

# Платон и платоноведение

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## J.-P. Vernant on Plato's Mimetic Theory: Images, Doubles and Simulacra\*

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J.-P. VERNANT ON PLATO'S MIMETIC THEORY: IMAGES, DOUBLES AND SIMULACRA  
 ABSTRACT. J.-P. Vernant interprets Plato's mimetic theory as a shift from sacred pre-entification of the invisible to representation of appearance. His investigation of the *Sophist* maps the differences between the perfect likeness (εἰκόν), the ghostly image (εἰδῶλον) and the simulacrum (φάντασμα). The latter, being an image without a model, is extremely dangerous to imitate. It could affect and spoil each ideal order. But distinguishing between the subject of the philosopher and of the sophist, between the good ruler and the demagogue, between the perfect likeness and the simulacrum is not an easy task, as we can see in a close reading of the *Sophist*. What makes it difficult to draw a minimal distinction between things which resemble each other is the effect of the double. This effect, its theoretical and political implications and its historical persistence, serves as a focal point for this study. The article focuses on how the mimetic shift changes the modes through which paradigms and examples function.

KEYWORDS: J.-P. Vernant, *mimesis*, likeness, simulacrum, images, the *Sophist*.

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Платоновские исследования / Platonic Investigations 14.1 (2021)

DOI: 10.25985/PI.14.1.01

\*The present study was funded by the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia (CAS, 2014). It is a continuation of the author's earlier work on Plato's mimetic theory in the *Sophist*; on the modus of exemplification, in her first book in Bulgarian *Event and Example in Plato and Aristotle* (2012); and on the transformations of the concept of *mimesis*, in her latest book *Modern Mimesis. Self-reflexivity in Literature* (2021).

### 1.1 Mimesis as a historical category

In this paper, I will examine J.-P. Vernant's approach to Plato's mimetic theory as the genesis of the division between philosophy and literature. Thus, *mimesis* as a historical category is grasped as the birth-place of the theory of image, and more precisely, the concept of the double. The narrow focus of the analysis aims to demonstrate how the figure of the double appears on the scene of Western thought. In this genealogy, I will use Vernant's investigation of the *Sophist* to trace back the birth of the figures of images, doubles and simulacra in Plato's mimetic theory. The mere possibility of conceptualizing doubles presupposes both a split and an intersection between literature and philosophy.

Although my approach is predominantly theoretical, as far as it traces the genesis of the concept of *mimesis* in Plato's dialogues, the theoretical frame is rooted in the concrete context of the Greek classical period (5th–4th century B.C.). So, Vernant's historical anthropology helps my exploration of the category of *mimesis* as a historical one, formed in a specific cultural context, with a concrete social background. Of course, each origin has a pre-origin and the mimetic notion could be traced before Plato. The archaeology of the semantic group related to the word *mimesis* has been a challenge for many scholars.<sup>1</sup> The established hypothesis is that *mimesis* derived from the word μιμοι or μιμος, a term which stabilized its meaning later Greek comedigraphy.

### 1.2 Mimesis before Plato

A detailed and extensive catalogue of the usages of the *mimesis*-group before Plato is given by Halliwell in *The Aesthetic of Mimesis*.<sup>2</sup> One of the earliest usages of the μιμ- root echoes a vocal mimicry found in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (around 600 B.C). The word μιμος is mentioned for the first time in a ritual musical mimicry in the tragedy

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<sup>1</sup> Koller 1954; Else 1958; Sörbom 1966; Gebauer, Wulf 1995; Halliwell 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Halliwell 2002: 17–22. This book is a bright introduction to the theory of *mimesis* in Plato and Aristotle, connecting the classical frame with the frame of modernity.

*Edonians* by Aeschylus (fr. 57.9 Sommerstein).<sup>3</sup> There, the arrival of Dionysus is accompanied by the frightening sound of musical instruments, known as bull-roarers: “bull-voiced... frightening *mimoi*” (φοβεροὶ μῖμοι). Another, more complex case of preceding reference to *mimesis* as image representation is found in a fragment of Aeschylus' satyr play *Θεωροί*. In a surviving fragment, the chorus of satyrs dedicates to the god the images of themselves, which are then compared to the mimetic works of Daedalus (Δαιδάλου μίμημα).<sup>4</sup> Those images are seen as frightening and potentially uncanny because of the similarity between the images and the satyrs themselves, while the whole scene is extremely comic as a parody of a satyr ritual.<sup>5</sup> Halliwell's elaborate catalogue of early notions of *mimesis* includes also two fragments from Pindar. One of them alludes to visual resemblance in a description of animals while the other alludes to musical mimicry.

