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Bachelor Thesis

Antidote to the effects of poetry in book X of
Plato's Republic

by

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I hereby declare that I have written this Bachelor Thesis myself and on my own. All the used material and literature has been referenced and quoted. This thesis has not been submitted in support of an application of another degree.

In Prague, 21st of June 2017

Signature: _____

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1. Introduction

Plato's preoccupation with art is clear since his early writings. Although his ideas are not formulated in a systematic theory, in *Republic* we find the body of arguments, which shed the light on some of the central questions. In his work Plato considers the value of the arts, especially poetry and drama. He provokes a more thorough re-examination of common beliefs. The philosopher insists on raising the questions about political, educational and moral significance of poetry. Is poetry good for us? Why do we enjoy it? What do poets really know, and what do they teach us about?

In order to find the answers, he engages in the philosophical inquiry of the deepest complexity. The critique can be figuratively divided into two parts. First, in book II and III Plato discusses all aspects of content and form of poetry. He acknowledges its vast influence and educational capacity. An idea of self-contained status of art, which persists in people's minds, is considered to be inaccurate and even dangerous. Plato insists that the art be subservient to moral aims. Then follows the discussion of the nature of dramatic characterization or mimesis, which is continued in book X. Plato puts questions about how poetry achieves what it does? What is the product of poetic imitation? How does it engage our minds, thoughts, and emotions? Finally, what is the danger of poetry?

In the present paper, in order to examine philosopher's hostility to poetry, we followed the development of his argument. We begin by looking at the critique in books II and III. The distinction, which Socrates makes, separates good and bad kinds of imitation. Before we proceed with the close study of Book X of the *Republic*, we take a look at the issue, which has been broadly discussed by the scholars. The unexpected shift in perspective in relation to the earlier books still presents a puzzle for every inspective reader of *Republic*. The following profound account on nature of imitative poetry shows clear signs of enmity and leaves very few options, which would dissuade the reader that Plato's goal is no less than to abolish poetry altogether. Socrates returns to the subject of poetry to justify its exclusion and determined by the argument, together with his companion Glaucon is compelled to conclude that there is no place for poetry, directed to pleasure and imitation, in the just city. The new justification, however, raises the question, whether book III's imitation of good character is still allowed. In the present

study we take into account different points of the view and infer our position in relation to the problem. Throughout the text we find Plato's attack to be branched out into three main directions. Plato argues against portrayal of unjust and generally bad character, the act of performance and the very form of the poetised statement. In the following chapters we will deal with the question of what is the real danger of poetry according to Plato, and whether it is harmful to everybody or to an elect few.

The critique in book X, however, extends beyond the project of founding the ideal state. In the light of the theory of tripartite structure of the soul, the book X explains what damage the poetic mimesis causes to the minds of the audience. In the chapter 4, we discuss to whom and what kind of danger the imitative poetry is capable of doing.

The text of book X contains still other ambiguous statements, which are no less important to consider in order to understand philosopher's relation to poetry. Throughout the text Socrates repeatedly undercuts his arguments with sincere remarks, confessing his lingering love of poetry. It is the alluring power and capacity to bewitch that is holding him back against abandoning poetry completely. We will examine the counterpoint, which explores the problem of whether Socrates, committed to philosophical ideals might be seeking for a way to welcome both poetry and philosophy and whether it is, indeed, possible to be a 'philosophical lover of poetry'.

The important sentence right at the beginning of Book X suggests the existence of a kind of knowledge that would make it possible to listen to poetry without falling under its spell. It is said that the 'antidote' consists in knowing of poetry's very nature (595b5-7). Taken in conjunction with the arguments provided by the discussion of poetry throughout the Republic, the metaphor of antidote presents a breakthrough point in relationship between poetry and philosophy. We will focus on exploring a possibility of reunion between the two.

At the heart of the present study will be the thesis that philosopher's aim isn't to cure poetry nor to do away with it at last but to prevent the damage it causes. We argue that it is possible to trace Plato's intention to enable the rational force of philosophical logos to prevail over the overwhelming power of irrational emotion in his treatise on poetry.

2. Poetry in the context of The Republic of Plato

Republic is one of Plato's later works, which contains perhaps the most comprehensive statement of his philosophical and political views. The work deals with the fundamental principles of human conduct such as knowledge, morality, effective education and relationship to the political community.

The discussion brings forward the question of the character of justice. Socrates attempts to define justice through his dialogues with exemplary characters of the political scene. For far more substantial analysis, he undertakes the project of founding a city-state, based on principles of justice, harmony and division of labour.

As a prelude to his construction of the ideal state, Socrates proclaims: "Let's build a city in words" (369c9). Consequently, the discussion covers all the range of influences, ideas, beliefs and practices that make up the society. In Plato's advocacy of the idea, the key role is assigned to philosophers. Among other issues, Socrates and his companions discuss features of philosophical temperament and the conditions in which it is most likely to develop and possible dangers.

Noticeably, throughout the text Plato does not tire of visiting and revisiting the theme of poetry. The discussion involves analysis of psychological states as well as epistemological features of composition and reception of poetry. On the one hand, Plato criticizes and even banishes poets, unmasking poetry's affectation and damaging influence. On the other hand, eloquent statements of continuing attachment to it, blunt the whole motif of 'banishment' of the poets from the ideal city.

We wish to trace a deep ambiguity in Plato's account on poetry, which elicited fundamentally different readings among scholars.

3. What is the danger of poetry?

3.1. The role of poetry in education in books II. and III.

In Plato's day education of young Athenians was mainly the responsibility of the family and took place on private basis. It consisted partly of physical exercise and *mousike*. That it all arts, which are governed by the Muses: poetry, music, singing and dance.

Activities such as learning and reciting poetry were thus at the heart of the Athenian system of education. We must remember that Greek poetry was inseparable from its musical elements and ideated a kind of performance that combined words and music.¹ In the Republic, Plato's far-reaching discussion of an advanced system of education, political structure and cognitive states contributes to unified idea of a community governed by knowledge. The operation of the whole society is ensured by the principle of specialization, which requires each class of citizens to fulfil its role by providing a component part of the common good. The special task of governance of the city is entrusted to the privileged class of guardians. According to Socrates, it is a prerequisite for an ideal society to have philosophers as kings (473d)². They are said to be concerned with the truth and are in a better position to decide what is good for all. Of course, a character of future rulers will require proper training carried out from childhood. The books II-III are dealing with the matters of upbringing of the young.

3.2. Early education

Plato holds that music and poetry have considerable effect on one's character especially in the young age. In book II-III he expresses his concerns about their content as well as about their musical form.

