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Plato's Polemic Against Poetry as Paideia

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PLATO'S POLEMIC AGAINST POETRY AS PAIDEIA

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B.A., University of Texas at El Paso, 1969
B.S., Hebrew Union College School of Sacred Music, 1964

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
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in the Graduate School of
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Plato, supposedly the father of Western philosophy, has often been presented by certain academicians in an unfavorable light. Although philosophers for the past twenty-five centuries have been writing commentaries about problems that were initially raised by Plato, something of a caricature of the man has been created. For Plato, although acknowledged as a literary genius for immortalizing Socrates, has also been ridiculed for making what seemed to be foolish remarks about the Greek poets and their poetry. His remarks about poetry, namely, that it is simply imitation, presenting only images and changing appearances and representing opinion and not knowledge, have brought about vast misunderstandings. The harshest condemnation of Plato derives from his stated intention to banish most poets, especially Homer and Hesiod, from his Ideal State.

This thesis shall attempt to prove that Plato's remarks against the poets were justified. It shall also attempt to prove that the Greek poets established and maintained an absolute and corrupt educational system and that they, through their poetry were ineptly and improperly educating the youth of Athens. This thesis shall show that Plato attempted to focus attention upon this unsatisfactory situation through his dialogues. In dramatic conversations he recreated the political and educational personalities of his time; while, under the camouflage of irony, he criticized their activities and advanced his own program for reform.

Chapter I addresses itself to Plato's most outstanding philosophic contribution, namely, his theory of knowledge represented by the Forms or Ideas.

Chapter II examines the Seventh Epistle, wherein Plato restates his epistemological doctrine. The information about knowledge systematically presented in this letter is explicated so as to clarify Plato's position on the epistemic status of poetry.

Chapter III affirms Plato's argument that poetry has no epistemic status; therefore placing it outside his theory of knowledge.

Chapter IV defines "Paideia." It also investigates the activities of the poets, not as educators, but as political advisors to statesmen. Plato's argument was that the poets, exercising their traditional educational influence, but directed by mere opinion, became irresponsibly involved in political activities.

The final section focuses upon the Republic, with emphasis on Book X, wherein Plato sums up his antagonism to the old educational system. He proves that philosophy based upon first principles, special knowledge, and clear and distinct ideas, should replace poetry as the educational mode in Greece. Plato, who experienced the political wrath of Athenian democracy, maintained that Athens would see no better days until those who had political power were educated by philosophers, or until philosophers gained political power.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS:

Anthologies of Plato's dialogues and epistles used as source material in this thesis are listed below, each followed by the code letters by which they are identified in the text:

Benjamin Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, Vols. I-V, Oxford University Press (London, 1939). (J)

Glenn B. Morrow, trans, Oskar Piest, gen. ed., Plato: Epistles, Library of Liberal Arts (Indiana, N.Y., 1962). (M)

Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., Plato: The Collected Dialogues, Princeton University Press (Princeton, N.J., 1969). (HC)

W.C. Helmbold and W.G. Rabinowitz, trans., Oskar Piest, gen. ed., Plato: Phaedrus, Library of Liberal Arts (1956). (LLA)

R.D. Cumming, trans., Oskar Piest, gen. ed., Plato: Euthyphro, Apology and Crito, Library of Liberal Arts (1956). (LLA)

"The degree to which we are able to reconstruct the thought of a philosopher is controlled by the degree of our own "Hybris" . . .

"Hybris alone, however, may lead to an all-too-human madness; it must be balanced by caution in the form of a rigorous fidelity to the written text."

I hope that I, in examining Plato's thought as recorded in his dialogues, have been respectful to him and have honored these words of academic widsom.

(Quotations from Stanley Rosen's Plato's Symposium, p. 50)

INTRODUCTION

For various reasons, most beginning philosophy students receive a totally unsympathetic image of Plato, supposedly the father of Western philosophy. One prominent interpretation of Plato and his works, "Still maintained in many quarters, though not so confidently as it used to be maintained thirty or forty years ago,"[1] is explained as follows: Plato, as a young intellectual of Athens, becomes attached to a wise old gadfly named Socrates. He follows him about town, jotting down whatever he says, and then presents this man, Socrates, and his thoughts, as the main character and theme of his dialogues. Then, as Plato develops into a mature man, he turns his back on his old master and, with a casual flip of his pen, dispenses with Socrates and his ideas, and proceeds to present his own views of man and the universe--views which were, of course, vastly inferior to those of his mentor and teacher. "Plato treated [Socrates] without scruple, to the point of putting into his mouth all sorts of theories invented by Plato himself after the death of their ostensible exponent."[2]

This aforementioned version predominated in all my early studies of Plato's philosophy. However, after a

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[1] A. L. Taylor, Plato: The Man and His Work (London, 1966), pp. 24-25.

[2] Ibid., p. 24.

number of years of intensive study, I gradually discovered that these impressions were distortions[3] of the real Plato,

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[3]William Barrett, professor of philosophy at New York University, presented a modern picture of Plato based on this nineteenth century interpretation: "In the Sophist . . . a late dialogue . . . the figure of Socrates himself by then has shrunk from a flesh-and-blood person to a shadowy abstract reasoner. . . . Plato had to assert himself at the end against Socrates. Those unknown figures--the Eleatic Stranger and the Athenian Stranger--are simply the shadow of Plato himself, those portions of his personality which had not been able to speak through the mouth of Socrates but had at last forced themselves to be recognized. . . . Unconsciously, at the end, he [Plato] took his revenge upon the figure [Socrates] that had dominated his life." Irrational Man (Garden City, New York, 1962), pp. 86-87.

This kind of Platonic presentation was also an outgrowth of a period beginning with the early 1930's which saw the publication of such anti-Platonic literature as John J. Chapman's Lucien, Plato and Greek Morals; The Platonic Legend by Warner Fite, professor at Princeton; and Plato Today by R. H. S. Crossman. These books, demeaning Plato both as philosopher and poet, were academically reinforced by Karl Popper's two-volume work The Open Society and its Enemies, in 1945.

"Chapman, in his estimate of Plato's literary art, as in his judgment of Plato as thinker, stands . . . as the detractor and the anti-Platonist." (Ronald B. Levinson, In Defense of Plato [Cambridge, 1953], p. 9.) Warner Fite presented Plato as "a figure . . . whose thought was not only bounded by inevitable human limitations, but distorted by partisan prejudice and the small passions of personal embitterment." (Ibid., p. 10.) Crossman, in his book, "describes Plato's failure to benefit in any way the Greek world of his time, and then analyzes this failure and the uselessness of Plato's message in general." (Ibid., p. 16.) Karl Popper represents the most extensive and systematic attack of Plato as a political theorist. "Plato's motivation was psychological: resentment of change, class prejudice, scornful distrust of the common [man]." And further, Popper would have us believe that Plato and his group, "oligarchic Spartophiles . . . by their disloyalty, sabotage, and on occasion outright treason, encompassed the ruin of their native city, the defeat of Athens by Sparta in 404 B.C." (Ibid., p. 17.)

But modern scholarship has seen a renewal of interest in defending the intellectual genius of Plato's thought. I refer those interested in the positive side of the question or the defense of the Platonic figure to John Wild's Plato's

distortions which had resulted from the fact that knowledge about Plato was being arrived at via two basic, but limited, methodological procedures. These procedures are best described in Jacob Klein's A Commentary on Plato's Meno:

> "We can try to avoid at least two pitfalls: (a) to become obsessed by the view that the chronology of the Platonic dialogues implies a 'development' in Plato's own thinking and that an insight into this development contributes in a significant way to the understanding of the dialogues themselves; (b) to attempt to render what is said and shown in the dialogues in petrified terms derived--after centuries of use and abuse--from Aristotle's technical vocabulary."[4]

These two methods, which "profess to give an account, not so much of 'Plato's Philosophy' (if any), as of his 'philosophical development,'"[5] have consciously directed the history of philosophy to portray Plato as an unsophisticated philosopher and poet. ". . . it must be said frankly that the Plato who emerges [from these two methods] can scarcely be regarded as a satisfactory or philosophically interesting figure, whatever standard one uses."[6]

Modern Enemies and the Theory of Natural Law, Glenn B. Morrow's Plato: Epistles, and Levinson's In Defense of Plato, which I consider to be a classic work and an eloquent defense of Plato.

[4](Chapel Hill, 1965), p. 9.

[5]Rupert C. Lodge, Plato's Theory of Art (London, 1953), p. 3.

[6]Stanley Rosen, Plato's Symposium (New Haven and London, 1968), p. xii.

Notwithstanding this unfavorable academic presentation, there was general academic unanimity that Plato's influence on Western thought had been most decisive. The importance of Plato and the significance of what he wrote was best articulated by Whitehead when he said that twenty-five hundred years of Western philosophy is but "a series of footnotes to Plato."[7] And yet these footnotes and commentaries, based as they are on incomplete method are, at best, only misleading:

> "There are many volumes allegedly about Plato which are not about that great Greek writer [poet] and thinker [philosopher] at all. They are about systems that have been made about his thought. They are about orthodoxies that have been offered under his name. They are about everything but the dialogues themselves, and often they only confuse rather than help the reader when he comes to reading those [dialogues].[8]

What I had discovered about Plato was, on the one hand, that something of an unfavorable caricature of the man was widely accepted and, on the other, that this same

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[7]Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York, 1960), p. 63. Whitehead was a great champion of Plato as philosopher par excellence: "The longer I live the more I am impressed by the enormous . . . the unparalleled genius of one philosopher, and that is Plato. There seems hardly an insight that he has not had or anticipated; and even after you have allowed . . . for the modifications introduced by changed social conditions since he thought and wrote, and the consequent variations which must be made, still in essence the most of it stands." Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead (New York, 1956), p. 110.

[8]Alexandre Koyre, Discovering Plato (New York, 1945), p. 6 (from the Introduction by Irwin Edman).

Plato was worthy of my profound respect and closest attention. This apparent contradiction disquieted me. In the past it had been my intention to try to correct this situation, or at least to draw attention to its untenability. As recently as last spring, I wrote a paper entitled "On Trying to Understand Plato--or--Will the Real Plato Please Step Forward." In writing this paper I meant to correct what I considered to be an unhappy situation. I had hoped to reconstruct a Plato commensurate with his avowed stature, for, "no philosophic writer of past ages has such permanent interest and value [to Western man] as Plato."[9]

In attempting to accomplish this reconstruction, another method was suggested by various Platonic scholars.[10] They maintained that such a method would reveal a Platonic figure truly deserving of philosophic attention.

