Research Article | Education | ISSN No: 2839-5085 | Volume : 1 | Issue : 4 | August 2026

Plato's Views on Art and Literature: A Critical Study of Plato

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Abstract

This research paper looks at the complicated and often hard to understand connection between Platos ideas and the place of poetry in a society. As everyone knows, philosophy and art often take paths and this is clearly shown in Platos thoughts. By looking at writings such as The Republic, Ion and Phaedrus the study explains the "Ancient Quarrel" between philosophy and poetry. It mainly looks at why Plato said that imitative artists should be removed from Kallipolis. The analysis breaks this idea into three parts: first the question of reality and how things really are; second, the problem that artists might not have real knowledge; and third the worry that poetry can harm the human soul in a bad way, which is still talked about in our country today. The paper also says that Plato didn't hate beauty itself. He was more worried about truth and the balance of the human mind. It is interesting to see that Plato himself uses stories and dialogue to question poets. This is something interesting to notice. At the time the study points out a "Third Realm" where certain kinds of art like songs that celebrate good values are allowed because they help people stay together. In the end the research reminds us that art has an effect on the way people think, sometimes even more than logic and this idea is still very important today especially when we see how media and education work, in modern times.

Keywords; *Mimesis, Platonic Idealism, Theory of Forms, Censorship, Aesthetics, Didacticism, The Republic.*

Introduction

Plato's philosophical system exists in a society where the writings of Homer and Hesiod were the way people learned about right and wrong. As everyone knows back in the days people learned a lot through stories. For the Greeks epic poetry was not for fun; it was like a book that showed how to live. It showed ideas of courage, fairness. Even explained what the gods were like. Because of this influence poets had a lot of power over how people thought. They shaped the way people acted and what they believed. This is something that happens with people too when stories guide how they

behave. The problem in Plato's thinking comes when he decides to get rid of poets from Kallipolis, which's his idea of an "Ideal City." This move seems strange because Plato himself was very good at writing. His books have characters, deep thoughts and creative stories—like the famous Allegory of the Cave. Even though he used stories and symbols to explain ideas he still thought that old poetry could be bad for a society that is balanced and logical. Plato's worry about art starts with the idea of mimesis, which means copying. He says that the world we see is not the world. It is a copy of higher truths, like Justice and Beauty. So when art copies this world it is copying a copy, which's very far from truth. "The artist is a creator of appearances not of truth." From this point of view poets may make things that're not real. For example if a child keeps seeing heroes crying or gods acting badly the child might start to believe that is okay of learning the truth through thinking. This is a problem even in our country today. The main point of this study is that Plato was not against beauty or art. He was trying to protect the mind. He thought that poetry has feelings and can influence people without using logic. This can hurt a person's ability to think. By controlling poets Plato wanted to protect the people of Kallipolis from confusion inside themselves. According to him a calm mind should be guided by logic. If art only plays with feelings and ignores truth it can make a person feel unsettled. In the end removing poets was Plato's move to make sure that truth is the most important thing, in life not affected by the nice but wrong ideas of stories.

Objectives of the study

- To analyze the Metaphysical Critique: Art as "thrice removed from reality."
- To examine the Psychological Critique: The effect of art on the irrational part of the soul.
- To evaluate the Political Implications: The necessity of censorship for the stability of the State.
- To reconcile Plato's philosophical prose with his condemnation of poetry.

Literature Review

The discussion about why Plato rejected poets has slowly changed from defensive ideas to modern views that also appreciate Plato's own writing talent. As we all know ideas grow with time. People start seeing them in new ways. By studying these opinions we can better understand how art, emotion and truth are connected in Western thinking something also commonly discussed among Indian people in today's academic circles. The first strong reply to Plato came from Aristotle. In Aristotle's famous work Poetics Aristotle did not agree that poetry and drama harm society. Plato believed that watching tragic heroes suffer would make people weak. Aristotle gave a new idea called catharsis. Aristotle explained that art actually helps the mind. It gives a space where people can release strong feelings like fear and sadness. Of making people irrational a good tragedy helps them understand emotions better and feel balanced. According to Aristotle poetry is even "more philosophical" than history because it talks about truths, not just specific events, which is quite interesting to think about. Years later Sir Philip Sidney responded to Plato in his work An Apology for Poetry. Sidney gave a meaning to the idea that poets "deceive." Sidney said this is not wrong but actually creative. Sidney mentioned that the poet "nothing affirms and never lieth." Unlike scientists or historians who talk about facts poets create a world that encourages people to become better. Sidney believed that philosophy shows the path but poetry gives the push to walk on it which we can relate to even in our country today. In the century writer and thinker Iris Murdoch again

