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Abstract
Symposium describes a synecdoche in Greek usage, in which a particular *poiesis*, the making of verses set to music, stands in for the generality of *poiesis*, production in its entirety. This passage provides Jean-Luc Nancy with a necessary premise for what he calls "the enigma of our time": *poiesis* and/or *techne*. But contrary to Socrates's warning, this trope continues to distort our contemporary understanding of production. Nancy inadvertently dramatizes this distortion by mistranslating Plato's account in a manner compatible with the Heideggerian contrariety, but incompatible with Nancy's convictions regarding the labor theory of value. By tendentially foreclosing philosophical consideration of productive relations, and condensing their antagonisms into a universalized mastery, this contrariety tends to frame problems in a manner that avoids politics and elides intersecting asymmetries of power founded on class, race and sex.

A word from the wise is not to be discarded,
O Phaedrus, but it is to be examined.
—Plato, *Phaedrus* (260a)

The Socratic project is founded on the fallibility of those reputed to be wise, and the necessity of examining their wisdom. The importance of fallibility is clear enough in the *Apology*, in Socrates's insistence that he is only wiser than others because he acknowledges his own ignorance. In *Phaedrus*, it is the basis of his distinction between the *sophoi*, the wise or learned, and the *philosophoi*, the friends, allies or comrades of wisdom. This distinction suggests that we can maintain a relation to wisdom, we can be on the side of wisdom, but we cannot incarnate or possess wisdom. Those called *sophoi* are therefore more properly called *doxosophoi*, those reputed to be wise. And yet Socrates does not debunk a view in order to dismiss or disqualify it from attention, since his relation to wisdom is maintained by his examination of conventional wisdom. In short, philosophy is defined in opposition to the rhetoric of devotion and disqualification, which now holds sway in social media but has long been deployed to accumulate prestige. When one refutes an opponent to disqualify them from attention, one presupposes the devotional fantasy of wholeness. By presuming

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that inconsistency or insufficiency proves an utterance to be unworthy of attention, one demonstrates faith in the prospect of an utterance that embodies the whole of wisdom.

Socrates is a figure for one who neither wholly accepts nor wholly discards the conventional wisdom, because each would be a form of judgment without examination. Convinced that no utterance is wholly and consistently wise, one approaches every view with interest, as though its mistakes are volitional and the portals of discovery.[1] Because it examines what is said without worship or condescension toward those who say it, philosophy is the opposite of both devotion and disqualification. In thus rejecting arguments from authority, the whole project is far more democratic, in principle, than the reliance on precedent and prestige that still characterizes conventional scholarship. One practical benefit of this approach is that it allows for a self-criticism that is more than mere self-abasement before the disapproval of a master or the masses. The promise of philosophy, as proposed in *Phaedrus*, is that of a transformative technique of inquiry: By examining our utterances, we objectify and transform the conditioning forces they indicate, which are otherwise inarticulable and inaccessible.

A demonstration of this technique is offered in *Symposium*, where the synecdoche of *eros* is identified as a formative trope that shapes a broad range of common opinions, framing debates by defining their terms in advance. That trope is defined by analogy to the synecdoche of *poiesis*, a usage in which poetry comes to stand in for production as such. But this poetic synecdoche is every bit as formative as the erotic, its conditioning force evident in its persistence as a necessary premise for what Jean-Luc Nancy calls "the enigma of our time": "art and/or technics" (5), the "Heideggerian formulation" of which is *poiesis* and/or *techne* (6). This formulation is the product of a long tradition, from antiquity through German Romanticism into contemporary theory, in which poetry as what Nancy has called "the literary absolute" is a privileged stand-in for all the arts. Poetry's synecdochal relation to the fine arts, and the fine arts' synecdochal relation to production in general, confers on *poiesis* a symptomatic significance as representative of our representations of making. Yet despite their significance, formative tropes like the poietic synecdoche rarely enter our awareness—in part because attending to them threatens to undermine the frames that constitute that awareness itself.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that Socrates would bring it up at a drinking party.[2] This was the sort of behavior that made powerful citizens view him as a corrupter of the young. In *Symposium*, Socrates recounts an observation by his teacher Diotima, to the effect that *poiesis*, the word

for making metrical verse set to music, was also the word for making in general (Plato 205a-205c). In what seems to be one of Socrates's playfully illustrative etymologies, he suggests that *poi-esis* literally indicates the act of bringing anything into being, much like our English word "pro-duction."[3] It can therefore be applied to any kind of making, but Diotima points out that only the particular art of composing and performing songs was called by the name of this broader notion of making. Her argument suggests this trope allows Greek speakers to forget that broader designation, assigning an ontological privilege to the role of poet that allows it to eclipse other productive roles. We will see that Nancy's passing reference to her observation inadvertently demonstrates that this function described by Diotima has persisted into contemporary usage, and continues to confuse our treatments of production, work and power.

The synecdochal usage of *poiesis* supports reference to the fine arts as both an exceptional instance and an essential form of production. It therefore allows us to speak of production without addressing the asymmetries of social power determined by one's role in productive relations—e.g., as master or slave. One way those asymmetries are elided is by universalizing the master's position, allowing the master's making to stand in for the slave's. This universalizing gesture is not an esoteric truth concealed beneath deceptive appearance, but an unexamined premise of common opinion, of just the sort that Socrates infamously drew out in his questioning. In the case we will examine here, the epistemological status of this overt but unattended truth is dramatized in the plain symptom of a philological error: Nancy's minor mistranslation of Plato's Greek, which renders it more consistent with Heidegger's contrariety but less consistent with Diotima's diagnosis. This alteration rationalizes the concept of production that Diotima presents as the irrational consequence of an unexamined usage, the synecdoche that figures *poiesis* in particular (i.e., poetry) as the essence or principle of *poiesis* in general (i.e., production), and therefore allows the fine arts to stand in for production in its entirety.

Though it is often treated solely as an alternative, Nancy's formulation "*poiesis* and/or *techne*" astutely indicates the conjunction that is also implicit in this contrariety. By positing the terms of scission, it determines a field of de-cision, one that tendentially forecloses philosophical consideration of productive relations by redirecting questions of work, power and production toward creation, creativity and the arts. This also tends to frame problems in a manner that avoids politics and history, treating as irrelevant the intersecting asymmetries of power between owners and workers, or masters and slaves—distinctions conditioned in the ancient world, as in our own time, by intersecting vectors of sexual, racial, cultural

and class difference. As a trope that conditions the definition of art and literature and the warrant for their study, the synecdoche of *poiesis* indicates a route to the fundamental fantasy of the humanities, marked by an oscillation and ambivalence in every attempt to define and evaluate art.

