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MIMESIS IN PLATO, PLOTINUS, AND PROCLUS

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Tese orientada pela Doutora Fotini Hadjittofi, especialmente elaborada para a obtenção do grau de Mestre em Estudos Clássicos.

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Homer, *Iliad* V.121-122

ἀγλὸν δ' αὖ τοι ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἔλον ἢ πρὶν ἐπῆεν,
ὄφρ' εὖ γινώσκῃς ἡμὲν θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα.

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Resumo

Nesta dissertação proponho investigar o conceito de mimese em três fases distintas, mas conectadas, do Platonismo, cingindo-me aos autores: Platão, Plotino e Proclo. A mimese é um conceito filosófico tratado primordialmente por Platão. Comumente, a mimese é definida como imitação. Nesta tese defendo e estabeleço que este mecanismo implica dois movimentos: a contemplação e a criação. Para se imitar um objeto, é necessário, primeiro, contemplar esse objeto e, em seguida criar a representação desse objeto. Esta divisão da mimese em dois movimentos distintos servirá de base à minha argumentação. Platão, no Livro X da *República*, ataca os artistas miméticos por estarem três vezes distantes da realidade. Se tivermos em consideração que a realidade para Platão é o mundo inteligível, esta crítica aos artistas miméticos pode ser entendida na medida em que estes imitam objetos sensíveis que, por si, já são imitações dos objetos inteligíveis e, por esta razão, estes artistas estão a imitar imitações, criando ilusões através das quais enganam quem as contemplar. Porém, esta não é a única perspectiva de Platão face à mimese. Como defendo, a mimese, tal como é interpretada por Platão, não se limita à crítica feita no Livro X da *República*. No primeiro capítulo, apresento uma perspectiva que escapa às críticas da *República*. Denomino esta nova perspectiva “mimese superior”. É definida pela sua contemplação, que, ao contrário da mimese criticada na *República*, a qual intitulei “mimese inferior”, tem como objeto os próprios Inteligíveis. Esta “mimese superior”, assim denominada porque contempla aquilo que Platão considera ser a verdadeira realidade, cria algo que é apenas uma vez removido da realidade, sendo uma representação mais perfeita do que a dos poetas miméticos.

O foco desta dissertação não se limita à visão estética ou artística da mimese. Ou seja, embora tradicionalmente o conceito de mimese se englobe nos campos filosóficos de teorias estéticas e teorias da arte, considero que o verdadeiro valor da mimese está numa visão desta num contexto de teoria de criatividade. A mimese, como mecanismo metafísico (visto que o conceito de imitação implica uma relação entre vários níveis ontológicos) tem uma importância vital para a realidade Platónica, particularmente para a criação do mundo sensível. Como demonstro, os vários níveis ontológicos das metafísicas platónicas têm uma relação mimética entre si, no sentido em que cada nível é uma imitação do nível que é seu superior. Este foco na mimese como mecanismo criativo

incorpora, por consequência, teorias estéticas e artísticas, visto que o estabelecimento dos ideais de criação levar-nos-ão aos ideais de beleza e de arte. No esquema metafísico platônico, a verdadeira beleza é a Forma do Belo, que é imitada por todas as coisas que participam nesta forma. A “mimese superior”, sendo capaz de contemplar as Formas, está potencialmente mais próxima da verdadeira beleza do que as teorias de beleza que se centram no mundo sensível. Através deste foco numa teoria de criatividade, demonstro a particularidade da mimese no sistema filosófico platônico.

Esta distinção entre o que denominei “mimese superior” e “mimese inferior” estende-se para lá das obras de Platão, embora não seja uma distinção feita conscientemente pelos autores estudados. Ainda que não seja feita a distinção diretamente, os três autores Platônicos que apresento nesta dissertação exibem perspectivas particulares face à mimese que obedecem à definição de “mimese superior” e “mimese inferior”. Desta forma, cada capítulo, dedicado a um autor platônico, analisa e define as perspectivas miméticas consoante a minha interpretação da divisão da mimese em “superior” e “inferior”, tal como a minha divisão do mecanismo mimético em dois movimentos, contemplação e criação. A escolha dos três autores, Platão, Plotino e Proclo, reflete, até certo ponto, uma evolução do pensamento platônico, representando três grandes etapas do Platonismo. Começando pelo próprio Platão, fundador da filosofia platônica, passando por Plotino, fundador do pensamento Neoplatônico, e acabando em Proclo, o melhor exemplo do Neoplatonismo Tardio.

No primeiro capítulo, dedicado a Platão, demonstro a crítica *ex libris* da mimese na *República*, estabelecendo aqui a definição de “mimese inferior”. De seguida, argumento contra a interpretação que dita que esta perspectiva da mimese em Platão é monolítica, apresentando fatores condicionantes à conclusão do Livro X da *República*. Depois, concluindo que a “mimese inferior” é apenas uma forma de mimese em Platão, defendo a possibilidade de uma “mimese superior”, por meio de evidências que podem ser encontradas em vários diálogos de Platão. Esta “mimese superior” é referida em vários contextos, mas sempre com um foco na relação entre diferentes níveis ontológicos.

No segundo capítulo, focado em Plotino, demonstro as várias formas de mimese que o fundador do Neoplatonismo aceita, dividindo-as, tanto quanto possível, entre “mimese superior” e “inferior”. A mimese em Plotino, embora evidentemente relacionada com a mimese em Platão, exhibe características particulares, devidas às inovações do sistema Neoplatônico, que é reconhecido por vários autores como o sistema filosófico mais complexo da tradição ocidental. Por essa razão, procuro introduzir de uma forma

generalizada o esquema metafísico que permeia toda a filosofia de Plotino. Seguidamente, trato o conceito de “mimese inferior” em Plotino, demonstrando as inovações nesta perspectiva negativa da mimese. A “mimese superior” em Plotino, particularmente na sua vertente de mecanismo metafísico que compõe o cosmo, ganha ainda mais relevância no sistema filosófico Neoplatónico, visto que neste sistema há uma grande insistência nos múltiplos níveis ontológicos distintos. Consequentemente, este capítulo contém uma secção dedicada à mimese como mecanismo criador da realidade sensível e inteligível. As secções seguintes são dedicadas à “mimese superior” como mecanismo criativo num contexto da agência humana, discutindo também as formas de atingir esse ideal através da virtude, dialética e anamnese, com o objetivo de relatar as formas de iniciar contemplação do reino divino, de acordo com Plotino. Por fim, este capítulo discute o potencial artista ideal, que consegue contemplar os inteligíveis e criar algo que, embora não seja uma representação perfeita (o que seria fora das capacidades da mimese), tenha uma relação dinâmica que implica semelhança.

Por fim, o terceiro capítulo foca-se em Proclo. Este filósofo é considerado vital para o nosso entendimento da filosofia Neoplatónica Tardia, visto que a sua obra sistematiza todo o esquema metafísico desta filosofia. O Neoplatonismo Tardio é caracterizado por um acréscimo na complexidade na metafísica, pois os níveis ontológicos sofrem um “efeito telescópico”, no sentido em que o que era um nível ontológico em Plotino transforma-se em vários níveis. O foco desta dissertação no contexto de Proclo é a sua obra intitulada *Comentário à República de Platão*, particularmente nos Ensaio V e VI, onde Proclo elucida a relação entre Platão e os artistas miméticos e defende Homero das acusações feitas por Platão, e nos seus *Hinos*. Anexo a dissertação a tradução do Ensaio V e dos *Hinos*.

Neste capítulo discuto a visão da mimese que Proclo descortina. Proclo, enquanto comenta a *República*, segue a conclusão de Platão sobre os artistas miméticos, que apresentam ilusões três vezes distantes da realidade, argumentando que estes são prejudiciais à alma da audiência. Proclo, porém, também sugere que as conclusões da *República* são condicionais devido ao contexto em que se inserem, e por vezes, indica a possibilidade de a mimese escapar às críticas de Platão. Além disso, a sua filosofia dos *symbola*, fruto do conceito de teurgia, é dependente do conceito de “mimese superior”, como argumento. Este *symbola* são marcas que existem dentro de todos os seres e que representam a semelhança dinâmica que estes seres têm com as suas causas.

Com esta dissertação, procuro defender uma visão da mimese que ultrapassa as

limitações de perspectivas estéticas e artísticas e que reabilita o potencial da mimese, não só defendendo que é uma forma válida de criação, mas também que é a única forma de criação dentro do esquema metafísico platónico.

Palavras-chave: Neoplatonismo, Mimese, Criatividade, Metafísica, Platonismo

Abstract

This thesis investigates the concept of mimesis in three philosophers, Plato, Plotinus, and Proclus, who represent three major stages of Platonism, with Plotinus being the founder of what is considered to be Neoplatonic philosophy and Proclus representing Later Neoplatonic thought. Most studies of mimesis focus on its value in theories of aesthetics or poetics. Particularly in Plato's works, mimesis is usually seen negatively and is criticized for creating things "three times removed from reality" –mere illusions. My focus, however, will be on mimesis as a creative mechanism. In fact, as I argue, mimesis is the only possible creative mechanism within the metaphysics of Platonism, be it in the creation of a work of art or the creation of the universe itself.

Mimesis, therefore, also has a positive value in Platonism, particularly since Platonic and Neoplatonic metaphysics are dependent on the concept of mimesis. I distinguish between two versions of mimesis: one I have called "inferior mimesis", which is equated with Plato's criticism of mimesis in Book X of the *Republic*. This "inferior mimesis" is a form of imitation that is limited to the mere copying of copies, and consequently creates illusions. The other version, "superior mimesis", defends that mimesis can look beyond the Sensible directly into the Intelligible realm and create representations of that reality. In each chapter, dedicated to each philosopher, I present their different perspectives on mimesis, while highlighting that the distinction between "superior" and "inferior mimesis" is maintained by all.

I have translated into Portuguese Proclus' *Hymns* and *Essay V* of Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, which are, respectively, Appendix I and Appendix II. This translation fills a gap in modern translations of Neoplatonic authors into European Portuguese. It is the first time that a complete work of Proclus is translated into European Portuguese. It is my aim to contribute to the Neoplatonic studies in this language.

Keywords: Neoplatonism, Mimesis, Creativity, Metaphysics, Platonism

Contents

Resumo	3
Abstract	7
Contents	8
Introduction	10
Chapter I – Plato	14
“Inferior mimesis” in Plato’s Republic	17
Books II and III.....	18
Book X.....	21
Educative status of poetry is attacked.....	22
The greatest charge against poetry	23
Superior mimesis	30
The Ideal poiesis.....	32
Nothing new can be created and divine inspiration.....	33
Poetic creation as pointing towards Intelligibles	35
Assimilation to God through poiesis	37
Poesis in the Symposium.....	38
Philosophy as the true art form.....	39
Conclusion.....	40
Chapter II – Plotinus	42
Mimesis	44
Inferior Mimesis	45
Shadows and Reflections.....	46
Mimetai crafts and Intelligible crafts.....	47
Superior Mimesis.....	49
Mimesis as a metaphysical mechanism	50
Participation as Mimesis.....	50
Macro-microcosm relation	51
Prohodos and epistrophe as Mimesis.....	53
Nature as a Mimetic product	54
“Superior mimesis” in the human sphere	56
Contemplation	56
Purification or Ways to Ascend.....	57

Virtue	58
Dialectic.....	62
Anamnesis	65
Virtue, Dialectic and Anamnesis	67
Projection.....	69
Creation	73
Impossibility of perfect mimesis	74
Spontaneous Creation	75
Role of Soul/Conclusion.....	77
Chapter III – Proclus	82
Differences between Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism	83
The Republic Essays.....	87
Essay V – “Plato’s view on the art of poetry, the kinds that fall under it, and the best harmonies and rhythms”	88
Essay VI – Proclus the Successor On the things said by Plato in the Republic on Homer and Poetry	99
The tripartition of Poetry	103
Symbola as likenesses	108
Hymns.....	111
Conclusion.....	117
Appendix I	119
I - Hino a Hélio.....	119
II - Hino a Afrodite.....	120
III - Hino às Musas	121
IV - Hino comum aos deuses.....	122
V - Hino a Afrodite Lícia	122
VI - Hino comum a Hécate e a Jano.....	123
VII - Hino a Atena de muitos conselhos.....	123
Appendix II	126
Comentário à <i>República</i> de Platão, Ensaio V: Os ensinamentos de Platão sobre a poética, as suas ideias, o melhor género e ritmo	126
Bibliography	145

Introduction

This study aims to re-examine mimesis within the Platonic philosophical scheme, not only in Plato's philosophy but also in Neoplatonic thought. Mimesis has often been discussed as a theory of aesthetics or poetics. This study proposes a different approach to mimesis as a creative mechanism, or, in other words, a theory of creativity.

Mimesis, particularly in Plato, has usually been studied within the context of Book X of the *Republic*, where Plato seems to exile the mimetic artists on account of their lies and potential damage to the political structure of *Kallipolis*. If we only take Plato's view on mimesis as the imitation performed by tragic and comic poets, as many have before, we may consider Plato's criticism of poetry as three times removed from reality to be a dogma. Chapter I discusses in more depth, however, Plato's opinion regarding mimesis, which goes beyond the simple imitation of characters postulated in the *Republic*. Mimesis in Plato is also a metaphysical mechanism used to explain our whole experience of reality. As such, it escapes the criticism suggested in the *Republic*. As I will argue consistently throughout this thesis, there is a possibility for a "superior" form of mimesis that is not limited to being three times removed from reality. This possibility is revealed through a perspective on mimesis that focuses on its creative mechanics, rather than on its artistic side, meaning that mimesis is not merely something an artist uses in his work, but the only possible form of creation possible within Platonism, and is used by artists as well as by the gods to create the world. Yet, this perspective, which focuses on the wider issue of creation, can still give rise to a theory of art, a theory that has its roots in mimesis as a metaphysical mechanism capable of transcending the "shadow-painting" of comedy and tragedy, which I have defined as "inferior mimesis". In essence, "superior mimesis" is a form of mimetic creation that does not look towards Sensible particulars, and therefore escapes the three removes criticism. Beyond the value of the object created, "superior mimesis" implies the capacity to contemplate the Intelligibles, which is part of the *telos* of the philosopher, and by extension the goal of human life. As I will be demonstrated throughout this thesis, this idea is already present in Plato and is consequently accepted and further developed by the Neoplatonists.

As a basis for my thesis, I have used a definition of mimesis that is bipartite. Mimesis, be it in the superior or inferior form, always implies two phases or “motions”, the use of which will define the value of a particular mimetic product. In mimesis, it is always implied that the mimetic creator looks at something, which is the phase I have called *theoria*, contemplation. This is the first phase in mimetic creation: since an imitation must have a model, a paradigm to which to look. The second phase is the creation, which I have called *poiesis*. To imitate something is to create something which has a likeness to its model. A mimetic artist, who can be as much a poet as a god and as a philosopher, is always bound by this two-phase process of mimesis. Just as the painter looks to the couch to create a painted couch, the Demiurge looks to the Forms to create the universe. Both products are mimetic products, and ultimately are also objects of contemplation which can potentially be used as models for other mimetic products. The value of mimesis, whether it produces mere shadows or things according to Intelligibles, is not primarily dependent on its product, but on its contemplation. “Superior mimesis” implies the contemplation of a higher reality, and consequently the creation of a product at a superior ontological level. This entails that mimesis can create something that is not a mere copy of a copy, but on the same level as nature, which is a copy of an original. With this perspective on mimesis as a creative process, it is possible to view other concepts within the mimetic scope. It will be found that divine inspiration, for example, is essentially a “superior” form of mimesis. Fundamentally, in Platonic thought, mimesis is the only possible form of creation. Nothing entirely original can be created, except by the First Principle which creates everything. Every proceeding creator is limited to being an imitator.

Chapter I discusses Plato’s views on mimesis. It first tackles the common interpretation of the *Republic*, regarding the exile of the mimetic artist, demonstrating that the statements made against mimesis are hesitant and conditional to the context of *Kallipolis*. After establishing the openness of Plato’s criticism against mimesis, this chapter will present a discussion on many other references to mimesis which are usually ignored when discussing mimesis in the artistic context. While these references might not all be directly referring to the use of mimesis by artists, they nonetheless illustrate Plato’s true attitude to mimesis as a creative mechanism. The conclusion will be that Plato believes in the possibility of a mimesis that contemplates divine reality and imitates it in a way that creates an object of contemplation that will lead others upwards. This form of “superior mimesis” will prove to be the philosophical art, and the philosopher is,

ultimately, the best human mimetic creator.

In chapters II and III, both of which discuss Neoplatonic philosophers, I have tried to give a general introduction to the notoriously complicated Neoplatonic metaphysics¹. While I make no claim to an in-depth primer, I hope that it is enough to understand the concepts employed in the investigation concerning mimesis. In chapter II, I focus on Plotinus' usage of the concept of mimesis, which is somewhat distinct from Plato's usage. Plotinus receives and expands upon Plato's theories, and this is reflected also in relation to mimesis. In Plotinus, mimesis achieves its most clear form as a metaphysical mechanism that explains the relationship between various levels of reality, which will be treated in a separate section. In Plotinus, "superior mimesis" becomes a concept openly alluded to, especially in relation to its use by artists and philosophers, in contrast to Plato's more enigmatic form of exposition. Furthermore, Plotinus' metaphysical scheme, which involves many levels of reality, is fertile ground for mimesis as a metaphysical concept since every level is imitating the one above it.

Chapter III is dedicated to Proclus (415-485 CE), who represents the later stage of Platonism, the post-Iamblichean branch, usually called Late Neoplatonism or Eastern Neoplatonism². This stage of Platonism, in contrast to Plotinian Neoplatonism, becomes a religion in its own right. The catalyst for this evolution is Iamblichus, who opens Neoplatonism to the influence of both traditional Hellenic and Roman religion as well as other religious traditions, such as the *Chaldean Oracles*. Proclus stands as the great organizer of Late Neoplatonism, not only being one of the Neoplatonic authors by whom we have the most extensive corpus, but also because two of his most important works aim to expound Neoplatonic metaphysics in a schematic manner, premise by premise. My discussion on Proclus' perspective on mimesis is centered on his *Essays* V and VI of the *Commentary on the Republic* and on his *Hymns*. In the former, he establishes what has been regarded as his theory of poetics which makes use of theurgy to justify divine inspiration and to defend Homer against Plato's criticisms³. In the latter, he puts into practice his creative theory. Theurgy in Proclus is, I will suggest, based on mimesis, and acts as a form of "superior mimesis", an innovation not present in Plotinus nor Plato.

I have chosen to dedicate a chapter to each of these authors in a way that represents

¹ Chlup (2017) 1.

² Chlup (2017) 18.

³ Lambertson (2012) entitles his translation of *Essay* V and VI of the *Commentary on the Republic* as "On Poetics".

three major stages of Platonism. I bypass Middle Platonism due to its small textual weight, compared to Neoplatonism, and the fact that mimesis is not discussed in depth in Middle Platonism, as it is in Neoplatonism. By examining these three authors in sequence I try to demonstrate not only the impact of mimesis as a theory of creativity in Platonism, but also to show how Platonism evolved, while still maintaining a connection to its source. While Plato famously writes through dialogues, which sometimes seem inconclusive, Plotinus writes in tractates which are replete with paradoxical imagery, and Proclus writes commentaries on other works. These diverging forms of exposition make each chapter's structure naturally different. Still, all chapters discuss both negative views on mimesis, which I have called "inferior mimesis", and optimistic views, which I have called "superior mimesis".

Chapter I – Plato

This chapter will discuss Plato’s theory of mimesis, based firstly on the *Republic* and the way it is commonly interpreted, and then discussing divergent interpretations of his critique of mimesis. My argument will be that Plato does not see mimesis as pessimistically as it is usually assumed. I will defend the existence of both a positive and negative view on mimesis, depending on the method of contemplation of the paradigm to be imitated.

First, I present a definition of mimesis: above all, I take this to be a creative mechanism. Stephen Halliwell⁴, commenting on the translation of mimesis to the Latin *imitatio* argues that the modern term “imitation”, in all modern languages, has been “impoverished” and “narrowed” because of the negative interpretation of mimesis as a “limited exercise in copying, superficial replication, or counterfeiting of an externally ‘given’ model”. Halliwell also defends that mimesis can be used semantically in relation to five categories or phenomena: visual resemblance, behavioral emulation, impersonation, vocal or musical production, and finally, metaphysical conformity (i.e., how different metaphysical entities relate to each other)⁵. Mimesis, in all these contexts, has the meaning of “correspondence”. Arne Melberg argues that, for Plato, mimesis is a “movable concept and every effort to make it reasonably unambiguous would be a betrayal of that floating ambiguity”⁶. Halliwell’s definition gives us many meanings, but the overall meaning of mimesis is ambiguous, especially in Plato’s case. For that reason, I propose the following distinction, in order to discuss the concept with a solid definition of what it entails.

Mimesis, as a mechanism that creates equivalence to a paradigm, implies two “motions” or “phases”. To imitate something is to contemplate that something (be it through vision, sounds or intellectually) and project its distinguishing features onto another thing that becomes the imitation of the first. Thus, we have the initial motion of “contemplation” (*theoria*), which leads the contemplator to “creation” (*poiesis*). Mimesis is dependent on both these processes - the mechanism could not function if either of the

⁴ Halliwell (2002) 13-14.

⁵ Ibid. 15.

⁶ Melberg (1995) 18.

two motions was lacking. Nonetheless, it mainly depends on the contemplative phase and, as I will argue below, it is what defines the value of creation and of mimesis as a whole. It should also be noted that mimesis always implies that the product of contemplation is inferior in some way to the paradigm. The relationship between paradigm and image is always one of superior to inferior, often ontologically even⁷, as in the case of the Forms and Particulars, which I will discuss below. If the image were a perfect representation of the paradigm, it would not be an image. Instead, it would be more akin to a copy (although if it were a perfect copy in all senses, it would be indistinguishable from the original and therefore not a copy at all either)⁸. The mimetic product need not be a physical object, it can also be a simple action, as in the case of ethical emulation.

Plato uses mimesis in all the five semantical meanings defined by Halliwell. One could argue (and many have)⁹, that the dramatic medium of the dialogue is itself a mimetic product. Plato is, as will be shown in this chapter, more optimistic than pessimistic regarding the value of mimesis. But modern literature has focused almost exclusively on his attack in *Republic X*. There, so the popular interpretation claims, Plato condemns mimetic products as being an image of an image and three times removed from reality. This is a landmark in the history of philosophy - the introduction of the idea that philosophy and art clash¹⁰, which will later be claimed to be “the greatest problem of philosophy”¹¹. This negative vision of mimesis creates implications that seem to transform all art into useless playthings that are ultimately harmful to one’s philosophical education – mere illusions that attract and deceive the uninitiated as to their ontological status. This is the negative perspective on mimesis, which seems to remove all potential from mimesis, leaving it playing with shadows in the worst case, and merely looking at the physical world in the best case.

If we consider all of Plato’s references to mimesis, however, it is possible to understand his complex view of the concept. If we do so, another perspective will emerge, one that values mimesis and its potential to reach the metaphysical realm and to produce

⁷ By this I mean that in the Platonic metaphysical scheme reality has many levels, and in this context the paradigm is superior in reality to the image.

⁸ *Crat.* 432b: ἴσως ὅσα ἐκ τινος ἀριθμοῦ ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι ἢ μὴ εἶναι πάσχοι ἂν τοῦτο ὃ σὺ λέγεις, ὥσπερ καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ δέκα ἢ ὅστις βούλει ἄλλος ἀριθμός, ἐὰν ἀφέλης τι ἢ προσθήῃς, ἕτερος εὐθὺς γέγονε· τοῦ δὲ ποιοῦ τινος καὶ συμπάσης εἰκόνοσ μὴ οὐχ αὐτὴ <ἢ> ἢ ὀρθότησ, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐναντίον οὐδὲ τὸ παράπαν δέη πάντα ἀποδοῦναι οἷόν ἐστιν ὃ εἰκάζει, εἰ μέλλει εἰκὼν εἶναι.

⁹ E.g., Blondell (2004), Coulter (1976), Melberg (1995).

¹⁰ Plato is credited with inventing the statement: “ancient quarrel” between poetry and philosophy, even though there is no evidence of such a quarrel before the Plato. Most (2011).

¹¹ Zovko (2018) 89, Halliwell (2002) 37.

something with “equivalence” to Plato’s actual reality of the Forms. By “equivalence” I mean a relationship between two distinct entities that is based on likeness, although likeness does not imply merely similar appearances but can be extended to less Intelligible criteria¹². I will argue that there are two competing forms of mimesis, “superior” and “inferior”, as I will refer to them. “Inferior mimesis” is the kind that Plato criticizes and expels from *Kallipolis* in the *Republic*. It is limited to the mere imitation of physical things, which are already themselves imitations of Intelligible things. Since this mimesis contemplates only physical things, the contemplator stays within the same ontological level and, as such, this type of mimesis works horizontally. Since it contemplates the Sensible, its product will be inferior and a mere illusion. “Superior mimesis” contemplates directly the heavenly realm of the Forms and therefore produces something ontologically superior to the product of “inferior mimesis”, something which is valuable to the ascent of our souls.

My aim is not only to defend a positive Platonic perspective on mimesis but also to demonstrate its relevance for contemplation and creation. First, I will synthesize the “inferior mimesis” position of the *Republic* and afterwards I will discuss the other mimetic references related to “superior mimesis”. Finally, I will briefly examine some references to mimetic-adjacent concepts that are relevant to the notion of “superior mimesis”. It is also worth noting that I follow the unitarian view of Platonic interpretation¹³, which defends that Plato has a concrete doctrine (in contrast to other interpretations such as the no-doctrine position that argues that the Platonic works are philosophical works but designed to only raise questions and not to provide answers)¹⁴ and that this concrete doctrine is totally concordant between all the dialogues and the unwritten teachings¹⁵. It is my view that Plato is not paradoxical or inconsistent with himself, but that passages that may imply contradiction only do so *prima facie*. There are Platonic interpreters that reject these statements and claim that Plato’s theories evolve

¹² The Forms are not sensible and therefore their particulars similarity will not be representing a direct equivalence of sensible appearance. I will discuss this more in depth below.

¹³ Tigerstedt (1977) 52.

¹⁴ E.g., Blondell (2004) argues that Plato makes a point to mask his first-person voice through the dialogue form in order to avoid any claim to dogmatism.

¹⁵ Reported by Aristotle in many works and by Aristoxenus in *Elements of Harmony*, II.30-1, Meibom. These unwritten teachings show that Plato has a doctrine beyond what is discussed in the dialogues. See Tigerstedt (1977) 64, 71. The legitimacy of these unwritten teachings is disputed, but Neoplatonic philosophers accepted their existence. Findlay (1974) postulates the unity of the unwritten teachings with the Platonic writings. For a list of passages referring to the unwritten teachings see Findlay’s Appendix I.

over the course of his works, which justifies their inconsistencies¹⁶. Other interpreters took to rejecting any Platonic work that might seem inconsistent with their idea of Platonic doctrine¹⁷. To argue against the many and varied interpretations of Plato is beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice to say that, to Neoplatonic philosophers, Plato had a concrete doctrine and was never inconsistent. Since my aim is to discuss the concept of mimesis from Plato to Proclus, I aim to see Plato as the Neoplatonists did.

“Inferior mimesis” in Plato’s Republic

In this section, I will refer to the *Republic*’s critique of mimesis, particularly the “inferior kind”. This apparently fatalistic theory has been the target of much heated debate, starting with Aristotle’s own divergent use of mimesis in the *Poetics* up until modern aesthetic discussions¹⁸. This theory has been viewed as monolithic and dogmatic, but it need not be so. It is only one aspect of the much more complex and broader Platonic concept of mimesis, as will be further discussed. First, I will summarize the critique of mimesis in *Republic* II and III and then that of *Republic* X. Afterwards, I will discuss their relationship and the theme of “inferior mimesis” at large.

In the *Republic*, Plato’s main concern is the “foundation” of a Utopian city¹⁹, which is fundamentally governed and legislated according to philosophical principles. Much of this work is dedicated to the pursuit of the ideal education for the Guardians²⁰, which are a caste entrusted to protect their co-citizens and repel the city’s enemies. No other caste is given as much attention as the Guardians in the *Republic*. The main desideratum of this utopia is simplicity of character. What this entails is that, when possible, any one person should be fully dedicated to only one craft and, consequently, try to cultivate only the one personality that is most efficient at that craft, with the goal that each citizen should become the most efficient and consequently the best at their

¹⁶ Tigerstedt (1977) 25.

¹⁷ Ibid. 19.

¹⁸ Potolsky (2006) 32 claims that “Unlike Plato, for whom mimesis is a mirror of something else and therefore potentially deceptive, Aristotle defines mimesis as a craft with its own internal laws and aims”.

¹⁹ This Ideal City is used to understand Justice in the soul, by “zooming out” and dealing with the topic at a larger scale. See *Rep.* 368c.

²⁰ *Rep.* 374e: Ἡμέτερον δὴ ἔργον ἂν εἴη, ὡς ἔοικεν, εἴπερ οἳ τ’ ἐσμέν, ἐκλέξασθαι τίνες τε καὶ ποῖαι φύσεις ἐπιτήδεια εἰς πόλεως φυλακῆν.

craft²¹. When applying this principle to the Guardians, however, Socrates and his interlocutors realize that their case is exceptional (*Rep.* 375c). The Guardians, by virtue of their job, which is to be aggressive towards enemies and compassionate to their fellow countrymen, must forgo some of the simplicity of character that the other castes are free to enjoy. Much concern is generated over this matter, for once you add some variety to one's character, no longer can you guarantee their uniformity at work and in their private life. Socrates worries that the Guardians' character will always have the potential to become tyrannical or submissive. Herein lies the great political problem of the *Republic*, with much subsequent discussion being geared towards how to educate the Guardians in order to make them as uniform as possible.

Naturally, one of the chief concerns of Plato is poetry's role in the cultivation of a person's character. Homer was, of course, commonly regarded as the "educator of all Greece" (even by Plato himself, *Rep.* 606e) and poetry was considered the default form of education²², a fact that Plato tries to undermine and make his contemporaries reconsider in multiple works (*Ion*, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*²³). Within the investigation related to the education of the Guardians, poetry is, therefore, thoroughly probed. To simplify, in the *Republic*, there are two principal instances where Plato deals with poetry, the first one starting at the end of Book II (*Rep.* 376e) and ending halfway through Book III (*Rep.* 403c), and the other, more infamous, instance being confined to Book X (*Rep.* 595a-608a). While both sections are concerned with poetry's value in education, their perspectives can be considered divergent²⁴.

Books II and III

Plato starts his discussion on mimesis halfway through Book II. There, the discussion is initially concerned with defining what is a just soul, and what is an unjust soul. When the theme seems to become too complicated for the interlocutors, Socrates proposes a solution (*Rep.* 368d):

εἶπον οὖν ὅπερ ἐμοὶ ἔδοξεν, ὅτι τὸ ζήτημα ᾧ ἐπιχειροῦμεν οὐ φαῦλον ἀλλ' ὀξὺ βλέποντος, ὡς

²¹ *Rep.* 370c: Ἐκ δὴ τούτων πλείω τε ἕκαστα γίγνεται καὶ κάλλιον καὶ ῥᾶον, ὅταν εἷς ἐν κατὰ φύσιν καὶ ἐν καιρῷ, σχολὴν τῶν ἄλλων ἄγων, πράττη.

