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Tripartite Poetics
A Reexamination of Plato's Aesthetics

By

Michael Regier

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Philosophy
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2017

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Tripartite Poetics

A Reexamination of Plato's Aesthetics

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Abstract

Traditional approaches taken in analyzing Plato's aesthetics tend to privilege either the critical dialogues (especially the critiques present throughout *Republic*), or the dialogues which present poetry in a more positive light. Placing emphasis on one of these approaches leads to the exclusion, in varying degrees, of the opposing position. However, if poetry is reevaluated and given a tripartite structure a reconciliation of these positions can be arrived at. Tripartition is not uncommon in Plato's corpus, and by investigating Plato's sense of poetry as though it possessed three components— a material component, an intellectual component, and a truthful component— a better understanding of Plato's broader aesthetics becomes possible. Each part of poetry roughly corresponds to, and affects a capacity of the soul, with the appetitive and material, spirited and intellectual, and reasonable and truthful creating pairs. Examining the relationship between poetry and the soul reveals subtle nuances in poetry, and allows for poetry to ascend higher than the critiques suggest.

Along with the tripartition, there needs to be a greater focus on, and understanding of the 'divine inspirer' in Plato's philosophical works. By elucidating the figure of the 'divine inspirer' the truth component of both poetry and philosophy can be drawn into a closer relationship. The historiographical nature of poetry, when traced to a divine source, can be viewed as possessing truth, which validates poetry. So, by deconstructing poetry into three distinct components, and recognizing the role of the divine inspirer in Plato's conception, a constructive understanding of poetry that legitimizes both the critical and positive discussions of poetry presented in across the dialogues can be constructed.

For my parents.

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Introduction

Plato's aesthetic theory, while never elucidated in any explicit or structured way by Plato, is nevertheless subject of much scrutiny. His repudiation and banishment of poetry in *Republic*, being the longest sustained discussion of aesthetics, is often taken to be reflective of his definitive position. This diminishes the importance of works like *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, which, while only discussing art tangentially, provide key positive attributes of poetry. Furthermore, the critical evaluation of art by Plato is seen to be at odds with his own poetic and artistic vision, as exhibited in the dialogues.[1] Interpretations which take the position that Plato *is* a poet argue in favour of an alternative to Plato's excoriation of poetry, where it is not necessarily a complete disavowal of poetry, but a critique that poetry has not been appropriately used in service of truth.

A description of Plato's aesthetics relying primarily on his critiques will be robbed of the sophistication that is evident in other dialogues, and will therefore fail to capture a more comprehensive and constructive aesthetics. The problem that arises in critique-focused evaluations of Plato's aesthetics can be seen in the failure to recognize what Anthony Storr viewed as the 'spiritual' component of poetry. In Storr's description, for a work of art to be more than just a 'work,' it requires something extra, something 'spiritual' (Storr 1972, 179). There must be something conveyed that affects the audience in order to elevate the work of artifice to the stature of art— for Plato this would be moving the audience's mind to contemplate reality instead of focusing on pleasures in the world of appearances. The reliance on the critiques inevitably eclipses the notion of 'divine inspiration' which is important to Plato's positive evaluation of art and allows that spiritual aspect of art to be recognized.[2]

Major questions about the concept of divine inspiration are asked in various places. An example of this is J. M. Cocking's focus on the 'what' and the 'how' of inspiration, which are critical questions in determining the efficacy of divine inspiration as a foundation for poetic creativity (Cocking 1991, 32-3); what

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[1] Elias defends this position in *Plato's Defence of Poetry*. Rather than producing an argument based primarily around Plato's statements about poetry, Elias centres his argument on the poetic nature of Plato's dialogues, which he sees as acting as an implicit defence of poetry. Elias' assessment has the negative feature of treating Plato's discussion of 'madness' in a negative and thoroughly modern way when referring to poets as 'madmen' and grouping them in with rhetoricians, as well as confusing them with the *mantics* (prophets) (Elias 1984, 38); Plato does not see madness in a negative way like this in *Phaedrus*— at least in relation to poetry— nor do the poets factor into the discussion on *mantics* (though they do follow in succession during the discussion of divinely inspired crafts).

[2] *Ion*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus* give the most detailed accounts of divine inspiration, but the idea arises in numerous other works, including *Republic*. The lack of detail that Plato gives divine inspiration in other works often leads to it being overlooked, but the importance that Plato attributes to divine inspiration in relation to philosophy in *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* lends credence to the idea that it was not something Plato accepted carelessly, as suggested in the conclusion of *Ion*, but something he took seriously and considered valuable to his philosophical system.

inspiration intimates, and how inspiration functions will be important questions in making the divine inspirer visible in Plato's aesthetics. To discover the depth and nuance of Plato's approach to poetry his aesthetic theory should be understood as possessing a tripartite structure, which is not an unfamiliar device in Platonic philosophy.[3] The goal of this essay, therefore, is to develop a Platonic aesthetic that is comprised of three components: *i*) truth, *ii*) intellection, and *iii*) the written or spoken form. Such a reevaluation would restore to poetry a more positive definition, and avoid the unfortunate misconception that all poetry is mimesis and deception.

i) Truth refers to the knowledge that can be conveyed in poetry. This claim is contentious as, according to *Republic*, knowledge is inaccessible to the poet— only the philosopher has the capacity to raise themselves above opinion. However, a rupture is produced in poetry with regard to knowledge claims, as there is a type of poetry that has a connection to truth through the love of Beauty inspired in the poet (*Phaedrus*, 248d), and a type of poetry that does not have a connection to truth, where the poets focus their poetry on representation and mimesis in replicating the world of appearance in their works (*Phaedrus*, 248e). These will be termed 'divine poetry' and 'mundane poetry' respectively. The divine poets are those who are inspired by the Muses[4] and are able to elevate their poetry because of that connection, and they will be the main focus of the first section of this examination of Plato's aesthetics. The mundane poet relies on an understanding of the world and sensual experiences to produce poetry that delights the senses. Recognition of these two types of poet is necessary for reconciling a positive view of poetry and Plato's critical analysis of poetry. The lack of knowledge on the part of the mundane poets places them closer to the sophist and the rhetorician,[5] while the divine poets are able to avoid Plato's condemnation due to the intervention of the Muse who provides them with visions of truth.

The divine poet is not the only figure Plato describes as being divinely inspired— acquisition of knowledge is only possible when intimated in an inspired state, and in most cases is not arrived at by self-directed reasoning, but is bestowed on the inspired by their divine benefactor. Therefore, being given knowledge by the divinities is not only the province of the poet. There are four arts that are associated with

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[3] Tripartition can be seen in the description of numerous concepts that Plato discusses in his dialogues, with *Republic* yielding several examples. The division of the state into three classes, which is vividly described by the myth of the metals (*Republic*, 415a). Importantly, these three classes roughly correspond to the conception of the soul supported in *Republic*, and which is returned to, or taken for granted in, several other dialogues including *Phaedrus*. In *Phaedrus* the soul is presented in the form of a chariot, composed of a driver and two horses, with each part representing the three capacities of the soul (*Phaedrus*, 246b).

[4] Inspiration is traced by Plato to the Muses as well as more ambiguous 'divinities'— Plato does not seem to make a strong distinction between these terms as they are used interchangeably within the dialogues, and I will follow this procedure throughout this paper.

[5] Which is recognized in the hierarchy of souls, where the sophist actually ranks lower than the mimetic poet— the sophist is relegated to the eighth incarnation, while the representational poet is the sixth (*Phaedrus*, 248e).

divine 'madness:'[6] mystery practices, prophecy, poetry, and philosophy (*Phaedrus*, 244b-245a; 249d). Divinely inspired poets and philosophers are bound together in the hierarchy of souls in *Phaedrus* (*Phaedrus*, 248d-e), as each is a lover of the Forms— the divine poet is a lover of Beauty, while the philosopher is drawn up by Beauty (as seen in *Symposium)*[7] and the philosopher comes to understand the Forms through recollection initiated by the recognition of the Beautiful as it manifests in the world of appearance. Once again, the mundane poets' limitations must be stressed as they will not be able to reach these heights, which is why they are recognized as limited to mimicry of the natural world, and therefore fail to be worthy of Plato's praise; mimesis and reproduction of beautiful particulars is not equivalent to the divine poet's representation of Beauty. Divine inspiration is therefore necessary to elevate poetry to expressions of knowledge. However, knowledge is not itself poetry. In order to make knowledge of reality comprehensible to an audience, who depend on reference to their sense experiences to understand, divine inspiration must be interpreted by the poet who is inspired. That is, it must be translated into a language that draws on experience to convey knowledge without being too abstract, and to perform this translation the poet's active intellect is necessary.

ii) Intellection[8] is the rational component of poetic composition and is utilized to interpret and order inspired visions. It is the nature of intellection as a principle for the composition of poetry that starts to draw the divine and mundane poets into a relationship. The way poetry is developed prior to presentation is similar to each type of poet; however, while the mundane poet draws solely on subjective sensual experience, the divine poet draws on a foundation of objective knowledge. In each case the poets are ordering and interpreting their vision to make it communicable to others. This produces a sensual account that is drawing not on particulars, but on experiences that have some universality. The poets each desire to share their vision with others, which forces a reliance on ideas shared with the audience. This is where the line is blurred between the divine poets and the mundane poets, as their presentations will inevitably bear similarities as they draw on similar linguistic conventions. While on the surface this would seem to lead to a

[6] Madness, enthusiasm, mania, and frenzy are each used to describe Plato's notion of divine inspiration, however, as Pieper points out, none of these is adequate to describing precisely what Plato meant (Pieper 1964, 49). While each is applicable to what Plato appears to be conveying, they each possess attributes that alter the meaning in subtle ways.
[7] In Diotima's speech in *Symposium* the philosopher is drawn up the Ladder of Love from the recognition and love of beautiful bodies at the lowest rung, and ascending to a love of the Form of Beauty (*Symposium*, 210a-212c).
[8] Intellection would bear a relationship to the modern conceptualization of 'imagination.' However, this terminology has some problematic connotations in the context of Plato, as it can be understood as a misinterpretation of the concept of 'imaging' which forms the lowest part of the divided line in the eponymous metaphor (*Republic*, 509d-511e). Murray W. Bundy's 'Plato's View of the Imagination' provides a strong account for the difference between each term. Importantly, he presents the argument that there are two distinct types of imagination: imagination of Forms, and imagination of material objects (Bundy 1922, 369). This serves to introduce the possibility of an imagination predicated on knowledge, while 'imaging' would be predicated on opinion alone. It is the former concept that relates to intellection in the composition of divine poetry.

condemnation of both poets, one must keep in mind that the sophist and philosopher also have remarkably similar ways of presenting ideas to an audience, but only one has knowledge and is able to speak truthfully.[9] It is therefore of great importance to explore the way that knowledge is presented within divine poetry in order to elucidate the status of divinely inspired poetry, and to distinguish the intellectual content from the way that content is presented.

iii) Form is the sensual component of poetry as presented in a physical medium— the vehicle of presenting poetry, whether written or performed. Plato focuses on this component of poetry, as it has the greatest capacity to be used illusively and deceptively. It is also the most easily recognized aspect of poetry due to its connection to the physical world and the need for it regardless of the type of poetry (or other discourse for that matter). The experiences that are represented in poetry forge a connection to the world of appearances that makes the work of poetry understandable, or allows for revelry in the poem's sensual pleasures. Whether poetry takes form in an oral or written tradition it still relies on something physical to be related to others; this is not to be confused with the plastic arts, though. In *Republic* X, poetry and painting are conflated in order to make an argument against the knowledge claims put forth in poetry (*Republic*, 597e-599a). The argument places poetry into the context of mimesis, where the physical appearance of an object is represented without attempting to surpass the appearance and reveal the Forms it participates in, and therefore the truth which underlies the appearance. This is a claim that is more accurate in relation to the mundane poet than the divine poet. This claim is further supported, as we shall see, by the divine poet's being less dependent on worldly experience than the uninspired poet. This serves to, once again, connect the mundane poet to sophistry and rhetoric, as each of these are founded on providing a presentation that is beautiful, without being founded on, or representative of, Beauty. The divine poet, on the other hand, has a beautiful presentation because the knowledge that is imbued in their poetry is Beautiful. The audience of the divine poet is elevated when they understand the content of the poetry, while the audience of the mundane poet is deceived in the same way that the audience of the sophists are.

To clarify this tripartite conception of poetry, and to situate this revised sense of poetry into Plato's larger system, two movements need to be made. The first is to position Plato's divine inspirer in the forefront of his aesthetic theory. The three components of divine poetry are dependent on the connection the poet has to a divine inspirer, so to gain an appreciation for the divine poets' craft their relation to their Muse needs

[9] This distinction is central in *Gorgias*, where rhetoric is under discussion. The three sophistical approaches each fail to appreciate the true nature of rhetoric, and focus on the material gain that can be arrived at through its use; the closing myth Socrates offers at the dialogue's conclusion, about the rule of Cronus and the rule of Zeus in the afterlife (*Gorgias*, 523-524a), illustrates the need for there to be truth in the way ideas are presented rhetorically— while being well-spoken may have been effective during the reign of Cronus, Zeus is able to use his reason to see past the appearances that have been proffered. *Phaedrus* is also instrumental in drawing the division, as the critical evaluation of rhetoric results in Socrates offering a formulation that requires the speaker to possess knowledge of souls, not just opinions about content (*Phaedrus*, 271b)

to be outlined. By assessing the divinities' influence on the various aspects of poetry a more nuanced view of poetry can be discovered. The second movement will be to bring the redefined conception of poetry that focuses on inspiration under the lens of Plato's critiques. Each aspect of poetry will be evaluated according to applicable critiques in order to see whether the divine influence on poetry is enough for it to surpass the critiques and raise poetry above the status of dissembling. Together these will be instrumental in providing a Platonic account of poetry that is not only positive and constructive, but sheds light on the contradictory aesthetic theory that is produced when the critiques are placed at the centre of an assessment of Plato's view and evaluation of poetry.

1. Divine Inspiration

An important hinderance in attributing to Plato a positive view of poetry is his sustained attack on poets and poetry, especially his critiques found throughout *Republic* and *Laws*. The result of this has been a lineage of works attempting to answer Plato's critiques by drawing on other dialogues, especially *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, which cast poetry in a more favourable light. However, it is not uncommon to see interpreters sever the connection between his critique and his affirmation, relying on one or the other to inform their perspective on Plato's aesthetics.[10] M.H. Partee positions himself on the side of the critique in his essay "Plato's Banishment of Poetry." Partee sees Plato's critique as overwhelming, and the positive view of poetry in other dialogues to pale in comparison, and ultimately fail to fully answer the arguments brought against poetry in *Republic* (Partee 1970, 209). While this appears to be a fine criticism on the surface, there is a lack of depth due to Partee's decision not to consider divine inspiration in any definitive way. The result of Partee's position is the mistake of combining poetry with sophistry and rhetoric based on the beautiful use of language (Partee 1970, 209). This is a common error in interpreting Plato's aesthetics, as his invective against beautiful language without content is found in numerous dialogues. The dialogues *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, where poetry is seen in a positive light, both deal with speeches and speech making, but delineate a difference between works that possess value (inspired) and those that do not (mundane). Nonetheless, by considering the concept of divine inspiration to be "trivial" (Partee 1970, 213), one loses sight and cannot recognize the status of the poet as akin to the philosopher in the hierarchy of souls in the *Phaedrus* (*Phaedrus*, 245). Without a deeper consideration of the importance of divine inspiration for Plato this view of poetry remaining impoverished.

There is also danger in overemphasizing the nature of divine inspiration to the exclusion of the critiques. Some interpreters bracket out fundamental attributes of Plato's philosophy which creates issues when evaluating aesthetics. W. J. Oates is guilty of this in *Plato's View of Poetry*, an otherwise fine assessment of Plato's aesthetic theory, but which feels incomplete when ideas philosophically relevant to Plato, like asceticism, are left unexplored.[11] The omission is not without merit though, and Oates defends his

[10] Figures who fall into this category include: J.M. Cocking (1991), and M.H. Partee (1970) each relying too heavily on *Republic* and *Laws*, giving little consideration to the other works that address art; W.J. Oates (1972) relies so heavily on abstracting an aesthetic theory that he ultimately fails to connect it adequately with Plato’s overall philosophy; G.X. Santas (1988) and H.G. Gadamer (1980) each psychologize Plato, end up losing some of the spirit of the works and fail to provide a complete account that focuses on drawing out a cohesive aesthetics from the dialogues.

[11] Plato's asceticism can be seen in the *Phaedo*, especially in the statement that the body, once activated by a soul, does have some effect on the soul embodied, as it carries desires. These should be ignored by a philosopher, says Plato, as they are lower pleasures— the philosopher "keeps his attention directed as much as he can away from [the body] and toward the soul" (*Phaedo*, 64d-e)— a clear illustration of where the philosopher locates attention, abstaining from the world as much as possible in favour of a more intellectual life (and so too the divine poet, who does not stay in a court to be lauded, but travels far and wide spreading their inspired wisdom).

omission by arguing that the very nature of asceticism goes against the foundations of art which is the representation of beauty (Oates 1972, 60). While typically that claim is fair, in relation to Plato's concept of divine inspiration the foundation of beauty is not in the physical world, but in the intelligible world, accessible through communion with the divine. Plato's asceticism derives from the earlier Pythagorean philosophy that places emphasis on the soul over the body, focusing primarily on memory (Vernant 2006, 141). The influence that this form of asceticism had on Plato's philosophy is far reaching, and its relevance to divine inspiration cannot be understated as the Muses, who inspire poetry, are related to memory and accenting a definition of poetry in concert with asceticism can yield an interesting stylistic approach in strong agreement with Plato's critical evaluation. Without balancing the philosophical problems of poetry and the philosophical praise of poetry any assessment will ultimately be incomplete.

The greatest problem in conceptualizing Plato's aesthetics comes in relation to 'divine inspiration,' and understanding the delicate balance of its use.[12] The idea that poets were inspired, possessed, or compelled by divinities to create poetry predates Plato,[13] and the interpretation that descends from him has passed in and out of favour since his time.[14] Even within his own works there is a certain tension that is produced between the simplistic and complex description of inspiration in Plato's dialogues. In the *Apology* there is a relatively simplistic view of inspiration where the soul of the poet is superseded by a divinity and the works spring forth directly from the source (*Apology*, 22c). This conception of inspiration conceived of the poet as an 'empty vessel' for the gods, it is a common interpretation of Plato's overall theory and helps account for the lack of knowing how or when knowledge has come into the world[15] (the 'Ancients' are nebulous in some of Socrates' examples, but their wisdom remains reliable) (Pieper 1964, 28). The ‘empty

[12] R. Kearney (1994), makes a common error by conflating imagination and imaging in Plato's critiques, and ultimately fails to appreciate the difference between these two ideas and Plato's view of inspiration. By interpolating imagination and inspiration into imaging poetry loses any value that could be attributed to it, and Kearney ultimately arrives at a contradiction arising from his view of Plato's aesthetics. The three different faculties need to be separated and judged according to their relative position in the tripartite conception of poetry, where imaging relates to the form, imagination would be more accurately termed intellectual imagination (which would be novel reformulations of experiences), and inspiration would be connected to truth.

[13] Hesiod makes a claim to being inspired in the opening section of the *Theogony* (Hesiod, 1-115). Brown’s characterization of the period of Hesiod's composition as ‘innocent of philosophy’ and familiar with mythical exposition suggests an acceptance of Hesiod's claim (Brown 1953, 15). Vernant considers it important not to reduce Hesiod to the modern stature of imaginative poet, as well by drawing attention to both the complexity and intricacy of Hesiod's work, and the claim of inspiration is deserving of respect (Vernant 2006, 64).

[14] Particularly notable figures who drew on Plato's concept of inspiration in their own views of poetry were Marsilio Ficino and Percy Blythe Shelley, they also produced translations of *Ion*, in Latin (1468-9) and English (1821) respectively.

[15] Gadamer makes an interesting point in regards to Socrates' consideration of the poet's insight being related to their closeness to the events of the past, where historical knowledge is obscured over time, or lost completely; the result is the credibility of the poet possibly being diminished as there is an alternative to inspiration to possess knowledge about the past (Gadamer 1980, 43). However, this would still provide the poets with knowledge about history, as Socrates is seeking an explanation for *how* they have knowledge, not questioning *whether* they have knowledge.

vessel' conception will change dramatically throughout Plato's dialogues, gaining more depth and nuance. Not only do the later approaches to inspiration scale back the direct influence of the divine on the minds of the inspired, but they also afford room for rational interpretation of inspired visions not evident in the, albeit brief, formulation of inspiration found in the *Apology.*[16]

The clearest explanation of divine inspiration that Plato provides is the concept of 'divine madness,' or just 'madness,' as seen in the *Phaedrus*. As stated previously there are four types of divine madness, each with a divinely supported skill or craft associated with it.[17] Along with these types of madness is a fifth type of madness which is more akin to a malady of the soul, which is a failure of the character of the individual, not due to the intercession of the divine;[18] it is an internally motivated madness, not an externally initiated madness. This is an incredibly important distinction, which is made explicit in *Timaeus* by assigning bodily localities to the types of madness: in divine madness it is the liver which serves as the entry point for inspiration, whereas physical madness is a disease of the mind (*Timaeus*, 86c-87c). By making the distinction between the localities of madness Plato is effectively differentiating defects of character from divine gifts, and simultaneously legitimizing claims to divine inspiration by the poets. Therefore, the distinction gains importance in two ways: primarily, not all madnesses are created equal— some forms of madness have value and ought to be respected. Secondly, there is the underlying notion that intellectual autonomy is not displaced in the moment of inspiration, as it is the liver affected, not the mind itself. This localization of inspiration in the liver opens the potential for the mind to be independently active, which is to say rationally active, during the state of inspiration.

In order to identify the nature of divine inspiration in Plato's system several major concepts need to be elucidated: *I*) the cosmological situation of the divinities who inspire; *II*) the relationship between divine beings and mortal beings; *III*) the knowledge that the divinities impart on mortals *IV*) the relation of the divinities and the inspired to the world of appearance. Together these sections will illuminate Plato's

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[16] This shift is extremely important to understanding and accepting Plato's critical analysis of poetry. *If* one is to accept this naïve concept of inspiration, the critique of the poet's knowledge is a critique of the divinities. Not only would poets not possess knowledge, but the gods would not be perfectly good, instead they would be explicitly capricious, which undermine's Plato's critique of poets as telling falsehoods that make the gods appear capricious— either the poets cannot be telling falsehoods because the gods are, or the poets are attempting to relate truths that surpass their comprehension as best they can, unfortunately introducing falsehoods into their works in the process.

[17] As discussed in the introduction, cf. *Phaedrus*, 244c-245c. Greene interprets Plato to give to inspired poetry a type of wisdom that is not reducible to a *techne*, which seems to contradict the notion of a 'skill or craft' being associated with inspiration (Greene 1918, 17). However, it becomes clear that his interpretation of Plato's position is felicitous to the hierarchy of souls (*Phaedrus*, 248d), which places the lover of Wisdom and lover of Beauty together. This interpretation, correctly, reflects a sense of wisdom, rather than a practicable skill that is being transmitted.

[18] This failure of character would be derived from their previous lives and their inability to wisely choose their next life during the period before their reincarnation, as seen in the Myth of Er (*Republic*, 614d-620d).

notion of divine inspiration through the analysis of the way the divinities manifest in his system, ultimately contributing to the understanding and interpretation of Plato's aesthetic theory.

1.1- The Cosmological Situation of the Divinities Who Inspire

In the *Timaeus* Plato presents his cosmological views, as well as his views of creation, and the workings of the natural world. At the centre of genesis is the figure of the Demiurge, the one who fashioned the cosmos according to the Forms, and from whom everything (save the Forms) originates. The Demiurge, therefore, is positioned as the supreme example of creativity in Plato's works, while simultaneously alluding to the idea that creativity is constrained by the Forms.[19] This idea anchors the notion of rational creativity, one that is circumscribed by the Forms. This sets a precedent in Plato's system where both divine and human works have an intellectual telos underlying them (Vernant 2006, 288-9). Therefore, Plato's framework for creation begins with the Demiurge creating a rational order out of chaos; there is an intelligent telos that determines structure of the cosmos[20] (*Timaeus*, 29b-31c). Plato sees the actions of the Demiurge as a movement to unite the plurality of singulars under universals, and Eros, the classical unifying principle in the *Theogony* (Hesiod, 116-138), is relegated to less predictable creative acts, like begetting or creating works that offer the possibility of immortality (Santas 1988, 38). The perfectly reasonable mind of the Demiurge is able to make the world of appearances intelligible by ordering chaos according to the Forms in a rational, deliberate way.

