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Dialectical Rhetoric and Socrates’ Treatment of Mimetic Poetry in Book 10 of the Republic

Mark Matthew Moes
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Christopher Janaway’s recent book on Plato’s critique of the arts discusses, among other things, Plato’s Ion and Book 10 of the Republic. This paper claims that his comments upon passages in Republic 10 overlook the status of the Republic as itself a work of dramatic mimesis, ignore the dialectical form of the work, and miss that in various dialogues, Plato evinces a high view of poetry and the arts and even envisions a techne poietike. The paper defends these claims by constructing a three-stage argument that Plato holds a high view of poetry: (1) It first sketches an outline of a reading of the Ion as a dialogue that, despite being aporetic, nevertheless points ahead to a Socratic philosophizing that is craft-like and open to divine inspiration, and not only recognizes the value of poetry but also sometimes composes poetry; (2) Then, it discusses Socrates’ use, in his conversational strategies in the Republic, of the techne of rhetoric described in the Phaedrus; and finally, (3) It considers four arguments against mimetic poetry in Republic 10 (598b8-606d7), and sketches an interpretation of them that takes issue with Janaway’s. It argues that they are meant to invite readers to a higher dialectical standpoint, from which might come into view the value of mimetic poetry to a community guided by a Basilike techne.

Keywords: Plato, Ion, Phaedrus, Republic, poetry, craft (techne), imitation (mimesis)

Christopher Janaway in a recent book offers a thoughtful interpretation of Plato’s critique of the arts, discussing the Ion, Books 2, 3 and 10 of the Republic, and some passages concerning techne in the late dialogues (Janaway 1995). This paper takes issue with his comments upon passages in Republic 10 by claiming that they overlook the status of the Republic as itself a work dramatic mimesis, and that the oversight leads him to judge wrongly that the passages express Plato’s “vehement antagonism” to poetry and the arts. It argues that the comments fail to account for indications in various dialogues that Plato has a high view of poetry and the arts, and even envisions a techne poietike. The paper sketches a three-part reading strategy for showing that Plato holds such a high view:

(1) It sketches a reading of the Ion as a dialogue that highlights the need for a philosophical Basilike techne, a...
peculiar sort of master craft\(^2\) concerned with human and divine things as a whole, a craft that not only recognizes the value of poetry\(^1\) but also sometimes composes poetry.\(^4\) According to this reading, the dialogue also suggests that craftsmen can work under “inspiration” without sacrificing deliberate and conscious craftsmanship; (2) It discusses Socrates’ use in the Republic of the method of dialectical rhetoric described in the Phaedrus and (3) Reading the Republic as depicting Socrates’ employing that method of dialectical rhetoric, it sketches an interpretation of the four arguments against mimetic poetry in Republic 10 (598b8-606d7) that departs from Janaway’s. It claims that Plato intended the arguments to incite readers to move to a higher dialectical standpoint, where the value of mimetic poetry to a community guided by a Basilike techne comes into view.

1. The Ion

To understand the Ion, a reader must keep in mind at all times Ion’s personality.

He is a famous performer and reciter of Homer’s epic poems. He is a self-satisfied lover of flattery, and a cosmopolitan who travels from city to city and is awarded prizes at religious festivals for charming large audiences. Advertising himself as an excellent interpreter of Homer, he strives to share in Homer’s prestige. He dresses beautifully and can afford to do so because he earns a lot of prize money by reciting Homer.

In the first section of the dialogue (530a-533c), Socrates tests this Ion to see if he has any knowledge of what Homer “speaks about”. Taking craftsmanship as a paradigm of knowledge, Socrates supposes that if Ion is indeed an excellent interpreter of poetry, he should possess the skills and abilities found in practitioners of a craft of poetry interpretation. He should be able, among other things, to recognize, to understand, to serve certain goods internal to that craft and to be able to interpret poets other than Homer. However, in examining Ion, Socrates discovers that Ion is interested only in Homer (probably because in that way he can make more money and get more status), but can give no reasons of craft why he prefers Homer to the other poets. In the course of his interrogation, Socrates asks Ion if poets such as Homer and Hesiod treat a common subject matter (532c-533c). Eventually, he elicits Ion’s consent to the thesis that the subject matter of poetry is reality as a

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2. The author believes that techne, in its broadest sense, appears in the dialogues as a paradigm for all knowledge. Each craft knows and reliably realizes that goods, “internal” to itself, can be possessed to various degrees, usually is learned in master-apprentice relationships and embodied and developed in historical communal traditions, requires the acquisition of various virtues and skills, and brings practitioners a rule-guided (to various extents) but creative freedom. Most importantly, a craft expresses in a single activity both theoretical understanding and practical finesse, or, at least, both cognitivity and creativity. In Jacques Maritain’s words: “Cognitivity and creativity are the two essential aspects of the intellectual nature” (168-176). However, the way that these two aspects are related to one another varies, depending upon whether the craft is (1) a “science”; (2) an ordinary “useful craft”; (3) a fine art or (4) a “philosophy”. Maritain thinks that some modern poets took a tragic wrong turn when they tried “to turn poetic knowledge into absolute knowledge and to make poetry, contrary to its own nature, a means of some kind of absolute science” (186) concerned with the deification of man (186-195). This constituted a shift from the creative Self (in the imago Dei) to the self-centered ego, and from creative emotion as vehicle of poetic knowledge to brute emotion as the thing to be expressed by poetry. The author thinks Plato would agree that any confusion of any one of (1) through (4) would be a wrong turn. Perhaps Socrates’ dream at the end of the Charmides about an unhappy city that had perfected the sciences and useful crafts to the exclusion of the fine arts and philosophy is evidence for this. Later, Aquinas taught that man cannot live without pleasure, and when the spiritual pleasures are lacking, he passes to the carnal ones.

3. “Poetry” has a wider and a narrower sense. Socrates hints at the wider sense in his discussion with Agathon in the Symposium. In this sense, poetry is the free creativity of the spirit and the intuitive knowledge through emotion that permeates and transcends all the arts. It is mousike. In the narrower sense, it is verbal poetry only.

4. If the author is right, Plato’s view of poetry is not far distant from the view that George Rowley attributes to the “Chinese poet”. “The Chinese quest after the Tao implied something more than the most subtle and perfect design values. The importance of yun (resonance), with its rules and methods, assured great sensitivity to design values, and these values, in so far as they manifested the order and harmony of the universe, were vehicles for conveying the Tao; however, yun was ever secondary to ch’i (spirit).... In trying to express the unnameable ideas, the artist had to experience a communion with the mystery of the universe akin to that enjoyed by the great Taoist mystics” (qtd. in Maritain 41).
He asks Socrates to explain to him why everybody thinks he is such a good speaker. Nor is he able, despite his claim to possess the craft of poetry interpretation, to judge different poets as better or as worse than others. He can recite poetry in a way that makes him popular with audiences, but that is all. At the end of this section, Ion can only say to Socrates: “I have nothing to say in response to you, Socrates.” He asks Socrates to explain to him why everybody thinks he is such a good speaker.

In the second section of the dialogue (533d-536d), Socrates provides such an explanation, but does so in such a way as to bring to light something about Ion’s character. Flattering Ion in the way in which Ion presumably flatters his own audiences, Socrates says that Ion is possessed by a god, and that a god is like a magnet that attracts and imparts its own power of attraction to other things. On this account, Ion mesmerizes people because a god imparts to Homer a “magnetic” power that is transmitted through Ion to Ion’s audience. Ion accepts the account, taking it to imply that reason has no part to play in the transmission or reception of such power. He claims that while performing Homer, he enters imaginatively into the scenes in such a way as to experience pity, fear and a “strange pleasure”, and to move “out of his right mind”. Yet he also claims that during his performances, he watches to see if members of his audience are experiencing pity and fear. If he sees that they are, he laughs because he is making money, and if he sees them unmoved, he cries because he is losing money. Socrates apparently wants to draw into the open a certain view of rationality presupposed by Ion’s claims. This is the view that to be rational and to be “in one’s right mind”, is to calculate about money and fame, and to serve the function of the 

Ion accepts the account, taking it to imply that reason has no part to play in the transmission or reception of such power. He claims that while performing Homer, he enters imaginatively into the scenes in such a way as to experience pity, fear and a “strange pleasure”, and to move “out of his right mind”. Yet he also claims that during his performances, he watches to see if members of his audience are experiencing pity and fear. If he sees that they are, he laughs because he is making money, and if he sees them unmoved, he cries because he is losing money. Socrates apparently wants to draw into the open a certain view of rationality presupposed by Ion’s claims. This is the view that to be rational and to be “in one’s right mind”, is to calculate about money and fame, and to serve the function of the logistikos of Republic 4, whereas to be “irrational” or “out of one’s right mind” is to be moved by pity and fear for the suffering of others.

5. Were this thesis true, poetry would in virtue of its subject matter, possess significant overlap with metaphysics, ethics and politics. The mimetic poet has in common with the dialectician that he sees or pictures together what the practitioners of the various technai see or produce separately. In this first part of the dialogue, Socrates tries to elicit some recognition that a poetic work, even if it is in some sense representational or mimetic, is not “about things” in the way that ordinary specialized technai are about things. If the poetic work as a whole is “about” something, moreover, it is about the human world as a whole in its relation to the divine world, or about self and world, not merely about this or that particular human concern. Such an understanding of poetic mimesis has an obvious bearing on how we might want to question Glaucon’s understanding of the “painter” in Republic 10.

6. A poetic work embodies its meaning as a unique created artifact. It is a small world of its own (One thinks of the beautiful image of the shield of Achilles from the 18th book of the Iliad). Its words and sentences are not mere bearers or expressers of a meaning distinct from themselves as many ordinary propositions are. Each word and sentence takes its meaning from its role in the whole work. An interesting elucidation of what a literary work of art is— an ontology of the literary work—is given by Roman Ingarden. A difficult but accessible study of Ingarden’s Poetics is The Poetics of Roman Ingarden by Eugene Falk. Ingarden holds that the structure of the literary work of art consists of four layers, and that this structure has an order of sequence. The work has an “organic” unity which founds a “presented” world. A layer of sound formations “carries” a layer of meaning units which in turn projects a layer of schematic “aspects” of imaginary objects, through which are presented a layer of presented objects and a presented world. Each of the layers (and the order of sequence) contains potentially perceptible—aesthetic qualities which readers or performers must intuit when they concretize the work in their imagination. The work may enrich lives by the ideas, truths, and ethical and aesthetic values contained in the presented world. A literary work of art, however, also demands that we concretize it aesthetically in a competent reading, and this requires that we suspend the praxis that governs our lives and yield to the aesthetic qualities perceived in a presented object. The proper function of the work is not to teach morality didactically, or to focus upon its possible external effects or upon the moral evaluation of the actions depicted. It is to reveal a sense of life as a whole that usually remains concealed in the whirling current of living, and this function is fulfilled by the presented world of the work (The “organic soul” of the work is what constitutes the “action” of the work, not merely the set of external aspects of the action(s) of the external things depicted by it). Free as we are from the crushing reality of a real-life tragedy, we are left free to contemplate the “metaphysical” quality of events in the presented world of a literary tragedy (See note 32 below). In the literary work, we are directed to the particularity of the presentation, and we are barely, if at all, concerned with the represented objective world, because the artistic presentation captivates us as if it were represented reality itself. The “idea” of the work emerges as a view of life or as a “metaphysical quality”. The work does not merely “express” that idea, but affords readers the experience of intuiting it through the work’s aesthetic qualities founded in the layers and in the order of sequence and in their interrelationships (Falk 158).

7. The real center of attraction for Ion is not a god but the audience who can bring him money and fame.
It is apparent from the first two sections of the dialogue that what Socrates wants Ion to see about himself, and Plato wants readers to recognize, is that Ion’s conceptions of rationality, inspiration and craftsmanship are all askew. His view of rationality fails to allow for any significant relationship between reason and emotion. His view of inspiration, making ecstatic utterance or automatic writing paradigmatic cases of inspired activity, fails to allow for the possibility of cases of inspired yet deliberate and knowledgeable craftsmanship. His view of craftsmanship fails to make clear its relationship with the pursuit, not of external goods like money or fame, but rather with goods internal to a craft. The two initial sections of the dialogue show that even if good poetry does express the content of some insights into the whole of reality, Ion has neither any grasp of what it is nor any desire to discover what it might be.

At the beginning of the third section of the dialogue (536d-542b), Ion changes his mind about the magnetic or “Magnesian” account of his power over audiences and retreats to his earlier claim to possess a craft of poetry interpretation. When Socrates presses him again to justify this claim, Ion fumbles around trying to compare his craft to one that happens to come into Homer’s narrative somewhere. In the course of this exercise, his behavior makes clear that he does not understand the Iliad at all. Focusing on a passage in which Nestor gives some advice about chariot racing, he bungles his interpretation of it by isolating it from its contextual meaning in the poem. He reads it as providing straightforward technical information, whereas the poem makes clear that Nestor’s counsel, though “technically effective” for winning the race, is unethical and productive of disastrous political consequences, for the near civil war that follows the chariot race disintegrates the Greek forces just when they might have gotten victory over the Trojans. Ion flails about looking for some subject matter in some passages in Homer that he alone knows about, and he finally ends up saying that his craft is the craft of military strategy—the craft of the military general.

Plato in this final section of the dialogue depicts Socrates as conducting his cross examination of Ion in such a way as to suggest that Ion fails to make a needed distinction between ordinary specialized crafts useful to the polis, on the one hand, and “higher-order” master crafts, on the other. He characterizes Ion in such a way as to make it conspicuous that he is overlooking the possibility that poetry (and poetry interpretation) might

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8. Socrates’ deliberate use of rhapsodic skill and poetic imagery in the middle section counters in deed his explicit claim that poetry and rhapsody must be either uninspired techne or pure inspiration. Socrates poses to Ion a crux of aesthetics faced by every student of poetry who knows that formal perfection may fail to move and that moving poetry often bends or breaks formal rules. He raises the question of whether or not it is possible or even usual to have good judgment without being a good craftsman or to do inspired work without loss of one’s mind and discipline. The dialogue provokes us to wonder if the claim that poetry and rhapsody must either be techne or inspired poses a false dilemma between categories not really mutually exclusive. There might be crafts that are both open to inspiration and concerned somehow with the human/divine world as a whole. Poetry might be one, and philosophy might be another, and the two crafts might have at least these two characteristics in common. Poets and artists can be excellent craftsmen (so that the strong analogy between poiesis and techne remains valid), and practitioners of merely useful techne can be poor craftsmen. Yet in poetry craftsmanship, as Socrates avers in the Iliad, is in certain respects less important than creative intuition, or “inspiration” that guides making. However, Socrates is using “craftsmanship” in the sense of practical finesse, pertaining to the ways and means of expressing the intuition in the work and not to the intuition itself (A poorly crafted poem might still contain radiant evidence of an intuition that has been “betrayed” by bad craftsmanship in execution). However, there is a wider sense of techne, the author thinks, found for example in the initial division in the Statesman, which embraces both theoretical and practical abilities in a peculiar unity.

9. Socrates knows that this is not a correct way to think about poetry interpretation, though he suspects that Ion, being no true cosmopolitan, interprets Homer in such a way as to flatter his audiences in various poleis and to flatter especially their warlike attitudes to one another.

10. The creative poet expresses the content of a creative intuition in the work. The work is meant to convey to the soul of others a receptive intuition. The gifted interpreter or performer must have the same poetic intuition that was in the soul of the poet, not precisely as creative, but as cognitive of the subjectivity of the poet and of the flash of reality apprehended by the poet echoing the ontologic mystery of the world. Often, the most important aspects of the intuition and the dearest to the poet are lost in the
be (or be part of) some kind of non-specialized master craft or *Basilike techne*. If poetry were such, it would be an important sense be philosophical. Although many commentators see in the *Ion* a Socratic rejection of poetry and myth in favor of a philosophy in which poetry has no part, the text does not support this interpretation in any conclusive way, for it can be read as provocative and aporetic with an aporetic ending. At the end of the dialogue, Socrates traps Ion in a dilemma. Either Ion must admit that he is not a craftsman at all and that he performs Homer in virtue of some mindless inspiration, or he must admit that his claim to be a craftsman is falsified by his inability even to pick out the subject matter of his craft. Seasoned readers of Plato know that he often uses such dilemmas to provoke readers into a closer examination of their horns. The *Ion* ends in *aporia* or puzzlement, and one of the questions it raises is the question of whether being inspired and being a craftsman are really mutually exclusive conditions.

Another question left dangling at the end of the *Ion* is a question about the significance of Socrates’ use of the image or model of magnetic attraction to elucidate the notion of poetic inspiration. Socrates’ conversation with Ion points up that the magnet model, as Ion interprets it, is an inadequate way of understanding the power of great poetry, and that poetry is not a specialized craft with a specialized subject matter. Nevertheless that is the process of reception. The significance of the work becomes more diversified in the minds of men than in the minds of the poet. A great work lives a life of its own through generations, and the received facets of its inexhaustible message are constantly changing. It matters that a poem’s performers and auditors be attracted by the magnetic ring of which Socrates speaks in the *Ion* (Maritain 303-309).

11. Readers familiar with Plato’s *Statesman* or with the first book of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* might be more apt to recognize this than readers not so familiar. Recall the point made in note 5 that Socrates seems to suggest that poetry, being about the whole, has the same subject matter as philosophical pursuits such as metaphysics, ethics and politics.

12. Ion cannot see that the discipline that creates a work that enables one to experience the horror of a senseless war, illuminates human character flaws and shows the fragility of human goodness, is similar to the discipline that allows a philosopher to see in earthly beauties the sign of divinity. See Gene Fendt and David Rozema, *Platonic Errors: Plato, a Kind of Poet* (Greenwood Press, 1998), 29. Perhaps this is because he is more concerned with the money and prestige to be gained by the practice of rhapsody than he is sensitive to the goods internal to his own craft (see 536e). His performance of Homeric poetry is cleverly delivered for titillation, and he performs Homeric formulas in the way a baboon imitates a Shakespearean actor. He performs Homer without insight as the inhabitants of Glaucon’s polis hear performances of Homer without insight, so that their leaders must ban performances presenting characters behaving in ways that the audiences might mime like baboons. Both poets and philosophers, for all the differences between their styles of discourse and their rhetoric, might know and communicate things in the light of the Good. On the other hand, poets might use poetic diction to produce bad work, and philosophers use dialectical skills to no good purpose.

13. Of course, inspiration is a generic term. We need, at the very least, to distinguish within it two species. “General” inspiration is an experience had by any artist who works from the root of his soul to intuit something true about Self and Cosmos, engaging the *imago Dei* that is his own creative intuition, while “special inspiration” is an experience of some special prophet who becomes a vehicle of divine intentions to communicate something to humans.

General inspiration might be divided into (1) the operation of creative intuition itself and (2) the “flow” that is released by creative intuition passing into the first stages of expression in poetry or fine art, or in the communication of scientific or philosophical insight. Yet this “flow” that gives wings to intellect and imagination is by itself usually not enough to ensure full and excellent realization of the artistic idea. Inspiration (1) provides the meaning of the work but is too rich for full expression in artistic media. Inspiration (2) is “disarmed and in search of tools” (Maritain 246). It cannot transpose and express the content of creative intuition into ungrateful and refractory and treacherous media without the practically rational skills of *techne*. Great work is achieved when the transposition of intuitive content into expressed work is guided all along by inspiration (1) and inspiration (2), but the fire of inspiration fuels the work of craft. Maritain writes: “Having only the power of a source, inspiration also requires of necessity—as a means—the rational tool of the virtue of art [in the sense of craft] and all the logic and shrewdness, self-restraint and self-possession of working intelligence” (246). It is a myth that great art is incompatible with the self-exactions of craftsmanship—that it must always proceed with total passivity under inspiration. Great artists know the need for lucidity and choice—a positive freedom that depends on conscious intelligence in the making of the work. “As the most dangerous criminals are lucid maniacs, so the most perfect poets are madmen using unfailing reason” (Maritain 249). Even in a Mozart, the conscious craftsmanship is less prominent but is still there. Maritain makes clear that craftsmanship is subordinate to inspiration when he writes: “Creative intuition is the only supreme gift that a poet, in any art whatsoever, ought to seek—in the way in which a gift can be sought: not in the sense that it might be acquired by any effort of the human will, but in the sense that it can be cared for, and protected, and assisted, when it is there” (405).
all. There are various indications scattered throughout Plato’s dialogues that Plato may have thought that poetry, with its attractive power and its peculiar ability to speak about the whole of reality, has some important role to play in relation to a higher-order craft like philosophy. For one thing, Plato alludes to the magnet model again in the Laws, where the Athenian Stranger (a stand-in for Socrates?) envisions a noble city of Magnesians (Planinc 263-268). Again, Plato’s own dialogues can be read as expressing certain profound reinterpretations of Homer’s poetry. Certain readings of the Phaedrus suggest that Plato views philosophy to be a higher-order craft that employs techniques not only of dialectical discussion and dialectical rhetoric but also techniques of poetry interpretation and poetry creation. In a number of dialogues, Plato supplies poetic myths of his own making whose import is inextricably tied to the philosophical discussions depicted in the dialogues in which they appear. Moreover, the suggestion can be found in the Timaeus that both the production of inspired poetry and the competent interpretation of inspired poetry are crafts. The speech of Timaeus in that dialogue suggests that all craftsmen work in synergy with the divine. According to that speech, the maker of the Cosmos is a maker and craftsman (poietes and demiourgos) and intelligent creatures are made in the image of this ultimate craftsman. Craftsmanship, moreover, is not just a theoretical knowledge of universals; it is also a practical knowledge of how to rightly realize universals or creative ideas for unique works that somehow “contain” universals as parts, in particulars.

These scattered indications provide evidence that the brief and apparently insignificant little Ion plays a more important role in the corpus of Platonic dialogues as a whole than most readers suppose. They suggest that it brings to light the need for a philosophical Basilike techne—a peculiar sort of master craft, unlike ordinary crafts in being concerned with human and divine things as a whole, and employing both the resources of

14. (See Planinc 2003). Throughout the dialogues, Homeric images and icons are taken very seriously and often incorporated into the very structuring of the dialogues. This the author takes to indicate that Plato thinks that Homer was in some sense an inspired poet and hence, wants in his thinking to make use of the fruits of poetic inspiration.

15. Some crafts, such as the fine arts, realize creative ideas or creative intuitions that are not universals but are rather ideas for unique works. In the Timaeus, Timaeus speaks of the Demiurge’s idea for the one universe as an “Ideal Living Animal that contains all living animals” (30c-d). This is an idea for a unique universe that somehow contains universals (ideas capable of multiple instantiations) as parts of itself.

16. To the extent that its object is transcendent in some way, it requires mania and inspiration to be successful. In Timaeus 70d-72b, Plato has Timaeus engage in a (playful) discussion of the divine design of the appetitive part of the soul. Timaeus says that because it is filled night and day with phantasms and fancies, the Maker has planned for this by putting inspired divination at the disposal of men, so that it becomes possible to improve this inferior part of ours and bring it into contact with truth. Maritain, nevertheless, thinks that Plato holds to a “total separation between poetic inspiration and reason” (87), and so “drove Homer and his fellow madmen out of the state” (87). He says that “the sin of Platonism is separation” (88) and that yet Plato did not manage “totally to divide, as perhaps he would have wanted, poiesis and techne from one another” (88). However, the Parmenides examines various senses of “separation”, as it examines various senses of “oneness”. Below the author takes issue with this interpretation of Republic 10. The author believes that we need to be more careful in our interpretations of the precise way that Plato “separated” poiesis, techne, inspiration and related things from each other. Norman Dahl argues that Aristotle in Metaphysics VII uses “separation” in a sense in which it is a non-symmetrical relation that obtains when A is not metaphysically dependent on B. A can be separate from B even when B is not separate from A. If Plato, in some senses of separation, thinks this, then inspired poiesis might be separate from techne even when techne is not separate from inspired poiesis. There are many possibilities here, and now is not the place to delve into these issues.

Maritain maintains that “poetry and the intellect are of the same race and blood” (90), and that “poetry not only requires artistic or technical reason with regard to the particular ways of making, but much more profoundly, depends on intuitive reason with regard to poetry’s own essence and to the very touch of madness it involves” (90). He writes: “I think that what we have to do is to make the Platonic Muse descend into the soul of man, where she is no longer Muse but creative intuition; and Platonic inspiration descend into the intellect united with imagination, where inspiration from above the soul becomes inspiration from above conceptual reason” (91). The author believes Maritain is wrong in thinking his view is anti-Platonic. In the Timaeus, Timaeus has the divine Craftsman make the lesser gods as craftsmen imitating him, without taking away their free faculties. (They are free in a positive sense when they become formed abilities, but they are also negatively free, to some extent, at least from rules and precedents, like the freedom of play and dreams.) If proper use of innate faculties can be imitation of the divine making—of
poetry and the resources of dialectical argument. This philosophical craft, as it comes to be characterized in later dialogues, unites a theoretical vision\(^\text{17}\) of the Good with the practical wisdom needed to realize the Good in individual and communal life, and remains open to divine inspiration in various ways.\(^\text{18}\) Indeed, Plato seems to depict Socrates himself as practicing some such craft in the \textit{Ion} and in all the dialogues.\(^\text{19}\)

If this reading of the \textit{Ion} is correct, then the dialogue—Plato’s only dialogue focused directly and exclusively upon the arts of poetry and poetry interpretation—does not depict Socrates as rejecting poetry and myth in the name of a philosophy in which poetry has no part. Rather, it shows that he envisions the possibility that poetry is in some sense philosophical and that true philosophy is in some sense poetical, or at least integrates the resources of poetry into itself. In order to rebut an obvious objection to this understanding of Plato’s views on poetry, it is necessary to defend a non-standard interpretation of Socrates’ discussion of poetry in Book 10 of the \textit{Republic}. However, in order to achieve this, it is in turn necessary to understand something important about the structures of the \textit{Phaedrus} and the \textit{Republic}.

