

Chapter III

A Historical Survey of the Problem

3.1 Plato's view of literature and truth.

Plato's names always appears parallel with his philosophical theory of the world of Forms or Ideas. The theory of the world of Ideas is the fundamental stone of Plato's philosophy. Plato's Theory of Ideas "is one of the greatest philosophies in the world. It can well stand on its own feet."¹ Whitehead once remarked that all Western philosophy consists of footnotes to Plato; he was the discoverer of the third world which exists independently of the mental and the physical worlds.² Plato's third world, or the world of Ideas, is something divine,³ unchanging and thus may be considered more real than the physical or mental worlds. In a sense it might be called the world of Divinity. Plato's realism admits such an entity, which can not be empirically perceived through the five senses, as what is denoted by the word "soul". That is - besides the world the planet earth, to put it simply, Plato envisages that there exists another possible world. Or, at least,

¹ John H. Randall, Jr., Plato: Dramatist of the Life of Reason, [London: Columbia University Press, 1970], p. 190.

² Karl Popper, *Ibid.*, p. 122.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

Plato sees that a man has a soul. This might be understood as what pertaining to the theological realm of nature or reality. Whether Plato's world of Ideas is identical with the possible world offered by most religions or not is a matter extending beyond the scope of the thesis. Only a brief, basic account of his doctrine is needed for an understanding of why he banished the artists.

Bertrand Russell saw that Plato's theory of Ideas is "partly logical, and partly metaphysical." The logical part has to do with the meaning of general words.

Language cannot get on without general words such as 'cat', and such words are evidently not meaningless. But if the word 'cat' means anything, it means something which is not this or that cat, but some kind of universal cattiness.⁴

And the idea 'cat' has no position in space or time; it is not born with any particular cat and will die with neither. It is eternal. Russell then explicated further:

And according to the metaphysical part of the doctrine, the word 'cat' means a certain ideal cat, 'the cat', created by God, and unique. Particular cats partake of the nature of the cat, but more or less imperfectly; it is only owing to this imperfection that there can be many of them. 'The cat' is real; particular cats are only apparent.⁵

⁴ Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy, [London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1980], p. 137.

⁵ Ibid., p. 137.

Thus conceiving, Russell pointed that "Plato's philosophy rests on the distinction between reality and appearance."⁶ Hence, it might be concluded that, for Russell, 'the idea cat' belongs to the logical world, and 'the unique cat' pertains to the real or metaphysical world; while 'a natural cat' is merely an appearance perceivable through the five senses. According to this notion, there seem to be three related worlds existing spontaneously and composing a universe of mutuality.

Plato accepts the existence of the gods or at least the idea or concept 'god'. For Plato, true belief or knowledge must be of the world of Ideas, or of what really is the case in that world. Plato's "theory is based on the distinction between things, on the one hand, and Ideas or Forms which are apart from things, on the other."⁷ Apprehension is possible because we proceed from the raw materials or the sense-data to the ideas or forms in the third world; and hence the explanations. "The only true science or episteme is thus a knowledge, not of the world, but of something quite different - of an "intelligible realm" of pure Forms or Ideas somehow apart from the [natural] world."⁸

Art, in Plato's view, is essentially imitation. In the third and the tenth books of The Republic, for instance, Plato refers to poets and painters as imitators. But for Plato who is concerned with building a good state, mere skill in imitation is not enough. The artists who do not have any capacity to discern whether what is imitated is good or bad is regarded by him as an irresponsible and therefore

⁶Ibid., p. 135.

⁷John H. Randall, Ibid., p. 190.

⁸Ibid., p. 190.

dangerous sort of person in a community where everything is to promote the growth of the citizens in virtue. For Plato, confusion in the class positions or in kind entails confusion in the state which is not desirable. Confusion is not a good thing even though it might have a place in the world of Ideas. In the area of art, "the simple style alone is to be admitted in the State; the attractions of the mixed style are acknowledged, but it appears to be excluded."⁹ In book three, The Republic, Plato had Socrates make a sarcastic statement against the pantomimic as follows:

And therefore when any one of these pantomimic gentlemen, who are so clever that they can imitate anything, comes to us, and makes a proposal to exhibit himself and his poetry, we will fall down and worship him as a sweet and holy and wonderful being; but we must also inform him that in our State poets such as he are not permitted to exist; the law will not allow them. And so when we have anointed him with myrrh, and set a garland of wool upon his head, we shall send him away to another city. For we mean to employ for our souls' health the rougher and severer poet or story-teller, who will imitate the style of the virtuous only, and will follow those models which we prescribed at first when we began the education of our soldiers.¹⁰

The paragraph is acknowledged as Plato's banishment of the artists. But here Plato is not concerned much with truth or falsity of the logical sense, but with politics or the growth of the State, "in which human nature is not twofold or manifold."¹¹ The artists in such a state,

⁹Plato, The Republic, translated by Benjamin Jowett, [New York: Airmont, 1968], p. 115.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 115.

¹¹Ibid., p. 115.

in Plato's view, have to follow what the "true philosophers" (- this means "those who are lovers of the vision of truth"¹² -) prescribe for them to do. Plato makes a distinction between "sight-loving" and "art-loving." The former pertains to the practical class whose mind is "incapable of seeing or loving absolute beauty."¹³ And the latter pertains to the "true philosophers" who logically seem to deserve a position as the authority of truth. Hence, the acceptable artists, for Plato, must be "lovers of the vision of truth", whose minds then have transcended the trait of "sight-loving" to a state where they are capable of "seeing or loving absolute beauty." "The vision of truth" in Plato's sense is then parallel with "absolute beauty." Thus, it appears clear here that for Plato truth is something transcendental. The artists must imitate only those things which are prescribed by "true philosophers" as "beauty" not "ugliness".¹⁴ And Plato seems to mean by "beauty" also "truth;" and absolute beauty is transcendental, conceivable exclusively to only "true philosophers" It might then be concluded from this notion or Plato's point of view that truth is exclusive.

For Plato, literature may be either true or false. In The Republic, Book two, Plato has Socrates, speaking with Adeimantus, preach that having organized the society, putting

¹²Ibid., p. 222.

¹³Ibid., p. 223.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 222.

the right man in the right place, the State must educate her citizens, programming or making them progress in the controlled direction. And the education has two divisions: "gymnastic for the body, and music for the soul." Following below is the dialogue between Socrates and Adeimantus concerning literature.

Shall we begin education with music, and go on to gymnastic afterwards?

By all means.

And when you speak of music, do you include literature or not.

I do.

And literature may be either true or false?

Yes.¹⁵

And Socrates concluded that if the writers of fiction or the poets were not telling what is true, they must be considered as committing a fault - "the fault of telling a lie, and, what is more, [is that they are, for Socrates, telling] a bad lie."¹⁶

However, Plato is not accurate in his application of the term 'true' or 'truth'. There are at least two senses of the meaning of the term employed prevalently in The Republic. One sense appears as a correspondence kind of truth. This may be termed as a logical truth. The other is the authoritative, or transcendental, or the absolute truth. And this second kind which is most prevalent may be termed the metaphysical truth, which has been briefly mentioned above.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 89.

And when a writer is found to have committed the alternative to the correspondence truth, he is also guilty of committing the alternative to the metaphysical truth. Homer and Hesiod and their tales are taken to illustrate Plato's thought or philosophy. To Plato, part of Homer and Hesiod's mythology or epics is a lie, and even a bad lie. For Plato, in the name of Socrates, reasons and draws a conclusion that "the good is not the cause of all things, but of the good only." And:

Then God, if he be good, is not the author of all things, as the many assert, but he is the cause of a few things only, and not of most things that occur to men. For few are the goods of human life, and many are the evils, and the good is to be attributed to God alone; of the evils the causes are to be sought elsewhere, and not in him.¹⁷

And then Plato employs the proposition "God is good and the author of good alone" as the maxim or postulate by which the rejection of part of Homer's and Hesiod's tales is articulated. For any statement telling the "ugly", or "evil" natures of the gods or God will be considered as not corresponds to what really is the case. That is - by the postulate, these statements of Homer and Hesiod asserting about "the wars in heaven, and of the plots or fightings of the gods against one another," must be held to be logically false, "for they are not true."¹⁸ God is the good, and the good is holy but "quarrelling is unholy."¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 90.