[19] The constraints on creation that are imposed by both the Forms and the Demiurge, as pattern and artificer, seem to take the place of the concept of *Moira*, which had, in Homer's poetry, imposed limits on both gods and mortals, and these limitations extend beyond creation to freedom in general (Cornford 1957, 14). It is necessary for Plato to displace the classical conception of the human condition which relied on the Fates, as this conception overpowered the freedom that he requires for ethics, and also limited the rationality of the cosmos; these changes in emphasis have important consequences for Plato's view of poetry, both in his critical and positive assessments.

[20] This can be contrasted with the traditional Greek creation myth, where creation occurs from Chaos and Void with the sudden appearance of Eros; this is rooted more in a spontaneous and uncontrolled concept of creation, tied more to a reproductive myth (Lee 1965, 8), rather than the rational approach that Plato desires. Plato's myth is a fairly radical departure from the classical approach to creation seen in Hesiod's *Theogony* (Hesiod, 116-153). Most notable in this genesis story is the role between masculine and feminine, and the predominance of reproductive metaphors that serve to underpin this understanding. Brown translates Eros as Desire, and views Desire as the motivation for proliferation (which is the differentiation of the existing parts of the world, earth and water) and the unification of earth and water into a whole which supports the reproductive interpretation of creation (Brown 1953, 15). Vernant views Hesiod's creation myth as placing Eros as a unifying force *after* the separation of the various parts of the world (Ouranos, Gaia, Pontos); Eros collects and unites the divided parts — this is an action which Vernant believes Plato incorporates into the Demiurge, maintaining a continuity between the religion of the past and his own philosophical system (Vernant 2006, 374). Cornford's analysis adds another layer to this with the differentiation of male and female that occurs in the classical conception, and its effect on Pythagorean thought which introduced the concept of an ungendered One that produces the gendered even and odd (Cornford 1957, 68-70); considering Plato's acceptance of ungendered souls that gain differentiation when embodied, this interpretation seems to have had an affect on Plato's story of creation. Eros also is reflected in the collection and division that the philosopher practices in dialectic.

Plato is careful not to obliterate the traditional pantheon, though. It is invoked even within the dialogue that displaces it (*Timaeus*, 27d). The divinities, rather than being the supreme entities are instead figures created by, and under the sway of, the Demiurge (who is also divine, but not among those who are venerated due to limited understanding (*Timaeus*, 28c)) and patterned off of the Forms directly, making them, essentially, perfect and good.[21] It is from the Demiurge that the divinities are given commands, including the command to fashion vessels for souls (*Timaeus*, 41c-d). However, while divinities are seemingly immortal, the Demiurge is the only rationality that cannot be dissolved, it is supreme, even in relation to the divinities (which, by their nature as created, are subject to annihilation) (*Timaeus*, 41a-b). This would appear to confirm the possibility of injuries to gods, as presented in the works of Homer and Hesiod.[22] Despite the supremacy of the Demiurge and its creation of human souls, it is removed from the mortal world, which is the province of the divinities.

As stated previously, it is the Demiurge who created the souls of humans and developed the cycle of existence that the human soul would follow over the course of its various incarnations. The soul is capable of both wrongdoing and achieving a good life, and it is embodiment that allows for the freedom to test these two potentials. The origin of the human body as a creation of the gods, not the Demiurge, is an important notion, as it means the soul is divorced from the body both on a dualist level *and* on a created level (*Timaeus*, 41d-42). This is not inconsistent with Hesiod's account, which does not provide an origin for humanity— however, it is notable that Zeus is not given power over humanity to control as he desires (Brown 1953, 44). The gods have no more control over souls than do mortals. This serves to shift inspiration from direct possession, as presented in the *Apology* (*Apology*, 22c), to a conception of inspiration where the inspirer is able to intervene in the body[23] without affecting the mind.[24] This avoids the problem of the

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[21] There is some contention with this claim, as Plato argues that the gods should be perfect and good in the *Republic* (*Republic*, 379d), but also in *Republic* he states that *if* the stories told of them acting in a way other than good were true "the best way [of dealing with the stories] would be to bury them in silence" (*Republic*, 377e-378a). This suggests that the stories themselves are problematic, not the poets who communicate them; the poets do not choose their stories, they present what has been inspired in them.

[22] Whether it is the fate of Cronus to be overpowered by Zeus and his supporters in the *Theogony* (Hesiod, 617-735), which Plato does not revise when discussing the shift of power to Zeus in the eschatological myth at the end of *Gorgias* (*Gorgias*, 523a), or the injury to Ares by the mortal Diomedes in the *Iliad* (Homer, 780-864). Homer's view of the gods presents them as limited in a similar sense to Plato, they do not initiate creation, and *Moira*, destiny, acts to limit their power (Cornford 1957, 12); while they are immortal and without age, they are still subject to fate.

[23] Storr's modern interpretation of Muses places them inside the artist, not external, despite the traditional interpretation of them as external forces (Storr 1972, 185). This is an interesting interpretation of inspiration that draws our attention to the way the divine act within the poet, rather than on the poet; this would suggest that the senses are not necessarily required, as it is intellectual perception that drives poetic construction, not perceptible experience.

[24] This confirms the argument from *Timaeus* that inspiration is given through the liver, not through the mind itself; rationality remains undisturbed. Pieper's interpretation of inspiration as 'being-beside-oneself' (Pieper 1964, 50) is an evocative image that helps to draw attention to the maintenance of the self during inspiration, there is the sense of cooperation that seems implied in being-beside-oneself. It is from the position 'beside' that the identity of the poet is manifest in the works they produce. Storr suggests that the 'empty vessel' notion fails to capture the authorial identity

poets relying on sensible experience to relate visions, as they are not replicating their own sensible experiences, but having intelligible 'visions' inspired within them.

By removing the necessity of experience of particulars as the foundation for poetry Plato allows it to transcend the world of appearances and access subject matter lying beyond the scope of mortal comprehension. Cocking, in his brief treatment of the concept of inspiration as laid out in *Phaedrus*, views this as a "sensible projection of intelligible beauty" (Cocking 1991, 39). This is an important step in supporting the historical nature of poetry, which extends to the genesis of the divine.[25] Despite the introduction of a new creation story that goes further back, Plato still accepts the traditional pantheon as it is related in the works of the poets, including the creation myths surrounding the pantheon (*Timaeus*, 40d-e). The traditional myths, in works like the *Theogony*, are acceptable to Plato due to the divine inspiration that the poet received which allowed its representation.[26] This means an ascension from the world of becoming into the true reality where the past can be viewed in order to be preserved for posterity in poetry. This does not place the poets outside of time as such, but instead gives them a god's-eye-view that would otherwise be inaccessible to a mortal. Therefore, with the aid of the Muses the divine poets are able to present a true account of history in their works, thereby enhancing the power and beauty of their verse (*Ion*, 534b). Poets who are not divinely inspired cannot capture the intricacies of the past in the same way that the divine poet can, as the divine poet's knowledge of the past comes not from an attempt to rationally reconstruct the past by extrapolating their experiences, but from a vision of historical events as they *actually* happened.[27]

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that is manifest in their works (Storr 1972, 218-9), continuing to say that the identity is not all encompassing in a work, and trying to apply a rigid sense of identity to a work is detrimental to the creative process (Storr 1972, 222-3); there needs to be balance. The identity of the author is important to Gadamer's evaluation of Plato's aesthetic position too, as he sees within imitation that desire to be some*one* else, which is a distraction from self-determination (Gadamer 1980, 63-4). Gadamer sees this as diverting focus to an external sense of self, rather than an internal sense of self. The ultimate effect of this digression is the emphasis that needs to be placed on the role of the identity of the author that is coexistent with the divine during the state of inspiration, which is key to understanding the role rationality plays in the composition of inspired verse.

[25] In *Phaedrus* the Muses provide the poets with inspiration allowing them to speak of "countless mighty deeds of ancient times for the instruction of posterity" (*Phaedrus*, 245a). The 'mighty deeds' of ancient times would not explicitly deny the validity of a work like the *Theogony* of Hesiod, which does indeed relate countless mighty deeds. *If* Plato accepts the traditional pantheon he must also accept the possibility that poets relate knowledge stretching back to genesis. This appears to be confirmed by the inclusion of Odysseus in the Myth of Er (*Republic*, 620c-d). By choosing the life of an ordinary citizen, Odysseus is cast in the myth as a figure to emulate as he is making a thoughtful decision, rather than being ruled by appetitive desires; the adventures represented in *Odyssey* would appear to have provided him with the wisdom to choose well in the next life— high praise if Plato interpreted Er's tale before including it in *Republic*.

[26] In this passage it is just not to be questioned; the knowledge of the progeny of the gods is to be taken based upon the traditional notions as they were understood by Plato and his contemporaries— this suggests that there is an inaccessibility to history for the philosopher (who understands the nature of the divine, but perhaps not their historical existence).

[27] This would also distinguish the divine poet from historians like Herodotus and Thucydides. Nagy points to Plato's awareness of the works of Herodotus (Nagy, 84-5), which suggests that Plato would have an understanding of the historiographical tradition that descends from the *Histories*. However, Herodotus is fallible, and the methodology that

This opens the potential for a poet to be distanced from their own earthly experiences in the creation of poetry;[28] this may appear immediately obvious by their divine inspiration, but the added layer of context lies in the possibility of a purely reasonable vision that is then put into words that reflect not earthly experiences of particulars, but universal ideals. This reflects Plato's overarching critique of 'realistic' poetry, which appeals to the senses and emotions rather than the mind. Santas argues that Plato's conception of poetry attempts to address both the sensual and the reasonable, with inspiration providing rational legitimacy and Beauty (the Form) manifesting in the *content* of the works; true Beauty can be seen to excite the mind and the senses (Santas 1988, 66-9). For poetry to attain these heights it needs to have a source of inspiration that lies beyond the sensible and provides access to reality; it is only by moving from the sensible to the intelligible that the poet's creations can mirror the creations of the Demiurge. With the divine acting as a mediator between the earth-bound mortals and the heavenly Forms, the inspired poets are able to produce works that surpass their natural talents, but the question of the mechanics of divine inspiration in mortals remains.

1.2- The Divine and the Mortal

The body's openness to the intervention of the divine allows for Plato's concept of divine inspiration to be maintained across a number of dialogues. The *Timaeus* is not the apogee of his explication of the idea, but it is within the *Timaeus* that it is given a context that brings it into alignment with his larger system. Of great importance for the overall development is the notion that creation is formulated around unchanging truths, which are good (*Timaeus*, 28a-b); this would extend to the works of the poets, who therefore require an unchanging foundation for their works. The inspired poet would produce in accordance with this dictate, as their creations flow from an unchanging source, but within a medium that is prone to alterations and misinterpretations (through forgetfulness, misapprehension, poor transcription, etc.). Gadamer notes that poets have a lack of control over the way their works are interpreted or presented (Gadamer 1980, 47). This is important as it alters the way the work of poetry is perceived by the audience, and can affect them in

underpins his historical approach is tied to the world of appearances; Herodotus presents opinions about history. By paying closer attention to the divine poets and the epics, Plato is placing historiographical acuity in sources that do not rely specifically on opinions, and is removing the democratization of history that comes with history that is based on doxa.

[28] This distancing of the changeable from the eternal is important in Plato's epistemic theories, and since the soul is eternal it is given primacy, so anything relying on the changeable is necessarily of lesser value (Robinson 1970, 30). The poet's ability to escape the changeable secures within their work a timeless value.

ways unintended by the poet.[29] It is therefore the form that is subject to alteration, not the content of the work itself.

The content of inspired poetry is founded upon unchanging truths as the subject being presented relates to matters of history and theology[30] (*Phaedrus*, 245a). Plato's acceptance of poetry which expresses historical truths seems to approach an acceptance of inspired poetry as representing something 'true,' as history has a nature which is 'unchanging' (in the sense that events which have passed have become) and which cannot depend solely on knowledge of particulars. So, the narratives being shared must be connected to the events themselves if they are true. Partee argues against poetry on the grounds that Plato requires "absolute knowledge" in discourse (Partee 1970, 210), but he fails to take history into account as a form of absolute knowledge, an issue which stems from his inadequate treatment of divine inspiration— the divine source of poetry is what allows it to be considered an accurate account (as it is not founded on human experience and opinion). The only means of a mortal gaining insights into the past is either through the extension of human experience and imagination, or through the intercession of the divine.

The nature of the divinities precludes them from having direct power over the individual's soul. This comes from the divinities' position as equivalent to the human soul, as each was created by the Demiurge. As the creators of human bodies, the gods are positioned in an intermediary position between humanity and the Forms (*Timaeus*, 69c); the human body is fashioned by the divinities and as a creation of a creation are at a remove from the Forms.[31] The gods were unable to create a perfect body, and this imperfection is the root of our freedom and our problematic faculties (ie. the desire to satisfy base pleasures,

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[29] Socrates recognized this and attempted a solution in *Ion*, where Ion is able "to learn [Homer's] thought, not just his verse" (*Ion*, 530c). The rhapsode should be able to understand the poet's thoughts in order to present the poetry adequately. This does not fully translate though, as the work is being presented according to the rhapsode's talents and not necessarily in accordance with the initial intention; while the inspiration flows through the poet to the rhapsode, as different individuals they will present the works differently.

[30] Limitations placed on the poet's knowledge can be seen to break down in *Ion* where questions arise relating to the knowledge of crafts represented in the narrative, like generalship. While Socrates mocks Ion's claim to possess knowledge of generalship due to his knowledge of Homer (*Ion*, 541), it would appear that Homer possesses knowledge of generalship relative to the narrative being told in order for it to be represented. The divinely inspired poet's knowledge should extend to what is represented in the narrative, and while this knowledge allows for accurate representation in the work, it is not necessarily actionable beyond that narrative. Rucker makes a similar claim, that the critique presented in *Ion* is not that inspiration does not impart knowledge, but that it does not impart *practicable* knowledge (Rucker 1966, 170). The claim by Ion is reminiscent of Gorgias' misguided claims about rhetoric (*Gorgias*, 454b); neither recognizes the important difference between speaking about a craft well and the practicality of their understanding of the craft and convince themselves through their presentation. This may mean that the skill of the rhapsodes is like the skill of the rhetorician: a 'knack' (*Gorgias*, 462c)

[31] The need to surpass the body in order to grasp the truth is a fundamental part of Plato's philosophy. One of the more provocative images of this is the body as the prison of the soul in *Phaedo* (*Phaedo*, 82e). The body constricts the soul and limits it from reaching its potential to understand the Forms and return to reality. Pieper's view of inspiration, though naïve, also recognizes the positive nature of the loss of physical autonomy as it allows for a movement towards knowledge that is otherwise inaccessible (Pieper 1964, 51-2).

propensity to wrong doing, etc.). This means the divinities do not directly control the soul of the human, but have power over the physical faculties, allowing for sensual inspiration. The caveat, of course, is the incompleteness that arises from reliance on physical sensation in relating truth. Representations can never adequately reproduce truth, which is as applicable to aesthetics as it is to philosophy. In *Republic*, Socrates recognizes that what can be spoken of is not necessarily replicable in the world (*Republic*, 473a); there is a loss of truth when ideas utilize sensual representation that construct a specific form as opposed to a theoretical model. This flaw can be overcome though, as the 'flaws' of some of the divine poets' works can be repurposed or reconfigured, Plato's use of myth being an example of this approach to poetry as he reinterprets myths in accordance with his system (drawing them closer into alignment with truth). This can be seen in the Myth of Er which subtly reevaluates the afterlife as presented in a number of mythological works, including Pindar's *Olympians II* (Pindar, 129), and brings them into accordance with Plato's epistemically and morally important cycle of rebirth.[32]

The relationship between Muse and poet, combined with the unchanging nature of history, allows for inspired poets to give voice to the past. The poet is able to transcend the natural world and gain a glimpse of events that have occurred. In *Laws* the Athenian Stranger states that poets "hit upon" historical truths when they are inspired, which has the connotation of not *knowing* that it is true, but only having *true belief* that the events occurred as presented (*Laws*, 682a). This is consistent with Plato's epistemic theory, as developed over the course of his dialogues, where the perceptible are unable to provide knowledge, only true belief (Runciman 1962, 14-15), and if the poets depend on the perceptible, as their use of language would suggest, they would be unable to ascertain truth. So, true belief seems to be the limit of poetic history, as the poet does not *know* the historical events as true, they instead represent historical events without actually understanding them. However, there is a guided movement towards the historical truth in narratives that have been inspired which leads to the poet "hitting upon" truth; it is not a random occurrence of belief, but instead a directed movement initiated by the Muses. The combination of the changelessness of historical facts and the divinely guided movement towards truth allows the poet to ascend higher than true belief, and instead possess knowledge of the past— again, this would not rely on fallible perceptible data, but instead on the connection to the divine.

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[32] Vernant argues that Hesiod's works are themselves a reworking of earlier myths (Vernant 2006, 48), they are a project of updating and reinterpretation, not unlike what Plato would carry through into his own productions. This is in strong agreement with Brown's interpretation of Hesiod as an interpreter (Brown 1953, 35). In each case Hesiod is not the inventor of the myths, but alters the myths to reflect a new sensibility; this would not entirely discount the inspired nature of Hesiod's works, instead suggesting that Plato's reinterpretation is a continuation of a classical tradition that leads towards a more philosophical formulation of mythology.

To advance the notion of the divine inspirer and poet as co-developing poetry one can look to the description of inspiration in *Ion:*[33] “for of course poets tell us that they gather songs at honey-flowing springs, from glades and gardens of the Muses, and that they bear songs to us as bees carry honey” (*Ion*, 534b). The notion of the inspired poet among the Muses while in a state of enthusiasm evokes the idea of the poet being in the direct presence of the divinities. This presence opens the possibility of intercourse, which is given further credence when focus is placed on the *gathering* of songs, presumably by listening.[34] This conforms to the previously discussed notion that inspiration is not a full possession, instead being a period of 'absent mindedness' (while gathering) that is lucidly, and rationally transformed for communication. There is something lost in the transformation, though. By utilizing particulars that can be understood by the audience the poets sacrifice the historical felicity of their work; the particulars change in a way that history cannot, which leads to misinterpretation. Rasmussen's comparison between language and bodies is apt here (Rasmussen 1971, 7), as each carries limitations, but it is necessary for acting in the world; language allows for connections between individuals, but is limited and unable to fully express ideas.

Poetic inspiration relates to history, but what about other forms of inspiration that present human events, like prophecy? The soul of the divine poet (or lover of Beauty), in *Phaedrus*, is akin to the lover of wisdom in the hierarchy of souls (*Phaedrus*, 248d). The soul of the prophet, however, is placed lower than these in the hierarchy, but if all three are divinely inspired with knowledge relating to human events/nature, why is this the case? Plato's epistemic and moral theories help to provide a solution to this problem. By predicating knowledge on recollection (*anamnesis*) the poet is given advantage over the art of the prophet. It is pertinent here to place within the context of the divine the station of the Muses and their relation to

[33] It is important to keep in mind that Ion is a *rhapsode*, not a poet. The criticism he receives from Socrates regarding his lack of knowledge should not be conflated with a lack of knowledge for the poet, as the rhapsode stands a further remove from the truth than the poet, as they are "representatives of representatives" (*Ion*, 535a). This is illustrated with the analogy Socrates draws between inspiration and magnetism (*Ion*, 533d-e; 535e-536d), where the poet acts as a mediator between the divine inspirer and the rhapsode. Furthermore, the knowledge gained through inspiration is not equivalent to the knowledge possessed by a specialist (*Ion*, 536e-541e). Gadamer refers to Homer as living an 'unstable rhapsodic' life (Gadamer 1980, 41), but by blurring the distinction between the poet and the rhapsode he makes allowances for otherwise inappropriate critiques that do not apply to the poet.

[34] Listening being a sensual inspiration, which is supported by the notion that the divine can affect the body and not the soul of the poet; the poet moves freely to gather songs rather than acting as a conduit, or an instrument, for the gods to present the songs directly through their body.

Mnemosyne (memory),[35] an important figure in Plato's theory of recollection.[36] The divine poet is brought to rapture in the moment of inspiration and they present the images or events as they are revealed, not according to their own will. Vernant describes inspiration as a tearing down of barriers between the past and the present, Mnemosyne allows for the poet to gain a perspective of the past that would otherwise be unavailable (Vernant 2006, 121). Despite the ability to see the past the potential for falsehood remains, but lies solely in the artificiality of poetry— if there is no artifice on the part of the poet (aside from the language used in presentation), they are only presenting what has been made evident to them. The inspired poet would not be able to present falsehoods, unless Plato is claiming the Muses, perfect divinities, are deceptive[37] (a claim he rejects, along with all other harmful traits, in the *Republic* (282e)). The poet, therefore, is practicing a type of recollection in the action of bringing the past into the present.

The prophet, on the other hand, is given visions of the future; prophets are provided a glimpse of the plans of the Fates. On the surface it would appear that the prophet is receiving knowledge from the divinities, as the prophet is given premonitions of what will happen. However, this does not fit Plato's recollective epistemology. More damning though is Plato's mistrust of the Fates, instead placing the power of choice in human agency, not on the divine plans, as in the age preceding Plato. *Moira* is above the gods in Homer's mythological works, this means the divinities are subject to the same forces as humans, and both are bound to fate with no hope of changing it (Cornford 1957, 12). Neither the gods nor humans are free as they *must* carry out their destiny, but if this is included within Plato's system, the cycle of rebirth cannot work adequately, as it requires choice. A second issue arises in the notion of the prophets asking for and receiving a vision— it is not a spontaneous, divinely granted vision, but one initiated by desire and

[35] Hesiod traces the Muses' lineage to Mnemosyne and Zeus in the *Theogony* (Hesiod, 53-62), which means the Muses are daughters of both memory and rationality, meaning Hesiod's inspiration bears a familial connection to both memory and rationality. Vernant sees the concept of Mnemosyne as representative of a state of mind that would have been held in high regard, as memory would be indispensable to the oral culture (Vernant 2006, 116); this is especially true in relation to the lengthy lists of names and genealogy, "dull encyclopedism" as Brown puts it (Brown 1953, 7), that are common in epic poetry. Vernant suggests that these lists lent considerable validity to claims of inspiration (Vernant 2006, 118); the Muses represent the ability to recall and represent something that would be nearly impossible for a person to remember without divine help.

[36] The historical knowledge related by the poets can itself be seen to act as a recollective action which allows history to be remembered for posterity (*Phaedrus*, 245a), but that would be the subject of a different paper. This historical knowledge would have been connected to the poet's via the Muses and Mnemosyne, however, as Vernant points out, Mnemosyne was shifted from its classical relation to the Muses and poetry, into a role connected more closely to reincarnation for Plato (Vernant 2006, 123-5). Plato's *anamnesis* relies on a robust sense of memory, but also one which is more closely centred on the individual, rather than related to the whole of human history (Vernant 2006, 134-5). Plato and the poets both draw on Mnemosyne as the source of knowledge, but the conceptual formulation of Mnemosyne is moved into the individual in Plato, where the poets maintain its separate existence as a divinity.

[37] While Plato would find this distasteful to suggest, Hesiod recognizes it in his invocation at the beginning of the *Theogony* (Hesiod, 25-28).

meant to help in the world of appearance.[38] Prophecy is therefore tied not only to a nebulous and changeable future, but is also only valuable in relation to life in the changeable world; prophecy has no higher purpose, its relevance does not extend beyond the world of appearances. Plato does not completely disregard the role of prophets in Greek antiquity, but despite the respect afforded them Plato does not extend to them a high stature in his hierarchy— in fact they are below statesmen and athletes who possess only belief (*Phaedrus*, 248d-e). Divine inspiration, while allowing for the transmission of higher knowledge in philosophy and poetry, is only as valuable as the knowledge that is being given; if the knowledge is subject to change as in prophecy, the knowledge is of a lesser value.

