

ARISTOTLE'S *POETICS* AND STOIC LITERARY THEORY

The extent and areas of influence of Aristotle's *Poetics* on Hellenistic literary theory have not been systematically investigated yet. This kind of study is indeed especially difficult because the evidence is scattered in many different and disparate sources and thus it cannot be easily evaluated. Nevertheless, thanks to excellent older and more recent work and the progress in the study of the papyri of Herculaneum and Philodemus' treatises, Stoic views on poetry have been sufficiently illuminated and systematized¹⁾ so as to allow a cautious comparison between the

1) The basic study of Stoic poetics is still P. H. De Lacy, *Stoic Views of Poetry*, *AJP* 69 (1948) 241–271. See also A. M. Ioppolo, *Aristone di Chio e lo stoicismo antico* (Naples 1980) 256–278, E. Asmis, *The Poetic Theory of the Stoic 'Aristo'*, *Apeiron* 23 (1990) 147–201, N. Greenberg, *The Poetic Theory of Philodemus* (London 1990) 57–79 and cf. M. Isnardi Parente, *Una poetica di*

Aristotelian and the Stoic poetic theories. Of the two major philosophical schools on whose literary theories some substantial evidence has survived I have chosen the Stoics over the Epicureans because the Stoic system was much more hospitable to poetry and the Stoics often tapped poets for authoritative arguments and examples to back their theories. As a result of this continuous fascination with poetry the Stoics developed more diversified literary theories than the Epicureans who held a relatively uniform negative view of poetry²). Thus it would seem a priori more likely to find areas of contact and continuity between the Aristotelian and the Stoic theories. I will argue that this plausible hypothesis cannot be substantiated by the extant evidence.

Although not absolutely without precedent, Aristotle's approach to poetry and criticism was, by modern lights at least, sufficiently novel. Especially his conscious effort to build a theoretical infrastructure upon which all subsequent literary criticism could securely rest was unique in ancient times. One would then expect that his approach would have awakened the interest of contemporaries and younger contemporaries and that Aristotle's legacy would have been particularly strong soon after his death. Such an attitude would have befitted the intellectual climate of the day very well since the Hellenistic age showed a keen interest in literary theory: poetry and its criticism were abundantly debated and formed part of diverse theoretical investigations as is attested e.g. by Philodemus' *On Poems*. Besides, there is evidence that other areas of Aristotle's philosophy, like physics, exerted some influence on later thinkers³) and there is no cogent reason why the

incerto Autore in Filodemo, in: *Filologia e Forme Letterarie. Studi offerti a F. della Corte*, V (Urbino 1987) 81–96. Much earlier C. Jensen, *Philodemos, Über die Gedichte, Fünftes Buch* (Berlin 1923), had broken new ground with his monumental edition of Philodemus' *De Poem.* 5 (see especially 128–145 [on Aristo] and 146–174 [on Crates]).

2) For Epicurus' views on poetry and liberal education see A. Ronconi, *Appunti di estetica epicurea*, in: *Miscellanea di studi alessandrini in memoria di A. Rostagni* (Turin 1963) 8 ff., A. Angeli, *Filodemo, Agli Amici di Scuola* (PHerc. 1005) (Naples 1988) 61–70, D. Clay, *Lucretius and Epicurus* (Ithaca 1983) 16 n. 12 and 78 n. 58 and E. Asmis, *Philodemus' Poetic Theory and The Good King According to Homer*, *CA* 10 (1991) 1–45. For Epicurus' followers see e.g. O. Regenbogen, *Lukrez. Seine Gestalt in seinem Gedicht* (Leipzig 1932) 81, F. Giancotti, *Postille sui rapporti fra Epicureismo e poesia in Epicuro e in Lucrezio*, *GIF* 3 (1972) 195 ff., Angeli 82–102 and E. Asmis, *Epicurean Poetics*, *BACAP* 7 (1993) 63–93.

3) See for instance the discussion of D. J. Furley, *Two Studies in the Greek Atomists* (Princeton 1967) and D. E. Hahm, *The Origins of Stoic Cosmology*

Poetics would not have met with similar reception. But the impact of the treatise seems to have been much more limited or at the very least diffuse: no commentary on it was ever written and no allusions to or quotations from it appear in extant literature. Although it is probable that the treatise was known, it apparently never gained wide popularity⁴).

On the other hand, there has survived no complete treatise or even detailed account of Hellenistic poetic theories, comparable to Aristotle's *Poetics*. Although not free from interpretive problems the *Poetics* at least presents concisely its author's theory of poetry. The chief surviving sources for Hellenistic literary theory are the works of Philodemus, especially his *On Poems*, of which only a substantial part of the end of book five has escaped severe damage. Not only does Philodemus' work survive in fragmentary state but also the author has a clear polemical orientation which results in a very synoptical presentation of the opinions refuted, often with little or no mention of individual names or even indication of philosophical schools. To make matters worse, it is not inconceivable that Philodemus or his sources intentionally distorted or misquoted, or perhaps in certain cases plainly misunderstood, the opinions refuted. At any rate, brief reference seldom does full justice to the text addressed. Nevertheless, even granting the considerable lack of reliable and, above all, adequate information, it is impossible not to notice a rift between Aristotle and the Hellenistic literary critics consistently suggested by the meager evidence. Hardly does any post-Aristotelian source seem to approach poetics the way Aristotle does. Concerning the definition, for instance, one searches vainly for anything even remotely analogous to the Aristotelian definition of tragedy. Only brief, descriptive and intuitive-sounding accounts of what a poem is appear occasionally. Needless to say, the importance Aristotle ascribes to $\mu\upsilon$ -

(Columbus 1977). More recently F. H. Sandbach, *Aristotle and the Stoics* (Cambridge 1985), challenged the assumption of Aristotle's influence on the Stoa, arguing that the evidence on which previous claims have been based is inconclusive. See, though, the discussion of the limitations of this argument by D. E. Hahm, *Aristotle and the Stoics: A Methodological Crux*, *AGPh* 73 (1991) 297–311 (I owe the last two references to Prof. Hahm himself).

4) See D. W. Lucas, *Aristotle. Poetics* (Oxford 1968) xxii–xxiii; see also below n. 9. Only in the Renaissance did the *Poetics* start enjoying its present prestige; see e.g. B. Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, vol. I (Chicago 1961) 349–423, J. Hutton, *Aristotle's Poetics* (New York 1982) 24–34 and S. Halliwell, *The Poetics and Its Interpreters*, in: A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics* (Princeton 1992) 409–24.

θεός and the theoretical infrastructure he postulates as the basis of the successful poem are nowhere to be found in Hellenistic literary criticism. On the contrary, moral/didactic considerations hold an especially prominent place.

Such considerations were a staple of Greek literary criticism as far back as one can go, to Xenophanes and Theagenes of Rhegium⁵). In Aristophanes' *Frogs* Aeschylus and Euripides discuss the social role of poets and both agree that poets are admired because of their "skill and advice, for making people in the cities better" (1009–1010)⁶). The first part of the play's agon is devoted to the benefits the Athenian citizens purportedly reaped from the plays of the two contenders: Aeschylus' plays taught them military valor and discipline, Euripides' characters offered models of smart argumentative power. Plato often (and ironically) mentions the use of poetry for didactic and paraenetic purposes. He ridicules of course the idea that poets can actually teach people and especially instruct professionals in their arts and crafts but he brings significant testimony to the fact that people did view poetry in terms of instruction or, at the very least, used such claims in their rhetoric. Plato himself takes much more seriously the possibility of using poetry to instill positive values to the young. Above all, he considers poetry a threat which contributes to the moral unraveling of the body politic⁷). Thus not everything was new in Hellenistic literary criticism as hardly everything was new in Aristotle's *Poetics*.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to consider Hellenistic literary criticism as basically a return to pre-Aristotelian poetics since several elements were particular to the schools which proposed them. My thesis is that, based on the fragmentary and often obscure extant evidence, there does not appear to be a clearly distinguishable thread that runs from Aristotle's *Poetics* to Hellenistic literary theory in general and the Stoic in particular. The

5) On the beginnings of Greek literary criticism see the surveys in R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford 1968) 8 ff., D. A. Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity* (London 1981) 18 ff. and N. J. Richardson, *Aristotle's Reading of Homer and Its Background*, in: R. Lamberton and J. J. Keane (eds.), *Homer's Ancient Readers* (Princeton 1992) 30–40.

