THEORY INTO PRACTICE: ARISTOTELIAN PRINCIPLES IN ARISTARCHEAN PHILOLOGY

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The peripatetic influence on many of the fields developed at Alexandria is undeniable: chronology, ethnography, paradoxography, glossography, literary biography, and bibliography (\textit{pinakes}), as well as medicine and mechanics,\(^1\) owe much to the Aristotelian school and its approach to \textit{Wissenschaft}. In recent years, against Pfeiffer’s refusal to see any link between Aristotle and the Alexandrian grammarians,\(^2\) scholars like Gallavotti, Nickau, Lührs, Porter, Montanari, Richardson, and Matthaios\(^3\) have argued in favor of the influence of Aristotle on Alexandrian philology and in particular on Aristarchus’ scholarship. Some parallels between Aristotle and Aristarchus can be found in the distinction between Homer and the Cyclic poets; in the idea of the \(\tau\varepsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma\) of a work (in particular, the famous statement that the \textit{Odyssey} had reached its \(\tau\varepsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma\) at 23.296);\(^4\) in the theory that the \textit{Iliad} and the \textit{Odyssey} are creations of one poet, Homer (schol. \textit{Il. 5.60a}, 11.147a); and in the importance of the principle of consistency (Homer does not contradict himself).

In this paper, I would like to return to this issue, focusing in particular on the intellectual relationship between Aristotle and Aristarchus. Passages from the \textit{Rhetoric} and above all from the \textit{Poetics} will be compared to the Aristarchean sources from the Homeric scholia. In order to proceed in my analysis, I will take into account only the \textit{scholia maiora} to the \textit{Iliad} and the \textit{Odyssey} and, among them, only those by Aristonicus and, with more caution, by Didymus.\(^5\) These, I believe, are the only secure sources for Aristarchean...

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\(^1\) A relationship between Aristotle and Alexandrian medicine, both sharing the principle of teleology, has been highlighted by von Staden (1997).


\(^5\) As a general principle, all the scholia quoted in the present study are by Aristonicus. I always alert the reader in the few cases when I discuss a scholium by Didymus, a much more independent scholar, who hence is a much less reliable source for Aristarchean material.

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material when the name of the grammarian is not expressly quoted. All the other scholia that do not explicitly mention Aristarchus are excluded in the present work, however “Aristarchean” they may sound.6

1. SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS: ARISTOTLE’S THEORY, ARISTARCHUS’ PRACTICE, AND THE QUESTION OF TERMINOLOGY

The comparison between Aristotle and in general the Peripatetic school, on the one hand, and Aristarchus and the work done at the Museum, on the other, must be put in the right context, for it is clear that the ethos and essence of the work of Aristotle and that of Aristarchus were fundamentally different. Whereas Aristotle wrote theoretical treatises, Aristarchus did not produce a single speculative work; all his theoretical background must be inferred from his own practice in dealing with the ἔκδοσις of Homer, as witnessed by the Homeric scholia. We can thus oppose Aristotle’s theory to Aristarchus’ practice and see whether and, if so, how this Aristotelian conceptual framework fits Aristarchus’ methodology.

As for terminology, many of the same terms are to be found both in Aristotle and Aristarchean scholia. However, in approaching this topic, we must employ caution for various reasons. First, at least with Aristarchus, we are dealing not with his own work, transmitted by direct tradition, but with the scholia by Aristonicus. Though beyond a doubt derived from Aristarchus, these scholia are excerpts of his work, and thus may not necessarily preserve Aristarchus’ ipsissima verba. This is especially true for grammatical terminology, since between the time of Aristarchus (third to second century B.C.E.) and that of Aristonicus (first century B.C.E.) grammatical and linguistic analysis developed greatly. Thus Aristonicus had at his disposal a much more precise and extended vocabulary for grammatical categories, and there is evidence that sometimes he rephrased Aristarchus’ original Wortlaut in order to update it with the new terminology of the τεχνη γραμματικη.7 However, for a different kind of vocabulary, that of literary criticism, the situation is different. First, key words used by Aristotle and Aristarchus in this field (for example μύθος, ἡθ, πρέπον, διάνοια, to name just a few) are part of a common technical vocabulary, shared by all scholars discussing literary texts (including Crates and the κριτικοί too; see below) between the fourth and the first centuries B.C.E. Thus, in this field, unlike in the τεχνη γραμματικη, the vocabulary available to Aristonicus was essentially that of Aristotle, and thus that of Aristarchus. When dealing with interpretation and exegesis in a broader sense, therefore, it is much more likely that Aristonicus did not change the Wortlaut he found in Aristarchus’ hypomnemata. Moreover, most of the terms in this field are not, strictly speaking, “technical terminology,” since adjectives like εὐτελής, ἀπίθανος, and ἀδύνατος and

6. Interesting results in the analysis of exegetical scholia (which however are not derived from Aristarchus, and also probably represent a later stage in Homeric criticism) were developed by Schmidt (1976) and by Richardson (1980); see also Montanari 1995.
adverbs like ἓδος and κυρίως are part of normal Greek vocabulary. They were also used by Aristotle as well as by other Greek authors in literary exegesis, but were not “invented” to express technical notions (as happened for the parts of speech of the τέχνη γραμματική). Even if the usage of these more common terms in Aristonicus’ scholia does not guarantee that they were exactly the same terms used by Aristarchus, what really matters is not the “form” but rather the “content” of these words, that is, the concept they express. Since Aristonicus’ goal was to preserve Aristarchus’ opinions concerning a line, what matters most are the ideas Aristarchus conveys. Thus, in what follows, even if Greek nouns and adjectives are used to indicate certain ideas common to Aristotle and Aristarchus (since these terms are to be found in both Aristotle’s writings and in Aristonicus’ scholia), the focus is rather on the content they convey—Aristarchus’ ideas—than on Aristonicus’ Wortlaut. As will become clear, the affinity between Aristotle and Aristarchus is evident in shared ideas and common approaches to literature, and this is the direction and the ultimate goal of the analysis that follows.

2. A Preliminary Assumption: Tragedy and Epos Are Strictly Connected

At the beginning of the Poetics (1448b24–1449a6), Aristotle draws a famous distinction between the two main “genres” of poetical works: serious and comic. Among the former he counts tragedy, which, according to him, is derived from the serious epic represented by the Iliad and the Odyssey, just as comedy is derived from the Homeric Margites (Poet. 1448b24–1149a2):

Poetry was split up according to their particular characters; the grander people represented fine actions, i.e. those of fine persons, the more ordinary people represented those of inferior ones, at first composing invectives, just as the others composed hymns and praise-poems. We do not know of any composition of this sort by anyone before Homer, but there were probably many [who composed invectives]. Beginning with Homer [such compositions] do exist, e.g., his Margites etc. . . . Thus some of the ancients became composers of heroic poems, others of lampoons. Just as Homer was the greatest composer of serious poetry (not that he alone composed well, but because he alone composed dramatic representations), so too he was first to indicate the form of comedy, by dramatizing not an invective but the laughable. For his Margites stands in the same relation to comedies as do the Iliad and the Odyssey to tragedies. (Trans. Janko 1987)

8. The same point has been made by Lührs (1992, 16).
It is this “etiological” derivation that allows us to look at how Aristarchus analyzes epic poetry in search of Aristotelian criteria, for ultimately these two genres are not so far apart. Aristotle himself emphasizes this (Poet. 1449b16–20):

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As for their parts, some are the same, others are particular to tragedy. For this reason, whoever knows about good and inferior tragedies knows about epics too. Tragedy possesses all [the parts] that epic has, but those that it possesses are not all in epic. (Trans. Janko 1987)

It is this close relationship between tragedy and epic that allows for the identification of Aristotelian criteria within the work of a Homeric scholar like Aristarchus. If what I am going to argue is sound, Aristarchus knew what the philosopher had said about the affinity between these two genres and therefore thought it legitimate to apply Aristotle’s criteria for a good tragedy to epic poetry. The Alexandrians knew some of the Aristotelian works, and whether or not the Poetics was available to them, the dialogue On Poets, in which Aristotle discussed the same topics as in the Poetics, and the Homeric Problems were both known. 10

For Aristotle tragedy is composed of six parts (Poet. 1450a9–10): plot (μύθος), characters (γῆθη), diction (λέξεις), thought (διάνοια), spectacle (ψυχικα), and music (μελοποιία). In the chapters on epic, he picks up this division again, but rightly states that epic lacks the last two, music and spectacle (Poet. 1459b7–10). 11 This is a very useful working distinction, which helps Aristotle to set out a systematic view of the main constituents of a tragedy (and of an epos too), as well as to refer to other works such as the Rhetoric for elements that have already been treated elsewhere. This distinction of epic into four elements seems, moreover, to operate also in Aristarchus’ methodology, especially when he must decide about an athetesis, for a line is generally judged with reference to its function for the plot, for the characters, for the thought it expresses, and in terms of style. Therefore we will follow this division in our analysis and will see what Aristotle and Aristarchus have to say about the plot, the characters, the thought-element and the style.

9. As proved also by the last chapters of the Poetics (chaps. 23–26), where Aristotle focuses on epic poetry, drawing on the previous chapters where he analyzed tragedy. For an account of Aristotle’s views on Homer, see Richardson 1992, and 1993, 31–35.


11. One problem is, of course, assessing whether this difference can be interpreted as a demonstration that tragedy is a more accomplished form of art than epic. However, there are also advantages in the lack of spectacle in the epos: see p. 286 below.
3. ARISTOTELIAN THEORY AND ARISTARCHEAN PRACTICE: ΜΥΘΟΣ

Since for Aristotle tragedy (and epic too) is an imitation of a complete and whole action (μίμησις τελείας καὶ ὀλης πράξεως; cf. Poet. 1450b24–25) and the plot (μῦθος) is defined by Aristotle as the μίμησις τῆς πράξεως (Poet. 1450a3–4), it follows that the plot is “the principle and as it were the soul of tragedy” (Poet. 1450a38–39: ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ οἶνον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγῳδίας). One of the most important criteria for the plot is that it must be in accordance with probability and necessity (Poet. 1451a36–38 and 1451b8–10):

It is also obvious from what we have said that it is the function of a poet to relate not things that have happened, but things that may happen, i.e. that are possible in accordance with probability or necessity. (Trans. Janko 1987)

A universal is the sort of thing that a certain kind of person may well say or do in accordance with probability or necessity—this is what poetry aims at, although it assigns names [to the people]. (Trans. Janko 1987)

For Aristotle, then, plots can contain what is “necessary” (ἀναγκαῖον), but also something which is κατὰ τὸ εἰκός, “according to probability.” In other words, a plot must consist of a necessary or probable sequence of events. This is due to the particular status of poetry, which distinguishes it from history: poetry represents universals, not particulars, like history; hence poetry is more philosophical (Poet. 1451b5–7):

Moreover, in poetry, elements that are impossible in reality are nevertheless admitted because in this way the poet is able to astonish his audience and achieve amazement (τὸ θαυμαστὸν: Poet. 1460a17), which is the τέλος of poetry (Poet. 1460b23–26):

12. The same kind of contrast is found again when Aristotle is dealing with episodic plots, where we have one episode after the other without necessity or probability (Poet. 1451b33–35: τὸν δὲ ἀπλῶν μῦθων καὶ πράξεων αἱ ἐπεισοδιώδεις ἐστὶν χρείαται· λέγει δ’ ἐπεισοδιώδη μῦθον ἐν ὧν τὰ ἐπεισόδα μετ’ ἀλλήλα ὁπτ’ εἰκὸς ὁπτ’ ἀνάγκη εἶλαν ("Among simple plots and actions, episodic [tragedies] are the worst. By 'episodic' I mean a plot in which there is neither probability nor necessity that the episodes follow one other," trans. Janko 1987)).
Since supernatural, impossible elements make the poetry more interesting, Aristotle judges the plot not according to whether it is possible or not, but whether it is πιθανόν/άπιθανός, “believable or not” (Poet. 1460a26–27 and 1461b9–12):

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<td>What is “probable” (εἰκός) is thus also “believable” (πιθανόν). Thus it is better for Aristotle to choose plots that are believable—though they may not be possible in the real world (πιθανά αδύνατα)—than stories that could happen but are not believable (δύνατα ἀπίθανα). 14</td>
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<td>Since a poet, in order to achieve το θεωμαστόν, has more freedom, the criterion of “believability” becomes an internal one: something is believable if it follows from what has been stated before as a logical consequence. Within a work of poetry there are rules that are typical of poetry and, as long as these rules are respected by the poet, the poetic work is good, no matter how the μύθος in itself corresponds to truth in the real world. The premise behind these prescriptions is that poetry is a τέχνη that works according to rules that are its own and different from those of other τέχναι (Poet. 1460b13–15):</td>
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<td>In addition, there is not the same [standard of] correctness in the art of civic life as in that of poetry, nor is there in any other art as in that of poetry. (Trans. Janko 1987)</td>
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3.1 Aristarchus: The Criterion of Believability

As for Aristotle, so also for Aristarchus, the main criterion for judging the plot is not the distinction between what is possible and what is not, but that...
between what is believable and what is not. Αδύνατα are not necessarily excluded if they help poetic goals. There are only two cases of lines athetized by Aristarchus because they contain Αδύνατα, “impossibilities.” The first case is in the Nekyia: the lines about Otus and Ephialtes’ project to put Olympus on Ossa and Pelium on top of them in order to reach the sky (Od. 11.315–16: “Οσσαν ἐπ’ Οὐλίμπων μέμασαν θέμεν, αὐτὰρ ἐπ’ Ὀσση / Πήλιον εἰνοσιφιλ- λον, ἴν’ οὐρανὸς ἀμβατός εἴη”) were rejected by Aristarchus ὀς Αδύναται (schol. V Od. 11.315). The other case is at Odyssey 22.144–45, where Melanthius, in order to help the suitors, takes out from the chamber twelve shields, the same number of spears and the same number of helmets, as Eustathius testifies (Eust. Od. 1921.56):

Note also that Aristarchus athetized and marked with a chi the line about the twelve shields and the following one, saying that it was impossible that a person could carry all these [weapons].

Nevertheless, in the Iliad, for example, there are no cases of atehesia due to Αδύνατα. Only at Iliad 2.667, when Homer tells the story of Tlepolemus arriving at Rhodes after killing his uncle Licymnios, Zenodotus’ reading αἴμα δ’ ὡς Ρόδων (instead of αὐτάρ ὡς Ρόδων) was dismissed by Aristarchus because it would be impossible for a fugitive wandering in the Aegean to arrive “at once” at Rhodes. Otherwise, elements that are impossible from a rational point of view are allowed because of poetic license. For example, the fact that the Cyclops knows that ships exist or understands Greek is in itself absurd, but for Aristarchus it is to be kept, because it is poetry (schol. HMQR Od. 3.71):

Aristarchus says that these lines are more properly included in the speech of the Cyclops [than here in Telemachus’ speech]. . . . But, he says, we must allow these [licenses] to the poet. For Homer represents the Cyclops as aware [of the existence] of a ship, [as it is proved by] “but tell me where, arriving, you put your well-made ship” (Od. 9.279), and [the Cyclops] understands the Greek language.

