Julia Pfefferkorn | Antonino Spinelli [eds.]

Platonic Mimesis Revisited

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Contents

Contents

Revisiting Mimesis in Plato: An Introduction

Julia Pfefferkorn and Antonino Spinelli

> On peut dire que l'idée d'imitation est au
> centre même de la philosophie platonicienne.
> Auguste Diès[1]

The painter at work

A terracotta column-krater, at display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, shows a painter engaged in applying pigment to a stone sculpture of Heracles.[2] The statue, standing on a pedestal, is dominantly placed in the centre of the image and sticks out by its white colouring. We can identify Heracles by his characteristic items: club, bow, and lion-skin. The painter is standing at his right (from the spectator's perspective), holding a small bowl with paint in his left hand and his forearm resting on his upper left leg. With the spatula in his right hand he applies paint (that is, tinted wax) to Heracles' lion-skin. The bent-over posture and concentrated expression of the painter, who wears only a cap and a garment leaving his upper body bare, suggest expertise and experience. As we can assume from the column and *phialê* (libation bowl) at the far left, the whole scene probably takes place in a sanctuary.

There are four other figures grouped around the statue and the painter: to the bottom left a boy managing a brazier, which serves to heat the rods for spreading the wax. On the top left and right two deities supervise the painter's work: to the left the ruler of the gods, Zeus, with the sceptre in his right hand; to the right the personification of victory, Nike, represented as a graceful woman with open wings. Both deities are floating over the scene, in a seated position, facing each other. Perhaps their presence in the picture indicates the factors of correctness and success in the painter's work. The last figure is the most interesting: it is Heracles himself, sneaking in from the right, behind the painter's back and invisible to him. The sculpture's model, too, wears his lion-skin, bow, and club. He has lifted

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1 Diès 1927, 594.

2 This description of the krater makes use of the information provided on the webpage of the Metropolitan Museum (see the following page for the web address). The krater is original from Apulia and was crafted between 360 and 350 BC. It is a rare surviving representation of an artist at work, providing evidence of a colouring technique with liquid wax which is called 'encaustic'.

Terracotta column-krater (bowl for mixing wine and water). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, United States.
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/254649 (accessed 15/01/2021, public domain).

his right hand to mouth level, his index finger almost touching his lips, as if scrutinising the artistic quality of the statue: does it resemble him sufficiently? As spectators of the scene, we cannot but note that, ironically, the sculpture is somewhat more impressive than the original, having a more muscular build and its posture being more casual than that of the model.

In a number of ways this extraordinary krater depicts and anticipates the subject of the present volume: sculpture and figurative art, representation and original, the expertise of the artist, the criterion of correctness, success and failure in achieving similarity, and finally the *mise en abyme* of a painter depicting a sculpture and another painter at work, evoke key problems of Plato's unique, ambivalent, and philosophically and historically far-reaching treatment of the phenomenon of mimesis.

Mimesis in Greek Literature

Plato's use of the semantics of mimesis is unprecedented in the work of a single author, with respect both to the number of occurrences and to the range of philosophical arguments it is applied to. However, it should not be overlooked that the vocabulary was already in use in a great variety of connotations across many literary genres at Plato's time. Apart from providing an overview, a brief survey of the oldest sources and principal usages contemporary to Plato shows that many connotations of mimesis which have crucial significance in Plato are in fact pre-Platonic. Far from belittling Plato's creative capacities, tracing some of the aspects of the Platonic treatment of mimesis in earlier sources can help us understand why the semantics were so suitable, in many contexts, for Plato's philosophical aims.

It was Hermann Koller who in the 1950's directed scholarly attention to the question of the 'original meaning' of μίμησις and cognate terms.[3] His principal claim that the lexical field has its origin in ritual dance was rejected by later studies in view of a lack of evidence. Yet the more general assumption that the semantics originate in the context of musical performance is supported by the earliest occurrences of the verb μιμεῖσθαι (see below). Morphologically, the noun μῖμος is usually assumed to have been the first member of the word group, although there is no direct evidence for this hypothesis.[4] The μῖμος was an early

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3 Koller 1954, 38 ("Grundbedeutung"), see also 119. For criticism of Koller's claims see e.g. Moraux 1955, Else 1958, Sörbom 1966, 15–18, and Halliwell 2002, 15 n. 32. According to Sörbom, the original sense is metaphorical: 'to behave like a mime actor' (esp. 38–39).

4 See Else 1958, 76, 78; Sörbom 1966, 22–40, and critically Halliwell 2002, 17. On the mime as literary genre see Zimmermann 2011, 668 and on a possible influence of the mime on Plato see Cicchini in this volume. The earliest evidence for the noun is the much-discussed Aeschylus-fragment 75 Radt, where so-called 'bullroarers' (musical instruments

Sicilian dramatic genre which consisted of brief crude-comical sketches based on scenes from everyday life and portraying character types; the noun indicates both the genre and the performer of such sketches.

As observed by Stephen Halliwell, it is strikingly difficult to pinpoint the precise meaning of μιμεῖσθαι in the earliest occurrences, let alone to define something like an 'original sense' of the verb.[5] This is especially true for the very first evidence, a passage in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. The hymn tells us about a chorus of Delian maidens – a great 'wonder' (θαῦμα, 156) of never perishing fame – who 'enchant' (θέλγουσι, 161) an audience of varied provenience with their song. For they possess a particular kind of artistry:

πάντων δ' ἀνθρώπων φωνὰς καὶ κρεμβαλιαστὺν
μιμεῖσθ' ἴσασιν· φαίη δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἕκαστος
φθέγγεσθ'· οὕτω σφιν καλὴ συνάρηρεν ἀοιδή. (162–164)

The voices and the rhythmic clattering of all humans
They know how to 'represent'; each one would say
He himself is singing, so beautifully is their song fitted together.[6]

This is not the place to get drawn into the vortex of this puzzling passage (a temptation everyone working on mimesis will have experienced). But a brief survey effectively shows just how much the readings differ in regard to the concrete sense of μιμεῖσθαι: Sörbom, for instance, thinks that the young women perform „some kind of characterizations, concretely and vividly […] of different tribes", while Flashar argues that the verb refers here to the vocal representation of the sound of musical instruments and generally involves a transfer to a different level of realisation.[7] Barker writes that "[t]he poet is advertising the rhythmic and linguistic versatility of the Delian chorus".[8] Peponi, finally, suggests that the female dancers do not 'imitate' any voices or dialects, but rather (symbolically) 'represent' the audience and create a "shared sensibility" between performers and spectators.[9]

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able to create a sound similar to the voice of a bull) or their players are – either literally or metaphorically (cf. Halliwell 2002, 17–18) – termed μῖμοι.

5 Cf. Halliwell 2002, 17–19 with n. 39.

6 The text is that of Allen 1936; West 2003 has βαμβαλιαστύν instead of κρεμβαλιαστύν, but see Barker 1984, 40 n. 4 and Peponi 2009, 41–54 in favour of κρεμβαλιαστύν. The translation is a modified version of Peponi's (cf. p. 67 n. 74). Burkert 1979 suggests dating the hymn to 522 BC, much later than is commonly assumed.

7 Sörbom 1966, 58 and Flashar 1979, 80 ("Präsentation auf einer anderen Ebene", "Umsetzungsprozess auf einer anderen Ebene").

8 Barker 1984, 40 n. 40, along the same lines already Allen 1936, 225 ("the accomplishment ascribed to the Deliades is that of singing in dialect"). For μιμεῖσθαι meaning "to imitate a dialect" cf. also A. *Ch*. 563–564 where this is presumably the main sense.

9 Peponi 2009, esp. 64. Peponi apparently uses 'represent' not in the sense of 'portray in a performance' but in an abstract or metaphorical sense. On these crucial verses, see also

Whatever the precise meaning – and surely some of the mentioned readings may form part of it –, some details of these verses are worth pointing out in view of later Platonic usages of the μίμησις word group. First, the context is that of a choral performance: Peponi has convincingly interpreted φωνὰς καὶ κρεμβαλιαστύν as referring to the combination of song and dance in choral dance (χορεία).[10] Yet μιμεῖσθαι does not indicate the performance as such (cf. ὕμνον ἀείδουσιν, 161), but rather a specific kind of artistry or competence *within* this performative context (cf. ἴσασιν, 163; with Halliwell: "a type of artistic accomplishment"[11]). A reader of Plato's dialogues is here reminded of the *Laws* where choral dance is defined as being generally engaged with "representations of characters" (μιμήματα τρόπων, *Lg.* 655d5).[12] Second, with all due interpretative caution, we assume that the Deliades' special skill includes an element of 'self-likening' to the other, whether this may refer to the imitation or reproduction of dialects and local idioms, to the representation of instrumental sound by means of the voice, to the enactment of a way of feeling shared with the audience, or just the ability to perform choral dances of different cultural origins. What reunites all these readings is the fact that the μιμεῖσθαι always occurs through and by means of the Deliades' own bodies. As a result, the spectators who recognize their own cultural ways in the performance identify with the Maidens. Especially in the more straight-forward readings, this kind of 'self-likening' is reminiscent of the definition of μιμεῖσθαι we find in the *Republic* (393c4–5).[13] Third, in most readings 'versatility' is an important part of the Maidens' artistry (cf. πάντων δ' ἀνθρώπων, 162). The effect of the song on the audience is called an 'enchantment' (see above: θέλγουσι, 161); perhaps this enchantment includes the identification of the spectators with the performers and the ensuing disappearance of the dividing line between performance and spectatorship. Where mimesis is treated critically in Plato, the versatility of the mimetic performer, be it a dramatist or a sophist, is often an issue of concern.[14] The psychological 'power' of mimesis over its

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Halliwell 2002, 18; Kurke 2013, 147–149, and Olsen 2017, 158–163 (both relying on Peponi) as well as Vlasits in this volume.