6) On the issue of moral didacticism in Greek drama as presented in the *Frogs* see recently the discussion of K. J. Dover, *Aristophanes. The Frogs* (Oxford 1993) 15–16.

7) For Plato's views on poetry and education see P. Vicaire, *Platon: Critique littéraire* (Paris 1960) and S. Scolnikov, *Plato's Metaphysics of Education* (London 1988) 112–119.

import of this claim can be better assessed if one considers the relationship of Aristotle's *Poetics* to Plato's work: although no mention of Plato is made and no quotation from his dialogues is found in the *Poetics*, similarities of content, methodology and even metaphors (e.g. the poem as a living being) have been catalogued⁸). It is very hard to find such similarities between the *Poetics* and Hellenistic literary criticism. This lack of correspondence does not of course imply that the *Poetics* was not known to Hellenistic theorists or that they did not consider it an important work – there is some indirect evidence that they must have known the treatise⁹), although it is naturally impossible to know how they ranked it. I will argue in what follows that, based on our limited evidence, one can only claim that there does not seem to be a 'direct' influence, in the sense of similar concerns or answers to specific problems, of Aristotle's *Poetics* on Hellenistic literary theory. It is perfectly possible that Hellenistic theorists read the *Poetics*, decided that Aristotle's approach was not satisfactory and went on to propose something totally different – this would definitely be a sort of influence. Unfortunately there is no evidence for this tantalizing possibility: one fails to find substantial influence of Aristotle on later theorists and there has survived no information that they reacted to the *Poetics* by rejecting, approving or modifying Aristotle's theses. Thus we can only speculate about such possible reaction since we cannot disprove it. In what follows all claims about the absence of Aristotelian influence on later literary criticism should be read with this caveat in mind.

Despite the absence of substantial direct connections between the *Poetics* and Hellenistic literary criticism, one finds many an assertion to the contrary in the literature, often back to back with remarks on the isolation of the *Poetics*¹⁰). One cannot help thinking that Aristotle and Plato loom so large in modern perception of ancient literary criticism that it proves difficult for anyone to reconcile oneself with the idea that they might not have been so influential in their time after all. The scanty and widely scattered ancient evidence as well as the paucity of modern studies, especial-

8) See S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Chapel Hill 1986) 331–36.

9) Diogenes Laertius mentions the *Poetics* in his list of Aristotelian writings (5.22–27) and his ultimate source is believed to go back to the Ptolemaic library; see I. Düring, *Aristoteles* (Heidelberg 1966) 36–37 and R. Blum, *Kallimachos und die Literaturverzeichnis bei den Griechen* (Darmstadt 1977) 121–32.

10) See for instance S. Koster, *Antike Epostheorien* (Wiesbaden 1970) 85 n. 1 and Halliwell (above, n. 8) 288 n. 4.

ly comparative ones, devoted to the subject have certainly contributed to the perpetuation or rather the taking for granted of a largely unsubstantiated assumption. This is not to imply of course that nobody has noticed the uniqueness and isolation of the *Poetics*¹¹) but to call attention to the fact that even in specialized studies Aristotelian influence is often taken for granted. I will provide two recent examples of such discussions before concentrating on the relationship of the *Poetics* to the literary theories of the Stoic school.

In his article on literary criticism in the Iliadic scholia Richardson¹²) makes repeated references to Aristotelian material in the scholia and even to the “fact” that practically all literary theoretic principles found there can be traced back to Aristotle, as if such influence were self-evident¹³). Again this claim can hardly be totally wrong since some things manifestly seem to go back to Aristotle. Nevertheless, there are no grounds for claiming that the majority of the scholiasts’ literary-theoretic principles are indebted to him. Richardson divides his article into sections with tellingly Aristotelian captions (μῦθος, ἦθος, λέξις etc.) but the similarity with Aristotle does not extend much beyond the terminology. Richardson asserts, for instance, the Aristotelian origin of ποικιλία (a principle often evoked in the scholia), i.e. the inclusion of variegated episodes or the alternation of charged and relaxed passages in order to avoid monotony. Now the term itself occurs only once in the *Poetics* (1459a34) in a negative context as something undesirable or at any rate problematic¹⁴). Of course the term is not of cardinal importance if there are indications that the concept is present. Although Aristotle mentions admiringly Homer’s use of episodes (Poet. 1459a30–b24; cf. 1451a16–35), his praise focuses not on avoidance of monotony or anything of this sort but on the

11) See Düring (above, n. 9) 182 and Russell (above, n. 5) 31.

12) N. J. Richardson, *Literary Criticism in the Exegetical Scholia to the Iliad: A Sketch*, CQ 30 (1980) 265–87.

13) Similar assumptions underlie the much earlier work of L. Adam, *Die aristotelische Theorie vom Epos und ihre Entwicklung bei Griechen und Römern* (Wiesbaden 1889). See the discussion of M. Schmidt, *Die Erklärungen zum Weltbild Homers und zur Kultur der Heroenzeit in den bT-Scholien zur Ilias* (Munich 1976) 39–74, esp. 39–54, who argues against the emphasis on both Aristotelian and Stoic influence on the scholia. According to him many views found in the scholia seem to have been commonplace in the Hellenistic period and thus their appearance would not imply any direct indebtedness. On the literary-theoretic views in the scholia see also the discussion of N. G. Wilson, *Scolia e commentatori*, SCO 33 (1983) 83–112.

14) Cf. M. Heath, *Unity in Greek Poetics* (Oxford 1989) 50 n. 30.

proper construction of a successful poetic μῦθος which nowhere includes variety for its own sake. Similarly, in his fairly recent study Meijering¹⁵) detects consistent influence of Aristotelian ideas on the literary and rhetorical theories in the scholia. More specifically, Meijering sets out to prove that the cardinal concepts of ψυχαγωγία, φαντασία, ὑπόθεσις and οἰκονομία go back to Aristotle. This is not a place to engage in a detailed refutation of this argument but so much at least should be said. Meijering remarks at the conclusion of his book that Aristotle or other Peripatetics are not cited in questions of literary theory and characteristically Aristotelian terms like μίμησις or fear and pity do not appear in the scholia¹⁶); nevertheless, he concludes that “it was possible for later commentators, who certainly never read the *Poetics*, to remain relatively close to the principles underlying it. In the commentaries of their predecessors, which I believe did arise via the Alexandrians from Peripatetic scholarship, they could recognize concepts familiar to them from their rhetorical schooling”¹⁷). I find this reasoning difficult to follow and at any rate less than cogent. Meijering assumes that “Peripatetic scholarship” stayed close to Aristotle and promulgated his ideas and terminology thus influencing all subsequent scholarship. But “Peripatetic scholarship” is a ghost, a convenient designation to cover all post-Aristotelian scholarship produced by authors of often little-known philosophical affiliation. Often one cannot even attribute a name to views or writings said or seeming to be of Peripatetic origin¹⁸). Thus Meijering’s

15) R. Meijering, *Literary and Rhetorical Theories in Greek Scholia* (Groningen 1987).