²² Xenophon, *Symposium* 3.5; Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* 102. Cf. Jaeger (1947) 35.

²³ Halliwell (2002) 39.

²⁴ I discuss this further below.

ἔμοι φαίνεται. ἐπειδὴ οὖν ἡμεῖς οὐ δεινοί, δοκῶ μοι, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, τοιαύτην ποιήσασθαι ζήτησιν αὐτοῦ, οἶανπερ ἂν εἰ προσέταξέ τις γράμματα σμικρὰ πόρρωθεν ἀναγνῶναι μὴ πάνυ ὀξὺ βλέπουσιν, ἔπειτά τις ἐνενόησεν, ὅτι τὰ αὐτὰ γράμματα ἔστι που καὶ ἄλλοθι μείζω τε καὶ ἐν μείζονι, ἔρμαιον ἂν ἐφάνη οἷμαι ἐκεῖνα πρῶτον ἀναγνόντας οὕτως ἐπισκοπεῖν τὰ ἐλάττω, εἰ τὰ αὐτὰ ὄντα τυγχάνει.

So, I told them what I had in mind: The investigation we're undertaking is not an easy one but requires keen eyesight. Therefore, since we aren't clever people, we should adopt the method of investigation that we'd use if, lacking keen eyesight, we were told to read small letters from a distance and then noticed the same letters existed elsewhere in a larger size and on a larger surface. We'd consider it a godsend, I think, to be allowed to read the larger ones first and then to examine the smaller ones, to see whether they really are the same.²⁵

Socrates explains that the constitution of a just soul will be a smaller version of the constitution of a Just City, thus setting up the discussion of the *Republic* to be seen as a discussion primarily on Soul and Justice, and secondarily and analogically, on a Utopian city. It is in this context that the problem of education is brought up. The Guardians (who represent the spirited part of the soul, as will be established later in the *Republic*), must be double in character, in contrast to all other citizens of this Utopia who must be as simple of character as possible in order to cultivate the best skills in their respective crafts. Since the Guardians must display both an aggressive character towards enemies and a complacent character towards friends, they must be twofold in nature. And their education must be well thought out, since we cannot afford for our Guardians to be violent against friends and passive towards enemies. It is in this context that mimesis is brought up in reference to their education.

Socrates proposes the first distinction in mimetic arts: truthful or false (*Rep.* 377a). He calls the epic poems of Homer false²⁶. He justifies what he means by false stories thus (*Rep.* 377e): “When a story gives a bad image of what the gods and heroes are like, the way a painter does whose picture is not at all like the things he’s trying to paint”²⁷. This is Plato’s first criticism of mimesis in the *Republic*. Mimesis is bad when it imitates something poorly. Plato’s main concern here is with the case of negative depictions of divine entities, which are, in reality, good. This criticism seems self-evident since, by

²⁵ All translations of *Republic* by Grube (1997).

²⁶ Οὐ μανθάνεις, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὅτι πρῶτον τοῖς παιδίοις μύθους λέγομεν; τοῦτο δέ που ὡς τὸ ὅλον εἰπεῖν ψεῦδος, ἐνὶ δὲ καὶ ἀληθῆ. πρότερον δὲ μύθοις πρὸς τὰ παιδιά ἢ γυμνασίοις χρώμεθα.

²⁷ “Ὅταν εἰκάζη τις κακῶς [οὐσίαν] τῷ λόγῳ, περὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἡρώων οἳ εἰσιν, ὥσπερ γραφεὺς μηδὲν εἰκότα γράφων οἷς ἂν ὅμοια βουληθῆ γράψαι.

definition, mimesis is always a poor representation of the paradigm²⁸. What is at stake here is not mimesis's incapability of perfect reproduction, but the consequences of its imperfections being taken literally, as in the case of children that hear the stories of Hades and become afraid of death. Socrates admits (*Rep.* 378d) that the "lying myths" are not necessarily to be taken literally (an interpretative tradition going back to the Presocratics²⁹) and accepts that they potentially hold allegorical meanings³⁰. What is problematic here is their literal interpretation by those who are incapable of making allegorical connections. At the end of Book II, not much else is said regarding mimesis: Socrates insists (*Rep.* 378e) that only certain representations must be censored in such a way that only representations with positive literal interpretations can be allowed in the city.

In Book III, the discussion on education shifts into the distinction between narrative and imitation in literature, narrative being the narration by a third-person narrator and imitation being the dramatization of the characters' words, which he exemplifies by turning a dramatic passage of Homer into a narration³¹. Here, Socrates claims that this kind of imitation has an impact on whoever reads³² or listens to these dramatizations, since the soul will mold itself into the character dramatized. Hence, Socrates defends that this kind of mimesis should only be undertaken for good characters, and even then, only in moderation³³. This criticism of mimesis is based on its production of bad characters or ideas, which become objects of contemplation. Since its products are bad, by contemplating these products the contemplator will produce bad effects as well. This is in line with Book X's greatest charge, which says that mimesis habituates the soul to immoderation. Plato's point in this section is simply to defend that artists should, ideally, only imitate good things, but this is still in the realm of "inferior mimesis", since these things are Sensible things. The critique of Books II and III is particularly concerned with the literal interpretation of unwanted behavior and ideas in the city, which might

²⁸ Stated in *Crat.* 432b, cited above.

²⁹ Obbink (2010) 17; Robinson (2008) 487.

³⁰ Ἡρας δὲ δεσμοὺς ὑπὸ ὑέος καὶ Ἡφαίστου ῥίψει ὑπὸ πατρός, μέλλοντος τῇ μητρὶ τυπτομένη ἀμυνεῖν, καὶ θεομαχίας ὅσας Ὅμηρος πεποίηκεν οὐ παραδεκτέον εἰς τὴν πόλιν, οὐτ' ἐν ὑπονοίαις πεποιημένας οὔτε ἄνευ ὑπονοιῶν. ὁ γὰρ νέος οὐχ οἶός τε κρίνειν ὅτι τε ὑπόνοια καὶ ὁ μῆ, ἀλλ' ἂ ἄν τηλικούτος ὦν λάβῃ ἐν ταῖς δόξαις δυσέκνιπτά τε καὶ ἀμετάστατα φιλεῖ γίγνεσθαι.

³¹ Melberg (1995) 17 notes the irony that "Socrates thereby corrects and improves not only Homer, but also, indirectly, Plato himself, who, after all, presents his investigation of mimesis, including the criticism of mimesis, in the very manner that he has Socrates define and criticize as mimetic".

³² Halliwell (2002) 52 argues that reading in Plato's time implied vocalizing the words which causes the reader to impersonate the characters.

³³ For further discussion on this moderation, see Motta (2018).

cause corruption in the soul. I will discuss this further below. For now, I will synthesize Book X's critique.

Book X

In this Book, Socrates attacks all mimetic artists, focusing especially on the poets (*Rep* 605b-d). He believes that all mimetic works are responsible for the destruction of their appreciators' minds. To explain why he believes this, he refers to his metaphysical system, which he previously established in Book VII³⁴. For some context: Plato believes that reality is not what we apprehend through our senses. Instead, reality is confined to the divine realm and only our minds can apprehend bits and pieces of it. Within this realm of reality exist universal Forms, which are the paradigms of Sensible things here below. In the Platonic metaphysical scheme, the Intelligible (divine world of Forms) and the Sensible (the world we as composites of body and soul inhabit) are contrasted, the first being reality and the source of the second, which is a mere image. In Book X, Plato uses this metaphysical scheme to explain his unease with poetry and mimesis generally.

Plato asks (*Rep*. 596b) us to imagine a couch³⁵, but not just any couch: a universal couch, the Form of a couch³⁶. This couch is the perfect couch. It lacks nothing that any couch can have and has nothing that a couch should not have. This Form is made by God and exists beyond the physical world. It is the only real couch. I will refer to it as the Ideal Couch. Then, Plato brings up a craftsman that makes couches. He "looks" at the Ideal Couch and creates an image of it³⁷. The craftsman, however, cannot fully apprehend the Ideal Couch, only being able to recognize³⁸ a particular couch, which he makes. All reproductions of the Ideal Couch, as long as they are physical reproductions with Sensible properties (i.e., dimensions), are doomed to fail, since the material world is not capable of fully embracing Intelligible things. This particular couch is technically unreal, since reality is reserved to the Intelligible world.

³⁴ *Rep*. 514a.

³⁵ οἶον, εἰ 'θέλεις, πολλάί ποῦ εἰσι κλῖναι καὶ τράπεζαι. As Brunyeat (1997) 232 comments, these were the couches used in *symposia*.

³⁶ Halliwell (2002) 57 take this as a cue to take the passage ironically, because a Form of a couch is a great downgrade to a Form, especially when the previous discussion only regarded Forms of higher concepts like Justice and Good. I argue that Plato uses this example as merely analogical to put the role of the craftsman in a comprehensible exposition.

³⁷ Gonzalez (2018) 24 questions the promotion of a craftsman to contemplator of Forms.

³⁸ Even the inspired poet is incapable of fully grasping what inspires him and can only represent a semblance of it. Cf. Collobert (2011) 48.

Next comes the painter, who will represent all mimetic artists (Plato later says that the Painter and the Poet are the same. *Rep.* 605b-d). The Painter will look to the particular couch and use it as a paradigm for his own couch, which will be the mimetic couch. This mimetic couch is based solely on a couch that already has no reality (*Rep.* 597a-b); therefore, the mimetic couch is even further removed from reality. One can think (analogically) of the Ideal Couch as a three-dimensional paradigm, the particular couch as a two-dimensional representation of that paradigm, and the mimetic couch as a one-dimensional representation of the three-dimensional paradigm, being infinitely incapable of representing accurately what was the original paradigm. But the main concern of Plato here is that the analogical one-dimensional representation of a couch can fool (*Rep.* 598c) “ignorant adults and children” into believing that these flawed representations are accurate. This seems curious if one only keeps in mind the Couch metaphor. In fact, Halliwell thinks it ironical to consider that children would believe that a painted craftsman was a real craftsman (*Rep.* 598c)³⁹. Later in the text (*Rep.* 601a) it becomes clearer that we must look at this issue in another way. It seems simpler to switch the Couch with another loftier Form, like Justice. If a mimetic artist, not knowing any better, imitates a form of Justice that is not perfect, those who hear him, not knowing themselves the true Form of Justice, will take the poet’s interpretation as accurate and act as if the poet’s justice is the true form of justice. This is just another instance of Plato’s long-winded campaign against poetry’s claim to true knowledge and status as main educative agent. It is not poetry that he is against, but poetry as a source of knowledge. His goal, as will be discussed below, is to supplant poetry with philosophy.

Educative status of poetry is attacked

As has been made clear, the poet imitates something that is already flawed. That by itself is not something to be particularly wary of, as Plato considers imitations as “not serious, a mere plaything” (*Rep.* 602b⁴⁰). When these flawed depictions have the pretension to educate, however, claiming their *opus* as true knowledge, only then do they become prejudicial to one’s rational capabilities. What Plato is doing here is the

³⁹ Halliwell (2002) 57. Although there are anecdotes regarding cases where paintings were said to fool people. See Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35.36

⁴⁰ Ταῦτα μὲν δὴ, ὥς γε φαίνεται, ἐπιεικῶς ἡμῖν διωμολόγηται, τόν τε μιμητικὸν μηδὲν εἰδέναι ἄξιον λόγου περὶ ὧν μιμεῖται, ἀλλ’ εἶναι παιδιάν τινα καὶ οὐ σπουδὴν τὴν μίμησιν, τοὺς τε τῆς τραγικῆς ποιήσεως ἀπτομένους ἐν ἰαμβείοις καὶ ἐν ἔπεσι πάντα εἶναι μιμητικούς ὡς οἶόν τε μάλιστα.

culmination of an agenda that he seems to have been advancing since as far back as the *Apology* and the *Ion*⁴¹, works where he seems to care particularly to show that the poet's claim to true knowledge is false⁴². Plato's objective is to make clear to his countrymen that using poetry as a source of wisdom is dangerous, leading good men astray with its false opinions. Plato argues that poetry's persuasive nature is independent of its words. Its power to move the audience is owed to its musical aspect, which, when removed, makes the words feel soggy (*Rep.* 601b⁴³).

The greatest charge against poetry

I have discussed above what is one of the charges against mimetic poetry that Plato intends to make. He reveals, however, that its untruthfulness and educative pretense is not the thing he considers the most dangerous. What he really considers to be his "greatest charge" is poetry's potential to cultivate the irrational part of the soul (*Rep.* 605d). Earlier in the *Republic*, Plato defended the tripartition of the soul (*Rep.* 435b-448e). His basic argument for the partition of the soul is that one element cannot hold two distinct opinions regarding one thing (*Rep.* 439d-e). Here he only refers to two parts: the rational and irrational. There is no reason, however, to suspect inconsistency, as some do⁴⁴, considering that this division of the soul in two parts is unrelated to the tripartition of Book IX. As Rachel Sengupurwalla⁴⁵ convincingly argued, the division of the rational from the irrational soul in Book X does not undermine the tripartition of Book IX. The tripartition of rational, spirited, and appetitive can be bipartite, divided in rational and irrational (which is composed of both spirited and appetitive parts⁴⁶).

Plato's example makes us imagine a moderate⁴⁷ man in mourning (*Rep.* 603d). When alone, he cannot control his grief and cries, but when among his fellows he will

⁴¹ Halliwell (2002) 39.

⁴² Normally, these works are considered part of a the "Socratic dialogues", which seem to be less concerned with establishing doctrines than deconstructing traditional views. These dialogues are usually taken to be a different phase of Plato's thought. As Rowe (2007) argues, however, the same agenda is present throughout all of Plato's works: the deconstruction of traditional forms of knowledge and the establishing of a new form of inquiry, philosophy.

⁴³ Οὐκοῦν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἔοικεν τοῖς τῶν ὠραίων προσώποις, καλῶν δὲ μή, οἷα γίγνεται ἰδεῖν ὅταν αὐτὰ τὸ ἄνθος προλίπη;

⁴⁴ E.g., Nehamas (1999) 264-269.

⁴⁵ Singpurwalla (2011).

⁴⁶ Rowe (2007) 169-170 sees the tripartition of the Soul as not a dogmatic doctrine since Socrates himself reports the nonequivalence of his theory to reality. In reality, the soul is unified – it only appears to us to be tripartite.

⁴⁷ Ἐπιεικῆς.

contain himself, for he believes that this is a lawful⁴⁸ thing to do. This man's inclination to give into his emotions and his counter-inclination to exhibit self-control are different entities, one rational and the other irrational. Having established this, Plato reports (*Rep.* 605c) that even "moderate men"⁴⁹ fall prey to poetry's powerful emotions. When people listen to mimetic poetry, they relate to the characters and invest themselves in the narrative's emotions. When tragedy befalls a character, the audience will feel, often times, the same immoderate grief (*Rep.* 605d). Plato argues that most people will recognize that grief displayed in dramatic performance is overblown and morally reprehensible in one's private life. But when the same exaggerated expressions are displayed in the theater and affect the audience, most will commend the poet's craftsmanship.

Plato believes (*Rep.* 605a) that the poets will always have a tendency to represent immoderate characters, for he believes that only varied and complex characters, in opposition to unified characters which cannot be immoderate, are fundamentally easy to imitate and prove to be the most popular among the common people. He believes that the poets will themselves have a complex character.

Plato argues (*Rep.* 606a) that this subliminal habituation of the soul to immoderation of emotion has consequences. Essentially, it trains the irrational part of the soul to thrive in overbearing emotion, which in turn depletes the rational soul's power over the irrational and spirited. Strengthening one's feelings of pity and grief with others' misfortunes will do the same towards one's own. This is the opposite of Aristotle's theory of catharsis. Aristotle argues that our experience of these emotions in the theater cleanses our need to feel them in our everyday lives, while Plato believes that such an experience will only strengthen our emotional immoderation⁵⁰. Plato worries that too much of this cultivation will cause deep wounds in our souls and undermine the foundation of the Ideal City. He recognizes poetry's power, and it is precisely on account of that power that he expels it from his city.

To sum up, in Book X, Plato has two main charges against mimesis in poetry. He believes that mimesis fails when it imitates something already flawed and produces an even more flawed product. He charges the poets with the spreading of false opinions as knowledge, whilst being ignorant themselves. The second charge is one of emotion. Poetry's emotional influence is detrimental to one's virtuous life. These are Book X's

⁴⁸ τῷ νόμῳ ἔτοιμον πείθεσθαι, ἢ ὁ νόμος ἐξηγεῖται.

⁴⁹ Ἐπικεικίς.

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Poet.* 6, 1449b27-28. Cf. Destrée (2014).

main claims, and those which most influenced western aesthetic thinking.

The compatibility of the critique of mimesis in Books II and III with the one in Book X has been sometimes put into question⁵¹. Not only does Plato seem to use the word mimesis in different senses for each of these critiques, but he also apparently shifts his focus. While in the first Books Socrates seems to only censor poetry's more problematic verses, and even allows the reading of Homer by initiated adults, in Book X he claims to have banished all sorts of mimetic poetry.

I argue, however, that these two critiques can be quite compatible. Where Books II and III claim that poetry tells lies, be it regarding the gods or giving false examples of virtue, Book X criticizes mimesis for presenting something "three times removed" from reality and fooling "children and ignorant adults". The main thematic connection, I believe, is one of epistemic value. Mimesis's irredeemable aspect is not necessarily that it is thrice removed from reality, or that it creates something inferior to its paradigm. Mimesis is detrimental to one's philosophical journey only inasmuch as it creates something that is not real and is taken to be so. The claims of poetry's authority in regard to education is what Plato is against. Poetry's incapability of truly representing reality should be recognized. Socrates' goal in the so-called "Socratic dialogues" was always to establish the goal of philosophy as the knowledge of the good and the bad, and his criticisms of poetry in the *Ion*, for example, as well as his criticisms of many other *technai* (like the *technê* of a general in the *Laches*, or the *technê* of rhetoric in the *Gorgias*⁵²), are centered on these *technai*'s lack of knowledge of what is truly good⁵³.

Regarding the criticism of Book III where Socrates points to the possibility of mimesis as "impersonation", as Halliwell calls it⁵⁴, this form of mimesis, within the framework of the two-phase division of mimesis, implies the contemplation of ethical behavior and the creation of a similar ethos within the contemplator. This contemplation can be done through reading, or by merely listening to a performance. I argue that this criticism of mimesis is much like the "greatest charge" of Book X. What an actor or reader might be susceptible to, inasmuch as they temporarily identify with a bad character, is much the same as an audience will be susceptible to as well. I argue that what Socrates

⁵¹ E.g., Halliwell (2002) 76, (2011); Coulter (1976) 13; Moss (2007) 417.

⁵² Although the discussion is about the *technê* of rhetoric, Socrates concludes that it is not a *technê* at all, but merely a knack.

⁵³ Rowe (2007) 11.

⁵⁴ Halliwell (2002) 52. An actor who impersonates mimetically a character becomes similar to that character. This is extended into readers as well as actors, since Plato assumes that the reader will vocalize the words and therefore impersonate to some extent the characters.

claims is that, since poetry is seductive by the use of rhythms and harmonies⁵⁵, it will make us believe in its false representation of reality, meaning we will take the ethical and moral positions represented within these rhythms and harmonies to be correct values⁵⁶.

The common interpretation of these passages from the *Republic* is what I have defined as “inferior mimesis”, in the sense that it takes a negative perspective on mimesis’s value. It can also be considered “horizontal” in the sense that the mimetic artist first contemplates something on his ontological level and thus his product is inferior, since mimesis always implies a product of inferior ontology. This is the usual view of mimesis. But a different perspective is possible and appears more valid: as much recent scholarship has argued⁵⁷, these criticisms should not be taken as monolithic and as representative of a Platonic dogma. The “common interpretation” can be considered to be suffering somewhat from tunnel vision, since it ignores not only other Platonic dialogues where mimesis and art are viewed in a more positive light, but also ignores the very conditional context of the *Republic*.

To understand Plato’s claim, we must first pay attention to the context in which these claims are inserted. In the *Republic*, this context is heavily defined by the discussion of an “ideal state”. But this “ideal state”, is arguably not Plato’s truly ideal state, or at least Socrates’. As he affirms (*Rep.* 372e):

Εἶεν, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ· μανθάνω. οὐ πόλιν, ὡς ἔοικε, σκοποῦμεν μόνον ὅπως γίγνεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ τρυφῶσαν πόλιν. ἴσως οὖν οὐδὲ κακῶς ἔχει· σκοποῦντες γὰρ καὶ τοιαύτην τάχ’ ἂν κατιδοίμεν τήν τε δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἀδικίαν ὅπῃ ποτὲ ταῖς πόλεσιν ἐμφύονται. ἢ μὲν οὖν ἀληθινὴ πόλις δοκεῖ μοι εἶναι ἣν διεληλύθαμεν, ὥσπερ ὑγιῆς τις· εἰ δ’ αὖ βούλεσθε, καὶ φλεγμαίνουσαν πόλιν θεωρήσωμεν.

All right, I understand. It isn’t merely the origin of a city that we’re considering, it seems, but the origin of a luxurious city. And that may not be a bad idea, for by examining it, we might very well see how justice and injustice grow up in cities. Yet the true city, in my opinion, is the one we’ve described⁵⁸, the healthy one, as it were. But let’s study a city with a fever if that’s what you want.

It seems, then, that even the so called “utopia” discussed in the *Republic* is not necessarily the true “ideal state”. The defended arguments are aimed at a specific case of a city that

⁵⁵ *Rep.* 601a-b.

⁵⁶ As sophistry also does, cf. Notomi (2011) 308.

⁵⁷ Verdenius (1962); Halliwell (2002); Coulter (1976); Rowe (2007).

⁵⁸ It was described in the preceding section. This city is distinguished by the fact that all necessities are produced and shared by the city, but only the bare necessities.

is Ideal but not the most Ideal. Furthermore, inasmuch as the talk is of an idealized constitution (*Rep.* 592b), a “city that exists in words”⁵⁹, which is better than a “city in action”, it is bound by the extraordinary aims of Socrates. For example, in the case of the Guardians, their education must not allow anything that can potentially harm their quasi-simple character, so as not to cause the potential destruction of the whole city. So, by default, anything that is neutral but has the potential to be harmful will be exiled from this Ideal City. Hence, arguably, mimesis, which is mostly neutral outside of the “ideal state”, comes under heavy scrutiny in this context and seems too unstable to be allowed.

Secondly, Plato, through Socrates, seems to be hesitant on more than one occasion regarding his criticisms. On some occasions, he implies that he will accept the mimetic arts, as in 378a:

Πρῶτον μὲν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, τὸ μέγιστον καὶ περὶ τῶν μεγίστων ψεῦδος ὁ εἰπὼν οὐ καλῶς ἐψεύσατο ὡς Οὐρανός τε ἠργάσατο ἅ φησι δρᾶσαι αὐτὸν Ἡσίοδος, ὃ τε αὖ Κρόνος ὡς ἐτιμωρήσατο αὐτόν. τὰ δὲ δὴ τοῦ Κρόνου ἔργα καὶ πάθη ὑπὸ τοῦ ὑέος, οὐδ' ἂν εἰ ἦν ἀληθῆ ᾧ μιν δεῖν ῥαδίως οὕτως λέγεσθαι πρὸς ἄφρονάς τε καὶ νέους, ἀλλὰ μάλιστα μὲν σιγᾶσθαι, εἰ δὲ ἀνάγκη τις ἦν λέγειν, δι' ἀπορρήτων ἀκούειν ὡς ὀλιγίστους, θυσασμένους οὐ χοῖρον ἀλλά τι μέγα καὶ ἄπορον θῦμα, ὅπως ὅτι ἐλαχίστοις συνέβη ἀκοῦσαι.

First, telling the greatest falsehood about the most important things doesn't make a fine story – I mean Hesiod telling us about how Uranus behaved, how Cronus punished him for it, and how he was in turn punished by his own son. But even if it were true, it should be passed over in silence, not told to foolish young people. And if, for some reason, it has to be told, only a very few people – pledged to secrecy and after sacrificing not just a pig but something great and scarce – should hear it, so that their number is kept as small as possible.

Socrates hesitates here, seemingly allowing poetry to be heard by initiated adults in a setting reminiscent of mystery cults. He believes that poetry can support an allegorical reading (*Rep.* 378d) but, in the context of education of the young guardians, it should be controlled, since they cannot yet distinguish what is allegorical from what is literal. Moreover, in Book X, Socrates starts his discussion on mimesis by arguing that there exists a *pharmakon* to protect the ones who are susceptible to being seduced by poetry's claims⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ ἐν ἧ νῦν διήλομεν οἰκίζοντες πόλει λέγεις, τῆ ἐν λόγοις κειμένη, ἐπεὶ γῆς γε οὐδαμοῦ οἶμαι αὐτήν εἶναι. *Rep.* 592b.

⁶⁰ For what this entails see Halliwell (2011).

Socrates also hesitates to accuse Homer, out of devotion, at 391a⁶¹. And at 388e, at the conclusion of the argumentation of Book II, Socrates says that “we must remain persuaded by it [the preceding argument] until someone show us a better one⁶²”. This is then repeated in Book X, when Socrates says (607d):

Δοῖμεν δέ γε πού ἂν καὶ τοῖς προστάταις αὐτῆς, ὅσοι μὴ ποιητικοί, φιλοποιηταὶ δέ, ἄνευ μέτρου λόγον ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς εἰπεῖν, ὡς οὐ μόνον ἠδεῖα ἀλλὰ καὶ ὠφελίμη πρὸς τὰς πολιτείας καὶ τὸν βίον τὸν ἀνθρώπινόν ἐστιν· καὶ εὐμενῶς ἀκουσόμεθα. κερδανοῦμεν γάρ πού ἐάν μὴ μόνον ἠδεῖα φανῆ ἀλλὰ καὶ ὠφελίμη. (...) Εἰ δέ γε μή, ὃ φίλε ἑταῖρε, ὥσπερ οἱ ποτέ του ἐρασθέντες, ἐὰν ἠγήσωνται μὴ ὠφέλιμον εἶναι τὸν ἔρωτα, βία μὲν, ὅμως δὲ ἀπέχονται...

Then we’ll allow its defenders, who aren’t poets themselves but lovers of poetry, to speak in prose on its behalf and to show that it not only gives pleasure but is beneficial both to constitutions and to human life. Indeed, we’ll listen to them graciously, for we’d certainly profit if poetry were shown to be not only pleasant but also beneficial. (...) However, if such a defense isn’t made, we’ll behave like people who have fallen in love with someone but who force themselves to stay away from him because they realize their passion isn’t beneficial.

There is an open-endedness in this passage, as well as in the former passage cited. It seems that Socrates only argues for the exile of poetry on the basis of the arguments which led him to accept these conclusions, but he remains open to another possibility. Likewise, this might be a reason for Socrates’ expulsion of the poets with honors (*Rep.* 398a), which will be a matter of some debate by Proclus, as will be discussed in Chapter III.

Furthermore, it seems that the three removes critique of Book X can be in fact a four removes critique⁶³. In the example of the couch, Socrates claims that the painter “imitates the *appearance*” of the particular couch made by the craftsman (*Rep.* 598a). Therefore, the painter is looking into something that is not twice removed from reality (a particular couch based on the real universal couch) but three times removed - an image of that particular couch. Consequently, the painter’s product will be four times removed from reality. This leaves open the possibility of a painter that imitates the bed as is, and not as it appears. Moss argues that, in Book III’s critique, where some forms of mimesis were allowed (namely, certain excerpts of Homer and the “eulogies of good men”), this

⁶¹ Ὅκνῳ δέ γε, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, δι’ Ὅμηρον λέγειν ὅτι οὐδ’ ὅσιον ταῦτά γε κατὰ Ἀχιλλέως φάναι καὶ ἄλλων λεγόντων πείθεσθαι. *Rep.* 391a.

⁶² Δεῖ δέ γε οὐχ, ὡς ἄρτι ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος ἐσήμαιεν· ᾧ πειστέον, ἕως ἂν τις ἡμᾶς ἄλλω καλλίονι πείσῃ. *Rep.* 388e.

⁶³ As Moss (2007) 437 argues.

mimesis does not imitate appearances of excellence, but imitates excellence as is.

Another reason to render doubtful the notion that mimesis is entirely dismissed in the *Republic* is the fact that the criticism is centered on Plato's epistemic attack on competing traditions of education. As I have mentioned above, poetry is only criticized because it has unquestioned paideutic supremacy and authority in Plato's society⁶⁴. While poetry has this privilege as educator, it does not have nor represent real knowledge about the things it talks about. But one is left to wonder what the conclusion would be if poetry acknowledged its lack of knowledge. Some have considered this. Halliwell⁶⁵ argues that Book X's conclusion is that poetry or mimesis need to have an external source of value. Verdenius⁶⁶ also makes a similar claim saying that: "Plato never tires of emphasizing the limitations of art. In his opinion art does not possess any independent value in the sense of having its aim in itself. It is important only in so far as it points to something more important". Also, Gonzalez⁶⁷: "Counter to what the beginning of *Republic* 10 might suggest, the philosopher will differ from the poet not in terms of the *production* of image, but rather in terms of their *use*". Therefore, the critique of the *Republic* can be overridden by a mimetic artist who recognizes the limitations of his own medium⁶⁸ and who claims no authority or paideutic status. Elsewhere, Halliwell⁶⁹ also argues that the critique of Book X are not arguments against poetry, but "incitements to recognize the need for a new and better understanding of artistic mimesis".

Essentially, there is an aura of uncertainty in the whole discussion of mimesis in the *Republic*. Not only are the arguments deeply conditioned by the context of the discussion, but Plato apparently hesitates to commit truly to the exile of poetry and tries to keep the conclusions open. What this shows is that mimesis is not unequivocally condemned by Plato in the *Republic*, and what I have deemed the common interpretation, which supports this, ignores the clues inside the dialogue. Besides this, there are clearly different takes on mimesis in other Platonic dialogues. As Rowe⁷⁰ defended, we as interpreters of Plato can legitimately take his works to be parts of a whole. No single dialogue is its own universe: they all refer back to each other and are evidently linked by

⁶⁴ Burnyeat (1997) 255 discusses Plato's programme to replace the cultural *status quo* of poetry in Classical Greece and establishing a different cultural paradigm, one that is philosophical.

⁶⁵ Halliwell (2002) 137-138.

⁶⁶ Verdenius (1962) 27.

⁶⁷ Gonzalez (2018) 23.

⁶⁸ And of the sensible world, in the case of the representation of Intelligibles.

⁶⁹ Halliwell (2011) 243.

⁷⁰ Rowe (2007) 3.

topics and arguments. As Verdenius puts it: “Plato does not expound his aesthetics in a systematical form, but the same applies to the whole of his philosophy”⁷¹. I make no claim of having solved the notorious interpretative difficulties of mimesis in Book X. I only argue that whatever Plato meant to say in the *Republic* was not necessarily a monolithic take and that he keeps his mind open to different perspectives and uses of mimesis. Thus, the section below will focus on other discussions of mimesis by Plato, outside of the *Republic*. These, I will argue, have a much more optimistic tenor than what has been seen so far.