The second is *Pythian* 12 which establishes the etiological myth of the musical instrument *aulos*: Athens gives “many-song” to Perseus so that he can imitate (μιμήσαιτ') the cry of the many-headed Gorgon by using a musical instrument.<sup>6</sup> Halliwell concludes that before Plato, the application of the *mimesis*-group was strongly connected with art both as a process and as a product. It was used to denote musical imitation (probably at the most archaic level), as well as visual resemblance and mimicry of gestures.<sup>7</sup> The plastic conceptualization of *mimesis* in Plato has its background in poetry and tragedy, and even in everyday language. But the turning point from dispersed application to crystallization and theoretical reflection on the concept of *mimesis* was Plato.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Halliwell 2002: 17. Fr. 57.7–11 Sommerstein: ψαλμός δ' ἀλαλάζει· / ταυρόφθογοι δ' ὑπομκῶνται / ποθεν ἔξ ἀφανοῦς φοβεροὶ μῖμοι, / ἦχῶ τυπάνου δ', ὥσθ' ὑπογαίου / βροντῆς, φέρεται βαρυταρβῆς.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. 78a.7 Radt.

<sup>5</sup> For a brilliant analysis of image language in *Theoroi*, see O'Sullivan 2000.

<sup>6</sup> P. 12.19–21

<sup>7</sup> Halliwell 2002: 22.

<sup>8</sup> Instead of searching the grounds before Plato, it might be better to just quote the lucid and illuminated first sentence of Mladen Dolar's book *What's in a Name?*: “It all began with Plato” (Dolar 2014: 6).

### 1.3 The Golden Age: the birth of tragedy, philosophy and political thought

A prominent triad in European thought was established within the context of the Classical period (5th–4th century B.C.) that is the Borromean knot of drama, philosophy and political thought. The emergence of the Athenian democratic polis and the new modus of sovereign power of law, the demythologization of traditional myths and the suspension of the sacred authority of gods, the development of logic and an abstract type of thinking are some of the processes that had their own genealogies but coincided and crystallized in the 5th century B.C. My task here is neither to retrace the historical analysis of the origins of tragedy, philosophy, political thought, nor to make a model of the collision between these discourses which has already been done in several elaborate investigations by scholars from classical and political theory departments.<sup>9</sup> My claim, however, is that this genesis is not a random coincidence but derives from the strong link among the foundations of these three spheres just as in a Borromean knot. I will examine the intersection between Vernant's theory on the birth of images (or on the historical contextualization of the new social function of ritual figures) and his approach to Plato's term *mimesis*.

The transformation of the social function of ritual figures and the dialectic of *mimesis* can be understood only within the new frame of Greek thinking. The shift is precisely from the sacred logic of the private to the public logic of the political. The birth of images coincides with the birth of politics. I will approach the concept of *mimesis* through a particular dialogue of Plato, the *Sophist*, and thus, I will resort to the theoretical groundings of drama, philosophy and political theory. Because I will trace the birth of mimetic theory in the 5th century B.C., the use of poetical, metaphysical, ontological and political assumptions is inevitable.

It is important to note, on the one hand, the influence of political theory and especially Hannah Arendt's claim that "the theater is the

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<sup>9</sup> Euben 1986; Pelling 1997; Vernant 2000; Kottman 2003; Ahrens Dorf 2009; Hall 2010; Ahrens Dorf 2009.

political art *par excellence*; only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art".<sup>10</sup> She is grounding the origin of political art precisely in the "Platonic-Aristotelian assumption for political communities" with regard to public speech and action at the open scene.<sup>11</sup> Arendt links Aristotle's concept of action in the *Poetics*, i.e. the famous definition of tragedy, with *mimetic action* (1449b24).<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, there is the classical scholarship which examines the historical background of this common genesis, insisting on the specific dimensions of the cultural context of the Classical period. The intersections and divergences among the scholars of Greek tragedy and scholars of contemporary political theory are observed by Peter Euben in his introduction to *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*. He argues that "Tragedy was also a democratic institution. Whatever its origins, fifth-century tragedy was a part of a religious festival and a political institution analogous to the *heliaia*, *boule*, or *ekklesia*"<sup>13</sup> (the supreme court, the council of citizens and the principal assembly of democracy). Euben pays attention to the ultimate paradox of dramatic performance: drama is a conservative institution since it is part of the traditional Dionysian festival, although tragedy, and even more so, comedy, provide new interpretations of traditional myths, related to contemporary Greek political life. The representative function of the tragic hero and his ambivalent act of constructing and (de)constructing the polis are grasped in a certain enigma: "This paradox parallels the situation of the tragic hero who is both a liberator/creator of and threat/destroyer to his community. A similar ambivalence applies to the tragedians and political theorists".<sup>14</sup>

Boyan Manchev's *Logic of the Political* is devoted precisely to this enigma, this crisis of representation in both tragedy and political the-

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<sup>10</sup> Arendt 1958: 188.