16. An episode that was particularly suspicious to Aristarchus; see p. 288 below.

17. Eustathius is here probably quoting Aristonicus (see Carnuth 1869, ad loc.) from a collection of scholia richer than the one that has reached us (and which does not present any scholium on Od. 22.144–45).

18. The possibility that Melanthius might have carried all these weapons in more than one journey does not seem to have been taken into consideration by Aristarchus.

19. The only case of Αδύνατα coming up in Aristarchean scholia is at II. 21.475: ἀπὸ τοῦτον ἀδύνατον στῆξε τρεῖς: οὐ δύναται γὰρ ὁ λεγόμενος “πατροκρατησάντοι κυρωμένην ἐν παλάμην” (II. 21.469) ἀποκαλεῖται τὸν Ποσειδώνα ἐν τῷ Ὀλυμπῷ πρὸς μάχην. Τὸ ὁμολογεῖ γὰρ . . . however, is due to internal inconsistency or ἀπερίπτεια of a character; according to Aristarchus it is “impossible” that Apollo once boasted that he was going to fight against his uncle Poseidon, if he is now afraid to face him. This is thus definitely not an atehesia due to something that is “impossible” from an objective point of view.


21. This closely resembles the Aristotelian remark: δύομεν γὰρ ταύτα τοῖς ποιηταῖς in Poet. 1460b13, apropos of metaphors and glossai.
A similar attitude is to be found in Aristotle when he comments on the episode of the bath in the *Odyssey*: Eurycleia’s recognition of Odysseus is in itself ἄλογον, but it is allowed because in this way the poet achieved τὸ θαυμαστόν (*Poet.* 1460a11–26). This is to be connected with the comparison between tragedy and epic: according to Aristotle an advantage epic has over tragedy is that, lacking ὅψει, it can afford to be ἄλογος, because the audience, not seeing the plot performed, is likely to notice irrationalities and incongruities less (*Poet.* 1460a11–14):

δὲι μὲν οὖν ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις ποιεῖν τὸ θαυμαστόν, μᾶλλον δ’ ἐνδέχεται ἐν τῇ ἐποποίῃ τὸ ἄλογον, δι’ ὅ συμβαίνει μᾶλλον τὸ θαυμαστόν, διὰ τὸ μὴ ὅραν εἰς τὸν πρᾶττοντα.

[The poet] should put what is amazing into his tragedies; but what is improbable, from which amazement arises most, is more admissible in epic because [the audience] does not see the person in action. (Trans. Janko 1987)

The main criterion for Aristarchus, as for Aristotle, is thus that of probability. Facts in the poems often receive comments along these lines: something takes place according to probability (εἰκότως) and is therefore acceptable. For example, in the Dolon (II. 10.447) Diomedes addresses Dolon by name: “μὴ δὴ μοι φοῦξιν γε Δόλων ἐμβάλλει τοῦ θυμῷ” (“Do not, Dolon, have in your mind any thought of escape”), and some ancient scholars found fault in the fact that Diomedes seems to know the name of Dolon, though this is the first time that they meet. On this basis they read δολῶν, the participle of δολῶ, “to deceive” (“Do not have in your mind any thought of escape, trying to deceive me”). Aristarchus, however, defended the text: for him, it was probable (εἰκός) that the Greeks knew the name of some of their enemies after ten years of siege (schol. II. 10.447a):

Δόλων· ὅτι ζητεῖται, πῶς τὸ ὄνομα ἑγνω· διὸ τινὲς ἀνέγνωσαν “δολῶν” ὡς νοοῦν. . . . εἰκός δὲ τινὲς γνώσκεθαι ὄνομα ὡς ἄν δεκαετῶς γεγονότος χρόνον, καὶ μᾶλλον τοῦ Δόλωνος· ἥν γὰρ κήρυκος υἱὸς “πολυχρυσὸς πολύχαλκος” (cf. II. 10.314–15).

Dolon: [the diple is] because there is a question about how [Diomedes] knew his name; hence some scholars read δολῶν, “deceiving,” perispomenon like νοοῦν. . . . But it is probable that they knew the names of some of them, since a decade had passed [with them there], and in particular the name of Dolon. For he was son of a herald, “rich in gold, rich in bronze” (cf. II. 10.314–15).

This criterion of probability is mainly expressed in Aristonicus’ scholia by the couple πιθανός/ἀπίθανος. It is one of the most common justifications given for an athetesis or for rejecting Zenodotus’ readings which, according to Aristarchus, often lack believability. For example, in the assembly of the Achaean leaders at *Iliad* 2.50–86, Aristarchus did not find believable Zenodotus’ reading according to which Agamemnon stands up to speak in front of only seven heroes (schol. II. 2.55a: ὅτι Ζηνόδοτος γράφει “αὐτὰρ ἔπει ρ’ ἔγερθεν ὄμηγερες τ’ ἔγενοτο, / τοῖς δ’ ἀνιστάμενος μετέφη κρείων Ἀγαμέμνονος.” ἀπίθανον δὲ ἐν ἔπτα ὅρθον δημηγορεῖν).22 Details that

22. See Lührs 1992, 260–61 n. 365; cf. also schol. II. 2.76a: ἀρτέστηντα στέχω ὅκτω, ὅτι οὐκ ὅρθον εἱρηκότος τοῦ Ἀγαμέμνονος λέγει ἦσον ὅγ’ ὡς εἰς κ ἄρ’ ἔξετο, ὅπερ ἀπίθανον.
seem to go against human chronology are rejected on the same ground, as, for example, that Aethra, the maid of Helen, is to be identified with the mother of Theseus, who would have been extremely old by then (schol. Il. 3.144a):

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Aethra, the daughter of Pittheus: if Homer means the mother of Theseus, [the line] must be athetized. For it is unbelievable that such a very old woman be the maid of Helen. It is impossible that she has been living for such a long time. If instead it is a case of homonymy, as happens in many other cases, [the line] can remain.23

Also the famous problem of the dual in *Iliad* 9 is solved by Aristarchus with the criterion of credibility: there are only two people present, Odysseus and Ajax, because, if Phoenix were also present, it would not be believable to have Odysseus leading, since Phoenix was older (schol. Il. 9.192a):

> τὸ δὲ βάτνη ἀποτέρα, ἠγείτο δὲ δῖος Ὄδυσσεύς· ὅτι ἐπὶ Ὅδυσσεός καὶ Αἰαντός τὸ δύικόν· παρόντος γὰρ τὸ Φοῖνικος ἀπήθανον λέγειν “ἠγείτο δὲ δῖος Ὅδυσσεύς.”

The two of them came forward, and noble Odysseus led the way: [the diple is] because the dual is for Odysseus and Ajax. For if Phoenix had been present, it would have been unbelievable to say “noble Odysseus led the way.”

The criterion of believability plays a role even in the supernatural episodes where Aristarchus, like Aristotle, seems to put a limit to τὸ θαυμαστὸν; thus within the microcosm of the epos, although the supernatural is allowed, believability still applies. For example, in poetry it is fine for an animal to speak, like Xanthus, the horse of Achilles. However, it is too much to have him speak like a learned man or a seer foretelling his destiny to Achilles, as happens at *Iliad* 19.416–17, lines that Aristarchus rejected (schol. Il. 19.416–17a):

> ἧπερ ἔλαφροτάτην ἀγάμον ἀθητεῦνται στίχοι καὶ οὕτως οἱ δῖοι, ὅτι . . . ἀπήθανον ἅκειν “φαῖν” ὀπερ ἀνόρα πολυστόρα.

[we may be running together with the blows of Zephyrus] who they say is the lightest of all things; [yet still your destiny is] to be killed [in force by a god and a mortal]. . . . these two lines also are athetized because . . . it is unbelievable for a horse to say “they say, etc.,” like a knowledgeable man.24

Or, again, it is acceptable to have gods intervening in human affairs disguised as human beings. However, at *Iliad* 21.290, when Poseidon and Athena, disguised as two men, go to Achilles, it is not believable for Poseidon to say “Athena and I will help you,” as Aristarchus remarked in schol. Il. 21.290a: ἀθετεῖται, ὅτι ἀπήθανον εἰς ἀνδρός μορφήν ὄμωμενον λέγειν “ἐγὼ καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη”· τίς γὰρ ἐστιν, οὐ μὴ νοήσῃ (“it is athetized because it is not believable that disguised as a mortal he says ‘Athena and I.’ For Achilles will not understand who he is”). How could Achilles know that these two men were divinities?

23. On this athetesis, see Jenkins 1999.
The most important case of a limitation of τὸ ἄλογον and τὸ θαυμαστόν is the second part of the Nekyia (Od. 11.568 [565?]–627), where Odysseus claims to have seen Minos, Orion, Tityus, Tantalus, Sisyphus, and Heracles. Notwithstanding the admissibility of a “marvelous” journey to the Underworld, and although the lines are not bad in style, this episode was rejected as suspicious by Aristarchus. Odysseus never enters Hades but remains at the gate of Erebus (cf. Od. 11.37, 150, 563), and therefore could never have seen all these mythical examples of divine justice and wickedness being punished. The scholia by Aristonicus bear witness to a long series of comments by Aristarchus along these lines: how can Minos come to the sacrificial blood? Does he go with all the people he is going to judge together with his throne (schol. HQT Od. 11.570: οὐκ ἄρα ὑπεξῆλθεν ὁ Μίνως ἴνα συνοφθη, ἄλογον γάρ τοῦ καὶ σὺν δικαζομένως καὶ αὐτῶ διήφρο εξελθεῖν)? How can Orion hunt in Hades? How could he come forward with all the beasts that he has slain (schol. HT Od. 11.573: οὐδὲ ἐπὶ τούτῳ τετήρητα τὸ σύμφωνον. ἄλογον γάρ τὸ ἐν “Αἰδοῦ κυνηγητεῖν” πῶς τε ἁμα τῇ τῶν θηρῶν ἀγέλῃ προῆλθε, καὶ διὰ τί;)? How can Tityus come to the sacrifice, if he is lying on the ground with his liver devoured by two vultures (schol. QT Od. 11.577: καταγέλαστα καὶ ταύτα, εἰ κατεστρωμένος ἐν τῷ δοπέδῳ προῆλθεν ἐπὶ τὸ σφάγιον: αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ Ὄδυσσεως οὐκ ἡδύναται διαβηνή ἐπὶ τὸ ξέβος?) Or how can Tantalus come to the sacrifice, together with the trees and the marshy lake in which he lies? Or how did Odysseus see what was within from outside (schol. Η Od. 11.588: οὐδὲ οὗτος δύναται σὺν λίμνῃ καὶ δένδροις εξελήλυθεν ἐπὶ τὸ σφάγιον, ἡ πῶς ἐξεθηκεν τὰ ἐσω ἔθεορει;) Or how can Sisyphus, who must push the huge stone up a hill, come to the sacrifice (schol. QT Od. 11.593: πῶς δύναται σὺν τῷ λίθῳ καὶ τῇ ἀκρωφειᾳ ἐφ’ ἣ ἀνέκυλε τὸν λίθον, ἥκειν ἐπὶ τὸ σφάγια;) All this, according to Aristarchus, was too much and the risk was that, instead of being astonishing, the episode became ridiculous (on which see pp. 298–99 below).

3.2 Aristarchus: Internal Contradictions

The conception of the work of poetry as a microcosm with its own rules leads to the principle of noncontradiction. Avoiding inconsistencies within the plot is a cardinal principle for Aristotle, who argues repeatedly against what is ὑπεναντίον (Poet. 1455a22–26): 27

25. On the criterion of τὸ ἄλογον applied to athetesis of repeated lines in Aristonicus’ and exegetical scholia, see Lührs 1992, 167–94.
26. Schol. HT Od. 11.568: νοθείται μέχρι τοῦ ἂς εἰπὼν ὁ μὲν ἄθροι ἄδικο δόμον "Αἰδος εἶσαι" (627), καίτοι οὐκ οίντις ἄγενεῖς περὶ τὴν φράσιν, ὑπέρ ἐς τῆς ἀδετήσεως αὐτῶν λέγεται τοιοῦ (Ἡ) πῶς οthal τοῦτος ἢ τῶς λαοποῖς ἐπὶ τὸν Άιδος πιλάν οίντις καὶ τῶν ποταμῶν.
27. For Aristotle on ὑπεναντίον, cf. also Poet. 1461α31–1461β9, 1461β15–18.
vividly as if he were actually present at the actions [he represents], he can discover what is suitable, and is least likely to miss contradictions. (Trans. Janko 1987)

Internal contradictions and inconsistencies are constantly rejected by Aristotle too, who seems to have developed Aristotle’s theory into a more complete system, where the philologist has to work on a text as a self-standing unity that must be purged of internal contradictions. Aristarchus takes exception to contradictions in the text (e.g., schol. Il. 8.39–40: ἐναντιοῦνται δὲ ἐνθάδε τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις; schol. BQ Od. 12.374; schol. HQ Od. 12.439) and as a rule, when this happens, he is in favor of athetesis. 28 He also argues against Zenodotus for readings that are contrary to some data present in the poems. 29

The idea that something is consistent or inconsistent with the rest of the plot is expressed in Aristonicus’ scholia with comments like συμφώνως (“in harmony,” “in agreement with”) or ἀσυμφώνως (“discordant,” “in disagreement with”). Ασυμφώνως is used to argue against readings and interpretations by Zenodotus or other colleagues that Aristarchus does not share because they contradict some other passage within the poem (schol. Il. 4.339b, 8.19). On the contrary, a line is συμφώνως with the rest of the poem when Aristarchus wants to defend Homer against his detractors or against the διασκευασταῖ (schol. Il. 3.230a), or defend his own readings (schol. Il. 7.330b, 8.562). Alternatively, the same idea is expressed with μάχονται-εται (“they/it contradict[s]”), that is, that one or more lines are at odds (μάχεται-ονται) with what has been said or known before, as in schol. H Od. 11.452: μαχόμενοι τοῖς προκειμένοις. For example, at Iliad 20.269–72, ancient scholars were puzzled that Aeneas’ spear reaches the golden plate of Achilles’ shield, having pierced the two external plates, one of bronze and the other of tin, as if the shield had the golden layer underneath, hidden by those of bronze and tin. Aristarchus solved the problem by athetizing the lines, because according to him these lines not only were odd in terms of content (why was the gold hidden by tin and bronze?), but, moreover, they were in clear contradiction with what we know about the shield of Achilles as described at Iliad 18.478–607, where its surface is clearly made of gold (schol. Il. 20.269–72a: ἀθέ-τοῦνται στίχοι τέσσαρες, ὅτε διασκευασμένοι εἰσίν ὑπὸ τινὸς τῶν βουλομένων προβλήμα ποιεῖν, μάχεται δὲ σαφῶς τοῖς γνήσιοὶς [“four lines are athetized because they were added by someone of those who want to create a question. For these lines are clearly in contradiction with those that are genuine”]).

