

Extrait du Rhuthmos

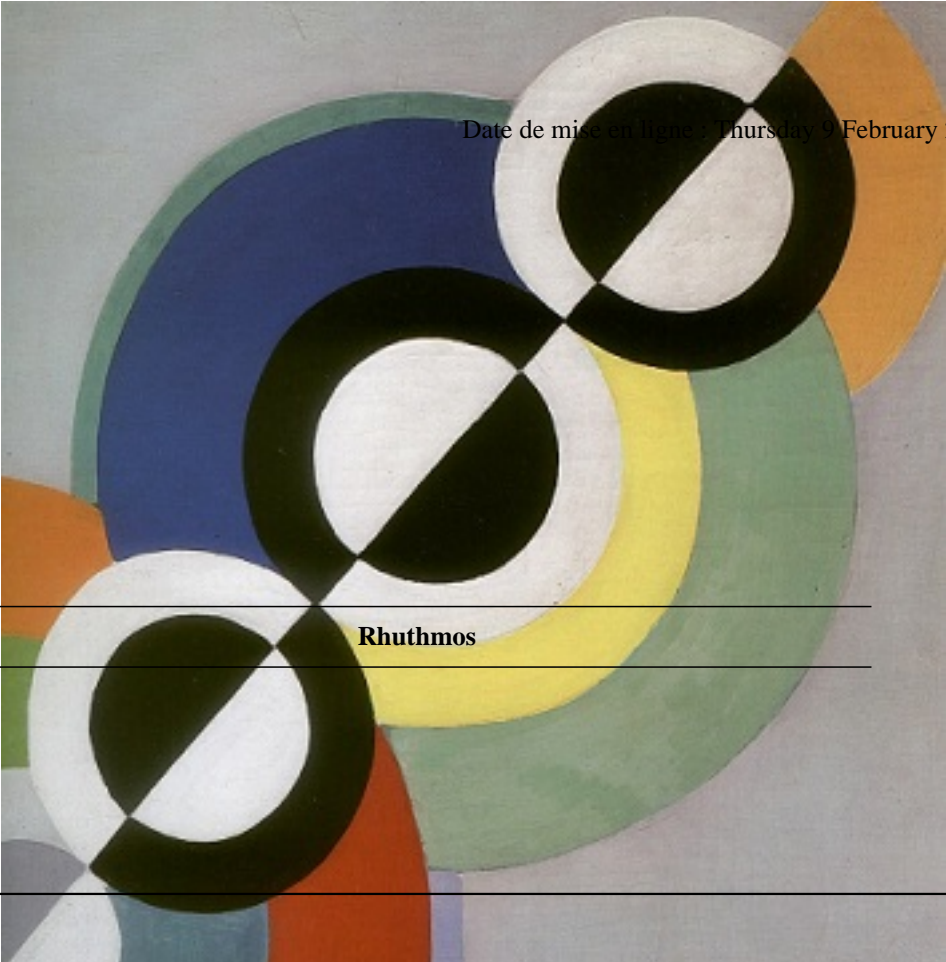
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Platonic Legacy (4th century BC - 3rd century AD) - part 2

- Recherches

- Vers un nouveau paradigme scientifique ?
- Sur le concept de rythme - Nouvel article

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Rhuthmos

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Rhythm in Public Speech - Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (4th cent. BC)

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle addresses an important question that was left open in *The Politics* that of language in public sphere and this leads him to consider rhythm in speech and subsequently loosen a little more the Platonic definition of rhythm.

In Book 3, after having dealt with proof, Aristotle focuses on the manner of expressing oneself, elocution (»-¾¹Á - *léxis*), "for it is not sufficient to know *what* one ought to say, but one must also know *how* to say it," and this contributes greatly to the impression conveyed by the speech. This know-how will materially assist the impression of moral "disposition or character" (&_¿Á - *êthos*), which the orator wishes to assume, on the minds of the audience.

