Ion

PLATO
c. 428–348 BC

Ion

Ἴων

Translated from the Greek with AI (Claude) and edited

FORAGE
forage.com

Ion · Plato (c. 428–348 BC)

Translated from the Greek with AI (Claude) and edited. Parallel-text edition, Forage, October 2026. forage.com/plato/ion

Greek text: John Burnet (1863–1928), *Platonis Opera*, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1903), via the Perseus Digital Library (github.com/PerseusDL/canonical-greekLit), CC BY-SA 4.0. English: translated from the Greek with AI (Claude), then edited for accuracy and consistency. Not reviewed by a human specialist. Free to reuse under CC BY-SA 4.0. Margin numbers are the standard Stephanus references (page and section of Henri Estienne's 1578 edition).

The original text is in the public domain. This translation is free to share and adapt under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International license (CC BY-SA 4.0): creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0

Set in Source Serif 4, with Gentium Book Plus.

CONTENTS

Introduction vii

Ion 1

Only Homer? 2

The magnet 6

Out of his mind 8

What does the reciter know? 10

Ion the general 15

Dishonest or divine 17

INTRODUCTION

Ion is a rhapsode, a professional reciter of Homer, fresh from winning first prize at a festival. He tells Socrates he speaks about Homer better than anyone alive. Socrates wants to know what knowledge makes him so good.

Ion can't say. He is brilliant on Homer and bored by every other poet, which no real expertise would explain. So Socrates offers another answer: poets and performers are not experts at all but are possessed by a god, linked like iron rings hanging from a magnet. Ion likes the idea of being divine, until Socrates asks what a reciter actually knows about chariot-racing, medicine or generalship.

This is one of Plato's shortest dialogues and one of his funniest. It is also the first statement of an idea that would echo through Western thought: that poetry comes from inspiration rather than skill.

Ion

Athens.
Socrates questions Ion, a prize-winning reciter of Homer, about whether his gift is a skill or divine inspiration.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
530a	**SOCRATES** τὸν Ἴωνα χαίρειν. πόθεν τὰ νῦν ἡμῖν ἐπιδεδήμηκας; ἢ οἴκοθεν ἐξ Ἐφέσου;	**SOCRATES** Greetings, Ion! Where have you come from to visit us this time? From home, from Ephesus?
	ION οὐδαμῶς, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀλλ' ἐξ Ἐπιδαύρου ἐκ τῶν Ἀσκληπιείων.	**ION** Not at all, Socrates. I've come from Epidaurus, from the festival of Asclepius.[1]
	SOCRATES μῶν καὶ ῥαψῳδῶν ἀγῶνα τιθέασιν τῷ θεῷ οἱ Ἐπιδαύριοι;	**SOCRATES** Don't tell me the Epidaurians hold a contest of rhapsodes in the god's honor too?[2]
	ION πάνυ γε, καὶ τῆς ἄλλης γε μουσικῆς.	**ION** They certainly do, and in every other art of the Muses as well.
	SOCRATES τί οὖν; ἠγωνίζου τι ἡμῖν; καὶ πῶς τι ἠγωνίσω;	**SOCRATES** Well? Did you compete for us? And how did you do?
530b	**ION** τὰ πρῶτα τῶν ἄθλων ἠνεγκάμεθα, ὦ Σώκρατες.	**ION** We carried off first prize, Socrates.
	SOCRATES εὖ λέγεις· ἄγε δὴ ὅπως καὶ τὰ Παναθήναια νικήσομεν.	**SOCRATES** Good to hear. Now see to it that we win at the Panathenaea too.[3]
	ION ἀλλ' ἔσται ταῦτα, ἐὰν θεὸς ἐθέλῃ.	**ION** And so we will, god willing.
	SOCRATES καὶ μὴν πολλάκις γε ἐζήλωσα ὑμᾶς τοὺς ῥαψῳδούς, ὦ Ἴων, τῆς τέχνης· τὸ γὰρ ἅμα μὲν τὸ σῶμα κεκοσμῆσθαι ἀεὶ πρέπον ὑμῶν εἶναι τῇ τέχνῃ καὶ ὡς καλλίστοις φαίνεσθαι, ἅμα δὲ ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι ἔν τε ἄλλοις ποιηταῖς διατρίβειν πολλοῖς καὶ ἀγαθοῖς καὶ δὴ καὶ μάλιστα ἐν Ὁμήρῳ, τῷ ἀρίστῳ καὶ θειοτάτῳ τῶν ποιητῶν, καὶ τὴν τούτου διάνοιαν 530c ἐκμανθάνειν, μὴ μόνον τὰ ἔπη, ζηλωτόν ἐστιν. οὐ γὰρ ἂν γένοιτό ποτε ἀγαθὸς ῥαψῳδός, εἰ μὴ συνείη τὰ λεγόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ. τὸν γὰρ ῥαψῳδὸν ἑρμηνέα δεῖ τοῦ ποιητοῦ τῆς διανοίας γίγνεσθαι τοῖς ἀκούουσι· τοῦτο δὲ καλῶς ποιεῖν μὴ γιγνώσκοντα ὅτι λέγει ὁ ποιητὴς ἀδύνατον. ταῦτα οὖν πάντα ἄξια ζηλοῦσθαι.	**SOCRATES** You know, Ion, I've often envied you rhapsodes your art. Your art makes it fitting for you always to be dressed up and to look as splendid as possible. At the same time you're obliged to spend your time with many good poets, and above all with Homer, the best and most divine of poets, and to learn 530c his thought thoroughly, not just his lines. That really is enviable. No one could ever become a good rhapsode without understanding what the poet says. The rhapsode has to interpret the poet's thought to his audience, and it's impossible to do that well without knowing what the poet means. So all of this deserves to be envied.

1 Epidaurus, in the northeastern Peloponnese, had a famous sanctuary of Asclepius, god of healing, and held a festival with contests in his honor.
2 A rhapsode was a professional reciter of Homer. Rhapsodes performed at festivals and competitions and also lectured on the poems' meaning.
3 The Panathenaea was Athens' great festival in honor of Athena. It included contests in which rhapsodes recited Homer.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
530c	**ION** ἀληθῆ λέγεις, ὦ Σώκρατες· ἐμοὶ γοῦν τοῦτο πλεῖστον ἔργον παρέσχεν τῆς τέχνης, καὶ οἶμαι κάλλιστα ἀνθρώπων λέγειν περὶ Ὁμήρου, ὡς οὔτε Μητρόδωρος ὁ [530d] Λαμψακηνὸς οὔτε Στησίμβροτος ὁ Θάσιος οὔτε Γλαύκων οὔτε ἄλλος οὐδεὶς τῶν πώποτε γενομένων ἔσχεν εἰπεῖν οὕτω πολλὰς καὶ καλὰς διανοίας περὶ Ὁμήρου ὅσας ἐγώ.	**ION** That's true, Socrates. For me, at any rate, this has been the most laborious part of my art. And I think I speak about Homer more beautifully than anyone in the world. Neither Metrodorus of [530d] Lampsacus nor Stesimbrotus of Thasos nor Glaucon nor anyone else who has ever lived has been able to offer as many fine thoughts about Homer as I have.[4]
530d	**SOCRATES** εὖ λέγεις, ὦ Ἴων· δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι οὐ φθονήσεις μοι ἐπιδεῖξαι.	**SOCRATES** Good to hear, Ion. Clearly you won't begrudge me a demonstration.
	ION καὶ μὴν ἄξιόν γε ἀκοῦσαι, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὡς εὖ κεκόσμηκα τὸν Ὅμηρον· ὥστε οἶμαι ὑπὸ Ὁμηριδῶν ἄξιος εἶναι χρυσῷ στεφάνῳ στεφανωθῆναι.	**ION** It's certainly worth hearing, Socrates, how beautifully I've adorned Homer. In fact, I think I deserve to be crowned with a golden crown by the Homeridae.[5]
	SOCRATES καὶ μὴν ἐγὼ ἔτι ποιήσομαι σχολὴν ἀκροάσασθαί [531a] σου, νῦν δέ μοι τοσόνδε ἀπόκριναι· πότερον περὶ Ὁμήρου μόνον δεινὸς εἶ ἢ καὶ περὶ Ἡσιόδου καὶ Ἀρχιλόχου;	**SOCRATES** And I'll make time to listen to you [531a] yet. But for now just answer me this: are you a master only of Homer, or of Hesiod and Archilochus as well?[6]

ONLY HOMER?

Ion is brilliant on Homer but bored by other poets, though they speak of the same things.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
531a	**ION** οὐδαμῶς, ἀλλὰ περὶ Ὁμήρου μόνον· ἱκανὸν γάρ μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι.	**ION** Not at all. Only of Homer. That seems enough to me.
	SOCRATES ἔστι δὲ περὶ ὅτου Ὅμηρός τε καὶ Ἡσίοδος ταὐτὰ λέγετον;	**SOCRATES** Is there anything on which Homer and Hesiod both say the same things?
	ION οἶμαι ἔγωγε καὶ πολλά.	**ION** Yes, I think so. A great many things.
	SOCRATES πότερον οὖν περὶ τούτων κάλλιον ἂν ἐξηγήσαιο ἃ Ὅμηρος λέγει ἢ ἃ Ἡσίοδος;	**SOCRATES** Then on those topics, would you explain better what Homer says or what Hesiod says?
	ION ὁμοίως ἂν περί γε τούτων, ὦ [531b] Σώκρατες, περὶ ὧν ταὐτὰ λέγουσιν.	**ION** Equally well on those, at any rate, [531b] Socrates, the ones where they say the same things.
531b	**SOCRATES** τί δὲ ὧν πέρι μὴ ταὐτὰ λέγουσιν; οἷον περὶ μαντικῆς λέγει τι Ὅμηρός τε καὶ Ἡσίοδος.	**SOCRATES** And what about the things on which they don't say the same? Take divination, for instance. Both Homer and Hesiod say something about it.
	ION πάνυ γε.	**ION** Certainly.