This method is well described by Platonic authority Professor Stanley Rosen. He states that, "Only by the recognition of irony as the central problem in the interpretation of Plato, do we honor the demands of rigorous philosophical analysis. Only if we successfully penetrate Plato's

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[9] G. C. Field, Plato and his Contemporaries (England, 1967), p. 1.

[10] Including Dr. Patrick Romanell, H. Y. Benedict Professor of Philosophy at the University of Texas at El Paso.

irony will the genuine character of his arguments become accessible."[11]

This observation by Professor Rosen and others,[12] that the employment of this method would lead to a proper study of Plato, raised an important methodological question; namely, if an insight into Platonic irony might help one discover a true portrait of the man, and also help to further illuminate philosophical investigations of Plato, why had so few investigators taken this path?

In recalling my past studies of Plato, I found that few professors represented Plato as a poet or a writer of dramatic dialogues. But "Plato, in addition to whatever else he may have been, was himself a very great artist."[13] After some consideration, I finally attributed the general

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[11]Rosen, p. xiv. In support of Rosen's position, Jacob Klein says, "nourished by information derived mainly from Diogenes Laertius (111, 18) . . . historians and commentators have tried to see Platonic dialogues as dramas, philosophical mimes, philosophical comedies and tragedies, or at least to establish what their relation to mime, comedy and tragedy is." A Commentary on Plato's Meno, p. 3.

[12]Jacob Klein in his book A Commentary on Plato's Meno (p. 5) says, "'Whatever the point of view from which one considers the Dialogues, they are ironical,' writes [Rene] Schaerer, and there can hardly be any disagreement about that. For, to begin with, irony seems indeed the prevailing mode in which the Socrates of the dialogues speaks and acts."

[13]Lodge, p. 7. "There is a strong tradition that [Plato] was himself a writer of poetry (there are some 'epigrams' ascribed to him in the Greek Anthology, though these ascriptions cannot be trusted); yet the author of the closing pages of the Symposium, and of parts of the Phaedrus must be ranked among the greatest of all prose poets." I. M. Crombie, An Examination of Plato's Doctrines (New York, 1962), p. 195.

lack of academic attention to Plato as poet to these reasons: One, the nature of irony itself. (a) As a poetic device, it disguises the written word from easy conceptual analysis and from specific and logical definitions. (b) As a special poetic technique, it reveals its meanings only to a diligent explorer, inevitably reducing the number of men who can comprehend it. Two, the admission that Plato was a poet and an employer of poetic irony and the addressing of one's self to Plato's obvious condemnation of poetry, is a step towards utter bewilderment.

> "You discover, further [in the dialogues] that he [Plato] does not appear to be highly enthusiastic about music and about many kinds of dancing; and with that, you are well away. You find yourself immediately relegating human art to a very humble position in Plato's estimation, if indeed you do not exclude it altogether from the higher reaches of the life of reflective citizenry."[14]

Originally, I had been presented with a scholarly but unsympathetic representation which posed a contradiction I had hoped to overcome. Now, when I examined Plato's position with regard to poetry and the arts, my findings seemed to have compelled me into admitting that <u>this Plato</u> was even less sympathetic than ever. It is here, when we approach the subject of poetry and examine comments about Plato's relationship to it, that his philosophic image suffers most of all. All who love and admire Plato and who

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[14]Lodge, p. 6.

are intellectually and spiritually drawn to him are embarrassed by Plato's polemic against poetry. As Eric A. Havelock said, it is "a phenomenon so disconcerting to the Platonist, [that he feels] that at this point in his thinking the master has let him down."[15]

Plato's main attack against poetry appears in Book X of the Republic. In his opening remarks he said that "all poetical imitations are ruinous to the mind of the hearers, and that the knowledge of their true nature is the only antidote . . . to the tragedians and the rest of the imitative tribe." (595a-J)

However, we should keep in mind that there are many passages in other dialogues which comment differently on the nature of poetry. "At any rate the attack on imitative art as such does not seem to be repeated elsewhere."[16] In the Ion (534d-e-HC) he likens poetry to "divine power," devoid of any real understanding. A man is seized by "divine power" and creates without comprehension. He is a spokesman for the Muse and cannot explain his creativity. "In the Apology (21-22) [and in the] Meno (99) . . . Socrates insists that poets do not understand the things they write

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[15] Preface to Plato (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 20.

[16] I. M. Crombie, An Examination of Plato's Doctrines (New York, 1962), p. 194.

about, and must write under some divine inspiration or frenzy."[17]

As one reads more of Plato, one discovers still other attitudes toward poetry. "In other places . . . he treats many of the arts as entertainment or play,"[18] and says that "the poet is able to provide a kind of delight which can be a great importance in life."[19] In the Phaedrus and in the Symposium, "it can be put into quite a different light. The poet's inspiration is a form of divinely inflicted madness [different than in the Ion] by which we are liberated from mercenary concerns with particulars and set on the road to philosophy."[20] Here, a man is seized by "divine madness" and creates with complete understanding. The gods Eros and Aphrodite initiate mental activity, which is philosophy.

These remarks have been largely responsible for creating confusion over Plato's meaning concerning poetry. "Each view is widely held and deeply rooted in the tissue of thoughts which constitute the main body of Platonic doctrine."[21] His further elaboration of four distinct kinds of divine madness which he considers "divine disturbance

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[17]Crombie, p. 194.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid., p. 195.

[20]Ibid., pp. 194-195.

[21]Lodge, p. 169.

of our conventions of conduct,"[22] makes the subject more confounding.

Thus, it has often been advocated by so-called admirers of Plato that we dismiss all Platonic comments on poetry from serious consideration. Moreover, considering the problematic nature of these remarks, they feel that it would be best to ignore them completely. "These attempts to lessen the impact of Plato's assault . . . are well-meaning, but they misconceive the whole spirit and tenor of the argument."[23]

Being an ardent admirer of Plato, I intuitively felt that a rational explanation ought to be found which would illuminate this poetic enigma. I felt it unlikely that Plato was a babbling idiot when discussing poetry and an intellectual giant and moral leader in all other areas, as he is generally acknowledged to be.

I shall explore two areas in this thesis: One, the epistemic status of poetry in the dialogues: and two, the status of poetry as political Paideia in the dialogues. Both areas should help us to unravel the true Platonic attitude toward poetry.

Plato was telling us something about poetry. "He is a sort of dramatic reporter of the currents of thought

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[22] Phaedrus (265-HC).

[23] Havelock, Preface to Plato, p. 9.

which were in the air in his time."[24] The focal point of this thesis on Plato's polemic against poetry is historical in nature. It is here, in the dramatic unfolding of historic events in the Athens of Plato's day, that we may hope to overcome previous prejudices concerning Plato and poetry.[25]

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[24]Lodge, p. 1.

[25]In order to set the historical scene, I think it is advisable to give the reader a precise picture of the political environment in which Plato lived and wrote. An excellent condensation is presented by Ronald B. Levinson in his book In Defense of Plato, pp. 489-490, a presis based upon G. C. Field's Plato and his Contemporaries, Chapter VIII. Following is Levinson's condensation:

"After every allowance has been made for Athens' great cultural and political achievements, there were grave defects objectively present in the Athenian society. During his most plastic years, from boyhood to early maturity, Plato had seen little else than war and civic convulsions . . . Nor did the fourth century, as it advanced, confute his opinion. The restored democracy, it is true, for a time followed more cautious and enlightened international policies, but the passion for imperial domination was destined to show itself again when opportunity offered. The utter discrediting of the extreme oligarchic faction had produced a general agreement to let the constitution stand, in the main, unaltered, as the sole alternative to civic chaos; but again, so great was the jealousy of the demos to preserve its every prerogative, that even moderate reforms could not be proposed without extreme danger to the proponent [my italics]. The irresponsible power of the orators at the Assembly and in the courts remained at least as great as it had been at the time of Cleon, and was often exercised to seek the banishment or death of political opponents [my italics] however meritorious their record of service to the state, or was employed simply for purposes of extortion [my italics]. Small wonder that cynical antimoralism still had its advocates and practitioners, and that a prudent regard for personal safety and survival [my italics] remained necessary equipment for any man in public life, to the detriment of civic harmony and devotion to the common good.

CHAPTER I

PREAMBLE TO THE SEVENTH EPISTLE

Prior to a proper evaluation of the status of poetry as knowledge in the dialogues, Plato's theory of knowledge must be delineated. This could be accomplished by focusing upon the dialogues, but the task would be a monumental one for Plato treats the problem of knowledge differently in each of his dialogues. Plato begins his search for knowledge with the

> ". . . employment of the Socratic method of definition . . . the scientific search for clear and distinct concepts. But the Phaedo suggests that the use of concepts and principles is for the most part hypothetical. The Republic outlines for the dialectician the vast labor of construction from isolated principles employed by the separate sciences, an all-embracing science based upon the Idea of the Good. . . . The Theatetus tries in vain to define knowledge; every formula, every proposition . . . every illustration . . . turns out to be an illustration or instance of opinion, rather than of knowledge. And in the Parmenides we find that the realm of Ideas, which was formerly thought to be the realm of knowledge, contains the same plurality, self-contradictoriness, and relativity which characterize the world of opinion. The connecting principles are still lacking; and these first principles, we are told in the Timaeus (53d) are known only to God and to those whom God loves."[1]

Since "Plato's theory of knowledge cannot be found system-

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[1]Glenn B. Morrow, Plato: Epistles (New York, 1963), p. 74.

atically expressed and completely elaborated in any one dialogue,"[2] and since "It is not stated all at once, or in any one place [but] it is unfolded gradually,"[3] then where can we find a general statement of Plato's theory expressed in explicit terms?

To find this statement we must focus upon the seventh letter, for, according to modern scholarship, Plato's epistemological doctrine is expressed adequately in his Seventh Epistle. "Though historians have ordinarily made free use of the narrative portions of this letter, in spite of the once general doubt as to its genuineness, seldom until very recently has any exponent of Plato's philosophy taken account of this passage [on epistemology] in the Seventh Epistle."[4]

Part of the problem in accepting these passages (342a-344d) had been the reluctance of the general philosophic community to accept the Epistle as genuine. "And yet if the letter is genuine,[5] it tells us a great deal

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[2]Frederick Copleston, S.J., A History of Philosophy, Vol. I (Garden City, New York, 1962), p. 166.

[3]Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Plato: The Collected Dialogues (Princeton, New Jersey, 1961), p. xvii.

[4]Morrow, p. 60.