<sup>11</sup> Arendt 1958: 183.

<sup>12</sup> For more information on the political implication of tragedy and the pre-philosophical scene within Arendt's theory, see Kottman 2003: 81-97. Kottman's article and especially the first three notes provide a good vantage point for a more recent political theory and tragedy.

<sup>13</sup> Euben 1986: 22.

<sup>14</sup> Euben 1986: 27.

ory. Manchev focuses on a particular Greek tragedy, namely Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, in order to explore the initial structural characteristics of the idea of the political. The double bind of representation is the immanent logic in which Oedipus is the transgressor of the previous norm and the establisher of new political law. Yet, because this constitutive act of figuration implies self-representation as well as self-disfiguration, Oedipus is also the tragic victim of the established law.<sup>15</sup> The theatre as a political institution accomplishes a certain transformation: the *sparagmos*, the scapegoat in the Dionysian ritual, is replaced with the tragic hero, so the victim and the purification of the community are rethought in a new modus or at a new conceptual level — the victim is no longer an animal brutally torn apart, but a subject of tragic representation on the open scene of the polis. Here, I have briefly sketched the strong relation between the theatrical and the political in the context of classical Greek culture.

Consequently, the common ground for drama and political thought is constituted by three structural elements: first, the open space of the political *agora*, second, the audience of the *demos*, taken as a whole in its potentiality for resistance, and third, the specific function of representation. To sum it all up, my initial claim is that the concept of *mimesis* as representation is the point of alteration that can give us the key to understand the genealogy of three significant phenomena — philosophy, drama and democracy — whose European inception took place precisely within the context of classical antiquity.

As for the conjunction between philosophy and political theory, or even better — the conjunction between philosophy and drama —, it is enough to evoke the big quarrel from the end of the *Republic*. Plato's mimetic theory, in addition to stating the fundamental questions — what is the generic principle of literature; what is the ontological status of copies, what is the relation between presentation and representation — always raises one very concrete question: what is the place of poets in the perfect polis; the place of those, who are not exactly themselves, because they are always in the process of self-transformation,

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<sup>15</sup> Manchev 2012: 86–128.

always resembling and pretending to be someone else. Poets open the negative operation of non-being, inasmuch as they create dangerous images without a prototype from the sphere of ideas. Briefly, there is a haunting question in European philosophy and literature: why did Plato expel the poets from the utopian polis? Is the possibility of a perfect polis opened only at the expense of dramatic *mimesis*, is this exclusion a constitutive gesture?

In Plato's dialogues, the positive model of an ideal state is associated with the figure of the philosopher, while the negative model is associated with the figure of the poet and the sophist: hence the crucial turn which was accomplished by Plato's theory of *mimesis*, a turn from the religious presentation of the invisible to the mimetic representation of phenomena, seems to have included from its very inception a certain redoubling effect.

With that wager in mind, let us ask a more philological question: how should we translate *mimesis*, what is the difference between translating *mimesis* as representation and translating it as imitation? Those two decisions have formed two very different traditions.<sup>16</sup>

In order to understand the genealogy of *mimesis*, I will make a detour from Vernant's thesis on the birth of images and his reading of Plato's theory of *mimesis* in the *Sophist*. In this regard, I will try to discern the connection between drama, philosophy and political thought in this particular dialogue of Plato. My attempt is to figure out the double as a theoretical construct emerging at the point of interrupted conjunction between philosophy and literature. The interrupted conjunction is seen as an operation of *one, divided into two*,<sup>17</sup> as exemplified by Plato's dialogues which are both philosophy and literature, and yet undertake to make a distinction between the two. In addition, this operation has a more technical or pedagogical side, namely through the dialectic principle of division (διάρεσις), where one splits into two. The

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<sup>16</sup> A very detailed analysis of the traditions of translation of *mimesis*, especially as representation (a more theatrical way in respect to Aristotle's interpretation of the term) and as imitation (a more pictorial way) may be found in Cassin 2014: 660–675.

<sup>17</sup> Lacanian school develops the conceptual dimensions of the figure of the two, see Zupančič 2003.

key moment is that after the split, one part of the pair is distinguished as corrupt, leaving the other, the good one, purified (the cathartic movement). This micro-level of division is responsible for the emergence of false imitation and a being not identical with itself, of which images, doubles and simulacra are instantiations. My hypothesis is that the figure of the double can be conceptualized within the interrupted conjunction of faithful images and simulacra in Plato. So I will observe the turn from the sacred double to the political double in the negative paradigms of sophistry in Plato's *Sophist*.