16) Meijering (above, n. 15) 223–224.

17) Meijering (above, n. 15) 225.

18) Cf. the comments of C. O. Brink, *Callimachus and Aristotle: An Inquiry into Callimachus' Πρὸς Πραξιφάνην*, CQ 40 (1946) 11–12: “In this context a fact of nomenclature may be mentioned. The name Περιπατητικός which by the middle of the third century B.C. denoted a member of the Peripatetic School in Athens, changed its significance about that time. With the wider influence of Peripatetic studies it is not only used for the Athenian school but can also denote any writer of biography or literary history connected with Alexandria ... two conditions constitute this new usage of an older name, viz. connexion with Alexandria ... and the refined form which Alexandria had bestowed on the literary and biographical studies of the Peripatos”. See also his further specification (12 n. 1): “There seems to have been a third stage in which the name lost its connexion even with Alexandria, and did not mean more than ‘grammarian’ or ‘literary critic’”. Along the same lines Pfeiffer (above, n. 5) 150–151 noted: “That Hermippus could be called Περιπατητικός as well as Καλλιμάχειος suggests that the term had no longer any philosophical flavour but could be used of any writer on literature and antiquities, in particular the biographer”.

unqualified references to Peripatetic scholarship are very optimistic, if not unfounded.

Turning now to the Stoic literary theory and starting with the definition, it appears that the Stoics fairly consistently defined the poem as a piece of significant rhythmical diction. Besides, Posidonius distinguished between poem as “diction that is metrical or rhythmical with elaboration . . . going beyond prose” and poetry as “significant poetic diction containing an imitation of things divine and human” (D.L. 7.60 = fr. 44 Edelstein-Kidd)¹⁹). It is not known whether all Stoics shared this distinction but it is reasonable that some at least did. The duality basic to most Stoic literary criticism is clearly apparent in this definition: poems were considered under two aspects, as a structure of harmonious sounds and words and as a carrier of meaning, or as λέξις and λόγος respectively, i.e. articulated speech and articulated speech with meaning. Stoic linguistic theory distinguished among the ἐκτὸς ὑποκειμενον, the σημαῖνον and the σημαίνόμενον²⁰). The most elementary indivisible component of words was the φωνή or articulated voice²¹). Consequently literary criticism started with the study and categorization of φωνή.

In Posidonius’ definition the difference from Aristotle’s *Poetics* is instantly obvious from the focus on the rhythmical, linguistic and metrical aspects of poetry. ‘Imitation’ of course rings closer to Aristotle but the notion is also prominent in Plato and it was definitely part of pre-Socratic theoretical discussions, especially of visual arts²²). The general character of Posidonius’ formulation in its extant form is foreign to Aristotle’s analysis and his concern to delineate precisely the appropriate kind of μίμησις that pertains to tragic poetry per se. But the most crucial discrepancy between

19) On Posidonius’ definition see De Lacy (above, n. 1) 244, M. Gigante *Σημαντικὸν ποίημα*: Contributo alla storia dell’ estetica antica PP 16 (1961) 45 ff., Greenberg (above, n. 1) and R. Häußler *Ποίημα und Ποίησις*, in: *Festschrift K. Büchner* (Wiesbaden 1970) 125 ff.

20) SVF II 166; see A. C. Lloyd, *Grammar and Metaphysics in the Stoa*, in: A. A. Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism* (London 1971) 58. Cf. also M. Pohlenz, *Die Begründung der abendländischen Sprachlehre durch die Stoa*, NGG 22 (1939) 151–198 and G. M. Rispoli, *Eufonia e poetica in testi ercolanesi*, in: G. Bolognesi & V. Pisani (eds.), *Linguistica e Filologia* (Brescia 1987) 462–463.

21) D.L. 7.55–59 = SVF III 212–214. On φωνή see K. Barwick, *Remmius Palaemon und die römische Ars Grammatica* (Leipzig 1922) 91–94 and W. Ax, *Laut, Stimme und Sprache* (Göttingen 1986) 151 ff.

22) See Russell (above, n. 5) 99 ff.

Aristotle and the Stoics remains the emphasis on rhythm. The most dedicated adherents of a radical theory of euphony, which advocated the autocracy of the sense of hearing as the only faculty responsible for the judgment of poetry, were the so-called *κριτικοί*²³). According to them not only content was considered extraneous to poetry but also style (*λέξις*) and its virtues (Philod. Tr. C 17.4 ff. *Śb.*). The poetic art consisted solely in composition (*σύνθεσις*), the harmonious combination of elementary sounds, and in rhythmical elaboration. At least one Stoic, possibly Aristo of Chios, shared this view and Philodemus explicitly says that he took it over from the *κριτικοί* (De Poem. 5.18.7–17). The identification of Philodemus' opponent with the flamboyant third century Stoic from Chios is far from certain. Jensen was the first to suggest Aristo²⁴) and many subsequent scholars accepted his argument²⁵). Recently, though, Isnardi Parente challenged Jensen's view arguing that Philodemus' report is incompatible with the rest of the available information on Aristo and indeed with the doctrines of the older Stoa²⁶). According to her Philodemus' opponent must have been a grammarian or philosopher associated with the middle Stoa²⁷).

Whoever Philodemus' opponent might have been, the main points of his poetic theory can be summarized as follows: (1) a requirement for good diction plus a morally blameless thought, (2) classification of poems into good, bad and intermediate, and (3) emphasis on euphony and the fact that poems are judged by hearing. Asmis²⁸) suggests that the division into thought and composition, in her opinion mainly a Hellenistic innovation, had important consequences for the history of literary criticism: it supposed-

23) On the *κριτικοί* see Jensen (above, n. 1) 146 ff., H. Gomoll, *Hera- kleodoros und die κριτικοί bei Philodem*, *Philologus* 91 (1937) 373–84 and D. M. Schenkeveld, *Οἱ κριτικοί in Philodemus*, *Mnemosyne* 21 (1968) 185 ff.

24) The identification was based upon Jensen's restoration of the damaged papyrus text of Philod. De Poem. 5.16.28–30.

25) M. Pohlenz, *Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des griechischen Geistes*, *NGG* 16 (1933) 77, De Lacy (above, n. 1) 252–253, G. M. A. Grube, *The Greek and Roman Critics* (London 1965) 136, Schenkeveld (above, n. 23) 177 and 180 (with caution) and Ioppolo (above, n. 1) 256–278.

26) M. Isnardi Parente (above, n. 1) and the same author's, *Gli Stoici antichi* (Turin 1989) 32 ff.

27) In his review of Jensen's book R. Philippson had much earlier rejected Jensen's proposal (*PhW* 44 [1924] 417–21). Asmis (above, n. 1) and C. Mangoni, *Filodemo. Il quinto libro della Poetica* (Naples 1993) 61–69, find Isnardi Parente's thesis plausible, although with some qualifications.

