. But this objection is dismissed as soon as it is shown that the truth as characterised by Plato is not the truth at which the poet aims. The second objection is that the mimesis of individual men in particular emotional states is a presentation of what would be better ignored or rebuked. Quarrels, intrigues, anger, grief, and subjection to natural instincts are not among the things that should be brought to men's attention. But the poets, in presenting detailed, vivid accounts of emotional states, both indicate that they have entered into such states themselves and by writing vivid attractive, powerful fiction, invite or even compel readers to enter them also.

D) Poetry and moral judgment

If the rigidity of the distinction between the emotions and the reasoning functions of the mind is not so clearly maintained, then the emotions might not be held to be such a threat to the possibility of rational judgment, and Plato's fear that any indulgence of the emotions will, in itself, be detrimental to the character might appear to be unfounded, and the 'subjection' to ~~emotions~~ as sensations and thrills provided by fictions be regarded simply as the experiencing of ⁿ sensations and thrills, and not as necessarily detrimental to well-being.

But the more complex deception which Plato holds to be characteristic of poetic mimesis is more worrying. For it is true that Homer has 'mimed' particular circumstances in such

a way that the reader can, indeed must, see them as he 'mimes' them or they may not be intelligible at all. Plato is right in thinking that this may be dangerous if such mimesis causes or even reinforces a general refusal or reluctance on the part of the public reading the work to think for themselves about moral values. I have suggested that Plato could not show what he apparently wanted to show, that the appeal of poetry is not merely primarily, but exclusively an appeal to the emotions. For there is a necessary overlap between emotional and conceptual thought and the poetic mimesis must, if it is to be comprehensible, have reference to the conceptual and must, if it is to have the vividness and power peculiar to poetry, appeal to the emotions, to the senses or at least to the imagination, and to the sense of the many-sidedness^{variety} of things.

Poetry does appeal in a direct way. It was mentioned that the people who first heard the ^{Iliad} ~~work~~ did not read or study it, but ~~constantly~~ listened to it ^{again and again.} The construction is such that the points underlying comparisons and contrasts would be made even without the hearers' deliberately working them out for themselves. This again would suggest that Plato is right in thinking ~~about moral~~ there is a special power in poetry that enables it to permeate thinking about moral or social affairs. One could of course argue that such influence could be used for good purposes as well as for bad ones, and in his sharp distinction of the Intelligentsia from the other members of the Republic, Plato would seem to have not merely room for but

also a need for its use in good hands, but this is a different point from the main one, that for those who can think, poetry is a disruptive influence on critical, rational thought.

But this objection is a moral one, and is aimed at what poetry does rather than at what poetry is. Poetry as mimesis is the source of a special enjoyment. This enjoyment is integrally related to the discernment of a purpose or uniting idea underlying the exposition of a story or theme. The value of the poem may be considered with reference to that enjoyment and the poem esteemed as a source of pleasure. But if one regards the importance of the effects which the mimesis does, or may, have, as having to be weighed against any pleasure to be derived from the work, there seems to be no final reply. By what standards could poetic value be measured against moral value?