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Jacopo Mazzoni

1548–1598

Because he was fundamentally a philosopher, Mazzoni was attracted in his two defenses of Dante to numerous theoretical issues: the differences between Plato and Aristotle, the credible impossible and the incredible possible, and truth and falsehood in poetry.

According to Mazzoni, poetry admits of three definitions, depending on one's point of view. Thus from one perspective poetry is simply imitation, the making of an "idol," with "no other end in its artifice than to represent and resemble." Mazzoni argues that "imitative" arts are those that "have objects which have no other existence or use except by reason of imitation or in imitation." Mazzoni also defines poetry in terms of its result in the reader, namely delight. Finally, he recognizes that from the point of view of the "civil faculty," or the principles for understanding the proper organizations and functions of human society, the poem delights usefully. In his plurality of definitions, he attempts to preserve his belief in the intrinsic uniqueness of poetry while yet recognizing its "use."

Much of Mazzoni's discussion centers on whether poetry expresses "truth." He turns to Plato's distinction in the *Sophist* between icastic and fantastic imitation, indicates that both kinds of imitation are acceptable in poems, and adopts Aristotle's preference for the "credible impossible," or fantastic imitation, over the "incredible possible," arguing all the while for the freedom of the work from canons of naive realism.

Imitation and *idol* are the key terms in Mazzoni. The poet "imitates," and he makes an "idol." Of major importance to his view is the idea that the idol is particular, credible, and verisimilar, but not necessarily true. Indeed, that it may be false makes no final difference. What is important is the illusion that has been created. "The verisimilitude which is sought by the poets," he says, "is of such a nature that it is feigned by poets according to their own will." Mazzoni draws a distinction, then, between poetry and history, poetry and science; thus he seems to anticipate modern efforts to distinguish poetic from other uses of language.

Mazzoni's work has never been translated in full. A. H. Gilbert, *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden* (1962) provides a selection, and Robert L. Montgomery (1983) has translated the introduction and summary of the *Defense* with a general introduction. See Baxter Hathaway, *The Age of Criticism* (1962) and *Marvels and Commonplaces* (1968); and Murray Krieger, "Jacopo Mazzoni, Depository of Diverse Critical Traditions or Source of a New One," in R. P. Armato and J. M. Spalik, eds., *Medieval Epic to the "Epic Theater" of Brecht* (1968).

On the Defense of the Comedy of Dante

From Introduction and Summary

[5] It is the common view of the philosophic schools that the arts and sciences have come to be distinct and different by means of individual and particular objects and subjects. . . . Some have supposed . . . that the objects of the arts and sciences differ according to differences among things insofar as they are things. And from this they are constrained to admit two very extraordinary conclusions. The first is that metaphysics is a total science, that which considers, so to speak, universal being, and that the other arts and sciences are a part of it, because each one of these is a part of universal being. The other conclusion is that each particular art and science must have something for a subject which could not be the subject of another art or science. . . . Both these conclusions are false. . . . Following the Peripatetics,¹ I say, as they believe, that the arts and sciences derive their true and real distinctiveness from their objects, not insofar as they are things but insofar as they are knowable things, supposing that things can be said to be capable of being devised. . . . In the same way, the division of the objects of the senses is not apprehended through a classification of their qualities as such but [6] by a classification of sensible things insofar as they are sensible. . . . By means of this discourse we can establish two firm conclusions. The first is that metaphysics is not a total science . . . that is, it does not totally comprehend other sciences as its parts. But we can say that it is a special science distinct from all others by virtue of having an object quite different, in its mode of being known, from the objects of the other sciences. A nice corollary derives from this first conclusion, which is that the definition of poetics given by Mirandola and his followers—that poetics is that part of philosophy which deals with human actions insofar as they are imitable in verse, number, and harmony—is false and perhaps ridiculous. The second conclusion is that since the division of knowable things (and not of things) separates the sciences, it necessarily follows that the same things can be

treated in diverse sciences under diverse modes of knowledge and consideration. . . . Therefore, just as the sciences are differentiated by their objects, not insofar as they are things but insofar as they are knowable, so the arts, of whatever sort they may be, are classified not by their objects insofar as they are things, but by their objects insofar as they are (I cannot say it otherwise if I wish to speak accurately) capable of being devised.

And because of this subject I find no doctrine more copious or sound than [7] that taught by Plato in the tenth book of the *Republic*;² therefore following his lead I say that there are three types of object and that they have three types of artifice, which as a result constitute three species of art. . . . They are "idea," "work," and "idol." The idea is the object of the ruling, or we might say governing arts. The work is the object of the fabricating arts. And the idol is the object of the imitative arts. Therefore the modes of the objects of the arts insofar as they are capable of being treated by artifice are three: the observable, the fabricable, the imitable. The arts which only contemplate things pertinent to some object are the ruling arts, and they are founded in the idea. Such is the art of horsemanship when it deals with the bridle. For the art of horsemanship does not consist in making the bridle but is concerned solely with the idea of how it must work and then prescribes to the rider the rules by which he must hold the bridle so as to guide the horse. The art which makes the bridle (which was first conceived by the ruling art) is that which has the work as object. So it is bridlemaking which fashions the work of the bridle, and that is all it does. The imitative arts are so named because they deal with the object only insofar as it is imitable; hence Plato said that they have the idol as object, which means a simulacrum or image of some other thing. Since, therefore, the same thing can be treated by different sciences under different modes of the knowable, then also the same thing can be submitted to different arts by different modes of artifice. And we have a clear example in the bridle which belongs to the art of horsemanship when considered in its idea, to the art of bridlemaking when made as a work, and to painting when initiated as an idol.