10 Peponi 2009, 55. Cf. the definition of χορεία in Plato's *Laws*: 654b3–4, 664e8–665a3, 672e5–673b3.

11 Halliwell 2002, 18.

12 Indeed, the Hymn seems to be an important cultural backdrop for the *Laws*, concerning for example the laborious life and aging of humans, as well as the presence and participation of divinities at their festivities (653c7–d5). See Kurke 2013 on some of these and other parallels. On mimetic dance in the *Laws*, see Pfefferkorn in this volume.

13 Οὐκοῦν τό γε ὁμοιοῦν ἑαυτὸν ἄλλῳ ἢ κατὰ φωνὴν ἢ κατὰ σχῆμα μιμεῖσθαί ἐστιν ἐκεῖνον ᾧ ἄν τις ὁμοιοῖ; (ed. Slings). See also *Cra.* 423a1–b2 and *Sph.* 267a6–8.

14 See e.g. *R.* 395a2 (πολλὰ μιμήσεται), 596c2 (πάντα ποιεῖ); *Sph.* 233d9–234c7 (cf. πάντα ποιεῖν, 234b6). On versatile imitation in the *Republic* see the much-quoted reading of Belfiore 1984; on the relation between *Republic* X and the *Sophist* esp. Notomi 2011.

recipient, while it is developed both negatively (as wizardry and deceit) and positively (as enchantment), is an overarching and ever-present theme in Plato.[15]

Both aspects, that of 'self-likening' and that of versatility, seem also to be present in one of the three early occurrences of μιμεῖσθαι in Pindar: in the twelfth Pythian Ode, we read of Athena who "created the many-voiced song of the reed pipes" (αὐλῶν τεῦχε πάμφωνον μέλος, 19) in order to be able to 'imitate' (μιμήσαιτ', 21) with musical instruments the loud-sounding wailing of the Gorgon Euryale. The aulos is 'many-voiced', implying that it can produce a great variety of different sounds,[16] while the verb μιμεῖσθαι, in a certain way, suggests an act of 'self-likening' of the instrument's voice to that of Euryale in the sense that the song played with the aulos reminds the listener of wailing cries. In fragment 94b (Maehler) the female speaker expresses the intention to 'imitate' (μιμήσομ', 15) in her songs the loud voice of the Sirens. Again the verb appears to refer especially (but perhaps not only) to the production of sound, and once more the aulos is involved in the mimetic act (14). Not so in the third Pindaric passage, a fragment of a *hyporchêma* (a choral song worshipping Apollo) quoted by Plutarch, in which a dancer is asked to 'represent' (μιμέο, 3) a Pelasgian horse or a dog from Amyclae in his performance.[17]

The tentative translations of μιμεῖσθαι in the previous paragraphs mirror a well-known debate in scholarship on mimesis which extends far beyond these earliest occurrences and comprises Plato as well: 'imitation' vs. 'representation'. This debate, too, goes back to Koller who strongly argued in favour of 'representation' (*Darstellung*) in the sense of 'taking shape in dance' (*Gestaltwerdung im Tanz*) as opposed to 'imitation' (*Nachahmung*) in terms of a 'mechanical reproduction' (*mechanische Wiedergabe*).[18] Koller's claim was rejected in a famous article by Gerald Else, but continued to positively influence scholarship on mimesis, including the most recent monographs by Stephen Halliwell and Lidia Palumbo.[19] Indeed, in the above examples the use of 'imitate' is acceptable only if what we understand by this act of self-likening is not the 'production of a faithful copy', but rather the much broader meaning of 'creating similarity in sound or

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15 For wizardry see esp. *Sph*. 234b5, 235a1 (γόης), and 264d3–5 (deceit: τέχνη ἀπατητική), but also *Euthd*. 288b8 and *Hp.Ma*. 370e10–11; for enchantment (ἐπᾴδειν) *Lg*. 659e1, 664b4, 665c4, 666c5, 671a1, 812c6.

16 It is surely against this background that the aulos is excluded from the city in the *Republic* (399d3–5), cf. Lynch 2016 on the context of this passage.

17 Pi. fr. 107a* (Maehler), quoted by Plu. *Quaest. Conv*. 9.15. Thgn. 370 (Young) is some-times considered an early occurrence too, but the dating of these lines is unsure, cf. Else 1958, 77.

18 Koller 1954, 10, 12, 66.

19 See Else 1958 who makes a case for 'imitation' in all early occurrences, and Halliwell 2002, 16 with n. 38 as well as Palumbo 2008, 9 n. 1, 61, 239 who both prefer 'representa-tion'. Halliwell, however, insists that there is no single translation that is appropriate in all contexts.

shape' where that similarity is partly or even mostly an accomplishment of the recipient's associative capacities. This is especially true for the Sirens' song: in this case, what is called the 'imitation' in human voice or musical instruments is in fact the only enactment of their voice.[20] To many, 'representation' seems to be preferable, exactly because it shifts the focus from an implicit model to the enactment. But this translation has its limits as well: for example, in the *hyporchêma* mentioned above, we cannot at all be sure whether what is meant is really the 'representation' in dance of a dog or a horse (as in Plato's *Cratylus*: 423a1–b2) or rather the velocity of the dancer's foot movement (cf. ἐλελιζόμενος ποδὶ, 3) which is associated by the speaker to that of a horse and a hunting dog. In that case, the translation 'represent' would be misleading and a rendering such as 'move like' would be preferable. As the many different approaches in this volume demonstrate once more, our struggle with the semantics of mimesis starts with the insoluble question of its correct translation.

By the time of Plato all forms of the μίμησις word group are attested. The usage of the vocabulary has broadened in a way that it can hardly be classified, particularly as the implied sense is not always entirely clear.[21] The great majority of pre-Platonic and contemporary occurrences belong to the social and political context. Μιμεῖσθαι and cognate terms within this frame acquire the principal meaning of 'to take someone or something as an example or model', either in a strong sense and with the aim of assimilation[22] or, quite often, in the weaker, situational sense of 'to act like someone else'.[23] Both connotations can be found in Plato's earlier dialogues.[24] The former, while it provides the conceptual frame for the famous topos of *Imitatio Socratis* in Plato and Xenophon,[25] also paves the way for what could be called Plato's 'psychology of mimesis': the acquisition of character traits through mimesis, which, depending on the impersonated character,

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20 It is also true in the same sense for the sculpture of Heracles portrayed in the vase painting described at the beginning of this introduction: might this be the reason why Heracles remains invisible to the painter?

21 For attempts of classification see Flashar 1979, 79–83, Keuls 1978, 9–22, and esp. Halliwell 2009a, 109–116.

22 Cf. Hdt. 4.166.5 (synonym with παρισόω), E. *Hel.* 940, Isoc. 1.11.8, 3.61.7, 6.82.3, 9.75.4, 12.228.1 etc., X. *Mem.* 3.5.14.5, *Cyr.* 6.10.2, 6.13.5–6, *An.* 3.1.37.1.

23 Cf. Hdt. 5.67.2, 9.34.1, Th. 7.63.3.7, E. *Hipp.* 114, *El.* 1037, Isoc. 12.100.6, X. *Smp.* 2.27.1, *Cyr.* 1.3.10.3, referring to a mythical figure: Ar. *Pl.* 312. Sometimes both connotations are mingled, as in X. *Cyr.* 3.1.15.1–5.

24 See *Prt.* 326a3, *Grg.* 511a1–7, 513b3–8, *Mx.* 236e5, 248e3 (assimilation); *Prt.* 342b8, 348a3, *Hp.Ma.* 287a3, 292c3, *Euthd.* 301b2, 303e8 (situational); *Mx.* 238a5 ('to copy something from someone'); *Euthd.* 288b8–c1, *Hp.Mi.* 370e11 ('act like' mythical characters).

25 See X. *Mem.* 1.2.2–3, 4.2.40.5, Pl. *Ap.* 23c5, *Phd.* 105b6, *Alc.* I 108b5, [Pl.] *Hipparch.* 231a2–3, and Erler as well as Capra in this volume. If τις at *Hp.Ma.* 286c5 refers to Socrates, 287a3 (μιμούμενος ἐγὼ ἐκεῖνον) and 292c3–4 (μιμούμενος ἐκεῖνον) could be counted as instances of *Imitatio Socratis* by Socrates himself.

can represent either a risk or a potent means of moral education.[26] Customs, manners of speaking, or political systems of other peoples are a further frequent object of imitation or assimilation in contemporary sources.[27] In the present context it may be important to highlight that in some contemporary and at least one pre-Platonic passage a member of the μίμησις word group is opposed to παράδειγμα in the sense of 'model' or 'example'.[28] While the coupling of both terms acquires a key philosophical and metaphysical meaning in Plato,[29] his choice of words is anchored in tradition.

