POLITICS AS (IS) THEATRE:

A PHILOSOPHICAL ACCOUNT of the PERFORMATIVITY of POLITICS as read in PLATO, ARISTOTLE, AND HOBBES

BY

KATERYN L. McREYNOLDS

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We also according to our ability are tragic poets, and our tragedy is the best and noblest; for our whole state is an imitation of the best and noblest life, which we affirm to be indeed the very truth of tragedy. You are poets and we are poets, both makers of the same strains, rivals and antagonists in the noblest of dramas, which true law can alone perfect, as our hope is.

Plato, *Laws*

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Dei Sub Numine Viget
Under God's Power She Flourishes

1

INTRODUCTION

In 407 BCE, Tripod Road was likely the busiest street in Athens—in all of ancient Greece, by the fact. Less than one kilometer long,[1] it connected the Theater of Dionysus which sat atop the Acropolis, to the open-air Agora[2]—the nucleus of Athenian politics and the locus of concentrated Athenian civil activity. It was in this Agora that one Aristocles, an aspiring playwright from an aristocratic family, witnessed Socrates engaging in one of his dialectic lectures.[3] He may very well have been coming along that same Tripod Road from the Theater that day. But soon after this encounter with the Great Inquirer, convinced of a higher calling, the twenty-year old Aristocles burned his previous poetic works in favor of different dialogues. A broad-minded Socratic disciple and broad-shouldered man, he was conferred the nickname 'Plato' (meaning 'broad'),[4] and stepped into Socrates' legacy after his death in 399BCE. Plato went

[1] About 0.9 km, about 0.5 mile long.
[2] The Agora was the great open-air marketplace of Athens, where civic assemblies gathered, laws were decreed, and civil society flourished; also the frequented locale of Socrates and his disciples.
[3] "Agora" and "Plato" - Ancient History Encyclopedia, https://www.ancient.eu/agora/.
[4] 'Plato', meaning 'broad' in Greek—presumably for his broad shoulders, forehead, and -mindedness.

on to found the first academy, and write the first extant text on political philosophy.

This thesis seeks to be another Tripod Road, or at least the beginning pavements of one. Rather than obliging an abandonment of all theatre in favor of political theory, the Tripod Road joins the two together—as I will argue, this is precisely what Plato did with his own philosophical texts. The proximity of these two loci—that of the world's first theater, and that crucial marketplace of ideas where Plato met Socrates—must not be taken as pure coincidence. At the very least, it is suggestive of the cultural convergence which occurred between the birthplaces of Western theatre and political theory; at most, it is indicative of a shared ideal origin whence both came.[5]

What follows is a quarrying of a few of the most influential philosophies—those of Plato, Aristotle, and Hobbes—to unearth the theoretical underpinnings of the performativity inherent in politics. It is a theory of how a few of the founding fathers of political philosophy conveyed their visions of politics as operating in an evidently theatrical, dramatically structured framework—arguably so intrinsically theatrical, as to either have been born of the same primordial "political nature" of humanity as claimed by Aristotle, or to be as theoretically twinned in their artificiality, in the Hobbesian sense.[6] It is this co-evolutionary nature of theater and politics that this thesis will begin to illustrate;

[5] Ideal, in the Platonic sense.
[6] I will leave to the reader's discretion this argument over the naturalness or artificiality of politics—as well as the possibility that certain elements of politics might belong to each.

that the two are inextricably, theoretically linked. Indeed, by the title of this thesis, one might surmise its two-pronged purport: at its weakest, it shows that the lens of theatre is an apt one through which to view politics; at its strongest, it asserts that politics *is* theatre, concentrated in three primary elements: performativity, dramaturgical structure, and representation (precisely in the way the terms are to be soon defined here). So, if it would please the reader, read on, and retain the image of Tripod Road as the path upon which the concepts of the *polis* and the *theatre* converge. You may soon find yourself gazing back and forth between the two in wonder at how similarly they are structured, as did I.

Etymological and Lexical Considerations

Agora. As a home and assembly house to philosophers, sophists, orators and politicos alike, the very name, meaning “assembly”, quickly bore the Greek verb *agoreúō,*[7] "to speak in the assembly", or “to proclaim”.[8] Of the same came the Latin cognate *agō* (“to conduct”, “to act”), root of the later Latin *actor*—an agent, performer, doer.[9] It’s no wonder that theatrical and political actors share an etymological origin as well as a conceptual one; both sets are known, by the nature of their roles, to conduct ideals through their embodiment of law and character alike; and to proclaim such ideals, whether in the assemblage or the amphitheater.

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[7] Ivor Roberts, *Satow’s Diplomatic Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 555.
[8] Rendich Franco, *Comparative Etymological Dictionary of Classical Indo-European Languages: Indo-European - Sanskrit - Greek - Latin* (Rendich Franco, 2013), 157.
[9] Ibid., 175

The shared lexical significance has only continued in the way English-speaking political communities describe and conceptualize their own systems. Consider the stage: a platform upon which actors represent characters, action, ideals, and ideas for an audience. The word is not only familiar to performing artists; it also fittingly refers to the increasingly spectated, multidimensional platform by which political actors address their constituents and represent their respective political entities. The theatrical lexicon has been frequently appropriated for political discourse even further: "political actors," "the political theater," "the global stage," "a dramatic speech," "a symbolic gesture," "Congressional clowns," "political circus," and so on. (Note that the use of such terms can range from politically-neutral descriptions, to striking extremes of praise or derogation of the event or actor—most often the latter, in the realm of political rhetoric.)

But the theatrical is not limited to a rhetorical device for pummeling and praising politicos. This borrowed theatrical language indicates yet greater shared grounds between theatre and politics and recommends the observance of an astute attention to word usage when examining intricacies of their relationship.

Throughout this thesis (particularly in Chapters Two and Three) is a continuation of italicized Ancient Greek interspersed among philosophical and theatrical lingo (see glossary for reference to key terms and translations) [10]. Particular meanings of the original Greek are often lost to any English translation, and some commentary on the context and multiple translations of

[10] See Appendix A for complete glossary

such terms will be provided in an effort to elucidate the semantic significances in Plato and Aristotle's philosophy.

Now, with such key terms as "performance," "theatre," and "art," the connotations vary significantly with the context of each word's use. To address this, I have offered specific definitions for consideration, along with justifications and sources of their derivation. It must be noted, however, that as essential as these concepts are, a single definition will likely not be comprehensive to suffice; so while the totality of the concepts may not be immediately evident, each will continue to take form over the course of this thesis. A preliminary detangling of these key concepts follows.

What is performance?

The term "performance" is a notorious polyseme used quite liberally in the English language, applying to a slew of concepts such as denotes: the general "execution of an action," the "fulfillment of a claim," and the "manner in which a mechanism performs". As taken from the Oxford English Dictionary[11]:

> 4. a. The action of performing a play, piece of music, ceremony, etc.; execution, interpretation.
> b. A ceremony, rite, or ritual. Now rare.
> c. An instance of performing a play, piece of music, etc., in front of an audience; an occasion on which such a work is presented; a public appearance by a performing artist or artists of any kind. Also: an individual performer's or group's rendering or interpretation of a work, part, role, etc. In extended use: a pretence, a sham.
> d. A display of anger or exaggerated behaviour; a fuss, a scene; (also) a difficult, time-consuming, or annoying action or procedure.

[11] "Performance, n. : Oxford English Dictionary," accessed April 27, 2020, https://oed.com/view/Entry/140783?redirectedFrom=performance#eid.

As seen in definitions 4.c. and d., the term often carries an unnecessarily negative connotation. Though not integral to the concept, in practice and usage, *performance* as would commonly be used in a political discussion today, is most recognizably slung about as an aspersion to portray a pretentious politician, or an unconvincing showing of power. In any such case, the essential implication is that: despite any appearance which would attempt to indicate otherwise, the political object which is being described, is *false*, and furthermore, is distinguishable as such. Reiterated, in the modern usage of the term in politics, there are three conditions: the political "performer" or "performance" (1) is false, (2) attempts to seem truthful, and (3) its deceit is recognized by at least those who call it such.

The full meaning of this thesis's concept of *performance* as it relates to political theory will become clearer throughout the whole of this argument. However, note that an important assertion to follow is that true *performance,* as we will treat it, does not automatically assume the negative associations it so commonly invokes in political discourse; in anticipation of this, may the concept itself remain normatively neutral (though, indeed, it may arguably be used in either normatively good or bad ways, to good or bad ends).

Theory of Performativity vs. Performance Theory

The pairing of the terms "performance" and "politics" may bring to the contemporary scholar's mind the seminal *theory of performativity* of Judith Butler, surrounding her arguments for performed sexuality and political

identities.[12] Whereas Butler's work emphasizes the performativity of political speech and normative ideas of behavior in a particular political moment, this thesis is not so observational of contemporary considerations of identity politics (though such considerations are certainly related and will be addressed by the conclusion of this thesis). Rather, it begins with a more rudimentary treatment, in that it attempts to discover the most fundamental philosophical underpinnings of the relationship between theatrical performance and politics, and only subsequently, of the particular forms of performativity found in specific political moments.

Another distinct, yet related theory is that of *performance theory*. Richard Schechner, a dramaturg, director, Professor Emeritus of the Tisch School, and editor of academic journal *The Drama Review*, is best known for developing and legitimizing this relatively recent realm of study in the past five decades. Like the interdisciplinary journal[13] from which it was born, the relatively new field evolved as a highly integrated one, drawing especially heavily from anthropology, sociology, literary theory, and research in the performing arts. In the spirit of sociologist Erving Goffman, who in the 1950s authored the seminal *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Schechner has likewise emphasized the great potential of *performance studies* to be applied to a wide realm of social phenomena—sport, religious rights, cultural rituals, and of course, politics. However, the extent to which politics has yet been addressed in the field is usually limited to

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[12] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech : A Politics of the Performative* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997).
[13] New York University, ed., "The Drama Review," 1955-present.

the basic observations and exemplary phenomena which may be studied *as* performance.[14]

An Introduction to Key Terms

Perhaps the foremost distinction of terms must be observed between *theatre* and *performance* (and additionally between *theatricality* and *performativity*, two different terms altogether). Colloquially, the two are interchangeable, and even across the interacting scholastic spheres of social scientists, performance practitioners and philosophers who work with these concepts, are still debating definitions.[15] For the purpose of this thesis, the following working definitions have been formulated from an understanding based in the American brand of *performance studies,* qualified by what I have judged to be useful when examining the political theories of Plato, Aristotle and Hobbes.

Performance

Performance is "an activity done by an individual or group in the presence of and for another individual or group."[16] By this definition—what the *polis* does—is performance because all the members of a polis are engaged in the act of politicking, which is for the *polis*. The territory of *performance* is very broad by

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[14] To reiterate, this thesis tends toward the claim that theatre is intrinsic to politics, not merely incidental.

[15] An additional divide (between a favored term for that which is observed in society and human behavior) appears between the American schools and European schools. "Theatricality and Performance," https://www.brown.edu/Departments/German_Studies/media/Symposium/desc.html.

[16] Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, Rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Routledge, 1988).

this standard, which is why this thesis begins with the claim that politics is performative, and treats it as a basic assumption before moving on to the stronger claim that politics is theatre.

Performativity is the quality of any performance most concentrated in the locus of communication between performer and audience (*audience* not being a mere observer, but a potential participant as well). Performativity implies the performer's intention to convey to the audience what they manifest in performance; it also implies a recognition of a mutual exchange between both parties. Further to note is that the roles of performer/audience may in some cases, be swapped, or both may simultaneously belong to the same entity; imagine, for example, two ambassadors who meet for diplomatic conference on behalf of their respective nations—both are critically observing and being observed. Performativity is elemental to theatre. And theatre is a type of performance with unique aspects which create a new reality (consider it performance-plus).

Regarding the activity of the audience: in the realm of theatre theory and practice, it is a widely accepted view that audiences are always passive participants, and sometimes active participants, in the theatre. Theatre cannot exist without audience, the event of audience-performance convergence being one of its primary elements. Performers often remark at the "energy" (or lack thereof) of certain audiences, which impact each performance or instance of theatre. Audience is arguably the most powerful factor in the fragility of a

theatrical performance, for the impact on the audience is the *final cause* for which theatre is made (as noted by Aristotle).

Theatre[17]

Theatre is a series of mimetic actions based in some sort of *script*, which when performed, manifest a novel, concrete *event* with an identity of its own. Its form is a structured, unified event of mimesis and dramatic action. So, whereas performance is the activity of conveyance, theatre is the unified conglomeration of agreement, action, and resulting event.[18] Its primary elements[19] are: (1) *script*—that which is brought to life; (2) *actor*(s)—the bodies/persons/entities who bring it to life;[20] and (3) the attendance of an *audience*—for whom it is brought to life. Since theatre is a concrete occurrence, I consider the fourth and fifth requisite elements to be implied—that of (4) venue, called a theater, [21] and (5) time (self-explanatory). The first three elements of theatre will be of primary pertinence in this thesis, as I consider them to be the most essential, and also the most pertinent to the philosophies soon to be analyzed.[22] There are many other elements found in most theatre, of course—including and not limited to the

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[17] Note the spelling distinction between theater and theatre: theat*re* being the actionable art (art in the originally broad, Hobbesian sense); theat*er* being the venue (spatial or conceptual) that

[18] For an explication of *agreement*, see Chapter 4, "Covenant and Contract".

