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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Susan Roberts, '66 . . . . . Editor
Sally Rutzky, '68
Deborah Schwartz, '68 . . . Asso. Editors in Annapolis
Vida Kazemi, '68 . . . . . Asso. Editor in Santa Fe
Paul Ollswang, '66. . . . . Art Editor
Eva Brann. . . . . Faculty Advisor

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PLATO'S ION AND THE WHOLE OF THINGS

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Senior Thesis

> "Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the center and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought; it is that from which all spring, and that which adorns all; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and the seed, and witholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life. It is the perfect and consummate surface and bloom of all things. . ."
>
> -- Percy Bysshe Shelley

ποῖόν τι ;
δεινόν· παντοδαπὸν γοῦν γίγνεται·
-- Aristophanes, Frogs

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Introduction

Socrates, as Plato presents him to us, seems to take particular delight in attacking the poets and their extravagant enterprise. The tokens of his enmity are, as he says himself, "countless." He banishes the poets from his city laid up in heaven,[1] he makes them the authors of the most sophistical doctrines,[2] he mutilates their verses,[3] misrepresents their intention,[4] and in one dialogue,[5] he out-drinks them. Yet for all these tokens, it is often hard to see the differences between the philosopher and the poet. In this essay we will consider one small dialogue, the Ion, where Socrates, by obscuring the differences makes them delightfully distinct. Through a rather careful examination of the words and action of the Ion, we hope to begin - and merely to begin - to answer an old and persistent question: What is the quarrel between the philosophers and the poets about?

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1) Republic, III, 398a; X, 595a, 7-8
2) Theatetus, 152e, 3 - 153a, 1
3) Ion, 538c, 2-3
4) Republic, 390b, 1-2
5) Symposium, 223d, 5-10

Plato in the Ion allows us to witness a conversation between two men: Ion, the celebrated and successful rhapsode, and Socrates. We learn from the first lines of the dialogue that the rhapsode has just come to Athens from the Epidaurian Asculepiad, where he carried away the first prize for his art. The two men, who have evidently met before, exchange a few words about the Asculepiad and (530a, 1-b, 4) speculate very briefly on the Panathenaic contests. Their ensuing conversation falls easily into two parts of approximately equal length, 530a1 - 536d7 and 536d8 - 542b 4. In this essay we will deal primarily with the first part.

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Part I - Setting

Socrates initiates the discussion in the first part by launching into the subject of rhapsody. "I have often envied (ἐζήλωσα) you rhapsodes your art (τῆς τέχνης), Ion," he says. (530b5 - c6) Ion's art is a dominant theme throughout the dialogue. So too, in a less obvious way, is Socrates' envy of that art. Let us pause for a moment over the word 'envy'. What we translate as envy is in Greek ζηλόω . Our English word 'zeal' is derived from it. Ζηλόω is more accurately translated as 'to rival eagerly','to admire', 'to desire to emulate or to imitate'. Ζηλόω connotes a noble passion, opposed in general and particularly in the Ion to φθονέω which is 'to envy' in a perjorative sense, in the sense of 'to be grudging'. A few lines after Socrates mentions his desire to emulate the rhapsode, he introduces the word φθονέω . "It is clear," he says to Ion, "that you will not begrudge me (φθονήσεις) an exhibition." The juxtaposition of the two words is not accidental. For as it turns out, Socrates' desire to emulate Ion is not left unsatisfied. And Ion, though he does it most unwittingly, does indeed begrudge Socrates the exhibition. The use of the words ζηλόω and φθονέω thus anticipates the peculiar ironic coloring of the dialogue.

Socrates proceeds to give a description of Ion's enviable (ζηλωτόν) art. The rhapsode, he says, is obliged to have his body splendidly adorned, and also to be familiar with many good poets, and especially with Homer, "the best and the most divine of poets"; and to learn out

(ἐκμανθάνειν)[6] his thought (διάνοιαν) and not only his words. The rhapsode must become the interpreter (ἑρμηνέα) of the poet for the audience. And he is unable to do this well without understanding what the poet says. All these things are worthy of emulation (ἄξια ζηλοῦσθαι).

We note that Socrates emphasizes the rhapsodes obligation to be an 'interpreter' of the poet. Ion is an interpreter of the poet in two ways. First, he recites the poet's verses and interprets them dramatically on stage. This is what Socrates seems to have in mind here and, I think, throughout the dialogue. Second, Ion comments on Homer, that is, he makes speeches about him. This, as we shall see, is what Ion understands Socrates to mean.

Ion is evidently pleased with Socrates' description of rhapsody, and replies, "You speak the truth, Socrates. At any rate, this portion of my art [interpretation] presents me with the greatest labor (πλεῖστον ἔργον)." Ion's great labor has, to his mind, not been in vain. He is proud of his interpretive expertness and boasts, "No one who has ever existed could speak as many fine thoughts (πολλὰς καὶ καλὰς διανοίας) about Homer as I can." Lured on by his companion Ion offers to give an exhibition of his skill. "It is well worth hearing, Socrates, how well I have ornamented (κεκόσμηκα) Homer; so that I think I am worthy of being crowned with a golden crown by the Homeridae." It is quite clear from the very beginning of the conversation that modesty is not an Ionic virtue.

The golden crown is all important to Ion. At Epidaurus, he had won fame and riches for his recitation of Homer's poems. But these things did not satisfy him. He came to Athens to compete for yet another prize - the prize for speaking well about Homer. Ion hopes to display his own artfulness through his interpretation of Homer. He, implicitly, and Socrates, explicitly,[7] identify this artfulness with wisdom. Ion's journey to the Homeridae is interrupted by his encounter with Socrates. Socrates, as it were, supplants the Homeridae, and becomes the proper

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6) The verb ἐκμανθάνειν is ambiguous. It means both 'to learn thoroughly' and 'to learn by rote'. Socrates, we suspect, though Ion does not, is being ironic. cf. 542b5.

7) 532d6

judge of the contest. Ion is not unhappy with this 'judge'. For Socrates, and perhaps the other Athenians, are in Ion's estimation wise men. That is, Socrates and those for whom he speaks are the men most qualified to award the prize for wisdom. The golden crown will hover over the two men throughout their brief conversation.

But how does Ion speak about Homer? There is a certain difficulty in answering this question. We are never allowed to witness Ion's exhibition directly. Twice[8] he attempts to make a speech and twice Socrates puts him off. Ion's first, thinly veiled, offer meets with a reply that will prove to be the rhapsode's undoing. "I will yet make leisure to have you heard. But now answer me this: Are you expert (δεινός) about Homer alone or about (530d9-531a4) Hesiod and Archilochus also?" The putting off of the exhibition will not deprive us - the readers - of seeing Ion's <u>true</u> skill. But we must keep our eyes open.

Socrates' question - whether Ion is expert about Homer alone or about Hesiod and Archilochus also - is striking in two respects. First it introduces the word δεινός into the conversation. This word occurs eight more times in the dialogue. The ambiguity of δεινός is well known. It means: a) fearful, dreadful, awe inspiring, and b) clever, cunning, expert. Thus, the word can be applied with equal appropriateness to a tragic hero and a sophist. It is not unlikely that Socrates means us to understand the word in both senses, particularly in Ion's case. In seven of the eight times that δεινός occurs it is followed or preceded by the word περὶ linked to a substantive, that is, 'about something'. Socrates never openly impeaches Ion's 'wondrous skill'. But the 'something' about which he is skilled becomes a great question mark in the dialogue. Indeed, it is the 'about which' that is in question here. (530d9-531a4)

Second, Socrates' inquiry into the scope of Ion's expertness is rather odd in itself. Why should Socrates ask whether Ion is skilled about Hesiod and Archilochus? It may be that he has a genuine curiosity about Ion's accomplishments. This explanation, however, seems hardly likely. Socrates had met and probably conversed with Ion in the past. And even

8) 530d6-8 and 536d6-7

if they had never talked before, Socrates has certainly heard a great deal about one of Hellas' most celebrated rhapsodes. Furthermore, Ion is not a man to conceal his talents. Had he any expertness in Hesiod and Archilochus, would he not have mentioned in in his previous boasting? And is it conceivable that Socrates missed the significance of Ion's omission?

We must conclude that Socrates knows the range of Ion's skill. Why then does he raise the question? Very early in the dialogue we learn of Ion's vanity. Perhaps, Socrates wishes to instruct the rhapsode in humility, by drawing attention to the deficiencies in his education. But that would be rather pointless. After all, Ion never professes to any knowledge of Hesiod or Archilochus. He knows that he knows nothing about them. He merely claims to be the greatest interpreter of Homer that the world has ever seen. That is the extent of it, nothing more. He is not like the craftsmen censured in the Apology,[9] who being wise in one thing consider themselves qualified to meddle with all things. If Socrates had wanted to explode Ion's pretensions would he not have questioned him about what Ion claims to know? Socrates' question, however, begins to make sense when we consider Ion's answer - an answer that Socrates may well have expected. "Oh no," the rhapsode replies, "just about Homer. For I think this is sufficient (ἱκανὸν γάρ μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι)." Socrates does not wish openly to cast doubt on Ion's professed accomplishments. He will question in the ensuing dialogue only the 'sufficiency' of these accomplishments. Socrates puts off Ion's display then by implicitly raising the question of the rhapsode's sufficiency. We should note the irony here. Recall that Ion's great success at Epidaurus left him unsatisfied. He seeks yet more wealth and more acclaim. He is eager to exhibit his art before Socrates in order to satisfy his bottomless vanity. Yet this unsatisfied man thinks that he and Homer are 'sufficient'. It is not without malice that Socrates fails to satisfy Ion's wants by beginning an attack on Ion's 'sufficiency'.

Socrates, pretending to ignore Ion's reply, asks, "But is there anything about which Homer and Hesiod say the same things?" One odd

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9) Apology, 22d7-9

question followed by another! What does Socrates mean by 'the same things'? Ion does not stop to puzzle over it but quickly answers, "I, at least (ἔγωγε), think there are many (καὶ πολλά)."

"About these things," Socrates continues, "would you expound (531a5-b10) better (κάλλιον ἄν ἐξηγήσαιο) what Homer says or what Hesiod says?" Ion replies that he would expound those things similarly, and cautiously adds, "about which they say the same things." The preciseness of his answer, which incidentally makes for a rather awkward sentence, suggests three things about Ion's state of mind at this moment. First, in his 'modesty', he wishes to avoid overstepping his original claims. Second, he smells a trap and proceeds with caution. Third, vaguely unsure of what Socrates means, he tries to conceal his uneasiness by 'rigorously' following the logic of what is for him an empty argument.

"But what about those places where they do not say the same things?" Socrates asks. "For example, about divination, Homer says something (λέγει τι) as well as Hesiod (τε καὶ Ἡσίοδος)." Ion agrees. "Well, then," Socrates asks, "could you or one of the good diviners better expound both what these two poets say similarly and what they say differently about divination?" Socrates' question breaks the orderly sequence of the conversation which Ion and the readers have been trying so hard to follow. Its insertion into the conversation leaves certain things unsaid. Previously Socrates had asked whether Ion could better expound what Homer says or what Hesiod says when they say the same things. His next question <u>should</u> be, but is not, about Ion's ability to expound the two poets when they say different things. To see the force of Socrates' omission we must do something rather bold. Let us try to fill in the gap. Let us try to re-write this part of the dialogue. Our revision would I think run something like what follows:

> <u>Socrates</u>: Would you expound better what Homer says or what Hesiod says when they do not say the same things?
>
> <u>Ion</u>: I would expound Homer better.
>
> <u>Socrates</u>: Then shall we say that Ion is an expert (δεινός) about all of Homer, but only part of Hesiod?
>
> <u>Ion</u>: Yes, all of Homer.

Socrates: And also those parts of Hesiod where Hesiod speaks the same as Homer?

Ion: I suppose so.

Socrates: Then you are an expert (δεινός) about a part and not about the whole of Hesiod?

Ion: Yes, and all of Homer.

Our Platonic revision brings to light a difficulty. If we have been at all true to the arguments we see that Ion claims, however reluctantly, that his wonderful expertness, his δεινότης , with regard to Hesiod at least, is fragmentary. But herein lies a riddle. How can anyone be partially δεινός ? Consider how the word is used both by Plato and by Homer. Homer: Achilles about whom there is nothing half-way is δεινός . Plato: the sophist, who by virtue of one art, makes the things of all arts is δεινός . Yet the meaning of a different kind of partial δεινότης is the very enigma that Socrates will later (533c5-9) 'see and reveal' quite explicitly.

