Plato

Dialogues on Arts and Aesthetics

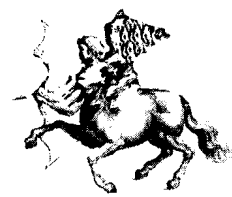
Essential Classics of Liberal Studies

全国百佳出版社
中央编译出版社
CCTP Central Compilation & Translation Press

Essential Classics of Liberal Studies

PLATO

DIALOGUES ON ARTS AND AESTHETICS



全国百佳出版社
中央编译出版社
Central Compilation & Translation Press

Plato
Translated with Analyses and Introductions by Benjamin Jowett
Dialogues on Aesthetics

Cambridge University Press, 1871

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

柏拉图对话集:美学卷:英文/(古希腊)柏拉图著.—北京:中央编译出版社,2012.1

ISBN 978-7-5117-1080-2

Ⅰ.①柏… Ⅱ.①柏… Ⅲ.①柏拉图(前427~前347)-美学思想-研究-英文 Ⅳ.①B502.232 ②B83-095.45

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2011)第218314号

柏拉图对话集:美学卷(英文版)

出 版 人:和 龚
责任编辑:韩慧强
责任印制:尹 珺
出版发行:中央编译出版社
地 址:北京西城区车公庄乙5号鸿儒大厦B座(100044)
电 话:(010)52612345(总编室) (010)52612363(编辑室)
(010)66130345(发行部) (010)66509618(读者服务部)
(010)66161011(团购部) (010)52612332(网络销售部)
网 址:www.cctpbook.com
经 销:全国新华书店
印 刷:北京瑞哲印刷厂
开 本:880×1230毫米 1/32
字 数:580千字
印 张:17.25 插页:4
版 次:2012年1月第1版第1次印刷
定 价:45.00元

本社常年法律顾问:北京大成律师事务所首席顾问律师 鲁哈达
凡有印装质量问题,本社负责调换,电话:010-66509618

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I ION

INTRODUCTION

THE ION is the shortest, or nearly the shortest, of all the writings which bear the name of Plato, and is not authenticated by any early external testimony. The grace and beauty of this little work supply the only, and perhaps a sufficient, proof of its genuineness. The plan is simple; the dramatic interest consists entirely in the contrast between the irony of Socrates and the transparent vanity and childlike enthusiasm of the rhapsode Ion. The theme of the Dialogue may possibly have been suggested by the passage of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* in which the rhapsodists are described by Euthydemus as 'very precise about the exact words of Homer, but very idiotic themselves.' (Compare Aristotle, *Met.*)

Ion the rhapsode has just come to Athens; he has been exhibiting in Epidaurus at the festival of Asclepius, and is intending to exhibit at the festival of the Panathenaea. Socrates admires and envies the rhapsode's art; for he is always well dressed and in good company—in the company of good poets and of Homer, who is the prince of them. In the course of conversation the admission is elicited from Ion that his skill is restricted to Homer, and that he knows nothing of inferior poets, such as Hesiod and Archilochus;—he brightens up and is wide awake when Homer is being recited, but is apt to go to sleep at the recitations of any other poet. 'And yet, surely, he who knows the superior ought to know the inferior also;—he

who can judge of the good speaker is able to judge of the bad. And poetry is a whole; and he who judges of poetry by rules of art ought to be able to judge of all poetry.' This is confirmed by the analogy of sculpture, painting, flute-playing, and the other arts. The argument is at last brought home to the mind of Ion, who asks how this contradiction is to be solved. The solution given by Socrates is as follows:—

> *The rhapsode is not guided by rules of art, but is an inspired person who derives a mysterious power from the poet; and the poet, in like manner, is inspired by the God. The poets and their interpreters may be compared to a chain of magnetic rings suspended from one another, and from a magnet. The magnet is the Muse, and the ring which immediately follows is the poet himself; from him are suspended other poets; there is also a chain of rhapsodes and actors, who also hang from the Muses, but are let down at the side; and the last ring of all is the spectator. The poet is the inspired interpreter of the God, and this is the reason why some poets, like Homer, are restricted to a single theme, or, like Tynnichus, are famous for a single poem; and the rhapsode is the inspired interpreter of the poet, and for a similar reason some rhapsodes, like Ion, are the interpreters of single poets.*