4 Metrodorus, Stesimbrotus and Glaucon were well-known interpreters of Homer in the fifth century BC.
5 The Homeridae ("sons of Homer") were a guild of reciters on Chios who claimed descent from Homer.
6 Hesiod (around 700 BC) wrote the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. Archilochus (seventh century BC) was famous for iambic and elegiac verse.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	SOCRATES τί οὖν; ὅσα τε ὁμοίως καὶ ὅσα διαφόρως περὶ μαντικῆς λέγετον τὼ ποιητὰ τούτω, πότερον σὺ κάλλιον ἂν ἐξηγήσαιο ἢ τῶν μάντεών τις τῶν ἀγαθῶν;	**SOCRATES** Well then, take everything these two poets say about divination, whether they say it alike or differently. Who would explain it better, you or one of the good seers?
	ION τῶν μάντεων.	**ION** One of the seers.
	SOCRATES εἰ δὲ σὺ ἦσθα μάντις, οὐκ, εἴπερ περὶ τῶν ὁμοίως λεγομένων οἷός τ' ἦσθα ἐξηγήσασθαι, καὶ περὶ τῶν διαφόρως λεγομένων ἠπίστω ἂν ἐξηγεῖσθαι;	**SOCRATES** And if you were a seer, and really could explain the things they say alike, wouldn't you also know how to explain the things they say differently?
	ION δῆλον ὅτι.	**ION** Obviously.
531c	**SOCRATES** τί οὖν ποτε περὶ μὲν Ὁμήρου δεινὸς εἶ, περὶ δὲ Ἡσιόδου οὔ, οὐδὲ τῶν ἄλλων ποιητῶν; ἢ Ὅμηρος περὶ ἄλλων τινῶν λέγει ἢ ὧνπερ σύμπαντες οἱ ἄλλοι ποιηταί; οὐ περὶ πολέμου τε τὰ πολλὰ διελήλυθεν καὶ περὶ ὁμιλιῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀνθρώπων ἀγαθῶν τε καὶ κακῶν καὶ ἰδιωτῶν καὶ δημιουργῶν, καὶ περὶ θεῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους καὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους ὁμιλούντων, ὡς ὁμιλοῦσι, καὶ περὶ τῶν οὐρανίων παθημάτων καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἅιδου, καὶ γενέσεις καὶ θεῶν [531d] καὶ ἡρώων; οὐ ταῦτά ἐστι περὶ ὧν Ὅμηρος τὴν ποίησιν πεποίηκεν;	**SOCRATES** So why on earth are you a master of Homer but not of Hesiod or the other poets? Or does Homer talk about anything other than what all the other poets talk about? Hasn't he mostly gone through warfare, and how people deal with one another, good and bad, ordinary people and craftsmen? Hasn't he described how the gods deal with one another and with human beings, what happens in the heavens and in Hades, and the births of gods [531d] and heroes? Aren't these the subjects Homer made his poetry about?
531d	**ION** ἀληθῆ λέγεις, ὦ Σώκρατες.	**ION** That's true, Socrates.
	SOCRATES τί δὲ οἱ ἄλλοι ποιηταί; οὐ περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν τούτων;	**SOCRATES** And what about the other poets? Don't they treat these same subjects?
	ION ναί, ἀλλ', ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐχ ὁμοίως πεποιήκασι καὶ Ὅμηρος.	**ION** Yes, Socrates, but they haven't composed the way Homer has.
	SOCRATES τί μήν; κάκιον;	**SOCRATES** How, then? Worse?
	ION πολύ γε.	**ION** Much worse.
	SOCRATES Ὅμηρος δὲ ἄμεινον;	**SOCRATES** And Homer better?
	ION ἄμεινον μέντοι νὴ Δία.	**ION** Better, by Zeus, absolutely.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν, ὦ φίλη κεφαλὴ Ἴων, ὅταν περὶ ἀριθμοῦ πολλῶν λεγόντων εἷς τις ἄριστα λέγῃ, γνώσεται δήπου τις [531e] τὸν εὖ λέγοντα;	**SOCRATES** Well then, Ion, my dear friend, suppose many people are speaking about number and one of them speaks best. Surely someone will [531e] recognize the one who speaks well?
531e	**ION** φημί.	**ION** I'd say so.
	SOCRATES πότερον οὖν ὁ αὐτὸς ὅσπερ καὶ τοὺς κακῶς λέγοντας, ἢ ἄλλος;	**SOCRATES** Will it be the same person who also recognizes those who speak badly, or someone else?
	ION ὁ αὐτὸς δήπου.	**ION** The same, surely.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν ὁ τὴν ἀριθμητικὴν τέχνην ἔχων οὗτός ἐστιν;	**SOCRATES** And that's the person who has the art of arithmetic?
	ION ναί.	**ION** Yes.
	SOCRATES τί δ'; ὅταν πολλῶν λεγόντων περὶ ὑγιεινῶν σιτίων ὁποῖά ἐστιν, εἷς τις ἄριστα λέγῃ, πότερον ἕτερος μέν τις τὸν ἄριστα λέγοντα γνώσεται ὅτι ἄριστα λέγει, ἕτερος δὲ τὸν κάκιον ὅτι κάκιον, ἢ ὁ αὐτός;	**SOCRATES** What about this? Suppose many people are speaking about which foods are healthy, and one of them speaks best. Will one person recognize that the best speaker speaks best, and another that the worse speaker speaks worse? Or will it be the same person?
	ION δῆλον δήπου, ὁ αὐτός.	**ION** Obviously the same, surely.
	SOCRATES τίς οὗτος; τί ὄνομα αὐτῷ;	**SOCRATES** Who's that? What's he called?
	ION ἰατρός.	**ION** A doctor.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν ἐν κεφαλαίῳ λέγομεν ὡς ὁ αὐτὸς γνώσεται ἀεί, περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν πολλῶν λεγόντων, [532a] ὅστις τε εὖ λέγει καὶ ὅστις κακῶς· ἢ εἰ μὴ γνώσεται τὸν κακῶς λέγοντα, δῆλον ὅτι οὐδὲ τὸν εὖ, περί γε τοῦ αὐτοῦ.	**SOCRATES** So, to sum up, we're saying this. When many people speak about the same things, it will always be the same person who recognizes [532a] who speaks well and who speaks badly. If he can't recognize the one who speaks badly, clearly he can't recognize the one who speaks well either, at least on the same subject.
532a	**ION** οὕτως.	**ION** That's right.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν ὁ αὐτὸς γίγνεται δεινὸς περὶ ἀμφοτέρων;	**SOCRATES** So the same person turns out to be expert on both?
	ION ναί.	**ION** Yes.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν σὺ φῂς καὶ Ὅμηρον καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποιητάς, ἐν οἷς καὶ Ἡσίοδος καὶ Ἀρχίλοχός ἐστιν, περί γε τῶν αὐτῶν λέγειν, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁμοίως, ἀλλὰ τὸν μὲν εὖ γε, τοὺς δὲ χεῖρον;	**SOCRATES** Now, you say that Homer and the other poets, Hesiod and Archilochus among them, speak about the same things, but not in the same way. You say he speaks well, and they speak worse?
	ION καὶ ἀληθῆ λέγω.	**ION** And what I say is true.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν, εἴπερ τὸν εὖ λέγοντα γιγνώσκεις, [532b] καὶ τοὺς χεῖρον λέγοντας γιγνώσκοις ἂν ὅτι χεῖρον λέγουσιν.	**SOCRATES** Then if you recognize the one who speaks well, [532b] you'd also recognize that those who speak worse are speaking worse.
532b	**ION** ἔοικέν γε.	**ION** So it seems.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν, ὦ βέλτιστε, ὁμοίως τὸν Ἴωνα λέγοντες περὶ Ὁμήρου τε δεινὸν εἶναι καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ποιητῶν οὐχ ἁμαρτησόμεθα, ἐπειδή γε αὐτὸς ὁμολογῇ τὸν αὐτὸν ἔσεσθαι κριτὴν ἱκανὸν πάντων ὅσοι ἂν περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν λέγωσι, τοὺς δὲ ποιητὰς σχεδὸν ἅπαντας τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖν.	**SOCRATES** Then, my excellent friend, we won't be mistaken if we say that Ion is just as expert on the other poets as he is on Homer. He himself agrees that the same person will be a competent judge of everyone who speaks about the same things. And nearly all the poets compose on the same things.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	ION τί οὖν ποτε τὸ αἴτιον, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὅτι ἐγώ, ὅταν μέν τις περὶ ἄλλου του ποιητοῦ διαλέγηται, οὔτε προσέχω 532c τὸν νοῦν ἀδυνατῶ τε καὶ ὁτιοῦν συμβαλέσθαι λόγου ἄξιον, ἀλλ' ἀτεχνῶς νυστάζω, ἐπειδὰν δέ τις περὶ Ὁμήρου μνησθῇ, εὐθύς τε ἐγρήγορα καὶ προσέχω τὸν νοῦν καὶ εὐπορῶ ὅτι λέγω;	**ION** Then what on earth is the reason, Socrates? When someone talks about some other poet, I can't pay 532c attention and can't contribute anything worth mentioning. I simply doze off. Yet the moment someone mentions Homer, I'm instantly wide awake, I pay attention, and I have plenty to say.
532c	**SOCRATES** οὐ χαλεπὸν τοῦτό γε εἰκάσαι, ὦ ἑταῖρε, ἀλλὰ παντὶ δῆλον ὅτι τέχνῃ καὶ ἐπιστήμῃ περὶ Ὁμήρου λέγειν ἀδύνατος εἶ· εἰ γὰρ τέχνῃ οἷός τε ἦσθα, καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ποιητῶν ἁπάντων λέγειν οἷός τ' ἂν ἦσθα· ποιητικὴ γάρ πού ἐστιν τὸ ὅλον. ἢ οὔ;	**SOCRATES** That's not hard to guess, my friend. It's obvious to everyone that you can't speak about Homer through art and knowledge. If you could do it by art, you'd be able to speak about all the other poets as well. There is, I take it, an art of poetry as a whole. Or isn't there?
	ION ναί.	**ION** Yes.
532d	**SOCRATES** οὐκοῦν ἐπειδὰν λάβῃ τις καὶ ἄλλην τέχνην ἡντινοῦν ὅλην, ὁ αὐτὸς τρόπος τῆς σκέψεως ἔσται περὶ ἁπασῶν τῶν τεχνῶν; πῶς τοῦτο λέγω, δέῃ τί μου ἀκοῦσαι, ὦ Ἴων;	**SOCRATES** So when someone grasps any other art whatever as a whole, won't the same method of inquiry apply to all the arts? Do you need me to explain what I mean by this, Ion?
	ION ναὶ μὰ τὸν Δία, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἔγωγε· χαίρω γὰρ ἀκούων ὑμῶν τῶν σοφῶν.	**ION** Yes, by Zeus, Socrates, I certainly do. I love listening to you wise men.
	SOCRATES βουλοίμην ἄν σε ἀληθῆ λέγειν, ὦ Ἴων· ἀλλὰ σοφοὶ μέν πού ἐστε ὑμεῖς οἱ ῥαψῳδοὶ καὶ ὑποκριταὶ καὶ ὧν ὑμεῖς ᾄδετε τὰ ποιήματα, ἐγὼ δὲ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ τἀληθῆ λέγω, 532e οἷον εἰκὸς ἰδιώτην ἄνθρωπον. ἐπεὶ καὶ περὶ τούτου οὗ νῦν ἠρόμην σε, θέασαι ὡς φαῦλον καὶ ἰδιωτικόν ἐστι καὶ παντὸς ἀνδρὸς γνῶναι ὃ ἔλεγον, τὴν αὐτὴν εἶναι σκέψιν, ἐπειδάν τις ὅλην τέχνην λάβῃ. λάβωμεν γὰρ τῷ λόγῳ· γραφικὴ γάρ τίς ἐστι τέχνη τὸ ὅλον;	**SOCRATES** I wish what you said were true, Ion. But it's you who are wise, I suppose: you rhapsodes and actors, and the poets whose works you sing. All I do is speak the truth, 532e as you'd expect of an ordinary person. Just look at what I asked you a moment ago. How simple and commonplace it is! Anyone could understand what I meant: that the inquiry is the same whenever someone grasps an art as a whole. Let's take it up in argument. There is an art of painting, taken as a whole, isn't there?
532e	**ION** ναί.	**ION** Yes.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν καὶ γραφῆς πολλοὶ καὶ εἰσὶ καὶ γεγόνασιν ἀγαθοὶ καὶ φαῦλοι;	**SOCRATES** And there are and have been many painters, good and bad?
	ION πάνυ γε.	**ION** Certainly.
	SOCRATES ἤδη οὖν τινα εἶδες ὅστις περὶ μὲν Πολυγνώτου τοῦ Ἀγλαοφῶντος δεινός ἐστιν ἀποφαίνειν ἃ εὖ τε γράφει καὶ ἃ μή, περὶ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων γραφέων 533a ἀδύνατος; καὶ ἐπειδὰν μέν τις τὰ τῶν ἄλλων ζωγράφων ἔργα ἐπιδεικνύῃ, νυστάζει τε καὶ ἀπορεῖ καὶ οὐκ ἔχει ὅτι συμβάληται, ἐπειδὰν δὲ περὶ Πολυγνώτου ἢ ἄλλου ὅτου βούλει τῶν γραφέων ἑνὸς μόνου δέῃ ἀποφήνασθαι	**SOCRATES** Now, have you ever seen anyone who is expert at pointing out what Polygnotus son of Aglaophon paints well and what he doesn't, but who is 533a helpless about the other painters? When someone shows him the works of other painters, he dozes off, is at a loss, and has nothing to contribute. But when he has to give his opinion on Polygnotus, or on any single painter you like, he's