On the other hand, in Aristonicus’ scholia οὔ μάχεται is used to solve a problem by showing that in Homer there are no internal contradictions. 30 One famous question (ζήτημα) was that of how many times Hector and Achilles ran around Troy, because at Iliad 22.208 we read: ἀλλ’ ὅτε τὸ τέταρτον ἐπὶ κρουνοῦ ἀφίκοντο (“but when for the fourth time they came to the springs”), whereas at Iliad 22.251 Hector says: “τρίς περὶ ἀστὺ μέγα Πριάμου δίον” (“[Achilles, I do not flee you anymore, as when before] I ran three times around the great city of Priam’”). Ancient scholars had taken

29. See schol. Il. 3.334–35a, 5.807.
30. See schol. Il. 9.571a, 13.365a.
exception to this passage, as Aristarchus noticed in schol. II. 22.208a2: 
σημειούνται δὲ τινες διὰ τὸ δοκοῦν ἐναντίον εἶναι “τρῖς πέρι ἀστυ μέγα Πρίαμοι δῶν” καὶ “ἀλλ’ ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον” (“some mark this line because of the apparent contradiction between ‘I ran three times around the great city of Priam’ and ‘but when for the fourth time’”). Aristarchus, however, clarified and solved the problem by arguing that there were three full laps, but in the fourth they went as far as the fountain but did not go right around the city. Therefore there was no contradiction between the two lines (schol. II. 22.251a: οὐ μάχεται δὲ τὸ “ἀλλ’ ὅτε δή τὸ τέταρτον” (II. 22.208)- τρεῖς μὲν γὰρ τελείους κύκλους περιέδραμον, τὸ δὲ τέταρτον ἕως τῶν κρουνῶν ἔλθοντες οὐκέτι περιήλθον τὴν πόλιν (“it does not contradict ‘but when for the fourth time’ (II. 22.208): for they ran in three full circles and in the fourth they arrived at the fountains and did not go around the city”).

4. ARISTOTELIAN THEORY AND ARISTARCHEAN PRACTICE: ΗΘΗ

At Poetics 1448a1–18, Aristotle states that every mimetic art represents ἡθη, which can be either σπουδαῖοι, “serious,” or φαύλοι, “base.” Poetry too, then, has to choose which ἡθη are to be the target of mimesis, and hence it is divided according to the characters that it is going to imitate. In this regard, epic and tragedy are identical, in that both of them represent “admirable,” “serious” people (Poet. 1449b9–10):


Epic poetry follows tragedy insofar as it is a representation of serious people which uses speech in verse. (Trans. Janko 1987)

Hence, what is valid for tragedy with regard to characters is to be considered valid for epos too. Characters of tragedy and epic must be σπουδαῖοι, “serious,” and better than they are in reality. Hence they must not be caricatures of real people, as happens in comedy, because everything that is ridiculous is to be avoided in tragedy and epic. When Aristotle comes to a detailed account of tragic/epic characters (Poet., chap. 15), he first states that they must be χρηστοί, “good,” that is, “of value,” ἀρμόττοντες, “appropriate,” ὦμοιοι, “(life)like,” and Ὥμαλοι, “consistent” (Poet. 1454a16–28):

ἐν μὲν καὶ πρώτον, ὃπως χρηστὰ ἦ, ἔξει δὲ ἢδος μὲν ἐὰν ὀσπρ ἐλέχθη ποιή φανερὸν ὁ λόγος ἡ ἡ πράξις προαίρεσιν τινα ἢ τις ἄν][add. Vahlen] ἢ, χρηστὸν δὲ ἐὰν χρηστὴν. ἐστιν δὲ ἐν ἐκάστῳ γένει καὶ γὰρ γυνὴ ἐστιν χρηστὴ καὶ δοῦλος, κατὰ γε ἵσως τοῦτο τὸ μὲν χέριν, τὸ δὲ ὅλος φαύλον ἐστιν. ἐπὶ μὲτον δὲ τὸ ἀρμόστοντοι: ἐστιν γὰρ ἀνάρειαν μὲν τὸ ἢδος, ὄντ’ ὦμος ἀρμόττον γυναικὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἀνάρειαν ἡ δεινὴ εἶναι. τρῖτον δὲ τὸ ὄμοιον, τούτο γὰρ ἔτερον τοῦ χριστοῦ τὸ ἢδος καὶ ἀρμόττον ποιήσαι ὡς προκηρύσσων.

31. In analyzing plot, Aristotle deals also with the difference between simple and complex plots (Poet. 1452a12–18), which are characterized by the presence of ἄναγκαιος and περίπτεια. These concepts are not present in Aristarchus, which is probably due to the fact that they are more part of a theoretical discussion of a literary work than concepts that could be used in his philological activity. For the same reason, Aristarchus does not seem to have taken much from Aristotle’s sections on the different parts of tragedy (Poet. 1452b14–27), and on the different kinds of actions (pittiful, fearful, recognitions, Poet. 1453b1–1454a15). This essential difference between the work of Aristotle (theory) and that of Aristarchus (practice) is fundamental.
First and foremost, the characters should be good. [The tragedy] will have character if, as we said, the speech or the action makes obvious a decision of whatever sort; it will have a good character, if it makes obvious a good decision. [Good character] can exist in every class [of person]; for a woman can be good, and a slave can, although the first of these [classes] may be inferior and the second wholly worthless. Second, [they should be] appropriate. It is possible to be manly in character, but it is not appropriate for a woman to be so manly or clever. Third, [the character should be life-like]. This is different from making the character good and appropriate in the way already stated. Fourth, [the character should be] consistent. If the model for the representation is somebody inconsistent, and such a character is intended, even so it should be consistently inconsistent. (Trans. Janko 1987)

If being χρηστοί, “good,” is a necessary characteristic, due to the essence of tragedy, which represents “serious” (σπουδάστοι) actions and characters, the other three characteristics (τὸ ἁρμόττον, τὸ ὁμοίον, and τὸ ὁμαλὸν) are more interesting to define. Characters must be ἁρμόττοντες, “appropriate,” in the sense that each character must fit the characteristics of the kind of individual it represents. This concept is later on coupled with that of πρέπον (Poet. 1454a28–31: ἦστιν δὲ παράδειγμα . . . τοῦ δὲ ἄρεπτου καὶ μὴ ἁρμόττοντος ὁ τε θρήνος Ὄδυσσεώς ἐν τῇ Σκύλλῃ. Cf. also Poet. 1458b14–15). Furthermore, characters must be ὁμοίοι, “(life)like,” “similar” to their real model (in ‘real life’ or in the mythical tradition to which the poet refers).³² Finally, they must be ὁμαλοί, “consistent,” and not behaving in a contradictory way. The last three characteristics are thus sharply distinct. Τὸ ἁρμόττον refers to the relationship between the “type” the poet has in mind and how the character relates to it, so how “convincing” the representation of that particular human being is (considered in terms of gender, age, social status, etc.). Τὸ ὁμοίον instead refers to the relationship between reality outside the work of poetry (i.e., the real life or the mythical tradition in the background) and the characters, in the sense that the audience has to recognize the character as someone similar to and comparable to people from their own experience, whereas the idea of τὸ ὁμαλὸν is an internal criterion to judge the development of the character within the poetical work. Aristotle then summarizes these criteria with the principle of κατὰ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἢ τὸ εἰκός: when the poet portrays a character, as when putting the plot together, he has to aim at necessity and probability (Poet.1454a33–36):

τέταρτον δὲ τὸ ὁμαλὸν, κἂν γὰρ ἀνωμαλὸν τις ἢ τὴν μίμησιν παρέχων καὶ τοιοῦτον ἢδος ὑποτεθῇ, ὁμοίος ὁμαλὸς ἀνωμαλὸν δεῖ εἶναι.

³². Cf. Janko 1987, 109: “the character should be ‘like,’ literally; but like what? This means either that the type should be recognisable to us as one we know, i.e. lifelike, or that it should be like us. As there is no explanation or example, Aristotle must have regarded the meaning as obvious. . . . Clearly a character who is not lifelike will also be unlike ourselves, so the first explanation brings the second with it.”
The analysis of characters plays a central role in the second book of the Rhetoric (Rh. 2.12–17.1388b31–1391b6), because the knowledge of different characters is essential for a good orator. Here Aristotle develops these ideas especially in the direction of what is typical of different ages. In three beautiful chapters (Rh. 2.12–14), where he is explaining how a good orator should depict various ήθη in order to be persuasive, Aristotle highlights the main characteristics of young people (rash, optimistic, generous), old people (prone to reflect, pessimistic, selfish) and mature people (a middle way between the two). If one wants to achieve a good mimesis, one cannot depict a character with the characteristic of another age, because this would go against the criterion of τὸ ἀρμόττον. In this light the poet must be particularly careful when putting words into the mouths of his characters, because their λέξες must be ήθικη, consistent with the character that uses it, as Aristotle makes clear in the third book of the Rhetoric (1408a10–11):

τὸ δὲ πρέπουν ἔξει ἢ λέξεις, ἐὰν ἡ παθητικὴ τε καὶ ήθικὴ καὶ τοῖς ύποκειμένοις πράγμασιν ἀνάλογον.

Your language will be appropriate if it expresses emotion and character, and it corresponds to its subject. (Trans. Roberts 1984)

This is because each age and class has its own mode of expression, and a good representation of a character must consider these characteristics (Rh. 1408a26–32):

. . . ἀκόλουθον ἢ ἁρμόττουσα [i.e., δεῖξις] ἕκαστον γένει καὶ ἔξεις. λέγω δὲ γένος μὲν καθ’ ἡλικίαν, οἴον παῖς ἢ ἄνήρ ἢ γέρον, καὶ γυνὴ ἢ ἄνήρ, καὶ Λάκκων ἢ Θεταλός, ἔξεις δὲ, καθ’ ἂς ποιός τις τῷ βιῷ· οὔ γάρ καθ’ ἀπασαν ἔξον οἱ βίοι ποιοὶ τινες. ἐὰν οὖν καὶ τὰ ὄνοματα οἰκεῖα λέγη τῇ ἔξεις, ποιήσει τὸ ήθος· οὔ γάρ ταῦτα οὐδ’ ὠσάυτος ἀγροῖκος ἀν καὶ πεπαιδευμένος ἐπεειν.

Each class of men, each type of disposition, will have its own appropriate way of letting the truth appear. Under “class” I include differences of age, as boy, man, or old man; of sex, as man or woman; of nationality, as Spartan or Thessalian. By “dispositions” I here mean those dispositions only which determine the character of a man’s life, for it is not every disposition that does this. If, then, a speaker uses the very words which are in keeping with a particular disposition, he will reproduce the corresponding character; for a rustic and an educated man will not say the same things nor speak in the same way. (Trans. Roberts 1984)

The interest in characterization in Homer is very well attested for Aristarchus too. In Iliad 1.117, when Agamemnon, angered by the response of Calchas, agrees to give Chryseis back and says, “I prefer that the army be safe rather than destroyed” (βούλομ’ ἐγὼ λαόν σῶν ἐμεμοι ή ἀπολέσθαι), Aristarchus rejected the athetesis of Zenodotus (according to whom the line was simplistic) by noticing (schol. Il. 1.117a) that ἐν ήθεi γὰρ λέγεται, that is, the line suits the character of Agamemnon (whom Aristarchus, probably, did not hold in great esteem).33

33. Cf. also schol. Il. 15.505a, where Aristarchus notes that the line is according to Ajax’ character (ἡθικᾶς); see also Didymus in schol. Il. 16.50a (Ἀρίσταρχος “ἐὰν τινα ὁλὰ” ἀν τοις εἰ, Λύγ. b(ΒΕΣΣΕ4)Τ ἐν’ ἡ ἡθικότερον).
Aristarchus seems to have followed Aristotle in arguing for consistency and credibility of characters. Characters, according to Aristarchus, should behave according to appropriateness (τὸ ἀρμόστον), decorum (τὸ πρέπον), and what is fitting (τὸ οἰκεῖον). In this case, as for Aristotle, ἀπρεπὴς becomes a synonym of οὐχ ἀρμόστον, in the sense of “not convenient,” “unsuitable” to the human type at issue. This criterion actually embraces all the subtle distinctions of the Poetics as well as those of the Rhetoric: characters are ἀρμόστοντες if they behave as their social position, their status, their age, their present situation, or their “mythical model” require. Aristarchus thus denies “unheroic” words to Homeric heroes. It was unacceptable to have Agamemnon dwelling on the pleasure he was going to enjoy from Chryseis back in Argos (schol. II. 1.29–31: ἂθετοῦνται . . . ἀπρεπὲς δὲ καὶ τὸ τῶν Ἀγαμέμνονα τοιούτα λέγειν) or showing himself too greedy (schol. II. 1.133–34 ἂθετοῦνται, ὅτι . . . καὶ μὴ ἄρμόζοντες Ἀγαμέμνονι). The last words of Achilles to Patroclus as he is about to go to battle, in which Achilles wishes that every Trojan and every Greek may die so that only the two of them could survive and sack Troy, were athetized by Aristarchus, because in his view they were not in line with Achilles’ character (schol. II. 16.97–100a): ἂθετοῦνται στίχοι τέσσαρες, διότι κατὰ διασκεδάζειν ἐμφανίσεις γεγράφθη υπὸ τινος τῶν νομίζοντων ἐραν τὸν Ἀχιλλέα τὸν Πατρόκλου τοιούτοι γὰρ οἱ λόγοι “πάντες ἀπόλοιπτον πλὴν ἡμῶν.” καὶ ὁ Ἀχιλλεύς οὐ τοιοῦτος, συμπαθῆς δὲ.

Four lines are athetized because in their construction they appear to have been written by one of those who believed that Achilles was in love with Patroclus. For such are the words “[I wish] that all might die but the two of us” [i.e., these words support the idea of an Achilles in love with Patroclus]. But Achilles is not like that, but is instead sympathetic [to the Greeks].

Aristarchus also refuses to accept an Achilles who pettily insults Aeneas (schol. II. 20.180–86a: ἂθετοῦνται . . . καὶ οἱ λόγοι οὐ πρέποντες τῷ τῶν Ἀχιλλέως προσώπῳ). Base insults to Diomedes are denied to Hector too (schol. II. 8.164–66a: ἂθετοῦνται στίχοι τρεῖς . . . ἀνάρμοστα δὲ καὶ τὰ λε- γόμενα τοῖς προσώποις), a great hero who moreover, on another occasion, does not “hope,” but rather “boasts,” that is, “vaunts” that he will win (schol. II. 14.366a: ὅτι Ζηνόδοτος γράφει “καὶ ἐλπεται.” ἀρμόζει δὲ τῷ προσώπῳ τὸ εὐχετεῖ, καυχᾶται (“because Zenodotus writes καὶ ἐλπεται, but καὶ εὐχετεῖ, ‘he vaunts,’ is fitting to the character”). Aristarchus also clearly deplores

34. This does not mean that, with the word ἀπρεπῆς, Aristarchus implied a moral judgment of poetry; however, I would not agree totally with Schenkeveld (1970, 167–68), who maintains that ἀπρεπῆς in Aristarchean scholia is used only to point out a contradiction in the text. When it refers to characters, ἀπρεπῆς implies “contradiction” only in the sense of being contradictory to what a real individual in the same condition would have done; hence ἀπρεπῆς means “unfitting.” On ἀπρεπῆς, see also n. 42 below.