Ion is delighted at the notion of being inspired,and acknowledges that he is beside himself when he is performing;—his eyes rain tears and his hair stands on end. Socrates is of opinion that a man must be mad who behaves in this way at a festival when he is surrounded by his friends and there is nothing to trouble him. Ion is confident that Socrates would never think him mad if he could only hear his embellishments of Homer. Socrates asks whether he can speak well about everything in Homer. 'Yes, indeed he can.' 'What about things of which he has no knowledge?' Ion answers that he can interpret anything in Homer. But, rejoins Socrates, when Homer speaks of the arts, as for example, of chariot-driving, or of medicine, or of prophecy, or of navigation—will he, or will the charioteer or physician or prophet or pilot be the better judge? Ion is compelled to admit that every man will judge of his own particular art better than the rhapsode. He still maintains, however, that he understands the art of the general as well

as any one. 'Then why in this city of Athens, in which men of merit are always being sought after, is he not at once appointed a general?' Ion replies that he is a foreigner, and the Athenians and Spartans will not appoint a foreigner to be their general. 'No, that is not the real reason; there are many examples to the contrary. But Ion has long been playing tricks with the argument: like Proteus, he transforms himself into a variety of shapes, and is at last about to run away in the disguise of a general. Would he rather be regarded as inspired or dishonest?' Ion, who has no suspicion of the irony of Socrates, eagerly embraces the alternative of inspiration.

The Ion, like the other earlier Platonic Dialogues, is a mixture of jest and earnest, in which no definite result is obtained, but some Socratic or Platonic truths are allowed dimly to appear.

The elements of a true theory of poetry are contained in the notion that the poet is inspired. Genius is often said to be unconscious, or spontaneous, or a gift of nature: that 'genius is akin to madness' is a popular aphorism of modern times. The greatest strength is observed to have an element of limitation. Sense or passion is too much for the 'dry light' of intelligence which mingles with them and becomes discoloured by them. Imagination is often at war with reason and fact. The concentration of the mind on a single object, or on a single aspect of human nature, overpowers the orderly perception of the whole. Yet the feelings too bring truths home to the minds of many who in the way of reason would be incapable of understanding them. Reflections of this kind may have been passing before Plato's mind when he describes the poet as inspired, or when, as in the Apology, he speaks of poets as the worst critics of their own writings—anybody taken at random from the crowd is a better interpreter of them than they are of themselves. They are sacred persons, 'winged and holy things' who have a touch of madness in their composition (*Phaedr.*), and should be treated with every sort of respect (*Republic*), but not allowed to live in a well-ordered state. Like the Statesmen in the *Meno*, they have a divine instinct, but they are narrow and confused; they do not attain to the clearness of ideas, or to the knowledge of poetry or of any other art as a whole.

In the *Protagoras* the ancient poets are recognized by Protagoras himself as the original sophists; and this family resemblance may be traced in the Ion. The rhapsode belongs to the realm of imitation and of opinion: he professes to have all knowledge, which is derived by him from Homer, just as the sophist professes to have all wisdom, which is contained in his art of rhetoric. Even more than the sophist he is incapable of appreciating the commonest logical distinctions; he cannot explain the nature of his own art; his great memory contrasts with his inability to follow the steps of the argument. And in his highest moments of inspiration he has an eye to his own gains.

The old quarrel between philosophy and poetry, which in the *Republic* leads to their final separation, is already working in the mind of Plato, and is embodied by him in the contrast between Socrates and Ion. Yet here, as in the *Republic*, Socrates shows a sympathy with the poetic nature. Also, the manner in which Ion is affected by his own recitations affords a lively illustration of the power which, in the *Republic*, Socrates attributes to dramatic performances over the mind of the performer. His allusion to his embellishments of Homer, in which he declares himself to have surpassed Metrodorus of Lampsacus and Stesimbrotus of Thasos, seems to show that, like them, he belonged to the allegorical school of interpreters. The circumstance that nothing more is known of him may be adduced in confirmation of the argument that this truly Platonic little work is not a forgery of later times.

ION

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE Socrates, Ion.

SOCRATES Welcome, Ion. Are you from your native city of Ephesus?

ION No, Socrates; but from Epidaurus, where I attended the festival of Asclepius.