But there may be doubt as to the importance of distinguishing the imitative arts from the others. For it would seem that the fabricating arts also deserve the name of imitation, since each one imitates with its work the model of the idea conceived by the ruling art. As, for example, the art of bridlemaking conforms to the idea conceived by horsemanship. . . . I reply (as I said before) that the distinction between

arts derives from their objects insofar as they are variously capable of being devised. Now the artifice of the work consists not only in representing the idea of the ruling art, [8] but also serves other ends. And so we can say that bridlemaking forms the bridle in accordance with the idea conceived by horsemanship, but yet this bridle is not made in order to represent the similitude of the idea, but rather so that it can be used in the various ways of managing horses. Hence we see that the artifice of the fabricating arts takes its direction from another art whose sole aim is to represent and resemble; therefore I say that the fabricating arts cannot be called imitative. But those arts which have the idol as object, have an object with no other end in its artifice than to represent and resemble; hence they are justly called imitative. And just as philosophy has called the logical faculty rational, not because it uses reason—for in this sense all the arts and faculties are rational—but because it has an object which takes all its being from reason and in reason; so I say that the imitative arts are so named not because they use imitation—for in this sense all the arts are more or less some kind of imitation—but because they have objects which have no other existence or use except by reason of imitation or in imitation. This I believe is what Plato wished to show in the second book of the *Laws* where he said, "The rightness of an imitation consists in this, as we said, that it is made of such a nature and size that the imitation expresses the nature and size of the object itself."³

In this way, therefore, the idol is the object of the imitative arts. . . . [9] The idol . . . is an image and similitude of some other thing, and it can come into being, as Plato has taught us in the *Sophist* and in the sixth book of the *Republic*, either with or without our agency. And that which comes into being without human agency has its origin either in material things or in spiritual. Those which originate in material things are understood to be in that portion of visible being which Plato in the sixth book of the *Republic* calls obscure. And so that everyone may understand what I mean it must be remembered that Plato divides existing things into two species: one he called intelligible; the other, visible. And again he wished to subdivide both species into two parts, the clear and the obscure. Now he calls that portion of visible things clear which includes plants, animals, the heavens, the elements, and all complex and simple things. But about the obscure portion of the visible he has reasoned as follows: "A portion of the visible kind contains images, for I call images first shadows, then simulacra, which appear in water

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ON THE DEFENSE OF THE COMEDY OF DANTE. *Della difesa della Commedia di Dante* was first published in 1587. It may be that the work was actually written by Tuccio del Conno from notes supplied by Mazzoni. It was preceded by the shorter *Discorso in difesa della Commedia del divino poeta Dante*, published in 1572. The text printed here was translated especially for this book by R. L. Montemeyer. Bracketed numbers refer to the pages of the 1688 edition.

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and in solid bodies as denseness, lightness, etc."⁴ . . . I believe idols are of this species. . . .

[12] Now coming to our proposition I say that when I earlier concluded that idols are the objects of the imitative arts, I did not refer to the sort of idols which originate without human artifice . . . but to those which do originate by our artifice, which are born only in our imagination and our intellect by means of our choice and will, as idols in painting, sculpture, and similar things. I conclude, then, that this species of idol is that which is a suitable object of human imitation and that when Aristotle says in the first chapter of the *Poetics* that all the species of poetry are imitation, he means that imitation which has for its object idols which derive totally from human artifice.⁵ . . . But it appears that the words of Suidas are contrary to this proposition; he believes that idols which derive from human artifice are not suitable objects for the imitative arts, but that idols joined to a different thing, which he calls similitudes, are. Here are his words: "Idols are effigies of things which do not subsist, such as Tritons, Sphinxes, Centaurs. But similitudes are the images of things which do subsist, such as beasts and men."⁶ According to this statement of Suidas, we have two sorts of imitation. One represents the true, as a painter does when he depicts with colors the effigy of a man who is known; and the other represents the caprice of the imitator, as the painter when he depicts according to the whim of his imagination; and we see at the same time that the idol is the object of this second sort of imitation and that the similitude is the object of the first. Therefore it is not true that the idol which derives from human artifice is a suitable object for every imitation.

I reply that that view of Suidas about idols is too restricted and also contrary to that held by other writers. . . . [13] In addition, Plato in the *Sophist* has left a statement that there are two species of imitation, one of which he calls *icastic*, representing things which are truly found to exist, or at least have been found to exist; the other he calls *fantastic*, of which we have examples in paintings which are made according to the caprice of the artist. And moreover he himself says in the tenth book of the *Republic* that the idol is the

²Plato, *Republic*, VI, 509–10. See also *Sophist*, 253–36.

³Mazzoni expands his concept of the idol in Book III, the main body of his *Deferre*. "[564] I say therefore that anyone who with words expounds some true concept in a certain fashion creates idols by means of this speaking, since each concept is a similitude and image of the thing to which it corresponds, and likewise names appear, according to Plato and also Aristotle, to be like idols and imitations of things. In this way not only history, but also natural philosophy and every one of the other arts which teaches something or deals with truth, makes quasi-idols with its languages and imitates things with concepts and names."

⁶Suidas is the supposed compiler of the *Suda Lexicon* (c. 1000), a combined dictionary and encyclopedia gathered from a wide variety of sources.

object of every imitation.⁷ Therefore, the idol is also common to fantastic imitation. . . . Now I add that under this sort of imitative art, or under this imitation, poetry ought to be placed, as a species under its genus. . . .

[15] As for Aristotle, I believe that he establishes poetic imitation as an analogous genus which contains within itself four species. The first and most important is the dramatic-fantastic, which is imitation because it necessarily contains within itself two sorts of idol and image. One is that of the person represented [i.e., the actor]. The other is the false but verisimilar image which the actor represents, since he does not represent the literally true but the verisimilar; he therefore represents the idol or simulacrum of the true. The second species is dramatic-icastic imitation, which always necessarily contains the idol of a real person. The third species is narrative-fantastic imitation, which doubtless always includes the idol and simulacrum of the true, and may also have another feature, always found in narrative-icastic imitation, which we will consider now. The fourth and last species is narrative-icastic poetry which contains those idols and images consisting in particularization.⁸ . . . I add that even if Aristotle has indeed called all four species of poetry imitation, nevertheless when he compares dramatic and narrative imitation, he considers dramatic more worthy of the name of imitation, to the extent that he sometimes calls narrative the otiose part of the poem and not imitation; but this must always be understood to hold in [the context of] comparison with dramatic poetry, and not absolutely. . . .

Now coming to Plato I say that he also has in some places denied that narrative poetry is imitation. . . . [16] Yet he also has maintained that narrative poetry is not imitation when compared with dramatic representation, but one ought not to conclude from this that speaking absolutely he believes that poetic narration is not imitation. And moreover I say that he himself in the *Sophist* has said that narrative is imitation.⁹ . . .