Since it is false, it is metaphysically a lie. And since poetry or literature is always "charming" and "attractive"²⁰ and since then 'she' may be powerful in spoiling the minds of the young men, the false statement must be regarded as "a bad lie." That is - "poetry being such as we have described is not to be regarded seriously as attaining to the [metaphysical] truth."²¹ And this means, since men or the readers are deceived or persuaded to believe falsely, "mankind are deprived of truth against their will."²² Consequently, "they [the lies] are stories not to be repeated in our State."²³ And "even if they [the ugly, evil deeds of the gods] were [accidentally] true, [the doings] ought certainly not to be lightly told to young and thoughtless persons; if possible, they had better be buried in silence."²⁴ Because "such a fiction [or accidental fact] is suicidal, ruinous, and impious."²⁵

²⁰Ibid., p. 395.

²¹Ibid., p. 396.

²²Ibid., p. 138.

²³Ibid., p. 89.

²⁴Ibid., p. 89.

²⁵Ibid., p. 93.

It might be inferred from the Republic that Plato discerns reality as comprises two natures: good and bad, or the good and the evil, or beauty and ugliness, or say, white and black. And since man lives in the midst of these alternative natures, and if his soul (whose image is "like the composite creations of ancient mythology, such as Chimera or Scylla or Cerberus,--- [a reality] in which two or more different natures [both black and white] are said to grow into one")²⁶ is not fostered by the milk of the good which is idealistically desirable, he is susceptible to falling a prey to the evil. Plato categorizes the human soul into different classes or natures, and sees that each has a determined duty. True philosophers seem to have the position closest to the good; therefore, they should be responsible in telling the others what the good or the beauty is. Concerned with the establishment of a healthy perfect State, the true philosophers or the rulers (Plato introduces the idea known as 'philosopher King.') ought to act like the steersman, guiding and controlling the State to perfection or absolute beauty or, in Plato's word, to the truth. What can be learned must be prescribed;" and we will desire mothers and nurses to tell the children the authorised ones only."²⁷

²⁶Ibid., p. 371.

²⁷Ibid., p. 88.

Plato's conception or his discernment of reality and his prescriptive principle of state administration obviously implies that Plato envisages that there are two kinds of education. This conception of education can also be found in Sunthorn Phu's Phra Abhai Mani: that is - "the education which gets one through and the education which does not get one through".²⁸ And this conception of reality and education somehow reveals or reflects Plato's conception of knowledge or of what knowledge is. Metaphorically speaking, Plato recognizes that that which will come to be termed as 'knowledge' has the same nature as that of the mushroom. There are two kinds of mushroom: one is eatable and useful; the other is poisonous and deadly. A question as to "what is the relevance of being useful to 'pure knowledge'" may perhaps rest on the answer to the question of the relation between the individual and his knowledge. It involves subjectivity. An individual may prefer death rather than eternity or immortality. However, according to Plato's metaphysics, Socrates preaches that it is wrong or guilty for an individual to wish death or, particularly, to commit suicide. The answer as to why it is guilty involves the concept of man. And the determination of its truth or falsity depends on whether we know the absolute truth of human life or not.

Logically, here Plato is consistent in his view, for Socrates preaches that : "There is a doctrine whispered in secret that man is a prisoner who has no right to open the door

²⁸ Montri Umavijani, "The World of Phra Abhai Mani", in Bangkok Post, [Sunday, 1 July, 1984], Bangkok.

and run away."²⁹ He compares man to a cattle of the gods. This is somewhat in accordance with the Christian belief. With the vision of man thus conceived, Plato is warranted logically when he concludes that what is desirable knowledge must be useful. Plato preaches about the immortality of the soul, therefore, man should head towards immortality. At any rate, a question might be raised as to what is meant by "the education which gets one through" or "through what that one has to get?" Deductibly, an auster christian may answer. "through the imprisonment." And as for Plato, it is clear that the answer will be that the individual should be edified morally and get "through ignorance" and that the life of the State should proceed to perfection, or absolute beauty or to the truth, the ideal vision which can be seen or recognized in the human mind through the capacity of reasoning and the innate ideas.

Plato's "the truth" of the above sense is understandable or conceivable with, or under the mutual light of, a few modifiers. It is not logical truth. The truth Plato seems to be pointing to is somehow describable with a cluster of these adjectives: ethical, moral, beautiful, vital, transcendental, metaphysical, prescriptive and, importantly, idealistic. The proof of its validity or truthfulness involves a process of actualization or realization. This *prima facie* seems dogmatic or arbitrary; but

²⁹ Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy,
[London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1980], p. 148.

to say it is not true is equally a paradox, since Plato calls such quality or the ideal vision conceivable in the human mind "the truth". And it is clear that the truth here is not the alternative to falsity; but the opposite to 'the lie'.

Concerned with the problem of truth and knowledge, Plato introduces the term "the idea of good". According to Plato, truth is only known when illuminated by the idea of good, as things will be seen clearly only when the sun shines upon them. The idea of good has the position or some characteristic like the sun. "The sun is not sight, but the author of sight who is recognised by sight".³⁰ The idea of good "is the author of science and truth, and yet surpasses them in beauty."³¹ And, in the similar manner as the sun is the cause of generation, the idea of good or "the good may be said to be not only the author of knowledge to all things known, but of their being and essence, and yet the good is not essence, but far exceeds essence in dignity and power".³² The paragraph quoted below is Socrates' introduction and explication of the term to Glaucon:

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

³⁰Plato, The Republic, Ibid., p. 264.

³¹Ibid., p. 265.

³²Ibid., pp. 265 - 266.

Now, that which imparts truth to the known and the power of knowing to the knower is what I would have you term the idea of good, and this you will deem to be the cause of science, and of truth in so far as the later becomes the subject of knowledge; beautiful, too, as are both truth and knowledge, you will be right in esteeming this other nature as more beautiful than either; and, as in the previous instance, light and sight may be truly said to be like the sun, and yet not to be the sun, so in this other sphere, science and truth may be deemed to be like the good, but not the good; the good has a place of honour yet higher.³³

This somehow reveals Plato's theology. The achievement of attaining to truth and obtaining knowledge is possible through 'the good.' For the good is the author of truth and knowledge. Hence, truth, for Plato, has degrees.³⁴ In conclusion, the relation of truth, knowledge and the good thus conceived, certainly a theologian will not hesitate to identify 'the good' with God, or at least the concept 'the good' with the concept 'God.' And, according to Plato, the capacity to apprehend the (idealistic) truth depends on the nature or the quality of the individual mind. And among those who are capable of "seeing and loving the vision of the truth", there are degrees of apprehension.

³³Ibid., p. 265.

³⁴Ibid., p. 267.

In truth, Plato does not deny the whole art or the artists all together. It is Plato's belief that "literature is music for the soul." Man can find truth in literature. And literature can be either true or false. But since nature in Plato's envisagement is both (and either) white and black, and since human soul is susceptible to choosing the black course of development, the charming evil music is considered dangerous. For the soul is fundamentally immortal and somehow connected with the good, the opposite of the evil. Therefore, in Plato's view, the art or artist whose work appears to nurture the evil spirit should be banished. Or, "should a dramatic poet attempt to visit the ideal state he would be politely escorted to the border."³⁵ Plato suggests a censorship of the writers of fiction,³⁶ for he recognizes their propagandistic power, and, on the ground that the writers must tell truths and that what is true and tellable is not harmful to the soul. That is - Plato banishes only those whom he considers as lying artists or "lying poets."³⁷

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

³⁵ Iris Murdoch, The Fire and The Sun, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978], p. 1.

³⁶ Plato, The Republic., Ibid., p. 88.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 96.

As a matter of fact, arts, particularly the ancient arts, is closely connected with religion. Art is always employed to serve the purpose of religion. If nature is possibly black or white, something like black religion must be undesirable to Plato who cherishes the truth of the immortality of the soul. Iris Murdoch, who calls Plato "the authoritarian moralist", in her book The Fire and The Sun, a dissertation on why Plato banished the artists, in a contemplation on art, writes:

Art is dangerous chiefly because it apes the spiritual and subtly disguises and trivializes it. Artists play irresponsibly with religious imagery which, if it must exist, should be critically controlled by the internal, or external, authority of reason....The artist cannot represent or celebrate the good, but only what is daemonic and fantastic and extreme; whereas truth is quiet and sober and confined.³⁸

Eventually, it can be concluded that Plato denies the artists on the ground of his theory of morality. Looked from this ground, art can be assessed as 'useful' or 'destructive.' Stephen D. Ross, dwelling on the question of utility of art, writes: "If art is but a means to certain human ends, to be judged by consequences and influences, it is a practical, not an aesthetic object. Its value lies in what it does not in what it is."³⁹ With the light of this version, it can be seen that

³⁸Iris Murdoch, The Fire and The Sun, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978], p. 65.

³⁹Stephen David Ross, A Theory of Art, [Albany: State University of New York, 1982], p. 38.

Plato does not deny art in virtue of its aesthetic nature, but in respect to its practicality. For Plato, art must not lie, morally.