SOCRATES And do the Epidaurians have contests of

rhapsodes at the festival?

ION O yes; and of all sorts of musical performers.

SOCRATES And were you one of the competitors—and did you succeed?

ION I obtained the first prize of all, Socrates.

SOCRATES Well done; and I hope that you will do the same for us at the Panathenaea.

ION And I will, please heaven.

SOCRATES I often envy the profession of a rhapsode, Ion; for you have always to wear fine clothes, and to look as beautiful as you can is a part of your art. Then, again, you are obliged to be continually in the company of many good poets; and especially of Homer, who is the best and most divine of them; and to understand him, and not merely learn his words by rote, is a thing greatly to be envied. And no man can be a rhapsode who does not understand the meaning of the poet. For the rhapsode ought to interpret the mind of the poet to his hearers, but how can he interpret him well unless he knows what he means? All this is greatly to be envied.

ION Very true, Socrates; interpretation has certainly been the most laborious part of my art; and I believe myself able to speak about Homer better than any man; and that neither Metrodorus of Lampsacus, nor Stesimbrotus of Thasos, nor Glaucon, nor any one else who ever was, had as good ideas about Homer as I have, or as many.

SOCRATES I am glad to hear you say so, Ion; I see that you will not refuse to acquaint me with them.

ION Certainly, Socrates; and you really ought to hear how exquisitely I render Homer. I think that the Homeridae should give me a golden crown.

SOCRATES I shall take an opportunity of hearing your embellishments of him at some other time. But just now I should like to ask you a question: Does your art extend to Hesiod and Archilochus, or to Homer only?

ION To Homer only; he is in himself quite enough.

SOCRATES Are there any things about which Homer and Hesiod agree?

ION Yes; in my opinion there are a good many.

SOCRATES And can you interpret better what Homer says, or what Hesiod says, about these matters in which they agree?

ION I can interpret them equally well, Socrates, where they agree.

SOCRATES But what about matters in which they do not agree?—For example, about divination, of which both Homer and Hesiod have something to say,—

ION Very true.

SOCRATES Would you or a good prophet be a better interpreter of what these two poets say about divination, not only when they agree, but when they disagree?

ION A prophet.

SOCRATES And if you were a prophet, would you not be able to interpret them when they disagree as well as when they agree?

ION Clearly.

SOCRATES But how did you come to have this skill about Homer only, and not about Hesiod or the other poets? Does not Homer speak of the same themes which all other poets handle? Is not war his great argument? And does he not speak of human society and of intercourse of men, good and bad, skilled and unskilled, and of the gods conversing with one another and with mankind, and about what happens in heaven and in the world below, and the generations of gods and heroes? Are not these the themes of which Homer sings?

ION Very true, Socrates.

SOCRATES And do not the other poets sing of the same?

ION Yes, Socrates; but not in the same way as Homer.

SOCRATES What, in a worse way?

ION Yes, in a far worse.

SOCRATES And Homer in a better way?

ION He is incomparably better.

SOCRATES And yet surely, my dear friend Ion, in a discussion about arithmetic, where many people are speaking, and one speaks better than the rest, there is somebody who can judge which of them is the good speaker?

ION Yes.

SOCRATES And he who judges of the good will be the same as he who judges of the bad speakers?

ION The same.

SOCRATES And he will be the arithmetician?

ION Yes.

SOCRATES Well, and in discussions about the wholesomeness of food, when many persons are speaking, and one speaks better than the rest, will he who recognizes the better speaker be a different person from him who recognizes the worse, or the same?

ION Clearly the same.

SOCRATES And who is he, and what is his name?

ION The physician.

SOCRATES And speaking generally, in all discussions in which the subject is the same and many men are speaking, will not he who knows the good know the bad speaker also? For if he does not know the bad, neither will he know the good when the same topic is being discussed.

ION True.

SOCRATES Is not the same person skilful in both?

ION Yes.

SOCRATES And you say that Homer and the other poets, such as Hesiod and Archilochus, speak of the same things, although not in the same way; but the one speaks well and the other not so well?

ION Yes; and I am right in saying so.

SOCRATES And if you knew the good speaker, you would also know the inferior speakers to be inferior?

ION That is true.

