

Epistemic Hierarchies and Multicultural Educational Justice: Re-reading Plato through Inclusive and Special Education

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ABSTRACT:

The Republic and Ion by Plato created a pecking order in which rational philosophy was superior to creative expression. This theoretical research remakes that hierarchy using disability studies and multicultural education. The paper presents a philosophical hermeneutic reading of some of the most significant passages in Plato to debate that his omission of poets foretells the perpetuation of epistemic hierarchies that are biased against non-dominant modes of knowing. Placing the discussion in the context of the current world discourse on inclusive and postcolonial education, the paper promotes epistemic pluralism as a key to multicultural justice. It argues that educational equity needs to legitimize creative, embodied and culturally diverse knowledge..

Keywords: Plato, poetry, mimesis, divine inspiration, epistemic ableism, disability studies, inclusive education, creativity in learning, special education.

Introduction

Long traditions of literary theory and philosophy have been influenced by Plato and his criticism of poetry, as found in *The Republic* and *Ion*. The way poets have tried to imitate appearances, which are three times farther away than the truth, and by indulging the passions instead of the reason, he accuses them of corrupting moral character. But ironically, he also refers to poets as being divinely inspired and directed by something that is not subject to logical reasoning. These contradictions demonstrate the two standards of Plato in making philosophy high and relegating poetry to the back seat.

Such tensions are historically, philosophical, and literary analysed in the existing research (Halliwell, 2002; Nightingale, 1995; Tigerstedt, 1974). Nevertheless, there exist significant gaps. A large part of the literature ends with the classical analysis and has little relation to the current educational setting of why Plato excludes poets. There are even less attempts at reinterpreting his arguments through the prism of disability studies, even though there are strong similarities between his privileging of rationality and contemporary ableist beliefs that undermine creativity, emotion, and other varieties of knowledge (Goodley, 2017; Mitchell and Snyder, 2015).

In modern educational systems, epistemic hierarchies are still at work to determine who is granted knowledge legitimacy and whose voice is marginalized. In some of the reports issued by the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring, disabled children are still among the most marginalized global populations, with a high level of school dropout and inaccessible quality education among them than the non-disabled counterparts (UNESCO, 2020). Millions of children with disabilities globally are either out of school or their school systems are segregated to limit their access to mainstream production of knowledge. These exclusionary patterns are not only structural, but epistemic, and represent centuries-old hierarchies that have been reinforced by the standardization and rational-analytical form of learning in favor of embodied, narrative, and creative forms of expression.

In the same vein, studies on multicultural education show that mainstream curricula tend to emphasize Western philosophical traditions, analytic thinking, and ignore Indigenous knowledge systems and oral storytelling traditions and ways of knowing rooted in culture (Banks, 2019; Nieto, 2017). Eurocentric epistemologies remain the standards of intelligence and legitimacy and colonial education, which is still present in most postcolonial settings. In this case, students whose knowledge is manifested in the form of a narrative, emotion, performance, or non-linear thinking may be seen as deficient instead of different. In this international scene, re-reading the Plato on the benefits of rationality makes it easy to see how ancient epistemic inequalities still echo in the educational inequities of present-day multiculturalism.

Through preempting such lapses, this paper suggests re-reading Plato's critique of poetry by placing it in the contemporary context of disability, inclusion, and special education. The purpose is to analyze how Plato's hypocrisy can be echoed in the legitimization of these voices over others and to propose that a pedagogical approach of promoting creativity, imagination and other forms of expression in non-discriminatory classrooms is educationally useful. Although the criticism of poetry though was an established classical issue, it has seldom been restructured by Plato along disability and inclusive education approaches.

Literature Review

The attack on poetry of Plato is based on two main points: the doctrine of mimesis (imitation), and suspicion of divine inspiration. In Book X of *The Republic*, he claims that poets copy looks and are three steps further on the wrong side (Plato, trans. 2000). In his opinion, poetry plays to emotions and not to reason and this is dangerous to the rationality of the soul (Halliwell, 2002). However, in *Ion*, Plato refers to poets as inspired by the gods and mediums of relaying truth that is beyond the power of reason (Murray, 1996). These inconsistency demonstrate that Plato was a two-sided man, who appreciated the concept of inspiration but rejected it at the same time.

