IMITATION AND INSPIRATION:
ASPECTS OF LITERARY THEORY IN
EARLY AND MIDDLE-PERIOD PLATONIC DIALOGUES

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ABSTRACT

Two theories of literature may be found in the dialogues of Plato: 1) the theory that the poet is inspired and his poetry the product of inspiration, and 2) the theory that the poet is an imitator and his poetry imitation. The two theories are distinct: inspiration is a theory of composition; imitation is a theory about the relation of language to its subject matter. Yet both theories are present in the Platonic corpus and in some cases in the same general context. This thesis will explore various aspects of these theories and will consider the problem of whether the two are in any way compatible. Our study will deal, in chronological order, with three of Plato's early and middle-period dialogues, the Ion, the Symposium, and the Republic.

The Ion treats explicitly the topic of poetic inspiration and contains implicitly the concept of poetic imitation. The theory of inspiration presented in this dialogue differs from the traditional view in two significant ways: 1) in its exaggerated portrayal of the possessed poet, and 2) in its exaggerated emphasis on the element of inspiration in the poetic process. Plato here presents an exaggerated theory of inspiration in order to emphasize the dangers inherent in poetry and to discredit the poets' claims to wisdom and knowledge. The theory of imitation implicit in this dialogue is similarly exaggerated and pejorative.

The Symposium repeats, with significant variations, the themes
of the Ion. The inadequacy of the poet as regards wisdom is demonstrated in a literary agon between poet and philosopher. A new theory of inspiration is introduced, a theory of philosophic inspiration that transmutes and transcends the theory of poetic inspiration.

The Republic deals explicitly with the topic of imitation and implicitly with the subject of inspiration. The theory of poetic imitation presented in Book X is an exaggeration of an earlier concept: the imitative poet of Book X is an "imitator" in the lowest and most pejorative sense of the word. Plato here, as in the Ion, presents an exaggerated theory of literature in order to refute the exaggerated claims made by and for the poets. Elsewhere in the Republic there are suggestions of a higher and truer concept of literary creativity. Various passages indicate that Plato conceived of both a theory of philosophic imitation and a theory of philosophic inspiration.

In the Ion and in Book X of the Republic, Plato presents two diverse and incompatible theories in order to prove identical points. In both cases he exaggerates the deficiencies in order to emphasize the dangers of the poet and his poetry. Neither the theory of poetic inspiration in the Ion nor the theory of poetic imitation in Book X of the Republic is presented by Plato as a valid theory of literature.

In the Symposium and in various passages throughout the Republic, Plato presents a theory of inspiration and a theory of imitation
that are valid and compatible. Here, both inspiration and imitation are taken up into the realm of philosophy. Philosphic imitation is imitation of the Forms; philosophic inspiration is inspiration by the Forms. At this highest level the two theories of literature coalesce and become one: the ideal Form is, for the philosopher-poet, both his object of imitation and his source of inspiration.
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NOTE ON REFERENCES AND CONVENTIONS

Plato's theory of art and literature is a topic which has received a vast amount of critical attention. The number of works extant on the topic is immense. Because of the impracticability of reviewing, within our time limits, all of the literature on the subject, the bibliography has been confined to important works in English.

For bibliography and footnotes we have adopted the following conventions. Full citations for all works have been given in the bibliography. Authors cited once in the bibliography are referred to in the footnotes by name only. For author cited more than once in the bibliography, author's name and full title of work, plus, in some cases, a short title to be used in future references, have been given in the first footnote entry.

In regard to the use of Greek we have adopted the following practices. Single Greek words used repeatedly, e.g. technē, sophia, epistēmē, have been transliterated. Other Greek words and phrases required for elucidation or clarification of some point have been printed in Greek characters. Except in cases where it seemed necessary to retain the Greek in order to make some linguistic or semantic point, longer quotations from Plato and other ancient authors have been given in English translation. Unless otherwise indicated, such translations are my own.
The treatment of the Greek word *mimēsis* presents a particular problem. *Mimēsis* might be variously translated, depending on the context, as "imitation," "representation," or "impersonation"; no single English term can adequately convey the meaning and range of the Greek word. In Plato's works the term *mimēsis* undergoes an infinite variety of applications, yet remains constant in definition: the word denotes consistently the relation of one object to another which is in some sense more real. Recognizing that the translation of *mimēsis* by any single term puts a strain on the English equivalent, yet wishing to retain the unity of the concept, we have either transliterated the word *mimēsis* or translated it consistently as "imitation."
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INTRODUCTION

It is a well known fact that Plato nowhere lays down a systematic theory of art; he does not write a Poetics. He nevertheless has a great deal to say on the subject of art, and on the subject of poetry in particular. His views are to be found scattered throughout his works, sometimes in passages dealing explicitly with art and literature, more often in incidental remarks.

The reader discovers in Plato's dialogues two views of literature: 1) the view that the poet is inspired and his poetry the product of inspiration, and 2) the view that the poet is an imitator and his poetry imitation. The two theories are distinct: inspiration is a theory of composition; imitation is a theory about the relation between language and its subject matter. Yet both theories are present in the Platonic corpus and in some cases in the same general context. In this thesis we shall examine various aspects of these theories and shall consider the question of whether the two are in any way compatible.

Our study will focus on three of Plato's early and middle-period dialogues, the Ion, the Symposium, and the Republic. We shall deal with these three dialogues in what is generally agreed to be their chronological order: the first chapter will deal with the Ion, regarded by those scholars who consider it to be genuine as one of Plato's earliest works; chapter two will be a discussion of the Symposium, a work of Plato's
middle period; the third chapter will treat the Republic, a dialogue considered by the majority of scholars to be later than the Symposium.\(^1\)

Plato's two theories of literature may be found in the Ion: while poetic inspiration is its explicit topic, the concept of poetic imitation is, we shall suggest, implicit in that early dialogue. In Chapter I we shall discuss in some detail the theory of inspiration presented in the Ion, pointing out that it differs from the traditional concept of inspiration in two significant ways: 1) in its exaggerated portrayal of the possessed poet, and 2) in its exaggerated emphasis on the element of inspiration in the poetic process. Possible reasons for Plato's formulation of an exaggerated theory of inspiration will be suggested, and various problems inherent in, or arising from, that theory will be considered. In Part 4 of Chapter I, we shall discuss the theory of poetic imitation implicit in the Ion, and argue that the rhapsode Ion and the poetry he recites are imitative in all but name.

In the Symposium, inspiration is given new and higher meaning: inspiration is taken up into the realm of philosophy. In Part I of Chapter II we shall argue that one of the themes of the Symposium is that of a literary agon, and that in this contest Agathon and Socrates, poet and philosopher, are the principle contenders. In the course of our discussion we shall present the idea that the philosopher, like the poet, experiences a kind of inspiration. Part 2 will deal more specifically with the topic of philosophic

\(^1\) See Ross 2, for lists of the Platonic dialogues in the chronological order assigned to them by Arnim, Lutoslawski, Raider, Ritter and Wilamowitz. For a more recent discussion of chronology, see Kahn 305-320. For a full discussion of the dating of the Ion, see Moore 421-439.
inspiration. We shall argue that Plato envisions a new process of literary creativity in which both process and product resemble, yet differ significantly from, the process and product of poetic inspiration.

In the Republic we again find the two theories existing side by side: while imitation is the theory of art and literature explicit in the Republic, the concept of inspiration is, we shall suggest, present as well. Part 1 of Chapter III will deal with the topic of poetic imitation, with imitation as it is defined in Books III and X of the Republic, imitation in its lowest, most pejorative sense. Possible reasons for Plato's presentation of an exaggerated theory of inspiration will be proposed. In Part 2 we shall consider Plato's views on philosophic imitation, imitation in its highest sense, the imitation of the Forms. We shall argue that Plato conceives not only of a process of philosophic imitation, but also of a process of philosophic inspiration, and that the two processes run along parallel lines.

Finally, we shall draw some conclusions as to Plato's true beliefs on the subject of art and literature, and argue that some, but not all, of these theories - poetic inspiration, poetic imitation, philosophic inspiration, philosophic imitation - are held sincerely and simultaneously by Plato. We shall suggest that the theories of inspiration and imitation regarded by him as valid are theories which are truly compatible.
CHAPTER I.

THE ION: POETIC INSPIRATION AND IMITATION

Plato's earliest and most explicit treatment of the subject of poetic inspiration is found in the *Ion*. We shall therefore begin our exploration of the topic by looking closely at this dialogue. Plato in the *Ion* puts forward a theory of inspiration which represents a departure from, and an exaggeration of, traditional views. He dissents from the early Greek poets’ concept of inspiration in two significant ways: 1) in his highly exaggerated portrayal of the possessed poet, and 2) in his insistence that inspiration precludes the use of the poet's own techne. The view that the poet is possessed and unskilled has no precedent in early Greek literature. In Part I of this chapter we shall cite various passages from Homer, Hesiod, Pindar and other early poets, and by comparing them with statements in the *Ion*, we shall demonstrate that Plato's portrayal of the poet as possessed and frenzied, passive and subservient, ekphrōn and deprived of nous, is an exaggeration of an earlier concept of inspiration. Evidence from the early poets, will also show that Plato's portrayal of the poet as unskilled is his own innovation, and that the notion of inspiration precluding the use of techne, sophia and epistēmē is entirely alien to the thinking of early Greek poets.

1 The majority of scholars now accept the *Ion* as one of Plato's early works. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, Vol. IV (hereafter *History IV*), 199, summarizes the current opinion on authenticity and dating: "Though the list of scholars who, in the past, have rejected the *Ion* is in E.M. Tigerstaedt's word, 'imposing', and Ritter in 1910 claimed to have proved it spurious by language-statistics, few would doubt today that it is Plato's own work. Estimates of its date have varied from before the death of Socrates to 391, the most probable estimate being between 394 and 391. It bears all the marks of an early Socratic dialogue, and Wilamowitz, who dated it before 399, saw it as 'the attempt of a tiro'.” Cf. Tigerstedt, "Plato's Idea of Poetical Inspiration" (hereafter "Inspiration"), 18.
Plato has a purpose in presenting a new and exaggerated theory of poetic inspiration. In Part 2 of this chapter we shall consider first his reasons for depicting the poet as unskilled, second his reasons for portraying the poet as possessed. Plato's depiction of the poet as unskilled and lacking in knowledge is, we shall suggest, the basis for his later attack on the poets. In the Ion and other early dialogues, Plato, through the mouth of Socrates, attempts to undermine the didactic pretensions of the poets and the popular belief in their infallibility as teachers. In the Meno (95d-96b) and the Protagoras (339a-347c), he demonstrates the futility of attempting to extract moral doctrines from poetry. In the Ion, the Apology, and the Meno, he examines and refutes the poets' claims to technē, sophia, and epistemē. In each of these dialogues, Plato is, we shall suggest, paving the way for the overthrow of the poets and for the establishment of the philosophers as the educators of Greece.

Plato has a similar purpose in portraying the poet as possessed: he intends to attack subtly and indirectly the belief in poetic inspiration and hence the belief in the authority of the poets. There is, we shall suggest, a further purpose in his likening of the poet to a frenzied Bacchant: he wishes to warn the reader that poetry is not only beautiful but also dangerous, and that the elements of beauty and danger are mingled inextricably. It is not until the Republic that Plato expresses his growing conviction that the more poetic a passage is the more dangerous it is, dangerous because of the element of emotional surrender involved. We shall
suggest, however, that the seeds of this conviction are present in the Ion.

Two questions will arise from our discussion of Plato's portrayal of the possessed poet: 1) is the possessed poet in any sense creative? and 2) is Plato serious about the theory of inspiration he presents here? In Part 3 of this chapter we shall attempt to answer both of these questions; the second is particularly difficult and our answer to it will be somewhat tentative.

Finally in Part 4 we shall argue that while inspiration is the predominant theory of the Ion, there are also suggestions in the dialogue of a theory of art as imitation. Ion, as we shall demonstrate, possesses many of the characteristics of the imitative poet.

1. A New Portrait of the Inspired Artist

Plato in the Ion presents a theory of inspiration which is without precedent and uniquely his own. His portrait of the inspired poet differs from earlier portrayals of the inspired bard in two important ways: 1) Plato depicts the poet not only as inspired and full of the god, but also as possessed, frenzied, and emptied of his own faculties, and 2) Plato depicts the inspired poet as ignorant, completely lacking in skill or knowledge of any kind. We shall consider first Plato's portrayal of the possessed poet, and second his portrayal of the unskilled poet.
The Portrayal of the Possessed Poet

When we read in Plato's Ion (533c4) that the Muse herself makes men entheoi we feel that we are standing on familiar ground. The Homeric bard has an aura about him that sets him apart from other men as "inspired" and "full of the god"; and while the word entheos is never used in Homer, the related word theios, "divine," is repeatedly applied "to bards as singing by divine inspiration,"\(^2\) and its cognate, thespis, is applied to both singer and song. Like the poet who is entheos, the bard who is theios or thespis experiences a close relationship with the Muse, and receives his poetry as a gift from her. The thespis aoidos (Od. 17.385) is the singer "who has been given from the gods the skill with which he sings" (Od. 17.518-19); the theios aoidos is the one to whom "the god gives song surpassing" (Od. 8.43-44). The divine bard wins honour and reverence from men because he is taught and loved by the Muse (Od. 8.479-81). It is the favour of the Muse, the gift of the god granted to him, which earns for the bard reverence and honour. Even the grovelling Phemius can justly ask to be held in reverence: οὐ δὲ μ' αἶδο (Od. 22.344). Why? Not because of any personal worth, but because the god has inspired in him a divine gift, has implanted in him a divine seed, the course of song: Ὁδὸς δὲ μοι ἐν ὑπερίειν οἷς/παντοῖς ἐνέφυγεν (Od. 22.347-8). The concept of divine inspiration can be found also in Hesiod. In a "mystic

\(^2\) Cunliffe 87.
communion with the Muses," Hesiod partakes of the nature of the gods: the Muses breathe into him their own voice, a voice that is *thespis*, divine (Th. 32). Thus we are aware that the concept of poetic inspiration is at least as old as Homer and Hesiod, and in Plato's first mention in the *Ion* of the poet as *entheos* there is little or nothing that is new. The concept, if not the word, is one with which the reader has long been familiar.

At his second mention of *entheos*, however, Plato may be introducing concepts alien to the thinking of the earlier poets and strange to their readers. Plato tells us that good poets are not only *entheoi* but also *katechomenoi* (533e7): the poet is "held down," forcefully "possessed" by a god, no longer a free agent, but an instrument whom the god now controls and uses. Like the participants in Corybantic and Bacchic rites, the poet is put into a frenzied and ecstatic state: "possession" here is closely linked with ecstasy (533e-534a). The poet receives and conveys his messages while in a trance-like state (cf. 534c-d). The notion of poets composing while in a state of ecstasy or trance is, as has often been noted,

3 Webster 174. Cf. Tigerstedt, "Furor Poeticus: Poetic Inspiration in Greek Literature before Democritus and Plato" (hereafter "Furor Poeticus"), 171-172, who perceives in the narrative a different tone: "the whole tone of the narrative is decidedly nonmythic, nonecstatic. What the real experience of the poet may have been, we do not know and it is useless to speculate about it. But his description of this experience is sober, even a bit dry. He is not dreaming, still less in a trance, when he hears the Muses and receives the branch of laurel." We agree, as we shall later note, that the poet is not in a state of ecstasy or trance. But Tigerstedt's description of Hesiod's account as "sober, even a bit dry," seems unperceptive and inappropriate.

4 Cf. Plato's discussion of *katechomai* at 536a-d, where he emphasizes the element of external force inherent in the word: poet and rhapsode are "held" by the Muse as if by a magnet.
entirely absent from Homer.\(^5\) The Homeric bard invokes the aid of the Muses; he asks them for factual information, for specific details in regard to battles, for the number of ships and the names of men.\(^6\) At no time does he ask to be transported into a state of ecstasy or to be used as a medium for divine utterances. The bard Demodocus, seated in the midst of the banqueters in the halls of Alcinous, recounts the glorious deeds of the warriors as the Muse stirs him to sing. As Tigerstedt remarks, "it is difficult to imagine a scene less like a consultation of the Pythia in Delphi."\(^7\) The bard is a divinely gifted singer, one blessed by the Muse with the gift of sweet song (Od. 8.62-64; cf. Od. 8.498). There is no suggestion that he loses his autonomy or his consciousness. Like the Homeric bards, Pindar and Hesiod receive information from the Muse without being thrown into a state of trance. "Give me an oracle, Muse," asks Pindar," and I shall interpret" (Fr. 150). As Dodds points out, it is the Muse and not the poet who plays the part of the entranced Pythia\(^8\); there is no suggestion that the

\(^5\) See Tigerstedt, "Furor Poeticus," 168-169: "the Homeric invocations to the Muses...never imply the poet's passivity. He is helped, taught, 'inspired' by the deity, but never so as to lose his freedom and consciousness. The first sense of the word \underline{\text{\textit{mol\text{\textcircled{e}}}}\text{\textcircled{d}}} and the original function of these deities are uncertain and disputed, but they have nothing to do with mantic ecstasy. It should be added that ecstasy in all its forms is conspicuously absent in Homer, as has been pointed out so often." Cf. Guthrie, History, IV, 206: "Where his own knowledge and wisdom failed him, the poet appealed to the Muses, but solely it would seem, as a higher authority: he did not ask them to enter, inspire, and possess him. Cf. P. Murray 96: "the Muse is asked to communicate with the bard, not to send him into a state of ecstasy."

\(^6\) See II. 2.484 ff.; cf. 11.218, 16.112, 14.508.

\(^7\) Tigerstedt, "Furor Poeticus," 168.

\(^8\) See Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (hereafter Greeks), 82: "It was truth...that Pindar asked of the Muse, 'Give me an oracle,' he says, 'and I will be your spokesman (\underline{\text{\textit{προδολεισ}}\text{\textcircled{\tiny<}}} ).' The words he uses are the technical terms of Delphi; implicit in them is the old analogy between
poet himself is entranced or possessed. The Muses on Helicon give to Hesiod true knowledge of the future, present, and past, and a divine voice with which to celebrate the gods (Th. 22-34); they do not send him into a state of frenzy or ecstasy. Plato's notion of a possessed and frenzied poet composing while in a trance-like state would seem strange and unfamiliar to readers of Homer, Pindar, and Hesiod.

Plato's third mention of the word *entheos* is immediately followed by a phrase introducing a concept perhaps even more startling. Plato's poet is not only *entheos* but also *ekphrōn* (534b5); his mind is no longer in him (534b6). The poet is unable to create while he is in possession of his faculties (534b6-7). This represents a radical departure from the thought of earlier writers for whom the poet's own mind and spirit played an important part in the creative process. We find in Homer that the *phrēn* within the poet is one (but only one) of the sources of his song. Odysseus himself in the halls of Alcinous is able to tell his tale "skillfully as a singer would do" because of both a grace of words that is upon him and

prophecy and divination. But observe that it is the Muse and not the poet, who plays the part of the Pythia; the poet does not ask to be himself 'possessed' but only to act as interpreter for the entranced Muse. And that seems to be the original relationship. Epic tradition represented the poet as deriving supernormal knowledge from the Muses, but not falling into ecstasy or being possessed by them." Tigerstedt, "Furor Poeticus," 174, questions Dodds' assumption that the Muse is entranced: "We may, however, well doubt whether Pindar really believed the Muse to be in a frenzy, \( \textit{μουσική} \). It seems more probable that \( \textit{προφήτευε} \) here simply refers to the divine omniscience of the Muse. In any case, Pindar's words stress his activity in transmitting the Muse's message." Cf. P. Murray 97: "Dodds is clearly right in saying that 'the Muse, and not the poet...plays the part of the Pythia', but to infer from this that the Muse is actually \( \textit{possessed} \) seems to me dubious." Be that as it may, Dodds' main point seems indisputable: the poet does not play the part of the Pythia; there is no suggestion whatever that the poet is possessed.
his own good sense (φρένες ἑυμνεί) within him (Od. 11.367-8). Again, in the case of Phemius, the god does not deprive the bard of his faculties, but rather implants the way of song within the poet's own phrenes (Od. 22.347-8). In Pindar, too, we find that song arises in part from the poet's own mind: his poetry is both a gift of the Muses and the sweet fruit of the poet's own phrēn (O. 7.8). In early poetry, the thymos, too, can be an active participant in the creation of song: the god gives to Demodocus skill in song, but it is the bard's own thymos that stirs him to sing (Od. 8.45). Plato, therefore, in stating that the poet is ekphron and not in possession of his faculties is introducing a theory of inspiration that would be new and strange to readers of Pindar and Homer.

Through the central section of the Ion, Plato again and again contrasts the powerful and active role of a divine external force with the complete passivity of the poet. Neither poet nor rhapsode is a free agent: a divine power moves him (533d4), or a Muse impels him (534c3). The mind of the poet is taken from him by the god, so that the poet himself is incapable of saying anything worthwhile; it is not the poet but the god who speaks and who, through the poet, makes his utterances to us (534c7-d4). The poet has become the mere mouthpiece of the god. Such a concept is entirely foreign to earlier literature. As has already been demonstrated, earlier poets recognize the vital role played by their own faculties in the creation of their poems. The activity of the god or Muse in the poetic process does not preclude the use of the poet's own mind. The songs of Demodocus proceed both from the god and from the poet's own spirit:
theos and thymos are happy collaborators in the production of song. Without noticing any paradox the bard Phemius can state:

\[
\text{The Muse stands alongside the poet and lends him her aid; the poet creates}
\]

\[
\text{Moîoia Í', òútw pöi πéretera möi}
\]

\[
\nuεοσιγάλον εὐρόντε τρόπον.
\]

The functions of self, god, and phrenes are closely intertwined; their roles are complementary. As Penelope Murray points out, dual motivation is a characteristic of Homeric epic: divine prompting does not exclude human motivation. There is therefore no contradiction in Phemius' statement that he is both self-taught and god-inspired. In Pindar, too, we find the role of god or goddess and poet closely intertwined. Verdenius comments:

\[
\text{The tie between goddess and poet is so intimate that their collaboration can be}
\]

\[
\text{expressed in a paradoxical prayer: 'grant me an abundant flow of song welling from}
\]

\[
\text{my own thought (N. 3.9, trans. Dodds, 22).}
\]

This "intimate tie" is evident again at Olympians 3.4:

\[
\text{Moîoia Í', òútw pöi πéretera möi}
\]

\[
\nuεοσιγάλον εὐρόντε τρόπον.
\]

\[
\text{The Muse stands alongside the poet and lends him her aid; the poet creates}
\]

9 See P. Murray 97.

10 Verdenius, "The Principles of Greek Literary Criticism" (hereafter "Literary Criticism"), 42.
something shining and new. Hesiod, too, enjoys a personal relationship with kindly Muses: they give him a staff, a branch of flourishing laurel, and breathe into him a divine voice (Th. 30-32); he reciprocates by singing of them both first and last (Th. 34). For him, as for Homer and Pindar, poetry is the product of collaboration between himself and the Muses: the invocation at the beginning of the Works and Days is followed by an emphatic declaration of his own part in the work: ἐγὼ δὲ γέ τε Περσία ἐτήσιμα μυθοσάμμην (10). In Plato's view of inspiration as expressed in the Ion, this personal relationship between the poet and his Muse has virtually been destroyed. No longer does a benevolent Muse draw alongside to help the poet. Rather, a god takes the mind from the poet, reduces him to passivity, and makes him a mouthpiece. Collaboration between poet and Muse is no longer possible; the poet can play no active role because his nous is no longer in him. Such a view must surely strike the reader as new and somewhat alarming.

The degree to which Plato has changed the relationship between poet and god or goddess may be gauged by comparing the words used by early poets to define their role and their relationship to the Muse with the words used by Plato for a similar purpose. The earlier poet thought of himself as the therapón, prophētes, or angelos of the Muses; Plato refers to the poet as the hypēretēs or hermēneus of the god

11 For therapón of the poet, see e.g. Hes. Th. 100; Bacchylides 5.14; Hym. Hom. xxxii. 20.

12 For the poet as prophētes, see e.g. Pindar Pac. 6.6; Bacchylides 9.3. Cf. Pindar fr. 150.

13 For angelos of the poet, see Theognis 769; Bacchylides 5.19.
Each of the three words used by the early bards signifies, in varying degrees, an honoured or exalted role for the poet. The word \textit{therapōn}, as Pindar's contrast between \textit{therapōn} and \textit{drastas} (P. 4.286-287) indicates, does not imply passivity or servility but rather a close relationship between poet and Muse.\textsuperscript{14} The word \textit{prophetes} suggests more strongly an active and honoured role for the poet: it suggests that the poet is the intermediary between gods and men, the intelligent interpreter and intelligible communicator of a divine utterance. The poet-prophet must, by the use of his own faculties, interpret the divine message which comes through the Muse; he must, by the use of his own skill, hone and polish that message and convey it to the people. His language must be both beautiful and intelligible: it must reflect the divine origin and consider the human destination of the oracular utterance. The word \textit{angelos}, too, suggests that poet fulfills an honoured role. From Bacchylides and Pindar we learn that the role of \textit{angelos} exalts both poet and Muse: Bacchylides compares the \textit{angelos} of Zeus to a swift and powerful eagle soaring high above the earth; Pindar tells us that the Muse is exalted by the true \textit{angelia} of the poet (P. 4.279). The word \textit{hyperetes}, in contrast, has negative connotations. Plato refers to the poet as a \textit{hyperetes} from whom the god has taken away the \textit{nous} in order to use the poet as a mouthpiece for his own utterances (Ion 534c8-d4). Clearly the word \textit{hyperetes} carries here its full etymological force: the poet is a mere "underling," subordinate and subservient to the god. Again, Plato describes poets as "nothing but \textit{hermēnēs} of the gods" and

\textsuperscript{14} This is noted by P. Murray 97, who, citing Pindar, states: \textit{"Θεοδήμας} is a revealing word. It does not imply that the poet is passive or servile but rather suggests a close relationship between the Muse and the poet who attends her."
possessed (534e4). The word *hermēneus* cannot here mean "interpreter", but must mean simply "messenger" or "go-between." As Guthrie points out, to translate *hermēnēs* at 534 as "interpreters" is to destroy the point which Socrates wishes to make, the passivity of the poet.\(^{15}\) Plato's *hermēneus*, unlike the *prophētēs* of earlier writers, is not an active interpreter of the gods, but merely their passive instrument. Plato, as is evidenced by his use of the words *hypēretēs* and *hermēneus*, has removed the poet from the exalted position of attendant and interpreter of the Muse, and reduced his role to that of underservant and mouthpiece of the god.

Clearly, Plato's views on inspiration as expressed in the *Ion* represent a departure from those of his poetic predecessors. His conception of the inspired poet as entranced and frenzied, passive and servile, deprived of his *nous* and *ekphrōn*, is a gross exaggeration of traditional views. We must therefore ask whether the views expressed by Plato originate with him or come from some other source. The search for a forerunner to Plato has led many scholars to the conclusion that Democritus is the originator of the theory of inspiration as possession, and the source from which Plato has drawn. Dodds, following Delatte and Wehrli,\(^{16}\) claims that Democritus deserves the dubious credit for having introduced the conception of poetry

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\(^{15}\) Guthrie, *History IV*, 203, n.1: "To mistranslate [hermēnēs] at 534e4 as "interpreters", with Jowett and others, is to destroy the point which S. wishes to emphasize, the utter passivity of the poet. A man cannot interpret when out of his wits, οἵς νοῦς μὴ ποίησει 534d3.

\(^{16}\) See Dodds, *Greeks*, 101, n.126.
as the product of an abnormal psychological state. Other scholars, however, maintain that it is impossible either to reconstruct the views of Democritus or to prove that Plato had any knowledge of his theory. Evidence is indeed slim. We have Horace's claim that Democritus *excludit sanos Helicone poetas* (*Ars Poetica*, 296), Cicero's statement: *negat enim sine furore Democritus quemquam poetam magnum esse posse* (*De Div. I*, 38), and two fragments of Democritus, some words of which are in doubt.

An examination of these fragments will show that even if we were able to prove Plato's acquaintance with them, we could not be certain that he drew his theory from them. There are greater discrepancies in the views of the two philosophers than has sometimes been recognized. Fragment 18 states:

\[
\pi\nu\iota\tau\nu\iota\varsigma \delta\epsilon \alpha\iota\sigma\varrho \mu\epsilon \nu \varepsilon \nu \gamma\varphi\omicron\pi\omicron\iota \mu\alpha\tau \varepsilon \\nu \theta\omicron\omicron\omicron\iota\sigma\sigma\omicron\omicron\omicron \alpha\omicron \iota \iota \omicron \rho\omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu \pi\nu\epsilon\nu\mu\omicron\upsilon\omicron\upsilon\omicron\omicron\upsilon\omicron
\]

The word *enthousiasmos*, as Russell notes, may well have had more positive meaning for Democritus than it had for Plato, and need not have implied a loss of sanity. As Russell points out, it seems unlikely that Democritus, who loved poetry and whose ethical ideal was tranquillity, should associate the

17 See Dodds, *Greeks*, 82: "As recent scholars have emphasized, it is to Democritus, rather than Plato, that we must assign the doubtful credit of having introduced into literary theory this conception of the poet as a man set apart from common humanity by an abnormal inner experience, and of poetry as a revelation apart from reason and above reason."

18 See e.g. Tigerstedt, "Inspiration," 72-76; Friedlander, *Plato II*, 324, n.8.

19 Diels-Kranz, 68B18 and 21. For further comments, see Guthrie, *History II*, 477, n.2.
production of poetry with extreme mental disturbance. \textsuperscript{20} Democritus' conception of the poet as writing with \textit{enthouiasmos} seems to be more closely allied with the views of Homer, Hesiod, and Pindar than it is with those of Plato. Democritus' bard is \textit{entheos}; he is not \textit{ekphrōn} or deprived of his \textit{nous}. The words $\text{ἐποῦ \ πνεῦματος}$, if they are authentic, also suggest a view of inspiration more like that of the early poets than that of Plato. There is no suggestion here of the god taking away the mind of the poet as he does in the \textit{Ion} (534e9); rather, the god inspires the poet with a holy breath, much as the Muses breathe into Hesiod a divine voice (Th. 32).

Fragment 21 reads:

\begin{quote}
$\text{"Ωνησος φύσεως λαχών Θε Ὀνύσης}
\text{ ἐπένων κόσμου ἐτεκτύνατο παιντοιών}.$
\end{quote}

Again we find Democritus to be more in the spirit of Homer and Hesiod than of Plato. Democritus' bard is not "possessed" like the poet of the \textit{Ion} (κελτεχόμενος \textsuperscript{21}, 533e7; 534e7); rather, he is the "possessor of a divine nature" ($\phiύσεως \ λαχών Θε Ὀνύσης$), a man set apart, like Homer's theios aoidos and worthy of reverence and honour. The words $\text{ἐτένων κόσμου ἐτεκτύνατο παιντοιών}$ point to one more significant difference between Democritus' view of inspiration and that of Plato. Democritus' bard, like the early poets, is a craftsman: he builds an ordered structure of every kind of verse. For Democritus, enthusiasm does not preclude the use of \textit{techne}. This view is diametrically opposed to that of Plato, as we shall now demonstrate.

\textsuperscript{20} Russell 72.

17
The Portrayal of the Unskilled Poet

Plato's portrayal of the inspired poet as unskilled represents a second major departure from traditional views. For Homer, Hesiod and the early lyric poets, inspiration was a gift of the Muses which enabled the poet to use effectively his own skills; for Plato, inspiration is an external force which precludes the use of the poet's own techne. The incompatibility of inspiration and techne is emphasized repeatedly in the Ion. All the good epic and lyric poets compose their beautiful poems not by techne, but because they are inspired (entheoi) and possessed (katechomenoi, 533e6). It is not by techne that poets compose and say many fine things about their subject matter, but by divine dispensation they compose well that to which the Muse impels them, that is to say, they compose well in only one genre (534b8-c4). Poets are unable to give a correct exegesis of poems in more than one genre because they make their comments not by techne but by a divine power (534c5). In explaining a similar inability on the part of the rhapsode Ion, Plato links techne with epistêmê and contrasts both with inspiration. Ion's inability to give an exegesis of the works of other poets is explained by the fact that he is unable to speak about Homer by means of techne, and epistêmê. Clearly, epistêmê in this context has the meaning "ability" or "skill": Ion possesses no comprehensive art or skill which he can apply to the exegesis of all poetry. The fact that Ion lacks art or skill leads to the conclusion that poetic exegesis, like poetic composition, is the result of divine inspiration. Socrates tells Ion that the rhapsode says what he says about Homer not by techne or epistêmê but by divine dispensation and possession (536c2).
The notion that divine inspiration is incompatible with human *techne* is entirely absent from early Greek poetry. We have seen that the early poets felt a heavy sense of reliance on the Muses, and were deeply conscious of their need of divine inspiration; we shall see that they were also keenly aware of their need of acquiring skill in composition. The word *techne* does not come into use to denote literary skill until the end of the fifth century, although this use, as Verdenius suggests, may be "foreshadowed" by Pindar's phrase *Mouggidíis téxvai gén* (Pae. 9.39). The concept, however, was well known, as is evident from the craft metaphors found in Homer and Hesiod, and present in increasing abundance in the works of the lyric poets. Homer includes the poet in a list of *demióergoi* (Od. 17.328ff.), suggesting that the poet, too, is a craftsman possessing a certain skill. Metaphors from weaving and sewing are common. Homer, Hesiod, and Bacchylides all use the metaphor of weaving a speech or song. Hesiod and Pindar refer to poets as stitchers of songs, a metaphor immortalized in the title "rhapsode." Architectural metaphors occur in Homer and are used by Pindar with telling effect: Homer speaks of fabricating a story (*étrpos téxv'ékfrívaio*, Od. 14.131); Pindar likens a poem to a far-shining structure, a wondrous hall (Q. 6.2), or to a Pythian victor's treasure-house (P. 6.7-9). Pindar's belief in the superiority of

21 Verdenius, "Literary Criticism," 23.

22 See e.g. Hom. II. 3.212; μύθοις ... ἐμυνον; Pi. N.4.44-45: ἐξίσαντες ... μέλος; Bacch. 5.9-10: ἀθάνατος ἐμυνον. Cf. Pi. Q.6.86-87: πλέκων ποικίλον ἐμυνον.

23 See Hes. fr. 265: ἀπάντατες λοίδην; Pi. N. 2.1: ἀπεια απειαν...
of that which comes by nature ( φυτικος ) to that which comes from mere training ( διδακτικος , Q. 9.100) has sometimes been seen as a denial of the necessity of acquiring technical knowledge. As Murray points out, however, Pindar’s frequent use of craft metaphors speaks against such an interpretation: his frequent use of such metaphors is evidence that he regarded technique as a vital ingredient in poetry. Pindar never denies the necessity of technē; he does, however, deny that technē is all that the poet requires. Pindar knew the value of technical skill as surely as he knew that anything produced without the help of a god ( ἀνενόητον θεοῦ , Q. 9.104) is worthless and should be silenced. Like all the early poets he understood that inspiration and technical skill are necessary and complementary elements in the making of a poem.

When Socrates opposes sophia to inspiration, he introduces a concept which is entirely foreign to the thinking of early Greek poets. Inspiration is the coveted possession of the poet, and sophia his particular province. Used in earliest times of craftsmanship in general, sophia later comes to denote the craft of the poet in particular. Verdenius, commenting on this development, suggests that Theognis’ use of the verb sophizesthai to denote his literary activity indicates that the poet felt himself the artist par

24 P. Murray 99: "Whilst Pindar does contrast the true poet who is a poet by nature ( φυτικος ) with the poet who has merely been taught his craft, he never denies the importance of technique in poetry. His frequent use of craft metaphors and his own evident concern with technique show that he regarded technique as a vital ingredient in poetry. But for the true poet mere technique is not enough."

25 Cf. Bowra, Pindar. 4: "when Pindar refrained, as he did, from calling poetry a τεχνηις , it was not because it was derogatory but because it was inadequate. He needed a word which would stress more than mere skill, and he found it in σοφις."

20
excellence. The close link between sophia and the art of poetry is exemplified by Pindar's usage of the words sophos and sophistes; both are used periphrastically for "poet." In the fifth Isthmian he tells us that the honours of brave warriors have given a new theme to σοφία τις, obviously meaning "to poets" (I. 5.28); in the second Olympian he contrasts the sophos, the true poet who knows much by nature (Φοί), with those who have only learned their art (O. 2.86). For Pindar, the true poet is sophos because of his divinely endowed nature. Sophia belongs to Apollo and to the Muses (P. 1.12; cf. N. 4.2): it is a divine attribute, and the mortal who participates in this divine virtue is elevated above the stature of ordinary men. He is the favoured recipient of a gift that comes from god (EK θεός, O. 11.10), the singularly blessed possessor of more-than-human wisdom. Sophia is in the highest degree compatible with divine inspiration, and in no sense opposed to it.

The occurrence of the verb epistamai in early poetry is another indication that the inspired bard recognized his need of an acquired technical skill. As Gould, following Snell, has demonstrated, epistamai in its early usage denotes skill, "the ability to carry out some action." Homer uses the word of a singer skilled (epistamenos) in the lyre and song (Od. 11.406), and uses it also of a bard's narrative skill, when Alcinous

26 Verdenius, "Literary Criticism," 21: "σοφία is used by Homer, to denote the skill of a carpenter, but it now becomes a technical term for 'the art of poetry.' Solon describes the poet as 'a man who understands the full measure of the lovely art.' Theognis omits the defining epithet and uses the mere verb σοφία τις to denote his literary activity. This means that the poet felt himself the artist par excellence."

27 J. Gould 8.
compliments Odysseus on having told his story skillfully (epistamenōs), like a bard (Od. 11.368). Hesiod, too applies the word to narrative ability, offering to tell a tale well and skillfully (epistamenōs, WD 107). Solon brings together the two words for skill, epistamai and sophia, describing the poet as one skilled in the measure of the lovely art (ἰμερτῆς σοφίς μέτρον ἐπιστάμενος. WD 107). Solon brings together the two words for skill, epistamai and sophia, describing the poet as one skilled in the measure of the lovely art (ἰμερτῆς σοφίς μέτρον ἐπιστάμενος. WD 107). An occurrence of the verb epistamai in Archilochus is of particular interest:

\[
\text{ἐὶ μὲν ἕγὼ θεότητι μὴν ἑνυαλίῳ ἄνακτος}
\]
\[
\text{kai' Mouséων ἑρατόν ὄμφον ἐπιστάμενος.}
\]  
(Fr. 1)

The poet recognizes both his dependence on the Muses and the necessity of exercising his own skill in relation to their lovely gift. For Archilochus, as for other early poets, skill and inspiration, far from being incompatible, are complementary aspects of one process.

2. The Rationale for Plato's Portrayal of the Poet as Unskilled and Possessed

Plato has, we suggest, a definite purpose in portraying the poet as possessed and unskilled. We shall consider first the reasons for Plato's assertion that the inspired poet is without technē. After that we shall turn our attention to the more important topic of inspiration, and shall consider the reasons for Plato's insistence that the inspired poet is possessed and out of his senses.

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28 West, Solon 13, line 52.
Why the Poet is Portrayed as Unskilled

Plato's reasons for asserting that the poet is unskilled are closely linked with the poets' own claims to be didactic and with their recognized role as the educators of Greece. Poets had from earliest times and to varying extents viewed their role as a didactic one. Homer, for example, is aware of his responsibility in the transmission and preservation of historical facts. This is evident from the nature of his invocations to the Muses, which are largely, as we have seen, requests for factual information. He asks for information about important battles or even "begs to be inspired with an army list."²⁹ Further evidence that Homer was both historian and teacher may be found in the song of the Sirens:

for no one else has ever sailed past this place in his black ship
until he has listened to the honey-sweet voice that issues
from our lips; then goes on, well pleased,
knowing more than ever he did; for we know everything that the Argives and Trojans
did and suffered in wide Troy through the gods' despite.
Over all the generous earth we know everything that happens.

(Od. 12.186-191, trans., Lattimore)

This passage contains, as Verdenius suggests, "the poet's own pretensions to make the public wiser".³⁰ after reading the poet's works a man will go on, well pleased and knowing more than ever he did. The poet not only delights but also teaches. He gives instruction of many kinds. Verdenius offers evidence to show that Homer, in addition to giving historical instruction,

²⁹ Dodds, 80, citing Il. 2.484ff.

³⁰ Verdenius, "Literary Criticism," 31.
indulges in technical didacticism, linguistic didacticism, and moral didacticism. Homer's moral maxims and pieces of technical and professional advice occur incidentally. They do not govern his work as a whole.

Hesiod, on the other hand, is ever aware of the didactic function of poetry and of his own role as educator. In the Theogony he teaches religious doctrine and presents a moral and ethical code. In the Works and Days he interweaves moral and ethical precepts with practical instructions on farming. Hesiod's concern for truthfulness is an indication of his awareness of the didactic function of poetry. This concern is evident both in the Theogony and in the Works and Days: in the proem to the Theogony he contrasts the plausible fiction of Homeric epic with the true

31 For advice on the durability of different kinds of wood or technical details for the construction of a raft, see II. 23.327-8; Od. 5.234-261.

32 For an explanation of an obscure or apt-to-be-misunderstood word, see II. 9.124; 3.387-8; 5.63.

33 The Supplications, for example, must be respected; see II. 9.502-12.

34 Cf. Sperdutti, 230: "Although destined through his magnificent grasp of humanistic values to become the greatest teacher of Hellas, Homer did not stress this as his role in general, and taught chiefly by indirection; Hesiod on the other hand, is at every point conscious of this function as the main task of poetry and teaches quite openly, only partially disguising his purpose by the use of gnomic expressions and of fables such as that of the hawk and the nightingale (Works and Days, 203ff.)."

35 Hesiod's emphasis on moral and ethical principles has often been noted, e.g., by Sperdutti 231: "Hesiod consciously conceives of the poet as the educator of the community in that he presents a religious doctrine and a code of ethics derived from it. The poet's primary concern is the creation of an enlightened political order founded on enduring moral principles..." Cf. Guthrie, History III, 29: "Hesiod had written his Works and Days both as a manual of instruction for farmers and as a vehicle for ethical precept. Theognis is full of ethical maxims...."
content of his own poetry, at the beginning of the Works and Days he emphatically declares his intention to tell the truth.

The poetry of Pindar is not overtly didactic in the manner of Hesiod's, and Norwood has gone so far as to say that "no educational element at all exists in Pindar." Yet there are indications that Pindar, too, was aware of the didactic function of poetry and of his role as teacher. Like Hesiod, he makes a strong demand for truthfulness in poetry: he calls upon Alathëia, daughter of Zeus, who sets all things right (O.10.3); he expresses a desire to "hit the mark as if with an arrow shot from a bow" (N. 6.26-28); he refuses to transgress the truth and tell glittering lies (O. 1.28-29). Pindar's use of the words sophos, sophistēs and sophia may be a further indication of an awareness of his role as educator. As we have seen, he refers to the poet as sophos (O. 2.86) and sophistēs (I. 5.28), the possessor of sophia from the Muses (P. 1.12; 6.49). At a later period, it was assumed that a sophistēs would be a teacher because he had a special skill

36 ἔδεικνυ τι παλικα λέγειν ἐτύμοσαν ὦμοια, ἔστη εἰ, εὖτε ἐθέλωσεν, εἰληθέα γνώσιοισα, (Th. 27-28). Murray 91, discusses various interpretations of these lines, and accepts the conventional interpretation that "Hesiod is here contrasting the true content of his own poetry with the plausible fiction of Homeric epic." Murray rejects, with good reason, Harriott's suggestion (113) that Hesiod is warning that he may be recording a lying vision: "Hesiod would hardly preface his work with a warning that what followed might be untrue; on the contrary, the preem to the Theogony is surely, to be regarded as a plea for the infallibility of the poem as a whole."

37 ἔγώ ἐστι κε Πέροι ἐτύμων μυθολέων (WD 10).

38 Norwood 47.
or knowledge to impart. Perhaps even at this early period Pindar, by applying the words sophos, sophistes, and sophia to the poet and his skill, is suggesting that the poet has lessons to teach, and is tacitly affirming the poet's responsibility to impart those lessons. There are other indications of Pindar's recognition of the didactic function of poetry. The passage in which he avows to "praise that which merits praise, and cast blame on the doers of wrong" (N. 8.40) implies, as Verdenius suggests, "the poet's self-testimony of a didactic purpose." Verdenius further notes that Pindar's frequent warnings against pursuing the unattainable (e.g. N. 11.47-48) has "a didactic ring." There can be little doubt that Pindar, like Homer and Hesiod, thought of himself as a divinely taught educator of Greece.