[5]Following is a brief summary by Glenn B. Morrow (in Plato: Epistles) of the historical background which culminated in general academic acceptance of the Seventh Epistle as genuine:

"The favorable judgement of antiquity was almost completely reversed in modern times with the rise of crit-

about Plato's views on learning and throws some light on the later stages of his theory of knowledge."[6]

Plato's epistemological digression in the Seventh Epistle contains definite similarities to statements in the various dialogues:

> "Mathematical concepts and ethical and aesthetic notions lead the list, just as in the dialogues they are most frequently employed to illustrate the theory of Ideas.[7] . . . The close similarity

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cal historical methods. . . . The general condemnation began . . . in 1783, and reached its culmination in Karsten's comprehensive work [in the 1800's] (p. 6.) . . .

"How unsympathetically and inadequately this criterion of consistency was employed in the 19th Century is shown by the fact that the Parmenides, Sophist, Cratylus and Philebus were regarded as doubtful or distinctly spurious, by these same critics of the Epistles; and the Laws would most surely have been condemned if it had not been expressly vouched for by Aristotle. (pp. 8-9) . . .

"That hypersensitive philological conscience which could admit as echt Platonisch only nine of the dialogues has given way to a more sympathetic attitude toward the Platonic Corpus. (p. 9) . . .

"Even Richards (Platonica, London, 1911, p. 279) whose estimate of the letter on other grounds is exceedingly unfavorable, admits that 'there is nothing in the style properly so called or in the grammar and vocabulary that is at all inconsistant with genuineness.' (p. 44) . . .

"There is now general agreement that on this count the Seventh Letter is above reproach . . ." (p. 45)

For further background, see especially pp. 3-17 and 44-60, Glenn B. Morrow's Plato: Epistles.

[6]Morrow, p. 60.

[7]"This passage makes no mention of the Ideas, which are supposed to be the distinctive feature of Plato's theory of knowledge; and this failure to mention the word has sometimes been used as ground for condemning the letter or at least this passage as spurious. But . . . an attentive reader cannot fail to notice that the list of things which we attempt to know by means of name, definition, and image

> of this list of objects to the objects which in the dialogues are said to participate in or to copy the Ideas indicates that the doctrine of Ideas is distinctly, though implicitly, presupposed."[8]

Therefore, we may safely assume that this epistemological digression is genuine.

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is strongly suggestive of the objects to which the theory of Ideas is applied in the dialogues." Morrow, p. 75.

Paul Friedlander in his Plato, Vol. I (New York, 1954), mentions something about the nature of the Ideas or Eidos that lends credence to Morrow's argument. He says we may ascribe to Plato "something that, like an invisible magnet, gives a definite direction to all the dialogues: they are constructed around the Idea, they aim at the Idea." (p. 88) But "having studied the writings of modern thinkers on 'Plato's Doctrine of Ideas,' and then returning to Plato's own dialogues, one might well be surprised at how little the latter contain of this principle element of Plato's philosophy." (p. 60)

[8]Morrow, p. 76.

CHAPTER II

EPISTEMOLOGY IN THE SEVENTH EPISTLE

Before we begin a detailed analysis of the epistemological portions of the Seventh Letter we shall outline the various technical terms and categories.

Plato mentions five stages or steps on his epistemological ladder (342b-M):

1. Name
2. Definition or Description
3. Image
4. Knowledge
5. The object "itself" (Form)

The first three steps Glenn B. Morrow in his book Plato: Epistles calls "three instruments of learning."[1]

The fourth stage, "Knowledge," is distinguished as having these "three forms of subjective apprehension,"[2] namely

a. Right opinion
b. Knowledge
c. Reason

The fifth stage is a mental entity "which is the true reality" (342b-HC) [Form].

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[1](New York, 1963), p. 68.

[2]Morrow, p. 69.

I have set forth four activities or processes, which should help in understanding the problem of knowledge: [viz., what is true and what is false, the nature of learning, the problem of teaching and possibility of communication (transmission).]

I. The Process of Acquisition involves three instruments of learning which determine primary knowledge about things. These three instruments of learning correspond to the first three steps of Plato's epistemological ladder.

II. The Process of Assimilation involves three forms of subjective apprehension (right opinion, knowledge and reason) which confirms knowledge derived from the Process of Acquisition.

III. The Process of Verification involves the correction of all original impressions derived from the Process of Acquisition, and all formal impressions derived from the Process of Assimilation. This process also examines the nature of dialectic or Plato's fifth stage, and the nature of illumination.

IV. The Process of Transmission leads to the examination of words and notes the weaknesses of language which preclude communication of first principles and ultimate realities.

The Seventh Epistle draws together epistemological information not gathered in any one of the dialogues. Here, under a general heading of what constitutes knowledge, we are directed by Plato "to a true doctrine that confutes anyone who has presumed to write anything whatever on such subjects, a doctrine that I have often before expounded, but it seems that it must now be said again." (342a-M) Plato's intense preoccupation with the correct statement of this doctrine leads us to believe that it often had been misrepresented; therefore, "in order to make the matter perfectly clear, he feels it necessary to go into some elementary principles involved in all learning."[3]

Plato's opening remarks set forth five stages or steps on the epistemological ladder, as listed in the preceding outline: "For everything that exists there are three classes of objects, through which knowledge about it must come. Knowledge itself is the fourth, and we must put as a fifth entity, the actual object of knowledge which is the true reality." (342a-HC)

To clarify my analysis, each of the five steps are characterized by the four distinct processes I have designated in the outline as: (1) The Process of Acquisition, (2) The Process of Assimilation, (3) The Process of Verification, and (4) The Process of Transmission. As we

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[3]Morrow, p. 67.

notice these various epistemological divisions we are aware that, "the writer of this letter is as much concerned with the difficulty of teaching and exposition as with the procedure of discovering truth."[4]

A. The Process of Acquisition

The Process of Acquisition involves three instruments of learning. "For every real being, there are three things necessary if knowledge of it is to acquired: first, the name; second, the definition; third, the image." (342a-M) Plato uses as his example a mathematical object. The name of the object is circle. He then asks us to take the name circle and define what the name denotes. The definition of circle is "the thing which has everywhere equal distances between its extremities and its center." (342c-HC) From the name and the description, we are able to image or diagram what the object is. "In the third place there is the class of object that is drawn and erased and turned on the lathe and destroyed--processes which do not affect the real circle to which these other circles are all related, because it is different from them." (342c-HC) Then, Plato asks us to apply this elementary procedure to all objects in the same way, as an essential step in determining primary knowledge about things.

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[4]Morrow, p. 68.

B. The Process of Assimilation

The Process of Assimilation requires three subjective modes of apprehension: first, right opinion; second, knowledge; and third, reason. "And distinct from both the instruments of apprehension [names, definitions, images] on the one hand, and the object of apprehension on the other, [the circle], is the subjective apprehension itself, appearing in the various forms of reason, knowledge, and right opinion."[5] As Plato represents this division, "In the fourth place are knowledge, reason and right opinion (which are in our minds, not in words or bodily shapes and therefore must be taken together as something distinct both from the circle and from the three things previously mentioned)." (342c-d-M)

Although Plato classifies reason, knowledge, and right opinion under the fourth stage it "does not mean that the author of this letter denies all differences between them."[6] Plato does make an important distinction between each of the subjective modes of apprehension and the fifth stage which involves dialectic. To clarify this distinction, Plato "explains that they are classed together here as being all of them abstract and hence distinct from both the name, definition, and image which are sounds or bodily

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[5]Morrow, p. 68.

[6]Ibid., p. 72.

shapes, and from the ultimate object of knowledge"[7] [the object per se].

After further analysis, I have determined that the three modes of subjective apprehension relate to the three instruments of learning. Right opinion determines the right name for any object; right opinion determines that it be this name rather than that name; correct knowledge confirms a designated name by defining and describing it; reason, the third mode of apprehension, and "nearest the fifth in kinship and likeness," (342d-M) enables us to image or diagram the corresponding Form. The stipulated name, derived from right opinion, and the corresponding definition, derived from correct knowledge, represent this Form. Thus, knowledge is confirmed by the mental activities of the fourth stage. Right opinion, correct knowledge, and reason designate the name, determine the definition, and relate both to its proper Form.

However, Plato recognizes the indeterminancy of knowledge derived from the first division, the process of acquisition, and the second division, the process of assimilation. While the subjective modes of apprehension make logical connections, they do not question original impressions, much like the mathematician who bases his conclusions upon unquestioned first principles. Plato also

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[7]Morrow, pp. 72-73.

recognizes that any system of epistemology is defective if such original knowledge cannot be effectively checked. "And the criticism that Plato develops here of these instruments of learning, and of any system of instruction which makes no provision for correcting these defects is clear and convincing."[8]

C. The Process of Verification

The Process of Verification involves the correction of original impressions gathered by the three instruments of learning and formal impressions derived from the subjective modes of apprehension. At the same time this activity involves the creation of an independent subject, with critical reasoning powers developed through dialectic. Only this subject has the mental ability to engage in the study of ultimate knowledge. For example, when we discuss terms like iron and silver, all men, everywhere, understand the same meaning. But when we hold the words just, good, beauty and truth up to investigation, "don't we all veer off in different directions and dispute the meaning, not only with others but with ourselves as well?"[9] Plato reinforces this thought when he says:

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[8]Morrow, p. 69.

[9]Phaedrus (263a-LLA).

> " . . . only when all these things--names, definitions, and visual and other perceptions--have been rubbed together and tested [not passively accepted as in the poetic tradition], pupil and teacher asking and answering questions in good will and without envy--only then, when reason and knowledge are at the very extremity of human effort, can they illuminate the nature of any object." (344b-M)[10]

For Plato, the Process of Verification as an activity, hopefully attains for man a vision of the Good, a necessary prerequisite to understanding the natures of justice, vice, being, and non-being. Such epistemological experiences, i.e., participating in the fifth rung, are often not available to many men, "for this knowledge never takes root in an alien nature, so that no man who is not entirely inclined and akin to justice and all other forms of excellence will acquire the fifth rung." (344a-M) It should be obvious to the careful reader of this Epistle that Plato doubts that most men can attain such a philosophic understanding of the true nature of the world, for "as soon as they see how many subjects there are to study, how much hard work they involve, and how indispensible it is for the project to adopt a well-ordered scheme of living, they decide that the plan is difficult if not impossible

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[10]Plato hypostatizes the Forms. He asks us to accept, on intellectual faith, the realities of the Forms, i.e. "the itself per se, which is 'one,' and which 'is,' and which is 'unseen.'" Eric A. Havelock, Preface to Plato (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 256.

for them, and so they really do not prove capable of practicing philosophy." (340e-341a-HC)

The Process of Verification, as a philosophic activity, involves much hard work, an ordered moral life, as well as a natural affinity with justice and the other virtues. All of these prerequisites are at best "only a preparation of the mind for an 'illumination.'"[11] We discover from Plato that this experience, illumination, is a mental vision of the natures of virtue, vice, being, and non-being. To such illumination, "Plato would not dare refuse the name of knowledge."[12] Illumination directs the mind to the Good. By this, Plato did not mean the subordination of knowledge to morality, or of science to human welfare, but the complete containment of the whole man, namely, reason, imagination, and emotion within the ultimate scheme of things.