SOCRATES Then, my dear friend, can I be mistaken in saying that Ion is equally skilled in Homer and in other poets, since he himself acknowledges that the same person will be a good judge of all those who speak of the same things; and that almost all poets do speak of the same things?

ION Why then, Socrates, do I lose attention and go to sleep and have absolutely no ideas of the least value, when any one speaks of any other poet; but when Homer is

mentioned, I wake up at once and am all attention and have plenty to say?

SOCRATES The reason, my friend, is obvious. No one can fail to see that you speak of Homer without any art or knowledge. If you were able to speak of him by rules of art, you would have been able to speak of all other poets; for poetry is a whole.

ION Yes.

SOCRATES And when any one acquires any other art as a whole, the same may be said of them. Would you like me to explain my meaning, Ion?

ION Yes, indeed, Socrates; I very much wish that you would: for I love to hear you wise men talk.

SOCRATES O that we were wise, Ion, and that you could truly call us so; but you rhapsodes and actors, and the poets whose verses you sing, are wise; whereas I am a common man, who only speak the truth. For consider what a very commonplace and trivial thing is this which I have said—a thing which any man might say: that when a man has acquired a knowledge of a whole art, the enquiry into good and bad is one and the same. Let us consider this matter; is not the art of painting a whole?

ION Yes.

SOCRATES And there are and have been many painters good and bad?

ION Yes.

SOCRATES And did you ever know any one who was skilful in pointing out the excellences and defects of Polygnotus the son of Aglaophon, but incapable of criticizing other painters; and when the work of any other painter was produced, went to sleep and was at a loss, and had no ideas; but when he had to give his opinion about Polygnotus, or whoever the painter might be, and about him only, woke up and was attentive and had plenty to say?

ION No indeed, I have never known such a person.

SOCRATES Or did you ever know of any one in sculpture, who was skilful in expounding the merits of Daedalus the son of Metion, or of Epeius the son of Panopeus, or of

Theodorus the Samian, or of any individual sculptor; but when the works of sculptors in general were produced, was at a loss and went to sleep and had nothing to say?

ION No indeed; no more than the other.

SOCRATES And if I am not mistaken, you never met with any one among flute-players or harp-players or singers to the harp or rhapsodes who was able to discourse of Olympus or Thamyras or Orpheus, or Phemius the rhapsode of Ithaca, but was at a loss when he came to speak of Ion of Ephesus, and had no notion of his merits or defects?

ION I cannot deny what you say, Socrates. Nevertheless I am conscious in my own self, and the world agrees with me in thinking that I do speak better and have more to say about Homer than any other man. But I do not speak equally well about others—tell me the reason of this.

SOCRATES I perceive, Ion; and I will proceed to explain to you what I imagine to be the reason of this. The gift which you possess of speaking excellently about Homer is not an art, but, as I was just saying, an inspiration; there is a divinity moving you, like that contained in the stone which Euripides calls a magnet, but which is commonly known as the stone of Heraclea. This stone not only attracts iron rings, but also imparts to them a similar power of attracting other rings; and sometimes you may see a number of pieces of iron and rings suspended from one another so as to form quite a long chain: and all of them derive their power of suspension from the original stone. In like manner the Muse first of all inspires men herself; and from these inspired persons a chain of other persons is suspended, who take the inspiration. For all good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed. And as the Corybantian revellers when they dance are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets are not in their right mind when they are composing their beautiful strains: but when falling under the power of music and metre they are inspired and possessed; like Bacchic maidens who draw milk and honey from the rivers when they are under the influence of Dionysus but not