28) Asmis (above, n. 1) 155–157.

ly promoted a strict demarcation of features intrinsic and extrinsic to poetry, like diction and music and dance respectively. This distinction militated against the Aristotelian position that pronounced tragedy the queen of all other genres because it included music and dance. It is, to say the least, bizarre to attribute to Aristotle an emphasis on the importance of musical embellishments as the basis for tragedy's superiority. He naturally considers them pleasurable but stresses their irrelevance to the *μῦθος* and their ultimate expendibility. It is definitely hard to think of a more rigorous distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic elements in poetry than Aristotle's in the *Poetics*. But the most important advantage of this Stoic's theory according to Asmis is the attribution of all thoughts included in the poem not to the characters but to the poets themselves. Thus there ensues the possibility for a critical upgrading of genres like lyric which were considered inferior by Aristotle. I fail to find any indication either that Aristotle considered the thoughts to belong exclusively to the characters or that the Stoic did not consider thoughts as reflections of a character's situation and thus not necessarily indicative of the poet's own concerns. Neither Aristotle nor any other ancient critic for that matter dealt with poetic subjectivity and its expression in a poem. Asmis claims that

whereas Aristotle was inclined to regard a poem as an artefact existing independently of its creator, *a poem is now seen as a creation arising from the mind of a poet* (my italics)²⁹).

But for Aristotle all production has its source in the mind of the artisan (Phys. 192b9 ff., Met. 1025b22–23, 1032a32–b2, 1034a24, 1070a7, GC 735a2–3, HA 588a29, EN 1140a10–14) and there is no reason to assume that poetic production is different in that respect. As far as can be determined from Philodemus' text, the Stoic's theory seems largely unrelated to Aristotle's *Poetics* and certainly does not improve upon it in any way.

A more interesting case is Crates of Mallos who wrote commentaries on archaic epic and drama and made considerable contributions to several branches of linguistics like phonetics, morphology and etymology. Although not a Stoic in the strict sense of the term, Crates was clearly influenced by Stoic theories – ironically, Philodemus' surviving work deals with thinkers affiliated with the Stoic school but not orthodox Stoics. Thus the task of determining the position of the adherents of the school and its various

29) Asmis (above, n. 1) 156.

satellites at different periods becomes particularly arduous. *Suda* calls Crates a Stoic philosopher but this must be an inference based on rather shallow knowledge of the philosophical affiliations of different thinkers³⁰). Crates was a κριτικός who thought very highly of his vocation: according to him a κριτικός is the only one able to play the role of literary critic, although he may lack the technical expertise of a grammarian³¹). With a well-developed literary theory Crates seems at first view to have affinities with Aristotle's theory of poetry but it soon becomes clear that these affinities are not as important as they might initially appear.

Philodemus devotes a large part of his discussion of Crates' views to the latter's *Auseinandersetzung* with the 'philosophers', a group of thinkers not further specified but who could, according to Philodemus erroneously, include the Epicureans³²). Philodemus denies that his own school shares the views of the 'philosophers' who considered the θέματα the sole criterion for the judgment of poetry. These were conventional, arbitrary agreed upon norms that regulated the literary perception of poetry and provided answers to such questions as who the best author to imitate in every genre was³³). On this thesis there is no natural good in a poem that

30) T 1 Mette. The fact that Panaetius was Crates' student (T 3 Mette) possibly facilitated his acquisition of the title of philosopher. On Crates' philosophical affiliations see C. Wachsmuth, *De Cratete Mallota* (Leipzig 1860) 5–6, Jensen (above, n. 1) 149 ff., H. Mette, *Parateresis* (Halle 1952) 61 and E. Asmis, *Crates on Poetic Criticism*, *Phoenix* 46 (1992) 160–161. J. I. Porter, *Philodemus on Material Difference*, *CronErc* 19 (1989) 157–158, 168–170 and id., *Hermeneutic Lines and Circles: Aristarchus and Crates on the Exegesis of Homer*, in: *Lamberton & Keaney* (above, n. 5) 85 ff., denies Stoic influence on Crates.

31) According to Sextus (*Adv. Math.* 1.79 = fr. 17 Mette) Crates believed that "the critic differs from the grammarian; and he says that the critic must have knowledge of the whole range of language whereas the grammarian simply explains difficult words, prosody and the like. Thus the critic resembles a master-craftsman and the grammarian a subordinate craftsman". The issue could not simply be settled by an assertion on Crates' part. Some grammarians for one espoused a much broader view of their discipline ("the grammarian must deal with all aspects of language", *Sch. on Dion. Thrax* 7.27–28 Hilgard) and Crates himself was called a grammarian by later sources. At any rate it is interesting to observe that Crates presupposes a gradation of arts and science that goes back to Aristotle (*Phys.* 194a36–b7).

32) Different suggestions on the identity of the 'philosophers' have been put forth. Philippson (above, n. 27) favored the Sceptics while Greenberg (above, n. 1) 209 n. 49 and Porter (1989) (above, n. 30) 162–163 thought that the term must refer to a group of critics with whom Crates disagreed according to Philodemus (*De Poem.* 5.27.7 ff.).

33) Cf. for instance Philodemus' remarks on the confusion that results from postulating different θέματα, since it is impossible for everybody to agree on the

can be detected by everyone and at all times. Crates attacked the philosophers claiming that there are no *θέματα* and that hearing can function as the judge of objective goodness irrespective of any posited and subjective criteria. Rejecting the multiplicity of standards espoused by the radical euphonists Crates pronounced their claim to subjectivity in the judgment of poetry unfounded because there was a natural good in poems distinguishable by everybody's ear. Philodemus agrees with the philosophers that there is no natural good inherent in a poem qua poem. On the other hand, he agrees with Crates that there are no *θέματα*. In *Rhet.* 4.7.6–14 (Sudhaus 1.151) he claims that postulating *θέματα* would be justified if there existed no naturally beautiful speech but, since this is clearly not the case, it is ridiculous to abandon nature and have recourse to convention. Nevertheless, he attacks as naive Crates' position that the sense of hearing, which according to the Epicureans is *ἄλογος*, like all senses, can judge the sound of poetry or anything else for that matter.

As befitted a *κριτικός*, Crates considered elementary sounds (*φωναί*) and thus hearing, the most important factor in the judgment of poetry. He differed, though, from the rest of the *κριτικοί* inasmuch as he did not believe that the sense of hearing was responsible for judging the thought: the *κριτικοί* proclaimed that a poem's euphony, perceived and judged by hearing, *eo ipso* made its thought praiseworthy irrespective of content, truth value or moral import. Crates suggested that a poem is judged empirically by the hearing which examines the sound in relation to the meaning or, as Philodemus puts it, “not without the thoughts but not the thoughts themselves” (*De Poem.* 5.28.26–28). For Crates the content of a poem fell under the jurisdiction of reason. While he

best style or model: “Because indeed not all people trust *θέματα* nor all respect the same [*θέματα*] ... but others emulate the style of Isocrates, others that of Thucydides” (*Rhet.* 4.7.14–22 [Sudhaus 1.151]). A little below Philodemus returns to the same issue: “But it is not even possible to say that the orators themselves as a group have made up their minds on one kind of style and practice it consistently. On the contrary, we will observe among them, or the majority of them, different tastes ... In respect to Isocrates either absolutely nobody or only two or three have the same attitude and some say that not even the style of Isocrates himself is uniform in all his works” (*Rhet.* 4.8.9–22 [Sudhaus 1.152–153]). Although Philodemus deals here with rhetoric and its inferiority in comparison to philosophy, his conclusions are certainly applicable to other arts as well. See G. Milanese, *Lucida Carmina* (Milano 1989) 86–93, who suggests that according to the Epicureans the concept of *τέχνη* cannot accommodate the multiplicity of standards implicit in the *θέματα* theory. In his subject matter, methods and even style the Epicurean philosopher avoids variation; cf. also Grube (above, n. 25) 202.

did not consider a successful poem simply an agglomerate of harmonious sounds like a musical piece, he thought that goodness or badness of thought is irrelevant to the judgment of a poem. Although his position seems somewhat artificial and hard to grasp, he apparently sought to strike a middle path between the radical one-sidedness of euphonists and those theorists who postulated thought as the most crucial criterion in the judgment of poems: he disagreed not only with the euphonists but also with the Epicureans who claimed that the hearing cannot judge anything because the sound cannot convey anything to the intellect: content and form should both be good and the poem should be judged as a whole by the intellect. Crates gave precedence to euphony but kept sound and thought, the criteria for their judgment and the faculties that judge them scrupulously apart. Crates' position is probably as close as a *κοιτικός* could ever approach the Stoic outlook on poetry. It is known that the Stoics like the Epicureans required both good sound and good thought to proclaim a poem worthwhile and believed that hearing judges the former and the mind the latter. Crates obviously espoused only the second claim of the Stoic theory.

