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For the Sake of the Intellect, Let Them Have Art:
A Possible Reconciliation for the Value of Mimetic Arts in the *Republic*

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to my mother, Rosalyn Tolliver, for teaching me that anything is possible, for her endless devotion, unconditional love, and unwavering support.

And to my two, four-legged feline children, Harley and Oscar. I love you!

§. Introduction

Art allows for the individual soul to utter what the conscious mind cannot. From prehistoric cave drawings to depictions of religious relics, to the works of art created by the humanistic masters of the Renaissance, serve as indicators that artistic expression permeates our world and transcends cultures and time. Artistic expression serves as an instinctive outlet in humanity's pursuit for harmony, rhythm, and balance: it is often regarded as an experience of the mysterious and an expression of the imagination. In some cultures, art is used in ritualistic and symbolic functions: it can be vehicle for communication, an outlet for entertainment, or a movement aimed at political change. Art is sometimes created for the purposes of social inquiry and psychological healing. Art serves a motivated purpose both intrinsically as personal expression and extrinsically in that it provokes critical reflection and challenges societal norms. The ruminating idea presented here is that art—as an object and as a practice—adds another distinctly human dimension to our lives by enabling us to connect to the world around us which motivates us to connect to something higher. There seems to be something, either inherently valuable within the artwork itself, or inherently valuable about art as a practice, or both. And in both cases, it is something we as human beings continue to pursue, to preserve, and to extend as a diverse but unifying practice.

Despite all this evidence *for* the validity of the arts, Plato establishes a harsh critique of the arts in the *Republic*. In books II and III, he suggests that the beginning of any process is the most important, especially for the young and tender. He goes on to say that when a person is the most malleable, she will take on the pattern of

behavior the influencer wishes to impress upon them (377a–b). In the same passage, he argues that one of the many problematic outcomes for a society that embraces art is that art can corrupt the youth. He says that the young cannot distinguish the real from the allegorical, and the opinions they absorb at that age are so hard to erase as to be potentially unalterable (378d).

Art, like the body, is physical. For Plato, it stands to inhibit one's ability to share in Truth, and ultimately, the Good, which both are nonphysical. In book IV, he provides reasons to suggest art does this by rousing the passions to align with one's base desires, which always implies a movement against or resistance to reason. So, Plato's solution, which I will further elaborate in the sections to come, is to impose a strict censorship on, or even banishment of, the arts.

One may ask, "Why focus on the argument against the arts from the *Republic*?" The assumptions that Plato uses to formulate his arguments are obsolete. Professional philosophers are far removed from speaking about the Forms. They do not consider this framework when engaging on matters regarding epistemology, philosophy of science, metaethics, and so forth. So why put forth the effort to address an argument that seems to lack any relevance or merit in a contemporary context?"

Suppose for instance, Plato's take on art extends beyond the limited realm of the performative arts that depict the misguided actions of Greek heroes and gods and how those arts positively or negatively impact the educational development of a citizen. Rather, I argue that what he means by "art" is the seemingly all-encompassing realm of artifacts and performative expressions that reflect our overall cultural

condition.¹ Art today, as Plato would understand it, includes art *qua* performance or entertainment. Authority figures such as parents, school districts, educational boards, and governments engage in a perennial discussion that asks what sorts of arts are appropriate for public consumption and, at its most heated depths, what sorts of arts are appropriate for children. Let us assume that children possess the most impressionable natures, and that those who are the most impressionable are the most susceptible to corruption. One is left to ask, if children are easily impressionable, thereby making them the most susceptible to corruption, then do we (as parents, educators, government, society-at-large) want to expose our children to morally questionable arts—which, based on Plato’s writings and many of our own lived experiences, threatens the corruption of our fledgling citizens’ moral psychology? Plato argues that the youth are unable to reason in such a way as to make healthy decisions about their consumption of ideas and says that “we should probably take the utmost care to ensure that the first stories they hear about virtue are the best ones for them to hear” (378e).² Thus, in the case of the arts specifically, one is tempted to view Plato’s argument in new light and agree that censorship, especially in the case of children *is* not only necessary, but should be upheld as a best practice.³

¹ Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), 10

² Havelock’s interpretation of Plato’s response is that “[mimetic] poetry as educational discipline poses a moral danger [as well as] an intellectual one. It confuses a man’s values and renders him characterless, and it robs him of any insight of the truth. Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 6.

³ The concern for censorship need not only apply to children but is also discussed when it comes to exposing certain kinds of entertainment to the public masses.

On the other side of the camp, an advocate for the arts, the *aesthete*,⁴ may conclude that Plato's suggestion to ban the arts from the *Republic*—or our modern lives—is like sentencing a person to death without due process or a fair trial.⁵ It seems utterly unfair and wrong. One reason for this reaction could be because despite its “moral danger,” there still exists something inherently valuable about art: something riveting, mysterious, and special. This value extends to appreciating the relationship between the artist and her craft or practice; understanding the global relevance of art as a vehicle for communication and a catalyst for social change. All of which lends itself to a feeling that the inherent value of art ought to be preserved. However, as previously mentioned, when considering Plato's concern in the case of the public (and more specifically, of children) as well as the consequential impediments of being exposed to morally questionable arts, one may easily give credence to his argument despite their artistic affections. It seems justified to suggest that we do not want our children emulating morally questionable activities, nor do we want to expose them to behaviors or input that stand to corrupt their moral character development.

This paper explores the possibility of a cohesive philosophy that recognizes both Plato's concern about art as a moral danger and art as something worth preserving. Its goal is not to outright disagree with Plato. Rather it seeks first to understand the potential dangers of art as he understood them. To accomplish this task, I unpack his argument that the soul is tripartite (Platonic moral psychology) and

⁴ By *aesthete*, I mean to refer to “a person who affects great love of art, music, poetry... [and other fine and performative arts,] and who indifference to practical matters [or moral consequences for being exposed to such arts].” (see dictionary.com)

⁵ Havelock's notes that part of this ‘insensitivity’ to the preservation of the arts could be a response to the cultural and religious implications of his time. Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 12.

the principle of specialization (Plato's guiding principle for finding justice within the macrocosm and justice within the individual). From there, once it is understood fully what motivates his concern, the paper's secondary goal is to resituate his argument and suggest that an overlap exists between art's aesthetic (intellectual) dimension and its moral dimension. I maintain that through negotiation and compromise, a reclassified understanding of the imitative arts can co-exist in this intellectual dimension and the moral dimension. Next, I argue that Plato's problem with art is not within the aesthetic dimension but rather stems from his fear of what might happen when art ignites the passions to side with one's desires: promulgation of ignorance, disruption of the harmonious balance within the individual, and ultimately, corruption of the Kallipolis. To support this claim, this paper offers examples of contemporary art forms that highlight the distinction between those arts that are a kind of vessel for intellectual engagement and arts that appeal to one's base desires. Finally, I show that art understood as a vehicle for critical reflection should alleviate Plato's concern about its moral danger and supports Plato's thesis on the individual and the acquisition for knowledge. I accomplish this by drawing on Plato's Divided Line theory and the Allegory of the Cave.

In the first section, I provide a definition of art to which Plato is referencing in the *Republic*. Next, I offer a thorough explanation of Plato's utopian educational project and how this project leads to a discussion on art. Plato understood art to be a kind of imitation and distinguishes art as copy making from art as impersonation. His argument against art as copy making is grounded in his Theory of Forms, whereas his argument against art as impersonation is predicated on the Principle of

Specialization, which I explore in the third and fourth sections. Additionally, while both arguments are intended to bring to light the impossibility of art cohabitating with morality in the Utopian city, I note in the same section that Plato launches his attack from two different angles: the first is motivated by his epistemic concern regarding the nature of art and the acquisition of knowledge, while the second addresses his moral concern regarding the psychological development of one's soul.