## 2. The \textit{Techne} of Rhetoric in the \textit{Phaedrus} and the \textit{Republic}

Socrates’ suggestions about rhetoric as a \textit{techne} in \textit{Phaedrus} 259e-274b are actually employed in the dialogue as a whole. Two long sections display an important parallelism of dialectical structure. The first, 231a-257b, moves to conclude that a lover is a better friend than a non-lover, and the second, 259e-274b, moves to conclude that rhetoricians must know the truth in order to succeed in their tasks. In each section, we find the following elements or stages: (1) Socrates articulates a problematic thesis held by Phaedrus, and defends, clarifies and works out implications of the thesis on its own terms; (2) He shows the need to move to a higher level of thought and to a better understanding of key concepts (He often begins to achieve this in the

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17. Here the author envisions poetry as indispensable for achieving such a vision.

18. Socrates speaks often of inspiration, sometimes, tongue in cheek, but not always. Such a craft would be a therapeutic craft to be sure, but perhaps it would also count as a productive craft to the extent that it involved the production of textual works of art, or even conversational works of art. Recall the final division of the Sophist in the \textit{Sophist} that makes sophistry (in a sense, neutral between good and bad sophistry) an expertise productive of \textit{logoi}.

19. It might be suggested that later, post-Platonic thinkers conceived philosophically informed theology to be such a master craft, aiming to integrate interpretations of inspired texts and the results of dialectical and metaphysical inquiry into a unified whole able to guide and be guided by ethical and political practice.

The \textit{Timaeus} suggests that good craftsmanship of any kind, but especially excellent practice of the \textit{Basilike techne}, is an imitation of God, so that craft training prepares one to do inspired work that adorns the world under divine inspiration. In Christian terms, this would amount to the maxim that the Holy Spirit works through the hard work of dedicated craftsmen of all kinds.
way he conducts the first stage); (3) He makes reorienting conceptual innovations and redefines key terms, using a method called the method of collection and division and (4) He formulates, with the aid of the conceptual innovations and clarifications, a thesis opposed to the problematic thesis, and argues for its superiority to the original problematic thesis. The redefinition, the reorientation and the argument together display both the partial truth and the deeper falsity of the original thesis and provide an explanation of how and why the proponent of the original thesis erred in espousing it.

All four stages are exemplified in the course of the second stretch of dialectic in the dialogue (259e-274b). Socrates examines and refutes the problematic thesis that rhetoricians wield persuasive techniques but not truth-seeking techniques. Socrates articulates a new definition of rhetoric as a psuchagogia of souls by means of discourse not only in the lawcourts and on other public occasions but also in private. In an initial division, he distinguishes two kinds of such soul-leading: a deceptive kind that leads souls away from truth to falsehood, and a truthful kind that leads souls away from falsehood to truth. In a further division, he differentiates truthful rhetoric into two parts: one containing valuable techniques that are non-dialectical and do not use the method of collection and division, and the other containing valuable techniques that are dialectical and use collection and division. Both sets of valuable techniques can work to dispel illusion and communicate truth. The first set of techniques would seem to partially constitute a poietike techne—a “rhetoric of poetry”. Socrates’ argument enables his auditor to see the partial truth in the problematic thesis—there is a part of rhetoric that, like poetry, does not employ careful conceptual analysis—the part containing the non-dialectical persuasive techniques, but it also shows the need to supplement these techniques with dialectical ones, for it shows that dialectical inquiry is needed in order to discover such things as the ends of rhetoric (the ethical and political ends of man), general psychological truths about kinds of auditor, and so on. Furthermore, the argument establishes that a good rhetorician must have a practical ability for recognizing which techniques, non-dialectical and/or dialectical, to use on which audiences or interlocutors, and when to use them.

In Phaedrus 272b-c, near the end of the discussion of the techne of rhetoric, Socrates contrasts the long and arduous road of truthful rhetoric to the easier and shorter path of merely persuasive rhetoric. There is an unmistakable echo in this passage of Republic 435c-d, where Socrates said he and Glaucon will not comprehend the structure and nature of the human soul without following a longer and fuller road of inquiry and discussion than they have so far followed. In its context in the Republic, Socrates’ remark is tantamount to his saying that the already articulated conceptions of political and personal justice are badly formed and misleading. This passage provides a clue to the structure and meaning of the Republic as a whole. Books 2-9 of the work depict Socrates’ employing the same method of truthful rhetoric as he employed in his discussions of love and rhetoric in the Phaedrus. At the beginning of Book II, Socrates moves from using elenchus alone to using the higher truth-conducive rhetoric he described in the Phaedrus. Until 471c, he brings to light and clarifies Glaucon’s problematic understanding of justice modeled upon the justice of the stratified feverish city-in-speech, clarifying it in its own terms and drawing out its implications, and showing the need for moving

20. The division seems to imply that the first part includes poetry, while the second part includes the use of logically careful collection and division, and that both parts require participation in the divine sophrosune glimpsed in the transcendent vision of the Palinode.

21. Glaucon’s mind is being pulled both by the deceptive rhetoric of Thrasymachus and his like and by the force of Socrates’ refutations of Thrasymachus. He asks Socrates in 357a: “Socrates, do you want to seem to have persuaded us, or truly to persuade us, that it is in every way better to be just than unjust?” (357a).
DIALECTICAL RHETORIC AND SOCRATES’ TREATMENT OF MIMETIC POETRY

22. The founding idea of the first city is that it is better to have the appearance of justice than justice itself. The rulers of the first city attempt to create and preserve an appearance, using censorship, lies, indoctrination and a calculating rationality aimed at control. Eventually, the city will degenerate because it does not know the truth about its own relationship to nature (the rulers cannot calculate the marital number). The rulers are like the bad rhetoricians of the Phaedrus who peddle jackasses while calling them horses. The city described after the turn in 471cff admits philosophy and love of truth as its founding idea (this is the “smallest change” needed to save the first city). Hence, the rulers must be dialectical rhetoricians.

23. Maritain says that his “creative intuition” is much the same as Aristotle noetic insight. See Jacques Maritain, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry.

are discussing, but the truth itself."²⁵ Plato wants readers to see in Book 10 an attempt to elicit from a dialectically challenged Glaucon the recognition of important uses of *mimesis* both in poetry and in the very *technē* of rhetoric that Socrates has employed in his conversation with Glaucon.²⁶ Plato depicts Socrates as a philosopher who, having descended into the Cave, must speak Cave-language in such a way as to begin to point for its inhabitants the way out of the Cave.

Reading Book 10 as a truncated dialectical examination of Glaucon’s misconception of *mimesis* contrasts sharply with Janaway’s way of reading the book, which is emblematic of that of many readers. Janaway tries hard to sympathize with what he takes to be Plato’s treatment of poetry, but is worried about its apparent analogies with the Third Reich’s suppression of films precisely because of their artistic superiority.²⁷ Janaway’s discussions of the treatment of *mimesis* and mimetic poetry in Book 10 are extremely helpful and insightful. The problem with them is that he thinks he is discussing Plato’s own views, and not statements Plato depicts Socrates as making in the course of articulating problematic dialectical theses about *mimesis* and mimetic poetry. He overlooks the provocative function of the depicted function of the depicted dialogue for use as philosophical exercise books in the Academy). Consequently, he remains unaware that in carrying on his own very astute testing and questioning of the problematic views propounded by Socrates (who is miming Glaucon’s views) in the earlier parts of Book 10, he is doing precisely what Plato intended his philosophical readers to do.²⁸ How exactly do Socrates’ remarks in Book 10 function to provoke readers to

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²⁵ Note that the distinction between truth and an image of the truth parallels the distinction between the poet’s creative intuition and the artwork that embodies and expresses that intuition.

²⁶ It turns out that one thing crucially wrong with the picture of justice provided by Glaucon’s city in speech and the understanding of the soul associated with it is that it draws a false contrast between being a ruler and being a craftsman. This false contrast obscures from view the *Basilikai technai* of politics and ethics that Socrates envisions as governing both unruly citizens in the city and unruly appetites in the soul, and capable, in the limit case, of eliminating conflicts among citizens and conflicts among desires. Socrates pays no explicit attention to the craftsmen not from his or Plato’s political convictions (think of the continuum of crafts in the final definition of statesmanship in the *Statesman*), but because his interlocutors do not want to be mere bronze. The problematic city and soul can only “manage” badness by a calculated use of manipulative force and deception. A true *Basilike techne* of politics or ethics, on the other hand, can recognize and work to realize the most important goods, especially those common goods that are internal to the practice of craft, rather than only the external goods of money, power and bodily pleasure. The words “advantage” and “strength” in Thrasymachus’ definition of justice will both have to be reconceived in light of the craft analogy. Socrates shows that the justice of the stratified city-in-speech is produced by pseudo-craftsmen who are intent on preserving conventional structures from the corrupting influence of the appetites of the “mere” craftsmen—persons who want to preserve what they understand to be the necessity from the corrupting influence of craft intelligence. Socrates means to bring about justice by unleashing the erotic desire for the goods internal to the *Basilikai technai*. He acts as a true ruler by practicing the true rhetoric of the *Phaedrus*.

²⁷ (See Janaway 80-81). He says at one point: “We are certainly meant to learn from the paradigm city how to approximate to an ideal of individual justice in ourselves” (83). In another place, he writes: “In his examination of the content of poetry and myth Plato advocates state censorship of some of the finest works of his culture with a full-blooded passion and an attention to detail which are surely hard to stomach for most readers in the late twentieth century” (85). And again, he writes: “Book 10 is the final chapter of a systematic ethics and epistemology, and if we treat it as a self-contained treatise on the arts, many of its assumptions will seem gratuitous and baffling” (154).

²⁸ Janaway isolates two principles that are implicated in the conception of what the author is calling the stratified feverish city-in-speech, the Principle of Specialization and the Principle of Assimilation. The former supposes that each citizen shall have one or only one role or function within the city. In the author’s view, Plato intends this principle to be called into question in light of the higher view of the soul introduced after 471c-a view which makes out the soul to be capable of practicing a *Basilike techne* in view of an understanding of the cosmic whole. The latter principle states that people come to resemble whatever they enact. It entails that engaging in *mimesis* of any character type that differs from what the city considers to be ideal character will tend to make one less like the ideal and more like the imitated character. One who imitates many things becomes like each of them, and like Zelig in the Woody Allen film. According to this principle, the practice of dialectic would be impossible, since it requires practitioners to enter sympathetically into at least two conflicting and opposing points of view. So would be the practice or appreciation of any fine art if the production of a work of fine art requires one to represent, as it were, the whole world in a grain of sand. In the author’s view, Plato depicts Socrates as calling this principle into question in the dialectic of the Book 10.
improve upon Glaucon’s understanding of mimesis?

3.1 Collection: A Generic Conception of Mimesis

We can only begin to sketch our way of reading of Book 10 by glancing at two passages at the beginning of the book.29 In 595a-b, Socrates proffers that:

… all sorts of imitative poetry (πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα) seem to be (or seem likely to be, ἔοικεν εἶναι) the maiming (or mutilation or corruption, λώβη) of the thinking (or intelligence, διανοίας) of those hearers who (τῶν ἀκουόντων, ὅσοι) fail to have as an antidote (μὴ ἔχουσι φάρμακον) the knowledge of what sorts of things (οἷα) these imitative poems are (or happen to be, τυγχάνει ὑπάρχῃ). (595b2-3)

We might translate less literally into English:

Literary works of art that employ dialogue and characterization (much of the humanities) seem to possess no intellectual force, and even to enfeeble the intelligence of people who hear (or read) them, unless those hearers (readers) know enough about the nature (ontology) and functions of works of literary art to be able to interpret them properly.

The second passage occurs in 595c, where Socrates directs a question at Glaucon: "Mimesis as a whole (or ‘mimesis, speaking generally’, Μίμησιν ὅλως), would you be able to tell me whatever in the world it is (ὅ τί ποτ’ ἐστίν)? For I myself do not altogether understand what mimesis is (or means) (or ‘what it wants to be’ or ‘what it means to be’, τί βούλεται εἶναι).” After posing the question, Socrates proposes that he and Glaucon begin by inquiring (ἀρξώμεθα ἐπισκοποῦντες, 596a5) into the nature of mimesis. These passages not only indicate that under certain conditions literary artworks do not hinder intelligent thought, but also suggest, or at least leave open, the possibility that an inquiry into the nature of literary art might show that works of literary art actually even enhance and empower such thought. The ensuing discussion does not succeed in producing an explicit account of the nature of mimesis, but it provides many materials suggestive of how such an account would have to go.

Before considering some of these suggestive materials, the author shall now claim that it is left to readers to perform the analytical collection and division of the concept of mimesis in order to move dialectically toward a philosophical understanding of poetry and literary works of art.30 Even though Glaucon is depicted as unable to do better than to mime Socrates’ suggestions without understanding their point, Plato hopes that we will do better. What would such a performance look like? In Books 2-3, mimesis referred ambiguously to a number of things. It covered not only poets’ uses of dramatic characterization, but also the overall activity of making poetry—the activity of performing poetry or acting in a play and the activity of “making oneself like another in voice or form” in or out of poetry. However, now in Book 10, Socrates has initiated an inquiry into a broader conception of mimesis subsuming all these. Readers of the Book are now invited to make a collection (συναγωγή, to use Plato’s term of art) of all forms of imitation under a more general conception. Socrates indirectly suggests that this general conception or genus of mimesis is the genus of all intelligent activities that make or represent or express, in a medium, some Form, some exemplary Idea, or the content of some

29. The author has done a differently focused study of parts of Book 10 in his paper “Mimetic Irony and Plato’s Defense of Poetry in the Republic”.
30. In articulating the method of truthful rhetoric in the Phaedrus, Socrates emphasized that the active powers of the hearer’s soul must be discerned fully by the true orator. In Republic 427e, Socrates, before beginning the discussion of justice in the feverish city, told Glaucon: “you will have to help”. In Book 10, however, Socrates makes suggestions to Glaucon concerning imitation that he is not able to work with. The author wants to claim that Plato wants readers to take up these suggestions and to actively achieve a new conception of imitation.
experience or creative intuition. It is remarkable that this generic conception of *mimesis* is not far removed from the idea of craftsmanship, which suggests that Socrates' conversation with Glaucon about *mimesis* might have an important relationship with his conversation with Ion about craftsmanship. After performing a collection, a philosopher in Plato's dialogues usually performs a division of a genus into a variety of sub-kinds. However, in order to show how such a division might go, we must first look at some of the suggestions about this provided in the early parts of Book 10.

### 3.2 Socratic Provocations: Textual Suggestions for Dividing the Genus into Its Kinds

In 596b-597c, Socrates says that it is important to distinguish three different craftsmen who stand in different relations to an artifact such as a bed or a table. God produces (*θεὸν ἐργάσασθαι*) the Form of the artifact (597b-c), the human carpenter constructs the embodied artifact (596b-7), and the painter of the artifact imitates the phenomenal appearance of the artifact (596e5-9). This set of distinctions raises a number of puzzles, not all of which can be discussed here in any detail. Why, to begin with, does Socrates treat the mental generation of a Form for an artifact by the god as an instance of craftsmanship? Again, why does he attribute the production of the Form for an artifact to a god rather than attributing it to the creative human artisan? And then, why does he call only the painter an imitator? In connection with the last question, it would seem that all three craftsmen are imitators in the wider sense of imitation. It would seem that the god expresses or represents, and in that sense, “imitates” some aspect of his own mind in any Form or complex of Forms he mentally generates. Likewise, it would seem that a human artisan “imitates” or realizes his artisan’s idea in the constructed artifact. It is not the case that the painter alone “imitates” something—the appearances of the objects that provide the proximate subject matter of his painting.

Socrates’ remarks about the three kinds of craftsmen suggest another puzzle when they are read in connection with the discussion of the imitative poet who was to be censored in the imaginary polis in Books 2-3, for they leave unclear whether that poet should be compared to the carpenter craftsman of the bed or table, producing an artifact useful to the polis, or to the painter, making a “useless” copy of the surface features of an artifact. Socrates, we suspect, knows that some painters intend to “imitate” or express something more and other than the phenomenal appearances of their subjects, that painters are not mere copyists, and that some paintings are powerfully edifying works of art. Furthermore, the image of the painter is used in Book 6 to suggest that philosophers are craftsmen of the beautiful. The image of a painter who “looks” to the divine and “sketches” the divine image into citizens through education is a lovely image, for the way theory (“looking”) is united with practice (“sketching”) in good craftsmanship (The painting image fits well, too, with Socrates’ reference at the end of Book 9 to the philosopher’s act of founding the ideal city in himself by imitating its pattern “laid up in heaven”). Glaucon, however, seems but dimly aware either of the nature of the fine arts or of the nature of the craft of

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31. *Mimesis* as a verbal noun denotes a kind of productive action. Generally, an act of *mimesis* produces a thing or event or state of affairs that is an expression or representation of the Form, Idea or creative intuition. This product or *mimema* of the act of *mimesis* bears a representing relation to the Form or Idea. In English, we use the term “imitation” both to denote the action and to denote the product of the action. We also sometimes call the representing relation a relation of imitation. We even say that the product of imitation itself imitates, though it only does so in connection with a mind that grasps it as a representation. (Think of Searle’s Chinese Box and critiques of computational models of mind).

32. When in 596b-e, Socrates suggests Glaucon could become a pan-mimetic artisan of images of everything merely by carrying a mirror, he seems to suggest the possibility that Glaucon could become a sophist or a bad poet or painter. He could make representations of all things by merely reflecting their surface features, without understanding their meanings or purposes, like, perhaps, the makers of the puppet-artifacts in the Cave image.

33. See Marcin Podbielski, “Painting the Ideal City”, read at the Fordham SAGP Conference in New York in 2009.
philosophy. Socrates gets him easily to assent to the claim that the poet, censored in the earlier discussion, is like a painter who captures only outward appearances from an arbitrary perspective, who merely throws images about arbitrarily, and who fails to embody any divine idea in any useful or edifying artifact.

Leaving open the question whether Glaucon’s low view of the painter (and of the imitative poet) is correct, Socrates turns to consider the epistemic status of poets like Homer. He urges Glaucon to consider whether people are correct in opining that such poets, in order to be able to produce the beautiful poetry they produce, must really know about all the crafts, all the virtues and vices, and all the gods. This exhortation will remind readers of questions Socrates has raised in other contexts (Republic 1 and 6, Apology, Charmides, Euthydemus, etc.) concerning kinds of knowledge other than the specialized technai. As we saw above, Socrates’...
questioning of Ion followed a similar line. We might now suppose that in all these discussions, Socrates is pointing to the possibility of a higher-order craft concerned with the whole reality and man’s place in it. Practitioners of this craft would possess a kind of knowledge, both theoretical and practical, concerning virtue and vice, the human self, the gods, etc., that might be capable of realizing states of affairs highly “useful” to a polis. Glaucon opines that the imitative poet is always a superficial imitator, but the text gives no conclusive reason for thinking that either Socrates or Plato agrees with this assessment. Readers might be capable of understanding better than Glaucon that poetic imitations of action might be finely crafted and at the same time, edifying to citizens of a polis.

Socrates urges on Glaucon and provokes him further by distinguishing, not this time three different craftsmen, but rather three different kinds of craft—one that makes something, one that uses the thing made and one that imitates it in some of its aspects and appearances. It is remarkable that these correspond to three kinds of craft discussed frequently in the dialogues—the ordinary specialized useful crafts, the higher-order craft of philosophical ethics or statesmanship (called the “user’s craft” in the Euthydemus) and the fine arts. Glaucon admits that the highest knowledge is that of the user, though it seems unlikely that he understands what Socrates is driving at. Socrates then offers three carefully chosen examples of products of craft—artifacts, living creatures and actions, doing his best to elicit from Glaucon some recognition of the existence of crafts that produce things other than commodities such as beds or tables or mouth-bits or reins or flutes. He provokes him, however, unsuccessfully, to suppose that works of imitative poetry might be well-crafted artifacts, and that states of virtue or health in living creatures might be produced or at least encouraged by therapeutic crafts such as ethics and statesmanship, or even by poetic works of art. Socrates suggests by indirection that, if actions (praxeis) can be expressions of a (higher-order) craft, and if artistic imitations of praxeis are themselves praxeis, then acts of artistic imitation can themselves have positive therapeutic value.

36. Even if not “useful” in the way that the ordinary crafts are.
37. Socrates uses beds and tables in his illustration, perhaps, because they are the implements of family life, or perhaps because they are objects that define life in the conventional city for the comfort-loving Glaucon.
38. Or that living creatures are crafted by the lesser gods of the Timaeus.
39. After Aristotle, the ancients divided the activity of the practical intellect into operations yielding human praxeis concerned with the good of the soul and operations yielding works to made or produced. The excellence of the first was phronesis—that of the second techne. Plato, of course, distinguished techne from phronesis, yet he emphasized perhaps more than his successors that phronesis is a many ways like techne, as if it were a higher order ruling techne or user’s techne. While recognizing that ordinary technai, including what we call fine arts, pertained to a sphere separate from and independent of the sphere of morality, Plato nevertheless emphasized the interconnections between the two spheres. He saw that even if the primary aim of art is not moral edification, the moral influences of art are not negligible, and the impact of an artist’s moral life on his art is something to be reckoned with, for he knew that the curiosity and recklessness living some artists practice in order to feed their art can warp the artist’s general temperament of thought and sensibility and its relation to reality.
40. This is not at all to say that the aim of poetic imitations is primarily or only moral didactics (See note 6). As the mind of the moral agent expresses itself in praxis with the aid of good craftsmanship, so the soul of the artist, by way of the creative intuition guiding his work, expresses itself in the work with the aid of craftsmanship. This creative intuition is what constitutes the plot of the work. The plot is not merely the set of imaginary actions depicted by the work. The “schematized aspects” of the deeds depicted (to use Ingarden’s term) constitute only one level of the ontology of the artwork (Maritain 356-359). Maritain writes: “The arrangement of the parts, the proportion, correspondence, and mutual impact between them, are what is first seen in the work, and the laws of this arrangement are what the working or discursive attention of the artist or the critic is most occupied with. Yet, essential as it may be, the number or harmonic expansion, being immersed in the materiality of the work, is only a kind of external reflection of the poetic sense and the action in the living and fertile mathematic of sense appearances” (364; see also Ingarden, The Literary Work of Art). Ingarden presents a highly sophisticated philosophical analysis of the ontological problems of great importance to literary scholarship and criticism: the mode of existence of the literary work, its relation to the artist and the relation of the reader to the work (Falk 200-204). Ingarden (see note 6 and Falk 125-136) says that a literary work is a “heteronomous” structure, i.e., it does not exist until the artist makes it with intentional creativity. The sound formations, sense units and their correlates in the aspects of the presented objects of the created world originate in acts of consciousness and yet
3.3 Division: Kinds of Craft and Kinds of Mimesis

The discussions of the three craftsmen, the epistemic status of Homeric poetry and the three kinds of craft provide materials for constructing an illuminating account of the main kinds of craft and the related kinds of mimesis carried out in these crafts. Techne or “craft”, in its broadest sense, appears in the dialogues as a paradigm for all intelligent activity. For Plato, a craft is a historically and socially embodied practice. Its participants, in varying degrees, understand and reliably realize goods “internal” to the craft. Craftsmen acquire expertise in master-apprentice relationships in which apprentices come to possess virtues and skills that make possible a kind of rule-guided but creative freedom. Most importantly, craftsmanship is intelligent activity that brings theory and practice together, uniting theoretical understanding (or creative intuition or “inspiration”) with practical finesse. To put this in another way, craftsmanship manifests both cognitivity and creativity. Imitation, in the broadest sense, should be understood as the realization or embodiment of theory in practice.41

However, the way in which theory and practice, cognitivity and creativity are related to one another varies across different kinds of craft (understood in the broadest sense of that term)42: (1) In sciences, the intellect creates concepts and judgments, but the creative function of the intellect is entirely subordinate to its cognitive function in understanding its objects. Cognitive insights guide the construction of concepts and judgements—the medium of conventional linguistic forms in which they are expressed, but the insights are not fully or perfectly expressed in them. The concepts and judgments are constructed to imitate (re-present, codify or express) the insights. The explicit formulations of theories, once they are constructed, can be said to imitate the insights. (2) In the “useful crafts”, on the contrary, the cognitive function of the intellect is to grasp some design plan, but is entirely subordinate to its creative function which is to produce an exemplification of the design plan—the needed commodity or condition. The commodity or condition then can be said to imitate or express the design plan, the productive or therapeutic intention of the craftsman in the relevant medium. (3) In

“transcend” those acts as mentally created, purely intentional and intersubjectively re-actualizable self-identical entities, continuing to exist after the death of the artist. They are available for experience through concretizations (Falk 130-136) in the imaginations of readers, without being reducible to those varied re-actualizations. According to Ingarden, the subsistent identity of a literary work is founded in independently existing (1) ideal concepts and essences and (2) real word signs. Every word meaning is an actualization of a part of an ideal concept or ideal quality, and its subsistent identity depends upon the pre-existence of these. However, word meanings are carried by sound-formations or graphic inkspots assigned to them (Semantic changes through history complicate matters but do not count against this point). Real word signs are not concrete sound formations (or concrete inkspots), but sound-formation (or inscription) types that are intersubjectively self-identical over time (Phonetic changes in historical languages complicate this point, but they do not count against it). The artistic effectiveness of the elements of a work (the craftsmanship with which they are put together) founds the aesthetic qualities that readers intuit when they make the work come alive in imagination. (Here is a connection between craftsmanship and inspiration.) The aesthetic, artistic, ethical, utilitarian or vital values of an artwork are determined by its various properties. Some values are relational and others belong to the artwork in itself (There are distinctions between the aesthetic value of the work in itself, its aesthetic value realized in the imaginations of readers, the moral value the work has in relation to readers, etc.). The conditional accessibility of values in no way implies that they do not exist. Artistic value is relational to the aesthetic values of the artwork and of its concretizations in the minds of readers. Positive aesthetic values of beauty, unity, completeness, gracefulness, etc., are relational values, valences, founded in the qualities of the work, yet only fulfilled when aesthetically intuited by competent readers/auditors (Falk 187-194).