Plato pushes up philosophy as the truth seeking endeavor and lowers poetry as irrational (Nightingale, 1995; Lear, 2006). This ranks the rational discourse at the level of the superiority to the artistic or inspired expression. Provided that poets are inspired by God he should have authority in what he says, but Plato diminishes them by making them to feed and water passions (Plato, trans. 2000).

Aristotle opposed Plato in his *Poetics* by asserting that imitation is natural, well-timed, and worthwhile, whereas the critics of the Renaissance and Romanticism period placed more value on the power of imagination and subjective expression (Abrams, 1953; Abrams, 1999). These customs prove that the ideas of Plato were still powerful but disputable.

The scholars of disability studies emphasize that the systems of knowledge usually marginalize or delegitimize the non-normative forms of expression (Goodley, 2017; Mitchell and Snyder, 2015). The concept of inclusive education implies that it is necessary to appreciate various ways of learning and creativity (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). The reinterpretation Plato in this light shows him dismissing poets as the silencing of dissenting voices in education.

Also, multicultural education scholarship has maintained that schools are not neutral but arranged according to dominant cultural forms of epistemology (Banks, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies underscore the fact that knowledge is plural, location based and historical power relations direct knowledge construction. Nevertheless, abstract rationality, textual literacy, and standardized assessment are commonly the main indicators of competence with the mainstream schooling. These epistemic privileges are unfavorable to students of oral, collectivist, or performance-driven cultures, neurodiverse students whose cognition might not conform to the standards of linear analysis.

These hierarchies are further aggravated by historical superiority of the colonial languages as well as the curricula in the postcolonial societies. Researchers have demonstrated that western canon

literature often takes centre-stage in national curriculums, and local literature, oral traditions, and community-based knowledge systems are often marginal (Mignolo, 2011; Smith, 2012). This preference of rationalist and Eurocentric cultures is the manifestation of what the critical theorists term as the epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007), in which selective knowers are systemically discredited. In this context, we can see the displacement of philosophy over poetry by Plato as not only an independent stand in philosophy, but as a continuum of epistemic marginalization that persists in forming the educational systems of multicultural societies around the world.

Research Objectives

1. To examine Plato's double standards in his evaluation of poets and philosophers.
2. To analyse the contradictions in Plato's criticisms of poetry and assess whether they undermine his arguments.
3. To explore Plato's concept of "divine inspiration" in poetry and its tension with his rejection of poets.
4. To reinterpret Plato's exclusion of poets as an early form of epistemic ableism, drawing connections to contemporary inclusive education.

Research Questions

1. Does Plato demonstrate double standards in his treatment of poets compared to philosophers?
2. To what extent are Plato's criticisms of poetry inconsistent or contradictory in establishing the superiority of philosophy?
3. If poets are "divinely inspired," how does Plato justify his claim that they "feed and water the passions" and threaten rational education?
4. What implications do Plato's views on poetry and philosophy hold for modern discussions of disability, creativity, and inclusive education?

Research Methodology

The method used in this study is qualitative case study, which is suitable when analyzing complicated philosophical arguments and their implication on education and disability. Case study research enables one to develop a detailed discussion of a limited

phenomenon in this case, Plato and his criticism of poetry with respect to inclusive education.

Research Design

The qualitative design was chosen since the study aims at discovering meanings, contradictions and implications not measurement of variables. It is concerned with the interpretation of Plato in *The Republic* and *Ion* and with how his dualism in relation to poets and philosophers can be seen to represent issues of inclusivity and exclusivity in knowledge production more generally.

Case Study Approach

The case study focuses on the treatment of poets as one confined case by Plato. This comprises his philosophies on mimesis (imitation) and divine inspiration, and the exclusion of poets who belong to ideal state. It is analyzed based on main sources (dialogues with Plato) and secondary ones (commentaries, histories of criticism, and views on disability studies). It is hoped that we can read how these ancient perceptions still affect contemporary discussions on creativity, rationality, and inclusive education.