⁷See Plato, *Sophist*, 235-36, and *Republic*, p. 36. The drift of Mazzoni's understanding of the difference between icastic and fantastic imagery may be gathered from the following remarks in Book III of his *Deferse*: "1580) it can probably be said that fantastic and icastic imitation are determined by the true and the false, not insofar as they are in themselves true and false, but insofar as they are considered true and false in the mind of the poet. . . . That poet who creates his own invention as a consequence produces it by the living power of his own imagination, even if by chance it conforms to what has happened in history. And thus not only, according to his belief, does he have the false as an object, but also its form and structure are in his imagination. It thus seems reasonable that these suit the title of fantastic imitator."

⁸Mazzoni argues in Book III that "narration" has a special virtue in addition to those it shares with rhetoric: "1974) And that virtue is particularity, through which the poet should extend and display the parts of his concept because, in this way he will be apt to imitate and make resemblances of everything he may have occasion to discuss."

As for narrative-icastic poetry, I say that the poet is also obliged to imitate, which he does rightly if he sets out to describe anything in a most particular manner. Therefore in this fashion also idols and images are made suitable to narrative. . . . [20] I conclude therefore that poetic narration is also the icastic form of idols and images and is consequently imitation by means of particularization. . . . [22] I believe it is likely that when Plato differentiated narrative poetry from imitation, he meant that compared to dramatic representation it did not merit the name of imitation. . . . But we ought not, because of that, assert that speaking absolutely poetic narration is not in some fashion imitative, also according to the concept of Plato. It can therefore be understood as a firm and fixed conclusion that the genus of poetry is imitation and so consequently all species of poetry make idols and images in the way already mentioned. And because the rightness of imitation [23] . . . consists in the precise representation of things, it then follows that a fundamental error in poetics would be to represent by distortion or dissimilarity. . . . For this reason it seems that Plato in the second book of the *Republic* thinks that Homer erred fundamentally in his imitation by representing many most ugly vices of the gods and heroes when he ought to have done just the opposite by representing with proper imitation the divine and heroic natures.¹⁰ . . . It is also a fact that Proclus has justified the distortions through which poets ascribe many vices to the gods on the grounds that they were writing allegories.¹¹ . . .

[35] We can now discuss the subject and material proper to poetry. In the opinion of many they are falsehood and lies, but that when these are verisimilar they are an adequate subject for poetry. And they let themselves be persuaded to believe this because they think that the true poet is he who derives his poem from his own invention, adding that whoever [36] takes his subject from somewhere other than his own invention does not deserve the name of a true poet. They also believe that this was Aristotle's view when he called Empedocles more a natural philosopher than a poet because he sought to expound the truth of natural things in verse, rather than to expound his own invention.¹² . . . It also seems that Plato supported this view in the *Platædo* when he said, "He who hopes to be a poet ought not only to put together words, but also to compose."¹³ Plutarch, in the little

¹⁰See *Republic*, p. 20.

¹¹Mazzoni expands on this traditional idea in portions of Book III: "807-08) each time poets have sought to follow the marvellous on the literal level they have uttered incredible things. . . . The license has sometimes been conceded to poets to feign the impossible in the literal sense while following the credible in the allegorical sense." These propositions are liberally illustrated with examples from classical literature and commentaries, chiefly Homer and Proclus.

book where he asks whether the Athenians have acquired greater glory through arms or letters, writes as follows:

They say also that one of the friends of Menander said to him, "The feasts of Bacchus are approaching; have you not made a comedy?" And Menander replied, "I have made a comedy, for I have discovered the fable and given it its order. All that remains is to add the verse." For poets believe the fable to be more essential than the words. Corinna said to Pindar when he was still young and boldly using his eloquence, that he was ignorant of poetries because he put no fables in his writings, which is the proper work of a poet.

And Plutarch adds, "It is certain also that Plato himself wrote that the occupation of poetry is the composition of fables."¹⁴

On the basis of all these authorities and many others, one could easily fall in with the view of those who say that poetry has no other subject but the fabulous and false, though joined to the verisimilar, since according to the rule of Aristotle, verisimilitude is required in the fables of poets. Nevertheless I say that this opinion is not correct for many reasons, some of which I shall select as they come to mind. . . . Consider first that the false verisimilar occurs in some other arts which are different from poetry, as in rhetoric. . . . [37] And in this respect I recall having read a very fine dialogue by Sigmor Camillo Paleotti . . . in which he . . . shows . . . that the false verisimilar is greatly abused by the corrupt world in that it is a nearly universal subject of the arts, sciences, and education. Therefore it cannot be concluded that it is a fit and adequate subject of the poet's art. For if this were the true subject of poetry, it would mean that poetry could not in any way be capable of truth, and yet Plato writes, and Aristotle confirms, and reason convinces us, that quite the contrary is so. Therefore Plato in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, having approved that kind of poetry that deals with the gods in accordance with the truth, showed that as a consequence the truth is not alien to poetry.¹⁵ Likewise Aristotle has confirmed this conclusion in three places in the *Poetics*:¹⁶ . . . In all three places, and especially in the last, we see plainly that Aristotle concedes that poetry sometimes has the

¹⁴"Were the Athenians More Famous in War or in Wisdom?" *Moravia* (Loeb edition, Vol. IV, p. 507).

¹⁵See *Republic*, pp. 37-38. Mazzoni is reading Plato in his own way. In this passage cited Plato asserts that only poetry containing acceptable doctrine belongs in the state, and in the passage from the *Republic* he says: "And . . ."

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true for its subject, and we see that because of all that has been said above, the idols of icastic imitation are, according to Aristotle, poetic idols.

But besides the authority of Plato and Aristotle, there is also reason which proves that the poet sometimes speaks the truth, for in narrating the wandering of certain heroes, he often could not help but describe the location of cities. When the poet adheres to geographical truth, it must be [38] said that either he forfeits the name of poet for the time being (which is completely ridiculous) or we must confess that sometimes the true can be a poetic subject. And we have already shown that idols and images can be made from true things, both narratively and dramatically. According to all these considerations we ought to affirm two conclusions as true. The first is that the false is not always necessarily the subject of poetry. The second is that, since the subject of poetry is sometimes the true and sometimes the false, it is therefore necessary to establish a poetic subject that in itself can be sometimes true and sometimes false.¹⁷

Therefore it seems that we ought to reject that point of view which seemed to prove that poetic subjects are always false. . . .