There are three things which require special attention in regard to speech [ÁµÁν Äx½ »³¿½ - *peri tôn lgon*]: first, the sources of proofs; secondly, [elocution] [ÁµÁν Ät½ »-¾¹½ - *peri tên léxin*]; and thirdly, the arrangement of the parts of the speech [ÄöÁ ÇÁt Ä-¾±¹ Äp ¼-Á· Ä¿æ »³¿Á - *pôs khre táxai tà méré tou lgon*]. [...] We have therefore next to speak of [elocution] [ÁµÁν ´ ÄÆÄ »-¾µÉÄ Ç¼µ½½ - *peri de tês léxeôs ekhmenin*]; for it is not sufficient to know what one ought to say, but one must also know how to say it, and this largely contributes to making the speech appear of a certain character. (*Rhetoric*. 3.1.1-2, trans. J.H. Freese, my mod)

In other words, speech involves not only *arguments* but also *manners of elocution*: voice, pronunciation, tone, tempo, etc. (*léxei diathéstai*); and *manners of action*: appropriate gesticulation, management of the hands, arms and entire body, and especially features (*hupkrisis* - playing a part on stage or orator's delivery), which "largely contribute to making the speech appear of a certain character."

In the first place, following the natural order, we investigated that which first presented itself what gives things themselves their persuasiveness; in the second place, their arrangement by [elocution] [»-¾µ¹ ´±, -Ä, ±¹ - *léxei diathésthai*]; and in the third place, delivery [Äp ÁµÁν Ät½ QÀ)°Á¹Ä½ - *tà peri tên hupkrisin*], which is of the greatest importance but has not yet been treated of by anyone. (*Rhetoric*. 3.1.3, trans. J.H. Freese, my mod)

Thus Aristotle seems first to contrast elocution and action, utterance and bodily movements, but he elaborates further

his thought and emphasizes that action or delivery is actually "a matter of voice," which should be considered in regard to "volume, harmony, and rhythm," i.e. vocal magnitude, pitch modulation and duration of uttered sounds. Far from opposing elocution and action, Aristotle thus suggests a holistic theory of speech which includes both of them.

Now delivery is a matter of voice, as to the mode in which it should be used for each particular emotion; when it should be loud, when low, when intermediate; and how the tones, that is, shrill, deep, and intermediate, should be used; and what rhythms are adapted to each subject. For there are three qualities that are considered volume, harmony, rhythm [$\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ μ, ζ̂, Á̂ $\frac{1}{4}$ ζ̂ $\frac{1}{2}$ -± á̂, $\frac{1}{4}$ îĀ - *mégēthos harmonía rhuthmîs*]. Those who use these properly nearly always carry off the prizes in dramatic contests, and as at the present day actors have greater influence on the stage than the poets, it is the same in political contests [law courts and public assembly], owing to the corruptness of our forms of government. (*Rhetoric*. 3.1.4, trans. J.H. Freese)

Thus rhythm initially appears as that aspect of speech regarding duration of utterances, which along with volume and harmony, gesticulations and features, makes up speech delivery manners and conveys a certain character.

A little further down in the same book, Aristotle examines again this aspect but this time in a prescriptive perspective. He contrasts "rhythm" with "meter," i.e. the organization of the orator's prose with the arrangement in verse and metrical feet that can be found in poetry. But this distinction is purely practical and not theoretical: "rhythm" is suited for judicial or political speech, "meter" for poetry, and they must be used accordingly without being mixed. Yet they are not different in nature. Meters partake of a more general rhythmic quality: rhythm is "the number belonging to the form of diction, of which the meters with their divisions are part." Both are ways to give "form" (*skhēma*), "measure" (*rhuthmîs/métron*), "limits" (*péraitō/métra*) and number (*arithmîs*) to speech.

