

Abstract

This article examines the role of literature in society and its relationship with the populace, contrasting Plato's critique with the practical examples found in Lu Xun's works. Contrary to Plato's arguments in "The Republic," which posits literature as misleading and detrimental to moral education, this study underscores the significant role of literature in reflecting societal issues, stimulating critical thought, and facilitating social reform. Through an analysis of "Kong Yiji," a story by Lu Xun, the paper illustrates how literature can be a powerful tool for social critique and education. By portraying the life and tribulations of Kong Yiji, a marginalized scholar who faces ridicule and disenfranchisement, Lu Xun casts a critical eye on the era's educational and social systems. The story transcends personal tragedy, mapping onto broader issues of social injustice, moral degradation, and the devaluation of intellectual pursuits. In doing so, "Kong Yiji" refutes Plato's claim that literature estranges readers from truth and moral education. Instead, Lu Xun's work exemplifies how literature can foster a deep sense of empathy, illuminate societal truths, and motivate individuals towards contemplation and action. This article combines Plato's theoretical concerns with Lu Xun's literary practices to advocate the indispensable role of literature in society. The article argues that literature is a catalyst for empathy, critical thinking, and social progress. Far from being merely a source of amusement or moral hazard, literature is affirmed as an important tool for education, reflection, and the pursuit of social justice.