Philosophical Hermeneutic Case Study: This paper purposely used a philosophical hermeneutic case study design that dwelled on the book of Plato, the *Republic*, and *Ion*. This method places the case at the intersection of philosophical hermeneutics, in which the meaning of the case is obtained through the close reading and reinterpretation of the original sources (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Although case studies in research in the field of education tend to use triangulation that could be either in the form of interviews, observations, or several sets of data, the limit of interpretation is based on the interpretive re-evaluation of canonical texts. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the qualitative designs may be larger or smaller, and philosophical case studies may tend to focus on the interpretation depth rather than the quantity of data. However, there is a lack of empirical triangulation, which is also a weakness because the research does not directly observe the practice and views of learners in the classroom. To fill this gap, further studies might be conducted by combining text with empirical evidence, e.g., interviews with teacher on

the role of creativity in inclusive classrooms, or observations in classrooms of poetry and storytelling as a pedagogical resource. This triangulation would provide not only greater trustworthiness but also experiment with the practical relevance of philosophical knowledge in the modern education settings. Moreover, there was the need to promote methodological soundness to meet the qualitative research standards in order to uphold the rigor of this philosophical hermeneutic case study. In addition to defining the design and analytic procedures, the study was able to deal with the four criteria of trustworthiness advanced by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These were credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability, and were the criteria according to which the analytic processes were evaluated and findings interpreted. Each aspect of trustworthiness was included in the study as explained in the following section.

Analytic Procedure: Step-by-Step Thematic Generation

The philosophical hermeneutic case study combined with the reflexive thematic analysis of *Republic* (Book X) and *Ion* was used in this work. This was aimed at building theoretically consistent themes as opposed to quantifying textual features. The steps that were done included the following:

Corpus Delimitation & Unit of Analysis: The purposive selection was used to select the passages that discuss explicitly mimesis, inspiration, education/moral formation and the civic status of poets. A logically demarcated section of the argument was the unit of analysis (e.g., a claim and its immediate justification), and to maintain traceability the standard Stephanus pagination was used.

Familiarization & Initial Memoing: The text was read respectively several times. The researcher made analytic memos about provisional learnings, queries, and tensions (ex: divinity inspiration versus techne, emotion disorder, selective use of hymns) during every pass. These memos recorded new sensitising ideas of the critical disability studies (e.g. epistemic injustice/ableism, voice/legitimacy).

Open (Semantic) Coding: Line-by-line coding was used, which identified explicit claims,

definitions and rhetoric moves (e.g., "poetry as imitation," "feeding the passions," "epistemic authority of the philosopher-ruler). The codes were brief and descriptive labels based on the text. There were allowed overlapping codes to prevent too soon closure.

Latent/Theory-Informed Coding: A second round of coding the data elucidated implicit meanings and assumptions based on sensitizing ideas of disability and inclusive education (e.g., "epistemic gatekeeping," "tokenistic inclusion," "hierarchies of intelligibility"). In this case the hermeneutic circle was made overt: tentative interpretations were constantly re-examined in relation to the specifics of the text.

Codebook Development & Versioning: Codes were bundled together in a live codebook including: code name, definition, rules of inclusion/exclusion, example passage (code with Stephanus reference), and an interpretive warrant (one or two sentences connecting writing to interpretation). The revision dates were added to form an audit trail. Duplicating or too broad codes were disorganized or retired.

Candidate Theme Construction: Patterned relationships between codes (e.g., Mimesis/Appearance, Divine Inspiration/Techne, Appeal to Passions/Moral Order, Philosophy over Poetry) were used to cluster codes into higher-order candidate themes. These clusters were overlaid by cross-cutting and disability-informed meta-themes (e.g., Epistemic Ableism, Voice and Legitimacy, Knowledge Hierarchies) to describe the gap between the classical argument and modern inclusion.

Theme Review Against the Corpus (Including Negative Cases): The candidate themes were all reviewed by going through all the coded passages and this tested coherence and distinctiveness. Any instance of disconfirming (e.g., selective approving of some forms of poetry by Plato) was recorded and incorporated to improve boundaries (e.g., between tokenistic and wholesale exclusion). Themes remained retained when they (a) represented a substantive pattern in the line of thinking of Plato and (b) were essential to the disability-informed reinterpretation.

Code–Recode Stability Check (Single-Analyst):

To increase the level of reliability, 20 percent of passages were re-coded two weeks later without reference to previous labels. The discrepancies were noted and eliminated through tightening code definitions or splitting codes. The changes were recorded on audit trail.

Defining, Naming, and Evidencing Themes:

Final themes were given definitions in the form of one sentence essence statements, boundaries and connections with sub-themes were made clear. In every theme, two or more exemplar passages (with Stephanus references) were accepted as well as the analytic warrant. The themes, contradictions and educational implications are provided in Table 2-7, and Figure 1 visualises the conceptual model between classical hierarchies and epistemic ableism in modern education.