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	γνώμην, ἐγρήγορέν τε καὶ προσέχει τὸν νοῦν καὶ εὐπορεῖ ὅτι εἴπῃ;	wide awake, pays attention and has plenty to say. Have you ever seen such a person?[7]
533a	ION οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, οὐ δῆτα.	ION No, by Zeus, certainly not.
	SOCRATES τί δέ; ἐν ἀνδριαντοποιίᾳ ἤδη τιν' εἶδες ὅστις περὶ μὲν Δαιδάλου τοῦ Μητίονος [533b] ἢ Ἐπειοῦ τοῦ Πανοπέως ἢ Θεοδώρου τοῦ Σαμίου ἢ ἄλλου τινὸς ἀνδριαντοποιοῦ ἑνὸς πέρι δεινός ἐστιν ἐξηγεῖσθαι ἃ εὖ πεποίηκεν, ἐν δὲ τοῖς τῶν ἄλλων ἀνδριαντοποιῶν ἔργοις ἀπορεῖ τε καὶ νυστάζει, οὐκ ἔχων ὅτι εἴπῃ;	SOCRATES What about sculpture? Have you ever seen anyone who is expert at explaining what Daedalus son of Metion [533b] has done well, or Epeius son of Panopeus, or Theodorus of Samos, or any other single sculptor, but who is at a loss when faced with the works of other sculptors? Someone who dozes off and has nothing to say?[8]
533b	ION οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, οὐδὲ τοῦτον ἑώρακα.	ION No, by Zeus, I haven't seen anyone like that either.
	SOCRATES ἀλλὰ μήν, ὥς γ' ἐγὼ οἶμαι, οὐδ' ἐν αὐλήσει γε οὐδὲ ἐν κιθαρίσει οὐδὲ ἐν κιθαρῳδίᾳ οὐδὲ ἐν ῥαψῳδίᾳ οὐδεπώποτ' εἶδες ἄνδρα ὅστις περὶ μὲν Ὀλύμπου δεινός ἐστιν ἐξηγεῖσθαι ἢ περὶ Θαμύρου ἢ περὶ [533c] Ὀρφέως ἢ περὶ Φημίου τοῦ Ἰθακησίου ῥαψῳδοῦ, περὶ δὲ Ἴωνος τοῦ Ἐφεσίου ῥαψῳδοῦ ἀπορεῖ καὶ οὐκ ἔχει συμβαλέσθαι ἅ τε εὖ ῥαψῳδεῖ καὶ ἃ μή.	SOCRATES And what's more, I think, you've never once seen such a man in pipe-playing or lyre-playing, or in singing to the lyre, or in rhapsody. He would be expert at explaining Olympus or Thamyras or [533c] Orpheus or Phemius, the rhapsode of Ithaca. But faced with Ion, the rhapsode of Ephesus, he'd be at a loss, unable to contribute anything about what Ion performs well and what he doesn't.[9]
533c	ION οὐκ ἔχω σοι περὶ τούτου ἀντιλέγειν, ὦ Σώκρατες· ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνο ἐμαυτῷ σύνοιδα, ὅτι περὶ Ὁμήρου κάλλιστ' ἀνθρώπων λέγω καὶ εὐπορῶ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι πάντες μέ φασιν εὖ λέγειν, περὶ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων οὔ. καίτοι ὅρα τοῦτο τί ἔστιν.	ION I can't contradict you on that, Socrates. But this much I know about myself. I speak about Homer more beautifully than anyone in the world, and I have plenty to say, and everyone else says I speak well. But not about the others. Now, see what this means.

THE MAGNET

Poets and reciters speak not by art but by divine inspiration, like iron rings hanging from a magnet.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	SOCRATES καὶ ὁρῶ, ὦ Ἴων, καὶ ἔρχομαί γέ σοι ἀποφανούμενος [533d] ὅ μοι δοκεῖ τοῦτο εἶναι. ἔστι γὰρ τοῦτο τέχνη μὲν οὐκ ὂν παρὰ σοὶ περὶ Ὁμήρου εὖ λέγειν, ὃ νυνδὴ ἔλεγον, θεία δὲ δύναμις ἥ σε κινεῖ, ὥσπερ ἐν τῇ λίθῳ ἣν Εὐριπίδης μὲν Μαγνῆτιν ὠνόμασεν, οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ Ἡρακλείαν. καὶ γὰρ αὕτη ἡ λίθος οὐ μόνον αὐτοὺς τοὺς δακτυλίους ἄγει τοὺς σιδηροῦς, ἀλλὰ καὶ δύναμιν ἐντίθησι τοῖς δακτυλίοις ὥστ' αὖ δύνασθαι ταὐτὸν τοῦτο ποιεῖν ὅπερ ἡ λίθος, ἄλλους [533e] ἄγειν δακτυλίους, ὥστ'	SOCRATES I do see, Ion, and I'm about to show you [533d] what I think it is. This ability of yours to speak well about Homer isn't an art, as I was just saying. It's a divine power that moves you, like the power in the stone that Euripides called the magnet and most people call the stone of Heraclea. This stone not only attracts iron rings but also puts a power into the rings, so that they in turn can do the very same thing the stone does and at-