As far as Aristotle is concerned, Crates seems to come closest to the tradition of the *Poetics* with his claim that poems are judged on account of whether they were composed according to the principle (*λόγος*) of the art (*De Poem.* 5.28.2–3). Philodemus complains about Crates' failure to define this principle. It seems, though, that the principle of the art, which exists by nature, determines the art of poetry and is judged by perception (*De Poem.* 5.28.24–26), can only be the principle of sound according to which a poem is judged³⁴). Thus for Crates a euphonious poem is a well-composed poem that satisfies the requirements of nature and art. Auditory pleasure is not laudable *per se* but as an indication of the poem's compliance with the principle of the art. This principle regulates not only the production but also the response to a work of art, in this case not only the composition of a euphonious poem³⁵) but also the pleasure that ensues from the realization, through the sense of hearing, that the poem complies with the

34) Cf. the discussion of Mangoni (above, n. 27) 297–298.

35) The persistent importance of theorems of art that regulated good composition, i.e. the arrangement of words, sentences and paragraphs, is attested by Dionysius (*De Comp. Verb.* 5.12); see A. Scaglione, *The Classical Theory of Composition from Its Origins to the Present* (Chapel Hill 1972) 74ff. and K. Freudenburg, *The Walking Muse* (Princeton 1993) 132–139.

principle of the art³⁶). Inasmuch as Crates emphasizes the principle of the art as the ultimate criterion of artistic value there can be detected an ultimate debt to Aristotle but the essence of Crates' claim turns out to be significantly different from any of Aristotle's pronouncements in the *Poetics*: Crates' principle of poetics, in contrast to the Aristotelian *μῦθος*, is euphony and the art consists in creating beautiful sound-patterns, an aim which Aristotle obviously could not have condoned as the defining characteristic of poetics.

In another part of his treatise Philodemus talks about a theorist whose name has been lost and who proposed the fairly radical (at least by ancient standards) theory that all poets, and consequently all poetic genres, dealt with the production of good sound or beautiful diction (PHerc 460, 26, Tr. B, fr. 17.8–27 Sb.).

He says it will make no difference, not even if we compare Archilochus or Euripides or someone else with Homer, if only we juxtapose the praised diction of each. For just because tragedy, iambic, and lyric differ from epic we will not refrain from comparing poets of different genres, since the goal (τέλος) is the same for each genre. For it follows that all diction in them is inserted beautifully, or badly, or indifferently.

The term τέλος marks both the conceptual similarity with Aristotle and the wide gap that separates the anonymous theorist from him. Asmis³⁷) has claimed that Philodemus here talks about Crates and her argument is fairly plausible. If her identification is valid, the difference between Aristotle and Crates, already apparent from Philodemus' remarks in book 5, becomes irreconcilable.

As mentioned above, the Stoics were in general less radical than Crates, although he shared common ground with them. They attributed importance to both diction and thought. Some Stoics seem to have been closer to the Aristotelian tradition than others. Panaetius for instance observed that the beauty of artworks consists in the arrangement of their parts and the spectator's perception of this arrangement³⁸), probably echoing Aristotle's *Poet.* 1450b34–37 and *Met.* 1078a36. Nevertheless, the overall impression from the comparison between Aristotle and the Stoics is one of divergent orientations. As mentioned above, the concept of

36) Cf. Asmis (above, n. 30) 156–158.

37) Asmis (above, n. 30) 167–169.

38) See Cic. *De off.* 1.14 and 98; cf. D.H. Dem. 48 and Arist. *Quint.* 1.4. See also the comments of R. Philippson, *Das Sittlichschöne bei Panaetius*, *Philologus* 85 (1930) 383–384 and De Lacy (above, n. 1) 246–247.

imitation, for instance, played a role in Stoic literary theory but both the object of μίμησις and its execution are unrelated to their Aristotelian counterparts. The Stoics thought that poetry imitates life and should be truthful to it. The broadness, and the consequent lack of precision, of this requirement contrasts with Aristotle's painstaking delimitation of the notion of μίμησις. Besides, according to the Stoics the imitation could be symbolic, not literal³⁹), and thus the road to allegorical interpretation opened wide. This is another un-Aristotelian staple of Stoic literary criticism, less original but arguably the most influential part of the Stoic theory⁴⁰) since it had a far wider impact on later theorists, especially Christians, through Philo. Allegory was for the Stoics a way of circumventing the most problematic stumbling block in their discussions of the poetry of the past. Poetry undeniably contained much that fell far short of the strict moral standards espoused by the school. Allegory provided a respectable, although inevitably often implausible, answer to many of these problems. Homer was the prime candidate for allegorical interpretations. He was highly esteemed by the Stoics and even by the Epicureans to judge from Philodemus' treatise *On the Good King According to Homer*⁴¹). Aristotle of course also considered Homer a model poet but it is characteristic of his approach that he searches for and pinpoints a concrete reason why Homer excelled among the poets of the past. Several reasons could easily be named in support of Homer's superiority, especially that Homer was the teacher of all Greeks in a variety of different arts, above all the art of war⁴²). Homer's

39) Cf. G. Kennedy, *Hellenistic Literary and Philosophical Scholarship*, in: G. Kennedy (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. I (Cambridge 1989) 212.

40) For a detailed collection of ancient evidence see M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*, vol. II (Göttingen 1970) 55. On Stoic allegory see Pohlenz 97, De Lacy (above, n. 1) 257–58, F. Buffière, *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque* (Paris 1956) 137–54, Pfeiffer (above, n. 5) 237–46 and D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley 1992). P. Steinmetz, *Allegorische Deutung und allegorische Dichtung in der alten Stoa*, *RhM* 129 (1986) 18–30, and A. A. Long, *Stoic Readings of Homer*, in: Lamberton and Keaney (above, n. 5) 41–66, have correctly challenged and qualified the scholarly *communis opinio* according to which the Stoics considered Homer an allegorist in the strong sense and pursued wild allegorical paths that distorted the poet's meaning. This sweeping view of Stoic interpretation originated in ancient polemical criticism of the Stoa. The Stoics approached Homer with clearly Stoic lenses but their interpretation was not unrefined, reproachable or radically different from that of many ancient and modern readers.

41) On Homer and Philodemus see Asmis (1991) (above, n. 2).

42) He was even credited with scientific insights. Crates and Posidonius,

poetry was intricate and pleasant and people turned to his epics for examples of ethical behavior⁴³). Aristotle, though, mentions only Homer's poetical superiority which consists in his having been able to construct a *μῦθος* out of the vast, non-unified material of the Trojan war saga. For Aristotle Homer is never a revered teacher but merely an excellent poet for a very specific reason.

