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As overtly stated in the title, this volume aims to revisit one of the central, and consequently most debated, concepts in Plato's philosophy, i.e., mimesis. The term is usually translated with "representation", "imitation" or "reproduction". The impossibility to settle on one single translation is by itself revealing: two concomitant aspects of mimesis are, on the one hand, its performative/productive side and, on the other, its icastic/representational side. The matter is made more difficult by the fact that the term "mimesis" is very often accompanied by a vast array of other terms belonging to the domain of representation, deceit, resemblance and so on. This is acknowledged by Plato himself in the *Sophist* (234b1-4), when he claims that (the nature of) what is mimetic (τὸ μιμητικόν) is the most diversified or multifarious thing (ποικιλώτατον).[1]

True to this Platonic statement, *Platonic Mimesis Revisited* (*PMR*) consists of an introduction and sixteen essays, which attempt to explore the luxurious pattern of the embroidery of Platonic mimesis. In a certain sense, *PMR* reproduces the *poikilia* of the notion of mimesis in Plato, and this is done both methodologically and content-wise. This is clearly stated in the introduction by the editors when, after a brief analysis of some pre-Platonic literary sources, they spell out the main objective of the volume: "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" (Pfefferkorn and Spinelli 2021: 19).

According to this purpose, the first chapter by Halliwell, titled *The Shifting Problems of Mimesis in Plato* (Halliwell 2021: 27-46), programmatically asserts that Plato's use of "mimesis" and its cognates ultimately does

not amount to any fixed doctrinal stance, and that even the downgrading of mimesis, which very often is considered to be unmistakably Platonic, needs to be rediscussed. For instance, there is evidence for a positive employment of the term when it comes to conceptualising philosophy and philosophers. The other fifteen chapters address a wealth of Platonic texts ranging from the Socratic dialogues to the *Laws*. The contributors focus on ethical, poetological, musical, metaphysical, epistemological, semantic matters and it is not possible to provide a detailed *résumée* of each chapter. In what follows, I will try to sort the chapters into macro-categories and in doing so I will present some exegetical proposals I find more representative. However, it is worth making explicit that each category is strictly intertwined with the others and that ultimately the boundaries between them tend to blur.

Mimesis and good life. The chapter by Erler (*Performanz und Analyse. Mimesis als Nachmachen – ein Element traditioneller Paideia in Platons früheren Dialogen und seine Analyse in den Nomoi*: 47-62) makes the case for viewing Socrates as providing an example of good life. This is the well-known *topos* of the *imitatio Socratis*. The main claim of the chapter is that in his dialogues Plato is representing the peculiar way in which Socrates acts as an exemplar of a good life. In Erler's view, Plato is suggesting that Socrates must not be imitated extrinsically as a man who is poking at other people with his provocative questions. Rather, one should follow him in the dynamic process of self-discovery and exercise of *logos*. One convincing claim of this chapter is that the *Phaedo* represents both the way Socrates acts when facing death, but also the effect that watching him do so has on the audience. In other words, Plato

would be giving a literary representation of how understanding Socrates' inner processes affects other people's emotional reactions. To this category, the chapter by Männlein-Robert (*Mit Blick auf das Göttliche oder Mimesis für Philosophen in Politeia und Nomoi*: 167-192) should be added. She focuses on the *topos* of the *homoiosis theo*, explicitly mentioned in the *Theaetetus*, and claims that it underlies the positive employment of mimesis one can find in the *Republic* and the *Laws*. Her main argument is that this mimesis is more than an artistic performance and comes to be a way of life, devoted to employing the intellect in the processes of assimilating oneself to the divine. Spinelli's chapter (Mimoumenoi tas tou theou periphoras. *Die Mimesis des Kosmos als menschliche Aufgabe in* Timaios: 291-312) sets out to show that in the *Timaeus* there is an imitation human beings carry out with regard to the visible cosmos in addition to the imitation of the intelligible model by the generated universe. Astronomy, harmony and gymnastics are different activities that aim at the same objective: giving order to one's life. An interesting point made by Spinelli is that especially in the case of astronomy and harmony the effect on one's intellect is both unconscious and conscious. This means that seeing the orderly motions of the heavens by itself positively affects our mind, but reflecting on the movements of the cosmos and its regularities also allows us to recognise such an order. This drives human beings, and especially whoever is philosophically minded, to imitate it.