Reflexivity Statement and Analytic Warrants:

A short note on reflexivity has the researcher detailing their own commitment to inclusive pedagogy and how this commitment was both a lens to and not a goal. There is an analytic warrant that goes with each interpretive move, why this passage warrants this inference, hence the confirmation.

Trustworthiness

Credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability were the methods of ensuring trustworthiness in this study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The provision of credibility was done by basing the entire interpretations on the textual evidence of Plato on the Republic and Ion, and placing insights within the existing disability and inclusion theory. To increase reliability, the analytic process was organized in cycles of close reading, memo writing, and refinement of themes, according to which the emergent interpretations were repeated and subjected to the test with the text. Confirmability was sought by keeping an open audit trail of coding decisions and analytic notes; future research can contribute to enhancing this dimension by use of peer debriefing or inter-rater reviews on theme development. The transferability was partially obtained through the connection between philosophical knowledge and the implication to the

inclusive education, but the results are mostly theoretical. Although a classroom-based research would facilitate a more contextual transfer, the research contribution of the study can be seen in

illustrating how classical philosophical critique can be used to contribute to the current debate in the field of special and inclusive education.

Table 1

Trustworthiness Strategies and Suggested Enhancements

Criterion	Strategies Used in This Study	Suggested Enhancements for Future Research
Credibility	Grounded interpretations in textual evidence from <i>Republic</i> and <i>Ion</i> ; situated insights within disability and inclusion theory.	Triangulate with empirical data (e.g., teacher interviews, classroom observations).
Dependability	Iterative cycles of close reading, memo writing, and thematic refinement.	Establish inter-coder agreement or use audit trails verified by external reviewers.
Confirmability	Transparent audit trail of coding decisions and analytic notes.	Use peer debriefing or collaborative coding; maintain reflexivity journals documenting assumptions.
Transferability	Linked philosophical insights to implications for inclusive pedagogy.	Provide thick descriptions of educational contexts; integrate cross-cultural or comparative case data.

Note. Table 1 shows how the research met the four main pillars of trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, as well as where the research may be enhanced in future studies to improve each of these dimensions. To gain credibility, close textual grounding and theoretical consistency with disability and inclusion models formed the basis of the study, and a future study can strengthen the credibility with triangulation of empirical classroom data. The methodological consistency in dependability was ensured by the means of repeated thematic analysis, but inter-coder checks or external audits would be more effective. An audit trail of analytic decisions supported confirmability, but peer debriefing, collaborative coding, and reflexivity journals may be useful in future research to record researcher assumptions in a more explicit manner. Lastly, transferability was also established through the connection of the philosophical insights to inclusive pedagogy but more detailed descriptions on the context and cross-cultural comparative cases would

enable findings to be relevant to a wider range of educational contexts.

Data Sources

Data was derived from:

1. Primary sources Plato, *Republic* and *Ion*.
2. Secondary sources: Literary criticism accounts of history (Aristotle to modern and Romantic).
3. Theoretical frameworks Critical Disability Studies and Inclusive Education literature which offers modern perspectives to rethink the ideas of Plato.

Analytical Framework

The theme analysis is used in the study, as the study targets recurrent themes like imitation, inspiration, rationality, exclusion, and moral education. These themes are critically re-examined through disability studies to point out the parallels in Plato underestimating poets to educators as many voices are underestimated in education.

Sampling Strategy

A purposive sample technique was employed, i.e. key passages in which Plato criticizes poets e.g. the statement that poets are feeders and waterers of the passions; or that they are inspired by the gods but irrational. These texts can be discussed as points of focus when interpreting the critical information and comparing it with the principles of inclusive education.

Data Analysis

The most arresting of the accusations that Plato heaps on poets are to be found in Book X of the

Republic, in which he contends that poets are guilty of mistaking the rational arrangement of the soul, by feeding and watering the passions. However, in other places, especially in *Ion*, he speaks of poets as those divinely inspired, which implies that it is not a matter of craft, but of a certain inspiration. There is inherent contradiction in these two assertions, poets as dangerous flatterers of feeling and poets as people who channel in divine truth. In this study, these contradictions are put forward as indications of the dualistic nature of Plato in giving philosophy superiority over poetry.