Actually, Plato does not deny art totally. He even enjoys the aesthetic nature of art. His own writing is in some degree poetical. In truth, when he denies art it means also that he is manifesting his respect for the powers of art. He states this attitude clearly in the Republic, book ten.

Notwithstanding this, let us assure our sweet friend and sister arts of imitation that if she will only prove her title to exist in a well-ordered State we shall be delighted to receive her - we are very conscious of her charms; but we may not on that account betray the truth. --- [And] ---

And we may further grant to those of her defenders who are lovers of poetry and yet not poets the permission to speak in prose on her behalf: let them show not only that she is pleasant but also useful to States and to human life, and we will listen in a kindly spirit.⁴⁰

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

⁴⁰ Plato, The Republic, Ibid., p. 395.

3.2 Aristotle's theory of art as "imitation".

According to Aristotle, art is imitation. Documentally, Aristotle was the first philosopher in the western history of ideas who made an intensive, direct study in aesthetics. His living work on the subject is Poetics. In this work, he professes at the outset that he "proposed to treat of Poetry in itself and of its various kinds." "Epic poetry", writes Aristotle, "and Tragedy, Comedy also and Dithyrambic poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation."⁴¹

The term "poetry" used by Aristotle has a significance different from the present conception. Sir David Ross made a study and concluded that Aristotle employed the term 'poetry' to embrace the following divisions: - dancing, prose-imitation (mimes, Socratic dialogues), elegies, epics, instrumental music, lyrics, tragedy, and comedy.⁴² That is all these divisions are 'various kinds' of what Aristotle terms as 'poetry.' The Aristotelian term 'poetry' signifies the Aristotelian genus of literature, historically. And the Aristotelian ~~genre~~ of

genre

⁴¹ Aristotle, Poetics, an abridged version in Interpreting Literature, edited by K.L. Knickerbocker and H. Willard Reninger, [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979], p. 680.

⁴² Sir David Ross, Aristotle, London: Methen, 1966 , p. 277.

literature is far different from that of the modern day. This is a matter of historical consciousness and mentality. For Aristotle, "what distinguishes poetry from prose is not metre but its being an 'imitation'."⁴³ Then it follows that poets are imitators. And that those who write in 'blank verse' are poets if their writings are imitation*. However, for Aristotle, whether or not literature means more than 'poetry' is unclear. It is certain only that he means by 'poetry' what the modern men may conceive of as 'literature'; and that literarists are those who 'imitate' something or those who study the imitations.

So, an understanding of what Aristotle means by 'imitation' or 'mimesis' will give rise to an understanding of his view of literature. As already quoted above that Aristotle asserts that all species of poetry are "modes of imitation", these modes of imitation differ "from one another in three respects - the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct."⁴⁴ And "the imitation is produced by rhythm, language, or 'harmony', either singly or combined."⁴⁵ Aristotle theorizes to explain the phenomenon of

⁴³Ibid., p. 277.

⁴⁴Aristotle, Poetics, Ibid., p. 680.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 680.

* As to why 'blank verse' is accepted as poetry (which is a question raised in Thai literary circle) , this may be answered by tracing back to Aristotle's theory of poetry.

poetry that it springs from two causes, each of them lying deep in man's nature.

"First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creature, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. --- Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature. Next, there is the instinct for "harmony" and rhythm, metres being manifestly sections of rhythm. Persons, therefore, starting with this natural gift developed by degrees their special aptitudes, till their rude improvisations gave birth to Poetry."⁴⁶

Evidently, Aristotle points out that the origin of poetry is what we conceive of as 'instinct'. In the work under discussion, he never explains what 'instinct' is. It seems to be the last resort. He tells only that man has two kinds of artistic instinct: the instinct to imitate whatever will give him pleasure in doing so; and the instinct for harmony. Therefore, to draw a conclusion, Aristotle's theory of aesthetics implies that nature is purposive: that man's artistic instinct is a 'natural gift' which is meant for pleasure and harmony. Unlike his master Plato, Aristotle does not resort to the theological realm of nature, but his biological realism resides within the scope of Plato's realism.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 680 - 681.

According to Ross, Aristotle does not tell what imitation is. And this is the question to be answered in order that one can understand his theory of aesthetics. Since "what distinguishes poetry from prose is not metre but its being an 'imitation'," Ross then noted that "fictitious sketches of character and manners like the mimes are poetry though they are unmetrical, and Empedocles* is not a poet though he writes in metre."⁴⁷ And apparently, here, if it is true that Aristotle employs the term 'poetry' to mean also 'literature', then it follows that any piece of writing which is an instance of 'prose' is not 'literature'. And what will fall under the term 'literature' must be an instance of imitation. It must be noticed that 'prose' is not the dichotomical alternative of 'verse'. Clearly, prose means, at least, that which is not imitation. Whether or not 'verse' is identical with 'poetry' or 'literature' is unclear. And if 'verse' is identical with 'poetry', then 'verse' is imitation, and the dichotomical alternative term of 'prose'. And that if the term 'literature' embraces both verse and prose,

⁴⁷ Sir David Ross, *Ibid.*, p. 277.

* The Penguin Companion to Literature records Empedocles (493 - 433 B.C.) as "a key-figure in the development of Greek philosophy before Socrates." "He was a statesman, philosopher and mystic." He composed a few works in philosophy, "of which too little survived." One of his interest is rhetoric. "Aristotle had a high regard for him as a thinker, and Lucretius saw in him a forerunner as a scientific poet."

then it means literature covers both work which is imitation and that which is not imitation. However, although it is not stated exactly, Aristotle seems to mean by the word 'poetry' 'literature'. There are good poetry and bad poetry. Homer, for example, is a good poet, contrarily to that of Plato's view. For Aristotle's outlook is aesthetical, as Plato's is practical and idealistic. At any rate, for Aristotle, the criterion of what is poetry is imitation.

In his study, Ross noticed that Aristotle takes over the word imitation from Plato as part of the stock-in-trade of literary criticism. For Plato, he wrote, art is the imitation of sensible things by means of a copy at a lower level of reality. The artist never imitates reality directly; he imitates sensible things, which are but the faint shadows of reality. "Aristotle does not explicitly controvert this view, but he supplies materials for its correction. What art imitates is 'characters and emotions and actions' - not the sensible world, but the world of man's mind."⁴⁸ Of all the poetic divisions, the most frequently exposed in Poetics is Tragedy. And the most important of all that constitute a good tragedy is the structure of the incidents. "For Tragedy", writes Aristotle, "is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 278.

quality."⁴⁹ Thus, what Aristotle means by imitation is not the representation of the particular thing or the individual or the character: character comes in as subsidiary to the actions." Now if we take actions as the forms or the representations of ideas, then the dramatic action is the imitation of ideas which are not particular things. Hence, it may be concluded that "poetry does not aim at reproducing an individual thing, but at giving a new embodiment to a universal truth."⁵⁰

However, this assertion may seem to smack highly of determinism (since for Aristotle, the universal is necessary) by which the word imitation will lose its conventional meaning. Since the action of the poet composing a play is also determined, he can not be said to imitate anything-creatively and actively at all. This view somehow makes the works of art seem to be the fruit of passive activities. It sounds like saying "art is an activity done through the mode or process of passivity" which implies that a machine can 'create' or indeed 'produce' work of art. Thus, art will lose its 'creative' and 'active' magnificence. Curt John Ducasse, noticing this problem, noted:

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

⁴⁹Aristotle, *Poetics*, *Ibid.*, p. 682

⁵⁰Sir David Ross, *Ibid.*, p. 278.

The term 'mimetic impulse' [the 'imitative instinct' - according to the text quoted in this thesis] is then rather ambiguous. It may be said, however, that in its rather vague commoner acceptance, the 'tendency to imitate' is a primarily passive sort of thing, whereas in art the active, originative aspect is prominent.⁵¹

The problem, however, is due to how one understands the concept 'mimesis', or exactly stated, 'Aristotelean mimesis'. The question will be discussed later in this section.

And yet the claim may result in even a subtler problem as to what is a universal truth in respect of the whole context of human action historically observed, with the possibility of the individuals being diverse in their courses of action. Against this claim, one can raise such a question as "Is it necessary that for any individual if he falls in the same case as Oedipus, after learning the truth, he will blind and exile himself - or say, punish himself? One can imagine convincingly an Oedipus marrying another woman and later defeating another sphinx. In the present human knowledge, there is no universal law which forbids that one can not imagine such a thing, or which says that such an imagination is false or not universal. From what history has recorded, the two alternatives are both possible: that a man finding the truth that he is guilty of a devilish crime will punish himself, or that "he" or that "another man" will not punish himself.