Now if we remove the false and accept the true in its place, we do not thereby destroy poetry, since we have already said that it can tolerate the true. The same can be said of the possible, because if in poetry we put the impossible in its place, it does not by this become either improved or deficient. But if the credible is removed and the incredible put in its place, the nature of poetry is totally destroyed. And on the other hand whoever takes the credible and totally removes the possible, nevertheless has a poetic subject, as Ar-

¹⁰For Mazzoni this involves the purpose for which idols and images are used. In Book III he argues to this point: "[564-65] But yet I say that the language of history and the arts and sciences does not use poetic imitation, and that the poet who treats either of history or of the arts or sciences will use poetic imitation, which we have above called similitudinousness (*similitudinaria*). According to the understanding of those who ought to know . . . the idol is that which has no other use in itself but to represent and resemble. And because the concepts of philosophy are not true and perfect idols (since they are not made solely to represent but to instruct and to disclose the truth of things), therefore we can say that history, and whatever else teaches things that are true, even if by means of its concepts it forms idols, does not form them insofar as they are idols, that is, it does not form them for the sole purpose of representing and resembling something else. Rather it moves to another mode and another cause of the object, that is, to recount the truth of what has happened or to teach some doctrine. But the imitator fabricates the perfect idol, that is, the idol insofar as it is an idol, which means . . . the idol insofar as it represents and resembles something else. So we can conclude that the historian and the poet who has history for the subject of his poem are different in that the historian will recount things in order to leave behind a memory of the truth, but the poet will write to imitate and leave behind a simulacrum, insofar as it is a simulacrum, of the truth. And the poet will be constrained to write with greater diligence than the historian and to ornament his writing with many poetic lights and colors so that the simulacrum which he wishes to form may be better seen and understood by everyone who reads his poem."

¹¹See *Republic*, p. 20.

¹²Mazzoni expands on this traditional idea in portions of Book III. "[1807-08] Each time poets have sought to follow the marvelous on the literal level they have uttered incredible things. . . . The license has sometimes been conceded to poets to feign the impossible in the literal sense while following the credible in the allegorical sense." These propositions are liberally illustrated with examples from classical literature and commentaries, chiefly Homer and Proclus.

¹³See *Poetics*, I, 8, p. 50.

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istotle has clearly testified: "For in what belongs to poetry the credible impossible is preferable to the incredible and possible."¹⁸ [39] Therefore it should be said that among all the subjects for poetry there is none more proper than the credible, and all the more because by its nature the credible contains both the true and false, since many times not only the true but also the false is credible.¹⁹ . . . And therefore I think that the credible is a subject correlative to belief, that is, to persuasion or faith. And belief, generally speaking, is an aspect of conclusions, as are opinion and knowledge. But knowledge derives from necessary causes, which cannot be said of opinion or of faith, which have contingent causes. Therefore it is plain that all the difficulty lies in knowing how to recognize the difference between opinion and belief. . . .

[40] First I say that persuasion concentrates on the particular as its instrument and means for proving its conclusions. And therefore it makes use of enthymemes and examples, both of which are lacking in universal propositions. . . . The means of proving conclusions are particulars, and they are ordinarily drawn from sensible objects. . . . And please note that I am speaking of belief and faith which originate in human arguments and not those founded in divine revelation. Hence we see that persuasion and belief concern the particular. But opinion always concerns the universal. This refers to the way of proving a conclusion rather than to the conclusion itself, for I am quite well aware that opinion [41] can be about the conclusion of some particular emotion which is involved in some particular subject. But still I say that the means by which one attempts to prove a conclusion are universal. . . . Persuasion derives from those things which can move not just the intellect but also the appetite. This is to say that persuasion, deriving from particular and sensible means, therefore derives from things which can also move the appetite; but opinion, deriving from universal types, therefore derives from things which do not have the power to move the appetite. . . . In infinite questions, in which natural things are treated in a persuasive way, there is produced in the human mind conviction alone without any stirring of the appetite. But whenever moral matters are involved in the same infinite questions and are primarily under the jurisdiction of good and bad, one cannot convince the human intellect without some stirring of the appetite, as the following example illustrates: As to whether one ought to choose a beautiful or an ugly wife, it is clear that many things could be said on both sides of the question which would have the power to stir the appetite, even if by its nature the ques-

tion is infinite.²⁰ Therefore, when Cicero says that infinite questions have as their end a conviction which must be chosen, he means that in all infinite questions treated in a persuasive manner there is always this end. But he does not absolutely deny that sometimes in infinite questions stirring of the soul has a place. With these considerations in mind, it can be concluded that the second difference, that between opinion and persuasion, is that persuasion can be derived from things which have the power to move the appetite. I say "can be derived" because it is not always so, as is seen in infinite questions about natural things which are treated in a persuasive way [42] that is with sensible and particular means. But opinion derives from things which cannot ever stir the appetite, for they are universals. Therefore the credible is the object of the kind of persuasion I have just now discussed.

And because we have already concluded, with the authority of Aristotle, that the credible is the subject of the poet's art, it seems that from what has been said we can establish three conclusions. The first is that because the poet always deals with the credible, he ought as a consequence to treat everything in a way consistent with credibility, that is, he ought always necessarily to use individual and sensible means to represent the things about which he writes, whatever they may be. And when he treats things pertinent to contemplative doctrine, he ought to make every effort to represent them with idols and sensible simulastra, which Empedocles did not do.²¹ He was therefore said to be a physicist more often than a poet. But in this respect Dante is certainly magnificent, as I will show more fully in the fifth book. For now we can be content with this single example in which, speaking of the holy and ineffable Trinity, he writes:

In the profound and clear being of the exalted light there appeared to me three turning wheels of three colors and a single extent. And the one seemed reflected from the other, as rainbow from rainbow, and the third seemed a flame breathing equally from the one and from the other.²²

And for this reason it happens that the poet frequently uses comparison and long, distinct parables. And whoever

asks why the poet is at least obligated to use this mode of the credible in his narrative must be satisfied with the following answer: the poet must speak to the people, among whom are many vulgar and ill-educated men, and therefore if he should present knowledge in a fashion [43] suited to the sciences, they would not understand him. For this reason he treats things in a credible fashion, that is, he teaches them by means of comparisons and similitudes taken from sensible things. And the people, who know that truth resides in sensible things as they are treated by the poet, easily believe that the same is true of intelligible things.