Results

Table 2

Key Themes from Plato's Criticism of Poetry

Theme	Description	Supporting Evidence (Primary Texts)	Contradictions/Observations
Mimesis (Imitation)	Poetry is "thrice removed from truth," offering only appearances.	Republic Book X – Poets imitate appearances, not reality.	Plato himself employs imitation in not constructing the "ideal state."
Divine Inspiration	Poets are "possessed" or inspired by the divine rather than rational knowledge.	<i>Ion</i> – Poets channel divine truth beyond rational thought.	If poets access higher truth, dismissing them undermines Plato's own claim.
Appeal to Passions	Poetry excites emotions, corrupts the rational order of the soul.	Republic Book X – Poets "feed and water the passions."	Ignores poetry's capacity to promote moral reflection and wisdom.
Philosophy vs. Poetry	Philosophy is superior because it pursues truth and rationality.	Republic – Philosophers are fit to rule the ideal state.	Excludes non-rational, creative ways of knowing; double standards evident.

Note. Table 2 sheds light on the key themes of the philosophy of the refusal of poetry by Plato and contradiction of his arguments. The philosophy of mimesis (imitation) unveils that Plato considered poetry as a reproduction of appearances, thus being three times further away than the truth. Nevertheless, his philosophical creation of the ideal state is also imitable implying a two-sided criterion. In like manner, his description of the divine inspiration makes the poets conduits of truth exceeding rational knowledge, and he at the same time rejects them as irrational. This contradiction

undermines his argument that philosophy is the only way that the truth can be established.

Implications for Disability and Education

In contemporary understanding, the omission of poets by Plato may be interpreted as a latent kind of ableism in the knowledge structures. In associating the value with rationality, he delegitimizes inspired, emotive, or non-rational knowledge, which can be characterized by the marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities. Each creative and storytelling and other forms of expression are

accepted as legitimately valid ways of knowing in the modern inclusive education (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011; Goodley, 2017). In this way, this criticism of Plato makes us aware of the long-

standing conflicts between the importance of considering rational-analytical discourse and the importance of embodied/emotional/inspired expression in the educational process.

Table 3

Thematic Reinterpretation through Disability and Inclusive Education Lens

Theme	Plato's View	Inclusive Education Perspective	Implications for Disability Studies
Rationality vs. Emotion	Rationality is superior; emotions are corruptive.	Inclusive education values emotional intelligence, creativity, and storytelling as valid learning modes.	Mirrors ableist bias that marginalizes learners who express knowledge differently.
Voice and Legitimacy	Poets' voices excluded as irrational.	Inclusive pedagogy emphasizes diverse voices and learner agency.	Exclusion of poets parallels silencing of disabled/non-normative voices.
Knowledge Systems	Only philosophy yields true knowledge.	Knowledge is plural, including embodied, creative, and experiential forms.	Highlights epistemic injustice against people with disabilities.
Creativity in Education	Poetry is dangerous, only limited "good" poetry allowed.	Creativity and imagination are central to inclusive learning environments.	Suggests that rejecting creativity perpetuates educational exclusion.

Note. Table 3 shows that the refusal of poetry by Plato can be re-read in the perspectives of disability studies and inclusive education. His advocacy of the idea of rationality over emotion is a sign of an early partiality that invalidates other forms of knowledge.

Synthesis

The criticism of Plato towards poetry is full of ambivalence: he is afraid of the power of poetry but admires the divine origin. His hypocrisy, refusing to believe in poetic inspiration and accepting philosophic imitation, refusing to accept passion and demonstrating his own emotional commitment

to the ideal state, make his assertions inconsistent. Rereading Plato as disability and inclusive education can also be a valuable idea because it helps in realizing how frameworks of exclusion arise in the process of privileging rationality as the only acceptable knowledge. This discussion highlights the importance of reconsidering creativity, inspiration, and emotion as part and parcel of human development and educational justice. This work is a bridge between classical criticism and contemporary disability studies in which it offers a framework of inclusive pedagogy that is open to both creativity and rationality.

Table 4 Synthesizing Contradictions and Educational Insights

Contradiction in Plato	Modern Educational Insight	Implication for Special/Inclusive Education
Poets are "divinely inspired" yet irrational.	Creativity can be both inspired and educationally valuable.	Creative expression should be legitimized as valid knowledge in special education.