But why is the problem which is analogous to an explicit theme of the dialogue only darkly hinted at here? Why does Socrates obscure the point by breaking the 'orderly sequence' of the arguments? Why is it necessary to re-write Plato in order to unearth the question? Let us recall Ion's confident, if thoughtless, assertion that Homer and Hesiod say the same things on many subjects.[10] What does he mean by the phrase 'to say the same things'? Does he suggest that the two poets sometimes express the same thought with different words? That would imply that he claims to understand Hesiod well enough to judge. But how can Ion, who makes no such claim and who moreover is simply indifferent to Hesiod, how can he mean this? Does he not mean, if he means anything, that both poets say literally, or almost literally, the same things? That is, word for word both Homer and Hesiod call Zeus, for example, "father of gods and men." With this understanding, or lack of understanding, Ion claims to expound equally well Homer and Hesiod when they say the same things. What an impossible boast! Ion, in effect, professes to expound isolated verses of Hesiod with an utter unconcern for the context. He does not take account of the wholeness of Hesiod's poetry, or, presumably, of any other poetry. For Ion there is no beginning, no middle, no end.

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10) See page 6.

But the problem remains: why does Socrates not expose Ion's misunderstanding of what a poem is? Why does he go out of his way to conceal it? Let us look again at the question interjected by Socrates, "Could you or could one of the good diviners better expound what these two poets say similarly and what they say differently about the divination?" Socrates by posing the question when he does imitates the rhapsode's faulty notion of what poetry is. Just as Ion pays no heed to the integrity of Hesiod, so Socrates pays no heed to the integrity of his own argument. Ion's opinion about poetry is thus dramatically mirrored by Socrates. The question itself also echoes Ion's opinion. Is it so clear that a diviner - even a good one - could expound any passages in the Iliad or the Theogony, for example, without some understanding of the whole?

This failure to consider the formal integrity of poetry runs through the whole dialogue. In the last half of the Ion Socrates 'picks out' (ἔκλεξον)[11] and recites five passages from Homer, each having to do with some art. Socrates argues that the practioners of the respective arts would judge better than a rhapsode whether Homer spoke well or ill in these passages. No mention is made of the necessity of understanding the poetical context in which the lines are written. As a result, we are told, for example, that a fisherman would be the best judge of Homer's verses describing an object's descent into the sea. (538d1-5)[12] Socrates neglects to inform us that the object whose descent is described in the verses is the goddess Iris. Thus, a fisherman, by Socrates' argument, would judge better than anyone else Homer's account of the movements of the gods.

Louis Méridier[13] reports that Goethe doubted the authenticity of the dialogue because he could not believe that Socrates or Plato would propose "a theory which took no account of forms, and which granted the sole power and right of judging certain passages in Homer to coachmen, fishermen, and doctors." If we are to understand the dialogue,

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11) 539d5-e1: Socrates' 'picking out' of Homer's verses is perhaps meant to parallel Ion's 'learning out' of Homer's thought. cf. page 2.
12) Cf. Iliad, XXIV, 80-2
13) Platon, Oeuvres Complètes, Tome V, 1re Partie; Budé, page 20.

we must answer Goethe's misgivings.

Why then should Socrates by interrupting the argument with his question about divination conceal Ion's misunderstanding of poetic form? And why should Socrates, later in the dialogue, exhibit the same misunderstanding? Why should the subject of poetic wholeness be so conspicuously absent from a dialogue which seems to be, at least in part, about poetry? Only after answering this question can we begin to understand the meaning of Plato's Ion. We leave it open for now.

Before going on to the next part, we should note another aspect of Socrates' question - whether Ion or one of the good diviners could better expound (ἐξηγήσαιο) what was said differently and what was said similarly about divination by the poets. The notion of a diviner 'expounding' anything at all is somewhat dubious. Diviners, as Socrates will tell us (534c9-d-1), are for the most part out of their minds. In the Timaeus (71e-72b) divination (μαντική) is called god's gift to human thoughtlessness (ἀφροσύνῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ). Timaeus is careful to point out the difference between the mad and inspired diviners and those who interpret divinations, the prophets (τὸ τῶν προφητῶν γένος). Sometimes prophets are named diviners by those who are wholly ignorant (τὸ πᾶν ἠγνοηκότες) that they are not diviners but interpreters (ὑποκριταί) of the mysterious voice and apparition. Ion's ignorance leads him to say that the frenetic and thoughtless diviners would 'expound' poetry better than he. Ion, of course, may be mistaken. Consider Socrates' next question. "And if you (σύ) were a diviner," he asks, "and if indeed (εἴπερ) you were able to expound what was said similarly, would you not also know how to expound what was said differently?" We note that what is spoken about similarly and differently and the identity of the speakers are left unspecified. Ion is thus hypothically transformed into a diviner who 'expounds' an unknown god speaking about an indefinite subject. The transformation is only in speech at this point. We must await the deed.

To all the dark and oracular implications Ion replies, "It is clear (δῆλον ὅτι)."

Part II

Whatever Ion may have acknowledged unwittingly his conscious claim is to expertness about Homer, and not about the other poets. This seems to him 'sufficient'. Socrates is now prepared to attack Ion's Homeric sufficiency. The gist of his argument is that expertness about one poet is expertness about a part and not about all of poetry. Thus Ion's skill is necessarily fragmentary. It does not fulfill the requirements of that true artfulness and knowledge which presuppose an understanding of the whole. By questioning the integrity of Ion's skill Socrates strikes at the two roots of Ion's self-satisfaction: vanity and the belief that Homer is just about perfect.[14)]

Socrates initiates his attack on Ion by asking why it is that Ion is expert about Homer but not about the other poets. The ensuing discussion falls into three parts. First, Socrates maintains that all the poets write of the same things. Ion agrees but insists that they do not write in the same way. For Homer is a better poet than the others. This leads to the second part. Socrates argues, by the examples of the doctor and the arithmetician, that an artful man will know good and bad speakers alike. The third part summarizes the other two in a not very clear discussion of poetic wholeness. This last part is interrupted by a short exchange, which we will treat separately.

A. The Content

How is it, Socrates asks, that Ion is expert only about Homer. Or does Homer speak about anything else than what all the other poets speak about?

> "Has he not told (διελήλυθεν) about (περὶ) war for the most part (τὰ πολλὰ) and about the intercourse of gods with each other, and their intercourse with men, the way indeed they have it (ὡς ὁμιλοῦσι), and about the heavenly occurrences (παθημάτων) and about those in Hades, and the births of gods and heroes. Are those not the things about which Homer made his poem?"

Socrates' enumeration is his genuine tribute to the vastness of Homer's horizon. It can be summed up by a phrase: Homer's theme is the whole

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14) Homer is the 'most poetical of poets' and is therefore the paradigm of all poetry. Cf. Republic x, 607a2-4.

of things.

Yet even a tribute from Socrates has its ironies. In his enumeration the phrase 'intercourse of gods with men' is given a special prominence by the two words ὡσ ὁμιλοῦσι . The two words mean literally "the way they have intercourse." The tone in this context is sceptical. By adding the words ὡς ὁμιλοῦσι , Socrates hints that Homer's report of the intercourse of gods with men is not altogether reliable.

Socrates' tribute is permeated with a much greater irony. The verb he used to characterise Homer's 'telling' about things is διελήλυθεν Διελήλυθεν , translated above as 'told', is the active perfect indicative of διέρχομαι (διά/ ἔρχομαι). The primary meaning of διέρχομαι is 'to go through'. The word comes to mean naturally enough 'to tell thoroughly', 'to relate in detail', or as we say today 'to give a penetrating analysis'. But Homer, according to Socrates, does not merely 'go through' things; he 'goes through about (διελήλυθεν περί) them. What does it mean to go through and about, διά and περί , at the same time? Is speaking about something equivalent to saying what that something is through and through? Does Homer penetrate the whole of things or does he circumscribe it? Or both? The ironic interplay of the two prepositions, διά and περί , raises questions that are to come up again.

Ion agrees that all the poets speak about those things listed by Socrates. "But," he adds, "they have not done it in the same way as Homer (οὐχ ὁμοίως πεποιήκασι καὶ Ὅμηρος)." "What then, in a worse way?" Socrates asks. Ion: "Far worse." Socrates: "And Homer in a better way?" Ion: "Much better, by Zeus!" (Ἄμεινον μέντοι νὴ Δία) That last bare exclamation - "Much better, by Zeus!" - constitutes Ion's whole praise of Homer in the dialogue. The rhapsode is not given another chance to adorn the most divine of poets.

B. Speaking Well (531d10-532c4)

Ion's praise of Homer opens the road to a discussion of the poetic manner of speech. Socrates argues that an artist will be expert about all those who speak, whether well or badly, on the same subject. He

cites as examples the arithmetician (ὁ τὴν ἀριθμητικὴν τέχνην ἔχων) and the doctor (ἰατρός). "When many are speaking about number, and one of them speaks best, there will, I suppose (δήπου), be someone who knows (γνώσεται) the one speaking well?" Ion agrees. "Will the same man know those speaking badly? Or will someone else know them?" The same, Ion replies. "And this is the arithmetician?" Yes. Socrates goes through a similar argument in the case of the physician. When many are speaking about the wholesomeness of foods (ὑγιεινῶν σιτίων ὁποῖά ἐστιν), and one speaks best, the same man, the physician, will know the best speaker, that he speaks best (ὅτι ἄριστα λέγει) and the worse speakers, that they speak worse. "And so in every case (ἀεί), the same man will know the one speaking well and the one speaking ill. For if he does not know the one speaking badly, it is clear (δῆλον) that he will not know the one speaking well, about the same thing." Ion agrees (Οὕτως): "Then the same man becomes expert (δεινός) about both?" Ion agrees.

"But <u>you said</u> (σὺ φῄς) Homer and all the other pets . . . speak about the same things, but not in the same way, but that <u>Homer</u> speaks well and the others worse." Ion: "And I speak the truth (καὶ ἀληθῆ λέγω)." "Then if indeed (εἴπερ) you knew the good speaker you would also know the worse speakers, that they are worse." "So it seems (ἔοικεν γε)," Ion replies. "Then, O best of men (ὦ βέλτιστε), we shall not miss the mark by saying that Ion is similarly expert (δεινός) about Homer and all the other poets, since, he agrees (αὐτὸς ὁμολογῇ) that the same man will be a competent judge (κριτὴν ἱκανόν) of all those who speak about the same things, and almost all the poets do (ποιεῖν) the same things."

Ion succumbs to Socrates' interrogation,

> "Whatever then is the cause, Socrates, that whenever someone converses about another poet my mind becomes inattentive, I am unable to contribute anything worth saying, and I simply fall asleep (ἀτεχνῶς νυστάζω); but when someone mentions something about Homer, straightway I am awake, my mind is attentive, and I have a wealth of things to say (εὐπορῶ ὅτι λέγω)?"

There are three points to be noted here:

1) The prelude to this exchange was Ion's declaration that Homer is a much better poet (by Zeus!), and that the other pets are inferior. Socrates reminds us of that prelude as he draws near to his conclusion. "But <u>you said</u> (σὺ φῂς) that Homer and all the other poets . . . speak about the same things, but not in the same way; but that <u>Homer speaks well, and the others worse</u> (τὸν μὲν εὖ γε, τοὺς δὲ χεῖρον)?" Ion emphatically answers, "And I speak the truth (καὶ ἀληθῆ λέγω)!" The boldness of Ion's answer indicates that he knows, or rather that he thinks he knows, the difference between the good poets and the bad ones. In Socrates' two examples, the arithmetician and the doctor, the ability to discriminate between the good and the bad speakers was sufficient reason to call a man artful and expert. When Socrates said that the same man, the artist, would be δεινός about <u>both</u> the good and bad speakers he meant that the same man would recognize the worth of both. Ion thinks he knows the value of the other poets, but he does not consider himself expert about them. He understands the word δεινός to be something more than the knowledge that allows a man to give tacit approval or disapproval to the speeches of others. For Ion, knoweldge must be conspicuous in order to be called δεινός . Learning must be accompanied by grand exhibitions and golden crowns. We might note that poetic excellence is, like the rhapsode's skill, conspicuous.