The form of [elocution] [$\tilde{A}\tilde{C}\tilde{A}\tilde{E}\frac{1}{4}\pm \tilde{A}\tilde{E}\tilde{A}$ »- $\frac{3}{4}\mu\tilde{E}\tilde{A}$ - *skhēma tēs léxeôs*] should be neither metrical nor without rhythm [$\frac{1}{4}\textcircled{\mu}$ $\frac{1}{4}\mu\tilde{A}\tilde{A}\tilde{C}\frac{1}{2}$ $\mu\delta\frac{1}{2}\pm^1$ $\frac{1}{4}\textcircled{\mu}$ $\tilde{A}\tilde{A}\tilde{A}$, $\frac{1}{4}\zeta\frac{1}{2}$ - *mête émmetron einai mête arruthmon*]. If it is metrical, it lacks persuasiveness, for it appears artificial, and at the same time it distracts the hearer's attention, since it sets him on the watch for the recurrence of such and such a cadence; [...] If it is without rhythm [$\tilde{A}\tilde{A}\tilde{A}$, $\frac{1}{4}\zeta\frac{1}{2}$ - *árruthmon*], it is unlimited [$\tilde{A}-\tilde{A}\pm\frac{1}{2}\tilde{A}\tilde{C}\frac{1}{2}$ - *apéranton*], whereas it ought to be limited [$\tilde{A}\mu\tilde{A}\mu\tilde{A}\rightarrow\frac{1}{2}\pm^1$ - *peperánthai*] (but not by meter [$\frac{1}{4}t$ $\frac{1}{4}-\tilde{A}\tilde{A}\tilde{O}$ - - *mê métrōi dé*]); for that which is unlimited [$\tilde{A}x$ $\tilde{A}\mu^1\tilde{A}\tilde{C}\frac{1}{2}$ - *tò ápeiron*] is unpleasant and unknowable. Now all things are limited by number [$\tilde{A}\mu\tilde{A}\pm\frac{1}{2}\mu\tilde{A}\pm^1$ \tilde{r} \tilde{A}^1 , $\frac{1}{4}\div$ $\tilde{A}\rightarrow\frac{1}{2}\tilde{A}\pm$ - *peráinetai de arithmō pánta*], and the number [\tilde{A}^1 , $\frac{1}{4}x\tilde{A}$ - *arithmòs*] belonging to the form of diction [$\tilde{A}\tilde{C}\textcircled{\mu}\frac{1}{4}\pm\tilde{A}\tilde{C}\tilde{A}$ $\tilde{A}\tilde{E}\tilde{A}$ »- $\frac{3}{4}\mu\tilde{E}\tilde{A}$ - *skhēmatos tēs léxeôs*] is rhythm [$\tilde{a}\tilde{A}$, $\frac{1}{4}\tilde{A}$ - *rhuthmîs*], [of which the meters with their divisions are part] [$\tilde{C}W^{\circ\pm v}$ $\tilde{A}p$ $\frac{1}{4}-\tilde{A}\tilde{A}\pm$ $\tilde{A}\frac{1}{4}\textcircled{\mu}\frac{1}{4}\pm\tilde{A}\pm$ - *ou kai tà métra tmēmata*]. Wherefore prose must be rhythmical [$\tilde{a}\tilde{A}$, $\frac{1}{4}x\frac{1}{2}$ - *rhuthmòn*], but not metrical [$\frac{1}{4}-\tilde{A}\tilde{A}\tilde{C}\frac{1}{2}$ - *métron*], otherwise it will be a poem. [Besides, it is not a matter of rhythm in the true sense of the word but of something close to it.] (*Rhetoric*. 3.8.1-3, trans. J.H. Freese, my mod.)

Clearly, Aristotle here relates "rhythm" to the late Platonic doctrine exposed in *The Philebus* and *The Timaeus*, partly borrowed from the Pythagoreans, according to which "numbers" are the regulating forces which introduce limits, shape, measure, order into a "unlimited," formless, chaotic mass of sounds, words or movements. In other words, rhythm receives its rhetoric power from the numbers it is made of and which it imposes upon the speech and the movements of the orator.

But this metaphysical detour does not last very long and he goes on by examining, as Plato in *The Republic*, the pragmatic qualities of some common meters (heroic i.e. hexameter, iamb, trochee, paeon) which he calls, here, "rhythms" because, as we just saw, he considers that meters are only specific kinds of rhythms, among others. But whereas Plato was interested in the educational qualities of the traditional Greek meters, Aristotle seeks, in *The Rhetoric*, to uncover their power to "rouse the hearer." The criteria of *good rhythm* are proximity with "ordinary conversation," "language of the many" and rejection of any "undignified" or "tripping" meters.

Of the different rhythms [$\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\omicron}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}$ - *tôn dè rhuthmôn*] the heroic is dignified, but lacking the harmony of ordinary conversation [$\overset{\circ}{\mu}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ - *lektikês harmonías*]; the iambic is the language of the many, wherefore of all meters it is most used in common speech; but speech should be dignified and calculated to rouse the hearer. The trochaic is too much like the cordax [a provocative, licentious, and often obscene mask dance]; this is clear from the tetrameters, which form a tripping rhythm [$\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\mu}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ - *trokherôs rhuthmôs*]. There remains the paeon, used by rhetoricians from the time of Thrasymachus, although they could not define it. The paeon is a third kind [of rhythm] [$\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ - *esti dè trítos ho paián*] closely related to those already mentioned; for its proportion is 3 to 2, that of the others 1 to 1 and 2 to 1, with both of which the paeon, whose proportion is 1 1/2 to 1, is connected.