The Definition of Arts

Nancy's citation of the poietic synecdoche arises from his concern with the difficulty of defining art. That difficulty begins with the ambiguous singularity of "art," as a usage interchangeable with the singular plural phrase, "the arts," where the definite article implies an undefined unity named by the plural noun. He thus begins with an obvious question that usually goes unasked, concerning common opinion: "Why are there several arts and not just one?" (1). This question remains heretofore unasked, Nancy argues, because it has been obscured by "two simple and well-known" kinds of definition, which function to foreclose inquiry, allowing us to feel we know what art is without having actually reached a definition (2). As he examines these modes of pseudo-definition, it becomes clear that each presumes the other, each refers to the other as its guarantee, so that together they function to give the impression of a whole object where in fact one finds only partial indications.

Nancy names these generic modes of defining art *technical* and *sublime*, distinguished by their tendency to disavow either the singularity or the plurality of the arts, respectively (4). Nancy calls those definitions "technical" that concentrate on distinguishing or grouping arts or artworks according to ranks of "fineness," or by medium, genre, style, school, or whatever criterion. In contrast, sublime definitions tend to discount this plurality of the arts as "mere appearance," obfuscating the truth of art as "the expressive profusion of" a singular essence (3). We can comprehend this distinction in terms of extensional or intensional definitions: Technical definitions of art are concerned with the term's extension, enumerating and classifying the objects designated "arts," while sublime definitions are intensional, articulating the conditions that allow one to call something "art." Neither of these conventional modes of definition account for the arts in terms of both singularity and plurality.

Nancy does not develop, concerned as he is with the ultimate connection he wishes to make between the arts and the senses, how each type of conventional definition of the arts manifests its internal insufficiency by its external reference to the other type of definition. Technical definitions rely on the sublime definitions they exclude, and vice versa. This means that technical definitions tend to presume an intensional definition without explicitly accounting for it, taking for granted art's singularity in order to concentrate on the plurality of its extensions. In consequence,

technical definitions tendentially proliferate distinctions among the arts or their products, without questioning the outer bounds of that field. Focusing on questions of "internal distribution," determining how the arts should be ordered or hierarchized amongst themselves, these definitions tend to ignore the arts' overall "jurisdiction"—what counts as an art and what does not (Nancy 2-3). In this way, Nancy explains, technical definitions treat questions of the arts "in the register not of ontology, but of technology"—that is, such definitions differentiate the arts in terms of techniques and technologies, without answering the ontological question, "What is art?"

But while the technical definition tends toward unprincipled classification, the sublime definition tends toward an unclassifiable principle. Positing the singularity of the arts as an essential unity hidden behind or beyond the merely apparent plurality of practiced arts, this essence is always "just around the bend, all the more dignified by being less perceptible as 'art'" (4). This definitive tendency to posit an essential unity beyond the apparent plurality produces instability, as any revelation of the concealed essence places it in the realm of appearance, and thus conditions the demand for another concealed unity—one even more essential. Readers of Lacan will recognize in this figure desire's insatiable hunt for the object it posits behind its apparent object, a schema that Nietzsche criticized in Hegel's articulation of the "true world" posited beyond apparent phenomena. It is therefore fitting that Nancy initially evokes Hegel as an exemplar of the sublime approach, in which "a unique Idea, substance or subject" is discerned beyond "the manifestations or the moments" of the apparent plurality of arts (3). Nancy then links this to Heidegger's "Origin of the Work of Art," as another example of the sublime definition—despite Heidegger's efforts to present his philosophy of art as a refutation of Hegel's, and an alternative to both technical and sublime approaches. In "Origin," Heidegger quickly dismisses the technical unity commonly presumed for the arts as "an area of cultural achievement," but he also explicitly refuses Hegel's sublime definition, in which "art is considered . . . an appearance of spirit" (qtd. in Nancy 3-4). This refusal is an example of the instability Nancy imputes to the sublime definition, as it tends to define art "in excess of its own concept," exceeding itself by postulating another concealed essence beneath or beyond those previously revealed.

Heidegger's attempt to avoid the Charybdis of unprincipled classification causes him to veer toward the Scylla of unclassifiable principle, and this inevitability of one or the other definitional shipwreck indicates something amiss about the route itself. It suggests that we have reason to reexamine this interdependent contrariety, in which each approach promises definition, but in each, definition turns out to be impossible.

One approach designates extensions without providing an intensional definition that might determine the validity of its inclusions and exclusions; the other articulates an intension that explicitly refuses to situate itself within the extensional field of relevance made up of conventional designations. In this way, readers dissatisfied with a lack of principle in technical definitions are referred to sublime philosophies of art, while those dissatisfied with the apparent irrelevance of the latter are referred to the former. Thus, two inconsistent definitions of art comprise the fantasy of a single "whole" definition of art. As long as there is sufficient segregation between disciplines and discourses that concern themselves with technical or sublime definitions, anyone who questions the inconsistencies or incompleteness of a definition of art can be dismissed on the grounds of vulgarity or ignorance.

The Synecdoche of Poetry

The common ground upon which these types of definition can be distinguished is indicated by the consistency with which "poetry" is given pride of place. In the technical concept's internal distribution, poetry is prioritized as "the major pretender to first place among the beaux-arts," while in the sublime concept, poetry plays the privileged "role of index of their essence" (Nancy 6). Heidegger provides an example of this tendency, in both technical and sublime definitions, to assign poetry "a privileged position in the domain of the arts." Nancy observes that for Heidegger, poetry is essential or "original" with respect to the arts: "*All art* . . . is, as such, *poetry*." This dual privilege accorded to poetry—prioritized and prior, principal and at the same time foundational—yields "the Heideggerian formulation" of what Nancy calls "the enigma of our time": This is how "art and/or technics" becomes, in Heidegger, "poetry and/or technics."