Recall how Ion characterized his exhibitions (530d6-7) "It is well worth hearing," he said, "how well I have ornamented Homer (ὡς εὖ κεκόσμηκα τὸν Ὅμηρον." Socrates later (532d2) echoes the word κοσμέω - to adorn - in a different, and yet, I think, similar context. He describes the rhapsode as being 'adorned' with a many-colored raiment (κεκοσμημένος ἐσθῆτι ποικίλῃ). Socrates' use of κοσμέω here (and also 530b6) suggests that Ion's expertness consists in his power to embellish and to be embellished in turn.

We must not forget that the word κοσμέω has another meaning: to arrange, to order, to make into a whole or κόσμος . The making of κόσμος is the task of the poet as well as the costume designer. It may be that Ionic embellishment is not so terribly different from Homeric ordering.

The discussion about the doctor and the arithmetician, then, draws our attention to a fundamental difference between their arts and Ion's. Doctors and arithmeticians judge; rhapsodes, and perhaps poets also, adorn.

2) Socrates' argument points out another difference between Ion's art and other arts. Both of Socrates' examples - medicine and arithmetic - are arts that deal with speech. Indeed, in the case of arithmetic, 'to speak well about number' is to do what arithmeticians mostly do. Arithmetic, as Socrates has said in the Gorgias (451b1-4), has its chief effect (ἔχουσα τὸ κῦρος through speech about number. Thus, the arithmetician will himself speak well about number and will also be a competent judge of others who speak about number. Similarly in the case of the physician, to speak well about the nutritional value of foods is to do what physicians who study that subject mostly do. Here again, the physician will be a judge of those who speak about food, and a speaker himself. We cannot extend this reasoning to Ion. Homer, it will be recalled, speaks about the whole of things. Ion fancies himself to be an expounder of Homer. That does not quite make him a poet. His knowledge is limited to Homer and does not go beyond the poet into the world. Ion is precisely the man who speaks well about the man who speaks well about everything.

But Socrates, by making us reflect on the difference between speaking about and speaking about speaking about, is stalking bigger game than Ion. Homer too speaks about physicians, for example, who speak about food. Indeed, Homer's relation to men, "good and bad, simple and skilled", is analogous to Ion's relationship to Homer. The odd way that poets have of speaking about things was playfully hinted at before in Socrates' enunciation of the Homeric themes.[15] Homer, Socrates said then (531c1-d1) "has gone thoroughly through about (διελήλυθεν περί)" the whole of things. The question of poetic circumlocution will be raised again in the dialogue, not in speech but in deed.

3) The discussion about doctors and arithmeticians has made us attend to

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15) pp. 10-11

two great differences between Ion's art and other arts. There is a third striking aspect to this discussion. Socrates, by citing some not quite appropriate examples and by exploiting the ambiguity of the word δεινός , elicited a question from Ion.

> "Whatever then is the cause (τί οὖν ποτε τὸ αἴτιον), Socrates, that when someone converses about another poet, my mind becomes inattentive (οὔτε προσέχω τὸν νοῦν), I am unable to contribute anything worth mentioning (λόγου ἄξιον), but I simply fall asleep (ἀτεχνῶς νυστάζω); but when someone mentions Homer, straightway I am awake, my mind is attentive, and I have a wealth of things to say?"

These words reveal for the first time the practical consequences of Ion's satisfaction with himself and with Homer. We note that listening attentively and silently to the speeches of others - the way the doctor and the arithmetician in Socrates' example listen attentively and silently - is precluded by Ion. For him, 'having a wealth of things to say is the precondition for discourse. Ion's great labor (πλεῖστον ἔργον) of learning out Homer seemed to him sufficient and almost satisfying. His only remaining desire is to give an exhibition of his wisdom.

That a man like Ion should ask a question about himself is an ironic tribute to the power of Socrates' rhetoric. Recall how Ion began his question: τί οὖν ποτε τὸ αἴτιον - "Whatever then is the cause, Socrates . . ." Ion, the vain rhapsode who earlier sought only to give an exhibition, is forced by Socrates to inquire into the cause of things! Alexandre Kojève summarizes this aspect of the dialogue as follows. "One sees clearly in the Ion a man who believes himself satisfied by what he is and who ceases to be so only because he cannot justify this satisfaction in answering the questions of Socrates."[16)]

Let us summarize the points we have made in this section: 1) For Ion, judgment that is not displayed or displayable is of little importance. Rhapsodic excellence, as he knows, demands an outward show. Or, as Socrates put it earlier (530b7-8), Ion's art compells him "to shine forth as the most beautiful of men (ὡς καλλίστοις φαίνεσθαι)." It is possible that the necessity of exhibiting is felt as much by the

16) Introduction a la Lecture de Hegel, 5e Edition, p. 273

poet as by the rhapsode. 2) Ion and Homer practice the same sort of poetic 'circumlocution'. 3) Socrates has succeeded in making the rhapsode wonder about his self-sufficiency.

C. On the Whole

Ion wants to know why he falls asleep when other poets are being (532c5-9) talked of and awakens when the conversation turns to Homer. Socrates answers, "It is not hard to see, my friend (ὦ ἑταῖρε), but it is clear to everyone (παντί) that you are incapable of speaking about Homer with art and knowledge." Here in so many words is the explicit thesis of the dialogue: namely, that Ion doesn't know what he is talking about. It need hardly be added that these words, whatever the interpretations or qualifications later appended to them, ar unambiguously insulting.

"For if you could speak about Homer by art, you could apeak about all the other poets. For the whole is poetry (ποιητικὴ γὰρ πού ἐστιν τὸ ὅλον), Or is not? Ion replies, "Yes (ναί)" Socrates' statement - ποιητικὴ γάρ πού ἐστιν τὸ ὅλον - is shocking in its radical simplicity. What does he mean? He certainly suggests, as Ion understands, that poetry is one art. But the words carry a much greater meaning than that. "The whole is poetry" means what it says. The true poet, if he exists, embraces and penetrates everything. He sees the world in its wholeness and presents it in its wholeness, with a beginning, a middle,and an end. In fact, he does more than just present the whole of things. He makes it. Thus the poet's art is not only the art <u>of</u> the whole; it is the whole.

The meaning of all this is far from clear. Given the obscurity and the extravagance of the claim, Ion's matter-of-fact answer - Yes (ναί) - takes on a comic aspect. Either he is indifferent to the whole of things or he comprehends it quite easily.

Socrates continues, "When one has apprehended (λάβῃ) any art whatsoever in its entirety (ὅλην) will the same way of looking (ὁ αὐτὸς τρόπος τῆς σκέψεως) hold with respect to all the arts (ἔσται περὶ ἅπασῶν τῶν τεχνῶν)?" The question can be

understood in two ways. 1) After a man has acquired any art whatsoever in its entirety, in the case of every art, there is the same method of consideration, [in regard to both the good and the bad in that art].[17] This reading is supported by the examples that Socrates later gives. When a man is capable of 'showing forth his opinion (ἀποφήνασθαι γνώμην)' about the painter Polygnotus, he is also clever at expressing his opinion about every painter. There is a second reading which is more literal and I think more interesting than the first. 2) When a man has apprehended any art whatsoever in its wholeness, he has apprehended the way of looking at all the arts. (532d1-533a7) That is to say, to apprehend one art in its wholeness is to apprehend all. It must be remembered that not every art can be apprehended in its wholeness because not every art is a whole. Thus, for example, bridle making is not a whole art, but a part of horsemanship, which in turn is a part of war, which is a part of politics.[18] In fact, there are probably only three arts which can make any serious claim to wholeness: politics, poetry, and whatever art Socrates engages in. Plato's Ion, as we hope to show, is concerned with examining the claims of these last two. That is, the Ion is concerned with exploring the integrity of poetry and philosophy.

D. Wisdom

Socrates' obscure question - when one apprehends an art in its wholeness, will the consideration be the same for all the arts - causes Ion some perplexity. "Do you need to hear what I mean by this?" "By Zeus, I do!" Ion replies with more truth than he knows, "For I delight (χαίρω) in listening to you wise men (ὑμῶν τῶν σοφῶν)." Socrates' answer to this is at once the most ironical and the most profound passage in the dialogue.

> "I wish you spoke the truth, Ion (βουλοίμην ἄν σε ἀληθῆ λέγειν). But you rhapsodes and actors are wise, and those whose poems you chant. I do nothing but speak the truth, such as befits a simple man (εἰκὸς ἰδιώτην ἄνθρωπον). For example, what I just now asked you, see how mean (φαῦλον) and simple (ἰδιωτικόν) it is, and how it belongs to every man to know what I said,

17) Cf. Plato's Ion with Introduction and Notes by J. M. Macgreggor, Pitt Press Series, Cambridge, 1956, p. 25.

18) Cf. Republic X, 601d-602b

> that the consideration is the same when one apprehends an art as a whole."

Let us consider some of the ironies here.

1) Ion's assertion that he delights in listening to wise men is somewhat doubtful. Indeed, Socrates' response, "I wish you spoke the truth" (that is, I wish you did delight in listening to wise men), suggests that Socrates at least doubts Ion's veracity. Has not Ion just told us that whenever he is not displaying his talents he falls asleep? Perhaps Ion in this situation would be more delighted to listen to Socrates than to answer his questions. Perhaps his statement is a polite way of saying, "Socrates, you give your exhibition, and then I'll give mine. But please no more questions."

2) Socrates places the rhapsodes, the actor, and "those whose poems you chant" in the same class.

3) He contrasts poetical 'wisdom' with his own way of speaking the truth, "such as befits a simple man." The implication is that poets and other wise men (σοφισταί ?) speak something other than the truth.

4) Socrates implies (though he never really says it outright) that he is not wise; yet he speaks the truth. How can one speak the truth without being wise? Or to put it another way, how can Socrates do what he does almost all the time? That is a hard question. We will not attempt to answer it here; but we can make a few observations about what the Socratic way of speaking involves. It is contrasted to the 'wise' and poetical way of speaking. It does not have the perfection of form and the apparent self-sufficiency of poetry. Socrates speaks by asking leading questions. And questions, no matter how 'leading', are necessarily fragmentary and deficient. They demand for their completion an answer, even if that answer is only 'yes' or 'no'. Furthermore questions, again no matter how leading, make the deficiency of the speakers apparent. Socrates' way of speaking is 'mean' (φαῦλος); that is, if we can borrow from the Theatetus (196d9-197a6), it is 'impure' (τοῦ μὴ καθαρῶς διαλέγεσθαι), and it 'shamelessly' ( ) uses words whose meanings are not clear. Finally, Socrates' mean and simple questions are about the whole of things.

It will be recalled (pages 3-4) that Ion came to Athens to compete for the golden crown of wisdom. Though Ion does not at first realize it, Socrates too is competing for the same crown. In the section of the dialogue we are about to consider an ironic reversal of roles takes place.. Ion becomes the simple and unwise Socrates and Socrates becomes the wise and artful rhapsode. Ion thus wins the prize for Socratic wisdom, that is to say, ignorance, and Socrates wins the prize for Ionic foolishness, which is somehow transformed by Socrates into wisdom.

Part III

Ion, as we have said, regards Homer and expertness about Homer as sufficient. Socrates from the beginning of their conversation calls Ion's and Homer's sufficiency into question. The Socratic interrogation has a remarkable effect. It causes Ion to wonder about his habit of falling asleep when other poets are being talked about, and of awakening at the mere mention of Homer's name. The rhapsode's wondering about (533c10-d1) himself is very different from his earlier self-satisfaction. Pressed by Socrates' questions, he finally says, "I cannot contradict you, Socrates. But I am conscious in myself (ἔμαυτῳ σύνοιδα) of this: that I excel all men in speaking about Homer, and have plenty to say (εὐπορῶ); and everybody else says so too. But about the other poets I do not speak well. Now, see why this is:"

These words reveal a great deal about the character of Ion's self-knowledge. "I am conscious in myself [that I speak well]. . ." he remarks, and soon adds, ". . . and everybody else says so too." The rhapsode's self-consciousness seems to require the approval of others for support. Earlier[19] in this essay, we pointed out that Ion, while imagining himself to be sufficient, felt a great need for acclaim. We begin now to see how these two aspects of his character are reconciled. Whenever Ion senses a deficiency in himself, the approbation of the many promptly, if only temporarily, satisfies him. Socrates, by silencing the applause, by refusing to hear and to praise Ion's exhibition, has forced the rhapsode to listen for a moment to the muted sound of his own emptiness.