It is instructive to investigate how Aristotle and the Stoics addressed Homer's 'mistakes'. Aristotle considered only mistakes pertaining to the art of poetry as compromising the poetic composition. The poet's ignorance of other non-poetic matters is not on a par with a mistake in the construction of the *μῦθος*. Optimally mistakes should be avoided altogether but since this is not always possible poets should be judged only on the premisses of their own art. Occasionally it is even possible that some mistakes or improbabilities promote the final cause of the art: in such cases they are to be not only tolerated but also praised (Poet. 1460b13–32). As mentioned above, the Stoics showed particular affection for Homer and even considered him as a sort of proto-Stoic. It was indeed not uncommon for Hellenistic philosophical schools to vie for the authority of Homer in an effort to enhance their prestige. The contradictory accounts of Homer's supposed philosophical affiliations were appropriately ridiculed by Seneca⁴⁴). Although the Stoics are included among the targets of Seneca's attack, when it came to judging Homer the Stoics could not but make him a bad poet. According to the Stoic system a poem could be called 'good' only if both its content and form were unobjectionably good. Even if only one element fell short of this strict ideal, it sufficed to

whose views along with those of others like Hipparchus have been preserved by Strabo, energetically defended the Homeric 'doctrines' against attacks like Eratosthenes' on which see H. Berger, *Die geographischen Fragmente des Eratosthenes* (Leipzig 1880) 19 ff.; cf. D. R. Dicks, *The Geographical Fragments of Hipparchus* (London 1960) 38. On Strabo see D. M. Schenkeveld, *Strabo on Homer, Mnemosyne* 29 (1976) 59–64. For Crates' defense of Homer see fr. 30, 34a and 35a Mette; cf. Porter (1992) (above, n. 30) 85–111. For Posidonius see fr. 49.300 ff., 216, 222, 277a and 280–281 Edelstein-Kidd; cf. the extensive discussion in G. Rudberg, *Forschungen zu Poseidonios* (Uppsala 1918) 127 ff., I. Heinemann, *Poseidonios' metaphysische Schriften*, vol. II (Breslau 1921) 54 ff. and W. Theiler, *Posidonius. Die Fragmente*, vol. II (Berlin 1982) 6 ff. For a more sober view of Homer's (and Aratus') 'scientific' contributions see Posidonius fr. 48a Edelstein-Kidd and I. Kidd, *Posidonius*, vol. II. *The Commentary* (Cambridge 1988) 214–216.

43) For references see De Lacy (above, n. 1) 264 n. 136–139.

44) Ep. 88.5; cf. SVF II 1077 and see H. Noblot, *Sénèque. Lettres à Lucilius* 3 (Paris 1979) 159–60 and Long (above, n. 40) 47.

catapult the whole thing into Stoic anathema⁴⁵). A poem could be either good, bad or intermediate. Absolutely good can only be poems composed by an absolutely good person, i.e. a wise person⁴⁶), a creature notoriously rare and virtually non-existent. Despite this problem, the Stoics apparently believed that 'good poem' was not a contradiction in terms, as Philodemus contends in his criticism, although admittedly such poems were very rare. Poems which were good in some respects but bad in others, or even bad in only one other, were considered intermediate if they lacked badness in the form of factual or moral falsehoods. In strict Stoic terms Homer was no wise man because in his poems one can detect several such lapses and find many phantastic and improbable elements that compromise the truth of the narrative. Although his composition was laudable, he could at best be called intermediate if not absolutely bad. The Stoics had to go out of their way to safeguard Homer from attacks of a Platonic, Heraclitean or even strict Stoic type. To exonerate Homer from charges of inconsistency Zeno postulated that the poet employed two principles, truth and opinion (SVF I 274 and 456)⁴⁷). Aristo adopted a lenient attitude and expressed willingness to "forgive" Homer by calling him 'good' only in a loose sense (Philod. *De Poem.* 5.17.32 and 18.5,14). Obviously, for the Stoics Homer's excellence could barely save him from philosophical contempt. It is also probably not accidental that, unlike Aristotle, the Stoics seem to have favored shorter poems like hymns. Such poetical forms could present philosophical truths more directly and exhibit the stylistic merits consistently advocated by the Stoics. The famous *Hymn to Zeus* by Cleanthes for instance was totally devoid of mythological elements and could very well be used for didactic purposes⁴⁸).

Much more interesting and original than allegory or the Stoic views on Homer was the Stoic concept of φαντασία and its role in the artistic process⁴⁹). As a literary term φαντασία appears in later

45) See Asmis (above, n. 1) 164 ff. and Mangoni (above, n. 27) 250 ff. with further bibliography.

46) SVF II 393 and III 505, 516 and 525.

47) Cf. Buffière (above, n. 40) 205.

48) On the hymn see K. Sier, *Zum Zeushymnos des Kleanthes*, in: P. Steinmetz (ed.), *Beiträge zur hellenistischen Literatur und ihrer Rezeption in Rom* (Stuttgart 1990) 93–108 with a collection of previous bibliography in n. 2.

49) On φαντασία see the discussion of Russell (above, n. 5) 108–110 and K. Eden, *Poetic and Legal Fiction in the Aristotelian Tradition* (Princeton 1986) 107–111; cf. M. Fuhrmann, *Die Dichtungstheorie der Antike* (Darmstadt 1992) 177.

sources⁵⁰): it is the ability to present things, especially dramatic, pathetic or calamitous events, so strikingly and vividly that the audience cannot help experiencing the desired emotion, like anger or pity. This effect is most efficiently achieved when the poets or orators themselves feel strong empathy with the misfortunes they depict, as if they were actual witnesses to, or participants in, the events they describe. The notion of vivid representation goes back to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (3.11) but the appropriation of the term φαντασία in the realm of literary criticism and artistic creation⁵¹) was certainly influenced by the use of the term in Aristotle's *De an.* 427b29 ff. for the ability to form images. Artists do not simply reproduce things they have already seen or experienced, as a strict theory of imitation would have it, but they are able to create totally or partially new things by drawing on their ability for φαντασία, combining old and inventing new elements⁵²). Although I do not think that Aristotle would object to such a theory or consider it incompatible with his own theory of μίμησις since he is willing to accept tragedies with imaginary plots, it is true that he nowhere elaborates on the creatively imaginative aspect of the poet's work. Later theory developed what is at best latent in his work.

On the whole, moralism probably constitutes the most serious dividing line between Aristotle and the Stoics. The latter firmly believed that poetry should contribute to the moral edification of the audience, especially the young, who could use it as a preparatory stage for their introduction to philosophy⁵³). Hence, poetry should present the same truths as philosophical prose. Fan-

50) Philostr. *Vit. Ap.* 6.19, Quint. *Inst.* 6.2.25 ff., 8.3.88, 10.7.15 and [Longinus] 15. It is surely not a coincidence that all these sources have connections with rhetoric because rhetorical theory used φαντασία extensively as a means of persuading the audience; see E. Birmelin, *Die kunsttheoretischen Gedanken in Philostrats Apollonios*, *Philologus* 88 (1933) 149–80 and 392–414, W. Bühler, *Beiträge zur Erklärung der Schrift vom Erhabenen* (Göttingen 1964) 64, Schmidt (above, n. 13) 62 and D. A. Russell, *Greek Criticism of the Empire*, in: Kennedy (above, n. 39) 313–14.

51) Historians also employed the term; see D. A. Russell, "Longinus". On the *Sublime* (Oxford 1962) on [Longinus] 15.1.

52) For an example of this process see Cic. *De Inv.* 2.1–3: Zeuxis created a portrait of Helen by combining the charms of five Crotonian beauties.

