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Apian Imagery and the Critique of Poetic Sweetness in Plato's *Republic*[*]

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SUMMARY: This article examines the apian imagery that runs through Plato's *Republic* in order to show how Socrates exploits traditional bee-related metaphors to strengthen his case against poetry. Socrates transvalues the traditional association between poetry and honey by conflating the image of the productive bee-poet with that of the parasitic drone-citizen, thus using poetry's own value terms to critique it on political grounds. By reconfiguring sweetness in all forms as a toxin inimical to a healthy state and incommensurate with the philosophic values of purity and moderation, Socrates turns the poetic tradition against itself. Once sweetness and benefit are understood to be mutually exclusive, poetry's apian "virtues" become political liabilities.

THE SYNAESTHETIC ATTRIBUTION OF SWEETNESS TO POETRY PERVADES GREEK poetics from its inception. Whether it be Hesiod's "sweet-speaking Muses of Olympus" (ἡδυέπειαι, *Theog.* 965–66), whose voice "flows sweet from their mouth" (ἡδεῖα, 39–40), or "the gift of sweet song" they bestow on Homeric bards (ἡδεῖαν ἀοιδήν, *Od.* 8.64), or Alcman's "honey-voiced" maidens (μελιγάρυες, fr. 26), or the "poured nectar" Pindar offers his athletic victors (νέκταρ χυτόν, *Ol.*7.8), the pleasure and satisfaction that Greek poetry promises to provide is of a strikingly gustatory nature.[1] It is only a matter of time before the poet himself adopts the persona of the bee, culling his songs from

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[1] Though a number of studies have examined the relationship between poetry and honey, none addresses the gustatory dimension of this analogy. A useful overview of the relevant passages (with very little commentary, however) can be found in Nünlist 1998:

the Muses' gardens to produce poetry that is, as Pindar puts it, "sweeter than bee-fashioned honey-comb" (fr. 152).[2] This apian conception of the poet's activity is exploited by Aristophanes, whose chorus of birds disparages the poet Phrynichus for feeding on their songs "like a bee" that must feed on flowers to produce honey (*Av.* 748–50), and also lies behind Socrates' rather diminishing parody in Plato's *Ion* (534a–b):

> λέγουσι γὰρ δήπουθεν πρὸς ἡμᾶς οἱ ποιηταὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ κρηνῶν μελιρρύτων ἐκ Μουσῶν κήπων τινῶν καὶ ναπῶν δρεπόμενοι τὰ μέλη ἡμῖν φέρουσιν ὥσπερ αἱ μέλιτται, καὶ αὐτοὶ οὕτω πετόμενοι.
>
> For surely the poets tell us that they bring us songs culled from springs flowing with honey in certain gardens and groves of the Muses, just like bees, flying about like they do.

Socrates puns on the lexical similarity between "honey" (μέλι) and "songs" (μέλη), and pokes fun at the traditional image of the apian poet by portray-

60–63 and 300–6. Robert-Tornow 1893 and Waszink 1974 offer the only monographs devoted to the subject of apian imagery in Greco-Roman literature, but both focus almost exclusively on honey's mantic associations and consequently interpret it as a symbol of truth primarily; cf. Pucci 1977: 19–21, 27–29, who complicates the symbolic significance of honey by demonstrating its ambivalent relationship to truth. Scheinberg 1979 provides an extensive history of the connection between bees and poetry as background to the bee maidens of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, to which Larson 1995 has added. Crane 1987 uses the same data to read a Callimachean innovation in the poet's *Hymn to Apollo*, though I would argue that Callimachus's substitution of water for honey is less innovative in light of the established connection between poetry and water in Pindar (e.g., *Ol.* 1.11, 11.1–6; *Nem.* 4.4, 7.11–13, 61–63; *Isthm.* 6.63–66, 74–75; *Pyth.* 9.104–6). Poliakoff 1980 acknowledges Callimachus's debt to Pindar in this regard, and analyzes the role of honey and water in both poets' critical terminology. Hunter 1999: 70–71 provides a brief but thoughtful analysis of the loaded metaphor of poetic sweetness in Theocritus's first *Idyll.*

[2] Elsewhere Pindar tells us that "the choicest hymn of praise flits from one theme to another, like a bee" (*Pyth.* 10.53–56), and takes himself to be "cultivating the choice garden of the Graces" (*Ol.* 9.26–27) when composing his odes. These and other Pindaric passages develop what I call an apian program of poetic activity oriented by *poikilia* (variety), which characterizes the whole process of poetic composition in terms of the bee's art and the sweetness of poetic pleasure as the product of his labor. Like the bee's activity, the poet's task involves a discriminating selection that results in the choicest product: "the perfection of honey" (*Pae.* 6.5–59). In light of such passages, I disagree with Waszink's argument (1974: 6, 14–16) that a metaphorical connection between poet and bee is only established with Bacchylides (whose self-description as "a clear-voiced [λιγύφθογγον] island bee" [10.10] nonetheless innovates by introducing the musical capacity of the bee into the metaphorical equation).

ing him comically in flight.[3] In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates does much more than mock the poet's apian pretensions; he challenges the very conception of poetic value upon which such pretensions are based: that of sweetness. This essay will examine the apian imagery that runs through the *Republic* in order to show how Socrates exploits various traditions of bee-related metaphors to strengthen his case against poetry.[4] Socrates transvalues the traditional association between poetry and honey by conflating the image of the productive bee-poet with that of the parasitic drone-citizen, thus using poetry's own value terms to critique it on political grounds. The reconfiguration of sweetness in all forms as a toxin inimical to a healthy state and incommensurate with the philosophic values of purity and moderation enables Socrates to turn the poetic tradition against itself. Under philosophic scrutiny, poetry's sweetness is revealed to be delicious, to be sure, but toxic. By establishing the addictive nature of sweetness and its corrosive effect on body and soul, Socrates builds a case against poetry that ironically emerges from the archaic poetic tradition's own rhetorical posturing.