From this we can conclude that the poet is not forbidden to deal with things pertinent to the sciences and to the speculative intellect if he deals with them in credible manner, fashioning poetic idols and images, as Dante with most marvelous and noble art has presented the whole of intellectual being and the intelligible world itself to the eyes of everyone by means of idols and most beautiful images. I recall that in the *Phaedrus* Plato, exalting his own invention, wrote thus: "But none of the poets has ever treated or ever will treat the place above the heavens as it should be treated."²³ But if he had seen the third canticle of Dante, he would doubtless have acknowledged the inferiority of his own invention and given the palm to Dante, and therefore to the poets for knowing how to make idols and images appropriate to bringing the people to understand the quality of the supercelestial world. . . .

The second conclusion is that since the poet's subject is the credible, he ought therefore to place the credible in opposition to the true, the false, the possible, and the impossible; that is to say, he ought to rely more on the credible than on any of the others mentioned. Hence if by chance two things should be available to him, one false but credible and the other true but incredible (or at least scarcely credible), then the poet ought entirely to leave the true aside and follow the credible.

The third and last conclusion, which is almost a corollary to the two preceding, is that poetry, by relying more on the credible than on the true, ought to be classified under the rational faculty, which the ancients called *sophistic*. And to entirely understand this truth, which, if I am not mistaken, has up to now remained obscure, it must be known that the poetic art can be regarded as two modes: according as it concerns the laws of the poetic idol or according as it makes and forms the idol.

I say that the first mode ought to be called poetic and the second "poetry." According to the first mode, poetic is

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¹⁸*Poetics*, XXIV, 10, p. 64.

¹⁹See n. II above.

²⁰Mazzoni is referring to Cicero's dialogue *Of the Classification of Rhetoric* (Loeb edition, p. 357). "Questions . . . are of two kinds: one kind is limited by its referring to particular (*finium*) occasions and persons, and this I call a cause, and the other is *unlimited* (*infinium*), that is, marked by no persons or occasions, and this I designate a thesis." In this treatise Cicero generally assigns finite questions a role in moving the feelings and infinite questions the task of persuading the judgment in more general matters.

²¹See Aristotle, *Poetics*, I, 8, p. 50.

²²*The Divine Comedy*, "Paradise," XXXIII, 115-20.

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I say that the first mode ought to be called poetic and the second "poetry." According to the first mode, poetic is

an art which governs the idol and uses it and is part of the civil faculty,²⁴ as we will show presently.

According to the second mode the poetic art is that which forms and fabricates the idol and is a species of the rational faculty; and, as I have said, it is to be classified under sophistic, since it disregards the truth. But I recognize that I have offended the poets by giving their art, which until now has been considered divine, the title of sophistic, which is considered ugly and infamous. Therefore to console them some, I wish to pause a bit over the art of the sophists and at the same time show where it possesses good and where evil views. . . . [45] Sophistic was that which treated all things rhetorically, that is credibly, and which certainly argued somewhat boastfully about its propositions and chose feigned subjects, such as Orestes or Alcmaeon, imitating them both together and representing them by means of idols. That this representation-by idols and images was proper to the sophistic art is clearly shown by Plato in the *Sophists*²⁵ where he uses the term *εἰδωλοποιήματα*, or fabricator of images, as that which represents what appears to be true. This is also confirmed by Alexander Aphrodisias in his commentary on the *Elements* of Aristotle. Philostratus . . . wishing to prove that Prodicus of Ceos was also a sophist shows that he made a book in which he dealt with one thing pertinent to moral philosophy by means of idols and images, that is, the appetites for virtue and vice which in the young man struggle for supremacy.

And for this reason Prodicus of Ceos wrote a pleasant speech in which virtue and vice appeared to Hercules in feminine form. Vice was adorned and variously colored and Virtue was as chance found her. They made obvious offers to the young Hercules. Vice offered ease and softness and Virtue hardship and fatigue.²⁶

It seems to me then that it is reasonable to say that poetry should be classified under the ancient form of sophistic, since it also treats things credibly and speaks with such audacity that it claims by means of the Muse and Apollo to know all things. Certainly Hesiod as a poet has the lofty arrogance [46] to suggest that in an instant he learned all things past, present, and future; for this reason I am delighted with the opinion of a very learned commentator on the *Poetics* who believes that it is entirely inappropriate for the poet to

²⁴Rational principles for understanding the proper organization and functions of human society.

²⁵236, 239.

²⁶Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists*, 481 (Loeb edition, p. 9).

use words or ways of speaking in any fashion that might cast doubt on the things he says. For since he professes creditably above all, he ought to recount everything with great assurance and boldness. For this reason as well the poet deserves the name of sophist. But even more he deserves it because he is a maker of idols and images. . . .

Philostratus also says that the old sophists spoke freely of the gods and heroes, a subject firmly considered proper to poets. Therefore by this also we can conclude that poetry is a species of old sophistic. But to understand perfectly everything pertinent to this subject it is necessary to know all the other kinds of sophistic and then to see which are appropriate to poetry and which are not. . . . Old sophistic was not essentially different from the second sophistic, except that the old used fictitious names and the second used real names. Hence it can be said that iastic poetry is a species of the second sophistic and fantastic poetry a species of old sophistic. Now I believe that everyone is capable of understanding that Philostratus thought that the sophistic art set aside the true to concern itself with the credible and that he thought it worthy [47] and noble, not vile and infamous, as Boethius preferred to label it, and perhaps also Plato and Aristotle. But in order to reconcile those authors who censure and those who praise sophistic, it must be understood that sophistic was assumed to deviate in some way from the rules of genuine philosophy. Now genuine philosophy is accustomed to direct the intellect by means of truth and the will by means of the good. Therefore sophistic, which is totally the opposite of genuine philosophy, is accustomed to mislead the intellect by means of the false and the will by means of evil. This was the sort of sophistic censured by Plato, Aristotle, and all their followers, and it appears that Plato sought to include the poetry of Homer in this species of sophistic, as that which misled the intellect by representing falsehoods about the gods and heroes and which misled the will by the variety of its imitation and by stirring up our passions immoderately. . . . And therefore it can be said that any other poetry similar to Homer's may be classified under the sophistic censured by that philosopher. . . .

Therefore one species of sophistic censured by the philosophers is that which misleads the intellect by the false and the will by injustice. Likewise under that sophistic they classify that sort of poetry which produces the same disorders and which does not truly deserve the name of poetry since it does not form its idols in conformity with the laws of poetry for governing and using idols.