Superior mimesis

This section will address the more positive side of mimesis. Mimesis is pervasive in Plato’s thought and works; it is not limited to the discussion of the *Republic* where it applies exclusively to the mimetic arts. Mimesis is the heart of Platonic metaphysics, as will be discussed below. Beyond that, Plato also seems to be open to the possibility of an artistic mimesis that has value and that escapes the criticism of the *Republic*.

Mimesis is the basis for the Theory of Forms, in the sense that the Theory of Forms is Plato’s solution to the problem of the Sensible world. Everything that exists in a particular way is an imitation or representation of a thing that exists universally as a form. What is usually understood as participation is essentially mimesis. As I have argued above, mimesis always implies a product (a particular) inferior to the object of contemplation (a Form). Plato sees Reality as a hierarchy, and each ontological step down is a weaker representation of the level above. As Verdenius⁷² puts it:

The clue to a correct understanding of Plato’s philosophy lies in his conception of a hierarchical structure of reality. There are different planes of being, each of them (except the Good, which is absolutely real) trying, within its own limits, to express the values superior to it.

The “image-paradigm relationship of mimesis is the foundation of Plato’s vision of reality”⁷³. It is in this sense that I call mimesis a metaphysical mechanism. Mimesis is the

⁷¹ Verdenius (1962) 9.

⁷² Verdenius (1962) 16.

⁷³ Zovko (2018) 94.

relationship that unifies the many levels of reality through likeness. There are many examples of this in Plato's works In *Timaeus* 47bc:

θεὸν ἡμῖν ἀνευρεῖν δωρήσασθαι τε ὄψιν, ἵνα τὰς ἐν οὐρανῷ τοῦ νοῦ κατιδόντες περιόδους χρῆσαιμεθα ἐπὶ τὰς περιφορὰς τὰς τῆς παρ' ἡμῖν διανοήσεως, συγγενεῖς ἐκείναις οὐσας, ἀταράκτοις τεταραγμένας, ἐκμαθόντες δὲ καὶ λογισμῶν κατὰ φύσιν ὀρθότητος μετασχόντες, μιμούμενοι τὰς τοῦ θεοῦ πάντως ἀπλανεῖς οὐσας, τὰς ἐν ἡμῖν πεπλανημένας καταστησαίμεθα.

The god invented sight and gave it to us so that we might observe the orbits of intelligence in the universe and apply them to the revolutions of our own understanding. For there is a kinship between them, even though our revolutions are disturbed, whereas the universal orbits are undisturbed. So, once we have come to know them and to share in the ability to make correct calculations according to nature, we should stabilize the straying revolutions within ourselves by imitating the completely unstraying revolutions of the god.⁷⁴

Our intelligence is an imitation of “orbits of intelligence in the universe”, which the Neoplatonists will consider the *Nous*, the Divine-Mind, of which our own minds are an imitation. Again, in *Timaeus* (38a):

τὸ παράπαν τε οὐδὲν ὅσα γένεσις τοῖς ἐν αἰσθήσει φερομένοις προσῆψεν, ἀλλὰ χρόνου ταῦτα αἰῶνα μιμουμένου καὶ κατ' ἀριθμὸν κυκλουμένου γέγονεν εἶδη.

And all in all, none of the characteristics that becoming has bestowed upon the things that are borne about in the realm of perception are appropriate to it. These, rather, are forms of time that have come to be – time that imitates eternity and circles according to number.

As the “realm of perception” is not capable of bearing eternity, it has time as an imitation of it. This is the essence of the mimetic relationship between Sensibles (particulars) and Intelligibles (universals). Verdenius⁷⁵ puts it best:

The empirical world does not represent true reality, but is only an approximation to it, “something that resembles real being but is not that” (*Rep.* 597a), it “yearns” to be like the Ideal Forms but falls short of them (*Phd.* 74d, 75ab), “with difficulty” it reveals something of the superior world of which it is an image (*Phdr.* 250b).

⁷⁴ All *Timaeus* translations by Zeyl in Cooper et al. (1997).

⁷⁵ Verdenius (1962) 16.

The division of mimesis as a two-process mechanism, *theoria* and *poiesis*, within the scope of metaphysical relationships between levels of reality is best seen in the case of the creation of the Sensible world by the Demiurge. As is explained in the *Timaeus*, the Demiurge contemplates the Forms and represents them in matter, thus creating particular things which participate in the universals (*Tim.* 29a).

Plato's philosophical scheme of reality, which sometimes has been called a dichotomy between Sensible and Intelligible worlds, is in fact a hierarchy which connects each level of reality through a dynamic relationship of likeness and representation. This is dynamic in the sense that the Sensible world is neither a direct copy of the Intelligible, nor does it necessarily imply that the Sensible world has a direct similarity to the Intelligible. As in the case of time and eternity, time is a weaker form of eternity, but they are not directly similar. Still, as Plato warns us, "an image cannot remain an image if it presents all the details of what it represents"⁷⁶.

The Ideal poiesis

Having considered Plato's position on "inferior mimesis" and on mimesis as a metaphysical mechanism that connects reality within different ontological levels, it will now be addressed the way in which "superior mimesis" can be related to the world of human affairs. As I have argued above, Plato's condemnation of the poets is conditional to their ignorant imitation of particular things, which creates illusions, and their claim to authority. This leaves open the possibility of a mimetic art that rises above these criticisms - one that contemplates beyond imitations.

It should be established beforehand that to Plato all crafts are a form of *poiesis*⁷⁷. As Socrates says (*Symp.* 205c):

ἡ γάρ τοι ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ ὄν ἰόντι ὁποῦν αἰτία πᾶσά ἐστι ποιήσις, ὥστε καὶ αἱ ὑπὸ πάσαις ταῖς τέχναις ἐργασίαι ποιήσεις εἰσὶ καὶ οἱ τούτων δημιουργοὶ πάντες ποιηταί.

After all, everything that is responsible for creating something out of nothing is a kind of poetry; and so, all the creations of every craft and profession are themselves a kind of poetry, and everyone

⁷⁶ ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐναντίον οὐδὲ τὸ παράπαν δέη πάντα ἀποδοῦναι οἷόν ἐστιν ᾧ εἰκάζει, εἰ μέλλει εἰκὼν εἶναι. *Cratylus* 432b. All *Cratylus*' translations by Reeve (1997).

⁷⁷ The term *poiesis* had already been established as primarily referring to poetry. Murray (1992) 29, although this was a late development, cf. Notomi (2011) 301.

who practices a craft is a poet.

Not only are all crafts *poiesis*, but all crafts are mimetic⁷⁸. Accordingly, I will then discuss *poiesis* as a general concept which includes poetry and all other forms of crafts, and which has as its source the mimetic process of *theoria*.

Nothing new can be created and divine inspiration

All crafts are mimetic in the same sense that all creation is mimetic. Within the Platonic metaphysical scheme there are no possibilities for non-contemplative creation, except from the God who created the world. Everything that has not been created by God is an imitation of the things which He created. While Plato does not say this directly, it is the logical conclusion from Plato's perception on metaphysical reality. There is no room for true originality. Since everything in the Sensible world is an image of the Intelligible world, then nothing that an artist can create within the Sensible world can be truly original. In fact, as Verdenius⁷⁹ interprets it:

And is there no wisdom in Plato's warning that a man who claims to have created something absolutely new is to be regarded as a charlatan producing false illusions just as the sophists (*Soph.* 234b, *Rep.* 596c, *Crat.* 432bc)?

Even within the Intelligible world, there is a limit to possible things and, in the end, all that can exist already exists there. Therefore, since nothing original can be created, it means that everything a poet (in the extended sense argued in *Symp.* 205c⁸⁰) can compose will be an image of something else. The value of creation is not in its originality but in its object of contemplation. If a poet imitates improper objects of contemplation (such as immoral actions) his creation will be inferior (depictions of the gods acting immorally) to one who does contemplate proper objects of contemplation. Plato states in the *Phaedrus* (245a) something along these lines, where he establishes that a poet "out of his mind" will always be better than a skillful poet. The divine inspiration to which Plato is referring here is a form of contemplation of a higher reality, inasmuch as divine

⁷⁸ I will argue in favor of this in the next section.

⁷⁹ Verdenius (1962) 33.

⁸⁰ Cited above.

inspiration is contact with the divine and that it produces something akin to what is seen. Sometimes, divine and inspiration are juxtaposed as opposite forms of creation in Plato. As I see it, divine inspiration and mimesis are one and the same creative process. When it is said that the Muses speak through the poet, it means that the Muses show the poet things which he imitates in his works, imperfectly even. This concept is alluded to in *Laws* 719c, which Gonzalez⁸¹ interprets as the poets “being out of their minds when they exercise their art of imitation”. While it is not Gonzalez’s point, I believe that this interpretation perfectly illustrates my point. The poet exercises mimesis (as the only form of creation) but, when divinely inspired, he is exercising a form of “superior mimesis”, since he is contemplating higher realities. Nickolas Pappas⁸², in the context of the same passage in the *Laws* where Plato brings mimesis and divine inspiration together, comments that:

In the end Platonic mimesis means too much more than impersonation to be either clearly compatible or clearly incompatible with divine inspiration. And in particular, Plato’s desire to call the process ignorant undermines the other sense of it that his dialogues voice, that mimesis rests on skill and expertise.

I believe that this compatibility and incompatibility between mimesis and divine inspiration is not due to an inconsistency in Plato’s thought, but that there are two different *mimeseis*. It is clear that Plato uses mimesis in two different ways. One is the skillful way in which poets use mimesis to imitate things that are already imitations, and this happens through a skill. The other is the way in which mimesis acts in the cosmos and which is related to the form in which divine inspiration acts through the poet. By contemplating the divine realm, the poet is coerced into creating something spontaneously⁸³ and passively⁸⁴. These two different ways through which Plato sees mimesis are the distinction between “inferior mimesis” and “superior mimesis”, as I have interpreted it. Divine inspiration is mimesis, in the superior sense. Skillful poetry is mimesis, in the inferior sense. The image of the magnets from the *Ion*⁸⁵, where Plato

⁸¹ Gonzalez (2011) 100.

⁸² Pappas (2012) 671.

⁸³ The idea of spontaneous creation will gain importance in my interpretation of Plotinus’ views on mimesis. See Chapter II.

⁸⁴ Plato seems to break from the Archaic view of inspiration and emphasizes the passivity of the poet. Murray (1992) 34.

⁸⁵ *Ion* 533d.

establishes that the Muses create a chain of inspirations that has as links the poet, the rhapsode, and the audience, further corroborates my claim. Each link is contemplating the link above and creating consequently something that is a representation of what was contemplated. William Welton⁸⁶ puts it best:

This image [the magnets] contains the notion that inspiration involves a kind of participation in something that implies a certain amount of imitation: the iron rings each acquire the power to “imitate the magnet by participating in its force, thus becoming magnets themselves”.

Divine inspiration is therefore a mimetic process. This is the basis for my claim that mimesis is the only source of creation. No creation happens in a vacuum: the creator will always look at something, be it nature, ethical actions, or divine inspiration through the Muses. All creation is mimesis. The value of the creation is defined by the object of contemplation. Poets can be criticized for creating illusions through mimesis and also praised for being divinely inspired. These claims are not detrimental to the value of mimesis as a mechanism, but to the way in which it is used.

Poetic creation as pointing towards Intelligibles

While divine inspiration is “superior mimesis”, the latter entails more than just divine inspiration. Contemplation of the divine realm is sometimes alluded to outside the context of divine inspiration. This appears to open the possibility of contemplation of divine realities without the aid of Muses or other divinities. If a poet can contemplate actively a higher reality, his product will be of higher value. There are many passages which allude to this form of mimesis. The whole discussion in the *Republic* is considered a “city in words” that imitates a model (*Rep.* 592b):

Μανθάνω, ἔφη· ἐν ἧ νῦν διήλθομεν οἰκίζοντες πόλει λέγεις, τῇ ἐν λόγοις κειμένη, ἐπεὶ γῆς γε οὐδαμοῦ οἶμαι αὐτὴν εἶναι. Ἀλλ’, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσως παράδειγμα ἀνάκειται τῷ βουλομένῳ ὄρᾶν καὶ ὄρᾶντι ἑαυτὸν κατοικίσειν.

I understand. You mean that he’ll be willing to take part in the politics of the city we were founding and describing, the one that exists in theory, for I don’t think it exists anywhere on earth. But perhaps, I said, there is a model of it in heaven, for anyone who wants to look at it and to make

⁸⁶ Welton (1995) 26.

himself its citizen on the strength of what he sees.

This shows that something described in words can be an imitation of an Intelligible paradigm and that one is capable of contemplating that paradigm without divine help. In fact, the theme of constitutions and laws as being imitations of Intelligibles appears elsewhere⁸⁷ in Plato. The point is made clear in *Timaeus* 28a:

ὅτου μὲν οὖν ἂν ὁ δημιουργὸς πρὸς τὸ κατὰ ταῦτ᾽ ἔχον βλέπων αἰεὶ, τοιοῦτ᾽ ἐνὶ προσχρώμενος παραδείγματι, τὴν ιδέαν καὶ δύναμιν αὐτοῦ ἀπεργάζηται, καλὸν ἐξ ἀνάγκης οὕτως ἀποτελεῖσθαι πᾶν· οὐ δ' ἂν εἰς γεγονός, γεννητῶ παραδείγματι προσχρώμενος, οὐ καλόν.

So, whenever the craftsman looks at what is always changeless and, using a thing of that kind as his model, reproduces its form and character, then, of necessity, all that he so completes is beautiful. But were he to look at a thing that has come to be and use as his model something that has been begotten, his work will lack beauty.

When the craftsmen (and the poets, according to the *poiesis* argument above) contemplate what is changeless (the Forms), they create something akin to its changeless character, and this is beautiful. This is “superior mimesis” - the object made is ontologically superior to the imitations criticized in the *Republic* X. This form of mimesis still creates through variegation, since that is the limitation imposed on creations within the Sensible cosmos. Having a superior object of contemplation grants, however, a different status to this variety. This variegation will point towards unchanging things, while the variegation criticized in the *Republic* is used to give pleasure to the masses. As Plato established in *Laws* 892b, art is above nature since it was created by soul and soul is prior to matter. Nature is a product of art, which is a product of soul. What this means is that a bare rock will be less perfect than a rock sculpted by a human soul⁸⁸ because, ideally, the human soul will look beyond nature. If a human soul contemplates nature and imitates it, he is looking at “something that has come to be and use[s] as his model something that has been begotten” and therefore “his work will lack beauty”. Both forms of mimesis are present in this passage of the *Timaeus*, where Plato allows the capacity of the craftsman to look to what is changeless.

Furthermore, as Melberg noted, in *Laws* 811c, the whole discussion of this

⁸⁷ For a study on the origins of laws through mimesis and divine inspiration see Welton (1995).

⁸⁸ Plotinus inherits this idea and establishes that the artist can elevate the ontological status of nature. See Chapter II.

dialogue is framed as a “literary composition” which acts as the “pillar of knowledge and of the building of society”⁸⁹. This form of mimesis, used by the philosopher who looks to the Intelligibles, implies the ordering of society as an image of the heavenly realm. The Ideal City in words, discussed in the *Republic* but also in the *Laws*, acts as both an image of the Intelligibles (inasmuch as it is created through philosophical contemplation) but also as a model for a city in action.

Assimilation to God through poiesis

In many dialogues⁹⁰, Plato establishes that the greatest goal of human life is “assimilation to God”. This doctrine is grounded on the idea that we as humans can become like God, in the sense that we can participate in certain divine characteristics. This is possible through the mimetic relationship of paradigm-image discussed above. Therefore, by imitating the paradigm God (as much as it is possible for the human soul), it is possible to become, in a way, a god image. Marie-Élise Zovko⁹¹ argues that assimilation to God can be achieved through different aspects, giving the example of moral assimilation, which is attained through the practice of virtue. On the other hand, the divine poet can imitate the divine creator (Demiurge) and participate in his creative power⁹². If the demiurge himself is, in a way, a mimetic poet, since he contemplates (*theoria*) the Forms and produces (*poiesis*) the world, then the human poet that imitates this same process will ultimately be imitating the divine order and will be assimilated to a god⁹³. Creation is a form of assimilation. Again, the poetic creation will not be changeless since that is beyond the Sensible realm. The act of contemplation of the Intelligible realities will create, however, something that is more attuned to the divine order than the mere act of poetic imitation of Sensibles. Gonzalez⁹⁴ notes:

Of course, Socrates’ defense of the philosopher against the hostility of the many in Book VI characterizes him or her as a *demiourgos* who, contemplating the eternal and unchanging realities, imitates them in his own character, the character of others, and the city itself (500c-d).

⁸⁹ Melberg (1995) 21.

⁹⁰ Zovko (2018) 90.

⁹¹ Ibid. 90.

⁹² Gonzalez (2018) 24.

⁹³ Zovko (2018) 99.

⁹⁴ Gonzalez (2018) 25.

The philosopher, being capable of contemplating the Intelligibles, will order the character of himself and those around him. As mentioned above, I take the philosopher as a kind of poet, inasmuch as creation is poetic and mimetic. There is also a connection between assimilation to God and divine inspiration, inasmuch as both are mimesis. In relation to the Council of the *Laws* (966c9-d3) which are the governing body of the ideal legislation, Welton⁹⁵ comments:

The [nocturnal] Council members participate in or become inspired by divinity by means of their philosophical pursuits, and their imitation of god becomes a way of resolving the tension between the authority of traditional religion and the claims of reason, as divine inspiration becomes transformed into the participation in the divine through the likeness to gods.

Welton's interpretation offers us a connection between assimilation, inspiration, and imitation. Besides that, as I have argued, it is imitation that is the true connection between the concepts - in this case, superior mimesis, since assimilation and inspiration both imply contemplation of higher realities. Assimilation as contemplation not only allows the possibility of "superior mimesis", but it is also the highest goal of human life.

Poesis in the Symposium

The *Symposium* establishes a form of creativity that works by contemplating beauty. The ones who contemplate beauty are called lovers, and they are categorized in three separate levels. Nehamas⁹⁶ insightfully compares this tripartition of lovers to the tripartition of the soul in the *Republic* and makes the following connection: at the first level, lovers, who love the beauty of bodies, are primarily motivated by their appetitive side; at the second level, the lovers of glory and fame are motivated by their spirited part; and finally, the highest level comprises the lovers of the Form of Beauty, the lovers who turn to philosophy and are motivated by their rational aspect. The creative mechanism established in the *Symposium* is motivated above all by the human desire for immortality, which is allegedly the key to happiness. Immortality is only achieved through generation, which is equivalent to *poiesis*. As Zovko⁹⁷ argues:

⁹⁵ Welton (1995) 22-23.

⁹⁶ Nehamas (2007) 6.

⁹⁷ Zovko (2018) 92, citing *Symp.* 208a-b.

This process involves a fundamental form of mimesis. For it is not by staying always the same, like the divine, that the mortal creature achieves immortality, but by leaving behind something new in the semblance of the original.

The lover, by contemplating the beauty of his beloved, becomes “pregnant”, at the intellectual level, with *logoi* (which can be works of art, laws or just arguments in general). This creative process is essentially the mimetic process since it implies the contemplation of something and the production of something else based on that object previously contemplated. The same applies to poetry, which is, nonetheless, not the most ideal form of contemplation, since the lover that creates it is contemplating mere glory and fame, as Nehamas suggests⁹⁸. The true lover, however, contemplates truth and not an image, and therefore produces true virtue⁹⁹, further cementing my argument for the possibility of “superior mimesis”. The idea of contemplating inner *logoi* is picked up by Plotinus¹⁰⁰.

Philosophy as the true art form

It has been demonstrated that Plato accepts a form of mimesis that is beyond the criticism of the *Republic*. In this scope, all creative processes are mimetic, and superior mimesis is possible to any creator. It is philosophy, however, what he considers the truest form of *poiesis*. He makes it clear through the mouth of Socrates in *Phaedo* 61a:

Ἦ Σώκρατες,” ἔφη, “μουσικὴν ποιεῖ καὶ ἐργάζου”. καὶ ἐγὼ ἔν γε τῷ πρόσθεν χρόνῳ ὅπερ ἔπραττον τοῦτο ὑπελάμβανον αὐτό μοι παρακελεύεσθαί τε καὶ ἐπικελεύειν, ὥσπερ οἱ τοῖς θεοῦσι διακελευόμενοι, καὶ ἐμοὶ οὕτω τὸ ἐνόπνιον ὅπερ ἔπραττον τοῦτο ἐπικελεύειν, μουσικὴν ποιεῖν, ὡς φιλοσοφίας μὲν οὐσης μεγίστης μουσικῆς, ἐμοῦ δὲ τοῦτο πράττοντος.

“Socrates,” it said, “practice and cultivate the arts”. In the past I imagined that it was instructing and advising me to do what I was doing, such as those who encourage runners in a race, that the dream was thus bidding me do the very thing I was doing, namely, to practice the art of philosophy, this being the highest kind of art, and I was doing that.

⁹⁸ Nehamas (2007) 6, citing *Symp.* 209d.

⁹⁹ *Symp.* 212a.

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter II.

Likewise, in *Phaedrus* 248d, Socrates reports that when the soul first falls, it becomes, “according to the law”, a philosopher, since this is the highest form of existence in the body. Philosophy is associated with Calliope and Ourania¹⁰¹, the oldest Muse, putting it again above all other arts. In all discussions of mimesis and representation, one theme has reigned: knowledge of the Good. Mimesis is at its best when the artist contemplates (and therefore gains knowledge of) the Good.

Good poetry presents what is worthy of imitation, and what is worthy of imitation may only be achieved through a knowledge of what is good and bad, and through a directedness towards the good which aims at making the listener better.¹⁰²

As I see it, philosophy is the highest form of *poiesis* not because it is distinct from all other forms of *poiesis*, but because it is the culmination of all creative forms. By this I mean that if a poet (for example) achieves the superior form of mimesis, his creation will transcend the limitations of the poetic medium and will in fact be philosophical. The Ideal Poet is the Ideal Creator, and that is what the philosopher is, as was claimed by Plato in the *Phaedrus*. The philosopher creates by contemplation of the Intelligibles, and his creation brings order reflecting the divine order to the Sensible world. The philosopher achieves assimilation to God and becomes an image of the god, becoming himself the best object of contemplation. Thus, his work points towards the higher realm and is truthful (insofar as it is possible to express truth in the Sensible world), and whoever contemplates the philosopher will be transported above. Andrea Capra¹⁰³ attentively noted that Alcibiades’ description of Socrates’ effect on his listeners in the *Symposium* was parallel to the description of divine inspiration in the *Ion*. The Philosopher is both the subject of contemplation and the object of contemplation in a chain of mimetic relationships. As Gonzalez¹⁰⁴ also noted, Socrates has a philosophical *technê* which he received from divine inspiration.

Conclusion

¹⁰¹ *Phaedrus* 259d.

¹⁰² Herrmann (2011) 39.

¹⁰³ Capra (2014) 99.

¹⁰⁴ Gonzalez (2011) 104, citing *Phaedrus* 257a7-8: τὴν ἐρωτικὴν μοι τέχνην ἦν ἔδωκας.

It has been my aim in this chapter to show the complexity of Plato's thought regarding the mimetic process. I have argued that the discussion in *Republic* III and X is deeply conditional to the context in which it is inserted. Furthermore, I have argued for the two-phase division of mimesis in *theoria* and *poesis* and defended that this is the only possible form of creation in the Platonic worldview. I have also suggested the possibility of what I have called "superior mimesis", which entails the contemplation of the higher realities of the Platonic metaphysical scheme, thus creating a product more valuable to those who contemplate it. Key passages in the Platonic *opera* allude to such theories, even if somewhat subtly (as is Plato's *modus operandi*). It is evident that mimesis is treated in a twofold manner by Plato, both as an inferior and as a superior form of creation, depending on the object of contemplation, and that mimesis is crucial not only as a creative but also a contemplative mechanism.

Chapter II – Plotinus

Plotinus was a philosopher of the third century A.D. He was the founder of Neoplatonism, the logical philosophical successor to the “Middle Platonism” of the first and second century A.D. His thought is, by his own admission (*Enn.* V.1.8.10-14), Platonic. The “Neoplatonic” label is a later invention, because in his mind, and no doubt in the mind of all the Neoplatonic philosophers, his own philosophical claims are not original: he only clarifies what Plato already said¹⁰⁵. Plotinus uses some concepts inherited from Aristotle’s philosophy, but the degree to which he uncritically uses those concepts is debated¹⁰⁶. Still, Plotinus believes that Aristotle is mostly in agreement with Plato, and when he is not, Plotinus puts the blame on Aristotle, never on Plato¹⁰⁷.

I have suggested above that Plato had at least two different ways of looking at mimesis, one being the *Republic*’s criticism of mimesis as a fool’s tool that is at best useless and at worst potentially harmful, and the other being the overall view that Plato seems to defend in many other works, sometimes indirectly. This second view perceives mimesis in a loftier way, granting the human soul the power to contemplate and imitate the Forms, bypassing the critique of *Republic* X that attacks mimetic art as three times removed from reality. In Plotinus, we will find both views and further ramifications of these.

To fully understand Plotinus’ thought is no small task, as all topics are interconnected. One cannot simply discuss any particular doctrine without referring to the whole. Thus, a short, but hopefully elucidating, introduction is in order. Neoplatonism is known to be an all-encompassing philosophical scheme which systematizes the whole of Reality¹⁰⁸. This system works like a web of entities¹⁰⁹ with different grades of reality but all connected in a relationship of cause-effect. This means that there is a hierarchy of Being, starting from the One – the Absolute that causes Being and is therefore beyond

¹⁰⁵ Louth (2007) 36.

¹⁰⁶ Magrin (2016).

¹⁰⁷ Wallis (1972) 23-25.

¹⁰⁸ Here meaning the whole existence and non-existence. Both the metaphysical realm and the sensible realm.

¹⁰⁹ I use “entity” in a neutral way to avoid confusion between philosophical concepts like Being, Essence, Hypostasis or non-Being. It can be used to refer to anything that does or does not exist, with no particular attention to its predication or non-predication.

Being – and ending in Matter, the Absolute non-being. Everything else is in between. For Neoplatonic philosophers, the simpler an entity is the higher it is placed on the grade of Reality. From the One down, all things become increasingly complex and, consequently, less real. Reality is definition (actualization), as the One is full actuality and the origin of Forms. Matter is full potentiality; thus, it is formless. This works hierarchically. For example, a soul is simpler, and therefore more real than a body, insofar as souls are without parts, while bodies are composed of many parts (right down to the atomic composition). Following the same logic, Soul is inferior to the Forms, because Soul has many faculties (reason and sense perception, for example), while Forms are the second simplest entity, as components of Intellect. Intellect is a whole made of Forms. Thus, Intellect is not fully unified and is only second in the scale of reality. The One is the absolute simplest entity. The main objective of all the cosmos, including human life, is the non-mediated contemplation of the One (*Enn.* III.8). Everything an entity does must ideally be towards something above itself. This does not mean that every entity can achieve this. Only that it should strive for it and achieve as much as it is proper to their nature, as is the case of plants and non-rational animals (*Enn.* III.8.1). There are two great metaphysical motions in Neoplatonic philosophy: *prohodos* and *epistrophe*, which mean procession and reversion¹¹⁰, respectively. Procession is the motion of all things being created and consequently being projected outside their cause, which contains its product in some way. Reversion is the motion of all things turning back and contemplating their cause, which in turn causes the contemplating entity to abound in “energy” and create another entity which proceeds from it. This idea will be discussed below.

To greatly simplify the divine hierarchy, there are three *archai* (commonly translated as principles or causes, but Lloyd Gerson warns against this oversimplification¹¹¹): the One, Intellect (or *Nous*) and Soul, which define the basis of the whole cosmos. The One is that which creates everything, to the extent that it is what grants Being to everything else, a doctrine of Pythagorean ancestry¹¹². “Nous”, as J. M. Rist insightfully comments¹¹³, is a complicated term to translate. Since it has many connections with the Greek concept of thought and intuition, he defends the use of “divine mind” as a near equivalent term in English. In this thesis, however, the term Intellect, or

¹¹⁰ Louth (2007) 37. Cf. *Enn.* V.2.

¹¹¹ Gerson (1994) I.

¹¹² Wallis (1972) 48.

¹¹³ Rist (1989) 190.

sometimes Nous, will be used to avoid adding unfamiliar terms to an already complex system. The Intellect is composed by the Forms and is that which grants Essence, therefore defining the unlimited creative power of the One. Logic and Reason are defined by the Forms, which is why the One is supra-rational - it exists prior to reason (not temporarily, but ontologically). Essence is what gives Life, for Intellection, the activity of the Intellect, is the most perfect Life, and all things that partake of Essence partake of Life in some way. Lastly, Soul is that which grants motion, creates Time (in contrast to the Eternal State that everything above Soul enjoys) and, most importantly, it is that which connects Forms to Matter. Soul has images of Forms within itself, and projects images of images of Forms into Matter¹¹⁴. These are the impressions of the Forms in the soul, which are commonly referred to as the *spermatikoi logoi*, a concept which will be mentioned below.

As Gerson explains regarding these *archai*: “They are fundamental explanatory concepts”¹¹⁵. What this means is that whenever Plotinus is confronted with any particular problem, like the nature of evil or what is virtue, he always falls back on these fundamentals of his philosophical scheme to answer it. As R. T. Wallis insightfully suggested, Plotinus’ scheme should be studied from the ground (Sensible world) up (the One), but with a slight detour through a primary exposition of the nature of the One¹¹⁶. This is because Plotinus always starts his treatises from the world of common experience (as opposed to Proclus, as will be discussed in the next chapter) and then climbs up to the Heavens. Thus, this should be the natural way of viewing his scheme. None of this ascent, however, will be Intelligible if the nature of the One is not, at least partially, understood. To discuss mimesis in Plotinus, one must discuss everything. This chapter will be a spiraling journey, in the sense that many themes will be explored multiple times with different focus on certain perspectives.

Mimesis

Plotinus does not follow dogmatically the Platonic texts, at least not as much as the later Neoplatonic tradition, especially since the exegetical theories that dictate that

¹¹⁴ These concepts are elucidated in Gerson (1994) II-III.

¹¹⁵ Gerson (1994) 2.

¹¹⁶ Wallis (1972) III.

every element in Plato's work is philosophically important were not yet fully formulated, allowing Plotinus to somewhat ignore "irrelevant" elements¹¹⁷. Still, even though Plotinus sometimes *seems* disingenuous in his citations of Plato, he is still a Platonist nonetheless, and arguably more faithful to Plato's original thought than he is given credit for. Considering this, it will not be surprising to find Plato's doctrine of mimesis in Plotinus' own works, albeit expounded differently. Generally, it is believed that Plotinus holds a more positive view on mimesis and art in general. Usually, when referring to Plotinus' views on art, modern authors¹¹⁸ consider that he is diverging from Plato's doctrine. Regardless of modern interpretation, Plotinus seems to advocate indeed for a superior mimesis in his works, and he is vocal about this (*Enn.* V.8.1). Still, Plotinus does not (or cannot¹¹⁹) ignore Plato's criticisms of inferior mimesis.