35. See also Didymus in schol. II. 4.345–46a: ἄπρεπῶς καὶ παρὰ τὰ πρόσωπα εἰς κρεάθινον ὀνειδίζοντος τῶν Ἀγαμέμνονος.

36. II. 16.97–100: οἱ γὰρ Ζεὺς τε πάτερ καὶ Αθηναίη καὶ Ἀπόλλων / μητὲ τις οὖν Τριῶν θάνατον φύγει ὡσοψ ἐστιν, / μητέ τις Αργείων, νοῦν δ' ἐκδίδωσιν ὀλόθρου; / δερ' οίκος Τριῶν ἵδρυ κρήκαιμον λίμνου (“I wish, O Zeus father and Athena and Apollo, that none of the Trojans, as many as they are, could escape death, nor any of the Argives, but that only the two of us could avoid destruction, so that we alone could loose the sacred veils of Troy”).
Ajax’ characterization as a miles gloriosus who brags of his military superiority (schol. Il. 7.195–99: στίχοι πέντε ἀθετοῦνται, ὅτι οὐ κατὰ τὸν Αἴαντα οἱ λόγοι καὶ ἐαυτῷ ἀνθυποφορέων γελῶσι [“five lines are athetized because this speech is not worthy of Ajax and it is ridiculous that he replies to himself”]). 37 By the same token there are words that may suitably be said to kings and words that may suitably be said to subjects, like those that Odysseus speaks to the soldiers to keep them from going back home (Il. 2.203–6: “not all of us Achaeans are to be kings; the rule of many is not a good thing; let there be only one ruler, one king to whom the son of Cronos, crooked of counsel, has given the scepter and the laws in order that he can take counsel for them”). 38 According to Aristarchus these lines should not be employed by Odysseus when Odysseus is addressing the rank and file (Il. 2.200–206), but should instead be transferred to a previous point, when he is addressing the other leaders (Il. 2.190–97). His point of view is clear from Aristonicus’ remark in schol. Il. 2.192a: εἰσὶ γὰρ πρὸς βασιλεῖς ἀρμόζοντες, οὐ πρὸς δημότας (“for these lines are suitable to kings, not to rank soldiers”).

The same holds for women, who must behave properly, not give orders to superior beings like gods, as in the case of Helen rebuking Aphrodite at Iliad 3.406–7 (schol. Il. 3.395: καὶ βλάσφημα ἢκαὶ [add. Friedländer] παρὰ τὸ πρόσωπον ἔστι τὰ λεγόμενα “ἕσο παρ’ αὐτὸν ἱοῦσα, θεών δ’ ἀπόειπε κελευθοὺς, / μηδ’ ἐπὶ σοίσι πόδεσσιν” (Il. 3.406–7) [“and it is blasphemous even for the character [i.e., Helen] to say: ‘Go and sit by his side, and give up the way of the gods, and [do not go back to Olympus] with your feet’”]; or, as in the case of Andromache, giving tactical advice to her husband, Hector, during their meeting (schol. Il. 6.433–39: ἄθετοῦνται στίχοι ἐπὶ ζῶς τοῦ (439) . . . ὅτι ἀνόικειοι οἱ λόγοι τῇ Ἀνδρομάχῃ ἀντιστρατηγεῖ γὰρ τῷ Ἑκτόρῳ [“seven lines are athetized down to line 439, because the arguments are not fitting for Andromache, since she is giving strategic advice instead of Hector”]. A young princess like Nausicaa was not allowed to dwell too much on the gossip people might have made upon seeing her enter the city with Odysseus (schol. Od. HQ 6.275: ἄθετοῦνται στίχοι ἢ . . . ὡς ἀνόικειοι τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ προσώπῳ [“fourteen lines are athetized . . . because they are not fitting to the character in question”]). A mother like Thetis cannot give excessively explicit advice to her son (schol. 24.130–32a: ἄθετοῦνται στίχοι τρεῖς, ὅτι ἀπρεπῶς μητέρα υἱῷ λέγειν “ἀγαθὸν ἐστί γυναικὶ μέσχεσθαι” (cf. lines 130–31) [“three lines are athetized because it is inappropriate for a mother to say to her son: ‘it is good to have intercourse with a woman’”]).

As between men and women, there is a clear distinction between what is allowed to gods and to humans (schol. Il. 1.204b: τοῦτο δὲ τῇ Ἀθηνᾶ ἀρμόζει μᾶλλον διαβεβαιοῦν [“but this sense of certainty about the future is more suitable to Athena [than to Achilles]”;] schol. Il. 2.791: ἄθετοῦνται στίχοι πέντε . . . Πολιτή ἀνόικειοι, μᾶλλον δὲ Ἰριδὶ ἀρμόζει ἐπιτάσσειν [“Five
lines are athetized. . . . [it is] not appropriate for Polites. To give commands is more fitting to Iris”). Also, the verbs suitable to the immortal gods are in the present, not the past tenses (schol. Il. 2.448c: Ζηνόδοτος δὲ γράφει παραστατικῶς “ἐρέθοντο,” ὀπερ ὦν ἄρμοζε ἐπὶ θανάτων). Even among gods there is a hierarchy: what is permitted to Zeus is not allowed to Iris (schol. Il. 8.406–8: ὃτι τὸ τοῦ Δίως προσώπῳ ἄρμοζωσιν οἱ λόγοι, τὸ δὲ τῆς Ἰρίδος [sc. 8.420–22] ὦκετί). 39

The distinction between Greeks and barbarians and what was fitting for a Greek hero to say played an interesting role in the athetesis of Iliad 16.237. Here Achilles prays to Zeus and says: “you did me honor, and greatly oppressed the army of the Achaeans” (τιμήσας μὲν ἐμέ, μέγα δ’ ἰψαο λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν). According to Aristarchus, the line was wrongly repeated from Iliad 1.454, where it was at the right place, when Chryses is praying to Apollo. For it was not likely for Achilles to rejoice at the defeat of the Greeks, whereas this was fitting for a barbarian enemy of the Greeks, like Chryses (schol. Il. 1.454: οὐ γὰρ εἰκότως Αχιλλευς ἐπιχαίρει ητη τῶν Ἑλλήνων. ὃ δὲ Χρύσης βάρβαρος καὶ μισέλλην (“for it is not plausible for Achilles to rejoice at the defeat of the Achaeans, but Chryses is a barbarian and enemy of the Greeks”)). 40 The words of Aeneas to Achilles suggesting that they should not insult each other like women in the streets were athetized by Aristarchus for the same reasons, because they were more suitable to barbarians than to civilized Greeks (schol. Il. 20.251–55a: ἀθετοῦσαί στίχοι πέντε. . . καὶ τὰ λέγομενα ἀνάξια τῶν προσώπων· καὶ παρὰ βαρβάροις δὲ, ἐστὶ τὸ τὰς γυναῖκας προερχομένας λοιδορεῖσθαι ὡς παρ’ Αἰγυπτίος [“five lines are athetized. . . . and what is said is unworthy of the characters. Among barbarians it is possible to have women come out and hurl abuse, as among the Egyptians”]). 41

An important point is that words and actions must be suitable to the age and the social level of the characters. A typical case is Iliad 3.156–60, when the old Trojans see Helen arriving on the tower and remark that it is shameful to fight for a woman, no matter how beautiful she is. The scene is introduced as follows (lines 154–55): ὁ δὲ’ ὃς οὖν εἶδον τ’ Ἑλένην ἐπὶ πύργον ἱούσαν, / ἥκα πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐπεα πτερόεντ’ ἀγόρευον (“and when they saw Helen arriving upon the tower, they softly spoke winged words to one another”). Aristarchus argued against a variant suggested by Zenodotus, ὅκα, “swiftly,” instead of ἥκα, “softly,” “in a low tone,” because that adverb was ἀνάρμοστον if it referred to Helen (a noble woman cannot come “quickly,” “run”: ἐπὶ πύργον ἱούσαν ὅκα) and ἀνάρμοστον if it referred to the old Trojans (old men are ἀραμοῦσοι, they cannot speak “swiftly”: ὅκα πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐπεα πτερόεντ’ ἀγόρευον). 42 Similar to this case is that of Odyssey 15.45,

40. Cf. also schol. Il. 16.237a.
42. Schol. Il. 1.355a: ἥκα [πρὸς ἀλλήλους]: ὃτι Ζηνόδοτος γράφει ὅκα.” εἴτε δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς Ἑλένης ἔστιν, ὅτι ὅκα ἐπικοροεῖται, ἀναρμοσταί εἴτε ἐπὶ τῶν ἄθμομερῶν, ὅτι ὅκα διελέγετο, ἀνάρμοστον βραδυλόγα γὰρ εἶναι ὁ γέρων. This scholium raises, moreover, the question of a possible distinction between the meaning of ἀναρμοσταί and ἀνάρμοστον/ἀρμόστον: whereas the first seems here to point to a specific appropriateness, related to the character Helen (running is not fitting to Helen), the latter seems to hint at a generic
where Telemachus wakes up Pisistratus by touching him with his foot (λαξ ποί κινήσας). According to Aristarchus, this way of waking someone up is more suitable to Nestor, who is old and does it at Iliad 10.158 to wake up Diomedes. These comments seem to have behind them the same ideas about old age as we read in the Rhetoric, Book 2.13, though, admittedly, Aristotle does not talk about the “slowness” and lack of strength of old people, but focuses on a psychological description. The same idea of old age as measured and never inclined to excess suggests that measured and dignified language is fitting to old kings like Priam and Alcinous. The reverse is true for young people, who should respect the old and restrain themselves from speaking too openly.

Also unfitting are references to marriage and family for warriors who are too young for it (schol. Il. 15.439a: ἵσα φίλοις τοκεῖσιν: ὅτι Ζηνόδοτος γράφει “ἵσα φίλοις τέκεσιν.” οὐχ ἀρμόζει δὲ τοὺς περὶ τὸν Αἴαντα νέος ὄντας λέγειν “τέκεσιν”’ πρὶν γὰρ παιδοποιῆσαι ἐστρατεύσαντο [“because Zenodotus writes ἵσα φίλοις τέκεσιν we honour him] ‘like our sons’ [instead of ἵσα φίλοις τοκεῖσιν, ‘like our parents’]. But it does not fit those around Ajax, who are young, to say ‘like our sons.’ They served in the army before begetting children”).

A case where the contacts between Aristotelian theory and Aristarchus’ practice are particularly strong and interesting is Odyssey 4.156–60. Here, Pisistratus speaks to Menelaus and confirms that Telemachus is Odysseus’ son:

“Ἄτρεις Μενέλαος διοτρεφείς, ὄργαμε λαῶν, κείνου μὲν τοῦ ὄντος ἐπτύμων, ὡς ἄγορεύεις· ἀλλὰ σασφόνω εὖτε, νεμοσαῦται δ’ ἐνι θυμῷ ὃδ’ ἔλθαν τὸ πρῶτον ἐπεξοφλίας ἀμαφαίνειν ἄντα σέθεν, τοῦ ναὸ θεοῦ ὃς τερπόμεθ’ σεῦ.”

Divine Menelaus, son of Atreus, leader of people, he is indeed that man’s son, as you say. But he is prudent and feels shame in his heart that on his first coming he might show himself hasty in speaking in the presence of you, in whose voice we both take delight as in a god’s.

appropriateness, related to the characteristics of the human type depicted (speaking quickly is not fitting to old people in general). However, the evidence from the other scholia, which use the two terms inconsistently, prevents the acceptance of such conclusions.

43. Schol. HVind.133 Od. 15.45: νοθεύεται ὡς διαπεπλαςμένος ἡ ἡμιστιχοῦ τῆς κ’ Ἡλίαδος (line 158)’ ἔκει γὰρ προφήτην ἐρῶτας Νέστορ κοιμώμενον Νικῆς ἀνείπτησα, κύρια κατοκυτικές ἀδιά τὸ γῆρας.

44. Schol. Il. 22.565–57: ἥδεταιναι, ὅτι ἀναρμόστοι τὸ πρῶτον αὐτὶ εἰρχάτε καὶ ἐπαυτόφορος ἡ ἐπάρκειας. Cf. also Didymus at Il. 22.636a: <πανασώμεθα·> οὕτως Ἀρίσταρχος ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀναπώσομεθα· ἀπρεπές γὰρ τὸ λέγειν τὸν Πράμαθα ἀποφέρων. To ἡλίκίαν. πρὸς ἐπιτίμησιν τοῦ πολέμου.

45. Schol. P Od. 7.311: τοῖς εὖ Ἀρίσταρχος διατάζει Ἄρμην εἶναι, εἰ δὲ καὶ Ἄρμηκοι, εἰκότι αὐτοῖς περιμεθυρήθαι φησί, πός γὰρ ἁγνόν τὸν ἄνδρα μνηστεύεται αὐτῷ τὴν ἡγεσίαν καὶ οὐ προσερπόμενος, ἀλλὰ λιπαντών. Cf. also schol. Il. 9.56–57, about Nestor saying to Diomedes: “You might even be my son”: ὅτι οὐχ ἀρμόζει τῷ τρεῖς γενεάς βεβίακοτε λέγειν ἑμοῖ ἀν παῖς εἶτας “(cf. line 57) κατὰ τὴν ἡλίκιαν. πρὸς ἐπιτίμησιν τοῦ πολέμου.

46. In this sense, one could quote the case of Od. 2.316–17, lines probably athetized by Aristarchus on the grounds that Telemachus here is threatening the suitors too strongly (schol. EM Od. 2.325: ἥ μάλα] βεβιαστικὰ ταῦτα τῇ ἔπῃ τοῦ μη εἰρήσασθαι ὑπὸ Τηλέμαχος τοῦ προσφερθέντος στίχους (line 316–17) “περισχά οὖς κ’ ὡμία κακός ἐπὶ κήρυς ἤλθον ἤ Πελοπόννησον εἶδον ἢ αὐτοῦ τῆς ἕν ἐπίθεμη” ἀποφέρετε γὰρ λέγουσιν “ἡ μάλα Τηλέμαχος,” οὐκ ἐν ἀποφέρεσθαι οἱ προσκεκουσάτε).
Lines 158–60 were athetized by Aristarchus because they were considered contrary to the traditional usage (τὰ πᾶτρια) and not appropriate for the character of Pisistratus; moreover, they were superfluous and utterly unsuitable to be spoken by a young man (παρὰ τὰ πᾶτρια καὶ οὐχ ἁρμότοντα τῷ Πεισιστράτῳ προσώπῳ . . . περὶ τούτων καὶ ὑπὸ νέου παντάπασα λέγεσθαι ἀπρεπεῖς). This comment by Aristarchus finds a striking overlap with what Aristotle had stated in the Rhetoric (1395a2–6 and 1404b15–16):

ἀρμότει δὲ γνωμολογεῖν ἡλικία μὲν πρεσβυτέρων, περὶ δὲ τούτων ἄν ἔμπειρός τις ἔστιν, ὥστε τὸ μὲν μὴ τηλικοῦτον ὄντα γνωμολογεῖν ἀπρεπές ὀστερ καὶ τὸ μυθολογεῖν, περὶ δὲ ἄν ἄπειρος, ἡλίθιον καὶ ἀπαθέωτον.