The other species of sophistic is that which Philostratus called the old sophistic and which, though it does offer feigned things to the intellect, does not mislead the will, but wholly and in every way tries to conform to what is

just. And this species of sophistic was not censured by the ancients. And if it should seem to anyone that it deserved blame for misleading the intellect by some falsehood, I say it must be understood that the ancient philosophers [48] (in this respect they were out of step with the truth of sacred theology) praised this distortion in certain instances when it was directed to an honest end. So Plato allowed his magistrates to lie to his citizens for the purpose of some public good. I leave out the fact that this kind of sophistic almost always contained some truth under the surface of first appearances. Now I say that fantastic poetry regulated by proper rules is part of the old sophistic, since it also submits feigned things to our intellect to control the appetite and many times contains the truth of many noble concepts under the surface of the fiction.

The third species of sophistic is what Philostratus called the second sophistic which does not propose feigned names or business, but true names and real events, upon which it discourses according to the laws of justice. . . . And this species is also called sophistic because even though it dealt with truth for the sake of justice, it nevertheless dealt with it in a credible way; hence it sometimes departed from truth when it recognized that falsehood was a more credible or a more effective instrument in persuading. . . . In my judgment iastic poetry ought to be classified under this third species of sophistic, for it represents true actions and people, though always in a credible way.

Therefore according to everything I have said about sophistic I believe that everyone can understand [49] fundamentals of the view that poetry is a rational faculty and that among the rational faculties it ought not to be classified with that which seeks to teach the truth and which opposes the truth to all other things, but under that which exerts its full force to seek out credible appearances and which opposes them to the truth. . . .

I conclude then with assurance that poetry is a sophistic art: because of imitation, which is its proper genus; because of the credible, which is its subject; and because of delight, which is its end. Also, because it is under that genus, because it has that subject, and because it concentrates on that end, poetry is many times forced to find a place for the false. . . .

[50] And therefore the credible is the subject of poetry. But because it is also the subject of rhetoric, it is still necessary to see in what mode the credible can become suitable to poetry and in what mode suitable to rhetoric, since we do not wish to fall into the error of those who prefer the verisimilar and false. I say, then, that the credible, insofar as it is marvelous, is the subject of poetry, because the poet must not only utter credible things but also marvelous things. Thus, when he can do so credibly, he falsifies human and natural

history and passes on to impossibilities.²⁷ . . . If there were presented to the poet two things equally credible, but one more marvelous than the other, even though it were false, but not impossible, that is what the poet ought to choose, rejecting the other.

But perhaps there is some doubt that the credible and marvelous can be found together with the true. And perhaps it can be thought that it was poorly expressed above, that poetry is sometimes capable of truth. I reply that there are some truths which are sometimes more marvelous than the false, not only in the natural world . . . but also in human history. . . . On this topic there remains only to deal with those [51] authorities who seem to prove that the false, insofar as it is verisimilar, is the subject of poetry. I say then in the first place that it is true that Aristotle remarked that Empedocles was more a physicist than a poet.²⁸ And this was confirmed by Plutarch in his book on listening to poetry in these words: "We do not know of any poetry without fables and fictions. For the verses of Empedocles and Parmenides, the *Theriac* of Nicander, and the sayings of Theognis are more often treatises which to avoid the baseness of prose took on the grandeur and rhythm of poetry as vehicles."²⁹ Now as for Aristotle, there are two ways of responding. The first is that he did say that Empedocles was more a physicist than a poet, but he did not say absolutely that Empedocles was not a poet, and thus, in affirming that he was more physicist than poet, he was in some way a poet, since, as the grammarians say, the comparative supports the positive.

The second way of responding to Aristotle is that it can be said . . . that Empedocles did not deserve the name of poet, not because he dealt with truth (for it has already been shown that poetry is capable of the truth) but because he dealt scientifically with things pertaining to the sciences, where he would be obliged, were he a poet, to treat them credibly; that is by making idols and images and joining to them a way of instructing the sensitive powers more often than the intellect. As for Plutarch, I say that he speaks either

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²⁷Mazzoni explores this point at some length in Book III: "[584] The true and perfect poet, then, prefers that sort of fable which has, among others, three conditions: novelty, credibility, and the marvelous. And if we wish to consider seriously these three conditions, we will discover that the fable in fantastic poetry is always the impossible credible, because the fantastic poet always presents the audience of his poem with an action which either has not taken place or has not taken place in the fashion initiated by the poet. Now what is above all impossible is an event which either has not taken place or has not taken place in the way revealed by the poet, since it would be impossible that past events would occur in a manner other than that in which they did occur. In any case, the clever poet unfolds his actions so as to make them credible to the people who listen to him."

²⁸See *Poetics*, I, 8, p. 55.

²⁹How a Young Man Ought to Study Poetry," *Moralia* (Loeb edition, Vol. I, pp. 83-85).

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of the true and perfect poet who (as I have said) ought sooner to be placed under fantastic rather than icaestic imitation; or, truly, what is apparently opposite to the views of Aristotle and Plato, that is that poetry has nothing at all to do with the truth. . . . To the text of Aristotle, in which he writes that the history of Herodotus spread out in verse would always be history and thus unworthy of the name of poetry, we reply that it is true: but it does not follow that history cannot in some way be a poem when it represents the marvelous as credible by means of idols and particularized images. But when it narrates in a way suited to history without making idols and images, even if displayed in verse, it always remains history. . . . [52] Also the true can be improved by narrating it in conformity with the credible and by making idols and images of it. And for this reason I believe that icaestic poetry, which takes its truth from history, can nevertheless on that account make many things its own by rendering that history in exact particulars.

As for the authority of Plato in the *Phaedo*, I say that he has written of fantastic poetry which always has a fabulous subject or creates a fictitious one or falsifies true history.³⁰ And therefore he says that the poet merits his name more for inventing his fable than for inventing his verses. Or it could be said that he finds a fable at the heart of each invention which is suited to poems and calls it a fable because thereby these subjects are more like the false and fabulous. But it ought to be said because of this that Plato does not believe that the true can be a poetic subject since in many other places he says quite the contrary. . . .

Summing up then what has been said above about the subject of poetry: it ought to be credible and at the same time marvelous; and linking this subject to the form which has already been made manifest, we can now say that poetry is an imitation made with harmony, rhythm, and verse joined to or accompanied by the credible and marvelous. . . .