[19] As distilled by several theatre theories, these are the most common and (arguably) the only essential elements. See similar example: Eric Bentley, *What Is Theatre? A Query in Chronicle Form* (New York: Horizon Press, 1956).

[20] By this definition, note, that other non-essential theatrical elements, such as spectacle, music and sound, fall under the category of actor.

[21] The venue(s) of theatre, often called the theat**er**, may be spatial, non-spatial, or both. More on venues to come, in Chapter 4.

[22] See

director, spectacle, plot, music, and sound—but each of these fits within one of the primary three (script, actor, and audience).

According to Roland Barthes—influential 20th cent. literary philosopher, critic, and semiotician—*theatricality* is:

> "theatre-minus-text," "a density of signs and sensations built up on stage starting from the written argument; it is that ecumenical perception of sensuous artifice –gesture, tone, distance, substance, light- which submerges the text beneath the profusion of its external language.[23]

Distilled, this means the non-textual elements of theatre, concentrated in the action of the actor. Theatricality "brings to life" a most indispensable aspect of theatre, that of *character*.[24] It is one of the three *essences*, or qualities, of the polis-theatre. When associated with philosopher of language J.L. Austin's framework of speech acts, *theatricality* aligns with the illocutionary[25].

Art

"Art" in this thesis will refer to the deliberate application of human skill toward the creation or achievement of a project or product. Its broad meaning includes visual and performing arts, as well as craftsmanship, the "art" of war, etc. Hobbes, as well as translations of Aristotle, use this original English meaning of "art" from which came the more specific instances of "the arts".

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[23] Roland Barthes, Critical Essays, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1972, p.26.
[24] The notion of "character" will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter 3.
[25] The "illocutionary" may be thought of as the doing of the speech, the intended action, as opposed to what explicitly was said (locution). It is that aspect of speech which does what it means to do, 'In saying x, I was doing y' as J. L. Austin tells us in J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, *How To Do Things With Words* (Oxford University Press).

Artifice is, quite simply, the product of human art. So, artifice would be deliberate, manmade and concrete. "Concrete," in the sense generally accepted in contemporary metaphysics, refers to that which exists in space and/or in time. And "artificial" is the quality of having been made by human art or skill.

A Descriptive Claim with Moral Implications

The notion that politics is performative may seem obvious to many; and some may wryly express this belief with the cynicism that derides much of contemporary party politics. Others may assert that, normatively, the ideal politic (sensible as it is) is not performative at all.

Influenced by my own accumulated understanding of *performance*—as one who has both studied *performance theory* and who engages with her sect of the trade as a performer herself—I have always been inclined toward a perhaps more balanced (though not uncontroversial) claim: that politics *is* performative, but in the way that performance is intrinsic to politics; not merely capriciously additive. In this sense, then, the performativity of politics is essentially morally neutral—as politics itself is often theoretically conceived to be—to the activities of politicking; any moral qualification beyond that is attributable to the actor who performed the (im)morality into their politic. But let not this claim be mistaken as reduceable to the simple observation that both politics and theatre seem to necessitate performative orators; that is only the tip of the iceberg, derivative of the inherent unity.

Let's begin at the beginning (or at least, the beginning of many an introductory course to political theory)—Plato. The *Republic* is replete with

passages of Plato's theory of the encompassing "poetic" imitation and its role (or lack thereof) in the polis. My research led naturally toward his star student, Aristotle, who disagreed with his teacher in several respects, particularly resisting his thesis of *mimesis* (the claim that all visual and theatrical art is imitative, and therefore, wont to being far from the truth—as many times as thrice removed, for Plato.[26]) A third theory comes from Hobbes, the father of modern political theory, who offers an antidote to Aristotle's "absurd"[27] metaphysics[28] by resting his key claim on the assertion that politics is as artificial as any artform.

Despite their disagreements, there is a theme throughout their theories: an emphasis and re-emphasis on the theatrical, though not in such simple terms. In the chapters to follow are a reading of their arguments through the lens of performance, but from a vantage point which is hopefully more holistic. For example, by reviewing Plato's picture of the Kallipolis of Book X with a wider frame (referencing the a parallel scene between the *Laws* and the *Republic*), one may read that performativity, by way of Plato's theory of imitation, is integral to the purpose of politics. In Hobbes, one may find it useful to read the representative function of the sovereign with Platonic *mimesis* in mind. In all three, and especially in conjunction with one another, one can see that not only is theatre important within the practice of politics, but in its function and purpose also. Thus, the claim of this thesis is specified further (while also broadened in

[26] Benjamin Jowett, *The Republic of Plato*, Third Edition (London: Oxford Unviersity Press Warehouse, n.d.), l. 599.
[27]Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), III, 669.
[28] The same metaphysics undergirds Aristotle's political and aesthetic theories.

scope) to be: that all (and especially ideal) politics is intrinsically theatrical, in practice, function, and purpose.

Now, in response to the earlier question (whether or not theatre in politics is normatively wrong), these three theorists have had many different interpretations attributed to them; we will address such interpretations of their inclinations in their respective chapters. I will reiterate, however, that the central claim of this thesis—that politics is theatrical—is fundamentally descriptive, not normative. Nevertheless, the claim does allow for normative implications: that the theatricality of politics may be directed toward normatively good or bad ends; also, that there are a range of ways of conducting theatrics in politics—from effective, or beneficial methods, to ineffective, or detrimental ones. A few claims of what ineffective/detrimental methods would look like, will be addressed in the chapter on Aristotle. (However, a truly thorough debate on the matter might best be left for another thesis.)

With the acknowledgement of such normative implications comes the potential for performance in politics to be used for good. True performance, as theorized all the way from Plato to Richard Schechner, has its strongest potential in its natural ability to unify, infuse, and broaden collective thought toward a projected ideal. This iteration of the argument, then, will also tend toward the conception that ideal performance, as does politics, involves just as much truth as it does deliberate artifice.

The Theatre-Polis Framework

As we near the heart of the matter, let this introduction end with a useful device with which to examine the rest. The apparent convergences among the theories of Plato, Aristotle and Hobbes divulged the opportunity to formulate the following framework: the paralleled elements of theatre and political community, and the resulting essences of theatre which they share.

Elements of Theatre	Definition	Function (what the elements do)	**What the elements bring**	**Qualities** of Theatre[29]
Script	the basic code of the events	**Imitation** (half of *mimesis)*	**Dramatic structure**	**Dramatic Structure**
Actor(s)	an individual or collective body who actively (i.e. through action) represents something or someone (real or fictional)	**Action**	**Action, Speech, Imitation**	**Representation** (the other half of *mimesis*)
Audience (Event)	The recipient and a participator in the drama of theatre; they are both passive and active in their contribution.	**Reception**, **Participation** (Passive or active)	**Contract, Agreement to suspend their disbelief**	**Performativity, Contractual Nature**

[29] associated respectively to each element that intermediates their action

The Elements of Theatre; Paralleled Levels of Politics; their Shared Qualities Between

Elements of Theatre	**Paralleled Elements of Political Community**	**Shared Qualities of the Theatre-Polis**
Script (which carries out the Drama)	Law (which carries out the Constitutional structure; regime type)	Structure
Actor(s)	Constituent Bodies; Governing Bodies	Representation (Hobbes)
Audience (Event)	All constituents of the one organismic body	Performativity; Interpretation of the Law

2

PLATO: A Theory of the *Polis* as Platonic Theatre

I write plays because writing dialogue is the only respectable way of contradicting yourself. I put a position, rebut it, refute the rebuttal, and rebut the refutation. -Tom Stoppard

Plato, though certainly not the first to postulate a philosophy of politics, is usually the first which any introductory course in political theory will cite. Alfred North Whitehead wrote the well-known quip: "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."[30] Thus, this thesis begins (and perhaps, very well continues) as one large footnote to his remark in Book X of *Republic*:

> But can you imagine, Glaucon, that if Homer had really been able to educate and improve mankind[31]—he had possessed knowledge and not been a mere imitator–can you imagine, I say, that he would not have had many followers, and been honoured and loved by them? Protagoras of Abdera, and Prodicus of Ceos, and a host of others, have only to whisper to their contemporaries: 'You will never be able to manage either your own house or your own State until you appoint us to be your ministers of education' –and this ingenious device of theirs has such an effect in making them love them that their companions all but carry them about on their shoulders. And is it conceivable that the contemporaries of Homer, or again of Hesiod, would have allowed either of them to go about as rhapsodists, if they had really been able to make mankind virtuous?

[30] Alfred N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (Free Press, 1979, p. 39)
[31] Homer being Plato's exemplified personification of *poiesis*, including theatre.

Two phrases stand out initially from this text. The qualification of Homer as "*mere* imitator" proves a discrepancy between the common claim of Plato's

The "ingenious device"—that of *mimetic poiesis*, or imitative poetry —the theatre—seems to be appraised by Plato as having great educational potential. And the *Republic* treats precisely this issue—the whole book may be viewed as a treatise on ideal education, as his notion of the *kallipolis* is one which seeks to educates its constituents (each according to their own abilities) toward the ultimate end of justice (*dikaiosynē*).[32]

What if the imitator were not "mere imitator," but also philosopher? (A philosopher-imitator?) What if this "ingenious device" were used for Plato's preferred end—the education of the masses toward their *telos* as a "virtuous mankind"—the organismic embodiment of the just soul? The answers to these questions are precisely what this chapter aims to answer. The first claim: Plato himself was such a philosopher-playwright. The second claim: that the training which Plato imagines for the guardians of the ideal polis, is a training for them to be philosopher-actors. The third and final claim: that the ideal polis, for Plato, is itself, one grand mimetic theatre.

[32] the specific kind of justice which dominates the central question of Plato's *Republic* (as opposed to Homeric *themis,* which seems to connote a more individual duty towards justice) For Plato, *dikaiosynē* is the highest Good.

Plato, the Playwright

Martin Heidegger is cited as claiming that "the 'dialectic', which has been a genuine philosophical embarrassment, becomes superfluous."[33] The context in which he makes this claim is in his discussion of Plato's theory of *being*. He claims that Aristotle does away with the unnecessary dialectic, in favor of a more straightforward telling of the theory.

The impulsive response to this observation-opinion may be to ask *why*, then, Plato felt compelled to write his philosophy in the form of dialogues. And then, possibly, after another retorts that these dialogues were simply a recounting of Socrates' own discourses, one might also ask if it was necessary for the supposed Socratic philosophies to be recounted so. One then, may consider that the *Republic* would not have arrived at the same conclusions it did if the discourse did not take place; surely, the development of the vision of the "beautiful city"[34] would not evolve as it did without the protests of Socrates' interlocutors. But before we slip into a questioning of whether or not Plato's work is the honest Socratic philosophy or not, I propose it would benefit us to begin by a very basic analysis of the literature.

The first and most obvious of observations is that the *Republic* was intended to be read. It, like all of Plato's favorite things, is for the purpose of education. Secondly, it is an imitation—a mimetic representation, one must

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[33] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 47.
[34] *kallipolis*, the name for the ideal polis of *Republic*, may be translated to beautiful city.

admit—of the actual Socratic discourses recounted to (or sometimes even witnessed by) Plato. Though we shall not presume Plato to have fictionalized the dialogues very much (as it seems he would be remiss to do, on the Socratic account of imitation as defilement of truth), one cannot help but assume that the dialogues are not recounted in perfect verbatim. Plato must have taken some liberties, but only those which illumine true knowledge. After all, he does not criticize *poiesis qua poiesis,*[35] so much as he chastises those who imitate that which they do not truly know. As reasoned by observation, then, the *Republic* seems to be an example of the very *poiesis* for which the Socrates of Book X yearns, and Plato, its author, is the Homer of philosophy.

From Plato's Ontology, Epistemology, to Political Theory, Ethics

The dialectical method is special because it makes use of the negative complements within propositional logic, that is, it owns the dichotomy of truth and untruth, and mirrors his own ontological/epistemological paradigm as understood from his descriptions of the sun, the line, and most specially, the allegory of the cave(514a–520a). There is a movement from untruth to truth; from darkness to light; illusion to reality; origin to telos; beginning to end. In the darkness of the cave is the crude performance of shadow-puppetry show, intended to deprive the shackled of truth and feed them mere representations of representations.

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[35] *Poiesis,* Greek for "poetry," refers to literary and performative creations of all kinds, most notably theatre, which was the consummate entertainment and communal gathering for the ancient Greeks, encompassing music, drama, dance and narration into one.