Plato is explicit that the divine inspiration of poetry and prophecy are rationally constructed despite divine madness (*Timaeus*, 71c-72b). The ideas that are introduced to the mortal cannot be interpreted in an absent minded state; true events may be experienced in that state, but they require a clear mind to be developed into communicable ideas. This is not inconsistent with his placement of divine madness in the liver, not in the reasoning part of the mind— they are free to work in tandem. The divinities, for Plato, transmit knowledge to the human conduit who acts as a mediator between the divine truths and other individuals; in order to reach those individuals the visions that are received need to be rationalized and transformed into language that is comprehensible, though not always directly clear (hence the poetic nature, it attempts to elevate the mind by drawing it towards the ideas that cannot be expressed). Greene emphasizes the problems associated with language, drawing attention to Plato's linguistic limitations that seem to inform his view of poetry (Greene 1918, 45). This is true both in poetry and prophecy, neither the poet nor the prophet can draw directly on their experience for the statements they make, but they have a lucidity to their claims that suggests there is some human artifice at work, rather than completely relating the inspiration.[39]

Before moving to the next section a final comparison needs to be drawn between the inspiration of the poet and the inspiration of the prophet. The conclusion was drawn earlier, from the discussion of the location of inspiration in *Timaeus*, that inspiration occurs by affecting the senses of the individual who maintains control of their mind, allowing them to ascertain truth and rationally represent it. This would hold for both the poet and the prophet. The change that occurs in *Laws* is the reduction of the moral implications

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[38] "They perform that fine work of theirs for all Greece, either for an individual or for a whole city" (*Phaedrus*, 244b). This aligns them more with the sophist, as both proffer goods to one who pays them— there is an element of deception embedded in prophecy that stems from its desirability.

[39] This is reminiscent of the allegory of the Cave, where those who are uninitiated would be 'dazed' and turn away from the truth (*Republic*, 514a-520a). Without guidance, whether through the help of the divine, or the artifice of the speaker who leads the audience, those listening are unable to fully grasp and comprehend divine truths. Vernant borrows the 'astonishment' Plato uses in *Theaetetus* as a way that the intellect is awakened, and applies it to poetry, where the myths serve to move the intellect towards truth (Vernant 2006, 382-4). Rather than mythology serving as an unquestionable source, Vernant suggests that Plato uses it as a means of drawing people towards truth— it opens people to philosophy by drawing attention towards truths that are not immediately perceptible.

of that truth. In relation to historical speeches the poet is unable to say who is morally right and who is morally wrong (*Laws*, 719c). The poet provides historical accounts according to the way events unfolded, there is not an intentional moral that determines or dictates the narrative that is inserted by the poet[40]—there is, however, an implicit moral that can be extracted from the work, and actions that are just (and unjust) which can be learned from. Prophecy can lack both implicit and explicit moral statements, as prophets present a fate which is predetermined, not determined in accordance with one's character— as can be seen in the prophecies related to Achilles in the *Iliad* (Homer, 499-505), or Oedipus in the eponymous play (Sophocles, 870-875), each of whom have a fate determined before their birth and therefore independent of their actions in life. It is the failure on the level of epistemic and moral grounds that reduces the value of prophecy as a divinely inspired art; it can still be recognized as having importance, but it is limited and not reliable.

Divine inspiration cannot be attributed value solely on the foundation of its divine origin. The insight that is given must be of equal importance as the source from which it is given; it is not enough that the divine bestow knowledge, it is the knowledge itself that makes the inspiration valuable. Prophecy fails to achieve moral or epistemic value, and it appears poetry too fails to possess moral value, as a goal of poetry is presentation of historic events as they happened, not the use of morals to determine the presentation of events. The lack of morality attached to poetry does not mean that there are no moral values that can be extracted from history, and Plato is able to discover and utilize some of these in his works (albeit with some shifts in the narratives or in emphasis).[41] If the poet is presenting an account of what happened, without inserting their own (moral) evaluations, as Vernant suggests, then the poets examine history and report on it when inspired, rather than interpret and evaluate it before presenting it (Vernant 2006, 376); philosophical investigation is needed to evaluate poetry, thereby allowing for a reconstruction of the poetry that conveys a moral imperative. This leaves epistemic value to be explored in order to discover how the soul that is inspired poetically can rise higher than the soul inspired with prophecy.

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[40] This moral ambiguity underpinning poetic works is critiqued by Plato in the *Republic*, as it allowed the gods to be portrayed as having flaws, which Plato says poets should not speak of, even if the gods do possess flaws, as that legitimizes immoral actions (*Republic*, 377e-378a), and in fact, Plato claims the gods possess no flaws (*Republic*, 382e). When poetry is used as a tool for teaching morality it starts to blend into sophistry (Gadamer 1980, 61). There is an important difference between the neutrality of poetry and the neutrality of rhetoric that Gorgias claims (*Gorgias*, 457b-c); poetry represents the past with some impartiality, the rhetorician cannot take an impartial standpoint as they do not have universal knowledge to draw on, as their art is based on opinions. When the beauty of poetry leads to its use as a teaching tool a morality that is otherwise absent from the poetry is inserted. This is an interpretive flaw, not a flaw with the poetry itself. The moral ambiguity is necessary though, or the poet's rendering of the events may have been distorted based on certain interests or influences.

[41] Examples of Plato's reinvention of poetry have been given previously, but in relation to his moralizing approach Vernant's comparison between the myth of metals in Hesiod's *Works and Days* and Plato's use of metal in *Republic* to symbolize souls is compelling and sheds light on Plato's revision of classical myths to not only fit his own theories, but to present ethical arguments (Vernant 2006, 33).

1.3- The Divine and Knowledge

The previous section ended with the need to examine the epistemic value of poetry, and Plato's epistemology is constructed around a method that specifically privileges philosophers with the potential to recollect knowledge. This means that in order to discover the ways that poetry can convey the knowledge of the poet some comparisons to philosophy will need to be made. Just as the inspired origin of poetry and prophecy facilitated a comparison of moral value, so too will the inspired origin of poetry and philosophy facilitate comparison in relation to epistemic value. Poetry and philosophy are both presented in the *Phaedrus* as divinely inspired, something that is confirmed in *Symposium* and alluded to in the *Republic* as well (where the Muses, or the divinities are necessary for drawing the individual's attention upward towards reality).[42] Where poetry inspired from the Muses is the third type of madness, the fourth type of madness, the madness of Eros,[43] calls the individual towards a love of Forms (*Phaedrus*, 249d). Just as the poet is inspired and able to surpass the constraints of the world, the lover of wisdom is impassioned with a love of Beauty and the Forms, initiating a desire to return to the true, rational reality. Neither poet nor philosopher is able to be content with being given a personal vision of reality, there is a compulsion to share their knowledge of reality with others, which accompanies inspiration (*Republic*, 517b-c); each attempts to find ways to express their knowledge and strive to make their inspiration intelligible to others. Nevertheless, in doing so they sacrifice aspects of their vision and rely on the sensible as a means of expression, thus opening their claims to criticism— they possess no authority, as the divinities do not enter into the world except through the inspired's works, and their works must be able to both convey truth, and be understood as truth.

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[42] The Muses allow for the connection to be forged between one who is disposed towards gaining knowledge, and reality; without the Muses to provide instruction, reality is unable to be understood (*Republic*, 411c-d). As seen above, knowledge is predicated on the intercession of divinities to initiate recollection. Dickinson draws attention to Beauty as the Form which is most recognizable and allows for the resurgence of memories of the Forms— it is not the only way to initiate recollection, but it is an important one due to the ability to recognize Beauty in objects which participate in that Form (Dickinson 1931, 147). Oates concurs with this, drawing on the description of the soul as charioteer, where Beauty is the Form that is most easily embodied in the sensible world (Oates 1972, 55), which means the divine poet who captures it is recollecting the Form intellectually in order to incorporate it in their work.

[43] Eros is presented as the source of the greatest type of inspiration (and inspires a love of wisdom or Beauty), the inspiration of the lover, which is what leads one to philosophical contemplation, allows for recollection of the Forms and the gravitation towards the divine Beauty; Eros inspires within the philosopher a recollection of the Forms that allows for the philosopher to enter into dialectical contemplation, whether it is with a beloved (as occurs in the dialogue) or internally (*Phaedrus*, 265b-d). In his analysis of *Symposium*, Strauss outlines the tension in Plato's analysis of Eros, where Socrates' speech is concerned with discussing only a partial truth of Eros due to its dual nature (Strauss 2001, 176). This dual nature is given added context in Cornford's discussion of Olympian and mystical Eros, where the former is related to the hubris and chaos of love (the less beautiful side of Eros), the latter is the Eros in Plato that orders and initiates a desire to gain knowledge (Cornford 1957, 120-1). Santas views the mystical form of Eros as the higher form and focuses on the relationship that develops between two people that is directed towards reality and a shared love of the Form of Beauty, not to the love of beautiful bodies (Santas 1988, 65). This form of Eros is further delimited by Santas from 'philia' as used in *Republic* and *Lysis*, where philia is related to the desire to share with others knowledge and the Good (Santas 1988, 93-4).

In *Phaedrus*, Plato removes the need to stretch the concept of divine inspiration in order to relate it to intellectual development, as Plato recognizes that the divinities take an active role in leading the philosopher to truth. An example of this is Socrates' claim to be inspired when making the second speech in the *Phaedrus*, and it is this inspiration that allows that speech to attain a measure of truth (*Phaedrus*, 262d); it is not his own power to compose speeches, or to speak well, which makes the speech good, but the content of the speech which has come from an external (divine) source. Here, as in poetry, beauty is not dependent on the quality of the speech's composition, but the knowledge conveyed in it. The form is determined in relation to the content, the beauty of linguistic conventions are a manifestation of the beauty of truth contained within a work. That is to say, there is an interpretation of the inspiration that leads to a rational configuration, it can not be understood in a chaotic, or random way.[44] The inspiration is rationalized by the inspired individual, which seems clear in Socrates' presentation, where he is not questioning the truth of what he has stated and it appears to have been arrived at in a dialectical and thoroughly philosophical way.[45] Nevertheless, even here there lingers the stain of falsehood, Socrates does not point specifically to an area where there is a lack of truth, but mentions that there may only be some truth. This could be Plato's way of covering himself. However, Plato was not one to make idle statements, so it appears more like an intentional statement to draw attention to the fallibility of earthly communication even if truth is expressed in that communication.[46]

One can scarcely speak of Plato's views on earthly communication without bringing up rhetoric, which is tied closely to both philosophy and poetry,[47] but it needs to be sharply differentiated from each of these. As stated above the ability to speak the truth is not situated in earthly experience, but in divine inspiration. This is illustrated in *Phaedrus* where the speech of Lysias and the first speech of Socrates exhibit falsehoods that can deceive based on their presentation of those falsehoods (*Phaedrus*, 242d-243a); these

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[44] Elias's analysis of the language of gods being different from the language used by humans, specifically in relation to names, is important in being able to understand the need for the poet to interpret their inspiration (Elias 1984, 71). The poet cannot replicate the language of the gods or it will not appear ordered or intelligible to the audience who is listening to them.

[45] Socrates draws attention to the method of collection and division, which is fundamental to philosophical analysis, shortly after making this speech (*Phaedrus*, 265b-d). The connection between the way the speech is delivered and the introduction of the philosophical method seems to suggest a recognition of the philosophical validity of that inspired speech, adding further credibility to the notion that inspired knowledge is rationally structured.

[46] One could also make the claim that it is Socrates attempting to maintain the classic Socratic ignorance, but that seems even more implausible at this point in Plato's dialogues, and when related to the latter portion of the dialogue where the philosophical method is laid out.

[47] Oates recognizes a similarity that exists in poetry, rhetoric, and philosophy as each does surpass just communication to affect the soul of the audience members (Oates 1972, 53-4). This connects the three as methods of communication that are not tied specifically to the vocalization of ideas, but to the audience member's understanding of the ideas; there is a content that is being related which functions in tandem with the speaking itself. Rendall recognizes this, arguing that dialogues serve as dramatization of philosophy, not assertions of philosophical positions (Rendall 1977, 171); the audience is tasked with joining the conversation in order to fully understand and appreciate the ideas under discussion.

speeches can be contrasted with Socrates' second speech which is inspired and attains a higher measure of truth about Eros because of its divine origin (*Phaedrus*, 257a-b). Earthly experience limits one to true belief, and even if these earthly experiences are shared with a mastery of expression they are not elevated to knowledge; truth is not contained in the world of appearance but in the reality beyond it. From this it can be understood that being well spoken to can only persuade one towards certain beliefs, while divinely inspired thought leads one to the truth (*Timaeus*, 51d-e). Rhetorical persuasion is therefore inferior, as it relies on *eristics* not *dialectic* to influence others by any means necessary (Oates 1972, 25); rhetoric does not need to be an attempt to lead others to truth, but can be, and according to Plato more often than not is, used to force others to accept beliefs (*Gorgias*, 455a). Vernant's assessment of the sophists draws a strong distinction between the sophists and the inspired poets, as he views them as employing a technical approach to speech; this connects sophistry to *praxis*, not to *poesis*; it is not concerned with understanding or creating, but with the activity of speaking (Vernant 2006, 317). Poetry is therefore quite distinct from being able to speak well or implement compositional skills to sway opinion.

The previously discussed notion that the poet "hits upon" historical truths and only has true belief, combined with the use of language to make the presentation of poetry attractive, suggest that poetry is an *eristic* form of communication, placing it in the realm of persuasion and rhetoric and therefore depending on opinion due to a lack of knowledge. However, each of these problems was refuted earlier— the divine poets are not attempting to persuade people to accept beliefs, they are only representing historical events as they occurred. Furthermore, the form of the poetry gains its beautiful nature in relation to the beauty of truth contained in the content, not from the linguistic and poetic structures that are employed in the conveyance of those truths. The inspired poet's ability to 'hit upon' truth is therefore intimately related to the connection to the divine, and a connection to a perspective that affords truth, not on rhetorical artifice or by blindly grasping for truth.

If the poet is capable of intellection when constructing poetry then the poet should not be held to have been persuaded by anyone, but instead recognized as having been provided an account or vision of truth by the gods— they are not displaying belief, they are displaying historical and/or theological knowledge. The means of arriving at truth in their poetry comes not from experiencing and studying the changeable world, but from a connection to reality provided by the Muses. Pieper views this as the need of the poets to relinquish their dependence on the sensual or physical pleasures, and embrace their inspiration (Pieper 1964, 50). This would allow the poets to ascend from their own experiences as a source of knowledge, and instead accept a source of knowledge that is infallible. Plato's claim that the poets do not possess knowledge because they require the divinities to speak through them in order to produce truth does

not need to be disregarded, either.[48] If that claim is accurate, the poets are still able to recognize their inspiration, and, as Storr points out, we tend to understand our works once they have been externalized (Storr 1972, 224)— we apprehend meaning upon revisiting the work. Not only do the poets appear to transfigure the vision into language, even if they do not understand the content which they compose into poetry, they will come to understand what they are speaking about through their intellectual interpretation that precedes the poetic representation. The intellectual interpretation requires that the poets be able to understand their visions in order to express them as accurately and clearly as possible. For the inspired poet to rely on their opinion rather than knowledge does not seem necessary, even if they are intellectually involved in composing poetry for the purpose of representing history. Therefore, the divine poet is not necessarily imitating the natural world, as their mundane counterparts do, but conveying truth. In what sense is this differentiated from the discourse of the philosopher?

Control over the acquisition of knowledge plays an integral part in differentiating the philosopher and divine poet. The occurrence of divine madness is not under the control of the mortal participant, but the inspirer; the Muses inspire according to their will, not the human's will (*Phaedrus*, 244a). The poets are not actively calling upon the divinities when they require knowledge, they are passive and the divinities impart knowledge. However, the poets maintain an active mind through their discourse with the divinities that allows them to interpret and translate the imparted knowledge into human language. Furthermore, the knowledge that is given by the divinities is not directed by the mortal participant's desires; they have an active perception of divine truth, but only within a predetermined vision decided by the divinities (*Ion*, 533e). The works may not be able to entirely represent the knowledge that has been imparted to the poets, but they do reflect the conscious perception and transformation the poets bring to bear on the inspired knowledge in order to make it representable within those works. The poets implicitly bring themselves into their works when they intellectually transform the inspiration— the work is intimately connected to the individual as they make certain choices in what is represented and the way it will be represented (Storr 1972, 83). In the context of divine inspiration, the poets receive knowledge but they must decide on what knowledge is related, as truth is always more than can be represented. The poet is dependent on the Muse to gain knowledge, but not to compose that knowledge into a comprehensible form. Poets can rationally order and present the inspiration intelligibly for others who otherwise would be unable to access that knowledge; though they do not decide on *what* knowledge will be inspired in them, nor *when* they will

[48] Again, this is not the strongest conception of inspiration— the divinities speaking directly through the poet would come into contrast with Plato's arguments against the knowledge presented by poets, as Plato would then be questioning the knowledge of the divinities speaking through the poets, not the poets themselves. Plato's critique of the poets' knowledge is still valid if this view was acceptable to Plato, but there are numerous issues that arise within Plato's epistemic and theological positions if this position is taken.

receive inspiration. Poets, in effect, have rational control over the way that inspiration is related, but relinquish control over when they will be inspired, or what knowledge will be transmitted through inspiration—this was illustrated by contrast to the prophets, who attempt to control their inspiration.

This is in agreement with the earlier argument in favour of conscious understanding during divine inspiration where inspiration does not completely overrule the inspired. This is true of prophecy and poetry, as seen earlier, but is also applicable to Plato's conception of philosophy as well. Socrates speaks of being inspired in the *Phaedrus* (cf. previous example from 249d) and *Symposium* (Socrates' speech deriving from Diotima (*Symposium*, 201d), who bears the wisdom of the inspired and, in some ways, acts as a source of inspiration for Socrates not dissimilar to Ion's inspiration from Homer)l[49] The form of inspiration that Socrates experiences in these cases should not be considered different from the poet's. It does not overcome or dominate Socrates' mind or body, and furthermore, is connected to the poet's inspiration as it derives from divinities and is similarly uncontrolled by human will. The ability to understand and recollect inspired knowledge, as well as the rationally directed movement towards understanding the Forms allows the philosopher to extend past the initial 'dazzling' effect of understanding (*Republic*, 515c) and become *noetic*. The philosophers are able to direct themselves towards further apprehension of truth, while the poets are only able to gain knowledge with the aid of, and through the direction of the divinities. Therefore, while the poets ascertain and represent truths through the same inspiration-rationalization method that philosophers use to communicate truth, the philosophers have a greater ability, through the practice of dialectic, to advance their knowledge and seek out wisdom without relying on inspired revelation. It is within the philosophers' power to direct their own understanding of the forms that can be practiced in the world independent of divine intervention.[50]

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[49] Diotima represents an interesting case for inspiration, as she does not seem to be a philosopher, yet she possesses wisdom. The nature of her speech suggests that the knowledge she possesses comes from inspiration, and this knowledge is passed to Socrates with implied authority of its divine origin. Another example of an interesting case of Socratic inspiration is developed in the notion of the 'divine sign' (*daimonion*) (*Apology*, 31d). This appears to be a limited form of inspiration that Socrates experiences in relation to his actions. His divine sign, warns him of falsehood and immoral deeds, helping him recognize when he is straying from the just path (*Republic*, 496c). Furthermore, the *daimonion* can be seen as connected to truth (and prophecy) in the *Phaedrus*, where it is eventually understood by Socrates as a warning about his first speech because that speech would be "foolish" and "close to being impious" (*Phaedrus*, 242c-d). This suggests that Socrates has an inspired sense that keeps him acting according to what is just and what is true; while this is, in a way, a limited inspiration, it functions in accordance with the wider sense of inspiration that Plato lays out, and gives an example of how inspiration can affect an individual without overcoming their rational mind, instead acting as a guide towards truth. Dickinson recognizes this predisposition of Socrates to look for an external source to corroborate his claims, with the figures becoming more closely aligned with the divinities in the later dialogues (Dickinson 1931, 25). It is still Socrates who presents the ideas, but he looks to inspiration as the foundation of his ideas,

[50] In *Sophist*, Plato suggests something of an internal monologue that functions in a dialectical capacity, which further enhances the philosopher's self-directed search for knowledge and development of an understanding of reality (*Sophist*, 263e).

In *Timaeus* Plato states that in matters of the gods mortals are "unable in every respect and on every occasion to render a consistent and accurate account," making explicit the limitations of mortal language in presenting divine truths[51] (*Timaeus*, 29d-e); this is not necessarily a statement about the felicity, or lack thereof, in poetic accounts but the inability for language to adequately represent truth. Robinson sees the mythological approaches to explaining philosophical ideas as Plato's way of transferring from literal speech to metaphorical speech in order to convey truths that cannot be experienced (Robinson 1970, 60). There is an inability to fully capture truth in literal language, so myths need to be employed. This is true of Socrates, the philosopher,[52] who, in his speech on love in *Phaedrus*, recognizes truth as a component of the speech, but the speech does not fully encapsulate the truth of the subject (despite the inspired origin) (*Phaedrus*, 262d). These limitations derive from the embodiment of knowledge in order to make ideas communicable, but which distort the poetry's connection to truth, making knowledge of reality impossible to express accurately— creating a dual problem for literal language, as it both fails to completely convey truth, and forces a reliance on the sensual to bring awareness to truth. This is due to the communicator's reliance on experience of particulars that invade, interrupt, and distort reality, in order to make ideas intelligible to those who only have experience of physical reality to draw on for comprehension. The philosopher requires the use of metaphorical language as well, as is seen when Socrates draws a similarity between his use of language and that of the tragic poets in *Republic* (*Republic*, 413b). The inspired poet's works could be construed by Plato as only a semblance of truth, but this view diminishes Plato's esteem for the gods by suggesting that inspired visions are chaotic, and not grounded in reality and truth, which would suggest that the gods are capricious. Furthermore, such a construal damages his own credibility as a philosopher, as he depends on the same conventions— rational configuration of divine inspiration— that the poets use to understand truth and to share their knowledge with others. The problem, therefore, is in the interpretation of the works by others. Those who are uninitiated will be unable to accurately understand and reliably assimilate the works of inspiration. It is by such misinterpretations that works with truth become distorted— this occurs for both

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[51] While on the surface this appears to diminish the knowledge of the poets, it is not contrary to Hesiod's statement that the Muses are capable of presenting both falsehood and truth (Hesiod, 25-28). Plato's redefining his meaning of 'mania,' as Pieper points out, also reflects this inability to make ideas concrete, there is always something more than what is contained in the definition of a term or concept (Pieper 1964, 81-2). Furthermore, Plato's reworking and revision of some of the historical stories are consistent with this idea. If language is viewed as a barrier to expression of truth, it is either a failure of the mind to reduce divine truths into mortal language, not a lack of truth that is the problem, or it is the limitations of linguistic conventions that are primarily rooted in sensual experience that are problems in sharing knowledge.

[52] Socrates is, at this point in Plato's works, a philosopher— this is especially true in the context of the *Phaedrus*, as Socrates arrives at truth by the same means he claims the philosopher would, the method of collection and division and dialectic, as previously stated.

the uninspired pupil of the philosopher, and the uninspired rhapsode.[53] Each is unable to fully grasp and understand the true meaning underlying the knowledge that has been shared, and instead places their focus on the form the content is expressed in.

The differentiation of the divine poet and the mundane poet is revealing of Plato's significantly nuanced view of poetry, and becomes clear in relation to epistemic concerns. He is subtle in his language and the rift is most recognizable when viewed in relation to dialogues with critiques of poetry, such as *Republic*, where there is emphasis on the sensual nature of poetry. These critiques, when one takes into account his view of inspiration, appear to be specifically directed at the superficiality of mundane poetry. However, the critiques are presented without their relation to inspiration made explicit, and are easily mistaken as his definitive view of poetry. When the critiques are compared to dialogues where inspiration is discussed it becomes evident that the divine poet does not suffer from many of the failings of the mundane poet, and is in fact far superior to the mundane poet in relation to moral and epistemic concerns. This extends to the beauty of their poetry, as the divine poets will of necessity produce poetry more beautifully as it contains truth, and no amount of skill in composition can compensate for that. The Athenian Stranger notes the poetic nature of the speeches in *Laws* and hints at a divine origin for them (*Laws*, 811c); what makes the speeches poetic is the truth that underlies them and makes them beautiful. The reason for this, as alluded to above, is beautiful content will always require a beautiful form. Our reliance on sensual experience in the world diverts attention from the Form of Beauty and places it on sensual pleasures instead, which Santas sees as happening in various degrees— from reliance on base senses, to the rational apprehension of universal Beauty through particulars that participate in the Form (Santas 1988, 66). It is the need of a form for communication that allows for a comparison between mundane and divine poetry to be made, and it is here that the line is blurred. If the distinction between the content and the form goes unappreciated, the divinely inspired poetry will be mistaken for merely a beautiful piece of poetry, rather than the expression of truth that it is. Therefore, the form of poetry needs to be evaluated and separated from the content.