Aristotle attests a metaphysical use of the semantics by the Pythagoreans.[30] Within the context of the arts, the semantics of mimesis are, contrary to what was assumed by Koller, commonly used in reference to figurative and plastic art; in several passages the μίμησις vocabulary indicates an imitation or representation of 'outward appearance'.[31] Again, it must be emphasised that the negative connotation in terms of deceit and 'mere' appearance, pivotal in Plato, is pre-Platonic. The most famous example for this meaning is Euripides' *Helen* (412 BC), where the μίμημα (74) of Helen is an animated deceptive image (εἴδωλον, 34) fashioned by Hera out of the sky and made to look like (ὁμοιώσασ', 33) the true Helen.[32] Within the field of the musico-dramatic arts, there are some specific uses: the semantics may refer to the 'performance of a play' or to the 'portrayal or interpretation of a character'.[33] Especially women are a frequent object of dramatic mimesis: it is no coincidence that the representation of women is Socrates' first example of inadequate mimesis in the *Republic*.[34] In particular one passage in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* (146–156), in which the tragic poet Agathon explains that the author of plays must, by means of mimesis, make himself similar to the play's characters, is often seen as associated with the use of the mimesis

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26 See *R*. 395c3–d3 and *Lg*. 655d5–656b7.

27 Cf. Hdt. 2.104.21, 4.170.5; A. *Ch*. 564, Ar. *Ec*. 278; Isoc. 4.36.4, 11.17.9, 11.20.2, 12.153.3; X. *Oec*. 4.4.2.

28 Cf. Th. 2.37.2–3 (παράδειγμα δὲ μᾶλλον αὐτοὶ ὄντες τισὶν ἢ μιμούμενοι ἑτέρους), Isoc. 6.83.5–6, 13.17.7–18.1.

29 See Candiotto and Fronterotta in this volume.

30 Cf. Arist. *Metaph*. 987b10–14.

31 See Halliwell 2002, 22 *contra* Koller 1954, 36, 48. Painting: Hdt. 2.78.3, 2.86.4, X. *Mem*. 3.10.3.3; sculpture: Hdt. 2.132.4, 2.169.20, 3.37.8, Hp. *Vict*. 20.4, X. *Mem*. 3.10.8.5. In some other contexts not related to art the semantics of mimesis are used in the metaphorical sense of 'be an image of something/someone', 'resemble someone': Th. 1.95.3.4 (,an image of tyranny'), E. HF 1298, X. *Mem*. 1.6.3.4.

32 See also E. *Hel*. 875, Hp. *Vict*. 20.4, and X. *Mem*. 1.7.2.3.

33 Cf. Ar. *Th*. 850, *Pl*. 291, 306, *Ra*. 109.

34 See *R*. 395d6–7 (γυναῖκα μιμεῖσθαι ἄνδρας ὄντας) and in Greek drama A. *Pr*. 1005, S. Fr. 769 Radt, E. *Ba*. 980, Ar. *Th*. 154–156 (cf. 266–268).

vocabulary in *Republic* III.[35] A reference to dance can be found in Xenophon.[36] Among the plays handed down to us, the use of the μίμησις word group is almost exclusive to Aristophanes and Euripides.

Mimesis in Plato: philosophical themes and scholarly approaches

As stated further above, the occurrences in those Platonic dialogues that are usually classified as 'early' generally mirror contemporary usage of the mimesis vocabulary. In these works, mimesis is not yet a functional element of a philosophical argument. However, many occurrences in Plato's earlier works do exhibit a unifying feature that is of some philosophical interest: the semantics of mimesis are often used in relation to the interlocutors themselves and sometimes serve to illustrate a way of proceeding or a certain kind of behaviour in their conversation. A mythical character (*Euthd.* 288b7–c2, *Hi.Mi.* 370e10–11), one of the speakers themselves (*Alc.* 1 108b5, *Euthd.* 301b1–2, 303e7–8), or anonymous individuals *(Hp.Ma.* 287a3, 292c3–4, *Prt.* 348a3–4) are presented as models. Against this general background, the topos of *Imitatio Socratis*[37] appears both as a particular instance of this use and as an implicit characteristic of all Socratic dialogue. The first Platonic text in which mimesis becomes "the crux"[38] of a philosophical argument is the *Cratylus*. Mimesis is here introduced in the context of a discussion on the nature of names. Being initially connected with sensible features (such as the imitation of animal sounds), the concept is then projected onto a metaphysical dimension, as Socrates argues that the function of names is to represent the essence (οὐσία) of the things named (*Cra.* 423e7, 423e7).

   The *Republic* is the dialogue with the most occurrences of the mimesis word group, and it continues to be the most controversial with regard especially to the compatibility between Books II–III and X.[39] In Book III, mimesis is first used to define the form of narrative (διήγησις) specific to drama, in which the voice of an author-cum-narrator is omitted (*R.* 392c7–398b9), and immediately after serves to describe the expressive quality of harmony and rhythm (*R.* 398c1–401a8). Book X appears to broaden the perspective with respect to poetry and uses painting as

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35 Cf. later in the text vv. 266–268, and Halliwell 2002, 51 with n. 35 as well as Capra 2017.

36 See X. *Smp.* 2.21.2, 2.22.6, and 7.3.5; *An.* 6.1.9.5. Two other occurrences belonging to the context of music are E. IA 578 (to play Phrygian songs with the aulos) and IT 294 (to perceive the cries of the Erinyes in the roaring of bulls and the barking of dogs).

37 See further above, with note 25.

38 Halliwell 2002, 43.

39 The literature on mimesis in the *Republic* is extremely vast. See, among many others, Tate 1928 and 1932, Nehamas 1982, Annas 1982, Belfiore 1984, Asmis 1992, Janaway 1995, Osborn 1997, Gastaldi 1998 and 2007, Moss 2007, Halliwell 2011, Palumbo 2013, and Heath 2013. Both Destrée/Herrmann 2011 and Reid/DeLong 2018 contain several chapters on the subject.

a paradigm for the mimetic arts (*R.* 595a1–608c1): by means of two well-known images, the "three couches" (which draws on the metaphysics of the middle books) and the "mirror", mimesis is considerably downgraded as a practice of producing mere copies. A major thread in both books is the deep psychological influence attributed to mimesis.

In the *Phaedrus*, the verb μιμεῖσθαι occurs several times in the context of the discussion about beauty and love as ways for approaching the divine. Remarkably, the term has a clearly positive connotation, since it refers to the relation between sensible beings and forms (*Phdr.* 251a3) and to the human effort to emulate the gods (*Phdr.* 252d2, 253b5). In the *Sophist*, mimesis is discussed in the context of an attempt to determine, by means of a conceptual division, the nature of the sophist. The dialogue offers two definitions of μιμητικὴ τέχνη: a broader (*Sph.* 265b1–2) and a narrower one (*Sph.* 267a6–8), which roughly reflect the different usages of the term in the *Republic*. The discussion then concentrates on a 'negative' sense of μίμησις: the art of creating an image with the aim of deceiving. In the *Politicus*, mimesis is applied to the question of the best constitution: the Stranger argues that all state forms other than the rule of a wise king are (better or worse) 'imitations' of that ideal state form (*Plt.* 293d–e). Among these, the rule of law is considered the 'second best' constitution and therefore a 'good' mimesis of its model (*Plt.* 297b–e). In the *Philebus*, mimesis is mentioned as a property of music that accounts for its "impurity" (*Phlb.* 62c2). The *Timaeus* contains the main examples of 'metaphysical mimesis'[40] in Plato; in the narration of the world's genesis the whole sensible cosmos is said to be a μίμημα of an intelligible model (*Ti.* 48e6, 50c5, 51b6). Within the framework of a complex ontological hierarchy, mimetic relations of different kinds connect the three levels of the eternal intelligible model, the imperishable sensible cosmos, and mortal beings. In the *Laws*, finally, the majority of occurrences refer to mimetic dance. In a memorable passage in Book VII, the dialogue's project as a whole is defined the mimesis of the finest and best life (*Lg.* 817b4).

As is evident already from this brief survey, the way in which the semantics of mimesis pervade Plato's oeuvre is, to say the least, extraordinary. Across the dialogues they play a key role with respect to virtually every subject area scrutinised in Platonic thought: philosophy of language, aesthetics (music and visual arts, dance, and literature), psychology and ethics, politics and theology, epistemology, metaphysics, ontology, and cosmology. At the same time, the treatment and (moral) evaluation of mimesis in all these different contexts could not possibly be more ambivalent. This combination of great relevance and deep ambivalence is one principal reason why mimesis in Plato continues to be a subject of intense and controversial discussion.

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40 See Halliwell 2009a, 117–118.

The *Republic* has always been at the heart of the debate, and it has also had a strong impact on the history of aesthetics, initiating a tradition of studying literature and art as 'representational' phenomena.[41] Yet some authors have treated the subject in Plato in a more comprehensive way. Although interpretations vary considerably, three principal approaches or perspectives can be – very roughly – distinguished: the attempt to prove mimesis to be a unitary concept in Plato,[42] the opposite endeavour to demonstrate its heterogeneity and ambivalence,[43] and literary interpretations which take their start from the *Republic's* notion of *diêgêsis dia mimêseôs* and confront them with Plato's own work.[44]

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41 Auerbach's *Mimesis* (2015, first published 1946), and Walton's *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (1990) are probably the most well-known modern exponents of this tradition, though neither of them has much to say about Plato. See also McKeon 1957, Gebauer/Wulf 1992, and Petersen 2000. Halliwell 2002 provides the most detailed discussion of the role of mimesis in the history of aesthetics from the very beginnings to modernity.

42 Palumbo 2008 presents the most elaborate unitary reading (see below for a summary of her work). A unitary conception similar to Palumbo's had also been proposed by Kardaun 1993 ("bildhafte Darstellung", 43). Verdenius 1949 ascribes a "doctrine of artistic imitation" to Plato (36); in his wake see also Golden 1975. Koller 1954 distinguishes two different senses of mimesis in Plato, but on the basis of a unitary approach, insofar as he considers the second sense in *Republic* X, which is based on painting, as a corruption ("Verfälschung", 36) of the true meaning which originates in dance and does not allow for a distinction of subject and object (cf. 21, 36–40, 55, 63–68, 119). Sörbom 1966, 99–175 recognizes "a tendency towards an aesthetic use" of mimesis throughout Plato's oeuvre which he tries to trace back to the ancient mime, arguing that mimesis does not refer to copies of phenomena, but to concrete manifestations of a general subject-matter and its typical qualities (esp. 138–145). Leszl 2006 argues that painting is Plato's paradigm of mimesis, and that it is to be translated 'imitation' (ch. 26, esp. 254–255). One recent example of a unitary or 'systematic' reading is Poetsch 2019, 109–126.