when they are in their right mind. And the soul of the lyric poet does the same, as they themselves say; for they tell us that they bring songs from honeyed fountains, culling them out of the gardens and dells of the Muses; they, like the bees, winging their way from flower to flower. And this is true. For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him: when he has not attained to this state, he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles. Many are the noble words in which poets speak concerning the actions of men; but like yourself when speaking about Homer, they do not speak of them by any rules of art: they are simply inspired to utter that to which the Muse impels them, and that only; and when inspired, one of them will make dithyrambs, another hymns of praise, another choral strains, another epic or iambic verses—and he who is good at one is not good at any other kind of verse; for not by art does the poet sing, but by power divine. Had he learned by rules of art, he would have known how to speak not of one theme only, but of all; and therefore God takes away the minds of poets, and uses them as his ministers, as he also uses diviners and holy prophets, in order that we who hear them may know them to be speaking not of themselves who utter these priceless words in a state of unconsciousness, but that God himself is the speaker, and that through them he is conversing with us. And Tynnichus the Chalcidian affords a striking instance of what I am saying: he wrote nothing that any one would care to remember but the famous paean which is in every one's mouth, one of the finest poems ever written, simply an invention of the Muses, as he himself says. For in this way the God would seem to indicate to us and not allow us to doubt that these beautiful poems are not human, or the work of man, but divine and the work of God; and that the poets are only the interpreters of the Gods by whom they are severally possessed. Was not this the lesson which the God intended to teach when by the mouth of the worst of poets he sang the best of songs? Am I not right, Ion?

ION Yes, indeed, Socrates, I feel that you are; for your words touch my soul, and I am persuaded that good poets by a divine inspiration interpret the things of the Gods to us.

SOCRATES And you rhapsodists are the interpreters of the poets?

ION There again you are right.

SOCRATES Then you are the interpreters of interpreters?

ION Precisely.

SOCRATES I wish you would frankly tell me, Ion, what I am going to ask of you: When you produce the greatest effect upon the audience in the recitation of some striking passage, such as the apparition of Odysseus leaping forth on the floor, recognized by the suitors and casting his arrows at his feet, or the description of Achilles rushing at Hector, or the sorrows of Andromache, Hecuba, or Priam,—are you in your right mind? Are you not carried out of yourself, and does not your soul in an ecstasy seem to be among the persons or places of which you are speaking, whether they are in Ithaca or in Troy or whatever may be the scene of the poem?

ION That proof strikes home to me, Socrates. For I must frankly confess that at the tale of pity my eyes are filled with tears, and when I speak of horrors, my hair stands on end and my heart throbs.

SOCRATES Well, Ion, and what are we to say of a man who at a sacrifice or festival, when he is dressed in holiday attire, and has golden crowns upon his head, of which nobody has robbed him, appears weeping or panic-stricken in the presence of more than twenty thousand friendly faces, when there is no one despoiling or wronging him;—is he in his right mind or is he not?

ION No indeed, Socrates, I must say that, strictly speaking, he is not in his right mind.

SOCRATES And are you aware that you produce similar effects on most of the spectators?

ION Only too well; for I look down upon them from the stage, and behold the various emotions of pity, wonder, sternness, stamped upon their countenances when I am speaking: and

I am obliged to give my very best attention to them; for if I make them cry I myself shall laugh, and if I make them laugh I myself shall cry when the time of payment arrives.

SOCRATES Do you know that the spectator is the last of the rings which, as I am saying, receive the power of the original magnet from one another? The rhapsode like yourself and the actor are intermediate links, and the poet himself is the first of them. Through all these the God sways the souls of men in any direction which he pleases, and makes one man hang down from another. Thus there is a vast chain of dancers and masters and under-masters of choruses, who are suspended, as if from the stone, at the side of the rings which hang down from the Muse. And every poet has some Muse from whom he is suspended, and by whom he is said to be possessed, which is nearly the same thing; for he is taken hold of. And from these first rings, which are the poets, depend others, some deriving their inspiration from Orpheus, others from Musaeus; but the greater number are possessed and held by Homer. Of whom, Ion, you are one, and are possessed by Homer; and when any one repeats the words of another poet you go to sleep, and know not what to say; but when any one recites a strain of Homer you wake up in a moment, and your soul leaps within you, and you have plenty to say; for not by art or knowledge about Homer do you say what you say, but by divine inspiration and by possession; just as the Corybantian revellers too have a quick perception of that strain only which is appropriated to the God by whom they are possessed, and have plenty of dances and words for that, but take no heed of any other. And you, Ion, when the name of Homer is mentioned have plenty to say, and have nothing to say of others. You ask, 'Why is this?' The answer is that you praise Homer not by art but by divine inspiration.

ION That is good, Socrates; and yet I doubt whether you will ever have eloquence enough to persuade me that I praise Homer only when I am mad and possessed; and if you could hear me speak of him I am sure you would never think this to be the case.