⁵¹Curt John Ducasse, The Philosophy of Art, [New York: Dover Publications, 1966] pp. 76 - 77.

For the sake of a clearer understanding, this may be expressed in the language of the logical symbol, to overcome the vagueness of the ordinary natural language. Given that G ___ means ___ finds himself guilty, and that P ___ means ___ will punish himself, from the statement above we have to make a distinction between $(x)(Gx \supset Px)$ and $(x) Gx \sim Px$. What is claimed as the 'state-of-affair' recognized in history is: The two alternatives are both possible, that is: ___ the statement above might be interpreted thus:

$$(x) (Gx \supset Px) \vee (Gx \sim Px) \vee (\exists x)(Gx \sim Px)$$

However, the question is, historically how one understands the proposition $(Gx \supset Px) \vee (Gx \sim Px)$. Historically, what does it mean to say that "Socrates who had drunk the hemlock might not have drunk the hemlock (provided that the poison was hemlock and no doubt about it)"? History (the factual, perceptible or empirical knowledge) never tells us this. And historians can not agree with such an assertion that 'man really knows nothing at all but for the state-of-affair perceptible at the present moment' which is nevertheless doubtable as is pointed by skeptics. What is posited as true logically and factually is that (if) Socrates 'drank' the hemlock, (then) and 'he' (the individual, unique Socrates) must never 'did not drink' it. In 'history', what does it mean by the statement 'There is a possibility that Socrates may not drink it'.? It will makes sense only in the case if a historian will put into his account some kind of statements like: "If it had been for the Sophists ('another man' or indeed, 'another category' of man) they would

not have drunk the poison as what Socrates did." This illustration points out that, assumably, the difficulty lies in 'a reality' or in 'the poverty' that both history and logic can not afford to distinguish or to tell whether it is 'he' or 'another man' who will not punish himself. Therefore, conventionally, the statement in question is always understood in the following manner:

$$(x) (Gx \supset Px) \vee (\exists x) (Gx \wedge \sim Px)$$

But since Aristotle claims that his truth is universal; hence, Aristotle may be susceptible to being viewed to commit an act of conversion, for the historical, existential alternative will be converted — the symbolization will be:

$$(x) (Gx \supset Px) \vee (y) (Gy \supset \sim Py) \vee (\exists y) (Gy \wedge \sim Py)$$

which demands for the explanation of the metaphysical mystery of the y entry or existence as well as it causes misery and alienation.

If Aristotle's claim that the Oedipus Case manifests the universal truth is right, then y is some foreign entity or agent outside or not included in Aristotle's universe. Or, that some people who, after finding themselves guilty, do not punish themselves will be excluded from the universe. Thus, Aristotle will have to encounter the difficulty of the question as to what he means by the word "universe." Apparently, his assertion seems to be normative rather than descriptive. His truth is in the category of truth by definition rather than truth about the natural world. It is tantamount to saying "If an Oedipus is a good man, he will punish himself, and if he does not punish

himself, he is not a good man." However, philosophers at the present can not tell that Aristotle is right or wrong. The case of normative truth and descriptive truth is a very subtle problem in human knowledge.

In truth, Aristotle himself is aware of the problem. In chapter nine of the Poetics he makes a famous distinction between the function of the poet and that of the historian. Aristotle writes thus:

...it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen, ...what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with metre no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages.⁵²...

What comes to the light in this passage is "the law of probability or necessity" which Aristotle takes to underly the universal truth in the works of art. Another constitution by which one can understand Aristotle's dramatic, universal truth is that one must recognize Aristotle's concept of man. Although

⁵²Aristotle, Poetics, Ibid., p. 633.

Aristotle does not speak of a particular, individual man, he speaks of certain, individual types of man: ... "By universal I mean how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity." One has to recognize the distinction between singularity and individuality. Therefore, to understand Aristotle by virtue of the symbolic logic depicted above, we have to add up a denotation of class in our reference or reasoning. Hence, as an illustration, given that A ... means ... is member of the class of man which has the Socratic spirit, Aristotle's version of dramatic, universal truth must be understood thus: $(x) (Ax \supset (Gx \supset Px))$ which reads "For any member of the class of man which has the Socratic spirit if he finds himself guilty, he will punish himself."

For the sake of a more complete interpretation of Aristotle's assertion which also stresses on the significance of the 'occasion' or situation or condition which somehow guides or moulds man's action, given that O ... means ... is in the Oedipus condition, then, Aristotle's version may be written in the language of the logical symbol as follows:

$$(x) ((Ax.Ox) \supset (Gx \supset Px))$$

which reads: ("With the law of probability or necessity concerning the course of life which consists in actions) for any member of the class of man which has the Socratic spirit who falls in the Oedipus condition, if he finds himself guilty (of such a devilish crime), he will punish himself (in such a painful, tragic way)".

With this more precise assertion, we can rule out the historical claim of the alternative possibility. In another word, Aristotle will say that the imagined man who does not punish himself does not belong to the class of Oedipus. The pivotal concept which is the key to the solution of this problem is the theory of man, which, however, Aristotle does not labour to explain.

The distinctive point in his theory of aesthetics, concerning the problem of truth and human knowledge, is that the poetic truth is not the same characteristic as the materialistically historical truth. Aristotle connects the concept of poetic truth to actions rather than to the dramatic characters. Aristotle argues that the course of human action has the characteristic of universality: it flows conformingly to the law of probability or necessity. That is, human action is predictable. Truth in Christianity is connected with spirituality, and spirituality manifests its spiritual-self-being or its 'character' through the body-person's actions. For an instance, we can judge a man in terms of good or bad and right or wrong by virtue of his overt actions. We don't judge spiritual badness or goodness by relying on the appearance of the physical-body-object-person, but by relying on or by virtue of his actions, provided that he acts honestly or freely or out of his 'true character'. The word 'character' seems to belong to the realm of spirituality rather than that of physicality or objectivity. In Buddhism and in Hinduism action is 'karma'.

Consequently, Aristotelian poetic, universal truth may be in the same family with the Christian spiritual truth and Buddhist noble truth as well as with the Divine truth in Hinduism. It appears clearly here that the consideration of truth in poetry, or say, in literature gives rise to the recognition of the connection between art and religion. This somehow confirms the claim that art is mysticism, and the arts are phases of a species of mysticism. Or, at least, art and mysticism are interconnected.

The concept of 'mimesis' or 'imitation' needs to be resolved. The notion of art as imitation causes at least a problem in aesthetics. Since logically if art is imitation, then art-works are not creative in the ordinary sense. Yet factually art-works are found to be creative. For example, a portrait may be found or perceived to be more beautiful than a photograph of the same object. Aristotle himself speaks of this creative aspect of art when he writes: "Tragedy is an imitation of persons who are above the common level, the example of good portrait - painters should be followed. They, while reproducing the distinctive form of the original, makes a likeness which is true to life and yet more beautiful."⁵³ The phrase 'and yet more beautiful' is an example of the meaning of the word 'creative' by the above sense. This problem arises from the misconception of the Greek word 'mimesis' which is generally translated to the

⁵³Aristotle, *Poetics*, Ibid., p. 635.

English word 'imitation'. Concerned with the problem of the concept, Jan Bruck writes: "Unfortunately, Aristotle did not define the term and used it also in a non-aesthetic sense; but from etymological research and contextual evidence one can deduce that 'mimesis' is best translated as 'representation' (rather than 'imitation')." ⁵⁴ He then argues that: "Mimesis does indeed imply that art is oriented towards reality; but that does not mean that all art is 'realistic'." In his thesis, he points that it is a mistake in the western literary history to identify 'mimesis' with 'realism'. According to Bruck, Aristotle does not use the word in the meaning as Plato's. "Against Plato, Aristotle maintains that artists must have knowledge of reality and that their representations are not necessarily illusory or false, but should be based on what is possible and probable." ⁵⁵ He argues that: "Poetic mimesis was judged not in terms of an abstract relationship of the 'picture' to 'reality' but in terms of the appropriateness of theme and style to the particular subject-matter." ⁵⁶

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

⁵⁴ Jan Bruck, "From Aristotelean Mimesis of 'Bourgeois' Realism," in *Poetics* 11, (1982) [Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company] p. 190.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

For the solution of the problem of the concept in respect as a notion of art, Stephen David Ross may have provided the best version. He clarifies that the conception of imitation inherent in Aristotle's theory of art as 'techne' does not mean that art is the "imitation of ideal nor the representation of physical objects, but the realization of a plan, conformation to a model."⁵⁷ Conceived in this sense, art can retain its creative aspect as a significant constituent. Resemblance and invention are compatible in art, for art is "purposive and constructs works according to plan...

but plans neither distinguishable from their works nor antecedent to their arising. ...A work of art redefines the standards according to which other works are to be judged."⁵⁸

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

⁵⁷Stephen David Ross, A Theory of Art, [Albany: State University of New York, 1982] p. 25.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 26.