What can be found in Plotinus is an expansion of Plato's doctrine, but it is presented in a textual form that is different from the Platonic dialogue. As Daniele Iozzia says, metaphor is for Plotinus what dialogue is for Plato: the ideal form of exposition of philosophy¹²⁰. Furthermore, as shall be demonstrated, Plotinus' expositions, even if based on Plato's doctrines, are usually more extensive and with further ramifications. Plotinus' works are all a mix of lecture, inner dialogue, dialogue between himself and his students and dialogue between himself and imaginary adversaries¹²¹. While this mix of interlocutors, sometimes even within the same tractate, can be confusing and even overwhelming at times, Plotinus' general exposition is very direct, compared to Plato's more dramatic approach to philosophy. This might account for the fact that Plotinus is more direct regarding his views on mimesis. Another relevant aspect is the more intense focus on contemplation in the Neoplatonic tradition, which is very connected to the idea of mimesis, as will soon be shown.

Inferior Mimesis

Plotinus has two different perspectives on mimesis, which have been distinguished above as "superior mimesis" (that looks beyond Sensible reality) and "inferior mimesis" (that looks only to the Sensible). Let us start with "inferior mimesis".

¹¹⁷ Wallis (1972) II.

¹¹⁸ E.g., Rich (1960), Armstrong (1967), Wallis (1972), Rist (1967), Sheppard (1980).

¹¹⁹ Kuisma (2003) 52.

¹²⁰ Iozzia (2015) 15.

¹²¹ Wallis (1972) 42.

Plotinus, though termed a “Neo” Platonist, is still a Platonist, and it is no surprise that his criticism of mimesis harks back to Plato’s own doctrine. In fact, Plotinus echoes (*Enn.* IV.3.10.19) his master’s words: “For craft is posterior to soul and imitates it, making obscure and weak imitations, just toys in a way, things of little worth, using many contrivances to produce an image of nature”¹²². The image of the toys and things of little worth evidently calls to mind *Rep.* 602b-c where Plato calls imitation a “Plaything of no matter”¹²³.

There is an interesting concept in this citation that is not present in Plato: craft imitates Soul. As will be shown later¹²⁴, Soul orders the cosmos by directly contemplating the Forms and projecting these Forms into matter, which is in itself a mimetic motion. Soul does this unconsciously and spontaneously as a consequence of its *epistrophic* phase. Craft imitates what Soul does but substitutes the Forms with inferior images of the Forms, as well as creating with intention, in contrast to Soul’s unconscious production. Just like in Plato, mimesis is associated with craft as being a mere imitation of an imitation. It is as useless as the “mere toys” and detrimental as “three times removed from reality”, following Plato’s own conclusions.

Shadows and Reflections

In Plotinus, however, there is a new development regarding the conception of “inferior mimesis”. In *Enn.* VI.4.10.1-15, Plotinus asserts:

Εἰ δέ τις λέγοι, ὡς οὐκ ἀνάγκη τὸ εἶδωλὸν του συνηρητῆσθαι τῷ ἀρχετύπῳ – ἔστι γὰρ καὶ εἰκόνα εἶναι ἀπόντος τοῦ ἀρχετύπου, ἀφ’ οὗ ἡ εἰκὼν, καὶ τοῦ πυρὸς ἀπελθόντος τὴν θερμότητα εἶναι ἐν τῷ θερμανθέντι πρῶτον μὲν ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀρχετύπου καὶ τῆς εἰκόνας, εἰ τὴν παρὰ τοῦ ζωγράφου εἰκόνα λέγοι τις, οὐ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον φήσομεν τὴν εἰκόνα πεποιηκέναι, ἀλλὰ τὸν ζωγράφον, οὐκ οὐσαν αὐτοῦ εἰκόνα οὐδ’ εἰ αὐτὸν τις γράφει· τὸ γὰρ γράφον ἦν οὐ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ ζωγράφου οὐδὲ τὸ εἶδος τὸ μεμιμημένον· καὶ οὐ τὸν ζωγράφον, ἀλλὰ τὴν θέσιν τὴν οὕτως τῶν χρωμάτων λεκτέον ποιεῖν τὴν τοιαύτην εἰκόνα. Οὐδὲ κυρίως ἡ τῆς εἰκόνας καὶ τοῦ ἰνδάλατος ποιήσις οἶον ἐν ὕδασι καὶ κατόπτροις ἢ ἐν σκιαῖς – ἐνταῦθα ὑφίσταται τε παρὰ τοῦ προτέρου κυρίως καὶ γίνεται ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ ἀποτετημένα τὰ γενόμενα εἶναι¹²⁵.

¹²² Τέχνη γὰρ ὑστέρα αὐτῆς καὶ μιμεῖται ἀμυδρὰ καὶ ἀσθενῆ ποιούσα μιμήματα, παίγνια ἅττα καὶ οὐ πολλοῦ ἄξια, μηχαναῖς πολλαῖς εἰς εἶδωλον φύσεως προσχρωμένη. Translation by Gerson et al. (2018)

¹²³ ἀλλ’ εἶναι παιδιάν τινα καὶ οὐ σπουδὴν τὴν μίμησιν.

¹²⁴ See below: *Superior Mimesis*.

¹²⁵ All *Enneads* translations by Gerson et al. (2018).

But if someone should say that it is not necessary for a reflection to be joined to its archetype, since it is possible for there to be an image when the archetype from which the image is derived is not there, just as something heated by fire can be hot when the fire is removed; first, in the case of the archetype and image, if one is speaking about the image made by the painter, we will say that it was not the archetype that produced the image, but the painter, given that even if someone paints himself, it is not an image of him. For what does the painting is not the body of the painter, nor the imitated form. It is not the painter but the arrangement of these colors thus and so that should be said to produce this kind of image.

Nor is this the making of the image or reflection in the strict sense such as occurs in water, mirrors, or in shadows. For in these cases, images come to exist strictly as derived from that which was prior to them, and they come to be from it, and it is not possible for them, once they have come to be, to be when they are cut off from that.

Plotinus clearly contrasts two types of mimesis, although the distinction is not between what I have dubbed “superior mimesis” and “inferior mimesis”, since both examples seem to concern Sensible and inferior paradigms. It seems that Plotinus is distinguishing between two types of “inferior mimesis”: one artistic and another reflective. Plotinus seems to grant a superior rank to artistic mimesis, for it has independent being imparted by the artist, but still not dependent on the paradigm nor the artist, since a painting or sculpture of a man does not require the existence of the man in order for it to exist itself. In contrast, reflective mimesis, exemplified by shadows and reflections in water, disappears when its paradigm steps away. Since reflections do not have an independent being, they could be associated with the Absolute non-being, which Plotinus considers to be Evil, as mentioned above. Plotinus, however, does not make that connection. In contrast, the artistic mimesis alluded to in this passage implies that the artist has the power to create things, granting them being, and thereby participating in the creative power of the Demiurge.

Mimetai crafts and Intelligible crafts

Plotinus, in another context, says the following, regarding mimesis in art (*Enn.* V.9.11.1-6):

Τὰ οὖν κατὰ τέχνην καὶ αἱ τέχναι; Τῶν δὲ τεχνῶν ὅσαι μιμητικάι, γραφικὴ μὲν καὶ ἀνδριαντοποιία, ὄρχησις τε καὶ χειρονομία, ἐνταῦθά που τὴν σύστασιν λαβοῦσαι καὶ αἰσθητῶ προσχρώμεναι

παραδείγματι καὶ μιμούμεναι εἶδη τε καὶ κινήσεις τὰς τε συμμετρίας ἃς ὀρθοῖ μετατιθεῖσαι οὐκ ἂν εἰκότως ἐκεῖ ἀνάγοιντο, εἰ μὴ τῷ ἀνθρώπου λόγῳ.

Actually, among the crafts, such as the mimetic ones – painting and sculpture, dance and mime – the construction of which, I suppose, is done here by the use of a *sensible paradigm*, that is, by imitating forms and motions, and transferring the symmetries that they see, one would not reasonably refer to the intelligible world, unless it were to the expressed principle of human being.¹²⁶

Here, Plotinus clearly identifies some crafts as mimetic, which implies that there are, to his view, certain crafts that escape the mimetic qualification. Moreover, he reports that these mimetic crafts are constructed “by the use of a *sensible paradigm*, ... by imitating forms and motions”. I take “forms and motions” to be the imitation of Forms projected in matter. This criticism is not new *per se*, since it is essentially what can be found in the *Republic*’s critique. A few lines further below, Plotinus adds, however, another comment (*Enn.* V.9.11.13-17):

Ἔσσαι δὲ ποιητικαὶ αἰσθητῶν τῶν κατὰ τέχνην, οἷον οἰκοδομικὴ καὶ τεκτονικὴ, καθόσον συμμετρίας προσχρῶνται, ἀρχὰς ἂν ἐκεῖθεν ἔχοιεν καὶ τῶν ἐκεῖ φρονήσεων· τῷ δὲ αἰσθητῷ ταῦτα συγκερασάμεναι τὸ ὅλον οὐκ ἂν εἶεν ἐκεῖ· ἢ ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ.

And so, too, those of the crafts that produce sensible objects, such as architecture and carpentry, to the extent that they make use of symmetries, would have their principles in the intelligible world and their thought processes there, too. But insofar as they are mixed with something sensible, they are not as a whole in the intelligible world, except within the human being.

Here, Plotinus creates a further distinction within “inferior mimesis”, between that which is Sensible and that which is mixed¹²⁷. Since, as has been noted before, mimesis implies two phases - contemplation and creation - it is also natural for there to be a mixed mimesis that contemplates beyond the Sensible but whose actions are aimed at the Sensible cosmos. As Audrey Rich noted¹²⁸, in this passage, carpentry and painting have the same relationship with each other as in Plato’s *Republic*, where the carpenter creates by looking at Intelligibles, and the painter by looking at the carpenter’s creation. As noted above, the Forms of objects need not be taken seriously as a doctrine of Plato, since the use of the

¹²⁶ Italics are mine.

¹²⁷ Denominated “productive arts” by Rich (1960) 234.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 234.

Form of Couch is merely exemplificative. Plotinus rejects the form of objects too¹²⁹ but takes the cue here to develop the concept of mixed mimesis, identified with productive crafts that utilize Intelligible concepts in their Sensible productions. They are distinguished from the “superior mimesis” inasmuch as their products are for the Sensible world and their creation is purposeful, as opposed to “superior mimesis”, which creates unconsciously and spontaneously.

“Inferior mimesis” is a reality in Plotinus’ own thought and does not diverge from Plato’s own conception, although Plotinus shows a more elaborated and straightforward version of these notions. Moreover, he further distinguishes the difference between various kinds of “inferior mimesis”. Plotinus appears to defend the classic conception of mimesis as put forward in the *Republic*: that mimesis of Sensible paradigms is thrice removed from reality and a “mere plaything”. Nevertheless, he adds to this conception an inferior and a superior derivation: shadows and reflections represent the inferior Sensible mimesis, which are devoid of Being itself, and Mixed mimesis, that looks to the Intelligibles but is left in the cosmos. So, there are three distinctions within the “inferior mimesis” category. Some have justified both of Plotinus’ attitudes to mimesis as dependent on chronology¹³⁰, meaning that, in the earlier treatises, he is more pessimistic towards mimesis and, in later treatises more optimistic, always juxtaposing both attitudes as contrasting, which, it is claimed, reflects an on-going departure from Plato’s teachings. I argue that there is no need for such arguments and that the two attitudes are reconcilable with each other and compatible with Plato’s fundamental teaching, albeit expounded more precisely and with some further developments. The distinction between “inferior” and “superior mimesis” in Plato has already been analyzed in the previous chapter, and Plotinus’ additions to this doctrine are faithful to his master’s supposed intentions. In all cases, “inferior mimesis” is criticized for its dependence on the Sensible cosmos, partly for using it as paradigm, partly for using it as goal.

Superior Mimesis

¹²⁹ I.e., Plotinus does not believe that there is specifically a Form of Couch, or a Form of Table; only Forms of loftier things like Justice and Wisdom.

¹³⁰ Finberg (1926) cited by Rich (1960).

Mimesis as a metaphysical mechanism

The “inferior” view of mimesis is only one side of the Neoplatonic attitude to imitation. In fact, there is a generally more optimistic view on the mimetic process within the Neoplatonic metaphysical scheme. Neoplatonism uses mimesis as a full-fledged metaphysical mechanism crucial to the “functioning” of the whole Reality, and as an explanation for the dynamic relationship between levels of reality. I believe this fact to be one of the greatest arguments for the value of mimesis in its “superior” form. Since Reality is itself constituted and constitutive through mimesis, it is evident that it cannot be seen only in a pessimistic way.

This section will explore the role of mimesis in the ordering of Reality as a process intrinsic to the Neoplatonic philosophical scheme. This, I argue, is part of the “superior mimesis” attitude, which reveals that the mimetic process itself is free from criticism, and its value is somewhat dependent on its paradigm.

Participation as Mimesis

Participation (μέθεξις) is the expression used by Platonists to explain the way Sensible objects retain an inferior version of an Intelligible Form¹³¹. Following Plato’s lead, any couch participates in the Ideal Couch, although all physical couches are relatively imperfect. The Ideal Couch is that which most perfectly describes a couch, having all couch-like qualities without any non-couch-like elements. When a particular couch is created, it is only a part of the Ideal Couch (or Universal Couch), for it is impossible for all couch-like qualities to be present simultaneously in one entity in the physical world (*Enn.* V.8.1.23). It can be thought of as a dice represented in a two-dimensional drawing. As a dice, it has 6 sides. As a drawing, however, its representation is limited by the medium in which it is represented, and in this form, we can only see 3 sides at most. The same applies to the general theory of Forms, in both Plato and his heirs. Any physical object is a representation in a non-natural (in the sense of natural ontological level) medium of a Form, and so it is bound to be imperfect. And it is in this sense that participation is mimesis. The proverbial couch imitates the Ideal Couch. It is implied in mimetic action that the product is inferior to the paradigm, and this is the crux of the

¹³¹ Clark (2015).

Neoplatonic metaphysical scheme. Nature itself is an imitation of the Nous. The Nous is an imitation of the One, as Plotinus himself defends in *Enn.* II.9.2.1: “(...) We must posit there to be one Intellect, unchangeably self-identical, without any inclination towards what is below it, and imitating its father as much as it can”¹³².

Another example would be that every Form participates in / imitates the One insofar as each Form is a unity. In fact, all things imitate the One, for all things are ultimately one. Therefore, the One is the cause of all Being, since Being is first of all existence which implies limitation, which in turn implies some form of unity. All things that *are*, are so by virtue of their imitation / participation in the One. Mimesis as participation plays a key role in explaining the most fundamental of ideas in Neoplatonism, and this is indicative of the potential positive value of mimesis.

Macro-microcosm relation

Still within this realm, this participative process implies a relationship between the paradigm and the mimetic product, which is essentially the same relationship between cause and effect. Since all things are imitations of their causes, they must have some similarities. In fact, Neoplatonism holds a macrocosm-microcosm doctrine, which implies that the Sensible mimetic products are similar to the metaphysical paradigms. This is most noticeable in the case of Nature as a mimetic product of the Nous as a paradigm, which means that what exists in Nature is an inferior version of the Intelligible Realm, but is still the same, as Plotinus says in *Enn.* II.9.8.16-22:

Εἰ δὲ μιμούμενον μὴ ἔστιν ἐκεῖνο, αὐτὸ τοῦτο κατὰ φύσιν ἔχει· οὐ γὰρ ἦν ἔτι μιμούμενον. Τὸ δὲ ἀνομοίως μεμιμησθαι ψεῦδος· οὐδὲν γὰρ παραλέλειπται ὧν οἶόν τε ἦν καλὴν εἰκόνα φυσικῆν ἔχειν.

And if, as it [Soul] imitates the intelligible, it is not the intelligible itself, that is precisely what is natural to it. For otherwise it would no longer be an imitation. And it would be false to say that it is an imitation bereft of sameness. For none of the things of which it can obtain a fine and natural image has been left out.

All Forms exist in nature in participated form, as they exist in the Nous in their pure form.

¹³² Οὐ τοίνυν οὔτε πλείω τούτων οὔτε ἐπινοίας περιττὰς ἐν ἐκείνοις, ἅς οὐ δέχονται, θετέον, ἀλλ’ ἓνα νοῦν τὸν αὐτὸν ὡσαύτως ἔχοντα, ἀκλινη πανταχῆ, μιμούμενον τὸν πατέρα καθ’ ὅσον οἶόν τε αὐτῶ.

It is due to this relationship that we, as souls in the physical cosmos, can learn things about the Intelligible through contemplation of Nature. As Wallis¹³³ notes, Plotinus generally starts his expositions of metaphysical themes from the world of Sensible experience and then moves upwards. Plotinus himself mentions on some occasions this need to contemplate things in the world below in order to understand the things above. For example, at *Enn.* V.3.14:

Ἦ, εἰ μὴ ἔχομεν τῆ γνώσει, καὶ παντελῶς οὐκ ἔχομεν; Ἀλλ' οὕτως ἔχομεν, ὥστε περὶ αὐτοῦ μὲν λέγειν, αὐτὸ δὲ μὴ λέγειν. Καὶ γὰρ λέγομεν, ὃ μὴ ἔστιν· ὃ δὲ ἔστιν, οὐ λέγομεν· ὥστε ἐκ τῶν ὑστερον περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγομεν.

In fact, if we do not have knowledge of it, does it follow as well that we do not have it at all? But we have it in such a way that we can speak about it, though we cannot speak it. For we say what it is not; what it is, we do not say, so that we are speaking about it on the basis of things posterior to it.

Another example in *Enn.* VI.8.8.1:

Ἡμεῖς δὲ θεωροῦμεν οὐ συμβεβηκὸς τὸ αὐτεξούσιον ἐκεῖνω, ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τῶν περὶ τὰ ἄλλα αὐτεξουσίῳ ἀφαιρέσει τῶν ἐναντίων αὐτὸ ἐφ' ἑαυτό· πρὸς αὐτὸ τὰ ἐλάττω ἀπὸ ἐλαττόνων μεταφέροντες ἀδυναμία τοῦ τυχεῖν τῶν ἃ προσήκει λέγειν περὶ αὐτοῦ, ταῦτα ἂν περὶ αὐτοῦ εἴποιμεν. Καίτοι οὐδὲν ἂν εὔροιμεν εἰπεῖν οὐχ ὅτι κατ' αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ περὶ αὐτοῦ κυρίως·

We see that autonomy is not an accident of the Good; rather, we see that it has this autonomy by stripping away the contraries from things with autonomy in other respects. In transferring lesser attributes from lesser beings to the Good, on account of our inability to grasp those things which should be said of it, we would like to say the following about it; yet we are in no position to find anything to say about it, let alone anything properly applicable to it.

To gain knowledge of the One, we must look to its posteriors and abstract from them the qualities that we understand are not applicable to the One. In *Enn.* I.2.3.25-28 Plotinus says:

Πάλιν οὖν τὸ νοεῖν ὁμόνυμον; Οὐδαμῶς· ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πρώτως, τὸ δὲ παρ' ἐκεῖνου ἐτέρως. Ὡς γὰρ ὁ ἐν φωνῇ λόγος μίμημα τοῦ ἐν ψυχῇ, οὕτω καὶ ὁ ἐν ψυχῇ μίμημα τοῦ ἐν ἐτέρῳ.

¹³³ Wallis (1972) 47.

But again, we must ask if the word “thinking” is equivocal? Not at all. But there is a primary type of thinking and one derived from it, which is different. For as a spoken word is an imitation of a word in the soul, so a word in the soul is an imitation of something in something different.

The relationship between spoken words and words in the soul / mind is another relationship of microcosm and macrocosm. In *Enn.* II.2.1 Plotinus argues that the heavens’ motions are due to them being an imitation of the Nous, as he succinctly says at the beginning of the tractate: “Why does it ‘move in a circle’? Because it is imitating Intellect”¹³⁴. In *Enn.* II.9.8-9 Plotinus defends that the Sensible cosmos is the most perfect imitation of the Intelligible cosmos, in his famous treatise against the Gnostics. It is clear that, for Plotinus, contemplating a microcosm leads one to a macrocosm, and this is the true essence of the “superior mimesis”.

Prohodos and epistrophe as Mimesis

In the Neoplatonic tradition, there are two terms that come as a pair and define the two great metaphysical motions: *epistrophe* and *prohodos* - Reversion and Procession, respectively. *Prohodos* is the motion caused by an entity over-abounding and creating another entity that proceeds from the first causal entity. *Epistrophe* is the opposite motion - the reversion of the effect to the causal entity. These two motions work in a circular logic, the effect reverts to its cause through contemplation and in this act the effect over-abounds and creates another entity, the effect then becoming a cause. *Epistrophe* is then the innate desire of all things to return to their cause, and *prohodos* is the consequence of that return, which causes new entities. Plotinus comments in III.8.1 that Nature “produces what it produces through contemplation”. Considering that there is legitimate reason to do so, both these processes are identified with the two phases of mimesis within the scope of this investigation. Mimesis, as explained above, is a two-phase process: contemplation and creation. Likewise, *epistrophe* is a form of contemplation¹³⁵. *Prohodos* is a form of creation. In the *prohodos* phase, an entity imitates unconsciously its own cause and creates spontaneously. As will be later observed, spontaneous creativity is the ideal form of creation. This is part of the mimetic mechanism that is pervasive in all Neoplatonic discussions of metaphysics.

¹³⁴ Διὰ τί <κύκλῳ κινεῖται>; Ὅτι νοῦν μιμεῖται.

¹³⁵ *Enn.* II.2.3; IV.3.4.25-37; IV.8.4; V.1.7; V.8.11. Cf. Louth (2007).

Nature as a Mimetic product

Having shown that mimesis is more than an artistic process and that it is a crucial mechanism for the Neoplatonic system, this section will address Plotinus' perspective towards this kind of mimesis. Plotinus explicitly says (*Enn.* V.8.1.33) that one should not criticize mimesis, as everything is made through mimesis, even the Sensible cosmos being an imitation of the Intelligible cosmos. The flaws of mimesis are not to be taken too seriously - it is only natural that the product should be inferior to its cause and paradigm. Nonetheless, all *hypostases* use mimesis. Likewise, Physical beauty is not to be disdained. Still, one must distinguish between a beautiful thing and Beauty itself. In *Enn.* III.2.3.1-5:

Καὶ οὐκ ἄν τις εἰκότως οὐδὲ τούτῳ μέμψαιτο ὡς οὐ καλῶ οὐδὲ τῶν μετὰ σώματος οὐκ ἀρίστῳ, οὐδ' αὖ τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι αὐτῷ αἰτιάσαιτο πρῶτον μὲν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὄντος αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐκ λογισμοῦ γενομένου, ἀλλὰ φύσεως ἀμείνονος γεννώσης κατὰ φύσιν ὅμοιον ἑαυτῇ.

And it isn't reasonable for anyone to find fault even with this world as not being beautiful or the best of things that are accompanied by body or again to be critical of that which caused it to exist, when, first, it exists of necessity and did not come into being as a result of calculative reasoning but was generated in a natural process by a better nature to be the same as itself.

While Plotinus is usually portrayed as pessimistic regarding the physical world – the anecdote in his biography by Porphyry (*Vita Plotini* I) where Plotinus disdains his own body is notorious – his actual outlook on nature is optimistic regarding its potential to rise to the higher realm. Nature is inferior to the Intelligible, that much is clear. Nature, however, is nonetheless an imitation of the Intelligible and is created by it. Thus, it should be respected for its origins. Likewise, one should not criticize the mimetic process itself, since all things were created “mimetically”. It is not the process itself that must be judged, but how it is used.

Plotinus argues (*Enn* III.8.3) that Nature contemplates itself, and that this is a form of “weaker contemplation”¹³⁶, since Nature is not looking upwards but inwards, which is still superior to the downwards¹³⁷ gaze of “inferior mimesis”. Nature, Plotinus puts it

¹³⁶ Weaker in comparison to the ideal contemplation that produces union with the One.

¹³⁷ In the sense that the contemplator looks towards things that are inferior to the human soul, in

(*Enn.* III.8.2.20), is separate from nature in the material world. It is a Form separate from the composite which is an offspring of the World-Soul¹³⁸. This works because Nature, inasmuch as it is soul, has the *spermatikoi logoi*. These *logoi* are impressions of the Forms, and not the Forms themselves (*Enn.* I.2.4.20). When Nature contemplates itself, it is contemplating impressions of the Forms, but this is not exactly the same as when a painter imitates nature, since the impressions within Nature are on the same ontological level as itself. In the case of the painter, for example, the nature¹³⁹ which he imitates is a level below his own ontological status, since nature (as a composite) is below humans' souls, in reality. As Plotinus puts it (*Enn.* III.8.4.15-21):

τί οὖν ταῦτα βούλεται; ὡς ἡ λεγομένη φύσις ψυχῆ οὐσα, γέννημα ψυχῆς προτέρας δυνατώτερον ζώσης, ἡσυχῇ ἐν ἐαυτῇ θεωρίαν ἔχουσα οὐ πρὸς τὸ ἄνω οὐδ' αὖ ἔτι πρὸς τὸ κάτω, σῆμα δὲ ἐν ᾧ ἔστιν, ἐν τῇ αὐτῆς στάσει καὶ οἷον συναισθήσει, τῇ συνέσει ταύτη καὶ συναισθήσει τὸ μετ' αὐτὴν εἶδεν ὡς οἷόν τε αὐτῇ καὶ οὐκέτι ἐζήτησεν ἄλλα θεώρημα ἀποτελέσασα ἀγλαὸν καὶ χάριεν.

What, then, does this mean? It means that what we call “nature” is a soul, offspring of a prior soul having a more powerful life, holding contemplation still within itself not directed to what is above, nor even to what is below, but stationary in what it is, in its own stable position, it saw what comes after it by a comprehension of this kind and a sort of self-awareness.

And (*Enn.* III.8.4.25-27):

ἑτέρα γὰρ αὐτῆς εἰς θεῶν ἐναργεστέρα, ἡ δὲ εἰδωλον θεωρίας ἄλλης. ταύτη δὴ καὶ τὸ γεννηθὲν ὑπ' αὐτῆς ἀσθενὲς παντάπασιν, ὅτι ἀσθενοῦσα θεωρία ἀσθενὲς θεώρημα ποιεῖ.

For there is another type of contemplation clearer than it in its vision, and nature is an image of the other type. Indeed, for this reason, what is generated by it is also completely weak because a contemplation that is weak makes a weak object of contemplation.

Nature is then not only a product of mimesis, in the sense that it is an imitation of the Soul prior to it (just like Soul is an imitation of Intellect and Intellect an imitation of the One¹⁴⁰), but it also produces nature in matter, by contemplating the Forms that are present

the ontological hierarchy.

¹³⁸ Louth (2007) 39.

¹³⁹ It should be noted that I distinguish Nature (capitalized) from nature. The former is the Soul that creates nature. The latter is the manifestation of Nature in the sensible world, creating nature, our world.

¹⁴⁰ O'Meara (1995) 76.

in itself as impressions. Hence, Nature produces inferior objects of contemplation, since her contemplation is weaker than the direct contemplation of the Forms.

As has been shown in this section, mimesis is much more for the Neoplatonic system than just an “aesthetic” or “artistic” concept. It is the cornerstone of all metaphysics. Having argued for its value as a metaphysical mechanism, the next section will be focused on its more artistic value.

“Superior mimesis” in the human sphere

This section will present an analysis on how the concept of “superior mimesis” is manifested in Plotinus in the context of “artistic” creation. The term is used to refer to the production of works of art by human souls through Sensible means. This section will be further divided into two sub-sections, corresponding to the two phases of mimesis: contemplation, and creation.

Contemplation

As has been argued repeatedly above, “superior mimesis” is distinguished from its “inferior” version by its contemplation of Intelligible paradigms, which I have also commonly referred to as “Forms” and “Ideas”. This form of contemplation implies a different process from the Sensible kind of contemplation. We can essentially define Sensible contemplation, part of “Sensible mimesis”, as physical vision. Contemplation of the Intelligibles, however, implies a different kind of vision which is not truly vision, as the Intelligibles have no Sensible form themselves. Plotinus himself uses the metaphor for vision in opposition to “knowing” in the context of the contemplation of the Forms¹⁴¹. It is very usual of Neoplatonic thinkers to use common words of everyday experience to discuss metaphysical ideas, as Wallis¹⁴² reports. This sub-section will illustrate how Plotinus believes one achieves this contemplation of the Intelligibles and how it works, so far as Plotinus himself reports it. Plotinus is notoriously¹⁴³ elusive on these themes, as they relate to the ineffability of his mysticism.

¹⁴¹ Wallis (1972) 89.

¹⁴² Wallis (1972) I.

¹⁴³ Louth (2007) 48.

Purification or Ways to Ascend

There are two major ways, as I categorize them, to initiate contemplation of the Intelligibles, and while both might appear independent, they work in unison and can be seen as different perspectives of the same phenomenon. The first one is by purification of the soul through Virtues and Dialectic. The second is through the power of *anamnesis*. The basic assumption of Plotinus' thought is that the Sensible world is infinitely inferior to the Intelligible world. It is not that Plotinus believes the Sensible to be bad - it is just inferior to the divine. As such, we should pay no tribute to it, but only take it seriously when it acts as a gateway to the Intelligible cosmos. His view on the human body reflects this vision as well (*Enn.* I.2.3.12): "The soul is evil when enmeshed with the body"¹⁴⁴. It is understood from this quote that Plotinus does not mean that the soul itself is evil while simply existing in the body, but that it is evil when it is too mixed with the body's urges. In Neoplatonic thought, the divine world is wholly good, and what is evil cannot be assimilated with what is good. Therefore, before one can have any contemplative contact with the Intelligible cosmos, one must be purified of the body's lowliness. As R. T. Wallis pertinently noted¹⁴⁵, purification in Neoplatonic parlance is very much unlike the Christian conception of purification. In Christianity, one must purify deeds done, that is, sins. This purification is granted through God's grace to all who truly want it, in an act of forgiveness, and it is the key for reconciliation with God. For Platonic thinkers, the concept of sin is somewhat at odds with the Christian's. There is no need to clean oneself after evil deeds, for these deeds are not direct acts against God's will but only against one's divine integrity. These sins are also confined to the body only. In fact, the Platonic God would not be bothered by these actions, as He is totally transcendent and impersonal. Platonic purification is the act of separating soul from body, making it possible for the person to be rooted in the Intelligible world, where the soul belongs. There are two major mechanisms to achieve this: Virtue and Dialectic, each of which has a full tractate of the *Enneads* dedicated to it, both in the first *Ennead*, which is associated with the purification phase of the philosopher's journey.

¹⁴⁴ Ἡ ἐπειδὴ κακὴ μὲν ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ <συμπεφυρμένη> τῷ σώματι.

¹⁴⁵ Wallis (1972) I.

Virtue

The ideal goal of the soul is to flee the Sensible world, for “evil inhabits it” (*Enn.* I.2.1). Plotinus reports that this flight is “assimilation of oneself to god”¹⁴⁶. He simplifies how this happens by stating that assimilation to God occurs when one is “just and pious with wisdom”. It is through the virtues that one escapes the Sensible world and evil in general. We, as composites of body and soul, are divided between both these constituents. Body, since it is composed of matter, is formless and indefinite, meaning that it is without control. This is what Plotinus considers the source of evil, as it is completely opposed to the immutable nature of the divine reality.