To discover a cause peculiar to poetry with some assurance, I believe that there is no more certain way than to consider what that art is that reveals the use of poetry, because this, if I am not mistaken, will show us the origin and end of poetry. Hence I believe that the civil faculty is that which shows not only the use of poetry, but next considers the standards and rules of the poetic idol. I am drawn to this view by the following consideration, namely, that all natural forces [53] and arts which derive from human reason are usually directed towards contrary objects, as for example medicine, which not only deals with health and health-giving poisons

²⁷Mazzoni explores this point at some length in Book III: "[584] The true and perfect poet, then, prefers that sort of fable which has, among others, three conditions: novelty, credibility, and the marvelous. And if we wish to consider seriously these three conditions, we will discover that the fable in fantastic poetry is always the impossible credible, because the fantastic poet always presents the audience of his poem with an action which either has not taken place or has not taken place in the fashion imitated by the poet. Now what is above all impossible is an event which either has not taken place or has not taken place in the way revealed by the poet, since it would be impossible that past events would occur in a manner other than that in which they did occur. In any case, the clever poet unfolds his actions so as to make them credible to the people who listen to him."

²⁸See *Poetics*, I, 8, p. 55.

²⁹"How a Young Man Ought to Study Poetry," *Moralia* (Loeb edition, Vol. I, pp. 83-85).

³⁰Mazzoni may be referring to *Phaedrus*, 229-30 or 265, though in neither place does Plato make precisely these assertions.

but also with sickness and deadly poisons. And so we can say that the legal profession also is one which comprehends not only justice but also injustice.

Now given these considerations, I say that the civil faculty professes to understand not only the propriety of human actions but also the propriety of the cessation of these actions, which is opposite to the first propriety, as deprivation is to habit. But because someone might suspect that the habits of our intellect and of human arts are concerned only with positive contrariety, and not the negative, I therefore suggest that the positive and the negative are always the concern of the same art. As, for example, the natural philosopher not only considers the contrariety of motion insofar as it is positive, that is, the contrariety which is found in motion according to which it moves either upwards or downwards; but also he considers the negative contrariety which is implied in motion, and is its cessation, that is, stasis. Also zoology deals not only with the contrariety of difference which makes different species, but also with negative contraries, such as life and death. . . . But the cessation of activity . . . ought to dispose and prepare men so that they are more apt and eager for renewed activity. Therefore the same faculty [54] will provide the law of activity and of its cessation. And please note that I do not take cessation as total negation but as cessation of important and difficult activities. And so in the above meaning of cessation we include activities of pleasure and amusement which we engage in for recreation and entertainment. Thus it can be said that the contrariety either of activity or of cessation is not just negative . . . but also positive. It is negative insofar as cessation means an absence of important activity. It is positive insofar as the cessation of important activity contains some pleasant activity apt to restore the spirits tired out by some more serious business. . . .

Thus it seems to me that it can be firmly stated that, since this contrariety of cessation and activity is both negative and positive, it ought to be considered as part of one art and by one faculty. But the civil faculty is that which is concerned with the propriety of activity; therefore it ought also to be concerned with the propriety of cessation. In this are contained, as I have said, all activities done for amusement, that is, everything which gives pleasure. Therefore consideration of the legitimacy of pleasures will no doubt be pertinent in some way to the civil faculty and to moral philosophy. But of all the pleasures there is none more worthy, more noble, or more primary than that given by the works of poets. Therefore the civil faculty should take care to consider the norm and legitimacy of the pleasure of poetry first before all others. Now the fact that poetry was thought a pleasure by the ancients is shown . . . by the authority of Virgil, Horace, *Præface to the comic poet Plautus in the tenth book of the Po-*

Caesarea in the twelfth book of his *Evangelical Preparations*. . . .

All these considerations, it seems to me, make it reasonable to say that the civil faculty ought to be divided into two main parts, one of which deals with the principles of activity and has been given the general name of politics, or civil affairs. The other deals with the principles of cessation, or the law of recreation, and has been called poetics. And for this reason I believe that the *Poetics* is the ninth book of the *Politics*, and this belief of mine seems to me all the more reasonable because Aristotle in the eighth book of the *Politics* already begins to discuss music and the first principles of poetry so that step by step he may come to discuss the management of the civil faculty. So I can say that the first seven books of the *Politics* deal with the civil faculty in action and the last two (so to speak) deal with the civil faculty at rest, which we have just named poetics.

And therefore poetic is part of the civil faculty and is that which prescribes the norms, the rules, and the laws of the poetic idol for poetry. So that one may say that poetic deals with the concept of the idol, and poetry makes the idol. Hence in its genus poetic is the art governing and using the idol made by poets. . . . And poetry in its genus is the fabricating art of the idol which then is used by poetics and the civil faculty. Therefore we can add the efficient cause to what was written above relative to the definition of poetry and say: Poetry is an imitation made with harmony, number, and verses accompanied by and joined with credible or marvelous things which have been discovered by the civil faculty. . . .

[56] I say then that many people would find it most unusual (and with good reason) if one should ask writers whether delight or utility were the end of poetry. For if it is true that poetry is an imitative art, and that each imitative art has the idol as its object, and that idol . . . is of value only through representing and resembling, then it appears to me that one must say that poetry has no other aim than to represent and resemble. Therefore it is not reasonable to inquire whether the aim of poetry is to be useful or delightful. I suggest that if the aim of poetry were to be useful or delightful, it would not be an imitative art. . . .

[58] Now it ought to be known that, as Aristotle has said in the tenth book of the *Ethics*, [59] delight is an accident belonging to some activities, and among others it is no doubt quite natural to imitation, since it appears to be joined to imitation in such a way that no kind of imitation can be found that does not also give delight and pleasure.³¹ . . . Since, then imitation is always allied to delight, it has there-

fore happened that those who have wished to devise entertainments and amusements have created some sort of imitation. . . . We can cite the game of primero in which is represented the image of an ochlocracy, that is, the kind of republic in which the common people are more powerful than the nobles. For as in this sort of republic the nobles are weak and the common people are strong, so in the game the noblest cards, commonly called court cards, are the least valuable and of smaller worth than the other cards which because of their ignobility the common people have come to call *cartaccio* ["waste paper"]. Now since in this game imitation can be considered for its own sake and in this case has no other purpose than to represent the image of an ochlocracy, and since entertainments and amusements can be considered in such a way that we recognize no other ends for them than delight and pleasure; so I say that poetry can likewise be thought of as an imitative art, and as amusement and entertainment. [60] In the first instance it has as its aim the precision of the idol, that is, that things be imitated properly. But in the second instance it concentrates on the aims of delight and pleasure which are joined to good and perfect imitation. I conclude, therefore, that poetry as an imitative art has the precision of the idol for its aim, but as a thing to be used for amusement and recreation and to effect some cessation of more serious and strict business, it proposes delight as its aim, which derives from suitable imitation. Now this delight which poetry effects can be considered in two modes, that is, either for itself alone, free and without laws; or insofar as it is subordinate to and regulated by the civil faculty. In the first mode is the aim of that sort of poetry which was gathered under sophistic and is worthy of blame since it is such that it disorders the appetite with immoderate pleasure and makes it in every way rebellious to reason and also causes damage and harm to virtuous living.