3.3 Hume's View of Poets.

Poets, in Hume's eyes, are liars, and lying is their profession. And in Hume's conception there is no truth in lying. Hume does not theorize on aesthetics or literature. He only mentions carelessly a few lines in the manner of making an allusion. But the remark is well-known and often referred to among literarists. Apparently, there are two problems to be discussed here:

1. The problem of the meaning of the words 'liar' or 'lying' and the nature of 'lying'.
2. The problem of 'truth' in literature in connection with Hume's view of poets.

Inevitably, due to the characteristic of the assertion itself and due to Hume's neglect of the clarification of his terms and assertions, the analysis will be critical.

Hume's distinguished work in philosophy is A Treatise of Human Nature. In section ten of this Treatise, while discussing under the topic 'Of the influence of belief', Hume alludes to poets (or the poets of an before his time) as "those who have acquired a habit of lying." Since belief is very closely connected with truth; or, in other words, the concept of 'belief' always associates with the concept of 'truth', we believe in something because we think it is true. And since for Hume, any ideas not being attended with belief will make no 'impression' upon the mind; hence, poets, in Hume's viewpoint, in their attempt to arouse belief or impress their ideas upon

the minds of the readers have to acquire the art of making belief via appealing to truth. Hume says:

It is certain we cannot take pleasure in any discourse, where our judgment gives no assent to those images which are presented to our fancy. The conversation of those, who have acquired a habit of lying, though in affairs of no moment, never gives any satisfaction; and that because those ideas they present to us, not being attended with belief, make no impression upon the mind. Poets themselves, though liars by profession, always endeavour to give an air of truth to their performances, however ingenious, will never be able to afford much pleasure.⁵⁹

Literature, therefore, according to Hume's viewpoint, is a species of deception and falsehood, appearing in the truth-appealing mask. And its aim is merely pleasure, it is meant only to produce pleasure.

It can be inferred from Hume's reasoning that truth (or the idea of truth) is not the ultimate subject or the core of the literary works. Poets, in their investigation into (what Hume and the other beings of the same species call) 'nature' and their contemplation upon (what is seemingly referred to by the concept) 'reality', do not seek truth as their goal. They just adopt aspects of what whose significance may fall in the embrace

⁵⁹David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge, [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967], pp. 120 - 121.

of the meaning of the idea "truth". And the adoption of 'an air of truth' is practised only under the purpose (or passion) to win flavour in the readers, just in the same manner as cooks put spice in their cookings or as women put colour on their lips and faces to attract attention, or, in Hume's word, to make the 'impression of her' (in the minds of those who see her) stronger. The magnificence of truth (or what is perceived in the mind in terms of the presentation of the concept truth') is similar to that of a fashion of dressing. A story when dressed in the clothes of truth will be attended with belief; and thus the 'ideas' presented in the story will receive more force and vivacity (from the mind) and become 'impressions'. What comes to be termed as 'truth' in poetic works functions only as the spice does in the cooking. In other words, truth or 'an air of truth' which poets breathe into their works is meant only for entertaining. Following the lines quoted above, Hume writes: "In short, we may observe, that even when ideas have no manner of influence on the will and passions, truth and reality are still requisite, in order to make them entertaining to the imagination."⁶⁰

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 121.

In Hume's view, truth or an air of truth which seems to appear pervasive and perceptible in poetry or literary works has no epistemic significance. Truth is required only because it is recognized to have a quality by which belief is stimulated. And that; ideas when flowing in an air of truth will at least be entertaining to the imagination. In short, what is meant by the word 'truth' in Hume's view is that which functions as a bridge between the ideas and the mind. Conceiving the notion 'truth' in this perspective, Hume writes:

...if we compare together all the phenomena that occur on this head, we shall find, that truth, however necessary it may seem in all works of genius, has no other effect than to procure an easy reception for the ideas, and to make the mind acquiesce in them with satisfaction, or at least without reluctance.⁶¹

In another word, truth in this conception seems to mean the same as the word 'plausibility'. Truth helps in bringing about the agreement between the mind and the ideas.

However, Hume does not give a clear meaning of the word 'truth' he uses when the concept is considered in connection with the composition of literature. Hume, unlike the later empiricists, e.g. the logical positivists, never notices the necessity to explicate his term as to what he means when he uses the word truth. And there are a bundle of words applied in his

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 121.

system of reasoning which might be termed in his own words as 'a species of reasonings' whose meanings he does not make clear. This recognition somehow suggests a fact that it might be also Hume's 'system of meanings' which is a stimulation to Wittgenstein's revolution. H.H. Price in his paper "The Permanent Significance of Hume's Philosophy" remarked that "Hume was perhaps the cleverest man who ever used the idea-terminology, but even he cannot escape its baneful influence."⁶² Price found that Hume confuses psychology with philosophy. Price noted as follows:

There are places where he quite explicitly identifies ideas with mental images. But the doctrine that all mental images are derived from impressions, [Since Hume's empiricist programme, his formulated dictum, is "All ideas are derived from impressions.", or, which philosophy historians reformulated as "All knowledge is derived from experience.."] whether it is true or false, is not of the faintest philosophical interest. It is a psychological doctrine, not a philosophical one, and it has nothing whatever to do with empiricism. Empiricism is a theory about concepts, not about images.⁶³

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

⁶²H.H. Price, "The Permanent Significance of Hume's Philosophy, in Human Understanding, edited by Alexander Sesonsko and Noel Fleming, [Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1966] p. 5.

⁶³Ibid., p. 6.

Agreeing to Price's remark, Antony Flew in his study on Hume noticed that Hume pays no austere attention to semantics or the philosophical problem concerning what is termed as 'meaning' or 'word'. Flew noted and pointed out the following.

Unlike such of his classical predecessors as Plato or Hobbes or Locke or Berkeley, Hume seems himself to have had little interest in or respect for any questions which he thought of as semantic. ...The iceberg of his own assumptions about language therefore make little show above surface. ...[And] Hume as such always must be the supreme authority on Hume.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, an understanding of Hume's conception of truth must be made so as to have a clear conception of the word 'liar'. Hume is an austere empiricist and also ingenious sceptic. And his empiricism is of a different camp from that of Locke and Berkeley. Although they share a common view that man's knowledge (or belief or opinion - the terms which the sceptic Hume prefers) grows out of experience, they hold different grounds. For Berkeley, man learns from experience but God is the authority of the experience. For Locke, man is designed by God to possess a blank mind; therefore, what he knows is based entirely on his experience. Concerning language, according to Locke (1632-1704), "God designed man to be a social creature, and therefore equipped him with the capacity 'to frame articulate sounds, which we call

⁶⁴ Antony Flew, "Private Images and Public Language", in Human Understanding, Ibid., p. 49.

words."⁶⁵ Language and public communication is a necessity which is hence pre-realized by the Creator. As for the concept or idea of 'truth', for Berkeley, truth, therefore, in a certain respect, is connected to the authority of experience. As for Locke, although he perceives that "truth is hard to ascertain, and that a rational man will hold his opinions with some measure of doubt," he still maintains his strong faith in 'reason', and remains "a devout believer in Christianity who accepts revelations as a source of knowledge."⁶⁶ According to Locke, revelation is acceptable as containing truth but "revelation must be judged by reason."⁶⁷ Conclusively, Locke's empiricism resorts to and holds reason to be the supreme criterion or authority of truth, whereas that of Berkeley's is God.

Hume, or Hume's scepticism, denies all these. For Hume, "reason is nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls [minds] which carries us along a certain train of ideas, and endows them with particular qualities, according to their particular situations and relations."⁶⁸ Reason is blind and passive and cannot even distinguish three kinds of

⁶⁶ Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy, [London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1980], p. 586.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 587.

⁶⁸ David Hume, Ibid., p. 179.

impressions.⁶⁹ (Hume distinguishes three kinds of impressions and asserts that the difference is founded on the imagination. "As far as the senses are judges," Hume writes, "all perceptions are the same in the manner of their existence." This is an important point concerning the problem as to 'what is the imagination.')