53) Philod. *De Poem.* 5.14.6–24, 29.15–19, PHerc. 403 fr. 3.8–15 and 4.12–16. See F. Sbordone, [Φιλοδόμου Περί Ποιημάτων] *Tractatus Tres* (Naples 1976) 254–55 and Asmis (above, n. 1) 193. For further evidence see De Lacy (above, n. 1) 251 n. 51, 52 and 269–71; cf. C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry*, vol. II (Cambridge 1971) 352 ff. and Russell (above, n. 5) 42 and 85.

tastic or 'immoral' stories were rejected as μῦθοι (i.e. *fabulae*) that compromised the philosophical integrity of a poem. Philosophers and sages had no use for poetry and rejected its pleasure as indeed every kind of pleasure which they considered an irrational movement of the soul (SVF III 391.20–21). They should not draw ordinary vulgar pleasure from poetry but experience χαρά⁵⁴), an agreeable emotion that accompanies the benefit they reap from their interaction with philosophical poetry.

Cleanthes held the most peculiar views on poetry's impact and prestige, even among his fellow Stoics. In contrast to almost every other thinker in antiquity, including Aristotle, he thought that the rhythmical patterns, musical accompaniment and exalted diction of poetry suited philosophical concepts about the nature of the divine and the cosmos much more than dry, pedantic prose. Like a trumpet that diffuses the air blown into it amplifying the sound, poetry with its elevated precision brought out serious themes much more strikingly than the freer prose⁵⁵). Vividness, of course, was an important notion in ancient theories of style and literary criticism but the philosophical twist Cleanthes gave it was peculiar and indeed unique with him. In the *Poetics* Aristotle mentions vividness passingly and considers it a characteristic of diction (Poet. 1455a21–29), a natural classification for an attribute that enjoyed prominence in the field of rhetoric and was counted as one of the virtues of style. Vividness, however, is a secondary element in the construction of the μῦθος, relevant primarily in the context of a theatrical performance: by visualizing accurately the happenings on stage the poet is able to present a clear picture, guaranteed to capture the attention of the audience and to avoid possible

54) For the contrast between the two see SVF III 431.16–18 and 434–435; cf. A. Bonhöffer, *Epiktet und die Stoa* (Stuttgart 1890) 293–298 and Asmis (above, n. 1) 192–93.

55) See the eloquent account of Seneca: *Nam, ut dicebat Cleanthes, quemadmodum spiritus noster clariorem sonum reddit, cum illum tuba per longi canalis angustias tractum patientiore novissime exitu effudit, sic sensus nostros clariore carminis arta necessitas efficit. Eadem neglegentius audiuntur minusque percipiunt, quamdiu soluta oratione dicuntur; ubi accessere numeri at egregium sensum adstrinxere certi pedes, eadem illa sententia velut lacerto excussiore torquetur* (Ep. 108.10). Cf. Philod. *De Mus.* 4.28.1–35, esp. 28–35, where the Epicurean endorses the Aristotelian position (Poet. 1460b2–5, 1462a11–14) in his response to Cleanthes: far from presenting the thought more powerfully, the glamour and loudness of metre, music and lofty diction distract the audience from the proper appreciation of the poem's thought. See further E. Asmis, *An Epicurean Survey of Poetic Theories* (Philodemus, *On Poems* 5, cols. 26–36), *CQ* 42 (1992) 400–401.

damaging slips⁵⁶). Cleanthes' conception of prose and poetry is reminiscent of Aristotle's comparison of history and poetry where the former is presented as encumbered by the inclusion of many incidental and inconsequential events that do not follow according to probability or necessity. The intervention of tragic μῦθος turns these disparate events into a work of art more akin to philosophy than history is. The metre, rhythm and diction of Cleanthes' philosophical poetry apparently had a similar effect: they turned a looser prose-account into a didactic philosophical masterpiece apt to present the truths of Stoicism, both scientific and moral. Again the emphasis on music and rhythm as well as the moralist slant of Cleanthes' views demarcate them clearly from Aristotle's concerns in the *Poetics*.

It is very hard to find anything analogous to moral instruction in the *Poetics*. The question of tragedy's, and poetry's in general, impact on the morality of the audience is never broached there. It apparently was never high on Aristotle's list of priorities and it is obvious that he never considered poetry a means of moral instruction⁵⁷). The old dilemma whether poetry is supposed to please or teach is addressed by Aristotle in a characteristically idiosyncratic way: to please not in an intuitive way but through the construction of a rational complex artefact, the μῦθος. Nevertheless, since tragedy at least deals with the actions of personal agents, ethics is inevitably drawn into the picture, if not so much by Aristotle himself, definitely by several modern interpreters. Actions of course have a moral basis since they are determined by and betray the agent's rational choice (προαίρεσις). The ἦθος of tragedy should reveal the rational choice of the characters (Poet. 1450b8–9, 1454a17–19). Besides, Aristotle explicitly refers to tragic characters as "greater than ourselves" (Poet. 1454b8–9) and to early poets as having a moral predisposition for their genre (Poet. 1448b24). Thus it is undeniable that moral parameters play some role in the outlining of the profile of tragedy but it should be stressed that the distinctly secondary role ethics plays in the *Poetics* has nothing to do with the Stoic insistence on morality and instruction through poetry. Aristotle apparently rejected both Plato's views on the worthlessness of poetry and the view Plato

56) On vividness see G. Zanker, *Enargeia in the Ancient Criticism of Poetry*, RhM 124 (1981) 297–311. For the views of later literary critics and orators on the subject see Eden (above, n. 49) 85–111, esp. 88 and 108–111, with a collection of evidence and bibliography.

57) See Russell (above, n. 5) 91–93.

attacked, the use of poems as educational compendia whose credibility is guaranteed by the prestige of their authors.

From the above it has emerged clearly that the differences between Aristotle and the Stoic school are considerable. To an extent, the discrepancy is understandable since both the Aristotelian and the Hellenistic literary theories developed as an offshoot of larger philosophical systems which were *ex hypothesi* fundamentally different. It is characteristic for the limited influence of the *Poetics* that, as far as can be gleaned from the extant evidence, even the Peripatetics seem to have diverged from Aristotle. Again it is impossible to observe or postulate a total split if only because it is hard to find any area of study that Aristotle left completely out of his horizon. But it is undeniable that second and third generation Peripatetics focused significantly more on biographical inquiries and even anecdotal material than Aristotle ever did⁵⁸). They wrote extensively on poetry, poets and literary criticism but they seem to have favored an approach that can be called if not un-Aristotelian at least largely foreign to the *Poetics*. Among the Peripatetics the scholar Neoptolemus of Parium is the most interesting, if very difficult to assess, case⁵⁹). The first and major stumbling block is Neoptolemus' philosophical affiliation: although often called a Peripatetic he is not securely identified as such. At any rate, from Porphyrio comes the tantalizing piece of information that Horace in his *Ars Poetica* adapted the most salient theses of Neoptolemus' literary theories (Ad Hor. A.P. p. 162.6 Holder). The only extant account of these theories is found in Philodemus' *On Poems* (5.13.32 ff.) and it is unknown whether it covers Porphyrio's "salient" points or not. Philodemus had apparently presented Neoptolemus' theories in some detail earlier in the treatise and the extant text is as usual obscure because it consists in little more than the author's expressions of indignation at views he considers unfounded and almost lunatic. Neoptolemus is reported to have divided the art of poetry into three parts or kinds, poem, poetry and poet⁶⁰). The first two are easily understandable and

58) For a comprehensive account of Peripatetic contributions see A. Podlecki, *The Peripatetics as Literary Critics*, *Phoenix* 23 (1969) 114–37.

59) On Neoptolemus' theories see Mangoni (above, n. 27) 53–61 and 221 ff. with a survey of previous bibliography; cf. Fuhrmann (above, n. 49) 145–53.