“Because rhythm and harmony most of all insinuate themselves into the inmost part of the soul and most vigorously lay hold of it in bringing grace with them; and they make a man graceful if he is correctly reared, if not, the opposite.”(401e)

The long discussion of poetry and poetic education aims to perpetuate a general principle:

¹ P., Murray, P., Wilson, Introduction in Music and the Muses The Culture of 'mousikē' in the Classical Athenian City', Oxford University Press, 2004

² If not stated otherwise, the references in brackets refer to the standard Stenzel pagination that is given in Bloom's translation in: Bloom, A., *The Republic of Plato, translated with notes and an interpretative essay by Allan Bloom*. Basic Books, 1968 (repr. 1991)

“...good speech, good harmony, good grace, and good rhythm accompany good disposition...” (400e)

Intellectual and moral training of the young guardians is discussed at 376e- 378e3. The influence of poetry and arts, in the ideal city must be overseen and carefully inspected in order to ensure that the good kind of disposition prevails. The reader of earlier books of Republic witnesses the process of formation of the limitations on what kind of poetry will be allowed. Philosopher’s stance is uncompromising. The explicit censorship of poetry needs to be undertaken for the general good of the state.

Socrates articulates his concern about the consequences that certain stories might have on child’s mind. He warns that ideas about gods and heroes are commonly derived from the existing poetry, which misinterprets the nature of the divine. His main objection is that the content of such works is not fitted for the educational purposes. Not only the youth acquires wrong kind of information, but because of the characteristic of the contemporary schooling methods, which required performance of the stories, they liken themselves to its flawed protagonists.

The ‘likening’ or the act of producing a likeness has great significance in terms of the present discussion and with regard to the overall topic of our inquiry. In book III Socrates speaks not only about theatrical performances and its influence but also about guardian’s real behaviour. Children take in certain rules of conduct at very early stages of development. For this reason, familiarity with and the excessive participation in dramatic recitations are treated with apprehension and circumspection.

First, Socrates calls in question the moral content of the stories that are being told to the children. Particularly the guardians, whose key role is that of embedding the ethical truths, thus being able to make accurate judgments regarding matters of fact, are prohibited to imitate unjust and bad characters. Since their view of things taken on at early age and is very hard to change, it is necessary to ensure that they hear only myths that encourage true virtue. Socrates proposes that only right kind of poetry is to be allowed in the city. To the question of what characters the guardians will be allowed to imitate Socrates answers by saying that:

“If they (guardians) should do imitate anything, then from their earliest childhood they should choose appropriate models to imitate – people who are brave, self-disciplined, god-fearing, free, that sort of thing” (395c3-d2)

3.3. The form of mimetic storytelling

Having discussed the issue of psychological and ethical effects of poetry, Socrates turns to the critique of 'style' or 'form'. The notion of mimesis is introduced with the analysis of the medium, through which poets convey their thoughts. The narrative might be 'simple', when a poet speaks in his own voice, or 'imitative' when he makes use of direct speech, putting his words in mouths of his characters, concealing himself behind a mask. Against this second form Socrates builds his argument. Genres such as comedy and tragedy receive the greatest attack, as they proceed wholly by imitation. The dithyrambs are said to consist of a simple narrative and epic poetry to contain both. A poet is said to liken himself to a character, what makes his audience believe that it's the character speaking.

The object of criticism in the first part of the work seems to be limited to works of poetry that contain parts or are wholly imitative. The spectrum of people who, in one sense or the other, engage in imitative poetry is expansive. Be it on the side of a maker of poetry, solicitous orator or merely belong to an audience, one is chargeable with producing a likeness. Initially, Socrates and his companion have agreed that a person can do a fine job in one activity only. He infers that a poet who attempts to imitate many things is doomed to failure. Neither is he capable of doing properly what he imitates, for he is firstly an imitator and not a carpenter or any other character in question. The same rule applies to the guardians of the City, who mustn't do or imitate anything else. They shall not be willing to represent an inferior character, but be ashamed of "fitting himself into, the models of worse men" (396d). Yet Socrates appears to be unsure whether this is the ultimate sentence for poetry. Regulations concerning of the form of poetry turn out to be quite complex and require a more profound analysis. The concept of mimesis, which he uses, proves to have multiple meanings. The discussion continues in the book X, where we are confronted yet with another definition. In the following chapter, we will try to figure out the ambiguity of the concept.

3.4. Understanding Mimesis

As we have seen, the concept of mimesis differs noticeably in any of particular situations. According to Socrates, there are at least two kinds of imitation, which he criticizes in books II and III.

Firstly, poetry, which features bad as well as good characters, is considered to be inappropriate for the ears of young guardians. At this stage, he is concerned with the content of poetry. He insists on banning of false and blasphemous stories, which corrupt the youth. The very act of performance has an immense influence on one's character. Guards who "imitate" bad men, by likening themselves to such characters, tend to become bad. Therefore, they are discouraged to partake in any form of imitative behaviour, whether on stage or in real life.

Secondly, imitation takes place in artistic production. This kind of imitation concerns the manner of performance. An actor or rhapsode imitate the characters created by poets. In reality, by doing so they imitate poet's own words, which he puts in the mouths of his characters. To make it clear Socrates introduces the distinction between mimetic and non-mimetic storytelling. In mimetic storytelling, a poet "hides himself" by telling the story through his characters' speeches. Only those who use narrative style with little or no changes of harmonic mode and rhythm will be welcomed in the city. Concerning the question whether the poets should be allowed to imitate at all, Socrates and Adeimantus finally agree that a poet "who would imitate the style of the decent man"(398b) would not be sent in exile. Socrates' position is clarified in the profound account on the nature of poets's work, which is presented in book X. However, before we turn to the second part of the critique in book X, let us have a look at some critics' perspectives on it. Book X is sometimes treated as epilogue to the Republic. Many scholars suspect certain degree of inconsistency in Plato's views in relation to the rest of the work. Some suggest it was written and added later³

³ Julia Annas holds a very critical view. Her unorthodox account of book X cuts across all central ideas on both knowledge and the Forms. She describes it as "an excrescence . . . full of

3.4.1. New concept of poetic mimesis in book X?

The book X's treatment of mimesis appears to be different from the book III. In particular, the critique of mimetic poetry in book X stands out with certain tenseness. It has been debated whether the charge from the book III coincides with its vindication or, whether Socrates in book X bans more mimesis than he did before.

The book X begins with resumption of the earlier reform. Socrates says that they were right in "not admitting at all any part of it that is imitative" (595a). The ambiguous line has provoked the debate over congruity between parts of the text.

Does Plato unexpectedly changes his mind and denounce all poetry as bad, whereas earlier (at Republic, 396b-398b) imitation of good men was allowed? Or is he now using the concept of mimesis in a radically different sense?

F.M. Burnyeat suggests that problematic sentence has to be read as "such *kinds* or *genres* as are imitative"⁴. He argues that book X's discussion of mimesis deals only with intrinsically mimetic genres and is consistent with book III' allowing imitation of a good character. We will now take a look at his position, concerning the reform of poetry, which defends the consistency of Plato's text.