Contradiction in Plato	Modern Educational Insight	Implication for Special/Inclusive Education
Poetry imitates appearances, philosophy imitates truth.	All representation involves mediation and interpretation.	Both rational and artistic forms of learning should coexist in inclusive classrooms.
Poetry corrupts morals, yet hymns and didactic poetry are allowed.	Selective inclusion reflects hidden biases.	Modern education must avoid tokenism, genuine inclusion requires valuing all forms of expression.
Justice requires harmony, yet poets are excluded.	True justice requires inclusion of all voices.	Inclusive pedagogy should embrace neurodiverse and disabled learners' creative contributions.

Note. Table 4 presents the narrative of internal contradiction in Plato that criticized poetry and redefines it by the dimensions of contemporary educational theory and inclusive practice. The culture of inclusive education should be able to surpass these conditional acceptance to include the complete array of creative and emotional inputs especially that of the neurodiverse and disabled students. Lastly, the definition of justice as harmony given by Plato is invalidated by the

fact that poets are eliminated. When balance and inclusion of every component of the soul and society are considered as part of justice, then the marginalization of a voice is automatically unjust. Nowadays, honest justice in education necessitates the constructive participation of all students (including those with disabilities) whose views and innovative contribution to the entire learning atmosphere are valuable.

Table 5

Contradictions in Plato's Criticism and Their Educational Implications

Contradiction	Plato's Claim	Modern Insight	Educational Implication for Inclusive Education
Poets are "divinely inspired" yet irrational	Poets access higher truth but are dismissed as irrational	Creativity can be both inspired and educationally valuable	Creative expression should be legitimized in classrooms for all learners
Poetry excites passions but also conveys moral lessons	Poetry corrupts reason, yet hymns and didactic poetry are allowed	Emotional engagement can enhance moral and social learning	Teachers should use creative arts to foster emotional intelligence
Philosophy imitates truth; poetry imitates appearances	Philosophy is superior to poetry	All representation involves interpretation	Rational and creative forms of learning should coexist
Justice requires harmony, yet poets are excluded	Poets are denied participation in the ideal state	Inclusion requires valuing all voices	Inclusive classrooms should embrace neurodiverse learners' contributions

Note. Table 5 points out to the main contradictions in the critique of poetry presented by Plato and links it to the modern educational knowledge and the practice of inclusivity. While Plato acknowledges poets as "divinely inspired," he simultaneously

dismisses them as irrational, revealing a tension between creativity and reason; modern education recognizes that creativity can be both inspired and pedagogically valuable, suggesting that all learners' creative expression should be legitimized.

Table 6

Themes in Plato's Criticism Mapped to Disability Studies Concepts

Theme	Plato's Perspective	Disability Studies Concept	Inclusive Education Implication
Rationality vs Emotion	Reason is superior; emotion is corruptive	Epistemic ableism	Inclusive pedagogy validates emotional and creative learning
Voice and Legitimacy	Poets' voices excluded	Silencing of marginalized knowledge	Learner agency and diverse voices should be affirmed
Knowledge Hierarchies	Philosophy = true knowledge	Devaluation of non-normative knowledge	Multiple intelligences and embodied knowledge are valued
Creativity	Only "good" poetry is allowed	Tokenistic inclusion	All forms of creative expression should be encouraged

Note. Table 6 maps the central themes in Plato's criticism of poetry to concepts from disability studies and highlights their implications for inclusive education. Plato's privileging of reason over emotion reflects epistemic ableism, emphasizing rationality while devaluing emotional and creative ways of knowing; inclusive pedagogy

counters this by validating emotional intelligence and creative learning. The exclusion of poets' voices illustrates the silencing of marginalized knowledge, which parallels the marginalization of learners with diverse abilities; inclusive education emphasizes learner agency and the affirmation of all voices.