> "The Protagoras, with its paradoxical thesis that virtue is knowledge but cannot be taught; the Meno, which says that virtue can be taught, not, however, as a set of precepts received from without [poetry] . . . the allegory of the cave, from whose obscurity the soul has to be converted before it can see the truth, the description in the Phaedrus and the Symposium of the soul's ecstatic vision of the realm of being--all these are expressions, from different points of view, and in different contexts, of this doctrine of illumination."[13]

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[11] Morrow, p. 77.

[12] Morrow, p. 79.

[13] Ibid.

The doctrine of illumination seems to be a principle proposed by Plato in order to explain why injustice seems to prevail in human affairs, i.e., "such an experience of complete satisfaction . . . is the privilege of the few, and the gift of the gods."[14]

D. The Process of Transmission

The Process of Transmission, the fourth division, involves only those who have participated in the fifth rung. For only those who know can attempt communication or transference of knowledge. "Plato held that inquiry, when not directed by one who knows, is futile;"[15] for, "a man must first know the truth about every single subject on which he speaks or writes. He must be able to define each [subject] in terms of a universal class that stands by itself. . . . He must know how to continue the division until he reaches the point of indivisibility."[16]

But the attempted communication from one person to another, through dialectic, applies only to the exposition and clarification of ordinary knowledge; i.e., science, mathematics, and other technés. Plato "recognizes the difficulty of penetrating to the real nature of Justice and

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[14]Morrow, p. 79.

[15]Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Plato: The Collected Dialogues (Princeton, N.J., 1961), p. xvii.

[16]Phaedrus (277b-LLA).

the impossibility, having once penetrated there, of expounding the truth in anything but imperfect figures."[17] Thus, any vision which brings about comprehension of first principles and ultimate objects can never be communicated to others. "The reasoned and impartial pursuit of truth through dialectic is the only way the soul can be prepared for it. And yet there is something in this experience that goes beyond language and logic."[18]

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[17]Morrow, p. 80. Plato states emphatically, "to discover the Maker and Father of the whole is a hard task, and when one has found him, he cannot tell of him to all." Timaeus (28c-M).

[18]Morrow, p. 79.

CHAPTER III

DETERMINATION OF THE EPISTEMIC STATUS OF POETRY

We have presented Plato's epistemological statement as derived from the Seventh Epistle. Now, we shall turn our attention to various remarks made in the letter and further examine the nature of words and the weaknesses of language. The analysis of these comments should determine what the status of poetry is throughout the corpus of Plato's writings.

What is of paramount importance in these remarks is Plato's determination to differentiate between a proper foundation for knowledge and an improper foundation for knowledge. Plato begins this revealing discussion with these important remarks: "These things [three instruments of learning, and the three subjective modes of apprehension], moreover, because of the weakness of language, are just as much concerned with making clear the particular property of each object as the being of it." (342e-M) He goes on to say, "the soul [by the soul he means psyche or mind, engaged in the activity of understanding], seeks to know, not the quality but the essence. Whereas each of these four instruments presents to the soul in discourse and in examples what she is not seeking . . . and fills everyone so to speak with perplexity and confusion." (343c-M) The tremendous importance of these points is

expressed by Plato's directive: "Let us go back and study again the illustration just given." (343a-M) His following remarks make the most obvious but amazing comment, viz., that names are conventions that are expressed in words, and that these names can be easily changed. However, changing the names of things will in no way change the being of whatever is talked about. "And we say that their names are by no means fixed; there is no reason why what we call 'circles' might not be called 'straight lines,' and the straight lines 'circles,' and their natures will be nonetheless fixed despite this exchange of names." (343b-M)

What Plato is saying is that words are at best capricious--they only paint pictures, they do not touch upon the reality of anything. At first glance this seems to be trivial, but Plato is saying much more than just "words also have limitations,"[1] and that "their application is just a matter of convention."[2] First, he is saying that what constitutes the proper foundation of knowledge are words, but that words also constitute the foundation for opinion. Our first important discovery is that words may constitute an authentic representation of what <u>is</u>, or words may constitute an authentic representation of what <u>is not</u>. But what is most insightful and decisive is this: Plato

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[1]Glenn B. Morrow, <u>Plato: Epistles</u> (New York, 1963), p. 69.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>.

reveals that words may constitute at any one moment what is, and what is not, simultaneously; a simultaneity where words may represent a contrary or contradictory view regarding this or that, at the same time, i.e., equivocation.[3] But Plato's disquiet about the metaphysical structure of words goes further than that. In reality, words, regarding this or that at the same time, represent no thing at all--they have non-being. "For sensible particulars, while they appear to be instances of two contrary characteristics at the same time, are never in fact instances of either."[4] Another disturbing quality of words, that is also alarming for Plato in his search for certain knowledge, is "the

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[3]See Chapter III, this paper, paragraph, immediately following footnote 17, beginning "According to Plato, the poets and rhetors . . . "

[4]Norman Gully, Plato's Theory of Knowledge (New York, 1961), p. 63. In order to make these remarks clear, we should remember that Plato, in Book V (478d) of the Republic, designates that opinion has for its object the many, i.e., vivid impressions of changing appearances. If an objector should ask why opinion, which has to do with the many, is not knowledge, Plato would answer "knowledge must be of something that is; ignorance, its opposite, is of what is not. Opinion is a faculty distinct from both knowledge and ignorance, its object can be neither. The only possibility left is that its object, its area of discourse, lies in-between. It is the area of the 'is plus the is not.'" Eric A. Havelock, Preface to Plato (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 247.

In Plato's words, "We would seem to have found then, that the many conventions of the many about the fair and honorable and other things are tumbled [my italics] about in the mid-region between that which is not and that which is in the true and absolute sense." Republic (479d-HC). And the men who direct this tumbling, we call them "doxophilists, rather than philosophers." (480a-HC)

arbitrariness with which a certain combination of visual or auditory symbols is used to denote this rather than that, or the ease with which it may be changed to denote that rather than this."[5]

This is an indirect reference to, and not too obvious condemnation of, those who use words or misuse words; viz., the poets and rhetors.[6] In the Gorgias, Socrates condemns Callicles on this very point:

> "Now I notice on every occasion that, clever though you be, whatever your favorite says and however he describes things to be, you cannot

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[5]Morrow, p. 69.

[6]There is a passage in the Epistle (343c-d-M) that seems to confirm my inference that Plato was referring indirectly to those men of language, the poets and rhetors. Such people, exponents of language who use eristic, may easily refute the dialectician who in his commitment to first principles and ultimate truths cannot easily explain the nature of these concepts, i.e., justice, goodness, truth, beauty, etc. Therefore he is made to look the fool by the proponents of eristic. "The passage . . . says that the ordinary questioner can make the dialectician appear ridiculous before a popular audience. . . . Plato everywhere condemns the eristic preoccupation with words rather than with realities!" (Morrow, p. 77, note 19.)

Plato's distinction between two kinds of dialectic marks the distinction between two classes of teachers who use words--the poets and the philosophers. In the Meno (75d-HC), Socrates refers to a "questioner . . . of the clever, disputatious and quarrelsome kind." In contrast to this kind of argument he says, if "we were friends . . . I should have to reply in some milder tone more suited to dialectic." A further distinction is made in the Protagoras (337b-HC): "Let your conversation be a discussion, not a dispute. A discussion is carried on among friends with good will, but a dispute is between rivals and enemies."

> contradict him, but constantly shift to and fro. In the Assembly, if any statement of yours is contradicted by the Athenian Demos, you change about and say what it wishes . . . For you are incapable of resisting the words and designs of your favorite, with the result that if any one should be astonished at the absurdities you utter again and again under their spell, you would probably say, if you were willing to tell the truth, that unless somebody stops your favorites from saying what they do, you yourself too will never stop speaking thus."[7]

To use words without any corresponding action, or to use words to represent many things in general, i.e., concrete events and actions, but never any one ultimate thing in particular, i.e., abstract ideas and forms, is condemned by Plato. " . . . this exhibits in a most startling fashion the chasm between our words and things, and between our concepts and reality, which is the chief lesson of this passage and perhaps also of all the Platonic Dialogues."[8]

Professor Glenn R. Morrow confirms Plato's condemnation of the rhetors and the poets, those "devoted sightseers"[9] and "devoted hearers of sound."[10] "The incapacity of language, especially the ordinary language of common life [poetic oral tradition], to attain the end which thought sets before itself, due to its preoccupation with

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[7] Gorgias (481d-482-HC).

[8] Morrow, p. 69.

[9] Eric A. Havelock, Preface to Plato (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 244.

[10] Ibid.

the sense world, and its consequent vagueness on ultimate matters, is a theme which occurs often in the dialogues."[11] For example, in the Cratylus, Socrates "asserts that language is a form of art, having for its aim the correct imaging of the nature of things; but like other creations of the artist it contains much that is accidental, and much more that is purely conventional."[12] Further, he says, language "has been constructed primarily by ignorant artists,[13] [poets and rhetors] interested in the world of becoming, instead of by the dialectician, the real master of words, who knows how to make them image true being."[14]

Plato's condemnation of those who misuse language is implicitly asserted in these passages of the Seventh Epistle. Although there is no explicit mention of the poets and rhetors, there is no doubt to whom his remarks are directed. In conclusion, Plato maintains here, as he does in the Phaedrus, that "only when the dialectician stands beside the legislator, and the ideal language becomes current among men, will it be possible to affirm an

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[11] Morrow, pp. 69-70.

[12] Ibid. (See Cratylus, 390e-HC.)

[13] ". . . spending hours twisting phrases this way or that, pasting in this and pruning that"--this is the way Socrates describes forensic rhetoricians in the Phaedrus (278e-LLA).

[14] Morrow, p. 70. (See Cratylus, 391d, 408a-b, 414d.)

inner or natural connection between our words and the realities they symbolize."[15]

If we accept the Platonic epistemological doctrine of the Seventh Epistle as "a true doctrine," (342a-M) [a doctrine that Plato often had expounded in the dialogues] and if absolute knowledge or true epistemé is of the Forms and of the Forms alone, then we must assert that Plato in his writings rejects poetry as knowledge and classifies it as opinion. Thus, "Willamowitz, Shorey, Cassirer . . . Friedlander . . . Paton, Sikes and Rosen . . . arguing in different contexts have concluded that Plato's final judgement on poetry is epistemological, so that its expulsion is determined by the premises of his own system."[16]

Throughout his dialogues, Plato distinguishes between a branch of knowledge which aims at what is worthwhile, and a branch of doxa which aims at producing pleasure. Poetry as opinion represents the knack of giving pleasure, philosophy as knowledge represents the techné of bestowing wisdom. And "since a pleasure-technique is by definition not interested in the real value of its objective, [and since] it cannot state the ground of what it does [and] cannot give

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[15]Morrow, p. 70.