According to Burnyeat, Plato's proposal for reforming the educational system is a part of greater intent of reshaping the whole culture. The project of founding the ideal city state presupposes that its "entire culture - material, moral, and musical - is pervaded by the right values, thanks to the philosopher-rulers"⁵. So, poetry undergoes a reconstruction in a carefully arranged sequence of stages. First stage is concerned with the content. As we have noticed earlier, Plato considered most of the poetry, from Homer onwards, to be full of false stories about gods, which are morally unsuitable for the ears of the young. Socrates comments:

oddities" J. Annas, ch. 14 Book Ten in *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, New York 1981, p. 335.

⁴ F.M. Burnyeat, *Tanner Lectures on Human Values: Culture and Society in Plato's Republic*, Harvard University, December, 1997, p. 291

⁵ For more detailed discussion see Burnyeat, 1997, lecture I

“A young thing can't judge what is hidden sense and what is not; but what he takes into his opinions at that age has a tendency to become hard to eradicate and unchangeable. Perhaps it's for this reason that we must do everything to insure that what they hear first, with respect to virtue, be the finest told tales for them to hear.” (378d-e)

We can see that the proposals of the reform are made not only for the sake of the young but for the sake of the whole polis. When there will be the right kind of stories, they will have to be told to everybody. At this point, Burnyeat emphasises the existence of strong ties between poetry as means of education and the culture, in a sense that former articulates cultural values and beliefs. “Plato’s message is that culture should be taken seriously for what it is: education.”⁶

At the second stage of the reform Socrates turns from the content of poetry to the manner of performance. As Burnyeat suggests “the norms are built up layer upon layer, with those regulating content as the foundation”⁷. The distinction between mimetic and non-mimetic storytelling, which we have already introduced, opens up the discussion of mimesis. In book III, the concept of mimesis implies impersonating. It is said that anyone who likens himself, either in voice or looks to someone else, engages in mimesis. Burnyeat puts it this way: “this sense of being present at the events enacted on stage, not merely at the theatrical event of enacting them”⁸. He proposes the following definition: “Mimesis is the production of visual and auditory likenesses, which give us that sense of actual presence”.⁹

The analysis of books II-III is concluded by the question: What occasions for performance of poetry will remain after the reform? Burnyeat insists that the right kind of imitation was not only allowed but also actively encouraged in book III. He describes a permitted sort of poetry as follows:

“The story will be mostly plain narrative, interrupted by the occasional stretch of mimesis. The mimesis will be largely restricted to auditory and visual likenesses

⁶ Burnyeat, 1997, p. 262

⁷ Burnyeat, 1997, p. 266

⁸ Burnyeat, 1997, p. 266

⁹ Ibid

of a good person behaving steadfastly and sensibly. ... There will be little variation in his (actors) voice, and the accompanying music will stick to a single mode and a single rhythm”¹⁰

When in book X the reform is being reaffirmed, Burnyeat advises to consider it as continuing the previous discussion on a higher level. Thus, by saying that he will vindicate book III’s decision by showing the damage that poetic mimesis does to the thought of its audience, Socrates lays but another layer in the critique of poetry. The justification does not imply that any new kind of imitation is proscribed. Burnyeat’s approach emanates from the principle of charity. He points out to the numerous back-references that Plato makes in book X to the earlier parts of the discussion. At 595a and later (602e-603a, 603d) Socrates refers to the division of the soul, discussed in book IV:

“For that the imitative, more than anything, must not be admitted looks, in my opinion, even more manifest now that the soul’s forms have each been separated out.” (595a).

It is also obvious that Plato proceeds without any special alert about the change in the status of mimesis. The critique is aimed to tragedy and comedy, picked up earlier as wholly imitative. The account of poetry in book X abides by the norms established in books II and III.

Yet, some scholars see a distinct contrariety between the different concepts of mimesis. First, introduced in the context of performing arts, mimesis or “imitation” is thought of as impersonation. In book X, however, Plato explains the nature of mimesis as representation. Burnyeat’s answer is that both definitions satisfy the condition of producing a likeness or image of something. He considers this to be the key quality, which reconciles first and second part of critique.

We have noticed earlier that Socrates uses the term of imitation in multiple meanings. Before we set out to examine the text of book X, let us summarise what goes by “imitation” in books II and III. First and the most common-sense meaning appears when an actor plays a role on stage, likening himself to some character. Another case of mimesis is what a poet does, when he uses direct speech in his work. Last but not least, in book II he talks about guardians becoming good or bad through imitation. Poetry’s imagery and melodic rhythms are said to be so powerful, they hardly leave anyone

¹⁰ Ibid, p.278

untouched. The guardians who will perform the plays during their education are in danger of acquiring bad character through impersonating the models of unacceptable behaviour. All three cases are concerned with mimesis as impersonation. However, the third, guardian's imitation is what matters in understanding mimesis and why is it so powerful in the city.

It is true that the following account of poetry presents a different way of looking at the concept of mimesis. There is no doubt it extends the present list of meanings. Our aim will be to inspect new connotations in order to see whether they contradict with the existing ones or as Burnyeat suggest, the general principle of mimesis is present in any of the particular cases.

3.4.2. The object of imitation

In book X Socrates begins with the analogy of painting to help in explaining what imitative art is and why is it dangerous. The art of a painter is to produce visual imitations of the objects that are the products of some other craft. Thus, when a painter draws a couch, he doesn't make a couch, but something that looks like it and "surely isn't in truth" (596e4). The relation of imitation to the truth becomes clearer later, as Socrates brings forward further ontological distinction between objects and mere appearances. Throughout books VI-VII Plato suggests that material objects are likenesses or images of Forms. In book X we are introduced to the third kind of objects that are likenesses of likenesses of the Forms, thrice removed from "the truth". A maker of these objects is addressed as imitator. The same is applied to the maker of tragedy (597e5). One does not copy things, "as they are", but only "as they appear". Socrates explains the distinction as follows:

"Does a couch, if you observe it from the side, or from the front, or from anywhere else, differ at all from itself? Or does it not differ at all but only look different, and similarly with the rest?" (598a).

A painting hence is an imitation of looks or appearances. Moreover, the appearance is not only distinct from the couch, but also qualitatively different. While the couch remains the same viewed from different angles, the appearance of it varies. Even "realistic" painting of a carpenter, which is made so it looks like a real carpenter from afar, is only an optical illusion or phantom that will not look like it when seeing closely. Plato draws

an analogy between imitative artist and a man with a mirror. If in case with painting the paradigm appears to be conspicuous, we are still to figure out how to apply the appearance/reality distinction to poetry. Plato defines the object of poetic imitation at 603c:

“Imitation, we say, imitates human beings performing forced or voluntary actions, and, as a result of the action, supposing themselves to have done well or badly, and in all of this experiencing pain or enjoyment”.