In defining the privilege accorded poetry as first or essential among the arts, Nancy draws upon his earlier work in collaboration with Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe, which names the function of *poiesis* as "the literary absolute" in German Romanticism, and especially in the Schlegels's journal *Athenaeum*. While today we are familiar with Heidegger's definition of *poiesis* in relation to *aletheia*, truth as "unconcealing," Nancy reminds us that the Schlegels trace it etymologically to production, rather than to truth: "The absolute of literature is not so much poetry . . . as it is *poiesy*, according to an etymological appeal that the romantics do not fail to make. Poiesy or, in other words, production" (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 11). This "etymological appeal" to *poiesis* as etymon of "poetry" demonstrates that these writers are "less concerned with the production of the literary thing than with *production*, absolutely speaking." This question of what is

the *absolute* definition of production is distinct from consideration of the productive *relations* of a particular place and time, concerning itself with its "ontological" as opposed to its "technical" definition.

This concern leads Nancy to cite an ancient source of the usage, finding the precedent for the Schlegels's identification of poetry with this "absolute" sense of production in a passage from *Symposium*, where Socrates relates a homology between the usages of *eros* and *poiesis*. Socrates recounts a lesson of his teacher Diotima, who points out that *eros* is a usage characterized by synecdochal duality: "Having set aside one form of *eros*, we call it by the name given to the whole of *eros*" (205b).[4] And just as this usage allowed romantic desire to stand in for all desire, so in the usage of *poiesis* "one part is set apart . . . and designated by the name of the whole" (205b-c). In each case, one "form" or "aspect" (τι εἶδος), which is only "one part" (ἓν μόριον) of a "whole" (ὅλου) is distinguished from the entirety, "set aside" (ἀφαιρέω) from the larger conceptual domain of which it is a part. It is then called by the name of the whole from which it is "set apart" (ἀφορίζω). This synecdochal sacredness poses a problem for translation, especially given the familiarization of *eros* and *poiesis*, usually rendered in English as "love" and "poetry."[5] At best, these are often inadequate translations. In the case of Diotima's analogy, they are dangerously misleading.

For *eros*, the translation that best conveys Diotima's point in contemporary English is not "love," but "desire"; and for *poiesis*, the best translation must be "production," rather than "poetry." Diotima defines *eros* as a whole by reference to "all desire" (πᾶσα ἐπιθυμία), saying its "gist" or "main point" (κεφάλαιον) is desire for one's own benefit, or gain, and well-being (τῶν ἀγαθῶν . . . καὶ τοῦ εὐδαιμονεῖν) (205d). In other words, she defines *eros* as an object-oriented striving, as opposed to indifference or repulsion. Diotima points out that desire admits of distinction according to its "various orientations" (τρεπόμενοι πολλαχῇ), which she differentiates according to object: desire for wealth or prestige, desire for gymnastic exercise or sport, and desire for wisdom. She thereby establishes this most general sense of desire can be directed at an object of any kind, but it also specifically names the kind of romantic, sexual desire directed at a beloved. In contemporary English, "desire"—as distinct from the more chaste and physical "affection," or the more distant and intellectual "admiration"—lends itself to sexual connotation because it can be applied to a sexual object. The same cannot be said of "love," which is just as often used to designate parental or familial feelings as it is romantic or sexual ones, whereas one is not likely to say one "desires" one's parent or one's child. So Diotima's point is better translated by "desire" than "love," by saying that "having set aside one form of desire, we call it by the name

given to the whole of desire." This ambiguity of more and less restricted usages that Diotima describes is also discernable in "desirous" in a way that it is not in "erotic," for example, though the latter is the more direct English relative of *eros*—because "eroticism" more exclusively designates sexuality without also naming the more general orientation of "desire."

A similar dynamic obtains in regards to *poiesis*: Though conventionally translated as "poetry," the relation Diotima describes does not obtain in that English word as it does in the Greek one. In its more general sense, Diotima reminds her student that *poiesis* names the broadest concept of "making"—offering something like an "absolute" definition of "production": "The principle of anything going from not being into being is *poiesis*" (205c). This definition makes it clear that, etymologically, the most apt translation of *poiesis* in general is "production"—from *ducere*, 'lead' or 'guide' and *pro-*, 'forth'—as the relevant sense here is trajection into being. And in its more particular sense, Diotima's characterization of *poiesis* as concerning the musical and metrical (περὶ τὴν μουσικὴν καὶ τὰ μέτρα) makes clear that the ancient Greek conception of poetry is substantially broader than a modern English speaker's. While contemporary poetry is by no means the reductively textual art some suppose—performance and musicality being more central to even its textual function than usually acknowledged—there is nonetheless no longer any habitual understanding of poetry as metrical verse sung to musical accompaniment, which Diotima takes for granted in her Greek context.

To translate that ancient and foreign context into a contemporary American one, it might prove more illuminating to render Diotima's notion of *poiesis* by reference to song. In contemporary popular music, and especially in electronic music, one person can make an entire "production"—that is, an entire song or album—because the state of technology allows one person alone to perform all the labor previously divided among a variety of performers, craftspeople and technicians: not only the performance, which may once have required several instrumentalists and singers, but also the composition and writing, recording, mixing, etc., that once required several artists and/ or technicians. Because no word existed to name these total makers of songs, they came catachrestically to be called "producers." The usage demonstrates some continuity with other fields of "arts and entertainment," in which "producer" has long designated responsibility for the organization and oversight of a whole "production."[6] So we can infer that this most recent extension of the usage "producer," to name one responsible for the orchestration of a song's multiple aspects—generic, tonal, rhythmic, melodic, etc.—is named by analogy to the similar tasks performed by a producer in other forms of

art, such as film or theater, overseeing and harmonizing the multiple aspects of a production.

This analogy between the contemporary producer and the ancient poet is far from perfect, as we have no perfectly analogous profession to what Diotima calls *poietai*, its various elements having been separated or recombined in other professions. And even where the bardic tradition to which Diotima refers persists, we tend to understand it as a deliberate anachronism or "historical reenactment." But an analogy between Diotima's *poietai* and a contemporary "producer" of songs—even if it does not necessarily translate the cultural centrality and familiarity of the term in her society—can at least provide us with a framework in which we better understand the synecdochal relation of production as a whole and production in particular, as she defines it. So with all this in mind, we can render Plato's Greek in this way:

> You already know that production is multiple: For the cause of anything going from not being into being is "pro-duction," as indeed the business of all crafts is production, and these craftspeople are all producers. . . . But as you know, not all of them are called "producers"; different ones carry different names: From all of production, a single part is set apart—concerning musical verse and rhythm—and called by the name of the whole. It alone is called "production," and we call only those who carry out this part of production "producers." (205b-c)

Compare this to a passage from the more familiar translation by Fowler: "The productions of all arts are kinds of poetry, and their craftsmen are all poets." The more literal translation proposed above seems less compatible with contemporary doxa than Fowler's, conveying the strangeness intended by Diotima's argument, which is obfuscated by the familiarizing effects of Fowler's conventional readings of τέχναις as "arts" and ποιήσεις as "poetry."