discussed this issue in The Fire and the Sun. Murdoch studied the competition between philosophers and artists. Murdoch suggested that Plato's dislike for art actually came from Plato's respect for its power. Murdoch said Plato saw art as a substitute for real truth like a false light that may stop people from searching for real knowledge and understanding. In times scholars have started focusing on the irony in Plato's own writing. This idea, called the "Literary Plato " shows the contradiction of a person who criticised poets but wrote in a poetic way himself. Many experts say that Plato's dialogue style is like drama, which keeps readers involved and thinking of giving fixed answers. Modern studies also suggest that Plato's idea of removing poets may not be fully literal. It could be a teaching method or a warning like telling people to be careful about what they believe. By using stories, like the Chariot Allegory or the Ring of Gyges Plato shows that when storytelling is guided by reason it can actually help people move towards truth and higher understanding.

Methodology

The study of Plato's rejection of poets uses a mixed method approach to understand the philosophical reasons behind his strict control over art. We all know that one method alone is not enough to understand ideas. So by combining reading of texts with historical background this research tries to give a full and clear picture of Plato's thinking. The main method used here is Qualitative Hermeneutics, which means reading and interpreting original texts. The study mainly looks at The Republic, Books II and III where the education system is explained and Book X where Plato clearly rejects imitative art. It also studies Ion, which talks about inspiration and skill and Phaedrus, which explains the connection between madness, beauty and writing. This detailed reading helps us understand how Plato builds his ideas step by step something we also try in our country while studying texts. Another important part of this method is comparing Plato's idea of reality. The study explains the difference between the World of Forms which's perfect and eternal and the World of Appearances which is temporary and based on what we see. Lastly the study uses context to explain these ideas better. During Plato's time in Greece society was slowly changing from oral storytelling to written philosophy. Earlier poetry was the way to pass knowledge and values but now logical thinking was becoming important. Plato's criticism can be seen as an effort to shift power from poets to philosophers, the philosopher-king. This change shows a movement, towards logical thinking and structured learning, which is also commonly seen among Indian people as education systems develop over time.

Analysis

Plato's main concern comes from his idea of reality. He says that true reality exists in the "Forms," which are perfect and eternal models of everything. The world we see around us is an imperfect copy of these Forms. When an artist paints or a poet writes they are not showing the essence but only copying what already exists in the physical world. This creates an order of truth: Reality > Physical World > Imitation For example the perfect idea of a bed is the real truth. A carpenter makes a bed, which is already one step away from truth. Then a painter draws that bed, which becomes a copy of a copy. So from this view art moves us away from truth. Brings us closer to illusion. This is something Plato strongly warns about. The second idea is about knowledge. Plato explains that there are three types of people connected to any object: the user, the maker and the imitator. The User: Like a flute player, who knows how to use it and understands its purpose.

The Maker: The person who makes the flute by following the user's needs. The Imitator: The artist who only copies how the flute looks, without knowing how it works. Plato says that artists do not have knowledge. For example poets like Homer talk about war, politics and medicine. They are not experts in these areas. This can mislead people as they may believe these ideas without questioning them. It is commonly seen among people also when stories influence thinking. Lastly Plato talks about the impact of art. He was worried about how young people learn from stories. Many poems showed gods and heroes behaving badly like lying or showing much emotion. Since young minds are easily influenced Plato feared that people would copy behaviour. If even gods are shown as imperfect then people may lose their sense of right and wrong. In his society art should only show good values like courage, control and justice. So removing poets was, like a step to protect society. Making sure that people are not negatively influenced by examples shown in art.