Mimesis and performance. The question of the performative nature of mimesis is addressed from a variety of perspectives. In his chapter (Imitatio Socratis *from the Theatre of Dionysus to Plato's Academy*: 63-80), drawing

on archaeological, literary and dramaturgical sources, Capra claims that Socrates represents the patron of philosophy in the same way as Dionysus is the patron of theatre, thereby suggesting that Plato, through his dialogues, is offering a radical cultural transition from theatre to philosophy. Vlasits addresses a vexed question concerning the relation between book III and book X of the *Republic* (*Plato on Poetic and Musical Representation*: 147-166). His exegetical proposal moves from a less covered sector of mimetical activities, i.e. music. Vlasits' view is that mimesis is to be understood as "representation by resemblance" (Vlasits 2021: 150-153). Accordingly, he claims that mimesis in general, and music in particular, do not represent qualities in abstraction, but rather are embodied and sensible instantiations of them (Vlasits 2021: 159). For instance, if a courageous character is forged by war, certain musical pieces along with dances can imitate war by resembling it and therefore elicit the same qualities as war in those who take part in such dances. Palumbo's chapter (Mimêsis teorizzata e mimêsis *realizzata nel* Sofista *platonico*: 193-210) connects the notion of mimesis to the literary and theatrical nature of Plato's dialogues. In focusing on the *Sophist*, Palumbo quite subtly claims that the dialogue explains the nature of mimesis (she has in mind the notorious passage at 235ff.) but also represents it by means of its characters. For instance, the Eleatic Stranger stands for the nature of difference; therefore, not only do we find a description of the nature of difference, but we also see how difference works as it is represented by the way the Stranger acts in the dialogue. Finally, performance is at the core of Pfefferkorn's chapter (*Plato's Dancing City: Why is Mimetic Choral Dance so Prominent in the* Laws?: 335-358). Her main claim is that in the *Laws* the key political virtue is self-control or moderation (*sophrosyne*) and this is essentially connected to dancing. This happens in two ways. Firstly, dance is an essential educational instrument to elicit moderation by giving order to one's motion and gestures. Secondly, and quite suggestively, Pfefferkorn maintains that dance is also what best symbolises moderation itself.

Mimesis, reality and knowledge. As is well-known, mimesis is deployed by Plato to capture the relation between sensible things and intelligible beings. According to Candiotto (*Mimesis and Recollection*: 103-122), "rather than casting the immanence of Forms in the sensible things, metaphysical μίμησις is a theory that stresses their relationship while simultaneously highlighting their distance". Candiotto's main claim is twofold. Firstly, metaphysical mimesis triggers the *anamnesis* as described in the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus*. In perceiving things, which are imitations of Forms, one's soul is pushed towards recollecting what one saw before her birth. Secondly, the defective nature of things qua imitations of Forms, despite being enough to let one recollect being, also triggers one's tension toward having a full grasp of Forms. Candiotto interprets such a tension in terms of erotic desire, which thereby proves to be an essential connection between embodied souls and intelligible beings. Fronterotta's chapter (*Generation as μίμησις and κόσμος as μίμημα: Cosmological Model, Productive Function and the Arrangement of the χώρα in Plato's* Timaeus: 275-290) addresses the metaphysical-cosmological employment of mimesis in Plato's *Timaeus*. Moving from a sharp distinction between a paradigmatic cause (intelligible forms) and a productive cause (the demiurge), which however imply one another, he claims that these two causes

require that there be a product, which is an imitation of the intelligible model. This generated product, i.e., the sensible cosmos, is essentially the ordering of a pre-existing material (on whose status Fronterotta briefly discusses some alternative interpretations). His main claim is that the *kosmos* is a *mimema*, i.e., the imitation of the intelligible model, insofar as its motion follows a numerically regular order and it is arranged according to geometrical figures. This represents the maximum degree of stability, as opposed to the stability on the intelligible model, allowed by the chaotic material in which and out of which physical bodies are made.