In the conclusion of book one of his *Treatise*, he points out that all philosophers seem to worship reason, but "when I look abroad, I foresee on every side, dispute, contradiction, anger, calumny and detraction."⁷⁰ If reason is the real key to truth and knowledge, all philosophers should have reached the same solution; or at least, there should be no obvious contradiction between the consequences of their reasonings. In his contemplation, he finds that if it is established that "no refined or elaborate reasoning is ever to be received," then he cannot claim to know anything, since "this means you cut off entirely all science and philosophy." But if he accepts the established maxim, it also means that he proceeds "upon one singular quality of the imagination, and by a parity of reason must embrace all of them: And you expressly contradict yourself ..." Hume, then, concludes that "We have, therefore, no choice left but between a false reason and none at all."⁷¹ And when we

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 192.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 265.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 268.

pass from one belief to another, this act of conversion is "not determined by reason, but by custom or a principle of association." Contrary to Locke, Hume, following the chains of his reasonings, thus derives at a Sophistic conclusion which is a famous statement and popularly quoted as 'Reason is the slave of passions'. "Reason is," Hume says, "and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."⁷² Ilham Dilman in his study of the relation between "Reason, Passion and the Will" gives a pretty summary explication of Hume's account of reason when he writes:

Reason is an instrument, like a torch which a traveller with a set destination uses to make his way in the dark. It can never give him a destination or change his direction independently of his passions. It has, therefore, to serve and obey them, and can do nothing else.⁷³

Thus; implicitly, Hume's statement that 'reason is the slave of the passions' suggests or, can be inferred further that the very statement itself is derived at by the determination of the passions (or, properly stated, Hume's passions) . Since it must be the help or support of reason by which Hume manages to reach the conclusion, the statement. For the

⁷²Ibid., p. 415.

⁷³Ilham Dilman, "Reason, Passion and the Will", in Philosophy: The Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy, (January, 1934) Vol. 59, p. 187.

statement testifies that reason does not bring or guide Hume to the conclusion, but only serves him along the steps. And that such an idea of the statement 'reason is the slave of passions' must arise out of a commitment of an act of inference or reasoning. For (if Hume did not write the signs with the meanings perceptible and understandable to the other people) we could find nothing whatever we might hold as the 'cause' of the perceptions which give a naive, trustworthy testimony that 'reason is the slave of passion'. Perceptions perse (without an act of commitment which modern philosophers term 'interpretation') is naive, fair, trustworthy, naked and indifferent or impartial and theory-free, and can serve only as a raw material for the interpretation or understanding. It is meant to point out here that Hume, indeed, interprets his perceptions (which is assumed or believed to represent the natural worlds - both physical and mental) through 'a species of reasonings' (which is his own term), so that he derives ~~at~~ the conclusion, the statement in question. And that the act of this derivation, according to the statement itself, is already determined by the passions. Otherwise (if Hume does not admit that the derivation of the statement arises through an act of commitment of reasoning which is submitted to the passions), Hume must explain it more clearly as to what he means by the word "resolve" when he writes the first sentence of his Treatise thus: "All perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS."⁷⁴

⁷⁴David Hume, *Ibid.*, p. 1.

According to Hume, reason seems to be a faculty in a system of mechanism, which is governed by the passions, and whose function is to co-operate with the imagination in manipulating upon the perceptions in the mind, correlating and associating the impressions and ideas. In short, if Hume is right in his opinion on this point, the statement, then, is an act of the manifestation of the passions itself. This fact somehow suggests that the passions is determined by itself to manifest itself. This discovery somehow sheds light to an idealist doctrine that nature will manifest herself. And the absurd point which is implicit in the statement is: if Hume's statement that 'reason is the slave of the passions' is true, this means that, if there is such a thing as truth, it is not reason which brings Hume to truth, (or, at least as is the case, to the true statement) but the passions. Hume's rhetoric and his less interest in semantics caused a considerable difficulty. "Reason", Hume later writes, "is the discovery of truth or falsehood."⁷⁵ It will be even more absurd if we substitute 'the discovery of truth or falsehood' for 'reason' in the statement 'reason is the slave of the passions.' At this consideration arises the question as to what Hume means by the metaphor 'the slave'. As what Antony Flew has pointed out, "The iceberg of his own assumptions about language therefore make little show above the surface."

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 458.

Although a sceptic, Hume does speak about truth. "Truth is of two kinds", Hume writes, "consisting either in the discovery of the proportions of ideas, considered as such, or in the conformity of our ideas or objects to their real existence."⁷⁶ The former kind is what is understood today as the mathematical truth. The later is the correspondence kind of truth. Hume, notwithstanding, does not see it important to give examples of propositions of truth. Hume admits that there are statements which can be judged as certainly true, but as a sceptic he sees no significant or epistemic point in this discovery of truth, for example, the truth discovered by mathematicians. And that the activities of mathematicians, for examples, results in nothing, but for the pleasure of gratifying their passions. Hume writes:

Were they convinced, that their discoveries were of no consequence, they would entirely lose all relish for their studies, and that though the consequences be entirely indifferent to them; which seems to be a contradiction.⁷⁷

As a matter of fact, Hume is quite wrong on this point. It is obvious that the discoveries in mathematics have rendered a great progress in science. And that scientist-mathematicians are labouring with painstaking effort to discover new truths, not just merely because they find their private pleasure in the

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 446.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 450.

work, but because they have recognized that they have found the key to uncover the mystery of the universe.⁷⁸ Instrumentalists, themselves, who hold the view that scientists are not discovering any truth about the world are encountering a difficulty of the question as to why, then, science is succeeding in making predictions concerning the phenomena of the natural world.⁷⁹

Hume never bothers to express it clearly in regard to by what criterion he terms poets as liars. However, from the manner of his expression of the statement where the words 'liars' and 'poets' occur, he seems to assert that 'truth' is the criterion. But, then, Hume is not consistent in his thoughts or opinions; since in the conclusion of book one of his Treatise, his scepticism preaches that we cannot hope for a true, but only a satisfactory set of opinions. Hume writes as follows:

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

⁷⁸ Frank Ross, New Worlds in Science, [New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Co., 1960], p. 91.

⁷⁹ Mark Tamthai, quoted from his lecture in the course "Philosophy of Science."

⁸⁰ This doctrine may be respected as the anticipation of Karl Popper's Falsification Theory.

While a warm imagination is allowed to enter into philosophy, and hypotheses embraced merely for being specious and agreeable, we can never have any steady principles, nor any sentiments, which will suit with common practice and experience. But were these hypotheses once removed, we might hope to establish a system or set of opinions, which if not true (for that, perhaps, is too much to be hoped for) might at least be satisfactory to the human mind, and might stand the test of the most critical examination.⁸⁰

Moreover, previous to this doctrine, Hume seems to assert in the same section that there is no criterion of truth, except to be found in feeling. He asks: "Can I be sure, that in leaving all established opinions I am following truth; and by what criterion shall I distinguish her, even if fortune should at last guide me on her foot-steps?"⁸¹

Philosophically, at the present stage of human knowledge when objectivity and truth have (has) not been firmly established, (This is stated on the assumption that truth and objective knowledge is possible - the ideal stage at which fundamentally there are no contradictory views.) it is rightful, sensible and agreeable logically for the individuals to hold different opinions. But it is absurd and not sensible that we should admit inconsistency in a single individual set of opinions. Sensibly; although it might be the passions which actively and successfully

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 272.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 265.

drive an individual to philosophize, rationally his aim of philosophizing should at least consist in the attempt to 'escape' from (or 'overcome', whatever is the case,) the absurdity of his ignorance. In truth, if all views or doctrines are equally merely opinions, capable of being justified as truths as well as susceptible to comprising falsehood, indifferently, then from which point and on what basis poets are to be regarded as liars?

Hume's distinction between the three terms: 'the imagination', 'imagination', and 'fancy', may yield a clearer apprehension of Hume's regard of poets as liars. Hume's 'the imagination' does not mean the same thing as that given in the dictionary. It is his theoretical term, (according to H.H.Price, a Humean term,) conveying a meaning specific for his empiricist philosophy. H.H.Price noted that it is a term which will bother Hume's readers.⁸² Unfortunately, Hume does not concern himself in exposing his theory of 'the imagination'. He does not recognize the cruciality of its being wanting in a theoretical exposition. And the question as to 'what is the imagination?' must be left to later empiricists. What Hume has offered is only a description of the consequence of his intensive contemplation upon human nature.

⁸²Alexander Sesonske and Noel Fleming, Human Understanding Studies in the Philosophy of David Hume, [Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1966], p. 2.

'The imagination', according to Hume's philosophy, seems to be the pivot of the whole quasi-mechanism of the interpretation of experience. It is the imagination, an active, cognitive faculty, which works the part on the associations of ideas; when 'the mind' which for Hume is identical with 'the soul' or, sometimes, 'consciousness', will 'enliven some ideas beyond others'.⁸³ The soul, certainly meaning different from the Hindu's or Christian terms, is also identical with the body, 'whichever you please to call it', the place in which the pleasures and pains arise;⁸⁴ hence, in this respect, performing no cognitive function. And the passions acting like the heart, transmits its energy through the whole system of mechanism; thus, influencing all faculties.