[16]Havelock, p. 33, note 37.

account of its procedures,"[17] it is no techné and has no scientific basis as knowledge.

According to Plato, the poets and rhetors irresponsibly use words to excite and stimulate by painting unnatural word pictures of what the gods and heroes do:

> "A hero . . . behaves now well, now badly, thus failing to furnish any one pattern of goodness in the abstract. This epistemological contradiction in the context of the poem sets up a corresponding psychological contradiction in the psyche of the listener, who identifies with the tale and so becomes now good, now bad, now angry, and now calm."[18]

Plato condemns poetry as knowledge, because poets use words to flatter or to give pleasure, without concern for truth. He says that the professional rhetors tell us "a man who is going to be a competant speaker need have nothing at all to do with truth."[19] A further demonstration of poetry as opinion by Plato is that "the interpretation of a poem cannot yield any final truth."[20] Whereas in a philosophical argument or position, there is "but one true logos, . . . a poem may have many interpretations."[21]

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[17] I. M. Crombie, An Examination of Plato's Doctrines (New York, 1962), p. 197.

[18] Havelock, p. 246.

[19] Phaedrus (272e-LLA).

[20] Paul Friedlander, Plato, Vol. II (New York, 1959), p. 23.

[21] Ibid.

Plato's final determination is that poetry has no epistemic status, therefore it lies outside the theory of knowledge. This pronouncement is clarified by referring to the Socratic principle, "Knowledge is Virtue and Virtue is Knowledge."[22] Virtue in the Greek sense constitutes a proficiency or aretḗ or excellence represented by an activity or techné, guided by first principles and general rules. This special knowledge is fundamental to each techné; is understood by each individual who directs the techné, and this special knowledge may also be understood by others who benefit from that techné. "A techné is that knowledge of the nature of an object, which aims at benefiting man [one's self and others] and which is therefore incomplete as knowledge until it is put into practice."[23]

The Socratic or Platonic search for truth is exemplified by two corrollaries: "An unexamined life is not worth living,"[24] and "an unexamined thought is not worth thinking."[25] In the Greek experience, poetry represented the antithesis to these corrollaries. Poetry was the

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[22] Meno (87c-d-HC) and/or Protagoras (324d-HC).

[23] Werner Jaeger, Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture (New York, 1939), Vol III, p. 21.

[24] Apology (38a-HC).

[25] Apology (29a-HC) and/or Theaetetus (150c-HC).

unexamined life nurtured by unexamined thoughts.[26] According to Eric A. Havelock in his Preface to Plato, "two doctrinal goals constitute the core of early Platonism: the affirmation of a subject, that is, an autonomous thinking personality, and the affirmation of an object; that is, of an area of knowledge which shall be wholly abstract."[27] Havelock further maintains:

> " . . . that these twin goals of Platonism are both directly conditioned by . . . [Plato's] perception of the need to break with the poetic experience, [because] that experience had been central; it had constituted an overall state of mind; let us call it Homeric. And he [Plato] proposes to substitute a different state of mind, the Platonic."[28]

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[26] A confirmation of my statement that "poetry was the unexamined life nurtured by unexamined thoughts" can be found in Plato's Meno (77b-HC). Meno, answering a Socratic question, says, "It seems to me Socrates, that virtue is, in the words of the poets, [my italics] 'to rejoice in the fine and have power,' and I define it as desiring fine things and being able to acquire them." The fact that Meno, a product of the Greek educational system, quotes the poets as instructors is interesting enough. But his following statement illuminates the whole nature of the poetical-educational experience. Notice how very similar are the dictum of the poet and the definition of Meno. The poet says virtue is "to rejoice in the fine and have power." Meno says virtue is "desiring fine things and being able to acquire them." There is no attempt by Meno to explain the nature of virtue or to ascertain, critically, if the poet's basic premise is worthy of acceptance. Meno simply draws this poetic dictum out to its logical conclusion by defining "power" in his own words.

[27] Havelock, pp. 234-235.

[28] Havelock, p. 235. We would like to outline in precise terms the nature of this Platonic state of mind and the language that represented it.

> " . . . direct evidence . . . is furnished not in the Forms, but in his (Plato's) reiterated use of the

'itself per se,' which is 'one,' and which 'is,' and which is 'unseen.' This is Plato's fundamental language. . . .

" . . . the 'itself per se' [stresses] . . . the simple purity of the 'object,' gathered together . . . in isolation [my italics] from any contamination with anything else. . . .

"When the 'itself by itself' is first introduced in Book Five as a description of what the philosopher thinks about, . . . the examples cited are beautiful, just, good, and their antithesis, ugly, unjust, evil. . . .

"A little later . . . he reiterates the moral terms and adds double, half, great, small, light, heavy, to the list.

"The next such list occurs in the parable of the Divided Line . . . The examples given are odd, even, shape, three types of angle, and 'the square itself' and 'the diameter itself.'

"Then in Book Seven . . . he lists, as examples of these objects, size, smallness, hard, soft, heavy, light.

"Finally in Book Ten . . . he asserts that the calculative faculty has to come . . . and measure great, less, and equal.

"These lists when cross-compared reveal considerable community. The first and second from Book Five, disclose . . . that 'goodness' and 'rightness' (or the 'principle' of good or the 'principle' of right) are . . . on a par with shape and dimension (size and smallness) and proportion (double and half).

"The simple mathematical categories are then joined by arithmetical ones (odd and even) and by geometric postulates (square and diagonal).

"Their entire purpose is to accelerate the intellectual awakening which 'converts' the psyche from the many to the one, and from 'becomingness' to 'beingness.' This . . . is equivalent to a conversion from the image-world of the epic to the abstract world of scientific description, and from . . . events in time towards . . . topics which are outside time." Havelock, pp. 256-259.

CHAPTER IV

GREEK EDUCATION

A. Paideia

Man, "in hand and foot and mind, built foursquare without a flaw,"[1] is the Greek educational ideal represented by the word "Paideia." "Paideia" meant education, but an education that indicates an "awareness of a standard,"[2] and "the deliberate pursuit of an ideal."[3] It also meant "the process of educating man into his true form, the real and genuine human nature."[4] And this man, in his true form, is a political man. This was the principle underlying all Greek education. It "implied the essential quality of a human being [as a] political character."[5]

The Greeks recognized that educational processes could mould human character. Being aware that education could create either good or evil men, they were particularly sensitive to the needs of education; namely, proper educational materials and elite educators. As represent-

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[1]Werner Jaeger, Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture, Vol. I (New York, 1943), p. xxii.

[2]Ibid., p. xiv.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. xxiii.

[5]Ibid., p. xxvi.

atives of this elite, poets, statesmen and philosophers were "bound by deep knowledge . . . to the service of the community. . . . The true representatives of Paideia were not the voiceless artist, sculptor, painter, architect--but the poets and musicians, orators (which means statesmen) and philosophers."[6]

The statesman was obligated to shape men through just and equitable laws. The poets, expressing thoughts and ideas in words and sounds, created actions and events which men were to imitate. The philosophers, seeking ultimate principles and striving for clear and distinct ideas, directed men to examine and investigate all educational criteria; viz., legal codes, poetic presentations and even philosophical first principles.

Although excellence (arete) was the aim of Greek education, an early struggle for control of the educational process arose among the poets, statesmen and philosophers, the educational leaders of Greek society. Each group steadfastly maintained that they had the materials, the methods and the right to direct "that process . . . by which the mind and attitude of the young are formed."[7]

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[6]Jaeger, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

[7]Eric A. Havelock, Preface to Plato (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 13.

B. Poetical Paideia

But it was the poets, by virtue of a longstanding tradition, who were the accepted teachers in Greek society. Plato, representing philosophy, had to reject poetry for two practical reasons: first, because it represented an entrenched educational power; secondly, because poetry represented so-called traditional knowledge and wisdom in the Greek educational experience. Poetry "occupied this position so it seems in contemporary [Greek] society . . . on the ground that it provided a massive repository of useful knowledge, a sort of encyclopaedia of ethics, politics, history and technology."[8]

As we notice in all of Plato's dialogues, his remarks against the poetic experience are usually related to the subject of proper or improper education. In the Meno the question is: To whom shall we send Meno in order for him to learn about Virtue?[9] In the Phaedrus, one major discussion is about the proper method for composing a speech in order to pursuade others,[10] and, in the Republic,

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[8]Havelock, p. 27. Plato, himself, accepted the role of poetry as traditional Paideia in Greed education. "It [poetry] takes hold upon a gentle, virginal soul, awakens and inspires it to song and poetry and so glorifying the innumerable deeds of our forefathers, educates [my italics] posterity." Phaedrus (245-LLA).

[9]Meno (91b-HC).

[10]Phaedrus (267e-LLA).

the proper educational curriculum for the guardians and the philosopher-king is discussed.[11] Several other dialogues[12] could also be cited, but, suffice it to say, that "Plato's perspective on poetry is controlled by his educational programme . . . [and any reluctance on our part] to accept priority in Plato's mind of educational over aesthetic purposes,"[13] will lead to vast Platonic misunderstanding.

C. Poetical-Political Paideia

Another important point to be made before examining Plato's Republic (which contains his most virulent comments on poetry) is that the poets, as preservers of the vast educational manual, "enjoyed a sort of institutional status in Greek society, and received, as it were, state support, because they supplied a training which the social and political mechanism relied on for its efficient working."[14]

The poets and rhetors performed various functions. They were guardians and preservers of the whole Homeric corpus. They were teachers and transmitters of religious instruction, valid moral training and viable technical

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[11] Republic, Books II and III, VI and VII.

[12] Protagoras (345), Cratylus (384b) and Sophist (217a).

[13] Havelock, p. 17, note 29. (Also see note 36, p. 17.)

[14] Havelock, p. 29.

information. What they were not expected to do, according to Plato, was to function as experts in political matters; i.e., military activities and statesmenship.[15] "So I [Socrates-Plato] soon made up my mind about the poets. . . . It seemed clear to me that . . . the very fact that they were poets made them think [my italics] that they had a perfect understanding of all other subjects, of which they were totally ignorant."[16] What the poets proceeded to do with amazing ingenuity was to ingratiate themselves into public and political favor by using flattery and exhibiting fickleness.[17] Their ability to recollect and recite traditional verses associated with political actions and events, in the Agora and in the Assembly, made them appear to be expert in the techné of politics in the sight of the multitude and its elected leaders.[18] As they found themselves accepted masters of this techné, they engaged in political intrigue and successfully exerted political influence and power.