Someone who supposes that parallel to a painter, who captures visible objects, a poet depicts visible aspects of human action, misses the important feature of Plato’s account on poetry. Wouldn’t he, in that case, stop after saying that imitation is concerned with “human beings performing forced or voluntary actions” if it is to be the objective of poetry? Yet, he continues claiming that what, in fact, imitative poetry does is that it aims at displaying human beings acting good or bad. Another point to make is, for example, when he refers to Homer, Socrates says:

“Tragedy and its leader, Homer, must be considered, since we hear from some that these men know all arts and all things human that have to do with virtue and vice, and the divine things too” (598e).

The focus here is on the particular areas of expertise, in which poets claim to have knowledge. These are the ones concerned with human virtue. Thus, according to Plato, a poet imitates what appears to be, though is not, a human virtue. The object of poetic imitation is, thereby, so called phantoms of virtue. (600e)

3.4.3. Poet’s knowledge

Plato's theory of artistic production is intertwined with his metaphysical and epistemological views. In book X, he does not only define what is the product of mimesis but also what kind of knowledge (or lack of it) its practitioner requires. Socrates resumes his attack on Homer right at the opening lines:

“Between us - and you all won't denounce me to the tragic poets and all the other imitators...” (595b3).

Tragedy and Homeric poetry are again at the centre of attention in book X. In response to "...praisers of Homer who say that this poet educated Greece, and that in the management and education of human affairs it is worthwhile to take him up for study and for living, by arranging one's whole life according to this poet..." Socrates questions whether their idol knew the things he wrote about and how is it possible that he wasn't involved in any of them during his life time. Rather," as the painter will make what seems to be a shoemaker to those who understand as little about shoemaking as he understands, but who observe only colours and shapes" (606e) it appears that the human virtues Homer wrote about, were mere phantoms, and "the educator of Greece" didn't lay hold of truth. Socrates argues that knowledge of any of the arts he brings into his stories would make Homer want to practice his expertise. Instead, imitation does not require any true knowledge.

"The maker of the phantom, the imitator, we say, understands nothing of what is but rather of what looks like it *is*" (601c).

Further, Socrates introduces the degrees of knowing or understanding. The difference is explained in relation to a thing, which can be made. The skill of making something is different from the skill of using it. A user of a thing will be the most knowledgeable about the qualities that make a thing good or bad for its appropriate use (601d-e). The maker will only have true beliefs about it, which he acquires from the user. Next, here is an imitator, who does not know what is good and bad for a thing and makes "whatever looks to be fair to the many who don't know anything".

3.5. Another perspective on the consistency between the two critiques

As we have mentioned book X's concept of poetic mimesis has been the reason for debates. Here, we present some of the views opposite to the one expressed by Burnyeat.

Concerning what has been said about Plato's view of poets, Julia Annas argues that the same reasons for saying that a painter lacks knowledge cannot be applied to a poet. She speaks of the whole analogy of painting as mere image not being sufficient model for poetry in any obvious way. Her point is that Plato fails to show how does poet imitate

in the same sense as painter. An image of a man holding up a mirror to things around does not carry over to a poet. She stresses that Plato's attempt to get the reader of book X to see poetry as trivial by the assimilation to a painting does, in fact, contradict book's III emphasis on how important its role is, especially in the education of the young. Moreover, the distinction between imitative and non-imitative poetry was drawn within poetry, whereas, on Annas' view, in book X all poetry is said to be imitative.¹¹ She assumes, that in book III "imitation was not what the poet did, but what the person did who recited or acted the poet's works"¹². Such interpretation implies a change in the meaning and scope of 'imitation'. Burnyeat rejected this saying that:

"Book X goes further than book III if, *but only if*, the phrase "such poetry as is imitative" covers all *individual* mimetic utterances, including the good ones permitted before."¹³

He suggests two ways of understanding the word "imitative" here. First meaning is "multiply imitative". Thus, it applies to those who imitate good and bad characters, but not to those who imitate only good ones. This way, unmixed kind of poetry, depicting good men is allowed. Another way to address the problem is considering "imitative" to be covering only some poetic genres, which were mentioned earlier as wholly imitative – tragedy and comedy.

In order to preserve the desirable consistency of the philosophical text we inclined to agree that book X's discussion of *poiésis hosé mimétiké* deals only with 'bad', already refused kind of poetry.

Moreover, the general principle of mimesis that Burnyeat suggests implies that there has been no change in the concept of mimesis and thus defends congruity between books II-III and X. Neither of book X's definitions contradict what has been deducted as the general principle. We see no reason to take what have been said about imitation earlier in the text to be ultimate or somehow comprehensive. In book X, Socrates does make reference to the good kind of poetry – 607a2. Imitation of a good character and narrative style remain examples of acceptable poetic utterances.

The central focus of the books II and III is on the question whether and what the Guards

¹¹ Annas' claim is based on her interpretation of the ambiguous line – 595a

¹² Annas, 1981, p.338

¹³ Burnyeat, 1997, p. 290

should be allowed to imitate. For the further discussion, Socrates is determined to follow the argument, which we assume is taking place in book X. This way, the later notion of mimesis is added to the discussion about poetry as to confirm what has been written earlier and not to ban all mimesis.

3.6. The danger of mimetic poetry

Now let's consider why Plato thinks of poetry as dangerous and having a damaging effect on the thought of those who hear it. (595b-c). Throughout the text Socrates mentions repeatedly the extensive influence of poetic utterances. We have been introduced to the immense importance of poetry and mimesis in education as well as its dangerous influence in books II-III. Socrates was well aware of the indispensability of mimesis (and mimetic art) in education. However, his desire to avoid any bad influence on the citizens, dictated by the care for each one's inner constitution and society as a whole, tempted him to be extremely cautious about it. In book X the discussion continues about why the hearers of poetry are susceptible to its charms.

Poets speak using meter, rhythm and harmony to garble the phrases, which when stripped of the colours of music lose all their attraction. Socrates comments that because of the affection in our nature for such things and similarly to our sight being misled by colours, shadow painting, puppeteering and other tricks, poetry misstates the nature of virtue and causes confusion in our soul (602d). The part of soul that is susceptible to this imaginative potency is the one opposed to the best part, "which trusts measure and calculation". By contrast, the one "that is far from prudence, and is not comrade and friend for any healthy or true purpose" is easily influenced by the poet who "awakens this part of the soul and nourishes it" (603a-b).

Earlier Socrates introduced the example of human suffering. He asks, how would a decent person act in the face of loss. According to the law, he should fight the pain, keep as "quiet as possible"; he would be ashamed to make a scene and not let himself be seen when in pain. Hence, when we deal with misfortunes, we must preserve the harmony and stay unaffected by them (603e-604e).