43 The most well-known supporter of a heterogeneous approach is Halliwell 2002 (see below for more detail). Among early interpreters, especially McKeon 1957 (first published 1936) had emphasised the fluid "extensions and limitations" (120) of mimesis in Plato. Melberg 1995, 10–50 is best summarised in his own words: "Plato's *mimesis* is, in my reading, a movable concept, and every effort to make it reasonably unambiguous would be a betrayal of that floating ambiguity" (18). Other non-unitary readings, such as Philip 1961, Woodruff 1998 (2nd ed. 2014) or Schmitt 2010, distinguish two or more principal meanings of mimesis.

44 The narratological analysis by Finkelberg 2018 is a recent exponent of this approach. She contends that Plato's theory (in *Republic* III) agrees with his literary practice, in that all dialogues are "filtered through a single focus of perception" (123). Similarly, Zimbrich 1984 observes that Plato, besides the criticised kind of mimesis of the sensible world, performed by the poets, also conceived a 'philosophical' kind of mimesis in the *Republic*. This mimesis of true being, according to the author, is the basis for Plato's own writing. According to Blondell 2002, in each dialogue there are correspondences between the strategies of dramatic representation on the one hand, and the discursive or theoretical treatment of mimesis on the other. Büttner 2000 argues that for Plato the mimetic character of literature is not *per se* the reason for his condemnation of poetry and outlines a Platonic literature theory with three main evaluation criteria (377) that he

The monographs of Stephen Halliwell and Lidia Palumbo, who both contributed to this volume, are by far the most thorough and influential studies of the more recent period, offering two very different perspectives.

Stephen Halliwell's book *The Aesthetics of Mimesis. Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (2002) traces the history of mimesis in aesthetics and philosophy up to the modern age. Four chapters are dedicated to Plato. The author's principal aim is to bring to the fore the complexity of Plato's attitude to mimesis and of the notion itself, arguing that Plato does not have a fixed (negative) doctrine of mimesis. In a first survey of relevant dialogues, Halliwell insists on the exploratory character of Plato's treatment of mimesis in each dialogue, showing that it is deeply entangled with large and lastly inconclusive philosophical questions regarding "the whole relationship between human thought and reality" (70). Chapter II scrutinises the psychological power of mimesis on both reciters and audience which lies at the core of Plato's critique of poetry. According to Halliwell, this power is grounded in the Platonic assumption of a continuity between the real world and people represented in mimetic art. In the experience of mimetic art, other possible lives are emotionally absorbed and therefore uncritically internalised by the recipient. This key aspect of Plato's treatment of mimesis is then further explored with regard to the repudiation of 'the tragic' of which Plato, in Halliwell's view, offers the first conceptual outline. Platonic philosophy opposes and attempts to actively overcome tragedy because it is the medium of a "whole view of the world" (98) which is essentially hostile to human values and morality. In the final chapter, devoted to Plato's treatment of visual mimesis in *Republic* X, Halliwell emphasises the provocative character of the mirror analogy and suggests reading it as a challenge to redefine pictorial representation beyond truth-to-appearance, on account of which painting would be "cognitively superfluous" (139). It is Halliwell's contention that Plato criticises precisely that concept of mimesis which lies at the heart of the aesthetic tradition usually thought to have originated with Plato.

While Halliwell's monograph has a clear focus on aesthetic questions particularly in the *Republic*, Lidia Palumbo's study *μίμησις. Rappresentazione, teatro e mondo nei dialoghi di Platone e nella* Poetica *di Aristotele* (2008) offers an overall interpretation of Platonic philosophy focused on the ontological-metaphysical dimension of mimesis as a unitary notion, understood as representation and im-

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considers coherent with Plato's own production. Regali 2012, 99–147, who concentrates on the *Timaeus-Critias*, claims that both the Atlantis myth and Timeaus' cosmological story are explicitly presented as forms of mimesis and that they match the criteria poetry must fulfil to be admitted in the *Republic*'s ideal city. See also Ausland 1997 (according to whom Plato's dialogues do not purport to expound any philosophical doctrine because of their dramatic character), Miller 1999 (who conceives of Plato's dialogues as a "reappropriation" of tragic mimesis) and, for a detailed scrutiny of the classification of poetry in *Republic* III, Halliwell 2009b.

age-making. Palumbo argues that Plato's understanding of mimesis cannot be separated from his metaphysical assumption that the entire empirical world is an image and therefore also a representation of the invisible world of Forms. In addition to the classic three-degree descending structure illustrated in the tenth book of the *Republic* (Forms, empirical world, images of the empirical world), the author also highlights kinds of images that go beyond the simple version of this scheme, since they do not imply a departure, but an approach to the original dimension of Forms: the representations, words and thoughts that constitute philosophy. Palumbo claims that dialogical philosophy, understood as a "theatre of Forms", is conceived by Plato on the model of Attic theatre, while also serving as an alternative to it. In affirming Plato's debt to Attic drama as the original model for the very notion of representation, she comes to characterise the *chôra* – i.e. the place where empirical entities make their appearance as representations of Forms – as the metaphysical equivalent of a theatre stage. In terms of philosophical depth and comprehensiveness of the investigation, this study remains an impressive attempt to interpret mimesis in Plato in a unitary perspective.

Since then, several collective volumes have been published,[45] yet they all have a wider historical scope, rather than concentrating on Plato. By contrast, this collection is entirely dedicated to mimesis in Plato, offering sixteen fresh re-examinations of the philosopher's treatment of the subject across all relevant dialogues. One advantage of a collective volume over a monograph is the possibility to present in a parallel way a great variety of scholarly approaches to be confronted by the reader. This is one of the two principal aims of this book, which contains contributions both by established scholars and by junior researchers with different academic and cultural backgrounds. The second is to overcome the strong traditional focus on aesthetic questions in the study of Platonic mimesis and instead to take into consideration, in a context-sensitive way, the entire range of application of the semantics of mimesis in Plato, by proposing both cross-dialogue interpretations and individual readings of single dialogues in their own right.

The present volume

With the exception of Laura Candiotto's contribution, the present volume collects the papers presented at the homonymous conference, held in Tübingen (Germany) on 2 – 5 May 2019. The volume is opened by *Stephen Halliwell*'s contribution who not only gives a comprehensive overview of the different usages of the mimesis vocabulary throughout Plato's oeuvre, but also provides profound insights on mostly overlooked difficulties of interpretation linked to the

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45 See e.g. Koch/Vöhler/Voss 2010; Isomaa et al. 2012; Reid/DeLong 2018.

heterogenous contexts of the occurrences, arguing for the absence of unity and systematicity in Plato's handling of the mimesis semantics.

The subsequent papers are ordered according to a roughly chronological criterion that aims to help the reader's orientation in the multiform framework of the subject matter. *Michael Erler* focuses on the educational value of imitation in Plato's early writings as well as in the *Laws*, showing that in the early dialogues Socrates acts as a role model for his interlocutors, which reflects contemporary pedagogical practices and anticipates the adoption of Socrates as a literary character in later authors. By means of an analysis of the performative level present in the dialogues, he thus highlights an as yet neglected positive usage of mimesis in Plato's literary practice.

Andrea Capra's contribution provides, on the basis of literary and archaeological evidence, new insights into the role of the Socrates iconography within Plato's attempts to establish his dialogues as a new genre in competition with Athenian theatre, identifying parallels with the iconography of Dionysus as the patron of Attic drama. The paper thus highlights a further mimetic element in Plato's activity as an author. *Anna Pavani* opens the series of contributions centred on specific dialogues with her analysis of mimesis in the *Cratylus*. She shows that the discussion of mimesis in this work, which initially regards merely vocal imitation, is actually interwoven with several ontological and metaphysical problems such as the difficulties of 'imitating' an essence and of defining the very nature of image and representation. *Laura Candiotto* takes a different perspective on the metaphysical dimension of Platonic mimesis by addressing the systematic relation between mimesis and recollection. She argues that mimesis has a crucial epistemic function for philosophical recollection. For this purpose, she analyses the notion of recollection presented in the *Phaedrus* and the *Phaedo* in connection with the metaphysical picture that emerges from the *Timaeus*' account of the sensible world as a μίμημα of the intelligible.

Elenio Cicchini's chapter claims an influence of Sophron's mimes on the origin of Plato's dialogic genre, relying on a number of ancient sources. He provides an investigation of the notion of *êthopoiia* in its two meanings of shaping a literary character and forming somebody's character, taking into consideration reflections from modern authors on mimic representation. He identifies the simple representation of a way of life (without dramatic action) which displays somebody's bare nature and character as the common element of Sophronic mime and Platonic ethics. *Justin Vlasits* investigates the relation between mimesis and music in the *Republic*, arguing for a unitary account of mimesis within this dialogue. His suggestions on how Plato's statements on the mimetic character of determined harmonies and rhythms should be understood lead him to the assertion that the general meaning of mimesis in the *Republic* is "representation by resemblance". *Irmgard Männlein-Robert*'s contribution identifies both in the *Republic* and in the *Laws* a kind of mimesis that pertains specifically to philosophers. This kind of mimesis, as opposed to the kind of representation performed by the painter in

Republic X, strives for the good as a divine model and is based on the intellectual activity of thought. It further entails a political, ethical and theological dimension and is tightly connected to the *topos* of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ.