§. Contemporary versus Traditional: Plato's Definition of Art

Art, in and of itself, is difficult to define. In contemporary thought, philosophers have argued whether art can be defined, and for or against the usefulness of definitions of art.⁶ Let us presuppose that art can be defined. In such instance, there are two camps in which definitions of art might reside: the contemporary and the traditional. Contemporary definitions of art are of two main sorts. The first is a more modernist, conventional sort which focuses on the institutional features of art, emphasizing how art breaks away from traditional notions of art and changes over time.⁷ The latter is less conventional in that it makes use of a broader, more traditional concept of aesthetic properties.⁸ Traditional definitions of art take the view that artworks—whether fine or performative—are characterized by at least a single property. The standard candidates—though admittedly there might be more—are representational properties, expressive

⁶ Adajian, Thomas, "The Definition of Art", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2016 Edition)

⁷ Adajian, "The Definition of Art"

⁸ Adajian, "The Definition of Art"

properties, and formal properties.⁹ The traditional definitions of art maintain that these properties are not sufficient conditions of an artwork—rather, all three are required to classify and distinguish an artwork from an ordinary object (a book on poetry, for instance, as distinct from an instruction manual).¹⁰ Plato’s understanding of art follows the traditional definitions of art.

In the *Republic*, and elsewhere in the Platonic dialogues, Plato understood art to be a kind of *mimêsis*.¹¹ *Mimêsis* is defined as dramatic imitation or impersonation.¹² In short, mimetic arts are representational. Or, as Plato says, “...to make oneself like someone else in voice or appearance is to imitate the person one makes oneself like...the...poets effect their narrative through imitation (393c–d). In the *Republic*, *mimêsis* is understood as both copy making and impersonation—which are ontologically inferior to the non-physical forms and subservient to moral realities. Before one can address the potential dangers of art, it is first important to understand how both copy making and impersonation pose considerable dangers for the individual. This is explained in the section to follow, after a thorough presentation of Plato’s Utopian project, and how that led to a discussion on art.

§. Plato on Constructing the Just City and Educational System

When Plato wrote the educational curricula outlined in the *Republic*, it served partly as an indictment of the Greek tradition and the Greek educational system.¹³

⁹ Adajian, "The Definition of Art"

¹⁰ Adajian, "The Definition of Art"

¹¹ Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 20

¹² Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 20.

¹³ Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 12

While the political framework maybe utopian, the educational proposals are not.¹⁴ The *Republic* introduces itself as a problem which is not philosophical in a specialized sense, but rather social and cultural.¹⁵ This paper assumes Plato's argument against the arts in the *Republic* is actually a treatise, in disguise, aimed at impressing on the reader the importance of a moral education.¹⁶

In the *Republic*, Plato's overarching project is to inquire about and eventually identify the nature of justice. What is justice? How can one either define or identify justice? If justice can be defined, why should one be just? As Plato understands it, justice belongs to the "finest class,"¹⁷ and it is valuable for its own sake and the sake of its consequences (357c). He thinks that there are two ways justice can manifest: justice belonging to the city or state and justice belonging to the individual. To identify justice in the individual, one must first identify justice on a larger scale. Hence, he points his readers to his paradigmatic construction of a city as an instrument for identifying and defining justice.

Before Plato begins the literary construction of his ideal polis or Kallipolis, he first introduces what he considers the foundational principle of human society: the principle of specialization. *The principle of specialization states that each person must perform the role for which he is naturally best suited and that he must not meddle in any other business* (370a-c). The farmer, for instance, must spend most his time producing food for others. He says, "...the doer must...pay close attention to his work

¹⁴ Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 13

¹⁵ Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 12

¹⁶ Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 13

¹⁷ Plato, *Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997), 971-1223.

rather than treating it as a secondary occupation...the result, then, is that more plentiful and better quality goods [will be produced] if each person does one thing for which he is naturally suited...and is released from having to do any of the others” (370b–c). By adhering to this standard, Plato is convinced that productivity and efficiency are maximized. Having isolated and explicated the foundational principle of the city, Plato is now ready to construct the Kallipolis. The first roles to fill are those that will provide for the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, health, and shelter. These roles are attributed to the producing class. He states:

They’ll produce bread, wine, clothes, and shoes...They’ll build houses, work naked and barefoot in the summer, and wear adequate clothing and shoes in the winter...For food, they’ll knead and cook flour and meal they’ve made from wheat and barley. They’ll put their honest cakes and loaves on reeds or clean leaves, and reclining on beds strewn with yew and myrtle, they’ll feast with their children, drink their wine, and, crowned with wreaths, hymn the gods. They’ll enjoy sex with one another but bear no more children than their resources allow, lest they fall into either poverty or war (372b).

After Plato finalizes the construction of this just city, he views this design to be one of good health and prosperity. He states, “They’ll live in peace and good health, and when they die at ripe old age, they’ll bequeath a similar life to their children” (372d). Despite his attempts to create a suitable example of a just city, Glaucon, Plato’s principal interlocutor in the *Republic*, calls the healthy city a “city of pigs” (372d). He claims if they are not going to suffer hardship, “they should recline on proper couches, dine at tables, and have...delicacies and desserts...” (372d). So, to address Glaucon’s

criticism, Plato must now accommodate for delicacies. Thus, the next stage in Plato's thought experiment is to transform this healthy city into the luxurious city (372e).

For a city to accommodate certain delicacies such as “perfumed oils, incense, prostitutes, and pastries” (373a), Plato says that we “must enlarge our city, for the healthy one is no longer adequate. We must increase it in size and fill it with...things that go beyond what is necessary...” (373b–c). Moreover, to feed the population, he assesses that “we’ll have to seize some of our neighbor’s land if we’re to have enough pasture and ploughland” (373d). In which case, a class of warriors will be needed¹⁸ to keep the peace within the city and to protect it from outside forces (373e–374a). So, for this reason, he creates the guardian class: the auxiliary and the rulers.

It is crucial that guardians develop the right balance between gentleness and toughness. Plato says “they must be gentle to their own people and harsh to the enemy” (375b–c). Members of this class must be carefully selected. The guardians must be persons with the correct nature or innate psychology. They should be spirited, or honor-loving, philosophical, or knowledge-loving, and physically strong and fast (375e). The guardians shall be properly educated in music and poetry because “rhythm and harmony permeate the inner part of the soul, more than anything else, affecting it most strongly and bring it to grace” (402d–e). Secondly, the young shall be given physical training for “...[a] good soul by its own virtue makes the body good...” (403c).

¹⁸ Plato stays true to his principle of specialization as identified in the first city. He reiterates that “it’s impossible for a single person to practice many crafts or professions as well.” See Plato, *Republic*, 374a

One may question why Plato thinks a citizen must be first educated in music and poetry, and then properly trained in the physical arts. He believes that “the beginning of any process is the most important, especially for the young and tender. It is now that [the child] is the most malleable and takes on any pattern one wishes to impress on [her]” (377a). For this reason, Plato suggests that we must “supervise the storytellers [and] we’ll select their stories whenever they are fine or beautiful and reject them when they aren’t...” (377b). Although Plato sees the merit in educating the guardians in music and poetry, he proposes a strict censorship of Homer and Hesiod’s works because certain segments of their content threaten to corrupt the young mind. Plato provides an account on the introduction of philosophy as education to equip the guardian with the means to exercise reason and formulate a good character. He adds that a potentially virtuous person learns to love and take pleasure in virtuous actions but must wait until late in life to develop the understanding that explains why what he loves is good.¹⁹ Once the more mature guardian has learned what the good is, his informed love of the good explains why he acts and does and why his actions are virtuous.²⁰ Plato offers a break down of mimetic arts, and why, if left unchecked, both copy and impersonation pose a danger to the individual and society at large.