It was not only the didactic claims of the poets themselves which were of concern to Plato; of equal or even greater significance were the claims made for the poets by the people. As Brownson remarks, "Almost every Hellene would have been numbered among those 'eulogists of Homer' who say that 'he has educated Hellas.'" There is abundant evidence that


40 Cf. Sperdutti 235: "The gods from whom flows the unfailing stream of all truth can prompt sage poets to a knowledge beyond the reach of mortals (P. 6.51ff); to the Muses, to Zeus, and to Mnemosyne specifically is allotted the knowledge of all things (ibid. 55-56), and men who would tread the steep path of Helicon unenlightened by the Muses remain blind spirits (P. 7.13ff). That is why Pindar calls poets sophoi; they are so through the Muses, and so from Heaven come both the art and wisdom of the poet; because they are sophoi they have valuable lessons to teach."

41 Verdenius, "Literary Criticism," 35.

42 Ibid.

43 Brownson 108.
Homer was the recognized authority of the Greeks in matters ranging from carpentry and warfare to religion and morals. In Xenophon's *Symposium*, Niceratus, who had learned all of Homer by heart (3.5), declares that Homer's range of knowledge is all-encompassing and that he, Niceratus, has in turn acquired all knowledge from the poet:

> You know, doubtless, that the sage (Ὁ σοφῶν ὅλος) Homer has written about practically everything pertaining to man. Anyone of you, therefore, who wishes to acquire the art of the householder, the political leader, or the general, or to become like Achilles or Ajax or Nestor or Odysseus, should seek my favour, for I understand all these things. (4.6 trans., Todd)

When challenged as to the range of his own knowledge, Niceratus replies, in the manner of Ion, that he knows from reading Homer how to play the king, drive a chariot close to the goal-post, and provide an onion as relish for drink. Not only Homer, but other poets as well, were regarded as sources of instruction and knowledge. Aristophanes in the *Frogs* outlines the kinds of knowledge that can be acquired from the various poets: from Orpheus, religious rites and abstinence from murder; from Musaeus, healing and oracle lore; from Hesiod, cultivation of the lands and the time for reaping and plowing, and from Θείος Ὀμηρος the famous τείζεις, ὀπλίζεις, and ὀπλίζεις δίψαων (1032-6). Many other references to the poet as educator could be given; Brownson cites passages from Isocrates, Aeschines, Lycurgus, Strabo, and Lucian.44

But we need to look no further than Plato for evidence of the

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44 See Brownson 114-115.
poet's key role in education. In the Republic, Plato reports what "some people" say about poets:

Then have we not next to scrutinize tragedy and its leader Homer, since some people tell us that these poets know all the arts and all things human pertaining to virtue and vice, and all things divine? (598e trans., Shorey)

Plato is here, as Havelock notes, "reporting the traditional estimate placed upon poetry," an estimate that "crystallised itself in the conception of Homer as the educational manual par excellence." In the Protagoras, Plato tells of the place of poetry in the education system:

the children, when they have learnt their letters, and are getting to understand the written word as before they did only the spoken, are furnished with works of good poets to read as they sit in class, and are made to learn them off by heart: here they meet with many admonitions, many descriptions and praise and eulogies of good men in times past, that the boy in envy may imitate them and yearn to become even as they. (325c, trans., Lamb)

Here we see that the heroes of poetry were regarded as role models and exemplars of virtue for the schoolboy to imitate. Not only the heroes but also the gods were looked upon as role models to imitate, and the Greeks often used mythological examples as an excuse for their own wrongdoings. In the Euthyphro, Plato gives us an illustration of this practice. Euthypro, about to prosecute his father for the murder of a workman, excuses his filial impiety on the following grounds:

45 Havelock 28.
Men believe that Zeus is the best and most just of the gods, and they acknowledge that he put his father in bonds because he wickedly devoured his children, and he in turn had mutilated his father for similar reasons. (6a, trans., Fowler)

Plato is not here, as Brownson points out, "undertaking a polemic against the poets," and this use or misuse of poetry must be regarded as a typical incident, "a reflection of the spirit of the time." These examples may suffice to demonstrate the popular view of the poet as educator, his heroes as exemplars, and his poetry as a didactic tool.

It is precisely this view of poetry to which the Socrates of the early dialogues reacts, and against which Plato, in the Republic, will launch a full-scale attack. The old quarrel between poetry and philosophy is for Plato a battle to be reluctantly but vigorously waged. The poets had long enjoyed a position of supremacy which was, in Plato's view, unjustly held, and he determines to oust them from that position. He attacks both their own didactic pretensions and the popular view that their writings are an infallible source of knowledge, a complete guide on matters ranging from technical know-how to moral, ethical and religious conduct. As Guthrie notes, Plato rejects the popular view on both intellectual and ethical grounds: the poet does not have technical knowledge, and his tales of gods, men, and heroes are often less than edifying. Plato attacks the poets on both counts: their ignorance is exposed in the early dialogues, and "his main onslaught on both counts, but especially on moral influence, comes in

46 Brownson 125.
the Republic." This "onslaught", curiously enough, arises from the gentle and often humorous conversations of Socrates described or enacted in the early dialogues. It is Socrates who teaches Plato "to reject the image of the poet as sophistēs, with a wisdom and knowledge of his own." The writings of the poets were often treated as a collection of wise sayings which could be consulted for advice and guidance in matters of everyday living. The sophist often challenged the validity of that advice by showing that the poet had contradicted himself. Socrates in two light-hearted passages, one in the Meno (95d-96b) and one in the Protagoras (339a-347c), pokes fun both at sophistic methods of literary criticism and at the popular practice of extracting advice from the sayings of the poets.

In the passage from the Meno, Socrates parodies the methods of the sophists by alleging that there is a contradiction in a poem of Theognis, although, as Bluck argues, "there is no real contradiction, and Plato can hardly have been unaware of this." Socrates alleges that

47 Guthrie, History IV, 209.

48 Ibid.

49 This is noted by Bluck 29: "Now the sophists, 'the heirs of the educational tradition of the poets', sometimes chose a text from a poet and elaborated upon it, and sometimes challenged the validity of some particular piece of 'advice' that a poet had given - in the latter case the favourite method was to try to show that the poet had contradicted himself; but in either case they tended to take words out of their contexts and treat the poem with which they were dealing as a set of isolated maxims."

50 For a full discussion of this passage see Woodbury, "Simonides on Ἀρετή," 135-163.

51 Ibid.; cf. Woodbury, "The Riddle of Theognis: the Latest Answer," 9-10, who also defends Theognis against the charge of inconsistency, and draws attention to the subtlety of Plato's argument.
Theognis first implies that virtue can be taught, and then a few lines later implies that it cannot. In reality, Theognis first affirms that where there is a good natural endowment virtue can be taught and later denies the possibility of teaching virtue when this natural endowment is lacking. In alleging a contradiction, Socrates would seem to be indicating that interpretations of poetry are variable and unreliable, and that one should not look to the poets for advice on moral and ethical matters.

In the *Protagoras* we find an elaborate and highly humorous parody of sophistic literary criticism, an "amusing 'skit' on the current methods of extracting any doctrine one pleases from a poet by devices which can make anything mean anything."52 Protagoras leads into the discussion by stating the current sophistic view of poetry and of poetry's role in education:

I consider, Socrates, that the greatest part of a man's education is to be skilled in the matter of verses; that is, to be able to apprehend, in the utterances of the poets, what has been rightly and what wrongly composed, and to know how to distinguish them and account for them when questioned. (339a, trans., Lamb)

A poem is, for Protagoras, an educational tool, a compendium of sayings on which one can practice the principles of literary criticism. It seems likely, as C.C.W. Taylor suggests, that he viewed literary criticism as a tool for sharpening the critical faculties rather than as a means to the appreciation

52 Taylor, *Plato the Man and his Work* (hereafter *PMW*), 256.
of poetry itself. Protagoras shows no interest in the poetical qualities of a poem; he is not concerned with aesthetic criteria. His only concern is to decide which of the individual sayings of a poet are correct and which are not, _ε ῥ ῃ ῃ ᾃ ῃ ῃ ῃ καὶ _μ ὑ_; his criterion for the judgement of poetry is factual correctness. He is concerned wholly with content, not at all with form. For Protagoras, a poem is no more than the sum of its parts. In our present dialogue, Protagoras claims that there is a contradiction between two of the parts of a poem of Simonides. This gives Socrates the opportunity to launch into a brilliant and elaborate parody of a sophist's lecture on poetry. In his endeavour to resolve the contradiction, Socrates begins by mimicking the methods of the sophist Prodicus, first drawing a careful distinction between the meaning of γένεσθαι and εἶναι (340c), "a piece of pedantry which succeeds only in darkening counsel," then twisting the meaning of the word "hard" ( _χαλιπτόντο_ ) to make it "evil" ( _χαίδον_ , 341c). When Protagoras rejects this interpretation as absurd, Socrates offers to explain what the poem means to him.

The explanation that follows is sheer farce: the Spartans are of all people the most philosophical; they merely pretend to be ignorant and to owe their superiority to physical prowess in order to keep the secret of their success, their great intellectual attainment, hidden from other people.

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53 Taylor, Plato: Protagoras, 141: "he saw the importance of literary criticism rather in developing the critical faculty and the exact use of language than in promoting the understanding and appreciation of poetry as an end in itself."

54 Atkins 42.
Their philosophy is characteristically expressed in short, pithy sayings. It was to refute such a saying of Pittacus, "Hard it is to be good," that Simonides wrote his poem. Socrates proceeds to analyze the poem in an outrageously high-handed fashion, and after an astounding exhibition of verbal gymnastics elicits the true meaning of the poem. Curiously enough, Socrates elicits from the poem the Socratic thesis: "no one does wrong willingly" (345d). By doing violence to its language, he had made the poem mean just what he wants it to mean.

The reader suspects that with Socrates there is some serious purpose behind all the fun, and we must now ask: what does Socrates (or Plato) intend us to learn through this parody? Atkins gives a perceptive answer. He suggests that Plato's intention is to caricature the pedantries of those who claim to extract moral doctrine from poetry, but who, in reality, read their own theories into the text. Plato is, he suggests, demonstrating in humorous fashion that serious doctrine cannot be drawn from poetry and that the time for reliance on the aphoristic wisdom of the poets is past. This answer would seem to be the correct one: it is futile to attempt to extract moral doctrines from poetry, because a person can, like Socrates, make a poem mean exactly what he wants it to mean; reliance on the aphoristic wisdom of the poets must give way to the search for philosophical

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55 Atkins 42: "Socrates...indulges in some first-rate quibbling which reduces the whole business to absurdity. In this way does Plato caricature the futile pedantries of those who professed to extract moral doctrines from poetry; the implication being that by such fantastic methods the critic could read anything or everything into a given text. The truth is, that, in Plato's judgment, neither from poetry itself nor from interpretations of critics could serious doctrines on the conduct of life be drawn, and that the time had gone by for relying on the aphoristic wisdom attributed to the poets."
Plato has, through Socrates’ brilliant parody, made his points sufficiently clear. Yet, as if to hammer these points home, Plato has Hippias and Socrates make a few further remarks. Hippias, like the good sophist he is, pronounces Socrates’ interpretation “very good”, then offers to give his own excellent explanation of the poem (347a). Plato thus reminds us once again of the variability and fallibility of poetic interpretation. Finally, so that the reader can make no mistake about his meaning, Plato relates this speech of Socrates:

let’s leave the discussion of lyric and other kinds of poetry, but I should be very glad, Protagoras, to complete our examination of the question I asked you at first. For the discussion of poetry strikes me very like a drinking-party of common, vulgar fellows. . . . But in a party of well-bred, educated people, you never see flute-girls, or dancers or harp-girls, but they can entertain one another with their own conversation without any childish trifles . . . . Similarly gatherings of this kind, if they are made up of the sort of men that most of us claim to be, have no need of anyone else to take part and in particular no need of poets; you can’t question them about what they say, but in most cases when people quote them, one says the poet means one thing and one another . . . . (345c-e, trans., C.C.W. Taylor)

Plato could scarcely make it clearer that the time for poetry was past, and that the wisdom for the new age was to be found in dialectic.

The parody in the Protagoras is, as Bluck notes, “as much a parody of the higher (sophistic) criticism of the poets as an attack on the
poets themselves. In other early dialogues Plato deals more directly with the poets and with the claims made by and for them. On more than one occasion, Plato gives us a delightful portrait of Socrates patiently cross-examining the poets and discovering to his own surprise that their boasted wisdom is no wisdom at all. In the Ion, the Apology, and the Meno, Socrates tests the validity of the poets' claims to knowledge. He identifies the kinds of knowledge traditionally ascribed to the poets, and demonstrates that the poets are deficient in those areas: the poets are lacking in technē, sophia, and epistēmē. This demonstration of deficiency lays the groundwork for Plato's battle with the poets. If the poets lack knowledge they are unfit to maintain the position of authority they have held for so long. If Plato can prove that they lack knowledge the way is open for him to establish his own supremacy in the field. Consequently we find in the early dialogues repeated demonstrations of the poets' lack of technē, sophia and epistēmē, and in the Republic an urgent, perhaps somewhat desperate, attempt to prove that the poets are without any real knowledge.

An elaborate and lively demonstration of the poets' lack of knowledge is given in the Ion. Plato here demonstrates that the poets are lacking in any technē, and defines the precise nature of that lack. In the dialogue sections (530a-533c and 536d-542b) we listen in on one of Socrates' conversations with the rhapsode Ion, a conversation conducted in high spirits and with great good humour. The dialogue, full of comic and farcical elements, has been compared by Ranta to a scene from Old Comedy, with

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56 Bluck 391.
Socrates playing the role of Eirōn, Ion the part of Alazōn. Yet, as always, the mask of the eiron conceals a serious purpose, and Socrates has a point to make. LaDrièrè's objections notwithstanding, Taylor would seem to be correct in his judgment as to the "real points" of the dialogue: the Ion is concerned only nominally with the rhapsode and his lack of professional knowledge; the real purpose of the dialogue is to demonstrate that the poet has no expert knowledge and has not necessarily anything to teach. Plato's attack upon the rhapsode is, as Friedlander perceives, a secondary intention at best; Plato's purpose is to make us "see the poet through the rhapsode." The comical elements of the opening and closing sections serve as a foil to the serious business of the central monologues (533c-535a).

57 Ranta 219.
58 See LaDrièrè 26-34.
59 Taylor, PMW, 40: "Nominally the little dialogue is concerned with the question whether rhapsodes and actors owe their success to professional or expert knowledge or to some kind of 'genius' or non-rational 'inspiration.' But it is clear that the real points to be made are that the poet himself is not an 'expert' in any kind of knowledge, and as poet, has not necessarily anything to teach us." Cf. Tigerstedt, "Inspiration," 25: "If the real subject of the dialogue is neither Ion himself, nor his art, nor the sophistic interpretation of poetry, it seems that we shall be forced to embrace the opinion of the great majority of interpreters, from Classical Antiquity onwards, viz. that what Plato really discussed in the Ion is poetry and the poets, more exactly: the nature of poetical inspiration."
60 Friedlander, Plato II, citing Xenophon's descriptions of rhapsodes as "more stupid than any other tribe of men" (Symp. 3.6) and "very precise about the exact words of Homer, but very stupid themselves" (Mem. IV 2.10), remarks the unlikelihood of Plato's attacking "a profession that, at his time, had already lost its dignity, its representatives having become notorious for their stupidity" (131). The attack upon the rhapsodes is "at best, a secondary intention" (131). Plato's primary purpose is to make us "see the poet through the rhapsode" (133).
In the opening conversation, Socrates insists on the importance of the rhapsode's understanding the thought or meaning (ἡ διάβολα, 530c1; τῆς διάβολας, 530c4) of the poet. Ion misses the point entirely; he can only speak of the many thoughts (τολμᾶς...διάβολας, 530d3) he has about Homer. The rhapsode's understanding is deficient in that he does not comprehend that true knowledge must be knowledge not of specifics but of the universal. Socrates demonstrates the deficiency in the rhapsode's knowledge only to point to a similar deficiency in the poet's knowledge. Accordingly, we see Socrates first making a negative statement about Ion's exegetical ability (532c5), then applying this negative assessment to the abilities of the poets themselves (534c5). Ion claims to be able to speak about Homer, but confesses his inability to speak about other poets. Socrates points out to him that if it were by technē that Ion could give an exegesis of Homer's works, he would be able to give an exegesis of the works of all other poets as well, since the technē of poetry is a whole (τὸ ὀλοῦν 532c9). Ion's inability to do this is therefore evidence that he does not speak about Homer by technē or by epistēmē (532c5). Socrates later proceeds to use the same reasoning to explain the poet's inability to compose or speak well about poetry in more than one genre: it is not by technē that the poet knows how to speak well about one; if it were, he would be able to speak well about all (534c5). Neither rhapsode nor poet has a knowledge that extends over the whole, a knowledge that consists of universal principles; neither possesses technē or epistēmē.

In the second dialogue section (536d-542b), a piece of
delightful comedy, Ion the Jack-of-all trades is shown to be master of none. After a lively round of questioning by Socrates, Ion is finally brought to heel, forced to withdraw his claim to all knowledge, forced to admit that he does not possess even the *technē* of the rhapsode and must therefore be inspired. Embedded in this humorous dialogue are many serious principles, not the least of which is the concept that true knowledge is a knowledge of the whole. It is this kind of knowledge that separates the philosopher from the poet. The poet depicts particular men engaged in particular actions; the philosopher apprehends the universal and attempts to translate it into human terms. For this reason, the philosopher is, in Plato's view, superior to the poet, and must take his place as the educator of Greece.

In the *Apology*, Socrates once again, but now in a deeply serious mood, demonstrates that the poets are lacking in a particular kind of knowledge; he shows them to be without *sophia*. He tells of how he went around questioning the poets, tragic, dithyrambic and others, about their compositions, and found that they were unable to explain the meaning even of those passages which seemed to have been worked over most carefully by them (22b4). His conclusion: it is not by *sophia* that they write, but by a kind of natural genius (*physis*) and being inspired (22b-c). The word *sophia* here would seem to have a range of meanings. In the context of poets carefully labouring at their poems it perhaps retains something of its original meaning of "skill in a craft." In the context of Socrates' search for someone wiser than himself it probably means the kind of wisdom Socrates is

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61 For the evolution in the meaning of *sophia* and its cognates, see Guthrie, *History III*, 27-34.
searching for, the kind of self-knowledge of one who recognizes his own worthlessness in regard to wisdom (23b2-4). The poets are entirely lacking in this kind of self-knowledge, entirely lacking in sophia. This account of the poet's ignorance, coming as it did in the last speech of Socrates before his death, must have had a profound influence upon Plato, and no doubt strengthened and confirmed his belief that the role of the poet was an inferior role, and that the life of the philosopher was the one life worth living for a man.

Socrates' discovery that the poets were lacking in sophia was no doubt instrumental in the development of Plato's antagonism toward the poets. As we have seen, the poets had claimed that they themselves were the sophoi and sophistai par excellence, and that sophia was their province. What is more, the nation of Greece had been convinced of the validity of these claims. The discovery that the poets were, in fact, without any sophia would open the way for the philosophoi, the truly wise, who recognized the limitations of their knowledge and who were therefore capable of learning and teaching, to succeed to the position of authority formerly held by the poets. The battle for supremacy was to be long and hard-fought; it was to be waged by Plato with a zeal and intensity made all the greater by his certainty, derived from Socrates, that the philosopher and not the poet was

62 Havelock, in his usual vivid style, suggests that the words sophos and sophia represented a field-site from which the philosophers would have to eject the poets: "historically the poet had claimed to be the sophos par excellence and his claim had been accepted. I conclude that the words sophos, sophia at the end of the fifth century represented a set of field claims staked out in the culture. When a new variety of verbal skill began to emerge, its practitioners did not coin a new word for it. They preferred the old one, as offering a field-site already prepared, but one from which they had to eject the previous tenant."
the one man truly wise.

The theory of inspiration is introduced in the *Apology*, as it was in the first dialogue section of the *Ion*, as an explanation for the poet's lack of knowledge. *Ion* does not talk about poetry, nor do poets compose or give an account of their writings by any *techne* or *epistēmē*: it must be, then, that they do what they do by divine inspiration. The poets of the *Apology* do not write by any *sophia*, as is evident from the fact that they cannot talk intelligently about their poems; it must be, then, that they write by some kind of inspiration. The theory of inspiration is, in the early part of the *Ion* and in the *Apology*, essentially negative, introduced only to explain an inability on the part of the poets. Plato is not here concerned to discuss inspiration as poetic process or as part of an aesthetic theory. His emphasis is entirely on the fact that Socrates has, in the *Ion*, demonstrated that the poets are without *techne* or *epistēmē*, and has, in the *Apology*, shown that they have no *sophia*.

In the *Meno*, Plato once again insists that the poets lack knowledge, and once again the theory of inspiration is introduced merely as a negative explanation of the otherwise inexplicable. Socrates has demonstrated that politicians do not control their states by any *sophia* or because they are *sophoi*, and has explained that their qualities are not the effect of *epistēmē* (99b). How, then, do they guide their states? There is only one alternative:

And if not by knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*), as the only alternative it must have been by good opinion (*εὐδοκία*). This is the
means which statesmen employ for their direction of states, and they have nothing more to do with wisdom than soothsayers and diviners; for these people utter many a true thing when inspired, but have no knowledge of anything they say. (99c, trans., Lamb)

It can only be that politicians guide their states by eudoxia, "true opinion," perhaps with the negative connotation of "good reputation." Socrates' reply is an effective "put-down" of politicians and, indirectly, of poets as well. The eudoxia of the politicians, like the inspiration of the soothsayers, seems to be, in Collingwood's terms, a je ne sais quoi, a convenient tag for something that cannot otherwise be explained. Politicians, like soothsayers, have no wisdom, yet they utter many true things. It can only be by some piece of luck, some gift of the gods to the foolish, some piece of inspiration or eudoxia.

Socrates' reply puts eudoxia on a level with "inspiration," and politicians on a level with soothsayers and diviners. The comparison of the politicians' eudoxia to the soothsayers' inspiration is hardly a flattering one; the comparison of the politicians themselves to soothsayers and diviners may be less flattering. Taylor suggests that "the effect ... is much that which might be produced today by speaking of 'ventriloquists, mediums, and cabinet

63 See Bluck 424: "Eudoxia here means 'true opinion'. Plato uses the etymology of the word to force this meaning upon it (Eudoxia). It is by no means impossible that Plato saw that the word could be taken as a pun - as though these statesmen owed their to 'good reputation'."

64 Collingwood, "Plato's Philosophy of Art" (hereafter "Philosophy"), 165.
ministers." Poets are soon tarred with the same brush: "we shall be right in calling those inspired (theious) of whom we spoke just now, soothsayers and prophets and the whole tribe of poets" (99d). Plato here explicitly includes the poets in the list of the inspired; he may have intended the reader to make the association even earlier. It is perhaps not by accident that a part of the passage in the Meno linking the politicians with the soothsayers is almost identical to a passage in the Apology linking soothsayers with poets:

they are like diviners or soothsayers; for these people say many fine things, but have no knowledge of anything they say. (22c, my translation)

It may be that Plato is, in the Meno, deliberately echoing the passage from the Apology, wishing to remind the reader again of Socrates' discovery that the poet, like the politician, knows nothing but believes himself to be wise. It is just such pretensions to wisdom that Socrates, and Plato after him, is ever concerned to refute. Whether or not Plato intends this connection, he does at 99d specifically link diviners and prophets and the whole tribe of poets, and we are here reminded of the passages in the Apology (22c) and the Ion (534d1) where Plato links the poets with soothsayers and inspired prophets. In all three passages, Plato's concern is to link the poets with other groups of people who are purportedly "inspired" and demonstrably lacking in knowledge, and thus to call into question both the "inspiration"

65 Taylor, PMW, 144, n.1.

66 See Bluck 427, on the meaning of θείος at 99c6 and here: "Very often the word is used in a wide general sense, 'remarkable', or else to mean 'godlike'. Here the meaning is certainly 'inspired' ... or 'man of God'.

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and the wisdom of the poets.

The language of the Meno echoes that of the Ion. In both these dialogues, Plato expresses himself with greater force than he does in the Apology. In all three dialogues, the poets are said to be "inspired." In the Meno, Plato adds to his description of the inspired tribe the word "possessed" (katechomenous, 99d3), a verb of stronger and more forceful connotation. Possession is one of the key concepts, and katechomai one of the key verbs in the Ion. The phrase "by divine dispensation" (Θεία μοίρα) is used in the Meno to explain how virtue can come without nous (ἀνεύ νου , 99e7). Both divine dispensation and deprivation of nous are important elements in the theory of inspiration as expressed in the Ion. Plato's language here is strong and clear. The pensive mood and reluctant tone of the Apology are entirely absent from the Meno and the Ion. In these two dialogues, Plato is firmly insistent that poets are not only inspired, but also possessed and lacking in nous.

In the Meno, the politicians, and by implication the poets, are without epistēmē. This is a serious deficiency, and Socrates implies that a man who has no epistēmē should give place to one who does: he suggests that the politician who has no epistēmē should give place to "somebody

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67 See Apology 22c: Εὔθους; Meno 99c10: Θείας; 99d3: Εὔθους; Ion 533e4: Εὐθείας; 533c6: Εὐθείας; 534b5: Εὐθείας; 533d5: Εὐθουσίαστα.

68 Cf. Ion 533c7: Κατεξώμενοι; 534a5: Κατεξώμενοι; forms of Κατεξώμενοι throughout the second monologue.

69 Cf. Ion 534c1, 536c2 and d3: Θεία μοίρας; 534c8: Εὔθους ... ἃνεύ νου.
among the statesmen capable of making a statesmen of another." Such a man would be a reality among "flitting shades" (100a5-7). This suggestion foreshadows Plato's concept of a philosopher-king and also his concept of a philosopher-poet. In Plato's view, anyone who is in a position of authority, whether poet or politician, and who is lacking in *epistēmē* should give place to the man who is truly wise.

We have seen that in the *Apology*, the *Ion*, and the *Meno* the theory of inspiration is introduced to account for the presence of some ability in the absence of any *technē*, *sophia* or *epistēmē*. We notice, however, that from the *Ion* and *Apology* to the *Meno* the meanings of these words have shifted. In the *Ion*, the words *technē* and *epistēmē* retain much of their original sense of "technical know-how," "skill in a craft." The poet and the rhapsode are, as Tigerstedt notes, contrasted to the man who is *technikos*, the man who through *technē* and *epistēmē* knows and practices his craft. In the *Apology*, the word *sophia*, may, as we have noted, retain something of its early sense of "skill in a craft." But in the context of Socrates' search for someone wiser than he, the word is clearly used in the later and extended sense of "wisdom," in particular of the kind of self-knowledge that recognizes its own limitations. It is this kind of wisdom that the poets lack: they mistakenly believe themselves to be not only wise in regard to their poetry, but also the wisest of men in things in which they

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70 Tigerstedt, "Inspiration," 26: "the poet and the rhapsode are contrasted to the craftsman (*technikos*), who through *techne* and *epistēmē* knows what he does and does what he knows." Cf. Greene 17: "the inspiration of the poet is...contrasted...with the purely practical kind of knowledge required in ordinary life - in other words, with the ideal of knowledge that Socrates had sought, typified by the arts."
are not wise (22c5). In the Meno, the word epistēmē has moved from the realm of craft to the realm of living. It is now, as Gould suggests, a form of moral ability - no longer a form of knowing how to practise a craft, but now a form of knowing how to be moral.⁷¹ Neither politicians nor poets possess this kind of epistēmē: they should give place to the man who is truly wise and who can make others like himself. Socrates' demonstration that the poets are lacking in sophia, technē and epistēmē has prepared the way for Plato's attempt to oust the poets from their position of authority.

Why the Poet is Portrayed as Possessed

Plato insists that the poetic process is irrational, that inspiration is a form of ecstasy or manic possession. To discover the reasons for his insistence that the poet is possessed we must look again at the first monologue section of the Ion (533c-535a), and consider the imagery used there. Socrates tells us in this section that the view of inspiration he is putting forth is that of the poets themselves; he is merely recounting what they themselves say (534a6). It will prove instructive to examine Socrates' account and to determine which of his statements do indeed reflect the traditional views of the poets, and which, if any, express views original with Plato himself.

⁷¹ Gould 7: "what is required is a form of moral ability, comparable in some respects to the creative or artistic ability of potters, shoemakers, and the like:...the ἐπιστήμη which Socrates envisaged was a form of knowing how, knowing, that is, how to be moral."
Socrates describes the poetic process in imagery of great beauty. Much of the language here is the conventional language of poetry. The sweet-flowing nature of the poet's words is a poetic commonplace from the time of Homer and Hesiod. Homer tells of Nestor, sweet of speech, the clear-voiced orator from whose tongue flowed speech sweeter than honey (I. 1.247-9). Hesiod speaks of the prince whom the daughters of great Zeus honour: they pour sweet dew upon his tongue and from his lips flow gracious words (Th. 83-84). Poets have long delighted in telling of their excursions to the gardens of the Muses or of the Graces, who according to Hesiod, live beside them (Th. 64). Pindar finds nourishment in the choicest gardens of the Graces (O. 9.27); Phrynicus, as we learn from Aristophanes, culls his songs from the sacred meadows of the Muses (Frogs 1300). The metaphor of the bee is also found in both Phrynicus and Pindar. Phrynicus, like a bee, feeds upon the fruit of ambrosial lays, and produces his own sweet song (Aristoph., Birds 749-751). Pindar speaks of his song of praise flitting like a bee from theme to theme:

εγκυμίαν γιὰ δόμος έκυκνυ \\
Π' αλλοτ' αλλον άτε μέλισσα Θείες λόγον \\
(P. 10.53-54).

Plato's description of the poet as a "light, and winged and holy thing" takes us back to Homer, where "winged" is an adjective frequently used to modify "words" (ἐπείδη περιφέρεσθαι), and "divine" is the standard epithet for the poet himself (Θεῖος δούλος). So we see that the imagery used by Socrates in Ion 534b is that used by poets in describing themselves and their works, and that Socrates is, as he claims, giving an account of what the poets themselves say.
In the central monologue section of the *Ion* there are, however, two metaphors which seem not to be found in earlier writings, the comparison of the power of the Muse to the power of a magnet, and the comparison of poetic inspiration to Dionysiac frenzy. Because of the fragmentary nature of extant Greek literature it is impossible to declare with certainty that any given metaphor does not occur before the time of Plato. As far as we can determine, however, these two are original with him. The point of comparison with the magnet is obvious enough: the poet or rhapsode is controlled by an external force. A power outside himself moves him to speak (533d3); he has no control over his own utterance. The poet is completely in the power of the Muse, held (*echetai*) or possessed (*katechetai*) by her (536b1). The points of comparison with Bacchants or Corybantes may be open to some dispute, as we shall see, but one point at least is clear. In making the comparison, Plato has uppermost in his mind the notion of possession. The idea of possession by a Muse as by a magnet leads Plato to the thought of Corybantic possession: all good poets, epic as well as lyric compose their beautiful poems not by *techne*, but because they are inspired and possessed, just as the Corybantes... (533c7-8). This same progression of thought is in evidence a second time: it is not by *techne* or *episteme* that Ion says what he says about Homer, but by divine inspiration and possession, just as the Corybantes (536c2). The notion of possession is the primary one governing the imagery of the Bacchants as well: the Corybantes rave in Bacchic frenzy and are possessed, like Bacchants who draw milk and honey from the rivers when they are possessed (534a3-4). Closely linked with the notion of possession is the complementary notion of not being in one's
senses: both Corybantes and Bacchants are said to be out of their minds
\( \text{ουκ} \text{ εὐφρονες} , 534a: \text{εὐφρονες} \text{ \ οὐ \ ω} \), 534a5). This comparison of poetic inspiration to Bacchic or Corybantic
frenzy seems to be unparalleled in earlier literature.

Having looked at the imagery in the central passage of the
Ion, we are now in a position to suggest reasons for Plato’s insistence that
poetic inspiration is akin to Dionysiac frenzy. One answer suggests itself
immediately: Plato is concerned to demonstrate that poetry is the product
of an irrational process and cannot, therefore, be an authoritative teaching
tool. The irrational must give way to the rational; philosophy must take the
place of poetry.

Havelock gives a rather one-sided, but nevertheless useful,
account of the intentions of Plato and other philosophers. He suggests that
poetic inspiration is a fifth century notion invented by the philosophers in
order to expedite the transfer of "the functional purposes of poetry as a
tribal education" to prose. He claims that the philosophers, determined to
denigrate poetry and to relegate it to "a category which was non-conceptual
and therefore non-rational and non-reflective," invented the notion that
poetry is the product of ecstatic possession.\(^{72}\) There would seem to be two

\(^{72}\) Havelock 156: "The contrary conception of poetic inspiration was
born in Greece...toward the end of the fifth century, when the requirements
of oral memorisation were no longer dominant and when the functional
purpose of poetry a tribal education were being transferred to prose. At
this point those who thought in prose and preferred prose - that is the
philosophers, who were intent upon constructing a new type of discourse
which we can roughly characterise as conceptual rather than poetic - were
driven to relegate the poetic experience to a category which was non-
conceptual and therefore non-rational and non-reflective. Thus was invented
major deficiencies in Havelock's account, namely his failure to distinguish between "poetic inspiration" and "ecstatic possession", and his insistence, as always, that poetry is merely functional, a kind of "tribal encyclopedia". Nevertheless, he performs a useful service in identifying the philosopher's concern to "relegate the poetic experience to a category which was...non-rational," and to establish in Greece an authority based on reason.

Tigerstedt's account of Plato's intentions seems to be, on the whole, more satisfactory. Noting that the poets' authority rested on the common belief that they were inspired, he suggests that Plato chooses to transform inspiration into possession rather than to attack directly the belief in the inspiration of the poets. Tigerstedt discerns correctly that Plato's view of inspiration is a transformation or an exaggeration of the traditional view, and that his purpose in making this transformation is to attack subtly and indirectly the belief in poetic inspiration and hence the belief in the authority of the poets. We would like to suggest, however, that this is only one of Plato's purposes.

the notion that poetry must be simply a product of ecstatic possession...."

73 Ibid., 92.

74 See Tigerstedt, "Inspiration," 70: "One of the main reasons for the poets' authority was the common belief that they were inspired. They were the servants and favourites of the Muses who enabled them to tell of past events and to give sage advice for the present and the future. The Muses, so to speak, guaranted the truth of the poet's sayings. It is evident that Plato could not accept this belief, for it would have made it impossible for him to submit the poets to the control he deemed necessary. But he did not choose to attack directly the belief in their inspiration...-Plato instead preferred to transform the poetical inspiration into 'possession', a mental state well-known to the Greeks as a peculiar religious phenomenon."
Plato's intention in identifying poetical inspiration with religious possession is, according to Tigerstedt, to make the poet harmless.\(^75\)

We would suggest that Plato's purpose in identifying poetical inspiration with religious possession is quite the opposite of this. Plato, we suggest, identifies poetic inspiration with Dionysiac frenzy and possession in order to warn the reader that the poet is, at least potentially, a powerful and dangerous member of society, and that his poetry can be a powerful and dangerous force.

Many commentators have noted the great beauty of the central monologue section of the Ion. Few, it seems, have detected in it any note of danger. Linforth expressly denies that there is, either here in the Ion or in any other of Plato's allusions to Corybantic rites, any "single note of disapproval" or any suggestion that Plato "saw in the rites the slightest danger to public manners and morals."\(^76\) Nor does Linforth find in Plato's use of Bacchic language in the Ion any suggestion of danger; Plato wishes merely to make a "beautiful comparison":

Plato speaks first of Corybantic rites and then passes to Bacchic language. But here is no question of actual Bacchic rites. He makes the transition in order to introduce the beautiful comparison of the poet's inspiration with the miraculous power of the Bacchae in the myth.\(^77\)

\(^{75}\) Ibid., 75: "the identification of poetical inspiration with religious possession is the vital point of Plato's doctrine for...in this way he succeeds in making the poet at once honoured and harmless."

\(^{76}\) Linforth 161.

\(^{77}\) Ibid., 138.
There would seem to be more than one difficulty with Linforth's interpretation. First, his statement that "here is no question of actual Bacchic rites" is puzzling. Plato in remarking that the Bacchae "draw milk and honey from the rivers when possessed, but not when in their right minds," (534a,4-5), would seem to be referring directly to Bacchic rites. Euripides in the Bacchae describes a similar ritual:

Another thrust her wand into the ground, and there the god made a fount of wine gush forth. And any that had desire for a white draught scraped the earth with their finger-tips and found abundant store of milk; and from the ivy-wreathed thyrsus sweet streams of honey dripped. (Bacch. 706-711, trans., Lucas)

This description of the Bacchants causing milk to gush forth from the ground may point to the fact that water and milk, as well as wine, were "important means to communion." Dodds notes that in pointing to the importance of milk in Bacchic rites, "Euripides is probably correct from a ritual point of view." It seems likely that Plato, in his mention of Bacchants drawing milk from rivers, is directly associating poetic inspiration with Bacchic ritual, and is intending that his reader also make this association. A second difficulty with Linforth's interpretation is his refusal to recognize that the comparison of "the poet's inspiration with the miraculous power of the Bacchae" is anything more than "beautiful". There are, certainly, beautiful aspects to the Bacchic experience; there are also dangerous aspects, of which Plato cannot be unaware. It is his awareness of

78 Dodds, Euripides’ Bacchae, xiii.

79 Ibid.
the danger as well as the beauty in Bacchic ritual, which, we would suggest, leads Plato to make the comparison between poetic inspiration and Dionysiac possession. In making the comparison, he is alerting his readers to the dangers inherent in poetry.

It may even be that Plato's reference to the Bacchants drawing milk and honey from streams is a direct allusion to the Bacchae of Euripides, and that he intends the reader to recall the message of the Bacchae: "how beautiful - but how dangerous!" Euripides' description of milk gushing forth from the ground and sweet streams of honey dripping from the thyrsi, seems at first to be purely an image of beauty. The viewer of the tragedy soon finds, however, that the hands that scrape milk from the ground are the same hands that rend cattle limb from limb (734-9) and dismember Pentheus (1202-10), that the thyrsi that drip sweet streams of honey are the same thyrsi that are taken up as weapons against men and beast (733), and that on one of these thyrsi the head of Pentheus is impaled (1165). The viewer discovers that the god of milk and honey is also the god of omophagia and sparagmos. It is by no means inconceivable that the young Plato himself was present at one of the early productions of Euripides Bacchae and that the performance made an indelible impression on his mind. It may be that he is deliberately echoing lines of Euripides in order to remind the reader: beautiful, yes, but also dangerous.

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80 Winnington-Ingram 11: [Euripides] has presented both the peace and terror of Dionysiac religion; the peace comes first, the terror afterwards, and it is the terror that is left uppermost in our minds .... How beautiful - but how dangerous!"
While this is conjecture, there are clear indications in the *Ion* itself that Plato intended the comparison to strike a warning note. We have looked at the imagery used in the central section of the *Ion*, and have found that some of it is, as Socrates claims, imagery used by the poets themselves, while other images seem to be of Plato's own invention. It is, we would suggest, not insignificant that the imagery which can be found in poetry—the bee, honey, gardens of the Muses, wings—are all images of beauty, while the imagery introduced by Plato—the magnet and Dionysiac possession—are images of power and, to some extent at least, of danger. It is as if Socrates were saying, "Yes, poetry is beautiful. The poets themselves tell us that, and they are telling the truth. But poetry is also dangerous, and we must be alert to its dangers." One of the clearest indications in the *Ion* that Plato recognizes an element of danger in poetry and wishes to alert his reader to this danger, is his repeated insistence that inspired poets, like Bacchants or Corybantes, have been deprived of their mental faculties. As we have noted, Plato emphasizes repeatedly that inspired poets are robh suneKov, robbed by the god of their nous. Any deprivation of mental faculties, any relinquishment, voluntary or involuntary, of control over one's mind, must always be regarded by Plato as dangerous. The reason must always rule. The poet when he composes, is in an irrational state; his poetry is not the product of reason, nor does it appeal to the reason. It is therefore dangerous and must be controlled in some way. It is not until the *Republic* that Plato makes explicit his views on the dangers inherent in poetry. But it is apparent in the *Ion* that these views were developing very early. We find in this early dialogue clear indications that Plato regarded poetry not only as a thing of beauty, but also as a powerful and dangerous force. This
awareness, which finds only indirect expression in the Ion, becomes for Plato an enduring conviction that never fails but only grows stronger and more compelling.

While there is a strong undercurrent of danger running through the central monologue section of the Ion, the uppermost theme is that of the unique and mysterious beauty of poetry. Unlike the first and third sections of the Ion and the passages from the Apology and the Meno which we have looked at, the central section of the Ion does not approach the subject of inspiration from the point of view of the poet's lack of skill or knowledge, but rather from the perspective of poetry's beauty. The theory of inspiration loses much of its negative tone, and becomes something far more positive. It is not now a somewhat hopeless and desperate attempt to explain a demonstrable inability on the part of the poet, but rather an earnest effort to find an explanation for the elusive quality that characterizes poetry. There is no suggestion here that a poem is a mere compendium of facts valuable only for its content. Poetry is now recognized as something set apart from ordinary speech; it has a mysterious quality about it that cannot be explained in ordinary terms. The criterion for the judgement of poetry is not now the correctness of its factual content, but rather the presence of the quality of beauty.

Good poetry is beautiful poetry. Socrates in the central monologue points to this repeatedly. Good epic poets are those who compose beautiful poems (τὸ καλὸν ... ποιήματα, 533e7); good lyric poets are those who compose beautiful lyrics (τὸ καλὸν μέλη).
The word καλά here quite obviously refers to an aesthetic quality, to beauty as we normally conceive of it, beauty such as we find in the imagery of lyric poetry. The word μέλι leads to the imagery of the honey-bee (ἐλι ΜΕΛΙΤΤΩΝ 534b2) and of honey-flowing fountains (ΚΡΗΝῌΩΝ ΜΕΛΙΡΡΥΤΩΝ 534b1) in the gardens and glades of the Muses; imagery of sweetness (μελι) is evoked from the mention of songs (μελι). By the poets' own technique of word association, Plato moves from the thought of beautiful poetry to the notion of its beautiful source. The extraordinary sweetness and beauty of poetry are explained by its origin in the sweet-flowing fountains and beautiful gardens of the Muses.

Beautiful poetry is poetry which issues from a divine source. This is the emphasis of the central monologue section of the Ion. It is by divine dispensation that the Muse composes "well" or "beautifully" in those genres to which the Muse impels him (534c1-3). There is in the Ion, as Kenneth Dorter points out, an ambiguity in the meaning of the word καλόν and its cognates.81 In the first and third section of the Ion (and, we might add, in the second section when the topic is not poetry itself, but its exegesis, 534b-c) καλόν seems to mean something like "knowledgeable" or "factually correct," as for example when Ion admits that a good prophet could give a more knowledgeable or factually correct (καλλίον) explanation of what two poets say about prophecy than could Ion himself (431b). In the third section, καλόν generally means "beautiful" and refers to "a beauty that stems not from factual knowledge (skill or science) but from divine

81 See Dorter 75-76.
The shift in meaning points to a shift in emphasis within the dialogue. The first and third sections are concerned with the poetic product, with the poem and its exegesis. The poem is examined from the point of view of content and factual correctness; a poem is important only for the knowledge that can be elicited from it. The central section is concerned with the poetic process, with the beauty of the poetry and the source of its beauty. Coming from a divine source, poetry is infused with a divine beauty and is valuable simply for its own sake.

In the account of Tynnichus and his poem we find the implication that beauty alone can be a sufficient criterion for the judgment of poetry. Tynnichus is introduced as proof of the fact that it is not the poets themselves who say things of such value (*οὔτω μελῶν ἀξίως*, 534d3) but the god who makes his utterance through the poets. Tynnichus wrote only one poem that anyone would think worth mentioning (*ὅτου τίς ἐν ἀξιώσει κύριοις κνησθήναι*, 534d6-7), a paean which is simply an invention of the Muses (534e1). Plato has twice mentioned the value or worth of the poem, and the reader might well ask in what its worth consists. It is interesting to note that there is no mention whatever of the content of the poem, other than the fact that it is a paean. It is not on the basis of factual content that the poem has been judged a thing of worth. We are told only that the poem is an invention of the Muses, and, twice, that it is the most beautiful of songs (*πάντων μέλων καλλιστῶν*, 534d8; *τὸ καλλιστὸν μέλος* 535a1). The worth of the poem consists entirely in its beauty, originating, as it does, in a divine source.