Lidia Palumbo contributes the first of four chapters dedicated to mimesis in the *Sophist*. Her principal aim is to show that mimesis is not only discussed in this dialogue, but also practised by the author who stages mimetic characters that represent, through their way of acting and arguing, the philosophical concepts at stake in the discussion. On this reading, the Eleatic Stranger impersonates the form of otherness, whereas the elusiveness of the sophist reflects the deceptive nature of non-being. *Michele Abbate*'s text focuses on the definition of the sophist as a μιμητὴς τῶν ὄντων, which is linked to his characterisation as a deceiver, an illusionist and a sorcerer. Abbate shows that the sophist and the philosopher share the *logos* as their specific instrument, but differ in their goals: the sophist uses it to unfold his deceptive art, the philosopher to describe the nature of being. The contrast between the sophist and the philosopher is also central in *Alexandra Alván León*'s contribution that starts with an in-depth analysis of the different definitions of the sophist provided in the dialogue. This leads her to address the question of the relation between non-being and image as well as to investigate the role of the key concepts of sameness and otherness in the underlying ontology. *Benedikt Strobel* provides a detailed analysis of the relation between image and falsehood in the *Sophist*. With the support of subtle distinctions he guides the reader through the different types of images and false beliefs that are discussed in the dialogue, thus delivering a key for understanding the question of falsehood in the *Sophist*.

The last four chapters are dedicated to Plato's very last writings on mimesis in the *Politicus*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws*. *Francesco Fronterotta* investigates the role of mimesis in the *Timaeus* with reference to the creation of the sensible universe, providing a comprehensive picture of this classical example of metaphysical mimesis in Plato, that helps understanding the intricate relations between the χώρα, the Demiurge and the Forms. *Antonino Spinelli* sheds light on another aspect of mimesis in the *Timaeus*, consisting in Plato's claim that astronomy, music and gymnastics are means through which human beings are able to 'imitate' the world soul and the world body. He further shows that this kind of anagogic mimesis is inscribed in a complex ontological picture, in which the sensible cosmos functions at the same time as an image of the intelligible realm and as a model for human activity. *José Antonio Giménez*' contribution is focused on the *Politicus*' statement that the rule of laws is the second best constitution and as such is to be considered as a mimesis of the ideal rule of a wise king. In discussing several much-debated problems linked to this assumption, he suggests that the claim is to be understood in a negative and limitative sense, insofar as the constitution of laws prevents false statesmen, i.e. sophists, from usurping power. In the conclusive chapter, *Julia Pfefferkorn* investigates the striking emphasis on mimetic choral dance in the *Laws*' project of moral education. She argues

that the prominence of choral dance reflects the pivotal role of *sôphrosynê* in this dialogue, since dance is conceptualised as a physical expression of ordered pleasure and thus becomes a symbolic image of *sôphrosynê*. This correspondence between the *Laws*' moral psychology and its aesthetics is shown to be based on an 'eikastic' (pictorial) notion of mimesis.[46]

Acknowledgements

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The Shifting Problems of Mimesis in Plato

Stephen Halliwell

οὐ ταὐτὸν λέγων πανταχῇ φανεῖται, ἵνα ἄν τις ἐκ ῥᾳδίας
τὸ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς βούλημα εἶδεν [...]

"Plato will clearly be seen not to be saying the same thing everywhere,
in such a way as to make it easy to discern his meaning [...]"
(Plotinus, *Enneads* 4.8.1.27–8)[1]

Abstract

This paper argues that the semantics of mimesis and related terms in Plato's dialogues are far less stable than orthodox accounts claim. After some preliminary remarks on the intricate implications of the *Republic*'s Cave allegory in this respect, I focus first on difficulties of interpretation raised by mimesis vocabulary in the *Sophist*, including the much-discussed dichotomy of *eikastikê* and *phantastikê*, whose complications make it a provisional and ultimately discarded attempt to distinguish between reliable and unreliable forms of representation. In the *Republic*, the semantics of mimesis expand and contract according to the needs of different stages of the argument, as well as shifting between negative and positive evaluations. Part of my analysis concerns the *Republic*'s series of comparisons between philosophers and painters, comparisons which are at odds with Socrates' reductive treatment of painting in Book 10. The *Sophist* calls mimesis a 'multifarious class' of entities: no single argument in Plato supplies a definitive way of theorising its conceptual ramifications; we should abandon talk of 'Plato's doctrine' of mimesis.

We are living, it is tempting to say, in hyper-mimetic times: in an age not only saturated to an unprecedented degree with images of every kind, but one in which media of simulation and "virtual reality", above all in the application of digital technologies, have proliferated into almost every corner of human existence. Various aspects of this state of affairs have elicited cultural analyses, such as Umberto Eco's concept of "hyperreality" and Baudrillard's theory of "simulacra" (both of which, however, predated the full impact of the digital revolution), which purport to expose the perils of what is taken to be a distinctively (post-)modern condition. Yet concerns of this kind have a much longer ancestry: they stretch back, in

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1 All translations are my own.

fact, to the oldest and most influential of all critiques of the cultural workings of simulation and image-making, the Cave of Plato's *Republic*. The notion of a hyper-mimetic age might, then, be trenchantly reformulated by the metaphorical proposition that we are now collectively acting out a heightened Platonic scenario, a version of the Cave in which the digital screen is the Cave wall miniaturised but multiplied in every area of life. Such grandiose and sweeping diagnoses of the state of the human world exercise an instinctive appeal for many, but caution is in order on more levels than one. Simulation, like the more traditional category of the "image", has multiple forms, uses, and consequences; there is a world of difference between a computer screen which mediates a realm of immersive fantasy and one which allows a surgeon to operate on a human brain. But over-simplification is also a risk with reference to Plato's own thinking, most specifically, for present purposes, in relation to the many contexts in the dialogues where questions of mimesis arise. Those contexts have too often been reduced, I believe, to manifestations of a single, and deeply negative, philosophical doctrine.[2] This chapter will argue for something very different from that. And as a prelude to the main part of my argument, it will be worth briefly noticing some of the complex implications for mimesis which emerge even in that seemingly ultimate condemnation of the "virtual reality" of human existence, the Cave allegory itself.

For all its philosophical memorableness and portentousness (Schopenhauer called it the single most important passage in the whole of Plato's *oeuvre*),[3] the Cave yields up, in fact, no easily decodable message about mimesis. While the description of the Cave does not itself make any use of the vocabulary of mimesis, it does employ several terms which are frequently associated with mimesis elsewhere in Plato, especially εἰκών ("image"), εἴδωλον ("simulacrum"), and φάντασμα ("appearance"). But the application of these terms is by no means straightforward. Three specific observations are worth making in this regard. First of all, εἰκών (*R.* 515a4, 517a8, etc.), together with the cognate verb ἀπεικάζειν (514a1), is applied to the verbal and imaginative status of the Cave itself, treating the allegory as, so to speak, a piece of word-painting (as well as, perhaps, a kind of pun on "shadow-painting", σκιαγραφία) ; and since elsewhere in Plato, including just a few pages earlier in the Divided Line, ἀπεικάζειν is sometimes interchangeable with μιμεῖσθαι,[4] this ought to mean that the Cave allegory is itself a quasi-mimetic speech-act on Socrates' part. Secondly, neither the shadows on the wall nor the objects carried in the Cave are themselves referred to as images (i.e., εἰκόνες), even though shadows do clearly belong in the latter category (cf.

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2 For a fuller case against such reductive readings, together with copious references to secondary literature which are (deliberately) not repeated here, see Halliwell 2002, 37–147.

3 Schopenhauer 1988, 536.

4 See e.g. *R.* 3.396d4–d6, 6.510b4–511a7, and 8.563a6–b1. All Platonic references are to the latest Oxford Classical Texts, including the edition of the *Republic* by Slings and of the *Sophist* and *Politicus* by Hicks *et al.*

6.509e1–10a1) and so do at least some of the objects in question, since they include statues in both anthropomorphic and animal form (ἀνδριάντας, 514c1, ζῷα, 515a1). Later in Book 7, moreover, those objects are twice called εἴδωλα (520c4, 532b7–c2),[5] "simulacra", a term which in the account of the ascent is also applied to reflections in water outside the Cave (516a7). εἴδωλα, then, like images more generally, have a relational status whose understanding presupposes a particular framework of reference. Finally, the term φαντάσματα also denotes reflections in water or in mirrors outside the Cave (516b5, 532c1; cf. 510a1), but the allegory requires those reflections to be interpreted as part of the entire metaphysics of the scenario (a task which, mercifully, need not be undertaken here) rather than in their literal, material status as referred to in the Divided Line (6.510a1).

Between them, the three points just made show something of the intricate and shifting semantics of the language of images in Plato, and, by implication, the language of mimesis as well. In addition to being a piece of verbal image-making in its own right, the allegory of the Cave hints at an interplay between multiple elements of mimesis: elements both natural and cultural, material and discursive, immanent and transcendent, as well as in the relationships between all these things. However we decode the allegory in its larger significance for education, politics, culture, and the nature of the mind, it puts "us" (515a5), as readers of the *Republic*, into the position, like Socrates and Glaucon, of being simultaneously subject and audience of the puppet-show (cf. 514b5–6). Mimesis, both in the fabric of Plato's writing and in the philosophical themes of the dialogues, is a far from simple matter. I will return to the *Republic* later in this paper in order to make some further observations on the overall complexity of the work's dealings with mimesis. In what follows I will make use of material from a number of dialogues in order to support my central contention that, contrary to a long-estab-lished orthodoxy, there is no unified and stable conception of mimesis to be found in Plato, let alone a uniformly negative conception. My concern here is with a selection of interpretative problems which invite close scrutiny but resist a doctrinal solution.[6]

I turn first to the *Sophist*, the dialogue whose use of the lexicon of mimesis is more philosophically far-reaching than any other work apart from the *Republic* and *Laws*. Since I shall be engaging with some specific details of interpretation,

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5 *R.* 520c4 is sometimes understood to cover both the objects and their shadows, but the context does not require this and consistency with 532b–c actually counts against it.

6 It may be worth clarifying that my approach to Plato's dialogues can be described as meth-odologically non-doctrinal: i.e., I adopt the hermeneutic principle that Plato οὐ δογματίζει (cf. Diogenes Laertius, 3.51). In practice, this means that I withhold ascription to Plato, as author outside/behind the text, of any particular propositional view advanced in the text, and I treat the engaged reader's primary responsibility as being to interpret the dialogues by "arguing with" them, not to extract settled doctrines from them.

not with a general reading of the work's strategies, it may be helpful if I signal in advance that my chief points of reference will be four: first, the early and very brief, but far from negligible, reference to mimesis at *Sph.* 219b; second, the more sustained and philosophically provocative appeal to mimesis at 234b; third, the much-discussed but problematic distinction between "eikastic" and "phantastic" mimesis at 235d ff.; and, finally, the ramifications of that distinction in the dialogue's final dialectical division. I begin with the second of those passages, which plays something of a pivotal role in the argument. At this stage, we are already well advanced with the attempt to define the sophist (we have been taken through the six preliminary definitions) when we reach the point at which the Eleatic Visitor rather abruptly invokes the concept of mimesis in order to establish a basis for convicting the sophist of a kind of conjuring with appearances. The passage in question is imprinted with a tone of insidious mockery (and dialogic tone is always a factor to be taken into account, however precariously, in the reading of Platonic arguments). The Visitor has just induced young Theaetetus to call the sophist's pseudo-omniscience (his supposed claim not only to be knowledgeable on all subjects but even to "make everything") a kind of game-playing (παιδιά). The following exchange then occurs:

Ξε. Παιδιᾶς δὲ ἔχεις ἤ τι τεχνικώτερον ἢ καὶ χαριέστερον εἶδος ἢ τὸ μιμητικόν;
Θε. Οὐδαμῶς· πάμπολυ γὰρ εἴρηκας εἶδος εἰς ἓν πάντα συλλαβὼν καὶ σχεδὸν ποικιλώτατον. (*Sph.* 234b1–4)

El. Vis. And are you aware of any class of game-playing that involves more artifice, or is actually more enticing, than the mimetic?
Tht. Not at all. By collecting all its varieties into one, you have designated a class that is vast and practically the most multifarious of all.

The Visitor, engaging in an implicit act of conceptual "collection", designates the class or genus of the mimetic with a substantivised form, τὸ μιμητικόν, which would have struck Plato's first readers – just as it evidently strikes Theaetetus – as somewhat elusively miscellaneous, and certainly an abstraction without any ready-made denotation in standard usage. The immediate elucidation which the Visitor goes on to provide (at 234b–c) does nothing, in fact, to draw on the multifarious variety to which Theaetetus had referred. Instead, it depends on an analogy, question-beggingly asserted,[7] between the single art of figurative painting (ἡ γραφικὴ τέχνη), which is satirically reduced to a matter of optical deception at a distance (and for an audience of "naive young children"), and the sophist's putative technique of making deceptive verbal images or "simulacra" (εἴδωλα, a term we have already encountered with applications both inside and

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7 Note how the transition from painting to sophistry is mediated by the casually presumptive formulation, "Should we not then expect [...]?" (ἆρ' οὐ προσδοκῶμεν [...], *Sph.* 234c1).

outside the Cave). If the Visitor's position here is to be granted the status of an argument, it is a very bad one, since it simply collapses skilled techniques of visual representation, aimed in principle at artistically self-aware audiences (even connoisseurs, as some other passages in Plato acknowledge: see below), into a trick played on ignorant victims. If, however, we treat the Visitor's stance as a sort of provocation to deeper thought, as I believe that later parts of the dialogue as well will encourage us to do, then it can still perform a philosophically useful function. We should, in any case, take careful note of Theaetetus's description of the mimetic genus, quoted above, as εἶδος ποικιλώτατον. The phrase metaphorically evokes an exceptionally variegated, even shape-shifting, phenomenon, as though the membership of the class or genus in question, and therefore its very identity, might escape a stable definition. The adjective ποικίλος has already been twice predicated of the sophist himself or his artifice (223c2, 226a6); now we are prompted to consider its applicability to the variable practices of mimesis as such.[8] Theaetetus's words alert us, at this juncture, to the difficulty of binding together the multiple varieties of mimesis into a conceptual unity. This difficulty will emerge again later in the work, though paradoxically in a context which supposedly exemplifies the strict method of dialectic: it is precisely this method, as we shall see, which will serve to expose some of the conceptual instabilities which afflict the philosophical understanding of mimesis.

Before we come to that point, however, I want first to glance back to the dialogue's single earlier reference to mimesis, as noted above. That reference, it should be noted, occurred prior to any of the attempts to define the sophist, and involved the more common substantival form ἡ μιμητική, "mimetic artistry" (219b1). In that earlier passage, mimesis was simply assumed to form a category of human skill, *technê*, a category which, almost as an after-thought it seems, needs to be added to the basic division of human productive activity into the kinds which deal respectively with the cultivation of organic nature and with the making of functional artefacts: so, roughly speaking, agriculture (though perhaps also medicine) and technology (219a8–b2). The Visitor's frustratingly unelaborated addition of mimesis to that basic dichotomy suggests a schematic tripartition of the defining activities of human culture; it appears, so to speak, to make room for something like a notion of *homo mimeticus*, and of mimesis as an anthropologically recognisable type of cultural production, alongside the more pragmatically focussed activities of the two more fundamental classes of *technai*. Since the dialogue's preoccupation with the definition of the sophist and, in due course, with the logic of non-being relegates other considerations to the margins, we get only oblique and scattered hints in the remainder of the work, as outlined below, to the range of activities which belong to the third tier of that

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8 At *R.* 10.604e–5a poetic mimesis is itself ποικίλη because of its concern with depicting the unstable, variegated character, the ποικίλον ἦθος, of the lower part of the soul.

tripartition. But my immediate point is that this early reference to mimesis in the *Sophist* acknowledges, however fleetingly, a more respectable status for mimesis as a domain of human culture than the Visitor seems prepared to admit in his satirically pejorative reference to painting as an analogue to sophistry at 234b. Putting together 219b and 234b exposes a point of tension in possible views of the status and value of mimesis as a basic type of human behaviour.

Before proceeding to consider the further use to which the idea of mimesis is put in the later parts of the *Sophist*, it is worthwhile taking a sideways glance at passages in two other dialogues which, between them, help demonstrate that the point of tension just mentioned leaves its traces more widely in Plato. In Book 3 of the *Republic*, a tripartition of the kind present at *Sophist* 219b seems to be presupposed by Socrates' compressed survey of what might be called the cultural environment of the ideal city at 401a. Here painting is mentioned as exemplifying a group of practices, by implication mimetic,[9] that exist alongside such things as architecture, on the one hand, and the cultivation of plants, on the other. Although there are considerations which stand in the way of reducing the full list of activities mentioned in this passage to an entirely neat typology,[10] we are faced clearly enough with a division of the objects of those activities into the mimetic, the (functionally) artefactual, and the natural.[11] If so, it is all the more important that far from belittling or downgrading the mimetic, this passage treats it as a set of practices whose products possess not only a capacity for formal beauty but also ethically expressive properties which embody, as Socrates goes on to call them, "images of character" (εἰκόνες ἤθους). Contrast this, however, with a section of the *Statesman* (288c) which elaborates a rather Byzantine classification of human *technai* into no fewer than seven groups on the basis of the functions of their products as tools, vessels, vehicles, etc.: here the whole domain of mimetic arts, both figurative (painting is again cited) and musico-poetic, is said to be concerned exclusively with pleasure and consequently amounts to a kind of "plaything" (παίγνιον) or "play" (παιδιά) . Now, "images of character", in *Republic* Book 3's description of the city's cultural environment, are patently not to be thought of as a matter of pure play, since Socrates envisages them as a vitally important means of inculcating and sustaining the values of the community. Equally, however, we cannot simply match up *Politicus* 288c with *Sophist* 234b, despite their common vocabulary of "play". In contrast to the *Sophist*'s mocking tone, the *Politicus*

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9 Painting has already been cited as mimetic at *R.* 2.373b5–6: I discuss this passage further below.

10 In particular, Socrates' second group includes activities of weaving and embroidery which themselves have a mimetic capacity for figurative depiction (see *Euthphr.* 6b–c for a case in point). As at *Sph.* 219a10–11, so at *R.* 401a4 activities involving nature suggest the inclusion of medicine alongside agriculture.

11 For a complication, namely the application of μιμήματα at *R.* 401a8, to all three groups of activities, see my text below.

passage offers a more neutral classification of the cultural status of painting and other mimetic practices; we might think of it, perhaps, as allowing for something like a conception of the aestheticised activity of *homo ludens*.[12] Certainly it does nothing to make the concept of mimetic play shade into connotations of harmful deception in the way that the *Sophist* does. This issue could be pursued further, since there are several other places in Plato where mimesis is classed as "play".[13] But this proposition varies in force and tone according to context; it does not supply a fixed paradigm of mimesis. For present purposes, it is sufficient to observe that what might be called different cultural anthropologies of mimesis come in and out of view in particular passages of the dialogues: the rhetorically slanted appeal to "play" at *Sophist* 234a–b raises more questions than it answers.