41. The author is aware that he has given no good analysis of what he means either by “theory” or by “practice”. Here the author will only say that he understands theory in a very broad sense as including mental acts or states with intelligible contents, whether those contents are universals or particular or something in between, and whether they are normative or not.

42. The author is thinking of the division of the kinds of pleasure and knowledge in the Philebus, and of the continuum of crafts in the final division of the Statesman. These seem to the author to express Plato’s view that intellectual activities fall upon a continuum more or less practical (embodied and creative) and more or less theoretical (purely cognitive). In making a four-fold division here, the author is following, to some extent, Maritain’s discussion of sciences, arts and crafts in Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry (See note 2).
the fine arts and poetry, a cognitive function of the intellect comes into play when an artist experiences a flash of transcendent beauty (or ugliness?) and experiences some great joy (or sorrow?). A creative function of the intellect comes into play when the artist generates a creative poetic intuition whose content is expressive of this experience. The intuition may be said to express or imitate the profound experience in a medium consisting of diverse conceptual and imaginative materials found in the pre-conscious life of the intellect (Maritain ch. III). However, then the creative function expresses itself again in a special kind of free creativity that expresses or imitates the intuition in the media of the unique artwork, not in universal concepts or in theoretical formulations. The artwork may be said to imitate the creative intuition. (4) In philosophy, conceived in the Socratic-Platonic way as a Basilike techne that is an ethico-political philosophizing about the whole of reality (including works of poetry), the cognitive function of intellect comes into play in metaphysical and moral-political insight into values, or, in Plato’s usage, into “the Good”. Further, the creative function of the intellect comes into play in the realization of cognized values achieved in the medium of one’s particular life-world, in particular actions in the course of living a good life. Conceived in this Platonic way, philosophy is a way of life (This remains true even for Aristotle and for Aristotelians who privilege “contemplation” over “action”).

These four kinds of intelligent activity can, of course, all be further divided. But since in Book 10, Socrates is trying to elicit in Glaucon a better understanding of the role of mimesis in the fine arts and especially in poetry, and a better understanding of the place of poetry in a good polis, let us focus upon imitation in poetry. Imitation, in the broadest sense, we said, is the expression or representation of some Form, exemplary Idea or experiential or intuitive content in some medium. What kinds of imitation do we find in the realm of poetry, both in its creation and in its reception? In Books 2-3, mimesis referred ambiguously to a number of things. It covered the poet’s use of dramatic characterization when “making himself like other people in voice or form” in his imagination. It also covered the activity of making purely narrative poetry, devoid of characterization and dialogue. It covered the activity of “making oneself like other people in voice or form” while performing any kind of poetry (e.g., as a rhapsode or singer, or as an actor in the performance of a tragedy or comedy). Let us see whether we can bring some order into this conceptual chaos.

Let us divide imitations into (1) imitations in the mind and imagination and (2) imitations in outer action or in praxis. Then let us further divide “imitations in mind and imagination”. Some are (1a) empathetic activities performed by poets when they create works employing dramatic characterization. Others are (1b) empathetic activities performed by readers and auditors when they imagine themselves into the characters and worlds depicted in artworks. Still others are (1c) empathetic activities performed by actors or performers when they pretend to be other characters while playing a role in a stage or film performance. We can divide (1a) into self-indulgent egoistic fantasizing, and constructing characters and worlds that adequately express the content of some genuinely creative intuition. We can divide (1b) into self-indulgent egoistic fantasizing, and a kind of empathizing that avoids the wrong kind of sympathizing with morally unsavory characters but succeeds in

43. The poet of a great epic, or, later on, of a great novel, of course, imitates in imagination while imitating by composing the work. Maritain writes: “Great novelists are poets. In order for a novel to be poetry a particularly powerful creative intuition is required, capable of carrying its influx up the inner recesses of other human selves living in the work. This is possible only because the creative intuition of a great novelist involves—starting with some primordial emotive awakening of his own self—that poetic knowledge of other subjectivities in and through his own, that knowledge through affective connaturality which makes him penetrate his characters and foresee their actions through the medium of his own inclinations, and which extends and develops all along the development of the characters and the production of the work, in such a way that the novel is made both by the poet and by his creatures” (396-397).
grasping the creative intuition expressed by the poet in the artwork (See note 25). We can divide (1c) likewise into good and bad forms of play-acting.

Let us divide “imitations in outer action or in praxis”. Some are (2a) artistic activities—activities that produce artworks expressive of creative intuitions. Others are (2b) activities of rhapsodes or other performers and (2c) activities of actors on stage or set. Still others are (2d) activities of discipleship—of trying to “imitate” sage or master by acquiring character traits and sensitivities like the master’s. Let us divide (2a) into artistic activities expressive of profound experiences of value and/or of disvalue in the cosmic whole, and artistic activities expressive of shallow experiences of the cosmic whole. Let us divide (2b) into rhapsodic performances guided by a solid grasp of the artist’s creative intuition, and rhapsodic performances not so guided (like Ion’s). Let us divide (2c) into acting performances guided by a solid grasp of the playwright’s creative intuition, and acting performances not so guided. Finally, let us divide (2d): We shall have, on the one hand, actions whereby one acquires or reenacts the intellectual and moral virtues of the person emulated in the concrete circumstances of one’s life; we will have, on the other hand, actions whereby one only imitates the surface characteristics, behavioral quirks, or outer voice and appearance of the person emulated (as in one kind of comic impression or mime), or actions that slavishly copy the master without expressing the master’s spirit.

4. The Defense of Poetry: A Backward Glance at the Ion

Glauccon, of course, fails to perform the collection and division of mimesis that we have attempted in the foregoing sections. He fails to see the suggestions or to pick up the hints, but that is because Plato is depicting his failure in order to motivate us to do better by doing the conceptual work for ourselves. Plato performs a quite sophisticated sort of psuchagogia for us, intending to lead us to a higher vision of the arts and the place of poetry in a good polis. There is a clear indication of this intention in 606e-608b, where Socrates actually calls for a defense of poetry against the four preceding arguments. Too many readers underplay the importance of

44. The contents of these include far more than the external “subject matters” or thematic materials of the artwork. They indicate something about the cosmos as a whole as experienced by the artist, some transparent reality showing through the thematic materials. Artistic intuitions guided by emotion capture how natural forms or human activities tell of more than of themselves, and hint at their relationship to all other forms in the cosmic whole. The author takes it that Plato was aware that only some of the more mundane kinds of imitation produce sheer copies of natural appearances achieved in such a way that the copy deceives the eye or ear and is taken for the thing (Inklings paper on Maritatin on imitation).

45. In a longer paper, it would be good to discuss 597aff. There Socrates says the Form is the work of the god, the artifact embodying the Form is the work of a human craftsman, and the painter’s representation of the “artifact, action, or living thing” is a representation only of certain aspects of the result of the craftsman’s work (See Janaway 112).

46. In Sophist 267c, the Eleatic Stranger suggests that the false sophistes is one who is ignorant of justice and all of virtue, but has some beliefs about it, and tries hard to appear to be just.

47. “Then let this be our defense…. [for how] we had reason to banish it from the city earlier, because our argument compelled us to do so”, says Socrates (607ab). Then: “If the poetry that aims at pleasure and imitation has any argument to bring forward that proves that it ought to have a place in a well-governed city, we at least would be glad to admit it” (607c). And: “Isn’t it just that such poetry should return from exile when it has successfully defended itself…. Then we’ll allow its defenders… to speak in prose on its behalf and to show that it not only gives pleasure but is beneficial both to constitutions and to human life” (607d). Again, the discussion of the soul and immortality in 608c-612a can be read as in part a recantation of the tripartite model of the soul that is so central to the set of problematic theses to be transcended. Taking 611ab: “Nor must we think that the soul in its truest nature [its non-pathological state] is full of multicolored variety and unlikeness or that it differs with itself…. It isn’t easy for anything composed of many parts to be immortal… yet this is how the soul now appeared to us” (611b5). Socrates says if we understood the soul’s love of wisdom [understood in accordance with the Divided Line model, according to which it can contain and correspond to the whole Cosmos], “we’d see what its true nature is and be able to determine whether it has many parts or just one and whether or in what manner it is put together” (611e-612a) (This text ought to be read in light of the complex mereological puzzles brought to the fore in the Parmenides, where the kinds of part-whole structure found in non-physical realities are shown to be different from those found in sensible, spatio-temporal and physical things).
this call.

The collection and division of mimesis (and the closely related distinctions among kinds of craft) that we have outlined in the foregoing enables us to answer it. It allows us to envision the possibility, for example, that a poet might imitate the life of a master or sage in art, in such a way as to enable a good reader to become a real disciple of that master. It also enables us to understand Plato’s reasons for ending the Ion with the puzzle about the relationship between inspiration and craftsmanship. For we might think that inspiration is what happens when the creative artist undergoes a transforming experience that enables him to generate an intuition expressive of that experience in the medium of the experiential, conceptual and imaginative materials found in the pre-conscious life of the intellect, we might suppose that craftsmanship is what enables the artist to express the content of that creative intuition in the somewhat different materials of the embodied artwork.

Again, the new and deeper understanding of mimesis enables us to see that both inspiration and craftsmanship are necessary in any actor or rhapsode, or auditor or reader, who is to adequately understand and appreciate the literary work of art. The reason for this is that in order to comprehend to any degree, the artwork is to participate in the artist’s original profound experience. But in order to do this, the connoisseur of the artwork must work backward from the artwork to the creative intuition, and by grasping the intuition to share the experience. But in so working backward, he must come to some degree to understand and to appreciate the craftsmanship that enabled the artist to express the intuition in the materials of the artwork in the first place.

We might now notice that the distinction between craftsmanship and inspiration corresponds to a distinction between an active kind of imitation and a receptive kind of imitation. Active imitation (craftsmanship) occurs when an artist generates a creative intuition expressing a profound experience and when that artist expresses the creative intuition in the artwork. It also occurs when an actor or performer, having grasped the intuition expressed in the artwork, expresses that grasp in the way he performs; or when a reader or auditor, having understood the mind of a master, conducts his life in accordance with that understanding. Receptive imitation (inspiration) occurs when the actor, performer, auditor, or reader, having considered the artwork with great devotion and attention to detail, comes to grasp the intuition and, behind the intuition, the experience. It also occurs when the artist undergoes the original transforming experience, at least if we suppose that that artist’s experience is itself an imitation of participation in some aspect of the divine mind or consciousness.

We are now in position to see another layer of meaning in Socrates’ distinction between maker, the user, and the mere “painter” of outer appearances. Authors or performers of insightful literary works correspond to maker-craftsmen, and good readers or auditors of insightful literary works correspond to user-craftsmen that deliberate better for having learned from the works. “Painters”, in Glaucon’s deprecatory sense, are superficial imitators and shoddy readers or auditors who take note of only superficial and obvious features of literary works, and agents who imitate superficially the good actions of masters and models without understanding the deeper springs of character and motivation behind them. Good users of literary works are in position to become better practitioners of the ethical “user’s craft” of making proper use of the products of other useful crafts, so crafting their own characters and embodying human goodness in the concrete material or media provided by

48. If one follows the Timaeus in thinking of God as a craftsman/fine artist, a number of striking relationships appear among the trinity of the artist’s intuition, the artist’s expressing it with craftsmanship and the artist’s grasping that expression as expressive of the intuition and Trinitarian “persons” in the Godhead in Christian theology (See the author’s “The Triune Act of Poetic Creation: Jacques Maritain, Dorothy Sayers, and Plato”).
their concrete circumstances. Readers of the Republic, who take note only of the superficial features of the text and have no understanding of the forms of dialectical rhetoric employed by both Socrates and Plato (on different levels) in the text, are like Glaucon and Adeimantus, who grasp only the surface features of traditional Greek literature and of Socrates’ dialectical rhetoric, and are blind to the character flaws that Socrates puts on stage for them in the conversation. Glaucon misunderstands Socrates in the inquiry of Book 10 in just the way that he misunderstands Homer.49

5. Response to Janaway

The foregoing considerations enable us to respond to Janaway’s reading of four arguments Socrates makes against the value of mimetic poetry in Republic 10. Here the author must be brief. The first two arguments are epistemological arguments concerning the poet’s lack of knowledge. The first (598b8-601b8) he calls the “painter of craftsmen” argument (598b-c). Janaway finds it odd that Socrates should complain that the painter of craftsmen has no specialized knowledge of the crafts possessed by his subjects. But in the author’s interpretation, Socrates is provoking Glaucon, and Plato his readers to recognize the possibility of there being non-specialized crafts about the Whole, such as poetry, philosophy or an ethical/political Basilike techne—kinds of knowledge less specialized than the ordinary technai. Socrates suggests that just as only children and fools would mistake an image of a craftsman for a real craftsmen, so only children and fools would assume that any painter/poet able to make images must necessarily possess profound knowledge of the Whole or of virtue and vice. No one would deny that there can be poetry or painting produced or performed by artists lacking insight. In the Ion, Socrates unmasked a rhapsode “successful” at making money from his craft, because he is able to please audiences with convincing imitations, but lacking in poetic insight and unable to participate deeply in goods internal to the craft. However, Socrates is trying to elicit from Glaucon the recognition that simply banning mimetic poetry altogether is an ignorant policy. Readers miss the point of Socrates’ rehearsal of anti-mimetic arguments when they fail to notice that he is working on the first stage of a piece of dialectical argument, clarifying a problematic thesis on its own terms while preparing his auditor for a higher viewpoint.

Janaway calls the second epistemological argument against mimetic poetry (601b9-602b11) the “user/maker argument”. It alleges that imitators lack not only knowledge but also true belief about what is imitated. This passage was discussed above. Here, the author only repeats that this “argument against mimetic poetry” is but a part of Socrates’ clarification and articulation of the problematic view of mimetic poetry that needs to be transcended.

Next, according to Janaway, the following are the two “psychological arguments against mimetic poetry”, which he calls the “conflicting attitudes argument” (602c1-605c5) and the “greatest charge argument” (605c6-606d7). Both arguments, he says, “capitalize upon” the tripartite psychology articulated in Book 4 of the Republic. However, once again, these arguments are not fully endorsed by Socrates but are part of the articulation, clarification, and working out of implications of the problematic thesis about mimetic poetry. And they show that the problematic thesis about mimetic poetry is bound up with the problematic theses of the

49. Loomis says that the imitations of action in good poets like Homer represent human action in various degrees of workmanship for educative purposes.
DIALECTICAL RHETORIC AND SOCRATES’ TREATMENT OF MIMETIC POETRY

tripartite psychology. Here we need only recall the discussion at the end of the previous section of this paper of the dialectical structure of Books 2-9. In the course of those books, a cluster of problematic theses about the conventional politieia, its moral psychology and its attempt to manage human badness were replaced by an interconnected set of theses about the philosophic politieia, its very different moral psychology and its method of inquiry into the Good. The argument that the soul has completely autonomous centers of attitude and activity can be countered in many ways, and Plato knows it (Recall 434d-435a.) One of the most vulnerable assumptions built into the tripartite psychology is that the reasoning part of the soul is a logistikon, consisting solely or mainly in powers of calculation. However, nous is not only merely a calculating power. Janaway articulates many telling and insightful criticisms of the “conflicting attitudes argument”, making some progress toward making the sort of collection and division of “imitation” we outlined earlier, but he goes awry in assuming that Plato endorses the argument.50

The “greatest charge argument” against mimetic poetry concludes that poetry is powerful enough to corrupt even good men, because experiencing it yields an aesthetic pleasure that is an irrational pleasure of a “lower” self-indulgent part of the soul—a pleasure that disables the reflective powers. According to the argument, one who takes aesthetic pleasure in mimic poetry must inevitably be confused as to whether he is pleased by the representation per se or by the type of often ethically despicable person or action depicted, but this argument cries out for refutation. Socrates suggests this right in the text when he calls for a defense of poetry in 607c-d. The call suggests that the “banishment” of the poets is a hypothetical banishment, to be carried out only in a polis benighted by its belief in the problematic theses about politics, and moral psychology—ways of managing human badness, and the nature of imitation. The call for a defense of poetry in 607c-d can be answered with the aid of the antidote to the misunderstanding of tragic poetry—a better understanding of imitation. The conceit of a “quarrel between philosophy and poetry” is an inherited idea—a convention. The epithets hurled by poets against the philosophers in 607bc echo Adeimantus’ recitation of the common opinions about philosophers in Book 6. Plato wants readers to question those opinions of philosophy, to recognize that there are rational and aesthetic pleasures, pities, and fears that enable the mind rather than disable it and that supervene upon, or even enable the occurrence of insight. The manager of the sick city uses calculation to “manage” the passions of the soul. But the tragic poet, not bound to the manager’s agenda, elicits passions which, although “unmanageable”, are nevertheless generative of insight in a way that convention is not. The Iliad shows such passions both in the wrath of Achilles and in the beginning of its transformation in the scene of his unconventional act of sympathy with Priam.51

50. In a dialectical inquiry, the explication and defense of a problematic thesis is intended in part to bring forth from its certain partial truths or half-truths needing qualification that will need to be aufgehoben by a better thesis. In this case, Socrates knows that degenerate poetry, produced not by a creative Self but by a self-centered ego, might express, or instead, elicit from a dumb audience instead of the high emotion of real poetry, brute or merely subjective emotion. However, this possibility can be accounted for and averted by less radical means than an unqualified condemnation of poetry.

51. Janaway, thinking that he is rebutting a view that he attributes to Plato on the basis of his misreading of the Republic as a whole and of Book 10 in particular, makes the following “cognitive/ethical” defense of the value of mimetic poetry to the polis (197-201). Tragedy and other fictional representations of human behavior make a fundamental contribution to our “non-propositional” ethical knowledge. This knowledge is “an understanding of human behavior through imagining possible human behavior and being impressed by its emotional significance” (198). We learn best when allowed to explore ideas of jealousy, lust, stupidity, confusion and despair as they affect passages of people’s lives. “Fictional representation involves the creative use of the imagination, that the imagination, by showing us how it would feel to be a person in multifarious circumstances which we will never in fact occupy, helps us eventually to learn how to feel, and that learning to feel in just this way is an irreplaceably valuable part of ethical development” (198) (This is how Plato’s dialogues work). Plato thinks, however, according
Janaway concludes his discussion of Book 10 by saying that despite the many flaws in the arguments, there is an interesting and coherent case against mimetic poetry to be heard. This is true, for the first stage in a dialectical inquiry performed by a competent dialectician is to clarify, examine implications and provide the best defense possible of theses to be transcended, in order to “make the weaker arguments stronger”. Socrates does this for Glaucon in Books 2-5, and he does it again in Book 10, in both cases, providing many hints and suggestions about how the problematic theses might be transcended. However, it is a grave error to attribute to Plato the view that the case against mimetic poetry is a conclusive “last word” rather than a proleptic “first word”.

Works Cited


to Janaway, that taking pleasure in representations of actions is never clearly distinguished from approving actions of the same kind in real life (Precisely what Plato invites us to rebut by inviting us to do the dialectical division of “imitation” in Book 10). “Imagination is not a wholly separate capacity from those of ordinary belief-formation and reasoning, which is why there is no barrier to our learning about real actions, motivations, and conflicts through watching a drama” (199). “We can approve the representation without simply approving or copying what is represented” (199). “As against life, tragic nimesis offers us clear vision and freedom to think. As against the sermon or philosophical treatise [Janaway too often reads the dialogues as if they were treatises, which they definitely are not.], it offers us not generalities but the image of humanity in the particularity of action [as the dialogues offer us not generalities but the image of humanity in the particularity of speech acts]” (200-201).
The Agreement between Socrates and Homer: An Interpretation of Plato’s Ion

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The argument involved in the development of the agonistic debate in Plato’s Ion is set by the requirement of determining the specific status of poetry in relation with the cognitive faculties which make possible the poetic creation as well as the rhapsodist’s performance. This discussion, established in the dialogue in theoretical terms, is the philosophic answer to the historical problem implied in the ancient criticism to the traditional paideia. According to the new epistemological criteria of philosophy, a genuine knowledge must appear as a discursive instance that could transmit abilities subject to exposition by means of rational arguments and, at the same time, capable of pointing out its universal principles. Our purpose is to demonstrate that the theoretical competence of the rhapsodist is reformulated by Socrates so as to be placed in an aesthetic register, the foundation of which cannot be subsumed under the epistemic regime with which the issue of the technai is dealt with. Thus, the version exposed in Plato’s Ion regarding the nature of the rhapsodist’s singing does not contradict the Homeric tradition, inasmuch as for Homer, the instance that integrates the memory of the community with that of the aoidos is his disposition to immediately manifest the exemplary images, for the audience to experiment a visual reception where the discursive dimension is consumed as the element in which the concrete representation of memory is expressed.

Keywords: technē, knowledge, inspiration, poetry

1. Introduction

Just as in the approach to other Greek conceptions of the early period, the notion of poetry in the Homeric poems does not appear as a theoretical reflection, but as the actual performance of different discursive, intellectual and cognitive instances developed at a diegetic level—through the features and speeches of characters, as well as at an extra-diegetic level—through the traces of the primary narrator as an epic singer.

Considering these aspects and their origin in the Indo-European tradition, it is possible to examine the conception of poetical speech starting from Homer himself. Thus, the parallel between the poet and some characters who transmit exemplary facts from the past throughout the play exhibits a particular conception of knowledge. In this respect, the factors that build up the basis for the credibility of individual memories and give them historical status, with the legitimacy of collective knowledge, rest upon its testimonial nature. In this context, the role of poetry is to transmit this kind of wisdom, comparable to that of the heroes who have
The Concept of Non-violence in the Philosophy of the Imperial Stoa

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In the moral philosophy of the late Stoa, there is a significant turn to the recognition of non-violence values. Starting from the point where the philosophers of the Ancient and the Middle Stoa acknowledge man’s relation with the Cosmos and with each human being separately, the Stoics of Rome (namely, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, but even Cicero who fosters many of the earlier Stoic ethical views) enrich the content of this theorization by offering an expansion of the concept of the Greek philanthropy. Through the practical means of individual correction, which leads to the therapy of passions, the stoic sage returns to society in order to emancipate the human being and to ensure that man will recover his ontological dignity. This effort is grounded on benevolent and mild action, which aims to correct rather than to discipline in a punitive way. It is their contribution to philosophy that the author aims to discuss in connection with the recording of their thought on issues directly related with a non-violent and eudaimonistic way of life in the context of social peace.

Keywords: non-violence, individuality, therapy of passions, dignity, logos, moral responsibility

1. Introduction

In ancient Rome, violence was part of the very fabric of its history and society (Le Glay, Voisin, and Yann 349). Roman imperial ideology was understood as inseparable from a cult of victory, which, in turn, was directly connected with power and authority. In the legal tradition, as Cicero shows in Pro Caecina, the question of who used violence could determine the rights and wrongs of a case, although there was not a legal definition of violence.1 Violence prevailed in all forms, either in public or in private life, as part and particle of the Roman imperialism and of the general attitude of contempt towards human life. Sadistic violence was also the result of the actions of slave owners or gladiators in the Roman arenas and did not transgress the moral standards that were generally accepted in society.2 In the philosophy of the late Stoa, during the brutal and inhuman time of Imperial Rome, the prerequisites for a eudaimonistic life are entangled in an innovative humanitarian synthesis. What is initially surprising is that, although two of the main Stoic thinkers of this period, Seneca (4BC-65AD) and Marcus Aurelius (121-180AD), are incorporated in Roman military and

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political life, they analyze the concept of non-violence from a moral, not a political perspective. The Stoic philosophers of that time, while they are not utopian or impractical men, but, quite the contrary, men of action and/or hard realism, resort to an enriched theorization of what the natural way of living (secundum naturam vivere) consists in. This theorization should not be taken as a new response to the problem of human co-existence, but as the cultivation of new criticism and more refined resolutions to relevant problems that subsisted in the past one way or another as well. However, these problems now become gigantic, and the need for individuality in the devouring system of the Roman world opens the way for a better understanding of the values that keep men together. In this understanding, eudaimonia is not the “haven” in an environment of war and cruelty, its precise significance is that it is the aftermath of the process of making man virtuous—man perceived as oneself separately as well as each one of the other men.

Starting from a concept of a Greek Polis, enriched with reasonable beings and thus converted into a Cosmopolis, and reinforced by the participation of men and gods, the Stoics of the Imperial Rome are preoccupied with the following questions: First, how can man transcend the limitations that passions and incorrect perceptions impose on him, thereby, avoiding negative human interactions; and second, how can man transcend the obstacles to harmonious co-existence in the context of the cosmic Whole? In this paper, the author analyzes the Stoic answers to these questions in the context of peace and non-violence. By focusing on a major, if not the major, public concern, the author will be able to make clear the Stoic conviction that all political questions, including peace and non-violence, must be considered as moral questions. This analysis should make clear why the late Stoics believe that non-violence cannot be achieved by external impositions like law but by individual efforts to perfect human reason, the result of direct self-correction and individual responsibility. Peace and its brother—non-violence, rest on moral foundations of human solidarity and not on political notions of law premised on coercion. These are the aspects that have mostly been neglected in the study of non-violence by the western disciplines of philosophy, history and politics for the reason that (1) the Stoics of Rome have been considered as eclectic philosophers by a majority of scholars in the past and (2) the Stoic theory is one among many major Greek philosophical theories, which have shed particular light on the human factor. Perhaps, the chief obstacle to appreciating the late Stoic commitment to peace and non-violence has been the fact that the term “non-violence” does not appear in their texts. Nonetheless, the author believes that a fair reading of their works makes clear their adherence to the value of non-violence, including its ethical foundations, as a fundamental element of peace.