All other meters "are to be disregarded" because they are [too] "metrical," that is to say too far from ordinary language to be used in judicial or political speeches.

All the other [rhythms] [$\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}$ - *álloi*] then are to be disregarded for the reasons stated, and also because they are metrical [$\overset{\circ}{\mu}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ - *kai díliti metrikoí*]; but the paeon should be retained, [since from this alone of the rhythms mentioned no definite metre arises] [$\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ - *ouk ésti métron tôn rhêthéntôn rhuthmôn*], so that it is most likely to be undetected. [...] the period should be broken off by a long syllable and the end should be clearly marked, not by the scribe nor by a punctuation mark, but by the rhythm itself [$\overset{\circ}{\mu}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ - *allà dià tôn rhuthmîn*].

The conclusion brings forward a new definition of eurhythmy. The latter now denotes the quality of a speech that, thanks to its supple global arrangement and way of flowing, produces on the audience the expected effects, be it in judicial court or political meeting. The Platonic metaphysical reference to numbers is not entirely abandoned but it becomes secondary to a more holistic and pragmatic view.

We have now seen that our [elocution] [$\overset{\circ}{\mu}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ - *léxin*] must be [eurhythmical] [$\overset{\circ}{\mu}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ - *eúruthmon*] and not destitute of rhythm [$\overset{\circ}{\mu}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ - *árruthmon*], and what rhythms [$\overset{\circ}{\mu}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\mu}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ - *kai tínes eúruthmon poioûsi rhuthmoí* - lit. "and what rhythms made eurhythmic"], in what particular arrangement [$\overset{\circ}{\mu}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ - *eírêtai* - lit. "fasten together in rows, string"], make it so. The [elocution] [$\overset{\circ}{\mu}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ $\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\iota}\overset{\circ}{\epsilon}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}$ - *léxin*] must be either free-running, with its parts united by nothing except the connecting words, like the preludes in dithyrambs; or compact and antithetical, like the strophes of the old poets. (*Rhetoric*. 3.8.4, trans. J.H. Freese, my mod.)

Rhythm in Literature - Aristotle's *Poetics* (4th cent. BC)

Let us now consider the most remarkable *Poetics*. Aristotle commences his essay by putting forward three major assertions. The incipit explains that he will try to figure out the conditions that make "poetic art in itself" (*poiêtikês autês*) "successful," literally that make it "become beautiful" (*kalôs éxein*).

1. The central question of poetics will be that of the quality of the artistic works. This will be exposed both in analytical and prescriptive manners.

2. The subject of his reflection will not be poetry as it is commonly conceived of as synonym for verse, but "poetry in itself" as a concept that is still to be elaborated but that has already a place in the theory something close to what we call nowadays "literature."

Let us here deal with Poetry [in itself] [$\text{ἄμῶν ἑἷς ποιητικῆς αὐτῆς}$ - *peri poiêtikês autês*], its essence and its several species, with the characteristic function of each species and the way in which plots must be constructed if the poem is to be a success [$\mu\omicron \frac{1}{4}$ -» $\mu^1 \circ_{\pm}$ » $\omicron\hat{\alpha}$ $\frac{3}{4}\mu^1\frac{1}{2}$! $\hat{\alpha}_{\zeta}$ - $\hat{\alpha}^1\hat{\alpha}$ - *ei mellei kalôs éxein ê poiêsís*]; and also with the number and character of the constituent parts of a poem, and similarly with all other matters proper to this same inquiry. (*Poetics*, 1447a, trans. W.H. Fyfe, my mod.)

A little further down, Aristotle elaborates this suggestion and proposes to name *poiêsís* (*poetry*) all artistic activities "employing words" which, he notices, constitute an ensemble that remains "up to the present day" with "no name" (*anônumoi*). In the 4th century BC *poiêsís*, as a matter of fact, still denotes only "composition in verse."

But the art which employs words either in bare prose [$\text{ἰσοπέδῳ ἢ ἑτέροις μέτροις}$ - *lîgois psiloîs*] or in metres [$\frac{1}{4}$ - $\hat{\alpha}\hat{\alpha}_{\zeta}^1\hat{\alpha}$ - *métrôis*], either in one kind of metre or combining several, happens up to the present day to have no name [$\frac{1}{2}\hat{\alpha}^1\frac{1}{2}\hat{\alpha}\frac{1}{4}\hat{\alpha}^1$ - *anônumoi*]. (*Poetics*, 1447b, trans. W.H. Fyfe, my mod.)