The taste of poetry is traditionally sweet, conveyed by the adjectives *glukus* and *hēdus* or by metaphorical analogy to the food and drink that these words typically modify.[5] The connection between literary and alimentary satisfaction seems to derive from the sympotic context in which poetic performance originates.[6] The bard serves up his song along with the meal of the banquet, satisfying the hearts of his listeners as wine and meat satisfy their bellies. Alcinous says as much in the *Odyssey*, when he aborts Demodocus's disquieting performance (8.97–99):

[3] As Murray 1996: 117–18 notes, "P[lato], like Aristophanes, mischievously takes poetic metaphor literally."

[4] Plato's use of apian imagery in the *Republic* has not received sustained scholarly attention since Pelletier's article (1948), which focuses exclusively on the development of the drone metaphor in books 8–9 without correlating the figure of the drone with the subject of sweetness (and poetic sweetness in particular) that recurs throughout the dialogue. A cursory analysis of the drone metaphor can also be found in Louis 1945: 120, 157–58 and Tarrant 1946: 33–34.

[5] Such as honey, wine, milk, water, and food generally. To take just a few examples of "sweet" objects of consumption from Homer: wine and honey in *Il.* 6.258 (μελιηδέα οἶνον), food in *Il.* 11.89 (σίτου ... γλυκεροῖο), milk in *Od.* 4.88 (γλυκεροῖο γάλακτος), honey and wine in *Od.* 20.69 (μέλιτι γλυκερῷ καὶ ἡδέϊ οἴνῳ), dinner in *Od.* 20.390–1 (δεῖπνον ... ἡδὺ). Honey's essential sweetness makes it a common component of compound epithets for archaic poetry, such as *meligērus*, "honey-voiced" (μελίγηρυν ἀοιδήν, *Hom. Hymn* 3.519); *meliphthongos*, "honey-toned" (μελίφθογγοι Μοῖσαι, Pind. *Ol.* 6.21); and *meligdoupos*, "honey-sounding" (μελιγδούποισι ἀοιδαῖς, Pind. *Nem.* 11.18); see Nünlist 1998: 303–6 for a comprehensive list of such adjectives.

[6] For the most recent study of archaic poetry's sympotic origins, see Ford 2002: 25–45.

> κέκλυτε, Φαιήκων ἡγήτορες ἠδὲ μέδοντες·
> ἤδη μὲν δαιτὸς κεκορήμεθα θυμὸν ἐΐσης
> φόρμιγγός θ', ἣ δαιτὶ συνήορός ἐστι θαλείῃ.
>
> Hear me, leaders and lords of the Phaeacians, already we have satisfied our hearts with the shared feast and with the lyre, which is wedded to the rich feast.

Alcinous portrays the banquet as poetry's natural habitat,[7] and together food and music (broadly understood) satisfy the biological and emotional needs of the *thūmos* in virtually indistinguishable ways.[8] Hesiod tells us that "it is sweet, at a feast and flourishing banquet, to delight in tales [τέρπεσθαι μύθοισιν], when men have had enough of feasting" (fr. 274), and that is precisely the time when the Homeric bard typically strikes his lyre.[9] The formula that marks this transition from the feast to the performance is one that reinforces the continuity between poetry and other appetitive pleasures: after the guests "have satisfied the desire [ἔρον] for food and drink," they go on to satisfy a comparable *eros* for poetry. Such scenes not only model the pleasure of poetry analogically on the pleasures of consumption, developing in the process a gustatory vocabulary for articulating poetic value, they also attribute a socializing function to the poetic performance comparable to that of communal dining, and present these public forms of "appetitive" satisfaction as in some sense socially productive. We will see that Plato's Socrates co-opts the appetitive conception of poetic pleasure only to deny it a productive role in sociality.

[7] Elsewhere the lyre is described as the feast's "companion" (δαιτί ... ἑταίρην, *Od.* 17.271), and song and dance are "ornaments" of the feast (ἀναθήματα δαιτός, *Od.*1.152); cf. Alc. fr. 70.3, where the kithara is described as "sharing in the symposium" (πεδέχων συμποσίω). See Segal 1992: 6–7 for a brief discussion of the relation between song and feasting in the *Odyssey*.

[8] This is particularly striking in the case of wine, which has both psychological and physiological effects on the *thūmos* and other psychic entities in archaic poetry, as Sullivan 1997 has shown. In conflating body and mind, wine thus provides a good parallel to archaic accounts of poetic pleasure. Wine also shares poetry's therapeutic function (espoused by Hesiod in *Theog.* 55 and 96–103) in its ability to alleviate pain and attenuate grief; Athenaeus offers a host of archaic and classical citations to this effect (2.37a and 40a–c; cf. Pind. *Pae.* 4.26, where wine is described as a "life-giving remedy for helplessness" and *Pae.* 6.10, where poetry is described as "warding off helplessness").

[9] Phemius and Demodocus begin performing only after the banqueters have finished their meal (*Od.* 1.150–52, 8.72–73, 8.485–500). Likewise on Olympus, divine "feasting" (on nectar and ambrosia) is followed by the musical performance of Apollo and the Muses (*Il.* 1.601–4).

The practice of listening to poetry after dinner in Homer makes sense of Pindar's metaphorical offering of song for "dessert" at Thrasybulus's symposium (μεταδόρπιον, fr. 124a)[10] and the extraordinary frequency with which the epinician poet attributes sweetness to his odes.[11] The traditional place of song at the feast allows Pindar to make the comparison between banquet consumption and literary consumption explicit: "Just as when the men's symposium is flourishing, we mix a second bowl of the Muses' songs [κρητῆρα Μοισαίων μελέων] for Lampon's triumphant family" (*Isthm.* 6.1–3). From this gustatory-poetic nexus of associations more strikingly hybrid metaphors emerge: in addition to "poured nectar," poetry is also "sweet fruit of the mind" (γλυκὺν καρπὸν φρενός, *Ol.* 7.8) and "this mixture of honey and white milk ... a draught of song [πόμ' ἀοίδιμον]" (*Nem.* 3.76–79).[12] Pindar thus invigorates the deadened metaphor of poetic sweetness by forging increasingly literal expressions to convey the appetitive nature of poetic satisfaction. Small wonder, then, that in Plato's *Republic* Socrates sees fit to locate the desire for poetry in the appetitive part of the soul. The poets themselves have already said as much.

Since archaic poetry presents itself as a kind of relish equivalent to honey and sweets, it is hardly surprising to find it absent from Socrates' "city of pigs" (ὑῶν πόλιν, Pl. *Resp.* 372d),[13] a vegetarian community whose wholesome and rustic simplicity Glaucon objects to on the grounds that it is "without relish" (ἄνευ ὄψου, 372c). Relishes are culinary delicacies,[14] and as such they sym-

[10] Elsewhere Pindar equates song with dinner (δόρπον) instead of dessert (μεταδόρπιον): "we shall not put you to bed without a supper of paeans [παιηόνων ἄδορπον]" (*Pae.* 6.127–28).

[11] E.g., *Ol.* 10.3; *Pyth.* 8.71, 10.56; *Nem.* 2.25, 3.32, 5.2, 9.3; *Isthm.* 2.7, 8.8.

[12] The image of "honey and milk" is one poetry shares with the mythology of Bacchic revelry, an association which Plato fully exploits in the *Ion* (534a), where he characterizes poetic inspiration as an ecstatic and mindless form of possession akin to maenadic frenzy; see Usener 1902: 177–81, Waszink 1974: 17–19, and Murray 1996: 116.

[13] Though Socrates does admit a kind of purified poetry into the city of pigs, and ultimately Callipolis itself—namely, religious hymns and encomia (ὑμνοῦντες τοὺς θεούς, 372b; ὕμνους θεοῖς καὶ ἐγκώμια τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς, 607a)—such poetry is no longer "sweet" in the traditional sense nor, judging from the difficulty Adeimantus has imagining the sort of poetry that would survive Socrates' censorship (378e), even recognizable as poetry. Pigs, it should be noted, are not associated with gluttony so much as sloth in an ancient Greek context (e.g., Semon. fr. 7.2–6; Pl. *Leg.* 807a–b), unlike our derogatory use of the slur "pig." The pigs of Glaucon's metaphor are not gluttonous; on the contrary, they live in what he sees to be an impoverished state of nature.

[14] An *opson* is any kind of prepared dish served as a condiment with bread and wine, and comes to designate any delicacy or treat (e.g., fish in Athens—this is why Socrates commends Homer for not feasting his heroes on fish, "even though they are by the sea,"

bolically represent the finer things in life to which an aristocrat like Glaucon is accustomed: the sorts of luxuries whose very gratuitousness makes living leisurely, pleasant, and civilized, and which distinguish and elevate human society from that of animals who merely subsist (or from the lower class of humans who live like animals). Poetry cannot arise in a city of pigs; its rightful place is in the "luxurious" and "feverish" city, where men "recline on couches ... and dine from tables and have relishes and desserts [καὶ ὄψα ... καὶ τραγήματα], as people do nowadays" (372d–e). The poets appear in a long list of artists, entertainers, beauticians, furniture makers, butchers, and cooks who emerge in the expanding marketplace of the new city. The swineherd is introduced because of the newfound "need" for meat (373c). The city becomes bloated with vanities, "gorged with a swollen mass of things [ὄγκου ἐμπλησταία καὶ πλήθους] which are not in cities out of necessity" (373b). In its noxious state the city requires more doctors to treat its maladies as well as more land to accommodate its excesses. The acquisition of land and wealth involves infringement on other peoples' property, leading to war—the root of all evil, Socrates says, "private and public" (373e).

The imagined history of Socrates' first utopian city is intended to show that, however superficially pleasant, the luxuries humankind has the potential to produce for itself are not, in the end, beneficial, because they create desires where there were once none, and consequently foster insatiability. A life of enduring pleasure (in the form of peace and contentment) is ironically offered by the very "bestial" city that Glaucon rejects: a city in which unnecessary desires never emerge in the first place.[15] Such a vision is indeed utopian—more so than Callipolis itself, whose vulnerability is conspicuous in the totalitarian measures required to preserve it—and the corrupt state of affairs that results from the introduction of relishes into the city of pigs is a far more realistic starting point for Socrates' philosophic project (since it represents, as Glaucon put it, what "people do nowadays"). The rest of the *Republic* is, in a sense, an extended attempt to purify the degenerated city of pigs and return it to its initial state,[16] but that return is inescapably postlap-

404b–c). On the luxury status of fish *opsa*, and this category of food in general, see Davidson 1997. Pindar uses the term metaphorically to express how the envious "feed" on rumors ("words are an *opson* to the envious," *Nem.* 8.21). *Opson* is eventually conceded as a necessity near the end of the *Republic*, but only "insofar as it benefits health" (559b).

[15] The history of the uncorrupted city of pigs ends happily: "and so, living a life of peace and health, they will probably die in their old age and hand down a similar life to their children" (372d).

[16] After the censorship of poetry and music, Socrates exclaims: "By the dog! We have unwittingly purified [διακαθαίροντες] the city which we were just calling luxurious" (399e). The purification continues throughout the dialogue.

sarian, and the final Republic that is founded must vigilantly guard against the relishes that have corrupted it in the past. Hence the need for a guardian class, and the caste system that follows.[17]

Thus, in the *Republic*, the very idea of sweetness as both a pleasant gratuity and a toxic superfluity renders any of its manifestations inimical to a healthy state, from honey and cakes to "sweet" forms of music and poetry. Socrates takes this danger quite literally when he bans sweets (ἡδύσματα) from the guardians' diet, which he does not only to preserve the physical condition of their bodies, but because eating sweet food implies a way of life that is devoted to "sweetness" understood as the appealing quality of variegated and immoderate pleasures (404c–e). He likens this way of life—and the corresponding way of eating—to the panharmonic mode of music (404d–e):

> ὅλην γὰρ οἶμαι τὴν τοιαύτην σίτησιν καὶ δίαιταν τῇ μελοποιίᾳ τε καὶ ᾠδῇ τῇ ἐν τῷ παναρμονίῳ καὶ ἐν πᾶσι ῥυθμοῖς πεποιημένῃ ἀπεικάζοντες ὀρθῶς ἂν ἀπεικάζοιμεν ... οὐκοῦν ἐκεῖ μὲν ἀκολασίαν ἡ ποικιλία ἐνέτικτεν, ἐνταῦθα δὲ νόσον, ἡ δὲ ἁπλότης κατὰ μὲν μουσικὴν ἐν ψυχαῖς σωφροσύνην, κατὰ δὲ γυμναστικὴν ἐν σώμασιν ὑγίειαν;
>
> I think that by comparing such food and such a way of life on the whole to music and songs composed in the panharmonic mode and in all rhythms, we would make a correct comparison ... Just as variety there produced incontinence, doesn't it produce illness here? And just as simplicity in music produced moderation in souls, doesn't it in gymnastics produce health in bodies?

As the city of pigs' rapid dissolution after the admittance of relishes already suggested, somatic habits and ethical habits are not merely analogically, but symbiotically related. Socrates makes this point explicit when he insists on striking the right balance between music and gymnastics to produce a suitable nature in the guardians; too much gymnastics turns a man into a "wild beast" (θηρίον) unfit for civilized culture, whereas too much music, described as "sweet" (γλυκείας) and "soft" (μαλακάς), "liquefies his spirit, until he dissolves it completely and cuts out, as it were, the very sinews of his soul, and makes of himself a 'feeble warrior' [μαλθακὸν αἰχμητήν[18]]" (411a–e). The shift in poetry's somatic effects from the gustatory to the erotic is quick and subtle. Poetry's sweetness can, like that of *erōs*, emasculate and incapacitate its victim by enslaving him to an appetitive desire.[19] Yet poetry is governed,

[17] The guardians are first introduced to fight the luxurious city's wars (374d–e).

[18] A Homeric taunt from the *Iliad* (17.577).

[19] The cost of erotic pleasure is what makes *erōs* paradoxically "bittersweet" in lyric poetry (see, e.g., Sapph. fr. 130 and Thgn. 1353–56, and Carson 1986 on this theme).

we soon learn, by the same Muse that attracts the soul to the discourse of philosophy. Socrates' surprising anxiety that boorish austerity could deaden our intellectual passions and inoculate us to the charms of philosophy leads him to concede a cautious need for music and appropriate the language of poetry for philosophy: one becomes an uncultured "misologist" (a hater of philosophic discourse) as a consequence of being "unmusical" (ἄμουσος, 411d). Whether this is another of philosophy's bald attempts to usurp its arch-rival, or whether a real proximity between philosophy and poetry compels Socrates to mitigate his puritanism, is another question. Suffice it to say for now that, in order to become philosophical, the spirited and musical parts of the guardian's soul must strike a very delicate balance, moderating one another through the rigorous training which Socrates proceeds to articulate in the remainder of the dialogue. Without regulation, the sweetness of music, like the sweetness of food, corrupts body and soul, and variety or *poikilia* (which we will come to shortly) plays a crucial role in making the source of corruption paradoxically pleasant and alluring.

Throughout the narrative of regime change in books 8 and 9, Socrates expresses a more marked disdain for sweetness in his use of apian metaphors—a use that subtly perverts poetry's traditional self-presentation by conflating the image of the bee-poet producing "honeyed hymns" with that of the drone-citizen draining society's resources.[20] Like honey and the honeybee, the drone has a venerable pedigree in archaic literary imagery, where it appears in civically rather than poetically oriented apian metaphors. This civic tradition of apian figures begins with Hesiod, who tells us that (*Op.* 302–6)

> λιμὸς γάρ τοι πάμπαν ἀεργῷ σύμφορος ἀνδρί.
> τῷ δὲ θεοὶ νεμεσῶσι καὶ ἀνέρες, ὅς κεν ἀεργὸς
> ζώῃ, κηφήνεσσι κοθούροις εἴκελος ὀργήν,
> οἵ τε μελισσάων κάματον τρύχουσιν ἀεργοὶ
> ἔσθοντες.
>
> Hunger is an altogether fitting companion for the lazy man. Both gods and men resent a man who lives unproductively, one resembling the stingless drones in nature, who waste the labor of bees by eating without working.

The verb *tēkei* which occurs in the *Republic* passage on music also has a lyric pedigree with distinctly erotic overtones, since melting and liquefaction are common symptoms of erotic longing (see, e.g., Ibyc. fr. 287, Alcm. fr. 3, and Pind. fr. 123.11).

[20] Socrates has been known to pervert poetry's conventional self-conception elsewhere (see n12 above); in the *Ion* he reconfigures the divine inspiration traditionally ascribed to poets as a mindless state of possession tantamount to madness, and renders mutually exclusive the previously compatible categories of craft and inspiration in order to divest poets of any knowledge or authority. See Tigerstedt 1970 and Murray 1981.

In the economy of the hive, the drones are perceived to be social parasites, consuming the goods of productive members of their community without producing anything themselves. According to this civic conception of the hive, worker-bees function as ideal citizens, unjustly (though necessarily) burdened with the dregs of society, and unthinkingly martyring themselves for the good of the whole. Elsewhere in Hesiod the dichotomy is gendered, with men cast as productive bees and women as parasitic drones (*Theog.* 594–602)[21]:

ὡς δ' ὁπότ' ἐν σμήνεσσι κατηρεφέεσσι μέλισσαι
κηφῆνας βόσκωσι, κακῶν ξυνήονας ἔργων—
αἳ μέν τε πρόπαν ἦμαρ ἐς ἠέλιον καταδύντα
ἠμάτιαι σπεύδουσι τιθεῖσί τε κηρία λευκά,
οἳ δ' ἔντοσθε μένοντες ἐπηρεφέας κατὰ σίμβλους
ἀλλότριον κάματον σφετέρην ἐς γαστέρ' ἀμῶνται—
ὣς δ' αὔτως ἄνδρεσσι κακὸν θνητοῖσι γυναῖκας
Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης θῆκεν, ξυνήονας ἔργων
ἀργαλέων.

As in the thatched hives bees feed the drones who are criminal partners—all day long until the sun goes down the bees are busy laying the white combs, day after day, while the drones stay indoors in the covered hives and reap the toil of others into their own bellies—so did Zeus who thunders on high make women to be an evil for mortal men, grievous partners.

Hesiod's blatant misogyny is echoed and subtly altered by the lyric poet Semonides half a century later in his notorious catalogue of women (fr. 7). The catalogue offers a humorous taxonomy of wives arranged predominantly according to the rather unflattering animal types to which they conform: the sow, the vixen, the bitch, the ass, the weasel, the mare, the monkey, etc.[22] The litany of vices ascribed to these animal-women (such as sloth, fickleness, ill-temper, gluttony, thievery, fastidiousness, cunning) remits momentarily at the end with the appearance of the "blameless" bee-woman, who, unlike the others, increases her husband's property, rears reputable children, and maintains a harmonious and loving household (83–93). Though Semonides appears at first to invert the metaphorical correspondences established by Hesiod by imagining the good wife as a productive bee rather than a parasitic drone, he also suggests a certain asociality to the bee-women that isolates

[21] On the role of gender in Hesiod's political hive, see Sussman 1978.

[22] I leave out two non-animal types: the inert earth-woman and the fickle sea-woman (21–42). Payne in a forthcoming treatment of the poem has a persuasive account of the foil such women provide for the other animal types: "Semonides' excursus among the elements points to continuities of appetitive and affective behavior between human beings and other animals by imagining forms of life that do not share them" (155).

her from feminine society ("she takes no pleasure in sitting among women where they tell erotic stories," 90–91), thereby undercutting the social virtue of the bee and implicitly elevating the vices of the other wives into forms of sociability.[23] The bee-woman fails to conform to the bee in one crucial respect: she does not leave the home to engage in communal labor. The feminine associations of the drone thus hover in the background even in cases where they are explicitly denied. Despite these subtle variations, the polarity between the bee and drone remains one which, on the surface at least, separates the social from the asocial, the productive member of society from the destructive. In light of this traditional understanding, the ideal aspect of the hive's economy represented by the productive bee is conspicuously absent from Plato's *Republic*, eclipsed by the prominence of the vicious drone, who, as we will see, contaminates the entire apian metaphoric complex.[24]

In Socrates' narrative of regime change, the drone figures predictably as a quintessential parasite, "a disease of the hive" that consumes its resources without contributing to its economy (552c). He first evokes the drone to characterize the destitute spendthrifts who crop up in oligarchic societies as victims of predatory lending (552a–b). The metaphor persists throughout the narrative of regime change. Beggars are "stingless" drones whereas outright

[23] Many thanks to Mark Payne for this insight; see his forthcoming book *The Animal Part* for an unorthodox reading of the Semonides poem that contests its alleged misogyny with renewed attention to its erotic dimension. Payne argues that the "bad" wives actually enable male forms of sociality by participating in a gendered division of the larger community, and that their "erotic stories" (ἀφροδισίους λόγους) cannot be dismissed as mere gossip, which is traditionally maligned as a threatening form of discourse in Greek literature, but should be seen as functionally equivalent to the erotic poem in which they appear (150–63). The poem suggests a complementary narrative in which women imagine the animal in their husbands, and this perceived animality on either side works to maintain the sexual attraction between them: "Despite appearances to the contrary, the female differences the poem imagines as being animal must be understood to involve some ongoing reenchantment of the appetitive bond between [husband and wife]" (161).

[24] Socrates does briefly evoke the hive as a positive political model at 520b, where he describes the philosopher-kings as "leaders and kings of the hive" in order to convey the city's acceptance of their natural superiority and remind them of their duties to the city (it should come as no surprise that the Greeks presumed the sex of the "leader of the hive" to be male, with the notable exception of Xenophon in his *Oeconomicus* [7.17, 33, 38], where the sex of the queen bee is most likely a metaphorical extension of the wife to which she is being compared). But given how applicable the structure of the hive is to the social organization of Callipolis, it remains noteworthy that positive apian metaphors are mostly absent from Socrates' language, especially in light of the fact that Plato employs such metaphors positively elsewhere (e.g., *Phd.* 82b and *Pol.* 301e).

criminals, such as thieves and muggers, "have terrible stings" (552c–e); thus "drone-like desires" (κηφηνώδεις ἐπιθυμίας) come in "beggarly" (πτωχικάς) and "criminal" (κακούργους) varieties (554b–c). The stinging drone and his characteristic desire seem to be a Platonic innovation, intended to suggest something more actively malignant than the relatively innocuous consumer represented by the traditional, stingless drone.[25]

The criminal drones of oligarchy grow up to be democratic revolutionaries (555d–556a). The oligarch's son turns into a democratic man once he "tastes the drones' honey" (γεύσηται κηφήνων μέλιτος), which, Socrates explains, is the sweet pleasure of satisfying gratuitous desires (559d–e):

> ὅταν νέος, τεθραμμένος ὡς νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν, ἀπαιδεύτως τε καὶ φειδωλῶς, γεύσηται κηφήνων μέλιτος, καὶ συγγένηται αἴθωσι θηρσὶ καὶ δεινοῖς, παντοδαπὰς ἡδονὰς καὶ ποικίλας καὶ παντοίως ἐχούσας δυναμένοις σκευάζειν, ἐνταῦθά που οἴου εἶναι ἀρχὴν αὐτῷ μεταβολῆς ... ὀλιγαρχικῆς τῆς ἑαυτῷ εἰς δημοκρατικήν.
>
> When a youth, raised in the way we were just describing, without education and stingily, gets a taste of the drones' honey and associates with fiery and clever beasts who know how to purvey manifold and subtle pleasures of every variety, then you must suppose that this is the beginning of his transformation ... from the oligarchic regime within him to a democratic one.

Here Socrates' revaluation of sweetness as a toxin allows him to transform the apian symbol of economic productivity—honey—into one of excess and corruption. Honey is now equated with a variety of gratuitous and pernicious pleasures that act like a poisonous drug on the soul of the oligarch's son. The drones of democratic society are hedonists trafficking pleasure, "a class of idle and extravagant men" who blight the city and ought to be "cut out as quickly as possible, cells and all" (564b–c). Rich men are called "the drones' pasture" (κηφήνων βοτάνη) because of the "honey" that the masses manage to "extract" from them (564e). Finally, the malcontents of democracy implant *erōs*, "a great winged drone" (ὑπόπτερον καὶ μέγαν κηφῆνα), in the soul of the tyrant, thereafter controlled and consumed by this most insatiable of parasites (573a).[26] In the acme of his power, the detested tyrant can only

[25] A point also made by Pelletier 1948: 145. Actual drones never, in fact, have stings, since they remain predominantly in the hive, fulfilling their function by mating with the queen and ensuring the propagation of the hive. Aristotle knew this (*Hist. An.* 553b5–6), as presumably did Hesiod (*Op.* 304) and Aristophanes (*Vesp.* 1115), who explicitly characterize drones as stingless.

[26] It is surprising that Socrates represents the tyrant's erotic passion as a winged drone, since only wingless drones have stings according to his novel apian taxonomy (552c), and

survive by hiring an armed guard of "drones" made up of thugs and former slaves to protect him (567d–e).

Crucial to Socrates' negative transvaluation of sweetness is its dependence on the more problematic concept of variety known as *poikilia*. The relationship between the two is not immediately apparent, nor is it obvious that there is an ambivalence to sweetness that Socrates can exploit. Sweetness's positive status would seem to be unequivocal, since it was traditionally held to confer desirability on its objects and, in many cases, to render them "goods" in the first place. The etymological root of pleasure (ἡδονή) is, after all, "sweet" (ἡδύς),[27] and when it makes its debut in Greek literature, *hēdonē* is the essence of desirability and coterminous with goodness itself (Simon. fr. 79):

τίς γὰρ ἀδονᾶς ἄτερ θνα-
τῶν βίος ποθεινὸς ἢ ποί-
α τυραννίς;
τᾶσδ' ἄτερ οὐδὲ θεῶν ζηλωτὸς αἰών.

What human life is desirable without pleasure, or what lordly power? Without it not even a god's life is enviable.[28]

Socrates himself in Plato's *Protagoras* seems to subscribe to this view when he claims, uncharacteristically, that goods are good (ἀγαθά) "in so far as they are pleasant [ἡδέα]" (351c).[29] *Hēdus* in such contexts loses its original

one would expect the tyrant to have the "criminal" desires associated with stinging drones rather than the merely "beggarly" ones characteristic of the stingless drone (552c–d). It is also strange that the *erōs* within the tyrant is depicted as suffering the "sting of longing" rather than actively inflicting it upon his host (573a). Socrates may want to retain something of the traditional imagery surrounding the god Eros, who is typically winged (as Adam 1963: 324 has noted), and in addition to emphasize the tyrant's passivity in making the dominant feature of his soul suffer stings.

[27] See Chantraine 1968–80 s.v. ἥδομαι and Frisk 1960–72 s.v. ἡδύς. Greek *hēdus* is cognate with Latin *suavis* and English *sweet*, all derived from the IE root **swād-/swad-*. Its basic meaning is "pleasant to the taste," and though the taste designated by *hēdus* is not necessarily saccharine, which is specifically denoted by *glukus*, it so often functions like *glukus* (appearing in the same compound epithets and modifying the same class of nouns) as to be in many cases synonymous.

[28] According to Athenaeus, these verses were cited by the fourth-century philosopher Heraclides in making a case for pleasure as the greatest good (12.512c).

[29] Socrates' hedonistic position in the *Protagoras* is something of an anomaly among Platonic dialogues; see Gosling and Taylor 1982: 45–68 for a lucid discussion of the problem and Berger 1984: 80–87 for an ironic reading of Socrates' argument that distances Socrates from his overtly hedonistic claims. The negative valence of *hēdus* is explicit in Thuc. 5.105, where the Spartans are criticized for regarding "what is pleasant [τὰ ... ἡδέα] as honorable [καλὰ], and what is profitable as just."

gustatory sense of "sweet" or even "pleasant to the senses" in order to convey a more comprehensive sense of "pleasing/pleasurable" that designates any and all properties of an object of desire. Just as something savory can be *hēdus* because of its rich and subtle flavor (the word *hēdusmata* refers not only to sweets, but more often to sauces and seasonings that make food "pleasant" to eat), so can any complex pleasure qualify as *hēdus*, and expand the semantic scope of sweetness in the process. Pindar ensures the sweetness of his poetry by adhering to the aesthetic principle of *poikilia*, selectively integrating complex and varied themes so as to evade the saccharine effects of unalloyed praise: "But respite is sweet in every deed./ Even honey may cloy, and the delightful flowers of Aphrodite" (*Nem.* 7.50–53).[30] Pindar recognizes that sweetness in excess is sickening rather than pleasant, and that the controlled absence of sweetness can paradoxically maximize its effects.

Though sweetness lies at the heart of pleasure, we can see how its meaning can be metaphorically extended to denote general desirability as well as variety insofar as it contributes to and sustains desirability. The nature of "pleasant things"—in the culinary realm and beyond—will often be complex and varied. But the gustatory origins of *hēdonai* are never entirely eclipsed; these varied pleasures are usually of the somatic variety, and those that aren't literally are often figuratively expressed in somatic terms.[31] Witness, for example, the description of poetic pleasure in the following fourth century tragic fragment (Astydamas, *TrGF* 779):

> ἀλλ' ὥσπερ δείπνου γλαφυροῦ ποικίλην εὐωχίαν
> τὸν ποιητὴν δεῖ παρέχειν τοῖς θεαταῖς τὸν σοφόν,
> ἵν' ἀπίῃ τις τοῦτο φαγὼν καὶ πιών, ὅπερ λαβὼν
> χαίρει <τις>, καὶ σκευασία μὴ μί' ᾖ τῆς μουσικῆς.
>
> Like the varied bounty of an elegant dinner, such must be what the clever poet offers his spectators, so that each departs having eaten and drunk and taken whatever he likes, and that there not be only one dish of entertainment.

We owe this renewed conception of the "poetic feast" to Pindaric imagery, where the complexity of *poikilia* is first coordinated with the concept of poetic

[30] I use the excellent translation of Nisetich 1980: 265; the Greek for "cloy" is literally "bring surfeit [κόρον]." *Poiklia* characterizes song in Pind. *Ol.* 3.8, 4.3, 6.87; *Pyth.* 9.77; *Nem.* 4.14, 5.42, 8.15; fr. 194; cf. also *Pyth.* 1.81–84, 11.38–44, and *Nem.* 4. 33–46 for a compositional strategy that adheres to the principle of *poikilia* without using the term explicitly.

[31] See Chantraine 1968–80 s.v. ἥδομαι. In the *Protagoras* Proclus distinguishes *hēdu*-related pleasure as bodily: "For he is delighted [εὐφραίνεσθαι] who learns something and gets a share of good sense in his mind alone, whereas he is pleased [ἥδεσθαι] who eats something or has some other pleasant [ἡδὺ] sensation in his body alone" (337c).

satiation (κόρος) in a self-conscious poetic program that aims to sustain the pleasure of poetry.[32] Whatever the context, variety's relationship to satiety and desire remains rooted in an appetitive understanding of pleasure, and any pleasure with an appetitive structure is suspect to Socrates in the *Republic*. The lavish description of the feast in Philoxenus's *Deipnon*, where the tables are described as "luxuriating in every kind of novelty [παντοδαποῖσι] of the cook's art directed at good living, the soul's bait [ψυχᾶς δελεασματίοισι]" lends some credence to the philosopher's anxiety that indulgent eating will lead to indulgent living and a corrupted soul.[33] The luxury food that Socrates bans from the guardians' diet is thought to be dangerous precisely because of its "soul-baiting" variety. He therefore denies them the pleasures of "the Syracusan table, and the Sicilian variety of relishes [Σικελικὴν ποικιλίαν ὄψου]" (404d).

Sweetness, Plato suggests, is a gateway drug to hedonism. Because it is both a corrosive ingredient in pleasure's mixture as well as what makes the mixture appetizing as a whole, the seductive power of sweetness poses a permanent threat even in its most benign manifestations. Throughout the *Republic* one of Socrates' greatest and most challenging contentions is that all forms of *poikilia* threaten to corrode our souls with an inherent sweetness that seems to issue from the nature of variety itself and accounts for its pleasurable effects. Seductive variety links seemingly harmless indulgences like condiments and multi-stringed instruments to the more consequential phenomenon of narrative poetry, and all of musical culture, previously thought to be relatively trivial entertainment, to the disturbing political reality of democratic and tyrannical regimes.[34] Sweetness and variety provide the common threads

[32] Satiety or *koros* is the death of poetic pleasure, and Pindar is acutely aware of the risk of repulsing his audience by exceeding their needs; see in particular *Pyth.* 1.81–84, 8.29–34; *Nem.* 7.52–53, 10.19–20. For a discussion of the core meaning of *koros* as excessive food consumption, see Michelini 1978: 36; for a discussion of its acquired meaning of insatiability, see Anhalt 1993: 82–93.

[33] *PMG* 836; for a translation of the fragment with commentary, see Dalby 1987. See also Wilkins 2000: 304–6.

[34] The following interaction nicely sums up the *Republic*'s view on the relationship between poetry (under the broader category of *mousikē*) and politics: "'For the ways of music are never disturbed without disturbing the most fundamental political conventions ... so it seems that it is there, in music, that the guardians must build their guard-house.' 'This is certainly the kind of lawlessness that creeps in undetected,' Glaucon said. 'Yes,' I said, 'as if it were only a form of play and did no harm.' 'It does no harm at all,' he said, 'except that by gradual infiltration it gently slips into people's characters and practices; from these it emerges all the stronger in their business transactions with one another, and from these transactions it proceeds against the laws and regimes with great violence, Socrates, until it finally overthrows everything, private and public'" (424c–e).

that tie together all forms of vice. The poet is described as "wonderful and sweet" (θαυμαστὸν καὶ ἡδύν) because he can become "every sort of thing" (παντοδαπόν), but in the process debases his soul and loses his identity (398a); so too the democratic man who is "beautiful and complex [τὸν καλόν τε καὶ ποικίλον], like the city" and for that reason inspires undeserved admiration, though he remains a slave to pleasure (561e). The democratic city is compared to a multi-colored (ποικίλον) cloak that dazzles women and children (557c), and its corollary life is described as "sweet" (ἡδεῖα, 558c) and "most beautiful" (καλλίστη, 557c) despite the dangerous anarchy it instantiates and the tyranny it generates. Like the gustatory pleasures of relishes and auditory pleasures of panharmonic music, all complexly structured pleasures exert a corrupting influence perniciously concealed by their apparent sweetness. Eventually Socrates strips away the superficial exterior of these pleasures to reveal the ugly source of their appeal: our basest part of soul, which, owing to its "manifold form" (πολυειδίαν, 580d–e), can hardly be named. The appetite is grotesquely depicted as a "varied [ποικίλου], multi-headed beast" sprouting ever more savage heads and limbs (588c–d). Those who feed it fragment themselves and foster a comparable disposition; their attractive exterior belies a gruesome battle within, where the spirited lion and the appetitive monster "bite and fight and devour one another" and drag the enfeebled man of reason about helplessly (588e–589a). In opposition to this complex, mixed, and "sweet" figure, "the manifold man" (397e), Socrates upholds the just man: simple, pure, and wholesome, who prunes his desires, maintains psychic harmony, and commits himself to a single purpose.[35]

Thus, Socrates in the *Republic* in no way breaks from tradition in his conception of poetic pleasure, but rather turns the tradition against itself by upholding purity and simplicity as the ultimate values with which sweetness and subtlety (hallmarks of poetic achievement) are incommensurate.[36] When Socrates begins purifying Homeric poetry in book 3 by excising all frightening depictions of death, he implores Homer and the rest of the poets (387b)

> ταῦτα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα ... μὴ χαλεπαίνειν ἂν διαγράφωμεν, οὐχ ὡς οὐ ποιητικὰ καὶ ἡδέα τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀκούειν, ἀλλ' ὅσῳ ποιητικώτερα, τοσούτῳ ἧττον

[35] I am combining images from books 3, 4, and 9, where psychic organization and the unity and multiplicity of character are discussed.

[36] For a contemporary discussion of the incommensurability of aesthetic and philosophic values, see Altieri 2003, esp.154–55. Altieri encourages us to accept this conflict and resist imposing reason's arbitration over the passions, with the significant (and undeveloped) qualifier "given the likelihood that no substantial harm will be done to others" (157). But it is precisely the potential for harm—to oneself as well as to others—that leads Socrates to subordinate aesthetic values to philosophical ones in the *Republic*.

> ἀκουστέον παισὶ καὶ ἀνδράσιν οὓς δεῖ ἐλευθέρους εἶναι, δουλείαν θανάτου μᾶλλον πεφοβημένους.
>
> not to get angry if we strike these and all similar passages, not that they aren't poetic and sweet for many to hear, but because the more poetic they are the less they should be heard by boys and men who have to be free and more fearful of slavery than of death.