Whether or not the imagination is the slave of the passions is an interesting question. For example, whether or not the 'original fact' that John Doe dislikes the law of God influences the very faculty to associate ideas in a certain way, with the help of reason, such that the consequence or the final information, which might be termed as 'an out-put testimony', will testify to John Doe that God does not exist. But, at any rate, according to Hume, reason does not reconcile with the imagination entirely or completely. "Nothing", Hume writes, "is more dangerous to reason than the flights of the imagination,

⁸³ David Hume, *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

and nothing has been the occasion of more mistakes among philosophers."⁸⁵ The instances of 'the flights of the imagination' which is operated upon by the conspiracy of 'experience' and 'habit',⁸⁶ are the behavioral phenomena such as man tempts to infer 'cause' from 'effect', from the part to the whole, from a miracle or something he fails to explain to 'the occult quality' (God-for example) which Hume regards as 'a weakness' and that there should be no excuse for the commitment.⁸⁷ (Both Locke and Berkeley are empiricists who resort to God.) For Hume, the imagination is the faculty or the place on which the memory, senses and understanding are founded: "The memory, senses, and understanding are, therefore, all of them founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of our ideas."⁸⁸ Again, it is absurd that man to understand things must rely on the imagination but must not fly with the work of the imagination, over the gulf between the shore of things known to the shore of things unknown or unperceived by the five senses. This is a fundamental absurdity of human knowledge. In another word, it is Hume who points out that there is 'a hole' or 'a vacuum' at the foundation of human knowledge. However, from another

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 267.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 265.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 224 - 225.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 265.

perspective, the absurdity might be understood as our lack (or deprivation?) in the understanding or knowledge of what is 'the imagination'.

According to Hume, everyone has to 'imagine'; therefore, 'imagination' is not the activity characteristic only to poets. Presumably, a practice of imagination is not a commitment of lying. Otherwise, everyone lies any time he is making a generalization which is a common affair in life. But, for Hume, the practice of poets is pursuing of what he calls 'fancy'. As already stated above, Hume attacks 'antient philosophers' on 'their invention' of 'the occult quality' which is the consequence of 'the flights of the imagination'. To Hume, the 'fancy' or the 'invention' is 'a remarkable inclination in human nature', or a 'trivial propensity of the imagination'. Hume says

There is a very remarkable inclination in human nature, to bestow on external objects the same emotions, which it observes in itself; and to find every where those ideas, which are most present to it. This inclination, it is true, is suppressed by a little reflection, and only take place in children, poets, and the antient philosophers. It appears in children, by their desire of beating the stones, which hurt them: In poets, by their readiness to personify every thing: And in the antient philosophers, [who theorize on God] by these fictions of sympathy and antipathy. We must pardon children, however because of their age; poets, because they profess to follow implicitly the suggestions of their fancy...⁸⁹

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 224 - 225

Thus; poets in Hume's words are those who 'profess to follow implicitly the suggestions of their fancy.' For a better understanding of what Hume means by the word 'fancy', it must be noted that Hume distinguishes between the 'trivial suggestions of the fancy' and the 'more established properties of the imagination'.⁹⁰ And the 'trivial suggestions of the fancy' may be another expression of Hume for the 'trivial propensity of the imagination', or, which might mean the same thing as 'the flights of the imagination.' These distinctions are a crucial point in Hume's philosophy. Since, if there is any difference, it must be of the sort 'by degree'. And this is important since it suggests the answer to the question as to 'how far the imagination can fly from the particularity which one really has experienced,' so that it will still maintain the 'more established properties.' The answer is needed, for, in this case, the criterion for the distinction between 'what is fancy' and 'what is imagination' is required. Because in Hume's view, (all) poets are liars, according to which it will follow logically that 'liars are those who profess to follow implicitly the suggestions of their fancy.' This, with the social context in which we have acquired a habit to understand the original meaning of the word in a certain conventional way, looks very absurd. And yet Hume does not give a criterion for the distinction between proper or sensible imagination and

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 267.

poetical fancy. Hume, then, has no means to tell who are poets and who are not. Hume, himself, when he writes the statement 'poets are liars', has already committed an act of 'the flights of the imagination'; the words 'by profession' suggest that he is making a generalization. Or, in another consideration, Hume may be interpreted to state that 'poets are liars because they are poets', which is very arbitrary. This is not a *ad hominem* argument. The point in this concern is that when a trivial aspect in Hume's philosophy is considered, Hume seems invalid and arbitrary. And the epistemological discovery is Hume's lack of attention to semanticism. This finding points to the same thing as Antony Flew has remarked: "The icebergs of his own assumptions about language therefore make little show above the surface."

At any rate, it is plausible to assume that Hume means by the word 'lying' as is identical with or synonymous with 'deceiving'. Hume's expression by the phrase 'always endeavor to give an air of truth to their fictions' implicitly suggests the assumption. A consideration of a cluster of synonymous words of an individual ~~relationship~~ is supposed to result in a clearer recognition of the point of philosophical concern. These words are: lie, falsehood, untruth and fib. The word 'Fib' is not of philosophical concern. According to the Macmillan Contemporary Dictionary, all these words "denote a misrepresentation of the truth". Yet, there are distinctions between them. The word 'Lie' which means 'false statement made with the purpose of deceiving', 'denotes a dishonest statement with the purpose of deceiving.' The word 'Falsehood',

meaning 'that which is false' or 'absence of truth' or 'quality of being false', 'is a fictitious statement or prevarication that diviates from or distorts the truth but does not suggest or intent to deceive.' The word 'Untruth', meaning 'something untrue', 'character or condition of being untrue', 'relates to an inaccurate or mendacious assertion resulting from ignorance or misunderstanding'. In addition to these lexical distinctions, the nexus of meanings bears a further distinction of another level. Namely, 'Falsehood and Untruth' in a certain respect is a subject of the logical concern, while 'Lie' is not. Moreover, the word 'lying' or 'liar' or 'deceive', all or either of them, convey a sense which signifies a certain mental commitment of the consciousness or the mind. And this commitment is other than the linguistic work of the mind. Hence; saying that one knows that the other is lying is tantamount to saying that he knows at least two things:

- 1) that the other is not speaking the truth, and
- 2) that the other is working a plan in his mind.

In conclusion, a sceptic who doubts the truth of everything even the inductive logic, should not proclaim to know the truth in the others' minds. In a respect, Hume is careless and wrong in his diction. But, in any philosophical point of view, Hume, as a sceptic or empiricist, is arbitrary and invalid on this point, commits inconsistencies with his view. Therefore, it can not be concluded that there is no truth in literature.

Assumeably, the 'truth' which is concerned by sceptics must be that of the objective sort; otherwise, they will not question the others' beliefs, or at least call those beliefs in questions. A feature of what is 'objective truth' is that the truth of a statement of the objective truth is independent of and other thing than whether it is believed or known to be true or not. For example, if God does exist, the truth of his existence will still be truth although no one in the natural world believes or knows that he exists. In the like manner, that when one does not deem what he says as true, (viz, he is alert and aware of the possibility of his ignorance, or in a sense he is sceptical, as what Hume is,) does not logically imply that the very thing said is not true. And this must be distinguished from that when one speaks the truth although he thinks it is false. Whether these distinctions altogether are to be considered 'lying' or not is one of this thesis's points of concern. Traditionally, as F. Waismann noted, "Lying consists in knowing what is true and intentionally saying what is false. 'Knowing what is true' does not mean 'having a particular feeling', but 'operating with unspoken words or images.'⁹¹ If Waismann's account is true, or if Hume's concept of 'lying' is the same, then Hume will fall into committing an inconsistency if he states that no one knows the truth. This point may be clarified in the syllogistic logical form below:

⁹¹F. Waismann, The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy, [London: Macmillan, 1968], pp. 294 - 295.

Lying consists in knowing what is true and intentionally saying what is false.

Poets are professional liars.

Therefore; poets are those people who know what is true but ^{*} intentionally say what is false, professionally.

Literally, in the context of thought being discussed, it is tended to mean that poets know the objective truth or absolute truth.

Certainly, Hume will not admit this: since, for Hume, he does not accept that there is any group of men who possess the objective truth and for him there is no such thing as the absolute truth. Hume argues that Nature has framed our experiences and habits to think in a way such that it will cost us too much pains to think otherwise. But Nature herself is uniform or not, we have no means to know, for he has shown the absurdity of our induction. As Russell concluded him, "There is no such thing as a rational belief: 'If we believe that fire warms, or water refreshes, it is only because it costs us too much pains to think otherwise.' We cannot help believing, but no belief can be grounded on reason."⁹² Consequently, for Hume, no one can claim to find a firm ground to justify his truth. One has to rest

* 'But' and 'And' are connectives of the same significance in Logic.