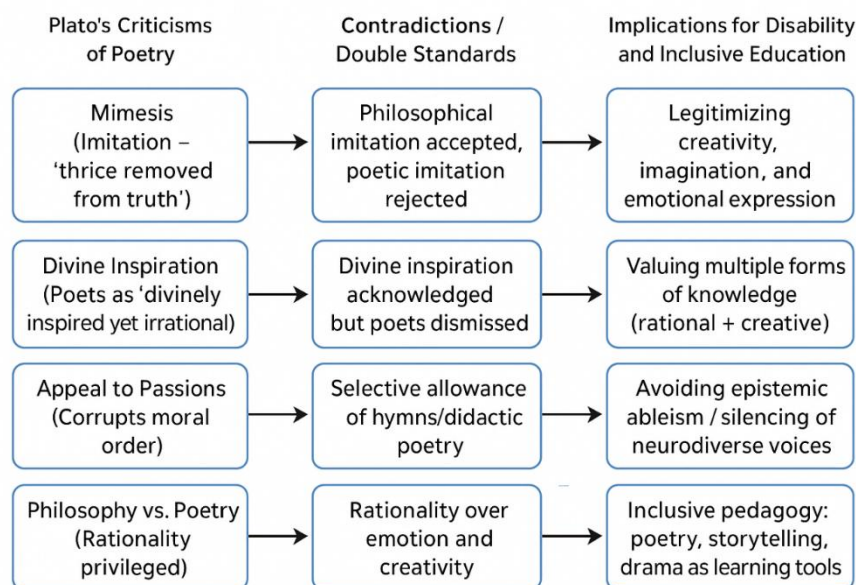
Table 7

Pedagogical Strategies Derived from Plato's Contradictions

Plato's Criticism	Modern Challenge	Recommended Practice	Inclusive Example
Poetry excites passions	Emphasis on rational learning	Use arts to integrate emotional and cognitive learning	Storytelling to teach ethics or social skills
Poets are irrational	Marginalization of creative learners	Recognize creativity as valid knowledge	Encourage students with disabilities to compose poetry or perform drama
Selective acceptance of poetry	Tokenism	Genuine inclusion of diverse forms	Include varied forms of expression, e.g., visual arts, music, role-play
Philosophy as superior	Narrow epistemology	Coexistence of rational and creative approaches	Combine logical problem-solving tasks with imaginative projects

Note. Table 7 translates the contradictions in Plato's criticism of poetry into practical pedagogical strategies for inclusive education. Plato's concern that poetry excites passions highlights the historical overemphasis on rational learning; modern classrooms can address this by integrating the arts to combine emotional and cognitive development, such as using storytelling to teach ethics or social skills.

Figure 1
Conceptual Model



Note. The critical approach of poetry found in the works by Plato, in the idea of mimesis, the divine inspiration, the appeal to passions, the privileging of philosophy over poetry, can be perceived as an early form of epistemic ableism as shown in the conceptual model in the Figure 1. This epistemic ableism tumultuously mediates the correlation between the hierarchical philosophies of the past and the present educational practices, underlining the undermining of non-rational, creative and emotional modes of knowledge.

Discussion

The results of this work point out the fact that the exclusion of poetry by Plato is not merely a case of philosophical paradoxes but also long-term trends of epistemic ableism in educational ideology. The superiority of rationality to creativity illustrated by Plato reflects the process of valorization of the normative described by Goodley (2017), in which some forms of knowing are given a green light and others are muted. The fact that he dismissed poets as irrational, even though he admitted to their divine inspiration in *Ion*, resembles what Mitchell and Snyder (2015) call epistemic injustice, when marginal voices are devalued to systematize them. According to the notion of inclusive pedagogy, this exclusion causes a problem since education

flourishes on diverse ways of knowing such as emotional, creative and embodied ways of knowing (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). The fact that only hymns and didactic poetry were being selectively admitted further highlights the element of tokenism in Plato which resembled all-day educational practices today where only creative expression is condoned as long as it does not undermine the norms. The modern integrative models suggest the greater importance of creativity and imagination as a part of learning, particularly in students with disabilities and neurodiverse backgrounds (UNESCO, 1994; Lear, 2006).

The presence of epistemic hierarchies as practiced in inclusive and multi-cultural classrooms is exemplified by empirical research. Research has identified a student who demonstrates an aspect of understanding by either telling stories, representing them artistically or expressing his or her feelings as not having academic rigor when compared to other students who adhere to the more analytic and standardized modes of expression (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011; Nieto, 2017). Neurodiverse students, especially, can be shown to exhibit profound conceptual knowledge by engaging in creative or non-conventional forms of communication but they are disadvantaged by

institutionalized notions of intelligence that reduce rationality to constrictive notions of rationality.