Soul, being an Intelligible entity, is essentially definition and order. We must follow the Intelligible side of us and imitate the order of the Intelligibles in order to add form to the body and control somewhat the passions. Virtue, essentially, is the result of the human soul participating in the Ideal Forms, which create Order and arrangement. As Plotinus defines it (*Enn.* I.2.1.46): “In the same way, then, we participate in order and arrangement and consonance coming from the Intelligible world, and these, when in the Sensible world, are virtue”¹⁴⁷.

Virtue is then what we receive from participation in the Intelligible. It is the product of our imitation of the divine order. With this ordering comes unity. In the Neoplatonic thought, ordering is the organizing of parts to be in concordance with the whole, which brings to mind the *Phaedrus*, where Plato establishes this as an ideal for literary works¹⁴⁸. This relates, through the macrocosm-microcosm relationship, previously mentioned¹⁴⁹, to the Intelligible cosmos’ relationship to the Sensible cosmos. This organizing of parts in wholes is considered an aesthetic, ethical and metaphysical ideal, since unity is participation / imitation of the One, the ultimate principle. It is this process that grants Being.

Plotinus divides virtues in two types: the civic and the purificatory, also called the practical and the theoretical¹⁵⁰. The first type of virtue is what is called the “temperating” virtues. These virtues put limits in our bodies’ indefiniteness but are themselves limited

¹⁴⁶ Ἐπειδὴ <τὰ κακὰ> ἐνταῦθα καὶ <τόνδε τὸν τόπον περιπολεῖ ἐξ ἀνάγκης>, βούλεται δὲ ἡ ψυχὴ φυγεῖν τὰ κακὰ, <φευκτέον ἐντεῦθεν>. Τίς οὖν ἡ φυγὴ; <θεῶν>, φησιν, <ὁμοιωθῆναι>.

¹⁴⁷ Οὕτως οὖν κόσμος καὶ τάξεως καὶ ὁμολογίας μεταλαμβάνοντες ἐκεῖθεν καὶ τούτων ὄντων τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐνθάδε.

¹⁴⁸ *Phaedrus* 264c.

¹⁴⁹ *Supra*: Macro-microcosm relation sub-section.

¹⁵⁰ Kalligas (2014).

to matter. They are meant to make us more ordered as a composite and make us live better in the world. The purificatory or theoretical virtues go beyond this. Their goal is not to make the composite better, but to fully abandon the body, as far as possible, and to return to the heavens. As Plotinus puts it (*Enn.* I.2.3.10):

Ἡ ἐπειδὴ κακὴ μὲν ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ <συμπεφυρμένη> τῷ σώματι καὶ ὁμοπαθῆς γινομένη αὐτῷ καὶ πάντα συνδοξάζουσα, εἴη ἂν ἀγαθὴ καὶ ἀρετὴν ἔχουσα, εἰ μήτε συνδοξάζοι, ἀλλὰ μόνῃ ἐνεργοῖ ὅπερ ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ φρονεῖν – μήτε ὁμοπαθῆς εἴη – ὅπερ ἐστὶ σωφρονεῖν μήτε φοβοῖτο ἀφισταμένη τοῦ σώματος – ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἀνδρίζεσθαι ἡγοῖτο δὲ λόγος καὶ νοῦς, τὰ δὲ μὴ ἀντιτείνου – δικαιοσύνη δ' ἂν εἴη τοῦτο

In fact, since the soul is evil when it is enmeshed in the body, and has come to experience the same thing as it, and has come to believe the same things, it would be good, that is, it would have virtue if it were not to believe these things, but were to act alone – which is what thinking and being wise is – and not feel the same things as the body – which is what self-control is – and not fear being separated from the body – which is what it is to be courageous – and if reason or intellect were to lead it, with the appetites not opposing it – which is what justice would be.

It should be noted that the theoretical virtues imply the civic virtues. To have the former is to already have conquered the latter, but not vice-versa. Furthermore, all virtues are mutually implicating, as Plotinus himself attests, though he does not expand on this. My interpretation is that all virtues are different aspects of the same phenomenon. Justice is following one's rational part, which is our proper nature; self-control is ignoring what is irrelevant and focusing on what is proper to our nature; wisdom is discerning what is proper and, lastly, courage is anchoring ourselves on what we know to be proper to our nature. All these virtues are anchored in the knowledge of one's own nature. One is courageous by knowing that the soul is immortal. One is just by knowing what is one's nature and to obey it (the rational soul). Having one of these virtues implies having all other virtues, in the sense that knowledge of one's nature implies all virtues.

In practical terms, the function of virtues is one of purification. Here below, among the Sensibles, we are trapped in our bodies and are chained to its appetites and impulses. Matter, as I have explained above, is the closest thing to a principle of evil insofar as it is formless non-being. Matter is the opposite of the ordering and unity which virtue brings (*Enn.* I.2.2.20¹⁵¹). In contrast, the soul is part of the Intelligible cosmos, and

¹⁵¹ Τὸ μὲν γὰρ πάντα ἄμετρον ὕλη ὄν πάντα ἀνωμοίωται. “For matter, being in every way unmeasured, is unassimilated to everything”.

it is that which gives form to matter. The human being, since it is composed of both body and soul, is torn between these worlds. Virtue, then, is following our higher selves, which is soul, and ignoring our lower selves, body. This translates to virtue as being a detachment of the soul from the body and becoming aware of the body's false beliefs, as Plotinus puts (*Enn.* I.2.3.11) it: “It would be good for the soul, that is evil when enmeshed in the body, to not believe what the body believes to be good”¹⁵². Virtue seems to be twofold; it brings unity through imitation of the divine but also separation through purification of the composite. This seems to be because matter can never truly receive Form and should therefore be abandoned. It should be noted that, while Plotinus does affirm (*Enn.* I.2.7.10) that “all virtues are purifications”¹⁵³, he explains that virtues are actually what is present in us after having been purified. Virtue is the manifestation in the Sensible of the higher existence of the soul.

Achieving this purification is somewhat a circular logic, very much like the whole Neoplatonic schema. Purification is achieved by noticing the existence of the higher realm and progressively ignoring the lower realm. We should (*Enn.* III.6.5.18) “not look at images, and not make judgments based on them”¹⁵⁴. For us to notice the higher realities, however, we must already be aware of them which already implies some level of purification.

In *Enn.* III.6.5, Plotinus gives us more details concerning the role of purification. Here he implies that it is through philosophy that we make the soul “unaffected” by lower afflictions. But he also reminds us that the soul is never truly “stained”. Our lower soul, which is in the body, is a reflection of our true selves. No matter how “enmeshed in the body” it is, it is always a mere reflection unconnected to our true being. The distinction between a virtuous life and a sinful life is that the surface on which our soul is reflected is either clearer or murkier, meaning that a virtuous person will see more clearly the true nature of his soul. This is what purification means - to realize our true nature and to see the composite of our bodies and lower soul as a mere reflection. When we realize this, we receive virtue, since truly knowing our nature will make us want to ignore the body and contemplate the Intelligibles. For Plotinus, purification is conversion to the philosophical-contemplative life¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵² Ἡ ἐπειδὴ κακὴ μὲν ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ <συμπεφυρμένη> τῷ σώματι καὶ ὁμοπαθῆς γινομένη αὐτῷ καὶ πάντα συνδοξάζουσα, εἴη ἂν ἀγαθὴ καὶ ἀρετὴν ἔχουσα, εἰ μὴτε συνδοξάζοι.

¹⁵³ καὶ τῇ καθάρσει δέ, εἴπερ πᾶσαι καθάρσεις κατὰ τὸ κεκαθάρθαι, ἀνάγκη πάσας·

¹⁵⁴ μήτε ὄραν τὰ εἶδωλα μήτε ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐργάζεσθαι πάθη.

¹⁵⁵ Kalligas (2014) 142.

Purificatory virtue, then, aims to ignore the body and focus the soul's attention to the Nous and towards the goal of assimilation and eventually identification with it. There is a distinction between assimilation and identification. Identification is the mystical process in which an entity is fully equal to another superior entity. Assimilation is essentially mimesis¹⁵⁶, as has been argued in the previous chapter. Mimesis, while mystical in some forms, implies the duality of contemplation and creation. Kalligas¹⁵⁷ rightly claims that assimilation does not imply likeness (or similitude), which is compatible with my interpretation of mimesis in this study. Since mimesis works within the framework of multiple levels of realities, it is evident that likeness is not what it aims for, at least in its more obvious sense. As has been demonstrated above, speech, for example, is an imitation of thoughts, and thoughts an imitation of the Forms. How can we claim likeness between these three elements when speech is limited by temporality, but the Forms exist beyond time? How can the particular couch have "likeness" to the Form of Couch which exists without spatiality? Mimesis is a dynamic relationship, as Kalligas eloquently puts it, between things in different realities. The product of mimesis will always be inferior in reality to the paradigm which it imitates. So, this assimilation is participation but in a subjective perspective.

To further corroborate this argument, we can take into Plotinus' final words in *Ennead* I.2, where he defines two forms of assimilation: one according to the civic virtues and one according to the theoretical virtues:

πρὸς γὰρ τούτους, οὐ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους ἀγαθοὺς ἢ ὁμοίωσις. Ὅμοίωσις δὲ ἢ μὲν πρὸς τούτους, ὡς εἰκὼν εἰκὼν ὁμοίωται ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἑκατέρω. Ἡ δὲ πρὸς ἄλλον ὡς πρὸς παράδειγμα.

For assimilation is to the gods, not to good human beings. Assimilation to good human beings is making an image of an image, one from another. But the other assimilation is like making an image according to a paradigm.

Essentially, Plotinus argues that civic virtues are imitation of good human practices, which are virtues focused on the Sensible world, and he qualifies it in the very familiar words of "image of an image". In the case of theoretical virtues though, these are an image according to an Intelligible paradigm. This distinction is evidently the same distinction that has been presented within the mimetic processes. What has been referred to as

¹⁵⁶ Zovko (2018), (2017).

¹⁵⁷ Kalligas (2014) 138.

“inferior” and “superior mimesis” can be seen as horizontal or vertical, respectively. Vertical mimesis is the process which looks upwards to a proper paradigm, and horizontal to that which is already an image, creating a further step down in the chain of reality. Assimilation is then a process of purification and mimesis.

Virtue is therefore contemplative. Pierre Hadot puts it thus: “In every sense of the word, then, virtue is the continuation of contemplation. Born of contemplation and returning to contemplation. Plotinian virtue is nothing but contemplation”¹⁵⁸. One must participate in the Intellect, as far as his own powers allow, in order to produce virtue. The horizontal / civic assimilation is done with the purpose of creating virtue. The vertical / theoretical assimilation is made with the purpose of contemplation, virtue being the spontaneous byproduct. This is a reflection of the mimetic process of contemplation / participation / assimilation and consequent creation. Note that Virtue only exists in the Sensible world. Like the mimetic relationship between Nous and thoughts, virtue is a reflection of Intelligible order.

Dialectic

Plotinus reports (*Enn.* I.3.1), paraphrasing Plato¹⁵⁹, that the one who ascends must be the one that has seen all, or most, Beings. He distinguishes three types of lives (philosopher, musician, and lover), following Plato’s *Phaedrus*¹⁶⁰, and states that all lives ascend through two phases. First, one must ascend from the Sensible to the Intelligible, and then to the “pinnacle of the Intelligible World”. The first phase is the phase of purification, which has been discussed above. As noted, purification is essentially looking up towards the Intelligible and ignoring the Sensible. This is what all the three types of lives must do, although each has its own way of ascending. Plotinus orders these lives hierarchically, which is at odds with Plato¹⁶¹, since in the original discussion all three lives are equal in honor and somewhat implied to be different perspectives of the same life. Predictably, the philosopher detains the highest honors and is said by Plotinus to be the closest to the Intelligibles, by a natural disposition. Next is the lover and, lastly, the musician, who is bound by Sensible beauties. Notwithstanding, all lives have the same

¹⁵⁸ Hadot (1998) 71.

¹⁵⁹ *Phaedrus* 248d.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Noted by Kalligas, who also notes a parallel between this hierarchy and a passage in V.9.1.1-21.

objective, their distinction in Plotinus being one of natural disposition, which potentially facilitates the journey. The philosopher is further ahead, in comparison to the other two, to the first phase of the ascent, since, for example, he has a natural disposition to love the incorporeal realities.

This first phase, as noted above, is one of purification, but in I.3 Plotinus gives a better example of what this entails. Plotinus clarifies (*Enn.* I.3.1.30-35) how the musician, the lowest kind of life (within this context), ascends:

χωρίζοντα τὴν ὕλην ἐφ' ὧν αἱ ἀναλογίαι καὶ οἱ λόγοι εἰς τὸ κάλλος τὸ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἀκτέον καὶ διδασκτέον, ὡς περὶ ἃ ἐπτόητο ἐκεῖνα ἦν, ἡ νοητὴ ἁρμονία καὶ τὸ ἐν ταύτῃ καλὸν καὶ ὅλως τὸ καλόν, οὐ τὸ τι καλὸν μόνον, καὶ λόγους τοὺς φιλοσοφίας ἐνθετέον· ἀφ' ὧν εἰς πίστιν ἀκτέον ὧν ἀγνοεῖ ἔχων

Setting aside the matter from the proportions and expressed principles in the beauty which is present, he should ascend, or be instructed that the things to which he is transported are the intelligible harmony and the beauty which is in it and, generally, Beauty, not the beauty of some one thing alone; and he should have instilled in him philosophical arguments from which he should ascend to confidence that he possesses that of which he is ignorant.

This, however, applies to all lives; we should progressively abstract ourselves from the particular instances of beauty and climb the ladder until we realize the true universality of Beauty. The difference between the three lives is between what they must be abstracted, which leads us to dialectic. Dialectic is, according to Plotinus, the highest part of philosophy. He makes a point to distinguish it from logic, for it works without prepositions, having instead a direct use of the “first principles in Intellect”. As Kalligas puts it: “The investigation of the constitution and articulation of Being is the work of dialectic”¹⁶². Plotinus explains how dialectic works thus (*Enn.* I.3.4.1-10):

Ἔστι μὲν δὴ ἡ λόγῳ περὶ ἐκάστου δυναμένη ἔξις εἰπεῖν τί τε ἕκαστον καὶ τί ἄλλων διαφέρει καὶ τίς ἡ κοινότης· ἐν οἷς ἐστι καὶ ποῦ τούτων ἕκαστον καὶ εἰ ἔστιν ὃ ἐστι καὶ τὰ ὄντα ὅποσα καὶ τὰ μὴ ὄντα αὐτῶν, ἕτερα δὲ ὄντων. Αὕτη καὶ περὶ ἀγαθοῦ διαλέγετα καὶ περὶ μὴ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ὅσα ὑπὸ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ὅσα ὑπὸ τὸ ἐναντίον καὶ τί τὸ αἰδίων δηλονότι καὶ τὸ μὴ τοιοῦτον, ἐπιστήμη περὶ πάντων, οὐ δόξη.

It is actually the capacity to say what each thing is, and in what way it differs from other things,

¹⁶² Kalligas (2014) 154.

and what it has in common with them, and in what and where each of these is, and if it is what it is, and how many Beings there are and, again, how many non-Beings there are, different from Beings. Dialectic converses about what is good and not good, and such things as are classified under the good and such things as are classified under the opposite, and, clearly, about what is everlasting and what is not so. It does this by means of scientific understanding about everything, not belief.

Dialectic, then, is the comparison between differences and similarities of things, which leads us progressively into abstraction from Sensible things and further into the universal concepts of the Intelligibles. This journey is ecumenical, as all lives must in some way or another traverse this path. This abstraction of dialectic is essentially a form of contemplation, in the sense that it is a form of reversion (*Enn.* I.3.4.9¹⁶³). We need to look ever higher and more universally until we are contemplating pure Forms. This is what purification is, as has been established in the context of virtues, paying more attention upwards than downwards. Dialectic (*Enn.* I.6.7.7-10) “is just like those who ascend to partake of the sacred religious rites where there are acts of purification and the stripping off of the cloaks they had worn before they go inside naked”¹⁶⁴.

Since dialectic is reversion, which implies contemplation and purification, as each of these is the other two equally, dialectic is also part of the mimetic process, being the first phase of mimesis. Dialectic is thus essentially contemplation, which, as demonstrated repeatedly, moves us to creation. In this specific context, dialectic inspires us to create virtues. The greatest work of art that a human soul can create is its own perfection, as Plotinus puts it in I.6.9.7-15:

κὰν μὴπω σαυτὸν ἴδης καλόν, οἷα ποιητὴς ἀγάλματος, ὁ δεῖ καλὸν γενέσθαι, τὸ μὲν ἀφαιρεῖ, τὸ δὲ ἀπέξεσε, τὸ δὲ λειῶν, τὸ δὲ καθαρὸν ἐποίησεν, ἕως ἔδειξε καλὸν ἐπὶ τῷ ἀγάλματι πρόσωπον, οὔτω καὶ σὺ ἀφαιρεῖ ὅσα περιττὰ καὶ ἀπεύθυνε ὅσα σκολιά, ὅσα σκοτεινὰ καθαίρων ἐργάζου εἶναι λαμπρὰ καὶ μὴ παύση <τεκταίνων> τὸ σὸν <ἄγαλμα>, ἕως ἂν ἐκλάμψει σοὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἡ θεοειδῆς ἀγλαΐα, ἕως ἂν ἴδης <σωφροσύνην ἐν ἀγνώ βεβῶσαν βάθρῳ

If you do not yet see yourself as beautiful, then be like a sculptor who, making a statue that is supposed to be beautiful, removes a part here and polishes a part there so that he makes the latter smooth and the former just right until he has given the statue a beautiful face. In the same way, you should remove superfluities and straighten things that are crooked, work on the things that are

¹⁶³ Schiaparelli (2009).

¹⁶⁴ οἷον ἐπὶ τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἱερῶν τοῖς ἀνιοῦσι καθάρσεις τε καὶ ἱματίων ἀποθέσεις τῶν πρὶν καὶ τὸ γυμνοῖς ἀνίεναι

dark, making them bright, and not stop “working on your statue” until the divine splendor of virtue shines in you, until you see “Self-Control enthroned on the holy seat”.

As seen above, virtue is the mimetic product of purification, since purification is the ordering of the soul according to the Intelligible paradigms. To become virtuous, one needs to see the perfection of the Intelligible realm. Through dialectic, we see the Intelligible Forms and participate in their order, which in turns creates an imitation of that order in our souls, in the form of virtues. And this initial contemplation is the cathartic process by itself.

Anamnesis

Anamnesis, or “recollection”, Plato’s doctrine that implies that “all learning and investigation is in truth a recollection”, is picked up seamlessly by Plotinus¹⁶⁵, although he adds more nuances to the concept, as with everything platonic. H. J. Blumenthal¹⁶⁶, however, argues that the doctrine of *anamnesis* in Plotinus loses somewhat its relevance to the ascent thanks to the “undescended soul” doctrine. That need not be so: we can only become aware of our higher soul after recollection of the existence of such soul. Plotinus seems to distinguish two types of memory, as both Stephen Clark¹⁶⁷ and Riccardo Chiaradonna¹⁶⁸ have noted. But more interestingly, he seems to make a clear connection between memory and imagination. Chiaradonna defines two types of mimesis within Plotinus: our normal day-to-day memories of all things we have experienced, which he calls, very logically, M1; and another type of memory, called M2, is equivalent, claims Chiaradonna¹⁶⁹, to Plato’s *anamnesis* doctrine - a memory of Intelligible beings present co-naturally in our souls as impressions. Within the framework of this investigation, these types of memory will be referred to as horizontal and vertical, to reflect the distinction of mimesis defended in this thesis and to put in focus the ontological direction of one’s mnemonic gaze. Our normal memory is horizontal in the sense that all we can remember with this memory is what has happened within the Sensible realm, in which we inhabit,

¹⁶⁵ McCumber (1978), however, points to three passages which might suggest that Plotinus did not accept Plato’s doctrine of *anamnesis*.

¹⁶⁶ Blumenthal (1971).

¹⁶⁷ Clark (2016) X.

¹⁶⁸ Chiaradonna (2019).

¹⁶⁹ Also, McCumber (1978).

like things we have learned. The other type of memory, the vertical, is a recollection of the higher beings through our innate knowledge of them, like universal truths. The term “memory” applied to this concept might be a misnomer, since memory implies discursive thought, which also implies temporality. This is not the case of *anamnesis*, at least in its contemplative form. When “recollection” is triggered, we are in fact activating our inner *logoi*¹⁷⁰ and apprehending them as a whole noetically. Plotinus explains (*Enn.* IV.3.25.13-20) that the Intelligible beings have no need for memory:

Μνήμην δὴ περὶ θεὸν οὐδὲ περὶ τὸ ὄν καὶ νοῦν θετέον· οὐδὲν γὰρ εἰς αὐτοὺς οὐδὲ χρόνος, ἀλλ’ αἰὼν περὶ τὸ ὄν, καὶ οὔτε τὸ πρότερον οὔτε τὸ ἐφεξῆς, ἀλλ’ ἔστιν ἀεὶ ὡς ἔχει ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ οὐ δεχόμενον παράλλαξιν. Τὸ δὲ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ ὁμοίῳ πῶς ἂν ἐν μνήμῃ γένοιτο, οὐκ ἔχον οὐδ’ ἴσχον ἄλλην κατάστασιν μεθ’ ἣν εἶχε πρότερον, ἢ νόησιν ἄλλην μετ’ ἄλλην, ἵνα ἐν ἄλλῃ μένῃ, ἄλλης δὲ μνημονεύῃ ἣν εἶχε πρότερον;

Indeed, one should not attribute memory to a god or to Being or to Intellect; for these have no element of time, but Being is attended by eternity and there is no before and after there; it is always as it is and in the identical state, and admits of no alteration. How, after all, could what is in an identical and uniform condition be involved in memory, since it neither has nor maintains a different state after the one it had before, or a different act of intellection after another one, so that it would be in one state, while remembering the different one that it was in before?

Therefore, vertical memory is *dynamically* similar to horizontal memory, in the sense that they are both the focusing on things impressed within our souls, but their similarity is unequal in the sense that they exist within different ontological levels. It could be said that horizontal memory is an imitation of vertical memory. Horizontal memory only exists in the soul from the moment that it falls in the Sensible world (*Enn.* IV.3.25.30):

Οὐ τοίνυν οὐδὲ ψυχὴν φατέον μνημονεύειν τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον οἷον λέγομεν τὸ μνημονεύειν εἶναι ὧν ἔχει συμφύτων, ἀλλ’ ἐπειδὴ ἐνταῦθά ἐστιν, ἔχειν καὶ μὴ ἐνεργεῖν κατ’ αὐτά, καὶ μάλιστα ἐνταῦθα ἠκούσει.

So, on identical grounds neither should we say that the soul remembers things which are parts of its nature, although, when once it is in the sensible world, it is possible for it to possess them while not being active in respect of them, particularly when it has just come to the sensible world.

¹⁷⁰ “But as for its being active, the ancients seem to apply ‘memory’ or ‘recollection’ to souls that activate what they have within them”, *Enn.* IV.3.25.

This dynamic relation is the same dynamic that we find in the case of mimesis. Our memories work in a superior or inferior mode, depending on their focus of attention. Leaving behind horizontal memory, *anamnesis* is the soul's own form of contemplation. Plotinus defends that Soul has memory of Forms, while Intellect has intellection of them¹⁷¹. Essentially, whenever we see something in the Sensible world, it has a chance to trigger our innate knowledge and this "recollection" will bring us instantaneously to contemplation of the Forms above, which is made through intellection. Our innate knowledge, represented in the *spermatik logoi*, is merely made of impressions¹⁷², not the real Forms, but it is through their activation that we can ascend. As John McCumber synthesizes: "non-pictorially, memory of Intelligibles is their successive actualizations in a soul which is not yet identified with Nous; intellection of them is timeless, self-forgetful cognition of Nous, and of the soul united to Nous"¹⁷³.

The particular focus of *anamnesis* is the Form of Beauty¹⁷⁴. Seeing a beautiful thing, like a just law or a courageous act, will make us see that Courage and Justice are things that exist by themselves in the Intelligible realm. This will lead us to see how the Intelligibles are present in our daily lives. The Form of Beauty, considered in Plato's *Phaedrus* (150b-c) the first Form, is the form through which we first apprehend the Intelligible world, and which points towards all other Intelligibles. This marks the first step of contemplation: as we are reminded of the existence above and turn our attentions towards it, we start to forget the world below. As Clark insightfully puts it "Plotinus' goal is not [only] Remembrance but [also¹⁷⁵] Forgetfulness"¹⁷⁶, since, to remember the Intelligible reality, we must forget the Sensible world.

Virtue, Dialectic and Anamnesis

So far, these three contemplative paths have been discussed as distinct forms of ascension, in an attempt to make it more manageable to explain these concepts. But their distinctiveness is not well defined. In truth, these three concepts are interlinked to the

¹⁷¹ McCumber (1978).

¹⁷² *Enn.* VI.3.15.24-38; I.2.4.19-25.

¹⁷³ McCumber (1978) 165.

¹⁷⁴ McCumber (1978): "Anamnesis seems here to be restricted to the soul's apprehension of the first Form; and Plotinus seems to accept the view of *Phaedr.* 150b-c that this is normally that of Beauty (I.8.15.23-29)".

¹⁷⁵ Square brackets are my addition to the interpretation.

¹⁷⁶ Clark (2016) 131.

point of dizziness. Each one implies the other two, just like the Forms in the Intelligible realm. It is meaningless to speak of one without the others. This section will demonstrate their connection.

First of all, in these three concepts, one major theme arises - contemplation, which is, as has been noted in the Virtue section, purification. Dialectic is the tool through which we abstract ourselves and elevate or focus above. Our striving for Virtue is in itself an abstraction, for virtue is focusing our attention above and forgetting the below. *Anamnesis* is the activating of our inner instincts that take us to the Intelligible world.

Virtue and Dialectic could not function without *anamnesis*, for the simple first step of starting our ascent by looking upwards could not even begin without us first realizing that there is an upwards realm. Our assimilation to the God could not happen without “memory” of God. As Hadot¹⁷⁷ puts it:

How could the soul know that there is a part of her that remains up above if she had not become conscious of it? How could she desire to make herself similar to God if she had not, all of a sudden, experienced divine presence?

Likewise, purification is a sort of forgetting. Following Clark’s insight, we can say that *anamnesis* is itself forgetting, in the sense that it is purification, since it makes us focus above and not below¹⁷⁸. To truly be purified and contemplate the above, we need to forget the world here below. To remember the Intelligibles, we must cast the Sensibles to oblivion. What is particular about our lives (i.e., our identity and our environment) is detrimental to our ascent. Memory of the Sensibles is what makes us unique and particular, but this is also what prevents us from abstraction and purification.

*Virtue is anamnesis*¹⁷⁹ in the sense that, to achieve virtue, it is necessary that the soul activates the inner *logoi* and contemplates that which they are impressions of. “If they (the innate *logoi*) are to be illuminated and it is to know them as being present, it must impel itself towards that which does the illuminating”¹⁸⁰ (*Enn.* I.2.4.20).

Much more could be said about the connection between these three processes but, moving forward, what must be remembered is that all these are three perspectives of the

¹⁷⁷ Hadot (1998) 69.

¹⁷⁸ Clark (2016).

¹⁷⁹ *Enn.* I.2.4.19. “A seeing and an impression of that which has been seen embedded in it and now active – like seeing in relation to the object seen. Did it, therefore, neither have them nor recollect them? In fact, it had things that were not active, but dispersed and unilluminated”.

¹⁸⁰ ἵνα δὲ φωτισθῆ καὶ τότε γινῶ αὐτὰ ἐνόητα, δεῖ προσβαλεῖν τῷ φωτίζοντι.

same contemplative ascent to the Intelligibles and that this itself is purification. Much has also been said concerning these concepts' relationship to mimesis. The point that has been attempted to be made, in this chapter, is that purification and contemplation are the same first step of the mimetic process. The best artist will be the one who is the most aware of the Intelligible world and therefore, most purified.

Projection

In his *Ennead* III.8, Plotinus explains how contemplation works. This treatise is considered by modern scholarship as being the first part of the “Great Treatise” against the Gnostics, as defined by Von Richard Harder¹⁸¹, composed of III.8, V.8, V.5 and II.9, in order. As Kalligas¹⁸² argues, the main purpose of this treatise is to show, against the gnostic dualism, that there is value to the Sensible world and that the higher entities can be apprehended by seeing their reflections in this world. In this treatise, already cited within the context of Nature as paradigm, Plotinus states (*Enn.* III.8.4.40) the following: “Indeed, everywhere we will find that production and action are a weakened form of contemplation or a consequence of contemplation”¹⁸³. In fact, the beginning of the whole treatise is as follows (*Enn.* III.8.1.1):

Παίζοντες δὴ τὴν πρώτην πρὶν ἐπιχειρεῖν σπουδάζειν εἰ λέγομεν πάντα θεωρίας ἐφίεσθαι καὶ εἰς τέλος τοῦτο βλέπειν, οὐ μόνον ἔλλογα ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄλογα ζῶα καὶ τὴν ἐν φυτοῖς φύσιν καὶ τὴν ταῦτα γεννῶσαν γῆν, καὶ πάντα τυγχάνειν καθ’ ὅσον οἷόν τε αὐτοῖς κατὰ φύσιν ἔχοντα, ἄλλα δὲ ἄλλως καὶ θεωρεῖν καὶ τυγχάνειν καὶ τὰ μὲν ἀληθῶς, τὰ δὲ μίμησιν καὶ εἰκόνα τούτου λαμβάνοντα – ἄρ’ ἂν τις ἀνάσχοιτο τὸ παράδοξον τοῦ λόγου;

If before attempting to be serious, we were actually to begin by playing and say that all things aim at contemplation and look to this goal, not only rational, but also non-rational animals and nature in plants and the earth which produces them, and that all things achieve it as far as they can in their natural state, but contemplate and achieve it different ways, and some in a genuine manner, other by acquiring an imitation and image of it, would anyone put up with the oddity of the statement?

The playfulness of this statement should be seen as a rhetorical device used on several occasions by Plotinus with the intent of making his audience indulge him on his

¹⁸¹ Harder (1936).

¹⁸² Kalligas (2014) 620.

¹⁸³ Πανταχοῦ δὴ ἀνευρήσομεν τὴν ποίησιν καὶ τὴν πρᾶξιν ἢ ἀσθένειαν θεωρίας ἢ παρακολούθημα·

views, as both Kalligas¹⁸⁴ and Corrigan¹⁸⁵ suggest. Plotinus' point is, therefore, not playful at all, but it is his actual opinion. He believes that all things contemplate, and, in fact, every action has contemplation as its goal. This contemplation, however, does not necessarily imply looking above one's own ontological level, as in the case of vertical mimesis. Plotinus defends that there are different kinds of contemplation according to each entity's powers. In Nature, this is reflected in its limited power to only contemplate itself and not above (*Enn.* III.8.4.15). Plotinus then recognizes that contemplation has many forms, depending on the subject's limitations regarding their object of contemplation. The distinction I propose is based on the object of contemplation. Weak objects of contemplation create weaker contemplation that in turn creates weaker objects of contemplation.

In the case of human souls, Plotinus defends that contemplation is generally the gaze upwards through the forgetting of, and abstraction from, the Sensible world. This usually implies some form of philosophical lifestyle, since the main forms of ascending are through Dialectic, Virtues and Anamnesis. The goal of life is contemplation, but, as Plotinus puts it himself, all action is contemplation. This phenomenon will be expanded upon below.