60) For different conjectures about Neoptolemus' kinds see A. Ardizzoni, *Ποίημα*. *Ricerche sulla teoria del linguaggio poetico nell' antichità* (Bari 1953) 9–30, C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry*, vol. I (Cambridge 1963) 58, Greenberg

indeed reminiscent of Posidonius' definition, although Philodemus found fault with them too. The third is the most puzzling and elicited Philodemus' heaviest attack: how can the poet, the agent, be considered part of the art he possesses? The question has not been satisfactorily answered yet. At any rate, whether a fuller account of Neoptolemus' theory would provide the sorely needed missing links or he simply used a loose terminological apparatus, the theory seems to be unrelated to the *Poetics*. Attempts to associate Neoptolemus' views with Aristotle's *Rhetoric* are not particularly convincing and have not met with much critical approval. If Neoptolemus were a Peripatetic, his difference from Aristotle would gain additional weight, especially since he seems to have been an advocate of the didactic use of poetry (De Poem. 5.16.22–28).

Already Theophrastus apparently moved away from Aristotle. The question of his debt to Aristotle will never be settled with any degree of certainty given the paucity of his surviving work. It is particularly unfortunate that only one very brief definition of tragedy attributed to him is found in a very late source, the grammarian Diomedes (I p. 487.11–12 K). Two other definitions, of comedy (I p. 488.4–5 K) and epic (I p. 484.1–2 K), as well as a dubious one of mime (I p. 491.15–16 K), are transmitted anonymously but there is strong possibility that they also originated in Theophrastus' work. Diogenes Laertius (5.47–48) testifies that he had written a *Poetics* as well as a *Rhetoric*, now lost. Fragments of his *On Style* survive – he was himself considered a very gifted stylist by later critics⁶¹). The primary contributions attributed to him concern the characters of style, i.e. its division into grand, middle and plain⁶²), and the virtues of style, correctness or 'Hel-

(above, n. 1) 276–84, G. B. Walsh, Philodemus on the Terminology of Neoptolemus, *Mnemosyne* 40 (1987) 59 ff. and E. Asmis, Neoptolemus and the Classification of Poetry, *CP* 87 (1992) 208–209, 219–220, 230–231.

61) See Cic. Acad. 1.33, Brut. 121, Orat. 62 and especially D.L. 5.38 who reports the outrageous anecdote that Aristotle changed his student's original name Tyrntamus to Theophrastus because of the man's divine diction.

62) It has been debated whether Theophrastus actually proposed such a theory or he basically espoused the Aristotelian doctrine of stylistic mean; see G. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton 1963) 278, D. M. Schenkeveld, *Studies in Demetrius On Style* (Amsterdam 1964) 66 ff., D. Innes, *Theophrastus and the Theory of Style*, *Rutgers University Studies* 2 (1985) 251–67. P. Chiron, *Démétrios. Du Style* (Paris 1993) lii–lv, suggests that, although Theophrastus advocated only one good style, later authors like Demetrius may have detected in his work a version of the later standard tripartition (Demetrius himself does not know this theory: see Chiron xxx–xxxi).

lenism', clarity, appropriateness and ornamentation⁶³). (Later the Stoics added brevity to this canon)⁶⁴). He exerted substantial influence on later rhetorical and stylistic theories, although the same holds for other Peripatetics too⁶⁵). As I have already indicated, opinions about Theophrastus' indebtedness to Aristotle have varied. The modern consensus leans towards a middle path of sorts: Theophrastus does not disagree with Aristotle and he essentially expanded on Aristotle's theses with many original insights of his own like his emphasis on audience-oriented vs. fact-oriented speech⁶⁶).

If decisions about Theophrastus' theory of style, of which something has survived, prove difficult and tentative, it is immediately apparent that Theophrastus' poetics is beyond reasonable elucidation. As mentioned above, the only surviving evidence, the definitions of genres, are so brief that they are not particularly helpful. The first one runs: "Tragedy is a *περίστασις* of heroic fortune". Dosi⁶⁷), who, following Rostagni, made the most ambitious attempt to reconstruct Theophrastean poetics, translates *περίστασις* as "vicenda" (event) and specifies that in tragedy's case this has to be a catastrophic event. Comedy is said to be "the safe *περιοχή* of private affairs" and epic is the *περιοχή* of "divine, heroic and human affairs". Even if *περίστασις* is not the rhetorical terminus technicus that Dosi proposes and simply means 'change' in the sense akin to Aristotle's *περιπέτεια*, the difference from the *Poetics* is striking. On the evidence of these definitions as well as what little can be found in other later sources Dosi reconstructs a system that, she claims, exerted a vast influence on all later criticism, from Hellenistic through Byzantine times. Although she inevitably attributes great significance to every scrap of available evidence and makes her case with great confidence, her argument

63) Cic. Orat. 79. Again, Aristotle recognized only one virtue and Theophrastus broke it down into four. Düring (above, n. 9) 180 considered this distinction as merely formal. Others saw a more substantial contribution on Theophrastus' part; see Pohlenz (above, n. 25) 107. See also Milanese (above, n. 33) 21–23 with an overview of previous bibliography.

64) See D.L. 7.59 and Innes (above, n. 62) 256.

65) See J. Stroux, *De Theophrasti virtutibus dicendi* (Leipzig 1912) 54 ff. and Innes (above, n. 62) 251.

66) See e.g. G.M.A. Grube, *Theophrastus as a Literary Critic*, TAPA 83 (1952) 178 and M. Lossau, *Untersuchungen zur antiken Demosthenesexegese* (Wiesbaden 1964) 47 ff.

67) A. Dosi, *Sulle tracce della poetica di Teofrasto*, Rend. Ist. Lombardo 94 (1960) 599–672.

is not implausible, even if ultimately improvable. Her basic thesis is that Theophrastus moved away from the Aristotelian position that emphasized an intellectual approach to poetry and concentrated on drama which could be studied in terms of probability and necessity. The insistence on the construction of a plausible *μῦθος* entailed the neglect of all other elements. Theophrastus set out to redress what he purportedly saw as an imbalance⁶⁸). He proclaimed that poetry does not necessarily have to reproduce reality or be plausible: aiming at pleasure it could include, beside real events (*ἱστορία*), fictitious but plausible accounts (*πλάσμα*) and totally fantastic elements (*μῦθος*). While history and philosophy deal with facts, rhetoric and poetry are fictions which charm and persuade the audience. Since the connection with probability and factuality was severed, Theophrastus necessarily had to proclaim diction the determining factor in the creation and appreciation of poetry. Words and eloquence are poetry's only means of pleasing and persuading the audience and should be chosen and worked out carefully.

If this reconstruction is correct, it suggests that Theophrastus can be viewed more as the precursor of Hellenistic and more specifically Stoic critics than the disciple of Aristotle, although of course his views must have been formulated as a reaction to Aristotle's. With the emphasis on diction he foreshadows later developments. Groping for answers to the problem of poetry's uniqueness and its position in a larger philosophical and moral framework, ancient critics were led to views that proclaimed diction, or some related formal element like euphony, the quintessence of poetry. More specifically, Posidonius' definition of poetry as "imitation of things divine and human" shows similarity with Theophrastus' definitions but that may be accidental. Dosi also suggests that Neoptolemus' division of poetry, poem and poet could go back to Theophrastus but that is even more speculative. What seems reasonably beyond doubt is that already Theophrastus most probably followed a distinctly un-Aristotelian path in his poetics. This fact poignantly underlines the isolation of Aristotle's views on poetry.

Rethymno (Crete)

Poulheria Kyriakou

68) See the discussion of Koster (above, n. 10) 85–92.