3. Then, as in the *Politics*, Aristotle characterizes what we call performing arts as "representations" (*mimêseis*).

Epic poetry, then, and the poetry of tragic drama, and, moreover, comedy and dithyrambic poetry, and most flute-playing and harp-playing, these, speaking generally, may all be said to be "representations." [$\frac{1}{4}^1\frac{1}{4}\hat{\alpha}\hat{\mu}^1\hat{\alpha}$ - *mimêseis*] (*Poetics*, 1447a, trans. W.H. Fyfe, my mod.)

I endorse here, as I did above, the translation of $\frac{1}{4}\hat{\alpha}\hat{\mu}^1\hat{\alpha}$ - *mímêsis* as "representation" (instead of the most common "imitation") proposed by W.H. Fyfe but also by Roselyne Dupont-Roc and Jean Lallot in their more recent French translation (Fyfe, 1932, *Poetics*, 1447a, n. 2; Dupont-Roc & Lallot, 1980, *La Poétique*, 1447a, p. 33, n. 3 & 4).

Imitation tends to keep Aristotle's poetic reflection within the Platonic paradigm. Poetry and more generally art would

be about copying as faithfully as possible the things as they are in order to reach the original ideas of which they themselves are copies. Its quality would then be relative to its own transparency and the accuracy of the copy it proposes. Instead, as Roselyne Dupont-Roc and Jean Lallot rightly argues, *representation* emphasizes the creative aspect of the artistic process, even if the original object is never entirely obliterated; art is about uncovering the ideas which give forms to the matter *from within*. It also insists on the role of theater as primary model to understand art, whereas *imitation* tends wrongly, at least as far as Aristotle is concerned, to use painting to this effect.

Like the dramatic play of mime, *mimèsis* is "poetic," that is, *creative*. Not *ex nihilo*: its basic material is already given, it is the man endowed with character, capable of action and passion, caught up in a network of events. The poet does not imitate this given as one makes a decal: this is the work of the chronicler, riveted to contingent particulars whose memory he records "what Alcibiades did or what was done to him" (chap. 9, 51b 11). The poet, as *mimètès*, constructs, according to a rationality that partakes of generality and necessity, a "story" (*muthos*) with its functional agents. He imitates only in order to *represent*: the objects which he uses as models Oedipus, Iphigenia, with the character and adventures that the legend attribute to them fade behind the objects composed by Sophocles or Euripides the represented stories which are *Oedipus Rex* or *Iphigenia in Aulis*. *Mimèsis* designates the very movement which starts from pre-existing objects and results in a poetic artifact; hence the art of poetry, according to Aristotle, is the art of this transformation. But even if the "imitated" object is never entirely obliterated we insist on this in order to categorically distinguish ourselves from the advocates of *mimèsis* as pure creation the emphasis is on the represented object which must, in order to be successful (*kalôs ekhein*), obey the rules of art (*tekhnè*) as defined by Aristotle. (Dupont-Roc & Lallot, 1980, p. 20, my trans.)

All those moves will prove revolutionary if for the second much later on because for the first time in the West, they define *poetry* as *re-presentation of life* and *poetics* as the study of *the conditions that make any language composition*, be it in verse or only in prose, *successful or beautiful*.

"Poetry in itself" has nothing to do specifically with verse: for instance Empedocles uses hexameters but is only a "scientist" and "not a poet," and reversely the "Socratic dialogues," which are in "bare words," are nevertheless considered by Aristotle as genuine poetry. Moreover it is different from magic incantation, recited formula, prayer to the gods; it is a representation of characters, experience and actions, be they divine or human. The question naturally arises of what makes a language representation "successful" and worth listening to. This is what "poetics" is about.

Nobody can deny that Aristotle pays more attention in his *Poetics* to character and story than to rhythm and melody. He even contrasts verse making which he deems not sufficient to make poetry, with storytelling which he thinks indispensable to it.

It is clear, then, from what we have said that the poet must be a "maker" not of verses but of stories, since he is a poet in virtue of his "representation," and what he represents is action. (*Poetics*, 1451b, trans. W.H. Fyfe)

This primacy of storytelling is a very well known fact and a lot has already been written about it, but I would like to

evoke another aspect of the *Poetics* that has been less often noticed. In order to answer the central poetic question that of the value of the artistic works Aristotle strikingly starts by comparing the means used by the main performing arts of his time. Dithyrambic poetry, tragic drama and comedy, he says, represent experience, actions and characters through rhythm, tune and language; flute-playing or harp-playing through rhythm and tune; dance only through rhythm.