Opposite to such behaviour, when someone sees poetic performance and another's sufferings exposed to public, he becomes emotionally involved. Socrates describes this involvement as follows:

“What is by nature best in us, because it hasn't been adequately educated by argument or habit, relaxes its guard over this mournful part because it sees another's sufferings, and it isn't shameful for it, if some other man who claims to be good laments out of season, to praise and pity him”(606a5-b)

Therefore, with their characters poets do not only produce “likenesses” but also communicate the models of good or bad behaviour. Such models, due to their powerful imagery, stand as the bright exemplars of moral behaviour, which affect the mind of member of its audience. While imitation has vast educational potential, it is deceiving and even harmful when is treated inappropriately.

The gravest charge against poetry is expressed in book X, when Socrates says, that it “succeeds in maiming even the decent men, except for a certain rare few, is surely quite terrible.” As he proceeds to consider the effects of poetry on the audience, he uses the first-person plural “even the best of us”:

"Listen and consider. When even the best of us hear Homer or any other of the tragic poets imitating one of the heroes in mourning and making quite an extended speech with lamentation, or, if you like, singing and beating his breast, you know that we enjoy it and that we give ourselves over to following the imitation; suffering along with the hero in all seriousness, we praise as a good poet the man who most puts us in this state" (605d).

The remarkable passage provokes some intriguing questions. Who are those „the best of us“, which are still susceptible to the harm of poetry? Why Socrates doesn't purport to be one of „the very few“, which are immune. And finally, who is a listener of poetry, to whom the book X is intended? Is it a pupil guardian, an ordinary citizen? Or is it someone else who is, like Socrates, committed to follow the dictates of philosophical reason and yet is receptive to the voices of poetry

4. Poetry and Wisdom-loving souls

4.1. Who are the philosophers?

Prior to the final discussion of poetry, the end of Book IX has placed a significant weight on the 'internal' city. Socrates applies the threefold division of the soul, which emerges gradually throughout Republic, to an analysis of the virtuous individual. (580c-581c)

We will now introduce the distinction between different elements in order to consider the following discussion of poetry in terms, besides all, of 'the city within'.

Parallel to the division of the city, the soul is divided into three parts. Corresponding to each part there are different pleasures, desires and kinds of rule.

One part is concerned with learning. It is directed toward knowing the truth and is called learning-loving and wisdom-loving part. Plato's choice of terms used to refer to the elements of the soul proves to be vague. The same part also indicated as the calculative part, figures later as the opposite of the one affected by poetry.

The desiring element seeks pleasure and satisfaction. Its appetites include eating, drinking, gaining of money. The third, the element of spirit amounts to the drive for victory and good reputation.

Individuals who aspire to virtue and truth are called, according to the part of soul at rule, the wisdom loving. Socrates and Glaucon admit that it is better for the reasoning part to be superior to the others, for its pleasures are the truest and best to pursue (586c-d)

The passage in book V about different kind of "lovers", describes what distinguishes true philosopher from the others, who are also "willing to taste every kind of learning with gusto, and who approaches learning with delight" (475c5). Socrates regards the lovers of sights and the lovers of hearing to be "like philosophers". Whereas the real ones are "the lovers of the sight of the truth" (475e). He further says, that on the one side he puts the lovers of sight, the lovers of arts and practical man, who "delight in fair sounds and colours and shapes and all that craft makes from such things, but their thought is unable to see and delight in the nature of the fair itself." On the other side, there are those "who argument concerns", "who are able to approach the fair itself and see it by itself". Thus, those with philosophic nature actually aspire to have a grasp of the unchanging and ultimate world of Forms, whilst "lovers of sight and sounds" are content with particulars. For example, according to the Theory of Forms, there is the

idea of Beauty, which is only intelligible to the true philosophers. Yet, those who see only beautiful instances are in a dream like state, which consist in “believing a likeness of something to be not a likeness, but rather the thing itself to which it is like” (476c). For Plato, the lovers of sights and sounds can only have a belief about something. On the other hand, the philosophers possess knowledge.

4.2. Intellectual danger of poetry

In the light of what has been said about book X, we can't but agree, it has a special place in the dialogue. It appears after the great deal of discussion has been foregone and points to the necessity of the final denouncement.

The critique of poetry, which grows out of the consideration of the proper education of the guardians, has now acquired different status. The discussion of poetry has been fortified by the explanation of the nature of mimesis. The argument of book X follows up the discussion but, as Burnyeat noticed, it is “guided throughout by the Theory of Forms and will only work with a Platonic philosopher”¹⁴. Plato insists on ubiquitous bad influence of imitative poetry, affecting everyone “except for a certain rare few” (605c4), including the followers of knowledge and argument. Those, who have been persuaded by Socrates’ words, whose soul is shaped by the craving for knowledge, are still affected by poetry, which “produces a bad regime in the soul” (605b6). We consider the possibility that book X uncovers yet another danger of poetry.

Socrates notices:

“all such things (mimetic poetry, see. 3.2) seem to maim the thought of those who hear them and do not as a remedy have the knowledge of how they really are.” (595b)

It is a harm of *thinking* or thought (*dianoia*) that threatens a wisdom-loving individual. Being able to recognise the artificiality of mimesis and yet being susceptible to its

¹⁴ F.M. Burnyeat, Tanner Lectures on Human Values: Culture and Society in Plato's Republic, Harvard University, December, 1997

imaginative potency, a philosopher is faced with a conflict. We take it that the danger of poetry discussed in book X is of epistemological character. In the following chapter we will review the position, which defends Plato's intention to abolish poetry because of its false claim of having true knowledge.

4.2.1. "Painted carpenter"

Socrates claims, that the hearers of mimetic poetry will suffer damage to their intellects, unless they are armed with the drug that will counteract it. He then continues the trial of poetry, supporting his position with the arguments, which we have briefly introduced in 3.2.2. and 3.2.3. These arguments are concerned with the poet's lack of knowledge. Christopher Janaway presents an engaging way of looking at Plato's epistemological scepticism in relation to poetry¹⁵.

The one of the arguments that we will be looking at features a picture of a carpenter. It purports the conclusion that an imitator is far removed from the truth and raises the concomitant objection that poets lack knowledge. Socrates draws reader's attention to the following situation:

"For example, the painter, we say, will paint for us a shoemaker, a carpenter, and the other craftsmen, although he doesn't understand the arts of anyone of them. But, nevertheless, if he is a good painter, by painting a carpenter and displaying him from far off, he would deceive children and foolish human beings into thinking that it is truly a carpenter."(598c).