2. Initial Ideas of Non-violence in Cicero

Rescuing many of the doctrines of the Ancient and the Middle Stoa and fostering many Stoic ethical views, Cicero (106-43BC) imports a number of Greek ideas, initiating a philosophical tradition which could deal with the perennial concerns of the middle and late Hellenistic era. There is a gradual recognition by the Roman Stoics that political thought must be founded on moral action and individual responsibility, independent of all justifications or acts of violence. Arguing like the Greeks, the Roman Stoics asserted that the bond between

the citizens and the city, as well as between the citizens and the official leadership, is morally profound and interactive. The Stoics believe that the complex of individual and social values must be embedded in a more holistic overview of mankind as a single species. Cicero’s legal, as well as philosophical, work in pre-Imperial times, argues for the unification of the utile (the expedient) and the honestum (the morally right). He supports this view by referring to the homologation of ratio and oratio—reason and speech. This contribution to the concept of humanitas is significantly enriched by Seneca who emphasizes the moral bankruptcy of inner and external violence.

In De Finibus, Cicero maintains the orthodox Stoic view that oikeiosis is concern for the interests of oneself as well as for the interests of others. In the frame of oikeiosis, the bond of mutual aid among men acquires the quality of great intimacy (multo haec coniunctius hominess). In De Re Publica, he commends Romulus for inculcating in Romans “a love for peace and tranquility which enable justice and good faith to flourish” (Cicero, De Re Publica 26). The Roman orator also commends Romulus for “turn(ing) toward benevolence and kindliness the thoughts of men who had become savage and brutish through their passion for war” (Cicero, De Re Publica 27). Cicero believes that the spirit of tranquility, along with religious sensibility, contributes to the stability of the State. Believing that justice prevails over wisdom, Philus, in the third book of De Re Publica, instructs us to be merciful, to give everyone his due, to respect property rights, and in general, to consider the interests of the whole human race. In De Legibus, Cicero asserts that all men are born for justice, and that all men are equal, there being no morally proper way to differentiate among them. Thus premised, he discerns a natural feeling of kindliness and good will that binds them together (omnes inter se naturali quadam indulgentia et benivolentia). Finally, he upholds that virtues originate in our natural inclination to love our fellow men, which is the foundation of justice. Deriving oikeiosis from a wider, more mature and more rational awareness of individual existence, then justice would result in the extension of the concept to the rest of the people.

However, this homogeny between men and their sense of natural justice, according to the teaching of the Middle Stoic School which is preserved in the writings of Cicero, do not seem sufficient to bring about peace and justice in the time of the late Stoa. “Regulation” of human relationships is required a proposition which raises many questions that have plagued political, as well as social, theory for centuries. Assuming that man can achieve serenity by reaching toward perfect virtue and wisdom, can this process of individual perfection be extended to the entire population, if so, how? Put differently, how can peace and justice be derived from attributes normally associated with individuals but not groups? What about those who would take advantage of

5. Cicero, De Officiis, II. iii. 10; III. xxx. 110.
6. Cicero, De Officiis, I. xvi. 50. Cf. the attitude of Aurelius who upholds that since reason is common, therefore law has to be common and we all have to be citizens of one common state. Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, IV. 4: “Εἰ τό νοερόν ἡμῖν κοινόν, καὶ ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ προστακτικός τῶν ποιητέων ἐδωκέν ἡ λόγος κοινός—εἰ τούτο, καὶ ὁ νόμος κοινός—εἰ τούτο, πολιτεύματός τινος μετέχομεν.”
10. Cicero, ibid, I. xiii. 35.
11. Cicero, ibid, I. xv. 43: “nam haec [virtutes] nascentur ex eo, quia natura propensi sumus ad diligendos homines, quod fundamentum iuris est.”
the virtues of others? And among others, who controls the regulatory process? As already having been suggested, the Stoics believe that the treatment of others correctly follows from three principles: (1) the understanding of proper functions; (2) the natural basis of human solidarity and benevolence\(^{13}\) and (3) and that these concepts must be imbedded in their idea of Nature, both human and universal one.\(^{14}\)

3. Seneca on the Militant Philosopher and on the Forms of Violence

To actualize the benefits of this complex of values, Seneca, in *De Beneficiis* and *De Clementia*, begins with a practical guide to ethical behavior, and not a prescription for the political process for drafting regulations. His guide, however, is far more than a manual for polite human interaction. Human passions must be restrained from the inside out—a process much more difficult and profound than obeying rules of etiquette. To make good the radical distinction between peace and violence and to substantiate the Stoic conviction that a wise and good man, the sage who has achieved wisdom can neither harm nor be harmed.\(^{15}\) The Stoics of Rome and Seneca far more prominently, define victory over passions as a dynamic logical procedure that eliminates false thinking.\(^{16}\) In order to live harmoniously with “otherness”, man has no alternative but to become better by self-correction. Thus, the primary goal for a perfect society is individual refinement and perfection.

Seneca’s significant social and political experience convinces him, contrary to the beliefs of the overwhelming majority of politicians, that the “political” need for a change is not really political at all. Philanthropy (*humanitas*) depends on the “individual”, which properly understood is “political”. Not, of course, “political” in the sense of a mass public movement or legislation, “political” for Seneca, as well as for the rest of the philosophers of the late Stoa, is based in the individual’s capacity to perfect his reason. Hellenistic man, by making radical changes in his life, focusing his effort on reformation of his character *per se* instead of the reformation of his things, possessions or institutional structures, will improve by this “political” action the political and the social arena as it has been generally conceived. Even in *De Clementia*, his most political work, addressed to the young Nero, Seneca places his efforts to forestall human conflict on the moral, not the political plane. Man for him is essentially a moral, not a political being, not even a *polis*-being as Aristotle understood the term.

Seneca believes that Nature endows man with a capacity for learning—a capacity implied by the undeveloped brain of a child (*ratio imperfecta*). Man develops, not so much by his interactions with his society but by an increasing awareness of his capacity to employ reason to meet his needs. The adult’s perfection of reason resides in the child’s capacity to grow morally as well as physically. This development is premised on two human natural desires for *eudaimonia* (a life of virtuous activity) and *ataraxia* (a life in which no passion

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\(^{14}\) There are not many differences among the main Stoic thinkers regarding the idea of what Nature is, while there are certain differences in the gravity of either human nature or universal Nature in the field of ethical discussions. For the Stoics of Rome, who follow the older tradition, their emphasis is on the human nature which realizes principles directly dictated by the universal one. However, especially in Seneca, there is a distinct turn towards a more anthropocentric approach, based on the idea that man occasionally needs to defy the powers of Fate for the sake of his own moral orientation and self-corrective process. According to the above, the “natural” being that the Stoic sage is incorporates the humanitarian values in his everyday life while he does not transgress the limits of natural living: It is the right reason that is naturally inclined to serving other human beings in kindness.

\(^{15}\) S.V.F. III. 587: “τούς μὲν ἀγαθούς αξίλαβεις πάντας εἶναι κατ’ ἀμφότερα, οὐτε βλάπτεσθαι οὐτε βλάπτετεν οἶως τε ὅντας ουτε βλάπτεσθαι.”

\(^{16}\) S.V.F. III. 92.
can overcome reason). Premised on ontological desires, reason perfects itself; in the process, man becomes impervious to the vicissitudes of life, thereby, eliminating impulses to anger, revenge and violence. His decision then will naturally adhere to the values of humanitas, especially the principle of non-harm. To the degree that such decisions permeate the social order, reform takes place—an extension of inner serenity to the larger society, implying that coercive regulation can be kept to a minimum. The social order will thus mirror its perfected constituents. Peace prevails. Violence disappears.

Aware that this process may seem utopian and naive, Seneca realizes that he must more thoroughly deal with the concept of violence. According to the Senecan Dialogi and the Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium, violence has two sources: one that proceeds from a powerful man and another from Fortuna, i.e., from Fate. Seneca believes that the violence of the powerful causes fear, amounting to panic—fear “without mind” (sine mente). Seneca juxtaposes clementia (clemency)—the benevolent action of the king while denouncing any moral justification of violence. Besides this dependence on the actions of the ruler, Seneca encourages the Stoic sage to protect himself from all forms of violence. More than unexpected sudden change in life’s circumstances, Seneca’s Fortuna is a cruel, indifferent, oppressive and violent enemy, which tries to destroy man. The man who submissively waits for his destruction is a being of fear (prope est a timente, qui fatum segnis expectat), and fear is one of the major vices in the theory of the Stoics. The sage does not submit to violence or fear but attempts to extricate himself from the influence of Fortune. Since it is necessary for the attainment of virtue, he fights like a heroic and determined soldier immersed in an incessant and crucial battle. Fortune must be overcome to achieve peace and serenity. Can military valor square with the Stoic insistence to avoid violence? Seneca believes it can, according to a complex argument.

The individual bears the moral obligation to be a fighter—an agonist with an untamed spirit, so that he can surmount the existential pain and suffering Fortune brings him. Seneca believes the philosopher is a gladiator, one who breaks through with his force. The philosopher/gladiator fights, on the battlefield of virtues, to emancipate himself along with the rest of the human beings in order to recover his and their essential dignity. The second form of acceptable violence is suicide, so long as its purpose is to assert the paramount values of human dignity against either the malevolence of fortune or the arbitrariness of human power. The third type of acceptable violence is “political”. A ruler, like a parent, does not hesitate to resort to extreme measures, but only when all the means of correction have been exhausted. A ruler may resort to severe measures, including homicide, but only for the good of the State (Non reges quoque occidere solent? Sed quotiens id fieri publica

20. Seneca differentiates between the two—between Fortune and Fate. Fate, in general, contains the benevolent action of Providence; therefore, it is not a power which is on the whole hostile to man.
22. Seneca, Epistulae Morales, LVIII. 32.
23. Seneca, ibid, XIII. 1-3.
24. Even when Fortune is angry or the circumstances are aggravating, she still provides enough for people’s survival, therefore, all the essential things that are truly needed if man leads a life of temperance. Cf. Seneca, Epistulae Morales, XVIII. 7: “Lucilli, exultabis dipondio satur et intelleges ad securitatem non opus esse fortune; hoc enim, quod necessitate sat est, dat et irata.”
26. Seneca, ibid, XIII. 12: “Nulla autem causa vitae est, nullus miseriarum modus, si timeatur quantum potest”.
Although the ruler may have to punish, he must do so only when absolutely necessary. 

Aware of the temptation of rulers to identify their preferences with the public good and thereby extend the zone of acceptable violence, Seneca believes the sage must try to restrain this tyrannical tendency although how he might enforce his judgments is vague.

Seneca resorts to an argument which might appeal to the ruler’s pride. He suggests that a ruler, while he may not be a sage, is no ordinary man driven by his passions. He therefore can temper justice with clemency. Moreover, he can be magnanimous, that is, a man who can tolerate being unavenged. By refraining from violence and cruelty, the ruler does more than control his passions. He reveals his love of the human race, approximating the status of a sage. A ruler, in a sense, is less free than other men to use violence. Men at the lower levels of society are freer to use force, to quarrel and to indulge their wrath, because they cannot be expected to restrain their emotions. Moreover, revenge may be the only way, poor as it is, for them to assert their limited power. Thus, for a king, at the other end of the social order, it would be inappropriate to have even loud speech and unbridled words, to say nothing of violent action.

Seneca buttresses his argument for justifiable violence with his discussion of cruelditas (cruelty). “Cruelty is an evil thing befitting least of all a man, and is unworthy of his spirit that is so kindly; for one to take delight in blood and wounds and, throwing off the man, to change into a creature of the woods, is the madness of a wild beast” (Seneca, De Clementia xxv 1). Seneca connects an elementary concept of non-violence and the natural disposition of man who is divine and kind because of his animus (soul). He also understands well that brutality, once started, is not easily averted while it seeks new ways of torture, and exceeds the human bounds in order to inflict pain. While Seneca realizes rage may become pleasure and dehumanize all action taken in the political, social or moral field, he believes that his exceptions to the prohibition of violence avoid this temptation, especially in the case of a ruler. Among the concluding lines of De Clementia, there is this affirmation of the avoidance of violence and cruelty—an affirmation which also constitutes an exhortation to the ruler: “To save life by crowds and universally, this is a godlike use of power” (Seneca, De Clementia xxvi 5).

Whenever a philosopher qualifies a position against his will, as Seneca does with his justifications of violence, the likelihood is that his arguments will not have the cogency or force of his main position. Each of Seneca’s exceptions to his rule of non-violence is subject to abuse by rulers under the pressure of events or even by their tendency to identify their interests with the good of the state. While a sage may reserve the right to judge the ruler’s decision, in other words, to tell the truth to power, it is difficult to see how the sage’s judgment can restrain a ruler who is not a sage like Marcus Aurelius. So, it is with some relief that the author returns to Seneca’s main argument regarding Fortune and human responsibility.

4. Seneca’s Resolution to Violence: Equality and Dignity

First, Seneca believes that man can overcome the malevolence of Fortune but not escape it altogether.
Despite the determinism of his approach, Seneca leaves room for individual responsibility and a zone for meaningful and effective human choice. If man has realistic and practicable objectives and if he applies the metamorphotic instrument of ratio (logos), he will be able to limit the deleterious effects of fortune, if not in terms of external effects, in terms of his response to them. Coupled with ratio is voluntas (will or volition), which lends moral weight to the efficacy of choice. Man’s profoundest and least tractable enemy—Fortune—must be encountered in a morally proper way. There is no other path to victory. This means that reason must be reinforced by human volition. Not content with the irreducible voluntary aspect of cognition, Seneca reinforces it with voluntas. Man must be fully conscious of his decisions if he is to avoid identifying his reason with necessity. Seneca, like Cicero, believes an action can only be morally right si est voluntarium (if it is voluntary).

For all his emphasis on voluntas, Seneca retains his determinism regarding external events, including its teleological implications. The function of voluntas and rational choice in general is to provide an existentially effective approach to rise above the misery in the human drama which is imposed by means of the adverse conditions of life and of the passions. Violence has many forms, and for each form, there must be found a way to overcome it, not in the sense of avoiding a hurricane, but in the sense of not letting such disasters control one’s life. Thus, his philosophy focuses more on applied ethics than metaphysics. His focus is the animus (the soul) and its pathologies. He wants to perfect man by providing a therapy to heal the soul, not remove events which threaten human life.

Catastrophes, especially violent ones, whether generated by the divine or human forces, create insecurity and fear, both of which can distort moral choice. When common, these distortions affect not only the individual but the community as a whole. Every society succumbs to sin and mental “mistakes”. The real danger of external events is that they will cause man to feel totally abandoned. Facing overwhelming calamity, man will revert to his passions, laying his soul waste to their inner violence. If unchecked by reason and moral choice, the latent destructiveness of the passions will deform the meaning and quality of his life. Seneca is much more concerned with assaults on the soul than of the body. Until man lives as a philosopher, he will be unable to withstand the inevitable disasters which confront him. Worse, he will respond in kind, meeting the arbitrariness of events with mindless violence. If man is to live a meaningful life as a man and not a beast, he must never abandon himself to passion and violence. He must strive to make steady and conscientious efforts to resist submerging his reason in a sea of anger, emotion or impulse.

The views of the late Stoic writers culminate in the concept of generalized humanitarianism—the Roman humanitas which is based on the Greek “φιλανθρωπία”. According to this moral canon, the relationship between individual man and the man as community member is based on a sweeping understanding of equality.

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35. S.V.F. II. 265 & 305.
36. Cicero, De Officiis, I. ix. 28: “nam hoc ipsum ita iustum est, quod recte fit, si est voluntarium”.
38. One of the major passions that Seneca turns against is that of anger. Unlike the relevant theorization of Aristotle, Seneca does not trust anything on the burst of anger, let alone virtue itself. What is more, in his conceptualization of anger, he meticulously defines how anger alienates one from one’s self but also from any potential connection with others. Cf. Martha C. Nussbaum (1994). The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 403: “Seeing others as anger sees them—as people who ought to suffer—is a way of distancing oneself from their humanity; it can make it possible to do terrible things to them. And this ferocity is, in turn, a diminution of one’s own humanity.”
40. Cicero, ibid, I. xxxix. 141: “Horum tamen trium praestantisissimum est appetitum optemperare rationi”.

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At the moral level, there can be no discrimination between an aristocrat and an ordinary citizen, and between the free and the slave. The equality of man is absolute at the moral level. Seneca suggests that other differences, in power, wealth, etc., have no significance. Only the nobility of the human soul signifies. The social consequences of this idea of equality conduce to a social arena which may mirror the perfected individual. The equality of souls has profound conceptual significance: Not only is man related with a natural and ecumenical law that pervades and exceeds him, but also he is subjected to the interaction with others where he can thus correct himself either by conforming to the constructive criticism that he receives or by observing the attitudes and behaviors of others and conforming to a certain model of ethical action. However, these necessarily presuppose a moral society which records and reflects his successful or not successful traits so that they can be corrected. Thus, a virtuous circle is sustained. Peaceful conflict resolution creates the conditions for individual moral correction, which in turn increases the ability of the society to resolve conflicts without violence.

The Stoic humanitas, as described above, could not be easily conceived without the aid of a very basic concept—dignitas (dignity), which plays a decisive role in that theoretical evolution. As a matter of fact, Seneca is perhaps the first western philosopher to apply the concept of a person or persona instead of the concept of the individual as an atomic part of a universal whole. What is striking is that he does not base this idea on a metaphysical structure or on religious beliefs but on the profound conviction that human dignity requires a certain attitude. In this frame, man becomes capable of transforming “external” reality by means of the interiorization of his moral life. Dignity belongs to each person, which means that each man must be sacred to another man. This implies a radical restructuring of human dignity. Human relations must be considered as relations between equals, each having irreducible moral worth. Not sociological or psychological equality, it is ontological equality. For Seneca, man has to achieve independence from the suffocating influence of fate and of powerful people if he is to be able to ascertain his true ontological significance. This valuation depends on his ability to perfect his life according to the principals of right reason.

This approach will resolve the conflict between what Seneca calls furor and ratio (fury and reason). Furor is the irrepressible impulse of the ordinary man to vent his passions, as clearly depicted in many Senecan tragedies. In Thyestes, the hero, although knowledgeable and rational, yields to the fierce power of furor, but so does Medea, whose ratio gives way to her willingness to revenge. In Hercules Furens, Juno admits that furor is always armed against itself (in se simper armatus Furor), and Lycus says that once furor is engendered, it never leaves a man’s heart. These manifestations of the destructiveness of furor explicitly show why, in the stoic view, ratio, which resides in the human soul, is the summum bonum (the supreme good). The renunciation

42. Cicero, De Beneficiis, I. xli. 146-147.
45. Seneca, Thyestes, 27, Medea, 52, 392, etc.
46. Seneca, Hercules Furens, 98.
47. Seneca, ibid, 362-364.
of defective thinking and the false valuation of material goods, expressed by abandoning a life controlled by
desires, pleasures, fears and hope, is the only way to achieve authentic existence and recover dignity. In this
manner, Seneca identifies the perfect human soul with virtue itself: talis animus virtus est. He attains two
practical benefits by doing so: (1) The human soul cannot be traumatized or harmed by violence when it is
identified with virtue and (2) Violence is abolished, which means that the human being is no longer
endangered. Fortune can strike, but man cannot be harmed if his soul is perfected in virtue.

5. Epictetus and the Role of Proairesis

Perhaps a brief discussion of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius will substantiate the author’s view that
Seneca’s and Cicero’s advocacy of non-violence and its associated values are central to the evolution of the
Stoic teaching in the late period as well as to the Stoic thought as a whole. Moreover, by presenting the
thoughts of slave and emperor, another profound idea of the Roman Stoics is illustrated: What matters is the
character of an individual, not his social, political or economic status. In addition, the similarity of their views
regarding non-violence will underscore the universality of Stoic views in personal as well as philosophical
terms. If any human being can properly justify his behavior, no matter how immoral, a slave can. “I am the tool
of others.” “I acted under compulsion.” It is significant that this rationale is explicitly denied by Epictetus
(55-135AD), a denial which gives Stoic thought much of its human appeal. Although a slave cannot control his
body or otherwise deny his master’s will, he can protect “himself”—his soul. By emphasizing the importance
of the soul, Epictetus is not making the best of a bad bargain (What else is left to a slave?). More than his most
precious possession, the soul is the essence of his humanity. A debased soul turns man into a beast.

In the first book of the Discourses, Epictetus upholds that the only degree of freedom which is possible in
the life of the human being is that which is safeguarded by the individual’s judgment. This is based on his belief
that what is free in its nature cannot be upset or obstructed by anything else outside itself. Therefore, if
someone feels that he is the recipient of violence, it means that it is his judgment that tells him so, but this does
not happen to be the “fact” itself, only the “opinion” about the fact. In the fourth book, he specifies the limits of
this perspective as follows: The righteous man will not fight against anyone nor will he resort to actions that
may raise obstacles to anyone. In fact, no one can dominate another individual’s mind (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν).
In the case of intervention in another person’s life, this would mean that there is an actual problem: If one
desires the other person’s behavior to be attuned with his, it further implies that he is totally unphilosophical, as
philosophy teaches how to recognize what is ours and what is not (τὰ ἰδία καὶ τὰ ἀλλότρια). Epictetus
supports his argument with a teleological premise: Man is not made for violence. Thus man is responsible for
fulfilling his ontological role: to preserve his natural capabilities (δυνάμεις), his serenity, kindness, sociality
and his tolerance for others. If proairesis is the sole good, then there is no place for disagreement among men,
for fighting and turmoil, but for peace, friendship and concord. Violence has no place.

Yet, violence often occurs. In the second book of the Discourses, Epictetus clarifies the reasons why man may initially tend to resort to a violent behavior. Oikeiosis, the Stoic concept that describes the relationship between each creature and itself, therefore the terms of its self-preservation and self-consciousness, is why man turns against others with such distrust and hate. When one’s judgment dictates that his best interests are obstructed by them, then he reacts, often violently, for he loves nothing more than his self-interest. All who interfere with him are his enemies, including parents, brothers, other relatives, one’s own country, even God. All his actions emerge from his self-understanding, narrowly, sometimes obsessively conceived. If man is driven by the flesh, nothing but the flesh will concern him. If he focuses on the possession of external things, those that the Stoics call adiaphora, he will be possessed by those things. Similarly, if man identifies with his proairesis, his actions will be suffused with faith, respect, tolerance, and temperance for all, including those who seem unlike him (τοῦ δ’ ἀνομοίου ἀνεκτικός). He will refrain from cruelty (οὐδενὶ χαλεπός) no matter how provoked. Then and only then can he be true to himself. Then and only then can he be the friend of all humanity.

6. Individuality as the Prerequisite of Sociality in Marcus Aurelius

Marcus Aurelius reflects this perspective by holding that it is against nature (παρά φύσιν) to act against another human being. Abstinence from aggression against others does not begin from a social sensitivity but counter intuitively from individuality that bridges the gap towards the rest of the people with the aid of logos. When a man finds his own good, “τό ἄγαθόν ἐκεῖνο τό ἱδιόν”, he will naturally discern the good in others. Although this good has its locus in the individual, it is objective because it is identified with the logos. As such, it is devoid of connotations of personal calculation which prevail when self-interest narrowly and subjectively conceived is pursued. Selfishness is defeated by a conception of self-interest premised in the logos. Available to all, logos based on self-interest becomes a collective as well as a personal good. Marcus Aurelius does not accept the modern idea of the inevitable and intrinsic conflict of interests between individuals and society. Enlightened self-interest becomes via logos the collective good. This process must not be conceived as an overlapping of interests, nor should it be seen as a calculation that what is good for the community will in the long run be good for “me” (as an individual), still less that it be seen as a criminal’s calculation of risk and reward. Marcus Aurelius has a more profound understanding than these accommodations of individual desires and community restraints suggest. The perfected individual or sage is naturally just when by virtue of his well-cabined passions. His real self is revealed and expressed—equable, serene, self-contained, as a force of human nature, not a compromise entailed in living in groups. Armored against the vicissitudes of life, he approaches others as fellows, not as adversaries or potential victims. The only “other” the sage fears is his unperfected self.

56. Epictetus, ibid, IV. 5. 35.
57. Epictetus, ibid, II. 22. 15-17.
58. Epictetus, ibid, II. 22. 36.
60. Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, II. 1: “Τὸ σὺν ἀντιπρακτικὸν ἄλληλοις παρὰ φύσιν—ἀντιπρακτικὸν δὲ τὸ ἀγανακτεῖν καὶ ἀποστρέφεσθαι.”
The ever-present danger of this “other” requires a certain level of self-absorption. His ability to remain just and philanthropic, and his preservation of his secundum naturam way of living, not to turn against another person, depends on a kind of isolation. Marcus points out: “in order to be just to others you also have to be independent of them” (Aurelius, Meditations II 17). Aurelius thinks it imperative that man first should concentrate on himself before he concentrates on others. Even when he does that, he reacts in dignity, avoiding any form of violence. The inner self is a resort where man is re-united with tranquility and bliss, a place where there can be found no violence whatsoever. The profound psychological connection with the Ego does not prevent man from being of service to other people or to the State, but, on the contrary, it provides him with the necessary prerequisites so that man can serve justice, peace and truth in harmony with his own self and can act according to natural law. Consequently, he is in full accordance with his destiny.