The birth of images is linked with the birth of philosophy and the birth of political theory in a process described by Boyan Manchev as "universalization of the sacred... a process, which gives evidence to the emergence of the idea of the transcendent guarantor" for the community itself.<sup>18</sup> This is the *universalization of the sacred*, "the double bind of representation" already mentioned above. This double bind could be articulated again figuratively: the one who has solved the enigma becomes an enigma, as illustrated by the case of the Sphinx and Oedipus in the first lost part of the Oedipus trilogy. To phrase it in a more theoretical language: the constitutive act of representation implies its own deconstruction.

My attempts to figure out the double as a dubious political figure are aimed at solving the same enigma of representation, restricting it to the question: why is it so difficult to distinguish the philosopher from the sophist in Plato's *Sophist*? In my reading, the sophist is grasped as a double of the philosopher, a double who problematizes the unique position of the philosopher — the one who knows the things as they are, the things by themselves, the ideas. My critique of Vernant, or better yet, my departure from Vernant's anthropological focus, concerns his conceptualization of the double. Vernant reads the double (εἶδωλον) on the side of the sacred visibility in a more archaic perspective (before Plato), the double for him is "as a power from the beyond".<sup>19</sup> I am reading the double within the order of images and simulacra. The concept

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<sup>18</sup> Manchev 2012: 44.

<sup>19</sup> Vernant 2006a: 323.



of the double, regardless of its previous usages, emerges from within Plato's mimetic theory. And the double as a figure already undermines the notion of an original. The double has no original, it never answers the question of the preceding original and the resulting copies. My theoretical reply to the brilliant interpretation of Vernant is that the concept of reduplication, and in particular the concept of the double, is not on the side of archaic cult function, but on the side of the mimetic turn which comes with Plato's theory.

*2. From a "presentification" of the invisible  
to a representation of appearance*

The mimetic theory of Plato is exposed in Jean-Pierre Vernant's work as a crucial turn from a sacred "presentification" of the invisible to an imitation of appearance. How does the mimetic turn alter the modus of actualization of the invisible to the modus of representation of phenomena? The sacred figure undergoes transformation when taken from the private to the public sphere. The "side-effect" of this transposition from private to public could also explain the notion of the double undergoing transformation: from the sacred, immortal double to the double as a political figure.

Vernant explains the mimetic turn by noting a change of the sacred function of ritual figurines — the wooden images of the deity (ξόανον). In this turn, the knowledge no longer relies on the privileged, secret possession. The transformation takes place in the context of classical Greece: the idol is displayed at the *agora*: "under the gaze of the City, the god becomes form and spectacle".<sup>20</sup> Through this revelation, the dynamics of the supernatural intrusion in the human world assumes the form of a dialectic between the visible and the invisible, the same and the other, between identity and difference, presence and absence, the oral and the written, memory and anamnesis, the original and the copy. The public role of the idol does not only shift the sacred orders: it also discloses the ontological gap between the conceptual abstractions

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<sup>20</sup> Vernant 2006b: 343.

and the copies, ghostly images, doubles and simulacra. The transformation of the function of ξόανον from private to public is parallel to the transformation of the function of a sovereign from the power of domination to the common law: “lodging power in the center, placing it in common, is also to strip it of its mystery, to snatch it from the realm of secrecy in order to make of it an object of thought and public debate”.<sup>21</sup>

Following Benveniste’s investigation,<sup>22</sup> Vernant traces back “the notion of figural representation” to the historical formation of the notion of image in order to formulate the argument on the shift of *xoanon* to *agalma*. The archaic little wooden idol (ξόανον) is predominantly a figure of god, it functions in the scope of the myth and the sacred ritual action. Its social role is not on the level of representation. Vernant explicitly stresses that it is not an image. The *xoanon* marks the invisibility of gods, it is the actualization of the deity, so it possesses a supernatural power and secret knowledge. Its characteristic of being primitive, mobile but hidden, its strangeness and non-anthropomorphic appearance are all results of its ritual function: the *xoanon* is not *like a god*, it is the god in the frame of the religious event. That is the reason why the *xoanon* implies the actual power of the deity at the present moment — it embodies the invisible and superhuman powers of the gods. So the figure is not a human creation, rather it has a divine origin: it is a gift from the gods and nobody should look at it beyond the ritual. The one who breaks the taboo will lose their mind in a fatal gaze. The *xoanon* is a sacred figure, its “task is to make the invisible visible”; its “paradoxical aspiration exists in order to inscribe absence in presence”.<sup>23</sup> It is hidden in the private home of privileged families. The one who possesses such a figure has the power.