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[53] The pupil and rhapsode being followers of a philosopher or a poet respectively. We will recall the conversation between Ion and Socrates, which led to the conclusion that Ion is inspired because he is able to speak of Homer better than any other, meaning he understands not just Homer's poetry but also his mind (*Ion*, 530c). The uninspired rhapsode cannot interpret the works as well as an inspired rhapsode, but this does not mean the inspired rhapsode possesses knowledge of the works, or a perfect interpretation either, as Ion was unable to recognize the knowledge in Homer as particular to the narrative, not universalizable, hence his claim to being the best general in Athens (*Ion*, 541), a claim which Homer never made. The importance of followers replicating the knowledge one bestows on them is important not just to the poet, but to the philosopher as this is a component of their immortality, as seen in *Symposium* (211e-212b).

1.4- The Divine Poet and the Material World

A common thread throughout this section has been the problem of distorting inspired knowledge to make it intelligible in the context of the physical world by utilizing sensible experience for illustration. Immaterial truths are constrained by the limitations of the world of appearances, which diminishes the full power of representing those truths— the Forms cannot be physically embodied without transformation.[54] While Plato is consistent in his belief that content reflecting Beauty will always take a form that is beautiful— as in *Ion,* where poets in their right mind, those who construct poetry only with reference to their experience of the natural world, are unable to achieve the beauty that an inspired poet is able to produce (*Ion*, 534b-c)— the form always contains the possibility of obscuring the content, as the sensual beauty can be mistakenly assigned priority. This is an area where it becomes difficult to distinguish the divine poet from the mundane poet, as the works produced will rely on the same conventions, despite being used for different effects. To avoid mistaking form for content the difference between the two needs to be examined and set apart. The divinities recede into the background when language is utilized to encapsulate and understand inspired knowledge, leaving the poet to take responsibility and recognition for that knowledge; the poets connect the world of appearances to reality, but only they are visible to the audience they present to, and only they can be held accountable for what is produced. This means the divine poets appear similar to the mundane poets, especially if their works are not understood to convey truth, but are only thought to be pleasurable shadows— the divine poets need to be recognized for their content and set apart from the mundane poets who need to be recognized for their compositional skills.

It is the distinction, or lack thereof, between divinely inspired content and mundane form which leads to many of Plato's critiques in *Republic*. In his rebuttal of Bundy, Cocking makes the same mistake that Plato does in *Republic* by conflating the form and content of poetry, thus overlooking the possibility of imbuing poetry with truth (Cocking 1991, 14). Poetry is predicated on two major linguistic styles in *Republic*: the use of metaphorical and symbolic language to obscure the lack of truth in works (suggested by Socrates' reference to his use of metaphor as akin to the style of tragedians (*Republic*, 413a-b)), and strict one-to-one mimesis of the world of appearance in the way that painting attempts to capture a single perspective of an object (*Republic*, 597e-599a). The former would serve to connect poetry intimately with

[54] This is accurate in communicating truth in both philosophy and poetry, where underlying truths are always more than the physical model is able to capture— this is exemplified by the theoretical nature of the republic that Socrates is outlining (*Republic*, 462d-e). The incapacity of capturing something theoretical in a model that is 'actualized' is what necessitates the use of language that is not literal; the poet and philosopher need symbolism to hint at what is beyond the capabilities of comprehensive representation in language. Communication needs to have room to be understood, it cannot over-determine the content without losing the truth that the speaker is trying to convey.

sophistry, as it is the clever weaving of language to hide a lack of knowledge,[55] and reflects an *intellectual* imagination on the part of the poet. The latter is associated with the plastic arts and only attempts to evoke an *emotionally* imaginative response to images, in the sense of 'image thinking' in the divided line. Both of these linguistic styles are applicable to the mundane poets, who rely on either strategy to produce their works. But the question is whether the divine poets rely on these styles, and if so, are they also only capable of being deceptive regarding knowledge claims, or does their use of poetic language allow them to transcend the world of appearances and express unalterable truths?

It was previously argued that the divine poets possess knowledge of historical events and the gods, which can be attributed to a combination of divine dispensation and the need to interpret, order, and compose the knowledge which they are given by their inspirer for presentation to others. This evaluation serves to distance the poets from depending on experience of the natural world in understanding historical events. Instead they are able to see the events with the aid of their divine inspirer. However, there is still a necessary reliance on utilizing earthly experiences when communicating with an audience. Plato acknowledges that the use of sensual particulars helps to make poetic representation more comprehensible (*Timaeus*, 19c-e), but this carries the potential side-effect of providing the audience with a sense of understanding that is false if it is not properly interpreted for them. This false understanding can lead to the further proliferation of ignorance when shared with others who focus on a work's sensual pleasure, not on the knowledge contained in the work; if the form of the work is what is taken as primary, or if the interpretation of the work is focused on the sensual nature of the poetry, the audience will fail to appreciate the truth incorporated in the work that the poet (and Muse) intended as the primary feature. While experience of the world can serve to bolster the poet's prose, the prose is not of the highest importance to the poet, nor is it primary in Plato's aesthetic evaluation— both the divine poet and Plato require truth to be a major component of poetry, which is why there is a need for divine revelation prior to the composition of poetry. This is important to keep in mind

[55] Cornford stresses the intellectual nature of rhetorical works in reference to Gorgias, stating that there is a highly skilled and precise arrangement of ideas and language (Cornford 1957, 211). While it is related to the rhetorician (and therefore more applicable to the mundane poet) it is reflective of the intellectual component of poetic composition that elevates poetry from merely representing a material object. In *Gorgias*, Plato presents the cleverness of sophistry by analyzing Gorgias and his followers. In the discussion with Gorgias, Socrates comes to the conclusion that the sophist convinces the audience, instead of persuading with knowledge (*Gorgias*, 454e-455a) by employing methods depending on flattery (*Gorgias*, 464b-465). The sophist, having no knowledge, is only able to use language to bring the audience to accept opinions which are cleverly constructed to appear like they possess knowledge (which is what allows Gorgias to claim that he would appear to have greater knowledge about medicine, as the audience is more convinced by his oratory than by the doctor who actually possesses knowledge about medicine (*Gorgias*, 464b)). Gorgias recognizes within his oratory is a skill that allows for the presentation of speeches that are constructed well enough that they appear to contain truth, which is, for Gorgias, equivalent to actually presenting truths. The mundane poet, similarly, can construct their poetry intellectually, but since they have no knowledge their works cannot relate truths, they can only convince through opinions that are well presented.

when confronting the strategies of representation, the focus is less on the linguistic and experiential imagery used in communicating, than on the intellectual and knowledge-based content that is being communicated.

The first poetic strategy is the use of metaphor and symbolic language to present ideas indirectly; imagery is used to convey ideas that are otherwise difficult or impossible to convey. When speaking of persuasion to sway the audience's mind about right opinions, Socrates uses 'theft' as a metaphor to suggest the notion that their right opinion is being stolen by speakers— this is misunderstood by Glaucon and leads to Socrates exclaiming that he is speaking like a tragic poet (*Republic,* 413a-b). The metaphor's lack of clarity reflects the lack of precision when using metaphors that are unfamiliar in certain contexts, or relying on symbolism to carry meaning that is difficult to grasp. The attempt by Socrates to explain to Glaucon an idea, one which was not immediately accessible, required a metaphor to give an initial sense of what is being related, the notion of 'theft,' but also necessitated an explication which served to refine the concept being related. In this case the metaphor is able to be explicated by the interlocutor, allowing Glaucon to understand the idea that Socrates is attempting to convey. Divine poetry also functions in this way, it is an interpretation of a divinely granted vision of truth that relies on symbolism as a means of extending language in order to elevate both the poetry and the mind of the audience, but it is also dependent on an interpretation of those symbols in order to make them intelligible and the truth clear and understandable. Poetry, on the other hand, does not always admit of interpretation on the spot in the way that Socrates provides to Glaucon. The Muse is not present in the world of appearances, and the other half of the authorship, the poet, is not necessarily present during each presentation of their works— meaning neither member of the authorial duo is available to the audience to provide clarification of the knowledge embedded in the poetry.[56]

The lack of clarification by either author is problematic as it leaves an image within the mind of the audience without making explicit the symbolism that underlies the usage of that image— if there is an idea underlying that image to begin with. Mundane poetry, focusing on the sensual pleasure of poetry, has few issues that arise with the use of metaphorical language. The lack of knowledge exhibited in the mundane poets' works means that the images used are focused more on the images they conjure up in the mind

[56] This can be reflected on in relation to both an oral tradition, and the written tradition. The written tradition being the weaker, as discussed in the myth of the invention of writing, as presented in *Phaedrus* (274-275). Writing carries with it a plethora of problems, not the least of which is the absence of the author, which means it is unable to defend itself, or clarify itself. Poetry can function in a similar way, especially in a written form, as the poet is no longer present to account for phrasing or expression. This has deeper ramifications for the divine poet. Their dependence on the Muse to give them knowledge, which they then cast into language, means the poets are not sole authors of their works, and so they cannot act as interpreters to exhaust the meaning contained in their poetry. This is why the rhapsode also needs to be inspired, they can fully appreciate what is being related in the works only if they share a connection to the Muse. These will present problems that Plato exploits in his critiques, and will be discussed in appropriate sections below.

than on the content. The interpretation is therefore subjectivized as it relies on each member of the audience's experiences and does not draw the mind towards a universal, ideal truth. Divine poetry, on the other hand, faces numerous hinderances as a result of metaphorical language. Attention can be diverted from the purpose of a work of divinely inspired poetry, namely recollecting and preserving history for posterity, and placed on the form that work takes; attention can be drawn to the way figures are portrayed using symbolism, and mistake the symbol as the representation, rather than understanding and interpreting that symbol as a means of appreciating the underlying ideas that are related through the metaphor employed.[57] Storr emphasizes the ambiguity of symbolism, recognizing that symbols can take different roles and can be applied in different ways when they are interpreted and applied to certain situations (Storr 1972, 145). This notion of symbolism as open to reinterpretation further complicates its usage in divine poetry. If the poet's metaphors are not properly clarified the whole enterprise of sharing knowledge collapses under the weight of the imagery. This would in turn diminish the role of the divinities, and the knowledge they imparted on the poet, reducing recognition of the divine poetry to the level of mundane poetry, as the truth content fades into the background.

The mundane poet is, in a certain sense, immune to the problems that the divine poet experiences through the use of experiential metaphors. The mundane poet's lack of knowledge can be more easily obscured with the skillful use of metaphor, which works against the divine poets, whose wealth of knowledge is encumbered by their skillful use of metaphor. However, the later indictment of poetry as an imitation of an imitation may present a saving grace for the divine poet, as it does not rely on interpretation, and could potentially help divine poets become acceptable to Plato, and allowed to enter Callipolis. In the imitation-of-an-imitation evaluation, Plato relates the craft of the poet to that of the painter, each producing only a semblance of an object which is itself only a physical manifestation of the Form— which means the object being represented is already limited[58] (*Republic*, 597b-e). Representation that is this far removed from the

[57] There are numerous examples that can be used to illustrate this, but Homer's use of anthropomorphism presents an especially strong case for the use for metaphor, as well as the need for proper interpretation of metaphor. Oates argues that Homer's use of anthropomorphism is often used in a humorous way, which, while lacking in fidelity to the gods, allowed for emphasis to be placed on attributes or concepts the gods represent (Oates 1972, 7). Pieper emphasizes Plato's critique of Homer's anthropomorphism in *Meno*, where Plato brings the charge against Homer that he bases his depiction of the gods on his experiences of humans and the world of appearances and therefore cannot be considered to be truly inspired (Pieper 1964, 63). The fact that there are commentators differing in emphasis, one supporting Homer and the other Plato, indicates the need for proper interpretation in order to gain an appreciation of the divinely inspired poetry; the linguistic depiction cannot be taken as the focal point of the artwork without sacrificing the importance of the knowledge that has been converted into sensible concepts.
[58] Oates views the comparison between poetry and painting, and the subsequent arguments, as Plato utilizing the Theory of the Forms in its "crudest and most naïve form" (Oates 1972, 39). Furthermore, reducing poetry to the plastic arts opens it to a connection to physical arts like sculpture, which adds another layer of concretization to the object in question, and moves further from the truth. Vernant discusses attempts in Ancient Greece to curb this by regulating the representation of gods in sculpture by imposing strict guidelines (Vernant 2006, 157), but these would have a human origin and fail to adequately reflect the divine anyway; they would still need to be recognized as merely symbolic, not as accurate representations.

Forms cannot capture truth as it is predicated on only understanding the physical object from a specific perspective. Therefore, focus is placed on representing the limited physical appearance of the object that is immediately available for the representation, and sensibles are given primacy over knowledge.

Predictably, the mundane poets are once again in a more amenable position, as they carry out the production of poetry with reference to their own experiences; they can draw on experiences they have had at any time, allowing for greater detail, and a more accurate depiction. The detail that the mundane poet can produce is similar to that of the painters who study objects and produce an image that is deceptive enough to be taken for the object itself. This is clearly problematic for Plato, as it means that certain subjective perspectives on objects are mistaken for objective truths about the Forms those objects participate in. This mistake serves to persuade those who are unable to see beyond the sensual beauty, and steals their right opinion as Socrates' 'theft' metaphor suggested, replacing it with a skewed view representing the poet's perspective, not the audience member's.[59] At best mundane poetry can be recognized as an exercise in speaking well; at worst it can act as a way to deceive an audience into naïvely accepting the poetry as revealing some knowledge, when in fact it is directing attention away from pursuits of knowledge.[60]

Where the mundane poets are free to access their experiences at any time to yield a more realistic account of the object they are representing, the converse is true of the divinely inspired poet. While it was previously argued that the poets possess knowledge of what they were shown in their inspired state, they do not necessarily gain a complete understanding, and, even if they were able to fully comprehend the visions, distilling them for a poetic composition is unrealistic. The distance between the divine poets and the experiences presented in their works causes a rift between how the works are presented and how the

[59] This can lead to the problems of imitation of souls that Gadamer discusses. For Gadamer, imitation extends beyond just imitation of the world of appearances in art— if not properly understood poetry can cause the audience to try to be 'some*one* else' and fail to become a self-determining individual; the audience members are distracted by the poetry and focus on being like the characters in the poetry instead of living their own life (Gadamer 1980, 63-4). Imitation is therefore not just used by the poet to compose poetry, but can be a result of the audience's (mis)understanding of that poetry. The result is the audience focusing on their external self to make it mirror the characters in poetry, rather than focus on their internal life and gain wisdom. When the poet has no knowledge of what a good life is their opinion is shared with the audience who, failing to recognize the sensual nature of the poetry, can take it for presenting knowledge and replicate it in their lives, thus relying not only on opinion, but on someone else's opinions.

[60] Plato's asceticism in *Phaedo* was previously used to show how the divine poet should not be focused on relying on the world of appearance. Additionally, it highlights the sensual world as a distraction from contemplation which diverts attention to the sensual (*Phaedo*, 64d-e). In relation to poetry, this would be reflected in the audience's lack of recognition of the intellectual properties of poetry, and the focus on enjoying the sensual beauty of poetic works. The audience needs to be presented with an interpretation of poetry that is suitable to the intellectual underpinnings of the poetic works— the audience needs to be shown that poetry is a distraction, rather than allowing them to enjoy it without that recognition. Following Gadamer's psychologism of Plato, we can perhaps glean a sense of this reaction in Plato's life, where the, possibly apocryphal, story of Plato burning his poetic works is symbolic of his disregard for poetry in favour of philosophy, which offered greater prospects for gaining knowledge and living a good life (Gadamer 1980, 40). Plato would have experienced this critique first hand, and concluded that philosophy was the more worthwhile endeavour; however, the poetic disposition of his youth is clearly carried over into his works, suggesting that rather than breaking away from poetry, Plato instead shifted towards philosophy, but utilized poetry as a means of conveying ideas.

poets interact with the interpretation of that work. Above, the employment of metaphor as a way of bridging this gap was explored, but here mimesis is reflected in the poet's attempt to record and express directly and without elaboration what occurred historically. There is no imaginative movement, or creativity in the decision of how best to present a concept that cannot be conceptualized directly, instead the work reproduces the events in the way they unfolded as accurately as possible. Once again the truth becomes muddied, not as a result of the ideas being unclear due to the imagery used, but instead as a result of the incomprehensible amount of information that any event accrues as the action unfolds. This necessitates choices on the part of the poet, which means giving primacy to certain events, figures, or ideas over others, introducing flaws into the account.

If anything has become clear it is that there is a lack of stakes for the mundane poet in regards to the style of representation in poetic composition. Mundane poets possess no knowledge, and therefore they do not have the problem of trying to relate knowledge in a format that can never be capable of capturing knowledge in an adequate way. There is no need to condense the truth, stripping fundamental elements in the process, nor is there the need to record a wealth of information that extends beyond what any mortal could incorporate within a single work. The mundane poets only have to rely on their own imagination and creative abilities to produce works that delight the senses of the audience. Their divinely inspired counterparts, on the other hand, are placed into a much less comfortable position. While Plato argues that their poetry will be more beautiful due to the truth content, consideration of their work brings added scrutiny, as the truth content may be obscured by the beauty of its presentation, rather than elevated because of it. The need for the interpretation of both indirect and direct representation of history places the divinely inspired poets into a uniquely difficult position, as they can neither defend their work's truth content (as they rely on the Muse to receive knowledge), nor can they defend the way they represent it (as this would be predicated on their interpretation of the inspired vision).[61]

Thus, while the divine poet is able to present truth in the use of either style of poetic composition (or in many cases, both styles), the truth will necessarily be incomplete due to limitations, and the representation will always be the subject of critique. Furthermore, while the beauty of truth is captured in the works there is also the stain of falsehood that comes with converting the truth for physical representation. It is this which leads to Plato critiquing even the most beautiful poetry as containing ugliness, as any physical representation will bear within it inaccuracies (*Republic*, 479a-b). Partee, due to his acceptance of the critiques outlined in *Republic*, also fails to make the adequate distinctions, which leads to an inability to see the way that truth is manifested in works of poetry, and Partee instead favours the view that poetry is merely

[61] This can be further complicated in the problematic conception of divine inspiration, where possession of the poet's body leaves them entirely unrelated to the works they produce, thus further limiting their ability to defend the work beyond a gesture towards the gods.

an imitation in a linguistic format (Partee 1970, 220). Despite the divine influence there is a need to recognize that what the poet produces is not a definitive account; the truth is necessarily mixed with falsehood that invades through the language. It is important to keep in mind that the stain of falsehood on divine poetry pales in comparison to that of mundane poetry, and the reflection of Beauty that can be found in divine works exceeds the linguistic beauty of even the best mundane poetry.

1.5- Truth, Intellection, and Form

In light of the most problematic aspect of poetry, it is important to reflect on the various components of poetry that are intertwined and allow poetry to rise above limitations. The importance of divine inspiration cannot be understated in regards to poetry, as the status of the inspirer in Plato's system serves to legitimize the possibility for divinely inspired poetry, and the influence of that divine inspiration can be seen in each of the three major components of divine poetry— elevating it above the mundane poet's capabilities. To recapitulate the primary concepts of this section: *I*) the divinities who inspire is an important figure in Plato's cosmology, and their relation to both reality and humanity allows for them to act as a bridge between the world of appearances and the world of Forms; *II*) divinely inspired poetry provides a connection between the poets and the divinities, and through that connection poetry has the capacity to convey truths; *III*) divinely inspired poets remain intellectually active during inspiration, not only gaining insight, but interpreting and transforming inspired visions into comprehensible ideas, and therefore possess knowledge pertaining to what they are presenting; *IV*) the form of poetry, while the most illusive and deceptive component, can overcome the inherent distractions hindering appreciation of the underlying beauty of truth if/when divine poetry is accurately interpreted. These major ideas contribute to a much stronger, more robust understanding of divine inspiration and poetry, lending credibility to the notion that there is a tripartite structure.

Where mundane poetry is linguistically formulated as a means of replicating physical stimuli in order to be considered valuable, divine poetry depends on a connection to truth and Beauty in order to be recognized as the most valuable poetry. The status of the divine inspirers in Plato's cosmology, being purely intellectual figures and the creators of human bodies, places them into an intermediary position between the Forms and reality, and the world of appearances. Divinities cannot possess a human's mind directly, but they can intervene on the body and allow the sensual apparatus of individuals to be overridden, elevating their mind and giving them a vision of truth, whether it is the future, the divine mysteries, the past, or the Forms (depending on the type of inspiration). It is through divine influence that the poet is able to represent truth in their works without depending on particulars drawn from their own subjective experience; there is a rupture produced in the divine poets during a state of enthusiasm where they are separated from their own sensual experiences, and they retrieve knowledge about the past without relying on their knowledge about

the present. Importantly though, the poet is not taken out of time. During the state of inspiration they do not leave their earthly body, their body is the conduit that allows their mind to observe true historical events that require certain selective considerations and interpretation. The poets remain grounded in the world of appearance, but their mind is free of the bonds of their own subjective experiences; the poet, as well as the philosopher, ascends from the world of appearance to the realm of truth.

The requirement to understand the natural world is therefore lessened for the divine poets, they do not need experience of the world of becoming in order to create their poetry, as the form is subservient to the content; the way truth is expressed comes from the way they construct the poem. This seems applicable in relation to Plato's overall view of knowledge, which does not draw on the natural world and instead advocates for an ascetic life that does not have an inordinate dependence on the physical world. The poets need to keep their "attention directed as much as [they] can from [the body] and toward the soul" (*Phaedrus*, 64d-e). This is true both for the philosopher and the divine poet, as neither should predicate their knowledge claims on their own experience-based opinions, but on the true reality that nature is patterned on. The soul should be nurtured by poetry, it ought to lead the audience up towards a more intellectual understanding of the world. The danger of poetry is derived from the physical world's limitations that are incorporated in the communication of poetry which initiates a desire in the audience which leads to the tendency to fail to recognize that loftier meaning in poetry and instead enjoy it purely for its emotional, or pleasurable content. Poets should be ascetic, but in relating inspired ideas they rely on a language that does not always reflect that asceticism.[62]

This reliance on the physical for representation does not remove the truth content of the poetry, but it can serve to obscure it. The divine poets' use of inspired knowledge as the foundation of their poetry allows for a transcendence of the physical in order to captivate the audience and present them with knowledge. This is true of their use of symbolism and metaphor to extend the meaning of an idea to emphasize certain elements that are otherwise impossible to capture in literal language, and it is also true of the use of mimesis as a way to present what actually occurred in history with as much fidelity as possible. The weakness of linguistic representation is the imagery which poetic composition employs that constantly attempts to dominate the poetry and draw attention to the sensual beauty, not Beauty as reflected in the truth content of the poetry. It is therefore of paramount importance that care is taken in interpreting poetry

[62] In *Republic* Plato refers to the mobility of Homer, he never practiced the crafts which he presents in his poetry, instead living the life of a wanderer. This would reflect his lack of reliance on earthly powers to satisfy his needs; he is more focused on spreading the truth of his works than settling down and practicing poetry as one would practice their craft. This would be true of Hesiod as well. Not only does he refer to himself as Hesiod the shepherd (which is already evocative of a wanderer), but he does not claim to have formulated his works alone, he claims to have composed them with the help of the Muses. He desires neither compensation nor recognition for his works, as one who is tied to the earth would (which is reminiscent of Plato's view of the philosopher as seeking neither accolades nor earthly advancement, instead opting for a life of contemplation and intellectual growth).

in order to gain a proper understanding of what the divinities are trying to relate with the help of the poets they inspire and how the content and form interact to produce imagery that is representative of objective truths, not attractive particulars.

Understanding the full breadth of poetry requires a mind that can recognize the knowledge expressed in poetry and interpret poetry in such a way that knowledge becomes the focal point, not just a convenient backdrop to the skilled use of language. While *Ion* suggests that the best interpreter of poetry will be the rhapsode who is inspired by the same Muse as the poet, this claim will need to be assessed in relation to the critiques, as the rhapsode is not a poet and does not appear in Plato's catalogue of the divinely inspired. Furthermore, while the divine poet and the mundane poet have been presented as separate categories of poet, and the elevated nature of divine inspiration has suggested alternatives to an ignorant imitator, there are still questions of whether this distinction will actually be applicable in relation to the critiques; are the divine poets immune to the criticism that Plato makes of poetry, or are they still eligible for the crown of wreaths and swift ushering away from the city that Socrates suggests all visiting poets be rewarded with in Callipolis (*Republic*, 398a-b)?