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19) p. 5

Ion's question sets the stage for a great Socratic performance. "See why it is." he had asked, "[that I speak well about Homer but not about the other poets.]" Socrates replies, "And I do see and I am about to reveal (καὶ ὁρῶ , ὦ Ἴων, καὶ ἔρχομαι γέ σοι ἀποφανούμενος) what I think it to be." This theatrical and prophetic announcement is followed by a long, intricate speech on the nature of poetic enthusiasm. When Socrates finishes the speech, he and Ion briefly consider what was said. Socrates then offers another short declamation of the same theme. In these speeches Socrates satisfies his old desire to emulate the rhapsode.[20] He does what Ion has been trying to do all along. He delivers a rhapsodic and poetic discourse on poetry. We will have to consider these two speeches and the intervening conversation at some length.

A. First Speech (533c10-535a2)

The avowed purpose of the speech is to give an account of Ion's fragmentary expertness. Socrates maintains that Ion speaks well about Homer not by art but by a "divine power (θεία δὲ δύναμις)" which moves him. He compares it to the power in the stone which Euripides called the magnet, but the many call the Heraklean stone. The magnet is the dominant image in both of Socrates' speeches, particularly in the second. This stone not only attracts (ἄγει) iron rings but imparts (ἐντίθησι) its power to the rings so that they in turn (αὖ) are able to attract other rings. And sometimes (ἐνίοτε) a very great chain of iron rings, hanging from one another, is suspended (ἤρτηται). The power in each of these depends (ἀνήρτηται) upon the stone. The Muse works in the same way as the magnet. She inspires men (ἐνθέους . . . ποιεῖ - literally 'makes them full of god.), and when through these inspired men, others are inspired, a chain is hung out. Thus all the good poets, and particularly the good lyric poets, make their beautiful poems not by art but by being enthused, possessed (κατεχόμενοι)and out of their right minds (οὐκ ἔμφρονες). Socrates likens the lyric poets to the Corybantians, the Bacchae, and finally the bees.

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20) Cf. p. 2

"For the poet is a light, winged, and sacred thing; nor can he create (ποιεῖν) until he becomes inspired (ἔνθεος) and out of his senses (ἔκφρων), or whilst any reason (νοῦς) remains in him. For whilst he has this possession (κτῆμα) every man is powerless to produce poetry (ποιεῖν) and to chant oracles (χρησμῳδεῖν)."

The poets, Socrates repeats, make their poems not by art, but by divine lot (θείᾳ μοίρᾳ). And each is able to do well (καλῶς) that alone to which the Muse impelled (ὥρμησεν) him: this one to dithrymbics, this to encomia, a third to choral hymns, another to epics, and another to iambics. And it is not by art that they say these things. For, if a man could speak by art about one, he could speak well about all. God steals away the minds of men and uses them as his servants, in order that we, the listeners might know that it is not the poet - in whom mind (νοῦς) is not present - who speaks these priceless words (οὕτω πολλοῦ ἄξια); but that god himself is the speaker. Socrates cites as proof (μέγιστον δὲ τεκμήριον) the word (τῷ λόγῳ) of Tynnichus the Chalcidean, who never composed anything worth remembering save for the poem which everyone (πάντες) chants, almost the best of the lyric poems. For these beautiful poems are not human and of men, but divine and of god. And god, in order to reveal this to us, intentionally (ἐξεπίτηδες) sang the most beautiful song through the meanest of poets (τοῦ φαυλοτάτου ποιητοῦ).

The 16th Century English critic, Sir Philip Sidney, commenting on this passage said[21] "Plato, in his dialogue called Ion, giveth high and rightly divine commendation to Poetrie . . . He attributeth unto Poesie more than my selfe doe, namely to be a very inspiring of a divine force, farre above mans wit." We cannot but acknowledge the justice of Sidney's comment. Yet we suspect, as Sidney does not, that this 'high and rightly divine commendation' has another side. We will come back to this speech again.

B. The Central Dialogue (535a3-e6)

Ion is pleased and moved by Socrates' adornment of poetry. "By Zeus, I

21) An Apology for Poetry, p. 192 in Elizabethan Critical Essays, Vol. i, Oxford, 1904

think you do [speak the truth]!" he exclaims. "For somehow Socrates, your words touch my soul." He agrees that the good poets interpret the gods for us by divine lot. Socrates reminds Ion that the rhapsodes are interpreters of the poets. "Therefore, the rhapsodes become the interpreters of the interpreters." Ion agrees wholeheartedly (παντάπασί γε).

This emphatic characterization of the rhapsode as the interpreter of the interpreter is our clue to understanding everything that follows. Ion, it will be remembers interprets poetry in two ways: first he delivers regular lectures about Homer; and second he acts as the poet's mouthpiece and mime on stage.[22] We are about to witness an interpretation in the second sense of the word. Ion and Socrates together will dramatically interpret not only Homer's poetry, but also the 'poetry' that Socrates has just recited.

> "Stop now and tell me, Ion, <u>without hiding anything</u> (μὴ ἀποκρύψῃ) what I chose to ask you. When you speak the lines well and especially thrill the spectators with some particularly pitiable or fearful song. . . are you then in your right mind, or are you carried out of yourself (ἔξω σαυτοῦ γίγνῃ) and does your soul in a divine enthusiasm suppose herself to be among the things that you are describing, whether they be in Ithaca or Troy, or wherever the verses chance to place them?"

Ion, again 'moved' by Socrates, replies, "How vivid, Socrates, you make your proof for me! (ὡς ἐναργές μοι τοῦτο ..... τὸ τεκμήριον εἶπες) I will answer without concealing anything (οὐ γάρ σε ἀποκρυψάμενος ἐρῶ)." He tells how when reciting some lament his eyes fill with tears. When the lines are awful and fearful, his hair stands on end and his heart pounds.

Two things must be noted about this exchange. First, Socrates has affected Ion in the same way that Homer affects Ion. The 'vivid proof' offered by Socrates has succeeded in transporting the rhapsode not to Ithaca or to Troy, but to the theatre. Is it not likely that Ion is 'deeply moved' by the recounting of his own past experiences? To be sure, Ion would not be the only man whose eyes 'filled with tears' at

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22) Cf. p. 3

hearing or telling the story of his own former triumphs.

Second, Socrates began the exchange with an ironic request. "Stop now," he said, "and tell me without hiding anything what I choose to ask you." Ion, carried away by the stirring memories conjured up by Socrates, replies that he will answer without concealing anything. Ion's words are prophetic. He indeed will not conceal a thing.

Socrates has thus cleared the way for a grand finale: to place Ion on stage without his mask.

"Well, then," Socrates continues, "shall we say that the man is then in his right mind who, adorned with many-colored raiment and golden crowns, weeps at festivals and sacrifices, when no one is despoiling him of these things, or is afraid before more than twenty thousand friendly people, none of whom is stripping him or doing him wrong?" Ion's answer is very bold, "No, by Zeus, not at all, Socrates, to tell the truth!" This is the fifth and last time that Ion invokes the name of Zeus. Now the lightning falls.

"Are you aware that you rhapsodes work the same effects on most of the spectators?" Socrates asks.

> "I know it very well," Ion replies. "For I look down upon them at such moments (ἑκάστοτε) and see them crying, and staring with awestruck eyes (δεινὸν ἐμβλέποντας), marvelling at my words. For I am obliged to pay the closest attention to them (σφόδρ' αὐτοῖς τὸν νοῦν προσέχειν). For if I set them weeping, I myself will laugh taking (λαμβάνων) the money; but if they laugh, I myself will cry losing the money."

Ion has at last revealed his true art - he is a charlaton - and his true artlessness - he is not quite aware that he is a charlaton. Socrates has accomplished what he set out to do. He has "despoiled,stripped, and wronged" a rhapsode. And all this on a high stage, while we, the spectators, look on with "awestruck eyes." Socrates, delighting perhaps in his victory, breaks into song.

C. Second Speech (535e7-536d3)

In his first long speech, Socrates employed the image of a magnet and its

rings in order to describe the chain effect produced by poetry. In the last section we saw a dramatic example of this chain effect. Socrates, by playing on Ion's vanity, produced a thoughtless and disastrous enthusiasm in the rhapsode.

Socrates again invokes the magnet - with some further elaboration. "Are you aware that this spectator is the last of these rings which I said take from one another the power [transmitted by] the Heraklean stone? (ὑπὸ τῆς Ἡρακλειώτιδος λίθου ἀπ' ἀλλήλων δύναμιν λαμβάνειν ;) You (σύ) the rhapsode and actor (ὑποκριτής) are the middle ring (ὁ δὲ μέσος); and the first is the poet himself. Through all these [rings] the god drags (ἕλκει) the souls of men wherever he wishes, making the power in each depend on the others (ἀνακρεμαννὺς ἐξ ἀλλήλων τὴν δύναμιν)." We note that the image has undergone some changes. First, it is made more vivid. Poet, rhapsode, and spectators are all 'transformed' into iron rings, hard on the outside, and, we suppose, empty in the middle. A few lines later (536b6) Socrates makes the image even more literal by interpreting the word 'possessed' (κατέχεται) as 'held' (ἔχεται). The ponderous iron ring held in a chain is quite different from that "light, winged, and sacred thing" spoken about in Socrates' first speech.

The order of inspiration has also changed. In the previous speech the relationship of the rings was consecutive from A to B. In this speech the relationship is reciprocal, from A to B and from B to A. This suggests that Ion is 'inspired' as much by the audience as he is by the poet.

Socrates is not content with having Homer, Ion, and the spectators hang down in mid-air by themselves. He heightens the comedy by adding choruses, chorus-masters, and under masters, hanging down from the sides (ἐκ πλαγίου) of the rings hanging down from the Muses.

Socrates concludes the speech by reminding us again of Ion's peculiar problem. "And you, Ion, are one of these possessed from Homer; and whenever someone sings of another poet, you are asleep (καθεύδεις), and are at a loss for words; but when some strain of your poet is uttered, straightway you are awake and your soul dances within you, and you have

a wealth of things to say." Ion had originally broached the subject of his sleeping habits by saying, "When someone converses about another poet . . . I fall asleep (νυστάζω). " Νύστάζω means to fall asleep, to drop into a doze, to start nodding. It denotes a change from a waking state to slumber. Socrates, in this second speech, substitutes for the word νυστάζω , the word καθεύδω , which means not to fall asleep, but to be asleep. Socrates suggests by using the word καθεύδω what we should have surmised before now - that Ion is almost always asleep.

D. The Socratic Poetry

Let us reflect a moment over the drama we have just witnessed. All of Socrates' efforts are aimed at uncovering Ion's true identity. But what an inquiry to make! No man is more conspicuous than Ion. He travels throughout Hellas performing at all the great sacrifices and festivals. At some performances more than twenty thousand people sit gazing at him. His body is ornamented with brilliant and many colored garmets and he shines out from above as the most beautiful of men. Yet for all Ion's celebrity, for all his godlike conspicuousness, Socrates insists on asking, albeit underhandedly, Who is Ion, really? The reason for Socrates' question is obvious. He is not satisfied with what he sees. He realizes what Ion does not realize, that a rhapsode when he is most conspicuous is most hidden. Socrates is intent on lifting the rhapsode's mask and seeing him in his nakedness.

But can Ion's nakedness reveal what he is? How is that possible? Ion is a rhapsode, and a rhapsode out of costume is no longer a rhapsode. His nakedness, by itself, would reveal nothing. Socrates is aware of the problem and offers an ingenious solution. He strips the tragic garb off the rhapsode and puts it on himself. Thus, though Ion stands on the stage naked, his image in the person of Socrates is appropriately garbed. Let us say that in a more sober fashion. We only learn the truth about Ion when we see the disparity between what he seems to be and what he is.