In the first place, it presents us with the case of mimesis, thus, an image of a thing, which is not real. Looking closely we can distinguish at least two more elements that are indicative of its intentional reference to poetry. Firstly, Plato chooses an example of "painted carpenter", or any other craftsmen, whereas anything can be an object of painter's mimesis.¹⁶The case of a painted couch will not be sufficient here because Plato tries to show a parallel between the "painter of craftsmen" and the poets. Consider the following attack on the tragedians and the Homeric poets:

¹⁵ C. Janaway, *Images of Excellence: Plato's critique of the arts*, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1995

¹⁶ This regards an image of a painter with a mirror 596d-e

"Shouldn't we set down all those skilled in making, beginning with Homer, as imitators of phantoms of virtue and of the other subjects of their making? They don't lay hold of the truth; rather, as we were just now saying, the painter will make what seems to be a shoemaker to those who understand as little about shoemaking as he understands, but who observe only colours and shapes."
(600e4-601a2)

The object of poetic imitation is human beings in action (603c4-7), often rulers, generals, doctors etc. Hence, the poet can create a character, which will appear to audience as possessing knowledge in some areas of human expertise. Hereof is the picture of a carpenter – an executor of a *technē*. Janaway suggests a parallel of having an ethical knowledge being analogous with possessing a *technē*, «so making poetic characters who appear to possess ethical knowledge is analogous with making characters who appear to be exponents of a *technē*»¹⁷ The images of virtuous individuals in poetry, likewise the pictures of craftsmen, are deceptive representations of what we take for virtues and lack of them.

Second feature is the presence of “children and foolish human beings” as an example of those who would be deceived by the painting. Janaway proposes that these are the opposites of the ones, who have the knowledge, the antidote. They do not realize that poets who write about generals and doctors do so in ignorance of the crafts in question. According to Janaway the fundamental point is:

“To make a successful poetic character, Plato is saying, it no more takes knowledge of the truths about value in human life, than it takes expertise in shoemaking to make a convincing visual image of a cobbler”.¹⁸

Thus, those who lack an insight about the nature of poetry, do not mistake characters for real persons, but in fact, mistakenly ascribe knowledge to the poet. This points to the fact that, in the case of the analogy of “painted carpenter”, Plato does not speak about ontological mistake of taking mere images for real things. Instead, the analogy is meant to justify people’s false believe that the poet knows the arts that his characters are good at.

¹⁷ Janaway, p.135

¹⁸ Ibid

4.2.2. The argument by the friends of the poets

To support the analogy between «painter of craftsmen» and the poet, Socrates brings up another argument:

«...when anyone reports to us about someone, saying that he has encountered a human being who knows all the crafts and everything else that single men severally know, and there is nothing that he does not know more precisely than anyone else, it would have to be replied to such a one that he is an innocent human being and that, as it seems, he has encountered some wizard and imitator and been deceived. Because he himself is unable to put knowledge and lack of knowledge and imitation to the test, that man seemed all-wise to him."(598c7-d5)

He continues with the remark about "tragedy and its leader, Homer", to make a reference to the people who claim just that about their beloved poet. As the condition of making good poems, they hold, the poet must be in possession of knowledge about the things his poetry concerns (598e2-5). The friends of the poets claim, Homer and the tragedians do have this knowledge of the subject. On the other hand, Socrates says that their condition is, in reality, a deception. Plato argues that Homer and others are nothing but imitators, who make only an image of appearance of a thing, and therefore "removed from truth". The question is: what does it take to make good poems? Plato's statement is the opposite of the one held by the friends of poets - to make good poems, or good, "in the opinion of the many", the poet does not need knowledge. Correspondingly, in the case of the "painted carpenter", his claim is that to make a convincing character no real expertise required. We agree with Janaway that the argument, which we have discussed at 3.2.3, supports this claim. Socrates counter-argues that *if* Homer and the tragedians had knowledge, enabling them to produce what they make images about and thus were truly able to help human beings toward virtue, they would be honored and respected by many as teachers, instead of being praised for their ability to imitate.

Another counter-argument adverts to the lack of empirical evidence concerning the poet's involvement in some virtuous activity. At 600a6-c we find the passage, in which Socrates questions whether Homer was praised for any of his deeds, apart from his poetry.

However, Plato doesn't ever mention that he holds Homer to be not a good poet. Instead, he recognizes him as 'most poetic' (607a2). At times Socrates even appears to be reluctant to criticize him. The verdict of exile of poetry is undercut by Socrates' expressions of hesitation and attraction towards it.

4.3. Philosophical lover of poetry

The opening lines of the final book of Republic are in many ways ambiguous and bring up a variety of questions. Despite the unexpected severity of the vindication of earlier decision, the epilogue is alleviated by Socrates confession, which denounces his affection for Homeric poetry.

«And yet, a certain friendship for Homer, and shame before him, which has possessed me since childhood, prevents me from speaking.» (595b7-9)

Socrates's confessional stance of "certain friendship for Homer" has wafted us to consider whether and in what sense it is possible to be a "philosophical lover of poetry". We have noticed earlier, that books II and III had the motive to examine and evaluate poetry in terms of education. Book X reopens the subject with new more personal perspective. The motif of the city of Republic as the city or constitution 'in the soul' at the end of book IX (590e-591a) prepares a reader to consider the following discussion in terms, above all, of 'the city within'. Socrates' personal accent at 605a-d, where he confesses his fear for the constitution inside himself, and announces that poetry is able of doing harm to 'even the best of us', sets up tone of addressing an individual lover of poetry. Such individuals themselves understand what it is like to succumb to the power of poetry, yet they contend to establish a 'ruler' and a 'constitution' in 'the city within'. Lets look at the passage where Socrates famously announces the "old quarrel between philosophy and poetry"¹⁹. Immediately after the subject of the "old opposition" has been

¹⁹ The nature of opposition is the subject of many discussions. Glen Most surveys the extant classical Greek poetry and presents an interesting account on whether there was in fact any kind of ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy? He concludes: "To say that the quarrel is largely a consequence of the way Plato viewed earlier and contemporary poetry and philosophy doesn't mean that he consciously fabricated it...", "Instead, given Plato's

brought up, the philosopher adds:

“All the same, let it be said that, if poetry directed to pleasure and imitation have any argument to give showing that they should be in a city with good laws, we should be delighted to receive them back from exile, since we are aware that we ourselves are charmed by them.”(607c2-6)

The dramatic reaffirmation of the verdict of exile of poetry from the polis that is ruled according to philosophical principles is so to speak mitigated by the possibility for poetry to defend herself. The question arises, why will Socrates and Glaucon continue to listen to poetry at all, since the case for its banishment has been reaffirmed? Socrates proposes to Glaucon that they would be glad to welcome poetry back from exile. He refers to the experience of being ‘charmed’ by it. This capacity to bewitch that has been repeatedly brought up against poetry, now is used as an excuse to give poetry or its protectors to speak up in defence.