High-stakes testing regimes also help to strengthen these hierarchies by emphasizing measurable cognitive products over relational, emotional, and imaginative products. Since most educational systems of today are moving towards standardized evaluation that is moving in line with international norms, creative arts like poetry, drama, and storytelling are often sidelined in school curricula. Such structural devaluation is the reflection of the distrust that Plato has of poetic expression and explains why historical philosophical hierarchies still inform the current concept of the legitimate knowledge. Multiculturally, these exclusions will overrepresent students with marginalized cultural, linguistic and disability backgrounds whose epistemic traditions might not conform to dominant standards.

In such a way, the reinterpretation of the Platonic criticism of poetry in terms of disability studies puts the philosophical exclusions of Plato in a wider context of discussion of educational justice, which proves that in order to be truly inclusive, it is important to acknowledge both rational and creative knowledge as valid and even indispensable.

Conclusion

This paper has revisited the transgression of poetry in *The Republic* and *Ion* by Plato through the prism of disability studies and inclusive education. It was found that the arguments provided by Plato are characterized by profound contradictions: he criticized poets as foolish imitators but still admitted that they were inspired by gods. Plato made creative and imaginative forms of expression less expressive by placing rationality and philosophy at the center of knowledge over creative expression. Reframed through the modern disability theory, such exclusion is an early expression of epistemic ableism, with only rational and normative modes of knowing being authenticated, and the voices of the emotional, creative, and non-normative excluded.

To the contemporary education, these results highlight the importance of shifting away of the narrow definition of knowledge and adopting pluralistic methodology, which acknowledges

rational-analytical and creative-expressive learning. Inclusive pedagogy identifies storytelling, poetry, drama, and imagination as potent means of participation, empathy, and self-expression especially in the process of learning with disabilities and neurodiverse profiles. Educational justice, as it is promoted within the international systems such as the Salamanca Statement and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities must be based on the principle of appreciating the various voices and making everyone belong to the community of learners. This paper by re-examination of the Platonic critique of poetry shows that inclusive classrooms need to challenge epistemic hierarchies and instead assert creativity and rationality as having equal importance in human development and collective learning.

The distinction between philosophy and poetry presented by Plato is an expression of a long-standing conflict in international education systems, namely, the conflict between singleness and plurality of knowledge. Educational justice in multicultural societies informed by colonial pasts, linguistic diversity, and disability movement requires a restructuring of the epistemic power. The way to truly include classrooms would be not only structural access, but to also to acknowledge the importance of numerous cultural, cognitive and expressive traditions as contributing equally to the overall learning.

Limitations

This study has following limitations that should be acknowledged.

1. The two Platonic dialogues (*The Republic* and *Ion*) that are in the center of analysis are unlikely to reflect the entire range of Plato philosophy, or its multifaceted interpretations.
2. Being a qualitative case study, the results are interpretative and cannot be generalized; they are an adaptable reading of the texts found by Plato, which is not an absolute description.
3. The paper relies on the secondary sources in the field of disability studies and inclusive pedagogy to contextualize its reinterpretation that could lead to introducing modern biases that were not initially present in the historical context of Plato.

4. The study lacks empirical classroom information so that the application of the research to inclusive practice is predominantly theoretical than applied in real learning institutions.

5. Although this research identifies similarities between epistemic hierarchies of Plato and contemporary ableist practices, it fails to look at any cases of counterexamples found in other philosophical schools or traditions that can perhaps provide a different view on creativity and inclusion.

Implications

1. The use of poetry, storytelling, drama and other forms of creativity should be a deliberate learning tool used by teachers.

2. The development of empathy, self-expression, and emotional intelligence is contributed by poetry and storytelling.

3. Plato was quite choosy with the hymns and didactic poetry, but disapproved of the rest, which indicates a restricted tolerance of creativity.

4. The benefits of inclusive classes are that the student offers a chance to think about their journey

and emotions in a manner of creative expression, which enhances academic and socio-emotional growth.

5. Inclusive practice should not be tokenism as is practiced today because it should include a variety of creative input and not just those that conform to the mainstream.

6. Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) confirms that schools ought to accommodate every child without considering their physical ability, intellectual ability, social, emotional, lingual or other abilities. Similarly, Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) establishes the right to inclusive education, requiring states to ensure that persons with disabilities can access education “on an equal basis with others” through reasonable accommodation and accessible pedagogy. Integrating poetry and creative expression into classrooms directly advances these commitments by validating multiple intelligences and modes of communication.

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