Consider the overall structure of the two speeches and the intervening dialogue: Socratic poetry - the stripping of Ion - poetry. Ion is

literally surrounded by a mask of 'high and rightly divine commendation' provided by Socrates turning poet. It is only by that mask that the rhapsode's character can be seen. He is, as we have said, a fool and an imposter. On the other hand, the irony of Socrates' two speeches, his adornment of Ion, can only be seen by looking at the rhapsode in the middle. Earlier[23] we noted that at one point in the dialogue Ion is transformed by the protasis of an hypothetical question into the expounder of an unknown god. Here again the same transformation is accomplished in deed. Ion, through his poetical simplicity, becomes a kind of expounder and interpreter of the two speeches of Socrates. And Socrates, we might add, becomes the unknown god. The stripping of Ion shows the mask of praise for what it is: a mask which seeks to conceal the object it adorns. By seeing the mask as a mask, we learn the truth.

But we have still not done justice to Socrates' poetry. The second speech is, as we have indicated, pure comedy. The image of poets, rhapsodes, spectators, choruses, and chorus masters all hanging in the sky stuck to one another is ludicrous. The 'dramatic interpretation of Socrates' first speech presented to us in the intervening dialogue is likewise comic. A rhapsode inspired by Socrates' flattery shows himself to be a fool. But the first and longer speech read by itself seems to have another tone. Sidney's understanding of it as 'high and rightly divine commendation' is not entirely unfounded. Let us look at that first speech again.

The two primary themes of the speech are 1) that all good poetry is divinely inspired, and 2) that each poet is able to make well only one kind of poetry. While it deals with all poetry the speech gives special prominence to the lyric poets. Indeed, it itself has a lyric quality. In the first half of the speech Socrates develops an elaborate pun on the words μέλος , song or lyric, and μέλι , honey, He compares the lyric poets (μελοποιοί) to the Bacchae who draw milk and honey (μέλι) from the rivers. He attributes this simile to the lyric poets themselves (ὅπερ αὐτοὶ [οἱ μελοποιοί] λέγουσι).

23) page 9. "If indeed you were a diviner, and if you could expound what was said similarly, would you not also know how to expound what was said differently." (531b6-9)

> For the poets tell us, I suppose, that plucking their songs (τὰ μέλη) from the honey-flowing (μελιρρύτων) fountains in certain gardens and valleys of the Muse, they carry them to us, just as the bees (αἱ μέλιτται) do; and like the bees they fly.

Lyric poetry is emphasized in the second half of the speech also. There, Socrates introduces the strange figure of Tynnichus, the Chalcidean, who ". . . never wrote anything worth remembering save for the paeon which everyone (πάντες) chants, almost the best (σχέδον τι .... κάλλιστον) of the lyric poems." Socrates tells us that Tynnichus simply (ἀτεχνῶς) called his song an 'invention of the Muse!' The remainder of Socrates' speech is an interpretation of this line.

> By this example above all, it seems to me, the god would show us, lest we doubt, that these beautiful poems are not human and of men, but divine and of god; and that the poets are nothing but the interpreters of the god, being possessed by the god from whom each is possessed. In order to reveal these things to us, the god intentionally (ἐξεπίτηδες) sang the most beautiful song (τὸ κάλλιστον μέλος) through the meanest of poets (διὰ τοῦ φαυλοτάτου ποιντοῦ).

In short Tynnichus has said almost exactly what Socrates is saying in this speech. Not only do the two say the same things, but they also speak in the same style. Tynnichus wrote a lyric poem and Socrates delivers a lyrical speech. To add to the similarities, Socrates had previously called his own way of speaking 'mean (φαῦλος)' and simple. In the last line of his speech, Socrates seems to designate Tynnichus as the 'meanest of poets through whom the god sang the most beautiful song.' It may be that Socrates is not referring to Tynnichus at all. Just before, Socrates had called the celebrated paeon not <u>the</u> best, but <u>almost</u> (σχέδον τι) the best lyric poem. Perhaps the song spoken of in the last line of the speech is even more beautiful then Tynnichus' song. Perhaps <u>the</u> most beautiful lyric is the song that Socrates is singing. That would make Socrates the meanest of poets.

It is our conjecture that the Socratic speech is an attempt to imitate and surpass the paeon of Tynnichus. But what is the character of Socrates' song? It understands itself as an interpretation of the deity's word. And it tells us that no man is the master of all poetry; no poet has

apprehended the whole. It is, in effect, the Socratic interpretation of the oracle that Chaeraphon brought back from Delphi. It will be recalled that the Delphic oracle designated Socrates as the wisest of men. Socrates interpreted the oracle to mean that he, Socrates, is the wisest because he alone knows that he does not know. But if Socrates emerges from the dialogue as the meanest and the noblest of lyric poets, in what image do we see Homer?

Part IV

Let us reflect a moment on the general character of the dialogue. Much of what is said in the Ion is about poetry. Homer is called the best and the most divine of poets,[24] all the poets are said to speak about the same things,[25] the Homeric themes are enumerated,[26] poetry is described as a whole,[27] a poetical account is given of poetic madness,[28] and Homer is quoted five times[29]. Most of these discussions are not trivial. Poetry is surely a major theme of the dialogue. But it is not the only theme. Indeed, for the most part the conversation seems to be about Ion the rhapsode and his rather peculiar problem. Ion can only speak well about one poet; and in his opinion this is sufficient. The burden of Socrates' argument is to show that Ion's limited expertness is not sufficient for true artfulness. He maintains that because Ion cannot speak about all of poetry he cannot speak with art or knowledge about any part of it. Art and knowledge according to Socrates require an expertness about the whole. And Ion's expertness is fragmentary. The rest of the dialogue is an ironic exposition of this theme.

We are confronted with a grave problem - how to unite the two themes. What does a rhapsode's artfulness, or lack of it, have to do with poetry? Or to put it differently, what is the relationship between Homer and Ion?

There are several obvious answers to that question. First, Ion is, in a literal sense, Homer's mouthpiece. Second, Ion is a self-appointed

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24) 530b10
25) 531d1
26) 531c1-d1
27) 532c10
28) 533c10-535a2
29) 537a10-539d1

expounder and advocate of Homer. Third, Ion is shown to be a 'descendant' of Homer. That is, he is pictured as 'hanging down' from the poet. Fourth, Socrates maintains that the same diviner power which moves Homer, moves Ion. Fifth, the rhapsode and the poet are engaged in analogous enterprises. Both are interpreters. Homer interprets the Muse and Ion interprets Homer (535a9).

This last point that there is an analogy between Homer and Ion can be extended much further. We have already indicated that the conspicuousness of rhapsodic excellence has a counterpart in poetry. Further there is a hint that Ion's embellishments of Homer are akin to Homer's embellishment of the world. Again, both Ion and Homer practice what we called poetic circumlocution - the speaking about men speaking about other things. This sort of 'speaking about' is comically impugned in the second half of the dialogue (536d10-541b5) where Socrates argues that the various artisans would judge better than the rhapsode those passages in Homer relating to their arts. The arguments used against Ion there could be used against Homer as well. Here again an analogy is clearly implied. Can we find further analogies between the rhapsode and the poet?

Consider the main thrust of Socrates' questions about Ion. Throughout the dialogue Socrates is determined to uncover, exploit, and attack Ion's failure to grasp the whole of poetry. He tries in every way to reveal the insufficiency of the rhapsode's skill. The question facing us now is: Is Socrates making an analogous attack on Homer? Socrates' attack on Ion culminates in the two central speeches of the dialogue. Those speeches appear to say as much about poets as they do about rhapsodes. The burden of the argument is that each poet is 'held' by only one Muse, just as Ion is 'held' by only one poet. Homer's expertness then, like Ion's, is fragmentary. Thus the two speeches make the analogy between Homer and Ion almost complete. All of the analogies and relationships we have been drawing point out the irreverent and dismal irony of Plato's Ion. Ion is not Homer. Yet Plato, through the ambiguous, underhanded, and ironic questions and speeches of Socrates transforms a simple-minded rhapsode into Homer's advocate and image. It is not a very flattering image nor a very fair one. Why does Plato do this? If he intended to talk about poetry, why did he pick Ion of all people to represent the

best and the most divine of poets? We will have to deal with these questions eventually.

If what we have said is correct, we can characterize the dialogue as follows: In the Ion Socrates interrogates a rhapsode in order to cast doubt on the integrity of the poetic enterprise. We can now begin to answer a question raised earlier[30] in this essay: Why should the formal wholeness of poetry be so flagrantly disregarded by Socrates? Perhaps Socrates regards the structural wholeness of poetry as a mask which hides a basic insufficiency of poetic discourse. But in what sense is poetry deficient. What is the real meaning of this accusation?

Recall Socrates' extravagant claim on behalf of the poets. The whole, he said, is poetry. Socrates was not the only man to make this claim for poetry. Ion's satisfaction with himself and with Homer is a reflection of his rather dim belief in the completeness and utter sufficiency of Homeric wisdom. We prefaced this essay with a quotation from Shelley in which the great English poet makes substantially the same claim for all poetry. But perhaps the most eloquent argument for the perfection of poetry was given by Homer. If one doubts this one has only to read the Iliad to be convinced. It is this very claim to god-like perfection - a claim that great poetry by its nature almost always makes - that Socrates comically defends and attacks in the Ion. The subject of poetic integrity is a significant theme in many other dialogues besides the Ion. The Sophist, the Phaedrus, the Symposium, and the Republic come to mind immediately. Let us look briefly at the discussion of poetry in Book X of the Republic.

In the Republic (X, 596d3-4), Socrates says that the poet is ". . . in a way (τινὶ τρόπῳ) the maker of all things." The 'way' by which poets make all things is imitation. Book X of the Republic contains a lengthy discussion of imitation. Unfortunately we cannot examine that discussion here. We might, however, consider one sentence (598b5-8) in which Socrates gives a summary of the argument. "The mimetic art is far removed from truth, and this, it seems, is the reason it can produce everything (πάντα ἀπεργάζεται), because it touches

30) cf. pp. 8 - 9

or lays hold of (ἐφάπτεται) only a small part of the object and that a phantom (εἴδωλον)." This statement has, I think, two ironic counterparts in the Ion. 1) Let us recall Socrates' enumeration of the poetic themes in the Ion (531c1-d2). His list, as we noted (p. 10) seemed to include everything. He characterized the poet's 'telling about things' by the words διελήλυθεν περί - he has told through about. We pointed out the ironic juxtaposition of the prepositions διά and περί . Was he not suggesting that poetry, though it appears to penetrate the whole, in truth touches only a small part, the outside of things, the phantom and the shadow of the world? The attack on poetry seems to be this: the poets, while laying hold on a small part, think they have captured the whole. The poets like the rhapsodes believe themselves to be sufficient (cf. 531a3-4). 2) Ion, as we have said before, is presented to us as the image and advocate of Homer. But Ion is not the only image of Homer in the dialogue. Socrates in his speeches presents us with another likeness of poetry. Thus, Ion, by his own word, is the interpreter, and Socrates, by his actions, is the imitator of Homer. We can only arrive at the full image of poetry in the Ion by considering both the rhapsode and the philosopher. Socrates' two speeches and the rhapsode they surround together constitute the Platonic image of poetry. That image can be stated as follows: poetry is like an iron ring (represented by Socrates' two speeches) which encompasses very little (portrayed by Ion). Perhaps we should put that in a less offensive way. Poetry speaks about the whole of things. It does not penetrate the center.

A proper exposition of Socrates ironic attack on poetic integrity would require a long discussion of images and imitation. We are not prepared to go into those problems here. Our aim in this essay is to begin to explore the questions which divide the poets from the philosophers. If we can give a clear formulation of some of the disputed questions we will have done what we set out to do. We are not seeking to give final solutions, but only to provide the basis for future inquiry.

The Socratic rhetoric also fails to penetrate the center. Socrates' speech, as he tells us again and again, is mean, obscure, and insufficient.

Even his poetry, by pretending to conceal that fact reveals it to us. His rhetoric does not satisfy us as Homer satisfies Ion (and not just Ion). And therein lies the difference. The Socratic masking of ignorance is aimed at comically displaying that ignorance against the background of wisdom. The integrity of Socratic rhetoric consists in its single-minded dedication to the uncovering of its own deficiencies. Socrates mocks our eagerness to produce images and ". . . to take them seriously as serious things that lay hold on truth."[31] By continually asserting the difference between true opinion and knowledge, by seeking to understand images as images, he attempts always to draw us into the mad enterprise of seeking wisdom by the study of our own ignorance. That is, he attempts to make us wise.