Mimesis, being and language. As far as language is concerned, Plato employs the semantics of mimesis not just with respect to poetry and theatre. Pavani offers in her chapter (*The Essential Imitation of Names: On Cratylean Mimesis*: 81-102) a careful reading of the idea that words imitate their object through the sounds they consist of. The upshot of Plato's *Gedankengang* is the famous argument of the two Cratyluses: if an image reproduces perfectly what it is an image of, then we would have two identical things, which implies that one is no more the image of the other. Pavani correctly argues that this is the way mimesis is used to show a crucial fact in Plato's philosophy, namely that "names *qua* imitations cannot but be ontologically different from the things they name. Mimesis accounts for this necessary distinction" (p. 99).[2] The chapter by Strobel (*Bild und falsche Meinung in Platons* Sophistes: 249-274) deals with the *Sophist* and specifically with the connection between falsehood and images. In his very interesting essay, Strobel considers a variety of accounts of how and why falsehood is the condition for the existence of all sorts

of images and to what extent different sorts of images end up being mistaken for what they are images of. He goes on to argue that the specific sort of images called *phantasmata* serve the purpose of producing false beliefs and that this is functional to the sophist's attempt at being mistaken for the wise. In the chapter by Abbate (*Der Sophist als* mimêtês tôn ontôn *(Soph.* 235a1f.) Ontologische Implicationen*: 211-224), the author sets out to give an interpretation of the phrase μιμητὴς ὢν τῶν ὄντων, attached to the sophist by the Stranger in the *Sophist*. This is utilised to address a much broader question: given that language is the specific instrument of both the sophist and the philosopher, how are they to be distinguished? Abbate's reading is that the sophist produces appearances, which aim to be taken as real, but ultimately are a distortion of reality. In other words, they *only* exist in (the relation of) being different from what is real or true. On the other hand, the philosopher is presented as the one who grasps the relations subsisting between genera or forms or between them and perceptible things. Abbate's convincing conclusion, as I take it, is that the sophist uses language to obscure the difference between language and reality. By contrast, the philosopher is the one who uses language to chart the relations between extra-linguistic entities relying on the fundamental assumption that reality and language have a common structure.[3]

To conclude, I wish to state that *PMR* accomplishes at least three goals, which prove to be helpful to all the scholars who work on the Platonic notion of mimesis. Firstly, it offers an up-to-date framework where to find open questions, both old and new, concerning mimesis in Plato along with, in most chapters, a sufficiently extended survey of the critical

literature. Secondly, in the case of some essays, it offers a manageable synthesis of very broad questions setting the basis for further development. Thirdly, in the case of some other essays, it offers innovative readings of well-known passages or interpretations of questions concerning Platonic mimesis that have mostly been neglected.

REFERENCES

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F. Aronadio, *I fondamenti della riflessione di Platone sul linguaggio:Il* Cratilo, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma 2011.

ENDNOTES

1   This passage is mentioned and theoretically utilised in the volume by Halliwell in his chapter (p. 30).
2   Pavani's chapter is a solid and interesting piece of scholarship on the Cratylus. It should only be pointed out that some of the questions she addresses such as the role of *delosis* and the relation between names and essences have received an extensive treatment in Aronadio (2002) and above all Aronadio (2011), which however are not discussed in her essay.
3   To use Abbate's own words, we can conclude "dass Platon eine logisch-strukturelle Auffassung der Wirklichkeit und der Sprache ausarbeitet, durch die ihre wechselseitige logisch-ontologische Entsprechung garantiert ist" (p. 222).