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[15]See quotation from the Republic (599c passim-J), Chapter IV, immediately following note #49 in text, this paper.

[16]Apology (22a-HC).

[17]See Chapter III, note #7, quotation in text, this paper.

[18]As Plato described in the Symposium (173a-175e-LLA), "When Agathon won the prize with his first tragedy . . . [it was] before the eyes of more than thirty thousand Hellenes."

This relationship, whereby politically naive poets influenced the structure, system and policies of a city-state, was for Plato the cause célebre of his diatribes against the poets. It was not the fact that statesmen were being influenced that upset Plato, but that statesmen were being influenced by a group of opining poets who were the intellectual practitioners of poetic mimesis,[19] as all their knowledge was derived mechanically from memory. The traditional Greek historical experience was presented in recalled poetic material without any prior critical evaluation based on independent thought and analysis.

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[19]"Mimesis" meant psychological or mental identification with events and actions of daemons, gods and ancient heroes. Memorization meant acceptance of and adherance to all stories and tales, whether good or bad, moral or immoral. Rote memorization plus mimesis crippled the rational faculty, i.e., the ability to distinguish between the important and the unimportant, between the possible and impossible, and between the sensible and non-sensible.

> "When Plato defines this mental condition he is attacking a problem specific to his own culture, and one which is indeed created by the previous poetised experience of Greece." (Havelock, pp. 235-236.)

A Platonic recommendation for proper learning and for healing the deformed faculty of reason is contained in these words of advice to Cratylus: "I would not have you be too easily persuaded of it. Reflect well [my italics] and like a man and do not easily accept such a doctrine." (Cratylus, 440d-HC.)

Plato's awareness of the potential danger and/or damage done to the mind through careless attachment to any doctrine or method of instruction is contained in his admonition: " . . . for you are young and of an age to learn" (Cratylus, 440d-HC.); viz., beware, be careful, "reflect well and like a man," and thus become a man.

Here lies the core of the Platonic assault:

> "[As] so designed, it [poetry] was obviously by Plato's day doing a very poor job. It could not carry out this task according to the standards which Plato required in the Academy[20] . . . Plato's remarks throughout the corpus of his writing are an indictment of the Greek tradition and the Greek educational system. . . . [the poets] emerge here . . . as 'the enemy' and that is how they are made to play out their role."[21]

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[20]The Academy, along with other schools, presumed to train statesmen, to devise constitutions, to send out graduates as advisors to important political figures. Before this was done, "the graduate of the Platonic Academy had passed through a rigorous training in mathematics and logic which [had] equipped him to define the aims of human life in scientific terms, and to carry them out in a society which had been reorganized upon scientific lines." Havelock, p. 31.

This was in sharp contrast to the politics of poetical-political Paideia: " . . . it could not carry out this task according to the standards which Plato required in the Academy." (Ibid.)

[21]Havelock, p. 13. Throughout the dialogues, whenever he is harsh with the poets, he seems to be reacting to their educational system. "The Homeric poet controlled the culture in which he lived for the simple reason that his poetry became and remained the only authorized version of important utterance. He did not need to argue about this. It was a fact of life, accepted by his community and by himself, without reflection or analysis [my italics]." (Havelock, p. 145.) Plato condemns the educational system because, in it, individuals are only made to memorize and then to recall various pieces of information about actions and events of gods, daemons and ancient heroes, without critical reflection. Thus, they find themselves unable to initiate private independent actions directed towards producing any personal excellence. Under such mental conditions, men are incapable of excelling at anything, except perhaps rote memorization. Thus, according to Plato, they stand condemned as ineffectual human beings. "For Plato, reality is rational, scientific and logical or it is nothing." (Havelock, p. 24.)

D. The Republic

According to Werner Jaeger, it was Rousseau who properly understood the Republic, when he said "that it was not a political system, as might be thought from its title but the finest treatise on education [my italics] ever written."[22]

Benjamin Jowett in his Dialogues of Plato states that education "is the continuous thread which runs through the Republic," and that "Plato is the first writer who distinctly says that the purpose of education is to comprehend the whole of life."[23]

These remarks of Rousseau and Jowett present the Republic not as a political polemic, but as an educational treatise. According to them, education, bursting forth throughout the Republic's various books, is the dialogue's one heralded message!

But, it was education as poetic mimesis that constituted the ancient experience, and "Plato is revealing a fundamental hostility to the poetic experience per se and to the imaginative act which constitutes such a large part of that experience."[24] We also must be aware "that the

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[22]Jaeger, Vol. II, p. 200.

[23]Vol. III (London, 1931), p. cc.

[24]Havelock, p. 11.

Greek educational system . . . was placed wholly at the service of this task of oral preservation."[25]

With these thoughts in mind, we are in a better position to understand Plato's philosophic examination of various topics and explicit subjects in the Republic; viz., religion, mythology, politics, music, poetics, law, medicine, literature and drama. All these topics represented various contemporary Greek (educational) modes within the polis, presented and preserved through this poetic oral tradition. "Once the Republic is viewed as an attack on the existing educational apparatus of Greece, the logic of its total organization becomes clear."[26]

His examination of the process of oral transmission and his critical evaluation of poetic mimesis is directed toward purging Greek education, for this ancient educational experience "would effectively preserve and transmit . . . only [my italics] if the pupil was trained to a habit of psychological identification with the poetry to be heard."[27] Thus poetry's form and content brought about harmful effects, i.e., "the submergence of the self-consciousness."[28]

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[25]Havelock, p. 234.

[26]Ibid., p. 13.

[27]Ibid., p. 234.

[28]Ibid., p. 235.

All philosophic activity in the Republic "is an indictment of the Greek tradition and the Greek educational system."[29] It is an examination that is conducted with but one thought in mind; to create a perfect state. According to Plato, only through proper education will mankind ever be able to approximate such an ideal. Of course, proper education meant philosophy. Philosophy made lofty claims, viz., "that henceforth all education and all culture must be based on nothing but knowledge of the highest values."[30] Also, "that the only safe and suitable recipient of political power is the philosopher;"[31] yet, "the older type of education . . . remained unconquerably active and alive beside its rival, and in fact continued to hold a leading place as one of the greatest influences on the spiritual life of Greece."[32]

In Plato's treatment of Greek Paideia, we observe that he delineates the individual characteristics of various people. These characteristics represent concepts, ideas or technés which Plato wishes to examine. For example, "Now the most skillful physicians are those who, from their youth upwards, have combined with the knowledge

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[29]Havelock, p. 12.

[30]Jaeger, Vol. III, p. 47.

[31]Havelock, p. 13.

[32]Jaeger, Vol. III, p. 47.

of their art the greatest experience of disease; they had better not be robust in health, and should have had all manner of diseases in their own persons." (408c-J) Further, "But with the judge it is otherwise; since he governs mind by mind; he ought not therefore to have been trained among vicious minds, and to have associated with them from youth upwards . . ." (409-J)

In all of his examples throughout the Republic, Plato seems to be sympathetic in his expositions, with one notable exception. This exception occurs when he talks about the poets. "Once it is appreciated that the poets are central to the educational apparatus, the successive critiques of poetry fall into place."[33] In regard to the poets, Plato is on the attack. "Perhaps the savage scorn with which Plato attacks and persecutes it [poetry] may be . . . explained by the . . . feeling that he is at war with an enemy who is . . . unconquerable."[34] Thus, his attitude is not one of sympathy and reconciliation. Indeed, it is harsh and immutable. Plato relentlessly "questions the Greek tradition. . . . Crucial to this tradition is the condition and quality of Greek education. . . . that process . . . by which the attitude and mind of the young are

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[33]Havelock, p. 13.

[34]Jaeger, Vol. III, p. 47.

formed. . . . And at the heart of this process . . . lies the presence of the Poets."[35]

In this section, I intend to examine Plato's insistent attack against the poets and their poetry. I intend to prove that Plato's major intent in writing the Republic was to mount a formidable attack upon those men, i.e., the poets, who exercised almost dictatorial control over Greek education. I will show that Plato, who "could see poet and philosopher together and distinguish them from each other precisely because he was both, within himself,"[36] saw that this educational power was absolute and had to be overcome, as it constituted the main obstacle and threat to the true Paideia; viz., philosophy. Naturally, a conflict developed. " . . . the Greeks held that poetry was the chief vehicle of Paideia, so that the dispute between philosophy and poetry was bound to become acute, as soon as philosophy began to claim to be Paideia, and to hold the leading place in education."[37]

I make these assertions, that the poets possessed absolute power and that they represented a threat to the new Paideia, philosophy, because Plato, consummate artist that he was, decided to end his most important work (Republic)

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[35]Havelock, pp. 12-13.

[36]Paul Friedlander, Plato, Vol. II (New York, 1959), p. 122.

[37]Jaeger, Vol. II, p. 359.

with an examination of the nature of poetry, not of politics. As Paul Friedlander states, "Now, shortly before the great concluding myth, (Book X) there follows, like a forced intrusion, the episode of the 'imitating' poet and the opposition of Plato's State to the latter. Why is this topic so important to Plato that he assigns it such an important place?"[38]

Although various books of the Republic mention the poets and their relationship to Greek Paideia, the tenth book is devoted to a searing denunciation of these artists. Hence, it is to these passages that my comments will refer.

First, let us consider the opening remarks of the book. Of all the rules in the perfect state, one, just one, upon deep reflection, pleases Plato more than any other. This rule is the one that denies imitative poetry a place in the Ideal state. (595) Plato emphatically states that the clearness of this insight is even brighter than the previous discourse about the various parts of the soul.