⁹² Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy, [London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1980], p. 645.

entirely on his passions and making choices. This attitude may be regarded as a trend of the existentialist attitude. Hume observes that passions prescribe reason.* Hume's scepticism does not only oppose to rationalism, but his refutation of rationality even undermines empiricism, equally.⁹³

Therefore, to interpret Hume aright, the above conclusion has to be altered to: 'Therefore; poets are those people who believe what is true, but intentionally say what is false, professionally.' The statement, however, is ambiguous: it can be taken to mean poets are those people who know the truth, but say the reverse; or, poets will say the reverse of their beliefs. Based on Hume's scepticism, it is more probable the right interpretation of Hume should be the later 'poets are those people who, professionally say the reverse of their beliefs.' This sounds no less absurd. And this does not entail that what the poets say will not probably be the truth, if there is such thing as objective truth. Namely, even if poets are really liars by this definition, it does not follow that there is no truth in poetry, or literature.

*Parellelly, Sartre's doctrine or formula of his existentialism is 'Existence precedes Essence.'

⁹³Ibid., p. 646.

Yet, again, this interpretation shows that Hume is not valid, for Hume has no ground on which Hume can prove, validly, that all poets are kinds of people who believe one thing but say the other thing. Hume calls poets liars on no firm basis. Hume's account of poets as liars is rather weak. "Poets", Hume says, "have formed what they call a poetical system of things, which though it be believed neither by themselves nor readers, is commonly esteemed a sufficient foundation for any fiction."⁹⁴ Hume does not support his assertion that poets do not believe their 'poetical system of things'. He does not justify himself how he knows this. It is possible that John Doe may 'believe' in the truth of the existence of God but he never mentions his belief to any one, for he lives in a society in which belief in God is regarded to be irrational, foolish or insane. Without his verbal testimony, no one will know what he believes. Even he may give a verbal testimony, this might not be what he really believes; he may lie. The verbal testimony is not the solely sufficient condition to tell what one's belief is. There is much more to ask into the nature of 'lying' and its relevance to language, truth, knowledge and reality, but that is beyond this thesis's concern.

⁹⁴David Hume, *Ibid.*, Book I, p. 121.

Hume illustrates the expression 'a poetical system of things' by citing the fact that there is a practice among tragedians to "borrow their fable, or at least the names of their principal actors, from some known passage in history."⁹⁵ And this practice is what Hume calls 'an air of truth.' Another example is the fact that we have a set of tales about the stars in sky, names are given to them, and the tales are related together, connected to create their system of meanings. In this manner, poets may be viewed to act like spiders, creating connected webs of meanings. All these are done on a purpose to make them sound true, so that these ideas will make their way "into the mind with facility, and prevail upon the fancy." Hume considers this practice as 'lying', which Hume calls the 'mixture of truth and falsehood.' However, this observation of Hume which is outside and foreign to the literary field itself is not the sufficient condition to tell that those practitioners are liars. Neither is it sufficient for the denial of their truth or their opinions. Observation alone without the right understanding of what the observed, so-called 'fact' really means or is purposively taken to mean may result in misunderstanding which will entail misjudgment. Naturally, observation with lack of understanding always entails misinterpretation. Before we can judge anyone as a liar, at least, we need to know what he really means by his words, or

⁹⁵David Hume, *Ibid.*, Book I, pp. 121 - 122.

perhaps, his actions. Although there is no such thing as 'rationality' among human beings, we should conform to the principle of 'sensibility', since in knowing we have to rely on the 'senses'. Art is a tradition which has its own system of meanings. What Hume cites as 'fact' is just "a form of expression"^{*}, and not the contents or meanings. In short, Hume's account of poets as liars is not so valid. It is grounded on his own arbitrariness. Bertrand Russell noted that Hume himself confessed that the only remedy to his sceptical doubt was his retire to carelessness and inattention.⁹⁶

In conclusion, in the light of this critical analysis, although it cannot be concluded that the words 'liars' and 'lying' are outside the linguistic system of scepticism, it is pointed out to a recognition that for a sceptic to be consistent with his doctrine, he cannot claim to know that any group of people are 'liars', except he will explain the conventional meaning in his system. He can only question their beliefs but cannot proceed from his successful doubts to the conclusion that they are liars. Actually, a Humean sceptic cannot even condemn a lunatic that he is not right in his belief and

^{*}This term or expression is adopted and applied from R.L. Goodstein, "Language and Experience", in Philosophy of Science, edited by Arthur Danto and Sidney Margenbesser, [New York: The World Publishing Co., 1970], p. 99.

⁹⁶Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy, [London: Unwin Paperback, 1980], p. 645.

actions.⁹⁷ This thesis considers it important to note that why 'lying' deserves as a significant, philosophical point is that it gives rise to the recognition of a more profound apprehension of the relation of truth, language, thought and mental action, and reality.

In the light of this research, concerning Hume's view of poets as liars, this thesis does not agree with Bertrand Russell when he asserted that Hume had a better intellect than Locke in not allowing himself to commit inconsistencies.⁹⁸ This thesis agrees with H.H. Price and Antony Flew on the point of Hume's assumption about language.⁹⁹ Russell himself also noticed this flaw in Hume's philosophy when he quoted Hume thus: 'Generally speaking, the errors in religion are dangerous; those in philosophy only ridiculous', and criticized that: "'Dangerous' is a causal word, and a sceptic as to causation cannot know that anything is dangerous."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 646.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 645.

⁹⁹ Alexander Sesonke and Noel Fleming. Human Understanding, [Belmont: Wadworth Publishing, 1966], pp. 5 - 59.

¹⁰⁰ Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy, [London: Unwin Paperback, 1980], p. 646.

It is pointed out that the flaw of Hume's philosophy, or in other words, Hume's carelessness and inattention, (provided that the term 'invalidity' concerning the soundness of reasoning and argument may not suit the case of Hume's philosophy)

roots or consists in his lack of a respectful observation and investigation into the decisive nature of language and thought, also in his less interest in logic. What is distinctive about logic concerning the point in concern here is that logic seems to presuppose no 'lying' in the application of language. Hume sees logic as a set of principles of human understanding whose rules are easily invented but extremely difficult in their application.¹⁰¹ This assertion results from Hume's lack of a respectful investigation into the problem of the relation between logic, language and lying. Hume mentions only one time about language, about logic as well. Languages, for Hume, are gradually established by 'human conventions without any promise'.¹⁰² In short, Hume views the origin of language as springs from randomness* and roots in no groundless necessity other than the need for human, social communication. Whether this is partially true or completely true is the point in

¹⁰¹ David Hume, Ibid., p. 175.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 490.

* In page 122, Hume states, concerning the nature of 'ideas' and thought that "the union among the ideas is, in a manner, accidental."

question. Conclusively, concerning a dimension of problems in philosophy, except for Plato's transcendental philosophy, it is Wittgenstein who notably first recognizes the decisive nature of language.

David Hume (1711 - 1776), is a very prominent leading figure in the world history of ideas. His scepticism and empiricism is very challenging and "to refute him has been, even since he wrote, a favourite pastime among metaphysicians", as noted by Bertrand Russell. Sometimes, as he regarded himself, he might be said to have undermined the whole edifice of human knowledge. But his central concern is not 'Knowledge' but 'Human Nature', as he states it in the conclusion of his Treatise, Book one, as follows:

...For my part, my only hope is, that I may contribute a little to the advancement of knowledge, by giving in some particulars a different turn to the speculations of philosophers, and pointing out to them more distinctly those subjects, where alone they can expect assurance and conviction. Human Nature is the only science of man; and yet has been hitherto the most neglected.¹⁰³

In Hume's view, he sees that this new study of man would serve as the foundation of all the sciences. As already pointed out, in the study of Human Nature dwells the problem of 'the imagination'. But this is far above the present discussion.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 273.

What must be noted here is that 'Human Nature' is also the central 'subject-matter' concerned by poets or literary people.

The central tenet of Hume's philosophy of Human Nature may be expressed by the analogy of a lunatic. Man is shaped to think in a way such that he cannot think otherwise. Why we don't conceive of ourselves as lunatics is because we all are lunatics and lunatics don't think they are absurd. In conclusion, if a classification is needed for a clearer understanding, fundamentally, Hume's skeptical empiricism is akin to positivism and his psychology is the anticipation of Behaviourism.



ศูนย์วิจัยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย