

# THE CHALLENGE OF “THE REPUBLIC”

Donald T. Williams on What Ought to Be

Plato banned the Poets from his state,  
Yet said, if one could make a sound defense  
In lilting verse with cogent arguments  
That they do more than merely imitate  
An imitation and dissimulate,  
He'd take them back again. And ever since  
Our best minds have been trying to convince  
His cautious Guardians of their mistake.

Sir Philip Sidney laid a firm foundation

In his divine “Defense of Poesy”:

The Poet gives us Virtue’s exaltation

More strong than History or Philosophy,

Concretely shows through his imagination

Not just what is, but more: what ought to be.

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