7 Polygnotus of Thasos was the most celebrated painter of the mid-fifth century BC, known for large wall paintings in Athens and Delphi.
8 Daedalus was the legendary master craftsman, and Epeius built the Trojan Horse. Theodorus of Samos was a real sculptor and architect of the sixth century BC.
9 Olympus, Thamyras and Orpheus were legendary musicians. Phemius is the bard in Odysseus' palace in the *Odyssey*.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	ἐνίοτε ὁρμαθὸς μακρὸς πάνυ σιδηρίων καὶ δακτυλίων ἐξ ἀλλήλων ἤρτηται· πᾶσι δὲ τούτοις ἐξ ἐκείνης τῆς λίθου ἡ δύναμις ἀνήρτηται. οὕτω δὲ καὶ ἡ Μοῦσα ἐνθέους μὲν ποιεῖ αὐτή, διὰ δὲ τῶν ἐνθέων τούτων ἄλλων ἐνθουσιαζόντων ὁρμαθὸς ἐξαρτᾶται.	tract other [533e] rings. Sometimes a very long chain of iron pieces and rings hangs one from another, and for all of them the power depends on that stone. In the same way, the Muse herself makes people inspired, and through these inspired people a chain of others who are inspired hangs down.[10]
533e	πάντες γὰρ οἵ τε τῶν ἐπῶν ποιηταὶ οἱ ἀγαθοὶ οὐκ ἐκ τέχνης ἀλλ' ἔνθεοι ὄντες καὶ κατεχόμενοι πάντα ταῦτα τὰ καλὰ λέγουσι ποιήματα, καὶ οἱ μελοποιοὶ οἱ ἀγαθοὶ ὡσαύτως, ὥσπερ οἱ κορυβαντιῶντες [534a] οὐκ ἔμφρονες ὄντες ὀρχοῦνται, οὕτω καὶ οἱ μελοποιοὶ οὐκ ἔμφρονες ὄντες τὰ καλὰ μέλη ταῦτα ποιοῦσιν, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὰν ἐμβῶσιν εἰς τὴν ἁρμονίαν καὶ εἰς τὸν ῥυθμόν, βακχεύουσι καὶ κατεχόμενοι, ὥσπερ αἱ βάκχαι ἀρύονται ἐκ τῶν ποταμῶν μέλι καὶ γάλα κατεχόμεναι, ἔμφρονες δὲ οὖσαι οὔ, καὶ τῶν μελοποιῶν ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦτο ἐργάζεται, ὅπερ αὐτοὶ λέγουσι. λέγουσι γὰρ δήπουθεν πρὸς ἡμᾶς οἱ ποιηταὶ ὅτι [534b] ἀπὸ κρηνῶν μελιρρύτων ἐκ Μουσῶν κήπων τινῶν καὶ ναπῶν δρεπόμενοι τὰ μέλη ἡμῖν φέρουσιν ὥσπερ αἱ μέλιτται, καὶ αὐτοὶ οὕτω πετόμενοι· καὶ ἀληθῆ λέγουσι.	For all the good epic poets utter all those fine poems not by art but because they are inspired and possessed, and the good lyric poets do the same. The Corybants are not in their right minds [534a] when they dance, and in the same way the lyric poets are not in their right minds when they compose these fine songs. Once they step into harmony and rhythm, they're in a Bacchic frenzy and possessed. The bacchants, when possessed, draw honey and milk from the rivers, but not when they're in their right minds. The soul of the lyric poets does just this, as they themselves say. For the poets tell us, of course, that [534b] they gather their songs from honey-flowing springs in certain gardens and glens of the Muses, and bring them to us like bees, flitting about like bees themselves. And they speak the truth.[11]
534b	κοῦφον γὰρ χρῆμα ποιητής ἐστιν καὶ πτηνὸν καὶ ἱερόν, καὶ οὐ πρότερον οἷός τε ποιεῖν πρὶν ἂν ἔνθεός τε γένηται καὶ ἔκφρων καὶ ὁ νοῦς μηκέτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνῇ· ἕως δ' ἂν τουτὶ ἔχῃ τὸ κτῆμα, ἀδύνατος πᾶς ποιεῖν ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν καὶ χρησμῳδεῖν. ἅτε οὖν οὐ τέχνῃ ποιοῦντες καὶ πολλὰ λέγοντες καὶ καλὰ περὶ [534c] τῶν πραγμάτων, ὥσπερ σὺ περὶ Ὁμήρου, ἀλλὰ θείᾳ μοίρᾳ, τοῦτο μόνον οἷός τε ἕκαστος ποιεῖν καλῶς ἐφ' ὃ ἡ Μοῦσα αὐτὸν ὥρμησεν, ὁ μὲν διθυράμβους, ὁ δὲ ἐγκώμια, ὁ δὲ ὑπορχήματα, ὁ δ' ἔπη, ὁ δ' ἰάμβους· τὰ δ' ἄλλα φαῦλος αὐτῶν ἕκαστός ἐστιν.	For a poet is a light, winged, holy thing. He can't compose until he becomes inspired and out of his mind, and his intellect is no longer in him. As long as a man keeps hold of this possession, he is quite unable to compose poetry or chant oracles. They don't compose by art when they say many fine things about [534c] their subjects, as you do about Homer. They compose by divine dispensation. So each of them can compose well only the kind of thing the Muse has stirred him to: one composes dithyrambs, another songs of praise, another dance-songs, another epic, another iambic verse. At everything else, each of them is poor.
534c	οὐ γὰρ τέχνῃ ταῦτα λέγουσιν ἀλλὰ θείᾳ δυνάμει, ἐπεί, εἰ περὶ ἑνὸς τέχνῃ καλῶς ἠπίσταντο λέγειν, κἂν περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων· διὰ ταῦτα δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἐξαιρούμενος τούτων τὸν νοῦν τούτοις χρῆται ὑπηρέταις καὶ [534d] τοῖς χρησμῳδοῖς καὶ τοῖς μάντεσι τοῖς θείοις, ἵνα ἡμεῖς οἱ ἀκούοντες εἰδῶμεν ὅτι οὐχ οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ταῦτα λέγοντες οὕτω πολλοῦ ἄξια, οἷς νοῦς μὴ πάρεστιν, ἀλλ' ὁ θεὸς αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ λέγων, διὰ τούτων δὲ φθέγγεται πρὸς ἡμᾶς.	For it's not by art that they say these things but by divine power. If they knew by art how to speak well about one subject, they'd know how to speak well about all the others too. That's why the god takes away their intellect and uses them as his servants, just as he uses [534d] oracle-singers and divine seers. He does it so that we who hear them may know that it isn't these people, who have no intellect in them, who say these things of such great

10 Literally the "Magnesian stone," named after Magnesia, where lodestone was found.
11 The Corybants were worshippers of the goddess Cybele. Their rites involved ecstatic dancing to wild music.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
		worth. It's the god himself who speaks, and through them he addresses us.
534d	μέγιστον δὲ τεκμήριον τῷ λόγῳ Τύννιχος ὁ Χαλκιδεύς, ὃς ἄλλο μὲν οὐδὲν πώποτε ἐποίησε ποίημα ὅτου τις ἂν ἀξιώσειεν μνησθῆναι, τὸν δὲ παίωνα ὃν πάντες ᾄδουσι, σχεδόν τι πάντων μελῶν κάλλιστον, ἀτεχνῶς, ὅπερ αὐτὸς λέγει, 534e "εὕρημά τι Μοισᾶν." ἐν τούτῳ γὰρ δὴ μάλιστά μοι δοκεῖ ὁ θεὸς ἐνδείξασθαι ἡμῖν, ἵνα μὴ διστάζωμεν, ὅτι οὐκ ἀνθρώπινά ἐστιν τὰ καλὰ ταῦτα ποιήματα οὐδὲ ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλὰ θεῖα καὶ θεῶν, οἱ δὲ ποιηταὶ οὐδὲν ἀλλ' ἢ ἑρμηνῆς εἰσιν τῶν θεῶν, κατεχόμενοι ἐξ ὅτου ἂν ἕκαστος κατέχηται. ταῦτα ἐνδεικνύμενος ὁ θεὸς ἐξεπίτηδες διὰ τοῦ φαυλοτάτου 535a ποιητοῦ τὸ κάλλιστον μέλος ᾖσεν· ἢ οὐ δοκῶ σοι ἀληθῆ λέγειν, ὦ Ἴων;	The strongest evidence for this account is Tynnichus of Chalcis. He never composed any other poem that anyone would think worth remembering. Yet he composed the paean everyone sings, very nearly the finest of all songs, and simply, as he himself says, 534e "a find of the Muses." In this case above all, it seems to me, the god has shown us, so that we wouldn't doubt it, that these fine poems are not human, nor the work of human beings. They are divine, the work of gods. The poets are nothing but interpreters of the gods, each possessed by whichever god possesses him. To show this, the god deliberately sang the finest song through the most worthless 535a poet. Or don't you think I'm right, Ion?[12]
535a	ION ναὶ μὰ τὸν Δία, ἔμοιγε· ἅπτει γάρ πώς μου τοῖς λόγοις τῆς ψυχῆς, ὦ Σώκρατες, καί μοι δοκοῦσι θείᾳ μοίρᾳ ἡμῖν παρὰ τῶν θεῶν ταῦτα οἱ ἀγαθοὶ ποιηταὶ ἑρμηνεύειν.	ION By Zeus, I do. Your words touch my soul somehow, Socrates. And I believe the good poets interpret these things to us from the gods by divine dispensation.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν ὑμεῖς αὖ οἱ ῥαψῳδοὶ τὰ τῶν ποιητῶν ἑρμηνεύετε;	SOCRATES And you rhapsodes, in turn, interpret the works of the poets?
	ION καὶ τοῦτο ἀληθὲς λέγεις.	ION That's true too.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν ἑρμηνέων ἑρμηνῆς γίγνεσθε;	SOCRATES So you're interpreters of interpreters?
	ION παντάπασί γε.	ION Absolutely.

OUT OF HIS MIND

Ion admits that when he performs he weeps, his hair stands on end, and his audience weeps too.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
535b	SOCRATES ἔχε δή μοι τόδε εἰπέ, ὦ Ἴων, καὶ μὴ ἀποκρύψῃ ὅτι ἄν σε ἔρωμαι· ὅταν εὖ εἴπῃς ἔπη καὶ ἐκπλήξῃς μάλιστα τοὺς θεωμένους, ἢ τὸν Ὀδυσσέα ὅταν ἐπὶ τὸν οὐδὸν ἐφαλλόμενον ᾄδῃς, ἐκφανῆ γιγνόμενον τοῖς μνηστῆρσι καὶ ἐκχέοντα τοὺς ὀιστοὺς πρὸ τῶν ποδῶν, ἢ Ἀχιλλέα ἐπὶ τὸν Ἕκτορα ὁρμῶντα, ἢ καὶ τῶν περὶ Ἀνδρομάχην ἐλεινῶν τι ἢ περὶ Ἑκάβην ἢ περὶ Πρίαμον, τότε πότερον ἔμφρων εἶ ἢ ἔξω 535c σαυτοῦ γίγνῃ καὶ παρὰ τοῖς πράγμασιν οἴεταί σου εἶναι ἡ ψυχὴ οἷς λέγεις ἐνθουσιάζουσα, ἢ ἐν Ἰθάκῃ οὖσιν ἢ ἐν Τροίᾳ ἢ ὅπως ἂν καὶ τὰ ἔπη ἔχῃ;	SOCRATES Hold on, then, and tell me this, Ion, and don't hide anything I ask you. Think of when you recite epic well and astonish your audience most. Perhaps you're singing of Odysseus leaping onto the threshold, revealing himself to the suitors and pouring the arrows out at his feet. Or of Achilles rushing at Hector. Or of one of the pitiful passages about Andromache or Hecuba or Priam. At such moments, are you in your right mind? Or are you 535c beside yourself, and does your soul, inspired, believe it's present at the events you describe, whether they happen in Ithaca or in Troy or wherever the poem sets them?