There is a form of contemplation unique to Plotinus which relates to mimesis and art: "projection". This is expounded on in the following text (*Enn.* III.8.4.30-40):

ἐπεὶ καὶ ἄνθρωποι, ὅταν ἀσθενήσωσιν εἰς τὸ θεωρεῖν, σκιὰν θεωρίας καὶ λόγου τὴν πράξιν ποιοῦνται. Ὅτι γὰρ μὴ ἰκανὸν αὐτοῖς τὸ τῆς θεωρίας ὑπ' ἀσθενείας ψυχῆς, λαβεῖν οὐ δυνάμενοι τὸ θέαμα ἰκανῶς καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐ πληρούμενοι, ἐφιέμενοι δὲ αὐτὸ ἰδεῖν, εἰς πράξιν φέρονται, ἵνα ἴδωσιν, ὃ μὴ νῦν ἐδύναντο. Ὅταν γοῦν ποιῶσι, καὶ αὐτοὶ ὄραν βούλονται αὐτὸ καὶ θεωρεῖν καὶ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους, ὅταν ἢ πρόθεσις αὐτοῖς ὡς οἷόν τε πράξις ᾗ.

Human beings, too, when they are weak in contemplation, produce action as a shadow of contemplation and reason. For their faculty of contemplation is not adequate for them due to weakness of soul and being unable to grasp adequately the object of their vision and because of this not being filled by it, yet still desirous of seeing it, they are carried towards action so that they can see with their eyes what they cannot see with their intellect. Whenever they do succeed in producing something, they also want to see it for themselves and others to contemplate and perceive it, whenever their project is realized as far as it can be in action.

¹⁸⁴ Kalligas (2014) 625.

¹⁸⁵ Corrigan (2005) 102.

Later in this chapter, Plotinus also comments (*Enn.* III.8.4.45): “And less intelligent children are also evidence of this; not being capable of study and theory, they turn to crafts and manual work”¹⁸⁶. Here, Plotinus presents a new type of mimesis within the “superior mimesis” *genera*. While the “superior mimesis” that has been defended implies the contemplation of the Intelligible realm and consequent production of something imitating that realm, this type of “projective mimesis” seems to imply a different kind of contemplation. One who contemplates is projecting their own innate *logoi* into external things in order to contemplate them visually, since they are incapable of doing it by intellection. It is not within the group of “inferior mimesis”, for evidently it does not claim “horizontal” contemplation of the Sensible world in which we live. In fact, what “less intelligent children” and “human beings weak in contemplation” are contemplating in this case is some form of Intelligible beings, even though it is only their impression in the soul. Still, this is a superior form of contemplation than contemplating mere Sensible things. As mentioned, in regard to Nature’s contemplation, in which Nature contemplates the *logoi* present within herself, all souls have in somehow these *logoi* in the same way. These *logoi* are merely impressions of the Forms. As in the case of *anamnesis*, we need to actualize them. This “projective mimesis” is contemplating these impressions and producing Sensible things. Now, since these *logoi* are inferior to the actual Forms, they are also weaker objects of contemplation. “Indeed, for this reason, what is generated by it is also completely weak because a contemplation that is weak makes a weak object of contemplation”¹⁸⁷ (*Enn.* III.8.4.30).

The contemplation part of the “projective mimesis” is a weaker contemplation, in the sense that it is not done by intellection but by a form of weak intuition¹⁸⁸. This weaker contemplation creates an object of contemplation which is even weaker, for the object of contemplation is created purposefully with the intention of the creator to contemplate visually what they cannot contemplate by intellection. This contrasts with the “superior mimesis” interpretation, since “superior mimesis” creates something spontaneously. “Projective mimesis” is merely a lesser form of mimesis that imitates a weaker version of the Intelligibles and creates with intention. Still, it is to be contrasted with “inferior mimesis” in the sense that it “looks”, albeit in a form of weak intuition, to the immaterial,

¹⁸⁶ Μαρτυροῦσι δὲ καὶ οἱ νοθέστεροι τῶν παίδων, οἱ πρὸς τὰς μαθήσεις καὶ θεωρίας ἀδυνάτως ἔχοντες ἐπὶ τὰς τέχνας καὶ τὰς ἐργασίας καταφέρονται.

¹⁸⁷ Ταῦτη δὴ καὶ τὸ γεννηθὲν ὑπ’ αὐτῆς ἀσθενὲς παντάπασιν, ὅτι ἀσθενοῦσα θεωρία ἀσθενὲς θεώρημα ποιεῖ

¹⁸⁸ Chlup (2012) 144.

while “inferior mimesis” looks to the material to create something also material. While not “inferior mimesis”, “projective mimesis” is also not vertical in the same sense as “superior mimesis”. It has its own category; one it shares with Nature - self-contemplation - not quite fitting my distinction between “horizontal” and “vertical mimesis”. The potential products of “projective mimesis” can be material, in the example of the children that turn to arts and crafts, but they can also be immaterial in the form of actions. As in the passage above quoted, “action is a shadow of contemplation and reason”. A good example would be that of a Homeric Hero performing brave deeds in order to see in those deeds the very essence of Courage and potentially trigger the anamnestic mechanism, activating the inner *logoi*. From an artistic point of view, this kind of mimesis would be somewhat like the production of art in order to capture the immateriality of the Intelligibles but failing in the sense that these cannot be represented materially. It can also be associated with innate talent, in the sense that the projection of *logoi* is not an intellectual activity, nor necessarily a mere copying of Sensible things.

“Superior mimesis” is reserved to the “intellectually capable”, those who pursue the philosophical and anagogic lifestyle. This “projective mimesis” is the best the less “intellectually” inclined can do, in the sense that they are still stuck in matter and their attention has not moved upwards yet. Nonetheless, the *logoi* exist within us intrinsically and are accessible to all souls. The contemplative distinction between “superior mimesis” and “projective mimesis” lies on the object of contemplation. I have referred to “superior mimesis” as “vertical” and “inferior mimesis” as “horizontal”, but “projective mimesis” seems to be a non-vectorial mimesis. It stays within its own level, just like how Nature creates nature by contemplating itself.

The section above presented an attempt to put into perspective the contemplative aspect of “superior mimesis”. As has been alluded to multiple times, mimesis implies contemplation and creation. This section has offered a discussion on the first phase of the mimetic process. The next will present a discussion on the creative process. Some topics will be the same as the ones explored above but approached from a different perspective. Just as we cannot separate the creation from the contemplation temporally, it is only natural that a divided discussion of such a unified theme will run into repetitions and reiterations.

Before that, a general conclusion is in order. This section has explored the methods of ascension - Virtue, Dialectic and Anamnesis - and their mutual relationship. This is the first step to understanding the contemplative aspect of Plotinus’ metaphysics.

The conclusion has been that all these elements are necessary for contemplation, inasmuch as they are integral parts of the purification necessary for the true ascent to the Intelligible world. These three elements can also be put in the vectorial distinction I have used, vertical and horizontal. Such is the case of the vertical assimilation to God or the horizontal assimilation to Man, and the vertical memory of the universal or the horizontal memory of our particular lives. Likewise, Dialectic can be used as a tool to ascend to the abstraction of the immaterial but can also be used for the categorization of the material.

Within “superior mimesis”, I have pointed to a further distinction, which I have called “projective mimesis”. In this case, the contemplative focus is on the immaterial world. Therefore, it is superior to the Sensible world, but still represents a contemplation of a weaker version of the Intelligibles. Likewise, its product is a weaker object. The philosopher is expected to contemplate the higher realms, but Plotinus also believes that, in the end, every single soul contemplates in some form. The only true distinction between a philosopher and a child or brute is simply the realization of the source of the things they wish to see, which entails the capacity to contemplate the Intelligibles. The philosopher can look to the Intelligibles themselves, while the child is limited to their impressions in the child’s soul.

How all this connects to the artistic role of mimesis will be discussed below. For now, suffice it to say that contemplation is the key to define the value of a work of art, both as the source element, in the sense that contemplation is what causes creation, and in the creative element, in the sense that works of art are also objects of further contemplation. A work of art is only as good as what the artist contemplates. Its value will also be dependent on its function as object of contemplation itself. As will be discussed below, however, this is beyond the superior artist’s control.

The main purpose of this section has been to demonstrate that, for Plotinus, “superior mimesis” is more than an accepted doctrine. It is, in fact, the whole basis for his metaphysical scheme. As has been discussed before, there are two major movements in Plotinus’ metaphysics: *prohodos* (procession) and *epistrophe* (reversion). The returning of a Being to its source is the contemplative phase of mimetic process. It is only through this that all Beings are capable of rising to a superior ontological level.

Creation

In this section I will discuss the creative perspective on “superior mimesis”. As noted above, all creation is fruit of contemplation (*Enn.* III.8). In turn, mimesis implies contemplation and the consequent creation, which are the two motions of mimesis. Following that logic, I have chosen to focus on one perspective at a time, but it must be kept in mind that contemplation and creation are just two sides of the same coin. Creation is the secondary activity of contemplation and creation creates more contemplation. Some aspects of mimesis that have been previously discussed will be discussed again with a particular focus on the creative side.

Impossibility of perfect mimesis

One thing must be made clear regarding the creative process in “superior mimesis”: as all forms of mimesis, inferior and superior alike, what is produced from the mimetic process - the imitation - is always one ontological level inferior to the paradigm. In the case of art, the same applies, even if it is produced through “superior mimesis”. Evidently, it cannot be expected that a work of art, made in the Sensible world with material elements, will represent perfectly the immateriality of the Intelligible world. Then, criticisms arise, as Kuisma states¹⁸⁹:

Plotinus’ view concerning the representative potential of art entails that artistic works can represent the beauty of particular bodies as well as instantiated species properties without difficulty, whereas in the realm of the beauty of the soul the resources of art begin to fail. For instance, how does one portray the soul’s immortality or immateriality?

Kuisma later defends that no “superior mimesis” can exist in the context of art, since nothing in the material world can represent the immaterial. But a direct copy of the immaterial is never implied when “superior mimesis” alluded to by Plotinus. The main focus of “superior mimesis” is what it contemplates, not necessarily what it creates. Since contemplation is what creates, the product’s value is, to a certain extent, dependent on the object of contemplation. Mimesis as mechanism always produces something inferior to the paradigm. Even “superior mimesis” will produce something inferior to the Intelligibles themselves. But this fact does not remove the possibility of “superior mimesis”, which, as I have suggested above, permeates the whole hierarchy of reality.

¹⁸⁹ Kuisma (2003) 69.

Another factor for the impossibility of a perfect representation of the Intelligible is that matter is wholly incapable of receiving Form¹⁹⁰. As Plotinus states (*Enn.* III.6.15.25-30):

ἡ δὲ – ἀσθενεστέρα γὰρ ἐστὶν ὡς πρὸς δύναμιν πολλῶ ψυχῆς καὶ ἔχει οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων οὔτ' ἀληθὲς οὔτ' αὖ οἰκεῖον ψευδός – οὐκ ἔχει δι' ὅτου φανῆ ἑρημία πάντων οὔσα, ἀλλὰ γίνεται μὲν αἰτία ἄλλοις τοῦ φαίνεσθαι, οὐ δύναται δὲ εἰπεῖν οὐδὲ τοῦτο, ὡς ἐγὼ ἐνταῦθα. ἀλλ' εἴ ποτε ἐξεύροι αὐτὴν λόγος βαθύς τις ἐξ ἄλλων ὄντων, ὡς ἄρα ἐστὶ τι ἀπολελειμμένον πάντων τῶν ὄντων καὶ τῶν ὕστερον δοξάντων εἶναι, ἐλκόμενον εἰς πάντα καὶ ἀκολουθοῦν ὡς δόξαι καὶ αὖ οὐκ ἀκολουθοῦν.

But matter, because it is much weaker in power than soul and possesses nothing of Being whether true or even at its own deceit, does not possess that by which it might appear since it is completely destitute of everything. And yet it is the cause of other things appearing, though I cannot even utter “Here I am”. But if some profound reasoning could distinguish it from other beings, it would, therefore, appear as something cast apart from all Beings, even from those that later appear to exist, a thing dragged into everything, apparently accompanying them though, again, not accompanying them.

Matter only gains its visibility when it “touches” upon Form. But even this “touching” does not imply any manner of mixing. In fact, it is more like the reflection in a mirror, as Wallis¹⁹¹ says. Evidently, it is not reasonable to suppose that “superior mimesis” is an incorrect interpretation if we cannot fathom the material representation of something immaterial. Surely it is also unfathomable that the Nous is represented in Soul if we follow that argument. The representation of superior ontological realities will always be inferior to the original, which is implied in the paradigm-image relationship.

In regard to art, as will be argued below, its value lies not in the object necessarily, but in the act of contemplation. Even the production of art is dependent on the form of contemplation, as will be discussed in the next section.

Spontaneous Creation

One of the main attributes of “superior mimesis” that distinguish it from the lesser forms of mimesis, like the shadow and the Sensible mimesis, is the intention of creation. In *Enn.* III.5.1.45, Plotinus claims:

¹⁹⁰ Wallis (1972) 49.

¹⁹¹ Wallis (1972) 49.

Τὸ μὲν οὖν μὴ γεννᾶν ἐθέλον μᾶλλον αὐταρκέστερον τῷ καλῷ, τὸ δὲ ἐφιέμενον ποιῆσαι καλὸν τε ἐθέλει ποιεῖν ὑπ' ἐνδείας καὶ οὐκ αὐταρκες·

And so that kind of love which does not want to generate anything is more self-sufficient in beauty, whereas the kind that desires to produce something beautiful wants to produce it because of a need and is not self-sufficient.

As Wallis writes, regarding the Plotinian *eros*, “As with other external activities, its real aim is contemplation”¹⁹². So, in this context, love is the contemplative part of mimesis. Spontaneous production, the ideal present in “superior mimesis”, implies that the creator is not particularly concerned with what it produces, which would, in a way, turn its focus downwards and stain its contemplation of the Intelligibles. Likewise, craft, inasmuch as it focuses on the creation of something, is inferior in its contemplation and consequently in its creation. Creation, (or pro-creation¹⁹³) implies deliberation about one’s situation and the necessity of creating something, which evidently means there are needs, this being a characteristic of an inferior form of life. When a craftsman creates a tool, he does so out of need for that tool to improve his hold on the Sensible cosmos. In contrast, the ideal paradigm of creation, the hypostases, have no need for anything since they are entirely self-sufficient (*Enn.* II.9.4) and are eternally in contemplation. Therefore, they create all things spontaneously as imitations of that which they contemplate (i.e., the Forms).

In “superior mimesis”, the phase of creation does not imply that “something” is created by subtraction from the productive cause. The creator “overflows”, or emanates, through sheer over-abounding in “energy received” from its epistrophic phase. This is what Intellect does when it creates Soul, spontaneously, without subtraction of anything and without care. This phenomenon pervades the whole metaphysical scheme of Plotinus¹⁹⁴.

Thus, there seems to be here a further distinction within mimesis. As has been mentioned above, one of the main distinctions between the different types of mimesis was the object of contemplation, mimesis can, in turn, also be differentiated by the intent

¹⁹² Wallis (1972) 86. Vel. sim.

¹⁹³ Wallis (1972) 86. This theme is discussed in the *Symposium*, regarding the beauty of the couple and their form of creation in the act of reproduction.

¹⁹⁴ O’Meara (1995) 76.

of creation. The ideal of “superior mimesis” is that the one who contemplates creates entirely without intention, by super-abounding in their contemplation of the highest realities. In the case of “projective mimesis”, while the one who contemplates is limited to impressions, they are still of the Intelligibles, but they create with intention - specifically the intention of contemplating what they cannot see by intellection. In fact, “projective mimesis” already fails from the beginning by having creation in its mind. “Projective mimesis” is not the only possibility for certain “less-intellectual” people due to their incapacity to go beyond the impressions but is the best possible type of creation when we are concerned with creation and not with contemplation. “Inferior mimesis” also fails in this respect, since it contemplates the Sensible world with the purpose of creating an imitation of it. It is relevant, however, to understand that the type of creation is nonetheless characterized by the form of contemplation. Direct contemplation of the Intelligibles will always create spontaneously. To contemplate the Forms directly, however, it is necessary to be already disposed *only* to contemplate, and creation will be a by-product. The mediocre artist will remain chained by his ambition to create. The point is that the true artist is not one who aspires to be an artist, but one who aspires to the philosophical life.

Role of Soul/Conclusion

Soul is the hypostasis that creates the Sensible cosmos. Its role in the ordering of reality is contemplating the Intellect and consequently “projecting” the Forms into matter, thereby making the Sensible cosmos an image of the Intelligible reality. In the case of the human soul, this implies certain considerations. Nature is created by the World-Soul by its contemplation of the inner *logoi* within herself. The case of human soul is similar, as noted in the example of “projective mimesis”. The human soul also contemplates its inner *logoi* to create something within Nature. Both these contemplative motions are ontologically neutral, in the sense that they both self-contemplate the Forms as impressions within their own ontological level. But this need not be the case. In fact, Plotinus believes that the human soul can go beyond this, as was discussed above. In the case of “superior mimesis”, the human soul is expected to directly contemplate the Intelligible (and potentially even the One). What this entails is that the human soul can go beyond what the World-Soul itself contemplated, having a more perfect access to the

Forms. We can, theoretically, better the Sensible cosmos. We can make nature be more similar to the Intelligible reality and less like an image. Plotinus gives the following example (*Enn.* V.8.1.12):

φανείη μὲν ἂν ὁ ὑπὸ τῆς τέχνης γεγενημένος εἰς εἶδους κάλλος καλὸς οὐ παρὰ τὸ εἶναι λίθος – ἦν γὰρ ἂν καὶ ὁ ἕτερος ὁμοίως καλός – ἀλλὰ παρὰ τοῦ εἶδους, ὃ ἐνήκεν ἡ τέχνη. Τοῦτο μὲν τοίνυν τὸ εἶδος οὐκ εἶχεν ἡ ὕλη, ἀλλ’ ἦν ἐν τῷ ἐννοήσαντι καὶ πρὶν ἐλθεῖν εἰς τὸν λίθον· ἦν δ’ ἐν τῷ δημιουργῷ οὐ καθόσον ὀφθαλμοὶ ἢ χεῖρες ἦσαν αὐτῷ, ἀλλ’ ὅτι μετεῖχε τῆς τέχνης. Ἦν ἄρα ἐν τῇ τέχνῃ τὸ κάλλος τοῦτο ἄμεινον πολλῶν·

The stone which has acquired the beauty of form by craft does not appear beautiful by being stone – for in that case the other would be similarly beautiful – but by the form which craft imported. So, the matter did not have this form, but it was in the one conceptualizing even before it came to be in the stone. And it was in the creator not insofar as he had eyes or hands, but because he partook of the craft. The beauty was, therefore, in the craft, and it was far superior there.

This theory makes, not only the artist but also the craftsman, capable of participating in the ordering of the cosmos, and therefore having a share in the Divine Craftsman.

Concluding the creative aspect, what must be remembered is the distinction between spontaneous and intentional creation, which are distinguished by the form of contemplation and will further define the quality of the object of contemplation created. It must also be kept in mind that, when “superior mimesis” is discussed, it is not implied that the artist can represent what is unrepresentable, but only that he can contemplate that superior reality and create something that is an imitation, and not a duplicate, of it. The main value of this form of creation is that it creates a better object of contemplation, since better contemplation creates better objects of contemplation. This carves, through art, new pathways of ascension and triggers *anamnesis* for the souls that remain fully in the Sensible. Furthermore, this act of creation has the potential of making the Sensible world a better image of the Intelligible, since the soul has direct access to Intellect, bypassing the mere impressions that the World-Soul contemplated to create nature.

Inasmuch as everything, both the Intelligible and the Sensible were created through contemplation, and therefore through mimesis, all things have a potential previous existence within the transcendence of the One. What this means to the artistic perspective is that absolutely nothing new can be fathomed, much less created. Creativity has, therefore, a limited meaning within the Neoplatonic metaphysical scheme. As moderns, we might demand originality from our artists, but in the Neoplatonic circle what

is, theoretically, demanded is exactly the opposite. A true artist will perfectly capture the originative causes in the world and his art will strive to make others realize this dimension. Furthermore, all that can potentially exist will exist.

The greatest synthesis of what I have tried to argue for has been given by Plotinus himself in III.8.4.31-43:

πανταχοῦ δὴ ἀνευρήσομεν τὴν ποιήσιν καὶ τὴν πράξιν ἢ ἀσθένειαν θεωρίας ἢ παρακολούθημα ἀσθένειαν μὲν, εἰ μηδὲν τις ἔχει μετὰ τὸ παραχθέν παρακολούθημα δέ, εἰ ἔχει ἄλλο πρὸ τούτου κρεῖττον τοῦ ποιηθέντος θεωρεῖν

Indeed, everywhere we will find that production and action are a weakened form of contemplation or a consequence of contemplation; a weakness where a person has nothing in mind beyond what has been made, a consequence where he has something prior to this contemplation which is superior to what has been produced.

Mimesis is “superior” when it contemplates something superior and creates as a consequence. Mimesis is “inferior” when it is concerned with creation. Since, “superior mimesis” implies at all levels an intense focus on contemplation and the attainment of a direct vision of Intellect, it is reasonable to ask what kind of artist would be capable of this. The artist, as a person with creative ambitions, will always have the creation of an object of contemplation as their objective. Therefore, an artist *qua* artist will never truly achieve “superior mimesis”. The best he can attain, theoretically, is “projective mimesis”, contemplating the inner *logoi* of souls by mediation of imagination¹⁹⁵ and maybe achieving an inferior form of *anamnesis*. Still, this is a better form of artistic creation than the case of “inferior mimesis”, which is limited to the mere copying of appearances - an image of an image. To truly attain “superior mimesis”, one must not be at all concerned with the potential of creation. The greatest of creations will not be made by intention, but as a consequence - a secondary product of the purest of contemplations. One who strives to attain this will not be an artist, but a philosopher. The Ideal Artist is not an artist at all, but a philosopher, a concept with which Plato would very much agree. True contemplation of the Forms is made by the path of philosopher, that is, through the achievement of Virtue and Purification, utilizing Dialectic to abstract our minds from the particular instances of Forms and by activating our Intelligible memories, triggering the

¹⁹⁵ Chiaradonna (2018).

“anamnetic” process. Only then, by being a philosopher, will one create the true Ideal Work of Art. One must remember that the product of “superior mimesis” cannot be a direct representation of the Intelligibles that are being imitated. It will ultimately be inferior, since we cannot represent the unrepresentable. It will be the closest possible imitation, and, one would hope, the safest way of beginning our ascent upwards.

Having then defined the way that contemplation and creation work in the mimetic process, one is left to ponder the conclusions. Modern scholars have had the tendency to assume that, when Plotinus shows a positive outlook on art or mimesis, he is somehow diverging from Plato’s doctrine. Evidently, in Plotinus, the positive view on mimesis is more common than the negative, which contrasts with Plato’s outspoken criticism of mimesis in the *Republic* and the more subtle references in the case of a positive mimesis. Nonetheless, it is my view that Plotinus is mostly in agreement with Plato, the major distinctions being the form of expression of their philosophical writings: Plato hiding behind drama and Plotinus being direct through metaphors and allegories. Both agree that the essential value of mimesis is defined not by its function, but by its focal direction. “Superior mimesis” is present in both, supporting that one can look directly to the Forms themselves and consequently create something meaningful (be it an action or an artwork), akin to being divinely possessed. “Inferior mimesis” is treated by both with the same disdain, both considering the products of such mimesis playthings and mere illusions. What Plotinus does differently is “telescoping” the two kinds of mimesis in further distinctions. Plotinus defined the kind of mimesis which merely creates shadows and reflections below the “horizontal mimesis” of the Sensible world. Beyond that he seems to imply a kind of “projective mimesis” which implies the contemplation of an ontologically stable version of the Forms in the soul and an intention to create. At the top of the mimetic modes is the “superior” or “vertical” mimesis which contemplates directly the Forms and, by over-abounding, creates spontaneously.

Contemplation of art and Nature are crucial elements for the doctrine of mimesis. The maxim “weak contemplation creates weaker objects of contemplation”, being reversed, gives value to good objects of contemplation that can potentially trigger a better contemplation. We, as individual Souls, have a better access to the Nous than the World-Soul, which only contemplates their impression. We can permeate the natural world with better representatives of the Intelligible world and consequently create more opportunities for our fellows to realize the true nature of Reality. As Gerson puts it: “One is more keenly aware of a soul at work when regarding works of art than when regarding works of

nature”¹⁹⁶. To Plotinus, art has great value for its anagogical potential. In contrast to modern theories of aesthetics, art in Plotinus does not have an independent value in itself. But that is not so strange, since all things are striving for the Good and their values is defined by their relation to the Good. Everything is a potential instrument for ascending and achieving the greatest goal in Reality: contemplation of the One.

¹⁹⁶ Gerson (1994) 213.

Chapter III – Proclus

Proclus was a Neoplatonic philosopher of the 5th Century CE. Born in Byzantium circa 410-412, he received a rhetorical education in Alexandria¹⁹⁷, which he would eventually abandon for Athens, having “conceived contempt for these institutions” (Marinus, *Vita Procli* 10¹⁹⁸). In Athens, the “doorman” of the city spoke these words to Proclus: “Honestly, if you had not come, I was about to close up”¹⁹⁹ (*Vita Procli* 10). While the Neoplatonism of Plotinus is already considered a very complex metaphysical system, Proclus’ systematization created further complexities²⁰⁰, which will be discussed below. Proclus’ *opus* is quite extensive (the fifth largest among extant works and it is composed of line-by-line commentaries of many Platonic dialogues, a commentary on Euclid’s *Elements*, and two systematical works): the *Elements of Theology*, which establishes the main premises for the Neoplatonic metaphysical scheme, and the *Platonic Theology*, a looser form of systematical approach to Platonism²⁰¹. Proclus also wrote many shorter works on many topics, such as providence, evil and theurgy.

Proclus exerted much influence on the Platonic circles of the Italian renaissance, particularly on Ficino, as evidenced by the latter’s use of Proclean theories of *symbola* applied to astrology. But Proclus’ popularity was severely restricted in modern times due to the view that Neoplatonism was an impure and irrational form of Platonism²⁰². That tendency has gradually subsided and in the last fifty years much more attention has been focused on Proclus as a philosopher.

This chapter will look at Proclus’ more direct discussions of mimesis, the *Essays* V and VI of his *Commentary on Plato’s Republic* and his *Hymns*. While these works will be the main focus, this chapter will also present a discussion on certain passages from other works.

¹⁹⁷ Chlup (2012) 8-9.

¹⁹⁸ All *Vita Procli* translations by Edwards (2001).

¹⁹⁹ These words have been interpreted to mean that the Academy was on its last leg, primarily due to Christian pressure, and that Proclus revitalized what was left. These signs, and many others reported by Marinus (*Vita Procli* 10), represented Proclus’ destiny as the last great head of the Academy.

²⁰⁰ Chlup (2012) 1.

²⁰¹ Chlup (2012).

²⁰² Dillon et al. (2017) 1.

Differences between Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism

The differences between Plotinus and Proclus in terms of Platonic doctrine might seem a matter of minor points of contention. But their worldviews, Radek Chlup comments²⁰³, are at odds. Plotinus begins from the world of common experience and moves upwards towards the One, in contrast to Proclus, who starts his discussions with the simplest entities²⁰⁴: for example, his *Elements of Theology* begins with the preposition, “Every multiple somehow participates in unity”²⁰⁵. The major differences between Proclus and Plotinus can be attributed to a fundamental change in worldview, caused by the separation of the soul from the Nous and the consequent introduction of a more religious preoccupation on the part of the Later Neoplatonists²⁰⁶. For Plotinus, the human soul is continuously present in the Nous (Divine Intellect), making our human souls below a mere image of that higher soul but leaving open the possibility to ascend to the higher realm, as has been discussed in the previous chapter. This Plotinian doctrine is quite optimistic in its worldview, in the sense that the highest goal of human life not only is already present in us in a way, but it also depends on us fully to attain it. Iamblichus, Porphyry’s student and philosophical opponent, was the greatest influence on Late Neoplatonism, of which Proclus is a part. It is through his thought that Neoplatonism became more distinct from Plotinian philosophy and gradually evolved into a full-fledged religion²⁰⁷, with rites and initiations. Proclus was reported to have said that “the philosopher ought not to worship in the manner of a single city or the country of a few people but should be the common priest of the entire world” (*Vita Procli* 19). In contrast, Porphyry reported Plotinus’ disinterest in religious celebrations and rites, having notoriously claimed that “it is they [the gods] that should come to me, not I to them”²⁰⁸ (Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 10). The Plotinian and Iamblichean branches of Neoplatonism can be distinguished by their area of influence, the former being particularly influential in the Latin West and the latter in the Greek East²⁰⁹. But what truly distinguished Plotinus from the Iamblichean side of Neoplatonism was the latter’s postulation that the human soul is isolated from the divine realm. Our souls are not, says Iamblichus (and Proclus), within

²⁰³ Chlup (2012) 3.

²⁰⁴ Wallis (1972).

²⁰⁵ *Elements of Theology* 1.

²⁰⁶ Smith (2004).

²⁰⁷ Chlup (2012) 16.

²⁰⁸ Translation by Edwards (2001).

²⁰⁹ Chlup (2012) 18.

the Nous. Proclus states (*In Parm.* 948.12-30):

Ἔστι μὲν οὖν ἡ παρ’ ἡμῖν ἐπιστήμη τῆς θείας ἐξηλλαγμένη, διὰ δὲ ταύτης ἐπ’ ἐκείνην ἀνιμεν· καὶ οὔτε τὸν νοητὸν κόσμον ἐν ἡμῖν δεῖ τιθέναι, καθάπερ λέγουσί τινες, ἵνα γινώσκωμεν ἐν ἡμῖν ὄντα τὰ νοητά· ἐξήρηται γὰρ ἡμῶν καὶ αἰτία ἐστὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας οὐσίας.

Knowledge in us, then, is different from the divine sort, but through this knowledge we ascend to that; and neither do we need to situate the intelligible realm within us, as some assert, in order for us to know the intelligible objects as present within us (for they transcend us and are causes of our essence).²¹⁰

Here Proclus is subtly criticizing Plotinus’ doctrine of the undescended soul²¹¹. In Proclus’ thought, the borders between levels of reality are not permeable. The highest goal of life - to achieve assimilation to the gods - is not possible by our own efforts. We, as human, are forever dependent on the gods’ grace. For Proclus, human intellectual contemplation is only a mere imitation of true intellection. With this development in thought, Late Neoplatonism needs to rethink its soteriological plan. It is not through intellectual practices, as was with Plotinus, that one escapes the Sensible realm. Iamblichus turns to theurgy, a religious ritual practice that has made Iamblichus less appealing to modern tastes. Eric Dodds is usually referred to for his bold take that the greatest work on Theurgy (Iamblichus’ *De Mysteriis*) was a “manifesto of irrationalism”²¹².

