



IV. On *Republic* X, 595a—608b10

A. Argumentation Its Structure of Argumentation

The passage in *Republic*, Book X, starting from 595a and ending at 608b10, can be divided into two distinct discussions. The first, at 595a—602b, provides ~~the a~~ characterization of the imitator ~~figure, as well as~~ and an argument about who in the city ~~is to~~ should be considered an imitator. The second, at 602c—608b, addresses the psychology of imitation, ~~it provides arguments for why~~ and explains why the avoidance of imitation ~~is to~~ must be avoided ~~is necessary~~.

Commented [CP1]: I changed this to US English as requested. I also changed single quotation marks to double ones and deleted spacing around dashes to align with US English conventions.

1. Definition of Imitation: A and are a All † Tragic p Poets i Imitators?

Book X begins with Socrates boasting that the banishment of imitative art from their city ~~of imitative art, that was~~ established in Book III, was a wise decision. ~~But~~ However, ~~from~~ the distinctly different uses of “imitation” in Book III; create ~~it is~~ confusion aboutng what has been banned: the first, stylistic usage means that all literature containing more than a small amount of first-person narration should be excluded from the city, while the second, substantive usage would ban poets ~~who had the content of whose works that was~~ lacked ing in philosophical grounding in its content (cf. Section III). Fortunately, Socrates immediately tries to clarify his usage of “imitation,” ~~and h~~ He begins by comparing the products of different trades. The craftsman (*ho demiourgos*) makes an imitation of the idea of a product (596b6—11); producing items resembling but ~~his products that do not have~~ having actual being; ~~but only a~~ resemblance to it (597a5—12).¹ In contrast, Socrates defines the imitator (*hē mimētē*) as one who imitates merely the appearances ~~which that the~~ of a craftsman’s produces product. The idea itself is the product of the god (597d1—8), and the craftsman is ~~at a second~~ twice-removed~~d~~

Commented [CP2]: You may wish to consider replacing “craftsman” with “artisan” throughout to remove gender bias. However, it is also important for readers to be able to match your discussion with a familiar version of the text, so I thought it best to leave the decision to you.

Commented [CP3]: This could be changed to “an idea or template” to help the reader understand how “idea” is being used here. Alternatively, you could simply use “an idea” if your readers are already familiar with this concept of ideas. The words “the idea” implied that a particular idea shaping the artisan’s work had already been mentioned.

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from the idea ~~in-by~~ imitating its reality (596b6—11); ~~so~~ therefore, the imitator is ~~at a~~ ~~third~~ ~~thrice~~ removed from Truth in copying only the appearance of the craftsman's product (587e1—5).

With this definition ~~having been accomplished~~ ~~in place~~, Socrates ~~moves on to know then~~ ~~questions of~~ what type of person might be considered an imitator. ~~It is decided that~~ The art of painting is ~~determined to be~~ always ~~determined~~ ~~directed to~~ ~~imitating-imitate~~ appearance only, and never reality (598b3—7). Socrates thus easily ~~labels-categorizes~~ all painters (*hoi zōgraphoi*) as imitators. At 597e6—8, Socrates states that this label of “imitator” will apply to the maker of tragedies also, *if* he is an imitator and is in his nature three removes ~~from~~ from the ~~... truth...~~ (HC 822—3). Here, the Greek conditional *eiper* begins the conditional clause. Smyth (538—9) writes that this strong conditional is used “especially when the truth of a statement is implicitly denied or doubted.” This distinction may or may not be significant, given the extensive attention ~~given-paid~~ to tragic poets later in this Book X passage, but it is worth noting.

Socrates creates a test to determine whether ~~or not~~ tragic poets deserve to be placed in the group of banished imitators. At 599b2—7, Socrates says that, “if, in truth, he had knowledge concerning the things that he imitates, he would greatly prefer to pursue these things zealously in his works, rather than to pursue counterfeits and copies.” (my translation). ~~Correctly~~ ~~If you want~~ ~~to u~~ ~~Understanding~~ this ~~correctly~~, ~~requires~~ ~~reading it must be read with~~ ~~considering~~ the ontology developed in Books V ~~through~~ VII ~~in mind~~. Plato establishes that the real things, capable of being known, are not spatio-temporal (cf. the sun analogy in Book VI [HC 742—4]; the ~~Cave~~ ~~cave~~ analogy in Book VII [HC 749—52]), and the ~~argument~~ ~~that the~~ highest function of the soul is intellection [(HC 747)]. ~~Because of this~~ ~~Therefore~~, it would be ~~completely~~ incoherent for

Commented [CP5]: Is this a citation? It does not seem to match anything in the bibliography. The same goes for subsequent similar citations from “HC.”

Commented [CP6]: I would suggest including “in Book ___” here?