In the 11th book of the Meditations, Marcus advises the philosophers to be mild and benevolent to everyone and able to show their mistakes but not reproachfully. Nobility and honesty should be the characteristics of the sage’s attitude to other men. The Roman emperor points at the direction of a deeper understanding of the motives and qualities of people, one that leads to complete empathy. One of his major points is that there should be no displeasure when others do rightly what they do; but even if they do not, it must be remembered that they do so involuntarily and in ignorance. Marcus shares the Socratic belief that every human soul is unwillingly deprived of the truth, so it is unwillingly deprived of the power of behaving to each man according to his deserts. Moreover, he puts special emphasis on the fact that man should scrupulously abstain from any negative attitude to other men since: (1) It is also in his own disposition to commit certain faults like they do; (2) He may not even understand whether men are doing wrong or not, due to the fact that many things are done with a certain reference to circumstances and (3) Man’s life is brief, hence, any disturbance related with exterior things, such as the behavior of others to us, is a waste of time. Marcus’s conclusion is that it is our own opinions which disturb us. If we take away these opinions and resort to a firm and right judgement about the events, then all negative emotions will be gone. To enhance the quality of relationships inside the society, Marcus considers that a good disposition is invincible, if it is genuine. No violence can be provoked against a man who continues to be of a kind disposition, affectionate, without any rancour in his soul, towards any threat or insult that may rise against him.

7. Conclusive Remarks

In conclusion, the Roman Stoics share the belief that abstinence from violence begins from a state of mind. An individual can be free to give his consent according to right reasons whatever his circumstances. Poverty, slavery, etc., affect only the body and what affects only the body is an “ἀδιάφορον” (indifferent). Thus, the poorest slave can become a king in his own soul. The absence of any effort to overthrow existing institutions simply signifies their belief that bearing such unjust institutions would be better than to exert power and

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65. It must be noted that this Stoic “empathy” is never converted into identification, at least in the late Stoa, primarily because individuality takes such precedence over other aspects in the procedure of moral perfection, and despite the fact that logos is common property for all men. Cf. Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, XVI; Seneca, *De Clementia*, II. vi. 2; Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Animi*, XV. 5-6, etc.
violence against them. Their faith in the brotherhood of men, as well as their trust in the divine plan of the world, favor change only through reason and consent—change according to knowledge. Hence, any conflicting interests or views can be overcome or resolved through the cognitive therapy of passions, self-correction and education.

All in all, there are certain non-violence values recorded in their thought as shown above: clemency, justice, nobility, dignity, humanitarianism, equality according to virtue, tolerance and mildness. It must be taken into consideration that all our appropriate actions should be under the prism of morality. Morality is not an external aspect to the human being, anything but a set of rules. What is moral is human; and what is human is commonly human, it belongs to all, because morality cannot be thought of outside the prism of the contribution of the perfect person, i.e., of the sage to the community. That is how the emphasis on individuality does not permit the dissociation of the individual man from the cosmopolitan ideal, but, quite the contrary, it leads to its enhancement. The community, on the other hand, is not established on political criteria as the term is valid today. On the contrary, the distinctive parameter for creating a community is the sole Good, Virtue, which is an objective for everyone as the unique outcome of the Stoic axiology. Through logos, the asymmetry observed between man and his fellow man is amended and overcome. It is paramount that, consistent with the Stoic beliefs, there ought to be a non-violent promotion of ethical knowledge. This means that the Stoics cannot accept the violent proliferation of their ideas or the violent expression of them, as this would totally annihilate the good intention of the moral agent—the voluntas behind the act. If the agent is not free, then the whole construction is shattered to pieces. While fate and authority impose certain limitations on man, man, on the other hand, should be free in his communication and unimpeded co-existence with other men in a spirit of peace and equality, therefore, violence could not occupy a place in this frame.

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68. Cf. Michael Trapp (2007). *Philosophy in the Roman Empire: Ethics, Politics and Society*. Hampshire-Burlington: Ashgate, p. 135: “the ‘proper functions’ or ‘appropriate actions’ that are objectively right for a human being in virtue of his or her identity as a rational creature, and of the other capacities and roles with which he or she is born, or which are acquired in the course of growth into participation in the structures and institutions of adult society. Though they are by no means confined to other-regarding action, these proper functions are nevertheless very largely composed of them”.
69. Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, XL. 8. Cf. Pierre Hadot (1998). *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*. (M. Chase, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 227: “…only gentleness has the power to reveal to people the good of which they are unaware, although they desire it with all their being. It acts both by its persuasive force and by the unexpected experience that encountering it represents for those who know only egotism and violence. It brings with it a complete reversal of values, by making those who are its objects discover their dignity as human beings, since they feel themselves to be deeply respected as beings who are ends in themselves.”


of defective thinking and the false valuation of material goods, expressed by abandoning a life controlled by desires, pleasures, fears and hope, is the only way to achieve authentic existence and recover dignity. In this manner, Seneca identifies the perfect human soul with virtue itself: \textit{talis animus virtus est}.\footnote{Seneca, \textit{Epistulae Morales}, LXVI. 6.} He attains two practical benefits by doing so: (1) The human soul cannot be traumatized or harmed by violence when it is identified with virtue and (2) Violence is abolished, which means that the human being is no longer endangered.\footnote{Seneca, \textit{ibid}, XLV. 9.} Fortune can strike, but man cannot be harmed if his soul is perfected in virtue.

5. Epictetus and the Role of \textit{Proairesis}

Perhaps a brief discussion of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius will substantiate the author’s view that Seneca’s and Cicero’s advocacy of non-violence and its associated values are central to the evolution of the Stoic teaching in the late period as well as to the Stoic thought as a whole. Moreover, by presenting the thoughts of slave and emperor, another profound idea of the Roman Stoics is illustrated: What matters is the character of an individual, not his social, political or economic status. In addition, the similarity of their views regarding non-violence will underscore the universality of Stoic views in personal as well as philosophical terms. If any human being can properly justify his behavior, no matter how immoral, a slave can. “I am the tool of others.” “I acted under compulsion.” It is significant that this rationale is explicitly denied by Epictetus (55-135AD), a denial which gives Stoic thought much of its human appeal. Although a slave cannot control his body or otherwise deny his master’s will, he can protect “himself”—his soul. By emphasizing the importance of the soul, Epictetus is not making the best of a bad bargain (What else is left to a slave?). More than his most precious possession, the soul is the essence of his humanity. A debased soul turns man into a beast.

In the first book of the \textit{Discourses}, Epictetus upholds that the only degree of freedom which is possible in the life of the human being is that which is safeguarded by the individual’s judgment. This is based on his belief that what is free in its nature cannot be upset or obstructed by anything else outside itself.\footnote{Epictetus, \textit{Discourses}, I. 19. 7-8: “οὐκ ἐνδέχεται τὸ φύσει ἐλεύθερον ὑπ᾽ ἄλλου τινός ταραχθῆναι ἢ κωλυθεῖνει πλὴν ὑπ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ.”} Therefore, if someone feels that he is the recipient of violence, it means that it is his judgment that tells him so, but this does not happen to be the “fact” itself, only the “opinion” about the fact. In the fourth book, he specifies the limits of this perspective as follows: The righteous man will not fight against anyone nor will he resort to actions that may raise obstacles to anyone.\footnote{Epictetus, \textit{ibid}, IV. 5. 1-2.} In fact, no one can dominate another individual’s mind (τὸ ἣγεμονικόν).\footnote{Epictetus, \textit{ibid}, IV. 5. 4.} In the case of intervention in another person’s life, this would mean that there is an actual problem: If one desires the other person’s behavior to be attuned with his, it further implies that he is totally unphilosophical, as philosophy teaches how to recognize what is ours and what is not (τὰ ἰδία καὶ τὰ ἄλλοτρα).\footnote{Epictetus, \textit{ibid}, IV. 5. 7.} Epictetus supports his argument with a teleological premise: Man is not made for violence. Thus man is responsible for fulfilling his ontological role: to preserve his natural capabilities (δυνάμεις),\footnote{Epictetus, \textit{ibid}, IV. 5. 12-13.} his serenity, kindness, sociality and his tolerance for others.\footnote{Epictetus, \textit{ibid}, IV. 5. 17.} If \textit{proairetis} is the sole good, then there is no place for disagreement among men,
for fighting and turmoil, but for peace, friendship and concord. Violence has no place.

Yet, violence often occurs. In the second book of the Discourses, Epictetus clarifies the reasons why man may initially tend to resort to a violent behavior. Oikeiosis, the Stoic concept that describes the relationship between each creature and itself, therefore the terms of its self-preservation and self-consciousness, is why man turns against others with such distrust and hate. When one’s judgment dictates that his best interests are obstructed by them, then he reacts, often violently, for he loves nothing more than his self-interest. All who interfere with him are his enemies, including parents, brothers, other relatives, one’s own country, even God. All his actions emerge from his self-understanding, narrowly, sometimes obsessively conceived. If man is driven by the flesh, nothing but the flesh will concern him. If he focuses on the possession of external things, those that the Stoics call adiaphora, he will be possessed by those things. Similarly, if man identifies with his proairesis, his actions will be suffused with faith, respect, tolerance, and temperance for all, including those who seem unlike him (τοῦ δ’ ἀνομοίου ἀνεκτικός). He will refrain from cruelty (οὐδενί χαλεπός) no matter how provoked. Then and only then can he be true to himself. Then and only then can he be the friend of all humanity.

6. Individuality as the Prerequisite of Sociality in Marcus Aurelius

Marcus Aurelius reflects this perspective by holding that it is against nature (παρά φύσιν) to act against another human being. Abstinence from aggression against others does not begin from a social sensitivity but counter intuitively from individuality that bridges the gap towards the rest of the people with the aid of logos. When a man finds his own good, “τό ἀγαθόν ἐκεῖνο τό ἰδιόν”, he will naturally discern the good in others. Although this good has its locus in the individual, it is objective because it is identified with the logos. As such, it is devoid of connotations of personal calculation which prevail when self-interest narrowly and subjectively conceived is pursued. Selfishness is defeated by a conception of self-interest premised in the logos. Available to all, logos based on self-interest becomes a collective as well as a personal good. Marcus Aurelius does not accept the modern idea of the inevitable and intrinsic conflict of interests between individuals and society. Enlightened self-interest becomes via logos the collective good. This process must not be conceived as an overlapping of interests, nor should it be seen as a calculation that what is good for the community will in the long run be good for “me” (as an individual), still less that it be seen as a criminal’s calculation of risk and reward. Marcus Aurelius has a more profound understanding than these accommodations of individual desires and community restraints suggest. The perfected individual or sage is naturally just when by virtue of his well-cabinied passions. His real self is revealed and expressed—equable, serene, self-contained, as a force of human nature, not a compromise entailed in living in groups. Armored against the vicissitudes of life, he approaches others as fellows, not as adversaries or potential victims. The only “other” the sage fears is his unperfected self.

56. Epictetus, ibid, IV. 5. 35.
57. Epictetus, ibid, II. 22. 15-17.
58. Epictetus, ibid, II. 22. 36.
60. Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, II. 1: “Τό οὖν ἀντιπράσσειν ἀλλήλοις παρὰ φύσιν—ἀντιπρακτικόν δὲ τό ἀγάπαστείν καὶ ἀποτεκτεῖσθαι.”
The ever-present danger of this “other” requires a certain level of self-absorption. His ability to remain just and philanthropic, and his preservation of his secundum naturam way of living, not to turn against another person, depends on a kind of isolation. Marcus points out: “in order to be just to others you also have to be independent of them” (Aurelius, Meditations II 17). Aurelius thinks it imperative that man first should concentrate on himself before he concentrates on others. Even when he does that, he reacts in dignity, avoiding any form of violence. The inner self is a resort where man is re-united with tranquility and bliss, a place where there can be found no violence whatsoever. The profound psychological connection with the Ego does not prevent man from being of service to other people or to the State, but, on the contrary, it provides him with the necessary prerequisites so that man can serve justice, peace and truth in harmony with his own self and can act according to natural law. Consequently, he is in full accordance with his destiny.

In the 11th book of the Meditations, Marcus advises the philosophers to be mild and benevolent to everyone and able to show their mistakes but not reproachfully. Nobility and honesty should be the characteristics of the sage’s attitude to other men. The Roman emperor points at the direction of a deeper understanding of the motives and qualities of people, one that leads to complete empathy. One of his major points is that there should be no displeasure when others do rightly what they do; but even if they do not, it must be remembered that they do so involuntarily and in ignorance. Marcus shares the Socratic belief that every human soul is unwillingly deprived of the truth, so it is unwillingly deprived of the power of behaving to each man according to his deserts. Moreover, he puts special emphasis on the fact that man should scrupulously abstain from any negative attitude to other men since: (1) It is also in his own disposition to commit certain faults like they do; (2) He may not even understand whether men are doing wrong or not, due to the fact that many things are done with a certain reference to circumstances and (3) Man’s life is brief, hence, any disturbance related with exterior things, such as the behavior of others to us, is a waste of time. Marcus’s conclusion is that it is our own opinions which disturb us. If we take away these opinions and resort to a firm and right judgement about the events, then all negative emotions will be gone. To enhance the quality of relationships inside the society, Marcus considers that a good disposition is invincible, if it is genuine. No violence can be provoked against a man who continues to be of a kind disposition, affectionate, without any rancour in his soul, towards any threat or insult that may rise against him.

7. Conclusive Remarks

In conclusion, the Roman Stoics share the belief that abstinence from violence begins from a state of mind. An individual can be free to give his consent according to right reasons whatever his circumstances. Poverty, slavery, etc., affect only the body and what affects only the body is an “ἀδιάφορον” (indifferent). Thus, the poorest slave can become a king in his own soul. The absence of any effort to overthrow existing institutions simply signifies their belief that bearing such unjust institutions would be better than to exert power and

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62. Marcus Aurelius, ibid, IV. 3.
63. Marcus Aurelius, ibid, III. 16.
64. Marcus Aurelius, ibid, XI. 13.
65. It must be noted that this Stoic “empathy” is never converted into identification, at least in the late Stoa, primarily because individuality takes such precedence over other aspects in the procedure of moral perfection, and despite the fact that logos is common property for all men. Cf. Epictetus, Enchiridion, XVI; Seneca, De Clementia, II. vi. 2; Seneca, De Tranquillitate Animi, XV. 5-6, etc.
violence against them. Their faith in the brotherhood of men, as well as their trust in the divine plan of the world, favor change only through reason and consent—change according to knowledge. Hence, any conflicting interests or views can be overcome or resolved through the cognitive therapy of passions, self-correction and education.

All in all, there are certain non-violence values recorded in their thought as shown above: clemency, justice, nobility, dignity, humanitarianism, equality according to virtue, tolerance and mildness. It must be taken into consideration that all our appropriate actions should be seen under the prism of morality. Morality is not an external aspect to the human being, anything but a set of rules. What is moral is human; and what is human is commonly human, it belongs to all, because morality cannot be thought of outside the prism of the contribution of the perfect person, i.e., of the sage to the community. That is how the emphasis on individuality does not permit the dissociation of the individual man from the cosmopolitan ideal, but, quite the contrary, it leads to its enhancement. The community, on the other hand, is not established on political criteria as the term is valid today. On the contrary, the distinctive parameter for creating a community is the sole Good, Virtue, which is an objective for everyone as the unique outcome of the Stoic axiology. Through *logos*, the asymmetry observed between man and his fellow man is amended and overcome. It is paramount that, consistent with the Stoic beliefs, there ought to be a non-violent promotion of ethical knowledge. This means that the Stoics cannot accept the violent proliferation of their ideas or the violent expression of them, as this would totally annihilate the good intention of the moral agent—the *voluntas* behind the act. If the agent is not free, then the whole construction is shattered to pieces. While fate and authority impose certain limitations on man, man, on the other hand, should be free in his communication and unimpeded co-existence with other men in a spirit of peace and equality, therefore, violence could not occupy a place in this frame.

**Works Cited**


68. Cf. Michael Trapp (2007). *Philosophy in the Roman Empire: Ethics, Politics and Society*. Hampshire-Burlington: Ashgate, p. 135: “the ‘proper functions’ or ‘appropriate actions’ that are objectively right for a human being in virtue of his or her identity as a rational creature, and of the other capacities and roles with which he or she is born, or which are acquired in the course of growth into participation in the structures and institutions of adult society. Though they are by no means confined to other-regarding action, these proper functions are nevertheless very largely composed of them”

69. Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, XL. 8. Cf. Pierre Hadot (1998). *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*. (M. Chase, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 227: “…only gentleness has the power to reveal to people the good of which they are unaware, although they desire it with all their being. It acts both by its persuasive force and by the unexpected experience that encountering it represents for those who know only egotism and violence. It brings with it a complete reversal of values, by making those who are its objects discover their dignity as human beings, since they feel themselves to be deeply respected as beings who are ends in themselves.”


Philosophy and Theology in the Islamic Culture: Al-Fārābī’s

*De scientiis*

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In this paper, the author refers to the Latin translation of the *Kitab Ihsa ‘al’ Ulum* of Al-Fārābī made by Dominicus Gundissalinus in the XIIth Century in Toledo, Spain. This text under the Latin title *De scientiis* was one of the most influential texts of the Arab and Persian world in the western Latin Europe. It is an introductory text into all until known sciences written for students and laymen (*illiterate*) who want to study one of these sciences. The text of Al-Fārābī discusses the seven liberal arts, all of the works on physics of Aristotle and includes some reflections on metaphysics, political philosophy and theology. There are two important points: (1) All sciences have a theoretical and practical aspect. All sciences are sciences of principles and causes and their application to the practical world. (2) The so called *prima philosophia* is the political philosophy and not metaphysics. In this respect, Al-Fārābī subordinates theology as a science of the religious laws to politics as a science of civil laws. In the same respect, he combines, under the famous sentence of Plato that philosophers are the governors and the very well companions of mankind, politics with theology.

*Keywords*: Muslim philosophy, political philosophy, seven liberal arts, medieval philosophy, theology, Plato, Aristotle

1. Introduction

Al-Fārābī’s (Abu Nasr Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Torhan Ibn Uzlag) *De scientiis* or *Kitab Ihsa ‘al’ Ulum* was translated into Latin by Dominicus Gundissalinus in the XIIth Century.¹ We have another translation into Latin by Gerhard of Cremona,² but Gundissalinus’ translation was more influential in the Middle Ages and was involved and incorporated into the *De divisione philosophiae* of Gundissalinus’,³ although Gerhard’s

translating is much more close to the original Arabic text. Additionally, Gundissalinus’ translation is more philosophical and for this reason, is more important in the Middle Ages, although the text of Gerhard is a slave translation of word by word without the general meaning of the content of the text translated. Gerhard is not a scholar of philosophy; whereas Gundissalinus is a philosopher and translator with intention and purpose of Arab philosophical texts he translated.

Al-Fārābī is called in the Islamic World by his companions the “seconde maître”: “qui ait été strictement un ‘philosophe’, au sens grec de ce terme” (Abdel-Massih 306) after the prime maitre Aristotle.4 He commented almost all the works of Plato and Aristotle, and he wants to unite the two philosophies, as M. S. Boethius wants to do the same interpretation of harmonization of Plato and Aristotle, as the title of one book of Al-Fārābī shows: The Harmonization of the Two Opinions of the Two Sages: Plato the Divine and Aristotle.5 There is known in the Middle Ages also a translation of the Risla f’l-‘Aql under the title De intellectu et intellecto and many other texts,6 for example, the Liber exercitationis ad viam felicitatis,7 or The Attainment of Happiness.8

More characteristic of the scholar Al-Fārābī is what Moses Maimonides writes in a letter to his translator Ibn-Tibbon: “Generally, I would advise you to study only the works of logic composed by the scholar Abunazar Alfarabi, for everything he has written, especially The Principle of Existing Things, is like fine flour. One can, indeed, derive knowledge and wisdom from his works because he was a distinguished philosopher” (Maimonides 135).

However, Al-Fārābī is known as a scholar of ethics, politics, metaphysics and theology, too. He is one of the Islamic philosophers who explores the relationship of the religious world and the political world with clear words: It is the governor of the human society which is responsible for the destinies of human beings.9 In the following the author wants to explain the position of Al-Fārābī in the view of his De scientiis and other texts of Al-Fārābī known in the Latin Middle Ages, especially his De intellectu et intellecto.10

2. Al-Fārābī’s *De Scientiis* in the Context of Latin Medieval Philosophy

Al-Fārābī’s book *De scientiis* is a book of medieval future opening the closed *septem arts liberalis* school training. It opens the closed system of the seven liberal arts: the trivium: grammar, dialectic (logic) and rhetoric; and the quadrivium: arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy or astrology, dominating in the scholastic education until the XIIth Century. Furthermore, Al-Fārābī does ordering in his *De scientiis* the philosophical disciplines of the several sciences or arts in respect of principles. Therefore, we can speak about “sciences” and no more about “arts”. New sciences are to be added, too, for example, the *perspectiva*, the *optics* and *medicine*. Also, the natural sciences and the metaphysics, respectively the Aristotelian lectures or “books” on these matters, are incorporated into *The Division of Sciences* of Al-Fārābī. His point of view of science agenda is theoretical and practical. All sciences have a theoretical and a practical part. fundamental science and applied science, for example, ethics and applied ethics.

This development signifies a great change in Medieval and Christian culture: firstly, a rigorous separation of philosophy from theology and secondly, the opening of the Christian intellectuality to the pagan philosophy. The human reason is open to all sciences. The scientification (“Verwissenschaftlichung”, Max Weber) and professionalisation (“Beruf”, Max Weber) of the understanding of reality and the world are the characteristics of this time in the XIIth Century. It has to do with the autonomy of science without religion relations. In addition, we have the great reception of philosophy and sciences of the Islamic world in the High Middle Ages, especially by translations of Arabic texts into Latin made in Toledo, Spain, received of Aristotle and Plato and their schools: Aristotelianism and medieval Platonism.

In this context, *De scientiis* of Al-Fārābī reaches its utmost importance. He is a true philosopher, a “true companion of human beings” (Plato *Sophist* 216a-d) who understands with a precise knowledge the science of all things. Science is, either say, philosophy, in the view of Aristotle (*Metaphysics* II 1. 993b19-20; 993b23-24), a research of principles and causes of all things being divine or human: The “sapientiae studio” (Marcus Túlio Cícero, *de officiis* II. 5), knowledge, respectively science, is the “divinarum et humanarum causarum [...] scientia rerum.”

Philosophy is precisely an inquiry of the principles and causes of all things being human or

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Because of this, the intention of Al-Fārābī in *De scientiis* is simply the following: to explain and clarify the principles and methods of all known sciences to facilitate the study of them, to educate those who want to lead in science before the study, to discover preferences studies, or to help those who want to explore a science proposals that should exist in the city or to an invitation to a middle formation in science, superficial to accompany the scientific and philosophical discourse in city training. Someone who consults a doctor has to have some knowledge about medicine so that he does not run risk of his health; someone who is building a house has to know something about geometry and the static walls; and someone who is speaking with his loved or with his friends has to know the rules of the spoken idiom. Al-Fārābī’s *De scientiis* is an introduction into the sciences, their principles and methods being necessary in a human society.16

In the book of Al-Fārābī’s *De scientiis*, we have another novelty, too. The political philosophy is the *prima philosophia* and not the “metaphysics” as the philosophers of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages thought. Just as René Descartes in his book of *Principles of Philosophy* confirms, the practical philosophy or the ethics are the purpose and the final end of all human desires to arrive at the true wisdom. In 1638, Guilielmus Camerarius edited two Latin works of Al-Farabi: *Opera Omnia*, which includes only *De scientiis*, and *De intellectu et intellecto*.17 Once more, a clear sign of the great relevance of *De scientiis* focuses exactly on the opinion that the political philosophy or the ethics are the highest philosophies or the *prima philosophia*.

In this respect, Al-Fārābī’s *De scientiis* makes an allusion to some words of Plato in his *Republic*: The philosophers are Kings, because they have the knowledge of the idea of the Good. This signifies, in the view of Fārābī’s *De scientiis* where Islam is a religion of the divine laws as in the Christianity and Judaism as well, that theology is subordinated to the political science or philosophy, which deals with the laws of the society and the human community. Religion is only one part of the law, namely, the divine law. The governor of a town or of a State must be wise, while a philosopher meets public and religious laws in its single person. The philosopher is the true companion of men. He joins together the religious and the political world.

The author wants to repeat his initial thesis with other words: It is the philosopher who represented in the person of the governor of the human society, who is responsible for the destinies of human beings. However, the philosopher only can stay beside of him, can give consults and can help with his thinking, but he is not the person who can resolve the political problems of the human society. As an inquiry of principles and causes, philosophy is independent of all human ends and practical intentions. Philosophy is the theoretical form of reflection without practical goals. As theory, philosophy is science, and as praxis, philosophy is the application of theoretical knowledge to practical ends and goals.