* * * * * * * * * *

We said before[32] that Socrates' primary thesis in the dialogue - that Ion doesn't know what he is talking about - is unambiguously insulting. That is not the only insult in Plato's Ion. There is a much greater offense. Ion the silly rhapsode is cast in the role of the best and most divine of poets. Why does Plato do that? I think the answer is simply this: the Homers of our world are almost always accompanied by Ions. Supreme human artistry, with its unutterable beauty, its awe-inspiring vastness, invariably draws to itself a cloud of praise and human vanity. The poet's notion of self-sufficiency and our habit in these times, and at all times, of spelling the word Art with a capital "A" attest to the kinship of artfulness and vanity in the human soul. While the clouds of vanity remain, serious thought about what they surround is impossible. Witness the case of Ion. He is the cloud incarnate.

Plato's mockery taunts the poet in us with the malicious insinuation that behind the cloud of vanity, played by Ion, there lies only a cloud of vanity. If we have listened attentively, we poets - and who is not a poet - should be shocked and offended. That is, we should be moved to engage in a serious and honest conversation about poetry and the whole of things. If we have been properly insulted, then Plato's charming little dialogue will have accomplished what it was intended to do - it will have become the perfect imitation and praise of Socrates.

---

31) Book X, Republic, 608a8-10
32) p. 16

A DISTANT HEARING OF GABRIEL FAURE'S MESSE DE REQUIEM

Veronica Soul '66

Bequeath remembrance to the past and find
Your giving echoed back in startling sounds
Of requiems.
A phrase a child was taught
To chant - a dona eis requiem -
Breaks from a windowed balcony to set
Its balm of new-learned sounds on brick-laid walks,
Our modern ruins, pockmarked paths, now eased
With clots of moss that fill the random gaps.

Unchanted asking - dona eis - wakes
Fore-sung, forgotten crisp eleisons.
Christe, Christe, boyish choral cries
To crack the hallowed shell of Coventry
Before it heals arise and fall like chips
Of twice and triply shattered colored glass.

Forget this former requiem. Bequeath
This raw remembrance to the past and take
Some other in its place:
once Boulanger
Came to conduct her teacher's Requiem.
She, gaunt and gray in fragile black, sent sounds
Of Christe, Christe, to the open crowd.
No exits for that concert-requiem,
Confined; no streetward Christes to surprise . . .

Keep requiems for youthful cries and let
Them strike unstaged in unexpected sounds
Beyond cathedral doors, conservatoires.

THAT THE INTERSECTION OF A CYLINDER AND A PLANE, PARALLEL NEITHER TO THE AXIS NOR THE BASES OF THE CYLINDER, AND CUTTING NEITHER BASE, IS AN ELLIPSE.

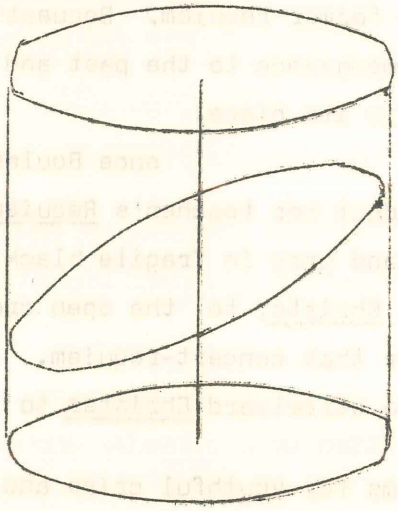
Dean Hannotte '68

Introduction

In Book IX of the Elements, Euclid gives, among others, these generally accepted definitions:

> 21. When, one side of those about the right angle in a rectangular parallelogram remaining fixed, the parallelogram is carried round and restored again to the same position from which it began to be moved, the figure so comprehended is a cylinder.
>
> 22. The axis of the cylinder is the straight line which remains fixed and about which the parallelogram is turned.
>
> 23. And the bases are the circles described by the two sides opposite to one another which are carried round.

This paper will prove by means of an orderly progression of synthetic theorems that the intersection of a cylinder and a plane, parallel neither to the axis nor the bases of the cylinder, and cutting neither base, is an ellipse, as defined and discussed in Apollonius' Conics.

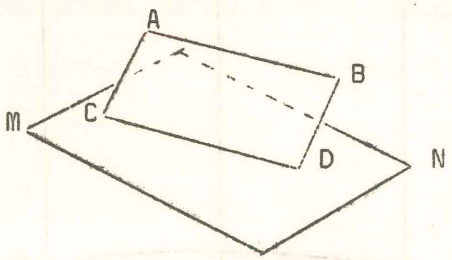


A cylinder, cut by said plane, which intersects said figure.

Theorem 1

Any plane containing only one of two parallel straight lines is parallel to the other.

Let AB, CD be parallel, and CD lie in the plane MN. I say AB will not meet the plane MN.



Now AB, CD determine a plane intersecting MN in the straight line CD. Thus, if AB meets MN it must meet it at some point in CD. But this is impossible since AB is parallel to CD. Therefore AB will not meet the plane MN, and is therefore parallel to it.

Theorem 2

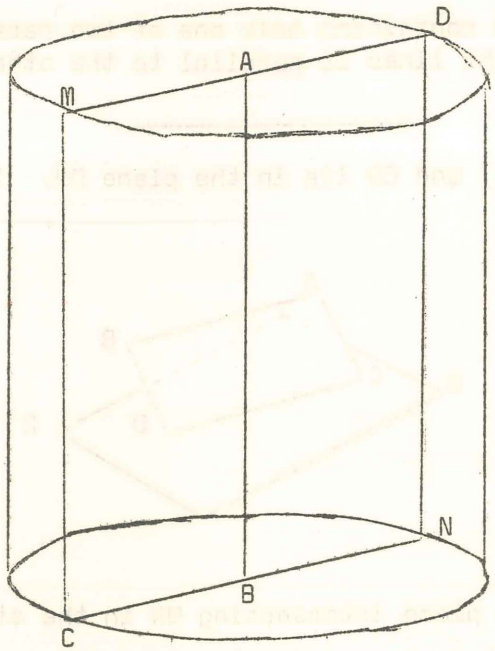
If a straight line is parallel to a plane, it is also parallel to the intersection of any plane through it with the given plane.

Let AB in the drawing above now be parallel to the plane MN, and let any plane through AB intersect MN in CD. Now AB and CD cannot meet, because if they did AB would meet the plane MN. Yet AB, CD are in one plane. Therefore, AB, CD are parallel, which was to be proven.

Theorem 3

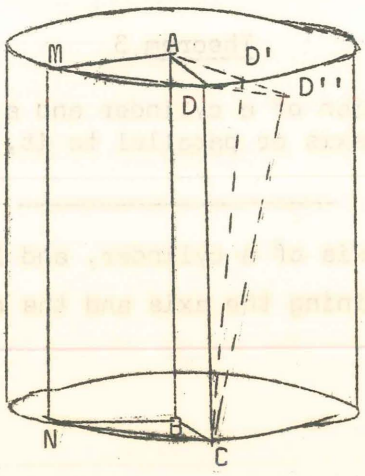
The intersection of a cylinder and a plane, either containing the axis or parallel to it, is a rectangle.

Case I: Let AB be the axis of a cylinder, and let MDNC be the intersection of a plane containing the axis and the cylinder, I say that MDNC is a rectangle.



Now the intersection of two planes is a straight line (Euclid, Book XI, Proposition 3). Therefore MAD is a straight line, and similarly CBN. Furthermore, MAD and CBN are parallel (Eu. XI, 16). Now MABC is one of the positions of the generating rectangular parallelogram and therefore MC is a straight line, and similarly DN. They are parallel by virtue of their each being parallel to the axis. Therefore MDNC is a parallelogram. Angle DMC is right because it is an angle of the generating rectangle, and so therefore MDNC is also a rectangle.

Case II: Let AB be the axis of a cylinder, and let MDNC be the intersection of a plane parallel to the axis and the cylinder. I say that MDNC is a rectangle.



Now the plane cuts the upper base at D. The generating rectangle which has as a side BC also includes D. For suppose this is not the case, and that the generating rectangle were ABCD', and that the intersection of its plane, the cutting plane, and the base plane were D''.

Now AB and CD'' would never meet because the latter is in a plane parallel to the former. Yet they are both in the plane of the generating rectangle. Therefore they must also be parallel in that plane. Now AB and CD' are parallel by hypothesis and therefore D' and D'' must coincide (Eu. XI, 13). But then M, D, and D' (D'') would lie both on a circle and on a straight line, which is absurd. Therefore CD will be a side of a generating rectangle, and similarly MN.

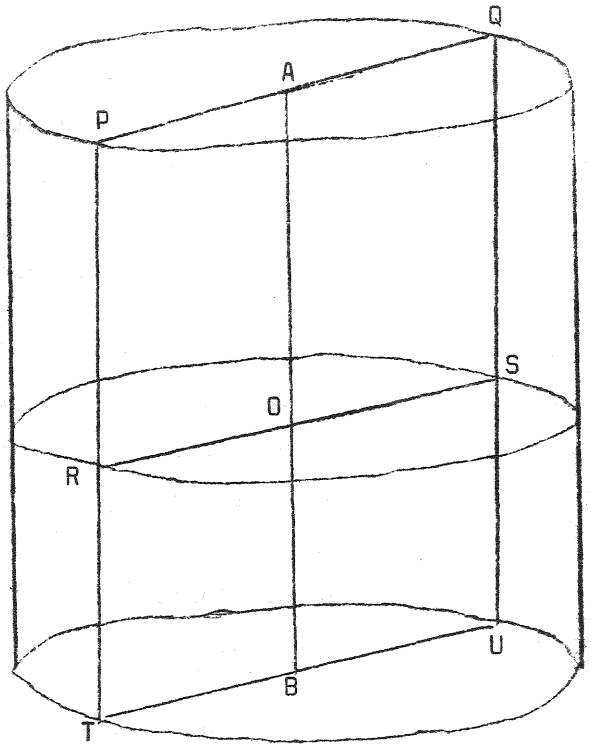
By this, then, MN and DC will each be parallel to AB, and by virtue of that fact they themselves will be parallel. MD and NC will also be parallel (Eu. XI, 16), and therefore MDCN will be a parallelogram.

Now the axis AB is perpendicular to either base as is seen from the definitions. DC is parallel to AB and therefore is also perpendicular to either base (Eu. XI, 8). It is said that a straight line is perpendicular to a plane when it makes right angles with all the straight lines which meet it and are in the plane (Eu. XI, def. 3). Therefore DC makes a right angle with NC. And therefore MDCN is a rectangle, which was to be proven.

Theorem 4

The intersection of a cylinder and a plane parallel to the bases and between them is a circle whose radius is equal to the radius of either base and whose center is on the axis.

Let AB be the axis of a cylinder, and let a plane parallel to the bases cut the axis at O. I say that the intersected figure about O is a circle with center at O and whose radius = PA.



Let there be chosen a random point R along the figure, and let the plane which contains R, A, and B be labelled PQUT. Now ABTP is a position of the generating rectangle, and therefore PT is parallel to AB. Now PA is parallel to RO (Eu. XI, 16), and therefore PAOR is a parallelogram.

Thus RO equals PA. But PA is the radius of the base. Therefore the distance between O and any point R on the figure is equal to the radius of the base.

And therefore the figure is a circle equal in radius to the base and having its center on the axis, which was to be proved.

Theorem 5

The line in the cutting plane which passes through the intersection of the axis and the cutting plane and is perpendicular to the intersection of the base plane and the cutting plane bisects all lines perpendicular to it in the figure.

Let AB be the axis of a cylinder, and let a plane parallel neither to the axis nor either base, nor cutting either base, intersect the cylinder in figure MPNR. Let the cutting plane and the base plane intersect in line HJ. From O, the intersection of the axis and the cutting plane, let OG be drawn perpendicular to HJ. Let RP be perpendicular to GN, and let RP be any such perpendicular. I say RK equals KP.

Let DBF be the intersection of the base and the plane which contains AB and GO, henceforth called the axial plane. Let RPQS be in a plane containing RP and parallel to AB. Then RPQS is the lower portion of a rectangle by Theorem No. 3, and RS is parallel to PQ, and angle PQS is right.