Ibid.
Plato has demonstrated that poetry can be judged by aesthetic criteria.

The poetry that is most aesthetically pleasing is also the poetry that is most dangerous. This message is implicit throughout the central section of the *Ion*. Plato chooses as his example of beautiful poetry τὸ Κόλυμβος of the epic poets and τὸ Μέλημος of the lyric poets, and suggests that in each of these types of poetry there is an element of danger underlying the beauty. In his description of lyric poetry, imagery of beauty is, as we have seen, interwoven with imagery that connotes danger. Lyric poets culling songs (τὸ Μέλημος) from honeyflowing fountains are likened to possessed and frenzied Bacchants drawing milk and honey (Μέλημος) from rivers: notions of poetry, possession, honey, sweetness, frenzy, Bacchic ritual are inextricably mingled. Again, the lyric poet is described in one and the same breath as being a light and winged and holy thing, and as being indwelt by a god, out of his mind, and deprived of his senses, (534b5-6): the poet is both beautifully winged and dangerously lacking in nous. The sentence has moved with hardly a jarring note from the notion of beauty to the notion of danger.

The smooth transition is effected by the use of the word *enteos* placed in the pivotal position in the sentence. As we have seen, Plato has given to the word *enteos* a new and exaggerated sense. The poet who is *enteos* is no longer simply one who has partaken of the divine nature and is himself divine and "full of the gods"; the inspired poet of the *Ion* is one whom the god has forcefully entered and possessed in the way that the Dionysus of the *Bacchae* forcefully enters the body and exercises
control over his victim (ἐσ  ὅ το σῶμεν ἔλθην πολὺς, 300). In our present sentence, the word *entheos*, bearing something of both the traditional and extended sense, acts as a hinge between the concept of beauty and the concept of danger. Retaining its traditional meaning of "full of the god", *entheos* looks back to the description of the poet as "holy" and to the notion of his poetry as something sacred and mysteriously beautiful; bearing its new and "exaggerated sense, *entheos* carries us forward to the description of the poet as out of his mind, and to the notion of his poetry as the product of unreason and therefore a potentially dangerous force. The interweaving and linking of the concept of beauty with the concept of danger suggest that Plato is very much aware that the two elements are bound together inextricably.

When Plato moves from examples of beautiful lyric poetry to examples of beautiful epic poetry we find once again an indication of his awareness that the most aesthetically pleasing poetry is also the most dangerous. The passages which he chooses as typical of epic poetry are all highly emotive: Odysseus' attack on the suitors, Achilles rushing at Hector, the lamentations of Andromache, Hecuba, or Priam (535bc). It is the strongly emotive quality of these passages which constitutes their beauty as well as their danger. Such passages appeal entirely to the emotions, not at all to the reason. The reasoning faculty must in fact be set aside in order for the poetic passages to have their full emotional impact. It is only when Ion is outside himself and no longer *emphrōn* (535b7) that he is moved to tears by a piteous tale or stricken with fear so that his hair stands on end and his heart pounds (535c). When Ion is in this highly emotional state he
is able to produce a similar effect upon his audience. It is then that he is best able to drive the audience out of their senses and to cause them to lay aside their reasoning faculties (535b2), so that they in turn are moved to pity, fear, and amazement (535e2-3). As the poet, in order to produce his beautiful poetry, has to be deprived of his senses, so the rhapsode and audience, in order to receive the full emotional impact of that poetry, must be deprived of their reasoning faculties. It is here that the danger lies. As Grube remarks:

The whole process, illustrated by the simile of the magnet, is purely emotional; it has nothing to do with reason or knowledge; the critical faculty is completely dormant and it is precisely this emotional surrender uncontrolled by reason which Plato distrusts and believes to be dangerous.83

Plato's concern about the dangers of poetry, his fear that the most pleasing poetry may be the most dangerous of all, is never made explicit in the Ion. This early dialogue is, in a sense, a seed-plot of ideas that will grow, develop, and find their full expression in Plato's later works. It is not until the Republic that Plato voices his conviction that poetry, because of its emotive qualities, is a powerful and dangerous force; the seeds of this conviction are present in the Ion. In Book III of the Republic, Plato struggles with the necessity of deleting certain passages from Homer. These passages he acknowledges to be "poetic and pleasing" to the majority of listeners (387b), but concludes reluctantly that the more poetic (ὅσοι ποιητικωτέροι) they are, the less suited they are to be heard by the citizens of his ideal state. These passages which he defines as

83 Grube, The Greek and Roman Critics (hereafter GRC), 49.
"poetic" are precisely those kinds of passages which he cited in the Ion for their emotive qualities: fearful scenes of the underworld, the lamentations of Achilles and Priam and other famous men. Plato in the Republic recognizes explicitly the dangers of these emotive or poetic qualities: the more poetic a passage is, that is to say, the more a passage causes the listener to be caught up in its emotional appeal, the less suited it is to be heard. Lamentations and pitiful speeches (387d) are particularly dangerous: the emotive force of such passages causes the listener to be taken outside himself and into the character of another; the listener internalizes the emotions of the character portrayed, and when he finds himself in a similar or even lesser misfortune, he is not ashamed to lose his self-control and utter many groans and laments (387d,e). Plato decides to eliminate the danger: he will delete the lamentations of famous men so that those who are being trained as guardians will disdain to act in a similar manner (388a).

In Book X of the Republic, Plato makes it clear that he considers highly emotive poetry to be both very pleasing and terribly dangerous (μικρούρος). He describes the dangerous effects of such poetry:

the very best of us, when we hear Homer or some other of the makers of tragedy imitating one of the heroes who is in grief, and is delivering a long tirade in his lamentations or chanting and beating his breast, feel pleasure, and abandon ourselves and accompany the representation with sympathy and eagerness, and we praise as an excellent poet the one who most strongly affects us in this way. (605c-d, trans. Shorey)
As in the *Ion* and in the passage we have considered in Book 3, it is the emotional surrender, the abandonment of ourselves, and our identification with the emotions of another that make this kind of poetry so dangerous. Yet, as Plato points out here, it is this very surrender of ourselves which we find pleasurable; the poetry we most enjoy is the poetry which most strongly affects us in this way. Plato has now made explicit what was implicit in the *Ion*: the poetry that is most pleasing is also the poetry that is most dangerous. In the *Ion* we find merely the suggestion that there are both beautiful and dangerous elements in poetry and that the two elements are inextricable. In the *Republic*, Plato addresses the problem caused by the inseparability of the aesthetically pleasing from the morally dangerous element. Homer is the most poetic (Ποιητικός, 608a2) of all; his Muse is the Muse of sweet pleasure (6047a5) and he is the most pleasing of all; for these very reasons he is the most dangerous of all and must be banished from the ideal state. Plato's decision in the *Republic* is no defilement of the *Ion*'s flowing streams; he has lost none of his appreciation for the beauty of poetry. His decision is rather the inevitable outcome of an awareness, first evident in the *Ion*, that the beauty of poetry is inseparable from its danger.

3. Two Questions

The *Ion* is an introductory work. In it Plato puts forward many ideas and suggestions, and leaves them open for our consideration. It is only in his later works that he explores the ramifications of these suggestions and carries his ideas to their logical conclusion. Often the
reader of the Ion is faced with perplexing questions, and often by examining the Ion he can arrive at only partial and tentative answers. Many times, as he reads Plato's later works, he will find it necessary to modify his preliminary conclusions. Two questions arise from our discussion of Plato's portrayal of the possessed poet to which we shall attempt to give at least tentative answers.

Is the Possessed Poet Creative?

The first question is concerned with the role of the poet in the poetical process: if the poet is lacking in any nous, if he is possessed and out of his mind, does he play any active part at all in the production of poetry? Is there any place at all for the poet's own creativity? Verdenius gives an affirmative answer. Insisting that the state of possession is not absolute and that the poet does not completely lose his autonomy, Verdenius states:

Plato stresses the poet's dependence, but he certainly did not mean to represent him as no more than a speaking-tube in the mouth of the Muses. After all, he calls the poet her interpreter (Ion 534e)\(^84\)

The poet, according to Verdenius' interpretation, "does not mechanically reproduce a divine message;"\(^85\) rather, he is an active collaborator with the Muse. As Tigerstedt bluntly remarks, "It is an ingenious explanation, but it

\(^{84}\) Verdenius, "Plato's Doctrine of Artistic Imitation" (hereafter "Plato's Doctrine"), 261.

\(^{85}\) Ibid.
is not what Plato says ... Plato, as we have already demonstrated, does in fact regard the poet as completely controlled by the Muse and as no more than a speaking-tube. The poet is her "interpreter" only in the sense of "messenger" or "go-between". There is no suggestion whatever of any collaboration between poet and Muse. The early part of Socrates' first monologue, in which he describes the poet as possessed, out of his mind and in Bacchic frenzy, makes it abundantly clear that the poet is controlled by an external force, that he is the passive agent of the Muse. Yet, as if to hammer the point home, Plato gives us the example of the poet Tynnichus. Tynnichus is presented as proof that it is not the poets, *oüs vóûs μὴ πρεστίν*, who speak words of such great value, but it is the god himself who speaks and who through the poets makes his utterances to us (534d). The example of Tynnichus is intended to dispel all doubts and to establish with certainty the fact that beautiful poems are not of human origin or source (*ouk ἄνθρωποι...οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπων*), but are divine and from the gods (*θεῖα καὶ θεῶν*, 534e). The poet is nothing but a "go-between" (*hermēneus*), an "amplifying valve" for the voice of the Muse, possessed by whichever god each is possessed *κατέχομενοι ἡμῶν ὧν ἐκαστὸς κατέχειν* (534e5). The near-repetitions (*ouk ἄνθρωποι...οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπων; θεῖα καὶ θεῶν, κατέχομενοι...κατέχειν*, 534e) make the statement strongly emphatic. As if to clinch the argument and to make it entirely plain that poetry is not the product of human activity, Socrates tells us finally that the god through the worst of poets

86 Tigerstedt, "Inspiration," 65

87 Warry 82.
sang the best of songs (534e6-535a1). Plato could scarcely have made his message plainer: the poet is a passive agent, the mouthpiece of the Muse; poetry is the utterance of the god transmitted through the poet without regard for human ability. The poet plays no active role whatever in the creative process.

While this is the message of the Ion, it is not Plato's final word on the subject of inspiration and poetic creativity. When we come to Plato's later works we shall discover that he conceives of a higher kind of inspiration and envisions a more exalted role for the poet. Inspiration will be taken up into the realm of philosophy and ample scope given to the creativity of the philosopher-poet.

Is Plato Serious about Inspiration?

There is a second question that inevitably confronts the reader of the Ion: how serious is Plato about the theory of inspiration? An answer is not easily arrived at, and commentators differ widely in their views. Some claim that the thesis of the Ion, like that of the corresponding passages of the Meno and the Apology, is wholly negative and that the theory of inspiration presented in this humorous little dialogue is wholly ironic. Collingwood, for example, states that "the thesis here maintained is identical with that of the Apology." He claims that the doctrine of the Ion is purely negative, that it demonstrates that art is not knowledge, but does not explain what art is: "to call it a divine force or inspiration is simply to
call it a _je ne sais quoi_. Shorey expresses a similar view: the main idea of the dialogue "does not differ appreciably" from that of the conclusion of the _Meno_ and the passage of the _Apology_ demonstrating the poets' lack of knowledge (22a-c). He states that in the _Ion_ the satire of the rhapsode is unsparing and irony predominates. There is a major difficulty with the view expressed by Collingwood and Shorey, namely that it ignores almost entirely the central monologue section of the _Ion_. It is true that in the first and third sections of the _Ion_ the doctrine is purely negative, a demonstration that poets lack knowledge. It is true that the satire of the rhapsode is unsparing and that in the first and third sections of the _Ion_ irony predominates. But as we have seen, there is a distinctly different emphasis in the central section of the _Ion_. While the first and third sections of the _Ion_, like the passages from the _Meno_ and the _Apology_, present the theory of inspiration as an essentially negative doctrine, the central monologue section presents it in a more positive light. The emphasis here is not on the poet's lack of knowledge, but rather on the mysterious quality of beauty present in his poems. Socrates attempts to trace this beauty to its source, and finds its source in the god: it is not the poets but the god himself who speaks and through the poets makes his utterances to us (534d3-4). This is Plato's earliest statement of a sincere and lasting conviction; he never wavers from the belief that the beauty of poetry originates in a divine source. In his later works the theory of inspiration will undergo many significant changes, but this one factor remains constant.

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88 Collingwood, "Philosophy," 165.
89 Shorey, _What Plato Said_, 97.
90 Ibid., 93.
Whether or not the central section of the *Ion* can in its entirety be taken as sincere, this one statement reflects Plato's true and earnest conviction.

At least one critic has arrived at the conclusion that the account of inspiration given in the *Ion* is ironic solely on the basis of evidence from the central monologue section. Woodruff claims that "Plato's story about gods and passive poets is absurd" and that "he cannot be sincere when he tells it." Plato, he says, must have noticed that the description of poets as mere passive mouthpieces for the gods is ridiculous.\(^{91}\) An account of poetry-making which requires poets to vacate their bodies and be possessed by a god is, Woodruff asserts, "absurd," a "reductio ad absurdum of claims made for poets."\(^{92}\) Again, there is an element of truthfulness in this critic's remarks. Plato's account of poetic inspiration is certainly highly exaggerated. His description of the poet as a passive mouthpiece or a vacated body does indeed border on the absurd. His portrayal of the poet is, in a sense, a comic caricature\(^{93}\) of the inspired and honoured bard. Plato's portrayal of the possessed poet is, as we have seen, an exaggerated account intended to undermine the authority of the poets and to expose the danger hidden in poetry. The view that the description is wholly ironic fails, however, to account for the lyric beauty and intensity of Socrates'...
praise of the poets (534b). His language is rapturous, ecstatic, sublimely beautiful, and it is an echo of what the poets themselves say (534a7). His description of the poet as a light and winged and holy thing eulogizing songs from the gardens and dells of the Muses has captured the hearts and imaginations of generations of poets, and has been understood by them as a sincere and honest tribute. If there is humor and irony here, it is irony mingled with ecstasy, humor mingled with sublimity. Woodruff's contention that Plato's account of inspiration is ridiculous and absurd seems far less sensitive and perceptive than the view of those critics who, like Warry, acknowledge the element of irony, but also note that "there are passages of lyrical rapture in which Socrates himself pays tribute to the sublime qualities of poetic inspiration," passages which "can hardly be understood as anything but sincere."  

The difficulty of determining at what point in the Ion irony ends and sincerity begins is freely admitted by Tigerstedt. Carefully weighing the evidence, he attempts to determine whether Socrates' description of the possessed poet is "a hyperbolic praise of the 'divine'

94 Warry 68. Cf. Friedlander, Plato II, 132: "The poet's existence is conjured up in ecstatic words. The poets gather their melodies from honeyed fountains out of the gardens and dells of the Muses, where, like bees, they wing their way. For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing ... (534b). This is strange language for Socrates, especially when we think of the beginning of the Phaedo (60e ff.) Yet, granting the elements of playfulness, we realize that Plato is also serious here."

95 See Tigerstedt, "Inspiration," 19: in the discussion with Ion "the Socratic irony more and more changes into an openly contemptuous sarcasm. The end is pure farce. But, as always in Plato, mockery does not exclude seriousness. It is the interpreter's hard duty to determine where the former ends and the latter begins." Cf. 28: "it is in the nature of irony that it leaves us baffled and perplexed. The έπωνυμία does not speak his mind. The more perfect his art is, the more uncertain we feel of it."
nature of poetry couched in extravagant, 'poetical' terms" or whether it is "an ironical disparagement of the poet's own claim to divine inspiration."\(^{96}\) Pointing to the fact that the "inspiration of Ion himself . . . cannot be taken seriously,"\(^ {97}\) Tigerstedt questions whether Socrates can be sincere when speaking in similar terms of the inspiration of the poets. His conclusion: "the scales seem heavily tilted in favour of the 'ironical' interpretation."\(^ {98}\) This conclusion, of course, depends on subjective impressions, and subjective impressions cannot be refuted. It seems to me, however, that Tigerstedt's impression falls short of the mark in two ways: 1) it rests somewhat heavily on the dialogue section of the Ion where the suggestion that Ion is inspired is plainly humorous and ironic, and 2) while noting the element of exaggeration, it fails to lay sufficient emphasis on the element of sheer beauty in the language of Socrates' first monologue. The "hymnic tone" of this monologue has often been noted and compared with the tone of Socrates' second speech in the Phaedrus or of Diotima's speech in the Symposium. Perhaps Plato in the Ion wrote better than he knew, and in the beautiful language of the monologue is revealing an unconscious awareness that inspiration is much more than he has said it to be, that poetic inspiration is akin to the inspiration of the philosopher and has in it a great potential for good. In the Symposium, Plato will formulate a theory of inspiration which is new and entirely his own, but which has affinities to the theory presented in this early dialogue. In the new mode of inspiration, the divine again touches the human (cf. Symp. 212a), the divine is again the

\(^{96}\) Ibid., 26.

\(^{97}\) Ibid., 27.

\(^{98}\) Ibid., 28.
source of beautiful words (cf. Symp. 212d). Again the divine is experienced non-rationally and intuitively: after an arduous course of dialectic the divine vision is revealed to intuition "suddenly" (Symp. 212e4). The theory of inspiration introduced in the Ion is an adumbration of higher things to come. The exalted language in which inspiration is described is an indication of the exalted role in store for it: the inspiration of the poet will be subsumed in the inspiration of the philosopher.

4. Inspiration and Imitation

While the theory of inspiration is the predominant one in the Ion, there are indications throughout the dialogue that Plato may have had in mind, even at this early period, a theory of poetry as imitation. Kenneth Dorter claims that the conception of art as imitation, though not explicit, is "clearly implicit," and that we find in the third section (536e-54e) of the Ion, "the famous view of the artist as imitator, culminating in Socrates' likening of Ion to "Proteus taking every shape" (541e7)." Dorter is, it would seem, correct in his perception that there is in the Ion a kind of proto-mimesis. Although the word mimēsis and its cognates are never used, the concept of art as imitation can be shown to be present in an early form.

99 This affinity between poetic and philosophic inspiration is noted by Maguire 397: "The uninspired versifier is nothing beside the inspired poet (Phaedrus 245A; Ion 533E, 534B). Even from the cognitive point of view, irrational insights are better than no insights at all. More than that, indeed, a similar irrational intuition is the ultimate mode of philosophy itself."

100 Dorter 71.

101 Ibid., 69.
throughout the dialogue. The figure of the rhapsode Ion has been introduced, as we have seen, with the purpose of "making us see the poet through the rhapsode." He is a representative of the whole poetic tribe. We shall see that many of the things which characterize Ion and the poetry he recites are those very things which in the Republic are said to be characteristic of the imitative poet and his poetry. Ion is an imitator and the poetry he recites imitative in all but name.

Ion is characterized, first of all, by an inability to comprehend the general or the universal. The knowledge he claims is knowledge of particulars: no one has as many fine thoughts (530d3) about Homer as he. His mind is incapable of moving from the particular to the general: he has no inkling what it means to understand the thought (530b10) of Homer. His inability to speak of other poets is further evidence of his inability to grasp the universal: he has no understanding of the art of poetry as a whole (532c9). When we come to the Republic, we find that this inability to comprehend the universal is characteristic of the imitative poet. Those who, like Ion, can grasp a part but not the whole, who see assorted "images" but not universal truth, are labelled "imitators": "all the poetic tribe, beginning with Homer, are imitators of images of excellence and of everything else they write about, and do not lay hold on truth" (600e). The art that does not apprehend universal truth but only lays hold of parts of particular things is termed "imitative" or "mimetic": "imitative art ( ), then, is far removed from the truth, and that is why, it seems, it can make everything, because it

102 Friedlander, Plato II, 133.
Ion is characterized, secondly, by his existence and function at several removes from the divine source of his art: first there is the god or Muse, then the poets, the hermēnēs (534e4) of the gods, and finally the rhapsode Ion who is only one of the ἐρυμνέων ἐρυμνίς (535a9). In the Republic we find a similar hierarchical structure: first there is the god, then the craftsman, and finally the artist (597b). All those who perform their artistic function at several removes from the divine source are, in the Republic, called "imitators".

"Very good," said I; "the producer of the products three removed from nature you call the imitator (ἐμίτητος ἀνθρώπος)?"
"By all means," he said.
"This, then, will apply to the maker of tragedies also, if he is an imitator and is in his nature three removes from the king and the truth, as are all other imitators." (597e trans., Shorey)

Ion, like the tragedian he represents, functions at several removes "from the king and truth" and is equally an imitator.

We have seen that the poetry which Ion recites is characterized by its emotive quality: it evokes a strong emotional response first in the rhapsode (his eyes are filled with tears, his hair stands on end, his heart pounds, 535c), and then in the audience (they weep, look on in terror, and are filled with amazement, 535c). Poetry which evokes such a response in the rhapsode, poetry which causes him to identify with the plight of another, is in the Republic termed "imitative";
imitative poetry imitates (μιμητική) men acting voluntarily or under compulsion, and believing that as a result of these actions they have fared well or ill, also suffering or rejoicing in all this. (603b, trans., Grube)

Poetry which evokes such a response on the part of the audience is said to be the work of the "imitative poet" (μιμητικός μοινής, 605b). The element in poetry that evokes a strong emotional response, the element which makes a given passage of poetry at once the most poetic and the most dangerous, is now found to be the element of imitation. It is when we in the audience hear one of the tragic poets "imitating one of the heroes sorrowing and stretching out a long speech of lamentation" that we in turn "imitate" or identify with that hero and his emotions, "feel pleasure, surrender ourselves, share his feelings, and earnestly praise as a good poet the one who affects us most in this way" (605d). The element of imitation is present in those emotive passages of poetry described in the Ion; in the Republic this element is defined and given a name.

Ion is further characterized by a pretension to knowledge when in fact he has none. Ion claims that he can speak well about all (536c2) of Homer, and that there is no part about which he does not speak well (536c3); Socrates demonstrates that Ion has no knowledge of the various technai described in Homer, and that Ion is therefore ill-equipped to speak knowledgeably on those subjects. Ion claims that all passages relate to the rhapsode's art (539e6); Socrates forces him to the reluctant admission that "the art of the rhapsode will not know everything" (540a5), that it has no knowledge of the other technai (540b1). In the Republic, the art which
attempts to represent all crafts while having knowledge of none is defined as "imitative" (598b): it is the mimetic artist who "will make a picture of a cobbler, of a carpenter, of other craftsmen, though he knows nothing of these crafts" (598c). The man who, like Ion, claims that he "knows all the crafts and everything else that anybody knows" is said to be a mere "imitator" (598d).

Another, somewhat peculiar, characteristic of Ion is noted by Socrates: while Ion is, or claims to be, the best general as well as the best rhapsode in all of Greece, he goes about as a rhapsode (514b8) rather than giving the Greeks the benefit of his expertise as a general. In the Republic, we find that Homer, like Hesiod, went about as a rhapsode rather than benefitting men by his knowledge and helping them to achieve excellence (600d). There can be only one explanation for this peculiar behaviour: Homer possesses no real knowledge but merely the art of imitation (600c). He has no knowledge of the subjects about which he speaks - wars, generalship, the government of cities, men's education - but is merely an imitator (599d). The peculiar life-style of any rhapsode, whether Homer, Hesiod, or Ion, is evidence that he has no real knowledge of the technai or of human affairs but merely imitates the language of the experts in various fields: "if he truly had knowledge of the things he imitates, he would much rather devote himself to actions than to the imitation of them" (599b).

It is in his characterization of Ion as a "Proteus assuming every shape" (Προτεύς προτοδιτός γίγνη, 514e7) that Plato comes closest to identifying Ion as an imitator. Ion-Proteus exhibits many
of the characteristics of the imitative artist. Turning himself every which way, Ion-Proteus assumes every kind of shape. In doing so, he resembles the imitator who, taking a mirror and carrying it around everywhere

is able to make not only all kinds of furniture but also all plants that grow from the earth, all animals including himself, and besides, the earth and the heavens and the gods, all things in heaven and all things in Hades below the earth. (596c trans., Grube)

Proteus is a master of illusionism, a producer of appearances that deceive. In this he resembles the scene-painter, an imitative artist whose art is little short of witchcraft (602d), and whose product creates confusion in our souls (602c). Proteus is a wizard-magician, an illusionist, a creator of phantoms. In the Republic, one displaying these characteristics is defined or identified as an imitator. Homer is said to be a creator of phantoms, and as such is defined as an imitator (599d). The poet is said to be able to assume every kind of shape and to imitate all things (398a): illusionism is identified as imitation. A man who seems to know all the crafts can only be some magician and imitator (598d): the magician is identified as an imitator. Plato in likening Ion to Proteus has likened him to one who displays the characteristics of the imitator.

Plato has, throughout the dialogue, ascribed to Ion many of the characteristics of the imitative poet. It is evident that Plato has, even at the time of this early dialogue, conceived the notion of the poet as imitator and of his poetry as imitation. The concept is, as we have demonstrated, implicit in the Ion; in the Republic the concept will be given a name. The theory of poetry as imitation, like the theory of poetry as the
product of inspiration, is merely introduced to us in the Ion and will be developed more fully in later dialogues. The fact that the two theories of poetry exist side by side in this early dialogue suggests that the two are in some way compatible. To determine whether this is so, we must look to Plato's later works.
CHAPTER II:

THE SYMPOSIUM: PHILOSOPHIC INSPIRATION

From the point of view of literary theory the Symposium may be regarded as a reprise of the Ion. Important themes are repeated, but with significant variations. In this dialogue, Socrates once again confronts a poet, and once again reveals the poet's inadequacy in respect to wisdom and knowledge. Plato also once again puts forward a theory of inspiration, but inspiration takes on new and higher meaning. Our discussion of the Symposium will fall into two parts. Part 1 will deal principally with Socrates' confrontation with the poet Agathon; Part 2 will consider Plato's new theory of philosophic inspiration.

The theme of a contest\(^1\) between Socrates and Agathon runs throughout the Symposium, recurring at intervals from beginning to end. The theme is introduced as the stage for the dramatic dialogue is being set. The contest carries on throughout the conversational interludes, culminates in the speeches of the two competitors, and resolves itself finally in the closing moments of the dialogue. We shall trace this theme of a contest through its various stages. In the preliminary portion of the dialogue (174a-175a), Plato sets Agathon and Socrates side by side and invites his readers to compare the two, first in respect to beauty, second in respect to wisdom.

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\(^1\) The suggestion that one of the themes of the Symposium is the agon between philosopher and poet has been made by many commentators, e.g. Bury xix-xx; Clay 189-191; Bacon 422-427.
In the conversational interlude prior to Agathon's speech (193d-194e), Plato makes it clear that the contest for *sophia* is a contest between poet and dialectician, between poetry and dialectic. The contest continues through Agathon's speech (194e-197e) and his ensuing conversation with Socrates (197e-201c). Agathon's speech reveals the inadequacy of his conception of *sophia*; the ensuing conversation, reveals the inadequacy of his conception of beauty. The contest reaches its climax in a speech of Socrates (201d-212c) which demonstrates clearly his superiority in respect to *sophia*. The prize is twice awarded to Socrates, the man judged to be the most beautiful and the most wise (212d-213e; cf. 223b-d).

The contest is won by the man who is inspired in the highest and truest sense. From Part 1 of our discussion of the *Symposium* there will emerge the suggestion that the philosopher, like the poet, experiences a kind of inspiration. Part 2 will deal with some specific aspects of philosophic inspiration. We shall demonstrate that philosophic inspiration involves an upward movement to the vision of divine Beauty: the philosopher makes an upward movement to the vision of divine Beauty: the philosopher makes an

Throughout our discussion of the *Symposium* we shall treat the speech of Diotima as being, to all intents and purposes, a speech of Socrates (cf. Taylor, *PMW*, 225), a vehicle for the conveyance of Socrates' own thoughts (cf. Bury xxxix). We shall adopt the view that Diotima is an actor's mask, a thinly veiled disguise for Socrates himself, that Diotima is, as Friedlander suggests, "the highest embodiment of the more or less vague 'somebody' whom he frequently posits in debate as another person in order to conceal himself ironically" (*Plato* I, 148): Diotima is, in other words, a visible and physical, rather than a merely verbal, expression of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge. Plato by putting the speech of Socrates into the mouth of Diotima accomplishes several purposes: "by a masterstroke of delicate courtesy he avoids making his host look foolish" (Cornford 122); he maintains his accustomed profession of ignorance (cf. Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. I (hereafter *Dialogues* I, 527); he turns his speech into dialectic and makes it an object lesson in what is, to his mind, the one effective method of teaching (cf. Taylor, *PMW*, 224; Bury xxxviii).
ascent which results at various stages in the creation of beautiful \textit{logoi} and culminates in the engendering of true \textit{aretē}. A combined force is operative in the ascent, the power of \textit{Eros} blended with reason. The presence and function of reason at all stages of the philosophic-creative process causes this process to differ significantly from the poetic process of the \textit{Ion}.

We shall point out several ways in which the philosophic-poetic process of the \textit{Symposium} differs from the poetic process of the \textit{Ion}: the poet is assigned a new and exalted role; "possession" and "enthusiasm" take on new meaning; the process purified of its dangerous element yields a product purified of its dangerous element. We shall point out further that the new process demands expression in a new form, the form of the dialogue. The inspired philosopher attempts, either by the spoken word or the written dialogue, to lead others on the upward path of dialectic. His inspired \textit{logoi} do not always have their desired effect. We shall conclude our discussion of the \textit{Symposium} with a study of Alcibiades, the man who has the potential to make the ascent, but who having eyes refuses to see and having ears refuses to hear.

1. The Literary \textit{Agōn}: a Contest between Poet and Philosopher

It would be very nice, Agathon, if wisdom were like water, and flowed by contact out of a person who has more into one who has less, just as water can be made to pass through a thread of wool out of the fuller of two cups into the emptier. (175d3-7, trans., Hamilton)
This "playful analogy" made by Socrates in light-hearted conversation with Agathon suggests one of the important and serious themes of Plato's Symposium. "It would be nice," says Socrates to Agathon, if wisdom really could be transmitted the way you poets believe it is transmitted. It would be nice if by absorbing the sweet sounds that flow from the lips of the Muses (cf. Hesiod, Th. 39) and the gracious words that flow from the lips of Muse-honoured men (cf. Hesiod, Th. 84; Homer, Il. 1.249) we could become wiser. It would be nice if we could drink of the words of the poets as of nectar from a spring (cf. Pindar, Fr. 106.41-42) and ingest wisdom from those words. It would be nice, but the truth of the matter is that wisdom cannot effectively be transmitted in this way. Neither wisdom nor knowledge can, in Plato's view, be poured into another man as into an empty vessel. Sight cannot be put into blind eyes (Rep. 518b). Wisdom and knowledge cannot be acquired passively, but can be gained only through the active participation of two or more individuals, only through the rigorous discipline of dialectic. The poet is mistaken in his views on the transmission of wisdom and knowledge. More fundamentally, he is mistaken in his belief that he has any real wisdom or knowledge to transmit. In the Ion and other early dialogues Plato has, through the mouth of Socrates, challenged the poets' claims to sophia, technē and epistēmē and challenged their position as educators of Greece. In the Symposium he will once again, through the mouth of Socrates, challenge the claims of the poets, and will move beyond this to establish the supremacy of the philosopher in the field.

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3 Friedlander, Plato III, 8.
The superiority of philosopher to poet, of philosophy to poetry, will be demonstrated in the lengthy speech of Socrates-Diotima on the nature of Erōs. The inferiority of poet and poetry will be demonstrated in Socrates’ dialogue with the poet Agathon, a dialogue which proceeds at intervals throughout the Symposium, and which may, from first to last, be regarded as a contest between poet and philosopher in respect to sophia.

The contest is officially announced by Agathon: διδακτισία Ἐγὼ τε καὶ σὺ πέρι τῆς σοφίας, δικαστὴν ἔχωμενοι τῷ Διονύσῳ (175e8,9). In this brief notice Agathon gives much pertinent information: the type of contest, the identity of the rival parties, the subject of the dispute, and the name of the judge. The contest is a διδακτισία, a "suit to decide between claimants" (LSJ), the claimants are Agathon and Socrates, the subject of their claim is sophia and the δικαστής is Dionysus. The judgment will be given ὀλίγον ὑπέρτερον. The contest in regard to sophia runs like a thread throughout the Symposium, providing one of its unifying themes. A final decision will not be reached until the closing moments of the dialogues but a preliminary skirmish takes place even before the contest is announced. In this preliminary action, Plato pits the popular young poet against the seasoned philosopher. Placing Agathon and Socrates side by side, he invites the reader to make comparisons.

Plato first invites the reader to compare the two contestants.
not in regard to wisdom, but in regard to beauty, a closely-related concept. Plato introduces Socrates to us with a description designed to alert our attention: Socrates has had a good bath and is wearing slippers (\(\text{λειωμένον} \ \text{kai} \ \text{πλαύτας} \ \text{υποδεμένον} \), 174a3-4). We are surprised, as Plato intends us to be, at Socrates' fine appearance. His reputation for going unbathed and unshod is proverbial. Aristophanes had poked fun at him for being \(\text{πλαύτος} \) (Birds 1554 and Clouds 103). Aristodemus considers Socrates' habit of going barefoot to be so characteristic of his master as to be worthy of imitation: he too, Plato tells us, is \(\text{πλαύτος} \) (173b2). Plato does not want us to miss the point; he takes great care to emphasize the fact that Socrates' appearance is most unusual. He states plainly that Socrates seldom appears in this fashion (174a4), and he has Aristodemus express surprise that Socrates has, contrary to his accustomed mode, become so beautiful (174a5). Three carefully chosen words further emphasize the unusual nature of Socrates' appearance. Socrates has not merely washed himself (\(\text{πιοιδαμένον} \) as he is accustomed to do \(\text{πιοιδαμένον} \), 223d11); he has "had a good bath (\(\text{λουσάμεν} \) ) followed by oiling and preening"\(^5\) (\(\text{λειωμένον} \), 174a2). To describe Socrates' footwear, Plato chooses not the common word \(\text{υποδήματα} \), but the rather rare word \(\text{πλαύτας} \). The word is unusual and the type of footwear is a most unusual one to be worn by Socrates: the intermediate Liddell and Scott defines \(\text{πλαύτη} \) as "a kind of slipper worn by fops." Plato's choice of the word \(\text{καλλωπισμόν} \)

\(^4\) These concepts are joined at 204b: "wisdom is one of the most beautiful things and Love is love of beauty, so if follows that Love must be a lover of wisdom."

\(^5\) Dover 81.
also strikes us as somewhat strange. \( \kappa \alpha \lambda \lambda \omega \nu \pi \iota \varepsilon \nu \) in its primary sense means "to beautify the face" (LSJ); in the middle voice it means "to adorn oneself," to give oneself a fair appearance. Elsewhere in Plato, as Bury points out, it means "to plume oneself," "swagger"\(^6\) (e.g. Rep. 605d). The three words \( \lambda \epsilon \lambda \omicron \omicron \mu \epsilon \omicron \nu \), \( \beta \lambda \omicron \omicron \tau \epsilon \varsigma \), and \( \varepsilon \kappa \alpha \lambda \lambda \omega \nu \pi \iota \varepsilon \nu \) combine to give us a most unusual picture of Socrates: Socrates bathed, anointed and preened; Socrates wearing foppish slippers; Socrates pluming himself on his outward appearance. The reader wonders: why this excessive concern with outward adornment? why this foppish appearance? Plato no sooner raises this question in the mind of the reader than he puts the answer into the mouth of Socrates: \( \varepsilon \iota \varepsilon \kappa \alpha \lambda \kappa \lambda \omega \sigma \tau \rho \eta \kappa \lambda \lambda \nu \iota \nu \) (174a9). Plato's purpose suddenly becomes clear: he intends to characterize not Socrates, but Agathon. Socrates' concern with outward appearance, with external beauty, has been assumed in order to put himself on a level with Agathon who is habitually concerned with outward appearance, whose beauty is merely external. With one short phrase, \( \varepsilon \iota \varepsilon \kappa \alpha \lambda \kappa \lambda \omega \sigma \tau \rho \eta \kappa \lambda \lambda \nu \iota \nu \) Plato has transferred to Agathon the wonder the reader instinctively feels at Socrates' foppish appearance.

Plato goes on to invite comparisons between the two men in respect to goodness (174b-c). A proverb says that good men (\( \lambda \gamma \alpha \theta \omicron \omicron \iota \)) go to the feasts of good men (\( \lambda \gamma \alpha \theta \omicron \nu \)), yet Homer has made a lesser man go to the feast of a better. In the present case Socrates is going to the feast of \( \lambda \gamma \alpha \theta \omicron \nu \). Which man, Plato invites us to ask, is truly \( \lambda \gamma \alpha \theta \omicron \iota \)? One contest will decide two closely related issues:

\(^6\) Bury 7.
the literary agon will reveal the man ἀλὸς ἐγοθός.

Plato has, through his humorous portrait of an unaccustomedly dandified Socrates, reminded the reader of Socrates' customary lack of concern for external appearance. He will now go on to show where Socrates' true interests lie; he will demonstrate that Socrates' concern is for the inner, not the outer, man. Plato accomplishes this purpose by giving a description of one of Socrates' celebrated trances, a description that will be corroborated later in the dialogue (220cd) by Alcibiades' account of a similar, but even more dramatic, incident. Socrates has, in his usual fashion, been walking along the road conversing, when suddenly he turned his thoughts inward and fell behind (174d4-5). No amount of persuasion could arouse Socrates from his trance-like state; he was deaf to all entreaties (175a9). Plato is careful to emphasize two facts about this trance of Socrates. First, it represents a complete withdrawal from the ordinary world. Socrates' attention is completely fixed upon his own thoughts (ἐξουσία πρὸς ἑαυτῷ τὸν ναόν, 174d5); he has withdrawn (ἀναλυσθῆς , 175a8) from the world not only in physical posture and attitude, but mentally and spiritually as well; he keeps himself aloof (ἀποστασίς , 175b2) from the things of time and sense. Second, Socrates' trances occur very frequently: they are a habit with him (ἡ ὦς ὑπὸ τὸν τοῦτον ἔχει , 75b1-2); they occur from time to time (ἐκιότατε , 175b2); he is accustomed (ὡς ἐκίότατε , 175c5) to spending time in this way. Plato wishes to make it abundantly clear that Socrates' attention is habitually focused not on external appearance but on unseen reality. The beauty which
is of interest to Socrates cannot be found in the phenomenal world. Socrates is the beholder and possessor of a beauty which Agathon, "the embodiment of external \( \kappa\alpha\lambda\omicron\sigma\)" does not know.

The stage has been set for the contest between Socrates and Agathon concerning sophia. Socrates, bathed, anointed, and fashionably shod, has, by his appearance, challenged Agathon in respect to beauty. Dripping with unguent and irony, he has become kalos, a match for the kalos Agathon. There is a great deal of both humour and irony in Plato's portrayal of Socrates the fashionable fop, and, as always, there is a serious purpose concealed beneath the irony. Plato has stimulated the reader's critical faculties, goading us into making comparisons between Socrates and Agathon in regard to beauty. He has set up a dialogue in the minds of his readers, forcing us to ask (and attempt to answer) such questions as: who is truly kalos? in what does true beauty consist? He has made us see that Socrates possesses true beauty, while Agathon's beauty is of an external and superficial kind.

Having carefully drawn this background, Plato brings us to the contest over wisdom. Agathon has gained a reputation for sophia. He has entered his first tragedy in a contest, and for his poetic sophia has won first prize (173a). Aristodemus has expressed concern about going to Agathon's party, an ordinary man going to the feast of one who is sophos (174c7). When Socrates, after his trance, finally arrives at Agathon's victory celebration, the celebration of the tragic poet's sophia, Agathon greets him

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7 Bury xxxiv.
Come, Socrates, recline beside me, so that, by touching you, I may have the benefit of the wisdom (τὸ ἀδόκου) which came to you in the porch. It is obvious that you found it and have it in your possession; you wouldn't have desisted till you had. (175cd, my translation)

Immediately the reader asks the questions Plato has taught him to ask: who is truly sophos?; in what does true sophia consist?; is Agathon's wisdom, like his beauty, perhaps of an external and superficial kind?; has Socrates perhaps come to possess a wisdom more deep and more real than any Agathon will ever know? While the reader is carrying on this dialogue with himself, Socrates launches into a flowery reply to Agathon's greeting. The irony of Socrates' appearance is now matched by the irony of his words. Socrates first remarks how nice it would be if wisdom could flow like water from the fuller to the emptier vessel, and he could be filled with Agathon's plenteous and beautiful wisdom (175e2). He goes on to say:

Such wisdom as I possess is slight and has little more reality than a dream, but yours is brilliant and may shine brighter yet; you are still quite young, and look at the dazzling way it flashed out the day before yesterday before an audience of more than thirty thousand Greeks. (175e, trans., Hamilton)

Again the reader is aware that the irony conceals a serious purpose, and again he begins a dialogue with himself: who is the fuller and who the emptier vessel?; whose wisdom is of a poor sort, illusionary, doubtful and like a dream?; is Agathon's wisdom, like Agathon himself, beautiful and bright in appearance only?; has a bright flash, a momentary and merely
external manifestation of wisdom deceived an ignorant multitude? Agathon misses much of the import of Socrates' reply, but misses none of the irony. "You are an insolent mocker ( ὑποκρίτης ἢ ), Socrates," he says, and the fight is on. It is only now that he announces the contest that will carry on till the end of the Symposium: διδακτομέθα εὖ τε καὶ οὖ περὶ τῆς σοφίας, δικαστὴν χρώμενος τῷ Διονύσῳ, 175e8,9). But the contest has been prejudged in the mind of the reader. Plato has tilted the scales heavily in favour of Socrates, and the final decision will come as no surprise.

Plato's reader may by now be experiencing a feeling of déjà vu; we feel that we have once before attended a very similar contest. There are, in fact, many striking similarities between Socrates' contest with the poet Agathon and his confrontation with the rhapsode Ion. Like Agathon, Ion had just won first prize for his poetic skill: we and Socrates meet Ion returning from an agón of rhapsodes at Epidauros where he has won τὰ πρῶτα τῶν ἄθλων (530b1). Like Agathon's, Ion's had been a dazzling victory: decked out in splendid clothing and a golden crown, Ion had mesmerized more than twenty thousand spectators with his brilliant performance (535d). Socrates' opening move in the contest with Agathon has been to adorn himself and make himself appear as kalos as Agathon; by both his ironic appearance and ironic remarks, Socrates has suggested that Agathon may be kalos and sophos in only the most superficial sense. Socrates' opening gambit in the contest with Ion had been the ironic remark that it is fitting to Ion's technē to adorn his body (530b6) and to appear as beautiful as possible (530b7); by this ironic remark Socrates had suggested
that Ion's *technē* is concerned only with external appearance and may be no true *technē* at all. As Socrates has ironically expressed admiration for Agathon's *sophia*, so he had ironically professed envy for Ion's *technē* (530b5-6). The reader has by now come to suspect that as the opening moves in the two contests are very similar, so will the outcomes be very similar. Ion had been concerned with adorning his body (*τὸ σώματι κεκοσμημένοι* 530b6) and with embellishing Homer (*ὡς ἐν κεκόσμηκα τὸν Ὀμηρον*, 530d7); he had proven incapable of comprehending the thought of Homer (530c1) and had thus shown himself to be lacking in any real *technē*. Agathon has been portrayed as excessively concerned with bodily adornment. We suspect that he too may be concerned with poetic embellishment, that he too may prove incapable of any deep understanding, and that even his technical *sophia* may be of a superficial and illusory kind. The two contests seem to be running along parallel lines.

