

PLATO'S IDEAS ON POETRY

Merxhan AVDYLI, PhD. C.

Universit of Gjilan "Kadri Zeka", Faculty of Education, merxhan.avdyli@uni-gjilan.net



Article history:

Accepted 01 August 2019

Available online 31 December 2019

Keywords:

Plato

aesthetics

Poetry

Idea

the beauty

ideal

philosophy

time

creation

culture

imitation

dialogue

literature

A b s t r a c t

In his most important and most voluminous creation "The State" (Republic, Politeia), Plato included the most characteristically philosophical concepts which were an expression of his interests. Apart various fields of teaching, such metaphysics, theology, ethics, psychology, pedagogy, State system, which result from this creation, art and poetry could not go without being included as well (including the music). Otherwise, the Plato himself, in young age, except with mathematics he also dealt with poetry by believing that he is going to be more dedicated to it. But, it seems that acquaintance with the Socrates since he was 20 years old changed his mind and he was fully committed to the philosophy. His general philosophical reviews sublimating his philosophical ideas, which arise on the basis of the idea, as an alpha and omega of every human been in the world, took Plato away from poetry by making him more and more torrential in philosophy and more and more critical, even more cynical towards the poetry.

Introduction

Plato (427-347 b.c) is one of the most prominent thinkers and philosophers of Greek antiquity.

The real name of Plato was Aristokle. He was named Plato based on the Greek word "Plato" which means "wide". It se said that he named "Plato" due to his athletic body. But, apart well build body; Plato had also well-built wider thinking. He was Athenian which came from a reach family. He was even known as a founder of the Academy in his town of birth on the doors of which he had written: "Let no one ignorant of geometry enter" (Gerliq, 1986).

The Plato's influence on general philosophical thinking is great and universal. His dialogues are popular which remained as philosophical works are prominent due to their stylistic aspect as well, where we have a meeting point of philosophical thinking and esthetical approach. Sometimes it seems that the border between the philosophy and art vanishes. This conclusion is reached also by historians of aesthetics, Gilbert and Kun, by dividing the Plato's idea into small parts, where they say that "if the art is weak philosophy, the philosophy is an excellent art" (Gilbert, 1969).

In his most important and most voluminous creation "The State" (Republic, Politeia), Plato included the most characteristically philosophical concepts which were an expression of his interests. Apart various fields of teaching, such metaphysics, theology, ethics, psychology, pedagogy, State system, which result from this creation, art and poetry could not go without being included as well (including the music). Otherwise, the Plato himself, in young age, except with mathematics he also dealt with poetry by believing that he is going to be more dedicated to it. But, it seems that acquaintance with the Socrates since he was 20 years old changed his mind and he was fully committed to the philosophy. His general philosophical reviews sublimating his philosophical ideas, which arise on the basis of the idea, as an alpha and omega of every human been in the world, took Plato away from poetry by making him more and more torrential in philosophy and more and more critical, even more cynical towards the poetry (Ibid).

However, Plato is the first philosopher which raised the issues of poetry in his writings: relation between the poet's poetry and the State and society. But, he is also first Greek philosopher which emphasized divisive elements between philosophy and poetry.

It cannot be said precisely what made Plato to abandon his poetical world, to move away and to deal fully with the focus on the idea in his philosophical reviews and puts on the stinger of the critics of his poetry.

In the focus of our interest this time are not his poetries, nor his general reviews on the idea and matter, but only his idea on the poetry and poets, respectively on his ripples towards the poetry and poets.

Plato's, which in the fundamentals of the development of his concepts puts the idea, he dealt with the concept of good, the concept of beauty and art. In his reviews, in his popular dialogues, which are known for their eloquence of expression, the tendency of persuasion and argumentation, one may notice that his thoughts, despite the essence and simply philosophical orientation take esthetical characteristics. Furthermore, the beauty is fundamental esthetical category and according to Plato they should be raised over all other philosophical and esthetical concepts. Despite the sublimation of this category, the metaphysics of beauty contravenes his theory on arts, by seeing it completely in the service of the ideal State, which he attempts to build. In this State, according to Plato, poets should have no place. This is the most concrete exclusion done to the poets for which he has his reasons which he excludes from his reviews. So, even the life of poets, due to their importance, ranks it in the sixth place, after the philosophers.

1. The Rise of Plato Against Poetry and Poets

Plato, in his idea for the creation of ideal State, could not avoid other societal activities. In this respect, he speaks about poetry with the greatest contempt, while about the poets he speaks as for destroyers, not only of the idea of establishing an ideal State, but also as destroyers of the youth.