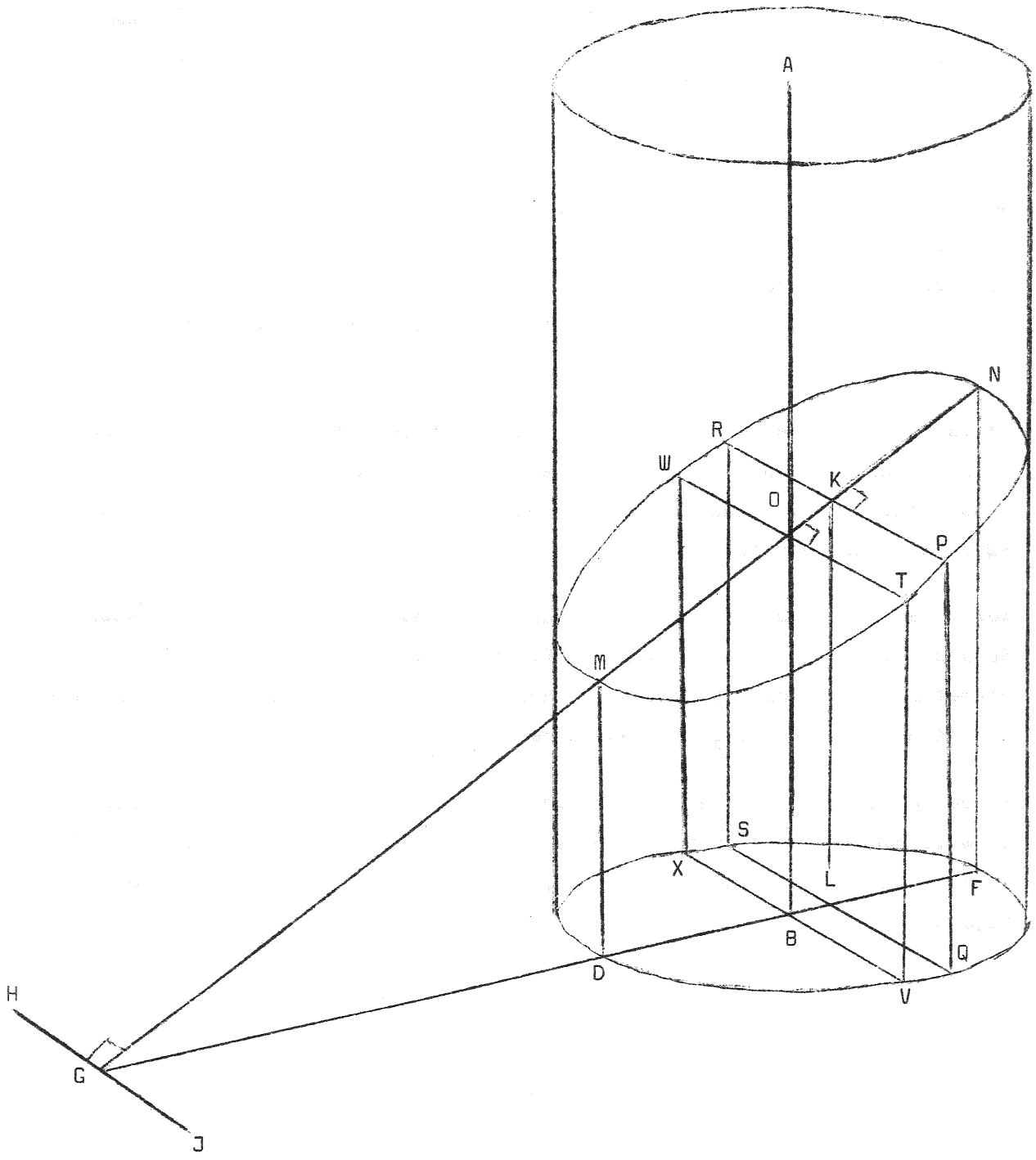
Now HJ is perpendicular to GN. But RP is perpendicular to GN. Therefore HJ is parallel to RP, and is parallel to the plane of RPQS by Theorem No. 1. By Theorem No. 2 HJ is parallel to SQ. Therefore RP is parallel to SQ, and RPQS is a parallelogram. Since angle PQS is right, RPQS is a rectangle.

Now KL is parallel to AB by Theorem No. 2, and PQ is parallel to AB by Theorem No. 3. Since therefore KL and PQ are parallel, RKLS and KPQL are rectangles, and therefore KP is perpendicular to KL. But KP is perpendicular to GN. Therefore KP is perpendicular to the axial triangle (Eu. XI, 4).

As was said before, KP is parallel to HJ. Therefore HJ, too, is perpendicular to the axial triangle (Eu. XI, 8), and consequently will be perpendicular to GF. Since then HJ is parallel to SQ, as was said before, SQ is also perpendicular to GF.

Now B is the center of the circle DQFS, and therefore DBF is a diameter. SL and LQ, being perpendicular to DF, are drawn ordinatewise to the diameter. Therefore SL equals LQ, and since SL equals RK, and LQ equals KP, RK must equal KP, which was to be proved.

Since MN bisects all the lines drawn perpendicular to it in the figure, it will henceforth also be known as the axis of the figure. Analogously, the perpendicular lines, such as KP, will be called ordinates of the figure.


A
N
R
W
K
O
P
T
M
S
X
L
F
B
Q
D
V
H
G
J

Theorem 6

In the figure, the square on the ordinate is to the area contained by the straight lines cut off by it beginning from the ends of the axis as the square on the line perpendicular to the axis and intersecting the axis of the cylinder is to the square on the axis of the figure.

Let WOT be that line drawn perpendicular to MN and passing through AB, and let WTVX be in the plane containing both WT and AB. I say that sq.KP:rect.MK,KN::sq.WT:sq.MN.

WTVX is a parallelogram, as shown in the course of Theorem No. 5, and so WT equals XV, But XV, passing through B, is a diameter of the base, and is therefore equal to DF. So WT equals DF.

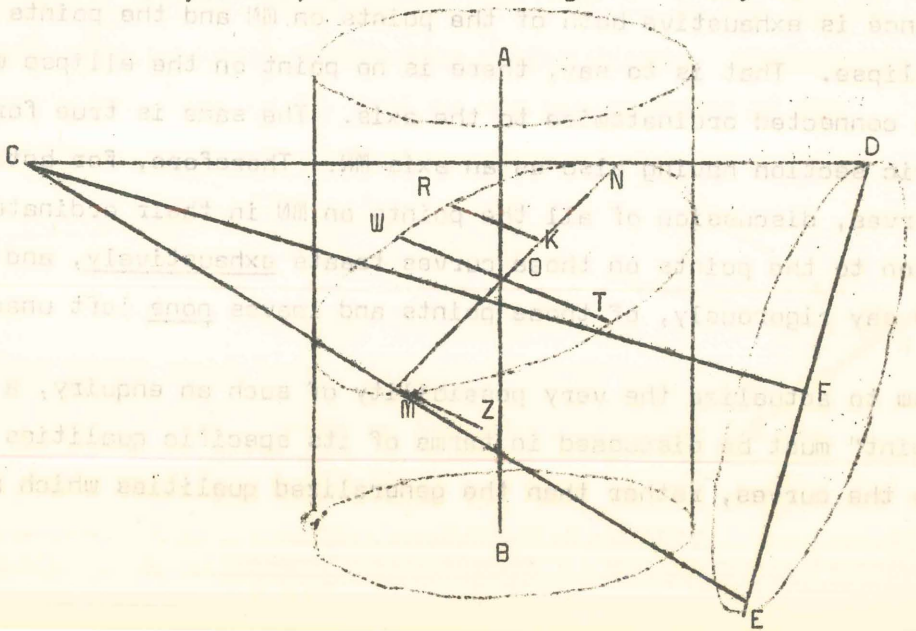
The square on LQ equals the rectangle contained by DL and LF (Eu. II, 14, lines 28,29; or VI, 8, porism). Since KP equals LQ, that rectangle also equals the square on KP.

Now, DL:MK::DF:MN, and LF:KN::DF:MN (Eu. XI, 17). Therefore rect.DL,LF:rect.MK,KN::sq.DF:sq.MN. But rect.DL,LF equals sq.KP, and sq.DF equals sq.WT. Therefore, sq.KP:rect.MK,KN::sq.WT:sq.MN, which was to be proved.

Theorem 7

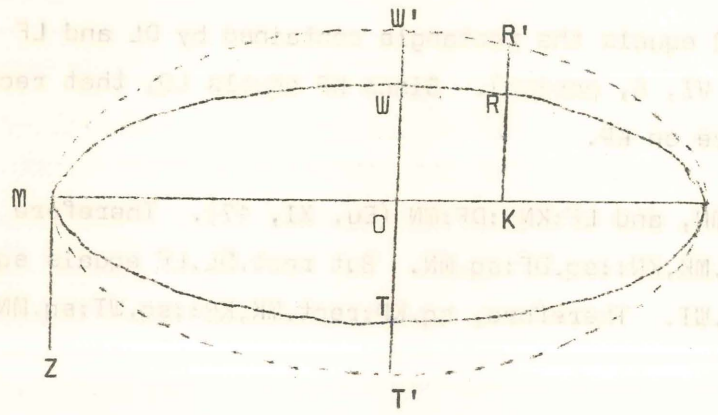
The figure is an ellipse.

Let AB be the axis of a cylinder, and MWNT the figure. I say MWNT is an ellipse.



Construct MZ perpendicular to MN in the cutting plane, and let it be contrived that MN:WT::WT:MZ (Eu. VI, 11). Now it is possible to construct an ellipse in the cutting plane with MN transverse diameter and MZ upright, with the given angle being right, by Apollonius I, 56. Let it be done, and let CDE be the cone of the produced ellipse. I say the ellipse constructed in the cutting plane will coincide with the figure already there.

For assume that it is not the case and let the closed curve MWNT represent the figure in the cutting plane, and let the closed dots MW'NT' represent the superimposed ellipse also in the cutting plane.



Since the given angle was right, MN is an axis of the ellipse by construction. Now every point on MN corresponds to 2 ordinates which in turn together correspond to two points on the ellipse. That correspondence is exhaustive both of the points on MN and the points on the ellipse. That is to say, there is no point on the ellipse which cannot be connected ordinatewise to the axis. The same is true for the cylindric section having also as an axis MN. Therefore, for both closed curves, discussion of all the points on MN in their ordinatewise relation to the points on those curves treats <u>exhaustively</u>, and which is to say rigorously, of those points and leaves <u>none</u> left unaccounted for.

Now to actualize the very possibility of such an enquiry, a "variable point" must be discussed in terms of its specific qualities with respect to the curves, rather than the generalized qualities which might be

extracted from the specific qualities of each point on MN with respect to the curves.

Let this "variable point" be K, and for the moment let it be fixed. Since ordinates to either curve are perpendicular to MN, from K they will coincide. Let KR be the ordinate to the figure, and KR' the ordinate to the ellipse. Let O be the intersection of the cylindrical axis, and the corresponding ordinates be OW,OW', and OT, OT'.

Now sq.KR':rect.MK,KN::MZ:MN (Apollonius I, 21). By construction, MZ:WT::WT:MN, and compounding each side with WT:MN we get MZ:MN::sq.WT:sq.MN. Therefore, sq.KR':rect.MK,KN::sq.WT:sq.MN. But sq.KR:rect.MK,KN::sq.WT:sq.MN (Theorem No. 6), and therefore KR equals KR'.

This contradicts our earlier assumption that there can be a point or points on the ellipse which are not on the cylindrical section by saying in effect that every point that corresponds to a point on MN, that is to say, every point in the ellipse coincides with a point in the cylindrical section. Therefore, what has been set out to be proved has been proved.

HOW THE SUN CAME TO BE

James Mensch '67

Once a very long time ago there was no sun to shine down
and bring day.
There was only Dawn, the yellow robed, and black winged Night,
And the sea.
There was greyness all about the soft lapping of the waters
And there was darkness on the land.

Now each morning, Dawn, the yellow gowned, rose up from
the bed of Night
And walked upon the earth until the sea lifted itself
about her feet.