The contest proceeds in the conversational interlude following the speech of Aristophanes (193d-194e). It now becomes clear that Plato has carefully planned every detail of the drama, that nothing has been left to chance. We discover now why Agathon just "happened" to be reclining in the last place alone (175e6) and why Socrates was assigned the place beside him. Plato, by this apparently fortuitous seating arrangement, has ensured that the speeches of the two principal contenders will follow one upon the other. Plato emphasizes the fact that the two contestants have been deliberately paired. He has Aristophanes express a desire to hear the remaining speakers:
The remark is apparently artless, but in fact skilfully contrived by Plato to throw emphasis on the word ἐκλέγεται and on the fact that only two, Agathon and Socrates are left. Plato has Eryximachus comment on the expertise of Socrates and Agathon in matters of love: ὑπεράνει ζευγαρίζει τε καὶ Ἀγαθῶν δεινοῖς οὕσι περί τι ἔρωτικά (193e5). Again the remark is carefully contrived: Plato brings together the names of the two protagonists, inviting the reader to compare the two and to decide which one is truly deinos. If the reader has any doubts, Plato will later dispel them. Through Socrates’ ironic remarks he informs us that Agathon is deinos in regard to method, Socrates in regard to matter: Agathon is deinos at speaking (δεινὸς λέγειν, 198c4); Socrates is deinos in the subject of love (δεινὸς τῷ ἔρωτικῷ, 198d1-2).

Plato by his choice of language indicates that both contenders are well aware that they are taking part in a competition and that they are pitted against one another. Socrates in complimenting Eryximachus on his fine performance uses the verb διώνυσομαι, implying that all the speakers are taking part in a literary agon: καλῶς γὰρ αὐτὸς ἤνωνυσει (194a1). He suggests ironically that Agathon will be his most formidable opponent: when Agathon has given his fine speech (ἐπεί δὲ καὶ Ἀγαθῶν εἰπή εὖ, 194a3) Socrates will be in a state of panic and at his wit’s end. Agathon uses the word Θεσπρον, 194a6)
to describe the small company of banqueters who make up his audience. Despite his protestations to the contrary, Agathon is indeed *θείτρον μεστός* (194b7), puffed up with his recent triumph in the theatre, and views his fellow-banqueters as another audience before whom he is able to display (*ἐπιδείξεως θείς*, 194b3) his literary brilliance. He looks upon Socrates as his most formidable opponent, one who has the power to bewitch him (*φαρμάκην*, 194a5) and throw him into confusion (194a6). Each of the main contenders has, whether seriously or ironically, suggested that the other is a master poet, that the other has the power of the good tragic poet to cast a spell and to provoke a state of confusion and fear. This suggestion, at this point in the dialogue, merely serves to pit one opponent against the other; later the idea will be developed more fully, as Plato encourages the reader to explore the relationship between the spell cast by the tragic poet and the dialectical spell cast by Socrates.

Plato now introduces an interesting fact about Agathon. Although he possesses the power to arouse the emotions of his audience, Agathon experiences none of these emotions himself: when he exhibits his *logoi* in the theatre he is not dismayed in any way whatever (194b4) nor thrown into confusion (194b5). Agathon is every inch the cool professional, practised in the techniques of audience manipulation, skilled in calculating the effect of his words upon his audience. In psychological detachment and emotional aloofness he surpasses even Ion who, despite his eye on the box-office, does exhibit a degree of emotional involvement:8 his hair stands on

8 While Ion’s calculating eye on the box-office would seem to indicate a lack of emotional involvement and an absence of true inspiration, some commentators have questioned this view, e.g. Dorter 72: "How can Ion be,
end, his heart pounds, and his soul is transported to the scene he is portraying (Ion 535c). Agathon, in contrast, does not exhibit the least sign of emotion. It is not for nothing that Plato has given us this detail about Agathon. He is carefully setting the stage for the main event, the speeches of Agathon and Socrates, where Agathon's coolness will contrast sharply with "the clear white-hot glow of a man whose very passion is intellectual." Plato is leading us to expect what we shall actually find in the speech of Agathon: professionally turned words and phrases covering a lack of fervour and a lack of substance.

Plato now reminds us once again that the contest is in regard to sophia. Again he invites us to ask: who are the wise and who the unwise? Agathon first draws a contrast between the few who are intelligent and the many who are fools: οὐχίγιοι έμφρονες πολλῶν ἐμφρόνων φοβερώτεροι (194b8). Socrates takes up the subject, suggesting with his usual ironic self-deprecation that "we may not be the wise, for we

as he said only ten lines earlier, transported into another world - the mythical world of Ithaca and Troy - and yet be so intensely and calculatingly aware of this one? It does not mean that Ion is a fraud or a hypocrite, insincere in his earlier claim to ecstatic transport, for it is a fact that performing artists must be as closely in touch with their audience as with their source material: their function is to mediate between the artist and the audience, and this cannot be consummately done without their being intensely aware of and sensitive to the audience." Cf. Henning 246: "There is no inconsistency ... between Ion's emotional identification with the text and his professional awareness of audience response ... Most readers can recognize that reciprocity of response between performer and audience is significant: it can be an immediate stimulus to an "inspired" performance, or its absence can be depressing. But to many, the notion that Ion can think of audience response in terms of financial reward seems rather out of place. This apparently vulgar or childish interest in winning monetary prizes is actually a profound meaningful indication of what it is to be a professional."

9 Taylor, PMW, 221.
were present in the theatre and were of the many" (194c4-5). Between the statements of Agathon and Socrates about the wise and the foolish, Socrates draws a contrast between Agathon and himself: οὐ μεντών καλὼς ποιοῖν... περὶ σοῦ τι ἐγώ ἄγροικον ἴδοξήν (194c2). With this statement, Plato focuses our attention on two particular men and on the contrasts between them. He causes us to ask: which of these two men is ἄγροικος, Socrates the barefoot philosopher or Agathon with all his outward appearance of urbanity?; which of the two is kalos? Our earlier question as to who are the wise and who the unwise is particularized. We now ask: which of these two men is sophos? The question is about to be decided by the speeches of the two men. Just before this decisive event, Plato reminds us once more that the contest over sophia is to be fought by a man who is a poet and by a man who doesn't care "if any of our purposes be realized in any way, so long as he can find anyone ( ὅπως... ὅπως... ὅπως, 194d3) with whom to converse", a man who is first and foremost a dialectician and whose burning passion is for dialectic.

The speech of Agathon and the ensuing dialogue with Socrates demonstrate clearly where Agathon stands in relation to sophia. Agathon, like the other encomiasts creates a god in his own image. Agathon's Erós is, like Agathon himself, young,10 soft,11 beautiful,12 and sophos.13

10 νεώταιτον... ηλικίαν νέον(195c1); σοῦ νέον ὀντός (175c6); νεώτατον(198a2).
11 ἀσωλός, (195c7); cf. Aristophanes' jibe: οὐ οὐ, εὐπρόσωπος λευκός, ἐξουσίων, ἰματικόφως, σεπιλός, εὐτρεπής ἰδέαν (Thesm. 191-2).
Agathon's purpose is to praise Ἐρῶς (195a4), and each of the foregoing epithets, to his mind, constitutes the highest praise. It is instructive to note the sense in which Agathon applies to Ἐρῶς the epithet sophos. Ἐρῶς is, according to Agathon, a sophos poet (ποιήσεις ὦ Θεὸς σοφὸς, 196e1): he is sophos in the sense that he possesses poetic skill. We expect that the epithet sophos when applied to Agathon will again connote poetic skill. True to our expectation, Agathon reveals that he conceives of the terms sophos and sophia primarily in a technical sense; his conception of sophos and sophia do not rise above the technical level. His statement that he has still to talk about sophia (περὶ δὲ σοφίας λέητευξιν, 196d5) leads directly to the statement that he is about to pay honour to his technē (τὴν ἔμετέραν τέχνην τιμῆσω 196d7): for Agathon, sophia and technē are synonous terms. The highest praise that Agathon can render to Ἐρῶς in respect to sophia, is to say that he is a sophos poet, that he possesses poetic technē. Agathon can conceive of no higher kind of sophia, either for Ἐρῶς or for himself.

Agathon's speech as a whole reveals an overriding concern for poetic technique, the only kind of sophia he knows. It is a showcase of poetic and rhetorical devices, many of which as Bury points out, give "evidence of the influence of the school of Gorgias." 14 Agathon's speech,

12 Κάλλιστος (197c2); cf. Καλὸν, 174a9).

13 ὦ Θεὸς σοφὸς (196e1); cf. σοφὸν ἡγήσον (174c6).

14 Bury xxxv. Bury enumerates some of these devices: short parallel kola with homoeoteleuton, e.g. ἔγινε δὲ ὁ Ἡθήμορος,

ποιῶν μὲν εἰπὲνιν/ ὡς χρῆ μὲ εἰπὲνιν/ ἐπέπειθε ἐπείν (194e); homoeoteleuton and assonance, e.g. πᾶντων Θεῶν εὐλογόμων

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rich in poetic devices, is impoverished in substance. It is not "full of content," but "full of sound,"\textsuperscript{15} sound which signifies nothing. The stylised aridity of Agathon and his poetry is well described by A.E. Taylor, who characterizes Agathon as "morally commonplace, cold in feeling, superficial in thought" and his poetry as "a succession of frozen conceits with no real thought behind them."\textsuperscript{16}

The superficiality and artificiality of Agathon's encomium will become even more glaring when his speech is matched against that of Socrates. Socrates' speech will prove to be full of content, characterized by a \textit{sophia} beyond Agathon's understanding. Socrates will reveal himself to be a philosopher - poet, a \textit{Sophos Poinitis} in a sense of which Agathon knows nothing. Agathon's speech has revealed the inadequacy of his concept of \textit{sophia} and \textit{sophos}. The gulf between the two contestants and their two kinds of \textit{sophia} will progressively widen.

Agathon's speech culminates in a torrent of rhetoric which stirs the \textit{theatron} to resounding applause (\textit{πάντας... ἄνερρηματικός τοὺς παρόντας}, 198a) and wins the ironic acclaim of Socrates. This "Platonic tour de force of parody or emulation of the Georgian style" is brilliantly translated by Paul Shorey:

\begin{quote}
\textit{ούτω}, (195a); assonance and alliteration: \textit{νηφείασ, ούπωσ κοινον ούπωσ ζ' ἐν ἱππολεί} (197c).
\end{quote}

Cf. also Dover 121-122.

\textsuperscript{15} Friedlander, \textit{Plato} III 23.

\textsuperscript{16} Taylor 221.
Love brings

To mortals peace, to wind-vexed ocean calm
And to the tired couch sweet slumber's balm.

He alienates hostility, conciliates civility,
bringing us together in the union of such
communion with one another, in festivals,
dances, and sacrifices, leader and guide.
To mildness impelling, all wildness
expelling, donor of kindness, disowner of
unkindness, gracious to the good, beheld by
the wise, beloved by the gods, desired by
the hapless, acquired by the happy. Of
wantonness, daintiness, luxury, grace,
desire, and longing the sire; regardful of
the good; regardless of the bad; in labor, in
terror, in yearning, in learning, guide,
consorfer, supporter, and saviour best; of
all gods and men the glory; the leader
fairest and rarest whom every man should
follow fairly, fair hymns reciting, wherein
delighting he casts his spell on the minds
of gods and men alike (197c-e).17

Socrates' response to this effusive flow is both humorously ironic and deeply
serious. His remarks serve to accentuate the differences between the two
contenders for sophia. One fact quickly emerges: Socrates' concept of
beauty is radically different from that of Agathon. Socrates remarks that
Agathon has spoken καλὸν ... καὶ παντοδιδῶν λόγον (198b3). The second adjective undercuts and reveals the irony of the first:
this "beautiful" speech is also "motley," "a thing of shreds and patches."18
Socrates' succeeding remarks about the "beauty" of Agathon's speech are
similarly ironic. He professes to be "astounded," driven out of his senses


18 Bury 85.
(ἐξίζησιν, 198b5), at the beauty of Agathon's words and phrases (198b4-5). The word ἐξίζησιν is plainly too strong for the context, and forms a part of Socrates' ironic rejoinder to Agathon's charge of sorcery: ἐφιμοττέτειν θεοὺς με, ὃ ἐξώκρατες (194a5).

Any reader of Plato is well aware that Socrates is not about to be driven out of his senses by anything so empty as the beauty of words and phrases. We know from the Apology that Socrates scorns the superficiality of such "beauty" and refuses himself to stoop to the use of "finely phrased speeches embellished with words and phrases" (Ap. 17c1). There, as in our present passage, he insists on using words just as they occur to him (Ap. 17c3; cf. Symp. 199b). When Socrates a third time compliments Agathon on the beauty of his speech, the irony is very near the surface. Socrates declares that he would never be able to come up with a speech anywhere near as beautiful as Agathon's (198b7-8). Clearly, there is irony here. The beauty of Socrates' speech will not be anything like the beauty of Agathon's, but will far surpass it. The beauty of Socrates' speech will be different in kind, a beauty of content, not of form.

Socrates now makes known, still under cover of irony, the essential difference between his speech and that of Agathon: Socrates will speak the truth. With heavy irony Socrates states that he, in his stupidity, thought that the right thing to do was to tell the truth about the subject of the encomium, and from this beginning choose the most beautiful things and set them out in the most attractive way (198d3-5). In this one statement
Socrates has laid down the principles that should govern every speech. As Bury notes, truth is the first requisite, and the second two - artistic selection and arrangement - are of value only insofar as they are based on truth. Agathon has failed to meet Socrates' first and most important requirement: his speech is not based on truth. It contains no real matter, no substance, no truth; it adorns vacuity of thought with "beautiful" words and phrases. To Socrates such "beauty" is no beauty at all; beauty cannot be separated from truth, cannot exist apart from truth. Socrates, again with heavy irony, drives home his point: he had had great confidence in his ability to speak well because he knew the truth about praising anything (198d7); he has now discovered that the proper method is to ascribe to the subject the greatest and most beautiful qualities, whether it possesses them or not - if they are lies, no matter (198e1-2). This is Socratic irony at its heaviest; the statement is a contradiction of all that Socrates (and Plato) believes.

The distinction Socrates has drawn between falsehood and truth leads him to make a parallel distinction between appearance and reality. The object of the speech-making, says Socrates, has been that each contestant should seem (ἀδέλφει, 198e4) to praise Ἐρῶς, not that he should actually do so; each was to make Ἐρῶς appear (φάλλεται, 199a1) the most beautiful and best of beings. Again the irony is obvious, and again

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19 Bury 87; "In the Socratic theory of rhetoric here stated we have the following order of treatment proposed: 1) τὸ γράφειν Ἀλέξειν, 2) τῶν καλλίστων ἔκλογη, 3) εὐπρεπῆς θέοις. But it is implied that the 2nd and 3rd of these - artistic selection and arrangement - are valueless, except in so far as they are based on the 1st requisite: in other words, matter is more important than form.
an essential difference between the speeches of Socrates and Agathon is revealed. Agathon's speech has put on the appearance of beauty; Socrates' speech will allow the listener to catch a glimpse of the only beauty that is real.

Socrates has contrasted falsehood and truth, appearance and reality; he now draws a contrast between ignorance and knowledge. Appearance deceives only the ignorant, those who do not have knowledge (199a); it cannot deceive those who know (199a2). We have here at least a partial answer to the earlier question: who are the wise? The entire company, with the exception of Socrates, has been deceived by the appearance of beauty in Agathon's speech (πάντως... ἢν τὸν ὑπερθέντας τοὺς πλεονεκτῶς, 198a2); they are all to be numbered among those who do not know. Socrates is the only one who has not been deceived. He alone has recognized that the beauty of Agathon's speech is not essential beauty because it fails to draw on truth. He alone can be numbered among those who know; he is, of all the company, the one man truly wise.

Socrates' response to Agathon's speech begins, as we have seen, with an ironic declaration that the beauty of Agathon's words has cast a spell on him (198a-c) and an ironic disparagement of his own ability: Socrates cannot speak beautifully, as Agathon has, but can only tell the truth (198b-199b). This brief discourse of Socrates quickly breaks up into dialogue; Socrates' irrepressible passion for dialectic, earlier noted by Phaedrus (194d), again breaks through. This time, Socrates is allowed to
proceed unhindered; Phaedrus now makes no attempt to curtail the conversation. The πατήρ τοῦ λόγου (177d5) agrees to Socrates' modest proposal to ask Agathon a few little questions (199b8). Socrates' partner, however, is somewhat reluctant; Agathon is well aware of Socrates' reputation for casting a dialectical spell (cf. φαρμάττειν, 194a5), for benumbing his opponent as a torpedo-fish benumbs his victim (Meno, 80a). At various points in the dialogue, Socrates must, with gentle persuasion, cajole Agathon into answering just a little bit more: "answer a little more" (199e1); "tell me one more little thing" (201c2). Socrates follows up one of these entreaties with the reason for his request: "answer a little more, so that you may better understand/learn (καταμεθένω) what I mean" (199e1). In one brief phrase, ἵνα μελλον καταμεθένω, Socrates gives the rationale for dialectic: it is through dialectic, through the method of question and answer that we learn. Learning does not take place through a torrent of beautiful words; wisdom does not flow from the fuller to the emptier vessel. It is only through dialogue that false pretensions to wisdom or knowledge can be exposed and the journey toward truth undertaken. Socrates' cross-questioning of Agathon is, as Bury suggests, "an object-lesson in method."20 Through testing of the hypotheses underlying Agathon's speech, he exposes the weakness in the poet's thought and prepares the way for his own speech and the ascent to truth. Step by step, and at each step securing the agreement of Agathon, Socrates makes his points: love is love of an object (199cd); love is love of an object we lack (199e-200e); love is love of beauty (201a). Ἐρῶς is not beautiful, but is the desire of the beautiful. Agathon is reduced to silence, forced to admit

20 Bury xxxvii.
that he didn't know what he was talking about (201b11-12). Socrates' rejoinder is a masterpiece of irony that reveals all the shallowness and superficiality of Agathon's "beauty": "and yet you spoke beautifully, Agathon" (καὶ οὐκ ἦν καλὸς ἐλέετο... ὁ Ἀγαθόν (201c1).

This reply is the culmination of a series of remarks in which Plato has played on the ambiguity of the adverb kalōs. Plato has used the word in two slightly different contexts and in two quite distinct senses. When Socrates is ironically praising Agathon's poetry, he four times uses the adverb kalōs: for Agathon, to praise kalōs meant to ascribe to the object of praise the most beautiful and best qualities whether it possessed them or not (198d8); Agathon's encomium was spoken nobly and kalōs (199a2); Agathon began his speech kalōs (199c3); Agathon explained magnificently and kalōs the nature of Eros (199c7). In each of these passages, kalōs is heavily ironic, and in each kalōs means "beautifully." When Socrates is cross-questioning Agathon, he twice uses the word kalōs in reference to Agathon's answer: "... if you wanted to answer kalōs (199c6); "you speak kalos" (200b4). In each of these instances, the word kalōs is spoken sincerely, and in each it quite obviously means "correctly." Plato has here, as in the Ion, used kalōs in the context of poetry to mean "beautifully" and in the context of dialectic to mean "correctly."