Theurgy, literally the combination of *theos* and *ergon*, has been interpreted as “works done by gods”²¹³. Theurgy appeared around the 2nd Century CE along with the *Chaldean Oracles*, a collection of religious utterances heavily influenced by Middle Platonism, which would go on to become the “Bible” of Late Neoplatonism²¹⁴. Through this mechanism, the theurgist can perform miracles, affecting the Sensible cosmos through the power of divinities, like provoking rain through the evocation of a local god of harvest. The greatest goal of theurgy, however, is assimilation to God²¹⁵. The theurgist, if properly prepared and purified, can invoke a lesser (encomsic) god who can elevate the theurgist upwards to the higher (hypercosmic) gods. This works through the *sympatheia*

²¹⁰ Translation by Morrow & Dillon (1992).

²¹¹ Finamore and Kutash (2017).

²¹² Dodds (1951) 287.

²¹³ Addey (2016) 3; Shaw (1995) 5.

²¹⁴ Chlup (2012) 31.

²¹⁵ Shaw (1995) 5.

that all things share with each other and the cosmos. For the theurgist, moving mountains is no more amazing than using a pulley to lift large boulders. The use of divine powers works like basic physics: through cause and effect. By performing the appropriate rite, the desired event occurs. The biggest difference is that it is much harder to know what the proper rites are than it is to know how physics work. This divine knowledge is not discovered through philosophical inquiry, since the divine realm is always somewhat ineffable, even though the lower levels are more knowable than the higher. This knowledge is not discovered but revealed. The Late Neoplatonist sees certain ancient writers and oracles as divinely inspired by gods who generously bestowed that knowledge upon humankind²¹⁶. This knowledge is composed of *symbola*, objects (physical, intellectual, or even linguistic) that have a relationship to divine entities. By handling correctly these *symbola*, the theurgist can act supernaturally in the world. Since the traditional religions, be it Hellenic, Roman or any other, are seen to be divinely inspired revelations as well, the Late Neoplatonists pay particular attention to the cults and rites of all forms of polytheistic religions.

Furthermore, there is a methodological distinction between Plotinus and the Iamblichean branch of Neoplatonism. Plotinus wrote treatises that always remained general, while the Iamblicheans wrote line by line commentaries. Moreover, the Later Neoplatonists have the tendency to telescope hypostases. So, where Plotinus had three hypostases, the Iamblicheans see nine. This might not be a difference of scheme. As Chlup points out²¹⁷, Plotinus was aware of different aspects of the hypostases but chose to discuss them as a whole, while Iamblichus and Proclus prefer to separate different aspects of an entity into different entities altogether. For example, in Plotinus, the concept of participation is straightforward: a particular object participates in the universal Form (which is untouched by the particular thing). In Proclus, the concept of participation implies three distinct levels of reality: the un-participated universal (the Form), the participating particular (the object) and in the middle the participated influx, emanated from the Form and immanent in the object²¹⁸.

Plotinus has a predilection for the use of images that might seem paradoxical. Proclus prefers to use precise definitions and connections between entities. The *Elements of Theology* is the best example of this tendency. In this work, Proclus establishes the

²¹⁶ Chlup (2012) 31.

²¹⁷ Ibid. 19.

²¹⁸ Ibid. 22. See 2.4.

basis of the Neoplatonic metaphysics by succinctly arguing for short, direct, and fundamental premises. This is not to say that Proclus does not use images and paradoxical statements to elucidate his doctrines, but this is not his primary tool. He only resorts to these more poetic forms of communication when the direct form fails to give a proper account of what he is trying to expound upon.

There are, then, three distinctions between Plotinian and Iamblichean (and Proclean) Neoplatonism: the separation of soul from Nous; the introduction of theurgy and religious rites; and the methodological differences that makes the latter more extensive, systematic, and detailed²¹⁹.

Late / Eastern Neoplatonic philosophy can be divided into two schools: the Athenian and the Alexandrian. We have a continuous succession of Neoplatonic Heads of the Academy from Plutarch of Athens (first Neoplatonic Head, died 432 CE) to Damascius (until the Academy's closure by Justinian in 529 CE²²⁰). In the case of the Alexandrian school, we have little information. It is usually agreed that it was in decline and that it was relatively inferior in quality comparing to Athens' school²²¹. The Alexandrians were less eager to discuss polytheistic metaphysics and seemed very "lukewarm" in their acceptance of Theurgy. This might be, Wallis²²² suggests, because the religious context of Alexandria, a city with a relevant Christian community, pressured (not necessarily intentionally nor by force) the pagan philosophers to "tone it down" on the paganism. Most of the extant works by Alexandrian Neoplatonists are commentaries on Aristotle, rather than on Plato, since the former was more religiously neutral. Nonetheless, the distinction between schools need not be as rigid as I may have made it out to be. While the interests of Athens and Alexandria were formed around their particular environments and resources, their philosophy was the same. Different theories are not something to distrust in the Neoplatonic world, as there is very little rigidity to their doctrine²²³.

Proclus' metaphysical scheme, all things considered, will still be similar to Plotinus'. To avoid repetition, this chapter will focus more on the discussions of mimesis that seem to be original to Late Neoplatonism, taking Proclus as its major representative.

²¹⁹ This account is by no means exhaustive. I have simply tried to connect my discussion of Plotinus' philosophical context to Proclus'.

²²⁰ Wallis (1972) 138.

²²¹ Ibid. 141.

²²² Ibid. 142.

²²³ Sheppard (1980) 10.

The Republic Essays

Proclus stands as the only known Neoplatonic commentator on the *Republic*. The Neoplatonic lack of attention to this dialogue, considered by modern scholars the *magnum opus* of Plato²²⁴, has been attributed either to the formulation by Iamblichus of a somewhat fixed *curriculum* stipulating which Platonic works should be studied and in what order, or to the general disinterest regarding politics among Neoplatonic philosophers, who were primarily preoccupied with metaphysical and theological questions²²⁵. Proclus' treatment of the *Republic* also runs counter to the standard *modus operandi* of the Later Neoplatonic philosophers, who tend to comment line by line on the major works, which are studied in the classroom²²⁶. This might be another reason for the lack of commentaries on the *Republic*, which is too large a work to be treated line by line. What we have by Proclus are actually short essays regarding specific topics discussed in the *Republic*²²⁷. In the Neoplatonic theory of exegesis, every Platonic dialogue must have a specific *skopos*, a main theme to unify all its parts. While the *Anonymous Prelegomena*²²⁸ argues that the *skopos* of the *Republic* is the "ideal constitution", Proclus argues that, in fact, it is the constitution of both the Ideal City and the ideal soul, inasmuch as both aim at harmonizing unequal parts²²⁹.

Both *Essays V* and *VI* are concerned with poetics. *Essay V* follows along the criticisms of Plato's *Republic* and tries to show that they need to be taken at face value, as I have attempted to do in Chapter I as well. He poses ten questions stemming from certain key passages and sets out potential solutions to each one. In contrast, *Essay VI* is much more concerned with defending Homer from Plato's criticisms, defending the divinity of Homer's inspiration, which allows the possibility of allegorical reading. Proclus uses this opportunity to reformulate Homer's meaning in the key passages that

²²⁴ At least by modern sensibilities. See Baltzly et al. (2018) Introduction, 1. The *Timaeus* was the *magnum opus* for the Neoplatonists.

²²⁵ Lamberton (2012).

²²⁶ Baltzly et al. (2018) 5.

²²⁷ *Essay XVI*, however, is a line-by-line commentary to the Myth of Er. There was a long tradition of commenting the Myth of Er, see Athanassiadi (2017).

²²⁸ This work from the second half of the sixth century CE aims at giving an introduction to the Platonic dialogues, through Neoplatonic lenses. Layne (2017) 533.

²²⁹ Proclus. *In Rem.* I.8.6-11.4.

Plato criticizes as unacceptable. Even though these essays address different concerns regarding poetics generally, both use the concept of mimesis in ways that are relevant to the present thesis.

It could be argued that the *Commentary on the Republic* is a mismatched collection of essays put together after Proclus' death, and that it is composed both of notes for specific introductory classes and more advanced texts destined for a more advanced audience²³⁰. This would explain supposed different takes on certain topics, like the differences between *Essay V* and *VI*, both on poetics. These essays' incompatibility seems to be one of the key arguments for the disunity of the *Commentary*, since they seem, at first reading, to contradict each other. This could be explained by defending that one was an earlier work, and that Proclus changed his mind with time (an argument also used to justify Plato's apparent discrepancies²³¹). I argue, following Dirk Baltzly, John Finamore, and Graeme Miles²³² (henceforth Baltzly et al.) that the discrepancy between *Essays V* and *VI* is only apparent. I will defend this view after discussing the *Essays* themselves.

Essay V – “Plato’s view on the art of poetry, the kinds that fall under it, and the best harmonies and rhythms”

Essay V is considered the more modest of the pair. Lamberton argues that if we only had *Essay V*, Proclus' “place in the history of poetics would quickly dissolve into thin air”²³³. This is because, in this *Essay*, Proclus says nothing that could be considered innovative, contrary to what we will find in *Essay VI*. His main purpose in this essay is to elucidate certain points regarding the “art of poetry” that are of wider interest. Proclus' discussions in the *Commentary* are centered on what would be the exegetical problems for his students²³⁴. By Proclus' time, the Homeric poems, as much a sacred text as the Platonic dialogues, were expected to reveal the same Eternal Truth. That Plato seems to reject Homer's revelatory knowledge would be a big thorn in the Neoplatonists' side. There is a particular preoccupation in Neoplatonic philosophy, at least starting with

²³⁰ See Baltzly et al. (2018) 121.

²³¹ Called the developmentalist theory. See Chapter I.

²³² Baltzly et al. (2018) 118-129. Beyond these two essays, Baltzly et al. also argue that the whole of the *Republic Commentary* is more unified than previously supposed.

²³³ Lamberton (2012) xvii.

²³⁴ Baltzly et al. (2018).

Porphyry, about defending the orthodoxy of the great texts. Proclus' students would have as a primary concern Plato's invective in the *Republic* and must have been most eager to learn of a possible workaround.

The first question is about why Plato seems hesitant regarding the expulsion of the poets from the Ideal City. In this case, Proclus gives many of the same arguments presented in Chapter I, which argued for the *Republic*'s conditional expulsion of the poets. First of all, Proclus defends that poetry is only expelled from the Ideal City, where no potential harmful thing is allowed, i.e., poetry can be useful outside the context of the Ideal City (*In Rem.* 47.25²³⁵).

Within this argument, Proclus also argues that the variety of characters, which was one of the major criticisms made in the *Republic*, can be potentially useful in the case of the opposite of the Ideal City, since mixing good with bad characters might make people in a bad constitution delight in watching good characters and consequently be positively influenced (*In Rem.* 48.19): "It would seem that just as this variety is harmful for the form of constitution that is kingly and divine²³⁶, so too, for the one that is lowest and tyrannical, it is beneficial"²³⁷. Proclus also argues, as I have, that Plato seems to allow poetry within a context of initiatory mysteries (*In Rem.* 48): "In any event, as he himself says, even the poetry that has represented divine matters falsely has a place in the intermediate mysteries"²³⁸.

Lastly, Proclus also defends the idea that what I have called "inferior mimesis" is only expelled from the Ideal City inasmuch as it tries to have authority and educative priority over philosophical legislation (*In Rem.* 49.4):

αἱ μὲν γὰρ ὀργανικὴν παρέχονται τῷ πολιτικῷ καὶ τοῖς ἄρχουσιν χρεῖαν, ὡς ὑποτετάχθαι καὶ μὴ ἀμφισβητεῖν τὴν ἑαυτῶν φυλακτούσας τάξιν πρὸς τοὺς τῆς πόλεως σωτήρας· τὴν δὲ ποιητικὴν φρονήματος οὖσαν ἀνάπλεον καὶ παιδεύειν ἐπαγγελλομένην οὐκ ἔστι συγκαταλέγειν ταῖς τέχναις, μὴ λάθωμεν ἐπιτειγίσματα κατασκευάζοντες πρὸς τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἐκ τῆς κάτω πόλεως καὶ τρέφοντες ἐπιτήδευμα πρὸς τὴν τῶν φυλάκων ἐπιτήδευσιν ἐναντιώτατον.

Some crafts have an instrumental role for the person who practices politics and for the rulers,

²³⁵ μὴ γὰρ δὴ τοῦτο οἰηθῶμεν, ὅτι καὶ τὴν τοιαύτην ποιητικὴν, καὶ εἰ τῇ ἀρίστη πολιτεία τυγχάνει προσήκουσα μηδέν, πρὸς πᾶσαν ζωὴν ἀνάρμοστον εἶναι θήσεται καὶ βλαβεράν, ἀλλ' εἶναι τινὰς, οἳ καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ταύτης ὀνίναιτο ἂν λόγων.

²³⁶ The constitution established in the *Republic*.

²³⁷ καὶ γὰρ ἔοικεν ὡς τῷ βασιλικῷ καὶ θεῖῳ τῆς πολιτείας εἶδει τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ποικίλον βλαβερόν, οὕτω τῷ ἐσχάτῳ καὶ τυραννικῷ ὀφέλιμον.

²³⁸ ὡς γοῦν αὐτός φησιν, καὶ τὴν ψευδῶς τὰ θεῖα μεμιμημένην ἐν μέσοις ἱεροῖς χώραν ἔχειν.

insofar as these crafts are ranked below them and do not dispute [their place] and stick to their own rank in relation to the preservers of the city. Poetry on the other hand, since it is full of arrogance and exults in its claim to educate, is not included among the arts, lest we inadvertently erect obstacles for the rulers from the lower city and nurture endeavors that are maximally opposed to the guardians' project.²³⁹

This is a point which I have claimed to be one of the major conditional points against mimesis in the *Republic*. Proclus seems to see mimesis as potentially acceptable within the Ideal City as well, upon condition that poetry accepts that it will lose its authoritative status. In this context, Proclus is discussing poetry specifically, but as he says (*In Rem.* 44), “all poetic activity is mimetic”²⁴⁰, which allows for an extension of this discussion on poetry to the wider sphere of mimesis. Moreover, with this statement, Proclus seems to recognize that mimesis is the only possible form of creation, as I have argued in Chapter I. Proclus recognizes that Plato’s critique of mimesis is conditional to certain criteria, which means, following my interpretation, that Proclus recognizes a form of mimesis that goes beyond the “inferior mimesis” which Plato condemns in the *Republic*. In fact, Proclus’ own formulations of the ways in which mimesis fails seems to imply a conception of “superior mimesis”. Proclus’ gives his own summary (*In Rem.* 47.15):

Δύο τοίνυν, ἵνα συλλαβόντες εἴπωμεν, αἴτια τοῦ μὴ εἶναι παραδεκτέαν τὴν ποιητικὴν εἰς παιδείαν ὀρθήν, <ἐν> οἷς μὲν ἀληθῶς μιμεῖται (ταῦτα δ’ ἐστὶν τὰ ἀνθρωπικά), τὸ ποικίλον τῆς μιμήσεως, ἐν οἷς δὲ ψευδῶς μιμεῖται, τὸ ἀπᾶλλον τῆς μιμήσεως, καὶ τοῦτο διττόν, ἢ ἐν τοῖς ὀνόμασιν μόνους ἢ καὶ τοῖς πράγμασιν, ὡς ἐδείκνυμεν.

Let us say by way of summary that there are two explanations for why poetry may be inadmissible in correct education. It may be inadmissible in what it truthfully imitates (i.e., things to do with human beings), on account of the variety involved in the imitation. Alternatively, it may be inadmissible in those things which it imitates falsely on account of the unbecoming nature of the imitation. The latter is twofold: it is either unbecoming in the language alone or it is unbecoming to the facts, as we have shown.

Following Plato, mimesis is condemned for imitating human characters that are “varied”, meaning that they are imperfect, since perfection implies simplicity. This criticism fits the ideal status of the Ideal City. It is not that mimesis fails *per se*, but that what is

²³⁹ All translations of *Commentary on the Republic* by Baltzly et al. (2018).

²⁴⁰ γὰρ μιμητικῆς ἀπάσης οὐσης τῆς τῶν ποιητῶν πραγματείας.

demanding of it is not in line with poetry's usual practices. Still, this is "inferior mimesis" in the sense that it imitates human affairs that are within the Sensible realm. Mimesis is also condemned for failing to accurately imitate things of higher realms, i.e., heroes and gods²⁴¹. In the case of heroes, poets fail not by imitating heroes as they are (virtuous and simple), but by projecting human traits into the heroes' characters. This is the "unbefitting to the facts" variant of this criticism. Sheppard notes that, to Proclus, "poetry about heroes is not inherently allegorical as poetry about the gods is"²⁴².

What Proclus means when he says "unbefitting in the language alone" is what concerns my argument. As he puts it (*In Rem.* 44.14): "... in the case of the gods, they use indecent language as a screen for the truth about them – these being matters about which it is not easy for the audience in general and for young people in particular to become competent judges"²⁴³. First of all, this is another defense of "inferior mimesis". Proclus defends that mimesis need not be read literally but agrees with Plato, that, in the case of the Ideal City, literal readings should be prioritized, since not all are capable of allegorically interpreting these texts (*Rep.* 378a). More to the point, however, is the remark "they use indecent language as a screen for the truth about them". This seems to imply that the poets do know the truth about the gods. It is not, in this case, that mimesis fails to imitate the gods as they are, but that their products do not pass the high standards of the Ideal City. As Proclus says, distinguishing the two forms of imitations (*In Rem.* 44.16): "Both these things manifest imitation that lacks semblance. One of them obviously does not conform to that which it imitates, while the other does not obviously conform due to the *appearance* of absurdity corresponding to the screen of myth-making"²⁴⁴. Again, the poets are not criticized for not reflecting in their poetry "that which it imitates", but for producing "appearances of absurdity" given through the allegorical veil. According to Proclus, Plato had the habit of saying (*In Rem.* 44.24) "about the poetry of divine myths that it lies beautifully – calling that lie beautiful which hides the truth through beautiful language"²⁴⁵. "However," notes Proclus (*In Rem.* 44.25-45.1), "on the subject of the imitations of things to do with the heroes, he did not say that it fails to lie

²⁴¹ Sheppard (1980) notes that in *Essay V* the false depiction of facts by mimesis seems reserved to heroes, while concerning the gods it is the appearance of the representations that is criticized.

²⁴² Sheppard (1980) 18.

²⁴³ παραπετάσασιν δὲ χρωμένους ὀνόμασιν αἰσχροῖς ἐπὶ τῶν θεῶν τῆς περὶ αὐτῶν ἀληθείας, ὧν οὐ ῥᾶδιον τοῖς ἀκούουσιν ἄλλως τε καὶ νέοις οὐσι γενέσθαι κριταῖς.

²⁴⁴ The italicized emphasis is my own.

²⁴⁵ διὸ περὶ μὲν τῆς τῶν μύθων τῶν θείων ποιήσεως εἶωθεν λέγειν συχνόν, ὅτι καλῶς ψεύδεται, ψεῦδος ἐκεῖνο καλὸν ὀνομάζων, ὅπερ ἂν ἦ δι' ὀνομάτων καλῶν ἀποκρύπτων τὴν ἀλήθειαν. I follow the correction of Kroll's addenda by Baltzly et al. (2018).

beautifully, but rather that it simply lies whenever it portrays those heroes to be like human beings”²⁴⁶.

This can potentially be interpreted as Proclus’ acceptance of a “superior mimesis” since the poets are, in this case, contemplating the higher reality of the gods (in order to really know their truth) and representing them mimetically in poetry. Of course, this poetry does not represent faithfully the gods (that is impossible), but it is still a representation, and one who knows how to read in-between the lines can see a glimpse of the gods. Proclus does not question the value of mimesis, and even recognizes these mimetic products’ hieratic potential among those who can read beyond the literal meaning (*In Rem.* 48.5):

ἡ τούτων ἀκρόασις συντελεῖ πρὸς τὴν ὅλην ἱερατικὴν, αὐτῆς τῆς ζωῆς τῶν ἀκουόντων ἐνιδρυθείσης τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ἀσφαλῶς ἤδη τῶν τοιούτων ἀκουούσης λόγων, δι’ ὧν ἐπανάγεται καὶ τὰ τελευταῖα τῶν πνευμάτων, καὶ θέλξαντα τοῖς τοιοῖσδε συμβόλοις ἀκόλυτον προξενεῖ παρ’ ἐκείνων εἰς ἡμᾶς προΐεναι τὴν θεῖαν ἐπίπνοιαν, οἷον ἀποπλησθέντων οἷς χαίρουσιν ὀνόμασιν καὶ πράγμασιν.

The recitation of these [words] contributes towards the universal hieratic art, since the very life of the listeners has been established among the gods and can now safely hear such words – words through which the lowest classes of pneumatic beings are invited in. When these beings have worked their magic by virtue of these symbols, they provide for the divine inspiration to proceed unhindered from those higher beings into us as if they had been satiated with the words and the things in which they delight.

Not only can these kinds of poets contemplate and know the truth about the gods and consequently create a representation of this truth, but their products become themselves objects of contemplation that can invoke minor gods and lead to divine inspiration. This concept fits perfectly into what I have called “superior mimesis”. In the end, it is this side of mimesis that grants poetry the honors worthy of “an image of the Muses”²⁴⁷, even as it is expelled due to its “inferior” side.

In the second question, “Why does Plato not accept tragedy and comedy on the basis of their ability to moderate the passions as Aristotle supposed?”, Proclus criticizes “inferior mimesis” in its ethical variation. When a person who loves variegated poetical

²⁴⁶ περὶ δὲ τῆς τῶν ἡρωϊκῶν πραγμάτων μιμήσεως, οὐχ ὅτι οὐ καλῶς ψεύδεταί φησιν, ἀλλ’ ὅλως ὅτι ψεύδεταί, τοιούτους εἶναι τοὺς ἥρωας δεικνῶσα οἷους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους.

²⁴⁷ *In Rem.* 48.25.

representations contemplates those representations, that person produces an ethical representation in themselves. This is the case for ethical “superior mimesis” as well, where the subject contemplates higher realities and consequently produces an ethical representation of them, i.e., a well-ordered and simple character. Proclus argues that (*In Rem.* 50.1):

δῆλον οὖν ὅτι καὶ τὴν τραγωδίαν καὶ τὴν κωμωδίαν παντοίων οὐσας μιμητικὰς ἡθῶν καὶ μεθ’ ἡδονῆς προσπιπτούσας τοῖς ἀκούουσιν διευλαβηθησόμεθα, μὴ τὸ ἐπαγωγὸν αὐτῶν εἰς συμπάθειαν τὸ ἀγώγιμον ἐλκύσαν τὴν τῶν παιδῶν ζωὴν ἀναπλήσει τῶν ἐκ τῆς μιμήσεως κακῶν.

It is thus clear that since comedy and tragedy imitate every kind of character and fall upon their audience in conjunction with pleasure, we must beware of them, lest their allure draw those who are easily led into a similar condition, filling the lifestyle of the young with evils that result from imitation.

The variety that is criticized in the dramatic depictions is criticized inasmuch as it is contrary to virtuous characters, which are simple, as already established by Plato in the *Republic*.

In the fifth question, “What are Plato’s views on *mousikê* and its species?”, Proclus discusses *mousikê* and its relation to poetry. He seems to define *mousikê* as cultural²⁴⁸ activities which are inspired or presided by the Muses. Proclus establishes (*In Rem.* 57.7-15) that philosophy is the “greatest *mousikê*” through which the philosopher can:

ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ τε ἀνθρώπινα πάντα δυνατόν κοσμεῖν καὶ τὰ θεῖα τελέως ὑμνωδεῖν, αὐτὸν μιμουμένη τὸν μουσηγέτην, ὃς ὑμνεῖ μὲν τὸν πατέρα ταῖς νοεραῖς ᾠδαῖς, συνέχει δὲ τὸν ὅλον κόσμον τοῖς ἀλύτοις δεσμοῖς ὁμοπολῶν πάντα.

Introduce order to all things human and to celebrate the divine matters perfectly, imitating the Leader of the Muses himself who, on the one, celebrates the Father with intellectual songs and, on the other, establishes continuity throughout the whole cosmos by means of insoluble bonds.

Here, the philosopher is not only considered to be inspired (“though the fact that the philosopher is divinely inspired is something that escapes most people”²⁴⁹ (*In Rem.*

²⁴⁸ As Baltzly et. al. note, Proclus’ use of *mousikê* seems to be more alike our definition of culture than of music.

²⁴⁹ καὶ γὰρ ὁ φιλόσοφος ἐνθουσιάζων λέληθε τοὺς πολλοὺς.

57.17), but he is also considered to be imitating the Leader of the Muses (Apollo) in his praising of the divine order and in his ordering of the cosmos. For Proclus, as I interpret it, the philosopher, by contemplating Apollo as a divinity, imitates the god's activity. This calls to mind Proclus' conception of the craftsman as imitating the Divine Demiurge, a topic that will be discussed further below.

Proclus, still in the fifth question, argues (*In Rem.* 58.6-15) that the poetry which Plato allowed in the Ideal City - that poetry which consists in *encomia* of good men doing good deeds - is thrice removed from reality. The poet is three times removed from reality because he is still only imitating good men who are imitating the example of other good men who "aimed at good things"²⁵⁰. It is implied by this scheme that the ones who aim at good things are one time removed from reality, meaning that they are the closest to reality and the ones who can best contemplate the Intelligible reality. By contemplating the divine realm, these ancient men then create a representation of the divine order of reality within their character, thereby becoming ordered and virtuous. Proclus comments (*In Rem.* 58.12) that "this mode of education was especially familiar to the ancients – through a certain kind of experience of those who had lived virtuously, leading others to virtue on the basis of imitating them"²⁵¹. This is the ethical form of mimesis which I have discussed in Plato's chapter. The subject contemplates the Intelligible order of the divine realm and forms his own *ethos* as a representation of it. Proclus contrasts this way of teaching (the Ancients') with the Lawgiver's since the former teaches by example and the latter by universals. Proclus states (*In Rem.* 58.25): "His (the Lawgiver's) education works by means of universal paradigms, not particular ones"²⁵². This statement, in my interpretation, further argues for the possibility of a "superior" kind of mimesis since the Lawgiver is capable of contemplating universals in order to imitate them in the constitution of his city. He will understand how best to order the city following the divine paradigm of the "city in heaven" (*Rep.* 592b).

While Proclus makes a contrast between the Lawgiver and the Ancients' form of teaching, he accepts in both cases the possibility of both contemplating universal

²⁵⁰ ὅπου δὴ καὶ τὸ ἔργον μάλιστα τῆς ποιητικῆς ὅσον ἐστὶν εἰς παιδείαν ἀνήκον ἐξέφηνεν καὶ οἷον, καὶ ὡς οὐ νομοθετικόν ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ὄντως τρίτον ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας, διὰ τῶν εἰς τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς γεγονότας ἐγκωμίων παιδεῦον τοὺς ζηλοῦντας τὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐπιτηδεύματα. καὶ γὰρ καὶ οὗτός ἐστιν παιδείας τις τρόπος τοῖς ἀρχαίοις μάλιστα συνήθης, διὰ δὴ τινα πείραν τῶν κατ' ἀρετὴν ζησάντων ὀδηγεῖν ἄλλους κατὰ τὴν ἐκείνων μίμησιν εἰς ἀρετὴν· οἷον δηλοῖ καὶ ἐκεῖνος ὁ παρὰ τῷ <ποιητῇ> λέγων οὕτω.

²⁵¹ καὶ γὰρ καὶ οὗτός ἐστιν παιδείας τις τρόπος τοῖς ἀρχαίοις μάλιστα συνήθης, διὰ δὴ τινα πείραν τῶν κατ' ἀρετὴν ζησάντων ὀδηγεῖν ἄλλους κατὰ τὴν ἐκείνων μίμησιν εἰς ἀρετὴν.

²⁵² καὶ ἡ παιδεία ὑπὸ καθολικῶν οὐχὶ μερικῶν παραδειγμάτων.

paradigms, which I take to mean that they contemplate Intelligible reality. And, in both cases, their contemplation manifests its creative side in the ordering of the *ethos*, be it of the individual or of the city. They seem to differ inasmuch as the Ancients' educative influence is transmitted through their imitation in poetry, while the Lawgiver directly influences the constitution of his city. The poets to whom Proclus assigns the “three times removed” status are imitating the imitators of the Ancients. In either case, we find that Proclus does not question their capacity to contemplate universals, which lends support to the thesis of a “superior mimesis”.

Proclus notes (*In Rem.* 59.24) that Plato introduced a type of *mousikê* which “discovers which harmonies and rhythms are able to educate the passions of souls and to shape them with the best character traits in every action and situation”²⁵³. He argues that this *mousikê* is the one which Socrates looks to in the *Republic* when he (*In Rem.* 60) “introduced guidelines concerning musical modes and rhythms”. Proclus' point is that this *mousikê* is beyond (*In Rem.* 60.5) “Sensible harmonies, but rather leads us up towards universal principles, moving our intellect into the Intelligibles away from the Sensible”²⁵⁴. Proclus' interpretation of *Republic*'s Book III seems to go beyond Socrates' conclusions. Proclus argues that there is a kind of *mousikê* that can contemplate and represent universal paradigms, leading the “hearers”²⁵⁵ to apprehending the Intelligibles.

Another comment is made in the fifth question, where Proclus distinguishes poetry as imitative (*In Rem.* 60.10):

ταύτην γὰρ εἶχεν ὁ πρῶτιστος βίος, καὶ ταύτην διώριζεν τῆς ποιητικῆς ὡς μιμητικῆς, οὐκ ἐθέλουσαν μιμητικῶς ζῆν, ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τῶν μιμητῶν ἀναρπάζειν ἑαυτὴν εἰς τὰ παραδείγματα τῶν ἁρμονιῶν τῶν τῆδε καὶ ῥυθμῶν.

The first way of life [in the *Phaedrus*, the philosophical] had this [philosophical *mousikê*] and he distinguished this from poetry insofar as it [poetry] is imitative, since this *mousikê* does not wish to live in an imitative manner, but instead to snatch itself from imitations to the paradigms of the harmonies and rhythms down here.

²⁵³ λέγει δὴ οὖν καὶ ἄλλην ἐπὶ ταύταις μουσικῆν, τὴν παιδευτικὴν τῶν ἡθῶν διὰ τε ἁρμονιῶν τῶν εἰς ἀρετὴν καὶ ῥυθμῶν, ἀνευρίσκουσιν τίνες μὲν ἁρμονίαι καὶ ῥυθμοὶ παιδεύειν δύνανται τὰ πάθη τῶν ψυχῶν καὶ πλάττειν ἡθεσι βελτίστοις ἐν πάσαις πράξεσι καὶ περιστάσεσιν.

²⁵⁴ ὡς περ εἰς τὴν πρὸ ταύτης, ἡνίκα τὰς ἐπιστήμας ζητῶν τὰς ἐχούσας τι πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν ὄλκον ἀξιοῖ καὶ τὴν ἁρμονίαν μὴ τὴν αἰσθητὴν ἀσπάζεσθαι ταύτην, ἀλλ' εἰς τοὺς καθολικοὺς ἀνάγειν λόγους, μεθιστάσαν τὸν νοῦν ἡμῶν εἰς τὰ νοητὰ ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθητῶν.

²⁵⁵ Since this *mousikê* works beyond sensible harmonies, there is no clear reference to it being something audible.