And the Dawn who had lain with the darkness of Night was sad
for there was no light.
. . . the sea in greyness moved low and sobbing;
And the Dawn shed soft tears which fell into the sea
with the waves lifting as if to catch them.

Thus Dawn, who was called at that time by the other gods,
"the mother of the unborn,"
Was seized with a great sadness.
And she lamented and beat her breasts and cut her long hair.
And gathering ashes she rubbed her face with soot and tore
her clothes.
But still the yellow gowned goddess looked at the sea, low, unlit,
and was sad
For there was no light.

Now one morning, the Dawn of the rosy fingers walked wet sandled
from the sea
Onto the earth, covered with darkness,
for the Night of the black feathered wings still lay sleeping.
And the Dawn had conceived an idea.

Now it was that the Dawn came upon the great fires
leaping into the darkness from the forge of Hephaestus.
And the lame god was wise in many crafts.
His work was as the intricately wrought gold upon the tripods of ivory
and the many layered shields of the gods.

The lonely god turned upon his staff and his shoulders
were of the pitiless bronze, his neck as alabaster;
And the great coals of his eyes glowed red against the long
black hair and the soot of his body.

And he walked three legged using his staff.
For one leg was white made of ivory inlaid with laughing silver
And the other was misformed, black, and would not support him,
crippled from that time his mother had hurled him to the earth
of the black winged Darkness
For he was not beautiful.
The lame god listened to the Dawn and smiled
and fashioned a great net wrought of white gold
And limping gave the gift to the goddess of the yellow gown.

And Dawn went to the bed of Night and lay down beneath
the black wings
With the golden net between her breasts
and slept with the god.

The next morning, the goddess of the yellow robe
rose up from the bed of Night
And walked on the dark earth until the sea lifted itself about
her feet.

And the Dawn taking the great net from beneath her breasts
Cast it upon the waters.
The tips of the golden waves lifted towards the net and caught
the golden light and fell splashing.
And the net descended beneath the waters.

Now a great thrashing arose and the sea which from the beginning
of time was greyness
Appeared violet and golden and green and red.
For a wonderful fish was caught in the toils of the net
with scales all the colors of the rainbow
glowing violently and lighting the sea.
And there was no greyness.
And the Dawn of the rosy fingers with the golden net
brought the wonderful fish ashore.

And wonderful!
The great fish, coloring the whole world, vomited out the sun
and fled back into the sea.
And the newborn sun rose bringing day and light.
The yellow robed Dawn had no sadness.

Now after twelve of the Hours had died,
the great ball of the sun fell dying into the sea.
But from that day on, the Dawn of the yellow gown rises
at the morning from the bed of Night
And casts her net upon the waters landing the wonderful fish
who vomits out the great ball of the sun.

And there is no darkness nor sadness with the day.

ESSAY ON CONICS BY BLAISE PASCAL

Translated by
Cynthia Siehler '66

Translator's Note

In the interests of projective geometry, the study of which is predominant during the last half of the senior mathematics tutorial, the following translation of Blaise Pascal's L'Essay pour les Coniques is offered.* This essay is one of two extant works of Pascal's Traité des Coniques, a much larger treatment of projective geometry, the remainder of whose contents is believed lost. The other work, which we study during the sophomore year, is entitled Generatio Conisectionum, and is available in translation in the bookstore. The Essay on Conics, published originally in poster form, presents only the enunciations of its lemmas and propositions. Lemma I of the Essay is particularly pertinent to all projective geometry systems and is known as Pascal's Hexagon Theorem, or the Mystical Hexagram, whose figure (see Figure 1) is described by the letters PKNOVQ.

* French text taken from Pascal, Oeuvres Complètes, Macmillan, 1963.

* * * * * * * * * *

Definition I:

When several straight lines meet in a point, or are all parallel to one another, all these lines are said to be of the same order or of the same ordering, and the group of lines is called an order of lines or an ordering of lines.

Definition II:

By "section of a cone" we mean the circumference of a circle, an ellipse, a hyperbola, a parabola, and a rectilineal angle; inasmuch as a cone cut parallel to its base, through its vertex, or in the three other directions which produce the ellipse, the hyperbola, and the parabola, brings about in the surface of the cone either the circumference of a circle, or an angle, or an ellipse, a hyperbola, or a parabola.

Definition III:

By the word "straight" placed alone, we understand a straight line.

Lemma I:

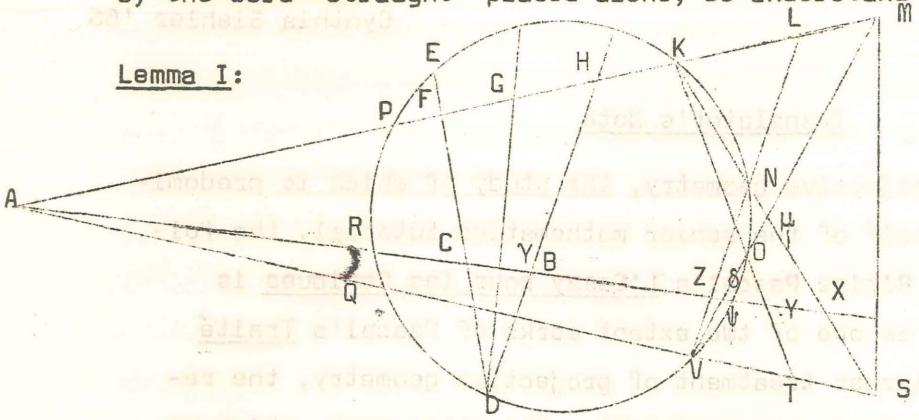


Figure 1

If in the plane M,S,Q the two lines MK and MV meet in M, SK and SV in S, MK and SK in K, MV and SV in V, MA and SA in A, and MV and SK in μ, and if the circumference of a circle cutting the lines MV, MK, SV, SK in O, P, Q, N pass through two of the four points A, K, μ, V not in the same straight line with the points M, S, as for example through the points K, V, I say that the straight lines MS, NO, PQ are of the same order.

Lemma II:

If several planes, cut by another plane, pass through the same straight line, all the lines of the sections of these planes are of the same order as the straight lines through which the planes pass.

(Figure 1) Given these two lemmas, and some of their easy corollaries, we shall demonstrate that, with the same things being given as in the first lemma, if through the points K, V pass any section whatever of a cone which cuts the straight lines MK, MV, SK, SV in the points P, O, N, Q, the straight lines MS, NO, PQ will be of the same order. This constitutes a third lemma.

Following these three lemmas and some of their corollaries, we shall give the complete conic elements, namely, all the properties of the diameters, the parameters, the tangents, etc., the restoration of a cone on nearly any given data, the description of conic sections through points, etc.

In the course of which, we enunciate the properties which we find therein, in a more universal manner than usual. For example, the following: If lines AK and AV in the plane MSQ meet a conic section PKV in P, K, Q, V; and if from two of these four points which are not in the same straight line with point A, as for example the points K and V, and through two points N and O, taken on the section, are drawn four straight lines KN, KO, NV, VO, cutting the lines AV and AP at the points L, M, S, T: I say that the ratio compounded of the ratios of PM to MA, and of AS to SQ is the same as the ratio compounded of PL to LA, and of AT to TQ.

We shall demonstrate that if there are three lines DE, DG, DH, which the lines AP, AR cut at points F, G, H, C, Y, B, and if in DC be determined the point E, the ratio compounded of the ratios of the rectangle EF,FG to the rectangle EC,CY, and of the lines AY to AG, is the same as the ratio compounded of the ratios of the rectangle EF,FG to the rectangle EC,CB, and of the line AB to AH. And is also the same as the ratio of the rectangle FE,FD to the rectangle EC,CD. Therefore, if through the points E,D pass a conic section cutting AH,AB in points P,K,R,ψ, the ratio compounded of the ratios of the rectangle EF,FG to the rectangle EC,Cψ, and of YA to AG, will be the same as the compound ratio of the rectangle FK,FP to the rectangle CR,Cψ, and of the rectangle AR,Aψ to the rectangle AK,AP.

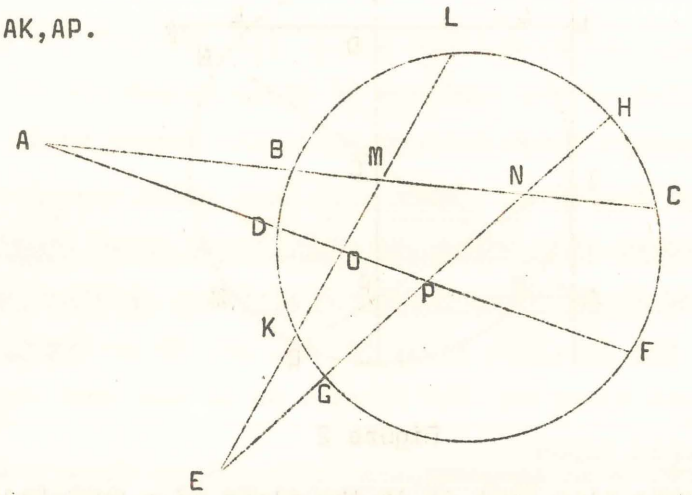


Figure 3

We shall also demonstrate that if four lines AC,AF,EH,EL intersect in points N,P,M,O, and if a conic section cut these lines in points C,B,F, D,H,G,L,K, the ratio compounded of the ratios of rectangle MC,MB to the rectangle PF,PD, and of the rectangle AD,AF to the rectangle AB,AC is

the same as the compound ratio of rectangle ML,MK to the rectangle PH,PG, and of the rectangle EH,EG to the rectangle EK,EL.

(Figure 1) We shall also demonstrate that property whose first inventor is M. Desargues, of Lyons, one of the great minds of our times, and one of the most versed in mathematical disciplines, and, among others, the theory of conics, whose writings on this matter, although small in number, have given ample witness to those who would wish to inform themselves; and let me confess that I owe the little that I have found on this matter to his writings, and that I have tried to imitate, as much as I could, his method in the subject, which he treated without making use of the axial triangle. And treating generally all conic sections, the marvelous property in question is the following. If in the plane MSQ there is a conic section PQV, on which are taken four points K,N,O,V, and if four lines KN, KO, VN, VO be taken in such a way that through any one of the four points only two lines pass, and if another line cut the section in points R, ψ, and the lines KN, KO, VN,VO in points X,Y,Z,δ: I say that the rectangle ZR,Zψ is to the rectangle YR,Yψ as the rectangle δR,$\delta\psi$ is to the rectangle XR,Xψ.

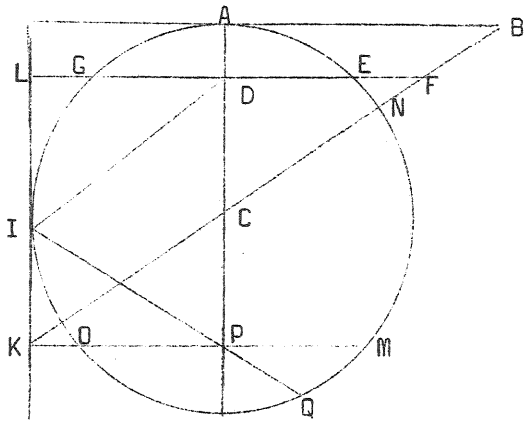


Figure 2

We shall demonstrate also that if in the plane of a hyperbola, or an ellipse, or a circle AGE, whose center is C, there be drawn the line AB, touching the section at A, and if, having drawn the diameter CA, the line AB be taken equal in square to a quarter of the rectangle of the figure, and if CB be drawn, and then, some other line, for example DE, parallel to AB, cutting the section in E, and the lines AC,CB in points D,F: If

the section AGE is an ellipse or a circle, the sum of the squares on DE and DF will equal the square on AB; and in the hyperbola, the difference of the squares on DE,DF will equal the square on AB.

We shall deduce also some problems, for example, from a given point to draw a line touching a given conic section.

To find two conjugate diameters at a given angle.

To find two diameters at a given angle and in a given ratio.

We have several other problems and theorems and several corollaries of preceding propositions; but the mistrust I have of my little experience and capacity does not permit me to bring forward any more until it has met the scrutiny of some skilled gentlemen who will oblige us in taking on that task: after which if they judge that the matter merits being continued, we shall attempt to carry it as far as God gives us the strength to take it.