The use of maxims is appropriate only to elderly men, and in handling subjects in which the speaker is experienced. For a young man to use them is—like telling stories—unbecoming; to use them in handling things in which one has no experience is silly and ill-bred. (Trans. Roberts 1984)

ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐν ταὐτὰ [i.e., in poetry], εἰ δοῦλος καλλιεπότο ἢ λίαν νέος, ἀπρεπέστερον, ἢ περὶ λίαν μικρόν.

For even in poetry, it is not quite appropriate that fine language should be used by a slave or a very young man, or about very trivial subjects. (Trans. Roberts 1984)

A young man cannot speak in γνώμαι either for Aristotle or for Aristarchus. 47

5. ARISTOTELIAN THEORY AND ARISTARCHEAN PRACTICE: ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑ

Aristotle defines διάνοια as the thought-element, everything transmitted and expressed with words (Poet. 1450a6–7 and 1456a36–1456b2):

διάνοιαν δὲ [λέγω], ἐν ὅσοις λέγοντες ἀποδεικνύσθησιν τι ἢ καὶ ἀποφαίνονται γνώμην.

By “reasoning,” I mean the way in which they use speech to demonstrate something or indeed to make some general statement. (Trans. Janko 1987)

ἐστὶ δὲ κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν ταῦτα, ὡσα ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου δεῖ παρασκευασθῆναι. μέρη δὲ τούτων τὸ τὸ ἀποδεικνύναι καὶ τὸ λέειν καὶ τὸ πάθη παρασκευάζειν (οἷον ἔλεον ἢ φόβον ἢ ὀργήν καὶ ὡσα τοιαῦτα) καὶ ἐτὶ μέγεθος καὶ μικρότητας.

All [the effects] that have to be produced by speech fall under reasoning. The types of these are demonstration and refutation, the production of emotions (e.g., pity, terror, anger, etc.), and again [arguments about things'] importance or unimportance. (Trans. Janko 1987)

Thus, with διάνοια we are dealing with the content of speeches, either uttered by characters or by the poet himself when he intervenes in the narrative. In this sense it is opposed to λέξεις, which is the form in which the thought takes shape. In particular, Aristotle states that the two main parts of the διάνοια are τὸ τε ἀποδεικνύναι καὶ τὸ λέειν (“demonstration and refutation”) and καὶ τὸ πάθη παρασκευάζειν καὶ ἐτί μέγεθος καὶ μικρότητας (“the

47. The attention toward characterization and what is fitting for each character is also used in the so-called λόγοις ἐκ τοῦ προσώπου, which are typical of Aristarchus' exegesis; on this principle, see Dachs 1913.
production of emotions, and again importance or unimportance”). Aristotle in the Poetics does not treat διάνοια extensively, but refers his readers to the Rhetoric, where the opposition between the thought-element versus the formal element in speeches is well stated (Rh. 1404a18–19):

οἱ γὰρ γραφόμενοι λόγου μείζον σιχύσωσι διὰ τὴν λέξιν ἢ διὰ τὴν διάνοιαν.

Speeches of the written kind owe more of their effect to their language than to their thought. (Trans. Roberts 1984)48

The thought expressed by the characters or by the poet must thus reflect the general “ethos” of a poetic work. In particular, the διάνοια of tragedy and epic must be in keeping with the “solemnity” (σεμνοτήτης) and seriousness that characterize both genres. Therefore, anything that is γελοῖον, “ridiculous,” must be avoided, because this is typical of comedy and low genres and extraneous to tragedy and epic (Poet. 1449a32–37):

ἡ δὲ κωμωδία ἐστὶν ὅσπερ ἐπόμεν μίμησις φαιλοτερὸν μέν, οὐ μέντοι κατὰ πάσαν κακίαν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ αἰσχροῦ ἐστὶ τὸ γελοῖον μάριον. τὸ γάρ γελοῖον ἐστιν ἀμάρτημα τι καὶ αἰσχῶς ἀνώδυνον καὶ οὐ φαιρτικὸν, οἶνον εὖθυς τὸ γελοῖον πρόσοπον αἰσχρὸν τι καὶ διεστραμμένον ἀνευ ὀδύνης.

Comedy is, as we have said, a representation of people who are rather inferior—not, however, with respect to every [kind of] vice, but the laughable is [only] a part of what is ugly. For the laughable is a sort of error or ugliness that is not painful and destructive, just as, evidently, a laughable mask is something ugly and distorted without pain. (Trans. Janko 1987)49

Aristarchus certainly shared the idea that epic is mainly concerned with “serious” content, for he often rejects lines expressing a ridiculous thought. In particular, there are some interesting cases where Aristarchus argues against Homer himself. At Iliad 12.176, describing the battle at the Achaean wall, the poet says: “it would be too much toil for me, as if I were a god, to tell all this” (ἄργαλεόν δὲ με ταύτα θεόν ὃς πάντ’ ἀγορεύσαι), a statement

48. A correspondence with this dichotomy between form (λέξις) and thought (διάνοια) can be found in the three books of the Rhetoric, where the first two deal with the thought, whereas Book 3 deals with the style. In particular, Book 1, where Aristotle analyzes the different kind of speeches and arguments, seems to correspond to the first part of διάνοια (“proof and refutation”), while Book 2, dedicated to the analysis of the different emotions and characters that the good orator must imitate in order to persuade, reflects the second and third parts (“the arousing of feelings and then again exaggeration and depreciation”). Book 3, instead, is about the πεζῆ λέξεως, the prose style, extraneous to poetry. This is probably why in the Poetics Aristotle refers his readers to the Rhetoric as far as διάνοια is concerned (the thought-element obeys the same rules both for prose and poetry); whereas he needs to have a proper section on style in the Poetics (ποιητικὴ λέξις is not the same as πεζή λέξεως). That this dichotomy of form vs. content is operating in Aristotle’s Rhetoric is shown by the end of Book 2 (1403a34–1403b3): ἐπεὶ δὲ τρία ἐστὶν ὁ δὲ πραγματευθῆναι περὶ τὸν λόγον, ὑπὸ μὲν παραδειγμάτων καὶ γνωμῶν καὶ ἐνθημάτων καὶ ὅλων τῶν περὶ τὴν διάνοιαν, ὅτιν τε εὐπορήσαμεν καὶ ὡς αὐτά λόγομεν, εἰρήσθω ἡμῖν τοσοῦτα, λοιπὸν δὲ διελθέν περὶ λέξεως καὶ τάξεως (“Three points must be studied in making a speech and now we have completed the account of examples, maxims, enthemes, and in general the thought-element—the way to invent and refute arguments. We have next to discuss language and arrangement,” trans. Roberts 1984).

49. On the opposition between γελοῖον (typical of comedy) and σεμνόν (typical of tragedy), cf. Rh. 1406b6–8: εἶτεν γὰρ καὶ μεταφορά ἄπραξες, αἱ μὲν δὲ τὸ γελοῖον χρωτάντα γὰρ καὶ οἱ κωμῳδοποιοί μεταφοράς, αἱ δὲ διὰ τὸ σεμνὸν ἄγαν καὶ τραγικὸν (“Metaphors like other things may be inappropriate. Some are so because they are ridiculous (they are indeed used by comic poets too). Others are too grand and tragic,” trans. Roberts 1984, modified).
that Aristarchus rejected as γελοιόν.⁵⁰ For the same reason he found fault in the concluding line of the long catalogue of the Nereids mourning Patroclus (II. 18.38–49). Here, after giving a list of thirty-three Nereids, the poet concludes: “and all the other Nereids that were in the depth of the sea” (ἄλλαι θ’ α’ κατα βένθος ἄλος Νηρη'δες ᾦσαν)—as if, Aristarchus commented, Homer first intended to list them all by name, but then got tired (schol. II. 18.39–49: γελοιόν τε εξ ὄνοματος προθέμενον εἰπείν πάσας, ὥσπερ ἀποκαμόντα εἴπειν “ἄλλαι δ’ α’ κτλ.”). Also, the consoling example of Niobe that Achilles tells to Priam is considered ridiculous, because a straightforward paraphrase of the exemplum would give: “eat, because Niobe too and then was turned into stone” (schol. II. 24.614–17a: καί ἡ παραμυθία γελοιόα· φάγε, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡ Νιόβη ἔφαγε καὶ ἀπελιθώθη)—indeed a rather poor encouragement.⁵¹

Aristarchus found fault also with the words uttered by the characters. For example, at Iliad 8.189 Hector talking to his horses and inviting them to drink was ridiculous: γελοιότατος ἐπὶ ὅπων ὁ στίχος, ὅτι οἶνον ὑποι οὕ πίνουσι. καὶ ὅτι “θυμὸς ἀνώγου εἰς μέθην” γελοιόν.⁵² Other atheteses by Aristarchus due to a γελοιόν thought in the words of characters are attested at Iliad 10.409–11 (Odysseus to Dolon); Odysseus 4.158–60 (Pisistratus to Menelaus); Odyssey 4.553 (Menelaus to Proteus); Odyssey 11.157–59 (Anticlea to Odysseus); Odyssey 14.495 (Odysseus to the Greeks at Troy). Alternatively, Aristarchus notes something γελοιόν in the readings of predecessors (Zenodotus in particular), which are therefore to be rejected, at Iliad 3.74 (Paris to Hector) and Iliad 23.94 (Achilles to Patroclus’ ghost).⁵⁴

The simile comparing Achilles and Hector running around Troy to a dream in which the pursuer cannot reach the one who runs away at Iliad 22.199–201 (ὡς δ’ ἐν ὑνείρῳ οὗ δύναται φεύγοντα διώκειν· / οὔτ’ ἀρ’ ὃ τὸν δύναται ὑποφεύγειν οὖθ’ ὃ δίωκειν· / ὡς δ’ ὃ τὸν οὗ δύνατο μάρψαι ποσίν, οὐδ’ ὃς ἄλυξαι) was athetized by Aristarchus, as he found the lines “cheap” both in style and in thought (schol. II. 22.199–201a): καὶ τῇ κατασκευῇ καὶ τῷ νοῆτα εὐτελεῖς.⁵⁵ Εὐτελῆς, “cheap,” “of no value,” is thus used as a synonym of γελοιόν in the scholia of Aristonicus to convey the idea that the content or the style of a passage are not consonant with the serious content of the epos. Aristotle likewise employs the adjective εὐτελῆς when comparing two

⁵⁰. Γελοιόν is surely part of the Aristarchean vocabulary since it appears in a direct quotation of Aristarchus by Didymus in schol. II. 2.420a.


⁵⁴. A rather close synonym of γελοιόν is εὐθῆς, “foolish.” Aristarchus athetized lines because of their “foolishness” in the thought expressed by the character: at Ili. 1.113 (Agamemnon to Achilles); II. 2.80–81 (in schol. II. 2.76a, Nestor commenting on Agamemnon’s dream); II. 8.185 (ἡ προσφώνησις, i.e., the address of Hector to his own horses, εὐθῆς). This criterion was also at the basis of an athetesis by Zenodotus in schol. I. 1.117a (a scholium already mentioned): βούλημα ἐγὼ λαὸν σοίν: ὅτι Ζηνοδότος αὐτῶν ἠθέτηκεν ὡς τῆς διανοίας εὐθῆς σοὺς, οὐ δεὶ δὲ αὐτῶν ἱδα προφέρεσθαι, ἀλλὰ συνεπέστειν τοῖς ἄνω ἐν ἔνθι γὰρ λέγεται.

⁵⁵. Though for different reasons, the διωξα of Hector by Achilles in II. 22 was problematic for Aristotle too (cf. Poet. 1460a11–18).
contrasting types of authors: the σεμνοί who will write tragedies and the ευτελεῖς who will prefer comedies (Poet. 1448b25–27):

οἱ μὲν γὰρ σεμνότεροι τὰς καλὰς ἐμμονῶν πράξεις καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων, οἱ δὲ εὐτελέστεροι τὰς τῶν φαίλων, πρῶτον φύγοις ποιοῦντες ὀσπερ ἔτεροι ἑμνοὺς καὶ ἐγκάμια.

The grander people represented fine actions, i.e., those of fine persons, the more ordinary people represented those of inferior ones, at first composing invectives, just as the others composed hymns and praise-poems. (Trans. Janko 1987)

Therefore, in Homer we must avoid everything that is εὐτελεῖς. And indeed, we find many Aristarchean atheteses on the basis that some lines are εὐτελεῖς τῇ συνθέσει καὶ τῇ διανοίᾳ (schol. ll. 1.133–34, Agamemnon to Achilles; schol. ll. 15.212a, Poseidon to Iris; schol. ll. 16.93a, Achilles to Patroclus; schol. HP Od. 5.94–95, probably referring to lines 97–98, Hermes to Calypso), some εὐτελεῖς κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν (schol. ll. 3.395 on ll. 3.414, Aphrodite to Helen), some εὐτελεῖς τῇ κατασκευῇ καὶ τοῖς νοήμασι (schol. ll. 20.180–86a, Achilles to Aeneas).56

On the other hand, the Aristotelian principle that epic διάνοια is concerned with or must express importance (μέγεθος; cf. Poet. 1456a36–1456b2 quoted above) seems to be at the basis of Aristarchean practice too. Arguing against an athetesis of Zenodotus in Iliad 17.260, Aristarchus maintained that those lines containing a comment by the poet himself (τῶν δ’ ἄλλων τῖς κεν ἤσι φρεσίν οὐνόματ’ εἶποι, ὥσσοι δὴ μετόπισθε μάχην ἠγείραν Ἀχαῖον; [“But of the rest, what man of his own wit could name the names of all that came after these and aroused the battle of the Achaean?”] were actually increasing the importance (τὸ μέγεθος) of the battle for Patroclus’ corpse (schol. ll. 17.260a: τὸ μέγεθος τῆς ὑπὲρ Πατρόκλου μάχης).}

6. Aristotelian Theory and Aristarchean Practice: ΛΕΞΙΣ

The analysis of ποιητικὴ λέξις is carried out by Aristotle (Poet. 1457b1–3) with reference to the ὄνομα: each word can be normal (κύριον), a gloss (γλῶττα), metaphorical (μεταφορά), ornamental (κόσμος), invented (πεποιημένον), lengthened (ἐπεκτεταμένον), truncated (ὑφηρμένον), or altered (ἐξηλλαγμένον). Moreover, whereas the κύριον usage is typical of the prose style, the other schemata are characteristic of poetic style. In particular, at Poetics 1459a9–10, glossai are said to be the most apt to epic; this, as already mentioned, is one of the points of contact between Aristotle and the work done at Alexandria, where collections of glossai were widely produced. However, poetic style cannot be reduced only to figures of speech; to be a good poet one has also to be clear (Poet. 1458a18–34): λέξεως δὲ ἄρετῆ σαφὴ καὶ μὴ ταπεινὴ εἶναι, σαφεστάτη μὲν οὖν ἔστιν ἢ ἐκ τῶν κυρίων ὄνομάτων, ἄλλα ταπεινή... σεμνή δὲ καὶ ἐξαλλάττουσα τὸ ἱδιωτικόν ἢ τοῖς ξενικοῖς κεχρημένῃ ξενικῶν δὲ λέγω γλῶσσαν καὶ μεταφορὰν καὶ ἐπέκτασιν καὶ πάν τὸ παρά τὸ κύριον. ἄλλ’ ἂν τις ἄπαντα τοιαῦτα ποιήσῃ, ἢ αἴνιγμα ἔσται ἢ βαρβαρισμός· ἢ μὲν οὖν ἢ μεταφορῶν, αἴνιγμα, ἢν δὲ ἢ γλώσσαν, βαρβαρισμός. ... δεῖ ἄρα κεκράτθαι πως τούτοις, τὸ μὲν γὰρ τὸ μὴ ἱδιωτικὸν ποιήσῃ μηδὲ ταπεινὸν, οἷον ἢ γλώσσα καὶ ἢ μεταφορὰ καὶ ὁ κόσμος καὶ τάλα τὰ εἰρημένα εἶδη, τὸ δὲ κύριον τὴν σαφήνειαν.