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[38]Friedlander, Vol. I, p. 118. For those who believe that the major intent of the tenth book is not to condemn poetry, but rather to explain the soul's reeducation after death in the myth of Er, F. A. G. Beck, in his book Greek Education (New York, 1964), says that the intrusion of the myth in the tenth book can be easily explained. Previously, Socrates, Andocides and Alcibides were brought up on the charge of "impiety." But this charge "was a mere pretext, for getting rid of opponents who had offended in other ways that could less easily justify prosecution. [Therefore,] Plato was careful to cover himself against any such contingency by the religious [mythical] nature of his organization." (p. 303)

Plato's pronouncement about the nature of the tragedians (poets) is made with a hushed voice; i.e., "speaking in confidence for I would not like my words to be repeated." (595b-J) The necessity to speak quietly about such things reveals two facts. First, the philosopher's personal safety in Greek society was threatened due to his opposition to the poets; second, the strong, important and prestigious position of the poets was reflected in their control of Greek education and politics.[39] In the Apology, Socrates tells us something of the intrigues that existed between the poets and the politicians in Athens. "The most

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[39]An interesting note is that Plato in his dialogues makes no mention of any contemporary political or poetic figures. All his discourses concern the historic figures of the preceding generation. "When he wrote his dialogues, these men were all dead, and in that rapid century, half forgotten. It needed all Plato's art to call the strong personalities of the famous Sophists out of the shadows to life once more." (Jaeger, Vol. II, p. 48.) But of course Plato is not just writing about the past, and "We need not go far to see, in the opponents whom he describes, mere masks for notable men of his own age." (Ibid.) A proper question to ask is why Plato felt it necessary to deal only with political and poetic personalities of the preceding century. It seems quite obvious that such literary tactics were essential if Plato were to protect himself from drastic political reprisals, i.e., death, banishment, confiscation of wealth. (See Introduction, note 26, this paper.) But one thing is certain: "Plato never argues with dead men, with historical fossils." (Jaeger, Vol. II, p. 48.) Glenn B. Morrow echoes Jaeger's position: "We are tempted to assume that Plato is employing the personages and doctrines of the bygone age as an indirect way of attacking the political issues of his own day." (Plato: Epistles, p. 119.)

preposterous thing of all is that I do not even know their names [his accusers]. I cannot tell you who they are except when one happens to be a comic poet."[40]

The populace revered the poets. A man could not speak against them without endangering himself. As Plato says, he is concerned about the possibilities of those "tragedians and the rest of the imaginative tribe" (595e-J) getting wind of philosophy's contempt for poetry.

Thus the poets are condemned because their creations are a threat to scientific cognition and moral considerations. That is, they produce works twice removed from Reality. The poet is compared to a painter, because the poet uses words the way a painter uses paint. It is obvious that Plato's argument concerning the nature of twice- and thrice-removed creations is forced and meant only to ridicule all creations and productions of the poets. "The

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[40] Oskar Piest, gen. ed., Plato: Euthyphro, Apology; Crito (New York, 1956, p. 22 [re Apology (18d)]. To further explain the apparent intrigue between poets and politicians in Athens, Piest says, "Apparently in order to obscure the political implications of the trial, the role of chief prosecutor was assigned to Meletus, a minor poet with fervent religious convictions." (See footnote, p. 23.)

A further insight into the nature of the battle between poetry and philosophy can be found in these further statements by Socrates: "But the fact is that not one of these charges is true [walking on air, sputtering about and other scientific nonsense]." (Apology, 19e-LLA.) But this next sentence is most revealing. Socrates finds it necessary to deny the charge that he educates men: "And if you have heard that I undertake to educate men, and make money by so doing, that is not true either." (Apology, 19e-20a-LLA).

painter [poet], it is said, is like a person carrying a mirror and making therewith all sorts of objects, not producing a bed, but only rendering a deceitful copy of it, and thus inferior to the carpenter. Is this not being frankly malicious?"[41] It seems to me in this case, that Plato is telling those lies, those "little lies" (See 389c), which he earlier said the philosopher-king must tell if true education is to be introduced into the state. Before this can happen, he felt that he must discredit the poets and so weaken their educational control.

Let us, for a moment, look at one attempt to accomplish this. He talks about the making of beds, and says that there are three makers of beds: the carpenter who makes a copy, and the painter [poet] who makes a copy of a copy, and then there is God. "Well then, here are three beds: one existing in nature, which is made by God, as I think that we may say--for no one else can be the maker?" (597a-J) I can hardly believe that Plato thought God went about making beds or other "ideal" objects, as necessarily prior to the ordinary creations of humans. Certainly his

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[41]Friedlander, Vol. I, p. 119. "Plato presents a theory of 'imitation' which cannot be evaluated properly . . . as a generally valid philosophy of art (the construction of which Plato never envisaged) instead of as a weapon with which he intended to defeat the artists, and especially the poets of his time." (Ibid.)

earlier explications of the nature of God say nothing about this new activity.[42]

Further, Plato states that poetic imitation is "ruinous to the understanding" (595b-J), that it is a kind of disease for which one must acquire an antidote! Before any proper antidote to this educational disease can be administered, the necessary diagnosis must be made; viz., the philosophical expose of the nature of poetics. A good many pages later, Plato winds up his argument, but not before he condemns both Homer and Hesiod. "The problem becomes urgent with the attack on Homer, . . . because everyone loves him, and so feels the gravity of the problem most quickly when the perfect poet is impugned."[43]

Now, Plato's condemnation of poetry is difficult to understand today, because there are modern proponents who maintain that artistic creations are important contributions as representative forms of insight and understanding about the true nature of things. They accept and laud "the conception of the poet as prophet and seer, possessed of a unique vision of reality, and a unique insight into things temporal."[44]

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[42] See Republic, Book II (380).

[43] Jaeger, Vol. II, p. 359.

[44] Havelock, p. 145.

However, these are modern notions. In order to understand and to place Plato's philosophical criticisms of poetry in perspective, we shall have to present the fundamental meaning of poetry in the Greek experience of Plato's day.[45] This is crucial. If we fail here, we fail in understanding what Plato is all about, and particularly, what his intent was in the Republic.

Whereas we moderns feel that the enjoyment of poetry has nothing to do with morality, the Greeks believed that any artistic presentation was intrinsically bound up with morality. "The aesthetic and ethical spheres, in fact, were never sharply distinguished by the Greeks."[46] Greek poetry was both ethical and aesthetic, hence, extremely didactic in nature. The whole intent of any poem was sealed within the context of the virtues, and virtuous conduct. The excellence of a poem depended not only upon its aesthetic delights, but upon the ethical content of its message. In many instances, the specific form and content

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[45]"There is a view of poetry which was peculiarly Greek, which set it altogether within the general trend of natural life and ideas; which asserted that it had a connection with ethics, religion, politics, or all of the general conceptions which regulated action and thought. Contrasted with this is one that appears to be prevalent in our own times: 'that its end is in itself and is simply beauty; and that in beauty there is no distinction of high or low, no preference of one kind to another." G. L. Dickinson, The Greek View of Life (New York, 1931), p. 206.

[46]G. Lowes Dickinson, The Greek View of Life (New Yock, 1931), p. 209.

of an artistic work was judged primarily in terms of the virtuous life of the artist who created it. "The works of the poets and especially of Homer were in fact to the Greeks all that moral treatises are to us . . . Poetry was the basis of their education, the guide and commentary of their practice, the inspiration of their speculative thought."[47]

The extent to which poetry permeated and influenced the lives of the Greeks can be further illustrated by a passage from the Protagoras. Here, relating the educational schema for young children, Protagoras states that:

> " . . . when the boy has learned his letters . . . they put into his hands the works of great poets. . . . In these are contained many admonitions, many tales, and praises, and encomia of ancient famous men, which he is required to learn by heart, in order that he might imitate, or emulate them and desire to become like them."[48]

Their national epics were held sacred and of supreme importance to the collective mind of ancient Greece. These epics were considered more than a storehouse of poetically inspired truths. They were also a storehouse of practical wisdom in that they contained references to all important technes of Greek social activity.

In The Frogs, Aristophanes sums up the respect which Greek society felt for its poets, as well as the extent to which poetry permeated all areas of Greek life. To show

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[47]Dickinson, p. 227.

[48]Protagoras (325c-J).

that poets have always been the instructors of mankind, he appeals to the writings of antiquity. Because of their traditional role as instructors of mankind, they are held in honor in Greek society.

> "Look to traditional history, look
> To antiquity, primitive, early, remote;
> See there, what a blessing illustrious poets
> Conferr'd on mankind, in the centuries past.
> Orpheus instructed mankind in religion,
> Reclaim'd them from bloodshed and barbarous rites;
> Musaeus deliver'd the doctrine of med'cine,
> And warnings prophetic for ages to come;
> Next came old Hesiod, teaching us husbandry,
> Ploughing, and sowing, and rural affairs,
> Rural economy, rural astronomy,
> Homely morality, labour, and thrift;
> Homer himself, our adorable Homer,
> What was his title to praise and renown?
> What, but the worth of the lessons he taught us,
> Discipline, arms, and equipment of war?"[49]

Compare Aristophanes' words of praise with this passage from the tenth book of the Republic:

> "Then, I said, we must put a question to Homer; not about medicine, or any of the arts to which his poems only incidentally refer: we are not going to ask him, or any other poet, whether he has cured patients, like Asclepius, or left behind him a school of medicine . . . whether he only talks about medicine or other arts at second-hand; but we have a right to know, respecting military tactics, politics [!], education [!], which are the chiefest and noblest subjects of his poems, and we may fairly ask him about them. 'Friend Homer,' then we say to him, 'if you are only in the second remove from truth in what you say of virtue, and not in the third--not an image maker or imitator--and if you are able to discern what pursuits make man better or worse in private or public life, tell us what State was ever better governed by your help?'" (599c passim-J)

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[49]Dickinson, pp. 229-230.

Plato would like to know "is there any war on record which was carried on successfully by him [Homer], or aided by his counsels, when he was alive?" (600 passim-J) More importantly, "is there any invention of his, applicable to the arts or to human life, such as Thales the Milesian or Anacharsis the Scythian, and other ingenious men have conceived, which is attributed to him." (Ibid.) Moreover, if these men are so prestigious, then, "Had he in his lifetime friends who loved to associate with him, and who handed down to posterity an Homeric way of life, such as was established by Pythagoras who was greatly beloved for his wisdom?" (Ibid.) Plato relentlessly continues his attack upon the credibility of the poetic influence by stating that "all the poetic tribe beginning with Homer are imitators of images of excellence . . . and do not lay hold on truth." (600e-HC) He infers that Homer had really been unable to educate and improve mankind, had possessed no true knowledge, and had been a mere imitator.

In the second book, Plato's attack upon the poetic tradition is meant to point out a second inherent evil of poetry; viz., that the poetic tradition was responsible for teaching that doxa, social praise and prestige, was to be preferred to actual morality. It was precisely the traditional presentation of the nature of virtue by the poets that confused young Athenians who were looking for guidance in their own lives. According to the poetic

tradition, justice is praised and injustice is to be avoided, only out of regard for the consequences of each in the society in which one finds onesself. "Parents and tutors are always telling their sons and their wards that they are to be just; but why? not for the sake of justice, but for the sake of character and reputation." (363a-J) According to the poets, justice is good because goodness brings goodness, and those who do the good are rewarded by the gods. ". . . and this accords with the noble testimony of Hesiod and Homer, the first of whom says, that the gods make the oaks of the just--

> 'To bear acorns at their summit, and bees in the middle;
> And the sheep are bowed down with the weight of their fleeces.'" (363b passim-J)

In a very similar vein, Homer says, "for he speaks of one whose fame is--

> 'As the fame of some blameless king who, like a god,
> Maintains justice; to whom the black earth brings forth
> Wheat and barley, whose trees are bowed with fruit,
> And his sheep never fail to bear, and the sea gives him fish.'" (363b passim-J)

Pretending to entertain notions of virtue and morality, poetry actually promoted injustice and immorality, and such promotion was its great sin, according to Plato. Although virtue was prescribed as an Ideal, the poets taught that it was both difficult and painful to achieve, and that it was terribly unrewarding to anyone who possessed it.