In the arts which we have mentioned [epic poetry, tragic drama, comedy and dithyrambic poetry] they all make their representations in rhythm and language and tune, using these means either separately or in combination. For tune and rhythm alone are employed in flute-playing and harp-playing and in any other arts which have a similar function, as, for example, pipe-playing. Rhythm alone without tune is employed by dancers in their representations, for by means of rhythmical gestures [$\rho \alpha \sigma \tau \omega \nu \sigma \upsilon \nu \theta \epsilon \tau \alpha \iota \sigma \tau \rho \alpha \phi \iota \alpha \iota$ - *dià tôn skhêmatizomênôn rhuthmôn* - lit. by giving figures/shapes to rhythms] they represent both character and experiences and actions [$\epsilon \nu \sigma \upsilon \nu \theta \epsilon \tau \alpha \iota \sigma \tau \rho \alpha \phi \iota \alpha \iota \sigma \tau \rho \alpha \phi \iota \alpha \iota \kappa \alpha \iota \epsilon \theta \eta \eta \kappa \alpha \iota \pi \acute{\alpha} \theta \eta \kappa \alpha \iota \pi \acute{\rho} \alpha \xi \epsilon \iota \varsigma$]. (*Poetics*, 1447a, trans. W.H. Fyfe)

This comparison is usually interpreted as showing that art without forgetting painting of which Aristotle speaks very highly in other passages is based on *mímêsis*. But it has less often been noticed that it also shows quite indubitably that according to Aristotle *rhuthmîs* is the common denominator of all performing arts and, for that very reason, the main means of the *mímêsis* itself (for an exception to this rule see Dupont-Roc & Lallot, 1980, p. 147). Technically speaking, as "the art which employs words," "poetry in itself" is certainly opposed to dance and music. But genetically, Aristotle emphasizes, poetry in its most complete form, i.e. tragedy, derives from dance and song. Moreover, since it uses rhythm and tune it is also clearly similar to the latter and can be considered as a kind of dancing and music playing in language, or performing of rhythm and tune with words.

In this instance, Aristotle's view is diametrically opposed to Plato's: whereas the latter viewed mimetic rhythms as extremely dangerous and art as a treacherous activity that should be strictly controlled by the state, art appears to the former as in essence liberating and rhythm as the deepest and most solid basis of *re-presentation*, i.e. endowed with positive ethical and political effects and therefore one of the main concept of poetics.

It is indeed in reference to rhythmic varieties that Aristotle constructs his enumeration of the species of composition whose material is language: prose, characterized by the absence of meter but not of rhythmic rules, as we have seen in *The Rhetoric*, is opposed to the metric genera, which are in turn distinguished from each other by the particular use they make of the meters.

There are certain arts which employ all the means which I have mentioned, such as rhythm and tune and meter [$\rho \alpha \sigma \tau \omega \nu \sigma \upsilon \nu \theta \epsilon \tau \alpha \iota \sigma \tau \rho \alpha \phi \iota \alpha \iota \sigma \tau \rho \alpha \phi \iota \alpha \iota \kappa \alpha \iota \epsilon \theta \eta \eta \kappa \alpha \iota \pi \acute{\alpha} \theta \eta \kappa \alpha \iota \pi \acute{\rho} \alpha \xi \epsilon \iota \varsigma$] dithyrambic and "nomic" poetry, for example, and tragedy too and comedy. The difference here is that some use all these at once, others use now one now another. These differences then in the various arts I call the means of representation. (*Poetics*, 1447b, trans. W.H. Fyfe)

In chapter 4, Aristotle adds to this some anthropological considerations. He explains that poetry owes its origin to "two natural causes." Men, he says, have an instinct on the one hand for "representation" that is accompanied by "enjoyment"; and on the second hand, for "tune and rhythm." Rhythm, representation, and the pleasure they provide, are all natural aspects of humanity which result in poetry making.

Speaking generally, poetry seems to owe its origin to two particular causes, both natural. From childhood men have an instinct for representation, and in this respect, [man] differs from the other animals that he is far more imitative and learns his first lessons by representing things. And then there is the enjoyment people always get from representations. [...] We have, then, a natural instinct for representation and for tune and rhythm [for the meters obviously partakes in rhythms] and starting with these instincts men very gradually developed them until they produced poetry out of their improvisations. (*Poetics*, 1448b, trans. W.H. Fyfe, my mod.)