The shift of meaning reflects the differing emphases placed on speech by poet and dialectician. Agathon the poet has endeavoured to speak "beautifully"; he showed little concern for factual correctness, little concern
for truth. Socrates the dialectician has been concerned first of all for
correctness and truth, aware, as Agathon is not, that without truth there is
no beauty. At the close of his conversation with Agathon, Socrates once
more uses the word *kalôs* to mean "beautifully”:

```greek
καὶ τὸν Ἀγαθόνα εἶπεῖν κινδυνεύων
ὦ Ἑσύπατε, οὐδὲν εἰδέναι ὅν τότε εἶπον.
καὶ μὲν καλὸς γέ εἶπος, φάνη, ὡς Ἀγαθών.
(201b11-cl).
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Plato has skillfully led up to this conclusion. His use of the word *kalôs* is
now heavily ironic and most revealing. Agathon, by his own admission, did
not know what he was talking about. And yet, says Socrates, he spoke
beautifully. Agathon joins the ranks of the many poets Socrates has
questioned and found wanting in knowledge, the many who "say many
beautiful things but know nothing of what they say" (*Apol.* 22c). Agathon
seems to possess a kind of *sophia*, but it is a *sophia* that is no more than
technical skill. He possesses a *sophia* that enables him to talk "beautifully";
he is utterly lacking in the *sophia* that would enable him to speak the truth.
Socrates is as superior to Agathon as he is to the poets of the *Apology*; it
is Socrates who is the possessor of true wisdom and the man truly *sophos*.

Socrates’ speech\(^{21}\) is the surest evidence that he is *sophos*.

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\(^{21}\) As we indicated earlier (see p.77, n.2), we are treating the speech of
Diotima as a speech of Socrates. There are several indications throughout
the *Symposium* that the teachings of Diotima are to be regarded as Socrates’
own. Socrates indicates that the doctrine professed by Diotima is doctrine
which he himself knows and understands: he claims to understand, though
he understands nothing else, *ta érōtika* (177c7-8); he claims to know the
truth about the *Eros*, the true nature of love (198c7). In method as well as
in matter Socrates’ teaching closely resembles that of Diotima: convinced by
Diotima of the truth of her teaching, he attempts to convince others (212b2-
3); he uses on Agathon the same methods and the same arguments Diotima
the clearest demonstration of his *sophia*. Agathon has spoken in a way that is a credit to his teacher, Gorgias. His speech, "a grandiloquent peroration heaping on *Eros* every laudatory epithet and all the rhetorical *technai,*"\(^{22}\) has won the applause of all. Socrates, too, has a teacher, as we now discover, Diotima of Mantinea. She is wise (*sophē*, 201d3) and a possessor of wisdom (*sophia*, 206b6). Socrates will, like Agathon, present a speech that reflects the influence of his teacher. Agathon's speech has been a display of rhetorical dexterity and technical *sophia*; Socrates' speech will be an expression of true *sophia*, true wisdom. Agathon has exhibited the characteristic of the *Eros* he creates; like his *Eros*, he is the possessor of a *sophia* that is no more than technical skill. Socrates, too, exhibits the traits of his *Eros*; like *Eros*, he is *philosophos* (204b4), a lover of wisdom. Through his love of wisdom and his love of beauty, the philosopher by ascending stages attains to the knowledge of Beauty itself (γνῶ ἀυτὸ τελευτῶν ὡς ἐστὶ καλὸν, 211c8-d1).

\(^{22}\) Guthrie, *History* IV, 374.
Although some have doubted whether Socrates ever reached the highest level, Plato surely means us to understand that Socrates has ascended the heights and has gazed upon absolute Beauty. As we read the Symposium we become more and more convinced that nothing in the dialogue has happened by chance, that every detail down to Aristophanes' hiccup has been carefully planned. It is surely not by chance that Plato has placed at the beginning and end of his dialogue a portrait of Socrates in a state of trance. The first portrait, as we have noted, emphasizes the fact that these trances are habitual with Socrates and the fact that they represent a complete withdrawal from the ordinary world. The second portrait, Alcibiades' account of Socrates' celebrated trance at Potidaea, emphasizes the length and intensity of these experiences: Socrates stands in contemplation, oblivious to the external world, from early morning until sunrise the following day (220cd). It seems obvious that Plato wishes to portray Socrates as the philosopher withdrawn from the temporal world and lost in contemplation of eternal reality.

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23 E.g. Cornford 129: "I adopted the view that Diotima's words to Socrates on the threshold of the greater mysteries, where she doubts if he can follow her further, indicate that Plato is going beyond the historic Socrates."
Markus 134: "I am inclined to agree with the suggestion that if we wish to draw a line between the views of the historic Socrates and the Platonic Socrates, is to be drawn between the 'lesser' and the 'greater' mysteries into which Diotima initiates him in the dialogue." It seems preferable to interpret Diotima's remarks at 210a as yet another instance of Socrates' own customary and ironic disavowal of knowledge. Several commentators have noted correctly the element of irony here, e.g. Bury (124): "Socrates throughout - with his usual irony - depicts himself as a mere tiro in the hands of the Mantinean princess; but he is still, in spite of his mock-modesty, the ideal philosopher of Alcibiades' encomium. As it was a part of his irony that he had already (201e) put himself on the level of Agathon and the rest of the unphilosophic, so the contemptuous here serves to keep up the same ironical fiction ..." Cf. Friedlander, Plato I, 150; Gagarin 36, n. 54.
While some might object that the historical Socrates never taught a doctrine of Forms, it seems clear nevertheless that the Socrates of this dialogue is the philosopher who has attained the ultimate vision of the form of Beauty. Plato emphasizes repeatedly that Socrates possesses true beauty, that he is the embodiment of true kallos. By a multitude of details he reminds us that Socrates is not as he seems to be, not as he says he is. The Socrates of this dialogue is, despite his customary appearance, the man who is truly kalos; Socrates is, despite his persistent denials, the man who is truly sophos. This is the continuing emphasis of the Symposium. The contrast between Socrates inner and outer man is emphasized not only by various details throughout the dialogue, but also by the shape and structure of the Symposium as a whole. At the beginning of the dialogue, Plato shows us Socrates lost in a fit of abstraction, Socrates the cause of some bewilderment and consternation to his host (174e-175c). At the end of the dialogue, Plato again depicts Socrates as he appears to the world, Socrates standing fixed in thought, Socrates an object of curiosity, a peculiar spectacle to the Ionians looking on (220c-d). In the central section of the dialogue, Plato shows us Socrates as he is; Plato in the discourse of Diotima reveals to us the inner life of the soul of Socrates. The entire dialogue is structured as a pyramid, rising in the centre to exalted heights. The discourse of Diotima is the climax of the speeches of the participating symposiasts, a climax followed by the denouement of Alcibiades' speech. Diotima's discourse is also the climax of Plato's portrayal of Socrates:

24 E.g. Vlastos, "Socratic Irony," 87, terms Diotima's dialogue "as strong an affirmation of Plato's un-Socratic doctrine, the theory of transcendent Forms, as is anything he ever wrote."

dialogue moves upward from a description of Socrates' outward appearance while lost in contemplation to a description of his interior vision, the pinnacle of philosophic experience; it falls again to a description of the enraptured Socrates as he appears to others - abstracted and weird. The pyramidal structure of the dialogue would seem not to be an accidental feature, but rather an integral part of Plato's design, a literary device intended to emphasize the degree of difference between the external appearance of Socrates and the inner reality of the Socratic existence.

Socrates has made the ascent; his love of wisdom and beauty has led him ever upward until he has gazed upon the vast ocean of beauty (210d4). It is this vision of beauty which enables him to bring forth "many beautiful and magnificent thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom" (210d5). Strengthened by this experience, he catches sight of the one unique epistēmē which is the epistēmē of beauty (210d7), and finally gazes upon Beauty itself (210e-211b). Socrates has reached the heights to which philosophia can take him, and has become sophos. His vision of beauty enables him to bring forth Καλοὺς λόγον (210d5), words that are truly beautiful because they are an expression and embodiment of true beauty; his attainment of sophia enables him to speak in language that is the embodiment of true wisdom.

The speech of Socrates is a vivid demonstration of his sophia. A glance at almost any lines of the exalted climax reveals how favourably this speech contrasts with that of Agathon. Let us take, for example,
Socrates-Diotima’s description of absolute Beauty:

The man who has been guided thus far in the mysteries of love, and who has directed his thoughts towards examples of beauty in due and orderly succession, will suddenly have revealed to him as he approaches the end of his initiation a beauty whose nature is marvellous indeed, the final goal, Socrates, of all his previous efforts. This beauty is first of all eternal; it neither comes into being nor passes away, neither waxes nor wanes; next, it is not beautiful in part and ugly in part, nor beautiful at one time and ugly at another, not beautiful in this relation and ugly in that, nor beautiful here and ugly there, as varying according to its beholders; nor again will this beauty appear to him like the beauty of a face or hands or anything else corporeal, or like the beauty of a thought or science, or like beauty which has its seat in something other than itself, be it a living thing or the earth or the sky or anything else whatever; he will see it as absolute, existing alone with itself, unique, eternal, and all other beautiful things as partaking of it, yet in such a manner that, while they come into being and pass away, it neither undergoes any increase or diminution or suffers any change. (210e-211b, trans., Hamilton)

It is clear at once that the beauty of this speech is a beauty that relies not on technical devices and rhetorical tricks, but a beauty that arises from true wisdom and understanding. This speech is beautiful because its author has beheld Beauty and has incarnated that Beauty in beautiful words. Socrates lives and moves and has his being in the "demonic realm-in-between".26 he has made the ascent to a vision of divine Beauty (ἐντὸ τὸ Θείον καλόν 211e3) and has returned to communicate that vision of divine to men. He is

26 Friedlander, Plato II 133.
the δινός ζητή (203a5), the man sophos in the communication of gods with men (203a1-2). Agathon, by contrast, is θέαμος (203a6), a mere mechanic, the man sophos only in regard to the technai (203a5). The speeches of the two contestants have clearly demonstrated the inferiority of Agathon and the superiority of Socrates in respect to sophia.

The contest has been won in the lists; the prize has yet to be awarded. The judge, Dionysus, immediately appears: Alcibiades, exceedingly drunk and crowned with the violets of the Muses and the ivy of Bacchus, appears on the doorstep, a very Dionysian figure indeed. He has come for one purpose: to crown with ribands from his own wreath the head of the man who is ἀλλήλος and σοφίτας (212e8). These ribands he places on the head of Agathon. Dionysus has, it seems, awarded the crown for sophia to the tragic poet.

This judgment, however, turns out to be a preliminary one; Dionysus is about to reverse his own decision. After catching sight of Socrates and engaging in some verbal by-play with his old erastēs, Alcibiades asks Agathon to return some of his ribands:

"...Agathon, give me some of those ribands to make a wreath for his head too, for a truly wonderful head it is. Otherwise he might blame me for crowning you and leaving him uncrowned, whose words bring him victory over all men at all times, not merely on single occasions, like yours the day before yesterday." So saying he took some of the ribands, made a wreath for Socrates, and lay back. (213e trans., Hamilton)
Socrates has won the *agon* with his words. The Socratic *logoi* are, in the judgement of this Dionysus, invincible. Their power and the source of their power have been demonstrated by the speech of Socrates, a speech founded on truth and inspired by beauty. The foundation of his speech is truth established by dialectic: Socrates' preliminary conversation with Agathon clears the ground of misconception and error and establishes the *archē* on which to build. The inspiration for his speech is beauty attained by dialectic: Socrates' ascent through the stages of dialectic leads to the vision of beauty and the begetting of beautiful words. Socrates' speech is pure philosophy, founded and inspired in dialectic, and cast in dialogue form. It is also pure poetry, rising to a pitch of lyric intensity that far surpasses in beauty the delicate prettiness of Agathon's words. Poetry has been taken up into philosophy and transmuted: the words of Socrates' are, like Socrates himself, pure gold. Socrates' speech is *sophos* and *kalos* because Socrates himself is *sophos* and *kalos*: he has made the ascent to wisdom and beauty, partaken of these virtues, and brought forth wisdom and beauty. Both in his person and in his speech he far surpasses Agathon, who understands beauty only as external adornment and *sophia* only as technical skill. Alcibiades takes from Agathon some of his ribands and makes a wreath for Socrates. The crown passes from the head of a man externally and superficially *kalos* and *sophos* to the head of the man who is in the deepest and truest sense *sophōς* καὶ *kalōς* (212e8); the crown passes from the head of the poet to the head of the poet-philosopher.

27 Alcibiades twice in his speech alludes to Socrates "golden" quality. At 217al he describes the *agalmata* within Socrates as "golden" (χρυσός). At 219al he recalls Socrates' suggestion that Alcibiades in desiring to exchange his beauty for that of Socrates is desiring to exchange brass for gold.
Knowledge is no longer to be transmitted like water through the flowing words of the poets, but is to be gained through the dialectic of the philosopher. The crowning of Socrates is the inauguration of a new age, the age of philosophy. But we have overlooked one small detail: Alcibiades has transferred only some of the ribands to the head of Socrates. We recall another seemingly insignificant detail: Socrates' speech received only some applause (ΤΟΥΣ ΜΕΝ ἘΠΟΔΟΛΕΙΝ, 212c4). And we remember that with Plato no detail is insignificant. Perhaps in giving these two small details Plato is giving tacit recognition to the fact that philosophy will win only some acclaim, the acclaim of the few who are wise. Poetry with all its untruth and deception will continue to win the approval of hoi polloi, the many who do not know. The philosopher walks a high but lonely road (cf. Rep. 6. 493e-498c).

In the concluding scene of the Symposium, the gulf between poet and philosopher-poet widens. As the scene opens, only three contestants are still awake. Agathon, Aristophanes, and Socrates are drinking from a large cup, and Socrates, as he always must, is engaging his companions in conversation. He is compelling them to admit that it is possible for the same man to know how (ἔπιστευκαίρθέλε) to write both tragedy and comedy, and that the man who is a tragic poet by technē is also a comic poet (223cd). It has been suggested that this passage contradicts what is said in the Ion: Dover for example, states that the argument "is strikingly unlike what is said by Socrates in Ion 531e-534e."28

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28 Dover 177.
Other commentators, more perceptively, have seen that the two passages complement rather than contradict one another. Friedlander notes that the poet of the Ion can compose only tragedy or comedy because he works by divine dispensation; if he worked by technē and epistēmē he would be able to compose both.  

If we simply note, as Friedlander does, the distinction between divine dispensation and technē kai epistēmē any apparent contradiction completely disappears. It is the inspired poet of the Ion who can compose well in only one genre (Ion 534c1-4); one who composed by technē rather than by divine inspiration would know how to speak well on all themes (534c5-7). This is not "strikingly unlike" but strikingly like what we are told in the passage from the Symposium: one who composed by technē would know how to write both tragedy and comedy. Agathon, like Ion, is lacking in technē. If Ion spoke well about Homer by technē, he would be able to speak well about all other poets (532c5); if Agathon composed his tragedies by technē, he would be able to compose comedies as well. Agathon, as we have seen, possesses no true sophia, no real wisdom, but only sophia in the sense of technical skill. To his limited understanding, sophia is no more than technē. It now appears that even his

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29 See Friedlander, Plato III, 32: "In the Ion, it is said that the distinction between tragic and comic art consists in the fact that each poet creates by divine dispensation (Δόξα, Μοίρα, Kai), but he who works with art and knowledge (Tekhnē, Kai Epistēmē) would combine both within himself. Thus Aristophanes and Agathon - so we must read Socrates - do not create from knowledge."

30 Paul Shorey, The Unity of Plato’s Thought (hereafter Unity), 82, suggests that the alleged contradiction between the Symposium passage and Republic 395a, where it is said that the same man cannot compose tragedy and comedy, is also removed by pressing technē.
technē is of a poor and inadequate kind. Technē, to be of any value, must be joined with epistēmē. In the Symposium, as in the Ion, technē and epistēmē are closely linked: Ion is unable to speak about Homer with technē and epistēmē (532c6); Agathon does not compose by technē and does not have the epistēmē that would enable him to write both tragedy and comedy (223d4-5). Both the Ion and the Symposium hint at the true meaning of epistēmē: the Ion suggests that epistēmē is knowledge of the whole (70 ὀλον, 532c9); the Symposium suggests that it is knowledge of the Form (ἐπίστημον μίκρον ... ἢ ἐστὶ καλὸν, 210d7). Epistēmē in its true sense is beyond the reach of Ion, Agathon, or any other poet; true epistēmē can only be attained by the philosopher.

In the Symposium it is Socrates who makes the ascent, sees the vision, and attains the epistēmē of Beauty (210d7). He is the one with true knowledge, the one who has arrived at the knowledge of absolute Beauty, and who knows at last what absolute Beauty is (211c8). His love of wisdom has led to the attainment of wisdom and knowledge; he has become the possessor of sophia and epistēmē in the highest and truest sense of those words. It is Socrates who is able to combine epistēmē with technē and to compose both tragedy and comedy.31 Tragedy deals with the sublime and the serious, the noble and the divine, the wise and the true.32

31 Cf. Plochmann 333: "the real knowledge which is at the bottom of tragedy and comedy, and which has the characters of both, is the poetically enriched dialectic of the philosopher."

32 A contrast between what is comic and what is true is drawn by Alcibiades: "He will perhaps think that I mean to make fun of him, but my object in employing [similes] is truth, not ridicule" (215a).
beautiful and the good. The themes of comedy are the low and the laughable, the base and the mundane, the foolish and the deceptive, the ugly and the shameful. Socrates himself is both tragic and comic: on the outside he is a Silenus, ugly and earthly, grotesque and base; opened up he reveals the images of the gods, beautiful and awe-inspiring, noble and sublime (215a-b). He is a tantalizing blend of the comic and the serious, all his life playing the eiron and playing with people, occasionally becoming serious and revealing the divine treasures within (216e). His logoi contain both tragic and comic elements: on the outside his conversation is ridiculous talk of pack-asses and blacksmiths, cobblers and tanners; on the inside it is almost the talk of a god (222a). For all their appearance of being comic, the Socratic logoi have the effects of tragedy: they produce in the soul of the hearer pain and suffering (218a; cf. Rep. 605d4), emotional upheaval (215e2-3; cf. Ion 535b5-7, e2-3), astonishment (215d5; cf. 198b5; Ion 535e3), confusion (215e6; cf. Rep. 602c ff.), and panic fear (216a-b; cf. 198c3; Ion 535c7-8). Socrates' words lead to two characteristic tragic experiences, recognition (cf. 215e-216c) and reversal (cf. 222b3-4, 217a ff.). Socrates encomium of Ἠρός, following immediately upon the speeches of a comic and a tragic poet, is a demonstration of his ability: its "comic, even ribald, fable of love's origins" shows him to be a master of the comic

33 Plato in the Laws (7.817a-b) suggests that tragedy is an imitation of the beautiful and the good: "all of our city has been founded as an imitation of the best life, and this we call what is in reality the truest tragedy."

34 See Bacon 425-426.

35 Bacon 427.
poet's art; its "lyrical description of love's higher mysteries" shows him to be a master of the art of the tragic poet. Socrates' praise of Erōs encompasses both tragedy and comedy, binds the two into a unified whole. It is Socrates, the daemonic man, who, as Diskin Clay suggests:

fills the gap between the high and the low, gods and men, and makes a whole of tragedy and comedy, binding this whole to himself. (202c).

On another level, it is Plato who bridges the gap between tragedy and comedy. Plato, both in his portrayal of Socrates and in his structuring of the Symposium, brings about a fusion of tragic and comic elements. His portrayal of the Socratic life and logoi is, as we have seen, a representation of a man who is at once comical and serious, an account of words which are both ridiculous and sublime. Plato depicts Socrates as a man both geloiōs (cf. 215a, 221d-e) and kallistos (cf. 212e, 213e), as a man possessing the characteristics of both Aristophanes (geloiōs, 213c) and

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36 Ibid.

37 Clay 200. Cf. Plochmann 334: "the identification of the two kinds of poetry is clear to anyone who can grasp the long speech of Socrates as a whole, that is, a fusion of the comic and the serious, or at any rate a mean between them."

38 See Clay 189: "By implication, his (Alcibiades') name for Aristophanes is geloiōs. His name for Agathon was kallistos. And Socrates is caught between these poles. If Socrates is geloiōs, he belongs next to the comic Aristophanes. But Plato carefully arranged for the accident that places him last and next to Agathon. He has created a tension between the comic and tragic, as he understands comic and tragic, and Socrates is caught between the levels suggested by the words geloiōs and kallistos. By a dramatic detail that will become philosophical, Plato has reminded us that Socrates seems to belong int he company of the clownish characters he resembles. But Socrates also belongs next to the fair...."
Agathon (kallistos, 212e), a man competent to fulfil the roles of both comic and tragic poet. By the speech which he puts into the mouth of Socrates, Plato demonstrates the philosopher's competence in both genres: Socrates' charming myth of Penia and Poros compares favourably with Aristophanes' delightful myth of sorb-apples and tumblers, of human halves and wholes; his lyric description of the ineffable vision far surpasses in beauty the speech of Agathon. By the dramatic action of the dialogue, Plato indicates that the tragic and comic poet have been defeated by the philosopher, that tragedy and comedy have been superseded by one new genre that is a union of the two, a kind of tragi-comedy. Socrates, after convincing Aristophanes and Agathon that the man who writes with skill and knowledge can write both tragedy and comedy, puts both to sleep and walks off alone to begin a new day (223d).

Plato structures the whole of the Symposium as a tragi-comedy. Socrates' characterization of Alcibiades' speech as a "satyr and Silene drama" (222d) can be interpreted as indicating that the speeches which came before were in some sense "tragic," five tragedies followed by the final satyr play. Even the speech of Aristophanes has its tragic elements: there is, as Taylor notes, "real tenderness" and "real feeling" in Aristophanes' description of the woebegone creature searching for its other half, in his comic description of man's serious search for healing and wholeness. The satyr play, too, has its serious side: the ivy-crowned caricature of Dionysus tells a comic tale for the sake of truth (215a), a tale

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39 As it is by Clay 194.
40 Taylor, PMW, 219.
which climaxes in a tragic recognition scene (216aff.) and in the tragedy of a wrong choice. In both the speech of Aristophanes and the speech of Alcibiades, Plato shows himself to be a master of the new genre, tragicomedy. Not only in these two speeches but throughout the entire Symposium, tragedy is interwoven with comedy. As Friedlander perceives, death is present at the banquet, present in the figure of Apollodorus whose grief at the death of Socrates is remembered from the Apology and the Phaedo, present in Phaedrus' celebration of the sacrifices of the heroes, and present in Diotima's account of the universal striving for immortality. The Symposium contains what Plato elsewhere calls the "whole tragi-comedy of life" (Phil. 50b).41

It is Plato, the poet-philosopher, who has the wisdom and knowledge that enable him to write works containing "the whole tragi-comedy of life." It is Plato who joins sophia and epistēmē with technē and creates works that are both philosophy and poetry, both tragedy and comedy. The Platonic dialogue is the verbal incarnation of the wisdom and knowledge of the philosopher. The dialogue form encourages each reader to participate in every conversation, to ponder and attempt to answer every question, and to embark upon the dialectical ascent which will lead to his own attainment

41 Friedlander, Plato III, 32: In the Symposium, we sense sorrow behind the splendour of the banquet. The poet Conrad Ferdinand Meyer urges us to hear the "drowsy flutes of death" at the end of the feast. But we have seen that the thought of death is present right from the beginning in the figure of Apollodorus who is reporting and whose passionate outbursts we remember from the Phaedo. Phaidros' speech celebrates the sacrifices of the heroes, and the tension between love and death is felt in the words of Diotima. Much of the Symposium and the Phaedo are works of contrast and complement, both contain what Socrates calls the "whole tragi-comedy of life" (Philebus 50b).
of wisdom and knowledge. Plato is firmly convinced that sophia and epistēmē can be attained only through dialectic; wisdom is not absorbed like water in a vessel. Poetry, whether tragedy or comedy, is the inadequate means of transmission of a sophia that is itself inadequate. It is not the sophia of the philosopher, as Socrates had ironically suggested, but the sophia of the poet that is "of a poor sort, doubtful and illusionary like a dream" (cf. 175e2). The sophia of the philosopher, unlike the false-shining sophia of the poet, is truly "bright and beautiful" (cf. 175c) because it has been illuminated by the vision of absolute Beauty. This true and truly beautiful sophia must be conveyed in a new way. New wine calls for new wineskins; new philosophical insights must find expression in a new genre. The sophia which surpasses that of tragic and comic poet must find expression in a genre which transcends comedy and tragedy. Plato finds an adequate and more-than-adequate means for the conveyance of philosophic sophia in a new tragi-comic work, the Symposium.

Within the Symposium, Socrates is the poet-philosopher, the whole man who see tragedy and comedy as fundamentally the same. Neither tragic poet nor comic poet can follow his argument very well; overcome by the wine-cup they go to sleep. Socrates, unaffected by drinking all night, leaves them there; in full vigour he sets out for the Lyceum and another day "spent as he would any other," that is, in dialogue. Victorious in wine, as in the arts of comedy and tragedy, he has, as it were, for the second time that night been awarded the prize by Dionysus, god of tragedy and comedy and god of wine.
2. The Inspiration of the Philosopher

In the preceding section of our discussion of the Symposium, we have suggested that the philosopher, like the poet, may be thought of as inspired. We have also suggested that there are both similarities and differences between the inspiration of the poet and the inspiration of the philosopher. We shall now attempt to tie together some loose threads and to make explicit the ways in which philosophic inspiration both resembles poetic inspiration and differs from it.

Plato has, from the time of his earliest dialogues, expressed dissatisfaction with the poetic product. In the Ion, he criticizes poetry on the grounds that it deals only with particulars. Neither the rhapsode nor the poet possesses technē in the sense of comprehensive art. Ion the rhapsode is criticized because his exegetical capacity is limited to one particular poet, although all poets deal with the same subject matter (531c). The poets are criticized because their ability in composition is limited to one particular genre and because their ability in exegesis does not extend over the whole of poetry (534c). The poets do not have the kind of knowledge which Plato values; the poets have only particularized, not generalized knowledge. In the Apology, Plato identifies a basic weakness in the works of the poets: poems are not composed by sophia (22c1), and cannot, therefore, be relied upon to contain sophia; the works of the poets are not reliable sources of wisdom and instruction. Poetry may, by a kind of divine
chance, contain many fine things (22c4); it is equally likely to contain things that are empty and foolish. In the *Meno*, Plato again points out a weakness in the works of the poets: poems are not composed by *epistēme* (99bc), and cannot, therefore, be reliable sources of knowledge. Poets may hit upon truth by a kind of "inspiration" (99d); they are equally likely to make statements that are false and deceptive. When we come to the *Symposium*, we see that Plato is still finding fault with the works of the poets. Agathon possesses no *epistēme*; his *techne* and *sophia* are of a poor and inadequate kind. He does not have the *techne* and *epistēme* that would enable him to write both tragedy and comedy (223d); his works do not display comprehensive and generalized knowledge. He has not caught sight of the one unique *epistēme* (210d7), and his works do not exhibit true knowledge; he has not attained *sophia* and his works do not contain true wisdom. Agathon's poetry is based on false premises and does not yield the truth (198cd); it is concerned not with reality but with deceptive appearance.

Poetry characterized by a lack of knowledge and wisdom, by an absence of truth and reality, is a dangerous force; of this Plato is always keenly aware. Poetry, simply because it is poetry, casts a powerful spell. Its lyric flow has a hypnotic effect on the listener, and the unwary are easily caught up in a current of deception. Truly inspired poetry, poetry brought forth by intimate association with beauty (209c2), is beautiful and good. Truly inspired poets, poets like Homer and Hesiod, bring forth enviable offspring, children with admirable qualities (209d1-3): they bring forth poetry characterized by *phronēsis* and *aretē* (209a3). Poetry brought
forth in beauty and characterized by areté is beautiful poetry; poets inspired by beauty to bring forth the divine qualities implanted within them (cf. 209b) are "good" poets (209d2). Plato recognizes that while there may be in poetry an element of danger, there may also be beauty and goodness. It is perhaps partly out of this dual awareness that Plato's new theory of inspiration arises. It is perhaps his awareness of the weaknesses and dangers as well as of the beauty in the existing poetic product that leads Plato to envision a new process of literary creativity. This new process would yield a new form of literature, a literature embodying knowledge and wisdom, truth and reality. The new form would contain none of the dangerous and deceptive elements of existing poetry; it would display a beauty more radiant than the beauty of Homeric and lyric poetry. It would be a form of literature in which poetry is taken up into the realm of philosophy, a new philosophy-poetry.

This new poetic process is both like and unlike the poetic process described in the Ion. In both the Ion and the Symposium, Plato puts forward a theory of inspiration which attributes the beauty of poetry to its origin in a divine source. In each case, the poet is in an intermediary position conveying divine and mysterious beauty to the mortal inhabitants of earth. There are, however, significant differences in the mode of conveyance. In the Ion, as we have seen, the divine moves downward through the human: the god uses the poet as, in effect, a conduit through which he makes his utterances to men (534cd). In the Symposium, the human moves upward to the divine: the poet-philosopher makes an ascent through various stages to a vision of divine beauty (αὐτὸ ἔτο).
The θείον καλόν, 211c3) that enables him to bring forth true areté—by implication, true wisdom, true goodness, true beauty. In the Ion, the Muse impels the poet to compose beautifully (534c2-3). In the Symposium, Erōs impels the philosopher-poet on the upward ascent that results at various stages in the creation of beautiful logoi.

The Erōs of the Symposium, the desire for procreation in beauty with a view to attaining immortality, is operative at each stage in the ascent, and at each stage results in the procreation of offspring, whether physical or spiritual (206b). At the lowest level, Erōs impels "those who are pregnant in body," or, as Hamilton translates, "those whose creative instinct is physical," to turn toward women and to procreate physical offspring who will bring them immortality (208e). At a higher level, Erōs impels those who are "pregnant" or creative in soul to procreate spiritual offspring who will bring them glory and immortal fame (209d). The man creative in soul is "pregnant" from his youth with phronēsis and areté in general (209a). On reaching maturity, he wanders about seeking a partner beautiful in soul on whom he can pour forth abundant logoi about areté and about the qualities and actions of a good man (209b). By intimate association with the beauty in the soul of his partner, he brings forth what he has long been pregnant with (209c): he becomes a father of areté (209e).

42 Diotima in her speech links together these various kinds of areté: Wisdom is linked with beauty at 204b: "wisdom is one of the most beautiful of things, and Love is love of beauty, so it follows that Love must be a lover of wisdom." Beauty is linked with goodness at 201c: "Is not the good also the beautiful?" Cf. 204de.

43 Partee, "Inspiration in the Aesthetics of Plato," suggests several ways in which the theory of inspiration given in the Ion and the Apology differs from that presented in the Symposium.
Who are these men who engender areté? Lawgivers, educators, creative craftsmen - and poets, good poets like Homer and Hesiod. Their poems, like the laws of Lycurgus and Solon, are offspring which exhibit areté. These are enviable offspring that far surpass human children in that they are more beautiful and more immortal (209c d).

Poets bring forth areté; this is the clear message of this one passage in the Symposium. This message, however, is soon to be modified. Plato has spoken only of the lower stages in the ascent; Diotima has spoken only of Love's lesser mysteries, into which, she says, even Socrates might be initiated (210a). As she is about to begin her description of the highest stage in the ascent, Diotima expresses doubt as to whether Socrates could ever be initiated into the higher mysteries. This has been taken by some critics to mean that Plato is now going beyond his master, that he is claiming to have reached heights to which the "historical" Socrates could not ascend. Other commentators are outspoken in their disagreement: Taylor labels this view "unfortunate nonsense". Grube calls it "quite ridiculous."
Grube suggests that Plato "means, if anything, that this is about as far as his audience will follow him." This suggestion seems perceptive and helpful.

It is not Socrates, but the poets, who cannot ascend to greater heights. Even the good poets, like Homer and Hesiod can climb only the lower rungs of the ladder (cf. 209d1-2). Good poets, Plato tells us, bring forth \textit{arete} (209e); their works are reproductions of the \textit{arete} in the soul. Yet these works contain, as Plato repeatedly tells us, not only manifestations of \textit{arete}, but also evidences of error, contradictions, and falsehood. Diotima, in the closing moments of her speech, describes the union with absolute Beauty that enables the aspiring soul to bring forth true \textit{arete} (212a). This union with absolute Beauty and the bringing forth of true \textit{arete} are the culmination of the arduous ascent through dialectic. The poet, \textit{qua} poet, cannot make the dialectical ascent to the form of Beauty; in order to do so, he would have to become a philosopher. The poet cannot make the ascent, and yet it is only in making the ascent that one is enabled to bring forth true \textit{arete}. Only the philosopher brings forth true \textit{arete}; the poet can bring forth only images of \textit{arete} (εἰς ὑλήν ἄρετὴν, 212a4). The inspiration of the poet is, Plato seems to suggest, akin to the inspiration of the philosopher, but it is a lower form of inspiration; it produces only images and not the truth. Poetry is full of error and contradictions which could be eradicated only if the poet were to make the ascent to the absolute Beauty. It is only this ascent which could, as Maguire suggests, "do away with the contradictions inherent in his

\footnote{Ibid.}

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conceptions by reducing them to the unity of the Idea." The poet, however, cannot be initiated into the higher mysteries; he cannot, qua poet, make the ascent.

Plato in the final stage of the ascent does not so much leave poetry behind as take it up into the realm of philosophy. Both the good poet and the philosopher-poet of the Symposium are truly creative. Both are "pregnant," "full to bursting" with divine seed (206c1,d8; cf. 209b1-2); beauty enables both to bring forth that with which they are already pregnant and to which they long to give birth (206). Both have within them the power to create; beauty releases that power. Both are inspired by beauty, but by beauty on different ontological planes. The poet sees true Beauty, but only an image or reflection of it. Poetic inspiration is, in a sense, an image or reflection of philosophic inspiration. It is only the philosopher who ascends the highest rungs of the ladder of Erōs, and in so doing he becomes a philosopher-poet. Erōs, the passionate desire for beauty and for immortality, impels the philosopher to seek beauty, to procreate in the beautiful, and then to search for a new and higher kind of beauty. At each stage, the offspring which the philosopher brings forth are beautiful logoi. At the lowest stages, Erōs impels the philosopher toward the beauty that is in one body and to the engendering of beautiful logoi (210a8). At a higher stage, Erōs impels the philosopher toward the beauty that is in the soul and to the engendering of logoi that make young people better (210c1-3). At a still

48 Maguire 397.

49 Vlastos, Platonic Studies, 21: "Beauty stirs us so deeply, Plato is saying because we have the power to create and only the beauty we love can release that power."
higher level, the philosopher is led to gaze upon the vast sea of beauty and to bring forth many beautiful and magnificent **logoi** and ideas in boundless love of wisdom (210d4-6). The culminating stage in the ascent is described as one in which the philosopher, contemplating absolute Beauty with the appropriate faculty and in constant union with it, brings forth not images of **arete**, but true **arete** (212a1-5). The philosopher in his union with the form of Beauty and his engendering of true **arete** becomes immortal (212a5-7).

The philosopher-poet is impelled by **Eros** to the creation of beautiful **logoi** and true **arete**. **Eros** provides the impetus for the philosopher's ascent from the realm of physical to the realm of absolute Beauty. **Eros** is not, however, the only force at work in the ascent; reason is operative at every stage. The role of reason is emphasized throughout the ascent-passage (209e-212a), defined at the lower levels by verbs denoting various types of intellectual activity - perceiving, despising, considering - and at the higher levels by verbs denoting intellectual vision. At the lower levels the roles of **Eros** and reason are depicted as

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50 Cf. **καθαροφόρον ἑνδυτής**, 210a8; **ἐννοησιών**, 210b4.

51 Cf. **καθαροφόρον ἑνδυτής**, 210b5.

52 Cf. the various forms of **ἐγνώμαι** in 210: **ἐγνώμοις**, b2; **ἐγνώμενον**, b6; **ἐγνώμος**, b7; **ἐγνώμονς** c6.

53 Cf. the various words for "seeing" in 210: **ὁπλώδησιν**, c3; **δείκνυς**, c4; **δεικνύς**, c7; **βλέπων**, c7; **δεικνύς**, d4; **κατίδη**, d7; **δεικνύος**, e7; **κατόπτερος**, e4; in 211: **δεικνύω**, b6; **δεικνύον**, d2; **δεικνύον**, d3; **δεικνύω**, d7; **δεικνύς**, e1; **κατόπτειν** e4; in 212: **βλέποντος**, a1; **δεικνύον**, a2; **δεικνύον** ὑπ' **δεικνύον**, a3.
complementary, separate but closely intertwined, disparate forces joined together in the pursuit of a common goal. The steps of Erōs, like the steps of reason, are explicitly defined: the man pursuing the goal in the right way must first love one beautiful body (210a7); he must proceed from there to become a lover of all beautiful bodies (210b4-5); he must then learn to love the beauty that is in the soul (210b6-c2). At the highest level Erōs is no longer specifically mentioned, but clearly continues to operate: Erōs here, as on the lower levels, impels the lover of wisdom to procreate in the sphere of the beautiful (cf. 212a5). At this level there is no distinction made between the activity of Erōs and the activity of reason. The Erōs

54 Moravcsik, "Reason and Eros in the "Ascent"-Passage of the Symposium," 285 ff., distinguishes the steps of reason and Erōs in such a way as to yield the neat Platonic "equation": E1:R1:R2:E2 equals E3:R3:R4:E4. The scheme, however, proves to be a little too neat. In some instances, particularly in the cases of the E-steps, it is highly questionable whether the label assigned by Moravcsik accurately represents the nature of the step. He seems to manipulate language in order to make Plato's thought conform to his own mold. The verb ἐρωτάω, "to consider" or "to regard," is used by Plato in describing four different steps in the ascent (cf. 210b2; 210b6; 210b7; 210c6). Moravcsik labels the first of these an R-step; translating ἐρωτάω in such a way as to make it suggest the work of Erōs rather than the work of reason, he labels the latter three steps as E-steps. And yet it is clear that in each of these three steps reason, as well as Erōs, plays an important role. Each of these three steps entails a decision-making process: a man is called upon to examine a particular kind of beauty, to make a value judgment about it, and to act in accordance with that judgment. Moravcsik is not justified in labelling these three steps as E-steps. His claim that the ascent yields a Platonic "equation" cannot be substantiated. Moravcsik's attempt at schematization points to the futility of attempting to make precise and systematic distinctions between the roles of reason and Erōs in the Symposium. Sharply defined units of emotional and rational activity simply do not exist. Even at the lower levels the roles of reason and Erōs are so closely intertwined as to be, at times, virtually indistinguishable. At the highest level reason and Eros are identified: the force at work is the "passion of the reason."

55 As Bury notes (xlvi), the use of the term ἔκτοτη in the concluding sentence (212a5) "is precisely parallel to the language elsewhere used of the action of Eros in the lower grades, and precludes the supposition that Eros ceases to be operant on the highest grade."
that is operative at this level is, as Bury states, "the Ἐρῶς of pure nous-enthusiastic and prolific intellection, 'the passion of the reason'." This statement points to one of the most intriguing aspects of Plato's theory of philosophic inspiration, the convergence of two forces generally regarded as antagonistic to one another, the union of passion and reason.

By the combined agency of Ἐρῶς and reason the philosopher-poet proceeds in ascending stages, each of which involves the creation of logoi, to the contemplation of absolute Beauty. In union with absolute Beauty he brings forth true aretē and gains immortality. This, in brief, is the philosophic-poetic process of the Symposium. A comparison of this process with the poetic process described in the Ion reveals striking similarities and still more striking differences. Plato in the Symposium takes up the poetic process, transforms it, purifies it of its dangerous elements, and enlists it in the service of philosophy. The new philosophic-poetic process is one of inspiration, but inspiration takes on new and higher meaning.

The inspired poet of the Ion is, like the inspired philosopher-poet of the Symposium, the hermēneus of the gods (Ion 534e4; Symp. 202e3).

56 Bury xlvi.

57 Cf. Jowett, Dialogues I, 532-3: "To most men reason and passion appear to be antagonistic both in idea and in fact. The union of the greatest comprehension of knowledge and the burning intensity of love is a contradiction in nature .... Yet this 'passion of the reason' is the theme of the Symposium of Plato." What Plato here joins together he later puts asunder. We may perhaps find in the element of conflict inherent in this union of two disparate forces the seeds of Plato's doctrine of the divided soul.
The language is the same, but the concept is vastly different. The hermēneus of the Ion plays a lowly part in the poetic process; the hermēneus of the Symposium fulfills the most exalted of roles. Both are denizens of the daemonic realm-in-between, intermediaries between gods and men, but they function within that realm in entirely different ways. The poet of the Ion is, as we have seen, the passive agent of the gods. His role is a subservient one: he is a hypēretēs, an underling, a servant, and less than a servant: robbed of his faculties, he becomes a mindless instrument, a mouthpiece through whom the gods make their utterances (534ed). The inspired poet of the Ion is not more, but less, than human.

In the Symposium, the role of hermēneus undergoes a transformation; here the hermēneus is an honoured and exalted being, a daimōn halfway between mortal and immortal (202d). The hermēneus of the Symposium, is, on one level, none other than Erōs himself, a great daimōn who bridges the gap between gods and men (202d-e). On another level, the hermēneus of the gods is Socrates, the Ζηυόνιος Ἐρυθ (203a5) who interprets the messages of the gods to men and who carries the prayers of men from earth to heaven (202e). The identification of the Erōs-daimōn with Socrates first suggests itself to the reader in the description of Erōs as the son of Penia: like the Socrates of the marketplace, this Erōs is always poor and, far from being soft and beautiful, is hard and rough, shoeless and homeless, and living in want (203c-d). The resemblance between Socrates and Erōs son of Poros is also immediately evident to the reader: like Socrates, Erōs son of Poros yearns after knowledge and is a lover of wisdom all his life (203d). Diotima’s myth of Penia and Poros arouses in the minds
of the reader the suspicion that the daimónios ánvēp, the hermēneus of the gods, in some way stands for Socrates; Alcibiades’ speech confirms those suspicions.

The identification of the Erōs-daimon and Socrates implicit in Diotima’s myth is all but made explicit in Alcibiades’ speech. Asked to make a speech in praise of Erōs, Alcibiades instead delivers a speech in praise of Socrates (214d-215a). The language of Alcibiades’ encomium of Socrates is, in many instances, a direct echo of Diotima’s description of the daimon Erōs. Like Erōs who has an innate passion for the beautiful (203c), Socrates has a tendency to fall in love with men who are beautiful (216d); like Erōs, who is always plotting against the beautiful and the good and devising some scheme (203d), Socrates schemes to get himself next to the most beautiful person in the room (213c). The barefoot Socrates (220b) is the living embodiment of the barefoot Erōs (203d). Socrates’ outdoor and nightlong vigil while on military service (220d) is typical of the behaviour of the homeless Erōs who always sleeps outdoors for want of a bed (203d). Alcibiades’ portrait of Socrates standing wrapped in thought (220c) is the portrayal of a man who, like Erōs, yearns after knowledge (203d). Socrates, like Erōs, is a clever enchanter and sorcerer (cf. 203d): he is a flute-player more marvellous than Marsyas, an enchanter who charms by the power of his lips, one who by mere words throws his listeners into a state akin to ecstatic possession (215b-e). The speech of Alcibiades presents Socrates as the embodiment of the daimon Erōs.¹⁵⁸ the one man who all his life and in all his words and

¹⁵⁸ See Bury lx: "The speech of Alcibiades is related to that of Socrates" as Praxis to Theory. "Its main purpose is to present to us a vivid portrait of Socrates as the perfect exemplar of Erōs (ὁ τελεῖς ἐρωτικός.)
actions displays the character of a lover of wisdom (cf. 203d).

This identification of the daimon Eros with Socrates may seem incompatible with the view that Socrates is the successful Platonic lover. How, one may ask, can Socrates be at one and the same time a being halfway between ignorance and wisdom and the Platonic lover who has made the ascent and attained the final vision of the Form? Yet Plato seems not to see this duality as in any way contradictory. One of the main emphases of the dialogue is, in fact, the dual nature of Socrates. Plato is, throughout the Symposium, from the opening confrontation with Agathon to the closing speech of Alcibiades, intent on showing us the two aspects of the Socratic existence. Socrates is, in his outward appearance, an ugly satyr, a barefoot, unkempt, and somewhat weird philosopher, a professor of ignorance engaged in a continual search for wisdom. In his inner being, however, he is quite the opposite: the Silenus opened up reveals images divine and golden, all-beautiful and wondrous (217a); he displays logoi that are most divine and abounding in images of areté (222a4). Socrates is, in one aspect of his existence, a lover, poor, far from beautiful, shoeless and homeless, ever in want, yearning after wisdom. In another aspect of his being, however, he is quite the opposite: he is the object rather than the subject of love, the beloved rather than the lover (222b3-4).

The speech of Alcibiades delineates clearly the duality of the

and thus to compel us to acknowledge that in the living Socrates we have before us a complete φιλόσοφος, even, as Eros is φιλόσοφων (203d), - and a δαιμόνιος ζινὴ - even as Eros is a δαίμων. Bury tabulates the various passages in which the language of Alcibiades echoes that of Diotima.
Socratic existence. Alcibiades' encomium of Socrates echoes, in many instances, Diotima's description of the daimōn Erōs. But Alcibiades' language echoes not only the language of Diotima, but also that of the earlier encomiasts, who depicted Erōs as the beloved, virtuous and fair. Alcibiades' language, in many instances, indicates that Socrates has made the ascent and become truly beautiful, that he has brought forth true aretē (cf. 212a). Alcibiades indicates that Socrates, like the Erōs of the earlier speeches (cf. 180b, 197d), is full of admirable qualities, filled with images that are divine and golden and beautiful and marvellous (216e), possessed of a nature that inspires reverence (219d), peerless in his attributes (212c). Socrates, like the beloved depicted by Phaedrus (cf. 178e) and the Erōs described by Agathon (cf. 197d), is eminently courageous, a brave warrior and selfless saviour (220e-21c). Socrates, like the Erōs of Agathon's speech (cf. 196c), is full of sophrosynē (216d). He is, in fact, the possessor of complete virtue, the equal of Erōs (cf. 196d) in his manifestation of sophrosynē and andreia, superior to all men in karteria and phronēsis (219d). Socrates is the lover as well as the beloved, the beholder of Beauty and begetter of aretē (cf. 212a) as well as the Erōs daimōn midway between ignorance and wisdom (cf. 202a).

Socrates is, in one aspect of his existence, the daimōn Erōs. Socrates, the prototype of the philosopher-poet functions in the daemonic realm-in-between (203a). As a lover of wisdom, a philosophos half-way between ignorance and wisdom, he occupies a position intermediate between two worlds. He is a hermēneus of the gods, but he is far from being a

59 These parallels are listed by Bury lxi-lxii.
passive agent. He moves about freely in the daemonic realm, travelling upward to the divine and returning again, the mediator of all communication between the divine and human realms (203a2-3). He is more than human, a daemonic man *sophos* in the communication of gods with men (203a5). His role is an exalted one. His arduous ascent to the realm of absolute Beauty yields the kind of universal knowledge which enables him bring disparate parts into a unified whole. He is the mediator who spans the gulf and binds all together, the healer of the fragmentation in man and the universe (202e6-7).\(^\text{60}\)

The inspired poet of the *Ion* is less than human, a mechanism, a mere mouthpiece. The inspired philosopher is more than human, a denizen of the daemonic world and himself a *daimôn*. This is not, however, the highest state attained by the inspired philosopher. His love of wisdom and love of beauty lead him upward.

> from one instance of physical beauty to two and from two to all, then from physical beauty to moral beauty, and from moral beauty to the beauty of knowledge, until from knowledge of various kinds one arrives at the supreme knowledge whose object is that absolute beauty, and knows at last what absolute beauty is. (211c, trans., Hamilton)

The inspired philosopher ascends the ladder of dialectic rung by rung until he reaches the final stages, the knowledge (*mathēma*, 211c8) of absolute Beauty, which is also knowledge of the Good. At this stage he has attained

\(^{60}\) On the fragmentation of human nature and its restoration in Socrates, see Clay 200.
what is for Plato the goal of philosophy: he has become as god, knowing good from evil. At this stage the inspired philosopher gazes upon immortal Beauty with that immortal part of himself, the eye of the soul, and in so doing becomes immortal. He enters into union with absolute Beauty and begets true arête (212a). He is no longer a daimôn, half-way between mortal and immortal; he has attained immortality and become like god. Plato divests the inspired poet of even his humanity; he invests the inspired philosopher with divinity.

In the Symposium, "possession" and "enthusiasm" take on new meaning. The inspired poet of the Ion is forcefully possessed by a god, completely controlled by a power outside himself. He becomes entheos, full of the god, only when he is emptied of his own faculties: deprivation of nous is an essential condition for inspiration. The philosopher of the Symposium is also possessed and entheos, but in a very different way. The language of the final revelation in the Symposium is, as has often been noted, the language of the culminating revelation of the mysteries. The philosopher of the Symposium, like the initiate into the highest mysteries, 

61 Cornford 128, probably goes too far in suggesting that "Plato believed that the goal of philosophy was that man would become a god, knowing good from evil." Plato does, however, believe that man can become like god, that he can attain divine attributes. Here in the Symposium he indicates that man may attain immortality. In the Republic he states that the philosopher in associating with what is divine and ordered becomes himself ordered and divine (theios) as far as a man can (500d). The philosopher in turn, basing his judgement on what Homer called the image and likeness of god (Godείδες τε καὶ Θεοεικέλου) existing in man, makes human characters as dear to the gods as possible. Taylor, PMW, 225, would seem to be correct in his suggestion that Plato views "the attainment of 'deiformity' as the real 'work of man'."

62 e.g. by Cornford, 127; Taylor, PMW, 231; Markus 140.
receives, in a moment of sudden illumination, a revelation of divine beauty, and enters into union with the divine. It is in this union that the philosopher, like the initiate into the mysteries, becomes entheos: he is in the divine and the divine is in him. He enters into the possession of absolute Beauty (212b3) and is himself possessed by it. The union results in the creation of offspring: the philosopher, "enthusiastic" and "possessed" in a new and exalted sense brings forth true areté. There is in the whole process no question of the deprivation of nous. On the contrary, it is by the operation of his own reasoning power that the philosopher contemplates absolute Beauty; it is by the agency of reason that he enters into union with the divine and becomes immortal.

This new kind of "possession" and "enthusiasm" must yield a new form of literature. This new literature, the product of passion blended with reason will be a poetry of both passion and reason, or, better, a poetry of the "passion of the reason." This new poetry, the product of emotion purified by intellect, will be a poetry purified of its dangerous element.

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63 Suggested by Taylor PMW, 231: "Science here passes in the end into direct 'contact,' or as the schoolmen say, 'vision,' an apprehension of an object which is no longer 'knowing about' it, knowing propositions which can be predicated of it, but an actual possession of and being possessed by it."

64 Many have commented on this paradox, e.g., Bury xlvii: "in this final stage, the Eros that is operant and prolific intellection, 'the passion of the reason': Jowett, I 532-533: "The union of the greatest comprehension of knowledge and the burning intensity of love is a contradiction in nature....Yet this 'passion of the reason' is the theme of the Symposium of Plato."

65 The notion of the purifying of emotion by intellect is suggested by Greene 22: [We do not] have in the Symposium merely a dialectic tinged with emotion, such as we undoubtedly find in the Republic. We have rather the purifying of emotion by intellect."
We recall Grube's description of the poetic process of the *Ion*:

The whole process...is purely emotional; it has nothing to do with reason or knowledge; the critical faculty is completely dormant and it is precisely this emotional surrender uncontrolled by reason which Plato distrusts and believes to be dangerous.\(^66\)

The process has now been reversed. The literary process of the *Symposium* is not "purely emotional"; it is a process in which emotion is purified by intellect. The new process has everything to do with reason and knowledge. Reason plays a vitally important role in the ascent: it is by the operation of his reasoning power that the philosopher beholds absolute Beauty and enters into union with it (212a1-2). Knowledge is the ultimate goal of the philosopher: at the final stage in the ascent he catches sight of the one true knowledge (\(\varepsilon\pi\iota\gamma\iota\mu\nu\nu\,\mu\iota\alpha\nu\) 210d7), the knowledge of Beauty; he arrives at last at the supreme knowledge (\(\tau\omega\,\mu\lambda\iota\theta\omicron\mu\alpha\) 211b7), the knowledge of absolute Beauty, and knows at last what absolute Beauty is. The philosopher in his ascent attains what is to Plato the only true knowledge, the knowledge of the Form. In the new process, the critical faculty is never dormant: reason is operative at every stage in the ascent. There is in the new process no hint of "emotional surrender uncontrolled by reason." \(\epsilon\rho\omicron\omicron\omicron\) is the best synergos of the philosopher’s own physis (212b3): passion is a helper, an assistant, an ally of the philosopher’s own faculties; the reason is always king. This new process, characterized by reason and knowledge, must yield a poetry characterized by reason and knowledge.

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\(^66\) Grube, GRC, 49.