Thus, it is not only the poetry that disturbs the Plato's ideal State, the poets are those that should be excluded from a State as conceived by him. In this context, Plato is very conservative. His exclusivity is pointed out especially in his very destroying opinions on poets. Almost in the entirety of his reviewing dialogues, where he gets the opportunity to speak, or to express an opinion about poets, he does not hesitate to express himself with contempt which derives from his lack of contravening refrain towards the poets, whom he considers as a category which knows to write beautifully, but does not know to think, which say their opinions in a very beautiful manner, but in the essence they are deceivers and people which with use their pathetically side to cheat on wider masses. Perhaps, the Plato's disagreement is exactly the floor of poetical expressions, which can be overflowing instantly, but, they do not have any core conceptual

form in the essence where the society should be influenced, especially the youth. Plato does not hesitate to draw attention to negative impact that the poetry and those who write verses could have. He, does not to attack Homer and his poetic style which he attempts to censure by marking some parts of his creation which according to Plato should have no place in the Homer's Iliad and Odyssey.

There are several reasons why Plato was positioned against poetry and poets as a bearer of this, according to him, evil in the society (Platon, 1980). Initially, the dilemmas must be removed as regards Plato's lack of knowledge on poetry, but his attention was focused more in the conception of the idea for creation of basis for an ideal State, almost utopic one. Therefore, his views on establishing a State are not equivalent with what the poetry lays down. This was probably influenced also by his withdrawal from poetic writings apart from its highly refined aesthetic feelings.

Although, the imitation (in Latin: *imitatio*) is "one of the key problems of the entire antique art philosophy" (Gerliq, 1986), however, Plato's understanding of arts, simply as an imitation or the shadow of the shadow (Plato, 1980), has the basis for his contemptuous attitude towards art their bearers, furthermore towards the poetry and poets.

Plato deals with the issue of poetry in the third book of "State". Through his dialogues, initially philosophical ones, he enters in the issue of reviews of the poetry in which by seeking an ideal purity he asks the poets to somehow not rush to write what it does not correspond to the truth. He is highly critical towards those poets which do not hesitate to present the goods with an image that does not correspond to the reality. In his request for the poets to have self-censorship and to not display in such a brutal manner their views towards the goods, he requests that even the top poet of antique Greece Homer to give up some verses, which according to Plato not only do not honour him, but they can also have negative influence on weakening the ideal State to which he is committed and in the demise of society, especially the young part of the population. Before all other motives, it is the preservation the State's and Society's honour that motivated and incited Plato's aversion towards the poetry and poets.

By further expressing of his idea on poetry, Plato, says that the poetry is imitation of imitation of essences in order to express openly regarding this issue that "The pleasure is the greatest deception", with which he expresses the lack of consideration for poets and the poetry and to conclude that the poetry is equivalent with the pleasure and the pleasure is not equivalent with the value, says Plato, by decreasing thus even more the importance and the value of poetic art, which derives from the poetry as well.

It has already been said above that Plato had good knowledge on the poetry. He also had a sense to write poetry. Even most of his philosophical reviews, notwithstanding what is about, has great meeting points with the poetry.

The Plato's attacks and opposition towards the poets are also expressed in the creation "Protection of Socrates". By analysing the inspiration of poets Plato distinguishes their inspiration, but by emphasizing that they, despite this, often are not able to know what they say, because according to Plato, the poets do not receive inspiration from their inner but from outside, it is the muses which inspire them (Ibid).

Meanwhile, to reinforce his opinion of breaking the youth's voyage by poets, Plato states that "poets are incorrect typewriters," he adds, "poets believe they are in other actions in the wise, but they are not " (Platon, 1976).

Plato also deals with this issue in the dialogues of Ijon, in which the main hero is now the poet interpreter. Even here Plato by opposing the traditional view that poets are wise and human teachers emphasize the blindness of poets and performers of their works. In this plane Plato's poetry's work compares it with the attractive and unconscious magnitude of the magnet (Gilbert, 1969). After all, Plato is convinced that not only poetry but all art is just a mirror and nothing else. His tendencies towards the poets and poetry Plato expresses and emphasizes also in "Feast", but not directly, such as "State" or "Iyon", as "Feast" more deals with beauty in general (Ibid).

2. Plato's Requests Towards Homer

In most of Plato's dialogues, poetry and poets, the central place of voice Homer and his epic, for which Plato has special requirements, demands that in order to complement the moral codes of being of the idealistic state are defined as censorship and self-censorship.

Therefore, seeing in this light Plato's request to Homer not to present the gods by crying or laughing, it can be said that this is a requirement that in some way precedes further trends in the literary developments of censorship and self-censorship, although this, in this case, is mainly concerned with Plato's attitude to the creation of the idealistic state. Thus, Plato, seeking from Homer and other poets to remove various parts from their works, he urged them "not to be angry at why these and similar places are deleted, not why they are not poetic, and why they are not content with them, but because they are more poetic, the less they should listen to the boys and the people who need to be free and who should rather have fear of slavery than of death" (Platon, 1980).