That familiarizing translation also yields more flattering connotations for both poets and craftspeople: Where poetry appears as the essence of all production, artists may bask in the amber glow of earthy labor, and other artisans receive their share in the diamond shine of art's dignity. But this mutual benefit only highlights the convention according to which poet and manual worker are roles usually defined as mutually exclusive, as an exception proves a rule. On further consideration, this usage renders the poet whole, and all other workers partial, treating "poetry" as a prism: In this view, all makers are some particular kind of poet, a ray of refracted partial color specified from the whole white light of poetry. All makers are partial, therefore, except the poet—an *arche-tekton*, a master maker or total producer, comprising in one undifferentiated core the dazzling

variety of possible productions differentiated through innumerable facets.

To sharpen the point: Such connotations enact precisely the error Diotima is attempting to define. She articulates this synecdoche of production to indicate its invisibility in ordinary usage, not to endorse or justify it. She is not arguing that poetry *is* the essence of making or production as such, but instead she is pointing out that "poets" are named *as if* it were—despite the fact that poetry is merely one among many kinds of making. Diotima emphasizes that, while poetry "is called by the name of the whole" (ὅλου), this usage effaces the fact that it is simply "one part set apart from" (ἓν μόριον ἀφορισθὲν) the entirety of production, to which it belongs. She gives no reason why either poetry—or any of what we now call the "fine arts," for that matter—should be given precedence of any kind, over another fine art or over productive labor in general. Aristotle's poetics will later attempt to rationalize this privilege by reference to the principle of *mimesis*, and specifically the emulation of a higher class and type of man. But Diotima's point is that one finds no rationale for it in ordinary usage, only evidence of the presumption. Logically, "production" includes painting, poetry or any other "fine art" in precisely the same way and to the same extent that it includes metalworking or carpentry. And yet, in common usage, one kind of making is set apart from the rest, implicitly elevated to essential status by a conventional synecdoche.

The *Abusio* of Production

In this usage, *poiesis* in particular stands in for *poiesis* as a whole, *pars pro toto*, and so we may characterize poetry as a synecdoche of production. But we should emphasize that this describes a usage, rather than asserting a truth: The usage "poetry" has long functioned as a synecdoche of production, but this does not necessarily mean that the activity of making poetry truly epitomizes production as such. Nancy seems to follow the Schlegels in blurring this distinction, citing this usage as if its antiquity demonstrated its truth, describing it as part of a "first, immemorial division, delivered up like a raw fact of language" (6). But of course, to note that people have long believed a thing is not to demonstrate its rationality, verifiability, naturalness or any other putative criterion of truth. Indeed, the necessity of distinguishing among measures of antiquity, credibility and veracity should be obvious to those of us who would be excluded from this very discussion if we accepted ancient beliefs supporting misogyny, imperialism, enslavement or anti-Semitism, among so many other pernicious disqualifications.

Diotima clearly acknowledges that the usage of *poiesis* she describes is established in common opinion, but she just as clearly rejects its veracity and its rationality, saying that to use this figure is to "misuse"

(καταχρώμεθα) the name (205b). Etymologically, *catachresis* as "misuse" carries connotations of "overuse" or "using up," as the downward motion indicated by κατα- is joined to χρῆσις as "use" or "enjoyment," to imply the diminution of available use. A brief review of ancient rhetorical definitions of catachresis shows that, in using this term, Diotima not only calls into question the veracity of the synecdoche of *poiesis*, but also troubles Nancy's imputation of "rawness," even as it indicates the internal logic by which the Schlegels would come to designate poetry as the essence of production.

As a rhetorical figure, the Romans translated *catachresis* with *abusio*, though this term does not necessarily imply disapproval: Quintilian praises *abusio*, which he defines as the deployment of an existing term to denote that for which there is no name (8: 6.31-34)—just as we surmised that "producer" might have been applied to the single makers of entire songs by analogy to theater or movie producers, who organize all aspects of a production. For Quintilian, this extension of an already existing word is a more prudent and conservative alternative to ὀνοματοποιία, the making (ποιία) of new names (ὄνομα). Quintilian often argues from Cicero's authority, but in this case their definitions diverge in a notable way, though they agree in describing catachresis as a kind of word substitution. Cicero reports that Aristotle classifies catachresis as a kind of *translatio*, metaphor, because it is a form of exchange or interchange, "which rhetors call ὑπαλλαγήν, where words are exchanged for other words, and grammarians call μετωνυμίαν, where names are transferred" (27.93-4).[7] But Cicero specifies that catachresis names those cases in which "we use a related word, if it is needful either for pleasantness or propriety." In other words, while Quintilian limits his definition to the function of supplying a name where there is none, Cicero defines catachresis to include a euphemistic aspect.

Just as Cicero relates catachresis to metonymy, so Quintilian's examples indicate the close relation between these terms, defining them with reference to examples of synecdoche (8: 6.23). He offers three examples of catachresis: *acetabula*, *pyxides*, and *parricida*. The first names a dish for serving vinegar, made shallow and with a wide mouth for dipping, but its name was applied to all dishes with a similar shape (Smith, Wayte and Marindin). Similarly, *pyxides* denotes a box made from πύξος, or boxwood, but eventually came to name boxes made from other sorts of wood, and even those made from metal. Finally, Quintilian notes that if a Roman killed his brother or mother, it was still called a "parricide," though the latter primarily and etymologically denotes the murder of one's father. So in Quintilian's definition, catachresis comports with synecdoche insofar as one particular instance lends its name to all members of the class to which

it belongs; but it differs from synecdoche insofar as in each example, the synecdochally named part is seen to be the origin of the whole class. It is in this sense that Quintilian can reserve catachresis for naming what did not otherwise have a name. A contemporary analogy would be to brands that gave rise to classes of products: Any photocopy was, for a time, called a "Xerox," because that company had invented the photocopier, and thus had produced objects for which there was not yet a name. The invention of facial tissues by Kleenex caused them to be called by that brand name, no matter what firm manufactured them.