“For surely we shall gain if it should turn out to be not only pleasant but also beneficial.”(607e).

Then he goes further and compares the state of being bewitched by poetry to the one of a man who has fallen in love. Socrates finds it hard to abandon his “inborn love of poetry”. The indications of his lingering affection for poetry confront readers with a paradox. Plato’s relationship to poetry, his supposedly outright hostility and finally repudiation of the best poets is not as straightforward as it might at first appear. A possible reading of book X implies that Socrates is speaking for those who acknowledge the existence of the city in the soul and poetry’s influence on it. Those who have been persuaded by the argument from the earlier books, but do not want to abandon their love of poetry implanted during the formative period of boyhood. The combination of attraction and resistance that a lover of poetry experiences makes him look for an antidote to the effects of poetry.

5. The Antidote

5.1. Immunity to harm

At the beginning of book X we find Socrates convinced that poetry is capable of doing 'grave damage' to the minds of those who hear it and emphatically promises Glaucon to speak his mind on the subject. He mentions that in order to combat the harm of poetry, one needs the 'antidote' that consists in knowing precisely what it amounts to. Then he embarks on enfolding critique of the status of mimetic art.

The metaphor of remedy implies that the drug, which prevents a disease, will safeguard those who have it, against falling under the spell. But what precisely is meant by this magical cure?

“All such things seem to maim the thought of those who hear them and do not as a remedy have the knowledge of how they really are.” (595b). What is this knowledge that uncovers the truth about “how *they* really are”?

Firstly, it is important to spot what are these things that Socrates is referring to. Prior to the remark about the antidote, he congratulates himself on “not admitting at all any part of it that is imitative” (595a4). We have discussed possible interpretations of these lines in 3.2.1. Since we hold that in book X, Socrates is addressing the kind of poetry that is imitative, the antidote must be the knowledge of the nature of mimesis.

In the previous chapters, we have focused on defining what is the danger of poetry and what kind of 'damage' it can do. In 4.2. we suggest that the harm has the effect on the mind or thinking of the audience. A cure that will convey immunity will have to address the same faculty. Thus, the knowledge, which Socrates refers to is the knowledge of the nature of mimesis with regard to its epistemological value.

5.1.1. Poetry. Reality. Truth

Before expounding the theory of mimesis and undertaking the project of examining the relationship between a work of art and reality, Socrates makes reference to their customary procedure. The method of inquiry entails acknowledgement of the existence of the Forms.

«For we are, presumably, accustomed to set down some one particular form for each of the particular 'manys' to which we apply the same name.” (596a6-7).

Plato's argument is structured around the relationship between what is imitated and its imitation. The object of mimesis, he says, is not the thing itself as it is in nature (one particular form) but as it is made by a craftsman (one of 'manys'). Poetry conceived as a likeness of a likeness, according to the metaphysical basis, has acquired the status of deceiving illusion. Just as shadows and reflections are considered to belong to the category of near-ignorance, the objects of poetic mimesis are thrice removed from the truth. This point invalidates the artist's access to the essence of things.

Mimesis fails in two ways. Firstly, it appeals to the part of us that is “far from prudence” and its offspring is of ignoble descent (603b). Secondly, it directs the soul toward appearances, encourages us to turn away from what is real. Instead of looking at what is being reflected, imitation keeps our eyes on the copy alone.

After presenting the evidence of Homer's ignorance, Socrates ends up saying that his poetry casts a spell. It is not the first time in the Republic that Socrates shows signs of addressing the problem of poetry with language of magic. Those who claim that poets are human beings who know all the crafts, are said to have «encountered some wizard and imitator and been deceived” (598d). They are unable to make a distinction between knowledge and lack of knowledge and imitation. And this is precisely what it takes not to be bewitched by poetry. The knowledge that uncovers the artificiality of mimesis.

Speaking about magical language, we cannot miss the point that when Socrates calls an imitator a wizard, it is quite noteworthy comeback. In the book III, it has already been mentioned that wizardry robs people of knowledge. There Socrates speaks about those who have been forced to change their opinion as the result of being deceived.

"Don't they suffer this by being robbed, bewitched by wizards, or forced?"

and later:

"By the robbed I mean those who are persuaded to change and those who forget, because in the one case, time, in the other, speech, takes away their opinions unawares.” (413a-c)

He makes it clear that such form of trickery is not welcomed in the city. Among Guards will be praised those, who have good memory and are hard to deceive. In case they encounter an imitator, this will help them not to be charmed by his creations and stay

with the truth.

To conclude, in order to combat the harm of poetry, one has to recourse to the argument, which aims at uncovering the truth about poetry.

5.1.2. Countercharm

It is true that book X features not just a repudiation of the poets, but also explores the nature of complicated relationship between poetry and philosophy. Apart from the announcement of the «quarrel», there is a few details that are indicative of equivocal and at times even cryptic relation between the two. In the 'epilogue' Socrates reaffirms the verdict of exile and alongside reiterates his expressions of hesitation and attraction towards poetry.

After the case for the banishment has been confirmed, Socrates and his companion Glaucon discuss the possibility of poetry to defend herself, and thus be welcomed back in the City. The vocabulary he uses when speaking of the experience of being 'charmed' by poetry as the reason for not wanting to see poetry actually expelled, contains magical and erotic connotations:

"But if not, my dear comrade, just like the men who have once fallen in love with someone, and don't believe the love is beneficial, keep away from it even if they have to do violence to themselves; so we too - due to the inborn love of such poetry we owe to our rearing in these fine regimes - we'll be glad if it turns out that it is best and truest." (607e-608a)

However, for as long as poetry hasn't proved to be "not only pleasant but also beneficial" (607e), they will have to recourse to a countercharm, as not to fall back under poetry's spells. This is the second time, when Socrates mentions the existence of the remedy. We have agreed in 5.1 that the antidote from 595b is the knowledge of the nature of mimesis and its epistemological value. Later, Socrates speaks of chanting the argument they are making as a countercharm to poetry (608a). He suggests medicating the aptitude for images with the rational thinking. At the beginning when he starts to explore the nature of mimetic poetry, in order to provide the antidote, he suggests using the same rational method of inquiry. (596a4)

Noticeably, the argument doesn't imply that one should necessary stop listening to poetry. Despite the fact that it presents poetry in rather negative light, in reality it enables one to continue to listen to poetry and yet resist its charms.