In the light of that point, we can now examine what happens when the conception of mimesis as a broad class of cultural production reappears in the final section of the *Sophist* in connection with the culminating division employed by the interlocutors to pinpoint the sophist's illusionistic machinations. Mimesis is now glossed as "the making of simulacra" (ποίησις [...] εἰδώλων, 265b1), but far from definitively tarnishing mimesis by its association with sophistry, this is incorporated in a passage which alludes to and complicates the multiplicity of mimetic entities previously referred to by Theaetetus. The term εἴδωλα, which was exploited pejoratively against the sophist earlier in the dialogue but also yields the compound εἰδωλοποιική as a near-synonym of μιμητική (235b–6c, cf. 264c, 265a–b), is not in fact irremediably negative. In the first place, it is now attached (synonymously with ὁμοιώματα, the only use of this noun in the *Sophist*) to the status of natural phenomena (dreams, shadows, and reflections) which the division classifies on the "divine" side of productive processes.[14] So, contrary to the original tripartition (at 219b) of human production into practices involving nature, artefacts, and mimesis, the present passage gives mimesis itself a role to play, however fleetingly, within nature itself. Furthermore, the meaning of εἴδωλα in the definition of mimesis at 265b necessarily encompasses the products of the two kinds of mimesis which the Visitor had earlier distinguished, in a much-discussed passage, as "likeness-making" (εἰκαστική) and "appearance-making" (φανταστική), terms which may both have been Platonic coinages and the second of which is found nowhere in Plato outside the *Sophist*.[15] This well-known but

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12 Note, in addition, that *Plt*. 288c is at odds with *Sph*. 224a, since the former pointedly excludes any serious purpose (σπουδή) from the purview of mimetic art, while the latter explicitly (if obscurely) allows for it.

13 See the further references in Halliwell 1988, 132 (on *R*. 10.602b8), with Kidd 2019, 51–6, for a recent discussion of the passages of *Sophist* and *Politicus* cited in my text.

14 See *Sph*. 266a–c for nature, including its εἴδωλα, as belonging to the realm of "divine" production. We might recall here that there are εἴδωλα both inside and outside the Cave of the *Republic*; see my text above.

15 The distinction is introduced at *Sph*. 235d–6c and is re-invoked at 264c and 266d.

problematic dichotomy, which was introduced with reference to optically motivat-
ed adjustments in visual art (though precisely *what* kinds of adjustment remains
art-historically obscure),[16] is reaffirmed in the course of the final application of
dialectical division at 266d8–9. But since all the further stages of the division fall
entirely under φανταστική, we are deprived of any additional elucidation of the
principles of likeness-making mimesis at this point in the discussion.

In addition, the final division itself gives rise to two striking complications re-
garding mimesis.[17] First, it inverts the earlier terminological hierarchy by seeming
to *restrict* the term μίμησις to the type of φανταστική which involves an agent's
own body, as opposed to types which employ instrumental means (δι' ὀργάνων) of
image-making: mimesis has now, it seems, become a species of what was earlier
one of its own species. Secondly, the originally negative valuation of phantastic
mimesis is now qualified, even overridden, by the inclusion of a kind of mimesis
that is based on knowledge (267b7), called (in a unique phrase) ἱστορικὴ μίμησις
(267e2), which one might even (boldly) translate as "veridical mimesis". So while
the division advances single-mindedly towards its verdict on the sophist as the
practitioner of a pernicious form of mimesis, it leaves space along the way for
a more positive evaluation of other mimetic forms which are culturally and even
epistemologically superior in character. If we have followed the twists and turns
of the discussion carefully, we are left with the impression – and this is my main
claim – that the final division is not definitive where mimesis is concerned but
would have to be expanded, even restructured, in order to produce a taxonomy of
mimesis which could do justice to a multiplicity of mimetic practices (members
of Theaetetus's "vast and multifarious" genus) and disentangle them from the
intellectual duplicity of the sophist. In short, whatever else it offers, the dialogue
does not (purport to) provide a comprehensive definition, let alone a complete
theory, of mimesis.

Before moving on, I want, extremely concisely, to note several further points
about the eikastic-phantastic distinction, since this is so often extracted from the
dialectical fabric of the work and turned into a stable, enduring conviction of
Plato's. First of all, as already mentioned, even the initial explanation of the
distinction is obscure in its artistic reference and implications; it lacks secure
corroboration from surviving evidence and covers painting as well as sculpture,
even though that requires two different kinds of optical adjustment to be built

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16 For one discussion from an art-historical point of view, see Keuls 1978, 111–15.
17 Another complication, which I cannot pursue here, is that the mimetic use of the body
    or voice at 267a6–7 ought, if it involves (as it surely might) a one-to-one match of
    properties with its model, to fall under the original definition (235d) of likeness-making,
    not appearance-making.

into the category of φανταστική.[18] Secondly, the possibility of extrapolating from a visual paradigm such as a colossal sculpture to certain non-sensory objects, including the intellectual deceptions of the sophist, is left vague, to put it mildly: what constitutes (metaphorical) experience of above and below, from near and from far, in the second of those cases? Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the eikastic-phantastic distinction is not consistently sustained later in the dialogue, since the vocabulary of the two word-groups gets run together in several places.[19] That last point can be supplemented by the telling fact that the eikastic-phantastic distinction is conspicuous by its absence in other Platonic dialogues. Elsewhere, the terminologies of εἰκών, εἰκαστικός, etc., on the one hand, and φάντασμα, φανταστικός, and so forth, on the other, are sometimes used interchangeably or at any rate in an overlapping manner,[20] while in other places each of the two sets of terms can occur without the other and nevertheless serve to describe mimesis in general. In *Republic* Book 10, which most scholars think earlier than the *Sophist*, the lexis of εἰκών and its cognates plays no part whatever, even though the argument professes to be concerned with "mimesis as a whole" (μίμησιν ὅλως, 595c7) and includes a notorious analogy with mirror-images. But if we choose to say that Book 10 implicitly treats *all* mimesis as φανταστική, that will itself be at odds with the *Sophist*'s original division of μιμητική. In the *Laws*, by contrast, there is no trace of φανταστικός terms; indeed, the Athenian actually states that *all* mimesis is εἰκαστική, a proposition which makes it even more significant that he also ascribes to all its forms (poetry, music, dance, as well as the visual arts) a capacity, even an aspiration, to capture both quantitative and qualitative aspects of its objects.[21] These details are not merely linguistic or terminological. They foreground the conceptual fluidity which characterises the role played by mimesis in different dialogic and philosophical contexts.

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18 Sculpture and painting are coupled in the remarks on phantastic mimesis at *Sph.* 235e5–36a2, but the explanation of optical adjustments given here cannot apply in the same way to both two-dimensional and three-dimensional representations.

19 See esp. *Sph.* 241e3, where the Visitor suggests that the terms εἴδωλα, εἰκόνες, μιμήματα and φαντάσματα may all be interchangeable and equally suitable as descriptions of false discourse, and 260c8–9, where εἴδωλα, εἰκόνες and φαντασία are similarly treated.

20 See e.g. the equivalence of (metaphorical) εἰκόνες and φαντάσματα at *Phlb.* 39b–c and 40a respectively (and note, contrary to a common assumption about the word, that φάντασμα is here applicable equally to true and false mental images), the same equivalence at *Ti.* 52c, and the status of φαντάσματα as one class of εἰκόνες at *R.* 6.509e–10a1. For related instances from the *Sophist* itself, see n. 19 above.

21 All mimesis is εἰκαστική: *Lg.* 2.668a6–7. The eikastic arts in general (and the qualification ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πᾶν εἰπεῖν betrays the need for fuller explication) involve correspondences of both quantity and quality, ἡ ἰσότης [...] τοῦ τοσούτου καὶ τοῦ τοιούτου: 667d5–7 (cf. ὅσον τε καὶ οἷον, 668b7). Clearly, these claims would need to be interpreted and refined with regard to the media and sense modalities of different art-forms. On this passage, see also Pfefferkorn in this volume.

What, then, are we to infer from the *Sophist*-specific localisation of the eikastic-phantastic distinction, as well as the respects, noted above, in which the distinction proves somewhat unstable in the later pages of the dialogue? My contention, in a nutshell, is that the distinction is not the marker of some lasting, let alone doctrinal, Platonic conviction but a dialectically provisional and ultimately abandoned attempt to borrow from visual art a putative distinction between (broadly speaking) perspectival and non-perspectival techniques of representation and to convert this into a formula for an *evaluative* division between reliable and deceptive mimesis in general. Part of the price of that attempt, and perhaps one reason for its abandonment, is the fact that the distinction seems to lose sight of the *Cratylus*'s argument that the "correctness" of images cannot be strictly equated with maximum replicatory fidelity or be formulated in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions.[22] If such correctness (or, more appropriately, effectiveness) can be stipulated at all, it will depend on combinations of factors which vary according to the materials, conventions, and genres of particular mimetic art-forms, not on a single set of objective criteria such as the measurable dimensions of *Sophist* 235d8. Note, finally, that the eikastic-phantastic distinction does not directly map onto the difference between reliable and deceptive representation, since φανταστική is actually defined in terms of optical adjustments whose rationale is precisely to preserve a kind of perceptual consistency. Among other things, that makes it less incongruous that, as noted above, appearance-making can even be made to accommodate some kinds of knowledge-based mimesis in the later stages of the argument.