The synecdoche of *poiesis* applies this logic to production as such, assigning art the privileged role of origin and principle of all production. Fowler's translation of Diotima's point would appear to be an example of Quintilian's catachresis: "The productions of all arts are kinds of poetry, and their craftsmen are all poets." In this formulation, one might take poetry to be the origin and principle of all *poiesis*, as other kinds of production "are kinds of poetry." That is, in comparison to poetry—which as Nancy and Heidegger note, functions conventionally as essence of the fine arts—all other productive labor is a limited derivative, receiving its name from the original, and thus essential or prototypical instance. This is what we have described as a "prismatic" concept of poetry, though with Xerox and Kleenex in mind, we might also call it the "trademark" concept of poetry.

But we get a different impression than that given by Fowler if we recall the aforementioned points about translating *poiesis*, and place ourselves on the set of a film "production." There we could indicate the many bustling workers that make that production possible—set designers, actors, lighting and camera people, craft services, writers, directors, et al.—and amidst all those workers we could say, closely reproducing Diotima's argument:

> The business of all these crafts is production, and these craftsmen are all producers. But even so, not all of them are called "producers," but different ones carry different names. From all of this production, a single part is set apart, and called by the name of the whole. It alone is called "production," and we call only those who carry out this part of production "producers."

With this, we might have a better sense of the social implications of Diotima's argument: There is something at least questionable—if not unseemly—about referring to one person, with particular duties that make up only a small part of the overall production, as its "producer." That particular job is implicitly universalized when it is assigned a grammatical role as agent and cause of the entire endeavor, the producer of the production. All those other workers, busily producing that production, are tendentially diminished by comparison, as if their contribution could

be subsumed beneath and credited to the (largely managerial) labor of one person.

In the case of the music producer, one could argue that even if others contributed to a song, their subsumption beneath the producer's title is legitimated by the single "vision" that occasioned their work. This role of the producer in convening and orchestrating all other contributions to a single production comports with our understanding of the artist as "mastermind," a version of what Aristotle refers to as the *arche-tekton*, which emphasizes deliberation or "intention" as the source of making. This is how we often rationalize the ownership of a small-scale capitalist enterprise, which are difficult to analyze in terms of productive relations, because they concentrate so many different roles in the single person of the owner-operator. In such "small businesses," it is easy to legitimate the capitalists' ownership of the product as a fair reward for their labor and risk. This goes some distance toward explaining the disproportionate rhetorical emphasis on small business by defenders of "free markets," even though neoliberal policies are historically just as disproportionate in the benefits they entail for the largest firms.

However, the example of a film set presents a more troubling case than the owner-operated small business firm. In the case of a film, it is more difficult to rationalize the ownership of the product by "producers" who contribute only the capital. Such producers own the final product and all the profits it makes, apart from shares otherwise specified by contract, even if that product has been conceived and made completely by others. Those other makers—including in many cases the director, the actors, and the entire crew—are paid only wages, even if those wages often far exceed the national average. This distribution demonstrates that the capitalist system is organized to reward ownership of wealth, even when the owner does no work at all, far better than any kind of work is rewarded.[8] In that case, the synecdoche of production begins to appear as an example of Cicero's definition of catachresis, as a kind of euphemism for what is unpleasant or indecent to discuss. Of course, the overwhelming majority of wealth is not earned in compensation for labor, but owned in consequence of investment. In other words, it is not owned by those who have worked hard to start a business or ply their trade, but instead by those who own enough wealth that it produces more wealth. A stark contemporary example was provided by Mitt Romney's disclosure of his tax returns for 2011, which showed that he earned "$13.69 million in income" (Rucker et al.), mostly from investments and interest during a period in which his assets were in a blind trust, preventing him from involvement in their management (Politico). In other words, while he was legally barred from performing any investment or wealth management

labor, Romney's wealth earned him $13 million. That year, 90.9% of US households earned wages amounting to less than $150,000 (US Census Bureau). This is an obscenity that cries out for euphemism.

Owners of capital like Romney own this passive income from returns on investment, while the workers who produce it are only compensated for their labor-time in the form of wages, not by a share in the profits their labor produces. This difference in compensation—that is, the qualitative difference in the manner of compensation for investment as opposed to wages—is the principle of class contradiction that Marx explains in *Capital*. His theory of surplus-value shows that wages as a form of compensation can only be accounted for by the same calculation one performs for the cost of machinery and other instruments of production: That is, just as the cost of a productive instrument is the cost of its replacement amortized over its productive life, wages can only be explained as determined by the cost of reproducing workers, amortized over the duration of our productive lives. Because workers are compensated like machines or tools of production, it is unsurprising that we are treated like tools or machines in other ways as well. This includes the fact that consumers of labor are constantly searching for ways to drive down its cost.

The distinction between modes of compensation defines the antagonism between classes: The compensation for capital is a share of the final product as profit, while the compensation for work is a wage that reproduces one's capacity to work. Because the worker's wage is a cost of production, it subtracts from the profits leftover for the owner, and this drives the class struggle of owners against workers. Like any other productive instrument, cheaper costs for workers mean more profits, and so owners seek to cheapen the cost of reproducing a worker, just as they seek cheaper and more productive instruments in other categories. The cost of reproducing workers' lives can be cheapened by reducing the cost of training, and therefore by simplifying and subdividing productive roles, or by reducing the cost of bodily maintenance, by driving down the standard of living. Those incentives also make it imperative for the owner to reduce any subjective factors that might unnecessarily inflate the objectively necessary minimum costs of human productivity—subjective factors like collective organization, which tends to increase workers' demands, or like aspiration to the leisure necessary for intellectual fulfillment and cultural development.