5.2. Rapprochement between poetry and philosophy

The provocative status of some of the arguments of Book X presents even a reader sympathetic with Plato's philosophy with an unmitigated anomaly. In the concluding part of the dialogue, Socrates sets himself the challenge of counteracting the voices of poetry with an alternative philosophical perspective. He admits to feel some kind of emotional ambivalence towards it. On the one hand, the need to resist pathological addiction results in outright hostility. On the other hand, the very state of being bewitched by poetry motivates Socrates to look for a way as not to abandon it completely. We agree with Halliwell in saying that instead of "presenting the 'banishment' of mimetic poets as the unequivocal outcome of an irreconcilable conflict, Plato wishes to create a strong sense that the relationship between poetry and philosophy (more specifically, their relationship in the soul of the philosophical lover of poetry) remains an unsolved, abiding problem"²⁰ We also suggest that, the metaphor of the antidote, which takes the form of the argument within book X, makes feasible the philosophically modified reaction to poetry, which seeks to reconcile the pleasure derived from the works of poets with the rational judgment. Halliwell, however, holds that, although for Plato there needs to be a solution how to welcome both poetry and philosophy in one's soul, it is not present in book X or elsewhere in Republic. On his view, the arguments of book X are purposefully open to defeat and invite the reader to continue the debate outside the text. He speaks of 'incantation' as a temporary solution, "a commitment to search for a way of rechanneling the eros that drives those needs into forms of poetic experience which harmonize pleasure with truth and goodness"²¹. For Halliwell the danger of poetry is psychological. The needs, which he is referring to, are emotional needs released by poetry. Therefore, the solution that he proposes, and that is supposedly with which Plato challenges his readers is to find "a mode of

²⁰ S. Halliwell, *Antidotes and Incantations: Is There A Cure For Poetry In Plato's Republic* in *Plato and the Poets* ed. by P. Destree and F.-G. Herrmann, 2011, Leiden: Brill, p. 260

²¹ *Ibid*, p.261

experience in which emotion and rationality are both at work²²

We, however, defined that despite the existence of psychological vulnerability to poetry, there is the danger of epistemological character. The antidote or chanting of the argument is intended to deal with this as well. The understanding of mimesis with precision of philosophical reason uncovers its artificiality and acknowledges poetry for what it is: an imitation

Halliwell's conviction that to find a justification of moral worth of poetry means to reconcile it with philosophy is, indeed, consonant with the much of the subsequent history of philosophical aesthetics. On the other hand, let's not forget that Republic depicts the formation of the ideal city. The city that is ruled by philosophers and which educational system is designed to a considerable degree as to raise future citizens with philosophical approach to life. Books II-III preoccupied with the educational effectiveness of the works of poets, which constitute the cultural background of the population. Book X, in its turn, reveals the influence of poetry on even deeper level. Because of its almost irresistible attractiveness, poetry permeates one's mind and takes hold not only of his emotions but of his thought as well. It seems to be the most appropriate for the philosophical ruler to investigate the phenomena and make use of it for the sake of the city and the truth. We suggest that in Plato's Republic the metaphor of antidote plays a crucial role in the relationship between poetry and philosophy. The character of Socrates represents the philosophical lover of poetry, who is a faithful follower of reason and yet is fearful of succumbing to the appeal of poetry. In book X Plato depicts Socrates, seeking for a way to welcome both, while recognizing the difficulty in doing so. The kind of kinship of the poetry and philosophy is made possible by the cure, which enables to see the former through the eyes of the latter. Plato attempts to find the grounds, on which the philosophical logos can operate in the area where recalcitrant irrational emotions are in charge. He further invites poets or others to speak on behalf of poetry, either in verse or prose. However, it is hardly plausible that he expects them to prove something that philosophy condemned, to be good or beneficial. On the contrary, it is supposed to return to present the proof of its worth in a deliberate spirit, being subservient to the ideals, determined by philosophy, fulfill its great potential.

²² Halliwell p.264

6. Conclusion

In the present study, we looked at one of Plato's major works, where he addresses the theme of poetry. In Republic he famously argued against traditional epic, lyric, tragic and also comic poetry.

His treatise on poetry presents a challenging interpretive and philosophical task. Using sharp and trenchant argumentation, the philosopher proscribes poetry from the city and raises the question that sets the agenda for the tradition of Western thought.

Miscellaneous responses, both direct and indirect, have constituted much of the history of philosophical aesthetics.

One of the main features of our approach to the matter of philosopher's hostility to poetry has been that, despite his repeated attacks on poetry, we refuse to receive Plato's perspective as pure and simple rejection.

In Republic he covers very broad variety of topics, starting out with the question about the nature of justice. In order to define it as a virtue of human being, Plato takes a long way, depicting the model of a good city, based on the principle of justice. The emphasis of each of particular part or book varies as he proceeds towards his goal. The discussion of poetry is intertwined with the main course of the argument. The meaning and status of some of the central concepts fluctuates accordingly. It is important to consider each part of Plato's treatment of poetry with regard to its place in the structure of the entire work.

Our essay was organized as to reflect the twofold division of the critique. Firstly, we focused on the discussion in books II-III. We explored what on Plato's view are the advantages and the downsides of the use of poetry in education. In books II and III he introduces the concept of mimesis as impersonation. Not just he looks down on the activity of likening oneself to others in looks, speech or behaviour, but also oversees its long-term influence on the character.

In the second part of the critique, which appears in book X, the Socrates aims at discovering the truth about what essentially is mimesis and why it is dangerous. While certain recurring themes crystallise themselves in the course of the discussion, still others remain contradictory and leave a number of unresolved issues. The position of mimesis in the criticism of poetry and whether it differs from the one in book III has been

the object of many discussions. We defend the view that there was no change in the concept of mimesis. Certain difference in perspectives was motivated by the shift of emphasis in book X. Here, Socrates shows that imitative poetry despite of being dangerous for psychological reasons is a deceptive source of knowledge. He applied the theory of Forms to the analysis of poetry in order to reveal what it amounts to. According to it, poetic images are nothing more than likenesses of likenesses of the originals or the Forms. To the minds of those who are craving for abstract, general knowledge, the images of imitative poetry are distractive and need to be counteracted by the antidote. We argue that in book X the danger of poetry is epistemological. In order to work towards a fuller comprehension of the text, in chapter 4 of our essay, we also considered the question of who is the perspective addressee of book X. Taking in account the framing of the arguments by Socrates' remarks of hesitation and rival passion towards poetry, we infer that in book X he addresses poetry as a subject of personal concern. We suggest that book X is intended for a lover of poetry, who understands what its like to succumb to its power and yet is faithful follower of reason.

The tension between poetry and philosophy in the soul of an individual is meant to be released by the antidote. The metaphor of drug represents a solution for a philosophical lover of poetry to be able to listen to poetry without being harmed by it.

While recognising the danger of poetry, Plato does not remain completely unreceptive to its voices. His critique extends beyond repudiation of the best poets and establishing censorship. With book X he puts the relationship between poetry and philosophy up for a discussion, which has continued the centuries after. Today, some might or might not agree with Plato, taking in account that many aspects of culture he knew, has changed significantly. However, we think that it is important to appreciate his contribution and give it a privilege to be considered in its own terms.

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