

Abstract for IPS meeting in Japan.

Philosophic and poetic inspiration in the *Republic*

Before introducing knowledge of the Good as the ultimate goal, Plato suggests that only a chance event (*tis ek tuchês*) or divine inspiration (*ek tinos theias epipnoias*) will lead to the realization of a perfect state, constitution or individual (*Republic* 6.499b). In the former case, *tuchê* or chance would have to compel a few untainted contemporary philosophers to take charge and force the city to obey them. In the latter case, contemporary rulers or their offspring (*basileias huesin ê autois*) would have to possess, under the impulse of *theia epipnoia*, “a true erotic love for true philosophy” (*alêthinês philosophias alêthinôs erôs empesêi*). In the *Banquet*, it is the mysteries of love (*ta erotica*) that lead to the final revelation (*ta telea kai eoptika*), that is, the vision and/or contemplation of beauty itself (211e-212a), the sine qua non for the realization of an ideal state. At *Phaedrus* (265b3), Plato uses the word *epipnoia* or inspiration to distinguish the four types of “divine” madness or *mania* (prophetic, mystic, poetic and philosophic) and characterizes the highest form, the philosophic, as “erotic” (*erôtikê*, 265b5). And still, in the *Phaedrus*, in Plato’s hierarchical classification of the nine types of soul based on previous contemplations of being, reality, or truth (248b-c), first on the list of reincarnations is the lover of wisdom or beauty or again, one who is a follower of the muses and prone to erotic love (*mousikou tinos kai erotikou*, 248d3-4).

In all three dialogues, true philosophy is associated with a revelation in which there is a symbiotic relation between vision and the erotic desire that characterizes the pursuit of wisdom. In this paper, I will examine more closely Plato’s references to, and the potential role of, “chance” and “divine inspiration” in the context of the realization of the “perfect city”. In conjunction, I will examine Plato’s references in the *Republic* to other inspirational phenomena, including the Delphi Oracle, Socrates daimon and poetic insights. I will also contextualize the vocabulary relative to the phenomenon of inspiration from Homer to Plato, with the aim of showing that Plato would place more faith in inspiration than chance, although the two, at times, must overlap. I will demonstrate that the references to inspiration show to what degree Plato is still captivated by the iconic poetry of Homer and Hesiod. Finally, I will discuss the differences between the Greek and the Judeo-Christian notions of “revelation”. More to the point, I will show that the Muses, a Greek phenomenon, do not reveal truth to the poet or philosopher as Yahweh or Allah do, but only guarantee the validity of a solution which the poet or philosopher discovers through a “conscious” or “quasi-conscious” intellectual exercise.

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