Vernant’s argument for the transformation of the social function of these sacred figures is based on a peculiar story about the people in Gela, told by Herodotus (7.153).<sup>24</sup> There was sedition in the city of Gela

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<sup>21</sup> Vernant 2000: 91.

<sup>22</sup> Benveniste 1932.

<sup>23</sup> Vernant 2006b: 335–336.

<sup>24</sup> For the important role of the same case for the structural principle of the city formation and the role of Chthonic goddesses in it, see Polignac 1984.

and the people were divided into two factions due to the conflict, so one part of the inhabitants retired above the city to a place called Mactorius. Telines suppressed the dissent only with the aid of the sacred figure of the underworld goddesses (Persephone and Demeter) – without any human help and without any violence. When the rebelling faction of the community saw the sacred idol supposedly endowed with supernatural powers, it turned back to the city and the polis was united. The idol kept down the dissent, but with its public display changed its own function. This story exemplifies both division and transformation: the private *sacra* are disclosed in the public *agora*, and a religious cult turns into a public cult, or a secular ritual.<sup>25</sup> The elements of this transformation form the following sequence: “popular revolt, pacification of sedition, not with violence but with *sacra*, talismans with both political and religious value, belonging to certain families, that by some sort of compromise became objects of public cult in the new social order of the city”.<sup>26</sup> This is why this transformation marks the structural inception of the age of polis. Departing from the religious sphere, the cult figure changes its social function and characteristics, it settles in a specific place, it becomes larger and gains an anthropomorphic appearance. The *xoanon* became a tremendous sculpture: *agalma*, *kouros*, *kore*. Those anthropomorphic statues are already images, signifying the divine brightness and perfection (χάρις) of the human body. Vernant's thesis about the birth of images is captured in the statement: “In the public cult however the value of ancient private *sacra* is also transformed at the same time as it is maintained. Since it ceases to incarnate the privilege of a family or of a closed group, the idol will have lost its more or less secret talismanic value in order to acquire the significance and the structure of an image”.<sup>27</sup> The process of desacralization is a transition from actualization to a modus of representation. So the dynamics between a universal model and imperfect copies is possible only after the transformation of the sacred function of figures has

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<sup>25</sup> Cartledge offers the term politicization as a limited secularization, which never completely loses the connection with the festival (Cartledge 1985: 102).

<sup>26</sup> Vernant 2006b: 342.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

occurred. These are no more sacred figures, but political figures. The dawn of philosophy, political thought and images refers to the ontological status of a negative tool or to the relation *aliquid stat pro aliquo* (something stands for something else, inasmuch as it stands not for itself, indexing some absence) in a very broad sense.

The same argument about the transition to a new ontological modus from actualization of the invisible to a representation of images is already formulated by Vernant in his earlier article on Plato's mimetic theory, namely: "Instead of expressing the irruption of the supernatural into human life, of the invisible into the visible, the play of Same and Other comes to circumscribe the space of the fictive and illusory between the two poles of being and non-being, between the true and the false".<sup>28</sup> The changed ontological modus is structured by the logic of the political, on the one hand, and it exposes the image as semblance. Hence it acquires a new task: it should render the gradual appearance between being and non-being, between originals and their semblances, or philosophy should cope with the blurred play of seeming and with the open source of heterogeneity. The conceptualization of the notion of *mimesis* in Plato as a historical notion is linked to the social context in which a sacred ritual is transformed into a political logic.

### 3. Redoubling mimesis and paradeigma in the Sophist

It is not easy to open and read the *Sophist* innocently because nowadays each reading contains traces of strong and influential interpretations from earlier periods. Let's mention just two of them. In the Winter semester of 1924–1925, Heidegger gave a lecture course at the University of Marburg on the *Sophist*. His reading and excavation of the ontological status of the *being*, *non-being* and *τέχνη* just preceded the coming *opus magnum*, *Being and Time* (1927). For the philosophy of the immanent difference, especially for Deleuze, it was crucial to overcome the supposedly false distinction between the original and the copy, between the "thing" itself and its images. This subversive operation of

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<sup>28</sup> Vernant 1991: 168.

“overthrow of Platonism”, proposed by Nietzsche, is related again to the return to Plato's *Sophist* and the negative possibility preserved in the concept of simulacrum.