12 Tynnichus is otherwise almost unknown. A paean was a hymn, usually sung to Apollo.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
535c	**ION** ὡς ἐναργές μοι τοῦτο, ὦ Σώκρατες, τὸ τεκμήριον εἶπες· οὐ γάρ σε ἀποκρυψάμενος ἐρῶ. ἐγὼ γὰρ ὅταν ἐλεινόν τι λέγω, δακρύων ἐμπίμπλανταί μου οἱ ὀφθαλμοί· ὅταν τε φοβερὸν ἢ δεινόν, ὀρθαὶ αἱ τρίχες ἵστανται ὑπὸ φόβου καὶ ἡ καρδία πηδᾷ.	**ION** How vivid that piece of evidence is, Socrates! I'll tell you without hiding anything. When I recite something pitiful, my eyes fill with tears. And when it's something frightening or terrible, my hair stands on end with fear and my heart pounds.
535d	**SOCRATES** τί οὖν; φῶμεν, ὦ Ἴων, ἔμφρονα εἶναι τότε τοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ὃς ἂν κεκοσμημένος ἐσθῆτι ποικίλῃ καὶ χρυσοῖσι στεφάνοις κλάῃ τ' ἐν θυσίαις καὶ ἑορταῖς, μηδὲν ἀπολωλεκὼς τούτων, ἢ φοβῆται πλέον ἢ ἐν δισμυρίοις ἀνθρώποις ἑστηκὼς φιλίοις, μηδενὸς ἀποδύοντος μηδὲ ἀδικοῦντος;	**SOCRATES** Well then, Ion, are we to say that this man is in his right mind at that moment? He's decked out in embroidered clothes and golden crowns, yet he weeps at sacrifices and festivals, though he has lost none of these things. Or he's frightened while standing among more than twenty thousand friendly people, when no one is robbing him or doing him any wrong.
	ION οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, οὐ πάνυ, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὥς γε τἀληθὲς εἰρῆσθαι.	**ION** No, by Zeus, Socrates, not at all, to tell you the honest truth.
	SOCRATES οἶσθα οὖν ὅτι καὶ τῶν θεατῶν τοὺς πολλοὺς ταὐτὰ ταῦτα ὑμεῖς ἐργάζεσθε;	**SOCRATES** And do you know that you rhapsodes produce these very same effects in most of the spectators too?
535e	**ION** καὶ μάλα καλῶς οἶδα· καθορῶ γὰρ ἑκάστοτε αὐτοὺς ἄνωθεν ἀπὸ τοῦ βήματος κλάοντάς τε καὶ δεινὸν ἐμβλέποντας καὶ συνθαμβοῦντας τοῖς λεγομένοις. δεῖ γάρ με καὶ σφόδρ' αὐτοῖς τὸν νοῦν προσέχειν· ὡς ἐὰν μὲν κλάοντας αὐτοὺς καθίσω, αὐτὸς γελάσομαι ἀργύριον λαμβάνων, ἐὰν δὲ γελῶντας, αὐτὸς κλαύσομαι ἀργύριον ἀπολλύς.	**ION** Oh, I know that very well. Every time, I look down on them from up on the platform, and there they are, weeping, staring wild-eyed, caught up in amazement at the words. And I have to pay very close attention to them. If I set them crying, I'll be the one laughing as I take their money. If I set them laughing, I'll be the one crying, because I'll lose it.
	SOCRATES οἶσθα οὖν ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ θεατὴς τῶν δακτυλίων ὁ ἔσχατος, ὧν ἐγὼ ἔλεγον ὑπὸ τῆς Ἡρακλειώτιδος λίθου ἀπ' ἀλλήλων τὴν δύναμιν λαμβάνειν; ὁ δὲ μέσος σὺ ὁ 536a ῥαψῳδὸς καὶ ὑποκριτής, ὁ δὲ πρῶτος αὐτὸς ὁ ποιητής· ὁ δὲ θεὸς διὰ πάντων τούτων ἕλκει τὴν ψυχὴν ὅποι ἂν βούληται τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀνακρεμαννὺς ἐξ ἀλλήλων τὴν δύναμιν. καὶ ὥσπερ ἐκ τῆς λίθου ἐκείνης ὁρμαθὸς πάμπολυς ἐξήρτηται χορευτῶν τε καὶ διδασκάλων καὶ ὑποδιδασκάλων, ἐκ πλαγίου ἐξηρτημένων τῶν τῆς Μούσης ἐκκρεμαμένων δακτυλίων.	**SOCRATES** Then do you know that this spectator is the last of the rings I was talking about, the ones that take their power from one another through the magnet? The middle one is you, the 536a rhapsode and actor, and the first is the poet himself. Through all of these the god draws people's souls wherever he likes, making the power hang down from one to the next. And just as from that stone, an enormous chain hangs down of choral dancers, chorus-masters and assistant masters, hanging off to the side from the rings suspended from the Muse.
536a	καὶ ὁ μὲν τῶν ποιητῶν ἐξ ἄλλης Μούσης, ὁ δὲ ἐξ ἄλλης ἐξήρτηται—ὀνομάζομεν δὲ αὐτὸ κατέχεται, τὸ δέ 536b ἐστι παραπλήσιον· ἔχεται γάρ—ἐκ δὲ τούτων τῶν πρώτων δακτυλίων, τῶν ποιητῶν, ἄλλοι ἐξ ἄλλου αὖ ἠρτημένοι εἰσὶ καὶ ἐνθουσιάζουσιν, οἱ μὲν ἐξ Ὀρφέως, οἱ δὲ ἐκ Μουσαίου· οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ ἐξ Ὁμήρου κατέχονταί τε καὶ ἔχονται.	One poet is suspended from one Muse, another from another. We call it being "possessed," but it 536b comes to much the same thing, since he is *held*. And from these first rings, the poets, others in turn are suspended, some from one poet and some from another, and are inspired: some from Orph-

	GREEK	ENGLISH
		eus, some from Musaeus, but most are possessed and held by Homer.[13]
536b	ὧν σύ, ὦ Ἴων, εἷς εἶ καὶ κατέχῃ ἐξ Ὁμήρου, καὶ ἐπειδὰν μέν τις ἄλλου του ποιητοῦ ᾄδῃ, καθεύδεις τε καὶ ἀπορεῖς ὅτι λέγῃς, ἐπειδὰν δὲ τούτου τοῦ ποιητοῦ φθέγξηταί τις μέλος, εὐθὺς ἐγρήγορας καὶ ὀρχεῖταί σου ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ εὐπορεῖς ὅτι [536c] λέγῃς· οὐ γὰρ τέχνῃ οὐδ' ἐπιστήμῃ περὶ Ὁμήρου λέγεις ἃ λέγεις, ἀλλὰ θείᾳ μοίρᾳ καὶ κατοκωχῇ, ὥσπερ οἱ κορυβαντιῶντες ἐκείνου μόνου αἰσθάνονται τοῦ μέλους ὀξέως ὃ ἂν ᾖ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξ ὅτου ἂν κατέχωνται, καὶ εἰς ἐκεῖνο τὸ μέλος καὶ σχημάτων καὶ ῥημάτων εὐποροῦσι, τῶν δὲ ἄλλων οὐ φροντίζουσιν· οὕτω καὶ σύ, ὦ Ἴων, περὶ μὲν Ὁμήρου ὅταν τις μνησθῇ, εὐπορεῖς, περὶ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπορεῖς· [536d] τούτου δ' ἐστὶ τὸ αἴτιον, ὅ μ' ἐρωτᾷς, δι' ὅτι σὺ περὶ μὲν Ὁμήρου εὐπορεῖς, περὶ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων οὔ, ὅτι οὐ τέχνῃ ἀλλὰ θείᾳ μοίρᾳ Ὁμήρου δεινὸς εἶ ἐπαινέτης.	And you, Ion, are one of these: you are possessed by Homer. When someone sings the work of any other poet, you fall asleep and have nothing to say. But as soon as someone strikes up a song of this poet's, you're wide awake at once, your soul dances, and you have plenty [536c] to say. That's because it isn't by art or knowledge that you say what you say about Homer, but by divine dispensation and possession. Think of the Corybants. They are keenly alive only to the one tune that belongs to the god who possesses them, and for that tune they have plenty of movements and words, but they pay no attention to any other. In the same way, Ion, when someone mentions Homer, you have plenty to say, but about the others you're at a loss. [536d] And the reason for this, which is what you're asking me—why you have plenty to say about Homer and not about the others—is that it's not by art but by divine dispensation that you're such a marvelous praiser of Homer.
536d	**ION** σὺ μὲν εὖ λέγεις, ὦ Σώκρατες· θαυμάζοιμι μεντἂν εἰ οὕτως εὖ εἴποις, ὥστε με ἀναπεῖσαι ὡς ἐγὼ κατεχόμενος καὶ μαινόμενος Ὅμηρον ἐπαινῶ. οἶμαι δὲ οὐδ' ἂν σοὶ δόξαιμι, εἴ μου ἀκούσαις λέγοντος περὶ Ὁμήρου.	**ION** That's well said, Socrates. Still, I'd be amazed if you could say it well enough to convince me that I'm possessed and out of my mind when I praise Homer. I don't think you'd believe it either, if you heard me speaking about Homer.

WHAT DOES THE RECITER KNOW?

Homer describes charioteering, medicine, fishing and prophecy, and each belongs to its own expert.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	SOCRATES καὶ μὴν ἐθέλω γε ἀκοῦσαι, οὐ μέντοι πρότερον [536e] πρὶν ἄν μοι ἀποκρίνῃ τόδε· ὧν Ὅμηρος λέγει περὶ τίνος εὖ λέγεις; οὐ γὰρ δήπου περὶ ἁπάντων γε.	**SOCRATES** And I really do want to hear you, but not before [536e] you answer me this. Of the things Homer talks about, which do you speak well about? Surely not all of them.
536e	**ION** εὖ ἴσθι, ὦ Σώκρατες, περὶ οὐδενὸς ὅτου οὔ.	**ION** Every single one, Socrates, I assure you.
	SOCRATES οὐ δήπου καὶ περὶ τούτων ὧν σὺ μὲν τυγχάνεις οὐκ εἰδώς, Ὅμηρος δὲ λέγει.	**SOCRATES** Surely not the things you happen to know nothing about, though Homer talks about them.
	ION καὶ ταῦτα ποῖά ἐστιν ἃ Ὅμηρος μὲν λέγει, ἐγὼ δὲ οὐκ οἶδα;	**ION** And what sort of things are these, that Homer talks about but I don't know?
537a		**SOCRATES** Well, doesn't Homer talk about the arts in many places, and at length? Chariot-driving, for