Plato says:

> ". . . if I am not mistaken, we shall have to say that about men, poets and storytellers are guilty of making the gravest misstatements when they tell us that wicked men are often happy, and the good miserable; and that injustice is profitable when undetected, but that justice is a man's own loss and another's gain--these things we shall forbid them to utter, and command them to sing and say the opposite." (392b-J)

For Plato, the most extraordinary thing about the poets is that they confuse the nature of virtue with the actions of the gods. "In speaking about the virtues and the gods, they say that the gods apportion calamity and misery to many good men and happiness and good to the wicked." (364a-J) Further, poets state, those "whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad."[50] All social institutions appeal to the poets for their authority. Here Hesiod is quoted:

> "'Vice may be had in abundance without trouble; the way is smooth and her dwelling-place is near. But before virtue the gods have set toil, and a tedious uphill road.'" (364d-J)

The tradition also cites that the gods can be influenced by men, for Homer states:

> "'The gods, too, may be turned from their purpose; and men pray to them and avert their wrath by sacrifices and soothing entreaties, and by libations and the odour of fat, when they have sinned and transgressed.'" (364d-J)

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[50]Jaeger, Vol. II, p. 218.

Plato goes on and on, giving evidence to the world that the books written by all the poets, Homer, Hesiod, Musaeus and Orpheus, corrupted the youth, denied the truth and ridiculed virtue. (See 364e.)

Yet, it will help us to recall that in Book III of the Republic, secondary education also included poetry as a requisite mode of education. Of course, it would be purged and purified. "Concerning the gods then, this is the sort of thing that we must allow or not allow them to hear from childhood up, if they are to honor the gods and their fathers and mothers, and not to hold their friendship with one another in light esteem." (386a-HC) But in Book X, Plato refers to poetry as "The bloom on a young face which is not beautiful in itself, and whose charm perishes when youth goes." (641b-J) To put it another way, Plato assigns poetry to that part of life when one is young, passionate, foolish, and without knowledge. As an educational tool, poetry is not only acceptable but necessary for it stimulates the emotions, which need to be developed in the young, while it affords the opportunity to the young to emulate and imitate the paradigms of the gods and the ancient heroes.

> "Character, in the Greek view, is a certain proportion of the various elements of the soul, and the right character is the right proportion. But the relation in which these elements stand to one another could be directly affected, it was found, by means of music [dancing and poetry]; not only could

> the different emotions be excited or assuaged in various degrees, but the whole relation of the emotional to the rational element could be regulated and controlled."[51]

Notice that Plato eliminates poetry completely from the higher education of the guardians and the philosopher-king, for these same reasons. Here, Plato objects to poetry because, in adult education, this educational mode is not directed to the best part of the soul, critical reason, but only to the emotions and imitative passions, which it sometimes unduly stimulates.[52] Plato's final statement on this subject is that poetry must be replaced in later life by philosophy.

Now, in all of his dialogues, Plato's most revealing presentation, which to my mind points up the crucial distinction between poetry and philosophy, between the old Paideia and the new Paideia, is represented by a popular and prominent contemporary Greek view found in the Gorgias. Here, Callicles, the spokesman for Athens, advises Socrates to beware of too much philosophy, especially later in adult life. "Philosophy, as a part of education, is an excellent thing, and there is no disgrace to a man while he is young in pursuing such a study: but when he is more advanced in years, the thing becomes ridiculous, and I feel toward

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[51]Dickinson, p. 220.

[52]See Chapter IV, note 19, this paper.

philosophers as I do toward those who lisp and imitate children."[53]

In denigrating philosophy, Callicles calls it a fool's activity, keeping one from the more important activities of business and politics. As for the philosopher, Callicles says, "He flies from the busy centre and the market-place, in which, as the poet [my italics] says, men become distinguished."[54] Philosophy prevents men from exercising safe control over their own lives, and may lead them on to personal ruin (Plato's subtle reminder to the reader of Socrates' trial and death). Here, Callicles invokes the words of Euripides to reinforce his argument, that philosophy is "An art which converts a man of sense into a fool."[55]

Callicles continues his polemic against philosophy by stating that the man who studies too much philosophy, as an adult "is necessarily ignorant of all these things which a gentleman and a person of honor ought to know; He is also inexperienced in the laws of the State, and in the language which ought to be used in the dealings of man with

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[53] Gorgias (485a-J).

[54] Ibid., (485e-J).

[55] Ibid., (486b-J).

man . . . and utterly ignorant of the pleasures and desires of mankind and human character in general."[56]

These statements by Callicles represent the popular view concerning the low status of philosophy as Paideia, as against the high esteem in which poetry was held in the Athens of Plato's day. Callicles maintains that it is poetry that a gentleman and a person of honor should know and respect. Further, poetic directives deserve a man's closest attention because they, alone, are to be considered knowledge (episteme').

What we have here are two diametrically opposed views concerning the process of education, the content of education, and the mood of education. Both Plato and Callicles agree that education is necessary and invaluable in the development of society or the polis. However, they differ radically as to who should study what, at what age, and for what purpose. "We are thus brought face-to-face with the final problem. . . . Socrates and Callicles stand respectively for two antithetical ideals in life, the one for the 'life of philosophy,' the other for the life of action as followed by a man of affairs in the Athenian democracy."[57]

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[56] Gorgias (484d-J).

[57] A. E. Taylor, Plato: The Man and His Work (London, 1966), p. 122.

Moreover, the content of education is hotly disputed. Callicles presents poetic materials, both ancient and modern, as educational criteria. While Plato, just as intensely, recommends dialectic as representative of true knowledge. Finally, the mode of education, as interpreted by Callicles for the poets is represented by the values of civilization: Power, prestige, possessions and pleasures. The mode of education, for Plato, is represented by the values of culture: Wisdom, temperance, courage and justice. The intent of poetic education is to teach man how to gain and maintain power over the external world. The intent of philosophic education is to teach man how to maintain an harmonious relationship within one's own self through adherence to these values; viz., justice, wisdom, courage and temperance. As we can see, poetry and philosophy, as Paideias, represent diametrically opposed world views.[58]

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[58] Paideia and power are two opposing concepts of human nature; two different philosophies of society. Education aims at internal control and self-understanding and results in an harmonious community. Power aims at external control often in order to prevent inner understanding, and results in a disruptive community. As Werner Jaeger says in Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture (Vol. II, p. 133): "We have to choose between the philosophy of power and the philosophy of culture. . . . The philosophy of power is the doctrine of force. It sees war and conquest everywhere in life, and believes that that sanctions the use of force. It can have no meaning except through the seizure of the greatest possible power. The philosophy of culture of education [Paideia] asserts that man has a different aim: kalokagathia. Plato defines it as the opposite of injustice and wickedness--it is therefore, essentially, a matter of ethics . . . the real meaning of human nature is not power, but culture: paideia."

Finally, if we are to give a sympathetic reading to Plato's polemic against the absolute educational power of the poets, we must direct our attention to this important historical fact; viz., Plato was living in the midst of a cultural and intellectual revolution. "It remains true that the crux of the matter lies in the transition from the oral to the written and from the concrete to the abstract."[59] So, poetry was condemned by Plato. Make no mistake about that. However, it was poetry in the Greek sense. It pictured divine activity as emotionally motivated, which led to unjust and irrational behavior. It caused the young to lose their independent self-awareness through mimesis. It presented power and pleasure as being inherently good, and identified power with the good. It advocated political activity for personal gain and prestige, and promoted social injustice and inequity. Thus, as an absolute educational power which controlled men's minds and corrupted men's moral fiber, it was charged with educational immorality. Poetry was not, in Plato's view, written with any moral aim, but merely gave pleasure, and as so constituted, was a form of rhetoric designed to please the public. "The whole indictment of poetry in the Republic is contained in principle in what is said . . . about its character as a 'mere mechanic' trick of pleasing,

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[59]Havelock, p. xi.

and amusing. That poets aim merely at pleasing the taste of an audience good or bad, was a current view."[60]

Living in the midst of political, social and cultural upheaval, Plato joined forces with other educational figures who had previously made attempts at purging and reforming poetry. In his criticism of Homer and Hesiod's use of myth, Xenophanes anticipates Plato. "Xenophanes is one who criticizes Homer and Hesiod for having attributed to the gods all things that are shameful and a reproach among mankind; theft, adultery and mutual deception."[61]

As a poet and a philosopher, Plato might have gone either way. He made a monumental decision when he chose to challenge poetic Paideia. His attempt to institute social justice by reforming education, although unsuccessful in his day, nevertheless heralded a future vision of the ultimate perfectability of man through education.

That Plato's pronouncements against poetry and politics were so extraordinary can best be appreciated by the tone of one of Callicles' remarks in the Gorgias. Callicles unbelievingly asks Socrates (Plato) if he really is serious about his commitment to the principle that injustice and the doing of wrong are the greatest of evils. "Are we to consider you serious now or jesting? For if you are serious

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[60]Taylor, pp. 122-123, note 2.

[61]F. A. G. Beck, Greek Education (New York, 1964), p. 69.

and what you say is true, then surely the life of us mortals must be turned upside down and apparently we are everywhere doing the opposite of what we should."[62]

Plato was serious. He meant not only to turn "the life of us mortals upside down," but inside out as well. "We ought to regard [Plato] . . . as a political agitator determined to turn the whole world upside down."[63] The quality of Plato's political agitation can be appreciated best in this paraphrase of Plato concerning the serious business of life:

> "Perhaps we are only playthings [for God] but even if that is so, we must 'play the game' well, not in the inverted fashion of mankind at large, who fancy that war is the business of life, peace only the play. The truth is that it is peace which is 'real' and 'earnest,' for it is only in peace that we can pursue Education [my italics], the most serious affair of life."[64]

And in Plato's own words, "this work of reformation [in education and in politics] is the great business of every man while he lives."[65]

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[62] Gorgias (481c-HC).

[63] Ludwig Marcuse, Plato and Dionysis (New York, 1947), p. vii.

[64] Taylor, p. 483. (See Laws, Book VII, 803a-804c.)

[65] Laws (644b-645-J).

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