Surprisingly, the pleasure provided by the representation is not aesthetic in the modern sense of the word, i.e. it is not related to our sensibility. It is plainly intellectual, cognitive. Roselyne Dupont-Roc and Jean Lallot have convincingly argued that any mimetic work uncovers a *specific form* (*idían morphèn*, 1454b 10) by disentangling it from the matter with which it is associated in nature. The artist reveals the formal cause of the object and provides the intellect with the opportunity of a *sui generis* activity, a reasoning about causality that is accompanied with a kind of pleasure that is both pleasure of wondering ($\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\mu\acute{\alpha}\zeta\epsilon\iota\sigma$ - *thaumázein*) and learning ($\mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\acute{\iota}\kappa\eta$ - *manthánein*). (Dupont-Roc & Lallot, 1980, p. 164, n. 2).

Roselyne Dupont-Roc and Jean Lallot claim that since this pleasure is intellectual, it is exclusively related to the story (*muthos*) "which is the representative part of the work *par excellence*," while rhythm and melody seem to be put aside by Aristotle on the ground that they do not have "independent representative virtues" (1980, p. 164, n. 4). But Aristotle does not say that. He only contrasts in the next passage the pleasure given by the comparison between the representation and the original with that given by the sheer perception without knowledge of the original, which then depends on "technique and color or some other such cause." He does not imply that rhythm and tune, which he has designated a few pages before as natural causes of poetry, are to be considered as mere "ornamental techniques" simply adding "charm" to the story.

The reason why we enjoy seeing likenesses is that, as we look, we learn and infer what each is, for instance, "that is so and so." If we have never happened to see the original, our pleasure is not due to the representation as such but to the technique or the color or some other such cause. (*Poetics*, 1448b, trans. W.H. Fyfe)

Even if it hurts our firmest beliefs which put rhythm on the aesthetic side, we must consider rhythm and tune as participating in the intellectual pleasure given by *re-presentation* and *re-cognition*. They both are genuine agents of *mimèsis*. But the reverse is also true: we also must regard this intellectual pleasure as involving the sounds and rhythms of speech. And this is not surprising since Aristotle already noticed in the *Rhetoric* that speech involves not only *arguments* but also *manners of elocution*: voice, pronunciation, tone, tempo, etc. This role given to rhythm and tune on the effects produced by poetry is another revolutionary Aristotelian innovation that should certainly be kept in mind vis-à-vis a large number of contemporary conceptions which still do not recognize it. We will come back to it when we study Diderot.

There is in chapter 6 a passage that constitutes a strong evidence in favor of this theory. I am using here again Dupont-Roc's and Lallot's precious analyses (1980, p. 193, n. 4). Aristotle compares rhythm and tune to "seasonings" of language [*hêdusménôi ilgôj*].

Tragedy is, then, a representation of an action that is heroic and complete and of a certain magnitude by means of language [seasoned with all kinds of spices] [$\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\mu\acute{\alpha}\zeta\epsilon\iota\sigma$ - *hêdusménôi ilgôj*], each used separately in the different parts of the play: [...] By "language seasoned with spices" I mean that which has rhythm and tune, i.e., song, [$\mu\epsilon\lambda\acute{o}\varsigma$ - *légô de êdusménon mèn ilgon tôn ékhonta rhuthmòn kai harmonían [kai mélos]*] and by "the kinds separately" I mean that some effects are produced by verse alone and some again by song. (*Poetics*, 1449b, trans. W.H. Fyfe, my mod.)

Literally the verb *hêdunô* means "to render pleasurable," but the noun *hêdusma* which is applied further down to

music (1450b 16) means (as in Aristophanes, Plato or Xenophon) "*that which gives a relish or flavour, seasoning, sauce,*" and in plural "*spices, aromatics.*" Roselyne Dupont-Roc and Jean Lallot rightly underline the fact that this metaphor is a novelty but they conclude, wrongly in my opinion, that "melodic and rhythmic elements (*harmonia - rhuthmos*) are thus presented as spices which, when *added* to language, give to it charm/attractiveness." They see in this metaphor an evidence for a dualistic theory of poetic language.