2. Defending the Critiques

Plato's critical analysis of poetry from the *Republic* is noticeably absent from the preceding section, this was done purposely to avoid obscuring the divine inspirer— something not uncommon in works that take the critiques as the central doctrine underlying Plato's aesthetic theory. That said, Plato's treatment of poetry in *Republic* cannot be ignored, not only is it forcefully stated, but it encompasses the bulk of the final book, and is discussed in relation to a variety of subjects throughout the text. The overarching critique of poetry is founded on the principle that poetry attempts a claim on something which it does not possess, namely knowledge. This claim is based around the combination of various poetic devices, as well as the view, contemporary to Plato, that poetry was a reliable source of knowledge (there are numerable crossovers between Plato's critiques of the poets and his critiques of sophists, who also claimed, somewhat dubiously, to provide knowledge[63]). Plato's critiques are founded on the argument that most poetry is merely a form of imitation which contains less truth than what it is attempting to represent; it cannot encapsulate the wealth of meaning inherent in the original that is being copied. Poetry needed to be excluded from Callipolis due to its potential to distract individuals from attempting to contemplate truths by drawing attention to the physical world and the beauty of particulars. The necessary connection between poetry and the world of appearances further entrenches the audience in the world of appearances, rather than drawing them towards the abstract. Instead of presenting new knowledge, poetry is content to draw the audience's attention to a shadow of the truth, diminishing their potential to gain true knowledge and ascend beyond the world of appearances and glimpse reality.

In banishing literature, Plato is performing an act of censorship that is meant to mitigate the harmful influence resulting from the spread of false information. Literature is constituted in the combination of poetry and music,[64] and these can possess both truth and falsehood (*Republic*, 376e-377a), the problem is that the poet is not able to appreciate the difference. Plato's position in *Republic* does not categorically remove poetry. As Plochmann points out, the critiques call for the exile of poets who act on their own

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[63] Gorgias' unsubstantiated claim that rhetoric is tied to knowledge about what is just or unjust, and that when teaching rhetoric there is also the teaching of justice, serves as a key source of discussion in the dialogue named for him (*Gorgias*, 460a), ultimately leading to an unsatisfying conclusion for all parties, when sophistic rhetoric is revealed to be hollow, and predicated on image making and flattery.

[64] It is important to note the combination poetry and music, as each of these are subject to critique by Plato, and the critique of music serves to further diminish poetry. While the critique of music is of less importance here, the possibility of it drawing poetry into a more intimate relationship with the sensual disrupts the delicate balance that is already evident in the poet's mediation between the world of appearances and reality. However, separating the two also introduces problems, as the abandonment of meter and music in poetry reveals its connection to rhetoric (*Gorgias*, 502c-d); this is especially true of mundane poetry, where the production of speeches under the guise of poetry are revealed as a type of demagoguery meant to appeal to the masses, as they possess little or no knowledge upon which to evaluate and judge the content.

opinions, this suggests that for poetry to be acceptable it must be derived from a position of knowledge (Plochmann 1973, 59). The critiques of poetry allow for the displacement of the poet as a credible source of knowledge and the advocacy of the philosopher as the only figure capable of having knowledge. This is achieved by providing an outline of the various flaws in poetry, and undermining the traditionally held position that poetry conveys truth. Poetry can be seen as expendable when it provides legitimacy to the emotional part of the mind as the dominant concern, instead of the reasonable part of the mind; if poetry is not constructed to teach specific ideas the uninhibited poet can lead the masses astray by stoking emotional fervour in them and the masses, once corrupted, could seize power, leading to the corruption of the entire state (*Republic*, 606e-607a). While the earlier critiques form the foundation of Plato's position, the banishment of the poets is largely predicated upon the argument that poets focus their attention on presenting poetry that is most attractive to the emotional part of the audience— the poet strives to affect the audience emotionally, disregarding their capability to reason in favour of pleasurable images[65] (*Republic*, 605a-d). Along with the emotional concerns are implicit and explicit epistemic concerns. Poets not only fail to possess knowledge and therefore rely on fallible opinion, they also rely on momentary particulars to compose their poetry; this not only reduces their claim to possess knowledge, but places their works into the realm of sacrilege, as they profess inaccurate depictions of the gods.[66]

Plato's view that the poets lack reliable knowledge is summed up in Socrates' statement that "all... artists are, as it were, third in succession from the throne of truth" (*Republic*, 597e). They utilize particulars, themselves removed from the truth, to produce a copy which has an even weaker connection to truth— what is produced is barely a shadow of truth. The three levels of truth begin with the universals, or ideals, which are abstract and underlie the physical world— they act as the plan for the various physical objects in the world; the physical objects in the world partake of the Forms, but do not fully encapsulate them, and these function as the pattern for the artistic replication (with artificial creations being third in succession) (*Republic,* 597b). The more limited the physical object, the more distant its relationship to the ideal, as concrete embodiment removes aspects of the object's true nature in order to make an easier, or at least less complicated, copy. Furthermore, the physical copy is far more subject to change, reflecting its nature as

[65] While the effect poetry has on the audience's emotions is central to Plato's critiques, as emotional displays function against the maintenance of justice in both the state and the individual, it is intertwined with the epistemic concerns Plato has. It is the epistemic concerns that are most relevant to this paper, but the problems relating to the emotional components of poetry will resurface throughout.

[66] Plato's religious attitudes are fundamental to his conception of the ideal state, which is displayed in *Laws* where the agora is replaced with the acropolis at the centre of the state, and radiating from that central point are twelve sections— each reflecting one of the divinities in the traditional pantheon (*Laws*, 745b-c). Plato's changes to city planning emphasize the position of religion as central to the ideal state. By placing the acropolis at the centre of the city, the role of the gods is emphasized and the figures who can felicitously portray the gods become the central figures in society— and for Plato the only figures who could possess this knowledge would be philosophers. Sacrilege is therefore a particularly serious charge for Plato to level against the poets, and adds emphasis to the seriousness of the critiques.

situated within the world of appearances. The dependence on a particular as the pattern for the artwork means even if it were a perfect replication it is still only copying a momentary semblance of the ideal, not the ideal itself. Therefore, a reproduction can only be a repetition, it contains no new knowledge, nor any closer relationship to truth. If one relies on the work of art for knowledge that reliance is predicated on a false set of premises that are inextricably tied to the world of appearances, instead of divine reality.

The tripartite conception of poetry that is central to the positive conception of poetry is equally relevant in understanding the critiques in a constructive way. Just as poetry flourishes through the combination of truth, intellection, and form, it is diminished by the lack of any one of the components, or the primacy of one component over the others. To illustrate the need for a well proportioned poetry, each component will be presented in relation to the relevant critique, *I*) poetry as purely form, where the perceptual beauty is the primary goal of poetry; *II*) poetry's instrumental use through the combination of form and intellect, where the beauty of the poetry is intentionally employed to obscure a lack of knowledge, or used as a pedagogical tool; *III*) poetry as lacking adequate interpretation, where any truth within poetry is left obscured, or is unable to be elucidated due to the inability to recognize what is, and what is not, true in the work.

I) The very basic critique that Plato presents deals with the notion that poets focus purely on the world of appearances.[67] This type of poetry is founded solely on emotions and pleasures, without concern for intellectual or truthful content. Art of this variety is pure mimesis, which leads to Plato comparing it to the artist pointing a mirror at the world, but it is also deceptive in the sense that the artist attempts to pass it off as though they created the world through the act of reflection (*Republic*, 596d-e). Despite only reproducing the world in a single dimension, the artist claims that what is produced is an accurate reproduction of what actually exists. While this is applicable to the visual artist, Plato extends it to the poet as well. The mimicking of the world through its reflection is, for Plato, no different in language than in sculpture or painting.[68] This is especially important in relation to the quality of those imitations, if the imitation is bad, it distracts from the truth by attempting to replace it (*Republic*, 394c). When the poor reproductions are produced the figures possess a poor character, and these become examples to the audience who, when emotionally attached to these figures, attempt to take on their attributes in life; if the poetry is effective in persuading the audience, they may cease to contemplate and sacrifice their reasoning in order to appear

[67] As previously discussed, these are the mundane poets, not the divine poets. It will primarily be the mundane poets who are discussed throughout this section, as they fail to incorporate truth in their works, limiting them to imitative, or intellectually imitative works.
[68] Elias argues that the comparison between poetry and the plastic arts cannot be dismissed out of hands due to the intimate relationship between visual imagery and linguistic terminology in the Greek language (Elias 1984, 7). While this helps to buttress the critique of the form of poetry, it certainly expands beyond poetic representation and has ramifications in the way that Plato expresses philosophical ideas; indeed, this touches any attempt to share knowledge.

similar to the intemperate figures they admire in the work of poetry. The poet's mixing of truth and lies in imitative works is at least an attempt to move beyond mimesis and suggests the movement towards an intellectual poetry.

II) Intellectual poetry extends beyond merely reflecting the world, and attempts to express specific ideas for specific interests; poetry is used as an instrument to achieve certain ends.[69] Poetry that includes an intellectual component alters poetry into a technical innovation that can be used to hide a lack of knowledge; success requires a certain skill and cleverness. Where the mimetic poet has no knowledge and their work is based solely on sensual delights and the attempt to entice the pleasurable mind (*Republic*, 602b), the intellectual poet incorporates a specific intentional purpose in their work that reflects or advances their desires, or the desires of their audience. By employing poetic language, the poets (or any who have learned from the poets, be they sophist or rhapsode) are able to obscure the lack of substantial content in their poetry. By appearing in a form that is beautiful the opinions of the speaker are given a veneer of wisdom— however, when this language is stripped away the vacuity of the author is revealed (*Republic*, 601a-b). It is this which necessitates the interpretation of poetry, but if the interpreters trace their lineage through the poets (which is to say through the adoption of poetic language as a tool), the interpretation will be unable to further elucidate the truth conveyed by the poetry.

III) The previous sections deal specifically with the mundane poets, as they are unable to convey any truth in their works, but what about the divinely inspired poets? Plato does not specifically draw a distinction between the divine and mundane poet in *Republic*. It can be read into the dialogue, and it is clear that Plato recognized a distinction in other dialogues, but, because the distinction is never directly made, divine poetry comes within the scope of the critiques as well (this seems especially true with the critical analyses of Homer, a figure who Plato otherwise seems to accept as possessing the status of divinely inspired). The notion that *all* poetry is to be excluded from the ideal city, including Homer's, due to the reproduction inherent to the craft, carries a subtle suggestion of maintaining social order by avoiding the 'distortions/injuriousness' Plato attributes to art (*Republic*, 595a-c). However, is it the poetry itself which has a tenuous connection to truth, or is it the way it is represented?

Previously is has been argued that Plato recognized historical knowledge being shared through the works of the divinely inspired poets, but a critical eye is always cast on those who interpret that poetry. So, rather than the poets being excluded, perhaps the exclusion is more properly assigned to the rhapsodes who present poetry. Ion, the divinely inspired rhapsode who argues that he is the best interpreter of the works of Homer, is suspect due to his inclusion of a full range of emotions that dominate his performance of the

[69] The critique goes further than the poetry itself and moves into the area of poetic interpretation, which is an important factor in understanding Plato's critical analysis of poetry. The interpretation of the classical works altered the way they were understood and could be used to support social or political ends; however, the goal of interpretation was not to find the truth, which contributed to Plato's critique of poetry's lack of truth, as will be seen.

works of Homer (*Ion*, 535c). By placing the emotional element of the poetry at the forefront of interpretation the rhapsode reduces the stature of the poetry below a representation of truth and instead focus on satisfying the emotional desires of the audience. The rhapsode is therefore closer in nature to the actor, who is playing a character and whose performance is more closely related to pleasure than to serious contemplation of the intellectual matters present in the work— this does not go unrecognized by Plato (*Republic*, 395a). Even if the rhapsodes are inspired, as Socrates suggests, they perform for an audience and their recitation is tailored to that audience. The result of this is the possibility of swaying individuals who have the potential for philosophical contemplation by captivating them by emphasizing the pleasurable aspects of a work of poetry instead of the intellectual merits or truth content, which leads those who are capable of thinking about and understanding reality to ignore their higher calling (*Republic*, 605a-d)— the focus of the rhapsode on gaining a larger audience forces them to place a greater amount of focus on the emotions to be understood and appreciated. The indulgence of the emotional masses often serves to corrupt those who are capable of gaining wisdom through the practice of dialectic who are also present in a rhapsode's audience. Therefore, the interpretation of poetry needs to be strictly regulated in order to focus on exposing the truth content of divine poetry, rather than place attention on the emotional content that is also present— poetry needs to be strictly interpreted as it can be used to influence people in both positive (by nurturing the soul) and negative (by providing pleasure to the senses) ways.

The requirement of poetry to be interpreted, but with truth being at the forefront of the revised poetry, leaves the philosopher as the only candidate who has the ability to adequately interpret poetry and illuminate the truth that is hidden within the poetic language. If the previous section's conclusion is acceptable, and the divine poets are capable of presenting historical truths in their works, the interpretation by the philosopher would allow for those truths to be presented with clarity— which is to say in language that is not overly dependent on sensory imagery. The divine poets are given a glimpse of history as it unfolded and their works are constituted of historical facts, the philosopher's interpretation would need to be a refiguring of those historical facts. The philosopher must idealize the history represented in the works of the divine poets in order to make what actually happened reflect perfect reality; the divine poets possess knowledge, and incorporate that knowledge in their works, but it is not the ideal knowledge that the philosopher seeks. It is through the translation performed by the philosopher that the ideal can be applied to history and the 'truth' of history can to be made clear to the the citizens of Callipolis. In turn this translation serves as a foundation to uphold the ideal state. Plato's critiques, ultimately, help to underpin his Republic and provide an unimpeachable foundation for the state that can utilize the religious and social implications of divinely inspired poetry, but without the distractions of the world of appearances, or the hinderance of maintaining an account that is focused on historical accuracy— by idealizing history Plato can surpass the

randomness of worldly history and provide a historical telos that culminates in the formation of the perfect state.

2.1- Critique of the Form of Poetry

The idea that poets focus on producing physical pleasure through mimesis is fundamental to Plato's critiques of poetry. This critique is the most direct consequence of the theory of the Forms,[70] as the focus on physical representation limits the Form beyond just the physical by reproducing it from a single perspective. Plato argues that bad stories are equivalent to bad representations (*Republic*, 377e), but this could extend to any physical reproduction of an idea or subject. While some stories are descended from truth, as is the case in divine poetry, mundane poetry is predicated on creating stories from life experience, which provides only a singular perspective. This means mundane works can only ever be poor representations, and therefore unacceptable stories. It is the application of the theory of Forms to poetry and artistic representation that provides the framework of Plato's overarching critiques, as it emphasizes the stain of falsehood that pervades earthly communication, and especially communication that focuses primarily on reproducing the natural world in emotionally stimulating ways— this will resound throughout the critique of physical form as it underlines the profound lack of value in imitative poetry. Not only is Plato critical of artistic reproductions of objects found in the physical world, but he is also wary of the creation of fantastical beings, as these are also intertwined with perceptual experience— mythological creatures are created by combining various parts of animals or humans that have been experienced into a novel creation. These beings have little or no connection to the Forms, which means that the poet is further distorting the Forms beyond the distortions already imposed by physical embodiment. While Plato seems to accept that language is necessary for communication, and that poetic language is useful in communicating specific ideas, if poetry is merely the imitation of beautiful objects within a linguistic context it can be nothing short of unacceptable.

Plato compares the use of poetic language to the works of a painter, where each is presenting an image through their craft that is meant to affect the audience in some way. Painters observe and closely study the subject of their works in order to represent them as accurately as possible (*Republic*, 484d-e); the painter attempts to closely imitate the subject from a particular perspective in order to impress the audience with the likeness. This is obviously not acceptable to Plato, as it is not only a representation of a single object, but it reduces that object to only a one—dimensional semblance, further removing it from the truth.

[70] This is what Oates referred to as the "most naïve" use of the theory of Forms, as was previously discussed (cf. footnote 58).

In poetry, the poet is conveying ideas that, though communicated through words rather than a visual depiction, rely heavily on the audience's senses. If the goal of poetry is to reproduce in the audience a certain sensation that they have had before, the poetry is only a reproduction. As Plochmann points out, art which attempts to pass itself off as general, or universal, draws attention to itself as mimesis (Plochmann 1973, 58-9). By attempting to relate an idea in such a way that any member of the audience can be receptive, the poet ultimately is drawing attention to the artificiality of the poetry. By delineating the experiences, they become defined too explicitly and reduce their stature from apparent generality to obvious particularity. This replaces any knowledge that could be in the poetry, favouring pleasurable verse in order to better relate to the audience. The statement that "most people identify the Good with pleasure, whereas the more enlightened think it is knowledge" (*Republic*, 505b) emphasizes the nature of poetry as catering to the majority who are not interested in knowledge, but in pleasure. If the goal of poetry is to give pleasure to the greatest number of people, it is primarily through perceptual beauty and emotional displays.

The problem that arises within poetry which relies on replication of the natural world is that composition of poetry is not tied to any specific endeavour to present truth or knowledge. Poetry that does not focus on knowledge, but attempts to gain an audience, possesses no internal telos outside of appearing pleasurable and acceptable to the audience's desires— this is limited and highly susceptible to change, being predicated on opinion instead of knowledge. The dependence on particular manifestations of the beautiful may be acceptable to most people, but this is due to an unphilosophical disposition (*Republic*, 493e). By representing ideas in recognizable forms the poet is able to present the audience with something they can recollect from their experiences and, if the work is successful, it will affect the audience and encourage an emotional response. Vernant sees this element of the critiques as descending from the innovations and changes in Greek art that saw the divinities being represented in more specifically human forms (Vernant 2006, 348-9)— the details on the bodies becoming more distinct, lending them a lifelike quality and therefore becoming more relatable. As the divinities are not human, nor do they have physical bodies, Plato clearly distrusts these depictions. By presenting the divinities as beautiful humans the audience is being given the impression that the divinities are more closely tied to the world, just as the audience is. This allows for the legitimization of placing one's focus on earthly pleasures rather than intellectual pleasures, as the gods also partake of the physical pleasures that are woven into the fabric of embodiment. Furthermore, Elias' recognition of the sophistic turn in poetry is reflected in Plato's critique, as the focus on remuneration led poets to represent their audience's desires or flaws as shared with the gods (Elias 1984, 21)— an audience who pays to hear that the gods have the same character flaws are presented with an account that invests the gods with those immoderate desires, which means the corruption of other members of the audience who understand this as a legitimization of immoral actions. The distance created between the physical beauty and intellectual content becomes impossible to bridge as there is no new knowledge being

placed into the work, it relies solely on the recognition by the audience of familiar shapes and acceptance (or support) for their unethical livelihoods. Instead of advancing the audience's recollection of knowledge, repetition of emotional experiences returns the audience's mind to momentary pleasures that should be left forgotten.

Poetic imagery is a problem, and presenting the physical world as primary reduces the divinities to the same stature of embodied humans.[71] This is not the only form that poetic imitation takes, as it can also be a mimicry of narrative itself. Plato sees the poets' mimicry of speeches and narratives as reminiscent of acting, the poets are not revealing anything new to the audience (as they recite lines that are already known), nor are they presenting knowledge from their own perspective as they do not have any new knowledge or insights to augment their presentation— the poet is attempting to pass themselves off as someone else in order to lend their poetry a non-existent legitimacy (*Republic*, 392d-393a). Once again this is an attempt on the part of the poet to hide a lack of knowledge through the use of illusion— this is similar to the image-making of the sophist who uses beautiful language to hide truth by using semblances of truth that are pleasurable and more easily accepted[72] (Runciman 1962, 59-60). In this case the poetic devices are not being used solely as a means of masquerading in the place of the object that is being reproduced, the poet is joining the reproduction in falsehood— this results in both the poet and their poetry claiming to be something other than what they truly are. Attempting to pass themselves off as another figure, as in the case of recreating the speeches of historical figures, reduces the poets to the status of imitators, and therefore they cannot be trusted, just as their mimetic poetry cannot be trusted. This places a fundamental flaw in the character of the poet which cannot be resolved outside of Plato's call for banishment; there can be no leniency by Plato for those who are interested in acting as though they are someone else, as each individual in the state needs to develop their character in relation to their own telos (as determined through their choice of lots[73]). Furthermore, by drawing attention to the ability to act as others the audience is encouraged to practice the mimicry of the outward physical actions/appearance of others.

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[71] Figural representation of the divinities was not solely a poetic adventure, but one which can be seen in painting and sculpture. Sculptors were bound to strict representational rules when creating devotional works; the physical look of the gods was something that was strictly regulated and did not require the sculptor's own imaginative depiction of the way divinities should be represented— artists created within a strict set of rules for representation (Vernant 2006, 157). The poets would be similarly constrained, as their works draw on physical representations, which means the poet's inspiration for imitating the gods would come from physical representations of the gods. Their works are therefore strictly regulated by the extension of the regulations of physical forms that would allow for an audience to recognize the divinities in physical or literary form.

[72] This is reminiscent of the relationship between rhetoric and pastry baking in *Gorgias*, where the rhetorician's speech is flattering the audience in the same way that pastry baking is catering to the audience's sweet tooth (*Gorgias*, 465d). In each case the goal is not to produce something that nurtures the recipient (whether it is their soul, in the case of oratory, or the body in the case of pastry baking), but something that caters to the recipient's bodily desires, taking the place of something nurturing but which is not immediately pleasurable.

[73] Cf. *Republic*, 620a-d

Poetry is more relatable to the audience when they can recognize the content and empathize with the poet; by focusing on experiences that are likely to be shared between themselves and their audience, the poet is able to forge a deeper connection between the audience and the poetry, enhancing the audience's engagement. But what about the fantastical aspects of poetry that have no foundation in experience, or poetry that presents objects that do not appear in the physical world, do these provide the possibility of the poet surpassing pure imitation? No, Plato does not grant fantastical beings a status beyond mere physical representation, viewing them solely as distortions of objects found in the world of appearances. For Plato, mythical creatures are composites of creatures that can be found in the world; they draw their attributes and their form from the actual creatures in novel ways, but not in a way that has intellectual value[74] (*Republic*, 588c-d). The mythical creature problem extends beyond just the representation of animals that do not appear in the world, to representation of the divinities. Plato is critical of the anthropomorphism of divinities, as previously stated, but he is also critical of the shape-shifting nature of the divinities— Proteus and Thetis are the figures referenced by Plato in *Republic*, who are said to adopt different shapes or appearances (*Republic*, 381d). Oates does not view this as a fair assessment of Homer, who employs the physical nature of the divinities in humorous ways, which Oates argues is illustrative of Homer's awareness of the problems associated with physical embodiment of the divinities (Oates 1972, 7). Even if Oates is correct, the 'humorous' nature of Homer's use of anthropomorphism can be misunderstood or unnoticed by the audience; lacking an appreciation for the intention can lead to the view that Homer is directly imitating the gods which ultimately leaves him open to the critique.[75] So, if Homer is using an imitative framework to provide a physical vessel for the gods in his poetry, the works exhibiting this cannot be accepted into Callipolis, regardless of intent.

Plato's critique of the form of poetry as mimetic and reliant on the physical world means that any poetry is going to be purely a form of replication of the world, adding nothing new, and, if anything, reducing the world to a single dimension. Poetry created with the intention of producing emotional stimulation is therefore only ever a semblance of truth and cannot contain any new revelations (*Republic*, 466e-467a).

[74] There can be some contention to this, as Plato discusses the possibility of things existing in thought that do not exist in the world, like mythical creatures, in *Sophist*. There, Plato argues that there must be some existence for the figures as they have names and can be understood without perceptual justification (*Sophist*, 237b-239b). While this seems to contradict the position in *Republic*, the creation of mythical creatures through the mixing of different animals is not done to present something otherworldly (like the Forms), but merely to delight the senses with an unexpected figure; the poet is attempting to surprise the audience with something new, but it draws from a perceptual understanding of certain animals and is therefore only partially new, and is still tied specifically to the world through reproduction of physical forms, for the purpose of eliciting emotions based on physical recognition.

[75] More accurately, this is a problem of interpretation, which will be discussed later. Suffice it to say that the poet's intention can be overshadowed by the audience's perception, which Plato is critical of; it is not enough for the poet to have the right intention, by placing poetry in a form that exults the physical, the audience's perception becomes the most important component of poetic recitation. Direct imitation is therefore problematic from the perspective of poetic composition and poetic interpretation.