My paper strives to raise a question. Why is the figure of the sophist seen as a double of the figure of the philosopher? In order to give an answer to this question, I will recall the differences between two types of images — likeness (εἰκῶν) and semblance (φάντασμα, 235b–236c), and two types of operations — dialectic division (διάρεσις) and purification (κάθαρσις, 227c–228b) which are central to Plato's philosophical and pedagogical method. What is even more intriguing, is the following question: what is the place of the notion of παράδειγμα in this dialogue? Again, there is the problem of translation: what is actually the παράδειγμα? It is mentioned six times in the dialogue (218d, 221c, 226c, 233d, 235d, 251a), but English translations use a variety of words to translate the very same word from the original. The παράδειγμα is once a mere “example”, then it is a “model”, and last but not least, it becomes a “pattern” or “illustration”. So does παράδειγμα stand on the side of originals and ideas, or does it stand on the side of what is unique and singular? The sympathizers of the argument for universality translate it as a “model”, and prove the validity of their argumentation by citing the usage of the term at 235d in the *Sophist*. But they disregard the possibility that παράδειγμα could be singular and can reproduce more or less imperfect images. The other five usages of παράδειγμα in the *Sophist* are translated as “example” or as “pattern”.

I will get back to the point, or to the beginning of the *Sophist* where Socrates (ironically?) stresses that it is not easy to distinguish between gods and philosophers, or among sophists, statesmen and philosophers — people are wandering from polis to polis, “appear disguised in all sorts of shapes”, pretending to be philosophers and statesmen. The macro-frame of the *Sophist* is the tetralogy of late Platonic dialogues (less ironic and ambiguous?) — the *Parmenides*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* — where we can observe the definition of the sophist, statesman and philosopher. In the *Sophist*, a visitor from Elea and a disciple of Parmenides comes to Athens. The Eleatic

Stranger doesn't speak directly with Socrates, but conducts an open lesson, a demonstration with the younger Socrates' follower, Theaetetus. The aim of the conversation between the Stranger and Theaetetus is to define what a sophist is, and in the following parts of the dialogue they reach five definitions of the sophist. If we count the negative definitions and the passing remarks, however, the definitions could prove to be more than five.

Who is the Eleatic Stranger? Is he a sophist or a true philosopher? That is neither a complex, nor a rhetorical question. Being part of the Eleatic school, the Stranger is a personification of the true philosopher and is supposed to stand against sophistry. What is unusual in the dialogue, is that the Stranger's opponent is not a historical sophist from the 5th–4th century B.C., claiming mastery of sophistry, such as Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus, Hippias, Thrasymachus, Antiphone, Critias, Lycophon. The school of Elea and the sophists diverged on the question of truth. But the situation in the *Sophist* is not an *agon* between the philosopher and the sophist. In fact, it is a rather pedagogical conversation between the experienced Stranger from Elea and the inexperienced Theaetetus.

Part of Parmenides' doctrine, and so part of the Eleatic school, is that there are two ways of penetrating nature: the way of truth (ἀλήθεια) and the way of opinion (δόξα). Because the Being is one, uniform and unchanging, only a philosopher could grasp the reality of things as they are on his way to truth, whereas the others, like sophists, could only promote the world of appearance, their speeches are fake, mere imitations. The clear division, made by Parmenides, of true reality and false appearance, of the things as they are and as they seem to be, is further developed by Plato in the *Sophist*. Plato changed the ontological foundation of the Eleatic school. Parmenides' grounding argument "it is impossible that things that are are not" is questioned and transformed into "it is possible that things that are not are". Thus non-being *is*, meaning that sophistry and ambiguous forms are possible. This opens a possibility to insert non-being into Being, thus explaining the activity of all heterogeneous forms and dubious creators, like sophists, poets, trage-

dians, painters and sculptors. Plato's leading judgment is that they are not creators *like* the demiurges, but create non-being. Even worse, they should not be named creators, not even imitators, but they are simulacra, their activity is delusive and phantasmatic. In addition, being and non-being could merge and incorporate each other, so that there are multiple levels between the two poles of pure being and non-being. The demiurge creates by modelling the Being, while sophistry models non-being, so Plato warns that it is misleading to compare their activities on the basis of resemblance. There is no common "like" between philosopher and sophist, and still it is not easy to distinguish the true philosopher from the delusive sophist. Why? "And a wolf is very like a dog, the wildest like the tamest of animals. But the cautious man must be especially on his guard in the matter of resemblances (ὁμοιότητες), for they are very slippery things" (231a).<sup>29</sup> So the naïve and unprepared pupil, like Theaetetus, who does not practice the division method enough, could make a mistake with wrong semblances. It is all about the likenesses. The way of analogy can generate heterogeneous types of examples. The dialectic is the operation that transforms the heterogeneous order into a homogeneous one.

The method of dialectics, which is the proper education, proceeds in a twofold way: the two operations are division (διαίρεσις) and purification (κάθαρσις). The division splits the one into two, so that it can categorize the things into genus and species, classes and subclasses.