Plato to maintain in this passage that the ultimate test of the soundness of one's ontological beliefs ~~must be~~ is the tangible properties of one's work. The discussion about the popular perceptions of philosophers in Book VI should be ~~kept in mind~~ considered. Here, Plato defends ~~the~~ philosophers against the accusation that they appears to be worthless because ~~their~~ work ~~doesn't~~ does not seem to command respect. Plato retorts by maintaining that the one who has wisdom will gladly share it with others upon ~~their~~ request, but that it is neither the ~~philosopher's~~ philosopher's responsibility nor ~~this~~ their desire of philosophers to hunt down those ignorant of ~~their~~ wisdom and ~~to attempt to convince his unwilling audiences~~ to listen to them. ~~So~~ Thus, in this *Republic X* passage, it is ~~not~~ unlikely that Plato has suddenly shifted position and now demands popular recognition or tangible accomplishments as proof of his wisdom: (“... and [he] would endeavor to leave after him many noble deeds and works as memorials of himself, and would be more eager to be the theme of praise than the praiser.” [599b5—7]). ~~Yet, Socrates next applies judges~~ the tragic poets next by using this possibly unsound ~~method~~ standard to tragic poets. He reports that no legislators use the writings of Homer to create their laws (599d—e); nor have any cults formed that base their beliefs upon these writings (600a8—b6). Socrates asks ~~whether, that~~ “if Homer had really been able to educate men and make them better and had possessed not the art of imitation but real knowledge, he would not have acquired many companions and been honored and loved by them?”²³ The discussion ~~of~~ concerning philosophers in Book VI is once again relevant. Here, Socrates asserts that popular opinion seems ~~inevitably to~~ inevitably hold lovers of wisdom in no esteem. “Teach this [lesson] to the man who is surprised that philosophers are not honored in our cities, and try to convince him that it would be far more surprising if they were honored” (489a10—b2). As ~~in with~~ the previous ~~part of this~~ argument,

Commented [CP7]: I rephrased this slightly to avoid gender bias. Additional changes below have the same purpose.

Commented [CP8]: Since Socrates is known for using irony at times, it may be worth explaining why you think this inconsistency is not a ruse but truly goes unnoticed by both Socrates and Plato.

~~it's completely unfounded~~ there is no basis for ~~to believe~~ inge that Plato has changed his criteria for ~~the judgment~~ recognition of recognizing wisdom since Book VI.

In the text of the Book X argument, however, Socrates *does* rail against Homer and the tragic poets for their lack of popularity and influence (599c2—600e4). ~~His~~ He ~~conclusion~~ concludes ~~is~~ that all poets are merely imitators of images of the ~~things they~~ subjects of their writing ~~about~~ and that they have no grasp on f Truth (600e4—7; 602b8—10)⁴.

This argument for labeling all poets as imitators ~~is a failure~~ fails because, as previously noted, Plato clearly (and rightly) does not endorse the premise at 599b8—600e4, ~~e.g.,~~ namely, that the wise man person will necessarily be ~~definitely~~ prosperous and honored. ~~But,~~ Nevertheless, the premise at 599a8—b6 should be ~~noticed~~ noted. ~~Depending upon the~~ On In some translations ~~accepted~~, Plato's intention here ~~can be~~ is consistent with ideas presented elsewhere in the *Republic*. According to Shorey's and Grube's translations, Socrates posits that ~~if~~ a man people with has real knowledge, ~~he~~ will spend theirs time employing that knowledge in deeds (e.g., physical actions) instead of ~~in~~ imitations (e.g., ~~in~~-writing about ~~men's~~ others' actions, as a poet does). My translation differs: ~~if one has~~ the works of people who have knowledge knowledgeable about real things, ~~his works~~ must be informed by ~~these~~ real things, ~~instead~~ rather than of by imitations. ~~By~~ On In my interpretation, these deeds or works ~~don't need~~ not ~~have to~~ be physical actions. In accordance with the Socratic teaching that knowledge is commanding, I believe that Plato ~~here does~~ agrees that, ~~if~~ one who has with knowledge of the objects of reality, ~~he~~ will always imitate *these* things rather than their appearances. Whether one ~~chooses~~ to express this knowledge of reality by writing literature or ~~by~~ performing valiant deeds will simply be a matter of personal aptitude and preference.

While the second half of the argument contained in Book X, 595a—602b, generally fails ~~overall~~ to convince us that all poets ~~really~~ are imitators by Plato's definition, the first half is valuable for its definition of imitation, ~~which~~ This definition will be used in the second argument presented in Book X's first half, ~~concerning which concerns~~ the deleterious ~~bad~~ effects of imitation upon the soul (602c—608b).

Commented [CP9]: This was changed to match the tone of the surrounding sentence.

References:

Plato. Republic. Trans. GMA Grube. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc., 1992.

Smyth HW. Greek Grammar, revised edition. Martino Fine Books, 2013.