The restricted philosophical aims of the *Sophist* bring with them a narrowly targeted, if nonetheless problematic, role for the idea of mimesis in the work's conceptual economy. But when we turn to the *Republic*, we find, by contrast, a correspondingly large and diverse range of contexts (in every book except 1, 4 and 9) in which the vocabulary of mimesis is employed – well over a hundred occurrences of the word-group in total. Fitting these occurrences into a coherent typology is difficult, but it is possible to discern some instructive patterns of usage, provided one does not prematurely assume a quasi-technical consistency. One fundamental variable involves expanded and contracted applications of the lexicon. Long before we reach the proto-narratological use of mimesis terminology in Book 3 for poetic representation by direct speech (392d ff.), Socrates has already classified as mimetic practitioners, μιμηταί (2.373b5), various groups of professionals who thrive in the city of luxury: visual artists, musicians, poets, actors and dancers. This classification was, for Plato's first readers, an established designation for representational art-forms in both visual and musico-poetic me-

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22 See *Cra*. 432a–d, where Socrates (i) claims that the notion of maximum replicatory fidelity involves a *reductio ad absurdum* ("two Cratyluses" rather than Cratylus and his image), and (ii) suggests, by contrast with mathematical properties, that the correctness of an image cannot be specified in terms of necessary conditions (see 432a8–9, 432c8–d1).

dia.[23] But it is not usually recognised that when we eventually reach Book 10's notorious discussion of what Socrates there calls "mimesis as a whole", μίμησιν ὅλως (10.595c7), we are dealing in effect, albeit tacitly, with a reactivation of the work's very first use of mimesis vocabulary in Book 2. That is confirmed, in part, by the fact that these are the only two places in the dialogue where painting and poetry are explicitly included within the same conceptual category.[24]

Book 3's proto-narratological sense of mimesis, on the other hand, is a narrower, specialised application (though, again, one which had its roots in existing usage). Significantly, this application cannot be generalised to other art-forms. Just as the eikastic-phantastic distinction, as presented in the *Sophist*, cannot be directly mapped onto poetry (for example),[25] so the *Republic*'s division of διήγησις into single-voiced (i.e., narratorial) and mimetic (i.e., dramatised) modes cannot be mapped onto visual art. We need to be aware, furthermore, that the narratological sense of mimesis *qua* direct representation of character-speech is itself treated as an extension of behavioural impersonation. But this extension (see 3.393c) does not, as one might have expected, concern dramatic performers in relation to their characters; rather, it applies the notion of impersonation to the agency of the *author*. I leave aside for present purposes whether this idea of authorial self-likening to characters, which was followed by Aristotle and others (but was not, in any case, original to Plato), should be regarded as a metaphorical or perhaps metonymic way of describing the imaginative process in which authors engage when composing dramatic speech. All that matters for now is that it belongs to a particular adaptation, not a general presupposition, of the semantics of mimesis.

Two further points of significance are worth making in relation to the shifts, and potential anomalies, between broader and narrower uses of mimesis terminology in the *Republic*. The first is the close proximity between the narratological sense of mimesis (whose discussion ends at 398b) and the subsequent application of the mimesis word-group, at 399a ff., to *musical* representation (or expression), even though, as already mentioned, these two senses are incompatible: variations of diegetic form, as defined by Socrates, have no equivalent in music's tonal structures themselves. The musical sense of mimesis, however, is entirely in line with the capacious category of mimetic practitioners originally assumed in Book 2

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23 For the basic evidence from the fifth century, see Halliwell 2002, 15–22.

24 A marginal qualification: painting and musico-poetic art are also juxtaposed at *R*. 6.493d2 as activities, alongside politics (but also any public practice: d4), in which the views of the majority may be damagingly reflected and reinforced (the opposite of the positive use envisaged for painting and other art-forms at 3.401a–d, as cited in my text).

25 When Theaetetus suggests at *Sph*. 235e3–4 that *all* practitioners of mimesis (πάντες οἱ μιμούμενοι) attempt to adhere to the principles of εἰκαστική, he must be taken either to be implicitly restricting his remark to sculptors or, more plausibly, to be voicing a very naive version of mimetic realism. His impulse is inverted by the Visitor's generalisation at 236c1.

(373b, cited above). But Book 3's treatment of musical mimesis advances beyond that earlier passage in virtue of its quasi-Damonian attempt to outline a technical basis for the expressive matching of melodic and rhythmic features with ethical qualities of human agency and experience, even to the extent of attributing to music a capacity to embody defining qualities of certain types of life, βίου μιμήματα (3.400a7).[26] My second point is that when the discussion of musical mimesis leads on, in turn, to Socrates' survey of the ideal city's entire cultural environment at 401a (mentioned earlier), we are not presented with exactly the same set of activities whose practitioners were called μιμηταί in Book 2. Although all the activities in that earlier passage can count as implicitly belonging to the group for which painting is here nominated as an example, others too are now added in the further groups of practices relating respectively to artefacts (including architecture) and to the cultivation of natural objects (including the human body). Yet Socrates proceeds to predicate of the objects of all three groups of activities qualities of ethically expressive form, whether positive or negative, to which he applies the phrase ἀδελφά τε καὶ μιμήματα (401a8). How can this be? Clearly he cannot be defining all the practices or objects in question as intrinsically mimetic, in the sense appropriate to painting or theatre or the other art-forms listed at 2.373b. He must, instead, be employing the term μίμημα to encompass a range of "correspondences" or "matches" between formal properties and ethical qualities which include but extend beyond direct depiction. The language of mimesis is being adapted and stretched by Socrates in order to meet the demands of his argument. By the same token, when the further elaboration of this argument employs the language of "images", εἰκόνες (401b), this too needs to be understood in a more than strictly figurative sense, since it has to apply in this context as much to, say, buildings as to paintings.

The *Republic*'s shifting uses of the vocabulary of mimesis involves a number of passages which have a bearing on philosophy itself. I would like now to focus on these. It makes sense to start with the case of the future or at least potential philosopher. In Book 7 (539b–c), Socrates maintains that if the young get a taste of disputatious argument (in effect, eristics: cf. 5.454a) at too early an age, when only adolescents (μειρακίσκοι, 539b3), they misuse it as though it were a game: they transfer to their treatment of others, by a process of mimetic adaptation (μιμούμενοι, 539b4–5), the techniques of interrogation and contradiction to which they themselves have been subjected. (We are reminded here of what Socrates says at *Apology* 23c about some of his own youthful followers.) Socrates cites by contrast the older person who has the maturity to model himself (μιμήσεται, 539c7) on a figure who possesses a genuinely dialectical concern for truth rather than a mere inclination to disputatious game-playing. Mimesis in this passage is a phenomenon of inter-personal or social behaviour; the criteria of its divergent

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26 On musical mimesis in the *Republic* see Vlasits in this volume.

possibilities require reference to motivation and to standards that are both intellec-tual and ethical. For that reason, mimesis in these cases cannot be neutrally judged from the outside, only with insight into the minds of those who are candidates for philosophical education. It is part of Socrates' position, moreover, that the acquisition of techniques of argument and disputation for purely social ends is precisely what generates dangerous disorientation in the individuals concerned and consequently brings philosophy itself into disrepute (539c1–3). What is at stake here, as in all educational matters, is *self*-modelling in the strongest sense: the "plasticity" of the embodied soul, which is stressed at several points in the *Republic* (in the first instance at 2.377b), exposes it to the workings of mimetic habituation, with far-reaching consequences, whether negative or positive, for would-be philosophers.

Socrates has in fact already attached the verb μιμεῖσθαι to philosophers them-selves in two earlier passages of the *Republic*, but with subtle differences from the case just noted in Book 7. In Book 5, he characterises the political role of the fully-formed Guardians as entailing not just adherence to the city's laws, but also, in part, a degree of discretionary or supplementary mimesis *of* the laws: in areas not directly covered by legal specification, the Guardians will give rulings in keeping with the spirit of the laws (μιμουμένους [sc. τοὺς νόμους], 458c). If this is a kind of behavioural mimesis, its personal agents are no longer modelling themselves on other agents but on abstract principles of conduct. And correct mimesis in this instance cannot, by definition, be measured by explicit criteria, only by standards of judgement that presuppose interpretation from an internal philosophical viewpoint. That viewpoint is salient in a passage of Book 6 of the *Republic* where philosophers are again described as practising mimesis. Here Socrates is expounding the difference between pseudo-philosophers who bring the subject into popular disrepute and the genuine philosopher whose mental gaze is fixed on unchanging reality. But the true philosopher does not just passively contemplate the ordered, beautiful world of reality; he (or she, since we have read Book 5) tries to form himself in its image: ταῦτα μιμεῖσθαί τε καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα ἀφομοιοῦσθαι (500c5). Here, unlike at 539b–c, behavioural mimesis lacks a personal model and is powerfully internalised; it cannot be observed at all from the outside, unless by an observer on the same philosophical level who shares the same understanding of what such self-modelling requires. The language of this passage is borrowed from ordinary social behaviour, from which it was in turn adapted, as we saw earlier, to Book 3's narratological model of the author imaginatively likening his "voice" to those of his characters in the creation of dramatic mimesis.[27] The present instance is given an additional and metaphorical colouring by the verb ὁμιλεῖν (twice in this passage): the realm of reality accessed by the philosopher is the symbolic "company" he keeps, a higher replacement for

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27 See the same pair of verbs (with the simplex ὁμοιοῦν) at *R.* 3.393c.