But it can also move between the general and the concrete, and vice versa: from one to many and from many to one. The division works through purification. The purification is a procedure of isolation and elimination; it expels the spoiled part from the proper one, and thus traces a foundational limit and lineage. The purification operator selects one part of the division and marks its privileged possession of being rather than another part. And it's easy to stay with the division and purification of a binary, such as beautiful vs. ugly; good vs. bad, healthy vs. sick, justice vs. injustice. But it is much more complicated to handle the distinction from one likeness to another. So if the Stranger wants to

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<sup>29</sup> Here and below, I use the English translation by Harold North Fowler.

protect the naïve Theaetetus from the great mistake (literally, ἀμαρτία is about missing the mark), the former should show that the argument “the sophist is like the philosopher” is a corrupted likeness.

With that in mind, I will return to Vernant’s interpretation of Plato’s mimetic theory and the representational modus it implies. Images are no longer a direct actualization of some divine power, from Plato’s mimetic theory onward images are just representations. They blend being with non-being in gradual stages. There are not only two poles of being and non-being, there are also ontological levels and a gradual ascent of being more or less alike. So I will return to the question of different ontological statuses of images in the *Sophist* in order to link the problem of images with the problem of analogies, and to conclude that the way of analogies as the way of imitations is divided in a rather confusing manner. This modus of representation allows not only proper images, but also fake simulacra.

All crafts and arts (τέχναι) are split into acquisitive and creative ones. Productive activity is divided into divine and human creation. Both divine and human producers could generate originals and images. Divine originals have their autopoiesis (αὐτοποιητικός, 266a) while the human originals are hand-made or first-hand productions (αὐτουργικός, 266d). The whole genus of making images (εἰδωλοποιικός) is divided into two significant subclasses which I observe. The Stranger distinguishes image (εἰκών) from semblance (φάντασμα, 235d–236c, 261c–264d). Likenesses are icons, they are the faithful reproductions, while semblances are dangerous simulacra without a prototype. This is not only a distinction between two types of images, likeness (εἰκών) and semblance (φάντασμα), with different ontological status, but is also one between two operations of comparison. The analogy of “to be like” should be distinguished from the analogy of “to seem to be”. The likeness and the seeming modi generate two types of patterns, models or examples (παράδειγμα). The likeness pattern could lead us to the upper level of being, since it represents something from above and even though compared likenesses are not identical, they still



are proportional and symmetrical to the original.<sup>30</sup> Symmetry and proportion become deformed in semblances because those do not participate in the ideal sphere and sabotage the mimetic operator of being “more or less” similar. They are not modelled on an upper ontological level and thus they persist in a never-ending transformation and mutation. The recurring metaphor for the elusive character of this type of images (or image makers) is that they are like Protheus, the constantly changing sea god. So the *phantasma* rest beyond definitions conducted by division. Moreover, such images are multiple, heterogeneous, ungrounded, so they could deform the orders of proper representation. Thus *mimesis* is not a strict concept, but the concept of *mimesis* in Plato is at least twofold, like the concept of the pattern (παράδειγμα). Likewise the παράδειγμα could not be proportional.

The imitation of the proper pattern / example / analogy / paradigm conducts and ascends the follower towards true knowledge. This *mimesis* is definable by the dialectic principle because it implies the division between originals and copies, and it simultaneously makes a reference to the originals while differing from them, therefore this procedure could lead to the oneness of being, to the unique ideas, or to the perfect polis. It supposes and proposes knowledge. The other *mimesis*, the one which imitates and represents simulacra, is not just improper. It is out of control because this is the *mimesis* of multiplicity, hetero-

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<sup>30</sup> Cassin 2014: 245: “The second term, also common, is *eikôn* [εἰκῶν] which comes from \**Feikô* (to resemble). The primary sense thus reveals an aspect of images, related to the first, namely, their similarity to the objects. The classical uses are analogical to *eidôlon* but the sense of statue or portrait is prior to that of a mirror image or a ghost. An effigy always preserves some aspect of its model, even though there are degrees of resemblance. When Plato performs a division of the art of *mimesis* in the *Sophist*, he defines *eikôn* as a faithful reproduction which strictly preserves the proportions and the colors of the original (235de). *Eikôn* thus tends to evoke the positive aspect of imitation, that which sticks to what exists, and so it is understandable that the term gave us *icon* and its cognates. Plato contrasts *eikôn* with *phantasma* [φάντασμα], a noun derived from the verb *phainesthai* [φαίνεσθαι] (to shine, to show oneself, to appear), by way of *phantazesthai* [φαντάζεσθαι] (to appear, to show oneself). He defines *phantasma* by taking as an example the practice of painters who represent objects not as they are, but as they appear to be according to their position and the point of view of the observer (236b)”.