In this way, class antagonism makes production and enjoyment mutually exclusive: Insofar as one produces, it is not for one's enjoyment, and insofar as one enjoys, it is not one's own product. Workers do not

own, enjoy or freely dispense with the product of their work, and owners do not produce the product they own, enjoy and dispense with. The synecdoche of production rationalizes this antagonism between production and enjoyment, and between producers and owners, representing this antagonistic contradiction between work and enjoyment as a necessary ontological condition of human life, though it is demonstrably a result of capitalist productive relations. Of course, Nancy elsewhere acknowledges Marx's incontrovertible reasoning regarding the labor theory of value (*Globalization*), so presumably he would not disagree with any of the foregoing standard explanation of Marx's theory of surplus-value. And yet his reading of Diotima does not reveal *poiesis* as an *abusio* of production. Rather than acknowledging the contradiction it constructs between roles of production and enjoyment, Nancy reads Diotima as articulating an ontological division between products and processes of production—that is, between enjoyment and production. This is explained by the unacknowledged contradiction between Nancy's Marxian convictions regarding the labor theory of value and his commitment to the Heideggerian premise of a contrariety between *poiesis* and *techne*. The antagonistic contradiction this indicates between Marx and Heidegger, which is an entailment of what Benjamin observes is the necessary antagonism between generic communism and generic fascism, finds its principle in their mutually exclusive definitions of production.

That principle is indicated by a symptomatic error in Nancy's reference to the passage in *Symposium* where Diotima describes the synecdoche of production. At first glance this appears to be an inconsequential typographical error: Nancy gives us "*poieseis ergasiai tekhnais*," instead of Burnet's standard "τέχναις ἐργασίαι ποιήσεις" (205b), transposing *techne* and *poiesis*. However, this transposition calls attention to a much more consequential alteration in Nancy's translation. In this isolated Greek phrase, his transposition need not affect one's reading, because the declension of these nouns remains unaffected by their order. In either order, the plural noun τέχναις is in the dative case. Both ἐργασίαι and ποιήσεις could be in the nominative case in this form, but only for ποιήσεις could this form also be used for the accusative. Therefore ἐργασίαι must be read in the nominative, as subject, ποιήσεις in the accusative, as direct object, and τέχναις in the dative, as indirect object. This means in the larger phrase from which Nancy cites, "ὥστε καὶ αἱ ὑπὸ πάσαις ταῖς τέχναις ἐργασίαι ποιήσεις εἰσὶ," the most literal rendering would be: "and therefore (ὥστε καὶ) the works (αἱ . . . ἐργασίαι) classed under all the crafts (ὑπὸ πάσαις ταῖς τέχναις) are productions (ποιήσεις εἰσὶ)."

But Nancy translates "*poieseis ergasiai tekhnais*" as "creations produced by techniques or by arts" (6), apparently reading *poieseis* in the nominative, *ergasiai* as verb, and *tekhnais* in the dative.[9]

Nancy specifies that in his translation, *poiesis* stands in for the product and *techne* for the mode or process of production. These two are divided, he claims, by labor, "the producing action, *ergasia* or *ergazomai*." But the translation above clarifies that the ἐργασίαι are the products, usually classed under the names of the various τέχναις, in this context "trades" or "crafts," by which they are produced. Diotima reminds her student that because they are all *produced*—by whatever crafts or trades (τέχναις)—they must all be understood as ποιήσεις, "productions." In short, where Nancy claims this "division separates . . . the name of the product, *poiesis*, from the name of the process . . . *techne*," Diotima demonstrates the opposite, observing that the *ergasiai* of all *tekhnais* are *poieseis*, the products of all crafts are productions.

The Subject of Work

The division of product from process leads to the conflation of the antagonistic positions of worker and owner. The mistranslation of *poiesis* and *techne* as product and process leads Nancy to infer that "what has thus divided at the origin is the producing action, *ergasia* or *ergazomai*, the act whose subject is the *demiourgos*, the one who works, who puts to work" (6). In contrast, Diotima indicates the unnecessary, conventional nature of the distinction between *poiesis* and other *tekhnais*, and therefore between *poietai* and other *demiourgoi*. The effect of Nancy's mistranslation is similar to that we observed in Fowler's: Diotima's point is reversed, and the distinctions she seeks to undermine or debunk are instead intensified and even hypostatized. Rather than acknowledging a distinction without sufficient reason within the domain of labor, Nancy's formulation posits an apparently well-founded qualitative difference between product and process.

By defining *techne* in terms of process, Nancy demonstrates that he follows Heidegger in comprehending "poetry and/or technics" as a definitively asymmetrical or unequal division, in which *techne* names the various means to *poiesis* as the end of any production.[10] In Heidegger's lectures on Nietzsche, delivered as he was composing "The Origin of the Work of Art," this inequality of *poiesis* and *techne* functions as the occasion for a critique of Greek metaphysics and the premise for an alternative approach to the question concerning art. He argues for an essential disparity between the two, privileging *poiesis*, while claiming that the ancient Greeks made no such distinction: "We have long known that the Greeks name art as well as handicraft with the same word, *techne*" (Heidegger,

Nietzsche 80). As we have seen, Plato's passage explicitly contradicts this, as Diotima demonstrates the purely conventional figure by which fine arts are privileged over other crafts in common usage, without apparent reason. But Heidegger seems to assume that the conventional values implicit in this Greek usage will be understood as evidence of truth. He cautions against mistaking the homonymy of *techne* for the lack of a distinction: "Because what we call fine art is also designated by the Greeks as *techne*, we believe that this implies a glorification of handicraft, or else that the exercise of art is degraded to the level of a handicraft" (Heidegger, *Nietzsche* 81). Just as in Fowler's translation, Heidegger's reading of the synecdoche of *poiesis* seems to assume as its premise the validity of the privilege common opinion assigns to fine arts, ignoring the lack of distinguishing principle. In other words, for Heidegger, it is obviously unjust to "degrade" the masterful making of fine arts to equal status with the slavish making of handicrafts.

Heidegger thematizes the putative equalization of fine arts and handicraft in the Greek usage of *techne* as definitive of aesthetics, a "concept . . . which comes to guide all inquiry into art" (80). "Aesthetics begins," Heidegger claims, in "the age of Plato and Aristotle" with the equation "art is *techne*." He therefore seems to be critiquing aesthetics when he stresses that *techne* should not be defined in terms of production, and should instead be understood as a kind of knowledge (81). He repeats the point in another essay composed in the same period, this time with reference to Aristotle's *Physics*: "*Techne* does not mean 'technique' in the sense of methods and acts of production, nor does it mean 'art' in the wider sense of an ability to produce something. Rather, *techne* is a form of knowledge; it means: know-how in, i.e., familiarity with, what grounds every act of making and producing" (Heidegger, "On the Essence" 192). But we have seen that in Diotima's usage, *techne* is not at all a homonym that means both "art" and "handicraft." Instead, she treats the *ergasiai* of all *tekhnais* as *poieseis*, the works of all crafts as productions.

Aristotle remains consistent with this precedent, just as Heidegger does, by defining techne as true reasoning concerning *poiesis* as making (1140a). So if we are to think of a term that denotes something like technique, but only as it applies to making, we may well think of the contemporary English usage of "craft." This single word can designate know-how associated with various kinds of production without equalizing their prestige or value, just as we can now speak of the "craft" of poetry, of fiction or of songwriting, without necessarily equalizing their value with the "craft" of carpentry, of cooking or of plumbing. "Craft" in this sense refers to a set of skills and knowledge germane to a certain kind of making, the know-how necessary to make certain kinds of products. It

would be just as inconsistent with Aristotle's usage as with Heidegger's to "aver that *techne* means hand manufacture" (Heidegger, *Nietzsche* 81), because in Aristotle, just as in Heidegger, the term applies to the know-how necessary for any "act of making."

Heidegger's point that "*techne* is a form of knowledge" agrees with Aristotle's classification of *techne* as one of five ways "the mind (*psuche*) arrives at truth (*aletheuei*)" (1139b). These are: "craft (*techne*), conviction (*episteme*), prudence (*phronesis*), wisdom (*sophia*), intellect (*nous*)." It is in this sense that we might think of *techne* as "know-how." But just as Heidegger warns that "*techne* does not mean 'technique,'" so Aristotle's system defines *techne* as know-how only concerning making (*poiesis*), unlike the contemporary usage of "technique," which we will see could also apply to activities Aristotle would class as "doing" (*praxis*). In Aristotle, *poiesis* names production as a kind of generation that is directed at an external end (i.e., a product). Productive activity is therefore *desirous* activity, insofar as it is directed toward an end (*telos*) other than itself. This external aim distinguishes "a thing made" (τὸ ποιητόν) from "a thing done" (τὸ πρακτόν): If one is making dinner, this implies an aim apart from the making—namely eating—no matter how much one may enjoy the process of making. In Aristotle's sense, then, preparing the food is making something in order to do something with it, while eating dinner is doing something one has set out to do. Because, in this definition, doing is the end of making, Aristotle privileges the action of the master who enjoys the meal over the production of the meal by his slaves. In this way, Aristotle can denigrate producers, defining their activity as bestial and slavish because it aims at enjoyment (*hedon*), while valorizing the masters' enjoyment of their products, which allow for the masters to pursue other aims.

For Aristotle, as for Heidegger, *techne* names know-how concerning *poiesis*. Aristotle defines *poiesis* as making that involves deliberation, as distinct from the generation that occurs in nature (*phusis*). But in *Politics*, Aristotle denies the capacity for deliberation to slaves, women and "barbarians"—all those who perform the productive and reproductive labor in Greek society. In Aristotle's system of definitions, the deliberative faculty is what distinguishes the classes Nancy conflates—"those who work" and "those who set to work"—rationalizing the latter's privileged position in an asymmetrical system of productive relations. Because Aristotle denies that slaves and women possess the deliberative faculty, and yet they perform productive labor, the deliberative aspect must be accounted for by another—namely, the master, as "mastermind" of the production. In this way, the productive activity of slaves can be depicted as merely the animal means to the productive ends of their masters, in much the same

way that oxen could be said to be fit only for bestial labor, and the labor they perform would be credited to the human who drives them. Aristotle places animals in the list of beings lacking deliberation alongside women, children, non-Greek "barbarians" and slaves. If the masculine Greek master provides the deliberative aspect of production, while the woman or enslaved person he legally owns is merely the animal instrument he uses to accomplish his ends, then it would follow that he as master should legally own the product of all this labor. By inventing substantial differences between beings that disqualify some from the capacity for deliberation, Aristotle is able to rationalize the property relations of imperialist and patriarchal enslavement.

Clearly, Aristotle's metaphysical evaluations are not irrelevant to his historical and social position: His definitional premises construct the terms in which one can only infer that existing relations of production are reasonable, the result of just distribution in accord with material differences. By accepting Aristotle's definitions, therefore, one is tendentially committing oneself to the evaluative conclusions that inevitably follow from them. This also helps to make sense of the thorny topic of the relation between Heidegger's ontology and politics. Though he claimed to be disagreeing with Aristotle, Heidegger was in fact reproducing many of his definitional premises (as had the primary figures of Western ontology before him), and thus it is not surprising that he would also end up committed to a similarly imperialist and racist politics.[11] And while Nancy is clearly opposed to that fascist politics, his adoption of Heidegger's terms, which are in agreement with Aristotle's definitions, inevitably produces conclusions consistent with those terms, and inconsistent with Nancy's other political commitments.

Instead of observing the *abusio* regarding producers—by which a small minority of those involved in production are given title to it, constructed as its origin and essence—Nancy's formulation conflates, in the figure of the *demiourgos*, "the one who works" and "the one . . . who puts to work." This conflation elides the entirety of the antagonism of class struggle, which is precisely the opposition of the interests of those who work and those who put to work. By comparing the Athenian context of the Socratic speech with our own, we can see this opposition comprises three contemporary antagonisms, rationalized by reference to the aestheticizations of class, race and sex: first, what we would now call the capitalist antagonism between owners and workers, with its referent in private property; second, the imperialist and white supremacist antagonism between the enslaved person of color and the white master, with its referent in race; and third, the patriarchal antagonism between the woman's domestic and reproductive labor and the man's lordship over

the family and home, with its referent in sex. To conflate or equate "both sides" of these antagonisms is to erase the asymmetry of these exploitative and oppressive relations—whether in ancient Athenian society or in our own contemporary contexts.