The metaphor of the seasoning clearly entails a theory of poetic language as composed of two quite distinct elements: a basic material, the "bare" language (cf. *logois psilois*, chap. 1, 1447a 29), without additions or ornaments, which performs the denotative function and additional elements, whose function, linked with pleasure (*hèdonè*, from the family of *hèdus, hèdusma*), is properly aesthetic. (Dupont-Roc & Lallot, 1980, p. 194, n. 4)

I would rather suggest that this metaphor tries to convey a non-dualistic view of poetic language and maybe of language itself. Whereas "ornaments" are superficial add-ons to a unchangeable underlying "structure" as in architecture or in rhetoric, the "seasoning" cooking metaphor evokes a perfect poetic blend where it is precisely impossible to distinguish any longer between the basic material, the "bare language," and the "additions." Moreover, one cannot help noticing that the cuisine comparison links poetic language with the body and especially the mouth, where the words are as much articulated as savored. Thanks to its rhythm and tune, poetry tastes like a good meal.

This is of tremendous importance: maybe for the first time in the West, the language is observed from a non-dualistic poetic viewpoint or better yet, from poetics, which departs from a sheer philosophical view and, by anticipation, from many modern linguistic views. As we will see, after a very long period of scientific oblivion, this revolutionary perspective will reemerge in the 18th century and put again the language in line with the body.

This may also shed some light on the most discussed passage of Aristotle's *Poetics*. This passage is actually included in the previous quote but I purposely kept it aside. It is time to come back to it. As one may know, Aristotle proposes to define tragedy as effecting $\rho\gamma\alpha\sigma\iota\varsigma$ - *kátharsis*.

Tragedy is, then, a representation of an action that is heroic and complete and of a certain magnitude by means of language [seasoned with all kinds of spices], each used separately in the different parts of the play: it represents men in action and does not use narrative, and through pity and fear [$\mu\epsilon\lambda\alpha\chi\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\alpha$ - *di' eléou kai phlèbou*] it effects relief [$\rho\alpha\upsilon\tau\iota\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$ - *peráinousa kátharsin*] to these and similar emotions. (*Poetics*, 1449b, trans. W.H. Fyfe)

There are countless interpretations and therefore translations of *kátharsis*. Classical interpretations considers it a "purification" as in religion or a "purgation" as in medicine. W.H. Fyfe (1932) translates it as "relief" which adds a psychological if not psychoanalytic nuance that seems to him to be missing in the previous translations. More recent interpretations emphasize that the essential pleasure provided by *mímêsis* is the intellectual pleasure of "learning and inference." Therefore *kátharsis* appears as an intellectual clarification process that may be only transliterated as "catharsis." But whatever their perspective, most of these interpretations concentrate on the effects of the "representation" of "men in action" and "emotions" that this representation arouses and cures. Roselyne Dupont-Roc and Jean Lallot, for instance, who belong to the third school, consider it as an aesthetic effect of the process of recognition of the forms presented through the story.

The tragic *katharsis* is the result of a similar process: put in the presence of a history (*muthos*) in which he recognizes the *forms*, cleverly elaborated by the poet, which define the essence of the pitiful and the frightening, the spectator experiences himself pity and fear, but in a quintessential form, and the purified emotion that seizes him then, and which we shall call aesthetic, is accompanied by pleasure. (Dupont-Roc & Lallot, 1980, p. 190, n. 3)

This is partly consistent with our previous analyses. Yet I would like to stress first that the mimetic process itself would not be possible without the mediation of the "language seasoned with all kinds of spices." In other words, there would be no story, no character, no event, in short no *mímêsis* and no *kátharsis* without the *rhuthmoí* and *harmonías* of the language. Secondly, this condition implies that the *kátharsis* cannot be a mere aesthetic (even conceived as intellectual) phenomenon with no ethical value. Even if it is not triggered, as it has been repeatedly claimed in the classical tradition, by the "edifying examples" shown on the stage, it certainly pertains to *ethics*. As a matter of fact, one wonders why music would be considered, as in the *Politics*, as triggering ethical effects and not poetry. In addition, given Aristotle's deep interest in the power of language displayed in the *Rhetoric*, it would be very surprising that the conclusions reached in this treaty, which he explicitly links many times with the *Poetics*, would not be paralleled in the latter.

Thus we finally get back to an intuition that we already previously encountered in the *Politics*: 1. The objective of the poetics' study of the artistic works based on words is genuinely *ethical* and *political*. 2. It necessitates to be achieved to study rhythm and harmony in a larger sense than the metric sense. 3. This point will reemerge in the 18th century provided that further studies do not discover similar cases in between.

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