13 Orpheus and Musaeus were legendary singers of the earliest age, to whom much religious poetry was attributed.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	SOCRATES οὐ καὶ περὶ τεχνῶν μέντοι λέγει πολλαχοῦ Ὅμηρος καὶ πολλά; οἷον καὶ περὶ ἡνιοχείας—ἐὰν μνησθῶ τὰ ἔπη, ἐγώ σοι φράσω.	instance—if I can remember the lines, I'll quote them for you.
	ION ἀλλ' ἐγὼ ἐρῶ· ἐγὼ γὰρ μέμνημαι.	**ION** No, I'll recite them. I remember them.
	SOCRATES εἰπὲ δή μοι ἃ λέγει Νέστωρ Ἀντιλόχῳ τῷ υἱεῖ, παραινῶν εὐλαβηθῆναι περὶ τὴν καμπὴν ἐν τῇ ἱπποδρομίᾳ τῇ ἐπὶ Πατρόκλῳ.	**SOCRATES** Then tell me what Nestor says to his son Antilochus when he advises him to take care at the turn in the horse race held in honor of Patroclus.
	ION κλινθῆναι δέ, φησί, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐυξέστῳ ἐνὶ δίφρῳ 537b ἦκ' ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ τοῖιν· ἀτὰρ τὸν δεξιὸν ἵππον κένσαι ὁμοκλήσας, εἶξαί τέ οἱ ἡνία χερσίν. ἐν νύσσῃ δέ τοι ἵππος ἀριστερὸς ἐγχριμφθήτω, ὡς ἄν τοι πλήμνη γε δοάσσεται ἄκρον ἱκέσθαι κύκλου ποιητοῖο· λίθου δ' ἀλέασθαι ἐπαυρεῖν.	**ION** "Lean over yourself," he says, "in the polished chariot 537b a little to the left of the pair; and the right-hand horse goad on with a shout, and give him rein with your hands. And at the post let the left-hand horse shave close, so that the hub seems just to graze its edge— the hub of the well-made wheel; but take care not to strike the stone."
537b	**SOCRATES** ἀρκεῖ. ταῦτα δή, ὦ Ἴων, τὰ ἔπη εἴτε 537c ὀρθῶς λέγει Ὅμηρος εἴτε μή, πότερος ἂν γνοίη ἄμεινον, ἰατρὸς ἢ ἡνίοχος;	**SOCRATES** That's enough. Now, Ion, who would be the better judge of whether Homer has these lines 537c right or not—a doctor or a charioteer?
537c	**ION** Ἡνίοχος δήπου.	**ION** A charioteer, of course.
	SOCRATES πότερον ὅτι τέχνην ταύτην ἔχει ἢ κατ' ἄλλο τι;	**SOCRATES** Because he has this art, or for some other reason?
	ION οὔκ, ἀλλ' ὅτι τέχνην.	**ION** No, because he has the art.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν ἑκάστῃ τῶν τεχνῶν ἀποδέδοταί τι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔργον οἷά τε εἶναι γιγνώσκειν; οὐ γάρ που ἃ κυβερνητικῇ γιγνώσκομεν, γνωσόμεθα καὶ ἰατρικῇ.	**SOCRATES** Now hasn't each of the arts been assigned by the god some particular work it's able to know? Surely what we know by the art of steering a ship we won't also know by medicine.
	ION οὐ δῆτα.	**ION** Of course not.
	SOCRATES οὐδέ γε ἃ ἰατρικῇ, ταῦτα καὶ τεκτονικῇ.	**SOCRATES** Nor will we know by carpentry what we know by medicine.
537d	**ION** οὐ δῆτα.	**ION** Of course not.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν οὕτω καὶ κατὰ πασῶν τῶν τεχνῶν, ἃ τῇ ἑτέρᾳ τέχνῃ γιγνώσκομεν, οὐ γνωσόμεθα τῇ ἑτέρᾳ; τόδε δέ μοι πρότερον τούτου ἀπόκριναι· τὴν μὲν ἑτέραν φῂς εἶναί τινα τέχνην, τὴν δ' ἑτέραν;	**SOCRATES** So it's the same with all the arts: what we know by one art we won't know by another? But answer me this first. Do you say that one art is one thing and another is something different?
	ION ναί.	**ION** Yes.
	SOCRATES ἆρα ὥσπερ ἐγὼ τεκμαιρόμενος, ὅταν ἡ μὲν ἑτέρων πραγμάτων ᾖ ἐπιστήμη, ἡ δ' ἑτέρων, οὕτω καλῶ τὴν μὲν ἄλλην, τὴν δὲ ἄλλην 537e τέχνην, οὕτω καὶ σύ;	**SOCRATES** Do you reason the way I do? When one body of knowledge is about one set of things and another about a different set, that's how I come to

	GREEK	ENGLISH
		call one of them one art and the other [537e] a different art. Do you do the same?
537e	**ION** ναί.	**ION** Yes.
	SOCRATES εἰ γάρ που τῶν αὐτῶν πραγμάτων ἐπιστήμη εἴη τις, τί ἂν τὴν μὲν ἑτέραν φαῖμεν εἶναι, τὴν δ' ἑτέραν, ὁπότε γε ταὐτὰ εἴη εἰδέναι ἀπ' ἀμφοτέρων; ὥσπερ ἐγώ τε γιγνώσκω ὅτι πέντε εἰσὶν οὗτοι οἱ δάκτυλοι, καὶ σύ, ὥσπερ ἐγώ, περὶ τούτων ταὐτὰ γιγνώσκεις· καὶ εἴ σε ἐγὼ ἐροίμην εἰ τῇ αὐτῇ τέχνῃ γιγνώσκομεν τῇ ἀριθμητικῇ τὰ αὐτὰ ἐγώ τε καὶ σὺ ἢ ἄλλῃ, φαίης ἂν δήπου τῇ αὐτῇ.	**SOCRATES** Because if two kinds of knowledge were about the same things, why would we say one was one art and the other a different one, when you could know the same things from either? It's like this: I know that these fingers are five, and you, just like me, know the same thing about them. And if I asked you whether you and I know the same things by the same art, arithmetic, or by a different one, you'd say, I take it, by the same one.
	ION ναί.	**ION** Yes.
538a	**SOCRATES** ὃ τοίνυν ἄρτι ἔμελλον ἐρήσεσθαί σε, νυνὶ εἰπέ, εἰ κατὰ πασῶν τῶν τεχνῶν οὕτω σοι δοκεῖ, τῇ μὲν αὐτῇ τέχνῃ τὰ αὐτὰ ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι γιγνώσκειν, τῇ δ' ἑτέρᾳ μὴ τὰ αὐτά, ἀλλ' εἴπερ ἄλλη ἐστίν, ἀναγκαῖον καὶ ἕτερα γιγνώσκειν.	**SOCRATES** Then tell me now what I was about to ask you a moment ago. Do you think it holds for all the arts that by the same art we must know the same things, and by a different art not the same things—that if it really is a different art, it must know different things too?
	ION οὕτω μοι δοκεῖ, ὦ Σώκρατες.	**ION** That's what I think, Socrates.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν ὅστις ἂν μὴ ἔχῃ τινὰ τέχνην, ταύτης τῆς τέχνης τὰ λεγόμενα ἢ πραττόμενα καλῶς γιγνώσκειν οὐχ οἷός τ' ἔσται;	**SOCRATES** So whoever doesn't have a particular art won't be able to judge properly what is said or done in that art?
538b	**ION** ἀληθῆ λέγεις.	**ION** That's true.
	SOCRATES πότερον οὖν περὶ τῶν ἐπῶν ὧν εἶπες, εἴτε καλῶς λέγει Ὅμηρος εἴτε μή, σὺ κάλλιον γνώσῃ ἢ ἡνίοχος;	**SOCRATES** Then take the lines you quoted. Will you know better whether Homer puts it well or not, or will a charioteer?
	ION Ἡνίοχος.	**ION** A charioteer.
	SOCRATES Ῥαψῳδὸς γάρ που εἶ ἀλλ' οὐχ ἡνίοχος.	**SOCRATES** Because you're a rhapsode, I take it, and not a charioteer.
	ION ναί.	**ION** Yes.
	SOCRATES ἡ δὲ ῥαψῳδικὴ τέχνη ἑτέρα ἐστὶ τῆς ἡνιοχικῆς;	**SOCRATES** And the rhapsode's art is different from the charioteer's?
	ION ναί.	**ION** Yes.
	SOCRATES εἰ ἄρα ἑτέρα, περὶ ἑτέρων καὶ ἐπιστήμη πραγμάτων ἐστίν.	**SOCRATES** Then if it's different, it's also knowledge about different things.
	ION ναί.	**ION** Yes.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	SOCRATES τί δὲ δὴ ὅταν Ὅμηρος λέγῃ ὡς τετρωμένῳ τῷ Μαχάονι Ἑκαμήδη ἡ Νέστορος παλλακὴ κυκεῶνα πίνειν [538c] δίδωσι; καὶ λέγει πως οὕτως— οἴνῳ πραμνείῳ, φησίν, ἐπὶ δ' αἴγειον κνῆ τυρὸν κνήστι χαλκείῃ· παρὰ δὲ κρόμυον ποτῷ ὄψον· ταῦτα εἴτε ὀρθῶς λέγει Ὅμηρος εἴτε μή, πότερον ἰατρικῆς ἐστι διαγνῶναι καλῶς ἢ ῥαψῳδικῆς;	**SOCRATES** Well then, what about when Homer says that Hecamede, Nestor's concubine, gives the wounded Machaon a mixed potion to [538c] drink? He puts it something like this: "With Pramnian wine," he says, "and over it she grated goat's cheese / with a bronze grater; and beside it an onion, a relish for the drink." Whether Homer gets this right or not—is it for medicine to judge properly, or for the rhapsode's art?
538c	**ION** Ἰατρικῆς.	**ION** Medicine.
	SOCRATES τί δέ, ὅταν λέγῃ Ὅμηρος— [538d] ἡ δὲ μολυβδαίνῃ ἰκέλη ἐς βυσσὸν ἵκανεν, ἥ τε κατ' ἀγραύλοιο βοὸς κέρας ἐμμεμαυῖα ἔρχεται ὠμηστῆσι μετ' ἰχθύσι πῆμα φέρουσα· ταῦτα πότερον φῶμεν ἁλιευτικῆς εἶναι τέχνης μᾶλλον κρῖναι ἢ ῥαψῳδικῆς, ἅττα λέγει καὶ εἴτε καλῶς εἴτε μή;	**SOCRATES** And what about when Homer says: [538d] "And she sank to the bottom like a lead weight, which, set on the horn of an ox that ranges the fields, speeds down among the ravening fish, bringing them harm"? Shall we say it's for the fisherman's art rather than the rhapsode's to judge what he's saying here, and whether it's well said or not?[14]
538d	**ION** δῆλον δή, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὅτι ἁλιευτικῆς.	**ION** Clearly it's the fisherman's, Socrates.
	SOCRATES σκέψαι δή, σοῦ ἐρομένου, εἰ ἔροιό με· "ἐπειδὴ [538e] τοίνυν, ὦ Σώκρατες, τούτων τῶν τεχνῶν ἐν Ὁμήρῳ εὑρίσκεις ἃ προσήκει ἑκάστῃ διακρίνειν, ἴθι μοι ἔξευρε καὶ τὰ τοῦ μάντεώς τε καὶ μαντικῆς, ποῖά ἐστιν ἃ προσήκει αὐτῷ οἵῳ τ' εἶναι διαγιγνώσκειν, εἴτε εὖ εἴτε κακῶς πεποίηται" — σκέψαι ὡς ῥᾳδίως τε καὶ ἀληθῆ ἐγώ σοι ἀποκρινοῦμαι. πολλαχοῦ μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἐν Ὀδυσσείᾳ λέγει, οἷον καὶ ἃ ὁ τῶν Μελαμποδιδῶν λέγει μάντις πρὸς τοὺς μνηστῆρας, Θεοκλύμενος— [539a] δαιμόνιοι, τί κακὸν τόδε πάσχετε;	**SOCRATES** Now look. Suppose you were the one asking, and you asked me: "Well then, Socrates, since [538e] you're finding in Homer, for each of these arts, the passages that are proper for each to judge, come and find me the ones for the seer and his art of prophecy too—what sort of passages it's proper for him to be able to judge, whether they're well or badly composed." Look how easily and how truly I'll answer you. He speaks of this in many places in the *Odyssey*, for instance in what the seer of the line of Melampus, Theoclymenus, says to the suitors: [539a] "Poor wretches, what evil is this you suffer?"[15]
539a	νυκτὶ μὲν ὑμέων εἰλύαται κεφαλαί τε πρόσωπά τε νέρθε τε γυῖα, οἰμωγὴ δὲ δέδηε, δεδάκρυνται δὲ παρειαί· εἰδώλων τε πλέον πρόθυρον, πλείη δὲ καὶ αὐλὴ ἰεμένων ἔρεβόσδε ὑπὸ ζόφον· ἠέλιος δὲ [539b] οὐρανοῦ ἐξαπόλωλε, κακὴ δ' ἐπιδέδρομεν ἀχλύς· πολλαχοῦ δὲ καὶ ἐν Ἰλιάδι, οἷον καὶ ἐπὶ τειχομαχίᾳ· λέγει γὰρ καὶ ἐνταῦθα -- ὄρνις γάρ σφιν ἐπῆλθε περησέμεναι μεμαῶσιν, αἰετὸς ὑψιπέτης, ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ λαὸν ἐέργων, [539c] φοινήεντα δράκοντα φέρων ὀνύχεσσι πέλωρον, ζῷον, ἔτ' ἀσπαίροντα· καὶ οὔπω λήθετο χάρμης. κόψε γὰρ αὐτὸν ἔχοντα κατὰ στῆθος παρὰ δειρὴν ἰδνωθεὶς ὀπίσω, ὁ δ' ἀπὸ ἕθεν ἧκε χαμᾶζε ἀλγήσας ὀδύνῃσι, μέσῳ δ' ἐνὶ κάββαλ' ὁμίλῳ· [539d]	"In night are wrapped your heads and faces and your limbs below; a wailing has blazed up, your cheeks are wet with tears; the porch is full of ghosts, and the courtyard is full too, of ghosts hastening down to Erebus, into the gloom; the sun [539b] has perished out of the sky, and an evil mist has spread over all." And in many places in the *Iliad* too—at the battle at the wall, for instance. There