Replication of the physical cannot advance knowledge, and if knowledge is the supreme good, mimetic poetry is necessarily antithetical to the good. Dickinson's understanding of Plato's critique of the form of poetry focuses on the abandonment of art on the grounds of its inability to convey knowledge, Plato sacrifices poetry because it is unable to contain intellectually stimulating ideas; it is a sacrifice due to Plato's praise of poetry (and his past composition of poetry, and the poetry contained within the dialogues) (Dickinson 1931, 88). Dickinson joins those who trace the critique of the image-based poetry to a pedagogical foundation, where Plato seeks to eradicate the stain of falsehood produced in poetry so it cannot be transferred to students and lead to emotional corruption. However, this is not true of all poetry, as not all poetry is strictly mimetic, there can be intellectual components to poetry, and these will be subject of further critique by Plato.

The critique of the physical form of poetry is important because it breaks the illusion that poetry is representing anything universally true when it places emphasis on the physical manifestation of objects. Plato's critique draws attention to the sacrilegious nature of mimetic poetry, the imposition of limits on limitless beings or ideas. This stands in stark opposition to divine poetry which possesses an intellectual foundation that is derived from a connection between the poet and the divinity who possesses knowledge and imparts that knowledge on the poet. As previously discussed, while the divine poet's works have forms that are beautiful, the beauty is a by-product of the intellectual truth contained within the poetry, so the form is not the defining feature. Not only does this help to draw a distinction between certain mundane styles of poetry and divine poetry, it allows for divine poetry to be taken as a higher form of artistic expression by possessing physical beauty, without the same problematic nature of direct imitation for emotional effect. However, it must be stressed that not all mundane poetry is purely superficial in this way, there can be an intellectual foundation to poetry that utilizes beautiful representation to convey ideas and concepts, rather than merely attempting to imitate the world directly for purely emotional pleasure.

2.2- Critique of the Instrumental Use of Poetry

The critique of poetry as purely mimetic and without the poetical to express knowledge, or possess intellectual value, undermines the form of poetry and instills doubt about the efficacy of poetry as a means of communicating ideas. However, when poetry is viewed from an intellectual perspective, the poetry begins to fade into the background of poetic discourse, as poetry is not only used as a means of relating stories, but can be used to make arguments. In this way, poetry can surpass the initial critique if employed to bring an aesthetic value to statements that are meant to convey knowledge. The use of poetic language in speeches is especially important to recognize, and plays a role in both sophistry and philosophy. This can be illustrated in what Pieper calls the 'Kierkegaardian Reversal' that takes place in the *Phaedrus*, where the aesthetically pleasing but vacuous speech of Lysias gives way to the aesthetically pleasing, and knowledge-

laden speech of Socrates (Pieper 1964, 39). The goal of each speech appears to be the expression of an intellectual idea, and both rely on some poetic constructions in order to relate to the audience and affect their soul. Plato shows that the lack of knowledge on the part of Lysias is able to be covered over by the beauty of the language; once again, poetry is employed to obscure the lack of knowledge and focus on the physical pleasure. It is here that Plato's critique of the intellectual capacity of poetry becomes most applicable, as poetry is used not just as a mirror to reflect the world, but a tool to exchange knowledge for appearance without drawing attention to the shift.

Where the critique of form seems to draw on Plato's mistrust of the plastic arts moving towards figural representation of the divinities, and the adoption of regulated anthropomorphism of the gods in poetry, the critique of poetry as a craft or skill seems to be related to innovations in poetic composition in play-writing and sophistry. In each of these uses poetry is employed as a means of masking opinions in such a way that they appear as knowledge. Dickinson views the nature of art in Athenian culture as combining aesthetics and morals, which provides the context of the critiques in *Republic* (Dickinson 1931, 83). Clearly the sensory aesthetic component is suspect, and Plato's critique of the lack of intellectual matter in poetry serves to undermine the moral claims. The synthesis therefore fails to save poetry from critique, and in fact, exacerbates the problems of poetry propagating falsehoods. Gadamer, in his analysis of the foundation of the critique, also sees the rise of a theological and mythical synthesis as a core problem (Gadamer 1980, 43-4). In this case the mythical functions as the material aesthetic component, drawing on recognizable appearances in order to sensibly represent theological ideas, which include a moral framework. Gadamer sees Plato as connected to the later tragedians, recasting myths for theological and moral ends— unlike the tragedies though, Plato possesses knowledge and is able to incorporate his knowledge in his reformulation of myths. It is the lack of knowledge in works of opinion which, when unrecognized, leads to fundamental issues in the context of Callipolis, and forces Plato to brand poetry intellectually unproductive.

There are three major strains of the intellectual critique that build upon each other: *i*) poetry's relationship to epistemology, *ii*) poetry as pedagogical, *iii*) poetry as technological. The first deals with the lack of knowledge possessed by poets, which stems from the previous critiques of art as images. The second deals with the use of poetry as a tool for teaching, and the ways that this is a perverted form of teaching, as it relies on repetition and opinion. The third is the notion that poetry is a craft, something that is not only used to teach, but is itself teachable; the person learns to mimic the skill of the poet, if not the opinions of the poet, thereby resorting to artificial means of acquiring and sharing knowledge, rather than depending on the natural recollective process.

i) Poetry's Relationship to Epistemology

The primary element of the critique of intellectual poetry is the blunt fact that poets possess no knowledge and therefore convey nothing of intellectual value in their poetry. Not only do poets not possess knowledge of the truth, but an audience who also does not possess knowledge or the ability to critically assess the poets' works must accept the poets' word that they express reliable knowledge, which shifts poetry from pleasurable depictions that delight the senses, to falsehoods that have both moral and ethical repercussions (*Republic*, 598e-599a). This produces a definition of poets that is not dissimilar to Plato's definition of sophists, as each presents opinions that are mistaken for truth due to the aesthetically pleasing language that acts as a vehicle for the work. Unlike the sophists though, the poets themselves are not necessarily presenting falsehoods, if they fall under the first critique, as they are ignorant and their works are distorted into falsehoods (*Republic*, 382b)— but not all poetry is based in ignorance, and it is not uncommon for poetry to contain arguments that appear to claim knowledge on the part of the poet. The poet who depends on the physical world in order to represent figures or concepts cannot include knowledge in their compositions, as true knowledge is independent of the physical manifestations. The poet therefore does not possess knowledge or they would be able to present that knowledge without the elaboration of poetic trappings.[76]

The poet does not have knowledge about the content which is contained in their poetry, but that does not entirely preclude the poet from possessing any knowledge. In *Republic*, poetry is often portrayed in ways that bears a marked resemblance to a craft, or technical skill— the imaging component of thought that allows for mythical creatures to come to the poet's mind is not the only type of thinking the poet is able to employ. Instead, poetry as a craft would possess its own sub-strain of knowledge which would be related to that of the sophist: composition and speaking well.[77] Plato makes a distinction between knowing a craft and understanding universals though, where understanding a craft would be thinking in the sense of *dianoia*, but it would not be indicative of knowledge in the sense of *noesis*, which only the philosopher is capable

[76] It was discussed in the previous chapter that the divine poet's works have a poetic form that derives from the connection they have to truth, and are delivered in an intellectually ordered way. In the case of the mundane poets, the poetic form is being consciously used as a means of obscuring the absence of knowledge underpinning their claims and making their opinions more palatable through the addition of a pleasurable form. This amounts to a difference in form, where the form of divine poetry is more appreciable to the intellectual reader (one who possesses knowledge) rather than the opinionated reader whose taste is related to contemporary styles— this would be commensurable with Plato's overarching theories, as the one who knows can recognize the ever-relevant poetry of the divine, while the uninitiated will be more disposed to enjoy the ever-shifting styles of mundane poetry.

[77] Once again, a distinction between divine poet and mundane poet must be stressed. The divine poet, in contrast to the mundane poet, does not require training to develop a skill in order to write well, their ability to use language skillfully comes to them through the inspiration, and the knowledge they represent must be given a beautiful form that reflects the inherent beauty of knowledge. This is shown in *Ion*, where Socrates uses the example of Tynnichus of Chalcis who was unable to produce poetry well, but managed to produce a single great work of poetry because he was inspired, which allowed him to overcome his lack of skill at producing successful poetry; Socrates makes an evocative statement that solidifies this when he says that the divinity inspiring Tynnichus produced "the most beautiful lyric poem through the most worthless poet" (*Ion*, 534d-535a).

of achieving (*Republic*, 428b). While this lends some credibility to the poets by moving them from a position of near-total ignorance to possessing a certain type of knowledge, it still remains an indictment of poetry, as it brings into question the underlying premises of any poetic subject; the poets have the ability to communicate well, but what they communicate is not based on any knowledge possessed by the poet.

The lack of knowledge beyond the craft of poetry, being comprised of composition and presentation, is made explicit by Plato in his condemnation of the pretence of the poets to be able to accurately and knowledgeably present other crafts. The reasoning behind this critique is the poets' practice of poetry instead of one of the more socially useful crafts which they appear to have knowledge about (*Republic*, 599c-601b). The imitation of those crafts is illustrated by the clear lack of actual knowledge that led the poets to choose to comment on the crafts, rather than to actually practice those crafts. The result is that the audience mistakes the poet's imitation as understanding and this serves to distract the audience, who may attempt to claim knowledge of those crafts based solely on their understanding of poetry, rather than actually seeking to learn and understand the craft through theory and practice.[78] Partee sees this as an integral part of the critique, especially in relation to the poet as a legislator (although in this case the poet is more likely a sophist who is utilizing a poetical form) (Partee 1970, 214). While Partee's claim is legitimate, it is in some ways facetious. The poets (especially the divine poets) may not make fine legislators because they do not possess knowledge, however, they also may choose not to act as legislators; the philosopher needs to be compelled to be a legislator, and perhaps this would be the case for divinely inspired poets. The philosopher does not seek political or financial gain, nor do they seek reward, they are oriented towards the acquisition of knowledge and the transference of divine knowledge into the world of appearance (*Republic*, 485e). While the quest for earthly gain and/or fame applies to some poets, it perhaps does not apply to all. In the case of accolades for recitation, as seen in *Ion* (*Ion*, 530d; 533c), or the laurels that will be handed out to the poets who find themselves at the gates of Callipolis (*Republic*, 398a-b)— those poets and rhapsodes who desire worldly recompense can be rewarded, or perhaps bribed to leave, with what they most desire.

The only argument the poets can make to defend their possession of knowledge is that they possess knowledge about the craft they practice, any extension beyond that relies on opinion (their craft being predicated on opinion means that even their knowledge of composition and presentation are opinion based and therefore subject to change and critique). If the poet's knowledge is unreliable, what is it that the poet is able to teach about, as it appears that Plato's critique is centred on poetry as a teaching tool, not just as a source of knowledge in general. The knowledge being related in works of poetry may not be the subject of

[78] This is evident in the case of Ion, who claims to be a general because he possesses the same intimate understanding of generalship that Homer possessed. However, he and the divinely inspired are given some freedom to make the claim as their knowledge descends from the divinities, not from depicting something they have seen or heard about in the world.

poetry itself, but the poetic style of communication— the poet *is* teaching through the use of poetic language, but the content of the poetry is not what is being taught and therefore is able to be changed without changing the nature of poetry. Poetry is therefore a tool for relating ideas to elevate their appearance from opinion to knowledge by relating the content as though it is derived from figures that have intellectual merit and authority; poetry functions as a tool of disseminating opinions with the appearance of knowledge. Therefore, the critique of the intellectual component of poetry seems to be related more closely to the pedagogical employment of the form of poetry.

ii) Poetry as Pedagogical

The knowledge claims contained in poetry are highly suspicious to Plato, whether it is the knowledge claimed in the epic poems, relating to everything from crafts, to history, to theology, or the knowledge claims implicit in mimetic poetry that attempt to recreate sensible objects or figures. If poetry is indeed a craft, it will certainly fail to reach the potential of conveying knowledge, instead only itself being knowledge of something particular (*Republic*, 428b) and in the case of poetry, which has a changing content, this will not be knowledge of particular objects that form the content of the poetry. Any poetry that has the pretense of providing an accurate account of its subject is questionable to Plato, but what about the form of poetry as a source of knowledge itself? The ability to employ a poetic style in discourse introduces

> the dangers which threaten the noblest natures, rare enough in any case, and soil them for the highest of all pursuits. And among men of this type will be found those who do the greatest harm or, if the current should chance to set the other way, the greatest good to society and to individuals; whereas no great good or harm will come to either from a little mind (*Republic*, 495a-b).

Those who have an understanding of poetry and who do not possess "a little mind" are capable of using that poetic style to great effect, whether this is for good or ill depends on the reason for its use. Plato's underlying critique of the emotional component of poetry reemerges as the focus of this passage, as it is the emphasis poetry places on satisfying the desires of the emotional part of the soul that leads those with the noblest natures astray. Poetry is not just a means of conveying knowledge, which can affect the audience, but is itself a body of knowledge in the sense that it is a craft which can be learned— what is learned is the ability to substitute intellectual matter for emotionally pleasing images. This means that poetry is opinion-based, and takes its form in relation to the desires of the audience who will be present; it is not attempting to present universal truth, but to achieve the gratification of specific worldly interests.

Learning to use poetry as a means of conveying opinions allows the poets to appear as though they possess a greater amount of authority, and their knowledge claims seem more legitimate. The means of affecting the audience that is provided by poetry allows for the enhancement of speech and the facade of understanding. Poetry is therefore a skill that can be learned by the audience if they are able to recognize its use, and pay close attention to the way it is constructed. Skill is not something capable of being perceived,

the poet's skill is only recognizable within the work itself. The skill of the poet does not mean the poet is capable of completely understanding the craft of poetry (not to mention the content); instead the poet's skill only provides advice to the audience on how to speak well, resulting in the following of *doxa*, opinion, not knowledge (Runciman 1962, 14). Whether one is in possession of, or only mimicking, the skill there is still not necessarily a full sense of understanding how best to employ the skill, which is what differentiates a good poet from a bad one; the good poet can recognize the limitations of poetry and is careful not to overstep the natural boundaries, the bad poet fails to recognize those boundaries and draws attention to their poor representations. This can be seen at work in the speech of Lysias in *Phaedrus*, where the content of the speech lacks coherence and an intellectually rigorous foundation, but is presented in a skillful and clever way that obscures that fact (*Phaedrus*, 242e-243a). Lysias displays knowledge of the skill by writing poetically without drawing attention to the deeper contradictions that arise due to a lack of knowledge. Therefore, this display of knowledge of a craft does not confer upon Lysias, or his speech, any knowledge relating to the content; furthermore, because the craft and the production are separate, the skill is not learned through strict teaching, but through opinions about which speeches are good, and the replication of those speeches.

Plato's arguments that reduce poetry to the status of a skill are recognized by Gadamer, who sees this conception of poetry as the ability to speak well, but that the speaking itself is the content that is focused on in pedagogical approaches to poetry (Gadamer 1980, 59-60); teaching poetry occurs through the use of poetry. This claim accepts the distinction between poetry as a tool and poetry as replicating objects, shifting the idea of poetry into a technical skill requiring some knowledge in how and when to employ it. Stripping the content of the poetry does not change the skill of poetry— it is fundamental to the critique that poetry lacks valuable content, and by stripping the skillful use of poetry that ornaments the content it will indeed be revealed that what is presented is, often, vacuous. If Gadamer's interpretation is correct, poetry is more of a technical skill that can be employed in pedagogical ways to teach, as it connects to the audience by using shared sensory experiences which makes the content more accessible, but it is also more prone to falsehood and turning individuals towards the pleasurable, or the most beautifully presented opinions. So the critique of the intellectual nature of poetry is not focused only on the lack of knowledge, or on the teaching of poetry (or teaching through poetry), but also must apply to the technical nature of poetry— poetry as a tool.

iii) Poetry as Technological

Poetry can therefore be seen as a technical innovation to speaking and writing, and more specifically to teaching. This idea is not left unaddressed in Plato's critiques. Plato refers to poetry as mechanical (*Republic*, 495d), making it an artifice, and therefore its products artificial. The distinction between the artificial and the natural is important in Plato's philosophy as the artificial is intimately connected to and

entrenched in the world of appearance[79] (*Republic*, 598a-c). The artificial production is only a semblance of something natural, and is therefore further from the Forms, and is the grounds of poetry being considered thrice removed from the truth. By interrupting the natural relations and producing an artificial copy, the original is left unexamined by the audience, who are therefore left without a full comprehension of the subject of the work. Vernant's evaluation of Plato's view of artificiality and technology leads him to note that at every point Plato refuses to attribute any significant value (intellectually or otherwise) to technical skills (whether it is art or farming) (Vernant 2006, 269-70). Vernant sees this antipathy towards technical skill and intellect as related to the antipathy towards the world of appearance, as each relies on production specifically tied to sensibles; this is true of both art and food, with both being ornamental when overindulged in, especially when placed in relation to Plato's consistent insistence on material and emotional asceticism.

The notion that poetry is a technical skill only serves to deepen the significance of the critique, extending it to any use of poetic language to convey ideas. Poetry becomes dependent on the world if it is technical and artificial, and only the content can act to resolve the problems that arise in even the most skillful implementations of the craft; ie. if poetry is used to convey philosophical truths. Vernant speculates that Plato's critique could stem from the lack of humanity perceived in work and technology; neither is part of the natural human condition that originates in the creation of souls, and therefore they act solely as distractions from the soul's proper task: contemplation of truth[80] (Vernant 2006, 270). The technical nature of poetry lends itself to being conceptualized as a skill that can be learned, and it can therefore be practiced well or poorly, developed, and perfected, but it will never constitute understanding, nor will it directly aid in human development.

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[79] This distinction is also important in the relationship between the mundane and the divine poets, as the divine poets have a more natural foundation to their works, with the content of their works related to both the divine and to truth, which are natural in the Platonic cosmology. An example of this can be found in the myth of the invention of writing (*Phaedrus*, 274-275). Rather than writing having a positive result in recollecting knowledge, it diminishes the ability to remember. In effect, writing removes a key component of the soul, as it makes recollection a matter of absorbing an external stimulus, rather than relying on recollection of reality as it had previously been experienced; understanding becomes nearly impossible as recollection is no longer recognized as *the* source of knowledge, as the written word appears to also possess knowledge and can be more easily accessed. The divine poet in this case is relying on a natural recollective process that is tied to representation of reality and the initiation of recollection in the audience, where the mundane poet is working from a technological standpoint and reproducing physical stimuli that take the place of the Forms— this reflects the distinction between '*alatheia*,' which is key to recollection (unconcealment), and '*apomnêmoneuei*,' which is a more artificial sense of remembering that is less closely tied to understanding.

[80] Vernant draws a connection between technology and divine inspiration that can help reclaim divinely inspired poetry if it is considered to be a technical skill. The inspiration of Archimedes' machines is seen to be divine— there was the perception that the machines at Syracuse were arrived at through a daemonic source (Vernant 2006, 312). While Plato does not himself attribute to technological innovations a similar standing, the possibility that artificial technical productions can be tied to natural knowledge derived from the divinities seems credible, which would mean that the divinely inspired poets, while producing an artificial object, are encapsulating within that object something that exceeds the purely mundane.

Poetry's epistemic value is therefore equally suspect to its aesthetic value. Unlike the mimetic form of poetry though, intellectually determined poetry has the possibility of being properly used to convey knowledge. Speaking well can be seen as a technical skill, which can be used in teaching, and can also be used to convey knowledge— but each of these must be predicated on truth in order for the poetry to have any great value. Poetry that focuses primarily on the intellectual component will almost certainly incorporate a mimetic component (its form) as well, but neither of these are able to provide a truth component to the poetry. The question of discovering the truth in poetry can be understood more easily through the question of who is best able to understand poetry. From the perspective of the sophists, who would be students of the poets— as they have learned to use the skills of the poets in their arguments— it is within their capabilities to interpret poetry. This is made clear in *Protagoras*, where Protagoras himself claims to be the best source of poetic interpretation, but ultimately fails due to a number of contradictions that arise in his explication of the poetry (*Protagoras*, 339b-d). While Protagoras has the ability to use poetic language skillfully, and he exhibits a great intellectual capacity for organizing and implementing that language in his discourse, he does not possess knowledge, which is necessary if one is to provide an interpretation of poetry that is not marred by contradictions. If the individuals who best possess the skills of the poets, and who are students of poetry, are not also the best suited to interpret poetry, who is, and how can the truth be discovered in poetry, when there is truth to be discovered?

2.3- Critique of the Interpretation of Poetry

It is at this point that we must leave behind the mundane poets, as they are incapable of joining the divine poets in the apprehension and presentation of truth, and seek the interpreters of those poetic works which contain truth. Plato's banishment of poetry, in part, stems from the 'poetic' nature of the language being used, which is to say a key problem with poetry is the necessity of interpretation of that style of language (*Republic*, 387a-b). The characterization of the poets as divine can be contentious, but even when that claim is accepted there are questions about the way their works are presented and the exegesis of those works. Plochmann makes a similar argument, as he views the linguistic structure of poetry as the core of Plato's critique, which explains why poetry is not categorically condemned in Callipolis (Plochmann 1973, 60). Plato finds poetry to be acceptable under certain conditions, but even then there are important restrictions that limit the freedom to compose poetry, to access interpretations of poetry, and to produce interpretations of poetry. Therefore, the interpretation of poetry is key to understanding what is being related

in poetry, and is fundamental in grasping Plato's banishment of poetry and those who interpret poetry without first possessing knowledge of reality. Protagoras' failure to interpret inspired poetry[81] adequately reflects his inability to rise above a mundane and earthly interpretation of poetry. The competency required to properly elucidate the truth content in poetry surpasses what can be discovered through the use of an intellectual application of experience and opinion, or an appreciation of the appearance of beauty in poetry alone.

We have seen previously that poets who are divinely inspired recount truthful accounts of historical events through their poetry. They are provided a vision of the past, and they organize the content of that vision into a story that is as felicitous to the events as the poet is capable given the limitations of material representation. In this way Homer, who appears to be divinely inspired according to Plato's evaluation in several dialogues, presents historical events that have some foundation in truth, meaning they are not entirely without merit— as is the case in Plato's evaluation of Homer's presentation of Ajax's reward for distinguished service in battle (*Republic*, 468d-e). The acceptance of Homer's sense of justice shows that he does have more than just a representational foundation to his poetry and is able to present moral values that are true.[82] That said, the instances of truth do not seem to outweigh the instances of falsehood in Plato's characterization of poetry in *Republic*, but the falsehoods themselves are not necessarily the entirety of the problem. Plato suggests that the falsehoods contained in poetry are only effective for swaying an audience who does not possess knowledge (*Republic*, 595a-c). This flaw may cut both ways. Not only can the one who possesses knowledge interpret and discover the falsehoods in poetry, they also have the capability of discovering the truth in poetry, and ways of conforming the falsehoods to truth.

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[81] The inclusion of Simonides' name among Homer and Hesiod in *Protagoras* suggests that he may be included among those considered divinely inspired by Plato (*Protagoras*, 316d) (although it is Protagoras' claim, and therefore somewhat suspect). However, Socrates states that Protagoras' interpretation of Simonides' poem "would create an impression of naïveté very unlike Simonides" (*Protagoras*, 343e) which suggests that Socrates recognizes an intellectual sophistication that extends beyond what a mundane reader (and poet) would be able to understand and appreciate. Additionally, and more to the point, in *Republic*, Socrates states that "it is not easy to doubt Simonides, for he's a wise and godlike man" (*Republic*, 331e), suggesting a stature greater than a mimetic poet would deserve. This is followed by a systematic rebuttal of the argument Simonides is used in support of. But rather than this being illustrative of a flaw on Simonides' part, it is more of a reflection of the problems of inaccurate interpretation. Those without knowledge are unable to provide an adequate interpretation of the works of an inspired figure like Simonides, which leads to the holding of contradictory, or baseless opinions. This is evident in Protagoras' failed attempt to interpret a poetic work that exceeds his comprehension.

[82] The argument could be made that Homer only possesses true opinion on these matters, but the treatment of Homer in other dialogues (ie. *Ion* and *Phaedrus*) suggests that his knowledge comes from a divine source, elevating his poetry from a reliance on opinion to an expression of knowledge. Furthermore, even if the understanding of the moral values underlying the action are founded solely on opinion, the knowledge that the event occurred and its felicitous representation within Homer's works reflect knowledge, not merely an opinion about what occurred. The knowledge claims that are put forward in divinely inspired works like Homer's are not specifically related to morality (as in the reformulations by Plato), but history— there are incidental morals that can be extracted from the works, but the focal point is the representation of history as it occurred.