This is the world of all theatre, apparently. But mind! Plato is surreptitiously using very poetic, imaginative, even theatrical means by which to tell this very allegory. The dark and devious actors are not named (though they may likely represent the Grecian state/religion/educators of the time), nor are they even explicitly qualified as being deliberate in their deception of the lowly unenlightened; perhaps they are ignorant themselves of the falsehoods they teach. Plato's Socrates says that it is the task of the dedicated philosopher (he who has seen the light, the truths) to come back down and help coax the others from the comfort of the cave, to the truth of the superterraneous. By what means shall he be able to do this, without getting killed?

Well, learning from the fate of his own teacher, Plato has evidently decided to take the safer, more surreptitious route—that slight of hand which is utilizing the very mode of operation his Socrates criticizes: theatre. The dialogues of Plato's body of writings are scripts themselves. The distinguishability of characters, unity of time and scene settings, and even the drive of discussion (towards resolution) are akin to an Aristotelian description of *poiesis*.

¶ The Essence of *Poiesis:* Mimesis as Imitation and Representation

The most common translations of the Greek *mimesis* are "to make," "representation," and "imitation". In Plato's philosophy, *mimesis* refers to either the *process* of imitation, or the *product* of imitation (or both). Plato uses *mimesis* to refer to theatrical performance or acting, or what actors do in theatre/*poiesis*. By Plato's definition (and by all accounts of serious theories of theatre), theatre is

essentially mimetic. In theatre, *mimesis* is the representation, emulation, impersonation—the function of the actor, and the essence of the action. (Note that mimesis need not be exact in its mimicry; it moreso refers to the emulation or representation of character and drama.)

Representation is fundamentally intertwined throughout the concepts and practices of performance as well as our evolved understanding of politics. Even as the notion of representative government did not appear until the Middle Ages, and our notion of political representation did not appear until the modern era,[36] Plato is privy to a primitive concept of political representation as evidenced by his incorporation of the *organic*, or *organismic* metaphor of the *polis*. He says that the same faculties which operate and govern the individual human person, should also operate and govern the entire body of the polis. His framework of the tripartite soul applied to the political community at large (outlined soon), explicates this notion.

The Kallipolic Theatre of the *Republic*

One important thing to note about the subject and title of this most famous dialectic: the "republic" being discussed is not a republic at all; its title simply comes from *Res Publica*, the secondary Latin title as translated from the original *Politeia*, which more neutrally translated, may be rather taken as "constitution," or "the arrangement of the offices in a polis"[37]. Thus, the political

[36] Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Representation*, [1st ed.] (New York: Atherton Press, 1969), 2.
[37] Ann Hosein, *Political Science* (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015), 105.

community treated in the *Republic* will henceforth be referred to as the *polis,* or alternatively, his word for utopia, the *Kallipolis*, or "beautiful city".

Scattered about Plato's *Republic* are his disparagements of theatrical practices, hypothetical censorship of the consumable arts, and exile of most poets from the ideal political community. Having unleased as much reproach, Plato is popularly cited as being the great antagonist to theatre, [38] to whom Aristotle must later answer in defense of *Poetics*.[39] However, as others have done[40], I argue on the contrary—Plato is quite the opposite. While he does advocate for strong, anti-liberal censorship of the content performed, [41] his philosophy is far from anti-theatre. Plato is a theatre-critic precisely because he has his own strong claims of what the ideal form of theatre is, and for which the polis should strive. His *kallipolis*, as he himself explicitly admits, is the very zenith of theatre, fulfilling its highest purpose—promoting a just society.

Mimesis and Truth in *Republic*

In Book X, Socrates discusses with Glaucon his theory of mimesis—the epistemological spectrum of things true, towards only appearances of the truth.

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[38] Timothy Murray, *Mimesis, Masochism, & Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought* (University of Michigan Press, 1997).
[39] Aristotle's *Poetics*, S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, 3d ed. (New York: The Macmillan company, 1902).
[40] Several (Louis Dyer, "Plato as a Playwright,")
[41] Content-censorship, it must be noted, certainly constrains the freedom of the manners of performance, and quite possibly, its effectiveness. Still, Plato's conception of theatre is intentionally anti-liberal, openly intended to be both tightly controlled and used by the political actors for the same ends of the just society—namely, justice, as Socrates and his interlocutors have come to conceive of it in *Republic*.

This division between objects of truth and objects of appearance (see Appendix C for a charted representation of where these fall along Plato's "divided line") implies a distinction between real and unreal—that his theory of mimesis is an ontological claim. However, it may be also postulated that it is more a distinction between different realities—some *truer* than others. After all, the symbols and sentences before you may not themselves be the full truth of the ideas they represent or aim to convey, but they are still real as a method of conveyance, are they not? (But perhaps let us leave this deeper discussion to the ontologists.) So, what does *truth* mean for Plato?

Alétheia is Plato's Greek term for "truth". Esteemed modern philosopher and interpreter of Plato, Martin Heidegger interprets this "truth" as described in the Allegory of the Cave as meaning primarily "unhiddenness," and only secondarily, "correctness of vision"[42] However, it seems that Plato's insistence on telling the truth is not categorically consistent. For example, despite the fact that Plato seems to associates *mimesis* with fraud and concealment when speaking of Aristophanes' plays and in *Republic III*, he is not completely opposed to being the director of deceit (or perhaps more Platonically put, "appearances".) He outwardly advocates for concealment and deception in his Kallipolis in *Republic III*, when he and Glaucon agree on the deceptive public reasoning for the separation of classes:

> Gold and silver we will tell them that they have from God; the diviner metal is within them, and they have therefore no need of the dross which is current among men, and ought not to pollute the divine by any such earthly admixture;

[42] W. J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1974) pp. 57-58.

> for that commoner metal has been the source of many unholy deeds, but their own is undefiled. And they alone of all the citizens may not touch or handle silver or gold, or be under the same roof with them, or wear them, or drink from them. And this will be their salvation, and they will be the saviours of the State.

We might rephrase the question, then: what does *truth* mean for Plato, in the political sense? Well, it's obvious that the closer something is to the *ideal* of the very thing, the form (*eidos*), the truer Plato considers it to be. And his primary critique of *mimesis* is in its potential for a wide margin of error when conveying moral truths (as exemplified by the descriptions of adulterous gods in Homer). Let it be claimed, for our purposes, that the *practical* truth advocated for in the *polis*, is whatever (truth or deception) will be most expedient in the way of leading individuals and classes towards a virtuous convergence in the *Kallipolis*.

Kallipolic Theatre: The Claim

In Books III and X of Plato's *Republic* are offered the arguments by which Plato asserts the famous ontological hierarchy of reality. Of utmost reality are the ideals, or fixed truths, existing in the realm of the forms. These are followed by the particular, material instances of the form, those natural things which exist; and these, in turn, are followed by the realm of mimesis—an imitation would be farthest removed from the truth (an artistic rendering of the created thing). Though Plato's initial example of artistic imitation in Book X is that of a painting, the concept of imitation, or mimesis, is pointedly directed to refer to poetic art, particularly that of dramatic *poiesis*, or theatre.

For Plato, these are the lowest in the ranking of educational endeavors due to their moral and epistemological objectionability, and thus have no place in the

ideal political community described by Socrates in *Republic*. Plato even picks apart what Aristotle later called the highest form of *poiesis*, the Homerian epic— thus it is often assumed that all *poiesis* is included in Plato's scathingly critical analysis— most especially, the subsect of theatre. However, there is a form of dramatic mimesis seemingly missing, and although absent from Aristotle's analysis, we can infer it by some investigation into the implications of Plato's *Republic* a teleological hint from *Laws*: that of the Platonically perfect theatre of the Kallipolis.

What is strongly implied throughout the dialogues of Plato, almost so strongly as to be explicitly evident in the structure of his argument, is the notion that theatre (narrative involving characters which is not only spoken aloud but also acted out in bodily and actionable representation) is the very means by which his ideal political structure needs be carried out. Plato's *Republic* never truly banishes theatre *qua* theatre; rather, he questions whether or not the theatre practiced so widely throughout Athens is guided by someone with knowledge of the subjects being re-presented:

> …for that the good poet cannot compose well unless he knows his subject, and that he who has not this knowledge can never be a poet. …The real artist, who knew what he was imitating, would be interested in realities and not in imitations (*Republic,* 599a).

Furthermore, what he notes regarding "the real artist" points to the standard he has for guardians (the aristocratic politicians and warriors of the polis[43]) seems to be the same as that for the consummate artist as well:

> [The real artist] would desire to leave as memorials of himself works many and fair; and, instead of being the author of encomiums, he would prefer to be the theme of them. (*Republic,* 599a)

Thus, the vision for the best tragedians is that they are not merely authors of fiction, directors of transitory theatrics, or producers of a short-lived show—but authors of history, directors of whole human lives, producers of a society. Thus, the tragedian becomes the politician (who is already conflated with the philosopher), and vice-versa.

The Organismic Metaphor & the Tripartite Soul

Plato's is a philosophy which melds three primary elements of the tripartite soul—*logos*, *thymos*, and *eros/epithumêtikon*— as being mirrored in the same elements within the larger whole, the polis. I claim that the same parts of the soul are linked to, or associative with, three aspects of government with which he so frequently wrestles in his writings: right judgement (associated with *logos*, reason, the realm of the philosopher); power (associated with *thymos*, spirit, the realm of the politician-warrior); and appearance (associated with *eros/epithumêtikon*, appetite, the realm of the artist). When all three consummate, they create the consummate soul, and thus, the epitome of the ideal

[43] Plato, *Republic,* 525a: "And our guardian is both warrior and philosopher."

polis. Whereas the last of these gets a bad rap with Plato in name, in his description of the ideal polis, he proves to have no qualms with artifice when he advocates for crafting stories to tell the masses who will live according to the "metal" they supposedly have within them.[44]

The aspect of appearance (or aesthetics, or artifice) is necessary in the *carrying out* of the aims of the first two; while judgement of what is practically just is formulated by the reason, and the spirited *thymos* exercises power to enforce the justice of law, there needs be a complementary draw towards what is already rationally and mandatorily necessary. That which compels all humans most basically—in other words, humanity's lowest common denominator whether at one's best or worst—is the appetite. Plato recognizes this when he asserts and reasserts the necessity for guardians to only imitate the best of men, so that what is ideally desirable for the soul (and thus for the polis), becomes actually so, by artificial, artistic means. (Artificial in the original sense, in which Hobbes uses the term[45]). The same potentially dangerous arts which deceive the masses towards falsehoods[46], are necessary and instrumental for drawing the same towards the goods of reason, precisely because the human person at its weakest, succumbs to desirous tendencies.[47]

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[44] Ibid., 415
[45] For Hobbes, the artificer is human, as well as the material for art. "To describe the Nature of this Artificiall man, I will consider First the Matter thereof, and the Artificer; both which is Man." Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction.
[46] *Republic*, 598c.
[47] Ibid., 607c.

While Plato described the head of the polis, the philosopher-king and guardians, as having reason reign supreme in their own souls—in order they be representative, or conductive, of the logos for the community—he also explicitly concedes that the human soul necessarily has these three elements to varying degrees, and no one person has only one of these ensouled faculties[48]. The well-trained ruler, then, is by nature, primarily a philosopher, educated in the rational virtues first and foremost; then, in soul, has a certain degree of spirit in order to enforce and protect; and their weakest part, being the desirous part, should be trained by true *poiesis*, to love only those things which are of virtuous beauty.[49]

Finally, I will return to the concept of the tripartite soul as mirrored in the polis, as proving Plato's concept of the ideal theatrical artform: the polis itself. Notice that the mirroring between the soul and polis is tantamount to the mimesis Plato critiques. If the three primary elements of the soul are realities; and these three manifest in the human person; and this in turn is magnified when mirrored in the whole of society, is not the polis its own mimicry of that which is in the individual soul? Indeed, Plato admits to this in *Laws*, when he echoes the *Republic*'s hypothetical scenario of meeting and excluding the "divine" poets who request residency in the perfect polis. I will end with Plato's own words, both scenes excerpted here:

> And therefore when any one of these pantomimic gentlemen… comes to us,…we will fall down and worship him as a sweet and holy and wonderful

[48] Ibid., 571a.
[49] Ibid., 398b.

> being; but we must also inform him that in our State such as he are not permitted to exist; the law will not allow them…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. *Republic,* Book X, 398b

and finally,

> [H]ow shall we answer the divine men?...Best of strangers, we will say to them, we also according to our ability are tragic poets, and our tragedy is the best and noblest; for our whole state is an imitation of the best and noblest life, which we affirm to be indeed the very truth of tragedy. You are poets and we are poets, both makers of the same strains, rivals and antagonists in the noblest of dramas, which true law can alone perfect, as our hope is.

3

ARISTOTLE: Performativity Paralleled in *Politics* and *Poetics*

"All the world's a stage/ And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances/ And one man in his time plays many parts."
–William Shakespeare

The quote expressed above (and particularly that first line) is a well-known verse to the average English-speaker. Its sentiment is one familiar to each of the political theorists explored here, too. As Plato feared the transformation of the individual to become a mere imitator of imitators by the consumption of bad *poiesis*, so did he recognize the potential for *mimesis* to take over reality in the best form, through the theatre of the *polis*. Aristotle, his star student, had more than a few starkly dissenting opinions with his teacher, which he addressed in his own works—most notable among them *Politics* and the *Nichomachean Ethics*. Yet, he also expressed his own understanding of, and agreement with the sentiments found in this famous Shakespeare quote. Aristotle would have made the related claim that the characters on stage were extensions of those who watched them from the audience. Aristotle saw theatre itself as an ethical tool, a device by which the members of a good *polis* could rid themselves of their own vices by vicarious experience.

What follows is an analysis of Aristotle's axiology, an explication of his emphasis on *ethos*, the political parallels of such representation of character, and his paralleled concepts of regime and dramatic structure.

Aristotelian Axiology

In all of Aristotle's work is a clear hierarchy of values. His political philosophy begins at the end of *Nichomachean Ethics*. Born from the need for a science of legislation to direct the moral values of the *polis* and thus of each individual, the essence of *Politics* is that same teleological value of the Good. However, this virtue is different from that *telos* of justice which Plato seeks in *Republic*. *Eudaimonia* is the word for human flourishing. In standard Western philosophy up until Machiavelli, it was accepted as the *telos*, final cause, or ultimate goal for humankind. Throughout Aristotle's ethical philosophy (which pervades all of his other philosophies), the *eudaimonia* is concurrent with *aretê*—the highest aim of moral thought and conduct. Thus, an individual *eudaimonia* is only achievable through the pursuit of such "excellence in virtue," and such excellence in virtue is contingent upon the education and habit formation taught by the communities and environments they occupy. Thus, all of Aristotle's theories—and notably those of the *polis* and *poiesis*—are intended to converge in a constellation of Aristotelian axiology. Let us see what alignments may appear in the investigation of *Politics* and *Poetics*.

Aristotle's Causes

In his *Physics* and *Metaphysics*,[50] Aristotle outlines his four accounts of causality. One sees quite immediately, his teleological viewpoint by the presence of a fourth and "final cause"—the end purpose. One may also surmise from the application of such a simple same graph, that which Aristotle would value as most important in the hierarchy of values; whenever the *final cause* of any endeavor or object finds its *telos* in itself, that same endeavor or object is of greatest value.

The charts below analyse his view of *poiesis* and *politics,* as well as those of Plato and Hobbes, through the lens of causality.[51]

Aristotle's Four Causes	Plato's ***Mimesis***	Aristotle's ***Poetics***	**Theatre** as defined and theorized here
Material "that out of which"	Words; actors; characters; action theatre/venue; audience	Script[52]; sound; bodies; action; theater venue,	The requisite elements: (1) script, (2)actor(s), (3)audience, (4) venue, and (5) time
Formal "the form", "the account of what-it-is-to-be"	Narration & dramatic action	Classically-structured plot that conducts drama (complication, *anagnorisis*, etc.)	**Theatre**: the theatrical *event* and/or the theatrical *production*
Efficient "the primary source of the change or rest",	Poets	Those who put on the theatre: producers/ financiers	The audience, who enters the agreement to suspend disbelief
Final "the end, that for the sake of which a thing is done"	Didacticism	Audience's experience of *Katharsis* (purgation of negative emotions implies prevention of negative behavior)	(Final cause of Ideal Theatre is still debated) **Didacticism** (Plato); Audience's experience of ***Katharsis*** (Aristotle)

[50] Aristotle, (*Physics* II 3; *Metaphysics* V2).
[51] Also see Appendix D.
[52] For "script" refer to glossary definition

			Unification in Shared Experience (Contemporary)

Aristotle's Four Causes	**Theatre** as defined and theorized here	Plato's Polis in ***Republic***	Aristotle's ***Politics***	Hobbes's ***Leviathan***
Material "that out of which"	The Requisite Elements of Theatre (Script, Actors, Audience, Venue, Time)	Citizens; Specialized classes of citizenry	Smaller units of community, Citizens	"Man"[53]
Formal "the form", "the account of what-it-is-to-be"	**Theatre**: the theatrical *event* and/or the theatrical *production*; A structured, unified event of mimesis and dramatic action	The polis	A working, productive community of members	"that great Leviathan called a Commonwealth, or State (in Latin Civitas) which is but an Artificial Man"[54]
Efficient "the primary source of the change or rest"	The audience, who enters the agreement to suspend disbelief	The Philosopher-king(s)/Guardians	The founding/initiating members of the political community	"the Artificer" that is "Man"[55]
Final "the end, that for the sake of which a thing is done"	(Final cause of Ideal Theatre is still debated) **Didacticism** (Plato); Audience's experience of ***Katharsis*** (Aristotle) **Unification in Shared Experience** (Contemporary)	Justice, *Dikaiosynē*	The Individual Good; *Eudaimonia*	Freedom from fear of imminent death and danger; Freedom from constant civil war; =SURVIVAL

[53] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. Introduction.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

A Note on the Nature of the Polis

For Aristotle, the *polis* is a naturally-occurring human state of being. This is because the human species is, for Aristotle, a z*oon politikon,* or "political animal". Just as it is an idiosyncratic tendency for bees to live in large community, it is supposedly just as intrinsic to our nature, because we are naturally gregarious and born into communities. This assumption allows Aristotle to make many corresponding claims on human nature, including that of an ethical teleology.

Aristotle on *Ethos*

Although Aristotle conceives of plot as having prime importance to a tragedy, his treatment of the category of *character* within theatre is of great importance to his theory also, and of primary relevance to the paralleled political function. *Ethos,* or "character," in Aristotle's works (*Poetics, Ethics, Rhetoric,* and *Politics*) refers to the ethical character the venue of virtue in an individual or collective body, as well as the character-based persuasive aspect of effective rhetoric, and finally, to the characters in theatre and all other performative and literary arts. When comparing his accounts in *Poetics, Politics* and *Ethics*, one may find it astounding that "character" has no differentiation of Greek terminology. The fact that we derive our notions of literary and theatrical "characters" from *Poetics,* helps us to better understand the original Aristotelian understanding of the duty of the actor and of theatre. The concept of *mimesis* we inherit from Aristotle is not mere mimicry of another person; it is the intentional embodiment of that person's ethical character. This has great implications for the theatrical actor and political actor alike. Any political actor's responsibility in representing a political entity—be it his or her nation, a constituency, or the law itself—effectively means that they are responsible for

performing the *ethical character* of that entity. By thus extrapolating Aristotle's dramaturgical theory in *Poetics* towards the political actor, we find that we've arrived at the same ethical imperative for virtue in the *polis* as he makes in his *Politics*.[56]

Katharsis through *Ethos*, *Ethos* through Polis

From the perspective of *audience*, that third element of theatre, Aristotle claims the end purpose of tragedy (and, we extrapolate, all of drama and mimetic arts): *katharsis*. *Katharsis,* the purification or purgation of the emotions, especially pity and fear. Firstly, this shows us that for Aristotle, the final purpose of theatre is extrinsic to itself, and thus not nearly as valuable as the polis, whose own good resides it its own flourishing. But is it true in all cases of theatre?

In the emotional attachment to those surrogates on stage, Aristotle theorizes, the observer's own *ethos,* or moral character, could be temporarily attached to the *ethos* of the tragic protagonist. In other words, Oedipus gouges his eyes out so the good-willed Athenian can leave his own frustrations and focus on his journey toward *eudaimonia*.

If we extrapolate this same concept to the process in the theatre of the polis, we find that the experience of *katharsis* is not so one-sided. Any good *polis* will have the structure and script in place for its citizens to perform the character of that polis well. And what is the *ethos* of the good *polis* but *virtue* itself? Thus, any citizen of such a *polis,* being both *actor* and *audience* member, experiences the double action of katharsis—both a performance and a recipient experience of

[56] (an exciting discovery, if you ask me) Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politics*, Second edition. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), chap. IX.

the "drama" which the good *polis* is wont to produce—virtue itself. Whereas in the theater of tragedy, the Aristotelian audience experiences a one-sided vicarious release of negativity, in the theatre of a *polis*, *katharsis* is a circumnavigation through each political actor, of the very *ethos* (ideally, *arete*) which the *polis* performs.

Description of the Elements of Theatre

Here we come upon the opportunity to describe the basic elements of theatre. As mentioned in the Introduction, the three primary elements of theatre are (1) script, (2) actor(s), and (3) audience. These three elements (and several more) appear in Aristotle's theory of aesthetics as seen in *Poetics*; while much of modern theory aligns with Aristotle's basic proscriptions, some of the elements are specific to tragedy and Athenian *poiesis*, and thus proven to be non-essential to this more general theory of theatre.

Script

The script need not be a written text, either in the theatre or in the *polis*. The script is "all that can be transmitted from time to time and place to place; the basic code of the events,"[57] In theatre, if the script *is* a written text, it's referred to as "the text". The script also is founded upon, and conveys, the dramatic structure of that which is being performed. The equivalent script of a political community under a government is the law; the structure being conveyed through the performance and interpretation of the law is the foundational structure of the

[57] Schechner, *Performance Theory*, 72.

government. In the same way that an actor conveys the dramatic structure of the Oedipal tragedy through their performance of the text of *Oedipus Rex*, so does a law-abiding U.S. citizen affirm and convey their consent to be governed and to govern by popular sovereignty, by abiding by the law and performing their political duties.

Actor(s)

Actors are those who represent, who conduct the drama of the script through themselves. Actors can be individuals, collective bodies, or even non-human entities, such as institutions, or sound design—as long as they serve the function of conveying character, and are controlled by humans. The Greek chorus is an example of a unitary actor made of several individuals. The term refers to both theatrical actors and political actors, and the latter refers to any member (individual citizen, or a collective) within the polis, precisely because each constituent is a representative of some political aspect—be it their nation, their party, their community, themselves as part of the popular sovereignty—when performing their political duties. Thus, it is important to note that the term "political actor" is not limited to the obvious representatives and public officials—anyone operating within the polis in a political function, is an actor. The most essential role for an actor is action, and the unit of action with an identity is the act which they perform. More precisely, an *act* is a unified action which is done by a human, political or theatrical entity (actor) towards an end. It is thus nearly synonymous with performance (which is for a specific type of *end,* that is, for the good of another human entity—be it an individual or a collective body). And

action, too, is that which is done by a human person or an actor, though not in so identifiable an identity.

For Aristotle, it is the essential role of the actor to convey *ethos*. In the ethical political understanding, this holds true. But in the more realist descriptive sense, which we will see in Hobbes, this will change.

A Path from Which to Diverge

Aristotle became the standard in Western philosophy for centuries to come, providing the foundation for the works of Cicero and Thomas Aquinas. This thesis's third and final political philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, attested to the widespread import of Aristotle in 17th century England, stating that "[Aristotle's] opinions are at this day and in these parts of greater authority than any other human writings." Hobbes reemphasized this fact precisely by condemning Aristotelian philosophy and declaring its massive influence to have been the foolish ruin of his contemporary commonwealth.

4

HOBBES: The Mechanistic Art of Representation

"I'm really very sorry for you all, but it's an unjust world, and virtue is triumphant only in theatrical performances."
-W.S. Gilbert, *The Pirates of Penzance*

This quote from the classic musical, *Pirates of Penzance*, rings reminiscently of the sentiments of our next and final philosopher, Thomas Hobbes. Granted, "the father of modern political theory" would have phrased it quite a bit differently. For Hobbes, injustice is not real until the Leviathan is formed and the justice conceived; it is only in the great performance of politics that any concept of justice or virtue can be found. The only natural justice[58], he says, "is the Liberty each man hath…of doing anything, which in his own Judgement, and Reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means [for the preservation of his own Nature]"[59]. So, such grave wrongs as murder, robbery and kidnapping do not exist as injustices pre-politically—they are all technically

[58] "Jus naturale"
[59] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. XIV.

fair in man's original "state of nature"[60]—not unlike the "unjust world" of the pirate seas.

The "Art" of Politics

Hobbes was not a stranger to ancient Greek tales, nor was he lacking in his own heroic qualities. A lover of Homeric poetry himself, he translated the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey* into English for a public that was banning his political works at the time. Yet, already we see the stark distinction between his notion of the origin of justice and that of the Greeks, whose teleological philosophy aimed at the ultimate justice of the Good, and its accompanying *eudaimonia*, or human flourishing. Fundamental to Hobbes's conception of justice as man-made, is his refutation of Aristotelian metaphysics,[61] in favor of a mechanistic materialism.[62] Inspired by the physics of Galileo and other scientific contemporaries, his was the first of extant philosophy to put morality and politics on a scientific basis. His

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[60] The *state of nature* is Hobbes's conception of pre-political humanity; a state of continuous civil-war between individuals; his description for it, oft quoted is:

> In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short. –*Leviathan,* "The Incommodities of such a war"

[61] The same metaphysics which undergirded Aristotle's political and aesthetic theories

[62] The following excerpt is exemplary of this *mechanistic materialist* view, and so may help introduced what is meant by the term (Hobbes's conceptualization of the human body as made by God, the Artificer of Man):

> For what is the Heart, but a Spring; and the Nerves, but so many Strings; and the Joynts, but so many Wheeles, giving motion to the whole Body, such as was intended by the Artificer."—Ibid., chap. Introduction

systematic view is that of the the world as made of mechanical components (see footnote 47). Thus he offers an antidote to what he dubbed the "absurd"[63] Aristotelian standard, by resting his theory on the assertion that politics is as mechanical as any machine, artificial as any artform.

The Mimesis of Hobbes' Mechanical Materialism

The following excerpt puts in perspective the structured basis Hobbes has of the political community:

> …that great Leviathan Commonwealth, or State, (in Latin Civitas) which is but an Artificial Man…in which, the Sovereignty is an artificial Soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body; the Magistrates, and other Officers of Judicature and Execution, artificiall Joynts; Reward and Punishment…are the Nerves, that do the same in the Body Naturall; The Wealth and Riches of all the particular members, are the Strength; Salus Populi (the Peoples Safety) its Businesse; Counsellors, by whom all things needfull for it to know, are suggested unto it, are the Memory; Equity and Lawes, an artificiall Reason and Will; Concord, Health; Sedition, Sicknesse; and Civill War, Death.

Despite his distaste for Aristotle's concept of what is "natural," Hobbes seems to immediately embrace an *organic* or *organismic* metaphor very similar to the Plato's—that the state should be organized in the same way a person or organism, with the higher, rational parts ruling the lower, and each entity concentrating within it similar functions, faculties and states of being, to those a single person would need—though, of course, the total would be "of greater stature and strength than the Natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended,"[64]

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[63]Hobbes, *Leviathan*, III, 669.
[64] Ibid.

The organismic metaphor points to the inherent mimetic nature of this Leviathan of a "Man"[65], by which Man imitates both Man and God:

> To describe the Nature of this Artificiall man, I will consider first the Matter thereof, and the Artificer; both which is Man.
>
> For by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN…
>
> Nature (the art whereby God hath made and governes the world) is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an Artificial Animal.[66]
>
> Lastly, the Pacts and Covenants, by which the parts of this Body Politique were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that Fiat, or the Let Us Make Man, pronounced by God in the Creation.[67]

Firstly from these passages, we see that the nature of the Commonwealth is artificial,[68] created by human art, after the pattern of the existing art of God in creating Man—thus, Man as the "Artificer" of the State is imitating Nature's pattern, or God (in His creative capacity). Secondly, we see that the pattern which Man is imitating from, is Man himself; so, the building of political community is also mimetic of Man himself.

The "art" of theatre is similarly so: mimetic, it imitates and represents, embodies and emulates, *reality* in the initial form of *artifice* bound by social contract. The social contract of theatre (the willing suspension of disbelief between its participants, actors and audience alike) creates real boundaries, expectations, and responsibilities for its constituents—and thus, creates takes on its own reality, its own identity. Indeed, according to Hobbes, so does the

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[65] Note that throughout this chapter, "Man" will refer to humankind, as this is the term used by Hobbes.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. Intro.
[68] As "artificial" has been defined in the Introduction; that is, manmade.

Commonwealth—by its founding covenant, initial agreements, laws and norms, as well as its enforcement of them, an actual entity is structured and identified, personified by its Sovereign (preferably a King, for Hobbes).

Covenant and Contract in State and Theatre

Foundational Contract: The Agreement of Wills and the Analogy of the Suspension Bridge

Hobbes's social contract, the Covenant, is called such to stress its long-lasting and more strongly binding nature. Hobbes rightly emphasizes that the State cannot exist without subsequent *action*. If its contractual members—the subjects and the Sovereign—do not act according to their contractual will to rescind self-governing rights and carry out their new designated responsibilities, the State will cease to exist. Thus, the social contract is, in his theory, the foundation for the whole state; but it is one which, akin to a suspension bridge, is suspended by the engagement of the cables which hold it up. (If the reader would briefly entertain, I shall continue with this simple mechanical analogy in the spirit of Thomas Hobbes.)

The analogy of the suspension bridge is useful when finding the connections between the commonwealth and theatre. Unlike instances of arch-bridges which we find in nature—remaining stable by their natural downward weight upon the solid ground—the suspension bridge's platform is more ingeniously artificial. Its bottom, that platform of the bridge, is effectively carried by a cable which is attached to two anchorages. In this analogy, the platform is equivalent to the initial social contract—the agreement of wills among members

of a polis to co-associate; the cables that carry the platform are comparable to the action by all parties—the performance in accordance with that will; and the anchorages are analogous to the interpretation and enforcement of the law—the structures in place to hold people in their place and keep them accountable. The same is of the theatre, evident by the name for the social contract of theatre: that "willing suspension of disbelief". The first requisite factor before theatre can take place is an agreement of suspended reality, held only by the common will to experience that artifice, and maintained by the action of the participants—the actions of the actors who enforce the script, and the interpretation by the audience of the drama they witness by their senses. (A similar analogy will be made in Chapter 5, with regard to a more integrated theory of all three theorists' views of the polis.)

Subjection as Self-Protection, Sovereign as Representation

The so-called artificiality of the state (as opposed to Aristotle's natural nature of the polis) is evident to Hobbes in that the development of a polis is not instinctual to humans, as building a colony is for bees. It takes a deliberate sacrifice of one natural thing for another better good—that of protection—produced by the Covenant which becomes a state. Hobbes says that in accepting a place in the state, individuals "reduce all their Wills, by plurality of voices, unto one Will," effectively saying to their appointed Sovereign (be it a monarch, a collective of governing aristocrats, or the collective majority of the *demos*):

> I Authorise and give up my Right of Governing my selfe, to this Man, or to this Assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorise all his Actions in like manner.[69]

Hobbes's political theory states that the whole purpose of the State is the protection of the individuals who voluntarily constitute it. But why would self-protection be prioritized over the self-governance natural to all human individuals; why enter into such a contract of subjectivity? Hobbes's answer is his equivalent of "the Good" for the ancient Greeks: *survival*. The decision to enter such an agreement is self-interested, deliberate and rational—rational, because it greatly increases the likelihood of an individual's survival. Still, the logic of the Commonwealth rests not only in its coalescence, its safety in numbers—after all, the individuals entering the same commonwealth may be as untrustworthy as they were in the *state of nature*.[70] Rather, the real protection lies in the subsequent assignment of a Sovereign who will represent the people and thus simultaneously "self-govern" and "self-defend," the new *self* being that of the whole commonwealth.[71] Such self-defense entails a *responsibility* upon the Sovereign, to not only defend the unified state against foreign enemies, but also to provide law and enforcement for the protection of its constituent subjects, and own members (should the Sovereign be composed of a collective).

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[69] Ibid., "The Generation of a Commonwealth"
[70] For definition of *state of nature*, see footnote 47.
[71] Hobbes's political conception of representation was that of a sovereign body (whether an individual or a collective body) which takes on the role of ruling, and thus represents the whole citizenry under its purview (this differs from our contemporary liberal notion of equal political representation)

Audience's Parallel to the Commonwealth Subject

Thus far, I have attempted to steer the reader away from seeing the actor-audience dichotomy as strictly equivalent to politician-populace relationship. However, there *is* a structural significance to be pointed out within the sovereign-subject relationship. If the first Hobbesian contract (to form a commonwealth) is equivalent to the *willing suspension of disbelief* contract among all participants in the theatre, then the second contract (the submission to a sovereignty) also has an equivalent relationship. In theatre, this latter submission is that of the audience to the body of actors giving the performance.[72] By their attendance and attention, the audience temporarily gives up the natural control over their own imaginations and emotions, and grants that purview to the actor(s). In doing so, they temporarily sacrifice at least a part of their faculty of reason—that which deduces for them what is real and unreal—and willingly grant access to their emotional faculties. In "buying into" the play or theatrical production, they imagine the artifice as if it is reality; thus the audience is the last necessary element in the creation of a new concrete reality, the *event* of theatre.

What a shocking show of trust and vulnerability—akin to that trust in the Sovereign! But the submission to the power of the theatre is not without its benefits. The voluntary theatre-goer is also a self-interested individual, who

[72] To reiterate, the element of *actors* functionally refers to human actors, human collectives (e.g. a Greek chorus) as well as those elements of spectacle, music and sound—all of that which conveys character and drama.

enters into the second contract for the psycho-emotional reward of *katharsis*,[73] as described in the previous chapter on Aristotle. This exchange parallels quite perfectly with the Hobbesian individual's bargain. Both the audience's *katharsis* and the individual's *security* are psychological rewards, "freedoms from". *Katharsis*—the release of extreme emotions, particularly fear and pity—is thus *freedom from* pent-up emotions, particularly fear. Hobbes makes the equivalent claim that the benefit of members of a Commonwealth is their *freedom from* fear of violent death, which is imminent in the pre-political *state of nature*.

As the submission to the performance is not unrewarded, neither is it absolute. The audience members affirm this submission of imagination by their active attention, but they may opt-out of that second contract anytime by simply exiting the venue. Take note that such a venue, or theater, need not be spatial alone—venue here refers also to the conceptual venue of the collective attention, or collective mind, of all those participating in the theatre. The venue of the commonwealth, or state, is also conceptual as it is spatial—indeed, the term "theater" is already used quite frequently among politicos to refer to the abstract dimension of performative politics. (*Venue* will be discussed further in Chapter 5.)

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[73] *Katharsis* is the purification or purgation of the emotions, especially pity and fear; it occurs when audience members observe and thus vicariously live the plot, and emote through the characters represented on stage. According to Aristotle, it is the useful end of tragedy and theatre. (*Poetics*)

Action as Maintenance of the Commonwealth

Recall from the introduction that "art" refers to the deliberate application of human skill toward the creation or achievement of a project or product, and artifice is the product of human art—deliberate, manmade and concrete ("concrete," being that which exists in space and/or in time). "Artificial" is the quality of having been made by human art or skill. As we've noted, Hobbes's conception of the state in *Leviathan* is that of *artifice*, because of its material cause[74] (the concrete, living humans, existing in time) but the same commonwealth is also *art,* because the existence of the state depends on the continuous action and agreement of its constituents. Now, in a monarchy, as we've discussed, this may mean that the responsibility of governance has been given by the constituents to a single sovereign who holds absolute power, and thus is the only one capable of truly "acting" on behalf of the people—but the action and process of law and enforcement must still be continuously carried forth by the governed entities, equated by Hobbes to the human faculties and body parts.[75] The state exists in the minds and will of the people that constitute it, as much as it does in the material bodies that enforce it. If the constituting entities of the state, namely, the sovereign and constituents, no longer believe in the state, it ceases to exist. It is, in this way, exactly like theatre.

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[74] Per Aristotle's four causes; see Appendix D.
[75] See excerpt in previous section: "The Mimesis of Hobbes' Mechanical Materialism"

5

THE THEORY OF THE THEATRE-POLIS, CONCLUSION

If Everyone Drops the Act: The Fragility of both Theatre and Politics

This Hobbesian beginning to *social contract theory* makes for a very fragile scenario. Since the polis first exists in the collective mind, the whole infrastructure and force of the body politic rests on that alone—the willed concept of the polis. As in theatre, if the collective assembly drops the act—performers and audience both stop the script, look each other in the eyes and say "This isn't real, and none of us believe it's real, so let's just all go home," then the theatre that was in play a moment ago, ceases altogether. Without this mutual agreement and acceptance of make-believe, the "magic" of theatre—its soul, or its Sovereignty, as Hobbes would say—dies, and along with it, the unique reality of the theatre. Similarly, there is no polis if there is no covenant taken seriously—no structure, no script of norms and laws, no performance of political duties—all are contingent upon the collective will, and upon one another, to form that great methodical theatre, the polis.

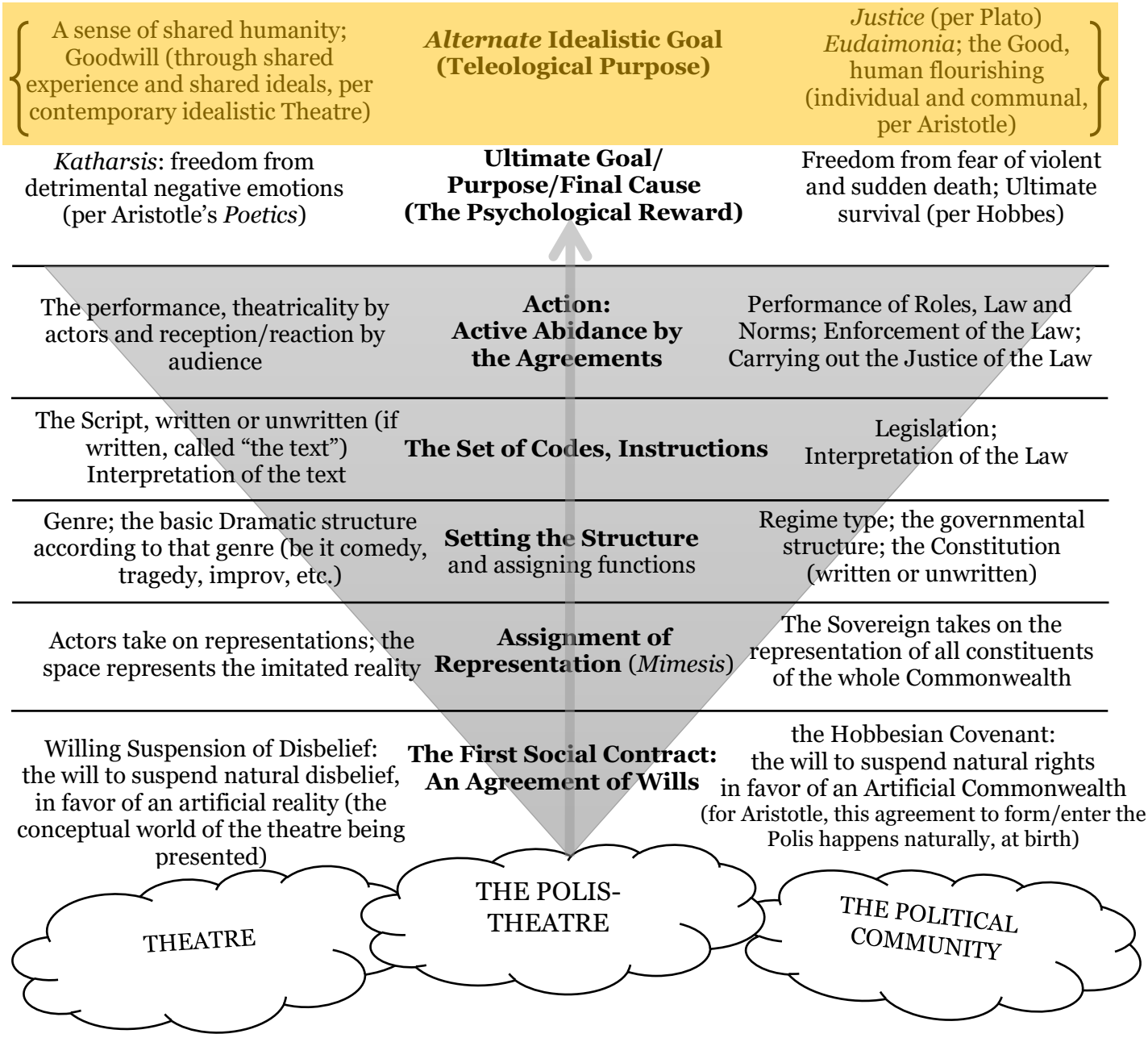
Luckily, like a thick bundle of twigs, the collective will towards the continued contract of the theatre of the commonwealth is hard to break unless

everyone (or at least, the majority) decide to disassemble. This is why civil war (as Hobbes so frequently references as the greatest fear) is such a conceptual battle.

A Couple of Additional, Conceptual Analogies

Recall the suspension bridge analogy to the theory of the Hobbesian state and the "suspension of disbelief" of theatre. In considering the theatre, and the merging of the three theorist's conceptions of the political community (polis, commonwealth, state), it is apparent that both realities rest on concept. Indeed, theatre and the polis both follow a blueprint found in natural reality—that is inherent in the *mimetic* nature of each. And it should further be admitted that the Hobbesian notion of politics is *grounded* in self-interest, while the Platonic-Aristotelian notion of politics is *grounded* in the idea of natural *telos* of the human person (*dikaiosynē* and *eudaimonia,* respectively). However, when we take these three theories into account, their contradictory foundations (the materialist artifice of one, and the teleological nature of the other two) leave us with no solid foundation at all. Thus, I propose that practicable politics, at least as we've observed it here, is best understood as founded upon theory, just as theatre is founded upon the abstract concept of drama. Thus, I have likened each of them being a "Castle on a Cloud"—each is a very real castle, but as history can attest, every cloud is bound to precipitate, and every instance of the theatre or polis proves finite. The following diagram shows the congealed theory of the Polis-Theatre as it stands, a Castle on a Cloud.

Model of the Great Theatre of the Polis, or "The Polis-Theatre"



The Fourth and Fifth Elements of the Polis-Theatre, Highlighted

The Venue (a.k.a. the Theater)

Venue, by my definition, includes those both spatial and non-spatial dimensions; it includes physical space for the coalescence of performance and

audience, physical bodies and acoustic embodiment of the performance, as well as occupation of the attention (i.e. minds) of its audience and its performers. I need not go too deep in description to convey the parallel importance of venue in politics—but I shall, at least, begin. Through politics, the polis establishes its own venue—the physical realm that the *polis* occupies and claims to be under its purview; the conceptual territory existing within and across unified minds which *will* themselves to be part of this polis, (by their collective covenant—the social contract—they *will* the polis into existence conceptually and by their willed action, *activate* it into concrete existence); any other infrastructure used by and for the polis, including nonspatial information and artificial intelligence (i.e. domains of the Internet).

This conceptualization of the venue may be likened to (though not synonymous with) the same connotations we attribute to "platform". A platform may be the physical one, upon which stands and speaks a politico; or it could refer to the conceptual 'political platform' upon which are built the practical intentions of a political actor or party; or it could even refer to the intangible yet concrete "social media platform" upon which a politico may curate text, image, and performance in order to disseminate even more widely such intentions. Venue is similarly. Venue also is also known as "the theat**er"** (note the -er as opposed to -re) in which occurs the theat**re**. A similar conceptualization is notable in the way politics and history often treat the word "theater": in war, a theater is an area in which important military events occurred (e.g. the Pacific Theater of WWII); but the "political theater" is a conceptual one, a venue for

performative politicians. (This existing notion of "political theat**er,**" of course, should not be confused with the polis-theatre, which refers to the entire process and product of political functioning, viewed *as* theatre.)

Overture, Propositions for Further Study

Potential scholarship developing from this thesis could be the expansion towards a more fully-fleshed survey of performativity in political philosophies (Machiavelli, Aquinas, Hegel, Marx and Hannah Arendt seem to have particular promise). Among these philosophers, or perhaps consequently, there may be opportunity for expanding and establishing new normative claims of how and in what conditions to best to use the elements of performance. For example, in a monarchical regime, there may be claims toward what sort of morally-bound methods and rules of performance the ideal monarch may efficaciously embody; what sorts of performative duties, rights and restrictions should citizens of a democracy be ideally held to, with this fundamental theory in mind (the intrinsic performativity of each political actor)?

In addition to criticisms, an expanded survey, and the development of new normative theories of performative politics, other potential projects suggestable by this thesis may include empirical research—for example: a study of the socially-measurable modes of performance within a single modern polis; the dramaturgical-structural patterns which characterized historical regimes and a theory of how certain modes may have effected certain revolutionary responses; a cross-national comparison of how the Internet and perhaps other globalized phenomena changes the modes of performance conducted in a polity; a

comparison of case studies of the use of performative demonstrations in democratic and non-democratic countries, the non-obviously redirected performativity in both and the varying implications of each; the possibilities are countless, and perhaps similar studies have been already done, but the unique lens of performativity grounded in its status as essential, rather than optional, may offer a newly nuanced approach.

Contemporary Applications, Implications

I anticipate that what may be of immediate interest beyond this thesis is an application of performativity to politics as we observe it practiced among constituencies in our contemporary moment, or perhaps applied to a comparison of differing political systems, or particular persons in offices of governments. While this is indeed would serve legitimate extrapolation from the implications of the theory, one conclusion of this thesis which I must re-emphasize is the amorality of my claim; or perhaps better stated, the initial moral neutrality of the performativity inherent in politics, and the great moral/ethical potential of its function. As with politics qua politics, its simply being is not a qualified moral statement, though the purpose of each of its manifestations may be seen as either good or bad, beneficial or harmful to the public; so it is with each manifestation of the theatricality of politics. One may choose to take Plato's initial concerns in the *Republic* seriously—to be wary of *all* performativity—or one may accept the synthesis of the arguments here, that politics is necessarily theatre, but not necessarily deceptive.

After all, why does performance, art, stories, and imitation exist in our world? Is all of it merely to deceive? Or is there a universal need to produce in order to convey, to imitate in order to capture and identify and compare and relate, to tell and absorb stories so as to empathize and hopefully, understand differently? The representation of the people, and of the ideas of people, in politics, may be varied and at times disproportionately represented, but they hold great potential in promoting, in any given system, the most basic goods of politics: the freedom from fear of imminent danger, communal unity, and perhaps even that great ideal of *eudaimonia*.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: A Comprehensive Glossary of Relevant Terms[76]

Act*- a unified action which is done by a human, political or theatrical entity (actor) towards an end; thus, nearly synonymous with performance (which is for a specific type of *end,* that is, for the good of another human entity—be it an individual or a collective body)

Action*- anything done by a human person or an actor

Actor*- an individual or collective body who actively (i.e. through action) represents something or someone (real or fictional); refers to both theatrical actors and political actors; the political actor refers to any member (individual citizen, or a collective) within the polis, precisely because each constituent is a representative of some political aspect (be it their nation, their party, their community, themselves as part of the popular sovereignty) when performing their political duties; thus, the term "political actor" is not limited to the obvious representatives and public officials.

Anagnorisis- GK recognition; "a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune"[77]

Arete- GK virtue, excellence. In Aristotelian ethics and political theory, the aim of the citizen of any polis, and the polis's goal for its citizens.

Ananke- GK necessity, force, constraint, inevitability, compulsion or necessity; along with *eikos*, one of the two premises of dramatic actions throughout *Poetics*.

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[76] **Bolded** term denotes the most central key terms; Asterisk (*) denotes a definition specific to this thesis, either defined or coined by the author; Definitions of Greek (GK) terms are derivative of descriptions from the following sources: (Patrice D. Rankine, *Aristotle and Black Drama : A Theater of Civil Disobedience* ; Zalta, "The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.")

[77] Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, l. 1452a.

Alétheia- GK Plato's Greek term for "truth"; Martin Heidegger interprets this "truth" as described in the Allegory of the Cave as meaning primarily "unhiddenness," and only secondarily, "correctness of vision"[78]

Commonwealth- Hobbes's term for political community, that "Leviathan" which comes into existence by the mutual agreement of all its members (the agreement may be read as implicit according to an early idea of tacit consent, or explicit in the law by which citizens actively abide). In Hobbes's words:

> "One Person, of whose Acts a great Multitude, by mutuall Covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the Author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient, for their Peace and Common Defence."[79]

Drama*- "the domain of the author, the composer, scenarist…the most essential aspect of the performance, the instruction, the action of the performance."; when applied to the realm of politics, the drama is the goings-on (See Chapter 3 for more on this)

Eikos- GK likeliness; along with *ananke*, one of the two premises of dramatic actions throughout *Poetics*.

Epistêmê-GK knowledge referring more specifically to theoretical knowledge, as opposed to *techne*, which is knowledge of craft. However: Aristotle (following Plato) did not see the two as strictly one or the other; it may be interpreted that *techne* is subsequent to, or perhaps even a subset of, *episteme*.[80] See chapter 3 for theatrical theoretical implications of such an observation.

Ethos-GK "character"; in Aristotle's works (*Poetics, Ethics, Rhetoric,* and *Politics*) refers to the ethical character (the venue of virtue in an individual or collective body), the character-based persuasive aspect of effective rhetoric, and to the characters in theatre and all other performative and literary arts. The fact that we derive our notions of literary/theatrical "characters" from *Poetics* helps us to better understand the original Aristotelian understanding of the duty of the actor and of theatre. The concept of *mimesis* we inherit from Aristotle is not mere mimicry of another person; it is the intentional embodiment of that person's ethical character. This has great implications for the theatrical actor and political actor alike. Any political actor's responsibility in representing a political entity—be it his or her nation, a constituency, or the law itself—effectively means that they are responsible for performing the *ethical character* of that entity. By thus extrapolating Aristotle's dramaturgical theory in *Poetics* towards the political

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[78] W. J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1974) pp. 57-58.
[79] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, "The Definition of the Commonwealth"
[80] Richard Parry, "Episteme and Techne," Zalta, "The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy."

actor, we find that we've arrived at the same ethical imperative for virtue in the *polis* as he makes in his *Politics*.[81]

Eudaimonia-GK happiness or well-being; in Platonic, Aristotelian, and most other ancient ethics, the highest aim of moral thought and conduct; virtue (*aretê*, excellence) necessary to attain *eudaimonia*.

Justice- notions of justice

> *Dikaiosynē*- justice; the specific kind of justice which dominates the central question of Plato's *Republic*, as opposed to Homeric *themis,* which seems to connote a more individual duty towards justice. For Plato, *dikaiosynē* is the highest good.
>
> *Themis*- GK justice; what is right; divine right. It is the *themis* of the individual to act justly, according to the moral norms of Homerian epics (as cited in *Poetics*). Plato uses a different term for "justice" in *Republic*. (See *dikaiosynē*)
>
> Thrasymachus's[82] notion of justice proposes that "Justice is nothing other than the advantage of the stronger" (*Republic* 338c); it "is obedience to laws" (339b), and it "is nothing but the advantage of another" (343c).
>
> Hobbes's notion of justice is that it is artificial, that is, an invention of man, valid only within the bounds and existence of an agreed-upon justice in the (also artificial) Commonwealth (or political community).

Katharsis- GK the purification or purgation of the emotions, especially pity and fear; according to Aristotle, it is the useful end of tragedy (*Poetics*)

Logos- GK "word," "reason/logic" "argument," "plan"; for Plato, *logos* is immanent both in the world and in the transcendent divine mind[83]; in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, 'the argument' or the logical element of persuasive rhetoric (the other two being ethos and pathos)

Mimesis- GK "**Imitation," "impersonation**" "representation," "emulation"

> theatre's essence is mimetic
>
> in Plato's work, may refer either to the *process* of imitation, or the *product* of imitation; Plato uses *mimesis* to refer to **theatrical performance** or **acting**, or what actors do in theatre/*poiesis*; Plato seems to associates *mimesis* with fraud and concealment when speaking of Aristophanes' plays and in *Republic III*; however, Plato also advocates for concealment/deception in his Kallipolis in *Republic III*, when he and

[81] (an exciting discovery, if you ask me) Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politics*, chap. IX.
[82] One of the first challengers in *Republic* to become an interlocuter with Socrates
[83] "Logos," Encyclopedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com

Glaucon agree on the deceptive public reasoning for the separation of classes

Representation-

in theatre, representation is *mimesis*, or impersonation—the function of the actor, and the essence of the action (note: mimesis need not be exact in its mimicry, it moreso refers to the emulation or representation of character and drama);

in Hobbes's political conception of representation was that of a sovereign body (whether an individual or a collective body) which took on the role of ruling, and thus representing the whole citizenry under its purview (differs from our contemporary liberal notion of equal representation)

Mythos- GK story, or plot; first of the six elements of tragedy, as described by Aristotle in *Poetics*[84]; Plato also compares *mythos* with *logos* in several of his writings

Performance- "an activity done by an individual or group in the presence of and for another individual or group."[85] By this definition—what the *polis* does—is performance because all the members of a polis are engaged in the act of politicking, which is for the *polis*. When one concedes to operate within a *polis,* it is assumed each member concedes until they commit an action that breaches that implicit social contract[86]. The territory of *performance* is very broad by this standard, which is why this thesis begins with the claim that politics is performative, and treats it as a basic assumption before moving on to the stronger claim that politics is theatre.

Etymology suggests an essence in the meaning of the alteration of form as not mere mimicry, but towards a completion, implying an end in itself:
from the old French, *par* (through, to completion) *fournir* (to furnish or provide to completion), to *parfourmer* (alteration) and *forme* (form); alteration of form

Performance theory/performance studies- a relatively recently developed, interdisciplinary academic field drawing primarily from anthropology, sociology, literary criticism, and research in the performing arts; centered by key principles including the 'presentation of self', 'restored behavior,' 'expressive culture', social drama and ritual;[87] formally developed as a course of study by Richard Schechner, Professor Emeritus of the Tisch School of the Arts, NYU; notable blazers of the initial theoretical trail include Kenneth Burke, Mikhail Bakhtin,

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[84] Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*.
[85] Schechner, *Performance Theory*.
[86] According to Thomas Hobbes's Second Law of Nature, which is now identified as early social contract theory. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. XIV.
[87] Schechner, *Performance Theory*. *Performance Studies : An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013).

Victor Turner, Erving Goffman and Mary Douglas.[88] For the purposes of this thesis, performance theory serves as a possible paradigm through which to evaluate any relevant event as performance; however, this thesis does not necessarily follow that paradigm unless stated, it merely takes inspiration from its influences and .

Performative utterance- (linguistics, as theorized by J.L. Austin[89]) an utterance which incites action; as opposed to a constative utterance, it does not "describe" or "report" anything—it is neither a true or false statement; rather, the performative utterance *is*, or *is part of*, the *doing* of an action; examples include vows, oaths, religious sacraments, bequeathings, bets, and namings; separated into three parts:

> Locutionary act- that which is explicit in the words and phrases of the utterance
> Illocutionary act- the intended meaning, the intended action of the utterance
> Perlocutionary act- the result of the performative action

The argument made in this thesis is that any utterance made in the performance of a theatre by actors, are in fact, performative utterances because the action they convey is *representation, imitation*, the very action of *portraying* the character. For example: even when an actor says "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark," (which is not a performative utterance in itself, rather is itself a constative utterance); but if the actor utters the sentence in the theatrical setting, they are actively making themselves embody the character Marcellus (which is the activity and responsibility of the actor), the same utterance is performative.

Now, extrapolating this to the political actor, whatever utterance is done in the role of representative on behalf of a political entity or the whole Commonwealth, that utterance would also be a performative utterance. For example, when the President of the U.S. meets with the representative(s) of another country in his/her capacity as Chief-Diplomat, every utterance (s)he makes to that representative is has a performative effect, in that it makes the President's actions and speech, those of the United States. Even if the linguistically constative utterance of "It has been

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[88] Several (Joy Connolly, "Review of Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy,";Carol Rosen, "Performance As Transformation: Richard Schechner's Theory of the Play/Social Process Knot,"; "Performance Studies | The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism")
[89] J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, *How To Do Things With Words* (Oxford University Press), https://www.oxfordscholarship.com

> a while since our last meeting"[90] activates the embodiment of the entire nation under that single person—the "we" does not refer to the persons of Xi Jinping and Donald Trump, but rather, to China and the United States.
>
> But the performative utterance is not limited only to political office-holders. Ordinary citizens make performative utterances when operating in their political capacity, performing political acts through speech. An example would be a person who chants "Black lives matter!" while marching. The saying of the superficially constative phrase is not only a declaration; it constitutes the act of protesting, and is thus a performative utterance. I argue, furthermore, that political speech is always performative, precisely because such speech always activates a political action.[91]

Performativity- the quality of any performance most concentrated in the locus of communication between performer and audience (*audience* not being a mere observer, but a potential participant as well[92]). Performativity implies the performer's intention to convey to the audience what they manifest in performance; it also implies a recognition of a mutual exchange between both parties. Further to note is that the roles of performer/audience may in some cases, be swapped, or both may simultaneously belong to the same entity.[93] Performativity is elemental to theatre. And theatre is a type of performance with unique aspects which create a new reality (consider it performance-plus).

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[90] Factbase, "Transcript Quote - Remarks: Donald Trump Meets With Xi Jinping of China in Buenos Aires - December 1, 2018," Factbase, https://factba.se/transcript/donald-trump-remarks-bilat-china-xi-buenos-aires-december-1-2018.

[91] In American constitutional jurisprudence, political speech now also includes the transference of money (*Buckley v. Valeo,* 1976), and symbolic acts such as flag burning (*Johnson v. Texas,* 1989), which furthers the point of its action-inducing performativity. Linguists may debate whether these instances may be considered "utterances," however.

[92] In the realm of theatre theory and practice, it is a widely accepted view that audiences are always passive participants, and sometimes active participants, in the theatre. Theatre cannot exist without audience, the event of audience-performance convergence being one of its primary elements. Performers often remark at the "energy" (or lack thereof) of certain audiences, which impact each performance or instance of theatre. Audience is arguably the most powerful factor in the fragility of a theatrical performance, for the impact on the audience is the *final cause* for which theatre is made (as noted by Aristotle).

[93] Imagine, for example, two ambassadors who meet for diplomatic conference on behalf of their respective nations—both are critically observing and being observed.

Peripeteia- GK "reversal"; "the turning point in a drama after which the plot moves steadily to its denouement"[94]; In Aristotle's *Poetics,* an essential aspect of the plot of a tragedy, the turn of the protagonist's good fortune to ill fate.

Polis-GK Greek term for political community in Aristotle's *Politics*; *Politics* treats the matter of the polis, not simply in our conception of the state. "Politics" comes from the adjective "politic" which comes from the Greek "polis". Just as athletics is what an athlete does, "politics" is what the *polis* does. The polis is the concrete subject, while politics is the abstract general characterization.[95]

Pratton(es)- GK "person (people) in action" the "doer" of an action;

Script- not necessarily a written text, the script is "all that can be transmitted from time to time and place to place; the basic code of the events,"[96] In theatre, if the script *is* a written text, it's referred to as "the text". The script also is founded upon, and conveys, the dramatic structure of that which is being performed. The equivalent script of a political community under a government is the law; the structure being conveyed through the performance and interpretation of the law is the foundational structure of the government. In the same way that an actor conveys the dramatic structure of the Oedipal tragedy through their performance of the text of *Oedipus Rex*, so does a law-abiding U.S. citizen affirm and convey their consent to be governed and to govern by popular sovereignty, by abiding by the law and performing their political duties.

Theater*- note the deliberate distinction between theatre and theater throughout this thesis; when observing this distinction generally, theater commonly refers to the venue (spatial or conceptual—for example, the "international theater of politics") in which performance occurs.

Theatre*- a series of mimetic actions based in some sort of *script*, which when performed, manifest a novel, concrete *event* with an identity of its own; the repetition of the same script nevertheless creates novel theatre because of the unique situation of time, place, and/or differences in the persons embodying and observing. Its primary elements[97] are: (1) *script*—that which is brought to life; (2) *actor*(s)—the bodies/persons who bring it to life; and (3) the attendance of an *audience*—for whom it is brought to life. Since theatre is a concrete occurrence, I consider the fourth and fifth requisite elements to be implied—that of (4) venue,

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[94] "Peripiteia" Encyclopedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/.
[95] Strauss, *History of Political Philosophy*, 65.
[96] Schechner, *Performance Theory*, 72.
[97] As distilled by several theatre theories, these are the most common and (arguably) the only essential elements. See similar example: Bentley, *What Is Theatre?*

called a theater[98], and (5) time (self-explanatory). The first three elements of theatre will be of primary pertinence in this thesis, as I consider them to be the most essential, and also the most pertinent to the philosophies soon to be analyzed.[99]

Theatre practitioner*- a person who actively produces, or engages, in the art of theatre. The terms are especially used to identify one who does so deliberately, or by trade.

Theatre-maker*- a person who, by any role or means, creates theatre. The terms are especially used to identify one who does so deliberately, or by trade. The following terms are some types of persons who contribute to the production of theatre, though (relevant to this thesis) not necessarily by trade, and not necessarily deliberately.

> Dramatist- a playwright, or one who engages in the creation of *script* for a performed drama
>
> Thespian- an actor or actress (also, *adj*. relating to drama or the theatre)
>
> Tragedian- an actor who specializes in tragic roles; also name for a playwright who writes tragedies

Theatricality- according to the influential 20th cent. literary theorist, Roland Barthes, is:

> "theater-minus-text," "a density of signs and sensations built up on stage starting from the written argument; it is that ecumenical perception of sensuous artifice –gesture, tone, distance, substance, light- which submerges the text beneath the profusion of its external language".[100]

Distilled, this means the non-textual elements of theatre, concentrated in the action of the actor. Theatricality "brings to life" a most essential aspect of theatre, that of character. It is one of the three elements of the polis-theatre.

Tragodia GK**/Tragedy**- According to Aristotle, "an imitation of an action which is serious, complete, of a certain magnitude, in language embellished…, in the form of action, not of narrative, and [cathartic] through pity and fear…". One of the four primary modes of *poiesis*, and one of the two dramatic poetries (the other being comedy); as opposed to comedy, uses characters who are better than in actual life; According to Aristotle, must have six elements: plot (*mythos*),

---

[98] The venue(s) of theatre, often called the theat**er**, may be spatial, non-spatial, or both. More on venues to come, in Chapter 4.

[99] See

[100] Roland Barthes, Critical Essays, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1972, p.26.

character (*ethos)*, diction (*lexis*), thought (*dianoia*), spectacle (*opsis*) and song (*melos*).[101]

Tripartite soul- the *Psyche* GK, according to Plato

> *Eros, or epithumêtikon*- the appetitive part of the soul
>
> *Thumos/thymos*- GK the spirited part of the Platonic tripartite soul which loves competition and victory;
>
> *Logos*- the rational part of the soul

Technê-GK "knowledge" "craft" or "art"; as compared with *episteme*, the knowledge of a skill, craft or art;

> Aristotle seems to make the distinction between *epistêmê* as pure theory and *technê* as practice. But this dichotomy is complicated because Aristotle refers to *technê* itself as a type of *epistêmê* "because it is a practice grounded in an 'account' — something involving theoretical understanding."[102]
>
> Plato, theoretical in his epistemology of "the forms" as he is, also seems to have the idea that *techne* is informed by theoretical knowledge.[103]

Zoon politikon- "political animal"; Aristotle's supposition that humans are naturally political, because they are naturally gregarious and born into communities; as opposed to Hobbes's view that politics is an art and the political community, an artifice.

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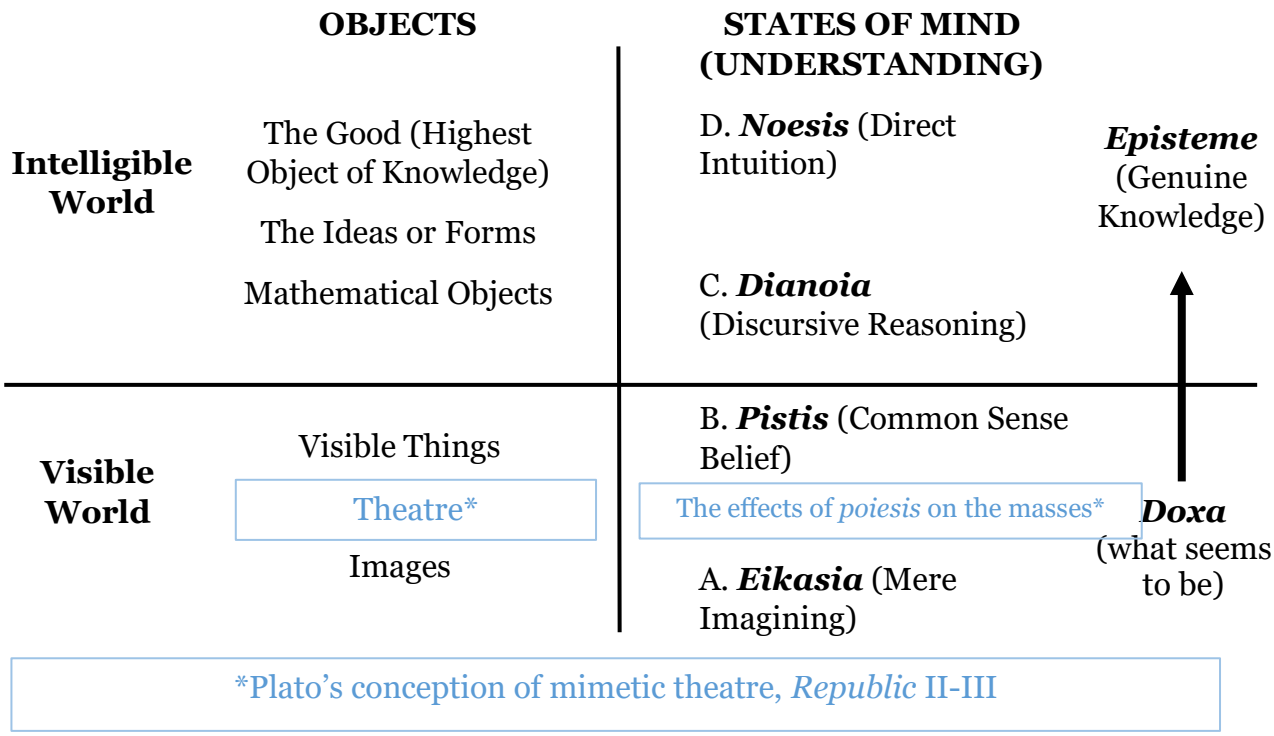
[101] Rankine reads these six elements as a set of "laws" of tragedy, laid down by Aristotle, which playwrights consciously challenge by their disobedience. (Rankine, *Aristotle and Black Drama*.)
[102] Zalta, "The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy," no. Episteme and Techne.
[103] Ibid.

APPENDIX B: Theory of Theatre in Plato's Divided Plane[104] (Ontological/Epistemological Axes)



[104] Based on pre-existing figure of the divided plane from John Messerly, "The Allegory of the Cave, The Divided Line, The Myth of the Sun," *Reason and Meaning* (blog), October 12, 2014, https://reasonandmeaning.com/2014/10/12/the-allegory-of-the-cave-the-divided-line-the-myth-of-the-sun/.

APPENDIX C: Tables to Explain the Theatre-Polis Parallel:

a. The Elements of Theatre→The Qualities of Theatre

Elements of Theatre	Definition	Function (what the elements do)	**What the elements bring**	**Qualities** of Theatre[105]
Script	the basic code of the events	**Imitation** (half of *mimesis)*	**Dramatic structure**	**Dramatic Structure**
Actor(s)	an individual or collective body who actively (i.e. through action) represents something or someone (real or fictional)	**Action**	**Action, Speech, Imitation**	**Representation** (the other half of *mimesis*)
Audience (Event)		**Reception**, **Participation** (Passive or active)	**Contract, Agreement to suspend their disbelief**	**Performativity, Contractual Nature**

b. The Elements of Theatre; Paralleled Levels of Politics; their Shared Qualities

Elements of Theatre	**Paralleled Elements of Political Community**	**Shared Qualities of the Theatre-Polis**	Explication
Script (which carries out the Drama)	Law (which carries out the Constitutional structure; regime type)	Structure	
Actor(s)	Constituent Bodies; Governing Bodies	Representation (Hobbes)	
Audience (Event)	All constituents of the one organismic body	Performativity; Interpretation of the Law	

[105] associated respectively to each element that intermediates their action

Venue[106] (Theater)			
Time[107] (boundaries set by the script, implicit agreement among participants, both actors and audience)	Regime/Governance period (depends on the Constitution, Sovereign's ability to maintain duties of contract)		

[106] Note that both Venue and Time are non-essential elements of theatre, because they are the universal sponsorship of all concrete action; in other words, they are requisite to theatre, but rather than creating theatre, they are themselves transformed by the creative action of theatre. They produce no essences of theatre

[107] See footnote 17.

APPENDIX D: Aristotle's Four Causes, Applied

a. The Causes of Theatre

Aristotle's Four Causes applied to compare notions of theatre (namely, theatre as it has evolved from Plato and Aristotle's notions to the contemporary Theory of Theatre presented here)

Aristotle's Four Causes	Plato's ***Mimesis***	Aristotle's ***Poetics***	**Theatre** as defined and theorized here
Material "that out of which"	Words; actors; characters; action theatre/venue; audience	Script[108]; sound; bodies; action; theater venue,	The requisite elements: (1) script, (2)actor(s), (3)audience, (4) venue, and (5) time
Formal "the form", "the account of what-it-is-to-be"	Narration & dramatic action	Classically-structured plot that conducts drama (complication, *anagnorisis*, etc.)	**Theatre**: the theatrical *event* and/or the theatrical *production*
Efficient "the primary source of the change or rest",	Poets	Those who put on the theatre: producers/ financiers	The audience, who enters the agreement to suspend disbelief
Final "the end, that for the sake of which a thing is done"	Didacticism	Audience's experience of *Katharsis* (purgation of negative emotions implies prevention of negative behavior)	(Final cause of Ideal Theatre is still debated) **Didacticism** (Plato); Audience's experience of ***Katharsis*** (Aristotle) **Unification in Shared Experience** (Contemporary)

[108] For "script" refer to glossary definition

b. The Causes of Politics, Compared to the Causes of Theatre

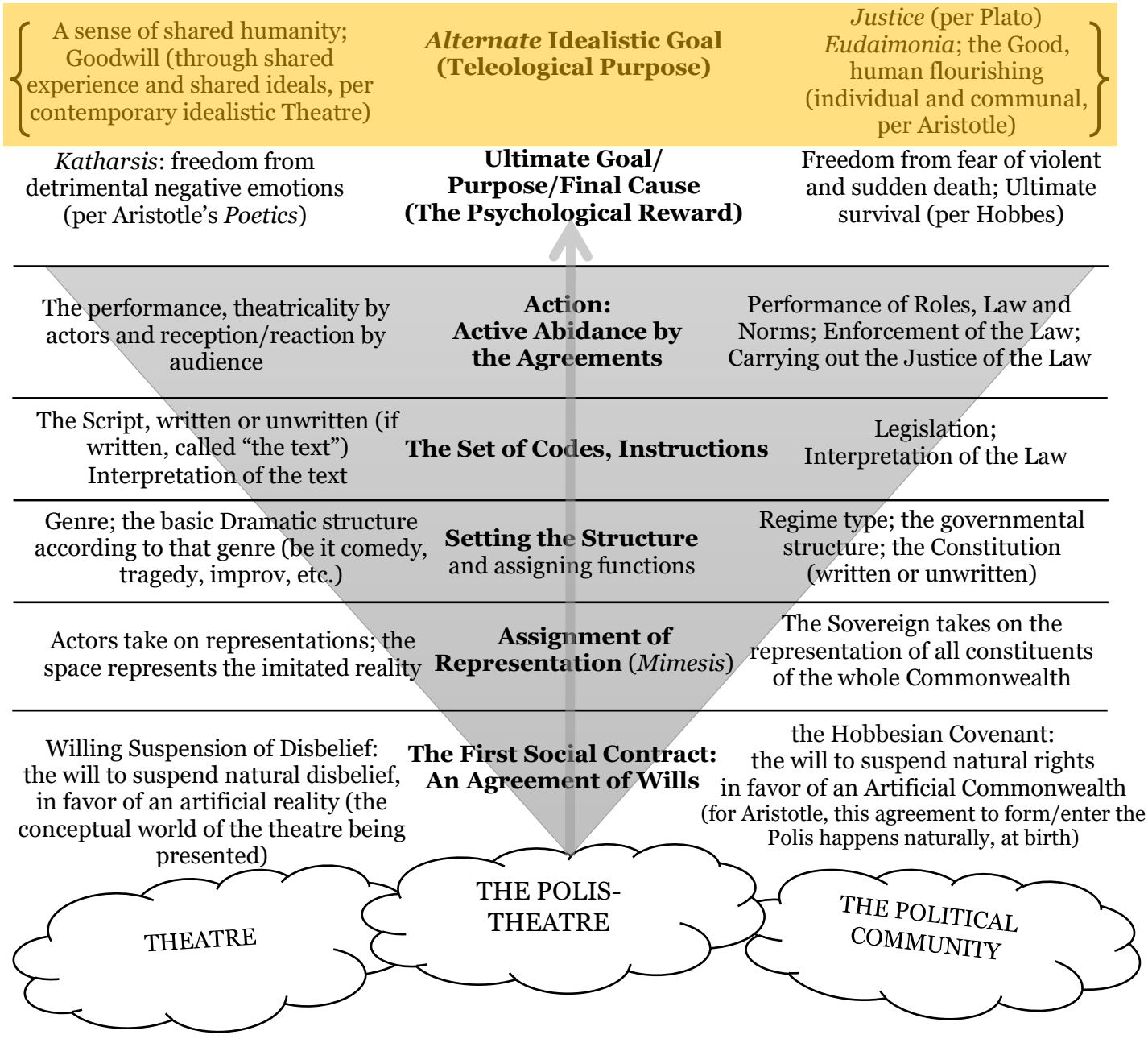
Analyzing Platonic, Aristotelean and Hobbesian Politics, Juxtaposed with Theatre

Aristotle's Four Causes	**Theatre** as defined and theorized here	Plato's Polis in ***Republic***	Aristotle's ***Politics***	Hobbes's ***Leviathan***
Material "that out of which"	The Requisite Elements of Theatre (Script, Actors, Audience, Venue, Time)	Citizens; Specialized classes of citizenry	Smaller units of community, Citizens	"Man"[109]
Formal "the form", "the account of what-it-is-to-be"	**Theatre**: the theatrical *event* and/or the theatrical *production*; A structured, unified event of mimesis and dramatic action	The polis	A working, productive community of members	"that great Leviathan called a Commonwealth, or State (in Latin Civitas) which is but an Artificial Man"[110]
Efficient "the primary source of the change or rest"	The audience, who enters the agreement to suspend disbelief	The Philosopher-king(s)/Guardians	The founding/initiating members of the political community	"the Artificer" that is "Man"[111]
Final "the end, that for the sake of which a thing is done"	(Final cause of Ideal Theatre is still debated) **Didacticism** (Plato); Audience's experience of ***Katharsis*** (Aristotle) **Unification in Shared Experience** (Contemporary)	Justice, *Dikaiosynē*	The Individual Good; *Eudaimonia*	Freedom from fear of imminent death and danger; Freedom from constant civil war; =SURVIVAL

[109] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. Introduction.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.

APPENDIX E: The "Castle on a Cloud" Analogy

A visual representation of the Realities of Theatre & Politics as formed on the mere agreement of wills; the Development of the Social Contract from Agreement to fully-fleshed Code of expectations and actions



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This paper represents my own work in accordance with University regulations.

Kateryn Lina McReynolds

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