56. On this athetesis, see Lührs 1992, 191 n. 153.
The virtue of diction is to be clear and not commonplace. Diction made up of standard names is the clearest, but it is commonplace. . . . Diction that uses unfamiliar names is grand and altered from the everyday. By “unfamiliar,” I mean the exotic [name], metaphor, lengthening and everything that is contrary to what is standard. But if someone makes all [the names] of this sort, [his poem] will be either a riddle or gibberish. If [it is composed] of metaphors, it will be a riddle; if of exotic [names], gibberish. . . . [The poet], then, should mix these [two kinds] in some way. The first (i.e. the exotic name, metaphor, ornament and the other kinds we mentioned) will produce that which is not everyday and commonplace, and the standard name will produce clarity. (Trans. Janko 1987)

To achieve clarity one must use “normal” words (κύρια); however, this can lead to ῥησίας, “meanness of style,” which must be avoided in poetic style. Therefore poets also use words that get away from common language (ἐξαλλάττουσα τὸ ἱδιωτικὸν ἢ τοὺς ἕξενικοὺς κεχρημένη), for example, glossai and metaphors. However, they must not be excessive, otherwise the result will be an αἵνιγμα (if there are too many metaphors) or a βαρβαρισμός (if there are too many glossai).57 The aim is thus to achieve an equilibrium between norm and novelty, where the true poet is able to mix the two and thus be at the same time both clear and striking.

Attention to both form and style is evident in Aristarchus; in particular, the definition of what is Homeric style and what is not seems to be the coherent development of the Aristotelian distinction between poetic and prosaic λέξεως.58 As for Aristotle, for Aristarchus too language must first be σαφής, “clear,” and Homer is a champion of σαφήνεια: he always builds his sentences in the clearest way, ἐνεκα σαφήνειας (cf. schol. II. 15.8a). For this very reason, Aristarchus argued against Zenodotus at Iliad 14.169: ἔνθι’ ἢ γ’ εἰσελθοῦσα θύρας ἐπέθηκε φαείνας (“And she [Hera] entered there [the chamber], closed the bright doors”), where Zenodotus changed the finite verb ἐπέθηκε into a participle ἐπιθείσα (so that the main verb was to be found in line 171, κθόθρεν). Homer—Aristarchus argued—prefers to have another main clause with a finite verb at line 169 and thus to be clear and avoid a postponed principal clause.59

Aristotle in particular maintained that σαφήνεια was due to the usage of κύρια ὑνώματα, “standard names.” It is interesting how many times Aristarchus notes that a term in Homer is used κυρίως, that is, according to the normal usage, hence “clear.”60 On the other hand, Aristarchus seems to be well aware of the characteristic of poetic language, which is allowed to depart from κύριον usage. Schol. II. 5.266b describes as ἀδιάως, that is, proper to Homer, the usage of the word ποινή in this passage (in the sense of “price paid,”

57. For a similar analysis of prose style, see Rh. 1404b1–1408b20.
58. In this case, an important change in terminology happened, since for Aristarchus ἕξεως meant “word” and not “diction,” “utterance,” “style,” as in Aristotle; cf. Matthaios 1999, 198–200; 1996, 68–69. To mean “diction,” “composition of words” in Aristonicus’ scholia we find σύνθεσις and κατασκευή.
60. Cf. schol. II. 4.141a, 7.146b, 7.255a, 10.75b, 11.523, 22.31, 22.319a, 22.489b. Aristarchus could not adopt the very word of Aristotle, κύριον ὑνώμα, which, by that time, meant something different, denoting the grammatical category of “proper names” (or just “names”), as opposed to that of epithets; see Matthaios 1996, esp. 69–70; 1999, 218–25.
“recompense”) and opposes it to the standard usage (κυρίως) of the word, as at *Iliad* 9.636 (in the sense of a “fine paid by the slayer to the kinsmen of the slain”). Sometimes when a word is used οὗ κυρίως the purpose is to give a deeper meaning, as at *Iliad* 2.670 where the image of Zeus pouring gold is said to be κυρίως in Pindar (*Ol.* 7.34) and metaphoric in Homer to suggest the abundance of gold (πρὸς ἐμφασιν τοῦ πλοῦτου). Or the epithets ἄργυροπλοῦν “with silver nails,” at *Iliad* 2.45, and χρυσόπλοῦν, “with golden nails,” at *Iliad* 11.29–30—both referring to the sword of Agamemnon—are not to be taken in the standard way (κυρίως). Otherwise, Homer would contradict himself and depict Agamemnon’s sword once as silver nailed, once as golden nailed. Rather, they are used ornamentally as a poetical device.

Aristarchus is also keen to note metaphorical usages in Homer, as in schol. *Il.* 1.37e (κατὰ μεταφορὰν ἐκ τῶν τετραπόδων); schol. *Il.* 11.632b (κατὰ μεταφορὰν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐμψυχῶν); schol. *Il.* 22.356a (ἀπὸ τῶν ὄσσων ἡ μεταφορά). Just as Aristotle allows poetic diction to depart from common language in order to avoid ταπεινότης, “meanness,” so Aristarchus athetizes lines or rejects readings because the words (λέξεις), the style (κατασκευή), or the composition (σύνθεσις) are εὐτελεῖς, as happens in schol. *Il.* 2.314b (εὐτελῆς δὲ ἡ λέξεις); schol. *Il.* 8.164–66a (εὐτελεῖς εἰσί τῇ κατασκευῇ); schol. *Il.* 10.497a (τῇ συνθέσει εὐτελῆς); schol. *Il.* 11.130a (εὐτελεῖς τῇ κατασκευῇ); schol. *Il.* 11.413a (εὐτελεῖς γίνεται ἡ σύνθεσις); schol. *Il.* 11.767a (εὐτελῆς δὲ ἡ σύνθεσις); schol. *Il.* 15.56a (κατὰ τὴν συνθέσιν εἰσίν εὐτελεῖς).

However, notwithstanding this shift from common language, Homer never barbarizes. Hence, anything against grammatical correctness must be rejected, as in schol. *Il.* 12.34 (ὅτι Ζηνόδοτος γράφει ὡς ἡμελλόν ὀπίσθε. ἔστι δὲ βάρβαρον) and in schol. *Il.* 15.716 (ὡστε βαρβαρίζειν τὸν Ὀμηρον), both against Zenodotus’ readings.

Finally, some interesting parallels with the *Rhetoric*. For prose, one of the most serious vices is to be ψυχρόν, “frigid,” and this can arise from four causes: the usage of glossai, of excessive epithets, of strange compounds, and of improper metaphors, all devices that pertain to poetry rather than prose (*Rh.* 1405b35–1406a13):

τὰ δὲ ψυχρὰ ἐν τέταρτῳ γίνεται κατὰ τὴν λέξιν, ἐν τοῖς διπλοῖς ὄνομασιν, . . . πάντα ταῦτα γὰρ ποιητικὰ διὰ τὴν διπλωσίαν φαίνεται. μία μὲν οὖν αὐτῆ αἰτία, μία δὲ τὸ χρήσθαι γλώτταις, . . . εἴτε δὲ ἐν τοῖς ἐπιδέοις τὸ ἡ μακροΐς ἡ ἀκαίρας ἡ πυκνοῖς χρῆσθαι ἐν μὲν γὰρ ποίησι πρέπει “γάλα λευκόν” εἴπειν, ἐν δὲ λόγῳ τὰ μὲν ἀπεξεπέταρα.

Frigidities in language may take any of four forms: the misuse of compound words, . . .

The way all these words are compounded makes them, we feel, fit for verse only. This, then, is one form in which bad taste is shown. Another is the employment of strange

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64. In particular, on σύνθεσις as a technical term, see Schironi, in Bottai and Schironi 1997, 1058–62.

65. On the athetesis of *Il.* 15.56, see Lührs 1992, 129–32. The word εὐτελῆς is used by Aristotle (*Poet.* 1458b18–22) as a negative term to compare two different results in composing iambi: a good one by Aeschylus and a bad one by Euripides.
In Aristarchus, we find the same principle applied to poetry, which must avoid too many prose elements: some atheteses are due to the style, which is πεζός, “prosaic” (schol. II. 2.252a: ἀθέτοῦνται στίχοι πέντε, ὅτι πεζότεροι τῇ συνθέσει).66

On the other hand, Aristarchus, like Aristotle, takes exception to epithets “out of place” (ἐπίθετα ἁκαραία).67 In this case, he seems to have applied Aristotle’s principles to poetic style, because sometimes he rejects a line because the epithet there is ἁκαραίος. This happens at Iliad 21.331, when Hera, addressing her son Hephaestus, calls him κυλλοποδίων, “club-footed” (schol. II. 21.331a: ἁκαροῦν τὸ ἐπίθετον ἢ γὰρ φιλανθρωπομένη καὶ λέγουσα “ἐμὸν τέκος” ὅως ὠφελέν ἄπο τοῦ ἐλαττώματος προσφορεῖν (“the epithet is out of place. For since she regularly shows kindness and says ‘my child,’ she ought not to have addressed him by mentioning his defect”)), or at Iliad 21.218, when the Scamander, talking to Achilles, calls his streams ἐρατεῖα, “pleasant” (schol. II. 21.218a: ὅτι ἁκαροῦν τὸ ἐπίθετον περαιόντα γὰρ ὑπὸ τοῦ αἵματος (“because the epithet is out of place: for [the river] is red with blood”)). Iliad 23.581 was athetized because Menelaus, angry with Anti-lochus, address him as διστρεφέες (schol. II. 23.581a: ἀθέτεται, ὅτι ἁκαροὺς λέγει διστρεφές, ὀργιζόμενος αὐτῷ (“it is athetized because he says ‘fostered of Zeus’ inappropriately, since he is angry with him”)). Often Aristarchus finds that the epithet διός, “divine,” is used ἁκαροὺς: for example, when Menelaus addresses his enemy Paris (schol. II. 3.352a: ἀθέτεται, ὅτι . . . καὶ ἀδίον ἁκαροὺς ὁ Μενέλαος τὸν ἔχθρον λέγει (“The line is athetized because . . . and Menelaus calls his enemy ‘divine’ inappropriately”)), or for the voluptuous Anteia (schol. II. 6.160a), or for Hector when he is talking to himself (schol. II. 7.75a1). Aristarchus’ principle is that epithets must be ἀρμοττοντα, “fitting,” to the names and contexts to which they refer, just as Aristotle explains (Rh. 1405a10–13):

dεὶ δὲ καὶ τὰ ἐπίθετα καὶ τὰς μεταφορὰς ἀρμοττούσας λέγειν. τούτῳ δ’ ἔσται ἐκ τοῦ ἀνά-λογον: εἰ δὲ μῆ, ἀπρεπὲς φανεται διὰ τὸ παρ’ ἄλλημα τὰ ἐναντία μάλλονα φαινεθαί.

Metaphors, like epithets, must be fitting, which means that they must fairly correspond to the thing signified: failing this, their inappropriateness will be conspicuous: the want of harmony between two things is emphasized by their being placed side by side. (Trans. Roberts 1984)

If instead ἐπίθετα are not ἀρμοττοντα the result is ἀπρεπὲς; this leads Aristarchus to an athetesis.68

66. Cf. also schol. II. 3.432 (ἀθέτοῦνται στίχοι πέντε, ὅτι πεζότεροι εἰσὶ καὶ τοῖς νομίσασι ψυχροί καὶ ἀκατάλληλοι); schol. II. 9.688–92a (ἀθέτοῦνται στίχοι πέντε . . . , ὅτι . . . τοῖς νομίσασι καὶ τῇ συνθέσει πεζότεροι); schol. II. 11.767a (ἀθέτονται δὲ ἀπὸ τούτων στίχοι ἐννεακατάδεκα . . . ὅτι ἢ σύνθεσις αὐτῶν πεζῆ).
67. Cf. also Rh. 1408b1–2: τὸ δ’ εὐκαίρος ἢ μή εὐκαίρος χρήσθη κομην ἀπάντων τὸν εἰδὸν ἔστιν (“all the variations of oratorical style are capable of being used in season or out of season,” trans. Roberts 1984).
The parallels between Aristotle’s theoretical statements in the *Poetics* and in the *Rhetoric* and Aristarchus’ practice in his ἔκδοσις of Homer must not be taken, however, as evidence of a “direct” dependence of Aristarchus on Aristotle. Aristarchus is not a Peripatetic, or, better, is only a Peripatetic to the extent that the other scholars and scientists working at the Museum or in Alexandria were Peripatetic. Aristotle seems to have shaped their rigorous and systematic approach to knowledge, also providing them with a set of methodological tools to proceed in their studies, such as the principle of cause and effect, analogical reasoning, the combination of teleological and mechanistic views of natural phenomena, and the analysis of concrete data in order to offer a systematic view of the kosmos. This is what, *mutatis mutandis*, we find in Aristarchus, who, among the “philologists” of his own time, such as Crates of Mallos and the so-called κριτικοὶ, is certainly the most concrete, systematic, and anti-speculative. This is an important point, because all of these similarities between Aristotle, Aristarchus and, in general, the Alexandrian philological school in the field of literary criticism are not particularly meaningful if it cannot be demonstrated at the same time that this is a unique case and that the majority of the other contemporary grammarians, philologists, and critics were adopting other views. It is thus necessary to focus on Aristarchus’ colleagues.

One of the most important sources for Hellenistic poetic theories is *On Poems* by Philodemus of Gadara. In Books 1 and 2, Philodemus, using Crates’ work surveying the literary views of the “critics” and of the “philosophers,” attacks the views of the so-called κριτικοὶ. Then in Book 5 (cols. 29–39 Mangoni), based on the previous work of his teacher Zeno of Sidon, he surveys thirteen different views of poetry. Unfortunately, these two accounts are not completely consistent with each other and, moreover, it is not always easy to judge who held particular views. However, some general points and a certain degree of detail for some of these critics and literary theorists can be reached. A brief review of them will show how Aristarchus’ approach to poetry is different from (and more Aristotelian than) all these other theories.

7.1 The κριτικοὶ (Heracleodorus, Pausimachus, and the Others) and Crates

The term κριτικός, as Janko has pointed out, is in itself very ambiguous because by the time of Philodemus it meant generically “literary critic.”

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69. The same relationship with Aristotle can be envisaged for Erasistratus; cf. von Staden 1997.
70. I am focusing on Aristarchus because among the Alexandrians he is the one about whom we know most and also he is considered the acme of Alexandrian philological activity. However, Zenodotus, Eratosthenes, and Aristophanes of Byzantium share, at least in part, the same Aristotelian approach with Aristarchus. On Zenodotus, see Nickau 1977, 132–83; on Eratosthenes, see p. 309 below. The contrast thus is between the Alexandrian school (with Aristarchus as the main and final representative of it) and the other schools flourishing in other parts of the Hellenistic world, like Pergamum and Athens.
71. The best survey of these views is that by Janko (2000, 120–89).
72. For an analysis of these columns, see Asmis 1992b.
ever, we tend to use this name to label a group of scholars that considered sounds and composition the primary (if not sole) criterion for judging poetry, as Philodemus explains in *PHerc.* 1676, col. 6, 2–9 (from *On Poems*, Book 2):


that “the supervenient euphony is particular [to poetry], but the contents and the words are external [to it] and must be considered common [to all]” is fixed as if in stone among all the critics. (Trans. Janko 2000, 124–25)

According to these critics, then, the content, the thought-element, and the words, were something outside poetry, and the poets must only take care of the form and verbal composition. The extraneousness of thoughts and diction from the τέχνη ποιητική was thus the common ground and the shared basic principle of all the κριτικοί. There were, however, some differences in the details. Heracleodorus (late third century B.C.E.) maintained that only euphony that supervenes upon word-order (συνθετική) mattered, whereas genre, style, and meter had nothing to do with poetry. In fact, according to him, even content was superfluous: if the line sounded good, it did not matter if the verse was unintelligible. Similar but more extreme views were held by Pausimachus of Miletus (c. 200 B.C.E.), who considered sound the only source of poetic pleasure (that is, the sounds of vowels in particular), and denied a role to content, genre, and even to the choice (ἐκλογή) of words. The first three views quoted in Zeno’s list of Book 5 are along these lines: the first group calls for a “composition that delights the hearing or moves along beautifully and expresses the thought powerfully”; the second for a “verbal composition that signifies the underlying thought vividly and suggestively,” and the third for a “composition that makes clear the underlying thought clearly and concisely along with preserving a poetic style.” All these views focus on the verbal composition (συνθετική), which is presented as the main task of a poet. The thought (διάνοια) is indeed there but its role is secondary; it is necessary only in the sense that poetry, qua poetry, must express something.

A particular case is represented by Crates, quoted by Philodemus among the κριτικοί and considered the rival of Aristarchus in Homeric criticism. The assessment of the real nature of this opposition is still under debate. If, on the one hand, it is undeniable that Crates was in many respects pursuing a different kind of scholarship, more interested in the philosophical aspects of the text and in its allegorical meaning (especially in the light of Stoic cosmology), on the other hand the methodology he uses (etymology, attention to Homeric style, grammatical analysis, and even analogy) is largely shared

74. On the κριτικοί, see Porter 1995.
75. Cf. also Asmis 1992a, 142.
80. Asmis (1992b, 397–99) thinks that the first opinion is Crates’ (on Crates, see below).
with the Alexandrians. Yet the similarity of methods used by these two schools highlights better their fundamentally different approaches to the topic, for there are frequent cases where Crates and Aristarchus use the same procedure (etymological analysis or even analogy) to reach opposite results.81 This fundamental difference between Aristarchus (a grammaticos, dealing mostly if not only with the text) and Crates (a kritikos, with a pronounced “philosophical” approach to Homer) was already recognized by Crates himself, who proudly maintained that he was able to “judge” a poem, unlike the grammarians concerned only with the limited analysis of words, syntax, and questions of authenticity (Sext. Emp. Math. 1.79):

καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος [i.e., Κράτης] ἔλεγε διαφέρειν τὸν κριτικὸν τοῦ γραμματικοῦ, καὶ τὸν μὲν κριτικὸν πάσης, φησὶ, δεῖ λογικῆς ἐπίστημης ἐξίσουν εἶναι, τὸν δὲ γραμματικὸν ἄπλως γλωσσῶν ἐξερευνήσαν καὶ προσωπίδας ἀποδοτικῶν καὶ τῶν τούτως παραπλησίων εἰδήμονα· παρὸ καὶ ξοικέων εἰκοίνων μὲν ἀρχιτεκτόνων, τὸν δὲ γραμματικὸν ὑπηρέτη.

[Crates] said that the “critic” was better than the grammarian and that while the critic was experienced in all of logical science, the grammarian was simply an interpreter of rare words (glōssaī), establisher of accents, and knower of things like these; hence the critic was like an architect and the grammarian like his servant. (Trans. Blank 1998)82

Further evidence of non-Aristotelian elements in Crates comes from Philodemus, On Poems, Book 5, cols. 24.25–29.18 Mangoni = frag. 101 Broggiato, where Philodemus dwells on Crates’ view, and in particular from the following excerpts:

τὸδ’ εἴπερ ἐτ’ εἶπε, τῷ μ[η] 1 πιθανὸν εἶναι τὴν διάλογον ἐπαινεῖν, ἀτέλευνο γε δὴ τοῦ τοιχοῦτον ἄντος. (Col. 27.3–7 Mangoni)

For he also said that it is not plausible to praise the thought, since this sort of thing is non-technical. (Trans. Asmis 1992a, 151)

διὰ τὸ 1 φάσκειν δ[α]γ[ινώσκεσθαι τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν ἐν 1 τοῖς ποιήμασι[μ][μ] φυσικὴν διαφορὰν τῇ1[ά]κοβη. (Col. 27.17–21 Mangoni)

Because he claims that the natural difference that exists in poems is discerned by the hearing. (Trans. Asmis 1992a, 153)


As to the claim that one must judge neither what is delightful to perception nor the thought of poems, but [one must] judge through perception the rational theorems that exist by nature, not without thoughts—not, however, the thoughts, . . . (Trans. Asmis 1992a, 155)

From these fragments, a major point in Crates’ literary views emerges clearly.83 As for the κριτικόί, for Crates too hearing alone can judge whether a poem is good or not. However, for Crates the judgment of euphony is not

83. See also Janko 2000, 122–23, esp. V 7, V 8, V 11.
subjective, but happens on the basis of objective criteria that are recognized by the hearing. Also, whereas Heracleodorus and Pausimachus did not take the content into consideration at all, Crates allows for it, in the sense that content is embedded in poetry. However content (διάνοια, τὰ νοούμενα) is not the object of judgment. 84 For διάνοια is a nontechnical (ἀτεχνον) part of poetry. 85

In sum, the constant and sole focus on σύνθεσις and εὑρωψία as the only criteria to judge poetry, on the one hand, and the firm point that content and argument are outside the art, on the other, mark all these views as not Aristotelian 87 and also not Aristarchean. As we have seen, Aristarchus very often opposes (or couples) form (σύνθεσις or κατασκευή) and thought (διάνοια or νόημα), as if they were the constitutive and polar parts of poetry, especially when giving reasons for an athetesis. If one decides on a line on the basis of the form or the thought-element (or both), obviously he considers these two elements as fundamental (and also technical) parts of the poetry, as did Aristotle. This is exactly what Crates and the κριτικοί were arguing against.

It is moreover interesting to note that the vocabulary adopted by the κριτικοί and Crates is identical to that we find in Aristonicus’ scholia, with terms like διάνοια, νοημα, and σύνθεσις. 88 This means that we are dealing with technical terminology that indeed started first with the Peripatos and was fully developed during Hellenistic times and still used in the first century B.C.E. However, within this common terminology, the principles are radically different: for the critics and Crates, διάνοια is not part of poetry, and sound alone (either as verbal composition, σύνθεσις, or as pure euphony) is the sole criterion by which to judge poetry. For Aristotle and Aristarchus the thought (διάνοια)—but we could speak more generally of content, including thus also the μόρος and the ηθος—is at the core of poetry.

7.2 Zeno’s List: Theories on Diction (σύνθεσις)

There is, however, more. In the list of Zeno, a second group of critics maintains that (Book 5, col. 30.6–10 Mangoni) the main point of a poem is a σύνθεσις λέξεως ἐναργῶς καὶ ἐμφατικῶς τὴν ὑποτεταγμένην διάνοιαν συμπληρώσα (“a composition expressing the underlying thought vividly [ἐναργῶς] and suggestively [ἐμφατικῶς]”). 89 In rhetorical handbooks, ἐναργεία and

84. Cf. Asmis 1992a, 160: “Crates does not take the extremely radical position that what makes a poem good is simply the sound, considered apart from any meaning. . . . His point, which is radical enough, is that what makes a poem good is the sound in relation to the meaning, regardless of what the meaning is.”
86. The theory of euphony stemmed from Pythagoras and the atomists and then was developed by the Stoics. Aristotle and the Alexandrians, however, rejected it; see Janko 2000, 173–82, 189.
88. For a full list of this technical terminology, overlapping with the Aristotelian one, see Mangoni 1993, 79–103.
89. On this opinion, see Asmis 1992b, 401–3. Ἐμφατικῶς is translated here with “suggestively,” because ἐμφασίς in ancient literary criticisms does not correspond to the modern “emphasis,” but is a technical term that indicates the ability that a poet has to express something that is not clearly stated, as Asmis (1992b, 402) explains: “There is no good English equivalent; ‘suggestive’ comes close in meaning. Although the term can mean ‘expressive’ and this sense can slide off into ‘forceful,’ it is misleading to translate ἐμφατικῶς as ‘emphatic’ or ‘forceful,’ as it is often done.” I have thus preferred to leave the Greek term ἐμφασίς instead of translating it into “suggestion,” which may be equally confusing.
έμφασις are considered among the best qualities of style;\footnote{90} this is in contrast with Aristotle, who maintains that the major virtue of style (both in prose and in poetry) is σαφήνεια.\footnote{91} We have seen that Aristarchus most highly praises σαφήνεια while also esteeming συντομία.\footnote{92} True, Aristarchus pays some attention to Homer’s ability to achieve συνόψεις and έμφασις,\footnote{93} but this is something that Aristotle as well admires in Homer (Rh. 1413b32–1414a7):

ο γὰρ σύνδεσμος ἐν ποιεῖ τὰ πολλὰ, ὥστε ἐὰν εξαιρεθῇ, δῆλον ὅτι τοῦναντιον ἔσται τὸ ἐν πολλά. ἔχει οὖν αὐξησίαν... τούτο δὲ βούλεται ποιεῖν καὶ ὁ Οὐμηρός ἐν τῷ “Νιρέως οὐ Σύμπεθεν,” “Νιρέως Ἀγλαῖος,” “Νιρέως ὃς κάλλιστος,” περὶ οὗ γὰρ πολλὰ λέγεται, ἀνάγκη καὶ πολλάκις εἰρήθησαι: εἰ οὖν [καὶ] πολλάκις, καὶ πολλὰ δοκεῖ, ὥστε ἡξηκέν, ἀπὸς μνημείῳς, διὰ τὸν παραλογισμὸν, καὶ μνήμην πεποίηκεν, οὐδαμοὶ ὑπέρθειν αὐτὸν λόγον ποιησάμενος.

Just as the use of conjunctions makes many statements into a single one, so the omission of conjunctions acts in the reverse way and makes a single one into many. It thus makes everything more important. . . . This is the effect which Homer seeks when he writes “Nireus likewise from Syme, Nireus the son of Aglaia, Nireus, the comeliest man.” If many things are said about a man, his name must be mentioned many times; and therefore people think that, if his name is mentioned many times, many things have been said about him. So that Homer, by means of this illusion, has made a great deal of Nireus, though he has mentioned him only in this one passage, and he has preserved his memory, though he nowhere says a word about him afterwards. (Trans. Roberts 1984)

It is interesting to note that the criterion of the ἐνάργης seems to be absent from the scholia by Aristonicus.\footnote{94} Moreover, the fact that those critics praised only the “excessive” qualities leading to amplification and έμφασις and did not pay any attention to clarity separates them from Aristotle and Aristarchus.\footnote{95} The third opinion, instead, demands only clarity and conciseness (Book 5, col. 31.7–8b Mangoni: σύνθεσις σαφῆς καὶ συντόμους τὴν ὑποτασσεμένην διάνοιαν διάσαρυφοῦσα); this too is not in line with Aristarchus, who recognized that Homer had a particular poetic manner of expression, for example with glossai, metaphors, and other figures of speech.

90. Cf. Dion. Hal. Lys. 7 (ἐνάργεια); Quint. Inst. 6.2.32 and 8.3.61 (ἐνάργεια), 8.3.83 and 9.2.3 (ἐμφασις); Rhet. Her. 4.67 (significatio = ἐμφασις), 4.68 (demonstratio = ἐνάργεια).
91. On Aristotle’s virtues of diction, see Ax (1993, esp. 27–31), who outlines the virtues of diction among Peripatetics and Stoics as follows: for Aristotle they are σαφής, ἐλληνίζειν, πρᾶπον; for Theophrastus: Ἑλληνισμός, σαφήνεια, πρᾶπον, κυτσακίζειν; and for the Stoics: Ἑλληνισμός, σαφήνεια, συντομία, πρᾶπον, κυτσακίζειν (see Diog. Laert. 7.59).
92. Cf. schol. Il. 1.110a, 3.352a, 8.108a, 8.528.
93. Cf. schol. Il. 2.299b, 2.670 (quoted above, for the distinction between κυρίως usage and the metaphorical one), 2.809, 3.808b, 6.169a, 8.108a, 9.44a, 15.470a, 15.622, 16.161a, 17.172, 23.16a, 24.6–9a1, 24.205b1; cf. also Didymus in schol. Il. 19.386a. In another instance (schol. Il. 9.14b) Aristarchus was arguing that lines 15–16 of Book 9 of the Iliad, where Agamemnon is weeping “like a fountain of dark water that pours down murky water from a steep cliff” and that Zenodotus rejected, were instead ἀνάγκαια δὲ... εἰς αὐξησίαν, i.e., for the amplification of the tragic character of the moment.
94. Out of forty-nine occurrences in the Iliad and Odyssey scholia of the words ἐνάργεια, ἐναργής, and ἐνάργης, none goes back to Aristarchus. See also Zanker (1981, 307–8), who maintains that ἐνάργεια is never used by Aristarchus, but that he uses ἐναργής in Poet. 1455a24 and so does Theophrastus. However, this is an Epicurean concept (ibid., 309–10).
95. According to Asmis (1992b, 405–6), the recognition that έμφασις is the most important constituent of poetry leads to the adoption by Hellenistic scholars of allegorical reading, a way of reading poetry that was totally rejected by Aristarchus.
7.3 Zeno’s List: Theories on Thought (διάνοια), Imitation (μίμησις), and More

Of course, other Hellenistic theorists gave great importance to the thought of poetry. For example, the διάνοια is central to the fourth, fifth, and sixth theories listed by Philodemus (himself a great supporter of the importance of the thought versus sound) in Book 5 of On Poems.96 Some (col. 31.33–34 Mangoni) demanded wise thought (σοφὴ διάνοια) and some (col. 32.3 Mangoni) useful thought (ὠφέλιμος διάνοια). All these definitions are equally extraneous to Aristarchus, who never defines Homeric poetry as “useful” or remarks on the σοφία of the poet. This can be seen in conjunction with the idea that Homer does not aim at διάσκαλία but at ψυχαγωγία, a statement ascribed to Eratosthenes, who maintained that in Homer one should not look for any technical knowledge, geography in primis.97 This idea was shared by Aristarchus as well, and many are the scholia where, commenting on Homeric geography, Aristarchus claims that we do not have to seek for accuracy, or a true depiction of the cosmos.98

Then (col. 33.1–3 Mangoni) Philodemus mentions the opinion of those who call for a composition able to teach “something more” (συνήθειν λέξεων προσδιάδοσκουσάν τι περιττότερον διὰ ποιήματος). This statement is very interesting when compared with Aristarchean evidence, and not only because again it calls for a didactic aim in poetry. More importantly, περισσός and its derivatives are some of the most typical expressions to be found in the scholia of Aristonicus, but they are always used in a negative sense, meaning “superfluous.” Everything that is περισσόν is rejected in Homer. Often this criterion is the deciding ground for an atheesis.99 This is a very interesting point because the negative sense for περισσός (in itself a vox media, signifying “extraordinary” but also “superfluous,” “useless”) is shared with

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97. Strabo 1.1.10.31–35: οὔτε γὰρ ἀληθείς ἔστιν, ὃς φησίν Ἑρατοσθενῆς, ὃ ποιητὴς πᾶς στοιχάζεται ψυχαγωγίας, οὐ διάσκαλίας· τάναντα γὰρ οἱ φρονιμωταί τοις περὶ ποιητικῇς τι φυληκάμενοι πρόστιν τινὰ λέγουσι φιλοσοφίαν τῆς ποιητικῆς (“for Eratosthenes is wrong in his contention that the aim of every poet is to entertain, not to instruct; indeed the wisest of the writers on poetry say, on the contrary, that poetry is a kind of elementary philosophy,” trans. Jones 1969). And also Strabo 1.2.3, in particular 1.2.3.37–42: ὁ δὲ ἔπινεν ὅτι ψυχαγωγίας μόνον, διάσκαλίας δ' οὖ, καὶ προσεξεργάζεται γε, πυθαγόμενος τι συμβάλλεται πρὸς ὄρετόν ποιητῶν πολλῶν ὑπάρξαι τόσον ἐμπερὼν ἡ στρατηγία ἡ γεωργία ἡ ῥήτορική ἡ οίον ἢ περισσεῖ ἀυτῷ τινὲς ἐξουλίθησαι; (“but his [of Eratosthenes] words were ‘merely entertainment and not instruction.’ And Eratosthenes gives himself quite unnecessary pains when he asks how it contributes to the excellence of the poet for him to be an expert in geography, or in generalship, or in agriculture, or in rhetoric, or in any kind of special knowledge with which some people have wished to ‘invest’ him,” trans. Jones 1969).

98. Cf., for example, Aristarchus’ criticism of those (like Crates; cf. Strabo 3.4.4.1–15 (= frag. 75 Broggiato) who interpreted the voyages of Odysseus as a true geographical decription of the oikouμενη (schol. PQ Od. 5.55: πρὸς τὰ περὶ τῆς πλάνης, ὃτι πόρρω ποι ἐκτελεσμένος τόπος ἀοράστως . . . , schol. BQT Od. 10.189: ἐκ τούτων δὲ ἐκτελεσμένη φαίνεται ἡ πλάνη τοῦ θεοσώμου). Cf. Lehrs 1882, 241–46; Buonajuto 1996. The link between ψυχαγωγία and poetry is present in Aristotle too (Poet. 1450а33–35): πρὸς δὲ τούτως τὰ μέγιστα οἷς ψυχαγωγεῖ ἡ τραγῳδία τοῦ μύθου μέρη ἑστίν, αἱ τε περιπέτειαι καὶ ἀναγνώρισεις (“In addition, the most important things with which a tragedy enthralls [us] are parts of plot—reversals and recognitions,” trans. Janko 1987). Here however the point is not so much about the goals of poetry but rather about the means by which the ψυχαγωγία is achieved. Hence, the parallel between Aristotle and the two Alexandrians is not so close.

Aristotle. The philosopher, especially in his works on biology, sees nature as purposive (i.e., with a τέλος) and not doing anything in vain, περιττόν. The same is, according to Aristarchus, the φύσις of Homer. Instead, these theorists quoted by Philodemus demand a poet who teaches us something περιττότερον, where the adjective is obviously used in a positive meaning, incompatible with the meaning that this key concept has for Aristarchus throughout our sources.

The seventh view in Zeno’s list calls for the mimesis of other poets. This is one of the bases of Roman literature, and we have no earlier evidence for it apart from this hint in Philodemus. To present Homer as a model that must be imitated can indeed be seen as a development of Aristotle’s view of Homer as a master of the craft and of Aristarchus’ distinction between Homer and the later poets (οἱ νεώτεροι). However, the exceptionality of Homer compared to all other poets is so deep according to Aristarchus that a mimesis is virtually impossible: the νεώτεροι can only try to imitate “the poet” but their results are so openly inferior that Aristarchus cannot but notice their bad outcome. In the Aristarchean scholia the νεώτεροί’s attempts to imitate Homer are often commented on with remarks like ἐπλανήθη/ἐπλανήθησαν, “he was/were misled,” that is, he/they missed the point, he/they got it wrong.

The other opinions (8–13) are extremely generic, and therefore they cannot be referred back to any particular school. The opinions, which judge poetry according to whether it has a λέξις πρέπουσα τοῖς ἐξαγομένοις προσώποις (eighth opinion), or on the basis of its effects on the audience (ninth and tenth opinions), of its beauty (eleventh opinion), of its goodness (twelfth opinion), or of πρέπον (thirteenth opinion) are not comprehensive theories of the τέχνη ποιητική, as are those of Aristotle and of Aristarchus. For those about whom we know more, however, the κριτικοὶ and Crates, the points of discrepancy are so many that the affinity between Aristarchus and Aristotle becomes even more evident.

7.4 The Peripatetics: Neoptolemus of Parium, Heraclides of Pontus, Andromenides, and Megaclides of Athens

Among Hellenistic scholars dealing with poetry, Neoptolemus of Parium shows an interesting overlap with the views we have found in Aristotle and Aristarchus. Neoptolemus was a Peripatetic living in the third century B.C.E., whose work is entirely lost and can be recovered mainly (again) through Philodemus On Poems 5 (cols. 13.32–16.28 Mangoni). As is well known, Neoptolemus divided the art of poetry into three parts: the poet...
(ποιημα), the poem (ποημα), and poesy (ποησις). The second and third parts correspond to form (συνθεσις or ποημα) and content (υποθεσις or ποησις). This opposition συνθεσις/υποθεσις as outlined by Neoptolemus (he himself seems to have used these terms together with ποημα and ποησις) is stated in Book 5 (col. 14.26–28 Mangoni):


It is astonishing of him to claim that only theme belongs to poiesis . . . . Also, [it is astonishing] that only verbal composition [participates] in a “poem.” . . . (Trans. Asmis 1992c, 210)

The technical terminology is the usual one; however, a link between Neoptolemus and the Alexandrians can be seen in the opposition between form and content as expressed with συνθεσις/υποθεσις. We have already mentioned the vast usage of the term συνθεσις to indicate “composition,” “style,” among the Alexandrians. This terminology is actually missing in Aristotle who, as was observed, used instead λεξεις to indicate “form” and “style.” It seems as if the usage of συνθεσις for “form” (in opposition, even from a morphological point of view, to υποθεσις for the “content”) is a later development, which might have been due to Neoptolemus himself. This Peripatetic scholar, like Aristotle and Demetrius of Phalerum before him, was known at Alexandria and exercised some sort of influence among the grammaticoi there. While in the scholia derived from Aristarchus there seems to be no trace of the opposition συνθεσις/υποθεσις as formulated by Neoptolemus, the use of the word υποθεσις to indicate the “content” of a literary work comes from Aristophanes of Byzantium, who used the term to refer to the summaries of the “content” of the dramas. However, apart from this idea of poetry as based on form and content, the tripartite division of poetry as devised by Neoptolemus is absent in Aristarchus as well as in Aristotle. Also different is the idea that the poets, according to Neoptolemus, should both delight and benefit, a criterion that seems closer to Plato than to Aristotle. The importance of διδασκαλία as the goal of poetry had already been advocated by Heraclides of Pontus (fourth century B.C.E.), a pupil of Plato and Aristotle, who, besides writing “grammatical” treatises on Homer and other poets in the best Aristotelian tradition, maintained, more in line with the euphonistic school, that ἐμμέλεια, “musicality” and λιγυρότης, “sonority,” were primary virtues for poets.

Andromenides (third century B.C.E.) is perhaps the closest to Aristotle and Aristarchus. His case, like that of Heraclides, is interesting evidence of how the Hellenistic critics were influenced by many different doctrines.

108. He was quoted by Aristophanes of Byzantium in his glossographical works. This, however, does not mean that Neoptolemus was indeed working at Alexandria, a hypothesis supported by Mette (1935, esp. 2467). For a more cautious view on the relationship between Neoptolemus and the Alexandrian scholars, see Brink 1963, 135–50.
109. See Asmis 1992c, where she tries to find other traces of this theory in rhetorical treatises.
110. See Asmis 1992c, 218.
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Philodemos in Book 1 quotes him among the κριτικοί;\(^{112}\) however, he has many views in common with Neoptolemus of Parium. Like Neoptolemus and the Peripatetic tradition, he collected glosses. Moreover, he seems to follow the same division of poetics into poet (ποιητής), poem (ποίημα), and poesy (ποίησις). He is more Aristotelian than Neoptolemus, however, when he maintains that poetry aims to please (and not to impart truth like prose) and when he holds the view that each genre has its own subject matter and appropriate style (τὸ πρέπον) and that each character has a distinctive diction. On the other hand, Andromenides, like Crates, maintained that the ear was the ultimate judge of poetry (and this is why he is considered a κριτικός by Philodemos), and also that diction and word choice (ἐκλογή) were paramount. This emphasis on phonetic beauty, not so prominent in Aristotle, is at the core of Theophrastus’ theory of style\(^{113}\) and can be seen as a later development of the Peripatetic school.

The case of Megaclides (early third century B.C.E.) is similar; he, while quoted by Philodemos in Book 1 among the κριτικοί, is defined as a Peripatetic in other sources.\(^{114}\) His work on Homer (he wrote a περὶ Ὀμήρου) and on his language (he believed that Homeric dialect was Attic, like Aristarchus) is purely in line with Alexandrian interests. Moreover, his distinction, especially in terms of mythological tradition, between Homer and Hesiod, on the one hand, and post-Homeric and post-Hesiodic poets, on the other, makes him an Aristotelian with ideas very close to those of Aristarchus. However, he was listed by Crates among the advocates of the ear (and not the intellect) as the best judge for poetry. And even if his precise poetical theories are still under debate, due to the fragmentary state of the evidence from On Poems 1, he seems to be close to Heraclides of Pontus and Andromenides, as Janko has concluded.\(^{115}\) The euphonistic approach to literature shared by all these Peripatetic scholars makes them pupils more of Theophrastus, with his theory of style and of word choice (ἐκλογή), than of Aristotle, with his content-based approach to texts.

**Conclusion**

As I hope to have shown, Aristarchus seems to have been aware of Aristotelian reflections on poetry. In his work on Homer, he uses Aristotelian categories and critical concepts. This is particularly evident when Aristarchus has to deal with atheteses or argues against Zenodotus’ readings. Interesting similarities between Aristotle and Aristarchus are to be found in the handling of the plot (it can contain “impossible elements,” but they must be “according to necessity or probability”), of the characters (they are of necessity “serious” and their behavior must be according to what is considered “proper”), of the thought-element (epos is a serious genre, hence all the comic elements must

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113. Cf. Dion. Hal. Isoc. 3.1; and Ardizzoni 1953, 70–72.
be avoided) and of style (which must be clear, but also poetic, i.e. rich in glosses and metaphors).

The affinity between Aristotle and Aristarchus is further proved by a comparison with other Hellenistic views on poetry. Here, while the technical vocabulary is almost identical, the views held by Crates or the other Hellenistic κριτικοῖ are opposite or, at best, far in spirit from what was expressed by Aristotle. In particular, their continuous focus on the sound-element and euphony against content are in striking opposition to Aristotle’s theory and Aristarchus’ practice.116

There is, however, a fundamental distinction between Aristotle and Aristarchus: whereas the philosopher theorizes these principles, the philologist applies them. In this, Aristarchus is different from colleagues like Crates and the κριτικοῦ as well. The latter had an “active” philosophical background; they claimed to be critics because they aimed to give prescriptive views on how one should write a poem. Aristarchus does not claim anything like that, but tries to make a better text of Homer by editing and commenting on it. In this sense, Aristarchus (and his Alexandrian predecessors) are different from all the other scholars who were taken into account, who like Crates (and, in this view, Aristotle too) wanted to develop theories out of the study of Homer. For Aristarchus, Aristotelian philosophy, like grammatical categories, is, instead, just a tool to use in his job: working on texts, preparing editions and writing commentaries. The contrast could not be greater: on the one hand, literary critics like Crates and the other κριτικοῦ, having a particular agenda, or, as in the case of Crates, influenced by Hellenistic philosophy, versus grammarians like Aristarchus, on the other. The latter had a “scientific approach” to the text, looking at the bare data on the basis of a very clear account: that of Aristotle, the founder of scientific inquiry.

116. I am not arguing that Aristotelian concepts are present only in Aristarchean scholia. As Richardson (1980) has demonstrated, they are abundantly present in the exegetical scholia. For example, in schol. QV Od. 23.310–43 (ο ἄριστος τριάκοντα τὰς τρεις καὶ τριάκοντα· διήτροπῃ γὰρ πεποίηκεν ἀνακεφαλαίωσιν καὶ ἐπιτομὴν τῆς Ὀδυσσείας), the scholiast argues against Aristarchus for hisathesis of Od. 23.310–43 with arguments that recall Arist., Rh. 1417a12–15 (ἐπει πεπραγμένα δεὶ λέγειν ὁσα μὴ πρατ-τόμενα ἢ οἶκτον ἢ δείκνυσιν φέρει· παραδείγματι ὁ Ἀλκινοῦ ἀπόλογος, ὡς πρὸς τὴν Πηνελόπην ἐν ἐξήκοντα ἐπεσιν πεποίηται), where the philosopher praises the story Odyssey tells Penelope as a good way of narrating a story cutting off all the most terrifying details. However, my claim here is that, even if we find more Aristotelian concepts in the exegetical scholia (which are a product of later scholarship), we do find Aristotelian concepts even in Aristarchus, and in opposition to the other Hellenistic theorists.
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