

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PLATO'S REPUBLIC  
AND ARISTOPHANES' BIRDS:  
ANOTHER LOOK AT THE AGE-OLD DISPUTE  
BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY

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## Introduction

The goal of this thesis is to illuminate the age-old dispute between philosophy and poetry via a comparative study of the Birds and the Republic. I will be using the Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns edition of the Republic, translated by Paul Shorey and the line numbers from the Alan H. Sommerstein translation of the Birds. The passages quoted from the Birds are from the Moses Hadas translation unless otherwise noted. The works will serve as examples of poetry and philosophy respectively. I will be working with key portions of the story lines, which are similar. A juxtaposition of the parallels in these works and an examination of the difference in the authors' mediums will support my hypothesis that Aristophanes and Plato were actively engaged in the dispute working under the cover of their leading characters, Pesthitearus and Socrates respectively. From this perspective, the Birds is seen as a satirical commentary on Socratic inquiry and the Republic as an ironic defense of Socrates in response to Aristophanes' attacks.

The similarities in the story lines begin with the scenes in which we find disgruntled Athenians searching for an ideal polity. In both works a plan is initiated to form a state. The details of its functions are described. The construction begins. The characters discuss past and present rulers, laws, and constitutions. A wish for a return to an earlier constitution is implied. A screening process for the determination of citizenship eligibility is demonstrated. A peculiar argument is put forth