### 3. Some Difficulties of the Interpretation of Al-Fārābī’s Thinking

As we know, Al-Fārābī is very well known in the Latin medieval tradition: as a logician, so in Moses Maimonides and Albert the Great, as an ethicist, so in Thomas Aquinas, and as a metaphysician like Avicenna

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Latinus. Aquinas quoted Al-Fārābī, to the author’s knowledge, only in one place, namely, in his Commentary of the Sentences of Peter Lombard (in IV sent., d. 49, q. 2, a 1 c ). There, Aquinas writes: “Our possible intellect (intellectus possibileis) never can reach the cognition of the separate substances as Al-Fārābī says at the end of his ethics; although he said the opposite in his De intellectu, as the Commentator refers in the third book of his Commentary of the De anima of Aristotle”. 18 The author cannot specify to which work of Al-Fārābī Aquinas refers, probably to the last chapter of De scientiis or even to Averroes. The Commentary of Al-Fārābī on the Nicomachean Ethics should be unknown to Thomas Aquinas, because this Commentary seems to be disappeared just in the Arabic original. 19

In his philosophical novel Hayy Ibn Yaqzan (The Living Son of the Vigilant) or also called philosophus autodidactus, Ibn-Tufail (Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Malik ibn Tufail al Qasi or in the Latin form: Abubacer) accuses the same contraposition to Al-Fārābī as Aquinas did. 20 According to the report of Ibn-Tufail, the following things run mixed up in Al-Fārābī:

1. In his Der Musterstaat or The Perfect State (Mabādi’ ārā’īhl al-madinah al-fādīlah), Al-Fārābī believes that the “evil souls” are nowhere after death, that means, would no longer be exist, because only the virtuous souls could be immortal. Whereas in his book The Ideal Religion (Kitāb al-Milla wa Nuṣṣāsh Ukhrā), he maintains that after death, the evil souls would be delivered to the “eternal torment” and so would live an immortal if also wretched life. 21

2. On the other hand, Al-Fārābī affirms in his commentary of Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle that human being could reach happiness only in this world and everything what someone intends to say further about that is only “Altweibergeschwätz” (old wives babble). What we want to add some other propositions to ours about this world, for example, statements or a probably propositional knowledge about the other, the metaphysical world, or the knowledge of the separate substances, is more or less a mischief.

3. In this context, Ibn-Tufail accuses Al-Fārābī, who has become famous by his work on logic, of contradictions and inconsistencies. Somebody could only reach the true happiness and the perfection and


immortality of the soul by the “speculative sciences”. However, it is he, who dedicates himself to these sciences, who separates himself from the ignorant and the pious. He, who knows everything from the highest Good, cannot reach it just by his own knowledge, because to reach it, he needs piety, and so he expires the eternal torment. And who knows nothing about it, the pious or ignorant, falls to nothing just because one can obtain the highest Good only by philosophy.

(4) Just as the same position of Ibn-Tufail, Thomas Aquinas also claims in his “ethica” that Al-Fārābī is of the opinion that human being do not reach knowledge of the separate substances and of the reality being beyond of the sensible world in which human being is living. However, Al-Fārābī mentioned the opposite opinion in his De intellectu: Human being can reach the true happiness and the perfection of the soul only by the speculative sciences dealing especially with what exceeds our earthly existence—with the realization of the highest Good and the First Principle. The question is threefold: (1) the question of the immortality and perfection of the soul; (2) the question of the true happiness of human being and (3) the question of the possible knowledge of the highest Good and the First Principle.

All these questions we can put in only one question: How the relationship between philosophy and theology is characterized. From the viewpoint of De scientiis, we can explain this complicated problem in the way interpreted below.

4. Faith and Reason, Dialectical Theology and Philosophy

In the De scientiis, questions are raising in the transition from the metaphysics and the scientia divina to the scientia legum, the scientia civilis and the dialectical theology that means to the political science, which, on the one hand, concern the relationship among profane science, philosophy and theology, and on the other hand, under the concept of the rex perfectus or the homo subtilis, the relationship between profanity and the sacred.

If true happiness and perfection of the soul can be accessed only by the speculative sciences—according to the opinion of Al-Fārābī in his De intellectu, then those dedicated to these sciences which means to philosophy separate the “wise man”—the philosopher, from the believers and from the pious.

Obviously, two perspectives are perceptible in this separation: On the one hand, we have to distinguish the human reason from the religious faith. The result of this is that faith is not really knowledge, because we cannot, in the same time and in the same relation, believe something that we know. On the other hand, we have to distinguish the speculative sciences, i.e., the sciences which unfold the Theoria in ancient Greek mind from revealed theology—the “dialectical theology” as Al-Fārābī calls it.

According to the structure of the De scientiis, the Aristotelian “theologic” or metaphysical theology, dealing also with the “Highest Good” and the “First Principle” and which Al-Fārābī calls “scientia divina”, clearly belongs to the speculative sciences. However, which he calls “dialectical theology” having something to do with the revealed theology does not be really science. In this respect, however, the politics is the science dealing with the divine, civil and religious law. Revealed theology is, in the structure of the De scientiis, one part of the scientia legum.

The relationship between reason and faith can cause conflicts. If the “Highest Good”—the God—is only accessible to the pious, such as in the “dialectical theology”, then the access to the “Highest Good” and the last destination or ultimate end, i.e., the “visio dei”, is closed to the wise man, to who knows the “Highest Good” and the “First Principle”—the God. If the contemplation of God—the “visio dei”—can be achieved only by the
speculative sciences, firstly by philosophy or by metaphysics, then the access to these things is closed to the believers and the pious, because he is not a trained philosopher. So, can only the philosopher reach the last end—the happiness of human being? Or only the pious?

Al-Fārābī gives the following answer: But firstly we have to ask where really is the place where the relationship between theology and philosophy will be decided, and where we can scientifically talk about and investigate the true happiness, the perfection of the soul and the highest Good. If we want to talk about these things scientifically, then quite clear, that is, to deal in philosophy on these issues.

Al-Fārābī puts philosophy in the form of metaphysics or scientia divina over revealed theology as Averroes does later as well. In this sense, for example, Aubry de Reims makes an illuminating allusion to things scientifically, then quite clear, that is, to deal in philosophy on these issues.

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215-238.


24. The thesis that philosophy or the speculative science is the ultimate perfection of human being is very clear in Al-Fārābī’s Virtuous Religion, where he says, “Divine Law (shari’ah), Religion (millah), and Faith (din) become synonyms. Religious opinions are undemonstrated ‘similitudes’ (mitalat) of scientifically demonstrated opinions. They are thus ‘subordinate to theoretical philosophy’” (qtd. in Mahdi, “The ‘Editio Princeps’” 8).

25. Or as Al-Fārābī explains in his work Die Partikeln: “die Religion… dient zur Unterweisung der großen Menge über die theoretischen und praktischen Dinge, die in der Philosophie deduziert wurden, und zwar derart, dass den Menschen das Verständnis durch Überzeugung (Rhetorik) oder das Evozieren von Vorstellungen (Poesie) oder durch beides zusammen erleichtert wird”. (the religion... serves to the instruction of the large amount about the theoretical and practical things which have been deduced in the philosophy, such, that understanding is facilitated to the people by convictions (rhetoric) or by the production or evocation of ideas (poetry), or by both together). In the De intellectu of Al-Fārābī, revealed theological knowledge has only the status of probably knowledge. The knowledge of the Mutakallimun is being taken in consideration, because that knowledge, which brings to light only probably things, is knowledge as well, but according to Plato, only an opinion (doxa) or a doctrine, and as we can say a dogma. However, strictly speaking, the theological knowledge is no knowledge in the scientific sense according to Al-Fārābī. If we take in consideration the Platonic
distinction between opinion (doxa) and knowledge (episteme), then we can talk about the true happiness and the highest Good scientifically only in philosophy, i.e., according to Aristotle, in the metaphysics or “theologic”, very distinguished from revealed theology.

Therefore, according to Al-Fārābī, the theological and religious opinions (opiniones) are unproven imitations (similitudines, the Greek term is mimesis) of the propositions proven in philosophy. They are, however, only “propositional imitations” of scientific propositions and not “propositiones” or affirmative or negative “sentences” of science, which Aristotle calls in his De interpretotione the “lógos apophtantíkos”. In this respect, the theological knowledge remains at the level of opinions and beliefs and is no scientific knowledge as the philosophical knowledge is oriented at the Analytica posterioria of Aristotle. However, the theological knowledge is not a mere imitation or a blind conjecture. As imitations of philosophically proven propositions, they are quite real propositions, on their truth we can trust in particularly because philosophy just brought to light the foundation of this trust.

In the last chapter of De scientiis, Al-Fārābī shows (The author quotes the English translation from the Arabic text):

There is a group of dialectical theologians who are of the opinion that they should defend religions by arguing that religious opinions and all their postulates are not susceptible of examination by human opinions, deliberation, or intellects, because they are superior to these in rank since they are received through divine revelation, and because they comprise divine mysteries that human intellects are too weak to comprehend or approach”. (qtd. in Naijar 28)27

In this context, the author wants to quote one passage from the al-Siyāsāt al-madaniyyah (The Political Regime or The Principles of Being), where Al-Fārābī is explaining:

Most men, either by nature or by habit, are unable to comprehend and cognize those things (principles of beings, their ranks of order, happiness, and the rulership of the virtuous cities); these are the men for whom one ought to represent the manner in which the principles of the beings, their ranks of order, the Active Intellect, and the supreme rulership, exist through things that are imitations of them (Al-Fārābī, The Political Regime 40).28

Human reason or intellect of most men, but not of all men, is too weak to comprehend and understand these things mentioned above (the principles of the beings, their ranks of order, the Active Intellect,29 etc.) and therefore, we need somebody who can represent for them the manner in which those things exist, and which exceed the human intellect. In this respect, it is necessary that human beings have a rulership and a governor or the “wise man” who can mediate the philosophical knowledge with the practical requirements. Al-Fārābī bounds together these twofold aspects of human life in the famous sentence of Plato that only the philosopher can be the true governor.30

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5. The *rex perfectus* or the *homo subtilis*

The whole truth consists in this Platonic sentence that only the philosopher is able to understand and recognize the things that are beyond our experiences and sensible world. Only is he authorized to see the divine and earthly things together. However, as the history of the Socratic rise to the vision of the ideas, especially of the idea of the Good and the necessary descent in the human world with their everyday necessities shows, philosophical speculation as such is dispensable, while human practice not. Therefore, a philosophical reflection on the human practice is necessary, which in the last chapter of *De scientiis* the so called *scientia legume*, the science of politics represents and of which theology is one part.

We can sum up: Inasmuch as the revealed theology is subordinate to the theoretical philosophy, she is not science in the strict sense of the word. However, insofar, she is a part of the *scientia civilis*. The *scientia legum* is a science because each law has knowledge and acts which we have to follow. Inasmuch as the theology examines the statutes of the divine cult, faith and the world, she is knowledge, but related to the adoration or worship of God (“ad honorem Dei”), an activity. In other words, the theology is a science of the divine law as the *scientia civilis* is a science of the civil law. Both come together in this point that they are law-sciences. We cannot separate the politics and theology. Both are nomothetic sciences which deal with what human beings have to do and to obey to achieve their ultimate goal—the true happiness.

In the form of the *rex perfectus* or *homo subtilis*, Al-Fārābī seems to give those people whose spirit is too weak a control pattern or a guide to the hand to cognize and illuminate their ultimate end on their way to happiness. However, there is no guarantee. In this sense, Al-Fārābī determines revealed theology as a study of the religious law, which is inseparable from the politics, the investigation of the civil law. The unity of politics and theology is corporate in the person of the *rex perfectus* or *homo subtilis*. Therefore, there is no revealed theology independent of politics, which we could understand in the sense of science. Theology is incorporated into the *scientia legum* and therefore only science.

However, philosophy comes to his own right. Al-Fārābī separates the theology in the meaning of Aristotle from revealed theology. Without any doubt, the Aristotelian “theologic” is science in the strict sense of the word. The religious law is not the only reality of the divine. There are also questions, for example of the existence, the unity, the incorporeality, the eternity, etc., or of God that we have to answer philosophically or scientifically. These questions stand outside the revealed theology as a science of the religious law. Philosophy remains autonomous and independent of all other things and human affairs, worries and necessities. The philosopher is the true companion of human being, because he knows. Only under the conditions of human being and of the necessities of everyday life, we need that wise man (*homo subtilis*)—the governor or the *rex perfectus*, who can conduct us—the normal people or the laymen (*illiterati*) or the majority of human beings—to our happiness by the trust on the truth of his speaking. That does not mean that we should have a blind trust on the wisdom of that “wise man” or “scholar”, because we take off our hat, but not our head when entering the Cathedral or the Mosque. Of course, if we can find him—the “wise man”, we can be happy. In this sense, politics is our destiny.

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PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAMIC CULTURE


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Beyond Logic of Discovery and Paradigmatic Consensus: A Reanalysis of the Popper-Kuhn Debate in the Philosophy of Science

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There is no patina of doubt that the central philosophical theories of Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn concerning the nature, substance and method for acquiring scientific knowledge constitute milestones in 20th century philosophy of science. Just as Popper’s fundamental work on the subject, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, marked a decisive break with inductivist epistemologies, Kuhn’s magnum opus, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962, enlarged ed. 1970), inaugurated the coming of age of the historical turn in the philosophy of science. Some scholars seem to consider the main doctrines of both philosophers as irreconcilables or contradictories. This explains why, for example, Popper and Popperians such as Imre Lakatos and John Watkins describe themselves as “critical rationalists”, whereas they refer to Kuhn as an “irrationalist” or “relativist”—appellations that the latter has consistently rejected. The debate between Popper and Kuhn, especially as contained in an important work, *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (1970), highlights some of the knotty problems connected with philosophical appraisals of science. It also demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of logistic approaches in the philosophy of science, on the one hand, and of historically informed socio-psychological analysis of science, on the other. In this paper, we reexamine the Popper-Kuhn controversy from an experimentalist perspective. In other words, we argue that the ideas of testing and normal science can be systematically accommodated by fine-structure dissection of empirical research through which scientists learn about the world, based on the assumption that the progress of science is the growth of experimental knowledge—a fact often neglected in theory-dominated philosophies of science. Taking discovery of the cosmic background radiation by Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson as example, the paper argues that important scientific discoveries have been accomplished even in the absence of theory in any obvious sense, a situation that conflicts with the theory-dominated models of Popper and Kuhn. Thus, it offers an account of how practicing scientists learn from research to control errors and avoid blind alleys. The paper affirms, in conclusion, that going beyond the theories of Popper and Kuhn requires that philosophers of science should take what scientists learn from experiments seriously when theorising about science, by taking into account normal testing or error detection and control strategies through which scientific knowledge is acquired and extended.

*Keywords:* logic of discovery, psychology of research, falsification, corroboration, normal science, paradigm, extraordinary science, experimental knowledge

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1. Background Analysis: Evolution of the Philosophy of Science

Epistemology or theory of knowledge is a reasoned inquiry into the nature, scope, justification, constraints and limits of human knowledge, and critique of rival epistemological schools of thought as well. Now, ever since the ancient Greek philosophers began probing into the nature of knowledge, it has become clear that our ordinary conceptions of the process of scientific cognition and knowledge in general need to be thoroughly interrogated. This is because philosophical investigations of what passes for knowledge have revealed ambiguities, inconsistencies and outright falsehoods in our knowledge-claims. The first attempt by post-Socratic philosophers to provide systematic account of knowledge was made by Plato in The Republic (Soccio ch. 6). However, in the Theaetetus, Plato devoted himself to the fundamental question, “What is knowledge?”. The book preserves something of the Socratic dialogue, but was inconclusive with regard to the definition of genuine knowledge. As Christopher Janaway observes, three proposed definitions of knowledge (knowledge as perception, knowledge as true judgment and knowledge as true judgment with an account or *logos*) were all rejected. The Socratic interlocutory method was highlighted in the Theaetetus, wherein Socrates even claimed to be an epistemological midwife who helps others to bring forth the philosophical knowledge inside them (Janaway 385). Whereas Plato construed knowledge as reminiscence or apprehension of the forms by reason, Aristotle, his greatest student, posited that sense perception and the intellect play important roles in the acquisition of knowledge. In the Middle Ages, epistemological inquiries did not advance much beyond the achievements recorded by the ancient Greeks. However, between the late 16th and middle of the 17th centuries, two important philosophical traditions or movements emerged which radically transformed epistemological investigations. The first tradition was inaugurated by the British inductivist philosopher of science, Francis Bacon (1561-1626), who identified “four idols” or bad thought-habits that cause people to fall into error (Russell 528). In The Advancement of Learning (1605), Novum Organon (1621) and The New Atlantis (published posthumously in 1660), Bacon criticised the sterility of Aristotelian logic and attempted to delineate what he considered the proper methods of science in order to transform it into an industry producing benefits for humanity rather than being the unsystematic pastime of occasional eccentrics. Some scholars identify (wrongly) the “Baconian Method” with induction by simple enumeration, that is, deriving experimental laws by generalising from particular instances of phenomena. Bacon’s ideas contain a sophisticated taxonomy of scientific methods which anticipated many of John S. Mill’s canons of inductive inference; They certainly indicate awareness that the search for laws was an imaginative and intellectual endeavour rather than a mechanical exercise carried out through sense perception (Blackburn 33).

The second tradition evolved from the philosophy of René Descartes (1596-1650). Descartes began his epistemological inquiry from the quest for certainty, for an indubitable starting-point which alone guarantees certainty. He claimed to have arrived at the bedrock or foundation of reliable knowledge—the cogito ergo sum, through methodic doubt. In his best known work, Meditations on First Philosophy (1641), Descartes advocated a strictly deductive-analytical methodology and held that only “clear and distinct” ideas arrived at through rational cogitation or mathematical reasoning have privileged epistemological status.

The theories of Bacon and Descartes which served as methodological launching-pad for the 17th century revolution in science subsequently led to crystallisation of two major epistemological tendencies whose roots could be traced backwards to the ancient Greeks, namely, empiricism, ably represented by John Locke and David Hume, and rationalism epitomised in the works of Benedictus de Spinoza and Gottfried Leibniz. Despite
differences in the articulation of empiricism by philosophers who advocate the doctrine, empiricists in general connect knowledge with experience, either in the sense of sensory contents of consciousness or as whatever is expressed in some designated class of propositions that can be observed to be true or known to be false by the use of the senses (Blackburn 76). Thus, for empiricists, any genuine item of knowledge must ultimately have a footing in experience. Rationalists deny the claim of the empiricists by stressing the role of “unaided reason” or “innate ideas” in the acquisition and justification of knowledge. Rationalists argue that reason rather than sense experience is the source of trustworthy knowledge.

Of course, classification of philosophers as empiricists and rationalists tend to oversimplify complex systems of thought, although it is necessary to do so sometimes in order to highlight the general direction or orientation of a philosopher’s thinking on a particular epistemological theme. For example, Cartesian epistemology, usually placed under the category of rationalism, allows some legitimacy to empirical inquiry. Similarly, Locke’s empiricist theory of knowledge accepted the rationalist doctrine that knowledge is a kind of intellectual intuition.

Immanuel Kant, after waking up from dogmatic slumber as a result of the sceptical conclusions of Hume regarding the possibility of scientific knowledge, attempted a reconciliation of empiricism and rationalism with his theory of synthetic a priori knowledge. Kant argued, in *Critique of Pure Reason*, that without the faculty of sense perception, no object will be given to the epistemic subject, and without the understanding, no object will be thought. Consequently, he says, “Thoughts without contents are void; intuitions without concepts, blind” (Kant 62). Since the faculties of sense perception and understanding are necessary for knowledge, none has priority over the other.

Now, although the validity of Kant’s philosophy of science was severely compromised by its overarching reliance on Newtonian physics and Euclidean geometry, especially after the emergence of relativity theory, non-Euclidean geometries and quantum theory in the 20th century, his major ideas influenced subsequent philosophers of science. According to Gernot Bohme, post-Kantian philosophers were inspired by the important insights in Kant’s theories concerning “the subjective side of science, the modes of data generation, concept formation and theory building” (Bohme 22).

John S. Mill and William Whewell were two of the most prominent philosophers of science in the 19th century. Mill’s outlook was empiricist: His six-volume work, *System of Logic* (1843), treated deduction, induction, mathematical knowledge, observation, fallacies, abstraction and classification, etc.. He elaborated Bacon’s ideas on scientific method into five canons of experimental inquiry which sought to clarify the logic or procedure for discovering causal connections among phenomena. Whewell’s theory of scientific method, worked out in *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (1840), bears some affinity with Karl Popper’s philosophy of science. For instance, he asserts that theorising in science depends on human ingenuity and inventiveness, since there is no mechanical or strictly logical algorithm that guarantees success in discovery. Whewell claimed that “Man is the interpreter of nature, science is the right interpretation.” He also espoused the view that scientific observation is theory-laden.

By the close of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, science became professionalised and specialised. It was no longer a hobby indulged in by clever bohemians. Thomas S. Kuhn has carefully documented some of the major factors responsible for this development (Kuhn, *The Essential* 60-65). They include emergence of institutions and publication outlets devoted to the various sciences, evolution of mathematics into a tool of applied scientific research, and educational reforms which began in Germany that
provided avenues for both experimentalists and mathematical theorists to be associated as practitioners. It must be remarked that, by that time, the growing professionalisation of science and its centrifugal movement away from philosophy was accompanied by the emergence of a sub-discipline of philosophy devoted exclusively to the investigation of science.

In tandem with the maturation of the specialized sciences, there was a growing disenchantment with Hegelian idealism which straddled the philosophical world in the west like a colossus until the outbreak of World War I. This led, in the early 1920’s, to the formation of Vienna Circle which later became known as logical positivism or logical empiricism. Under the leadership of Moritz Schlick and, later, Rudolf Carnap, the positivists attempted “to set philosophy upon the sure path of science” (Ayer 9). In the process, they projected a scientific outlook very hostile to metaphysics by proposing the principle of verification which seeks to eliminate metaphysical propositions from the province of knowledge. According to positivists, although philosophy is different from science, it should contribute in its own way to the progress of scientific knowledge. The principle of verification was intended to be both a criterion of meaning and of demarcation between science and non-science. Accordingly, scientific propositions, unlike metaphysical ones, are verifiable in principle, and therefore meaningful, whereas metaphysical propositions are not. On the philosophy of science proper, the logical positivists emphasised that its aim is to elucidate the “logical form” of science based on formal logic as a model. Prominent positivists, such as Rudolf Carnap, Carl Hempel and Hans Reichenbach, usually employed the techniques of mathematical logic to deal with topics, such as scientific explanation, logical relations between evidence-statements and scientific theories (probability calculus), and theory-appraisal in science (Carnap, 1936, 420-471; 1962; Reichenbach, 1951; Hempel, 1965). Evidently, on the supposition that a general logic of scientific discovery or justification might be found, positivists conceived the actual work of the philosophers of science to be the construction of adequate formal representations of scientific expressions in general, rather than with details of particular current scientific work, let alone with outdated scientific work.

Needless to say, the theories of positivism have been subjected to serious criticism by philosophers (Toulmin, 1953; Polanyi, 1958; Popper, 1959; Kuhn, 1970; Shapere, 1992), although Carnap and members of his school have adjusted and further articulated their theories to meet these criticisms. The “historical turn” in the philosophy of science is the most challenging and profound outcome of the revolt against positivism, epitomised in Thomas Kuhn’s provocative work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. In fact, the meltdown in logistic theories of science led philosophers to increasingly focus on historical, contextual and sociological approaches which construe the methods and achievements of a science in a particular period as products of available methods and paradigms within social contexts of research.

### 2. Fundamentals of Karl Popper’s Philosophy of Science

Although the theories of Popper and Kuhn are so well known that reiterating them in detail may seem unnecessary, an abridged presentation of the main ideas connected to conjectures and refutations, on the one hand, and paradigmatic consensus, on the other, is germane as background for contextualising the experimentalist approach we intend to reiterate in this study. Now, the dominant ideas of Popper, as he hammered them out in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, *Conjectures and Refutations*, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach* and in the two-volume work, *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, etc., establish that Popper shared the logistic, empiricist and realist concerns of positivists. But unlike the latter, he allowed a
limited role for metaphysics as a forerunner of genuine scientific theories, and rejected induction and the principle of verification as both a criterion of demarcation and meaningfulness. The cornerstones of Popper’s uncompromising deductivist methodology are the principles of falsification and corroboration. Popper summarised what he called the method of critically testing theories and selected them according to the results of tests as follows:

From a new idea, put up tentatively and not yet justified in any way—an anticipation, a hypothesis, a theoretical system or what you will, conclusions are drawn by means of logical deduction. These conclusions are then compared with one another and with other relevant statements, so as to find what logical relations (such as equivalence, derivability, compatibility or incompatibility) exist between them…. And, finally, there is the testing of the theory by way of empirical applications of the conclusions which can be derived from it. (Popper, The Logic 32-33)

A theoretical system, or conclusion drawn from it, must be testable, falsifiable or refutable. The falsifying mode of inference is justified by the modus tollens of formal logic (Popper, The Logic 76). Hence, the core of Popper’s falsificationist methodology can be schematically presented like this: Let $p$ be the conclusion of a scientific theory $t$ and initial conditions (For brevity, the theory and initial conditions shall be treated as belonging to the system $t$). Then logically, it means that $t$ implies $p$. If $p$ is known to be false ($\neg p$), it would follow, given the relation of deducibility, that $t$ is also false ($\neg t$). We now formulate the inference involved as follows: $t$ implies $p$, $\neg p$, therefore, $\neg t$. According to Popper, the potential falsifier of a scientific theory is a basic statement. Basic statements are required for identifying falsifiable theories; they are equally needed for the corroboration of falsifying hypothesis and, therefore, for the falsification of theories. Typically, they are singular existential statements of the form: “there is so-and-so in region $k$” or “such-and-such an event is occurring in $k$” (Popper, The Logic 101). Popper believes strongly in the asymmetry of verification and falsification, in his methodology that only falsification is warranted through modus tollens. As a result, he rejected theories of induction and probability posited by positivists to account for the verification or confirmation of scientific theories in the context of a given set of evidence. Popper insists that the aim of science is truth, although no scientist can be sure that he has arrived at it. As there is no guarantee of truth in science since all theories will always remain hypotheses, he introduced the concept of corroboration. Simply put, a theory is corroborated if it stands up to tests, that is, if none of the basic statements deduced from it has been falsified thus far. There are degrees of corroboration which depend on the severity of the tests to which the hypothesis in question can be, and has been, subjected. This, in turn, is a function of its degree of testability, which is directly proportional to the simplicity of the theory—the more falsifiable a theory is, the simpler and more highly corroborable it would be as well.

In The Logic of Scientific Discovery, Popper carefully avoided both the concept of truth and the problem of ontology. However, this changed after he had assimilated the semantic theory of truth from Alfred Tarski. Thereafter, he elaborated the notions of verisimilitude, truth content and the theory of three worlds. The idea of verisimilitude was based on Tarski’s reformulation of the correspondence theory of truth, which aimed to provide a definition of “truth” that is both materially adequate and formally correct (Grayling 149-150). Convinced that Tarski has provided an objective definition of truth, Popper sought to formulate a logical or formal characterisation of the intuitive idea of approximations to the truth. He introduced formulas for calculating the truth content and falsity content of scientific theories and proposed how the difference between the two, in the context of initial conditions, can serve as a measure of verisimilitude.
Popper denied that science has foundations in the Cartesian or positivistic sense, but still employed some relatively permanent principles of formal logic, especially *modus tollens*, to articulate his methodology. For him, the history of science is relevant as a source of data for illustrating logical points. But in his paper “Normal Science and its Dangers”, Popper expressed disdain for the history, sociology and psychology of science as basis for doing philosophy of science: He described them as disciplines “riddled with fashions and uncontrolled dogmas” (*Criticism* 57-58).

In summary, Popper’s philosophy of science, with its staunch deductivism, is an attempt to clarify the normative and logical infrastructure of scientific knowledge. Like the positivists, he claimed to be a realist and a rational empiricist; he also emphasised the demarcation between science and metaphysics. He was averse to subjectivist or psychologistic interpretations of scientific knowledge, on the ground that the task of the philosophy of science or logic of knowledge “consists solely in investigating the methods employed in those systematic tests to which every new idea must be subjected if it is to be seriously entertained” (Popper, *The Logic* 31).

3. Thomas Kuhn’s Conception of Normal Science and Extraordinary Science

In the theory of normal and extraordinary science, Kuhn attempted to account for the relatively stable as well as the dynamic character of scientific research. Unlike orthodox philosophers of science, he laid emphasis on the irreducibly social nature of scientific knowledge, because it is generated within scientific communities, that is, by congeries of specialists in various fields of science. As an able historian of science, it is not surprising that Kuhn relied heavily on the actual practice of scientists largely as it is set out and documented in historical source materials. In fact, his theory has had a profound impact on the history, sociology and philosophy of science (Kuhn, *The Structure* 1; Barnes 87). Kuhn began his investigation of science with the question: How does a scientific discipline emerge out of speculations about an aspect of nature? Most philosophers of science even do not pose this question, let alone attempt to answer it, but Kuhn did, because the answer is relevant to his characterisation of mature science. Before the evolution of a scientific discipline solely devoted to the study of a particular domain of reality, several schools of thought, with divergent and oftentimes incompatible problems and problem-solutions germane to the phenomena under investigation, competed with one another for acceptance by practitioners. Now, since researchers in the domain had no standard set of methods or of phenomena that each investigator felt obliged to employ or explain, the net result of their activities was something less than science. However, when an explanation emerges, which is clearly superior theoretically and observationally to others, the stage is set for normal science.

Kuhn defines “normal science” as “research firmly based on one or more past scientific achievements, achievements that some particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice” (Kuhn, *The Structure* 10). These achievements or paradigms form the central focus of research, and their assimilation in the course of education is what mainly prepares the student for membership in the particular scientific community or related communities within which he will practice eventually. Having learnt the core principles of a scientific specialty from the same concrete models as his colleagues, his future research will seldom lead to overt disagreement about fundamentals. The practice of normal science depends on the ability, acquired from exemplars, to group objects and situations into primitive similarity sets without prior answer to the question “similar with respect to what?” (Kuhn, *The Essential* 308). A paradigm (or disciplinary matrix) that guides normal science has three philosophically relevant cognitive components around which consensus is built, namely, symbolic generalisations, models and exemplars (Kuhn, *The Essential* 298-308;
Hoyningen-Huene 141-162; Anele 417-418). It is the paradigm accepted within a given tradition of normal research that makes puzzle-solving possible. Normal science, the overwhelming activity of scientists qua scientists, is a relatively rigid and cumulative aspect of scientific research which aims principally at rigorous articulation of paradigm, that is, the steady extension of the scope and precision of existing scientific knowledge. Hence, determination of significant fact, matching of facts with theory and articulation of theory, constitute the principal foci of normal science, both theoretical and experimental.

Fundamental novelties of fact and theory are seldom sought during normal science. But because no paradigm or theory has ever resolved all the problems it helps to define, anomalies are bound to rear up in the course of research. Many of such anomalies are resolved by adjustments both in accepted theories and experimental protocols. Several others are relegated to the background. Kuhn argues that an anomaly becomes a crisis in a scientific specialty if it calls into question explicit and fundamental generalisations of a paradigm or if the applications it inhibits are important for practical purposes. In addition, normal research sometimes transforms an anomaly that was previously a minor discrepancy into a source of crisis. Clearly, the transition from a paradigm-in-crisis to a new one from which a new tradition of normal science can emerge is a non-cumulative process; rather, it entails a reconstruction of the field from new fundamental principles, a process that alters some of the field’s most elementary theoretical generalisations together with many of its paradigm methods and applications. Kuhn describes research during the transition as “extraordinary science.” When a significant anomaly or crisis emerges in the course of normal research, scientists approach existing paradigms in different ways and the nature of their research changes accordingly. Some of these changes include proliferation of competing articulations, readiness to try novel strategies, the expression of explicit discontent, recourse to philosophy, and to debate over core foundational principles.

Extraordinary science often leads to scientific revolution. Scientific revolution, the way Kuhn conceives it, is preceded by awareness that accepted theory is malfunctioning despite concerted efforts to resolve the problem. Prominent revolutions in science, such as the ones inaugurated by Copernicus, Lavoisier, Planck and Einstein among others, apart from necessitating radical reconstruction of the theoretical and experimental foundations of existing theories in the fields where they occurred, also brought about changes in world view. In this connection, Kuhn writes:

Examining the record of past research from the vantage of contemporary historiography, the historian of science may be tempted to exclaim that when paradigms change, the world itself changes with them… paradigm changes do cause scientists to see the world of their research engagement differently. In so far as their only recourse to that world is through what they see and do, we may want to say that after a revolution, scientists are responding to a different world. (Kuhn, The Structure 111)

Kuhn argues that since there are no algorithms that must be applied unequivocally by all the members of a scientific community in deciding between rival theories, subjective and objective factors are always involved in the process. In a paper titled “Objectivity, Value Judgment and Theory Choice”, he identifies, reexamines and reiterates the complex issues scientists deal with anytime a promising new theory that is competing with a theory already in use (Kuhn, The Essential 320-339; Salmon, “Rationality and Objectivity” 175-204). Thus, he argues that communication between proponents of different theories are inevitably partial, that what each takes to be facts partly depends on the theory he accepts (incommensurability), and that an individual’s transfer of allegiance from a theory to another is often better described as conversion rather than as choice. In espousing these controversial doctrines, Kuhn is deliberately challenging the claim of positivists and Popper that
idiosyncratic and subjective factors are completely irrelevant in theory choice. However, he failed to state the epistemological rationale for the values which he acknowledged to be relevant in the process.

4. Beyond Falsificationism and Paradigm Articulation: The Need for a More Experiment-informed Philosophical Analysis of Science

The theories of Popper and Kuhn seem to complement each other, to the extent that some philosophers of science have attempted to produce a synthesis of falsification and normal science. For example, John O. Wisdom, in “The Nature of Normal Science”, interprets Popper’s refutability thesis in a manner that is consonant with the theory of normal science (826-827). In working out whether a counterexample refutes or falsifies a theory, he says, the scientist needs to ascertain whether the problem lies with (1) the fundamental theory itself, (2) propositions specifying initial conditions and (3) auxiliary hypothesis pertaining to chance effects, instrument failures, validity of deductions, human error, etc.. These are elements of puzzle-solving which Kuhn claims to be characteristic of normal science. Only when (2) and (3) have been thoroughly checked and occluded as the causes of the discrepancy between a statement deduced from a theory and experimental findings, the arrow of modus tollens which falsifies that very theory comes into effect. Wisdom’s strategy involves interpreting Kuhnian normal science as a handmaiden or avenue for Popperian testing. Nonetheless, he ignored the fact that normal science is a prerequisite for extraordinary science and (Popperian) criticism of fundamental theory. Kuhn argues, in contrast to Popper, that when a well-developed theory is available, the time for steady criticism has passed. Hence, the aim of normal science is not explicitly to provide occasion for testing but to articulate accepted paradigm.

It is on the rationality of theory appraisal and acceptance in science that the differences between Kuhn and Popper appear widest. Popper insists that in the choice between an existing theory and a new one, objective factors, that is, logical considerations and evidence (degree of corroboration), ought to be decisive. Kuhn, however, posits that objective and subjective factors are necessarily involved for a very good reason. Standard objective criteria of choice, such as accuracy, fruitfulness, scope, etc., constitute values to be used in making choices rather than rules of choice, because as values, they allow for the necessary flexibility required by members of a scientific community in case the choice made by individual members turns out to be wrong.

Granted that Kuhn made a valid point in charging that traditional criteria underdetermine theory choice, does it then follow that it is wrong, epistemologically speaking, to give primacy to experimental outcomes as the decisive moment on such occasions? Clearly, it does not, because in science, scientists raise definite questions in the course of their research, questions which can be answered only at a time through experiments. This explains why theoreticians in particular do whatever they can to deduce testable conclusions from theories, and experimentalists work really hard to test those conclusions. Consider the financial resources and efforts expended in conducting experiments nowadays in the sciences, for instance, the Human Genome Project and research in particle physics using the Large Hadron Collider (Rescher 193-207; Greene 222; Hey, and Walters 45-56).

On the other hand, although Popper, unlike Kuhn, is right in stressing that severe tests ought to determine the fate of scientific theories, he failed to give explicit details about how this should work out in real experimental situations. In addition, Popper’s theory appears not to have any meaningful way of explaining why passing a severe test counts in favour of a theory, thereby, rendering his talk about “severe test” is superfluous.

Kuhn’s socio-psychological account of theory appraisal in science problematises the dialectics of objective and subjective factors in science. However, it goes too far in downplaying the role of experiment, and therefore,
of intersubjective testing or learning from the possibility of error, in the acquisition of scientific knowledge. Deborah G. Mayo provides a theoretical framework within which the insights from Popper and Kuhn can be blended together constructively while at the same time avoids the difficulties associated with their theory-dominated doctrines on the growth of scientific knowledge (Mayo 1996). Using methods adapted from error statistics, Mayo articulates a theory of experimental knowledge or Popperian “learning from our mistakes” which reinterprets the idea of normal science that allows for the kind of normative conclusions in Popper’s theory. Accordingly, she writes:

The fundamental features of scientific research are to be found in the criteria of normal testing, and these criteria demand stringent normal tests, not (uninformative) attacks on fundamental theory. Because anomalies that are reliably produced in normal tests indicate real effects that will not go away, they provide the most severe tests when these are warranted. (45)

According to Kuhn, scientists are particularly unwilling to give up “quantitative accuracy” and “numerical success” (Kuhn, The Essential 212-213), which suggests that normal science involves the kind of severe testing Popper emphasised. However, “what is desirable is not quantitative accuracy in and of itself [but] the strength and severity of the argument that is afforded by a special kind of experimental knowledge” (Mayo 44). Such knowledge, which aims at ever closer agreement between numbers derived from theory and numerical data from experiment as Kuhn recognises (and Popper would endorse), has primacy notwithstanding the consequences of shifts in redefinitions of science, its methods and goals. That is because experimentation or systematic attempts to learn from error-distributions during what Ian Hacking called “intervening in phenomena” grounds science (hooks it up) with the real world.

A key advantage of looking at science philosophically from an experimentalist prism is that, unlike theory-dominated approaches, it allows philosophers to understand why and how scientists determine one step at a time manageable errors in testing parameters, estimate the effects of background factors, distinguish real effect from artifact, codify and interpret general methodological rules or canons specifying experimental tests from which they are likely to learn based on their background knowledge of the kind of errors to be on the lookout for, and identify strategies for implementing severe tests with limited information. This, by and large, meshes fairly well with Popper’s emphasis on severe testing (Popper, The Philosophy of Karl Popper 32-33) and with Kuhn’s identification of three major areas of theoretical and experimental research in normal science (Kuhn, The Structure 25-34).

The strategy of controlling errors in error-statistical philosophy of experiments holds great promise as a realistic account of the growth of scientific knowledge which goes beyond the theory-dominated models of science posited by Popper and Kuhn. Mayo delineates three interconnected models of experimental inquiry: (1) models of primary scientific hypotheses, which centre on one or more local or “topical” hypotheses, each of which corresponds to a distinct primary question or primary problem (puzzle); (2) data models generated from modelled data, which raise the question of how to collect and process raw data and structure them in the standard or canonical form needed to tackle questions in the experimental model and (3) experimental models, which link the primary problems to the data. Here, scientists have to figure out how to relate primary questions to questions about the particular type of experiment at hand, and how to relate the data to these experimental questions (Mayo 128-129).

As a structure erected on a bipedal system, science, at its best, grows both theoretically and observationally, although in the process, its observational foot sometimes goes forward first, to be followed by
the theoretical foot, and vice versa. It is better understood as an organised system of piecemeal tests of local hypotheses (not large-scale global paradigms) in the course of normal experimental testing, including tests precipitated by anomalies. Experimental methods provide rationale for the research activities of scientists by demonstrating how and why scientists put explicit questions about errors—regularities and irregularities, in terms of questions that can be answered by real or thought experiments, carry out some of these experiments, and make trustworthy inferences even in cases where the data are not very accurate.

During normal science, as Kuhn affirms, scientists work on experiments that can be handled with existing theory, and this involves questions about experiments that can actually be performed or simulated. The researcher usually begins with a quantity or parameter—which may or may not be part of a theory—and transforms it into a parameter of an experimental model, as was the case in the researches that led to quantification of energy conservation and conversion in the middle of the 19th century (Kuhn, _The Essential_ 66-104). By splitting the domain of research into definite research questions that can be handled experimentally, possible irregularities in the knowledge-situation are fleshed out and related to known patterns of variability. And by learning about irregularities, scientists learn about experimental phenomena, that is, about what should be expected to occur with certain frequencies whenever specific experimental conditions are fulfilled. Mayo explains further:

> Our ability to make successful inductions, our success in obtaining experimental knowledge, is explained by the error-statistical properties of [experimental procedures]. We make progress in experimental knowledge—experimental knowledge grows—because we have methods that are manifestly adequate for learning from errors. (464)

These methods work because scientific experiments allow researchers to estimate the error arising from learning a new thing due to its complexity and the difficulty contingent on entrenched network of concepts. It is hard to learn new things that disrupt an entrenched network or paradigm, but scientists are remarkably good at learning, through experiments, (including thought experiments), new things that fit such a network and new things that fit new networks (Margolis 129).

The processes involved in the discovery of cosmic background radiation (Smoot, and Davidson 12-13; Guth 57-81; Greene 348-356) bring to the fore what is typically wrong with theory-dominated epistemologies—failure to provide coherent account of why scientists, on many occasions, make important discoveries ahead of relevant theories that explain them. Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson of Bells Telephone Laboratories, New Jersey, who discovered the radiation, were neither testing nor articulating a particular theory. Rather, their research programme was to measure to 2% accuracy the intensity of Cassiopeia A, a supernova remnant in the Milky Way, which, due to its brightness, was frequently employed as a calibration source by radio astronomers. Penzias and Wilson intended to use their highly sensitive 20-foot horn-reflector antenna to probe the radio emissions of the galaxy at a wavelength of 21 centimetres, corresponding to an emission line of hydrogen. In order to detect feeble radio waves or signals emitted from natural sources in space, the two radio astronomers needed to understand (and possibly eliminate) all other possible sources of electrical signals. A significant source of such “background noise” is the random thermal motion of electrons within the circuitry that detects and amplifies the signals. To correct this effect, Penzias and Wilson had to calculate the noise level their amplifier would emit if no signal at all were fed in from the antenna. Disconnecting the antenna will not solve the problem, because a dangling antenna lead would still pick up an intolerably high level of random
noise. Similarly, shielding the device cannot eliminate the large amount of noise emanating from the random motion of electrons in the shield itself.

To eliminate contaminating noise from the shield, Penzias and Wilson had to cool the shield to the coolest possible temperature, absolute zero, at which all random motion stops and no radiation will be emitted. Absolute zero is impossible to attain with available technology, but the two researchers came close by using “cold load”, a device made of Dewar cooled by liquid helium at its liquefaction temperature of 4.2 °C above absolute zero. Even at that very low temperature, some microwave emission was still noticeable. However, Penzias and Wilson accommodated it in their data analysis by calculating its intensity and quantity. Switching the receiver between the cold load and the antenna at intervals of about 30 seconds, they used the difference between the two signals to ascertain the true signal from the antenna.

However, that was not all, for there were other sources of radiation that can come through the antenna. For instance, the emission of radio waves from the thermal agitation of molecules in the earth’s atmosphere cannot be occluded since the atmosphere cannot be eliminated. Nevertheless, the degree of atmospheric contamination could be varied by changing the direction of the antenna, because it was known that the line of sight intercepts a longer stretch of atmosphere when the antenna is pointed at the horizon than when it is pointed straight up. Based on this background knowledge, Penzias and Wilson estimated the extent of atmospheric interference by comparing the signals in the two cases. Another source of problem is the generation of electrical “noise” inside the antenna itself, for whenever an electric current passes through a material, electrical resistance converts some of the power to heat. Conversely, there is also conversion, proportional to the electrical resistance, of some of the energy of thermal molecular motion into pulsing electrical signals. Therefore, in order to minimise the electrical resistance of the antenna, Penzias and his colleague meticulously sealed all the seams with aluminum tape to ensure a clean electrical connection, they even had to get rid of pigeons that were nesting on their telescope to ensure that all known possible sources of radiation were accounted for (Hacking 159).

Penzias and Wilson conducted a series of measurements at the relatively short wavelength of 7.35 cm where radio signals from galactic sources were thought to be negligible to confirm their estimates of the background noise in the system. They expected that when the known sources of electrical background radiation were subtracted from the measured antenna output, the result would be zero, at least within some small experimental uncertainties. By 1964, when measurements of the antenna output commenced, they found out that their efforts did eliminate all the microwave radiation. Indeed, it appeared that the system was still picking up signals which registered in their equipment as a mysterious hiss from an unknown source. Moreover, the strength of the signal was independent of the direction of the antenna, time of the day and the seasons.

Meanwhile, Robert H. Dicke, a physicist at Princeton University, was speculating about a radiation background, the cosmic afterglow of the intense heat that heralded the birth of the universe. Eventually, Penzias and Wilson got in touch with Dicke and his colleagues at Princeton. The Princeton group provided convincing theoretical explanation of the background radiation that led Penzias and Wilson to launch their painstaking investigations: It is the blackbody remnant of the Big Bang which brought the universe into being between 15-18 billion years ago. The temperature of the radiation is now fixed at 2.726°K, with an uncertainty of less than 0.01°K. Further experimental corroboration that the radiation spectrum is a blackbody was achieved between 1990 and 1993 when a team of scientists and engineers working on the COBE (Cosmic Background Explorer Satellite) project announced that measurements taken from 67 different wavelengths, ranging from
well below the blackbody peak to far above it, matched accurately the theoretical blackbody curve (Smoot, and Davidson 214-230; Guth 81-82).

Our brief summary of the discovery of the cosmic background radiation and its theoretical and experimental corroboration is a classic case of systematic mapping of possible sources of errors and the progressive narrowing down of these very sources. Although attempts by Penzias and Wilson to eliminate all known sources of the mysterious hiss in their receiving equipment have a family resemblance to normal science, as indicated earlier, no global paradigm in the Kuhnian sense was presupposed by their investigations. Nor should it be assumed, as Popper suggested (Popper, *The Logic* 107), that it is the theoretician who “long before has done his work” that showed them the way—the phenomenon was unknown by the time Penzias and his co-researcher began their work, and they were unaware of the previous theory of George Gamow and others which hinted at background radiation as an aftermath of the Big Bang. Mayo makes exactly the same point brilliantly in the following propositions:

The growth of knowledge, by and large, has to do not with replacing or amending well-confirmed theory, but with testing specific hypotheses [in this case that a certain “noise” was anomalous] in such a way that there is a good chance of learning something. Having divorced normal (standard) testing from the Kuhnian dependence on background paradigms in any sense other than dependence upon an intertheoretic pool of exemplary models of error [and from Popperian methodological conventionalism] it is easy to accommodate a more realistic and less theory-dominated picture of inquiry. In much of the day-to-day scientific practice, and in the startling new discoveries we read about, scientific are just trying to find things out. (56)

Hence, efforts by Penzias and Wilson to identify the source and measure the intensity of the “stubborn” radiation (anomaly) are experimental strategies aimed at avoiding erroneously attributing causes in reasoning from observed effect. Just because every research-situation in science is redolent with possibilities of being wrong, the strategies scientists deploy in particular situations helps to narrow down the chances of following a blind alley, so to speak. It might be argued that the experimental argument does not apply in the case at hand, because unlike the situation during normal laboratory experiments, scientists cannot interfere with phenomena occurring in the vast reaches of space. Yet the very skills Penzias and Wilson employed are identical to those used by scientists in the laboratory (Hacking 160). In any case, from both astronomical observations and laboratory experiments, scientists learn something definite by systematically controlling errors.

5. Concluding Observations

Popper and Kuhn were among the severest critics of logical positivism. As Kuhn himself acknowledged, there is extensive overlap in his ideas and those of Popper. Both are concerned with the dynamic processes by which scientific knowledge is acquired and extended. They consider the history of science as a legitimate source of data about the facts of actual scientific practice, and insist that scientific knowledge grows by revolutionary overthrow of accepted theories rather than through inductive accretion of established knowledge. Popper and Kuhn espouse the view that scientific observation is theory-laden, and recommend socio-psychological imperatives or advice for practicing scientists (Kuhn, *The Essential* 266-292).

Despite his emphasis on severe testing, Popper merely discussed it in general terms without specifying how and why passing a severe test counts in favour of a hypothesis. Nevertheless, the lacuna can be filled by construing normal severe testing as the researches Kuhn described in normal science (Wisdom 826-827). With few exceptions (Popper included), philosophers of science accept that Kuhn’s description of scientific research
in the context of an accepted paradigm theory is essentially correct (Masterman 59-60; Barnes 87-89). But with respect to scientific revolutions, Kuhn hyperbolised unnecessarily the socio-psychological concomitants of paradigm-shifts without acknowledging the methodological import of the function he assigned to measurement in science, which is the consolidation of the ground made available by the most recent theoretical breakthrough, and the essential preparation for the breakthrough to follow; that is, normal severe testing (Kuhn, *The Essential 188*). For Popper, learning during a revolution is a matter of deductive falsification: A hypothesis $H$ is deductively falsified if $H$ implies experimental result $R$, whereas the actual result is $\neg R$. Hence, what is learned essentially boils down to this: If all the necessary checks of auxiliary assumptions about initial conditions and equipment detect nothing anomalous, then $H$ is false. This sketchy white glove logical analysis, according to Mayo, obscures important experimental error-detection-and-control mechanisms that underpin the growth of scientific knowledge. For instance, in the case of Penzias and Wilson discussed in subsection 4, a plausible case can be made that their research programme involves strategies for conducting reliable inquiries aimed at delineating and controlling four interconnected standard errors, namely, (1) mistaking experimental artifacts for real effects, and mistaking chance effects for genuine correlations or regularities; (2) mistakes about a quantity or value of a parameter; (3) *post hoc* errors about a causal factor and (4) mistakes about the assumptions of experimental data (Mayo 18). The actual measurements they carried out and the COBE project were attempts to reliably minimise these errors. Furthermore, it was their discovery that gave strong empirical backing to what would otherwise have been mere speculations by Dicke and his colleagues at Princeton.

Stepping back to have a panoramic view of the theories of Popper and Kuhn, an analogy from the theory of perspective in fine art will be helpful. Perspective is the science of representing things and objects according to the way they are affected by space and distance. Depending on the distance from which a landscape is observed, for example, different visual experiences could be registered. If an observer $O$ is distant enough, some details such as fallen branches, dead leaves, swampy ground, etc., will not be clearly visible. But probably because of this, $O$ would perceive the beautiful landscape with fascinating sunset in the horizon. Now, imagine another observer $O'$ who is much closer to the same landscape. His visual experience would include details like fallen branches, dead leaves, etc., that might prevent him from having the same picturesque beautiful view as the first observer. In other words, $O$ and $O'$ are looking in the same direction at the same configuration of objects, but their perceptions of the landscape are dissimilar in some respects, because they do not observe it from the same distance. Popper is like the first observer $O$. He observes science from a relatively distant perspective dominated by logic. Thus, his picture of science is simple, logically tidy, but it misses out some details that are important for understanding scientific knowledge and how it grows.

Kuhn (observer $O'$), on the other hand, is too close to the history of science. His image of science contains several important details left out by Popper. However, it is cluttered with bits of information of dubious epistemological import. Since it is difficult to simultaneously turn Kuhn’s duck (normal science) into Popper’s rabbit (severe testing) and Popper’s duck (falsification) into Kuhn’s rabbit (conversion), the best option is to go beyond the errors of falsificationism and paradigmatic consensus by submitting that scientists begin with problems which can be broken down into more definite and manageable questions. They proceed to answer these questions experimentally one step at a time, and the tests they actually carry out must be reliable, severe and informative. By taking experiments and theories of experimental learning seriously (something Popper and Kuhn failed to do), methodological canons naturally emerge which connect philosophy of science to the actual methods scientists employ in learning from experiments. These canons can be used to model experimental
procedures, error detection and control, and also to tackle problems associated with the relation between evidence and inference in the context of methodological rules which can only be learned a posteriori, as Kuhn clearly saw.

Works Cited


Truth and the World: Why Davidson Is Right and Rorty Is Wrong

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Richard Rorty thinks he has the same agenda as Donald Davidson. He is wrong. Though Rorty contends truth as only metaphor liberates us, he actually undercuts a rich interpretative ability. Davidson’s agenda provides ways to explore this ability by elucidating the conditions that reside in the make up of successful communication and in which truth claims are made about the world. Thus, Davidson and Rorty have different agenda, and Davidson’s offers more promise for philosophy to help explain what we seem to know—we can communicate truthfully about the world.

Keywords: Donald Davidson, Richard Rorty, truth, language, society

Richard Rorty’s agenda is easily grasped. Donald Davidson’s agenda is not so. Rorty rejects language as a mirror of nature, Cartesian dualism, foundationalism of any sort, the necessity for objectivity and a theory of truth. Davidson also rejects language as a mirror of nature, Cartesian dualism, foundationalism of any sort, but he maintains objectivity and a theory of truth are necessities for a philosophical account of successful communication. Rorty insists they have the same agenda, but he is wrong, and why he is wrong shows the superiority of Davidson’s philosophy to Rorty’s.1

Of all the comments Rorty and Davidson make about each other, this one, in the author’s opinion, indicates the real difference between them:

Where we differ, if we do, is on whether there remains a question how, given that we cannot ‘get outside our beliefs and our language so as to find some test other than coherence’, we nevertheless can have knowledge of, and talk about, an objective public world which is not of our own making. I think this question does remain, while I suspect that Rorty doesn’t think so (Davidson, 1991, 141).

1. Rorty on Truth

For Rorty, we waste our time seeking objectivity because the contingency of our language, selfhood and community runs deep in our efforts to communicate (Davidson, 2001, 141). Objectivity presupposes the Cartesian distinction between self and world, which we can no longer maintain. In fact, for Rorty, we should also jettison the concerns for a theory of truth. Since we cannot mirror the world with our knowledge claims about it, we should not attempt a normative claim about the world.2 Consequently, we also do not have to

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1. See the Appendix for a compendium of quotes by Rorty on Davidson and Davidson on Rorty.
2. This is the theme of his influential early book Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980).
worry about defining truth or establishing the characteristics of a truthful statement or even defining falsity and how to avoid it. Furthermore, since we no longer couch the knowing enterprise in the subject-object scheme, we have no need to refute skepticism. It’s uninteresting.

The best we can do is to make our metaphors serve our interests. In the future, today’s metaphors may not be useful, and since we are not wedded to any metaphor being truer than any other, we are free to adopt new self-descriptions to enhance our lives. The quest for the objective view of the world, selves or community becomes a hindrance to the expansion of our contingent lives within contingent communities; and by ignoring the supposed need for objectivity, we can focus on the real issue—finding enough solidarity with others to make our metaphors work.3

Rorty often quotes Nietzsche’s definition of truth as the “mobile army of metaphors” (Rorty, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity 17). It expresses the radical contingencies of all claims and also the malleability of our metaphors. Like a poet, we are free to use the metaphors that work best to reach our interests. We should not vex ourselves over the metaphors others use, as long as they do not impose them. Rather, we should approach life like shopping in a Kuwaiti bazaar in which we could care less what normative truth claims other persons choose, as long as we can shop and reach a reflective equilibrium with them. After the bazaar, we can go about our business and commune with those of like-mind.

What if the other tries to impose her metaphor? What should a philosopher do? We should be ironists, exposing the contingency of all claims, and exposing that the history of culture is actually the history of metaphors.4 Philosophy has one important role in society, not in the sense of explaining the world or how truthful knowledge occurs, but debunking constructivist claims about language, selfhood and reality. The ironist is more than a Socratic gadfly, revealing inconsistencies and incoherencies. She disenchant the world by eliminating any pretense to finality about life’s meaning and purpose.5 Any enchantment of the world in terms of religion, cosmology and philosophy amounts to a Freudian neurosis. By choosing whatever metaphor best fits us, we live more freely in a disenchaned world. Our civilization might have been able to adopt and sustain enchantment a century ago, but since Nietzsche, the early Heidegger, the later Wittgenstein, Dewey, Darwin and, according to Rorty, even Davidson, we cannot go back to the time when religion informed us of transcendence and philosophy instructed us on truthfully talking about the world.

2. Davidson on Truth

Rorty looks at Davidson’s notion of radical interpretation, holism and the indeterminacy of translations and believes they are doing the same thing philosophically. However, he is wrong.

First, let us consider Davidson’s explanation of radical interpretation.6 Key to understanding how radical

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5. Frankly, an obvious elitism runs throughout Rorty’s account and justification of the liberal ironist. They are smarter and more attuned to the modern currents of culture than others. For example, see “Inquiry as Recontextualization: An Anti-dualist Account of Interpretation” in Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth, pp. 93-110.
6. Davidson first wrote “Radical Interpretation” in 1973 and it is published in Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation (Oxford:
interpretation is possible is what Davidson means by propositional attitudes. We express them with phrases as "mean that", "believe that" and "intend that". They do not refer to linguistic entities in themselves, which would have some normative characteristics or extra-linguistic states, but they indicate objects. They occur in the act of interpretation, and interpretation is impossible without them, because to interpret, we must know what a propositional attitude is, and which means we must know how to intend the world.

However, if they occur only in the acts of interpretation within the same language group, then how could an outsider learn to interpret the meanings, beliefs and intensions of the alien language group? According to Davidson, we need a theory of truth to conduct a radical interpretation. However, Davidson rejects a causal theory that tries to connect words to non-linguistic facts. Though we may be able to associate words with particular behavioral states or brain states, we cannot associate sentences with them. The semantic features of a sentence require that speakers belong to a language community in which it is possible to interpret the propositional attitudes of others. To explain a cause, we need to know when we interpret it truthfully. Thus, we need a theory of truth. Furthermore, to account for the possibility of truth claims, Davidson says Tarski’s definition of truth works well (though he never said it is the only possible theory of truth which would work). What is needed for us to determine is whether we can render what people claim to be the case into Tarski’s definition. If we can, then we can rightly interpret their claims. Tarski’s definition is: $S$ is true in $L$ if and only if $p$. $S$ would be the linguistic utterance (say “snow is white”), and $L$ the natural language of the speakers, and $p$ the situation in the world. Thus, the statement “snow is white” is true in a language if and only if in fact snow is white. It’s important to recognize that it is not a formula, which guarantees truthful communication but a way to interpret another’s account and to reach the same propositional attitude.

Tarski’s definition indicates the centrality of propositional attitudes, that is, we mean/believe/intend “p”. We could not interpret what others mean in their language, if we could not ascertain whether their propositional attitudes could or could not refer to the “p”. Tarski’s definition, for Davidson, captures the necessary components of giving interpretable sentences, and for making interpretations, that is, speakers who share propositional attitudes and who can test the truthfulness of their sentences.

Davidson is not trying to define the “essence” of truth. In many places, he works hard to show that the
well-known definitions of truth, for instance, “correspondence” and “coherence”, beg too many questions and assume an essential property separate from the actual communication to which sentences need to conform to be true.\textsuperscript{11} Truth is important because by it, we are able to make our propositional intentions interpretable to others who may have similar propositional intentions. Without truth, we would not know whether other people are actually thinking minds and whether we could think like them. Even raising the question of whether other people have thinking minds seems strange, because as a language community, we have accepted a vast amount of claims of the world that have come about because we communicate in ways interpretable to others, which definitely implies we can think alike, i.e., agreeing with each other’s propositional attitudes about the world.

If Rorty were right about Davidson, then Davidson would not be so reliant upon Tarski’s definition. For Rorty, successful communication requires shared metaphors, not a shared theory of truth.\textsuperscript{12} In Rorty’s understanding, Tarski’s definition would have to be changed to “$S$ is true in $L$ if and only if $p$ can be substituted for $S$”. That is, “snow is white” is true in a language community only if we substitute “snow is white” for schnee ist weiss. All claims have to be put into quotations. However, the right side of Tarski’s definition is not in quotations because it represents the object of the propositional attitudes, which is outside the attitudes themselves. The fact that meanings, beliefs and intentions exist assumes that they are about something, and the role of radical interpretation is finding the right way to align the propositional attitudes of the other groups with her own propositional attitudes, and a theory of truth is necessary to do this, because it shows that our attitudes are about something in the world.\textsuperscript{13}

Rorty and Davidson are alike in that they recognize that meaning occurs among language users and is not an independent standard to the users, but they differ at a key point. For Davidson, to interpret another’s propositional attitude, we must consider the objectivity of their propositions. If Rorty were right about disregarding a definition of truth, then we would also lose the foundation upon which radical interpretation can take place, which would also weaken the import of our propositional attitudes and would hinder our ability to understand when another person is being truthful. Since Davidson keeps these, he not only is different than Rorty, but he is better at accounting for the obvious feature of meaningful communication, that is, we seem to know when others speak truthfully, and we seem to be able to understand what makes another person truthful.

Second, let us consider Davidson’s account of holism.\textsuperscript{14} Holism is the inseparable but distinct operations in the knowing process of the person who communicates meaningfully about the world.

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\textsuperscript{11} See “Truth Rehabilitated” and “The Folly of Trying to Define Truth” in \textit{Truth and Language, and History}, pp. 3-17 and 19-37.

\textsuperscript{12} See the chapter “Solidarity” in \textit{Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity}, pp. 189-198.

\textsuperscript{13} For a good explanation of the importance of a theory of truth to Davidson’s account of meaning, see Ernest Lepore and Kirk Ludwig, “Truth and Meaning” in Donald Davidson, edited by Kirk Ludwig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). They say, “His central proposal was that the task of understanding ‘what it is for words to mean what they do’ can be fruitfully approached by considering how we could confirm a truth theory for a speaker on the basis of evidence that does not initially presuppose any knowledge of the speaker’s meanings or the detailed contents of his propositional attitudes” (p. 59).

TRUTH AND THE WORLD: WHY DAVIDSON IS RIGHT AND RORTY IS WRONG

Like Rorty, Davidson in this quote rejects any left over from the Cartesian scheme of knowing clearly and distinctly the mind separate from world. The mind cannot be known separately from the world as though it were either a transcendental substance or an epiphenomenal event. The mind is a mental activity, and mental activity occurs when one intends a claim about something that can be treated as an object to knowledge. We cannot conceive of a thought without some content about something.

For Davidson, mentality requires a language that structures claims according to propositional intent. To have the mental activities of intentions, beliefs and desires, we must be able to form predications about the world. We do not need to reintroduce the Cartesian bifurcation to do this. Like Rorty, he tries to remove the gap by not separating the knower from the known. Rorty does it by rejecting the relevance of objectivity and hence, the unimportance of determining truthful accounts of the world. For him, as he cleverly said once, the world is well lost.

For Davidson, truthful claims are possible because of the nature of interpretability. Two people can intend and believe the same interpretable sentence because the sentence connects them in its predication. When a truthful claim is made about the world, two people have the same meaning, because they converge their intentions in the linguistic event of truthful claims. If language did not afford us the capability to predicate claims about the world, which can be expressed as a Tarski’s theory of truth, then we could not be certain if we were of the same mind, of the same beliefs and intentions. As there are truthful, objective claims about the world, there can be shared propositional attitudes, shared rational mentality, and moreover, because there can be shared propositional attitudes, we can make truthful and objective claims about the world.

Rorty wants to dismiss the legitimacy and need to speak about the world as a reality separate from our advantageous metaphorical rendering of it. Since language cannot be a mirror about the world, it has to be a metaphor. We do not need new arguments about the world. We only need new vocabularies of new metaphors to advance liberal democracy.

However, Rorty changes the meaning of metaphor from a linguistic capability that suggests associations with a description of all language. With no concern for truthful language, we are interested only in successful metaphors that foster our need freely to re-describe ourselves when needed.

Frankly, Rorty’s approach cannot yield more than what he claims, that is, the use of irony to reject the need to worry about truth so that we can become more adept at re-inventing ourselves when desired—any

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16. By the phrase, Rorty advances a disenchantment of the world as the honest appraisal of it. See “The World Well Lost” in Consequences of Pragmatism, pp. 3-18.


18. For a good explanation of the threefold nature of Davidson’s account of successful communication, see Samuel C. Wheeler III, “Language and Literature”, Donald Davidson. He makes this point, “Thus the speaker can acquire linguistic ability only by means of another person’s ‘tria ngulating’ among his own responses, the speaker’s responses, and the world being responded to” (p. 186).

non-ironic claim about what philosophy should know or what kinds of persons we should be would be dismissed as irrelevant and uninteresting to the liberal ironist. Though Rorty has many original opinions and many astute readings of prominent philosophers and literary texts, the upshot of his philosophy is simple: First, there are no mirrors of nature and thus the question and need for truth are dismissed; and second, people are free only if they can re-invent themselves. He cannot offer more than these.

However, Davidson has more to offer because he is concerned about truthful communication: “Successful communication proves the existence of a shared, and largely true, view of the world” (Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* 201). Though not a metaphysician, he argues that we know events in reality actually occur and other minds exist. Of course, these claims do not come easily to us. We have to forge them through the give and take of making truthful claims in the matrices of intersubjective communication.20

3. Davidson versus Rorty

Though Rorty insists that Davidson and he are doing the same thing in emphasizing the communal and consensual nature of knowledge, they work with different senses of communal consensus. Rorty’s consensus comes about because we find a community who will let us get by with what we say of the world, and this happens when we share metaphors. Davidson’s consensus comes about through actually knowing the world through truthful claims. Our mentality and our ability to form intentions, beliefs and meanings about things increase through truthful intersubjective knowledge of the world, and this occurs through the tests of interpretability, which entails we interpret another’s claim by determining the truthfulness of the other’s predications in coherence with our predications.21

In 1983, Davidson wrote “A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge” in which he said “coherence yields correspondence” (Davidson, 2001, 137). Rorty chided him for the article and Davidson in part recanted some of what he claimed. He had said that if coherence works well, then correspondence becomes established. The Cartesian-baggage associated with the word “correspondence” implies language is a medium of knowledge mirroring the world. Davidson, like Rorty, also rejects a correspondence intending to create a mirror, but there is an “objectivistic correspondence” in Davidson’s holism. When people through interpretable claims share the same propositional attitudes, they establish objective claims about the world. These claims go through refinement and amendments, and, because they are not mirrors, never assert a finality or infallibility. Yet, they correspond objectively to the world in that when people test their propositional attitudes with a theory of truth, they are triangulating with the world. Davidson is not only different than Rorty at this point, but he is better at recognizing what language and rational mental events in fact do.

Third, let us consider Davidson’s explanation of the indeterminacy of translations. He gets this phrase from

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20. An undeveloped part of Davidson’s philosophy is how to make metaphysical claims from his holism. The author thinks we can at least say his holism requires an ontology of other minds and an external world. What more can we say is unclear. Carol Rovane highlights the issue: “My criticism will be directed not at the idea that belief must be situated in the context of communication, but at the idea that the metaphysically relevant constraints on belief will be constraints that attach to theories of meaning. Rather, I think the constraints that are important to metaphysics move from the concept of communication not from the theory of meaning that purports to describe our communicative practice” (“The Metaphysics of Interpretation” in Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson, p. 425).

21. Central to Davidson’s agenda is his effort to show the distinctive but inseparable activities within the social act in interpretation; two of the clearest and most direct explanations of this are “The Method of Truth in Metaphysics” in Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation, pp. 199-214 and “Three Varieties of Knowledge” in *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 205-220.
Quine and expands it to cover his interests in explaining interpretability. Quine bases his explanation of the indeterminacy of translations on the inscrutability of reference. We never know a final definition or description of something, and thereby, the distinction between analytical and synthetic statements evaporates. Thus, for Quine, we can never claim a strict correspondence between sentences. Davidson and Rorty both agree.

For Rorty, because knowledge is indeterminate, the best way to use language is metaphorically, never pretending or intending to mirror nature or bridge the mind to the world with a truthful claim. However, Davidson’s use of the indeterminacy of interpretation is different. He admits we cannot finalize a final explanation of an experience nor can we reduce all knowledge claims to an indisputable claim. Davidson would ask, “What would a claim as that to which all others could be reduced look like?” Even if we give one, we still need to interpret it, and that would reverse the steps away from the reducible claim. For instance, we can give a physicalist description of a brain event, but as soon as we try to integrate it with other physicalists’ descriptions, we rely on non-physicalist accounts. We then have to consider how to explain the integration to other rational people who are also making their interpretations of integration. It is not that one claim is truer than the other; it is that both can make truthful claims about the same experience. It is wrongheaded to seek to reduce all our knowledge to one claim, because all interpretations are indeterminate. Reductionism assumes a determinacy to interpretation, and also, we can speak truthfully only in one way.

However, for Davidson, “Indeterminacy occurs whenever a vocabulary is rich enough to describe a phenomenon in more than one way” (Davidson, *Truth, Language, and History* App. 316). Rorty would like this, but for a non-Davidson reason. Our metaphors change relative to our interests, and we should never claim a metaphor is truer of the world than another. We have no compelling reason to stay with a metaphor through the thick and thin of making sense of our experiences of the world and others. Since the world is well lost, so would be our metaphors if needed.

Davidson does not have this kind of cynicism though he is skeptical about epistemological realism as well. The world is an interesting place, because it can be interpreted in multiply true and different ways. In his 1993 article “Spinoza’s Causal Theory of the Affects” (Davidson, *Truth, Language, and History* ch. 20), he builds upon Spinoza’s idea of a substantive monism known through at least two modes—mind and matter. We assume an ontological monism but work with a conceptual dualism. Both mental and physical descriptions of an experience can be truthful interpretations about an object in the world, and it would be a mistake to insist that mental descriptions should be reduced to physical one.

In 1970 in “Mental States”, he called this relationship between the mental and the physical “anomological
monism”. Though the mind and the brain are identical ontologically, we explain them differently. We explain physical states by nomological accounts, that is, with law-like norms, which is the purview of physics and chemistry. However, we cannot explain the mind nomologically as we would the object of physics and chemistry, because mental events are propositional attitudes of belief, intentions, desires, faith, etc. that occur in the communal efforts of interpreting whether the linguistic claims about these attitudes are true or false. Each can make legitimate truth claims. In a sense, we can say we all live in one world—an ontological monism, but can interpret the world both physically and mentally.  

4. Conclusion

To expand on Davidson’s point, the more able we are to interpret our experiences in differing truthful ways, the more intersubjectively enlarged our knowledge of the world would be, because we would able to make multiple truth claims, and thus add to the interpretable propositions about the world. Let us call this expanded use “multiplicative interpretability”. It entails making simple interpretations such as yards and meters to interpret distance and also complex interpretations. For instance, if our experiences can be interpreted physically, aesthetically and ethically, we would have a better understanding of the world in which we live, because we would give a variety of ways by which mutual intersubjectivity could make objective claims about the common experience of the world.

“Multiplicative interpretability” requires two criteria. First, the claims would express the continual mutual interpretability of rational people who seek to test their propositional attitudes about the world. These would work not just because they are metaphors, ala Rorty, but because they are objective, and because they would endure through the intersubjective exercise of coming to mutually shared propositional attitudes. Second, since the multiple interpretations are about the same world, they would not be contradictory with each other. Though the multiple interpretations are expressed in different ways, for instance, physicalist, aesthetic, ethical or perhaps religious, they would not cancel each other. That is, we would not deny a physical truth in order to affirm an aesthetical, ethical or religious truth, and if we had to deny, let us say, a well-established scientific interpretation to maintain a religious one, then likely, the religious one would not be about the common experience of the world.

Though Rorty wants to divest us of such a rich interpretative ability, he offers only a one-sided description of our experience, and in doing so, he curtails the interpretative capabilities of successful communication. Davidson’s agenda provides ways to explore these capabilities by distilling the conditions that reside in the make up of successful communication in which truth claims are made about the world. In conclusion, Davidson

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25. It is difficult to designate Davidson’s position in the typical terms of materialism, epiphenomenalism, dualism, etc. A strict materialist would never want to say we can explain part of the physical reality anomologically. For this reason, though his book is a good introduction to Davidson, the author would not say with Darrell Wheeler “Thus, Davidson is a monist. He holds that all events are physical. Thus, his view is rightly characterized a version of physicalism or materialism” (On Davidson, New York: Wadsworth, 2003, p. 88). Wheeler’s labeling does not capture the nuances of Davidson’s attempt to be monistic but not reductionistic to physicalism. The author believes one can have a monism that does not require a strict identity between the mind and brain by which the physical is both the necessary and sufficient explanation of the mental. It is not contrary to an ontological monism to contend that though the physical is the necessary condition for the mental, it is not a sufficient explanation of the predication of the mind’s propositional intentions.

and Rorty have a different agenda, and Davidson’s offers more promise for philosophy to help explain what we seem to know—we communicate truthfully about the world.

Works Cited


Appendix: Quotes from Rorty on Davidson and Vice Versa

Here is what Rorty says about Davidson:
1. I shall be describing the work of Donald Davidson in philosophy of language as a manifestation of a willingness to drop the idea of “intrinsic nature”, a willingness to face up to the contingency of the language we use. In subsequent chapters, I shall try to show how a recognition of that contingency leads to a picture of intellectual and moral progress as a history of increasingly useful metaphors rather than of increasing understanding of how things really are (from the chapter “The Contingency of Language” in Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity 9).

2. Davidson’s treatment of truth ties in with his treatment of language learning and of metaphor to form the first systematic treatment of language which breaks completely with the notion of language as something which can be adequate or inadequate to the world or to the self, for Davidson breaks with the notion that language is a medium—a medium either of representation or of expression (from the chapter “The Contingency of Language” in Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity 10).

3. On the other hand, if Williams glosses the objectivity thesis in the second, more dubious way, then we shall have to choose between his theoretical diagnosis and Davidson’s. Faced with this choice, I would gravitate to Davidson’s side. One reason I would do so is that Williams still seems to me a bit bewitched by epistemology, by the idea that there is something interesting to be said about human knowledge. Davidson almost never, except in the unfortunate title of his essay on coherency, discusses the topic of knowledge. He is not interested in when we have knowledge and when we do not (in the chapter “Michael Williams Versus Donald Davidson” in Truth and Progress 162).

4. But this trivial sense in which “truth” is “correspondence to reality” and “depends upon a reality independent of our knowledge” is, of course, not enough for the realist. What he wants is precisely what the Davidson-Stroud argument prevents him from having—the notion of a world so “independent of our knowledge” that it might, for all we know, prove to contain none of the things we have always thought we were talking about (in the chapter “World Well Lost” in Consequences of Pragmatism 14).

5. Davidson, like the traditional philosopher who wants an answer to the epistemological skeptic, wants us to step out of our language-game and look at it from a distance. But his outside standpoint is not the metaphysical standpoint of the idealist, looking for an unsuspected ontological homogeneity between beliefs and non-beliefs invisible to science, nor the hopeful standpoint of the physicalist, looking to future science to discover such homogeneity. Rather, it is the mundane standpoint of the field linguist trying
to make sense of our linguistic behavior (in the chapter “Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth” in *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* 339).

Here is what Davidson says about what Rorty says about Davidson:

1. I have in the past claimed to have a refutation of skepticism. Richard Rorty has scolded me for saying this; he thinks that if I were right in so describing my position, I would be aligning myself with all the other philosophers who have tried to give a constructive answer to Descartes or Hume. Rorty says that, properly interpreted, my message to the skeptic is to ‘tell him to get lost’, thus aligning myself with the later Wittgenstein or the early Heidegger. I am not inclined to go along with Rorty. If one can show, as I think is possible, that in order to have a thought, even a doubt, one must already know that there are other minds and an environment we share with them, then this amounts to saying that it is impossible seriously to doubt these things—we cannot give a coherent content to such doubts. It is better to describe such a view as dismissing rather than answering the skeptic (in the chapter “The Problem of Objectivity” in *Problems of Rationality* 6).

2. Richard Rorty sees some of my views as serving his Wittgensteiner agenda, which is flattering if deserved. He is less pleased by my persistent interest in Tarskian semantics. Like many others, he views these tendencies as opposed, and urges me to forgo the second. But I can’t, because what Rorty holds to be antithetical modes of philosophizing I see as interdependent aspects of the same enterprise.

   The mental vocabulary isn’t “privileged” because it is irreducible (as Rorty thinks I think), it is irreducible because it is normative. Normativity is constitutive of the mental because the mental is built on a framework of attitudes which have a propositional content, and propositions have logical relations to one another.

   Rorty thinks I make too much of the concept of truth. I have come to agree with Rorty that there is no point in calling truth a norm or a goal.

   The importance of the concept of truth is rather its role in understanding, describing, and explaining the thought and talk of rational creatures.

   As McDowell says, the simple thesis that names and descriptions often refer to things, and that predicates often have an extension in the world of things, is obvious, and essential to the most elementary appreciation of the nature both of language and of the thoughts we express using language. Sellars was wrong to deny the thesis, and so is Rorty in holding it suspect (these are from the Appendix: Replies to Rorty, Stroud, McDowell, and Pereda in *Truth, Language, and History* 316-323).

3. As Rorty has put it, “nothing counts as justification unless by reference to what we already accept, and there is no way to get outside our beliefs and our language so as to find some test other than coherence”. About this I am, as you see, in agreement with Rorty. Where we differ, if we do, is on whether there remains a question how, given that we cannot "get outside our beliefs and our language so as to find some test other than coherence", we nevertheless can have knowledge of, and talk about, an objective public world which is not of our own making. I think this question does remain, while I suspect that Rorty doesn’t think so (in the chapter “A Coherence Theory” in *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001, 141).