The very essence of poetry—its "poeticity," to use Jakobson's term[37]—turns out to be a kind of sweetness that corrodes and weakens men's "spiritual" (in the sense of thumotic) constitution, so that the level of sweetness in poetry is inversely proportionate to the level of benefit (ὠφελία), as Socrates explicitly claims near the end of the dialogue (607e). It is clear even throughout his treatment of poetry in book 3 that Socrates concedes to poetry its own professed value, but this value works against the philosophic ones he champions. When it comes to terrifying depictions of Hades he admits that (387c)

> καὶ ἴσως εὖ ἔχει πρὸς ἄλλο τι· ἡμεῖς δὲ ὑπὲρ τῶν φυλάκων φοβούμεθα, μὴ ἐκ τῆς τοιαύτης φρίκης θερμότεροι καὶ μαλακώτεροι τοῦ δέοντος γένωνται ἡμῖν.
>
> they may serve some other purpose well, but we fear for our guardians, lest from such chills they become more feverish and softer than they ought to be.

Concerning depictions of immoderation he insists (390a):

> οὐ γὰρ οἶμαι εἴς γε σωφροσύνην νέοις ἐπιτήδεια ἀκούειν· εἰ δέ τινα ἄλλην ἡδονὴν παρέχεται, θαυμαστὸν οὐδέν.
>
> I don't think they are fit for the young to hear for the purpose of moderation. But if they offer some other pleasure, it is no wonder.

Poetry certainly serves a purpose and serves it well, but that purpose is hedonistic and incompatible with the courage and self-control required for justice, both because poetry so often puts us in an affective state of fear that infects our real lives, but also because such "chills" are experienced as pleasurable, leading us to seek out the very states that incapacitate us.

[37] Alternately called "the poetic function" (Jakobson 1981: 750). However, Jakobson's concept focuses on poetic language rather than the story-worlds it makes accessible; it is language severed from its referents: "Poeticity is present when the word is felt as a word and not a mere representation of the object being named or an outburst of emotion, when words and their composition, their meaning, their external and inner form acquire weight and value of their own instead of referring indifferently to reality" (750). For Plato poeticity is always linked to the pleasure of fictional involvement (though perhaps Jakobson would concede this as part of the poetic word's "external form").

Socrates leads us to recognize an emerging paradox in poetic pleasure, and to question how intensely painful affects such as fear and suffering contribute to poetry's sweetness.[38] They are regular features of poetry's "mixed" or "complex" nature, which Socrates must reform in order to accept on justice's terms. When he and Adeimantus agree on allowing what they call "the unmixed imitator of the decent" into their ideal city, Socrates warns: "But surely, Adeimantus, the mixed type is also sweet [ἡδύς], and by far the sweetest to boys and their teachers and to the great mob is the opposite man to the one you prefer." Adeimantus echoes him with some trace of regret: "He is most sweet" (397d). Near the end of the dialogue, Socrates himself is poignantly shamed by his abuse of Homer (595b–c), and portrays himself rather tragically as ending a destructive affair with someone he still profoundly loves (607e–608a). Socrates welcomes any case on poetry's behalf, since he renounces it despite his affection for it, and invites future defenders of poetry to show "that it is not only sweet [ἡδεῖα] but beneficial [ὠφελίμη] to regimes and human life" (607e), a challenge which Aristotle and Plutarch take up, though arguably fail to meet.

The *Republic*'s concluding thoughts on poetic sweetness recall the toxic effect of relishes on the city of pigs: "If you admit the sweetened Muse [τὴν ἡδυσμένην Μοῦσαν] in lyric or epic, pleasure and pain will be joint kings of your city, instead of law and that argument which is always commonly thought to be best" (607a). The dialogue has arrived at this conclusion largely through Socrates' manipulation of traditional apian imagery. By reconfiguring sweetness, in both literal and figurative manifestations, as a spiritual and physical poison, and by opposing the dangerous principle of variety to which sweetness is inextricably linked, Socrates negatively transvalues poetry's traditional value terms. He thereby undermines the ideal of the hive as a political model, since it is organized, on his account, to maximize the production of a toxin, the "honey" of gratuitous pleasure. Socrates also compounds the corruption conventionally ascribed to drones since they not only drain the city of its resources, but stimulate the traffic of honey as a drug. The "bee-like" poet turns out to be a hedonistic dilettante that thrives in democracies, and the honey of his poetry is the opiate of the "drone-like" masses. This blithely corrupt state of affairs allows the tyrant to emerge unchecked, goaded by the

[38] Altieri 2003 provides a rich and provocative account of aesthetic affects that focuses on the complex and often painful values of "intensity," "involvedness," and "plasticity" that motivate our pursuit of aesthetic pleasure. Despite—or because of—his radically anti-cognitivist and hedonistic approach, Altieri's account of literary experience is entirely consonant with Socrates', though they crucially differ in the evaluation of such experience (which Altieri endorses and Socrates condemns).

great drone within him to pursue every kind of destructive pleasure. Once sweetness and benefit are understood to be mutually exclusive, poetry's apian "virtues" become political liabilities, and the sweetened Muse is revealed to be a poisonous one.[39]

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[39] This is not the last word on sweetness and the gustatory model of pleasure it instantiates in the *Republic*. Just as Socrates, both in the *Republic* and elsewhere, redefines music by identifying it with philosophy rather than poetry (*Resp*. 411c–412b; cf. *Phdr*. 248d–e, 259b–d, and *Phd*. 60e–61b), he similarly replaces the traditional model of complex and appetitive sweetness with the true, purified sweetness of philosophy, exposing the rest as mere counterfeit pleasures (*Resp*. 533c–586c). Socrates even appropriates the appetitive language of gustatory pleasure to describe philosophical satisfaction: he has not "dined well" on Thrasymachus's argument about justice, but like a glutton tasted everything without savoring any one thing (354a–b); in a similar vein, he later laments that those who are devoted to carnal pleasures "have never tasted the stable and pure pleasure" of wisdom (586a). More work could be done to explain this appetitive conception of philosophic pleasure.

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