The philosopher has ascended to the heights, and, like the mystic who receives a culminating revelation in a blaze of light, has received a sudden revelation of divine Beauty, pure and clear and unalloyed (211e). As philosopher, he has beheld the form of Beauty; as poet, he must convey his vision to the people. As philosopher, he has ascended from the world of appearance to the world of reality, from a world of darkness to a world of light. As poet, he must find concrete language in which to express abstract reality; he must find words with which to describe ineffable light. He has seen a new vision; he must express that new vision in a new form. This new form must be one that points beyond itself, one that leads upward to the new vision. It must not focus attention upon itself and its own reflected beauty, but must direct attention beyond itself to the Beauty of which it is a reflection. The new form must set the reader upon the first rungs of the ladder and lead him upward step by step through the process of dialectic to a knowledge of the Forms. Plato is, if not the creator, at least the perfecter of the only literary form which can fulfil these demands: the form of the dialogue.

The written dialogue, as Friedlander notes, "transmits its

67 Moravcsik, "Noetic Aspiration and Artistic Inspiration," 30, notes that the products of philosophic inspiration (which he terms "noetic aspiration"), unlike the products of artistic inspiration, succeed in pointing beyond themselves to higher levels: "while the objects and products of noetic aspiration are intrinsically good, the objects and products of inspiration have at best instrumental value, insofar as they contribute to the seeking of understanding on higher, more theoretical levels. At their worst they lead us astray, since they suggest the self-contained nature of art and its allegedly intrinsically meritorious insights, and hence keep us from reaching toward the kind of understanding that culminates in the contemplation of the Forms."
dialogical and dialectical dynamics to the reader.\textsuperscript{68} By means of the written dialogue the philosopher can lead his reader through the dialectical process, can guide him step by step up the ladder of ascent. By means of the dialogue, the philosopher who has knowledge and becomes as god can return to the world of men and direct others toward knowledge. He can direct his questions toward every reader, engage every reader in dialogical cross-questioning, and expose the ignorance of every man. In so doing he can set every man on the upward path toward true knowledge. By means of the dialogue, the man who has made the ascent and become truly sophos can assume once again the intermediary role of philosophos and guide others toward wisdom. He can implant in every man the love of wisdom that leads to the attainment of true sophia. By means of the dialogue, the philosopher who has beheld Beauty absolute, simple, separate, and everlasting can create in others an intense longing to behold that Beauty. He can find language in which to clothe his vision, words with which to express the ineffable. Here, if anywhere, there is abundant scope for the creativity of the philosopher-poet. By means of the dialogue, the philosopher who has entered into union with absolute Beauty and become immortal can return once more to the daemonic realm-in-between. He can assume once more the role of δαίμονις ἀληθός and lead others to the region where the mortal puts on immortality. By means of the dialogue, the philosopher who has received the culminating revelation in a blaze of light can return to the darkness of the daemonic realm and lead others, step by painful step, up to the light.

The philosopher has beheld the vision of Beauty; his task as

\textsuperscript{68} Friedlander, Plato I, 166.
poet is to enable others to see that vision. He must, like the philosopher of the Republic, return to the cave and lead others from darkness into light. The majority will refuse to follow. Many of these are incapable of making the journey: they do not have eyes to see. Others who have the capability find the ascent too painful; of their own will they decide to remain in the darkness of the cave rather than expose their eyes to the blazing light. Plato paints for us a vivid portrait of a man who has eyes but refuses to see, who has ears but refuses to hear: he paints for us in the vivid colours of human flesh a portrait of Alcibiades.69

69 In our reading of Alcibiades' speech we adopt the traditional view that this speech serves as a vindication of Socrates against the charge of the corruption of Alcibiades (cf. Bury lii). The failure of Alcibiades is, in our view, the fault of Alcibiades himself. This view has recently been challenged, notably by Gagarin in his article "Socrates' Hybris and Alcibiades' Failure," 22-37. Gagarin, pointing to the element of criticism in Alcibiades' speech (22ff), characterizes the speech as a condemnation, rather than a vindication, of Socrates and his method of teaching. The failure of Alcibiades and others is, according to Gagarin, a direct result of Socrates' hybris. Gagarin notes that both Socrates' superiority and his pretense of inferiority are, on several occasions and by several individuals, perceived as acts of hybris: Socrates' claiming of ignorance is perceived as hybris by Agathon (25); Socrates' military valour, his superiority in enduring hardships, is perceived as hybris by his fellow-soldiers (30-31); both Socrates' "music" (31) and his invulnerability in sexual affairs (32) are perceived as hybris by Alcibiades; Socrates' treatment of Charmides and Euthydemus is regarded, at least by Alcibiades, as hybristic. All those who attempt to learn from Socrates - Agathon, Charmides and Euthydemus, Alcibiades' himself - are, so Gagarin says, frustrated in their attempt by Socrates' hybris (35). No one in the dialogue learns anything; Socrates is, claims Gagarin, a failure as a teacher (37). Vlastos, "Socratic Irony," 93ff., suggests that Alcibiades' account demonstrates "how Socrates could have deceived without intending to deceive" (94). While acknowledging that some blame may attach to Socrates, Vlastos places the burden of guilt squarely of the shoulders of Alcibiades. Alcibiades is deceived "not by Socrates, but by himself" (93). This view, emphasizing the concept of moral autonomy (95) seems both more moderate and more plausible than that of Gagarin. We reject Gagarin's argument as relying too heavily on the perceptions (or misperceptions) of men unable or unwilling to follow Socrates. Plato, we believe, intends the reader to regard Socrates' military valour, his superiority in enduring hardships, his invulnerability to sexual temptation, as being in all ways admirable, in no way culpable; he intends the reader to see that the perception of Socrates' virtue as hybris is a misperception existing in unphilosophic minds.
Alcibiades is the Dionysiac man, the man of Bacchus and Bacchic frenzy. He appears before us suddenly, as if in a vision, exceedingly drunk and crowned with violets and ivy (212de). He is the human embodiment of Dionysus, god of tragedy and comedy, and god of wine. In wine there is truth, and Alcibiades' truth is the truth of poetry. By crowning Agathon and by leaving most of the ribbons on Agathon's head, Alcibiades affirms his own affiliation with poetry, his reluctance to depart from its truths and his preference for its methods. Like a poet, Alcibiades attempts to tell the truth through images (215a5). He describes Socrates by means of two images: Socrates is like those statues of Silenus, hollow inside and containing little figures of gods; Socrates is like the satyr Marsyas, charming men by the power that proceeds out of his mouth. Like a poet, Alcibiades can speak only of particulars; he has no knowledge of universal truth. Asked to speak about Love, he speaks of a particular love, of a "particular, contingent passion for a particular, contingent individual." His encomium of Eros is an encomium of Socrates (215a4). He cannot describe Love in general terms; he cannot give a universal account that covers all the particulars. Like a poet, Alcibiades believes that knowledge comes through experience. He concludes his speech with a warning to Agathon to learn from the experience of others rather than having to learn, like a fool, from

Alcibiades' failure is, we shall argue, not the result of Socrates' hybris but the result of Alcibiades' own deliberate refusal to follow Socrates and his teachings.

70 Nussbaum 152-164, draws attention to Alcibiades' poetic nature and poetic practices.

71 Ibid., 153.
his own experience (222b). His final words are the motto of the tragic poet: πολεμίζειν γνῶνα (222b7). According to Alcibiades, knowledge is gained not through the grasping of an abstract principle but through the undergoing of a concrete experience. Alcibiades' conceptions are poetic conceptions; his mania is the mania of poetry.

There exists, in addition to the mania and frenzy of poetry, another kind of madness, the mania and frenzy of philosophy (τῆς φιλοσοφοῦ μανίας τε καὶ βαξείδος, 218b3-4). Alcibiades has partaken of this madness (218b3); he has been wounded or stung in his heart or soul by philosophical logoi (218a5) which have taken hold of him and clung more fiercely than a serpent. The two kinds of madness are closely akin; there is, as John Anton suggests, a "Dionysian affinity"72 between poet and philosopher. The man possessed by the divine mania of the Muses may be the man capable of being possessed of and by the divine vision; the ecstatic and frenzied poet may be the man with the capacity to become a philosopher. We find such a man in Alcibiades. He is a man of passion, wine, and poetry; he is also a man whose sensitive Dionysian soul is most susceptible to the charms of philosophy. He has tasted of its madness, felt its sting; he has come under its dialogical spell. He is affected by the words of Socrates as others are affected by the words of the tragic poet. Whenever he hears the Socratic logoi he is driven out of his senses and possessed (ἐκπεπτάλημένοι ἐγμέν καὶ κατεχόμεθα 215d5-6); his soul is thrown into confusion (ἐτεθορὔβησο, 215e6). Under the spell of the Socratic logoi his heart leaps and tears pour down

72 Anton 50.
and he undergoes an emotional experience more intense than that of those who participate in Corybantic rites. Socrates is a flute-player more remarkable than Marsyas: Marsyas used to charm men by means of his instrument; Socrates produces the same effect by mere words (ψιλοῖς λόγοις, 215c7).

Alcibiades is the man who has ears to hear these words. Again and again he acknowledges the superiority of the Socratic logoi to any other form of discourse. He awards the prize for sophia to Socrates, the man who is at all times victorious over all men in logoi (213e). He testifies to the power of the Socratic logoi to cast a spell and stir the emotions (215a-e); he confesses that they have a hold on his soul (218a). He recognizes that the words of Socrates are, like Socrates himself, unique and beyond compare. On the surface, Socrates' talk seems ridiculous, talk of pack-asses and blacksmiths, cobblers and tanners; opened up, it is most divine, "almost the talk of a god," talk that "enshrines countless representations of ideal excellence" (222a3-4). Alcibiades opens up the Socratic logoi, penetrates their innermost recesses, and finds them to be the only logoi that have nous (222a1-3). He knows that Socrates and his logoi have nous, that all others are, by comparison, flitting shades; he knows that Socrates and his logoi have real substance, that all others are shadows (cf. Meno 99a). He recognizes instinctively that Socrates is the one man who can lead him from shadow to substance, from illusion to reality and truth. He has penetrated the depths of the Socratic logoi and understood their

73 Linforth, 140-144, presents an interesting discussion of the significance of this reference to the Corybantes.
meaning as few others have.

Alcibiades has ears, but refuses to hear. Acceptance of the Socratic logoi involves painful self-confrontation, painful self-knowledge; acceptance of the Socratic logoi involves arduous toil (210e6). Alcibiades undergoes the pain of self-recognition. He rejects the toil that would bring him release from that pain. Under the power of Socrates’ words Alcibiades is made to feel that he is no better than a slave (215e6-7): he is made to recognize his actual condition. Alcibiades’ life is in actual fact a life of slavery: he is enslaved to the particular; to the beauty that is in the one. Socrates’ words compel Alcibiades to recognize that he is in a state of slavery. But they do more than that: they offer him freedom from slavery, release from his bondage to the particular. The Socratic logoi point to a beauty beyond the particular. In contemplating this manifold beauty, Alcibiades might cease to resemble a house-slave in love with the beauty of the one, might cease to be a slave mean and petty (210cd). Under the power of Socrates’ words Alcibiades is made to feel that his life is not worth living (216a): again he is made to recognize his actual condition. Alcibiades’ life is the life of passion and poetry; for Socrates, the one life worth living is the life of discipline and dialectic. Alcibiades’ life is the unexamined life, and the unexamined life is not worth living for a man (Apol. 38a5-6). Socrates’ words cause Alcibiades to recognize the futility of his present existence. But they do more than that: the Socratic logoi offer him a life spent in the contemplation of absolute Beauty, the life that is, above all others, the life worth living (211d1-2). There is, however, a cost, and for Alcibiades the cost is too great.
Education is a turning around, and Alcibiades must turn from his present life. He must climb the ladder rung by rung and must, in making the ascent, turn his back upon the kind of pleasures that are most attractive to him. He must concentrate upon the pleasures of the mind and give up the pleasures of the body (cf. Rep. 485d). Alcibiades refuses to relinquish those physical pleasures. He refuses to make the ascent. In refusing, he denies a part of his own nature and renounces his affinity to the philosophic man. A part of him desires intensely the freedom and knowledge of absolute Beauty which Socrates offers; by force he denies the desires of that better part. By force he stops up his ears and runs away, as from the Sirens (216a6-7). Even as he does so, he is conscious that he has made the wrong decision; he knows he should do as Socrates bids (216b4). He is aware that he has chosen slavery instead of freedom: he likens his actions to those of a runaway slave (\( \delta\sigma\omega\tau\varepsilon\tau\varepsilon\nu\), 216b5). He is ashamed of his decision, and turns his self-loathing upon Socrates: like the man chained to the shadows of the cave he would gladly kill the man who attempts to lead him upward to freedom and reality (216c1; cf. Rep. 517a).

Alcibiades is the man who has eyes to see. He is the man capable of looking beneath Socrates' Silenus-like exterior, the man capable of opening him up and discovering the images of the gods within (215b3). Alcibiades has a gift of sight that few possess. He can truthfully claim to be the one man among the company who knows Socrates, the one man who can reveal him to the others: "none of you knows him; but I will reveal him" (216c7-d1). He has reason to believe that he may be the only man who
has looked inside Socrates and seen the divine images: "I don't know if anyone has seen the images within; but I saw them once" (216e6-7). Alcibiades has seen the images and has found them to be "divine" and "golden" and "all-beautiful" and "marvellous" (216e7-217a1), reflections of the divine Beauty which Socrates himself has seen. The soul of Alcibiades is moved by the vision: he feels compelled to do all that Socrates bids (217a1-2); he is filled with the desire to know all that Socrates knows (217a4-5). He desires also to become as good as possible, and realizes that it is only through Socrates that he can attain this goal (218d2-3). Alcibiades recognizes the supreme worth of the beauty he sees in Socrates: he recognizes that it is a beauty that is incomparable and far superior to his own physical beauty; he recognizes that if he could exchange his own beauty for the beauty that is in Socrates he would be exchanging the appearance of beauty for true beauty, brass for gold (218e). The vision of the beauty that is within Socrates has had its proper effect on Alcibiades: the vision has filled Alcibiades with a desirous longing for knowledge, for goodness, for beauty, for reality and truth. The vision of beauty has inspired in Alcibiades the desire to make the ascent to the form of Beauty.

Alcibiades has eyes, but refuses to see. A man's mental vision does not begin to grow keen until his physical vision is past its prime, and Alcibiades is far from reaching that point (219a). Alcibiades has the capacity to behold absolute Beauty. He has seen the beauty that is within Socrates and has recognized that there is something divine about this beauty. A part of him longs to make the ascent and to see with the eye of the soul that divine Beauty, pure and clear and unalloyed of which all earthly beauty,
even that within Socrates, is but a dim reflection. But before he can attain that vision the eye of the body must grow dim. In order to attain that vision he must restrain his passion toward the beauty that is in one body, look down upon it, and regard it as trivial (210b4-6). Alcibiades' mania (213d6) is a passion for one particular body, Erōs for the beauty that is in the one. His mania is never tempered by reason. He never restrains his passion for the one, never looks down upon that passion. The eye of his body never grows dim. He remains always a figure of human flesh and colour, a mass of perishable rubbish (211e1-2) and, by his own admission, a mass of imperfections (216a5). He has seen a more-than-human beauty, but refuses in the end to exchange appearance for reality, brass for gold. He has has a glimpse of divine beauty, but prefers the shadows of the cave. He chooses to live in darkness, receiving honour from the many who live among the shadows (216b5; cf. Rep. 516c). He never leaves the cave. He remains always chained to the shadows, chained by his own refusal to see.

Alcibiades has eyes to see and ears to hear. He has the inborn capacity to consort with reality, but chooses to live among the multiplicity of particular things (cf. Rep. 490b). His failure to apprehend the highest reality is the result of his deliberate refusal to use his inborn capacities. This refusal is a denial of his own nature, a renouncement of his Dionysian affinity to the philosophic man. Alcibiades is of all men the man most susceptible to the dialogical spell. It is only by force (216a6) that he can stop up his ears and flee the spell cast by the Socratic logoi.
The Socratic *logoi* cast their own spell. The words of the inspired philosopher, like the words of the inspired poet, have the power to charm. The spell cast by the philosopher is, however, the antithesis of the spell cast by the poet.\textsuperscript{74} Poetry has a hypnotic effect upon the hearer.\textsuperscript{75}

It lulls men to sleep among the shadows of the cave. Inspired poetry pours suggestions into unwary minds like water into empty vessels and causes the hearer to accept those suggestions unquestioningly. Poetry deceives men about their own condition and fosters a false sense of complacency: it causes poet and hearer alike to believe they are wise when in fact they know nothing, and makes them content with their ignorance. Poetry deceives men about the conditions around them and instils a sense of satisfaction with their present state: it causes them to mistake shadow for substance, illusion for reality, appearance for truth; it makes them content with appearance, shadow and illusion. Poetry binds men to the beauty within it rather than pointing to the beauty beyond it; it causes them to focus their eyes on a flickering image rather than to seek that one true Beauty of which all other beauty is a dim and uncertain reflection. Poetry enslaves men to illusion; it binds them to the shadows of the cave.

\textsuperscript{74} Bacon 427, notes that the spell cast by Socrates is the antithesis of Agathon's spell.

\textsuperscript{75} Havelock comments repeatedly on the hypnotic effects of poetry. The following statement is typical: "The audience found enjoyment and relaxation as they were themselves partly hypnotised by their response to a series of rhythmic patterns, verbal, vocal, instrumental, and physical ..." (152). He suggests that "the educational system which transmitted the Hellenic mores has ... relied on the perpetual stimulation of the young in a kind of hypnotic trance ..." (208). While Havelock overstates his case, he does perform a service in pointing out a fundamental difference between two educational systems, the poetic and the philosophic. Warry also notes that "Plato regards the poetic process as a form of hypnotism ..." (76).
Philosophy intends to evoke an opposite response. The inspired *logoi* of the philosopher are designed to arouse in the soul of the hearer a divine discontent. The Socratic *logoi* attempt to expose a man's ignorance in order to set him on the path of knowledge. The Socratic *logoi* reveal to a man the fact that his life is no better than a slave's, the fact that his present life is not worth living. The piping of the satyr offers freedom and release. Marsyas calls to a man to wake from his sleep. He calls him to forsake his present life, to give up shadow for substance, illusion for reality, appearance for truth; he calls him to exchange brass for pure gold. The piper calls a man to rise, to turn his head, to walk, to look up toward the light (*Rep.* 515c). The process is a painful one. It involves the pain of self-realization and the pain of self-denial. The one who follows this piper must realize that he is a mass of human imperfections; he must at every step deny his passion, reject his former loves. The piper calls a man to leave the cave, to ascend to the region of absolute Beauty, the realm of pure light. The ascent is an arduous one. It involves self-discipline and the rigorous discipline of dialectic. The one who follows this piper must display a willingness to have his own ignorance exposed; he must submit his every thought to another's relentless scrutiny and criticism and must often have his thoughts refuted. He must be willing to relinquish false opinion; he must learn to explain and justify his true beliefs (*Meno.* 98a). Knowledge will not be poured into him like water; it must be gained by strenuous toil. The end of all this toil is freedom and knowledge: freedom from the shadows of the cave, freedom from bondage to appearance, illusion and deception; knowledge of Beauty itself (211c6), the one knowledge of the Beauty that is one, absolute, separate, unique, and eternal (211b1-2).
The philosopher continues to hold out his offer of knowledge; Marsyas continues to pipe his enchanting tune. Through the medium of the written dialogue Socrates holds out to every man the prospect of freedom from slavery, the promise of wisdom and knowledge. Most will refuse his offer. Most will remain in their ignorance, chained forever to the darkness of the cave. Some cannot hear the sounds of the satyr; others, like Alcibiades, have ears but refuse to hear. Socrates leads up an arduous path. Not many will follow this piper.

Alcibiades refuses the dialectical path. He refuses the life of philosophy, preferring to become a king. He chooses to neglect the needs of his own soul and to direct his attention to the needs of the city (216a). The consequences for the Athenians are disastrous.76 Alcibiades has the potential to become a philosopher: he is the man with the inborn capacity to consort with reality (Rep. 490b). His is the best nature, the nature capable of attaining the highest good. His is the best nature which, when corrupted, can bring the greatest evils upon cities and individuals (cf. Rep. 495b). The corruption of Alcibiades' nature is tragic and has tragic consequences both for himself and for the polis. It is the repetition of such a tragedy that Plato, by the founding of his ideal state, intends to avert.

Central to the growth and development of this new state is his educational system, a system which will foster the optimum growth and development of the best individuals. Those with the greatest potential will be trained in

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76 Gagarin 33, notes that after the Peloponnesian War Alcibiades "was commonly regarded as having contributed largely to Athens defeat." He cites Thucydides (6.15) and Xenophon (1.2.12-13) as supporters of this view.
philosophy; only after they have become philosophers will they become kings (Rep. 499b). Art and literature will play an important part in the new educational system. We shall turn our attention now to Plato's Republic and to the nature and function of poetry in that ideal state.
CHAPTER III
THE REPUBLIC: POETIC IMITATION, PHILOSOPHIC IMITATION AND INSPIRATION

The theory of art and literature predominates in the Republic is that of imitation. Plato in this dialogue uses the term mimēsis and its cognates in a range of contexts and with a variety of applications. In Book III and X he uses mimēsis in its lowest and most pejorative sense in order to condemn the poets. In other parts of the Republic he uses the term and concept of mimēsis to describe the most exalted activity of the philosopher. Our discussion of imitation in the Republic will be in two parts: we shall deal in Part 1 with mimēsis in its most literal and condemnatory sense, in Part 2 with mimēsis of a higher kind.

Plato’s use of mimēsis in the third and tenth books of the Republic has provoked endless controversy. This has centred around the question of whether or not Plato in these two books displays a consistent attitude toward poetry and art. Some critics allege that Plato changes both the meaning of mimēsis and his attitude toward mimetic art. Others claim that while there are superficial or apparent discrepancies, there is nevertheless an underlying consistency, a real unity of thought. We shall take as a representation of those who charge Plato with inconsistency the critic Julia Annas, and shall examine her views in some detail. We shall attempt to defend Plato against the charge of inconsistency by pointing out some of the weakness in Annas's arguments. In our reply to Annas we shall follow to some extent the line of reasoning of J. Tate, one of the staunchest
defenders of Plato's consistency in this area.

Annas lays several charges against Plato. She alleges that Plato changes the meaning of imitation and changes his position with regard to the acceptance of poetry into his ideal state. She states that the first two arguments of Book X are "outrageous": there are, she feels, no obvious parallels between the effects of optical illusions and the effects of poetry. She alleges finally that Plato in the first two arguments of Book X presents poetry as trivial, whereas elsewhere he presents it as important and dangerous. We shall attempt a reply to each of these charges.

Plato's comments on mimēsis of a higher kind have also provoked endless controversy, centering, in this case, around the question of whether or not Plato conceives of art and poetry that can imitate the Forms. The opinions of critics fall into roughly three categories: 1) the opinion held by Annas, Nehemas, Collingwood, and Havelock, that art cannot in any sense imitate the Forms; 2) the opinion held by Verdenius, Golden, Battin, and Hall, that the artist can in some indirect sense imitate the Forms; 3) the opinion of Grube, Greene, Atkins, Grey, and Tate, that imitation of the Forms is possible but can only be accomplished by the philosopher. In Part 2 of this chapter we shall briefly survey the views of each of these critics and by examining various passages in the Republic shall attempt to determine Plato's views on good art, and in particular his views on art as imitation of the Forms.

Plato's highest ideal for mimetic art is, we shall argue, realized in the
works of Plato himself: the Republic is a city modelled on the Forms of beauty, justice, and goodness; every Socratic dialogue is an imitation of a good man and thus indirectly an imitation of the Good. Finally, we shall suggest that the artist who is imitative in the highest sense is also inspired by his vision of the eidos of the Good.

1. Poetic Imitation: Republic III and X

Controversy has raged and continues to range over Plato's theory of artistic mimēsis as delineated in the third and the tenth books of the Republic. Critics allege that Plato in Book X expresses opinions inconsistent with those he holds in Book III, and changes both the meaning of mimēsis and his position in regard to the role of mimetic art in his ideal state. Collingwood, for example, in his article "Plato's Philosophy of Art" states that whereas in Book III only some art is mimetic, Plato in Book X, in defiance of a still implied distinction between mimetic and non-mimetic art (διν μιμητική, 595a), argues that all art is mimetic. This "change of terminology" is, says Collingwood, "remarkable." And not only remarkable," but "unintelligible except on the hypothesis that Plato arrived at the theory of art as double imitation after writing the third book of the Republic." ¹ Collingwood is troubled not only by Plato's change of terminology but also by what he regards as a change of position. In his book The Principles of Art he asserts that whereas in the third book "some representative poetry is banished because what it represents is trivial or evil," in the tenth book "all

¹ Collingwood, "Philosophy" 166.
representative poetry is banished because it is representative." "Plato's position," states Collingwood unequivocally, "has changed.""^2

Urmson takes a similar stance. He points out that while the reader has every reason to expect that Plato in Book X will mean by mimēsis exactly what he meant by the words in Book III, his expectations are not met. Plato in Book X gives an account of mimēsis which, according to Urmson, "affords absolutely no basis whatever for the distinction of drama and narrative made in Book 3."^3 Urmson, like Collingwood, believes that Plato has changed not only his definition of mimēsis but also his position in regard to the acceptance or rejection of mimetic poetry. He claims that whereas in the third book "not all even of directly dramatic acting is forbidden, not all of mimētike as there defined," in the tenth book Plato calls for "the total elimination of mimetic poetry." Plato in Book X is, according to Urmson, defending "a different conception of mimēsis."^4 and this scholar rejects any attempt to reconcile these differences. He scorns the suggestion that Book X may be regarded as supplementary to Book III: "we can represent the argument of Book 10 as resuming that of Book 3 only by doing gross violence to one or the other or both."^5

Other commentators, while acknowledging that there are apparent inconsistencies between the two books, feel that they must do Plato the

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^2 Collingwood, The Principles of Art, 47.

^3 Urmson 128.

^4 Ibid., 127.

^5 Ibid., 129.
justice of assuming that beneath the surface inconsistency there is an underlying unity of thought. Such an approach is, they feel, both "more fruitful" and "more philosophical" than the labouring of "inconsistencies in appearance."6 If Plato appears to hold two inconsistent attitudes toward mimēsis and the place of mimetic poetry in his state, the commentator must, they feel, undertake an investigation to determine the cause of the apparent discrepancy. The appearance of inconsistency is a "puzzle" to be solved.7 These commentators deny the validity of claims such as those made by Collingwood and Urmson.

Shorey, for example, insists that "the differences between the tenth and the third books of the Republic cannot be pressed."8 He refuses to entertain the notion that Plato after the composition of the third book discovers the psychological distinctions brought out in the intervening books and formulates a new theory of mimēsis based on these new-found distinctions. "The third book," he points out, "hints that there is more to come" (ἰὼς δὲ καὶ πλεῖω ἐτὶ τούτων, 394d7).9

6 Maguire, quoted by Shorey, Unity, 5.

7 See Lodge 169: "the puzzle of the two inconsistent attitudes as to the value of art, centres right here in the term 'mimēsis'. We shall therefore subject this term to special study: including in our investigation, not only the treatment in Book X of the Republic but the treatment in other parts of the Republic..." Cf. Atkins 36: "It is true that his attitude to poetry presents difficulties of a special kind; though, viewed in their proper setting, his remarks are by no means as contradictory and puzzling as they are sometimes made out to be."

8 Shorey, Unity, 81.

9 Ibid. The import of this phrase has been much debated. Shorey, Republic I, 232, comments further: "This seems to imply that Plato already had in mind the extension of the discussion in the tenth book to the whole question of the moral effect of poetry and art." Brownson 89 holds a
apparent change in the meaning of *mimesis* results according to Shorey, simply from the fact that "in emphasizing the distinction between dramatic and narrative poetry Plato carelessly speaks as if the former alone were imitative."¹⁰

Rosen, responding directly to Collingwood's statement that for Plato in Book III only some art is mimetic, suggests that the reader must search beneath the literal level to find out Plato's meaning. The apparent contradiction may, he suggests, be resolved either by understanding Plato to be here using *mimesis* "in a specialised rather than in a general sense" or by understanding Socrates' statement at 394d7 to mean "that the details concerning *mimesis* will receive their full treatment in Book X."¹¹ The reader of Plato must, Rosen says, "either face a contradiction in the Republic, or resolve it."¹² He prefers the second approach.

Cross and Woozley, responding to Collingwood's statement that similar view: "Plato has clearly prepared the way in III for the further discussion in X . . . . These words (at 394d) may indeed be referred to the implied condemnation which soon follows, of epic poetry which is both mimetic and bad; but it is more natural with Jowett to find here an allusion to the argument of X, which distinctly goes 'further' both in its absolute condemnation of all mimetic poetry and in its extension of the meaning of that term". Adam, Republic I, 147, takes the opposite position: "In this remark J. and C. find 'an anticipation of the condemnation of epic poetry in Book X.' I cannot see that it does more than prepare the way for ἀλλ' ἐπιγνώσκοντα τὸ νῦν - ἔφεσον ." Cf. Greene 31: This is "not a reference to the discussion of epic in the tenth book as Jowett and Campbell wrongly hold. Here the reference is clearly to the question that immediately follows: shall the guardians be imitators at all (394e)?"

¹⁰ Ibid., 82.
¹¹ Rosen 138.
¹² Ibid., 140.
whereas in the third book some imitative poetry is retained, in the tenth book all imitative poetry is banished because it is imitative, pronounce Collingwood's view "unconvincing." The view that Plato's attitude has changed is, they suggest, inadequate for three reasons: a) it does not explain Plato's reference at the beginning of Book X to his earlier exclusion of all imitative poetry; b) it rests in part on the unlikely supposition that Plato did not regard the hymns to the gods and the praises of good men as imitative; and c) it fails to recognize that whereas in Book III Plato's use of "imitation" was purely stylistic, in Book X "imitation" no longer has this narrowly stylistic sense. Rejecting Collingwood's charge that Plato's attitude is inconsistent, Cross and Woozley turn for a more convincing line of argument to the views of Professor Tate.

Tate is perhaps Plato's staunchest defender against charges of inconsistency. Firmly convinced that there is in Plato "no real inconsistency of thought," in two articles he undertook a vigorous defence of Plato against the charges laid by critics. In the first of these articles, "Imitation' in Plato's Republic," he attempted to prove that Plato holds a consistent attitude toward poetry by positing the thesis that "the true kind of imitation is in some sense non-imitative." By distinguishing between a true and a false kind of imitation, Tate demonstrated to his own satisfaction that "there is a far greater degree of consistency in Plato's utterances regarding poetry and art than commentators have hitherto allowed." In his

12 Cross and Woozley 277.
13 Tate, "Imitation' in Plato's Republic" (hereafter "Imitation"), 16.
14 Ibid., 23.
second article, "Plato and 'Imitation',"\(^{15}\) he affirmed the correctness of his distinction between a good and a bad sense of imitation, and offered further supporting considerations. Tate's articles have been extremely influential and have won the approval and support of many commentators.\(^{16}\)

Julia Annas is as severe in her criticism of Plato as Tate is staunch in his defense. She is as firmly convinced of Plato's inconsistency as Tate is of Plato's consistency. In her book *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* Annas inveighs repeatedly against Plato's double-mindedness: Plato in Book X "adds a discussion of poetry that changes the meaning and scope of 'imitation' and argues that all poetry should be banished, whereas Book 3 was more tolerant",\(^{17}\) he holds "two inconsistent views about poetry",\(^{18}\) he is "deeply divided about poetry and cares passionately about it in two quite inconsistent ways."\(^{19}\) In her article "Plato on the Triviality of Literature" Annas launches a similarly vehement attack: Plato "is deeply split about art, and especially about poetry"; because he is pulled in two directions "he treats poetry, inconsistently, as both trivial and dangerous."\(^{20}\) The inconsistencies in Plato's thought are, Annas feels, both real and glaring.

\(^{15}\) This article will be referred to in footnotes by full title.

\(^{16}\) E.g. Cross and Woozley, whose favourable comments have already been noted; Sikes 76; Shorey, *What Plato Said*, 193; Oates 36.

\(^{17}\) Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (hereafter *Introduction*), 342.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 343.

\(^{20}\) Annas, "Plato on the Triviality of Literature" (hereafter "Triviality"), 20.
and must be faced rather than resolved. The contradictions between Books III and X are, in her opinion, blatant, and must be acknowledge rather than explained away. The argument of Book X cannot, according to Annas, be represented as resuming that of Book III; all attempts at resolution are misguided.

Tate and Annas represent two diametrically opposed theses. We shall follow Tate, Shorey, Maguire and others, in arguing that the alleged inconsistencies in Plato's works are often more apparent than real, and that they are, in Rosen's words, "susceptible of resolution on a deeper level." Contrary to Annas, Urmson and others, we believe that a later chapter in one of Plato's works must be read in the light of an earlier one, and that, in particular, Book X of the Republic can and must be read as supplementary to Book III. Annas's treatment of Book X of the Republic is, we believe, undesirably and unnecessarily negative. There is, in our opinion, a far greater unity and coherence in Plato's arguments than Annas allows. We shall attempt to expose some of the weakness in Annas's line of reasoning and to demonstrate that Plato's views on artistic and poetic mimesis are not so contradictory or so inconsistent as Annas and like-minded scholars allege.

Plato, so Annas claims, "changes the meaning and scope of 'imitation'." She notes that whereas in Book III only some poetry is imitative, in Book X all poetry is imitative, and then declares with some

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22 Rosen 139.

23 Annas, Introduction, 342.
concern: "but we soon see that something different is meant by 'imitation'." She raises several points of difference: whereas *mimēsis* in Book III was introduced in the context of the performing arts, in Book X it is discussed in the context of painting; whereas *mimēsis* in Book III was best thought of as expressing or representing, in Book X it is a literal or mindless copying of one particular aspect of a particular thing and is not creative in any way. Annas finds the change in the meaning of *mimēsis* most disturbing. Because of the shift of meaning, there can be, she feels, no real continuity between the two books; Book X cannot be read as resumptive of, or supplementary to, Book III. The discrepancy in meaning is, she believes, so great as to render Book III useless as an aid to the interpretation of Book X. Plato is, however, unaware of the difficulty. Speaking as if Book X can and should be read in the light of Book III he sets forth arguments which are, in the opinion of Annas, "outrageous."

Annas is both correct and incorrect in her allegation that in Book X "something different is meant by 'imitation'." Plato does in Book X, as Annas suggests, use the term *mimēsis* in a slightly different context and apply it to a different model. The difference in context and application does not, however, constitute a difference in definition. As McKeon points out in his very helpful article, "Literary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation in Antiquity," the meaning of a word may alter with a change in context yet the definition be retained. There are, in the normal and natural use of any word, both constants and variables. The word "imitation"

24 Ibid., 336.

25 McKeon 3.
in the Platonic dialogues, undergoes, as McKeon notes, "infinite gradations of meaning and application."\(^\text{26}\) Yet through the varying applications, the definition remains constant: \textit{mimēsis} denotes consistently a relation between something which is real and something else which is made like it. Through as infinite range of applications, \textit{mimēsis} indicates consistently "the lesser term of the proportion of being to appearance,"\(^\text{27}\) of truth to falsity, of knowledge to opinion. Plato does not so much change the definition of \textit{mimēsis} as vary its meaning and application; in Adam's words, he "gradually deepens and intensifies the connotation of \textit{mimēsis} as the dialogue advances."

The word first denotes dramatic as opposed to narrative style (392d-394d), later assumes an ethical import and expresses assimilation in matters of conduct (3943, 395c; cf. 401b-404c), and finally acquires an ontological or metaphysical significance (595cff.)\(^\text{28}\) The sense of the word \textit{mimēsis} in Book III is narrower than, rather than essentially different from, its meaning in Book X.\(^\text{29}\) The broadening and extension of meaning in Book X does not, contrary to what Annas believes, render Book III useless as an aid to the

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 10.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 9.

\(^{28}\) Adam, \textit{Republic} I, 144.

\(^{29}\) This is noted by Shorey, \textit{Republic} I, 224-225: "All art is essentially imitation for Plato and Aristotle .... But Plato .... complicates the matter...by sometimes using imitation in the narrower sense of dramatic dialogue as opposed to narration. An attentive reader will easily observe these distinctions." Cf. 228, 232. Many commentators have noted Plato's careful avoidance of a technical vocabulary, e.g. Shorey, \textit{Unity}, 4: "Plato avoided rather than sought a rigid technical terminology"; Tate, "Plato and 'Imitation'", 161: "The distinction between the two senses of imitation is .... clearly explicitly and deliberately made .... No doubt Plato would have made things easier for the mechanically-minded reader if he had used technical terms to distinguish the two senses. But at the time of writing the \textit{Republic} he had not yet descended to such devices." Cf. Grube, \textit{Plato's Thought}, 185.
reader in the interpretation of Book X. The degree of continuity between the two books is far greater than Annas allows. The reader must simply remain alert, aware of both the varying applications and the constant definition of mimesis.

Plato, so Annas claims, changes his position in regard to the acceptance of poetry into his ideal state. He attacks poetry in Book X in a way which is, according to Annas, unexpected, arbitrary, and "impossible to reconcile with Book III." Annas's allegation of inconsistency appears, at first sight, to be justified. She asserts that Plato refers to an earlier banishment of all imitative poetry (595a) although "at 396b-398b some, though restricted, imitation was left for the good person." And Plato does indeed say that he had earlier refused to admit as much of poetry as is imitative (ὡς ἐν οἷς μιμητική, 595a5), although at 396c he had allowed the virtuous man (μετριος ἀνήρ) to imitate the speech of a good man acting steadfastly and sensibly, and at 398b he had agreed to retain the poet who would imitate the diction of a good man. And yet Plato himself seems not to recognize any inconsistency. Quite the contrary, in fact. He opens the discussion in Book X by asserting in the strongest terms that the earlier organization of the state had been entirely correct, not least in the matter of poetry (595a). He further states, in terms equally strong, that the correctness of their absolute refusal to admit as much of poetry as is imitative is now even more plainly apparent (595a). He closes the discussion of poetry in Book X by affirming strongly that they


31 Ibid.
had earlier had good reason to banish poetry from their ideal state: "let this be our defence as we have returned to the subject of poetry, that it was reasonable for us to banish poetry from the city earlier, considering its nature" (607b). Is Annas correct in her allegation that Plato is inconsistent and that it is "impossible to reconcile" the views he expresses in Book III with those he expresses in Book X? Or is Plato, as he himself seems to feel, consistent, perhaps in some way that is not immediately apparent on a cursory reading?

Tate offers us a perceptive answer to these questions. He suggests that perhaps there is a sense in which the poetry which Plato admits is not imitative, that perhaps "the true kind of imitation is in some sense non-imitative." Tate points out that the guardians both are and are not allowed to be imitative. Imitation in which the guardians identify themselves with others unlike themselves, such imitation as would destroy the single-mindness which must characterize the guardian and would build inappropriate character (394a, 395e) is forbidden. Imitation in which the guardians imitate the qualities proper to their occupation, qualities such as courage, moderation and piety (395c), is permitted. Tate recognizes that while formally the second is the same as the first, really it is very different.33

32 Tate, "Imitation," 16.

33 Ibid., 17. Nehemas 49, denies the distinction that Tate makes: "nothing here, it seems to me, implies that 'imitation' has two senses; all that is implied is that one and the same activity can have two sorts of objects." Yet he later (61) allows that Plato himself makes this very distinction: "Here [394e8-9] the conditions for what constitutes a distinct activity are not supplied by the activity itself, not by the rules it follows, but only by its object: if the object is different, the imitation is different too. Playing the hero, Plato seems to think, is an activity distinct from playing the villain...."
The guardians who practised the second kind of imitation would be imitating not a character alien from their own but their own ideal character. Such imitation would involve not the suppression but the development of personality. Tate describes the three styles distinguished in Book III as: 1) the "non-imitative style" in which the virtuous man will at most times imitate only good men like himself but will occasionally imitate baser men for the sake of amusement or when they are performing a good action; 2) the "imitative style" in which the man of opposite character imitates every kind of speech, action, and noise; and 3) "a style compounded of 1) and 2)." The style which Tate classifies as "non-imitative" will contain very little imitation and only imitation which is ethically good; it is characterized by the restriction of the imitative element and so is regarded as "non-imitative." It is this "non-imitative" style which is to be admitted into Plato's state, the style which is "non-imitative," but "which nevertheless contains such kinds of imitation as the virtuous poet will not disdain to practise." Tate concludes that Plato was entirely correct in stating that he had earlier excluded imitative poetry. The reader must simply understand that Plato means by "imitative" the style of the "unphilosophic, unvirtuous poet."

Tate's explanation is, as Cross and Woozley claim, convincing and commendable in many ways. It is an explanation which makes sense of

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34 Tate, "Imitation," 18.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid. 19.
Plato's assertions that he had been entirely correct in his earlier decision to banish all imitative poetry from his ideal state (595a; 607b), an explanation which credits Plato with accuracy and honesty of speech rather than assuming that he forgets or misrepresents what he had earlier said. It is an explanation which sees through and beyond superficial and apparent inconsistencies to a deeper and truer consistency. Tate's perception that a style which is in a technical sense "imitative" may yet be, in a deeper and truer sense, "non-imitative" is a valuable one. Plato, as Tate points out in his subsequent article, "did not always choose to avoid verbal contradictions... but he was certainly alive to real self-contradictions." 38 Tate has demonstrated convincingly that the contradiction which Annas alleges to exist between Book III and the opening statement of Book X is verbal rather than real.

Annas, however, is firmly convinced that the contradictions are real. Believing that Plato has in Book X given mimēsis a meaning different from that which it had in Book III and that consequently Book X cannot be interpreted in the light of Book III, she finds the first two arguments of Book X "outrageous." Plato, she says, attempts in the first of these arguments (595a-602c) to establish "that the poet imitates in the pejorative sense established for the painter." 39 But the argument, Annas claims, does not work for the following reasons:

We cannot appeal to Book III to fill out the sense in which the poet imitates. For in Book III imitation was not what

38 Tate, "Plato and 'Imitation'," 161.

the poet did, but what the person did who recited or acted
the poet's works....

Annas’s allegation "that in Book III imitation was not what the poet did" is simply not true. For Plato at least twice in Book III, the first time with direct reference to Homer, speaks of imitation as what the poet does: "he and the other poets effect their narrative through imitation (\textit{di} \textit{m} \textit{im} \textit{t} \textit{o} \textit{ws} 393c); "we must decide whether we will allow our poets to narrate as imitators (\textit{m} \textit{im} \textit{ou} \textit{m} \textit{e} \textit{v} \textit{o} \textit{us}) , or whether they are to imitate some things and not others, and what kind of things in each case, or whether they are not to use imitation (\textit{m} \textit{me} \textit{i} \textit{ob} \textit{al}) at all" (394d, translation based on Grube). It is true that Plato goes on at 395a and following to refer to imitation as being, in Annas's words, "what the person did who recited or acted the poet’s works." But Annas seems to have overlooked the fact that imitation has in Book III not one, but three, aspects. Imitation is an activity engaged in by three separate groups of people: the poet, the actors, and the audience. Poets are imitators: they write tragedy and comedy and these are two forms of imitation (395a). Rhapsodes and actors are imitators: they perform or recite tragedy and comedy, and these, Plato repeats, are imitations (395ab). The members of the audience are imitators: the guardians as spectators enter into the spirit of the performance, identify with the actors, and in so doing are said to imitate (395d; cf 396ab). In

\footnote{Ibid., 339.}

\footnote{While these passages may seem to indicate that the guardians are to become actors, this is clearly impossible in Plato's scheme: the guardians, like all others in the city, have but one occupation (397e) and the task of the guardians is to rule. Adam, Republic I, 150, notes that it is not as actors but as spectators that the guardians imitate: "In what sense can the guardians be said to 'imitate' in such a case...? Not as actors, but as spectators. Acting involves three elements - the character, the actor, and}
the Republic as in the Ion (535e-536c) poet, actor and audience are three links in a chain. The poet is the first link, the first of three imitators, and Plato in Book III of the Republic recognizes him as such. Imitation in Book III was, contrary to what Annas asserts, not only "what the person did who recited or acted the poet's works," but first and foremost "what the poet did." We can therefore, contrary to what Annas asserts, "appeal to Book III to fill out the sense in which the poet imitates." 42

Plato's original readers would possess as an aid to the understanding of Book X not only the background material on poetic imitation presented in Book III, but also a general background of knowledge in relation to art as mimēsis. By Plato's time all art was considered to be a form of mimēsis; not only song and dance and vocal miming but also pictures and statues were commonly recognized as forms of imitation. 43 Originating in the sphere of the spectator. In good acting the spectator identifies himself with the actor through sympathy; and as the actor 'imitates' so does he. Such is Plato's theory, though merely glanced at here." Cf. Nettleship 101: "when Plato is talking of imitation we must think of the audience quite as much as of the dramatic poet or actor; the spectator enters into the situation and, so far as he does so, is an imitator."

42 Annas, Introduction, 338.

43 The pre-Platonic use of imitation has been surveyed by several commentators. Else 73ff., traces the history of mimēsis and its cognates from its earliest use in the sense of "miming" (dramatic or protodramatic sense) through a later use in the general sense of "imitation" of the actions of one person by another (ethical sense) to a still later use in the sense of "replication" (reproduction of an image or effigy in material form). Havelock, 57ff., combining the views of Else with those of Koller (Die Mimēsis in der Antike) concludes that "the use by Plato of the analogy of graphic art in Rep. 10 to illustrate poetic mimēsis has some pre-Platonic support" (59), and that "when Plato chose mimēsis as his all-inclusive term for 'poetry', his readers would have little difficulty in following him" (60). Webster demonstrates that Greek art and literature follow parallel courses through the period from Homer to Euripides. He traces the history of mimēsis and its cognates from its early use in the sense of vocal imitation.
vocal imitation and long used with reference to dramatic representation, *mimēsis* and its cognates were by the fourth century used with reference to painting and sculpture.\(^4^4\) *Mimēsis* had originally denoted the imitation of animate beings by voice and gesture; by the fourth century it denoted as well the imitation of inanimate objects. Music had been recognized as imitation by Pindar: Athena invented the music of flute in order to imitate the cry of Euryale (P. 12.21). Dramatic representation is considered by the author of Delian hymn to Apollo to be a form of imitation: the Delian maidens "know how to imitate the voices and the dance of men" (163).\(^4^5\) Poetry, Aristophanes suggests, may be a form of imitation: when the poet has no natural gift he resorts to the use of *mimēsis* (*Thesm*., 156). By a secondary development objects of art had by Plato's time come to be recognized as forms of *mimēsis*: a papyrus fragment (P.Oxy. 2162), probably of Aeschylus, tells of a satyr's astonishment at a painted or carved likeness of himself, an imitation (*mimēma*) worthy of Daedalus; Herodotus tells of "a wooden image of a corpse in a coffin, painted and carved in exact imitation" (2.78), and again refers to a statuette of Hephaestus as the *mimēsis* of a dwarf (3.37); Euripides describes the embroidered figures in Creusa's web as *mimēmata* of Erichthonius (*Ion* 1429). We can safely assume that Plato's original readers were accustomed to thinking of both oral and pictorial representation as forms of *mimēsis*.

to its fifth century application to art and literature (167-169).

\(^{44}\) Else 78; cf. Webster 168.

\(^{45}\) A similar reference to imitation of the human voice is found in Aeschylus, *Cho*. 564: Orestes and Pylades pretend to be Phocians, "imitating the sound of the Phocian tongue."
A parallel between dramatic and pictorial representation is implied by the fact that both were considered to be forms of mimēsis. Without reference to imitation, Simonides draws an explicit parallel between painting and poetry: "poetry is vocal painting" as "painting is silent poetry." The explicit parallel between poetry and painting drawn by Simonides may have been, like the parallel between poetry and painting implicit in the conception of both as mimēsis, familiar to many of Plato's early readers.

Annas is unable or unwilling to recognize the parallels between painting and poetry which Plato draws during the course of his first argument (595a-602c) and she seems to feel that any reader would have difficulty in comprehending the parallels Plato makes. The claim made about painting, Annas says, does not carry across to poetry; "poets do not do anything that can be compared to holding a mirror up to particular things." She objects repeatedly that there are no obvious parallels: the model of painting "does not fit poetry in any obvious way", "we cannot just use expressions like 'third from truth' of the poet's work, as Plato does, as though it were obvious what they meant when applied to poetry", it is "hardly obvious" that the picture on which the descriptions of the painters

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46 Cited by Adam, Republic II, 392: "ὁ ἐμπνεύσεως ἐν ἡμῖν τῷ καθένα σιωπῶς προσαναγάλησεν Πλωτ." de gloria Ath. 346F.

47 Annas, Introduction, 337.

48 Ibid.

49 Annas, "Triviality," 5.
depend has any application to poetry.\textsuperscript{50} Annas further objects that when Plato expands on his argument he does not use the same picture but "a quite different one." Plato first bases his argument on the theory of Forms: the craftsman imitates the Form and produces a bed; the painter imitates the way the bed appears. When Plato expands on this argument he speaks of the user with knowledge, the maker with true belief and the imitator with neither: "Forms," Annas objects, "do not fit into the picture at all."\textsuperscript{51}

This further objection may be quickly dismissed. Plato expands on his argument by giving another illustration. This illustration is subordinate to the argument and closely related to it, not extraneous as Annas seems to suggest. It is, as Greene more perceptively notes, "a subsidiary proof of the ignorance of the artist."\textsuperscript{52} It is true, as Annas claims, that this subsidiary proof does not depend on the theory of Forms. "Knowledge" as used in this subordinate illustration has no metaphysical significance; "knowledge" is not here, as elsewhere in Plato, knowledge of the Forms. Yet, as Adam points out, while the user does not have scientific knowledge of the Idea, he has something analogous to it: "the man who uses a single instrument correctly occupies the same relative position in regard to that object which the dialectician occupies in regard to the totality of things."\textsuperscript{53} The knowledge possessed by the user of a physical object is of a lesser kind than the knowledge possessed by the man who knows and copies the Forms, but it is

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{51} Annas, \textit{Introduction}, 337.

\textsuperscript{52} Greene 53.

\textsuperscript{53} Adam, \textit{Republic II}, 404.
nonetheless knowledge. The subordinate argument serves to emphasize Plato's important point that the imitative painter and poet have no knowledge of any kind.

Annas's earlier and broader objection may also be easily answered. Plato does not, as Annas claims, define the role of the imitative painter and then just assume, without explanation or justification, that the poet is an imitator in the same sense. For the explanation lies in Book III where Plato explained that the tragic poet was an imitator, and so it is now apparent that he is imitative in the same sense as the painter. As Tate shows, all that is true of the imitative painter who holds a mirror up to nature is also true of the imitative poet: "the tragedian, in assuming a character alien from his own . . . is necessarily remote from truth, because he can copy only appearances, the words and actions of such characters."54 Like the imitative painter, the imitative poet sees and copies only external appearance. Neither has understanding of the reality lying beneath that which he imitates. Both imitative poet and imitative painter are characterized by remoteness from the truth. It is only by recalling Plato's description in Book III that the reader can understand that tragedian and painter are imitators in the same sense. The reader can and must, contrary to Annas's assertion, "appeal to Book III to fill out the sense in which the poet imitates."55

