

Plato and aristotle



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Plato complains that are not reliable sources of truth about the world because they are not experts in the things they write about. Homer, for example, was not a general and thus we should not turn to him for the truth about the experience of leading men in battle. Can you think of particular works of literature (perhaps one of our " touchstones") that might be used to answer or support this charge?

According to Plato, mind is the ultimate source of reliance. He believes that all is perceived has a concealed perfect form that cannot be detected through the senses. If one tries to duplicate something, one moves away from perceiving the ideal form. Hence, writing, according to Plato implies attempting to duplicate the memory because one has to rely on the outside source and this drifts one away from the truth. He states that wisdom comes from the inner self and when one tries to put it in writing, memory plays a role and hence it is not the truth. The authors have not experienced all they write about.

This claim of Plato is also clearly visible in *The Story of an Hour* by Kate Chopin. Chopin wrote a lot of fiction and she interacted with different cultures. Although she tried to represent life as it is actually lived, ultimately it sprang from her memory and in the words of Plato, this drifts one away from the truth. Chopin lost her husband at a very young age and hence it would appear that she lives in the hope that one day she too would encounter something like Mrs. Mallard did. Perhaps it is her innermost feelings that are expressed through this story and hence Plato's claim that authors try to duplicate the memory is justified. Chopin has not experienced something like this so can she with authority describe the feelings. Fiction is a fragment of the mind and hence not an experience which an author can

write about with authority.

Based on your own experience of literature or other arts, how would you understand the meaning of katharis? When you experience art or literature, do you feel purged of emotions, or do you feel emotions in a purified way, or do you see or understand them more clearly? More generally, do you think the emotional experiences literature or art create are beneficial? Or do you think (perhaps like Plato) that they are not beneficial, perhaps even harmful?

The emotions that come up with the experience of art and literature are momentary. Katharsis implies purging of emotions never to return. Once the mind and soul is cleared of such thoughts, once the emotions have been released, they should never again disturb the person. That is katharsis or purging. It is a form of regression from which one emerges a new person altogether.

Katharsis should lead to an enhanced understanding of the universal law, of nature, of the world and its creation. It brings with it inner wisdom and one understands how short-lived emotions are. The emotional experiences that literature and art create are not beneficial and can even harm an individual. One tries to justify one's feelings and identifies himself with the character in the literature or work of art. One finds consolation that someone else also suffers like him. One may also re-live the moments of sadness or joy with the experience of literature but this only leads one further into darkness. Some may also become fearful of the future. Works of art merely arouse the emotions; they do not cause purging or katharsis. Such emotions may also give temporary pleasure but what is required is permanent happiness.

Emotions change the very next moment when one experiences some other

work of art. Happiness, once attained through katharsis is permanent and any form of literature and art will not disturb a person. Any experience should lead to introspection but the emotional experience of art and literature merely arouse emotions, cause pain and disturbance, and hence not beneficial.