This is the sort of poetry which Plato drove out of his republic. . . .

If, then, we [61] are to reason about the aim of this sort of poetry, we can certainly say that as an imitative art it should have the precision of the idol as its aim, but that as amusement it has only pleasure as its aim. But if this delight is considered insofar as it is regulated and given its quality by the civil faculty, it is necessary to say that it should be directed towards the useful. Consequently that kind of poetry which was classified under praiseworthy sophistic (this is, the sort which regulates the appetite and subordinates it to reason) would be considered as amusement qualified by the civil faculty and would have the useful for its end. . . .

[64] Now without any doubt I believe that, as regards the aim of poetry, this is true: that perfect poetry considers delight for the purpose of utility. . . . I saw then that true no-

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³¹See *Nicomachean Ethics*, X. IV.

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utility and insofar as it is amusement it has delight for its aim. But insofar as it receives its quality from and, so to speak, is given its character by moral philosophy, it places delight first and gives us profit afterwards. . . .

[69] But now to come to the end of this definition, I think that it would be well to assemble in a brief epilogue every thing mentioned above concerning the final cause of poetry. I say therefore that since the tongue is always an instrument of the concupiscible power and has gratification as its aim, but that nevertheless when it is considered as an instrument of the irascible power, its end is the defense of the animal soul, and that when it is considered as an instrument of the rational power, its aim is speech; so in the same way poetry is always an imitative art, and as such its end is always to represent the images of things directly. But nevertheless considered as recreation deriving its quality from the civil faculty, its aim is delight, but directed towards utility. From this premise it seems to me that we can conclude that poetry will admit of three definitions, according as it is thought of in three ways: as imitation, as pure enjoyment, or as enjoyment deriving its quality from the civil faculty.

In the first mode perhaps it can be defined thus: Poetry is an imitative art made with verses, number, and harmony accompanied with or joined to the credible marvelous and devised by the human intellect for the suitable representation of the images of things.

In the second mode perhaps this second definition will serve: Poetry is an imitative recreation made with verses, number, and harmony accompanied by or joined with the credible marvelous and devised by the human intellect for delight. . . .

[70] The third mode perhaps admits of this last definition: Poetry is an imitative recreation made with verses, number, and harmony accompanied by or joined to the credible marvelous and devised by the civil faculty to delight the people usefully. . . .

This is the sort of poetry which Plato drove out of his republic. . . .

If, then, we [61] are to reason about the aim of this sort of poetry, we can certainly say that as an imitative art it should have the precision of the idol as its aim, but that as amusement it has only pleasure as its aim. But if this delight is considered insofar as it is regulated and given its quality by the civil faculty, it is necessary to say that it should be directed towards the useful. Consequently that kind of poetry which was classified under praiseworthy sophistic (this is, the sort which regulates the appetite and subordinates it to reason) would be considered as amusement qualified by the civil faculty and would have the useful for its end. . . .

[64] Now without any doubt I believe that, as regards the aim of poetry, this is true: that perfect poetry considers delight for the purpose of utility. . . . I say then that true poetry is amusement and receives its quality from the civil fac-

From these three definitions follow necessarily four corollaries. The first is that poetry understood in the first mode is not regulated or governed by the civil faculty. The second corollary is that only poetry understood in the third mode is that which is regulated and governed by moral philosophy and the civil faculty. The [71] third corollary is that poetic, which considers the idol belonging to the first mode and at the same time considers the idol of the second mode, ought not in any way to be called a part of moral philosophy. The fourth and last corollary is that only the poetic which deals with the idol of the third mode of poetry is that which is worthy to be named part of the civil faculty, according to the rules of which each good poet ought to fashion his poem, as indeed Dante has done better than all the others. . . .

From
Book I

[278] I say, then, that the fantasy is the power of the soul common to dreams and to poetic verisimilitude. But because my opponents do not doubt of what I too believe, that the fantasy is the power upon which the dream is founded (which Aristotle said many times and which has been repeated more often by his followers), it is therefore well to explain that poetic verisimilitude is also based on the same power. The verisimilitude which is sought by the poets is of such a nature that it is feigned by poets according to their own will. Therefore it is necessary that it should be fashioned by that power which has the virtue of forming concepts in accordance with the will. Now this power cannot in any way be intellectual, for the intellectual power is necessary in producing concepts in accordance with the nature of objects. Hence the subtle [279] Scotus in many places in his *Sentences* says that the intellect is a capacity more natural than free. Therefore it is necessary that the power fitted to generate verisimilar concepts dependent upon the will be the power of the phantasy, called by the Latins *imaginative*. And all that we have said was stated first by Aristotle in the second book of *De Anima*:

It is in our power to imagine not only things which can be, but also those which cannot, such as men with three heads and three bodies, as Geryon in the

fables is supposed to have been, and as men with wings, like Zetes and Calais the sons of Boreas, and the Centaurs and Scylla and Charybdis. For in whatever way a painter may depict an animal of any form, so it is possible to create it in the mind. In addition when we think that some formidable and fearful calamity may occur, we immediately dismiss our courage and our whole body trembles, we shake, and we grow pale. . . . But when we build these things in our mind (as when we imagine terrifying earthquakes and the fierce aspects of wild beasts), we are not affected at all, no consternation follows, and just as paintings do not affect us, neither do visions nor those figments which we willfully gather together. From this we can distinguish imagination from opinion and apprehension.³²

Therefore if I am not mistaken we can clearly see that the fantasy is the proper power of the poetic fable, since it alone is capable of those fictions which we ourselves are able to create. [280] From this it follows necessarily that poetry is composed of feigned and imagined things, because it is based in the fantasy.

³²This quotation is not from Aristotle, whose remarks on the imagination are more cursory, but from the commentary of Themistius, philosopher and rhetorician of the fourth century A.D.

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