14 Homer is describing the goddess Iris plunging into the sea; anglers weighted their lines with lead set in a piece of ox horn.
15 Theoclymenus, descended from the legendary seer Melampus, here foresees the suitors' doom in *Odyssey* 20.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	αὐτὸς δὲ κλάγξας πέτετο πνοιῇς ἀνέμοιο. ταῦτα φήσω καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα τῷ μάντει προσήκειν καὶ σκοπεῖν καὶ κρίνειν.	too he says: "For a bird came upon them as they were eager to cross, a high-flying eagle, skirting the army on the left, 539c carrying in its talons a monstrous blood-red serpent, alive, still writhing; and it had not yet forgotten the fight. For it struck the eagle that held it, on the breast beside the neck, twisting back; and the eagle flung it from him to the ground, stung with pain, and dropped it in the middle of the throng, 539d and with a scream flew off on the gusts of the wind." These passages, and others like them, I'll say, are the ones it's proper for the seer to examine and judge.
539d	**ION** ἀληθῆ γε σὺ λέγων, ὦ Σώκρατες.	**ION** Yes, and what you say is true, Socrates.
	SOCRATES καὶ σύ γε, ὦ Ἴων, ἀληθῆ ταῦτα λέγεις. ἴθι δὴ καὶ σὺ ἐμοί, ὥσπερ ἐγὼ σοὶ ἐξέλεξα καὶ ἐξ Ὀδυσσείας καὶ ἐξ Ἰλιάδος ὁποῖα τοῦ μάντεώς ἐστι καὶ ὁποῖα τοῦ ἰατροῦ καὶ 539e ὁποῖα τοῦ ἁλιέως, οὕτω καὶ σὺ ἐμοὶ ἔκλεξον, ἐπειδὴ καὶ ἐμπειρότερος εἶ ἐμοῦ τῶν Ὁμήρου, ὁποῖα τοῦ ῥαψῳδοῦ ἐστιν, ὦ Ἴων, καὶ τῆς τέχνης τῆς ῥαψῳδικῆς, ἃ τῷ ῥαψῳδῷ προσήκει καὶ σκοπεῖσθαι καὶ διακρίνειν παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους.	**SOCRATES** And so is what you say, Ion. Come on, then, now it's your turn. Just as I picked out for you from the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* the sort of passages that belong to the seer, the sort that belong to the doctor, and 539e the sort that belong to the fisherman, you pick out for me—since you're more experienced in Homer than I am—the sort that belong to the rhapsode, Ion, and to the rhapsode's art: the ones it's proper for the rhapsode, beyond anyone else, to examine and judge.
539e	**ION** ἐγὼ μέν φημι, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἅπαντα.	**ION** All of them, Socrates, I say.
	SOCRATES οὐ σύ γε φῄς, ὦ Ἴων, ἅπαντα· ἢ οὕτως ἐπιλήσμων εἶ; καίτοι οὐκ ἂν πρέποι γε ἐπιλήσμονα εἶναι ῥαψῳδὸν ἄνδρα.	**SOCRATES** No, Ion, you don't say "all of them"—or are you really that forgetful? And yet it would hardly be fitting for a rhapsode to be forgetful.
540a	**ION** τί δὲ δὴ ἐπιλανθάνομαι;	**ION** Why, what am I forgetting?
	SOCRATES οὐ μέμνησαι ὅτι ἔφησθα τὴν ῥαψῳδικὴν τέχνην ἑτέραν εἶναι τῆς ἡνιοχικῆς;	**SOCRATES** Don't you remember saying that the rhapsode's art is different from the charioteer's?
	ION μέμνημαι.	**ION** I remember.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν καὶ ἑτέραν οὖσαν ἕτερα γνώσεσθαι ὡμολόγεις;	**SOCRATES** And didn't you agree that, being different, it would know different things?
	ION ναί.	**ION** Yes.
	SOCRATES οὐκ ἄρα πάντα γε γνώσεται ἡ ῥαψῳδικὴ κατὰ τὸν σὸν λόγον οὐδὲ ὁ ῥαψῳδός.	**SOCRATES** Then by your own account the rhapsode's art won't know everything, and neither will the rhapsode.
	ION πλήν γε ἴσως τὰ τοιαῦτα, ὦ Σώκρατες.	

	GREEK	ENGLISH
		ION Except, perhaps, things like that, Socrates.

ION THE GENERAL

Ion claims a reciter knows what a general should say, and that he would be Greece's best general.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
540b	**SOCRATES** τὰ τοιαῦτα δὲ λέγεις πλὴν τὰ τῶν ἄλλων τεχνῶν σχεδόν τι· ἀλλὰ ποῖα δὴ γνώσεται, ἐπειδὴ οὐχ ἅπαντα;	**SOCRATES** By "except things like that" you mean except more or less everything that belongs to the other arts. But then which things will he know, since he doesn't know them all?
	ION ἃ πρέπει, οἶμαι ἔγωγε, ἀνδρὶ εἰπεῖν καὶ ὁποῖα γυναικί, καὶ ὁποῖα δούλῳ καὶ ὁποῖα ἐλευθέρῳ, καὶ ὁποῖα ἀρχομένῳ καὶ ὁποῖα ἄρχοντι.	**ION** What it's fitting, I'd say, for a man to say, and what for a woman; what for a slave and what for a free man; what for someone under command and what for the one in command.
	SOCRATES ἆρα ὁποῖα ἄρχοντι, λέγεις, ἐν θαλάττῃ χειμαζομένου πλοίου πρέπει εἰπεῖν, ὁ ῥαψῳδὸς γνώσεται κάλλιον ἢ ὁ κυβερνήτης;	**SOCRATES** Do you mean that the rhapsode will know better than the ship's pilot what the one in command should say when his ship is caught in a storm at sea?
	ION οὔκ, ἀλλὰ ὁ κυβερνήτης τοῦτό γε.	**ION** No, the pilot will know that, at any rate.
540c	**SOCRATES** ἀλλ' ὁποῖα ἄρχοντι κάμνοντος πρέπει εἰπεῖν, ὁ ῥαψῳδὸς γνώσεται κάλλιον ἢ ὁ ἰατρός;	**SOCRATES** Well, will the rhapsode know better than the doctor what the one in charge of a sick person should say?
	ION οὐδὲ τοῦτο.	**ION** Not that either.
	SOCRATES ἀλλ' οἷα δούλῳ πρέπει, λέγεις;	**SOCRATES** But you mean what's fitting for a slave?
	ION ναί.	**ION** Yes.
	SOCRATES οἷον βουκόλῳ λέγεις δούλῳ ἃ πρέπει εἰπεῖν ἀγριαινουσῶν βοῶν παραμυθουμένῳ, ὁ ῥαψῳδὸς γνώσεται ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁ βουκόλος;	**SOCRATES** For instance, what a slave who herds cattle should say to calm his cows when they're getting wild—you mean the rhapsode will know that, and not the cowherd?
	ION οὐ δῆτα.	**ION** Certainly not.
	SOCRATES ἀλλ' οἷα γυναικὶ πρέποντά ἐστιν εἰπεῖν ταλασιουργῷ περὶ ἐρίων 540d ἐργασίας;	**SOCRATES** Well, what's fitting for a woman who spins wool to say about working 540d the wool?
540d	**ION** οὔ.	**ION** No.
	SOCRATES ἀλλ' οἷα ἀνδρὶ πρέπει εἰπεῖν γνώσεται στρατηγῷ στρατιώταις παραινοῦντι;	**SOCRATES** Well, will he know what's fitting for a man to say when he's a general encouraging his soldiers?
	ION ναί, τὰ τοιαῦτα γνώσεται ὁ ῥαψῳδός.	**ION** Yes, that's the sort of thing the rhapsode will know.
	SOCRATES τί δέ; ἡ ῥαψῳδικὴ τέχνη στρατηγική ἐστιν;	**SOCRATES** What? Is the rhapsode's art the art of generalship?