¹⁹ Marcia Homiak, “Moral Character,” ed. Edward N. Zalta, (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016)

²⁰ *Ibid.* Marcia Homiak “Moral Character”

§. *Mimetic Art as Copy making and as Impersonation*

Plato's understanding of mimetic art as copy making and his arguments against it is predicated on his understanding of the Theory of Forms. He classifies a Form as a paradigm that is "one-over-many" (100c)²¹ and says that they are divine (80a–b), intelligible (79a), and eternal (79d). He suggests that "...we customarily hypothesize a single form about each other of the many things to which we apply the same name" (569a). The idea here is that whenever we have two or more things in common, there exists a Form. For example, there is a red apple on my counter. I am wearing red gloves. I drive, or at least in some possible world, a red Lamborghini Murcielago. Since each of these have something in common (i.e., redness), there exists a Form-Red from which all "red" things participate in. He continues, "...there are certain forms from which these other things, by getting a share of them, derive their names—as for instance, they come to be like by getting a share of likeness, large by getting a share of largeness, and just and beautiful by getting a share of justice and beauty."²² Given this understanding, Plato moves to a discussion on art as copy making. He says, "...[there are] three kinds of beds [or natures]. The first is in nature [the Form] ...the second is the work of the carpenter [the imperfect copy] ...and the third is the one the painter makes [the copy of an imperfect copy] ..." (597b). The carpenter "...doesn't make the form...but only a bed..." (596e). In other words, the carpenter looks to the Forms to build the intended craft (605a–b). The painter, on the other hand, is not a "...maker of such things..." rather "...he imitates..." (597d). Plato

²¹ S. Marc Cohen, "The 'One' Over Many Argument"

²² Plato, *Parmenides*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997), 359-397.

states, “[the painter] is an imitator of what others make” (597d). The primary difference between the craftsman and the painter is that the craftsman—though he produces an imperfect copy of a perfect form—looks to the form to produce his craft. Hence, Plato considers this an honest or even virtuous failing. The artist, however, is not looking to the Forms. Rather, he looks to the imperfect copy of the Form and copies or imitates it. Plato says the imitation “is far removed from truth...” (598b), and the artist “...can’t distinguish between knowledge, ignorance, and imitation” (598d); thus, he “can deceive children and foolish people into thinking that [he] is truly a carpenter” (598c). *Mimetic art* is a “shadow-show of phantoms, like those images seen in the darkness on the wall of the cave.”²³

In the *Phaedo*, he suggests that the goal of every person should be to seek separation from his body so that his soul can enter the realm of the Forms, allowing him to immediately intuit knowledge (64a–65a). The philosopher embarks on this process by looking to the Forms. The artist looks to the “particular,” which is an imperfect copy of the form. Hence, it can be inferred that if the carpenter commits a virtuous failing by crafting an imperfect item, then the artist has committed an ultimate failing because she does not look to the Forms at all. And in showing her work, she is promoting her own vanity and leaving the audience to formulate opinions; thus, promulgating an inescapable ignorance of which the audience will struggle to break free. Despite the artist’s failing by promulgating ignorance or the viewer’s failing in ignorantly receiving it, art as copy making serves as an epistemic

²³ Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, 25

concern rather than a danger to one's moral development.²⁴ It is true that in the *Meno*, Plato introduces the possibility of virtue as a kind of moral knowledge and as such it has the capacity to be taught to others (87b–c).

Art as copy making poses a danger to the individual—not necessarily by jeopardizing their moral psychology, but by inhibiting their ability to look to the Forms. By moving us away from the Forms, and ultimately Knowledge and the Good, the artist is promoting a kind of willful ignorance that deters an individual from seeking, and thus sharing in, true knowledge.

Plato's understanding of mimetic art as impersonation and his arguments against it is heavily influenced by the Principle of Specialization. His concern regarding art in this context is its profound ability to corrupt the individual soul and eventually distort the just and harmonious balance of the Kallipolis. Before one can understand the potential dangers of impersonation, it is important to grasp Plato's

²⁴ Platonists, such as Plotinus, Frege, DeWitt, and Quine, have focused a considerable amount of attention on making sense of Plato's metaphysics, namely the Theory of Forms. Their opponents, Aristotle, Vlastos (1954), Geach (1956), Strang (1971), and Cohen (1971, 2006) have focused on the purported incoherency of the Theory of Forms. S Marc Cohen presents three objections to the Theory of Forms: 1) the *Extent of the World of Forms (130e-131a)*, 2) the *Nature of Participation (131a-e)*, and 3) the *Third Man Argument (Cohen 1971, Geach 1956)*. The most powerful objection of the three is the TMA objection. The TMA argument encompasses three premises regarding the Theory of the Forms: one-over-many (OM), self-predication (SP), and Non-Identity (NI). To review: OM states that there is a Form for any set of things we judge to share a predicate in common. For example, if a collection of things such as Oak Tree, Weeping Willow Tree, and Evergreen Tree, all share in the Form-Tree, then there is a single Form by participating in which they are all Form-Tree. SP states that the Form by which things are (and are judged to be) *F* is itself *F*. For instance, Tree-ness is Form-Tree. And lastly, NI states that the Form by which a set of things are all *F* is not itself a member of that set. Equivalently, noting is *F* by participation. Tree-ness (n) in this case does not participate in Tree-ness (n). (Summarized in Cohen's "The Logic of the Third Man." For full citation, see Cohen's *Criticism to the Theory of Forms*). Plato himself identifies the severity of the TMA objection for he notes in the *Parmenides*, "each of your Forms will no longer be one, but unlimited in multitude" (130d). See S. Marc Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," *The Philosophical Review* 80, no. 4 (October 1971): 448-475

notion of the soul, which at the heart is the foundation for his theory of moral psychology.

For Plato, the individual soul is tripartite: it possesses a rational part, a spirited part, and an appetitive part. The rational part governs one's reason; the spirited part governs one's passions or emotions; the appetitive part governs one's desires. He says, "it is obvious that the same thing will not be willing to do or undergo opposites in the same part of itself, in relation to the same thing, at the same time. Hence, if we ever find this happening in the soul, we will know that we are not dealing with one thing but many" (436b–c). So, if one were to say "I want to eat three pizzas, but I do not want to eat three pizzas," one is not completely absurd per Plato's account. One is saying "The appetitive part of my soul desires to eat three pizzas; however, the rational part of one's soul asserts that it would not be wise or arguably in my best interest to act on such a desire." In such case, the appetitive part of the soul is in contention with the rational part. This is an example of Plato's use of the Principle of Non-Contradiction: something cannot be both p and not- p at the same time. Plato continues his investigation by reflecting on the third part of the soul: spirit. Is it the case that the spirited part of the soul is uniquely distinct? Or, is it one and the same with either the rational part of the soul or the appetitive part of the soul? Plato claims that the spirited part can sometimes make war with the appetites (440a). The worry here is that Plato does not want the soul's appetites to make war with reason.

So, what does Plato recommend as it relates to the artist? He says,

If a man, who through clever training can become anything and imitate anything, should arrive in our city, wanting to give performance of his

poems...we should tell him that there is no one like him in our city and that it isn't lawful for there to be. We should pour myrrh on his head, crown him with wreaths, and send him away to another city (398a-b).

Like stories told of gods and heroes participating in morally questionable acts, Plato argues that morally questionable forms of imitative arts entice the participant to behave immorally, which inevitably corrupts the soul. Thus, he mandates that any artistic expression considered to be distasteful and unfavorable should be banned or heavily censored.²⁵

A second concern for Plato stems from his conviction that art as impersonation interferes and conflicts with the principle of specialization. As elucidated in the first section of this paper, the principle states that each person must perform the role for which he is naturally best suited and that he must not meddle in any other's business (370a-c). Initially, Plato rejects the idea that guardians should also become imitators. He says, "Our guardians *must* be kept away from all other crafts to be craftsmen of the freedom, and ...do nothing at all except what contributes to it..." (395b-c). Here, he is suggesting that a person who focuses on a single occupation is more likely to perform that occupation well. And contrastingly, a person who focuses on several occupations or "meddles in the affairs of others," is going against the principle of specialization

²⁵ Although it is not conclusive, Iris Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun*, argues extensively that Plato intended to ban the artists from his utopian education project. (Murdoch 1977). Rachana Kamtekar, on the other hand, makes this point more explicit. She says, "Plato does not ban painting...It is true that paintings are like poems in being imitations, and that imitations are inferior to things they imitate. But Socrates uses this point not to banish all imitations but to argue, against those who think that the poets 'know all crafts, all human affairs concerned with virtue and vice, and all about the gods' (589d-e), that producers of imitations cannot be teachers. For if they could produce virtuous deeds, they would not devote themselves to producing imitations of them in poetry (599a-b); and as it happens, they have no good laws, successful wars, inventions in the crafts and sciences, ways of life or virtuous individuals to their credit." (See Kamtekar, "Plato on Education and Art" p.352)

and is at risk of poorly doing multiple things. Plato concludes that the guardians must focus on their primary specialization which is to guide and protect the Kallipolis. However, he grants that if imitation must occur, it must take place during childhood. He notes that children must imitate those endeavors that are appropriate to them “[because] imitations practiced as youth become part of nature and settle into habits of gesture, voice, and thought.” (359c–d).²⁶ Given both accounts, one can begin to stitch together the moral underpinnings of Plato’s concern regarding art as impersonation.