If it is fair to say falsehoods are not the explicit grounds of poetry's exclusion because falsehoods pervade anything in the world of appearances, it would open the possibility for the extension of poetry beyond intellectually recognizable facts to a conception of poetry rooted in truths that need to be discovered within the works. This would elevate poetry beyond its form and intellectual content by adding the third component of poetry, truth, and confirming the divine status attributed to certain poets and their works. The work of interpretation to make poetry clear becomes especially important when placed in the context of an audience. Plato draws specific attention to the youths who hear poetry, but who are incapable of recognizing the allegorical or metaphorical nature of poetry, and therefore take the statements as literal instead of figurative[83] (*Republic*, 378d). Even in poetry where the divine poet is expressing truths, there is the possibility for misunderstanding those truths, and the stunting of the audience's intellectual and spiritual growth due to the misapprehension of the poem's meaning. From this it seems that the goal of poetry should be to orient the audience's mind towards philosophical reflection (or in the case of their role in Callipolis, towards acting justly and according to their pre-ordained social station).

For interpretation to indulge the rational mind there must be avenues for understanding poetry as expressing truths. The intellectual aspects of poetry and the form of poetry will always fail to provide these avenues, so interpretation must be able to express the historical truths in inspired works of poetry, and make the other components subservient to revealing those truths. Partee views the apparent lack of intellectual matter and the overabundance of sensual and emotionally evocative content in poetry as the primary cause of Plato's banishment of the poets (Partee 1970, 215), but this only reflects the surface of the critiques, which seem to suggest that the emotionally focused problems of poetry are derived from the weaker interpretations of poetry that focus on aspects intertwined with physical desires— the desires the majority considers the highest good. Therefore, it is essential for any good interpretive approach to poetry to include and emphasize the truth content of poetry. In order to rise above the interpretive problems a mundane interpreter experiences, the interpreter of divinely inspired poetry must have knowledge of truth, and the ability to recognize it. Just as the divine poets capture truth in their works, those who interpret works of poetry must have knowledge and the ability to apprehend truth in all situations.

There are two major figures who put forward claims asserting their respective capabilities in interpreting poetry as superior, with both claiming to be able to address each of the three components of poetry

[83] This is a problem that is experienced in philosophical discourse as well, as metaphors are created as a means of developing new ideas (*Meno*, 74b-76e). In order for something new to be meaningful it needs to be made clear with reference to something that is familiar to the audience. This is equally true of poetic works and philosophical discourse, where something unfamiliar to the uninitiated (or uninspired) is opaque without the reference to something known and the subsequent work of interpretation to deconstruct the metaphor and make the idea clear. The comparison to something experientially known is more problematic in poetry due to simplistic interpretations that focus primarily on the metaphor as an adequate explanation without attempting to recover the underlying idea or truth that the metaphor represents.

and locate the truth content of poetry as the primary fixture: the inspired rhapsode— especially in the figure of Ion— and the philosopher. Within the context of the proposed triadic structure of poetry there arises three primary components of interpretation that are essential to fully elucidating poetry, and an interpretive approach which fails to encapsulate truth, intellect, and form will be incomplete. Each component has significant issues in relation to interpretation and these problems need to be overcome in order to present a full account of the content expressed in the poetry. The problems include: interpretations that focus primarily on the sensual beauty; interpretations that reflect a certain goal, where the intention is not to discover truth, but to support the interpreter's interests (or the interests of those who commission the interpretation); interpretations that fail to appreciate the deeper significance that underlies and unifies the poetry and fails to bring clarity to the poetry's connection to truth. For the rhapsode or philosopher to be the most able candidate for interpreting poetry, they must be able to avoid these problems, and still include elaborations on the material, intellectual, and metaphysical components of poetry without obscuring the interconnections between each component.[84]

The rhapsode, if Ion is to be believed, is the primary candidate for poetic exposition and interpretation. In *Ion* it is the inspired rhapsodes who have the most intimate knowledge of the divinely inspired poetry, as they memorize and know the works of poets and present them to audiences. This intimate knowledge places the rhapsodes in a position where they can be taken to have knowledge of the truths being related through poetry. The eponymous figure of the dialogue is attributed with the status of divinely inspired due to his ability to present and discuss the works of Homer, who is inspired by the same divinity (*Ion*, 524a-b). If this attribution is deserved it would position the rhapsode as the superior figure to reliably interpret poetry due to the connection formed between the rhapsode and the Muse through the poet's works. This would allow Ion to be granted a glimpse of the same truths revealed to Homer by the Muses, therefore gaining an appreciation of the poetry that extends beyond opinion or self-interest. Ion himself claims to be the greatest expositor of Homer's works, both in presentation and in explication— in fact he is so good he believes he is worthy of being given a golden crown by the Sons of Homer, a rare honour (*Ion*, 530c-d). If Ion's word alone is not enough to accept that he speaks most beautifully about Homer, he claims that "everybody says I do it well" (*Ion*, 533c), specifically the audience who attend his performance and those who also engage with Homer's poetry. This would appear to suggest that Ion's claim is fair, and that he can be trusted when he claims to have knowledge of Homer's works, but his claims, and the support of the claim by those who acclaim him, including Socrates, should be investigated.

[84] Nagy points out the roots of the interpreter (*hermeus*) as one who is able to understand the poet's *dianoia*— which he illustrates with the notion of 'train of thought' (Nagy, 39-30). Whoever is the best interpreter of poetry will be one who is able to continue the poet's train of thought, and use the connection to the poet's *dianoia* to interpret the poetry.

The best rhapsodes are considered divinely inspired figures by the end of *Ion*, and are connected to the divinities when they are in a possessed state during recitations in front of an audience. However, this notion of divine inspiration was previously seen to be problematic in relation to the divine poet, as the complete possession of the body failed to account for the translation into human language. Also, Socrates characterizes the rhapsodes at a remove from the truth, they are representatives of representatives (*Ion*, 535a). This places them into a similar position to that of the mimetic poet in *Republic*- they are third in succession from the truth. Ion's ability to speak well of Homer should reflect an understanding of the poetry, and perhaps the poet, but it does not mean Ion has knowledge from the Muse inspiring Homer, nor does it mean the actual subject matter of the poetry is understood by Ion. Such a remove from the truth does not invalidate the rhapsode's claim to supremacy in the area of poetic interpretation, as it is the poetry that is the focus of their attention, and the ability to interpret it according to the poet's understanding of the content. If the rhapsode is able to felicitously represent the works, then the truth would manifest in the performance and the explanation of the poetry.

The rhapsodes should be able to represent the form, intellection, and truth of poetry in their interpretation, and Ion, if he is truly among the greatest of rhapsodes, should exhibit this capability in his discussion with Socrates. He certainly produces an interpretation of the sensual nature of poetry, injecting a strong emotional element into the performance (*Ion*, 535c), causing himself to tear up when sad, or have frightened responses where appropriate. Being in a position to know that these are going to happen and yet still to experience the emotional effects suggests that he is invested in giving an overtly emotional presentation of the poetry, by emphasizing the mood swings that occur in the works. This strong connection to the sensual component of the works does not preclude Ion from advancing beyond this, nor does it diminish his interpretation to the purely sensual, as Socrates sees the highly emotional state of the rhapsode as a component of their inspiration (*Ion*, 535c-d). Socrates believes a rational person with self-control would not make the display of emotions central to Ion's recitation, so for Ion to be able to be recognized as producing an intellectual interpretation, he must be enraptured by the Muse. This raises some questions about Ion's performance of the material, while Socrates may be able to recognize that the rhapsode's effusive performance is derived from inspiration, and Socrates may be able to recognize that there is more depth to the performance than the sensual presentation conveys, does Ion or his audience recognize this, and can Ion provide an equally clear intellectual explanation of the poetry to complement his overtly dramatic performance?

An answer to whether Ion includes an adequately intellectual account of the poetry is difficult to provide, as Ion does not give any specific details about either his interpretations or his insights, outside of his claims that he possesses knowledge of the crafts discussed in the poetry. This is questionable, and is reflected in Rucker's assessment of *Ion* that it is not a critique of poetry, but of rhapsodes and the possibility

of rhapsodes actually being able to possess knowledge (Rucker 1966, 170). This position is not inconsistent with the notion that rhapsodes are at a remove from the truth, as they work from their understanding of the poet not their understanding of the poetry's content.[85] The question remains as to how rhapsodes arrive at their interpretations, and here Ion provides us with some clues that may lead to an answer. Ion brags about his first place finish at the festival of Asclepius at the beginning of the dialogue (*Ion*, 530a-b), which is his first suggestion that his capability to act as a representative for Homer is exceptional— it is also the first suggestion of his personal interests that influence his interpretation.[86] While his success suggests that he is skillful, it also has an underlying hint of vanity. His preeminent status as the greatest expositor on Homer requires the accolades of others to be maintained. He has an interest in this, not only for personal vanity, but for his livelihood as well.

The interest in maintaining a livelihood is accentuated by his statement that he needs to keep his wits about him, lest he laugh at the audience members who are paying him to make them cry (*Ion*, 535e). The emotional performance is set up against one that fails to evoke emotions, in which case Ion himself would be tempted to cry as he will not receive as great a recompense as he would receive for a more emotionally evocative performance; in contrast to his emotional displays being directed by the action of the poetry, they are directed by his relationship to the audience, and more specifically his relation to their purses. The desire for accolades, and the dependence on payment for his performance damages the credibility of Ion, whose interpretation of Homer needs to be crafted for the audience, in order to have success; it is not based on knowledge, but on a skillful understanding of what the audience he is presenting to desires to hear.[87] Gadamer sees the intrusion of this type of sophistry in poetic interpretation as one of the fundamental aspects of Plato's critique of poetry— the interpretation of poetry that alters the meaning relative to the paying audience (Gadamer 1980, 61). The result of the reliance on interpretations that bolster the claims

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[85] This suggests that the rhapsode is not dissimilar to writing, as it is the presentation (or performance) which serves as the primary motivation, not the desire to add something to the content. Furthermore, the remembering practiced by the rhapsode is more artificial, like writing, and is not necessarily paired with understanding, as natural recollective memory is for Plato.

[86] Competition (*agon*) is an important part of the rhapsodic tradition, which is competitive in nature (Nagy, 36-7). Nagy points out that finishing with a higher ranking in the rhapsodic competitions would have had a very significant social benefit, as well as a significant material benefit, for the rhapsode. This introduces into the tradition an explicit dependence on interests by the rhapsode; a key component of their performance is making sure they are able to win over their audience.

[87] The shifting nature of the rhapsode's interpretation reflects the problems with opinions formed upon experience or social tastes. Plato's critical approach to interpretation needs to focus on the problem of the interests of the figures who are interpreting the poetry, as the interests, if based on desires in the world of appearances, will always veer away from seeking truth and instead be directed towards the desires of the audience in order for the presenter to materially gain from the performance. The instrumentalization of poetry reaches its peak when the unchanging truths of poetry are subverted as a means of affecting the audience for applause, and yet are still claimed to have remained unchanged. Plato's critiques focus on rooting out the subjective component of poetry and attempt to bring any objective truth to the surface.

of the highest paying customer diminishes the morality and truth of the poem, and leads to the diminishment of society.

Returning to the earlier claim that Ion makes regarding his being the greatest representative of Homer, with others confirming it, further questions are raised. If Ion's interpretation and representation of Homer's works are determined relative to the audience's sensibilities, the audience needs to be adequately astute in understanding Homer's works. However, Ion is the most knowledgable about Homer, so who can judge whether the performance exhibits knowledge or an accurate account better than Ion himself? Furthermore, if the audience is not inspired with knowledge, instead being persuaded by the emotional aspects of the poetry, who possesses adequate knowledge to laude Ion's knowledge of Homer? It would appear that Ion depends on those who have opinions to acclaim his presentations and, if the opinion of most takes what is pleasurable to be the highest good, Ion's presentation receives acclaim for the sensual beauty of the interpretation. The dependence on those who possess more money than knowledge means that the rhapsode is not concerned with whether the poetry possesses truth, but whether their interpretation would be equally effective in satisfying their interests if the truth is brought to the forefront of the presentation, instead of just gratifying the audience emotionally; the interests of the rhapsode is always placed above their felicitous interpretation of poetry, which means their interpretations will remain questionable.

It would appear that Ion's claim to be the preeminent source of knowledge relating to Homer is specious. This is not unrecognized in Socrates' half-hearted acknowledgement at the conclusion of the dialogue that Ion may be inspired, stating that it is the nicer way to interpret Ion's ability to speak well only about things relating to Homer (*Ion*, 542a-b). The lesser option is that Ion only has mastery of a craft, as there is no knowledge of the poetry's content carried in the skillful presentation, only skill and opinion.[88] While Socrates is charitable to Ion, it seems like a somewhat misplaced charity. Plato would not be so charitable to the rhapsodes in his formulation of the ideal city, where interpretation is strictly regulated in order to avoid the possibility of intentionally misplacing the emphasis on the emotional component due to interests.

Ion's focus on the sensual foundation of poetry, combined with the suspicious interests in maintaining his livelihood and status influences his presentations on Homer, suggesting that the truth contained in Homer's works is not the central focus of rhapsodic interpretation. Plato's view that there is a mixture of truth and falsehood in the works of divine poets like Homer (*Republic*, 383a), only serves to magnify the need for proper interpretation that focuses on the parts which contain truth. While Plato suggests that the falsehoods be ignored in order to leave the divine aspects of the poetry unobscured, the inspired rhapsode would seem to be incapable of performing this task, as they have knowledge only of what the poet speaks

[88] Once again highlighting Plato's antipathy towards practicing a craft, even one that seems to be otherwise praiseworthy (even when craft of the practitioner does not necessitate the possession of knowledge to be considered legitimate).

of, so they do not know the difference between truth and falsehood, presenting each with equal consideration, and, if the audience desires it, potentially supporting interpretations that fully obscure the truth behind emotional satisfaction. The inspired rhapsodes, the figures who should most intimately know the poets and their works, cannot be relied upon to bring out the truth in works of poetry as they do not possess knowledge extending beyond the craft of producing poetry; they can only represent what they have access to, which is the work of poetry itself, not the historical events the poetry relates. Thus, they are only able to produce opinions based on an external object, not recognize and focus on the meaning lying deeper in the works. The only figures who can adequately provide an account of poetry that includes truth are those who possess knowledge, and those who can separate truth from falsehood.

As stated earlier in this section, aside from the inspired rhapsode, the philosopher has a claim to being the best candidate to interpret works of poetry. Returning to the earlier conclusion we found the failure of Protagoras to interpret Simonides, ultimately producing a contradictory and obviously unacceptable account of the poetry. Following the sophist's failure, Socrates presents his interpretation which is much stronger and reflects a better understanding of what the poet was trying to convey through poetic discourse (*Protagoras*, 342a-347a). This attributes to Socrates[89] a greater competency than the sophists in interpreting poetry. The rhapsodes were also superior to the sophists, due to their inspiration (although, whether the inspiration decisively advances the rhapsode's ability beyond that of the sophists may be debatable), meaning the philosopher's interpretation may have similar constraints in expressing truth. This does not seem out of the scope of possibility, and Socrates recognizes that, while the poem's meaning changed radically between the interlocutor's respective interpretations, and despite the superior quality of Socrates' interpretation, the results of poetic interpretations are rarely conclusive, and evaluating different claims of how a poem should be interpreted can be a difficult task[90] (*Protagoras*, 347e). Here we see the rhapsode and sophist come into close contact, as both rely on opinions about an external stimulus, but Socrates is set apart as he is able to overcome this limitation and discover within the poem a deeper significance; this is complemented by Socrates' recognition that others may not recognize the important difference between an interpretation rooted in opinion and one rooted in knowledge, which leads to the acceptance of sophistic interpretations due to personal interests, ultimately leading to the lack of a satisfyingly conclusive interpretation. So, philosophers must be able to avoid the obstacle of audience misunderstanding if they are to be

[89] And by the transitive property any other philosopher who would similarly be in a position to possess knowledge or wisdom which would allow for a ready understanding and interpretation of poetry, or poetic discourse.

[90] Runciman interprets this as a distinction in the type of language in poetic discourse, arguing that poetic language is not logos as it lacks the potential to be verified; there is meaning in works of poetry, but they are not logos in the way that philosophical dialogue is logos (Runciman 1962, 110). The distinction in the type of language used in poetry and philosophy has important ramifications for the philosopher's ability to interpret poetry and provide an account for the meaning it communicates.

considered the best suited to interpreting poetry, and to be able to distinguish the truths from the falsehoods, allowing divine poetry to lose its earthly blemishes and be returned to its lofty position.

Where the rhapsode finds themselves intertwined with the language of poets, replicating the obscurity of the language in their representation of the poet's works, the philosopher is able to speak more clearly. There is a distinction in the type of language used by the poet and philosopher due to the nature of their audience, the philosophers employ dialectic to elucidate their ideas in a way that a poetic presentation cannot do (*Republic*, 601a-b). The use of dialectic functions to deconstruct ideas obscured by poetic language (metaphors, allegories, etc.) and make them clearer by exposing and enhancing the ideas that underly the poetic discourse. The philosopher is able to present the poet's works by rendering them into a form that emphasizes the truth over sensual beauty. The philosopher's stripping of the work's sensual components that otherwise obscure truth allows the philosopher to make the work of poetry's content more explicit. By interpreting poetry in this way, the philosopher can provide the audience with an account of the poetry that elucidates its true aspects and avoids the problematic aspects of audience interpretations that rely on a combination of opinion, experience, and interests. Where the rhapsode plays to the momentary audience, the philosopher is accessing and presenting the truth that is independent of the audience and is directed at attaining an eternal truth that will not shift based on who is listening.

This can be seen in the reinterpretation and use of poetic myths by philosophers. Gadamer, rightly, sees Plato's use of myths not as myths in the poetic sense, but as elements of the philosophical mindset; they are not presented in a way that is inscrutable, and they have an underlying purpose that draws on truth and is formed intelligibly to present that truth in a way that lends itself to a specific interpretation[91] (Gadamer 1980, 68-9). The divinities who inspire the philosophers inspire the poets as well, and their respective myths explain the relationship between the world of appearance and reality, but based on their respective understanding of reality, not experience of the world; the philosophers can present knowledge in their myths, which can be understood to convey truth by those who possess knowledge, as well as those who are only capable of opinions, the poets are not able to be understood in this way. The difference between the philosophical myth and the myths in poetry is the purposefulness of their expression; the philosopher is attempting to relate an eternal truth about reality and refigures the myths to make these ideas accessible, while the poet is attempting to convey historical accounts that are important for continuing the recognition of a shared history. In this way, philosophical myths are not presentations of events, like poetic myths, but narrative arguments that draw attention to truth. The mythological components of a philosophical argument

[91] Elias recognizes this as well, but instead sees philosophical poetry as a way of making up for limitations, or inconclusive answers in dialectic (Elias 1984, 40). This is the second best course philosophers can take as it is a means of providing temporary answers that would otherwise be left incomplete; poetry is instrumentalized to present philosophical conceptions of reality.

are meant to recede to the background for the truth of the myth to be emphasized. Poetry that reflects this focus on truth follows from that

> one trait of the philosophic nature we may take already for granted: a constant passion for any knowledge that will reveal to them something of that reality which endures for ever and is not always passing into and out of existence. And, we may add, their desire is to know the whole of that reality; they will not willingly renounce any part of it as relatively small and insignificant (*Republic*, 485b).

The desire of the philosophers to seek out the truth of reality leads them to interpret poetry in accordance with that truth, rather than in relation to any particular part of the truth. This type of interpretation functions as a recollective act,[92] which is triggered by the poetry and allows the philosopher to recall the truth and to order its representation in such a way that the interlocutor(s) are able to understand that truth. Furthermore, their philosophic nature allows the philosopher to see past the falsehoods in divine poetry, as their interrogation of the works is oriented on discovering the truth that is contained in the poetry regardless of how seemingly limited that truth appears when ornamented by the world of appearances.

The philosopher, the one who knows, seems to be more capable of interpreting divine poetry, as their goal is to discover and represent the truth of the poetry, through reinscription of the myths to draw attention to the philosophically valid ideas. This does not dispense with the sensual nature of the poetry, which is maintained in the new myths, and these interpretations allow for the inclusion of an intellectual component by making the ideas comprehensible in a more direct way than poetry is capable of. Philosophers are therefore able to capture each component of poetry in their interpretation. This reflects Plato's claim that presentations of poetry either need to hide truths that are harmful to those who cannot fully understand them, or expose the falsehoods that are being passed off as truths in poetic works (*Republic*, 377e-378a). Both of these approaches inform the philosophers in their reinterpretation of poetry, leading to the removal or alterations of the events portrayed of poetry that are not reflective in the ideal moral truths. When philosophers expose and discard the problematic attributes of the divinities, they are able to join the poets in producing representations of the past using poetic devices to overcome the limitations of language, but rather than focusing on the felicity of the presentation of actual events like poets, the interpretation focuses on felicity to the Forms, and especially Justice. The philosopher's myths provide an explanation of the past that reflect an ideal historical model that functions in accordance with Plato's philosophical project. Gadamer's understanding of the critiques recognizes this shift, where the critiques can be understood as a means

[92] Ricoeur, through Eliade, presents the concept of interpretation as a recollective act, as it discovers and restores meaning to symbols (Rasmussen 1971, 93-4). This seems to be in strong agreement with Plato's approach to poetry, where the poetic ideas are experienced in their presentation and through that experience memory is triggered. This memory has significance beyond the world of appearances, which in turn allows for the restoration of meaning to the poem by eliminating the distracting components that draw attention away from meaning, or which have served to obscure that meaning and alter the poem.

of undermining the traditionally accepted models of history, in order for a history that serves as the foundation of the ideal state to be introduced (Gadamer 1980, 47). The philosopher is therefore refining the knowledge that the poets possess about the past in accordance with truth and emphasizing the moral framework that is necessary in forming the ideal city. But, if this is accurate, what is the final result of the critiques and is the banishment of poetry justified?[93]

2.4- The Ideal Poetry

By eradicating the roots of Greek history, through the reinterpretation and redefinition of the divinely inspired poetry which served as those roots, the philosopher is idealizing the history represented in the works of the divine poets and imbuing poetry with a sense of truth that is derived from the Forms, not the truth of the events as they unfolded in the world of appearances.[94] The divine poets possess knowledge of history and this is recognized by the philosophers who use that history, but poetry is *not* presenting the ideal knowledge that the philosopher possesses, and the history the divine poet's present is therefore *not* an ideal history. The poetic interpretation of the philosopher allows for the truth to be made present in poetic works by interpreting them with reference to ideal truths, and the ideal moral and social framework that history *should* reflect. The philosopher uncovers the poetry's underlying truth by removing the distractions that enter in through its connection to the world of appearances; the philosopher is able to recover the ideal that is sacrificed when the events take place in the sensual world. Plato's argument against the poets suggests that they should be removed primarily due to the effect they have on the audience, but along with this comes the exclusion of interpreters of poetry who would undermine and conflict with the philosophers who are

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[93] The idea that divinely inspired poetry could be banished from an ideal city in a serious way is itself an act of hubris beyond what Plato exhibits in the corpus of his works. To argue that the divinities would cease to act within the city seems contrary to the way the city is designed, especially the city in *Laws*. Divine inspiration, at least in poetry, does not come through an invocation of the gods, but by the will of the gods alone. For Plato to deny entry into Callipolis to the divine poet would imply that the gods would also be denied entry. A second problem arises from this, and that is the access to history. While the philosopher kings have access to the Forms and can order the city so it reflects the ideal order, much of Plato's structure is derived from more traditional sources; history is recast, but in order for history to be recast, there must be a recognized history. Plato credits the divine poets with historical knowledge that can be maintained for the sake of posterity, and it does not seem unreasonable to believe that the rulers of an ideal city would not similarly accept and reinterpret the divine poet's accounts. This forces serious questions to be asked about whether divinely inspired poetry was included in the banishment in the first place.

[94] Vernant points to Plato's "half-serious and half-joking" acknowledgment of his debt to the myths that preceded him, and allowed him to recollect the myth of Er and utilize the plains of Lethe, but through a philosophical lens (Vernant 2006, 153). Vernant's suggestion is that, while Plato views philosophy as surpassing mythology, philosophy is still founded largely upon the earlier myths that have been surpassed through philosophical interpretation. Philosophy may have dethroned myth for Plato, but philosophy assumes the truths that are central in the myths and adds depth to them, and reorders them according to an ideal framework that is predicated on the Forms.

the only ones who can truly know how to properly interpret poetry. The critiques, therefore, serve an important role not only by exposing problematic forms of poetry, problematic uses and interpretations of poetry, but also the problematic exposition of truth through poetry.