geneity and transformability. So Plato's mimetic theory enables this ontological distinction between general *mimesis* and double *mimesis*, between imitation of truth and imitation of imitations. And the most formidable, the double *mimesis*, pretends to be *like* the proper *mimesis*, corrupting the uniqueness of the latter. The redoubling effect inputs a negative moment into the representation so the discrimination of right images from the ungrounded images (φάντασμα) is a complex division. It is a division that could only be done by an experienced philosopher who had already recognized the way of truth. Otherwise it is quite possible to make a mistake. There is a possibility not to recognize the sophist: the one who pretends to be like the philosopher. Similarly, the demagogue pretends to be identical with the good statesman. Plato's opposition towards the double *mimesis* lies in the argument that the artist uses the subject as an instrument of likeness without knowing the logic of likeness. The actors use their own bodies and voices to be like somebody else, to create dangerous phantasms without making the effort to distinguish and separate the similar from the non-similar.

The philosopher will say that *he is not like* the sophist, even though the sophist *is*. But the philosopher could never purify his way and guard the truth from a sudden eruption of blurred analogies, dispersed examples and accidental patterns. This eruption is the sudden return of his double, the sophist, whose activity is in infinite transformation. The sophist has many faces; the paths of his mimicry are highly unpredictable.

In conclusion, the principle of the analogue or the way of the examples is neither the way of truth, nor that of opinion. And it is never reduced to a simple logistic instrument — A is like B, or A seems, but is not like B. Plato's analogies and examples with anglers, carpenters, architects, bed-makers, merchants, poets are organized in parallel series and lineages. For example, at the beginning of the *Sophist*, the Stranger suggests: "shall we take some lesser thing and try to use it as a pattern for the greater". So he selects the definition of the angler as a "lesser thing". But the greater thing is probably not the hunting of the sophist and the search for his slippery traces, it is the persuasion

of the pupil's soul. The competition between the philosopher and the sophist is for Theaetetus' sake. Who will Theaetetus prefer as an example and a model is not a minor question within the context of classical Athens. This choice is still relevant — the relativism of some immanence, some inner frame like language, subject, social context remains against the transcendence of absolute truths. So Plato's mimetic theory always retained this pedagogical inclination which produced genealogies: it is better to imitate the patterns of a wise philosopher than the delusive images of the sophists and poets; only the exemplar philosopher can lead us to the true being. Plato's ban of poets from the perfect polis, organized like the soul, is an ironic turn. Plato tries to control the transformative *mimesis*. The conditional (or fictional) status is important: if there is a perfect polis, it could govern the non-being and the producers of non-being. But if there isn't, the hunting of illusive images, of doubles, of simulacra, starts again in each dialogue.

Instead of a bottom line, there is one more question. If Plato is against making oneself look like a non-identical subject, why does he use the mask of a true philosopher *like* Socrates, and also the simulacra of ambiguous figures *like* Gorgias, Agathon and Aristophanes? How can we explain or eliminate the amorphous literary passages and fictionalized techniques in the philosophical dialogues of Plato? How are we to separate Plato's truth from Socrates' irony?

Both concepts, that of memory and of *mimesis*, are embedded in the general contextual framework that trace back the shift in Greek thinking leading to the birth of images: ritual figures lost their sacred status of directly presenting the divine powers, so they begin to function as images — they can substitute and represent what is negative and absent. The next undertaken step consists in analysing how the new status of images functions in Plato's mimetic theory and in particular in the dialogue *Sophist*. To the division of two types of images, authentic and fantastic, is then added the division between two types of imitation and two types of exemplification. Authentic *mimesis* contributes to the homogeneity between the general-particular; genus-species; image-sample. Heterogeneous *mimesis*, on the other hand, re-

doubles authentic *mimesis*, insofar as it is the “imitation of an imitation”. Thus, it intervenes in the key dialectical operation: the mechanism of diaeresis-and-catharsis. In this sense, the very concept of παράδειγμα is also twofold — the paradigm is both a model and an example. It can be a philosophical construct — a scheme that leads to the world of ideas. But it can also be a superfluous literary ornament — the most accidental example, which contextually caters to the environment, the interlocutor, the professional orientation of the company and the overall atmosphere in the dialogue. My thesis is that a certain analogy, juxtaposition and interference unfolds between the random examples and the general paradigm. The middle level of such interference between the particular and the general enables a more careful reading of Plato: to recognize the connections, interruptions and short circuits between the more concrete example and the more abstract paradigm. Once again, Plato is captured and recognized on the edge between philosophy and literature.

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