This conflation of two distinct and unequal positions in productive relations tendentially erases the visibility and mutes the voice of those in the less powerful position. By identifying the exploited with their exploiters, who have more social prestige, power and voice, exploiters are given warrant to speak for those they exploit. As a result women, people of color, enslaved people and workers need not be consulted, because their views and interests can be adequately and properly represented by their white male property-owning masters. It is notable that Nancy's other writings leave little room to doubt his concern for social equity and human equality, indicating that he would not want to advocate such a position. Unfortunately, in taking as his point of departure the Heideggerian misreading of the synecdoche of production, Nancy's path is diverted away from his stated concerns for equity and inclusion. He is inadvertently committed to the euphemistic *abusio* of production as an entailment of the synecdoche of *poiesis*, conditioning his embrace of the Heideggerian formulation of our time's enigma. In this, Nancy serves to caution all those who have not traversed the fundamental fantasy of art as synecdoche of production, which is also the fundamental fantasy of mastery: If a thinker of such good faith and acuity is led astray by sensitive dependence on initial premises, so much more attentive must the rest of us be, who hope to keep the democratizing promise of philosophy.

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Notes

1. To adapt Joyce's definition of genius, a distinction from which any comrade of wisdom has divested.
2. I assign Plato's written words to Socrates, here, because my argument does not make constative claims about the views of the historical Socrates, but only about the arguments made by Plato's character named Socrates. I am convinced that the two are not identical, and that we can infer from available evidence possible differences between them, but none of that is pertinent to the present argument.
3. "Pro-duction" literally means "forth-guiding" (from ducere, "to lead or guide"). In Greek, ποί-ησις can be analyzed into ποῖ ("whither") combined with ἧσις (as third person plural imperfect of εἰμί, "to be"), and therefore similarly read to signify coming forth into being.
4. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the Greek are by the author.
5. For example, in Fowler, as well as in Nehamas and Woodruff.
6. The musical extension of 'producer' developed here is certainly not yet as enduring as that to which Diotima refers, and may not survive long; but 'producer' has certainly been used in similar ways across a wide variety of contemporary arts since at least 1891 (the earliest date reported by the OED, in reference to theater).

7. Unless otherwise cited, all translations from the Latin are by the author.
8. While this is not the place for an extended discussion of the role played by risk in this distribution, it is worthwhile to note in passing that risk is the conventional warrant proposed for capitalist ownership of the products of labor. The bad faith of that argument is indicated by the absence of relation between risk and reward: Whether the risk is minimal or maximal, and even when the risk is completely obviated—for example, by government guarantee—the rewards of ownership remain the same. A historical example is provided by the purchase of IndyMac by an investment group led by future Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin. The government's extensive guarantees on potential losses helped Mnuchin aggressively push homeowners into default on their mortgages to seize their homes, earning him the moniker "Foreclosure King." See Glantz, Aaron. "The homewreckers: How Trump cronies are sabotaging the American dream." Reveal, 14 Sept. 2017, www.revealnews.org/article/the-homewreckers-how-trump-cronies-are-sabotaging-the-american-dream/
9. Because all these fine grammatical distinctions risk charges of pedantry, it is necessary to emphasize that the point here is not correction for its own sake: Nancy's aim does not appear to be the posing of specialized problems to philologists or translators, and so my observation need not challenge or endorse Nancy's argument regarding the relation of the arts to the senses, the end to which the phrase from Plato is simply a means. We can safely assume that Nancy would not be abashed at what amounts to simple proofreading—the identification of a transposition or typographical error. In other words, I have no doubts about Nancy's good faith, which I find apparent in his work, for which I have genuine respect and affection. I acknowledge the error not in order to disqualify his argument, but in order to explore its symptomatic significance, as example of the insistence and persistence of the abusio Diotima defines. This is the opposite of the common academic practice of ad hominem disqualification, which treats any flaw as proof of substantial inadequacy and therefore as sufficient reason to dismiss an author's work. Disqualification is a theme of my forthcoming book, Reaganism in Literary Theory: Negative Moralism and Hermeneutic Suspicion (Symploke Studies in Theory at Anthem Press, 2020).
10. This distinction cannot be fully explicated without accounting for the manner in which Heidegger places poiesis in the position, vis-à-vis techne, traditionally occupied by phusis in ancient Greek thought. This naturalization of production in opposition to techne amounts to an aestheticization of production, as I develop in another, unpublished article.
11. In connecting Aristotle's attitudes toward production with contemporary capitalist and even fascist attitudes, I am mindful that this could be misread as drawing an equivalence or identity between ancient and modern valuations or even modes of production. While I do not wish to elide the overdetermined cultural and historical differences, my argument does tend to contradict a conventional view to which Nancy alludes, when he claims that only since the eighteenth century have we been saying art in the singular: This view, which also informs Heidegger's philosophy of art, posits a fundamental shift in the eighteenth century that separates ancient from modern definitions of art and attitudes toward production. Signal to this view is Kristeller's argument for a discontinuity between the ancient and modern systems of the arts, and in an unpublished article I critique his misreading of Plato and Aristotle, which in part relies on the synecdoche of production: While Plato does not explain the principle of the distinction between what I call "poiesis in particular" from "poiesis in general," Aristotle takes up this unanswered question in Poetics. There he produces the same list of fine arts that Kristeller later calls "modern," and defines their single common principle of distinction as emulation (mimesis). This reduction to a single principle provides Batteux with the title and thesis of his 1746 work on the philosophy of art, which is usually overlooked in favor of Baumgarten. But confusion about the synecdoche of poiesis also underlies arguments

that we moderns value production, while the ancients did not. To the contrary, I would contend that precisely because capitalism values productivity, it devalues production: Valuing (i.e., promoting) productivity means devaluing (i.e., pushing down the cost of) labor-time in order to produce a greater share of surplus-value. Greater productivity means a lower value for labor-time relative to profits, so to value productivity is to literally devalue production—i.e., the process comprising productive activities, and the producer's life that labor-time both consumes and supports materially. Aristotle argues that while many live for enjoyment, the best treat it as a means rather than an end. Similarly, while consumer culture encourages hedonistic fantasies, building wealth in capitalist societies requires that one reinvest or capitalize one's surplus rather than consume it. Because capitalism distributes wealth with disproportionate favor to those who earn by return on investment (consumers of surplus-value) over those who earn wages (producers of surplus-value), we moderns relatively devalue production vis-à-vis consumption, as did the ancients. This is not to argue there is no difference between ancient and capitalist productive relations, but only that it is not a difference defined by, or reducible to, the relatively higher or lower value we place on production, because both the ancient imperial systems and modern global capitalism devalue production and producers in favor of those who legally own the means of production, through systems in which proprietorship supersedes usufruct.

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