The reader possesses in addition to the background knowledge of the

54 Tate, "Imitation," 20.
poet as imitator given in Book III the common knowledge that both painting and poetry are forms of *mimēsis*. When Plato in Book X reopens the discussion of *mimēsis*, he can allude almost in passing to the tragic poet as imitator (597e), then go on to extend his frame of reference from tragedy to its leader Homer, and reasonably expect that the alert reader, recalling the earlier discussion and aware that all art is *mimēsis*, will transfer his knowledge to the present discussion. The reader will then have no difficulty in recognizing the simple and obvious parallel between imitative poet and imitative painter: the poet imitates, for example, a shoemaker, using the medium of words; the painter imitates the shoemaker using the medium of paint. Their is no fundamental difference in their activity, only a difference in the medium they employ. The poet is, in Lodge's phrase, a "word-artist." Plato is able to build on this obvious parallel and to draw the further parallels which he himself wishes to make: both imitative poet and imitative painter lack knowledge, whether knowledge of the Forms (596bff.) or merely the knowledge possessed by the user of an artefact (601cff.); both imitate phantoms, not reality (598d) and produce phantoms, not reality (599a,d); both imitate a product three removes from nature (597e) and are themselves three removes from truth (597e; 599a-d). The average reader, mindful of Book III and of the concept of art as imitation, would surely have little difficulty in grasping either the basic parallel between imitative poetry and imitative painting or the further parallels Plato wishes to draw. But Annas seems unable to recognize these parallels.

Annas professes a similar inability to see parallels in Plato's second

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56 Lodge 170.
argument, the argument from scene painting and optical illusion to poetry (602c-605c): "Plato clearly thinks that there is a parallel here. But again it is far from clear that there is."57 "The argument from painting," she says, "does not carry over to poetry because the parts of the soul distinguished are not the same in both cases."58 "The argument," she claims, "works only if... the opposition to reason set up by painting is the same as the one set up by poetry."59 But is it essential to Plato's purposes, as Annas claims it is, for the lower part of the soul appealed to in the case of poetry to be the same as the lower part of the soul appealed to in the case of painting? Could not the fundamental opposition be the same but the particular components merely similar? Plato is here giving an analogy; he wishes to demonstrate that the poet is, in some respects, the antistrophon of the painter (605a). In order to make any analogy work we require two elements that are not the same but similar. In order to make this analogy work, Plato requires that the lower part of the soul appealed to in each case be not the same but similar. And there are many obvious similarities.

Anna herself points to some of these similarities while claiming at the same time not to see them. She claims that the tendency to be led by emotion that provides most of tragedy's best plots "can hardly be the same as the hasty or unreflective acceptance of visual impressions that leads one to think that a straight stick in water is actually bent."60 The part "taken

57 Annas, Introduction, 338.
58 Ibid. 339.
59 Annas, "Triviality," 8.
60 Annas, "Triviality," 8.
in by optical illusions" is, she says, "hardly the same" as the part "led by emotion." But Annas's very language points to the similarity. There are, surely, obvious parallels between being "taken in" and "being led." Being "taken in by optical illusions" and being "led by emotion" both involve uncritical acceptance, whether on a visual and physical level or on a deeper level, the level of the emotions. In both cases a part of the soul fails to listen to the counsel of reason, and passively and uncritically accepts appearance for reality. In one case an impression coming through the eye creates an optical illusion; in the other case an impression coming through the ear creates emotional delusion. Both imitative poet and imitative painter depend for their effects on creating illusions, whether visual or emotional. Both practise a form of sorcery or conjuring (602d); both deal in deception rather than truth.

Annas, anticipating such objections to her arguments as we have raised, says:

Some try to escape this problem by claiming that Plato does not even think that the two contrasts drawn are the same; his language at 603a7 and 605a-b suggests that he may think of the part of the soul opposed to reason as being not a unity but a collection of bad tendencies. But this does not

61 Annas, Introduction, 338.

62 Many commentators have noted this parallel, e.g. Atkins 45: "as the painter depends for his effects on achieving certain illusions of sight (by colour devices for instance, making things appear concave or convex), so the poet takes advantage of certain illusions of feeling to produce a distorted view of life ...."; Nettleship, 350: "As painting takes advantage of certain illusions of sight, so poetry takes advantage of certain illusions of feeling and emotion; and as, in the case of painting, reason is for the time being kept in abeyance by mere appearance, so, for poetry to have its effect the feeling of the moment must blind us to some facts .... Poetry makes the emotion of the moment exercise a sort of illusion over us."
avoid the problem that reason's role does not come out the same in the two cases.\textsuperscript{63}

She complains that Plato "is very vague here about the soul's lower part," that he treats it "simply as the trashy part, the part, whatever it is like, that opposes reason."\textsuperscript{64} Annas once again points to the answers to her own objections while seeming to be unaware that the answers are directly before her. Plato does, indeed, as Annas suggests, seem to think of the part of the soul opposed to reason as being a collection of bad tendencies. At 603a he speaks of the best part of the soul as the reckoning part and of the part which opposes it as one of the soul's inferior elements (\textit{\(\tau\iota\upsilon\varphi\alpha\iota\upsilon\lambda\nu\nu\)}).

At 605a he concludes that the poet, like the painter, appeals to one of the inferior parts of the soul. Plato is, as Annas claims, treating the lower part of the soul as a collection of bad tendencies. He is vague here about the soul's lower part simply because here, in the context of this particular analogy, finer distinctions do not matter.\textsuperscript{65} What matters here is that the soul's lower parts, regardless of other, individual characteristics or functions, are similar in that they are taken in by illusions and easily deceived.

\textsuperscript{63} Annas, \textit{Introduction}, 339.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{65} Nehemas 67, notes that Plato here "seems to oppose reason both to spirit (\textit{thymos}) and to appetite (\textit{epithumētikon}). He, too, suggests that finer distinctions are irrelevant to Plato's present purpose: "The explanation of why he opposes reason to spirit and appetite together, it seems to me, is simply that he does not need to distinguish these two for his present purposes. He wants to claim that poetry is likely to depict conflicts between reason on the one hand and some lower part of the soul on the other. Sometimes that lower part of the soul is appetite (for example, \textit{aphrodisia}, \textit{epithumētika}, 601d1-2); sometimes it is spirit (for example, \textit{achthos}, \textit{lupē} 603e7-8; \textit{thymos} 606d1)."
Reason's role too is similar in both cases. Again Annas, while denying the identity, points to the similarity.

In the case of both painting and poetry, reason enters as the reflective and careful corrector of first impressions; but its role in protecting us from acting on wrong visual impressions is hardly the same as its role in protecting us from acting on the feelings of the moment by giving us a correct estimate of the moral importance of the past and the future.66

Hardly the same, but similar in the ways Annas herself suggests: reason opposes those lower elements in the soul that are characterized by uncritical acceptance of impressions; reason is the reflective corrector of unreflective first impressions and the soul's protector against those rash and impulsive actions which without reason's intervention and opposition might result.

Anna's allegation that Plato's argument does not work because reason's role is not the same in both cases and because Plato thinks of the lower part of the soul as being merely the trashy and reason-resisting part is unjustified. Plato intends to make an analogy, and because of similarities in the two cases, the analogy works. Both imitative poet and imitative painter depend for their effects on illusion; both resist the work of reason and appeal to the lower part of the soul. Plato's claim is justified. He has successfully demonstrated that the imitative poet is, in two respects, the antistrophon of the imitative painter: both produce work that is inferior in regard to the truth and both appeal to an inferior part of the soul (605b).

There is a valid analogy between poet and painters. There are also

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limits to the analogy. Plato sees clearly both the analogy and its limits and intends his reader to see both. Both are important to his purposes. The limits to the analogy are no more accidental or no more detrimental to Plato's argument than is the analogy itself. Plato does not regard the cases of poet and painter as identical; he recognizes that there are important differences as well as important similarities between the two cases. This is evident from the fact that at 605a-b Plato first states that they are right in making the poet the antistrophon of the painter and immediately afterward states that they are right in not admitting the imitative poet into a well-governed state. There is no suggestion that the painter is to be similarly excluded. It is only the poet whom Plato refuses to admit to his city on the grounds that he stimulates and nurtures the inferior part of the soul and by strengthening it destroys the rational part. It is only the mimetic poet whom Plato charges with setting up an evil constitution (καλὴν πολιτείαν 605b6) in the individual soul by gratifying the mindless part. Plato at the beginning of Book X announced that his topic was imitative poetry and a justification of its earlier exclusion from the ideal state. The painter has been brought in by way of analogy, as an illustration of the fact that mimetic poetry is illusion, that it is dependent for its effects on illusion and that it appeals to a part of the soul that is susceptible to illusion. Having made his analogy Plato leaves the illustration from painting behind; he never alludes to the painter again. The poet alone is refused admission to the well-governed state. And it is against the poet alone that Plato goes on to level his greatest accusation, the charge that poetry is able to corrupt even good men (605c).
The poet and not the painter is banished because the poet differs from the painter in a most significant way: the effect of the poet upon his listeners is much more serious and much more dangerous than the effect of the painter upon the viewers of his work. The painter produces an optical illusion and deceives the uncritical eye; the poet causes emotional delusion and deceives the part of the mind that is uncritical about human action.\[^{67}\] The painter presents a distorted view of a physical object; the poet presents a distorted view of life. The painter by the various devices of *skiagraphia*\[^{68}\] makes objects in a one-dimensional painting appear concave or convex, distant or near; by a skilful use of shading and perspective he causes errors of vision (602d; cf.502cd; 523b). The poet places the actions of men in false perspective and causes errors of a much more serious kind. The mimetic poet by nature relates to the inferior part of the soul; he imitates the irascible and variable character which both he and his audience find easy to imitate and easy to understand (604e-605a). The mimetic poet portrays the man who is unmeasured in his sorrow, the man who dwells on his misfortunes and who has an insatiable appetite for lamentation, the man who like a child indulges in loud and extravagant displays of grief (604d-e). The law commands a man to remain as quiet as possible in misfortune; reason

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\[^{67}\] This is noted by Belfiore, "The Role of the Visual Arts in Plato's Ideal State" (hereafter "Visual Arts"),119: "The poet imitates _arete_ in the sense of "human excellence," though he knows nothing about it, and he deceives that part of the human mind which is uncritical about human action."

\[^{68}\] See Steven 149-155, for an informative discussion of *skiagraphia*, "shadow-painting." Steven notes that *skiagraphia* by Plato's time involved two illusionistic elements: "The word _σκιαγραφία_ was first applied to Apollodorus's discovery of the plastic use of shading; it did not include perspective painting. It is evident, however, from Plato's use of the word that by his time it might imply either or both of these illusionistic elements" (150).
instructs him to handle his affairs in the best possible way, the way of moderation. The man portrayed by the imitative poet obeys neither reason nor the law, but indulges the emotion which urges him to give way to his grief (604b-c). A kind of distortion has occurred: reason and the law which should rule in the soul have been resisted and their authority overthrown; the emotions which should be kept in a subservient position have been indulged and exalted to a position of supreme rule.\textsuperscript{69} The irrational elements have been stimulated, fostered and strengthened, the rational part destroyed; an evil constitution has been set up in the soul (605b-c). Because the mimetic poet alone has the power to exalt the emotions and to destroy the reason, the power to set up an evil polity in the individual soul, the mimetic poet alone is banished from the ideal state.

There is another, somewhat different but similarly dangerous, type of distortion produced by the poet. The mimetic poet creates the illusion that his characters are exemplars of arete.\textsuperscript{70} The poet is considered by his

\textsuperscript{69} Maguire 394, notes that the distortion in this case consists in enhancing the emotions at the expense of the reason: "The poetic instance of this [i.e. of "proportional dissimilarity," cf. \textit{Sophist} 235d-236b], which Plato later in \textit{Republic} X equates with the visual distortion of the painter is the representation of men indulging in self-pity (604d-605c). The distortion in this case apparently consists in enhancing one facet of the model (his emotions) at the expense of another (his reason), thus altering, for effect on a certain class of percipients, the proportion which really obtains between these facets in the model."

\textsuperscript{70} Karelis develops fully the idea that "poetry is imitation insofar as it could deceive an audience that the actions and agents represented are exemplars of various sorts of excellence" (320). Battin follows a similar line of argument: Plato in claiming that poetry is not true is "denying that poetry portrays true x's, that is, objects which are trustworthy exemplars of their kinds" (165). Belfiore, "Visual Arts," notes that whereas the painter imitates visible objects, the poet "imitates aretē, the excellence of the human mind," although "he is ignorant of moral and intellectual beauty" (119-120).
audience to be a guide to human behaviour, an authority on moral and ethical conduct, a representer of human excellence. Plato tells of the extravagant claims made for poets: "encomiasts of Homer tell us that this poet has educated Greece, and that for the conduct and education of human affairs he is worthy of our study and that we should order our entire lives by the guidance of this poet" (606e, translation based on Shorey). The poet's subject is men in action: "imitative poetry imitates men acting under compulsion or voluntarily, and as a result of their actions supposing themselves to have fared either well or ill" (603c). These men in action are taken by the audience to be sufficient guides to human conduct; they are thought to be role models, behavioural paradigms, exemplars of aretē. The poet however, contrary to what his audience believes, has no knowledge. As the painter who has no knowledge of cobbling paints a man who appears to him and to others equally ignorant to be a cobbler (600r-601a), so the poet who has no knowledge of human aretē depicts a man who appears to him and to others equally ignorant to be an exemplar of aretē. The painter does little harm; it is of little consequence if the viewers of his painting mistake an imposter who merely appears to be an expert for an expert.\textsuperscript{71} The poet can do a great deal of harm; it is of serious consequence if his listeners mistake his false paradigms for true patterns of human behaviour, imitate these false paradigms and model their lives after them. The listener may imitate a man acting immoderately in his grief and making ill-informed judgments about whether good or evil has befallen him, and himself act without moderation and make improper judgments about good and evil (603c-604e). The listener may imitate a god or hero acting in an immoderate or

\textsuperscript{71} Cf. Karelis 318.
unjust or impious manner, and himself act without moderation or justice or piety (387b-391e; cf. Euthyphro 5e-6c). The poet has depicted a distorted role model; the listener, reasonably but mistakenly assuming that this model is a genuine paradigm and a true guide to human behaviour, has patterned his life and conduct after a false model. The poet has portrayed and the listener imitated a false exemplar of arete. The mimetic poet is a false guide to human behaviour, a perverter of morals, and a pernicious influence on the lives of the citizens. This purveyor of distortion and evil must be banished from the ideal state.

Artistic illusion, the illusion produced by the painter, is trivial and harmless; poetic illusion is, on the other hand, important and dangerous. Plato uses the trivial and hypothetical example of visual illusion merely to illustrate the real and serious danger of the illusion created by the poet. No one is harmed by believing that a straight stick is bent or that a bent stick is straight; one may be seriously harmed by believing that a crooked and perverse character is a paradigm of excellence and by patterning one’s life after that false paradigm. Both poet and painter are illusionists and the works of both are illusion. The knowledge of the poet like the knowledge of the painter is mere eikasia, and the works of both belong to the realm of eikasia. The sphere of both poet and painter corresponds, in other words to the lowest division of the line in Book VI of the Republic (509e-510e) and

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Eikasia, in the context of the Republic, is "apprehension of or by means of images or shadows" (LSJ). The term connotes the taking of images or illusion for reality.
the shadows of the cave in Book VII (514a-517a). The poet, however, is far more likely than the painter to deceive. It is unlikely that anyone will be taken in by the painter's illusions. No one is likely to mistake a one-dimensional painting for its three-dimensional model any more than one is likely to mistake images, shadows and reflections in water and on bright surfaces, for actual physical objects (cf. 509e-510a) or to mistake the shadows of the cave for reality (cf. 515d). It is only when a painter displays his art at a distance that he is able to deceive any of his viewers, and even then he is able to deceive only children and fools (598c). The case of the poet is far different. With every performance of his dramas, with every recitation of his poems, he is able to deceive not only the ignorant multitude but even the best of men (605c).

The poet is far more likely than the painter to cause deception because he appeals not to the eye but to the emotions. The emotive force of his poetry causes even the best of men to enter fully into the poetic experience and to succumb to the poetic spell: "when even the best of us hear Homer or some other tragedian imitating one of the heroes sorrowing

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73 For an interesting discussion of eikasia, see Paton 69-104. Paton and others have remarked on the correspondence between mimēsis and the lowest division of the line and the shadows of the cave. Paton 74, notes that in the simile of the line the relation between the objects of eikasia and those of pístis is the relation of the copy to the original, and that "In the cave it is described as the relation of the shadow or reflexion to the thing which casts it, and the same view is suggested by the theory of mimēsis in the tenth Book." Murdoch 65, states that Plato firmly relegated art to the mental level of eikasia, and suggests that art, like the prisoners in the cave, "delights in unsavoury trivia and in the endless proliferation of senseless images." Cf. Havelock 25: "Poetry...indulges in constant illusionism, confusion and irrationality (602c4-603b8). This is what mimēsis ultimately is, a shadow-show of phantoms, like those images seen in the wall of the cave (598b6ff)." Cf. Nettleship 347: "The knowledge of the artist ... corresponds ... to the conjecture (ἐξηκαστήρα) of Book VI ..."
and stretching out a long speech of lamentation or chanting and beating his breast, we feel pleasure, surrender ourselves, and follow with sympathy and eagerness" (605c-d). In the case of painting and optical illusion, reason quickly enters to correct the first false and fleeting impression. In the case of poetry, reason is held in abeyance; the emotional pull of poetry is so strong as to overcome the attempted intervention of reason. We identify with another's suffering, praise and pity the man who grieves excessively, and transfer excessive indulgence in another's suffering to excessive indulgence in our own (cf. 606b). In the case of painting, deception is a possibility. In the case of poetry that possibility becomes an actuality. The deception caused by painting is trivial and momentary; the deception caused by poetry is serious and has a permanent and detrimental effect on our souls: poetic imitation waters and fosters our lowest emotions and appetites and establishes them as our rulers when we ought to be ruled (606d). For these reasons the imitative poet, but not the imitative painter, is excluded from the ideal state.

Annas claims that Plato in the first two arguments of Book X presents not only painting but also poetry as trivial: "poetry has been presented as something essentially trivial, as tacky as scene-painting, something that no serious person would bother wasting time over."74 Plato wishes us to see poetry not only as "trivial and tacky" but also, Annas assures us, as "so trivial and silly that it falls right beneath the scope of moral concern," as something "utterly stupid," "essentially banal."75 Annas believes that Plato's

74 Annas, Introduction, 340.
75 Annas, "Triviality," 8.
representation of poetry as trivial renders him inconsistent. Whereas in Book III Plato had emphasized the importance of poetry, in Book X, according to Annas, he stresses its triviality. "Plato has gone from accepting that poetry is important and dangerous, to trying to prove that it is trivial and marginal."  

Annas's own summary of the first two arguments of Book X would seem to belie this statement. She summarizes the arguments as follows:

The poet, we are told, is despised because he devotes his life to making images instead of originals; he deals with images of virtue only; he and his works are at a third remove from the truth; he lacks knowledge and even true belief because he deals only in images; he is an imitator and as such held in low regard; his imitation consorts with an inferior part of the soul....  

These arguments, Annas contends, are all "attempts to get us to see poetry as being trivial." It is difficult to perceive the force of her contention. Surely the arguments of Plato which Annas has outlined lead not to the conclusion that poetry is trivial, but to the conclusion that it is important and dangerous. It is important and dangerous precisely because the poet "deals with images of virtue only," deceiving the unwary, causing them to mistake phantoms for reality (599a). It is important and dangerous precisely because "the poet and his works are at a third remove from the truth," deceiving those who do not understand the nature of mimetic poetry and who take its appearance for truth. Poetry is important and dangerous precisely because the poet "lacks knowledge," and, lacking knowledge, is

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77 Ibid.
unable to educate men and make them better (600c), unable to help men to achieve excellence (600d), yet deceives men and causes them to believe that he "knows all the crafts and everything else that anybody knows, and that there is nothing which he does not know better than anyone" (598c-d). The poet, lacking knowledge, deceives others who also lack knowledge, those who do not possess as a pharmakon the knowledge of poetry's true nature (595b). His poetry serves to corrupt and mutilate their minds. Poetry is important and dangerous precisely because it "consorts with an inferior part of the soul," and stimulates and fosters that element in the soul, and by strengthening it tends to destroy the rational part (605c). Poetry may be a form of play (602b), a kind of shadow boxing that grapples with phantoms rather than laying hold upon the truth, but it is a dangerous form of play. Plato's final conclusion in these two arguments is that poetry is not trivial, as Annas claims, but important and dangerous: "the mimetic poet sets up an evil constitution in the soul of every private individual by gratifying the mindless part" (605c, translation based on Grube). Plato has not "gone from accepting that poetry is important and dangerous, to trying to prove that it is trivial and marginal." Plato is always keenly aware of the importance and the danger of poetry, and in these two arguments, as elsewhere, he presents it as important and dangerous.

Plato's language in the first two arguments of Book X is strong, even exaggerated. It is true, as Annas suggests, that Plato in these passages assails poetry in terms of contempt. He likens poetry to a debased form of painting which, as we know from other passages, he despises and

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condemns. Plato likens poetry to *skiagraphia* (602d), illusionistic painting. The imitative poet is no better than the illusionistic painter who merely holds a mirror up to nature and produces mirror images, photographic copies (596e). Imitative poet and illusionistic painter alike produce images that are three removes from reality (597e); they produce appearances of appearances (596e), distortions of distortions of reality. Both poet and painter are imitators far removed from truth (598b); both are ignorant, knowing nothing of that which they imitate (598c); both are specialists in the art of deceit, imposters, wizards, magicians (598c-d). Plato's language is exaggerated, and it is exaggerated for a purpose. His purpose is not, however, to trivialize poetry. Plato's purpose here, as in earlier dialogues, is to demonstrate that all existing poetry is a dangerous force and should therefore be eliminated from the just society.

As in the *Ion* Plato presents an exaggerated view of inspiration, so here in the *Republic* he presents an exaggerated view of imitation. In both

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79 Steven 150-152, comments on the many passages which indicate Plato's dislike and condemnation of *skiagraphia*, e.g., *Phaedo* 69b, where Plato likens virtue which consists in a senseless interchange of different pleasures and pains to an illusionistic painting of virtue; *Rep.* 523b, where the illusionistic painter is branded as a trickster and his work is *φοινικής* *ποιοτέα*; *Rep.* 568b, where it is said that the uneducated "consort with pleasures mingled with pain, which are mere phantoms of true pleasure, like illusionistic paintings, taking their colour from juxtaposition, so that they are both accentuated"; *Laws* 663c, where Plato compares the ignorant multitude's notions of justice and injustice with the impressions they receive from an illusionistic painting. Steven further comments on the illusionistic painter's technical skill and his power to deceive: Zeuxis painted grapes so realistically that the birds came and pecked at them; Parrhasius painted a curtain covering the artist's easel so realistically that Zeuxis asked him to remove the curtain and show him the picture underneath.

80 Cf. Tate, "Imitation," 20: the art of imitation "lays hold upon a partial and unsubstantial aspect of the object (598b); the copy is, then, a further distortion of what is already a distortion of reality."
dialogues Plato exaggerates the deficiencies, in order to emphasize the dangers, of the poet and his poetry. The inspired poet of the Ion and the imitative poet of the Republic are deficient and dangerous in similar ways. Both are engaged in mindless activity: the inspired poet of the Ion, deprived of his nous, becomes a mindless instrument, a mouthpiece of the god (534c-d); the imitative poet of the Republic, like a man who holds a mirror up to nature, produces mindless copies of external appearance (596e; 598b). Both overthrow the rule of reason and allow the emotions full sway: the inspired poet of the Ion composes when in an irrational, highly emotional state (534a-d), and moves his audience to identify sympathetically with the characters he portrays (535e); the imitative poet of the Republic similarly moves his audience to a state of emotional surrender and sympathetic identification (605d), and in so doing nurtures and strengthens the emotions at the expense of the reason (606a-d; cf. 605b-c). Both are ignorant, woefully lacking in knowledge of any kind: the inspired poet of the Ion has no knowledge of his craft, no technē to enable him to compose beautifully or to interpret a passage well (534b-c); the imitative poet of the Republic has no knowledge of the form as the craftsman has (596b), has not even the practical knowledge possessed by the user of an implement (601c-602b). This portrayal of the poet as mindless, ignorant, and a dangerous subverter of the reason is quite obviously an exaggeration. Plato is speaking in the strongest terms in order to exhibit the poet in the strongest and most unflattering light. His exaggerated account of the deficiencies and dangers of the poet is an earnest attempt on the part of the philosopher to damage the cause of poetry as much as possible.
The excess of Plato's argument in *Republic* X is plainly apparent and has been noted by many commentators. Green compares Plato's vehemence to that of the liberated prisoner returning to the cave; Plato's argument is strong, even desperate, because he feels a strong compulsion, a desperate necessity to release his fellow-citizens from the poets, the shadows of the cave. Atkins likens Plato's methods to the methods of an advocate; Plato's argument is a piece of "special pleading," "a case for the plaintiff (philosophy) without concern, for the time being, for the rightful claims of the defendant (epic and dramatic poetry)." Each of these commentators perceives correctly that Plato's argument is excessive because his concern is real and strong. Plato is the committed reformer, dedicated to the task of releasing prisoners from the shackles of the cave, from bondage to poetic imagery and illusion. In order to accomplish this task he is prepared to use whatever weapon comes to hand. *Mimesis* as Plato uses it in Book X of the *Republic*, *mimesis* in its lowest, most pejorative sense, is a ready weapon.

81 Greene 55: "Plato returns to the world about him, as the liberated prisoner of his allegory returns to the cave, and looks once more at the objects from the contemplation of which his fellow-countrymen hope to attain truth; the images of the cave happen to be the poets."

82 Atkins 50. Cf. Griswold 135-150. Griswold suggests that Socrates' tripartite schema is "intentionally ironic" (139), a schema explicitly formulated in order to characterize and criticize imitation (146). In Griswold's interpretation, "Socrates' criticism of the imitative poets is also a caricature of their imitations" (138).

83 The question of whether this pejorative sense of *mimesis* is an invention of Plato has been hotly debated among scholars. Else 81, argues against Koller that the implication of the inadequacy, of "imitation" is found before Plato e.g. in Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 159: \( \text{χλωρίον ταύτης ἐστὶ} \ \text{τὸ} \ \text{μεμιμηθέντα.} \) He claims also that there is "in the earliest appearance of *mimos* in extant Greek literature, an implication which Koller finds nowhere before Plato: that of deliberate deception" (76). Havelock 58, argues that Else assigns to pre-Platonic usages of imitation "that inferior status required by the Platonic analysis," and then reads this backward into Platonic usage. He concludes that "One must therefore agree with Koller as
Plato takes it in hand and wields it vigorously in his life-long battle, the battle of the philosopher against the poets.

2. Philosophical Imitation and Inspiration

Plato in Books III and X of the Republic has used mimēsis in its lowest, most pejorative sense in order to condemn poetry of the lowest, most degraded kind. He has used mimēsis as a weapon against poetry that is morally and ethically as well as ontologically and psychologically debased and dangerous. This pejorative use of mimēsis does not, however, represent Plato's studied and considered view of imitation, nor does his attack on mimetic poetry represent his studied and considered view of art. Mimēsis is, as McKeon observes, a term "universal in scope and indeterminate in application," a term with an infinite range of meaning. Plato applies the term "imitation" to objects and concepts as diverse as time (Ti. 38A), government (Plt. 293E, 297C), music (Cra. 431C), thoughts and arguments (Cri. 107B-C), sounds (Ti. 80B), laws (Plt. 300C), dancing (Laws 816A), and the universe itself (Ti. 50A-C).

against Else that the pejorative sense of mimēsis was invented by Plato in Rep. 10." Nehemas 57, attempts to demonstrate that mimēsis and its cognates even in the latter half of the fifth century "did not go hand in hand with the Platonic notions of the counterfeit, the merely apparent, the deceitful, the fake." What is important for our purposes is not the question of whether or not Plato invented this pejorative sense of mimēsis, but the fact that he in Book X uses mimēsis in this pejorative sense.

84 McKeon 3.

85 These various references are cited by McKeon 7-9, and by Verdenius, "Plato's Doctrine," 269.
a particular dramatic style (Rep. III) and to a particular kind of painting and poetry (Rep. X) by no means exhausts his view of mimēsis of even the poetic and artistic kind. There are numerous passages throughout Plato's works and in the Republic itself which indicate that Plato held a much higher view of mimēsis and of poetry and art.

Controversy has raged over Plato's views on a higher kind of artistic mimēsis, controversy as great or greater in volume and vehemence as that engendered by Plato's view on mimēsis of a lower, more literal kind. The controversy has centred around one question: does Plato conceive of an art which imitates the Forms? Some critics have vigorously denied the possibility of this highest kind of imitation. Others have suggested that Plato accords to the artist the status of one who can imitate the Forms in some indirect sense. Still others suggest that Plato conceives of an artist who will acquire philosophic knowledge and directly imitate the Forms. We shall briefly survey the opinions of critics from each of these schools.

Those critics who deny the possibility of art imitating the Forms are most vehement in their denial. Julia Annas regards all attempts to show that Plato left a place for true artists who would imitate the Forms as ill-advised and illogical attempts to rescue Plato from the charge of philistinism. Plato's would-be rescuers should, she feels, recognize that there are "grave prima facie objections" to the idea of art imitating the Forms and abandon their futile attempts to salvage Plato's reputation.86

86 See Annas, "Triviality," 19: "There has always been the strongest temptation, from Plotinus onward, to give Plato a single coherent theory of art, by claiming that in the book 10 arguments he is attacking only blankly
Nehemas states bluntly that the claim that artists can somehow directly imitate the Forms is "wrong." The claim is, in his opinion, wrong textually: "the main texts on which it is based are either neutral on this question or they contradict the very claim they are used to support." And it is wrong philosophically: imitation of the Forms is "logically impossible," for in imitating the Forms the artist would cease to be an artist. Collingwood expresses a similar view in even stronger terms: the suggestion that the artist copies the ideal is "simply a confusion of thought"; the suggestion that the artist knows the ideal and depicts objects as they ought to be is "absurd." Havelock's comments are more scathing still: Plato nowhere suggests that poetry constitutes a likeness to the Forms; the interpretation of metaphorical language to suggest that he does is an unrealistic art as being bad...and that book 3 shows that he leaves a place for the true and inspired artist who will not just copy slices of life but also will 'imitate' and represent ideals, the Forms of various virtues and morally desirable states.... There are grave prima facie objections to this idea; it is strained to assume that when we read of the banishment of all poetry in book 10 we are to think that all the same a place has been left for good poetry. But all the same the temptation is very natural. We would like Plato not to be a philistine about poetry."

87 Nehemas 59.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., 60.
90 See Collingwood, "Philosophy," 158-159: "the moral is drawn [from 472d] that the artist really copies not the percept but the concept, not the actual but the ideal. But this objection is simply a confusion of thought.... To suggest that the artist copies the form or concept is to suggest that the landscape painter, in painting a cottage, alters it so as to bring it into the closest attainable conformity with the concept of an ideal residence, and that the dramatist, so far as he is a good dramatist, depicts his characters as purged of all moral imperfections and regulated by the standard of what a man ought to be. These suggestions are of course absurd: the concept, the ideal which the craftsman would realise if he could, is a thing of which the artist knows nothing."
unethical "device" by which the Platonic philosopher can be turned into an artist and Plato's text "reduced to a glutinous paste capable of adhering to any mental object in the critic's mind."\textsuperscript{91}

Many have suggested that the artist can indirectly imitate the Forms. A leading exponent of this view is W.J. Verdenius. This scholar suggests that art, while it cannot be a direct reflection of the ideal Forms, can nevertheless reveal them indirectly.\textsuperscript{92} Art, he points out, cannot be a direct reflection of ideal values because art is separated from the plane of real Being by the plane of the phenomenal world; art is prevented by the hierarchical structure of reality from being a direct manifestation of the ideal Forms. But art can, he suggests, by illuminating the higher aspects of the intermediate, phenomenal plane, manifest something of the "sheen of eternal radiance" that glimmers through the phenomenal world.\textsuperscript{93} True art would then be a true, but indirect, reflection of ideal Beauty. Verdenius has found an ardent disciple in Leon Golden. Closely following Verdenius and enlarging but slightly on that scholar's perceptions, Golden suggests that artistic \textit{mimēsis}, reflecting as it does the hierarchical structure of the universe, can lead us from the obscure to the clear, from the false to the true. \textit{Mimēsis} is, he suggests our path to the apprehension of ideal reality, and the artist our guide on that path.\textsuperscript{94} Battin suggests that the poet,

\textsuperscript{91} Havelock 34-35.

\textsuperscript{92} See Verdenius, "Plato's Doctrine," 267n.12: "from the fact that art is no direct imitation of the ideal Forms it does not follow that it could not reveal them indirectly."

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 269-270.

\textsuperscript{94} See Golden 122-124.
while he cannot imitate the Forms, can imitate figures and objects which participate closely in the Forms. In depicting people or objects which are paradigms or trustworthy exemplars of their kinds, the poet might after all, Battin suggests, produce poetry which is a proper source of behavioural models and ethical norms, poetry which is normatively true. Hall, too, suggests that Plato allows for a poetry which is normatively true but which does not depend on direct imitation of the Forms. This poetry would, Hall suggests, be produced not by the philosopher who with knowledge apprehends the Form, but by the poet who with right opinion apprehends the "form-copy." This "form-copy," the immanent quality derived from the Form, would be embodied in each of the poet's works.

Other scholars insist that the artist qua artist cannot imitate the Forms, but suggest that the artist might acquire philosophic knowledge and become an artist-philosopher. Grube, for example, says that Plato in his actual discussions of art never allows for the possibility that either artist or

95 See Battin 165-171. Battin concludes that Plato would admit to his ideal state "all and only poetry which is normatively true" (173). Karelis (320-321) arrives at a similar conclusion: "Plato is prepared to sanction and admit into the state any poetry that, unlike all existing poetry, accurately depicts instances of excellence."

96 See Hall 77-78. Cf. Belfiore, "Visual Arts," 122. While dealing specifically with painting, Belfiore expresses a similar conviction that the highest kind of artist in Plato's ideal state would be not the philosopher with knowledge, but the craftsman with right belief: Republic X leaves room "for another sort of painter who could create true beauty. This painter would not be, as some have suggested, a philosopher looking to and imitating the Form or Idea of Beauty. He would necessarily be confined by his medium to the visible world, inferior to the world of Ideas. Within this imperfect world, however, the painter of true beauty could be a craftsman like the carpenter or shoemaker. He could, just as any craftsman does, consult the "user" of an object he wished to depict and so arrive at true belief concerning the beauty of what he represents (Republic 10.601d ff.)"
poet can imitate the Forms directly. Although no existing poet can imitate
the Forms because no existing poet possesses philosophic knowledge, there
is, in Grube's opinion, "nothing in Plato's philosophy that would prevent the
existence of a poet-philosopher."\textsuperscript{97} Greene at one point suggests tentatively
that the poet \textit{qua} poet may deal with universals.\textsuperscript{98} Later, however, he
recognizes that the poet in order to express eternal Forms would have to
become a philosopher.\textsuperscript{99} Atkins claims that imitation of the ideal Forms is
the kind of imitation Plato associates with poetry of the highest kind.\textsuperscript{100}
He later refers to poetry based on imitation of the ideal world as "poetry of
a philosophic kind."\textsuperscript{101} Grey feels that there are indications that Plato

\textsuperscript{97} Grube, GRC 54. In \textit{Plato's Thought}, 202, Grube notes further that
while there is nothing in Plato's philosophy to prevent art from imitating
the Forms, Plato does not make this theory explicit: "...the whole physical
world is, in a sense, an imitation of the world of Forms. Why should not
works of art be imitations in the same sense, expressing the Ideas in the
physical world without the intermediate model of the world itself? There is
nothing in Plato's conception of the relationship between the two worlds
which precludes such an escape out of the difficulty. There is, however, a
very definite objection, namely that he himself never says a word to indicate
anything of the kind." Daiches 20, also suggests that while imitation of the
Forms is compatible with Plato's philosophy, the theory is never made
explicit: "Why it did not occur to Plato that the painter, by painting the
ideal object, could suggest the ideal form and thus make direct contact with
reality in a way denied to ordinary perception, is not easy to see..."

\textsuperscript{98} See Green 34: "Plato seems to hold that poetic imitation may to a
certain extent deal with universals."

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 75.

\textsuperscript{100} See Atkins 52: "Alive as he was to an unseen reality existing
behind the objects of sense, he conceived of an imitation of the ideal forms
of that unseen world, ideas of justice, beauty, and truth, which were to be
embodied in human character. And it is this kind of imitation\textsuperscript{3} that he
associates with poetry in its highest form; a process which represented
things as they ought to be, and not in their actuality."

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 68.
conceives of an artist who copies the eido and who in the process exercises philosophical insight. Tate is perhaps the most outspoken proponent of the view that Plato conceives of a poet-philosopher whose works would be a direct copy of the Forms. He claims that there are, in Plato's view, two kinds of imitation: the first imitates only the apparent nature of things; the second imitates the ideal world and can be achieved only by the man of understanding, the poet-philosopher.

Scholars who claim that Plato holds an ideal theory of art and conceives of imitation of the Forms, whether in a direct or an indirect sense, appeal to several passages in the Republic in order to substantiate their position. We shall look at these various passages and attempt to determine Plato's views on ideal art.

There are passages even among Plato's most condemnatory utterances on the subject of art and poetry which suggest that he held, if not an ideal theory of art, at least a much higher conception of art and poetry than that which presents itself on a cursory reading. In Books II and III he condemns the poet who makes a bad image of gods and heroes; such a poet is like a painter whose portraits bear no resemblance to his models (377e). Plato's condemnation of bad poetry and art implies that good poetry and art are possible. The condemnation of poetry which pictures the gods badly implies

102 See Grey 299.

103 See Tate, "Imitation," 23: "The second form of imitation is that which imitates the ideal world. This form can be achieved only by the man of understanding, who can recognize both the ideas in themselves and their images in the sensible world.... Thus the poets must, like the kings (499bc), become philosophers; or else philosophers must become poets."
the possibility of poetry which pictures the gods well;\textsuperscript{104} the condemnation of painting which bears no resemblance to its model implies the possibility of painting which represents its model accurately. Plato objects to poetry which tells lies about the gods: poets are not to depict the gods engaging in acts of filial impiety, indulging with impunity in criminal activity, or behaving in a manner that is aggressive, vicious and cruel (378b-d). He objects to poetry which misrepresents gods or heroes: poets are not to portray gods or heroes behaving in an immoderate manner, whether giving way to immoderate lamentation and displays of grief (387d-388e), overcome by fits of unquenchable laughter (389a-b), or indulging excessively their appetite for sex, food and drink (390a-c). Plato is here, as Nettleship observes, "suggesting what poets ought to say by examples of what they ought not to say."\textsuperscript{105} Poets ought not to say that gods or heroes are impious, immoral, immoderate and cruel; poets ought to say that gods and heroes are pious, moral, moderate, and benevolent. Plato does more than imply his approval of good poetry, poetry which depicts gods and heroes as they ought to be. He lays down specific standards for the composition of good poetry: poets must compose noble tales which are well told and which dispose children to virtue (377b-c; 378e); poets must represent God as he is, that is, as always good and never changing (379a-383c); poets must depict heroes who are examples of moderation in all things (390d). Plato does approve and accept poetry in which the gods and heroes are true exemplars of excellence.

\textsuperscript{104} Cf. Greene 34: "He has blamed Homer for not representing the gods as they are; that implies at least that a true representation of them is not impossible."

\textsuperscript{105} Nettleship 94.
When Plato in Book III moves from a discussion of content to a discussion of form, he once again sets his stamp of approval on a good type of poetry while condemning poetry of a harmful and dangerous kind. He condemns poetry which calls upon a man to imitate characters unworthy of himself, poetry which requires a man to shape and mould himself after characters who are base and inferior (396d). He condemns the poetic style of the inferior person who will imitate anything and everything, the style which consists almost entirely of imitation in voice and gesture (396d-397b). There is, however, a type of imitative poetry which Plato commends as suitable for the good and noble man, the man of moderation (396c). Plato approves and commends poetry which calls upon a good man to imitate a good man acting steadfastly and sensibly (396d), poetry which requires a good man to shape and mould himself after characters who are courageous, moderate, pious, and free (cf. 395c). Plato, in other words, approves and commends poetry which portrays men who are paradigms of excellence, men who closely participate in the Forms of courage, moderation, piety, and freedom.

Even in Book X, a book that has often been regarded as uncompromisingly hostile to poets and poetry, there are indications that Plato has a higher view of art. Plato at 598e reports the opinion of "some people" on poets and poetry:

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106 Plato affirms repeatedly that the kind of imitation which is acceptable is imitation of the good man. Cf. 397d: "we will accept only the pure style which imitates the good man (τὸν τῶν ἐπιείκειος μιμητὴν ἀληθῶς ἀλλήλῳ ἄλλῳ)"; 398b: We would employ the poet "who would imitate the diction of the good man."
these people say that if the good poet is to compose fine poetry, he must have knowledge of his subject; else he cannot compose at all. We must therefore investigate whether they have been deceived on meeting these imitators, and when they see their works do not realize that these are at a third remove from reality and are easy to compose without knowledge of the truth; they are but images, not reality, or whether there is something in what these people say, and the good poets really do have knowledge of the subjects of which the majority thinks they speak so well.  --We must certainly examine this question.

Do you think that a man who could make both the model and the image would allow himself to be in earnest about the making of images and put this in the forefront of his life as the best talent he had? ---I do not.

I think that, if he truly had knowledge of the things he imitates, he would much rather devote himself to actions than to the imitation of them....(598e-599b, trans., Grube)

The point of this passage is that the poet who is an "imitator" in the pejorative sense (cf.598d) does not have the knowledge he must have if he is to be "good." The way is left open for a poet who does possess knowledge and who is truly good. The passage, by pointing out the deficiencies of the existing kind of poet and poetry, suggests the characteristics which a better kind of poet and poetry would possess. The good poet would possess knowledge, not merely knowledge of the technai, but knowledge of the truth; good poetry would be not an image far removed

107 This is noted by Grey 299: "the point of 599 seg. is that the artist has not, in fact, the knowledge that he ought to have if he is to be 'good.'"

108 Cf. Grube, Plato's Thought, 190: "But another kind of painting is no doubt possible, and another kind of poetry, as there is another kind of rhetoric than that practised by Lysias and Gorgias. In every case the good artist 'must have knowledge of what he creates if he is to create beautifully' (598e), but his knowledge will be of a very different kind from that which most Greeks so readily concede to their poets. It will be on the same level, indeed of the same kind, as that of the philosopher."

109 Cf. Lodge 188, n.2: "The passage contains, for contrast-effect, a reference to the "real" artist (i.e., the philosopher-artist), who knows what he is imitating (namely the 'ideal'), and creates 'realities'."
from reality but a close approximation to real Being. The good poet would compose poetry not "in earnest" but as a kind of "play" (Cf. 602b), recognizing that his poetry is not an end itself, but something which points beyond itself, a mere image, but an image of the truth.\textsuperscript{110}

There is a further indication in Book X that Plato's explicit statements on the inferior nature of mimetic poetry do not represent his highest views on the subject of poetry and of art. Plato at 604e speaks of the imitation of good or bad character:\textsuperscript{111}

Now this peevish part gives many opportunities for all sorts of imitations, while the wise and quiet character (\textit{εὐσεβὴς}) which always remains pretty well the same is neither easy to imitate nor easy to understand when imitated...(604e, trans., Grube).

Throughout his diatribe on the deficiencies and dangers of mimetic art Plato is insistent on the point that mimetic art and poetry can imitate only the perceived appearance of a person or object: the painter makes only the

\textsuperscript{110} Cf. Verdenius, "Plato's Doctrine," 272: "The ideal artist, though bestowing serious labours on his work, would not attach much value to his imitations. In fact, 'if he had genuine knowledge about the things he imitates he would far rather devote himself to real things than to the imitation of them' (Rep. 599b). So he would frankly admit the deficiencies of his knowledge and his means and would give his products for what they are: images which, by interpreting the real nature of their objects, try to suggest something of the world of ideal Beings, but which never belie...the limitations of their medium."

\textsuperscript{111} Paton 95-96, cites this passage and notes its implications: "Plato indeed, speaks as if the painter merely imitated or recreated one of the innumerable \textit{φωτεινὰ} or sensible appearances of a bed, but he also speaks of the tragedian as imitating a good or a bad \textit{άρρατος}, although he insists a trifle grudgingly that it is very difficult to imitate a good \textit{άρρατος}. However that may be, it is clear from this and many other passages...that art can imitate, or as we should say create, a good or bad character, which, of course, can never be given to sense at all."
appearance of a bed (596e); painting is directed in every case not to the imitation of reality as it is but to the imitation of appearance as it appears (598b); mimetic art can make everything because it touches only a small part of each thing, and that an image (598b); imitative poetry imitates not the inward character but the outward actions of men (603c). Yet at 504e Plato seems to admit that poetry can do something more than imitate outward appearance and actions. Poetry, he says, imitates the Ethos, the innate character, the inner disposition of man. Poetry, in other words, can imitate something which is not directly perceived by the senses. It can imitate not only the outward appearance but also the inner reality of man. Plato in this passage from Book X allows us a fleeting glimpse, a momentary indication, of his deeper and truer conception of a deeper and truer art.

Many passages of the Republic apart from those condemning the lowest form of mimetic art indicate Plato's unqualified approval of art that is "imitative" in a higher and better sense. In Book III Plato abandons polemics at least for a time, and advances a positive theory of art (398c ff.). Here he develops the notion, merely given a backward glance in Book X, that art can imitate character. All artistic works, Plato tells us, are full of good speech, good accord, good grace, and good rhythm, or of their opposites (401a-b). Gracelessness, poor rhythm and discord are akin to a poor Ethos; good grace, good rhythm and good accord are akin to, and imitations of, a moderate and good Ethos (401a). The cultivation of a truly good and fine Ethos is the special task of the young (400e). Poets and

112 Cf. Shorey, Republic I, 255, note c: "Their special task is to cultivate the true Ethos in their souls."
other artists must be compelled to assist them in this task: poets and artists must be supervised and compelled to embody in their poems or other works the image of a good ethos (401b). Poetry and works of art which imitate a good ethos are of the highest value in the education of the young: "something from these beautiful works will strike their eyes and ears like a breeze that brings health from salubrious places, and lead them unawares from childhood to love of, resemblance to, and harmony with, the beauty of reason (kalos logos, 401d). Art and poetry which is imitative in this highest and best sense, far from nurturing the emotional, and destroying the rational, part of the soul (cf. 605b; 606b-d), will nurture the rational element. Artistic imitation of the beautiful and graceful will foster in the young a resemblance to (401d) and kinship with (402a) reason, so that when reason comes he who has been thus nurtured will easily recognize and welcome it (402a). Art and poetry which is imitative in the highest and best sense, far from setting up an evil constitution in the soul (cf. 605b), will bring to the soul graciousness, beauty, and goodness. Through nurture in the arts, rhythm and harmony will permeate the inner part of the soul, bring graciousness to it, and make the man gracious (401d). Artistic imitation of the beautiful will lead a man to praise beautiful things, rejoice in them, receive them into his soul, be nurtured by them, and to become himself beautiful and good (401e). Good art imitates a good ethos and nurtures that ethos in the souls of its percipients. Plato here conceives of an exalted role for poetry and for art.

This passage (400e-402d) indicates clearly that good art does more than slavishly copy outward appearance. Does this passage indicate further
that good art imitates the Forms? The answer to this question lies in the following statement:

we shall not be educated in the arts, neither ourselves not those whom we say we must educate to be our guardians, before we recognize the different forms (ἐλεγχοι) of moderation and courage, of generosity and munificence, their kindred qualities and opposites too, as they occur everywhere, and perceive wherein they occur, both themselves and their images, and do not despise them in small things nor in great, but realize that this is part of the same craft and training.(402c, trans., Grube)

The man who is to be mousikos must, says Plato, recognize both the forms (eidē) and their images (eikones). The images, in this context of the meritorious effects of poetry and the arts, must be the copies or reflections of moderation, courage and other virtues represented in poetry and works of art. If the eidē are the Platonic Forms, the passage clearly implies that the artist imitates the Forms: the artist must know and copy the Forms if his works are to contain images of them.

But are these eidē in fact the Platonic Forms? This question has been vigorously debated. Some scholars simply assume that these eidē are the Forms. Others deny the validity of this assumption. Objections such as the following are raised: the theory of Forms has not yet been introduced at this point in the Republic; the notion of negations or "opposites" of Forms does not occur elsewhere; the eidē here are spoken of as immanent (ἐν ὁπίσθεν ἐν ὄσει ἐνευγελθεὶς) whereas the Platonic