Discussion

One of the interesting contradictions is what we call the "literary Plato." Of writing simple and direct theory Plato uses stories and conversations. His dialogues have settings, real-like characters and deep emotional situations. Characters like Socrates are shown with detail almost like heroes in stories, which is something commonly seen among Indian people when we connect with characters. By using storytelling methods like metaphor and irony Plato actually uses art to question art itself. This shows that Plato was not fully against art. Against how it was used earlier. Plato uses the power of stories to guide people towards thinking. In this way Plato's writings become a kind of " poetry" that replaces blind belief in traditional stories. Another important idea is the difference between stories and what Plato calls the Noble Lie. In The Republic Plato says that poets should be removed because they may mislead people. At the same time the state can use certain stories for social good. One example is the Myth of the Metals, where people are said to be born with qualities like gold, silver or bronze. This shows that Plato was not fully against ideas but he was concerned about their purpose. If a story creates confusion or wrong thinking the story is harmful. If the story helps society stay peaceful and united the story can be useful. This creates a balance between truth and practical needs, which we can also relate to in our country today. Lastly the dialogue Ion gives an idea about art. Here Socrates says that poets are not experts but they are inspired by divine power. Like a chain this inspiration flows from a source to the poet and then to the audience. "The poet is a light and winged and holy thing. There is no invention in him until he has been inspired." This idea makes the issue more complex. If art comes from inspiration the art has a special value beyond logic. At the same time the art can be risky because poets may not fully understand what they create. So Plato accepts the beauty of art. Removes its authority as knowledge. In the end we see that Plato was deeply affected by art. Plato was also careful, about the power of art to influence human thinking without logic.

Results

The study shows clearly that Plato did not completely reject poets. He was not against creativity itself. Instead he was against emotional imitation. In his view any art that shows ideas or encourages bad behavior can harm the mind. Art that follows reason and truth can be helpful especially in teaching. The main point here is that Plato wanted to make art a part of philosophy. In this vision every kind of expression should help create balance and order in the Kallipolis. An important finding of this study is the idea of a "Third Realm" in

the Ideal City. Even though Plato rejects types of poetry he still permits some kinds of creative work. He supports: Hymns to the Gods: Songs that show the unchanging nature of divine powers. Praises of Famous Men: Stories that highlight people and heroes offering strong moral examples for young minds. By allowing these Plato accepts that humans are naturally drawn to rhythm and stories which's also common among Indian people. He does not want to take the love for beauty. He wants to guide it in the direction. This "Third Realm" acts as a bridge, between the world and higher truth. It shows that Plato's goal was to create a form of art that supports thinking and wisdom not just emotions.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study clearly shows that Plato's rejection of poets was not an careless act of censorship. As we all know his ideas go deeper. It was based on philosophical and moral reasons. By giving importance to the "Forms" than to what we see and feel Plato wanted to build a society where reason becomes the main guide for understanding everything. His criticism works like a protection for the soul making sure that the attractive nature of art does not confuse people or disturb their thinking. The idea of the "Ancient Quarrel" between philosophy and poetry is still very relevant today. In times we can see this conflict in discussions about media, education and influence. Just like Plato questioned the effect of stories on young people today we also think about how movies, social media and digital content affect our minds. In our country also this topic is commonly discussed when we talk about education and values. The main concern of Plato—whether stories help build character or spoil it—still continues today. It makes us think about the role of creators and also the responsibility of the audience in understanding what they see and hear. In the end Plato's ideas act like a warning about the strong power of art and beauty. His writings show that stories and images can directly affect emotions, sometimes even more than logic. By asking art to prove its value through truth and usefulness Plato reminds every generation to be careful. He tells us that the search for truth needs awareness especially when imagination can easily attract us. His decision to remove poets can be seen as a message for humanity to move away, from illusion and focus on thinking, guided by knowledge and the aim of achieving the highest good.

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