Plato poses clear demands, especially to Homer, disagreeing with many of his work and demanding the removal of all those parts, whether terrible or frustrated, or those that Plato considers to be unstable or even untrue, by mentioning any part of the actions of Zeus, Achilles, Hector, Patroclus, Priam, Tezeu etc.

Therefore, Plato's attack on Homer's work, based on idealism and on the protection of some kind of abstract morality, becomes even tougher when Plato can sublimate his opinion on the subject in these words, arguing that "the poets and myths makers, for the most part, speak badly about people" (Ibid).

3. Do Poets Identify With Imitation and Do They Touch the Truth?

It is interesting to point out and emphasize Plato's approach to the appearance, by the poets, of the actions of the good and the unworthy or the bad, as he shares it. Plato is of the opinion that the poet during the imitation phase, as it is said, of the actions of the good people is worth identifying with them, somehow, while not worthy of the poet, which in any way be identified with the action of unworthy or bad people, saying that with such irritating imitation should not be made his mirror (Ibid).

Much more specific and clearer in his attacks on poetry and poets, Plato is in the tenth "State Book", where he is presented with the firm demand that in state building he has clarified the position of poetry and poets, which pose great risk to the ideal State. Plato for this says: "If she (monaural poetry: M.A.) imitates, we did not want to accept it. Now that we have examined each and every kind of soul, as it seems to me, it is even clearer that such poetry should not be accepted at all" (Ibid).

In the section about Plato's mimetics, he continues to pose numerous issues and dilemmas for poetry. In his review, speaking on the subject, he raises the dilemma whether it is possible that the poet as imitator who is able to answer even in the spheres and areas for which he is willing to write. He in one case calls sophisticated poets, even magicians. Meanwhile, it raises the dilemma of whether poets can do what they imitate.

Plato compared a doctor's healing work and imitation of the poet's words to the doctor, addresses Homer and other poets, asking whether any of the poets have come to cure someone as Asclepius (Ibid).

In reviewing this issue, he further ironizes Homer's work by posing direct questions about his imitations, as Plato expressed, about their wars and development, the rule of state, and the education of people, reducing the value of positive influence on

society and public life, not only of Homer, but of all the poets. To illustrate this, Plato, attacking Homer considers that his influence and other poets in public life is trivial, for he adds "as Homer and Hesiod had been able to teach virtue to people, then their contemporaries certainly will not let the rhapsodist to wander around the world, hold them stronger than the gold themselves, and force them to stay in them, and if they do not want to do so would go after them wherever they would go, until they gained enough education" (Ibid).

Further, Plato gives an interesting conclusion after all his contemplation of imitation: "All the creators, beginning with Homer, are just imitators of the images of true virtue and all that they sing for songs, and the truth does not even touch it" (Ibid). Do the poets really touch the truth, it is unknown even today.

References

1. Bart, Rolan, Književnost, mitologija, semiologija (Literature, Mythology, Semiology), Belgrade, 1971.
2. Eco, Umberto, Si bëhet një punim diplome (How to Become a Diploma), "Attempt", Tirana, 1997.
3. Lotman, J. V., Predavanja iz strukturalne poetike (Lectures from structural poetics) "Matica Hrvatska", Zagreb, 1965.
4. Lotman, J. V., Struktura umetničkog teksta (Structure of the Art Text), "Nolit", Belgrade, 1976.
5. Slammig, Ivan, Disciplina mašte (Discipline of imagination), Zagreb, 1971.
6. Welek, Rene - Austin Warren, Teoria e letërsisë (Theory of Literature), "Onufri", Tirana, 2015.
7. Gërliq Danko, Leksikoni i filozofëve (The lexicon of philosophers) „Rilindja“, Prishtinë, 1986.
8. Everet Gilbert, Katarina - Helmut Kun, Istorija estetike (History of aesthetics) “Kultura», Beograd, 1969.
9. Platoni, Shteti (State), “Rilindja”, Prishtinë, 1980.
10. Gërliq, Danko, Estetika – Historia e problemeve filozofike (Aesthetics - The History of Philosophical Problems), “Rilindja”, Prishtinë, 1986.
11. Platon, Odbrana Sokratova – Fedon - Ijon (Socrates' Defense - Fedon - Ion), BIGZ, Beograd, 1976.
12. Zejnullah Gruda “E Drejta Ndërkombëtare Publike”, Publishing house “Furkan”, Skopje, 2007.