113 See e.g. Atkins 52; Tate, "Plato and 'Imitation'," 161-162.

114 See Adam, Republic I, 168; Grube, Republic, 72, n.29; Nehemas 59; Greene 37.
Forms are transcendent and self-existent. While these arguments do not prove conclusively that Plato is not here thinking of the eternal Forms, it seems unwise, in the face of such objections, to make too much of this passage. Plato may have in mind not the Forms as they exist separately and eternally, but rather various earthly embodiments of those Forms, qualities of moderation, justice and other virtues as they manifest themselves in the visible world. Plato may be saying simply, as Adam suggests, that "the artist copies from the life," that he copies the beautiful Ethos in the soul (402d). It seems safest to assume that Plato in this passage is saying only that the artist copies the embodiments or qualities of the Forms, and not that the artist copies the Forms themselves.

115 One might present various counter arguments as Grey, for example, does: "I cannot agree with Adam that there is no technical reference here, when it is apparent from 476A that the theory of the eidé is already known to at least one of the participants. Whether the eidé are "immanent" or "transcendent" is beside the point, when one realizes what the eidé are in this dialogue: for they will be both (299). Cf. Shorey, Republic I, 260: "It is of course possible to contrast images with the things themselves, and to speak of forms or species without explicit allusion to the metaphysical doctrine of ideas. But on the other hand there is not the slightest reason to assume that the doctrine and its terminology were not familiar to Plato at the time when this part of the Republic was written."

116 See Friedlander, Plato II, 89: "musical education is...a preparation for pure knowledge, a necessary prerequisite without which we could not set out on the dialectical path toward knowledge. "Forms" ( τοίχοι ) are the objects of both disciplines. The difference is that in pure knowledge the mind grasps the nature of true being without the help of perception, whereas in music only objects are perceived. Here (i.e., in the real world) they move about in various embodiments, and in addition to the embodiments or qualities of discipline (sophrosyné) and courage, the embodiments of their opposites also move about."

117 Adam 68: "Plato expressly speaks of the ἐἴδη here only as immanent, and not transcendent, and we must therefore assume that the artist copies from the life (cf. τοίχοι ἐν ζωῇ καὶ τοιχικά ἐν ζωῇ ἐν ζωῇ )." Adam further suggests that ἐἴδη is used here "as a harbinger of the Ideal theory of VI and VII - a sort of half-way house between the Socratic λόγοι and Plato's Ideas."
There are several passages in the Republic which liken the philosopher to the painter and which seem to suggest that Plato conceived of an art that copies the ideal Forms. In the first of these passages Socrates asks:

Do you think a man is any less a good painter if, having painted a model (περιέγραφα) of what the most beautiful man would be, and having rendered all the details satisfactorily in the picture, he could not prove that such a man came into being? (472d, trans. Grube)

This question clearly implies that the artist can do more than copy the appearance of existing things. The artist can do more than represent man as he is: the artist can represent man as he ought to be (ὁ ὄφεις ἐν ἐλπίδι). The artist can envision a man such as never existed, an ideally beautiful man, and can embody his vision in a work of art. The artist can, Plato seems to suggest, see and imitate ideal beauty.

In the second of these passages Socrates again asks a telling question:

Do you think there is any difference between the blind and those who are really deprived of the knowledge of every reality, who have no clear model of it in their soul, and cannot as painters can, look to (ἐποθέπνοις) that which is most true, always refer to it, contemplate it as exactly as possible, and so establish here on earth lawful notions about things beautiful, just and good...? (484c, trans., Grube)

Here again Plato seems to suggest that the true artist can imitate the ideal.

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118 Greene 67, n.4, remarks that Plato in this phrase "foreshadows the words ὠφεῖς ἐν ἐλπίδι, with which Aristotle introduces the discussion of the difference between history and poetry (Poetics 1450, a38)."
Plato's language, particularly his use of the word \( \textit{αιτοβλεπόντες} \),\(^{119}\) seems to imply that the artist can look away from the visible and sensible world to the realm of ideal Being, and there contemplate that model which is most true. By his likening of the activities of the philosopher to those of the painter, Plato seems to imply that the painter, too, looks to a \textit{paradeigma} of reality, refers to it continually, contemplates it exactly, and embodies in his work canons of justice, beauty, and goodness. Plato, in other words, seems to imply that the artist can contemplate and imitate the ideal Forms.

There is, however, a simple and valid objection to the view that Plato conceives of an artist who imitates the ideal Forms: the artist \textit{qua} artist cannot apprehend the Forms, nor can he imitate them. It is fundamental to Plato's metaphysics that only the philosopher with philosophic knowledge can apprehend the Forms. This point is made constantly and consistently: it is the philosopher who can approach Beauty itself and see it in and by itself (476b); it is the philosopher who can see both Beauty itself and the things which partake in it (476d); it is the philosopher who can apprehend that which remains in all aspects ever the same (484b); it is the philosopher who is in love with the knowledge that reveals something of the eternal essence (485b). There is, for Plato, one knowledge and one possessor of knowledge: knowledge is knowledge of what is (477b), knowledge of the Forms; the one man who knows and has knowledge is the philosopher (476d).

\(^{119}\textit{αιτοβλεπόντες},\) as Shorey points out, "belongs to the terminology of the ideas" (Republic II, 4). Cf. \textit{καμεῖος} which, juxtaposed as it is to \textit{αιτοβλεπόντες}, also suggests that the painter looks "yonder" to the heaven of Ideas (see Adam, Republic II, 2). Plato's use of such terminology makes it seem unlikely that he is referring "only...to the way a painter uses his model" (Grube, Plato's Thought, 188).
Plato's own description of the exclusive nature of the philosopher and philosophic knowledge precludes the possibility of the artist *qua* artist imitating the Forms.

There is another passage which likens the philosopher to the painter and which has sometimes been used to show that Plato held an ideal theory of art. In this passage Socrates asks:

> when the many realize that we speak the truth about him, will they be irritated with the philosophers and will they distrust us when we say that the city will never find happiness unless the painters who use the divine model sketch its outline? (500e, trans., Grube)

This passage, in likening the philosopher to the painter, suggests that Plato holds the good painter in high esteem. The passage indicates that Plato's hostility in Book X is directed only toward mimetic art and poetry of the lowest kind, and that he has a genuine regard for genuine art. When Plato wishes to degrade and condemn the poet, he compares him to a painter; when Plato wishes to exalt and defend the philosopher, he likens him to a painter. Clearly the painter referred to in the second case is of a very different kind from the one referred to in the first. The poet is like the painter who uses as his model the appearance of a bed and who

120 Nehemas 73, n.32c, suggests that the use of the Form "bed" may in itself be derogatory: "The Forms of bed and of table may have been chosen by Plato precisely so that, because of their lowliness...the imitator can be put down. These are the very implements that separate the 'city of pigs' from the most primitive human city at 372d-e, and are clearly connected with food and sex - the lowest desires of Plato's scheme." Cf. Greene 51: "The interesting question for us is: When it was possible for Plato to use as examples in this discussion either the idea of the beautiful or the idea of the bed, why did he choose the latter? The answer must be that Plato deliberately chose the example that lent itself to exhibiting the artist in the most unfavourable light."
produces the appearance of an appearance (596e-598c); the philosopher is the painter who uses as his model the divine paradigm (500e).

It is important to note here what Plato does not say. He does not say that the painter uses the divine paradigm. He does not, strictly speaking, say anything about the painter at all. To imply, as Tate seems to, that the point of the passage is that poetry or art which is imitative in the good sense uses the divine paradigm,\textsuperscript{121} is to miss the point of the metaphor.\textsuperscript{122} The entire passage is a description of the philosopher: it is the philosopher who is a "painter"; it is the philosopher who uses the divine paradigm. The passage occurs in the context of what the philosopher does: the philosopher looks upon things that are ordered and ever the same, imitates them, and tries to become as like them as he can (500c); the philosopher puts into practice the things he sees yonder by applying them to the characters of men and is thus a good craftsman of moderation and justice (500d); the philosopher is a "painter" who uses the divine model and

\textsuperscript{121} See Tate, "Plato and 'Imitation,'" 161: "The kind of poetry (or painting or oratory or any other art) which is imitative in the good sense is that which imitates the ideal world. It uses the 'divine paradigm'". Cf. "Imitation," 21: "The clearest account of this genuine kind of imitation is in Republic 500-501, where Plato compares genuine painting with genuine statecraft." Havelock (33, n.27) and Nehemas (59) both criticize Tate for making too much of this passage. Tate does, however, modify his remarks. He notes that the passage is merely a "sustained metaphor," but suggests that it may, nevertheless, "be used to shed a light on the procedure of the genuine artist." This suggestion is made tentatively and carefully and seems plausible.

\textsuperscript{122} This is noted by Nehemas 59: "Republic 500c-501b . . . likens the construction of the perfect city to the works of a painter using 'divine paradigm' (501e3). Tate ('Imitation,' 21) considers this as a description of the 'genuine kind of imitation.' But this misses the point of the simile, which is not that there is such a painter, but that this is what the philosopher is."
sketches the outline of the ideal city (500e); the philosopher takes the city and men's characters as a drawing board and wipes it clean (501a); the philosopher keeps looking back and forth to Justice, Beauty, and Moderation as they are in the nature of things, composing human life with reference to these, mixing and mingling human likeness from various pursuits (501b). It is, in short, the philosopher and not the painter who reproduces ideal reality in human life; it is the philosopher and not the painter who imitates the Forms.

All of the passages mentioned above reveal Plato's deep sympathy toward true art. The passage describing the beneficial effects of nurture in the arts reveals his awareness of the close affinity between philosopher and artist: the artist who has the natural talent to pursue the beautiful and the graceful (401c) is closely akin to the philosopher who has a mind that is by nature measured and gracious (486d), who has the natural capacity to consort with reality (490b); the artist who copies the eide of moderation, courage, and other virtues and represents them in his work (402c) is closely akin to the philosopher who imitates the Forms of moderation and justice and applies them to the character of men (500c-d). In the passages which liken the philosopher to the painter, Plato notes specific points of resemblance, specific ways in which the two are alike: the philosopher who seeks the paradeigma of the perfectly just man even though the man does not exist is like the painter who portrays a paradeigma of the ideally beautiful man even though that man does not exist (407c-d); the philosopher who has a vivid pattern of reality in his soul and who in his work always refers to it and contemplates it is like the painter who looks away from the objects of sense
to the pattern that is most true (484d); the philosopher is a "painter" who uses the divine paradigm (500d).

In all of these expressions of the likeness between philosopher and artist, whether implicit or explicit, Plato reveals his deep respect for the artist. He reveals that his hostility in Book X is directed only toward poetry and art that is imitative of false appearance, poetry and art whose mimēsis is deception. He reveals his admiration for poetry and art that are imitative of real Being, poetry and art that embody the essence of that which is true. He reveals, perhaps, the theory of art that he would hold\textsuperscript{123} if he were not prevented from doing so by his own metaphysics. If Plat's metaphysics were otherwise, it might be possible for art and poetry to imitate not only the earthly forms but also the eternal Forms of moderation and courage, justice and beauty. It might be possible for art to represent the ideal world; possible for the artist to use the divine paradigm. But this is impossible, at least in his present world. No existing poet or artist can imitate the Forms because no existing poet or artist has acquired philosophic knowledge. If his highest ideal for art is to be realized, he must, as Tate suggests, call into being a new race of poets.\textsuperscript{124} Plato's highest ideal for art will be realized only when he allows art to coalesce with philosophy,\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{123} Cf. Grey, 300: "Indeed the question in 472d4, epitomizes the theory of art Plato would like to hold, but which he cannot hold unless he allows art to coalesce with philosophy."

\textsuperscript{124} See Tate, "Imitation," 22: "Such art will be an imitation or expression of the reality of truth and beauty. But it would appear that in Plato's view no extant poetry belonged to this class. The ideal state must in its own interests call a new race of poets into being."

\textsuperscript{125} Cf. Grey 300.
only when the philosopher, the imitator of the Forms, becomes an artist.

It is in Plato's own life and work that this ideal is realized: Plato himself is a philosopher-poet and his works philosophy-poetry. Plato has, as a philosopher, attained knowledge of the ideal Forms of justice and goodness; as a poet he has represented these Forms in his work. Plato has looked away to the divine paradigm of a just and good city and has reproduced that city in words. Plato twice emphasizes that fact that the city he is creating is a city in words, a verbal model of the ideal: like the painter who paints in a picture a model of the ideally beautiful man, Plato has portrayed in words (\(\lambda\dot{\omega}\gamma\nu\)) the model of a good city (472c); Plato's ideal city is founded in words (\(\epsilon\nu\lambda\dot{\gamma}o\nu\)) , a model laid up in heaven (592a-b). The philosopher looks away to the model that is most true (cf.484d); the poet represents that model in the medium that is most true: he represents that model in words, and words, far more than actions, partake of truth (cf.472e-473a). Plato's ideal city is the verbal embodiment of the divine paradigm to which he looks: the Republic is the poet's embodiment of the philosopher's vision.

Plato is a mimetic poet, and the Republic mimetic poetry, in the highest and best sense. The Republic is mim\(\epsilon\)sis, but it is the reverse of that mim\(\epsilon\)sis which is false, deceptive, and dangerous. The Republic, unlike mimetic poetry of the lowest kind (cf. 598b; 600e), is a close approximation

\[126\] Gallop 116 suggests that Plato's mention of creating in words the pattern of a good city (472e) is an indication that he regards himself as capable of representing the Forms. Plato, he suggests, "accords the status of a word picture to the Republic itself. It is a verbal image of moral and political Forms."
to the truth: it is a verbal paradigm which partakes in truth (cf. 473a). Plato, unlike the mimetic poet of Book X (cf. 599a; 601a), composes with knowledge of the truth: having the knowledge of every reality, he contemplates and imitates that which is most true (484d). The Republic, unlike the mimetic poetry which is mere image of image, appearance of appearance (cf. 598b; 599a), is an image of reality, a verbal image of the Forms: the ideal city and its institutions are patterned after the Forms of beauty, justice, and goodness (cf. 472c-8; 484d). Plato, unlike the mimetic poet who produces an evil constitution in the soul of the individual (cf. 605b), establishes both in the state and in the individual soul the rule of reason.127 The Republic, far from being designed for pleasure only (cf.607d), is useful as a model of justice and goodness both for the state and for the individual man.

Not only the Republic, but every dialogue written by Plato is a form of mimetic art. Plato in the Republic speaks frequently of a kind of mimēsis that is good and acceptable: a moderate man will be willing to imitate the words and actions of a good man acting in a faultless and intelligent manner (396c); we ourselves would employ a more austere and less pleasurable poet and story-teller for our own good, one who would imitate the speech of a good man (398a); we accept only hymns to the gods and eulogies of good men (607a). These descriptions of the mimetic poet and the object of his

127 Cf. Friedlander, Plato I, 121: "when it is said that the mimetic poet 'produces an evil political order in the soul of the individual' by pleasing the irrational part of the soul, we may recall that Plato has just completed the work of ordering the state of the citizens as well as that of the individual and securing the sovereignty of reason in both. Thus it is even more clear than before that he claimed for himself the very place he asked the tragic poets to vacate."
imitation are apt descriptions of Plato and Socrates: Plato is himself a moderate man, an austere poet who aims not to make us happy but to make us good; Socrates is, ever and always, the good man, the man who in all his words and deeds behaves faultlessly and intelligently (cf. 396c-e). Every Platonic dialogue arguably has as its object of imitation the good man Socrates. On this view, in each of his dialogues Plato endeavours to imitate the reasonable and quiet character which always remains approximately the same (604e), the character of Socrates. In this case, the Socratic dialogues are, from beginning to end, encomia of the good man, Socrates.

While Plato constantly and consistently throughout his dialogues imitates the words and actions of the good man, he also, relatively briefly and for the sake of contrast, imitates the inferior character (cf. 396c-d). In Book I of the Republic, for example, he draws a portrait of Thrasymachus, a character who compares unfavourably with Glaucon and Adeimantus, and who stands in stark contrast to Socrates. Plato through his portrayal of Thrasymachus allows the reader to compare and contrast the

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128 Several commentators have suggested that Plato's object of imitation is Socrates, e.g. Clay 197: "In the Republic and Laws a new form of poetry is envisaged, as is a new function for truly political poetry.... Its aim is to implant into the soul the image and example of human character which are good and noble (Rep.401B). Although Plato never says as much in any of his dialogues, the object of imitation of this new poetry is Socrates." Cf. Friedlander, Plato I, 121: "a reasonable and quiet type of stable character is not easily represented by the poet; it is difficult to grasp and, hence, unpopular with the audience. But did not Plato represent, always and everywhere, precisely this type of man in Socrates?"

129 Cf. Friedlander, Plato I, 122: "What are all Platonic dialogues ultimately but encomiums to Socrates and the Agathon?" That is to say, all Platonic dialogues fulfill Plato's requirement for poetry acceptable in his state: they are eulogies to good men (cf. Rep. 607a).
unphilosophic and the philosophic man. Unlike Glaucon and Adeimantus, Thrasymachus is unwilling to learn. Self-sufficient and seeking self-aggrandizement, he takes part in the discourse not in order to learn but in order to display his own "very beautiful" answer and to win the admiration of the others (338a). His response to Socrates' attempt to engage him in dialectic is haughty, mocking, and bitterly sarcastic (cf. 337a; 334a; 350d-e; 352b). Glaucon and Adeimantus, in contrast, are eager pupils and correctly-motivated participants in the dialogue: Glaucon, eager to learn the effects and nature of justice and injustice (358b), praises the unjust life in order to hear a defence of justice (358d); Adeimantus, eager to hear justice adequately described, pleads at length with Socrates to praise justice without taking rewards and reputations into account (366e-368d). Both display a philosophic temperament: they are eager to track down the nature of justice (368b), even as the true philosopher has a passionate desire to grasp the nature of each reality (490b), to come to a knowledge of every virtue, including Justice itself (479a-480a). The character of the two men is, in the reader's opinion as in Socrates', admirable (367e), and is made to appear all the more admirable by the implicit contrast with the character of Thrasymachus.

The contrast between the character of Thrasymachus and the character of Socrates is sharper still. Thrasymachus, immoderate, lacking in self-control, aggressive, ferocious, and savagely vehement (cf. 336b ff.),\(^{130}\) is the polar opposite of Socrates, the exemplar of moderation, the paradigm of

\(^{130}\) Plato's description of Thrasymachus in animal terms (336b), while exaggerated and comic, nevertheless contains a great deal of truth about Thrasymachus' nature.
behaviour that is wise and quiet and always approximately the same (604e). He serves as a foil to Socrates, causing the goodness of the good man to shine clearer and brighter. Thrasymachus is a representative of the many, a personification of *hoi polloi*; as such, he is directly opposed to Socrates who is the ideal representative of the few who are wise. Thrasymachus' method of education is the popular method, the method long used by the poets: as a bathman might pour a flood of water, he pours a mass of close-packed words into his listener's ears (344d; cf. *Symp.* 175d); for him, teaching consists of pouring one's argument into another's mind (345b). Socrates refuses to oppose him with a parallel set speech, but chooses rather to investigate the question by seeking agreement with one another (348b): he attempts to establish the method of dialectic. Thrasymachus's opinions are, as Glaucon points out, popular opinions, the opinion of the many: like most, he believes that justice is to be pursued for the rewards it brings, but avoided in itself as being difficult (358a; cf. 366b). Socrates undertakes to help those not satisfied with popular opinion to pursue to the end the investigation as to the nature of justice and injustice and the truth as regards their benefits (368c). By means of the contrast with Thrasymachus, Plato heightens the attractiveness of Socrates, increasing the appeal of the man, his method, and his message.

On a broader and more impersonal scale, Plato, by depicting the

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131 Agathon, like Thrasymachus, stands in contrast to Socrates as the many stand in contrast to the few. While Socrates develops his own method of dialectic, Agathon also employs the popular method, pouring out words as one pours water from a fuller into an emptier vessel. While Socrates' speech embodies the Beauty and Wisdom known only to the philosopher, Agathon's speech contains what is assumed to be beauty and wisdom by the many.
characters of both the philosopher and the tyrant, seeks to heighten the attractiveness of the philosophic man and to increase the appeal of the philosophic life. The tyrant is, as has often been noted, the polar opposite of the philosopher. The fundamental difference in the nature of the two men is determined by the nature of the ruler within: passion lives as a tyrant within the tyrant in complete anarchy and lawlessness (575a); within the truly just man, the man of philosophy, the reason must always rule (441e). The fundamental difference in nature manifests itself in various qualities and characteristics: the tyrant is envious, faithless, unjust, friendless and impious (580a); the philosopher is magnificent, gracious, friendly, and akin to truth, justice, courage, and moderation (487a). Plato has drawn the contrast between the two natures so that the reader, acting as judge, may arrive at

132 The tyrant, interestingly, becomes tyrannical by imitating the actions that he dreams of; he becomes continously and in his waking hours what he occasionally became in a dream (574e). New (and base) opinions, once freed only in dreams, are permanently emancipated and become the ruling principles of his life. Passion, once allowed to prevail in his dreams, now lives as a tyrant within him in complete anarchy and lawlessness as the sole ruler (575a). Submitting himself to its rule, following its leadership, "imitating ," in a sense, the tyrant passion, the man becomes a tyrant: the one who has in his own soul the greatest and strongest tyrant becomes himself the most tyrannical (575d). Unlike the philosopher whose thoughts are truly directed towards real existences (500b) and whose pleasures are gained from the contemplation of reality (582c), the tyrant directs his thoughts toward an illusion, a dream, and gains pleasures that are illusory, mere shadow-images (583b). He resembles that other dweller in the realm of eikasia, the prisoner chained to the shadows of the cave (514a-b). Like him, the tyrant is unaware of his true condition: believing himself to be liberated, he is in reality as enslaved as it is possible to be (577c); his soul is full of servitude and lacks freedom, and the best parts of it are enslaved (577d). He resembles, too, that other victim of illusion, the man in the theatre. Like him, the tyrant surrenders himself to an illusionary experience and allows the overthrow of the passion by the reason. The dream, like poetic imitation, stimulates the passion and establishes it as ruler when it ought to be ruled (cf. 606d; 575a). Like the man who behaves in real life as he did in the theatre (603cff.), the tyrant becomes in reality such as he was in his dreams (576b). All three, the tyrant, the cave-dweller, and the theatre-goer, fall victim to the deceiving influence of eikasia; for each, illusion becomes reality.
the proper verdict:

that the best, most happy, and most just is the most kingly who rules like a king over himself, that the worst, most unjust, and most miserable, is the most tyrannical who tyrannizes most over himself and over his city. (580b-c, translation based on Grube)

He has examined the good and the bad life (578c), so that the reader, following the argument, may choose between them. He has depicted the life of the degenerate man so that the reader may shun the worst and most miserable of existences. He has portrayed the life of the philosopher so that the reader may choose that life which is happiest and best.

The task of imitating the good man is not an easy one, as Plato himself remarks (604e), and his success in the accomplishment of this task is a measure of his talent as a writer. Plato succeeds as few have in making the character of the good man appealing, in making goodness attractive. Tennyson, for all his efforts, could not give human life and warmth to Arthur: the good king is a marble "column," a cold and lifeless figure who repels rather than attracts. There are many readers who, like the queen, prefer the "warmth and colour" found in erring Lancelot. Milton, despite his best efforts, could not invest the hero of Paradise Regained with the warmth of flesh and blood: that pale hero is a "rock of Adamant" (PR 4.534-535), a figure hard, cold, and unappealing. Many readers, and perhaps

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133 See Rusnak 269.

134 Ibid., 257.
even Milton himself,135 have found in the mighty fiend of *Paradise Lost* a more attractive "hero." Plato, in contrast, has clothed his ideal figure in warm human colours. His skilful portrayal of a man who is at once completely good and irrepressibly human has endeared Socrates to countless generations of readers. Plato, almost alone among poets, succeeds in making the reasonable and quiet character supremely attractive, a figure whom the reader would admire and strive to emulate. Plato himself does what he would compel poets and other artists to do: he represents in his dialogues the image of a good *ethos*, and by that representation nurtures the souls of his readers so that they in turn many become beautiful and good (401b-e).

Plato himself is an artist such as he would seek out, one who has a natural talent for pursuing the beautiful and the graceful (401c), one who knows both the Forms and their images and can represent the Forms in his work (cf.402c). Ultimately it is only the philosopher who can fulfil these requirements. Plato is both philosophical theorist and literary artist, both philosopher and poet. The two roles are distinct, yet closely parallel. Plato, as philosopher, formulates a theory of philosophical creativity. This theory defines the imitation that is consequent upon a vision of the Forms, the embodiment of the ideal in human character and in social organization. Plato, as poet, describes a man in whom he has seen the ideal embodied. The philosopher, looking back and forth to Justice, Beauty, Moderation and the other virtues, attempts to compose human character with reference to these (501b). The ideal poet describes a human life such as the philosopher

135 For discussions of the identity of Milton's hero, see e.g., Lewis 94-103; Kermode 317-330.
would like to compose. The philosopher, using the divine paradigm, attempts to establish a new constitution and new laws (500c-501a). The ideal poet describes a republic such as the philosopher would like to establish. Plato's role of poet is, in a sense, a secondary extension of his role as philosopher. His philosophic activity and creativity is paralleled, on a lower plane, by his poetic activity and creativity. As a philosopher he attempts to embody the virtues in his own life and in the lives of his fellow-citizens (500c ff; cf. 540b): he attempts to bring forth true areté (cf. Symp. 212a6). As a poet he creates a portrait or an image of a man who embodies the virtues: he brings forth an image of areté (cf. Symp. 212a4). Obedient to the Muse of philosophy, he attempts to found an ideal state (cf. 499b-d). Obedient to the Muse of poetry, so to speak, he founds a city in words (592a). Plato's poetic creativity is, as it were, a shadow or reflection, an image or "imitation," of his philosophic creativity.

The Muse of philosophy and the Muse of poetry had, as it were, been engaged in a long and vigorous battle for Plato's allegiance. The young Plato, or so the story goes, had renounced poetry in the language of poetry; upon first hearing Socrates, he had consigned his poems to the fire in words adapted from Homer: "Ἡφαίστε Πρόμολος Πλάτων ύπειρ Χαῖρε."

If that legend is correct, although he renounces his career as poet, he could not renounce the poet within himself. The very wording of his renouncement reveals his deep affection for Homer.

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136 The story is told by Diogenes Laertius, Vitae Philosophorum, III.5. For testimonia and further details, see Riginos 43-51. Cf. Brownson 4-5.

137 Cf. Iliad 18.392.
and his deep affinity for poetry, an affection and an affinity retained throughout his lifetime. Plato is both philosopher and poet, and the two natures struggle within him. There is, as Friedlander suggests, an Heracleitean tension within Plato's own being. Relaxation is, perhaps, attained in the writing of dialogue. It is perhaps in the creation of the Platonic dialogue, a literary form that is both philosophy and poetry, that the old quarrel between poetry and philosophy is resolved.

Plato is both philosopher and poet, the philosopher-poet he himself calls into being. He knows the Forms, and he knows what each image is and of what it is an image because he knows the reality of the Beautiful, the Just, and the Good; he is the philosopher compelled by an inner compulsion to return to the cave and to free those who mistake illusion for reality (cf. 520c). Knowing the Forms, he does not despise the images, but chooses to employ images to lead others to a knowledge of the Forms. He is the poet whose masterful use of imagery has made his philosophy accessible to generations of readers, the philosopher-poet par excellence.

Plato is an imitator who correctly evaluates his imitations. He is not

138 It has often been suggested that the old quarrel between poetry and philosophy is a battle fought within Plato himself. See e.g., Friedlander, *Plato II*, 136: "he felt within himself both Socrates and 'Homer, Hesiod, and Archilochos.* That 'ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry* to which he refers in the *Republic* (X.607b) cut through the centre of his own existence, and he was compelled to create order between those two powers-knowledge and enthusiasm - now converging, now diverging within himself."

139 Ibid.

140 Cf. Griswold 150.
eager to abandon himself to the fashioning of images; he does not set this in the forefront of his life as the best activity to pursue (cf. 599a). He knows that verbal dialogue, the give and take, the exchange and correcting and refining of ideas, is the most effect method of teaching; he knows that the written dialogue is a mere imitation of this verbal exchange. And yet it is an imitation which closely approximates the reality, an imitation which can lead the reader vicariously through the stages of dialectic to an apprehension of the truth. Plato is aware that the writing of books is a kind of "play" (cf. 602b). Yet it is "play" with a serious purpose, play engaged in by Plato with a view to something higher, with a view to reproducing the Forms of beauty and goodness in the characters of men (cf.401e). Plato is aware that his work is only an imitation, an image, a copy. Only, as Friedlander perceptively notes, "a copy of the eternal forms, but a copy of eternal forms." 

Mimēsis is the theory of art and literature which predominates in the Republic. The artist of the Republic, whether he be the illusionistic painter who is characterized by ignorance and whose work is a deceptive appearance of an appearance, or the poet-philosopher who has attained the highest

141 Friedlander, Plato I, 123, likens the writing of books to "serious play": "Thus may we say that even the writing of books is playfulness-play compared with the seriousness of Plato's philosophizing and teaching, and yet serious play - precisely because it is related, under the aspect of imitation, to genuine seriousness?"

142 Verdenius, "Imitation," 272, following Schaerer, says of the term "play": "In Plato's thought this term does not refer to an arbitrary pastime or a mere discharge of surplus energy, but it denotes "every activity which is exercised with a view to something more important."

143 Friedlander, Plato I, 125.
knowledge and whose work is a representation of the Forms, is an imitator. But while mimēsis is the predominant artistic and literary theory of the Republic, it is not the only such theory present there. Implicit in many passages of the Republic is the theory that the philosopher-poet is inspired and that his work is the product of inspiration.

The passage of the Republic which suggests most compellingly the inspiration of the philosopher-poet reads as follows:

Will it not be a fair plea in his defence to say that it was the nature of the real lover of knowledge to strive emulously for true being and that he would not linger over the many particulars that are opined to be real, but would hold on his way, and the edge of his passion would not be blunted nor would his desire fail till he came into touch with the nature of each thing in itself by that part of his soul to which it belongs to lay hold on that kind of reality - the part akin to it, namely - and through that approaching it, and mingling with (μιγέσ) reality really, he would beget (γενόμενεσ) intelligence and truth, attain to knowledge and truly live and grow, and so find surcease from his birth-pang (αἰρέσας, cf. Symp. 206e1), but not before? (490 b, trans. based on Shorey)

The theme of philosophic inspiration and creativity developed fully in the Symposium is stated "in miniature" here. There are many striking parallels in language and in thought. In both the Republic and the Symposium, the philosopher strives single-mindedly toward his goal: the philosopher of the Republic strives earnestly toward real being, refusing to remain among the particulars that are opined to be real, refusing to desist from his passion for reality; the philosopher of the Symposium ascends

144 Vlastos 19, n.53, describes 490b as "a passage which states in miniature the experience of the vision of the Idea of Beauty and union with it in Symp. 210E-212a."
continually toward the beautiful (211c), refusing to remain in love with a particular person (210b) or a particular kind of beauty (210d), refusing to desist from his passion for the Beauty that is real (cf.210a-e). The philosopher in each case has as his goal the apprehension of absolute reality: the philosopher of the Republic strives to grasp the nature of each thing in itself; the philosopher of the Symposium continues on his ascent until he sees absolute Beauty existing by and with itself (211b), absolute Beauty in its essence (211e). In each case the eternal Form is apprehended by a faculty akin to it, the eye of the soul (Sym. 212a; Rep. 518c): the philosopher of the Republic grasps the nature of each thing in itself by the part of the soul to which it belongs to lay hold on reality, the part akin to it; the philosopher of the Symposium contemplates Beauty with the appropriate faculty, the faculty capable of seeing it (212a). In each case the apprehension of the Form results in creativity, and in each case this philosophic creativity is described in terms of sexual union and procreation. The philosopher of the Republic coming near to and mingling with (μυθεῖσ) that which is really real begets (γεννηδός) intelligence and truth and ceases from his birth-pang ( ὁλίγος ); the philosopher of the Symposium in union with (συνότος , 212a2) Beauty brings forth (ἰκτέλ , 212a3,5) true aretē and is released from his birth-pang ( ὁλίγος , 206e1). In each case the philosopher has attained true knowledge and the one life worth living: the philosopher of the Republic will have knowledge and truly live and grow; the philosopher of the Symposium arrives at the supreme knowledge of absolute Beauty, at the region where life should be spent (211c-d).
In each case the apprehension of the Form results in creativity: the philosopher of the Republic like the philosopher of the Symposium is inspired by his vision of the ideal, inspired to bring forth intelligence and truth. In the Republic the theme of philosophic inspiration is present not only in this one passage (490b), but is present in expanded form throughout the similes of the sun, line, and cave. The philosopher of the Republic, like the philosopher of the Symposium is engaged in an ascent (ὀἴσκολα ἐπιβάσθαι Rep. 511a; cf. ἴσπερ ἐπιβαβαλλοῦσαν, Symp. 211c), an ascent from the shadow world of eikasia to the realm of pure light, an ascent from ignorance to knowledge, from appearance to reality, from seeming to truth. Like the philosopher of the Symposium who at last is able to see absolute Beauty in its essence, divine Beauty where it exists apart and alone (211ce), the philosopher of the Republic is able at last to see the sun, not images of it in water or in some alien place, but the sun itself in its own place (516b). As in the Symposium Beauty is the medium in which reproduction occurs, the element which makes procreation possible, so in the Republic the sun is the source of all life, the principle which governs all things in the visible world, the cause of all that is right and beautiful, the cause of knowledge and truth (516b-c; 517c; cf.508e). As in the Symposium Beauty is the final goal of all the philosopher's efforts (210), the culminating vision which enables him to bring forth true aretē (212a), so in the Republic the Form of the Good is the last to be seen, the culmination of the philosopher's ascent and that which enables him to produce in his life true wisdom and intelligence (517c). In the Symposium the source of the philosopher's inspiration is the vision of absolute Beauty; in the Republic the source of philosophic
inspiration is the eidos of the Good.\textsuperscript{145}

The philosopher of the Republic cannot be allowed to remain on the heights. Having made the ascent and having glimpsed with difficulty the Form of the Good (517c), he must descend again to the world of appearance; in terms of Plato's imagery, having made the journey to the sun he must return to the shadows of the cave. The philosopher cannot be allowed to live a life that is exalted, sublime, and useless (cf. 499b); he must be compelled to return to the cave and to exert his best efforts to free the prisoners from bondage and to lead them upward to the light (cf. 517a). The philosopher who has himself accomplished the journey and seen the Good (519d) must enable others to make that same journey. He must take the prisoners in the cave, raise them up and turn them towards the light (cf. 515c); he must turn their souls from the world of becoming to the world of being, from the contemplation of shadows to the contemplation of reality: he must turn their souls toward the Good (cf. 518c-d). The philosopher who knows what each image is and of what it is an image (520c), must lead others to see the truth of the beautiful and the just and the good. He must convince those whose world is comprised of images that there is reality.

\textsuperscript{145} Cf. 540 a-c, where it is said that the philosopher who looks upon the Good itself (\textit{τό ἐγκεκοιμημένον ἀλήθειαν}), and who uses that paradigm to put in order himself, the city and its citizens, will have memorials established to him, as to a man divinely blessed and divinely inspired (theios). Several commentators have noted the correspondence between the Beautiful of the Symposium and the Good of the Republic, e.g. Jowett, Dialogues I, 533: "the highest summit which is reached in the Symposium is seen also to be the highest summit which is attained in the Republic, but approached from the other side..." Cf. Greene 22: "The lover of beauty aspires...to know the truth.... His path, like that of the Σοφεία, leads to the summit of the same mountain; the mountain to him, however, is known as beautiful, to the Σοφεία, it is known as good."
beyond those images; he must convince them that reality is to be found not in the profusion of images before them but in the pale glimmer of light that infiltrates the aperture of the cave.

The philosopher must convince the cave-dwellers of the reality of the Good. He must reveal to them something of the creative power and transcendent beauty of that highest Form. And he can do so only by means of images: the Good can be made known only through the offspring and child of the good (cf. 507a). The philosopher must, in other words, adopt the method of the poet: he must convey his vision through poetic images. Plato himself is a master of imagery. His imagery of sun, line, and cave, to use but one example, provides an unforgettable illustration of the journey of the soul to the intelligible realm (cf. 517b). The image of the sun provides a readily comprehensible illustration of the eidos of the Good. Plato understands the value of imagery, and he knows its limitations. Imagery is of value, as the mathematician's diagrams are of value, in illustrating truths that must ultimately be established by abstract reasoning. In the realm of knowledge (epistēmē), imagery is confined to the lower level of dianoia: it is a stepping stone which must be left behind if one is to grasp that which is beyond visible illustrations, the intelligible reality contemplated by the science of dialectic (cf. 511b-c). Imagery is, as McKeon suggests, a

\[\text{146} \quad \text{Cf. Gallop 119: "The Sun, Line and Cave similes provide sensible images of the Forms, and of the discipline that would enable us to perceive them directly for ourselves. By using such images, the Republic consciously apes the mathematician's procedure. It confines itself to the level of dianoia."}
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necessary stage in the ascent to reality\textsuperscript{147}, but a stage that must be abandoned if reality is to be fully known.

The philosopher knows the Forms and he recognizes their images (cf. 520c); the good artist knows the forms and he recognizes their images (cf. 402c). There is in Plato's scheme of things a place for the good artist, the artist who is merely an artist but who has a natural affinity with the philosopher. In the \textit{Symposium} Plato grants to the good poet a place on the lower rungs of the ladder (208c-209e) and thus places poetic creativity in a continuum with philosophic creativity. In the \textit{Republic} there is again the suggestion that the creative activity of the poet parallels, on a lower level, the creative activity of the philosopher. The good poet has the natural ability to pursue the beautiful and the graceful (401c); he is able to recognize the forms in their various embodiments, forms of moderation and justice, courage and munificence, and is able to represent the images of these forms in his work (cf. 402c). His work is of great value in the education of the young: "nurture in the arts is most important because their rhythm and harmony permeate the inner part of the soul, bringing graciousness to it" (401d). Nurture in the arts moulds good and beautiful character and creates an affinity with reason which enables the one thus nurtured to recognize and welcome it "when reason comes" (401e-402a). These are high ideals for poetry and for art. They are higher, perhaps, than any ever formulated and stated by philosopher or poet. They are not,

\textsuperscript{147} McKeon 12: "Images and copies, however, as the metaphor would suggest, provide no satisfactory substitute for reality, though they are a necessary stage in the approach to reality. To understand the image we must know the reality; but to know the reality we must dispose of the images."
however, Plato’s highest ideals.

Plato’s ideal poet will resemble but surpass the good poet or artist. The ideal poet has a natural ability akin to, but more excellent than, that of the good artist: the good poet has the natural capacity to consort with reality (490b); he has a mind endowed with measure and grace, the natural disposition easily led to the perception of the Forms (486d). The ideal poet contemplates not many beautiful things but Beauty itself, not many just actions but Justice itself (cf. 479d-e); his eye is directed beyond the various earthly embodiments of the Forms (cf. 402c) to the Form which remains eternally the same (476d). Consorting with what is divine and ordered he himself becomes ordered and divine; applying what he has seen yonder to the characters of men he moulds character that is not only good but godlike (500c-501c). The ideal poet represents in his work not images of the Forms in their earthly embodiments (cf. 402c), but images of the transcendent Forms: his poetry is a representation of the eidos of the Good. Unlike the artist who possesses only opinion and whose works must be overseen (cf. 401b), the ideal poet has knowledge (476d) and can be relied upon to represent that knowledge accurately: the works he begets are intelligence and truth (490b). The ideal poet has made the ascent (cf. 519d) and has seen the eidos of the Good (cf. 516b); he can therefore represent the Good by an accurate and true image, an image that will be a sure stepping-stone to the knowledge of reality (cf. 511b). The ideal poet can thus do more than impart harmony and grace to the character: the ideal poet can set his listeners upon the path to knowledge (cf. 522a). For Plato the ideal poet is the philosopher who has acquired the one true knowledge, the knowledge of
the Forms,\textsuperscript{148} and who can through his poetic imagery lead others to the attainment of that knowledge. Plato's highest ideal for art and for poetry will be realized only when the philosopher, inspired by his vision of the Forms, becomes a poet.

\textsuperscript{148} Cf. Griswold 141: "poetry must be guided by philosophy and ultimately by a philosophical vision of the Ideas."
CONCLUSION

The Ion presents an exaggerated view of inspiration. Plato in this dialogue takes the traditional theory of inspiration and grossly exaggerates it. The inspired poet of the Ion is, to some extent, a caricature of the ancient and honoured bard. The poet is no longer the privileged recipient of kindly aid from a benevolent Muse; he is no longer the possessor par excellence of sophia and techne, a wise and skilled collaborator with an all-knowing Muse. The inspired poet of the Ion is possessed, frenzied and out of his mind; he raves like a maddened Bacchant (534a). Deprived of his faculties, he becomes a mouthpiece for the utterances of the god; he is passive and servile, a mindless instrument (534c-d). Inspired poetry is the irrational product of an irrational process, useless and worse than useless.

Book X of the Republic presents an exaggerated view of imitation. Plato here takes the concept of art and poetry as mimesis, a concept already familiar by the fourth century, and exaggerates it. The imitative poet of the tenth book of the Republic is an "imitator" in the lowest, most pejorative sense of the word. He imitates the outward appearance of a sensible object; his work is the mere appearance of an appearance, the illusory image of an image (597e-598b). His work is far removed from truth (598b) and produced without knowledge of the truth (599a). The imitative poet of Book X has no knowledge of any kind: he has no knowledge of the truth (599a) and no knowledge of reality (601b); he has neither the knowledge possessed by the user of an instrument, nor even the right
opinion of the maker (602a). He is an ignorant deceiver, a specialist in illusionism, a conjurer, a sorcerer (598b-d; cf. 601a-b). The imitative poet produces work that is inferior as regards the truth and appeals to an inferior part of the soul; he exalts the reason at the expense of the emotions and produces an evil polity in the soul (605a-c). His work is pleasant, but useless and worse than useless (cf.607d-e).

Both the Ion and Book X of the Republic present a theory of art and literature that is exaggerated and that is exaggerated for a purpose. In the Ion, Plato's gives an exaggerated account of the poetic process; in the Republic, he gives an exaggerated description of the poetic product. In each case his purpose is the same: he exaggerates the deficiencies, in order to emphasize the dangers, of the poet and his poetry. In each case he intends to alert his readers to the dangers of relying on the poets as educators, to the dangers of submitting to the poetic spell. In both dialogues Plato speaks in language that is extravagant and excessive in order to refute the extravagant and excessive claims made by and for the poets. The early poets had viewed their role as a didactic one; the people regarded them, and Homer in particular, as possessors and dispensers of knowledge (Rep.598e) and as the educators of Greece (Rep. 606e). In order to attack the didactic pretensions of the poets and the popular acceptance of their role as educators, Plato describes their activities in exaggerated and pejorative terms. In the Ion he places a one-sided emphasis on the irrational aspect of the poetic process in order to discredit the poets' claims to wisdom and knowledge. In the Republic he emphasizes unduly the aspects of falsity and deception inherent in the concept of imitation in order to disparage the

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poets' works. Plato is vigorously engaged in the battle between poetry and philosophy (cf. 607b). In both the Republic and the Ion he is using an exaggerated theory of art and literature as a weapon against the poets. Wielding this weapon he hopes to bring about the defeat of the poets and to establish the supremacy of the philosopher.

Plato uses two diverse and incompatible theories to prove identical points. There is no real compatibility between the theory of inspiration as presented in the Ion and the theory of imitation as presented in Book X of the Republic: the poet or artist who merely imitates external appearance has no need of inspiration. Yet Plato uses both the theory of imitation and the theory of inspiration to demonstrate the following points: the poet is ignorant, lacking in any real knowledge (Ion 532c, 534c; Rep. 598c, 599a, 601a, 602a); the poet engages in mechanical and mindless, rather than creative, activity (Ion 534c-d; Rep. 596c-597e); the poet exists and functions at several removes from the source of his art (Ion 534d-535a; Rep. 598b, 599a); the poet is an illusionist and sorcerer (Ion 541e7; Rep. 598d); the poet plays on the emotions of his hearers and evokes a purely emotional response (Ion 535e, Rep. 603b). Neither the theory of imitation in Book X of the Republic nor the theory of inspiration in the Ion is presented by Plato as a valid theory of literature and art. Plato does not seriously hold two incompatible theories. Both are exaggerated accounts, exaggerated for the purpose of demonstrating the dangers of the poet and his poetry.

Neither the Ion nor Book X of the Republic presents Plato's highest and truest views on poetry and art. There are indications even in Book X
of the Republic that Plato has a higher view of mimēsis and mimetic art; there are suggestions in the Ion of a higher view of inspiration. Book X of the Republic indicates that there may be a good poet who has knowledge (598e) and that there may be good poetry which imitates not outward appearance but inward ethos (604e), poetry which imitates something more than the objects of sense perception. The Ion suggests that the beauty of poetry originates in a divine source. The sheer beauty of language in the central monologue section (533c-535a) suggests a sensitivity to the beauty of poetry and a sincerity in attributing its origin to a divine source. The exalted language suggests a more exalted view of inspiration. The theory of inspiration presented in the Ion is in a sense a mere shadow or reflection, an adumbration of a higher view to be expressed in later dialogues. Poetic inspiration will be taken up into the realm of philosophy, the inspiration of the poet subsumed in the inspiration of the philosopher.

In the Symposium inspiration takes on new and higher meaning. In this dialogue Plato takes elements of the inspirational theory expressed in the Ion, transmutes them, and creates a theory of inspiration uniquely his own. In the Symposium as in the Ion the source of inspiration is divine. There are, however, significant differences in the inspirational process. In the Ion, the divine moves downward through the human; in the Symposium, the human moves upward to the divine, the philosopher ascends to the vision of divine Beauty (τὸ θεῖον καλόν, 211e3), which enables him to bring forth true aretē (212a5). In the Ion, the Muse impels the poet to compose beautifully (534c2-3); in the Symposium, Eros impels the philosopher on the upward ascent which results at various stages in the creation of
beautiful logoi (210a8; 210c; 210d5). In the Ion, the poet is a passive instrument, a transmitter for the utterances of the god (534c-d); in the Symposium, the philosopher is actively engaged in the ascent which enables him to bring forth thoughts he himself has been pregnant with (206c-e). In the Symposium, "possession" and "enthusiasm" take on new meaning. In the Ion, the poet is forcefully entered and "possessed" by a god (534a4); he becomes entheos only when deprived of his own faculties (534c-d). In the Symposium, the philosopher enters into the possession of absolute Beauty and is possessed by it; by means of his own faculties he attains the vision of Beauty, enters into union with the divine, and becomes entheos in the highest sense (212a). The new inspirational process results in a new product: a process purified by reason results in a literature purified by reason, in a literature purified of its dangerous elements.

There are several passages in the Republic which suggest an exalted and true theory of imitation. The passage in the Republic which illustrates most clearly Plato's views on the highest kind of imitation is that in which he likens the philosopher to a painter using a paradigm (500b-501c). Plato here tells us that the philosopher, the man whose thoughts are truly directed toward real existences, looks upon things that are ordered and ever the same, imitates them and tries to become like them; the philosopher consorting with what is divine and ordered becomes ordered and divine. The philosopher, the true craftsman of moderation, justice, and civic virtue, not only moulds his own character, but also applies the things he sees yonder to the character of others. The philosopher, a painter using the divine paradigm, keeps looking back and forth to Justice, Beauty, and Moderation,
and composes human characters dear to the gods. This passage, taken in conjunction with 402c and the suggestion there that works of art and literature are images of the eide of moderation, courage and other virtues, indicates that in Plato's view the highest kind of mimēsis and mimetic art is the province of the philosopher. It is only the philosopher who can contemplate and imitate eternal reality, only the philosopher who can use the divine paradigm. The true eidē, the Platonic Forms of the virtues, can be imitated, in art as in life, only by the philosopher. If Plato's highest ideal for art and poetry is to be realized, the philosopher, the imitator of the Forms, must become an artist and poet. It is in Plato's own dialogues that this ideal is realized.

There are suggestions in the Republic of an exalted and true theory of inspiration. One passage is a statement in miniature of the theory of philosophic inspiration expressed in the Symposium. Plato in this passage (490b) describes the ascent of the philosopher from the multiplicity of particular things to the apprehension of eternal reality. Grasping the nature of each thing in itself with that part of the soul akin to it, approaching it through that and consorting with true reality, the philosopher brings forth intelligence and truth. This passage, taken together with the similes of the sun, line and cave, repeat with a slight variation the Symposium's theme of philosophical inspiration: the process of inspiration is almost identical, but the source of inspiration is given a different name. In the Symposium the ascent of the philosopher culminates in the vision of Beauty, which enables him to bring forth true aretē (212a); in the Republic the ascent of the philosopher culminates in the vision of the Good, which enables him to bring
forth wisdom and intelligence (490b; cf.517c). In the Symposium the source of inspiration is the Form of Beauty; in the Republic the source of inspiration is the Form of Good. The philosopher who has made the ascent and seen the Form must descend again to the cave and attempt to convey his vision to the prisoners there. He must find words with which to express the inexpressible, concrete language in which to clothe abstract reality. This task will require the full exercise of his own creative powers and it will require the use of poetic imagery: the Good can be made known only by the offspring and child of the Good (cf.507a). If Plato's highest ideal for poetry is to be realized, the philosopher, inspired by a vision of the Forms, must become a poet.

Plato holds sincerely and simultaneously two theories of art and literature. These theories find their true expression neither in Book X of the Republic nor in the Ion, but in the Symposium and in scattered references throughout the Republic. Here both inspiration and imitation are given their highest and truest meaning; here both inspiration and imitation are taken up into the realm of philosophy. For Plato the true poet is the philosopher. The philosopher-poet is truly inspired and his works true products of inspiration; the philosopher-poet is the true imitator and his works true imitations. There is no incompatibility between the two views. True imitation is imitation of the Forms; true inspiration is inspiration by and through the Forms. At this highest level the two theories of art and literature fuse, coalesce and become one: the ideal Form is, for the philosopher-poet, both his object of imitation and his source of inspiration.


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