The problematic forms of poetry that come under the lens of critique are easily brushed aside. The purely representational form of poetry, or mimetic poetry, that tries to pass itself off as valid experience is bereft of any deeper meaning than the sensual pleasure it provides. This is an important critique as it emphasizes the distinction between art that banally represents a specific object, or a specific appearance, from poetry that has a deeper intellectual content. By exposing this form of poetry and banishing it, Plato is making a statement less about the banishment of poetry alone, and more about authenticity and representations that implicitly make claims which overstep their natural boundaries. Poetry that caters to physical desires has detrimental effects on individuals who are more concerned with pleasure, of which the audience is primarily comprised, by providing a sensual experience that validates the importance of the emotional part of the soul above the rational part of the soul— an imbalance that is dangerous for both the individual and the state. By excluding such poetry from Callipolis, Plato sets precedents about the way ideas should be related— a more spartan language that places greater focus on conveying an intellectual truth in language that is not too encumbered by sensual imagery, and which would nourish the part of the soul that should be given most attention.

The intellectual component of poetry also receives a critical evaluation that functions less as a means of completely excluding poetry from the ideal state, and more to exclude unethical uses of poetry, and unethical interpretations of poetry. As previously stated the intellectual poetry is tied more closely to pedagogical approaches, and the application of poetic language as a technical skill. This is not the proper implementation of poetry, and is far from the divine poet's intellectual configuration of their inspired knowledge. By using poetry as a means of satisfying interests whether through gaining influence or making a livelihood, the goal of poetry ceases to be the expression of divine truths, and becomes a tool for dissemblers to express their opinions as though they were presenting knowledge. Along with the trend to misuse and abuse poetry, it is the misinterpretation of poetry in order to substantiate opinions of others that are completely unacceptable; the interpretation of poetry by sophistical poets who only have their opinion to guide them will inevitably abandon their own opinions and accept the opinions of the audience who provide them with a material reward, leading the poets and their poetry, further astray from truth. The goal of intellectual poetry is therefore not what it professes to be— it does not convey and clarify knowledge— but instead hides a lack of knowledge behind the veneer of beautiful language according to apparent interests. The critiques are an important step in further denying the validity of opinions as a source of knowledge, and allows for the ability to distinguish between the mundane and divine poets and interpreters. Once the

distinction is drawn it is revealed that both the philosopher and the works of divine poets may enter Callipolis, while excluding those who only masquerade as philosophers and distort divine poetry according to their limited understanding.

The critique of the truth value of poetry is the most difficult critique for divine poetry to overcome, as it not only seems to remove the possibility of poetry possessing any accurate and ideal knowledge, it appears to extend to the removal of divine poetry, and may include the possible exclusion of ostensibly inspired figures, like the best rhapsodes. However, poetry itself does not seem to be what is under attack in this critique, as it is not the poetry that fails to have truth, but the interpretations of poetry which fail to possess truth; divine poetry conveys truth, but even this poetry is only valuable if it is able to be properly interpreted to reveal its truth content. This critique does not attempt to explicitly bar poetry's inclusion in Callipolis,[95] but instead suggests that those who attempt to present poetry without an understanding of truth, or the possession of knowledge of the Forms should be excluded or censored. The strict regulation of poetic interpretation is reflected in Plato's acceptance of storytellers who produce stories that have socially valuable purposes (*Republic*, 377c). There need to be restrictions on those who produce stories, and similarly, there need to be restrictions on how stories are told; those who attempt to tell stories *must* be able to formulate them towards socially useful ends that are determined by the philosopher kings, who have knowledge of the values the ideal society should be predicated upon. Therefore, divine poetry is not excluded, but it is strictly regulated and interpreted solely in accordance with an ideal framework, not in relation to the historical events themselves.

The idealizing of history allows for the philosophical interpretation of poetry to overcome the myriad problems that the critiques outline. Furthermore, it suggests that, while Plato is critical of poetry throughout the *Republic*, there is still a place for poetry within Callipolis, albeit a more limited and regulated place. The exclusion of both purely sensual, and intellectually rendered poetry serves to differentiate the mundane poet who has no place in the ideal state from the useful divine poetry, that expresses truths that need to be, and can be, interpreted to reflect the social framework that serves as a blueprint for an ideal society. Plato's argument that myths should reflect the social order and be understandable to all members of society, not only to those who possess knowledge, is most valuable in relation to this notion of poetry as a groundwork for society (*Republic*, 415d). The historical truths expressed in divine poetry are less important due to their relation to the world of becoming than the ideal truths, and therefore are made to recede into the background of the philosopher's interpretation. These historical truths are not entirely removed, but

[95] Which is exhibited by Plato himself when he issues the, logistically impossible, challenge to the art appreciators to defend poetry by providing an argument that is free of poetic language and presents a foundation of poetry that includes truth (*Republic*, 607d-e). Only if this occurs will poetry be allowed into the ideal city, but to provide such an account would be similar to the philosopher defending their discourse as containing truth without using dialectic.

are made subservient to the truths that are fundamental to the proper social hierarchy of Callipolis; the interpretation functions as a useful drug[96] for gaining the adherence of those without knowledge by giving an explanation that expresses ideal truth in a way that is comprehensible to those who rely on experience-based opinions (*Republic*, 459c-d).

The critiques, therefore, play an important role in providing a foundation for poetry's acceptance in the ideal state, and outlining how poetry can best be used within it. This serves to legitimize divine poetry, by revealing ways that it escapes the critiques, and comes into a closer relationship to philosophy. If the philosopher is the only figure who has the ability to properly interpret the divine poet's works, there *must* be truth in those works. Furthermore, if there is only opinion being presented in the works of divine poetry they would be open to the interpretation of anyone, and there would be no truly legitimate interpretation as was shown to be false in Socrates' superior interpretation of Simonides, and no legitimate place in Callipolis. The pairing of divine poet and philosopher was seen earlier in the hierarchy of souls from *Phaedrus*, but it is only through the lens of the critiques that their relationship is able to be clarified. Plato's condemnation of poetry does not extend to divine poetry, instead it serves to elevate poetry's stature, separating it from the mundane interpretations that attempt to drag divine poetry down, and intertwine it with the world of appearance. The philosopher kings rely on the works of inspired poetry to discover the historical foundation of their state, and it is within their capability to recognize the truth of the works, and interpret them appropriately. The philosophers are not only kings in Callipolis, they are poets, and rhapsodes as well.

[96] The notion that falsehoods can function as a useful drug (*pharmakon*) is an important point in Plato's discussion of the divinely inspired poetry, as it suggests that poetry can function as a way of presenting socially useful information to those who would otherwise be unable to understand the importance of acting morally based on their capacity to reason; it is useful for producing an ethical concern in individuals who do not have the capacity to arrive at a rational disposition to act ethically. While Plato is using *pharmakon* in a positive way in this instance, the term has a wide variety of uses that extend beyond antidotes, and often suggests poisons (cf. Jacques Derrida's 'Plato's Pharmacy', 1983). The ambiguity of the term reflects the drug's apparent usefulness as it allows for the possibility of creating societies that function around shared ethical norms that have a root in an unquestionable source. The problem is the stories lack a necessary connection to truth, and there is no attempt to give exposition to elucidate the truth content as the audience would be unable to fully comprehend the philosophical position— the falsehoods act purely as persuasive devices that do not draw the audience towards a greater understanding, instead providing them with a convenient lie, not unlike the result in sophistical interpretations of poetry.

Conclusion

Plato's critiques represent a negative definition of poetry, providing an outline of the various problems that poetry must overcome if it is to be seen as a legitimate means of presenting knowledge. When the concept of divine inspiration is placed into the context of the critiques it can be seen as redemptive for the poets, allowing them to rise above the critiques which primarily focus on issues arising from the worldly infringements on poetry— whether they are found in the sensual imagery, or the material interests which influence the interpretation and recitation of poetry. By casting poetry into a tripartite structure, both the concept of divine inspiration and the critiques can be brought into accord and a more constructive definition of poetry that would be commensurable with Plato's greater philosophical system can be found. It is within this type of poetry that the possibility of interpretations that privilege philosophically valuable ideas can be discovered. By producing an idealized account of history that reflects the way the world should unfold, even if that is not equivalent to the way the world has actually unfolded, the ideal city can find a foundation that is not wholly alien— and along with its inclusion in Callipolis, poetry can find a place in philosophical discourse.

The critiques especially highlight problems associated with subjective interpretations of poetry. The infringement of worldly interests into the poetry distract from identifying the veracity of the poetry; poetry is distorted to reflect momentary desires, with the always relevant truth being excluded. The critiques in *Republic* do not collapse poetry into logos, or logos into poetry, though.[97] It is important to be attentive and recognize that while there is strong criticism against poetic form, and against poorly conceived intellectual poetry, there is the possibility of positive compositions of poetry— but the form and intellectual components need to be subservient to the truth. This evaluation of poetry is seen in *Republic*, where poetry does have a use, but needs to be constructed and interpreted by those capable of possessing knowledge. There needs to be an objective meaning to the poetry that advances it beyond merely subjective opinions

[97] Greene sees a difference between logos and muthos in Plato's works, where muthos is presented poetically and allows for the expression of ideas that are beyond what can be easily conveyed (Greene 1918, 71). Robinson echoes this in his discussion of *Timaeus*, arguing that literal language can only be used when things are capable of being experienced, what is discussed in the dialogue requires language that incorporates mythological and analogical language (Robinson 1970, 60); poetry enters into philosophy as a means of bridging the gap between what can be understood, and what needs to be understood. Rachel Bespaloff sees the use of poetic conventions as important, as it allows for the extension of reason in order to save reason (Bespaloff 2005, 92-3); the conceptual apparatus of Plato requires something beyond the physical, and poetic language and myths allow for the surpassing of the boundaries of language that are closely tied to the material world. Robinson views Plato's use of poetic devices to reflect the same impulse that led to Sartre's use of novels to present philosophical concepts (Robinson 1970, 130), there is a compromise made between felicitous representation of the ideas and accessibility of the ideas to the audience; the compromise introduces limitations, including inconsistencies that enter into Plato's various explanations of complex ideas, like the soul or the afterlife, each of which is given a different account over several dialogues (Robinson 1970, 119).

about the works; there is a single way to properly understand poetry, and the one who possesses knowledge is capable of recognizing this. Sophistical poetry cannot achieve objective validation, as the poetry is neither attempting to convey an everlasting truth, nor starting from a position of knowledge. In sophistical uses of poetry the truth is discarded in order to achieve a certain interest and appeal to a specific audience, altering their interpretations as needed. Without the connection to a divine source to learn something true and the inclusion of knowledge in the content of poetry (even if the presentation ultimately obscures the important ideas), a poet cannot represent anything valuable; without a connection to the Forms for knowledge an interpreter cannot recognize and emphasize truth.

Poetry that fails to possess truth is incomplete, just as a soul without the capacity to reason would be incomplete. There needs to be a sense of justice and moderation brought to poetry, where the form, intellect, and truth are brought into balance, just as the appetite, spirit, and reason of the charioteer model of the soul in *Phaedrus*[98] does (*Phaedrus*, 253d-254b). Robinson's evaluation of the charioteer model of the soul suggests that rather than representing a tripartite soul, it is more reflective of a bipartition as the spirited portion follows the reasonable without needing to be forcibly controlled (Robinson 1970, 116-7); the noble horse in Robinson's estimation is just an extension of the driver. This is an interesting argument, but in the *Phaedrus* the black horse is not held in check by the noble horse, the noble horse follows the more willful between the black horse and the driver. This is applicable in the tripartite approach to poetry, where the sensual can corrupt the intellectual and lead to a worldly poetry that is difficult, if not impossible, to redeem.[99]

A comparison between the way the soul is presented in *Republic* and *Phaedrus* and the proposed structure of poetry is constructive in forming an aesthetics that has legitimate philosophical relevance. The appetitive desires of the soul are presented as nearly uninhibited in *Phaedrus* (*Phaedrus*, 254a), the black horse needs to be heavily coerced to be brought into submission by the charioteer. This is not dissimilar to the form of poetry, which we saw as the most immediate, sensually pleasurable aspect eliciting strong desires, and the component of poetry that most captivates the audience. The form of poetry is also the most intimately intertwined with the sensible world, whether it is drawing out the emotions of the audience, or replicating objects of the world in order to delight those in attendance. Furthermore, the difficulty apparent in gaining the obedience of the appetites is reflected in the difficulty of gaining adherence to the deeper

[98] The model of the soul depicted in *Phaedrus* reflects a charioteer where the reasonable capacity is represented by the driver of the chariot, and the appetitive and spirited component are each horses (*Phaedrus*, 246b). The horses are further defined, where the horse on the right (spirited) is white and has a noble look to it and follows orders, and the horse on the left (appetitive) is black and misshapen and requires goading and the whip to be brought under the control of the driver (*Phaedrus*, 253d-e).

[99] This is also reflected in the previously discussed ability for poetry to lead those with the noblest souls astray (*Republic*, 495a-b). If there is a lack of moderation in the poetry there is the potential for the corruption of those who are present at a recitation, regardless of their intellectual potential.

meaning of poetry; appetites distract the mind from contemplation, and distract from the recognition of the truth content available in divinely inspired works of poetry. Just as the philosophically natured individual needs to be able to control their appetites, we saw previously that the divine poet also benefits from an ascetic life. By maintaining a distance between their work and their experiences the inspired poets are able to overcome the predisposition to use their own experiences as a means of representing events from the past— the historical event itself is the imagery that is available to the inspired poet, thus securing the poetry's felicity to the actual events and universal veracity. Imagery alone is not poetry though, and there needs to be an ordering principle that constructs opinions, or knowledge into poetic discourse.

Where the form of poetry is reflected in the black horse, the intellectual component of poetry seems to share similar properties to the noble steed. The noble steed is representative of the spirited aspect of the soul, and appears more ambiguous than its dark companion— it does not lead, it follows. While Robinson's critique captures the ambiguity, the spirited steed does seem to have its own place in the charioteer analogy, just as the spirited nature of the soul is not merely an extension of the reasoning capacity and seems to join itself to the soul's disposition that is most commanding.[100] In this way, the spirited capacity of the soul wants to align itself with the advantageous capacity— appetitive or reasoning— it allies itself with the desires that have the greatest gravity and adds its strength in achieving those desires. The intellectual part of poetry functions in a similar way, as it organizes experiences, ideas, and sensual form in accordance with the strongest desire; the intellectual part of poetic composition mediates between the gratification of worldly interests and how best poetry can be used to convey ideas about reality— however, the mediating impulse can be bent towards specific interests, especially the seductive appetitive pleasures. The critiques do not reveal an intellectual end to poetry, unless it is conveying truth, illustrating the lack of independent intellectual interests, and emphasizing the ambiguous nature of intellect; there are no specific interests assigned to spiritedness either, it carries out the preferable desires of reason, or, reluctantly, the appetites. It is therefore an indispensable tool to the poet, whether mundane or divine, as it provides the ability to organize poetry for presentation and is accessible regardless of the knowledge content or truth value of the poetry. The poet does not need to possess knowledge to be able to use poetry instrumentally.

[100] At least in relation to its usage in *Phaedrus*, as the black horse would likely not be able to overcome both the spirited steed and the rational driver— the noble steed is said to give in to the black horse's insistent pull along with the driver, but this would suggest that both have been overpowered by the sinister horse's tugging towards the desired body; the noble steed seems to move with the black horse before the driver gives in. In *Republic* there seems to be the suggestion that sensual desires that constitute the appetitive soul take up the greatest portion of the soul (as it reflects the masses in the state), but the guardians do not seem to reflect the same character that the noble steed possesses in *Phaedrus*; it is difficult to comprehend a personality which would be entirely balanced between appetite and reason, as the noble steed is not given any motivation, it is compelled to follow commands— which would mean the guardians would require no teaching, as their natural disposition would be to follow orders. For the purposes of this investigation I will follow the lead of *Phaedrus*, as the charioteer seems to reflect a more clear, and amenable, depiction.

Truth, the final component of the tripartite structure of poetry, has the charioteer, reason, as its counterpart. Just as the charioteer needs to be the figure who rightly controls the chariot, the truth needs to be the primary fixture of poetry that determines the work. The failure of the mundane poet, and any figure who uses poetry without knowledge for that matter, is due to the focus placed on achieving interests in the world of appearances; the mundane poet's soul is oriented towards emotional gratification, when it should be oriented towards contemplation. It is the lack of truth that diminishes poetry, and the reliance on imagery organized to legitimize the rule of appetites that necessitates banishment. But not all poetry is guilty of this injustice, just as not all people are guilty of living according to their earthly desires. The poets who have been inspired by a divinity are able to incorporate truths in their poetry, and while these are not the ideal truths that dialectic arrives at, they reflect knowledge that is unchanging and known only through communion with the divine; the greatest poets need to be drawn to their art by the Muses, just as the philosophers must be drawn to their art by Eros— their Muse. Just as the philosophers face challenges in intimating their revelations, the poet has challenges, as outlined and justified by the critiques. It is not just linguistic challenges, but the interpretive challenges that manifest from the obscurity of the language, and the inability to fully encapsulate historical events within a comprehensible framework that inhibits the truth component of poetry and diminishes its value. The various claims to expertise in interpretation distract from understanding the poetry as it is meant to be understood by encumbering it with interests or accents that are not reflective of the author's and Muse's intentions. More importantly in the context of Callipolis the issues associated with poetry, even the best poetry, exist because the depiction of history fails to emphasize Justice.

Divine poetry does not need to be excluded from the ideal state, and while the mundane poets, and pretenders who claim to be the best interpreters find themselves banished, the importance of the historical accounts preserved in the divine works are recognized and absorbed into the fabric of the state. Instead of poetry being available and accessible to those who only possess opinions, it is strictly regulated and reformulated in support of a socially valuable narrative. What distinguishes the problematic poetry from acceptable poetry is analogous to what elevates rhetoric from merely well spoken opinions: the ability to speak to each part of the soul (*Phaedrus*, 277b-c). Divine poetry locates truth as the central component of a work, utilizing form in an intellectual way to communicate with an audience; the goal is not to express certain interests, but to provide a felicitous account of history. Divine poetry does not seek to spread falsehoods, but, as with any work, once it is made separate from its creator it becomes susceptible to being misused.[101] Overcoming the immoral interpretations of poetry requires one with a philosophical disposition

[101] This is most clearly seen in *Phaedrus*, where writing has the problem that it stands silent when presented with criticism (*Phaedrus*, 275d-e); it appears to speak and possess wisdom, but it can only repeat the same statements without further elaboration. Rendall sees this critique extended to any treatise, whether epic poem, speech or play, that becomes fallible due to the potential for questions that would introduce problems and weaken the arguments put

to come into sole possession of the works. Divine poetry needs to be placed into the right hands for it to be properly construed and become a legitimate communicative form for Plato. A natural pairing of the divine poet and philosopher arises from their complementary relationship where the poet brings the past into the present, the philosopher is able to reveal the truth conveyed in the inspired works by interpreting them in such a way that they reflect the ideal truths of reality, not just accuracy to their unfolding in the world of appearances.

Republic includes a myth and an allegory demonstrating similarities between the two figures.[102] Through the Allegory of the Cave (*Republic*, 514a-520a) we are introduced to the philosopher, and in the Myth of Er (*Republic*, 614b-621), we are introduced to a figure, the soldier Er, who is granted a divine image of what is, ostensibly, the past.[103] In each case the figure is inspired,[104] and discovers something true; the philosopher escapes the cave and discovers true reality of the Forms, and Er is granted a vision of the afterlife. The philosopher receives knowledge revealing the true nature of the world of appearances, and is able to recognize the fallibility of opinions formed based on the world of appearances which is revealed as only barely reflecting the Forms. The inspired Er receives historical knowledge, he does not necessarily understand the moral implications of his story, but he seems to understand how the afterlife functions as he is able to explain it with some detail. The practical value of the knowledge in each case comes in the after-life— in *Phaedrus* it is the philosophic disposition that allows for the breaking of the cycle of rebirth (or at least reducing the number of reincarnations and therefore time spent in the cycle) (*Phaedrus*, 249a), and in *Republic* it is the ability to choose a life well that is the mark of a just individual (*Republic*, 621b-d). The philosopher and divinely inspired poet[105] are both able to use the knowledge inspired in them to choose

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forward (Rendall 1977, 172). When the author is absent their works becomes vulnerable to those who do not understand them (which, in the dialogue, leads to Phaedrus' poor defence of Lysias' speech), or to those who question it because it is lacking in some area, but never discover a satisfying answer.

[102] The myth actually performs two duties, it illustrates an inspired figure bearing knowledge about the past, and also serves as an interpretation and philosophical reconfiguration of a classical poem, with Socrates' version emphasizing the truth content contained within the original work.

[103] It is debatable whether the scene Er discusses is indeed in the past, but the legendary status of the figures he sees in the afterlife would suggest that they were legendary by the time of his vision, and Er himself appears legendary to Socrates. Furthermore, if the picture of the afterlife in *Phaedrus* is to be believed, each of these figures will have been in the afterlife for a thousand years before drawing lots for their next incarnation (*Phaedrus*, 249b). Furthermore, Er is not the only figure who was brought back to life in Greek myth, Oates points out a number of figures and notes that their resuscitation is the ultimate sign of favouritism, making each figure an "enunciation of 'truth' to men" (Oates 1972, 37-9), which serves to enhance Er's reputation.

[104] Plato gives no direct reason for the philosopher to turn around and ascend from the cave to reality in *Republic*, they are mysteriously released from their bonds (*Republic*, 515e). In *Phaedrus* the philosopher is among the inspired, which could be the impetus to discover reality; *Symposium* provides an answer as well, where Eros is the inspiration that guides the philosophically disposed towards a love of the Forms (*Symposium*, 211c). In either case, it is divine inspiration that leads to the philosopher turning around and seek a way out of the shadows.

[105] This may be a stretch in the case of Er, but he is clearly inspired with a vision by a divinity, and the historical nature of his vision separates him from the other three inspired crafts outlined in *Phaedrus*; he does not view the Forms, he does not see the future, and he is not presenting himself as a priest.

their next life well— an important notion for Plato's support for reincarnation, and his recollective epistemology.

It is not a selfish lust for knowledge that comes with inspiration. While the philosopher and the divine poet are able to use their knowledge to influence their own lives, neither is content to only use their knowledge to help themselves. The individual who escapes the cave does not remain outside, they return and try to explain the difference between the shadows and what lies beyond the shadows (*Republic*, 516e-517a)— albeit, not always in a successful way, as the cave-dwellers may ignore or slander the individual trying to remove their blindness. Er finds himself in a similar situation, he is bade by the divinities to share his vision with others (*Republic*, 614d), and he clearly does so. The compulsion to share is a primary component of divinely inspired poetry, as previously discussed the poet needs to express the vision, there is a compulsion to record history for posterity. But, like the philosophers, the poets' good-will in sharing their knowledge may not be reflected in the treatment of their works, with the truth being misunderstood and distorted according to interests. There is an inherently social component to both poetry and philosophy, there is a recognition that the content is universal and applicable to everyone;[106] but there is also the recognition, at least on the part of the philosopher, that there is danger in providing knowledge to those incapable of respecting its importance, and this is reflected in the limitations assigned to interpreting poetry as the false interpretations only serve to hinder understanding, and obscure accurate interpretations.

The divine poets are not entirely different from the philosophers, and their poetry, like philosophical discourse, reflects the three attitudes that comprise the soul. Plato's critiques outline a variety of problems that arise in poetry, but each of those critiques relates to the misuse of poetry, and therefore becomes support for inspired poetry. There is a clear respect for the roots of the traditions Plato finds himself in, but it is only by separating the roots sprouting from knowledge, from the weeds of opinion that he is able to reassemble the truth conveyed through the divine works; it is only by philosophically interpreting the works that they can be corrected and returned to their proper foundational station. Plato's use of poetry is not accidental, and the critiques do not damage the credibility of all poetry. Poetry is recognized as a tool for expressing truths, or falsehoods if misused, in ways that are understandable regardless of the soul's greatest disposition, but it is only when poetry is crafted in such a way that it resists interpretations that fail to include truth that poetry reaches its apogee. Inspired poetry is an indispensable source of history that is otherwise inaccessible, and the divine poets become figures worthy of praise across the dialogues because of their connection to the Muses. By imbuing poetry with an objective meaning Plato does not eradicate poetry, he saves it.

[106] Attention can be drawn to another connection between inspired poetry and philosophy, as the epic poets Homer and Hesiod take a Panhellenic view in their poetry, it is meant to be understandable and valued by all members of Greece, not only certain states (Rosen 1997, 463), which reflects the universality of Plato's philosophical project— he is not writing for Athens, he is writing for everyone.

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