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	ION Γνοίην γοῦν ἂν ἔγωγε οἷα στρατηγὸν πρέπει εἰπεῖν.	**ION** Well, I certainly would know what's fitting for a general to say.
	SOCRATES ἴσως γὰρ εἶ καὶ στρατηγικός, ὦ Ἴων. καὶ γὰρ εἰ ἐτύγχανες ἱππικὸς ὢν ἅμα καὶ κιθαριστικός, ἔγνως ἂν ἵππους 540e εὖ καὶ κακῶς ἱπποζομένους· ἀλλ' εἴ σ' ἐγὼ ἠρόμην· "ποτέρᾳ δὴ τέχνῃ, ὦ Ἴων, γιγνώσκεις τοὺς εὖ ἱπποζομένους ἵππους; ᾗ ἱππεὺς εἶ ἢ ᾗ κιθαριστής;" τί ἄν μοι ἀπεκρίνω;	**SOCRATES** Maybe that's because you're a general too, Ion. After all, if you happened to be a horseman and a lyre-player at once, you'd know horses 540e that were well ridden and badly ridden. But if I asked you, "By which art, Ion, do you know the horses that are well ridden—the one that makes you a horseman, or the one that makes you a lyre-player?" what would you answer me?
540e	**ION** ᾗι ἱππεύς, ἔγωγ' ἄν.	**ION** The one that makes me a horseman, I'd say.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν εἰ καὶ τοὺς εὖ κιθαρίζοντας διεγίγνωσκες, ὡμολόγεις ἄν, ᾗ κιθαριστὴς εἶ, ταύτῃ διαγιγνώσκειν, ἀλλ' οὐχ ᾗ ἱππεύς.	**SOCRATES** And if you could also tell the good lyre-players apart, you'd agree that you did it by the art that makes you a lyre-player, and not by the one that makes you a horseman.
	ION ναί.	**ION** Yes.
	SOCRATES ἐπειδὴ δὲ τὰ στρατιωτικὰ γιγνώσκεις, πότερον ᾗ στρατηγικὸς εἶ γιγνώσκεις ἢ ᾗ ῥαψῳδὸς ἀγαθός;	**SOCRATES** And since you know military matters, do you know them because you're a general, or because you're a good rhapsode?
	ION οὐδὲν ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ διαφέρειν.	**ION** I don't think there's any difference.
541a	**SOCRATES** πῶς; οὐδὲν λέγεις διαφέρειν; μίαν λέγεις τέχνην εἶναι τὴν ῥαψῳδικὴν καὶ τὴν στρατηγικὴν ἢ δύο;	**SOCRATES** What? You say there's no difference? Are you saying that the rhapsode's art and the general's are one art, or two?
	ION μία ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ.	**ION** One, I think.
	SOCRATES ὅστις ἄρα ἀγαθὸς ῥαψῳδός ἐστιν, οὗτος καὶ ἀγαθὸς στρατηγὸς τυγχάνει ὤν;	**SOCRATES** So whoever is a good rhapsode turns out to be a good general as well?
	ION μάλιστα, ὦ Σώκρατες.	**ION** Absolutely, Socrates.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν καὶ ὅστις ἀγαθὸς στρατηγὸς τυγχάνει ὤν, ἀγαθὸς καὶ ῥαψῳδός ἐστιν.	**SOCRATES** Then whoever turns out to be a good general is a good rhapsode as well.
	ION οὐκ αὖ μοι δοκεῖ τοῦτο.	**ION** No, that I don't think.
	SOCRATES ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνο μὴν δοκεῖ σοι, ὅστις γε ἀγαθὸς 541b ῥαψῳδός, καὶ στρατηγὸς ἀγαθὸς εἶναι;	**SOCRATES** But you do think the other way round: that whoever is a good 541b rhapsode is also a good general?
541b	**ION** πάνυ γε.	**ION** Certainly.
	SOCRATES οὐκοῦν σὺ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἄριστος ῥαψῳδὸς εἶ;	**SOCRATES** And you're the best rhapsode in Greece?
	ION πολύ γε, ὦ Σώκρατες.	**ION** By far, Socrates.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	SOCRATES ἦ καὶ στρατηγός, ὦ Ἴων, τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἄριστος εἶ;	**SOCRATES** Are you also the best general in Greece, Ion?
	ION εὖ ἴσθι, ὦ Σώκρατες· καὶ ταῦτά γε ἐκ τῶν Ὁμήρου μαθών.	**ION** You can be sure of it, Socrates. And I learned that, too, from Homer's poems.
	SOCRATES τί δή ποτ' οὖν πρὸς τῶν θεῶν, ὦ Ἴων, ἀμφότερα ἄριστος ὢν τῶν Ἑλλήνων, καὶ στρατηγὸς καὶ ῥαψῳδός, ῥαψῳδεῖς μὲν περιιὼν τοῖς Ἕλλησι, στρατηγεῖς δ' οὔ; ἢ [541c] ῥαψῳδοῦ μὲν δοκεῖ σοι χρυσῷ στεφάνῳ ἐστεφανωμένου πολλὴ χρεία εἶναι τοῖς Ἕλλησι, στρατηγοῦ δὲ οὐδεμία;	**SOCRATES** Then why in the gods' name, Ion, if you're the best in Greece at both, as general and as rhapsode, do you go around Greece performing as a rhapsode, but not leading armies as a general? Or [541c] do you think the Greeks have great need of a rhapsode crowned with a golden crown, but none at all of a general?
541c	**ION** ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἡμετέρα, ὦ Σώκρατες, πόλις ἄρχεται ὑπὸ ὑμῶν καὶ στρατηγεῖται καὶ οὐδὲν δεῖται στρατηγοῦ, ἡ δὲ ὑμετέρα καὶ ἡ Λακεδαιμονίων οὐκ ἄν με ἕλοιτο στρατηγόν· αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴεσθε ἱκανοὶ εἶναι.	**ION** Because my city, Socrates, is ruled by you Athenians, and its armies are led by you, so it has no need of a general. And your city and Sparta wouldn't choose me as general: you think you're capable enough yourselves.[16]
	SOCRATES ὦ βέλτιστε Ἴων, Ἀπολλόδωρον οὐ γιγνώσκεις τὸν Κυζικηνόν;	**SOCRATES** My excellent Ion, don't you know Apollodorus of Cyzicus?
	ION ποῖον τοῦτον;	**ION** Who's he?
	SOCRATES ὃν Ἀθηναῖοι πολλάκις ἑαυτῶν στρατηγὸν ᾑρηνται [541d] ξένον ὄντα· καὶ Φανοσθένη τὸν Ἄνδριον καὶ Ἡρακλείδην τὸν Κλαζομένιον, οὓς ἥδε ἡ πόλις ξένους ὄντας, ἐνδειξαμένους ὅτι ἄξιοι λόγου εἰσί, καὶ εἰς στρατηγίας καὶ εἰς τὰς ἄλλας ἀρχὰς ἄγει· Ἴωνα δ' ἆρα τὸν Ἐφέσιον οὐχ αἱρήσεται στρατηγὸν καὶ τιμήσει, ἐὰν δοκῇ ἄξιος λόγου εἶναι; τί δέ; οὐκ Ἀθηναῖοι μέν ἐστε οἱ Ἐφέσιοι τὸ ἀρχαῖον, καὶ ἡ Ἔφεσος [541e] οὐδεμιᾶς ἐλάττων πόλεως;	**SOCRATES** A man the Athenians have often chosen as their general [541d] though he's a foreigner. And there are Phanosthenes of Andros and Heraclides of Clazomenae: foreigners though they are, this city promotes them to generalships and the other offices, once they've shown they're men of some account. And Ion of Ephesus, then—won't it choose him as general and honor him, if he seems a man of some account? Besides, aren't you Ephesians Athenians by descent, and isn't Ephesus [541e] second to no city?[17]

DISHONEST OR DIVINE

Socrates gives Ion a choice: be a man who does wrong, or a man inspired by the gods.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
541e	**SOCRATES** ἀλλὰ γὰρ σύ, ὦ Ἴων, εἰ μὲν ἀληθῆ λέγεις ὡς τέχνῃ καὶ ἐπιστήμῃ οἷός τε εἶ Ὅμηρον ἐπαινεῖν, ἀδικεῖς, ὅστις ἐμοὶ ὑποσχόμενος ὡς πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ περὶ Ὁμήρου ἐπίστασαι καὶ φάσκων ἐπιδείξειν, ἐξαπατᾷς με καὶ πολλοῦ δεῖς ἐπιδεῖξαι, ὅς γε οὐδὲ ἅττα ἐστὶ ταῦτα περὶ ὧν δεινὸς εἶ ἐθέλεις εἰπεῖν, πάλαι ἐμοῦ λιπαροῦντος, ἀλλ'	**SOCRATES** But the fact is, Ion, if you're telling the truth that it's by art and knowledge that you're able to praise Homer, then you're doing me wrong. You promised me that you knew many fine things about Homer, and claimed you'd show me, and now you're deceiving me and are far from show-

16 Ephesus was at this time a subject city of the Athenian empire.
17 Phanosthenes and Heraclides were foreigners who held Athenian commands in the late fifth century BC. Ephesus was traditionally said to have been founded by colonists from Athens.

	GREEK	ENGLISH
	ἀτεχνῶς ὥσπερ ὁ Πρωτεὺς παντοδαπὸς γίγνῃ στρεφόμενος ἄνω καὶ κάτω, ἕως τελευτῶν διαφυγών με στρατηγὸς ἀνεφάνης, 542a ἵνα μὴ ἐπιδείξῃς ὡς δεινὸς εἶ τὴν περὶ Ὁμήρου σοφίαν. εἰ μὲν οὖν τεχνικὸς ὤν, ὅπερ νυνδὴ ἔλεγον, περὶ Ὁμήρου ὑποσχόμενος ἐπιδείξειν ἐξαπατᾷς με, ἄδικος εἶ· εἰ δὲ μὴ τεχνικὸς εἶ, ἀλλὰ θείᾳ μοίρᾳ κατεχόμενος ἐξ Ὁμήρου μηδὲν εἰδὼς πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ λέγεις περὶ τοῦ ποιητοῦ, ὥσπερ ἐγὼ εἶπον περὶ σοῦ, οὐδὲν ἀδικεῖς.	ing me anything. You aren't even willing to tell me what the subjects are that you're so clever about, though I've been begging you all this time. Instead, exactly like Proteus, you take on every shape, twisting this way and that, until in the end you slip away from me by turning up as a general, 542a so as not to show how clever you are in your wisdom about Homer. Now if you are a master of an art and, as I was just saying, are deceiving me after promising a display about Homer, then you're unjust. But if you're not a master of an art, but say many fine things about the poet while knowing nothing, because you are possessed by Homer through divine dispensation—as I said of you—then you're doing no wrong.[18]
542a	ἑλοῦ οὖν πότερα βούλει νομίζεσθαι ὑπὸ ἡμῶν ἄδικος ἀνὴρ εἶναι ἢ θεῖος.	So choose: would you rather we thought you an unjust man, or a divine one?
542b	**ION** πολὺ διαφέρει, ὦ Σώκρατες· πολὺ γὰρ κάλλιον τὸ θεῖον νομίζεσθαι.	**ION** There's a big difference, Socrates. It's much finer to be thought divine.
	SOCRATES τοῦτο τοίνυν τὸ κάλλιον ὑπάρχει σοι παρ' ἡμῖν, ὦ Ἴων, θεῖον εἶναι καὶ μὴ τεχνικὸν περὶ Ὁμήρου ἐπαινέτην.	**SOCRATES** Then that finer title is yours in our eyes, Ion: to be a divine praiser of Homer, and not a master of an art.

18 Proteus is the shape-shifting old man of the sea in the *Odyssey*, who changes form to escape whoever has hold of him.