In his first concern, Plato postulates that those mimetic arts deemed to be unsavory or distasteful in nature poses a moral danger by enticing one to emulate immoral behavior; hence, corrupting the soul. In his second concern, impersonation presents a different kind of danger—specifically by interfering with the primary function of the guardian, which is to be the craftsman of the city’s freedom (395b–c), and forces them to focus on several occupations instead of just the one.²⁷ Given this account, it seems reasonable to infer that Plato’s concern is not just that impersonation stands to distract the guardian from her primary duties nor merely corrupting her soul. Rather, what is gravely at stake is that the art form of impersonation is in direct conflict with the principle of specialization. In the same way that the just city has three individual classes (the Guardians, the Auxiliary, and

²⁶ Plato, *Republic*, 395 c-d. On this account, Plato is talking about the effects of playing the part of character in a play or poem, or perhaps reading aloud (Summarized from Rachana, “Plato on Education and Art” p. 350)

²⁷ It must be noted that per the principle of specialization, there could exist those who are born with natural propensities for creativity and art. So, it is not the case that one will be both a guardian and an artist, or a craftsman and a performer. Rather, it’s these individuals who will rise above the rest and be identified as artists in the city.

the Craftsmen), the soul has three individual parts (Reason, Spirit, and the Appetites). As previously stated in section one, the project of the *Republic* is to understand to what class justice belongs to and to identify the nature of justice within the individual by first looking at justice on a microcosmic scale. From that vantage point, it can be reasonably inferred that the three individual classes outlined in the *Republic* align with the three individual parts of the soul. Thus, the principle of specialization which governs the Kallipolis can also be said to govern the individual soul. The purpose for the principle of specialization—which mandates that separate parts ought not meddle in the affairs of others—is to assist in creating harmony within the individual soul and distributing order and balance in the Kallipolis. It does this by ensuring that each part, whether a specific class or a part of the soul, does its “just” due. And upon successfully doing so, justice is free to permeate the Kallipolis as well as the individual soul. The extrapolation here is that the principle of specialization is what ensures harmony and balance within their soul and is thereby enabling one to experience or exhibit justice in the social sphere.

As we have seen, Plato says that the guardians shall first be properly educated in music and poetry because “rhythm and harmony permeate the inner part of the soul, more than anything else, affecting it most strongly and bring[ing] it to grace” (402d–e). To further develop this idea, take for instance, Ludwig von Beethoven’s classical masterpiece, *Moonlight Sonata*. Often regarded as one of his most innovative composed works, the song exhibits a kind of free-flowing movement that creates a dreamy fantasia for the listener. While this piece has been improvised and performed world-wide, some listeners may say the song has a calming demeanor to it and has

remained an all-time favorite to classical music enthusiasts of all time. *Moonlight Sonata* would arguably be considered as an acceptable art form in the Kallipolis. The reason is because *Moonlight Sonata's* melodious composition offers a harmonious experience to the person and to the individual soul. Again, what Plato fears most is the rallying of one's passions to resist reason and submit to one's desire (or our most animalistic impulses). Instead *Moonlight Sonata*, on Plato's account, helps to soothe the passions, engage the intellect, and keeps the boisterous ones at bay; thereby, bringing the individual into grace – which for Plato is a moral good. The suggestion here is that Plato permits art as a means for some moral cause or purpose, or to impress upon the youth particularly some moral good. However, the question here is whether those arts which stir up one's passions and overrule reason tempt the guardian into meddling in affairs other than their stately duties condone. In other words, the arts on trial are those Plato believes causes one to emulate or participate in their base desires—that summon an overwhelming temptation ensued from being exposed to imitative arts; the effects on the individual parts of the soul or the distortion placed upon one's primary function within a respective class. Let us refer to these arts as amoral arts (arts that can reasonably be excluded from either a moral dimension or immoral dimension) and immoral arts (arts belonging to an immoral dimension). The idea here is that if art is created and disseminated with the intent to impress a good character or good nature—and can do so successfully—Plato takes no issue with it. However, if the art counteracts the primary of goal of cultivating a good character, establishing a harmonious balance within the soul, and distributing justice within the whole, Plato concludes that all art ought to be heavily censored or banned.

§. The Platonist and the Aesthete: Rethinking the Nature of Art and the Role of Morality

In the previous section, I outlined Plato's understanding of art as a kind of imitation or representation. Additionally, we unpacked the idea that mimetic art forms can either be copy making or impersonation. Plato argues that art as copy making is a potential danger, but only in an epistemic context, as it stands to inhibit one's ability to look to the Forms, thereby denying access to acquire true knowledge. On the other hand, impersonation stands to corrupt the soul (or one's moral psychology) because it entices the audience to emulate morally contentious acts. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, I have suggested that impersonation is in contention with the principle of specialization, thereby potentially disrupting the balance of justice within the individual and the collective. While Plato seems to be in favor of the mimetic arts being harnessed to arrive at a particular moral agenda,²⁸ he is leery of what happens when art stirs up the passions, swaying an individual or community to act based on desire rather than reason.

Looming behind Plato's argument against art as impersonation, there seems to be an underlying presupposition that aesthetics and morality are one in the same. As previously mentioned, Plato allows for the art that furthers a moral agenda, however, argues that art antithetically understood in this way ought to be subjected to a kind of moral scrutiny. One is made to assume that a precondition within the value of art is that it must also have some sort of underlying, moral intent. Is it a

²⁸ This could be one reason why Plato, as author, found it to be an acceptable enterprise of being a poet in his own time: It is possible that he believed the *Republic* and the entire corpus of dialogues to be producing 'moral' art or an art that impresses on the audience some moral good.

necessary condition that it exhibit moral “intent” as a precondition of its value? Eleonora Rocconi (2012) examines Plato’s aesthetic concerns with music to see if, and to what extent, he believed it was possible to appreciate the qualities of musical composition independently of its educational or moral value. In the *Laws*, Plato states that it is matter of prime importance for any legislator to be concerned about the education of its citizens’ *paideia* and *khoreia*. *Paideia* is defined by Plato as that “training from childhood in goodness, which makes a man eagerly desirous of becoming the perfect citizen, understanding how to rule and be ruled righteously.”²⁹ *Khoreia*, on the other hand, is “the most effective mean for educating and bringing order to society; it is choral dancing and singing in honor of the gods.”³⁰ Per this view, what is

sung or represented through music and dance should then represent a ‘good’ (*kalon*) model, since good postures’ (*kala schemata*) and good melodies’ (*kala mete*) act as a vehicle to lead people to virtues such as courage (*andreia*) and temperance (*sophrosune*). [Plato goes on to say that it is] for this reason, musical practices in the city should be closely controlled and regulated, and the people in charge of the task should receive suitable training for being able to judge them correctly. [The purpose and most crucial aspect of *paideia* is that] it “predisposes the individual through proper practices and habits to a correct management of pleasure (*hedone*) and pain (*lupe*)...[and] these

²⁹ Eleonora Rocconi, “The Aesthetic Value of Music in Platonic Thought” In *Aesthetic Value in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Sluiter, Ineke and Ralph M. Rosen, (Boston: Brill, 2012), 113-132.

³⁰ Rocconi, “The Aesthetic Value of Music in Platonic Thought,” 115

sensations act as vehicles for the ‘goodness’ (*arête*) and badness (*kakia*) of the soul.³¹

The *aesthete*, on the other hand, may have a different view on the matter. Let us first examine the position of a famously historic, internationally renowned advocate for the arts.

In his highly regarded work, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde beautifully describes the narrative, with a philosophical bent, of his main protagonist, Dorian Gray. Dorian is depicted as a handsome narcissist who willingly participates in self-indulgent, hedonistic activities, hedging the lines between sensualism and debauchery, and ultimately selling his soul to the devil to preserve his vanity and beauty within a portrait. The novel was first published in an 1890 issue of Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine³² where the editor of the magazine imposed a strict censorship of some of the language and content without Wilde’s knowledge.³³ The book offended the moral sensibilities of British book reviewers, and was accused of violating the laws guarding the public morality.³⁴ When the published book was made available in 1891, Wilde included a preface in defense of the artist’s rights and art for the sake of art.³⁵ The preface, made famous given its unique, aphoristic approach, served as a

³¹ Rocconi, “The Aesthetic Value of Music in Platonic Thought” 116 and see Plato, *Laws*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997), 1318-1616

³²Oscar Wilde (1968-9) *The Artist as Critic, The Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*. (ed. Richard Ellmann), New York: Random House, 1-474.

³³ See Ellmann (1968-9) “Introduction” in Oscar Wilde’s *The Artist as Critic, The Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*.

³⁴ See Ellmann (1968-9) “Introduction” in Oscar Wilde’s *The Artist as Critic, The Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*.

³⁵ See Ellmann (1968-9) “Introduction” in Oscar Wilde’s *The Artist as Critic, The Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*.

literary and artistic manifesto for artists, critics, historians, and advocates to come.³⁶ How can it be that something is both the object of affection and the object for one's moral demise? Wilde says in the preface of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, "there is no such thing as a moral book and an immoral book. Books are either well-written or badly written, that is all."³⁷ The idea here is that like the three parts of the soul, there exist separate 'parts' within art: an aesthetic dimension and a moral dimension, to name a few of many possible divisions. Based on Wilde's response, it can be inferred that neither dimension is concerned with the activities regarding the other. And the implication here is that the artist should only be concerned with the excellence of making, and morality has no place in a discussion on making art.³⁸

³⁶ Wilde, Oscar (1854-1900). *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. London; New York: Penguin, 2003. 1-214.

³⁷ See "Preface" to Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (2003).

³⁸ What's inspiring this move to distinguish the intellectual dimension of art and the moral dimension of art is motivated by an understanding of a personalist approach to aesthetics. Unsatisfied with the scholastics and their disregard for producing a treatise on the philosophy of Fine Arts, Jacques Maritain writes *Art and Scholasticism* to explicate the nature of art and the constituents relevant to practice of art. He begins with an account of virtues. There are virtues of the mind whose sole end is for the sake of knowledge and others for the sake of something else. Those for the sake of knowledge belong to a speculative order and the others belong to a practical order. In the speculative order, we derive from experience the understanding of first principles (e.g. Being, Causation, End, etc.). We perceive at once "the self-evident truths upon which all knowledge depends" (Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism with Other Essays*, p. 3). Science, for instance, produces knowledge demonstrably by attributing causes. Wisdom (Maritain is referring the wisdom acquired in the study and practice of metaphysics and theology. *Ibid.* p. 3) makes us contemplate first causes. The practical order, on the other hand, tends to something other than pure knowledge. If man has knowledge in the practical order, it is because he intends to put what he knows to use with the view of making or doing something; such as the cobbler who uses his knowledge towards a desirable end – namely, to make and to mend shoes. Since its orientation is towards doing and not purely inward knowledge, art belongs to the practical order. The practical order is divided into two distinct camps: The Sphere of Action and the Sphere of Making. Action consists in the free use of our faculties or in the exercise of our free will. It is not necessarily bound to 'things' themselves or the works of our hands. Rather, it is simply in relation to the use to which we put our freedom. Hence, Action is directed towards the common end of all human life. It has a part to play in perfecting the human being (*Ibid.* p. 3) *Phronēsis* or Prudence (The Greek word for 'prudence' to which Maritain is referencing is *phronēsis*. *Phronēsis* is often translated to mean "practical wisdom" or "intelligence." In the ethical treatise *On Virtues and Vices* (sometimes attributed to Aristotle), *phronēsis* is characterized as the "wisdom to take counsel, to judge the goods and evils and all the things in life that are desirable and to be avoided, to use all the available goods finely, to behave rightly in society, to observe due occasions, to employ both speech and action with sagacity, to have expert knowledge of all things that are useful" (See *Athenian Constitution, Eudemian Ethics, Virtues and Vices*. Translated by H. Rackham), for instance, is element rightly situated in the Sphere of Action.

To respond to both Plato and Wilde, let us assume that when thinking about the moral considerations of art, there exist three different dimensions: the artist, the artwork, and the audience. Let us say that the primary function of the artist is to strive for excellence³⁹ in the making of art. The artwork or art form is simply matter and form, imbued with sensible content that stimulates one's senses. And finally, the audience or individual viewer is a receiver of the artistic content. In thinking about

Although it is confined within the limits of human conduct, it serves as guide for our actions. The activity of prudence involves discerning and applying the available means³⁸ to obtain our moral ends. It operates for the good of the agent and presupposes that the will is undeviating in respect to the good (which is the good of every man). Its purpose is to determine those means as it relates to the actualized ends already willed by the agent. Moreover, it presupposes that the appetites involved are disposable to achieve those ends. The prudent rhetorician, for example, takes several things into consideration before he delivers a speech. He ensures that the arguments in his speech are cogent and sound. He properly identifies his audience and exhibits the appropriate passions. He establishes himself as a trustworthy character by presenting valid arguments and displaying the appropriate passions. The demagogue (who *does not* exercise prudence when delivering a speech) uses his ability to persuade to entice, flatter, and win others over. Making, however, *is not* considered in relation to the use to which we use put our freedom. It is simply in relation to the 'thing' produced. It guides what ought to be and is ordered to a definite end. Art is an element of the Sphere of Making. It remains outside of human conduct, and its rules govern the work to be produced. The activity of art involves impressing an idea on matter. Maritain once again uses the paradigm of *matter* and *form* within the context of the fine arts to further elaborate on this intricacy of his thesis. The *formal element* (or formal cause³⁸) of a work is controlled and directed by the mind. The *work to be done* is the 'matter' of art. The *reason exercised* to guide and the direct the matter is the 'form' of art. Art resides in the mind and is a subject or quality within the mind. It is then impressed onto matter by the exercising of the artist's operative habit.³⁸ In the case of music, the 'matter' in this context is final serenade which resides in the artist's mind. The 'form' is the reason exercised to compose and actualize the art in its formal element. Prudence is an element of the sphere of action and aims at the ends of the human good. Prudence is directed at the ends of human good, and its business is to determine the right means of achieving the ends. The challenge for Prudence (or the prudent man) then is this: to assess the situation and circumstance on a case by case basis, to discover the paths or rules which are subordinate to the will and contingent, and to execute a choice or opportunity as deemed appropriate by Prudence. If a person chooses a direction that's been guided by prudence, Maritain espouses the view that the direction is certain and infallible. The reason being that the truth of prudential judgment is found in the undeviating intention, and *not* in the consequence of a given act. Art is an element of the sphere of making and aims at the ends of the work to be done. Art is more exclusively intellectual than prudence in so far as it operates for the good of the work to be done and diverts everything else which seeks to diminish and adulterate it. If an artist willfully chooses to misuse his art, or the artist defects his art through negligence, improper material, or lack of skill, the virtue of the art itself is no less perfect. Maritain asserts that the infallibility of art only concerns art in its formal element (art as a subject of the mind). Art tends to make the artist good only in terms of the work he produces, hence art understood in this way is an intellectual activity and belongs to the intellectual dimension.

³⁹ By 'excellence,' I mean the Greek concept of *aretē* (virtue) in the accusative of respect, i.e., "per virtue."

morality as it relates to art, one question that arises is this: which actor in this tripartite relationship holds the burden of accountability? In other words, must the artist be held accountable for the artworks' moral content? Or, is the viewer (audience) accountable? Or, is it a shared responsibility between the two? Is a large, governing, political body accountable? Or does the burden exist at the individual level? Given Plato's reaction to the artist who promulgated his unsolicited art forms for the Kallipolis, Plato might say that the burden for moral delegation is first overseen by the larger, established political structure, and then by the artist. This paper, which differs from Plato's reaction, takes the position that the culpable player held liable for their moral development belongs to the audience, and at times, the parental figures of the home. Let me explain.

In thinking about the Platonic notion of art, what makes art "dangerous" is its ability to stir the passions, thus allowing or inviting one to justify taking sides with their base desires. However, one qualifier I think must be highlighted is that art (absent from its moral considerations) is a kind of *techne*, or craft. Thus, art is a kind of knowledge. I propose that for a craft to be instrumental to one's moral cultivation, *art must engage the intellect* in the end. This is an important distinction for the aesthete because if art is first situated as a means or a kind of catalyst for intellectual engagement, it quickly distinguishes itself from other "art forms" that are misconstrued by blurring the lines between art and smut, or art and propaganda, and so forth. By placing art in the intellectual sphere, the aesthete can enjoy all the fruits of making and what it is aesthetically pleasing about art, while avoiding any need for moral adherence in the artist's practice.

To further develop this idea, take for instance a controversial, contemporary example of imitative arts. The 1997 single *Smack My Bitch Up*, written and recorded by the British beat group *The Prodigy*, quickly became critically acclaimed as one of the most controversial songs of the 90s. The lyrics in the song, “Change my pitch up, smack my bitch up,” are repeated throughout the entirety of the song. The music video is filmed from a first-person perspective. We witness a person drinking and driving, abusing cocaine, acting out in violence, vomiting, committing vandalism, and engaging in an explicit sex scene toward the end of the video. The viewer most likely concludes that the main character is some young, misogynistic male, intensely focused on participating in activities that are reckless, dangerous, illegal, and highly immoral. It is not until the very last scene of the video that we learn the main character is a young, blonde female. And in that same moment, all of our preconceived judgments about the character, their activities, and their treatment of others are called into question. Herein lies a pivotal crossroads for the aesthete and for Plato, and for those who passionately disagree with the strategies for harnessing and controlling art as suggested in the *Republic*, during Plato’s time, Wilde’s time, and our contemporary time. How does one find cohesiveness amidst the fogginess of disagreement? One suggestion might be to understand exactly at what point do both sides disagree and to highlight possible places where both the Platonist and the Aesthete can come together.

As indicated in the preface of the *Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde’s primary concern regarding the arts is the excellence of craft. Plato would have understood excellence or virtue as *aretē* and craft as a kind of *techne*. For Wilde, the notion of

whether an artwork imbues an immoral character is meaningless if the piece is made well and exhibits all the features of strong craft. Given the inferior nature of art, to Plato's mind, whether a piece exhibits excellence is a non-issue, because Plato is concerned with any image or physical object that ignites the passions to engage an unstable, lower part of the soul. To address this issue, it is helpful to take a step back and look at the nature of arts—in this case, mimetic art specifically—and to examine its *genus* and *differentia*. In the *genus* of mimetic arts, there exists members of three classes: those arts which can ignite the passions and engage the reason, arts that excite and engage our base desires, and lastly, the remaining members of the mimetic arts that are neither moral or amoral in kind. For the sake of simplicity, I shall refer to each member of this genus as moral art forms, immoral art forms, and amoral art forms. In the case of each art form, there exists standards or properties or qualities that render them as such. While quality can exist in many different variations, an art form is either made well or it is not made well. The standard of quality is applicable in all art forms, whether moral, immoral, or amoral. So perhaps it is not the case that all art forms ought to be eliminated. Should an art form exhibit the quality of being made well—which satisfies Wilde's criteria, and that art form also engages one's reasons, per Plato's specifications, it seems as if there can exist a working definition and ideology by which the Platonist and the aesthete can have a conversation about the value of art in which they are not talking past each other; namely, *an art form that engages the intellect and exhibits a craft made well*.

It is helpful to know that many have challenged Plato: even if the poets have no knowledge of truth, and can only reflect to their audience the uninformed opinions

that circulate society (602a–b), is it not the case that poetry can raise critical questions about these opinions? A Platonist might respond and affirm that while poetry can raise questions, the problems lie in the fact that poetry provides no resources other than opinion all over again.⁴⁰ Despite poetry’s inability to coach the individual on the discerning powers of discursive reasoning, the idea is that poetry, and other mimetic arts which engage the intellect, *do* inspire one to raise critical questions. And it is through this inspiration that one may be prompted to seek truth. From here, we take the idea of arts that engage the intellect, and apply it to Plato’s Divided Line theory, and the Allegory of the Cave.

§. *Sun, Line, and the Cave*

For Plato, the acquisition of knowledge requires one to turn away from the world of senses and physical objects—which can only ever produce opinions—and look to the realm of the Forms, which are perfect and intelligible. To understand this idea, Plato uses two metaphors: The Divided Line and the Allegory of the Cave, to further understand his application of the Theory of Forms. Our goal in this section is to investigate the role of mimetic arts as they relate to the sensible world and the individual soul and to examine whether art produces a benefit that engages one’s intellect to shifts one’s efforts toward the acquisition of knowledge.

At the end of Book V in the *Republic*, the argument and analogies for the sun, line, and cave begin to take form. The point of the *sun* is to provide correspondence

⁴⁰ Rachana Kamtekar, “Plato on Education and Art”

between the visible and intelligible realms.⁴¹ In the visible realm, the sun gives light to physical objects required by the eyes to access the physical world.⁴² Corresponding to the sun in the intelligible realm is the Good.⁴³ Plato says, “What gives truth to the things known and the power to know to the knower is the Form of the Good. And though it is the cause of knowledge and truth, it is also an object of knowledge” (508e). To elucidate this thought, in Platonic metaphysics, the sun is the entity responsible for the knowability of objects, both in the visible realm and intelligible realm.

The *line* starts from the broad division stipulated by sun and creates a dualism: there is the intelligible realm and the visible realm.⁴⁴ Each realm is divided into two, unequal parts (509D–510A). The former is said to encompass *epistêmê*, often translated as knowledge, and the latter, *doxa*: opinion or mere objects incapable of becoming objects of genuine questions.⁴⁵ In the visible realm, one finds visible things such as shadows, or images, or *eikasia*, and physical objects, or *pistis*—faith and belief set over the physical world.⁴⁶ In the intelligible realm, one finds higher entities such as mathematical objects or objects of science, or *dianoia*—a kind of discursive reasoning, and Ideas or Forms, *noesis*, or pure intuition.⁴⁷ Ideas or Forms, and the Good are the highest object of direct knowledge. Physical objects are imperfect copies that share in the Forms, while images are images of physical objects, thus twice removed.

⁴¹ Silverman, Allan, "Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2014 Edition)

⁴² *Ibid.* Silverman, Allan, "Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology"

⁴³ *Ibid.* Silverman, Allan, "Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology"

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Silverman, Allan, "Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology"

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* Silverman, Allan, "Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology"

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* Silverman, Allan, "Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology"

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* Silverman, Allan, "Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology"

The *cave*, which is arguably one of Plato's most famous allegories, reinforces the message of the *line*. In this analogy, the prisoners are seated and chained so that they cannot move their heads. They stare at a cave wall on which they see projected images. These images are cast from carved figures illuminated by a fire carried by people, hidden by a wall behind the prisoners. A prisoner is loosed from his chains, and first notices the carved images and the fire. Then he is let out of the cave into the outside world, or the "real" world. Upon exiting the cave, the prisoner is blinded by the sun. Thus, he is unable to look at the physical objects outside, and instead focuses on their shadows and reflections in the water. As he adapts to the light and is now finally able to gaze upon those objects, he notices their physical form, and then looks up—attributing the visibility of objects to the sun.

In the case of mimetic arts, whether copy making or impersonation, those arts are found in the visible realm on Plato's divided line. Since an image is like a shadow or a phantom, Plato would say that we need *eikasia*, to make sense of the images in the visible realm. As previously mentioned, mimetic arts, particularly copy making, pose a threat by promoting willful ignorance and deterring one from seeking truth—this of course could include morality which Plato suggests is a kind of knowledge (see *Meno*, 87b–c.). On the other hand, mimetic arts that are impersonating in nature, and hence entice the individual to emulate morally impermissible behaviors, threaten to corrupt the moral psychology of the soul. To further elaborate, it is helpful to tie this into a modern example.

Throughout history, succeeding Plato's influence, there have been examples of totalitarian states or states ruled by the indoctrination⁴⁸ of collective leadership who have implemented some of the ideologies offered in the *Republic*, specifically as they relate to censorship and the noble falsehood regarding origins of matters of state. George Orwell dedicates his renowned novella *Animal Farm* to the events leading up to the Stalinist era of the Soviet Union. Orwell profusely criticized Joseph Stalin. He believed that the Soviet Union had become a brutal dictatorship built upon a cult of personality and enforced by fear and terror. His reason for writing *Animal Farm* was to manifest a fully acquainted attempt at fusing together political and artistic purpose into a critical whole. *Animal Farm* is satirical in nature. It humorously describes the character and activities of the individual animals to deliver the novella's most controversial messages. What makes the book an attractive reflection of the emotions

⁴⁸ It is helpful to know that Plato supports the idea that indoctrination for the common good is morally permissible and justifiable, especially when it comes to children. Plato introduces the Noble Lie in the fictional tale known as the myth metals. The idea is to provide a falsehood on the origins of the stratified class system, and as way to make the members of the society care about the social and political structure of the state. He says, "...the earth, as being their mother, delivered them, and now, as if their land were their mother and their nurse, they ought to take thought for her and defend her against any attack, and regard the other citizens as their brothers and children of the self-same earth...While all of you, in the city, are brothers, we will say in our tale, yet god, in fashioning those of you who are fitted to hold rule, mingled gold in their generation, for which reason they are the most precious — but in the helpers, silver, and iron and brass in the farmers and other craftsmen. And, as you are all akin, though for the most part you will breed after your kinds, it may sometimes happen that a golden father would beget a silver son, and that a golden offspring would come from a silver sire, and that the rest would, in like manner, be born of one another. So that the first and chief injunction that the god lays upon the rulers is that of nothing else are they to be such careful guardians, and so intently observant as of the intermixture of these metals in the souls of their offspring, and if sons are born to them with an infusion of brass or iron they shall by no means give way to pity in their treatment of them, but shall assign to each the status due to his nature and thrust them out among the artisans or the farmers. And again, if from these there is born a son with unexpected gold or silver in his composition they shall honor such and bid them go up higher, some to the office of guardian, some to the assistanceship, alleging that there is an oracle that the city shall then be overthrown when the man of iron or brass is its guardian" (416c-417e). While Plato himself is proposing a kind of aristocratic state and the presence of a philosopher king, firmly grounded in moral virtuous values, he too suggests that an aristocracy has the capacity to denigrate into other kinds of political states: timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and finally, tyranny (See Plato, *Republic* VII, for a detailed account of Plato's five political regimes).

of its audience is its chronological narration of the rise of power. The audience is made aware that not all the animals are equal in terms of the ability, intellect, or status on the farm. The pigs, who are described as the most cunning and intelligent of all the animals, use their intellect to manipulate the other animals on the farm by lying, stealing, and later, instilling fear. At the end of the story, what once started off as Animal Farm, where all animals were equal, was restored back to The Manor Farm. And with its restoration, the assertion of the final commandment—that all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others—was made. This novella is not only paramount in its importance as it relates to the history it signifies, but it also creates a teachable moment for the reader.

The book engages the intellect through satire and humor—examples of literary devices used to appeal to the sentiment of the reader—to show what happens when one is not made aware, or one does not question. In other words, it shows the potential consequences of lack of awareness and critical engagement for both the individual and the whole. What happens when an individual chooses to engage the work and pose meaningful questions? Like the prisoner loosened from his chains and observing the fire and objects carried in front of it, the individual elevates his state of understanding and pursues truth. Now a Platonist may object and say that all Orwell's work *has* raised questions but is ill-equipped to allow one to reason discerningly about the moral and political contentions of the novella, maintaining that mimetic arts continue to reassert opinion. I maintain the idea that while art, in and of itself, does not house the kind of evaluative or discursive powers to allow one to examine their own ethical system, art can pose reflective questions for one to pit against their

individual value system. In this reclassification of mimetic arts, the individual is less tempted to embrace *eikasia*, and instead arts that engage the intellect, encourage their viewers—or readers—to question. Furthermore, I concede and say what is needed in this sequence is to equip each member in an audience with the ability to reason about their own moral compass, which necessitates the cultivation and development of critical thinking skills. As Plato suggests, this is where the role of dialectic, or *dianoia*, comes into play.

A Platonist might concede that works of art that engage the intellect might inspire one to pose reflective questions once they have reached *the age of reason*, but what about in the case of children? Surely most children are not only incapable of reflecting critically, but depending on their age and development, may not have the language or capacity to pose questions at all. In the following section, I address Plato's concern about the mimetic arts as they relate to children, to explore to what extent children have the capability to ward off the moral dangers of art and whose responsibility is to help them do so.

§. *Mimetic Arts & the Case of Children*

At this point, we explored Plato's conviction that the aesthetic dimension overlaps with the moral dimension. It is because of this view that Plato thinks all art ought to undergo moral scrutiny. The aesthete, on the other hand, suggests that aesthetics and morality are two completely different enterprises, hence one should not be concerned with the other. My suggestion is that aesthetics and morality be separated and evaluated independently of one another to some extent. I believe this

is best done by reclassifying art as an activity associated with the intellectual realm, the express purpose of which is to engage the intellect.

In making this move and distinguishing our understanding of art's purpose from Plato's, it becomes even more clear *why* Plato takes issue with art that is not aligned with morality. Art, which stirs the passions, is dangerous for a society which seeks to maintain and sustain itself as a collective. The aesthete counters this idea by suggesting that art, which may depict morally contentious content, yet successfully engages the intellect to encourage one to analyze their own moral compass, shows the world its own shame by utilizing visual or written content. And such efforts, though polemical, are necessary in creating teachable moments for the individual viewer. Even if Plato were hard-pressed to concede to this idea, his concern, and arguably the strength of his argument against imitative arts, lies in his concern about the corruptibility of children. In several places in the *Republic*, Plato speaks out against the arts due to their ability to corrupt children's impressionable souls. He believes that it is the children who are the most susceptible to the crippling temptation of the arts, and suggests in *Laws II* that this is partly due to their inability to grasp the rational account at such an early age. He says,

I maintain that the earliest sensations that a child feels in infancy are of pleasure and pain, and this is the route by which virtue and vice first enter the soul. (But for a man to acquire good judgment and unshakable correct opinions, however late in life, is a matter of good luck; a man who possesses them, and all the benefits they entail is perfect.) I call 'education' the initial acquisition of virtue by the child, when the feelings of pleasure and affection,

pain and hatred, that well up in his soul and are channeled in the right courses before he can understand the reason why. Then when he does understand, his reason and his emotions agree in telling him that he has been properly trained by inculcation of appropriate habits. Virtue is this general concord of reason and emotion. But there is one element you could isolate in any account you give, and this is the correct formation of our feelings of pleasure and pain, which makes us hate what we ought to hate from first to last, and love what we ought to love. Call his education, and I at any rate think you would be giving it its proper name (653a–c).

In this passage, Plato provides an early account of psychology and child development. He suggests that for most children the earliest lessons they receive are channeled through their emotional responses. And for them to start deciphering between pleasure (or pleasurable emotions such as happiness, joy) and pain (or painful emotions such as fear, anxiety), they must first be taught by continually participating in practices that expose them to virtue and vice. As previously mentioned, one reason Plato may take issue with arts is that they are distributed for public consumption without moral scrutiny and because the arts themselves do not provide the tools or an invitation to engage them through the lens of reason or one's moral system.

One may suggest that Plato would have benefitted from this: tools for critical thinking about the arts need to be incorporated into the pedagogy of the education curriculum, rather than the arts banished from the students' purview. While it is the case that the arts may or may not empower the viewer with the means to critically reason about the content's ethical implications, I maintain that any art that engages

the intellect can pose meaningful questions for reflection and consideration. One may ask then, "Why doesn't Plato introduce Philosophy earlier in the curriculum?" In the *Republic*, the guardian undergoes years of training, covering various topics, however, philosophy is something that is introduced later in life. One may ask, "Why doesn't Plato allow the children to learn philosophy?" He says on the topic of introducing philosophy too early,

For I fancy you have not failed to observe that lads, when they first get a taste of disputation, misuse it as a form of sport, always employing it contentiously, and, imitating confuters, they themselves confute others. They delight like spies in pulling about and tearing with words all who approach them...And when they have themselves been confuted by many they quickly fall into a violent distrust of all that they formerly held true; and the outcome is that they themselves and the whole business of philosophy are discredited with other men...But an older man will not share this craze...but rather choose to imitate the one who consents to examine truth dialectically than the one who makes a jest and a sport of mere contradiction, and so he will himself be more reasonable and moderate, and bring credit rather than discredit upon his pursuit (539c-d).

Plato's comments can be interpreted in several different ways. One way, which seems glaringly apparent, is that in addition to questioning whether a child can grasp the rational account, another concern is whether a child can understand and apply logic and dialectic, and even if so, whether they possess the maturity and wit to properly apply their newfound powers of discernment. Plato seems to think the

answer is *no*, that children—and by children he means all those below the age of thirty-five (see Kamtekar 2006)—are not mature enough in cognitive or emotional development to fully grasp and harness the practice that is philosophy.

While it is challenging to say whether this account is true, one may agree that Plato's argument still seems feasible. One may respond to Plato and suggest that perhaps, the level of critical engagement is altered or fashioned in a way that appeals to an appropriate audience or age group? Or maybe what we understand as contemporary critical engagement and what Plato means by philosophy is that it needs further consideration to determine what is meant and intended by both? In the case of children, a proposal one may offer is that perhaps a secondary element or figure is needed to assist in a child's cultivation of character, and that is of the wise parent, guardian or mentor who serves as a reinforcement to check in and engage the child's critical engagement. Again, what makes art so dangerous, is unlike some physical objects in the visible realm, mimetic art forms can rouse the emotions to either join forces with reason or with desire. While it seems feasible to suggest that a child cannot reason discernably utilizing advanced tools such as dialectic to tackle complex ethical queries, the child can experience sensations – like most persons – which help to lead to conclusions about right from wrong, good from bad (as Plato too acknowledges). Take for instance, the guardian who is preparing a meal in the kitchen, and the young child – not fully capable to grasp the rational account – comes running into the kitchen with eager eyes and curiosity about the activities taking place. Through the periphery of their eyes, the child spots a flame emitting from atop of the stove. Curious to understand this phenomenon vexing their senses, they

approach the stove. The guardian warns the child by appealing to their intellect and says, “do not touch the stove! The stove is hot.” Not having the experience of burning hot sensation, the child examines the stove and touches it against the warnings of their caretaker. The child cries out in agony as she experiences the pain of “hot” for the first time. In this example, by a reinforcement of sensation in their environment, the child has learned “hot stove” equals “pain,” and “pain” equals “hurt” or “displeasure.” The caretaker tends to the child’s wounds and reinforces the lesson, “See? The stove is hot. Ouchy.” In most cases, a child who experiences this pain often chooses not to experience it again – though of course there are exceptional cases. The idea inferred from this example is the child has learned – through strong sensation – and developed a kind of reasoning about displeasurable experiences or objects in the physical environment – which Plato will not object to (653a). It seems feasible that this same idea of *reinforcing positive and negative consequences through sensation and emotions (pleasure or pain) to develop one’s reason* can be applied to mimetic arts – *arts that utilize emotion to engage the intellect and pose meaningful questions about what one is experiencing*. Regardless, the idea here is that critical engagement is a necessary addition to education to ensure the development of one’s moral psychology. Perhaps in the case of the child, it is only the strong, educated, worldly mentor, parent who can provide guidance to youth who might be led astray, and art plays an important but supportive role in allowing for that development.

§. Conclusion

This paper sought out to accomplish a few crucial tasks. The first was to explore a cohesive philosophy that recognizes art as a source of moral danger, and an alternative philosophy that recognizes art as something worth preserving. It did this by first delineating mimetic art as copy making from mimetic art as impersonation. It set the stage by officiating that art as copy making and art as impersonation pose a cognitive and moral threat, whether that is by promoting ignorance or by corrupting the soul. Art as copy making poses an epistemic worry and not necessarily a danger to its viewer's moral psychology. The paper then shifted its focus to a close examination of imitative arts that are representational. Plato uses examples of poetry and theatre, but this paper broadened the scope of what he meant by art *qua* imitation to contemporary examples of representational art.

In closely examining his position as it relates to imitative arts, we find Plato's deeper concern is not solely that art interferes with the cultivation of a good soul, but that imitative art stands to interfere with the principle of specialization, the governing rule for the harmonious balance within the individual soul and the permeation of justice within the collective society. My suggestion was that by separating the moral dimension from the aesthetic dimension—which is a move in line with Plato's call for specialization—and classifying each dimension as performing its own separate enterprise, mimetic art forms can be viewed as something less suspect and more capable of contribution—specifically, turning one from the phantom images of *eikasia* to something higher requiring initial questioning and critical reflection. From there, aesthetics has been resituated as a kind of *techne* or knowledge, and its purpose is to

stir the passions to engage the intellect. By making this move, the artist is free to pursue the excellence (*arête*) of making art.

We acknowledge that the arts do not have as a part of their domain the evaluative powers to equip the viewer with the tools one needs to reason, reflect, and critically engage—that when appropriately honed are capable of augmenting one’s ability to ward off moral dangers. While Plato is concerned that children are too young to fully grasp or appreciate an early introduction to philosophy, this does not necessitate that some age-appropriate version of a critical thinking, perhaps one that is integrated alongside the teaching of other subjects, is out of the question.

In this paper, I have shown that art understood as a purely intellectual activity can save itself from moral scrutiny by resting on the foundation that an art form made well and engages the intellect in turns stands to move one up the divided line, closer to the intelligible realm, as compared to an art form that only appeals to one’s base desires. And by delineating its function while simultaneously introducing critical thinking as a defense against the moral dangers of art, art can enjoy the aesthetic freedom of making while simultaneously critically engaging the intellect. Additionally, art that stirs the emotions provides opportunities for the viewer to return from a place of shock or awe to a place of renewed belief or conviction and winds up being a meaningful tool for the cultivation of reason, thus securing itself a utilitarian place in Plato’s call for justice and the health of the soul.

Finally, it must be noted that Plato’s introduction of the *Republic* was a first attempt at social reform within the Greek city-state system during his time. Plato’s influence has had a global effect and has impacted many societies since his time and

far away from Greece in place. This paper is not attempting to situate itself as a catalyst to promulgate social reform nor to present a specific path to social reform. It does however, set the stage for others to reflect and ask pressing questions that surround the debate on the arts and censorship, the proper educational model for children and society-at-large, and the role of Plato's ancient, constructive model of what a conducive, healthy, and flourishing society looks like, and how we can (or should) implement modern versions of those own ideals in our contemporary contexts.

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