Here, Proclus contrasts the highest life of the *Phaedrus*, which is the philosophical life, with poetry. They differ since poetry is imitative, while the philosophical *mousikê* goes beyond mere imitations and looks towards Intelligible realities. Proclus here, I argue, is not criticizing poetry for being mimetic, in the sense that it imitates something, but in the sense that it imitates imitations. There is ample evidence from this essay that Proclus believes in the value of a mimesis that imitates the universal paradigms; therefore, his criticism must not be of the mimetic process, but of the model of imitation - in this case, other imitations. In the case of the philosophical *mousikê*, it is said that it looks to the Intelligible paradigms and imitates them within the Sensible reality. The philosophical *mousikê* was discussed above in Proclus' "imitation of the Leader of the Muses" conception. This kind of *mousikê* seems capable of using "superior mimesis". As was the case with both Plato and Plotinus, this form of mimesis, if not reserved for the philosopher, is at least best exemplified by the philosophical way of life.

In the sixth question, "what are the modes and meters that he finally approves of and why, given the importance of these things, has this been left unclear?", Proclus mentions that poetry must be mimetic, but here he uses the term mimesis in the sense of drama, as opposed to narrative, a sense first used by Plato in Books II of the *Republic*. Proclus reports (*In Rem.* 67.6) that "the (ideal) poetry, according to Plato, would thus be a mimetic disposition that, through both myths and *logoi*, and in conjunction with mode and metre, is capable of disposing the souls of the audience to virtue"²⁵⁶. Proclus is considering here the arguments from Books II and III of the *Republic* in order to postulate what the ideal form of poetry would be for Plato. Proclus' view on mimesis in this section is limited to the "inferior mimesis", based on Socrates' conclusions. In the case of "inferior mimesis", the best one can do is to imitate solely examples of virtue and simple characters, and through these, teach the audience forms of virtue. I consider it "inferior mimesis" because, as noted above in the fifth question, this form of poetry and mimesis is still "thrice removed from reality", even if it has earned an educative role.

In the last question, "what god within the universe plays the role on the cosmic scale that the good poet should seek to emulate here below?", Proclus' goal is to connect the poet to a universal paradigm of creativity. In the Proclean metaphysics, individual gods represent specific metaphysical mechanisms. For example (*In Rem.* 69.7), "Asclepius is the one who reveals all things to be in a natural condition since it is through

²⁵⁶ ὥστ' εἴη ἂν ἡ ποιητικὴ κατ' αὐτὸν ἕξις μιμητικὴ διὰ τε μύθων καὶ λόγων μετὰ ἁρμονιῶν καὶ ῥυθμῶν κατ' ἀρετὴν διατιθέσθαι δυναμένων τὰς τῶν ἀκουόντων ψυχάς.

him that the universe neither sickens nor grows old, nor releases the elements from their indissoluble bonds”²⁵⁷. Or (*In Rem.* 69.1), “The general among these [gods] is the great Ares who presides over conflicts and rouses all things to the cosmic opposition”²⁵⁸. In this section, Proclus is arguing that human roles, such as the general, the doctor, the statesman, and the poet, are images modeled after the paradigm of the role of the gods. The human general must look to the universal general to understand his art in the best way. Likewise, the poet²⁵⁹ must look to the universal poet to better understand his craft. Proclus says (*In Rem.* 68.15) concerning this universal poet:

οὕτω γάρ που καὶ ποιητῆς ἄλλος ἐστὶ κοσμικός, μυθολογικὸς μόνως, μιμήματα ποιῶν τὰ ἐμφανῆ τῶν ἀφανῶν καὶ καλῶν καλά, τῶν κατὰ νοῦν τὰ κατὰ φύσιν, ἀρμονίαις χρώμενος, δι’ ὧν ἀρετὴν ἐν τῷ ὅλῳ παρέχεται κρατοῦσαν, ἡττωμένην δὲ κακίαν· καὶ ῥυθμίζων τὰς κινήσεις, ὥστε κατὰ λόγον κινεῖσθαι, καὶ μίαν ἐκ πάντων ζῶσαν ἀποτελῶν ἀρμονίαν καὶ ἓνα ῥυθμόν.

[All this being so] there must also be the one who is the cosmic poet, who is a maker of myths in a unique manner. He makes imitations both visible and beautiful of things both invisible and beautiful and makes imitations that exist naturally of the things that exist intellectually; using musical modes through which it is provided for the virtue that is in the whole to dominate and for vice to be diminished. He gives the rhythmic metre to the motions [in the universe] so that they undergo a motion that is rational and produces a single living harmony and one rhythm that is composed from all things.

And who is this god? It is (*In Rem.* 69) “none other than Apollo, who is the poet / creator of imitations that are endowed with harmony and rhythm”²⁶⁰. Apollo imitates Intelligible reality and thus creates Sensible reality, being the paradigm of the *mimetic* creator. When the particular poet creates, he is in a way imitating the activity of Apollo. In fact, Proclus (*In Rem.* 69.15) in the end claims that:

πάντα δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ψυχῶν ἀρξάμενα ποιήματά ἐστιν Ἀπόλλωνος ἐναρμόνια καὶ ἔρρυθμα· καὶ εἰς τοῦτον βλέπων ὁ τῆδε ποιητῆς ὑμνεῖτω μὲν θεοῦς, ὑμνεῖτω δὲ ἀγαθοῦς ἄνδρας ἐν τε μύθοις καὶ ἄνευ μύθων, ἢ περὶ ἄλλα στρεφόμενος γιγνωσκέτω καὶ ποιητικῆς ἀμαρτῶν καὶ Ἀπόλλωνος.

²⁵⁷ ὁ δὲ πάντα κατὰ φύσιν ἔχοντα δεικνύς Ἀσκληπιός, δι’ ὃν οὐ νοσεῖ <τὸ> πᾶν, οὐ γηράσκει, τὰ στοιχεῖα οὐκ ἀνίησι τῶν ἀλύτων δεσμῶν.

²⁵⁸ ἐκείνων δὲ ὁ μὲν στρατηγὸς ὁ μέγιστος Ἄρης, πολέμων προστάτης θεὸς καὶ ἀνεγείρων πάντα πρὸς τὴν ἐναντίωσιν τὴν κοσμικὴν.

²⁵⁹ Baltzly et al. note the ambiguity with the term “poietikos” and translate it as both poet and creator.

²⁶⁰ οὐκ ἄλλος ἐστὶν ἢ ὁ Ἀπόλλων, ποιητῆς ὢν μιμημάτων ἐναρμονίων καὶ ἐνῤυθμων.

Everything that has its origin from souls is the work of Apollo, harmonious and rhythmic. Looking to this universal poet let the earthly poet compose hymns to the gods. And let him compose hymns to good men, whether in myth or without myth. Otherwise, if he turns to other subject matter, let him know that he sins against poetry and against Apollo.

This is Proclus' final statement concerning the best poet, according to Plato's *Republic*. The best poet will only compose hymns to the gods and good men, as was established in the sixth question. Proclus, however, seems to imply that the contemplative side of the mimetic artist is capable of contemplating the divine beings and is not limited to the imitation of good men, which he himself considered to be "thrice removed from reality" in the fifth question. He establishes that the poet "looks to this universal poet". What else could this looking be if not contemplation of a divine being? Even so, Proclus evidently limits creativity to what Plato deemed acceptable. In the end, Proclus is establishing the ideal poet for the ideal form of education, and since "superior mimesis" will potentially create something that works beyond mere literal interpretations, Proclus deems that the ideal poet, even if he contemplates the higher realities, must still obey the criteria that Plato established in the *Republic*. Even though the universal poet concept seems to be a Neoplatonic original idea, Proclus is still following the conclusions from Books II and III of the *Republic*. Both the possibility of contemplating the Intelligibles and the expulsion of every poetry except hymns and encomia need not be at odds, but Proclus clearly calls the representation of good men "three times removed from reality". Yet here he seems to imply that the poet is looking directly to the Intelligible realm, which would go against the former point. Is Proclus mixing his own views on mimesis and poetry with Plato's conclusions on the best type of poetry? Is Proclus' conclusion conditional to the audience of *Essay V*, a point argued by Baltzly et al.²⁶¹? Certainly, this cannot be the whole picture of Proclus' views, since *Essay VI* will reject this claim, as will be seen below. Proclus' commentaries usually work within the *skopos* of the dialogue being commented, meaning that Proclus will try to solve the problems he is faced with by referring to the framework of that dialogue, so this problem might be Proclus' way of justifying Plato's claims and

²⁶¹ *Essay V* seems to be given to a less experienced audience, which justifies why he should give a more civic conclusion, in contrast to a more metaphysical / contemplative conclusion, something he will give in *Essay VI*. In fact, this is one of the main arguments for the discrepancy between *Essay V* and *VI*, which solidifies the thesis that Proclus wrote both essays at different times, *Essay V* being the earliest of the two. Baltzly et al. (2018).

inserting his own views on mimesis and poetry²⁶².

Be that as it may, I would like to bring to mind a parallel within *Essay V*, between this passage just discussed and an earlier passage cited above, through which Proclus seems to give us a glimpse into the mimetic creativity of the philosopher. In the fifth question, Proclus claims that the highest form of *mousikê*, the philosophical *mousikê*, follows the “Leader of the Muses”²⁶³, which is identified as Apollo. As noted above, Apollo has a twofold role: to sing intellectual songs of praise to the Father and to order the cosmos through his contemplation of the Intelligible reality. It seems that, in Proclus’ mind, both the philosophical *mousikê* and poetry can, and must, imitate Apollo in his role as the universal paradigm of a creator.

In conclusion, *Essay V* maintains a critical outlook towards mimesis, following Plato’s example in the *Republic*. But a lot of genuine original ideas are present, giving us a glimpse into a possible perspective of “superior mimesis”. As has been noted along this section, Proclus recognizes many times the capacity of certain individuals (be they philosophers, poets, or lawgivers) to contemplate Intelligible realities and to create a representation of that reality within the Sensible cosmos.

Essay VI – Proclus the Successor On the things said by Plato in the Republic on Homer and Poetry

If in *Essay V* Proclus is much too dependent on Plato’s arguments, in *Essay VI* he might seem to be going against his master. Certainly, his concern in *Essay V* is definitely limited to explaining the *Republic*’s arguments and their relationship to other Platonic dialogues. As I have argued, Proclus’ originality is not obvious at first sight, but slips through the cracks here and there throughout the essay. This need not be a criticism of Proclus, since the discussion of *Essay V* was probably aimed at an audience very early in its philosophical curriculum. This can be apprehended by the very few digressions into higher metaphysics, which are frequent in all of Proclus’ works. In fact, Proclus, in his *Commentary on the Alcibiades* - a dialogue which was the first step into the Neoplatonic curriculum - very easily and frequently moves from the simple *skopos* of the dialogue to higher theological concepts that might be thought to be reserved for more advanced

²⁶² Baltzly et al. (2018) 125.

²⁶³ *In Rem.* 57.7-15.

students. Generally, Proclus does not seem to have a threshold of difficulty to his audience, meaning that in almost all of his commentaries he discusses both beginners and advanced material, be it on commenting the simpler dialogues or the more advanced ones²⁶⁴, a fact which makes more strikingly blatant how much *Essay V* seems to be aimed at a much more general audience than any other work. This is also the main argument for the supposed unity between *Essay V* and *VI*, since they might *seem* discrepant with each other, but this might be a question of context and the level of philosophical capacity of the audience.

In *Essay VI*, Proclus' defense is reserved for the more advanced students, as he puts it in the final words of the essay (*In Rem.* 205.21): "Dear friends, let these thoughts be a memorial of thanks for the company of our teacher. They have been told by me to you but are not to be spoken to the masses"²⁶⁵. The *Essay* was given as an oral lecture for the occasion of Plato's birthday and was later revised by Proclus, as seems to have been Proclus' *modus operandi*²⁶⁶. Sheppard²⁶⁷ argues that *Essay VI* seems to have gone through four stages of development, which she categorizes as: first, a lecture by Syrianus, Proclus' master and previous *diadochus*; second, a subsequent discussion on this topic between Proclus and Syrianus; third, a lecture by Proclus on Plato's birthday; and fourth, the writing of that lecture into *Essay VI*. Proclus' debt to Syrianus is openly admitted by Proclus himself, who mentions (*In Rem.* 72.21) that he is merely reporting what Syrianus already said²⁶⁸. *Essay VI* is vastly longer than *Essay V*, thus the approach taken henceforth will necessarily be focused on key passages and concepts and will not be as extensive as the discussion on *Essay V*.

Proclus' mission in this essay is stated clearly at the beginning (*In Rem.* 69.23-70.7):

... παρέστη διασκέπασθαι, τίνα ἂν τις τρόπον ὑπέρ τε Ὀμήρου πρὸς τὸν ἐν Πολιτεία Σωκράτη τοὺς προσήκοντας ποιήσαιτο λόγους καὶ ἐπιδείξειεν τῇ τε φύσει τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ τοῖς αὐτῶ <τῶ> φιλοσόφῳ μάλιστα πάντων ἀρέσκουσιν συμφωνότατα περὶ τε τῶν θείων καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἀναδιδάσκοντα, καὶ τὸν Πλάτωνα τῆς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐξέλοι διαφωνίας, καὶ ἀποφῆνειεν ὡς ἄρα ἐκ μᾶς ἐπιστήμης ἅπαντα καὶ νοερᾶς ἐπιβλέψεως καὶ προαιρέσεως θεοπρεποῦς, ὅσα τε

²⁶⁴ Baltzly et al. (2018).

²⁶⁵ ταῦτα, ὧ φίλοι ἐταῖροι, μνήμη κεχαρίσθω τῆς τοῦ καθηγεμόνος ἡμῶν συνουσίας, ἐμοὶ μὲν ὄντα ῥητὰ πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ὑμῖν δὲ ἄρρητα πρὸς τοὺς πολλοὺς.

²⁶⁶ As reported by Marinus in *Procl.* 22.

²⁶⁷ Sheppard (1980) 32.

²⁶⁸ For Syrianus' influence on Proclus in *Essay VI*, see Sheppard (1980) Chapter 2.

ἐγκωμιάζων γέγραφεν τὴν Ὅμηρου ποίησιν καὶ ὅσα ἐπαιτιώμενος ἔφθεγκται.

... I should consider how one might compose an appropriate reply on behalf of Homer to Socrates in the *Republic* – to show that Homer’s teachings are completely in accord with the natural facts and, above all, with the doctrines of the philosopher himself on matters both divine and human. [I considered] how one might save Plato from self-contradiction and show that such things as he wrote in praise of Homer’s poetry, as well as the accusations uttered [against it], all result from a single knowledge, one intellectual conception, and a single plan that is worthy of the gods.

Proclus considers that both Plato and Homer are discussing the same reality, but this reality is not demonstrated in the same way by either one. First of all (*In Rem.* 73.20), Plato acts like the ideal poet of *Essay V*, who contemplates the divine realm and represents it in his works, but conceals it not with unworthy and ugly images, but with appropriate images. Furthermore, Proclus fully recognizes that Plato tries to imitate Homer (*In Rem.* 164.9):

Εἰ δὲ τούτων ἀπαλλαγέντες καὶ τὴν περὶ τὴν λέξιν πολυπραγμοσύνην ἄλλοις ἀφέντες ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς θεωρίας ἀνα-δράμοιμεν τῶν ἀνδρῶν ὁμοιότητα, πάλιν κἀνταῦθα τὴν ἀνέλεγκτον ἐπιστήμην τὴν αὐτὴν παρ’ ἀμφοτέροις διαλάμπουσιν γινώσκοντες καὶ τὸν Πλάτωνα πανταχοῦ μεταθέοντα τὴν πρὸς Ὅμηρον ἀφομοίωσιν.

If we move away from these matters and leave agonising over style to others and move quickly to considering the similarity in the intellectual vision (*theoria*) of these two men, in this too we shall recognize that the same irrefutable knowledge shines out in the work of both, and that Plato at all times pursues likeness to Homer.

Proclus discusses at length (*In Rem.* 163.13-172.30) the relationship between Plato and Homer, concluding that both speak regarding the same reality, but in different manners. Homer speaks through images and allegorical meanings, while Plato argues for the same doctrines by “demonstrational arguments” (*In Rem.* 172.9).

Proclus establishes that Homer’s activity “went beyond every human and partial conception and that the gods were established within his own thought”²⁶⁹ (*In Rem.* 70.25). This statement is made to synthesize Plato’s claim that Homer is divinely inspired. What this means is that Homer’s divine inspiration implies that his discursive thought (*dianoia*)

²⁶⁹ τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐπέκεινα πάσης τῆς ἀνθρωπικῆς καὶ μεριστῆς ἐπιβολῆς αὐτὸν ἐνεργήσαντα καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς ἐνιδρῦσαντα τὴν ἑαυτοῦ νόησιν ἐπιδείκνυσιν.

is overridden by a superior form of *noesis*, which implies that Homer has a vision of divine beings that is beyond what language (as imitation of discursive thought) is capable of expressing. Therefore, while Homer can have a superior contemplation of the Intelligible realm, he may never fully imitate it in words, which is why Proclus defends that Homer’s controversial passages are worthy of being read allegorically. Still, Proclus shows here that Homer can have the superior type of contemplation that implies “superior mimesis”. More significantly, however, Proclus says (*In Rem.* 71.2) that Homer’s teachings are “common with the truth subsequently contemplated by Plato”²⁷⁰. Both Plato and Homer reveal things about Intelligible reality, but they express them differently. Likewise, Proclus mentions (*In Rem.* 72.1):

ἐπεὶ δὲ πρὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων ὁ Σωκράτης αἰτιᾶται τὸν τῆς μυθοποιΐας τρόπον, καθ’ ὃν Ὅμηρός τε καὶ Ἡσίοδος τοὺς περὶ θεῶν παρέδωσαν λόγους, καὶ πρὸ τούτων Ὀρφεὺς καὶ εἰ δὴ τις ἄλλος ἐνθέῳ στόματι γέγονεν τῶν ἀεὶ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως ἐχόντων ἐξηγητῆς, ἀνάγκη δήπου καὶ ἡμᾶς, πρὶν τοὺς περὶ τῶν καθ’ ἕκαστα δογμάτων ἀνασκευώμεθα τῆς θεωρίας τύπους, αὐτὴν τὴν τῶν Ὀμηρικῶν μύθων διάθεσιν προσήκουσαν ἐπιδείξει τοῖς πράγμασιν, ὧν δὴ καὶ παρέχονται τὴν ἔνδειξιν.

Now, since prior to everything else Socrates blames the *manner* of the myth-making through which Homer and Hesiod conveyed their stories about the gods – and prior to Homer and Hesiod, Orpheus and anyone else who with inspired lips expounded things eternally and invariably the same – it is surely necessary for us to demonstrate that the very composition of the Homeric myths as proper for the facts about which it doubtless provides an indications [and to do this] before we provide an outline of the meaning of specific teachings.

Proclus states that the poets can contemplate the facts (*In Rem.* 73.13):

δεῖ δὲ ἄρα τοὺς μύθους, εἴπερ μὴ παντάπασιν ἀποπεπτωκότες ἔσονται τῆς ἐν τοῖς οὐσίῳ ἀληθείας, ἀπεικάζεσθαι πως τοῖς πράγμασιν, ὧν ἀποκρύπτειν τοῖς φαινομένοις παραπετάσμασιν τὴν θεωρίαν ἐπιχειροῦσιν.

Thus, unless they are in fact going to fall short of the truth that is found in these [divine] beings, it is necessary for myths to conform somehow to the facts – facts whose contemplation they attempt to conceal by means of visible screens.

²⁷⁰ Φέρ’ οὖν ὅσα κἀνταῦθα τοῦ καθηγεμόνος ἡμῶν ἠκούσαμεν περὶ τούτων διαταττομένου καὶ τῆς κοινωνίας τῶν δογμάτων, ἣν ἔχει τὰ Ὀμήρου ποιήματα πρὸς τὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἐν ὑστέροις χρόνοις καθεωραμένην ἀλήθειαν.

These visible screens are the allegorical veils that the poets use to mask the impossibility of faithfully representing the Intelligible reality which they have contemplated. Proclus' objective is to explain how the scandalous things which Homer says can be fitting of an existence that "accords with Goodness Itself" (*In Rem.* 72.12²⁷¹). And, as will be discussed below in more detail and has been alluded to above, Proclus believes in Homer's authority and inspiration. Still, this passage points to Homer's capacity to "contemplate the facts" and to conceal them²⁷².

Proclus distinguishes between the good and bad use of myths. He argues that one should not only read the superficial meaning of the myths, which ultimately are a good thing given to us by the gods but try to understand their anagogical meaning which allows those who are capable to contemplate the higher realities. Those who only contemplate the literal meaning of the inspired poets are doomed to fall into "gigantic impiety"²⁷³ (*In Rem.* 74.15). Proclus then argues (*In Rem.* 76.19) for a bipartition of mimesis / *poiesis*, one educational and another anagogical. The last one is reserved to the highest form of life that uses myths, the life of the philosopher.

The tripartition of Poetry

In *Essay VI*, Proclus establishes his greatest contribution to the philosophy of aesthetics. Lambertson²⁷⁴ considered this contribution as Proclus' distinguishing theory. This innovative contribution, that sets off *Essay VI* from the dryness of *Essay V*, is commonly called²⁷⁵ the three types of poetry. Proclus establishes (*In Rem.* 177.15) three lives in the soul which correspond to the three types of poetry. These three lives are hierarchically organized, starting from the highest and best form of life to the lowest and worst. Proclus starts with the best form of life (*In Rem.* 177.15):

τριττάς ἐν ψυχῇ εἶναί φαμεν ὡς τὸ ὅλον εἰπεῖν ζώας· τὴν μὲν ἀρίστην καὶ τελεωτάτην, καθ' ἣν

²⁷¹ πῶς γὰρ δὴ ταῦτα, φαίη τις ἄν, τὰ πόρρω τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ τῆς τάξεως ἀποπλανώμενα καὶ αἰσχροῦ καὶ ἔκθεσμα τῶν ὀνομάτων πρέποντα ἂν γένοιτο ποτε τοῖς κατ' αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθὸν τὴν ὑπαρξίν λαχοῦσιν καὶ τῷ καλῷ συνυφεστηκόσιν, καὶ ἐν οἷς ἡ τάξις πρώτως ἐστὶν καὶ ἀφ' ὧν πάντα τὰ ὄντα μεστὰ μὲν καλλονῆς, μεστὰ δὲ τῆς ἀχράντου δυνάμεως ἀνεφάνη.

²⁷² Further ahead (*In Rem.* 73.15), Proclus says that this is Plato's *modus operandi*.

²⁷³ Lambertson (2016) argues that references to gigantic and atheistic masses refers to the Christian community.

²⁷⁴ Lambertson (2012) xvii.

²⁷⁵ E.g., Sheppard (1980); Lambertson (2012).

συνάπτεται τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ζῆ τὴν ἐκείνοις συγγενεστάτην καὶ δι' ὁμοιότητος ἄκρας ἠνωμένην ζωὴν, οὐχ ἑαυτῆς οὖσαν, ἀλλ' ἐκείνων, ὑπερδραμοῦσα μὲν τὸν ἑαυτῆς νοῦν, ἀνεγείρασα δὲ τὸ ἄρρητον σύνθημα τῆς τῶν θεῶν ἐνιαίας ὑποστάσεως καὶ συνάψασα τῷ ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὅμοιον, τῷ ἐκεῖ φωτὶ τὸ ἑαυτῆς φῶς, τῷ ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν πᾶσαν καὶ ζωὴν ἐνὶ τὸ ἐνοειδέστατον [τὴν] τῆς οἰκειᾶς οὐσίας τε καὶ ζωῆς.

We say generally speaking that there are three lives in the soul. The best and most perfect life is that in accordance with which the soul is connected to the gods and lives a life which is in closest kinship with them, and which is unified through the highest form of likeness. It is a life that belongs not to the soul itself, but to the gods. On the one hand it transcends the soul's own intellect, on the other it awakens the ineffable symbol of the unitary existence of the gods. It attaches like to like, its own light to the light there, the most uniform part of its being and life to the one beyond all being and life.

Here it is reported that the best life implies the highest form of likeness to the gods. This is the *telos* of the soul - to assimilate itself to God, to become like the divine. Here, mimesis has a mystical function. Like in Plotinus, when the philosopher contemplates (*theoria / epistrophe*) the divine intellectually, he creates (*poiesis*) a form of life that is perfectly in union with the divine order. This contemplation is created through the activation of the soul's *symbolon* that is connected to the One, the one in the soul. This is the best form of "superior mimesis". Regarding the second-best form of life, Proclus states (*In Rem.* 177.23):

τὴν δὲ ταύτης μὲν δευτέραν πρεσβεία τε καὶ δυνάμει, μέσην δὲ ἐν μέσῃ τῇ ψυχῇ τεταγμένην, καθ' ἣν ἐπιστρέφει μὲν εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐνθέου καταβᾶσα ζωῆς, νοῦν δὲ καὶ ἐπιστήμην προστησαμένη τῆς ἐνεργείας ἀρχὴν ἀνελίττει μὲν τὰ πλήθη τῶν λόγων, θεᾶται δὲ τὰς παντοίας τῶν εἰδῶν ἐξαλλαγὰς, εἰς ταῦτόν δὲ συνάγει τό τε νοῦν καὶ τὸ νοούμενον, ἀπεικονίζεται δὲ τὴν νοερὰν οὐσίαν ἐν ἐνὶ τῆν τῶν νοητῶν φύσιν περιλαβοῦσα.

The life which is second to this in seniority and power is that which is a middle life arranged in the middle of the soul, in accordance with which [the soul] reverts upon itself, descending from the divinely inspired life, and, by establishing intellect and knowledge as first principles of its activity, it unravels the multitude of *logoi* and contemplates all of the variations among the forms. It brings together as one thing that which thinks and the object of thought, and it represents the intellectual substance, since it encompasses the nature of the Intelligibles in one [unified activity].

This form of life is similar to the concept of projection explored in the previous chapter.

The philosopher of the middle life, in contrast with the divinely inspired one, does not transcend his reality. Instead, he studies the *logoi* which are present within him, postulating visions of the Intelligibles through scientific ways (*episteme*). While not transcendent, this life is still occupied with true reality, the Intelligibles. And lastly, the third and worst form of life (*In Rem.* 178.3):

τρίτην δὲ ἄλλην ἐπὶ ταύταις τὴν συμφερομένην ταῖς καταδεεστέραις δυνάμεσιν καὶ μετ' ἐκείνων ἐνεργοῦσαν, φαντασίαις τε καὶ αἰσθήσεσιν ἀλόγοις προσχρωμένην καὶ πάντα τῶν χειρόνων ἀναμπλαμένην.

The third life after these is the one that is carried away by the lesser powers and has its activity in conjunction with them, employing irrational imaginings and sense-perceptions, and is altogether filled with lower things.

This is the worst form of life, due to its occupation with mere illusions - the Sensible world. It ignores the reality of the divine realm and is stuck believing that the images down here are the paradigms. This is Plato's criticism of mimesis in Book X, to which Proclus responds by dividing poetry into three forms. Sheppard notes that Proclus' division of the lives corresponds to the division of the soul²⁷⁶. The highest life is related to the highest element in us, the one of the soul. The second-best life is related to our rational part. And the worst part is related to the irrational side of the soul. Plato's criticism of mimesis in Book X associates the inferior form of mimesis with the irrational part, but Proclus has a different tripartition of the soul.

The best form of life corresponds to poetry that is divinely inspired, and which is "defined by reference to divine proportion"²⁷⁷ (*In Rem.* 179.1). Proclus connects the Platonic concept of *mania* to this form of poetry²⁷⁸. The second form of poetry "recognizes the essence of the things that truly exist, and it loves to contemplate the beautiful and the good, both in words and in deeds, it also brings each of the subjects that it treats into an interpretation in metre and rhythm"²⁷⁹ (*In Rem.* 179.5). This is the form of poetry that is the most common and is composed of good advice, characters worthy of

²⁷⁶ Sheppard (1980) 97.

²⁷⁷ ὅσπερ οὖν κατὰ μὲν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν μαντικήν, κατὰ δὲ τὸ κάλλος τὴν ἐρωτικήν μανίαν ὑφίστασθαι λέγομεν, οὕτως ἄρα καὶ κατὰ τὴν συμμετρίαν τὴν θεϊαν τὴν ποιητικὴν ἀφορίσθαι φαμέν.

²⁷⁸ Sheppard notes that in this passage Proclus is joining the four *maniai* of the *Phaedrus* with the three monads of the *Philebus*. See Sheppard (1980) 100.

²⁷⁹ γινώσκουσα μὲν τὴν οὐσίαν τῶν ὄντων καὶ τῶν καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν ἔργων τε καὶ λόγων ὑπάρχουσα φιλοθεάμων, εἰς δὲ τὴν ἔμμετρον προάγουσα καὶ ἔνρυθμον ἕκαστα τῶν πραγμάτων ἐρμηνείαν.

emulation and scientific investigations that “provide a recollection of the cycles of the soul and of the eternal *logoi* and diverse powers in them”²⁸⁰ (*In Rem.* 179.13). The last and worst form of poetry is “mingled with opinions and imaginings, and since it is constituted through nothing but mimesis, it both is, and is rightly called, ‘mimetic’”²⁸¹ (*In Rem.* 179.16). Interestingly, this phrase says that this form of poetry is criticized for being “nothing but mimesis”, which seems to imply that either the other forms of poetry have mimesis but also something else, or that Proclus uses mimesis here to refer to the type that does not contemplate beyond mere appearances. Proclus forks this type of poetry into the *eikastikê* and the *phantastikê*, following the *Sophist*’s definitions. The former is only defined as “representations”, meaning direct imitations of something, while the latter is accused of distorting its paradigms in order to appease to the opinion of the majority. This distinction joins the *Sophist*’s perspective on mimesis to the *Republic*’s. Even though mimesis works with imitations of Sensibles in the *eikastikê* variant, it represents them accurately, which has some value. The *phantastikê* poetry, on the other hand, is not even considered real mimesis by Proclus, who claims that it deals “in illusion and provides only an apparent mimesis”²⁸² (*In Rem.* 179.31).

It seems, then, that Proclus sees in these three (plus one) forms of poetry four forms of mimesis, although he only uses the term to describe one form of poetry. Despite not using mimesis to describe it, all forms of poetry discussed are mimetic. Since the last form of poetry (which encompasses both *eikastike* and *phantastike* poetry) is evidently mimetic, I will focus on the other two forms to argue that they are also mimetic.

The first form of poetry represents what I have called “superior mimesis”: through divine inspiration (which represents the *theoria* phase of mimesis). The poet becomes like the divine, ordered according to Intelligible principles, and produces (*poiesis*) not only the ordering of his own soul but also orders “the lowest activities of the soul [writing] by metres and rhythms”²⁸³ (*In Rem.* 178.28). Furthermore, the poem created through this mimetic process is itself an object of contemplation that leads others to contemplation of higher realities.

²⁸⁰ ἀνάμνησίν τε παρεχόμενα τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς περιόδων καὶ τῶν αἰδίων ἐν αὐταῖς λόγων καὶ τῶν ποικίλων δυνάμεων.

²⁸¹ Τρίτη δὲ ἐπὶ ταύταις ἐστὶν ἡ δόξαις καὶ φαντασίαις συμμιγνυμένη καὶ διὰ μιμήσεως συμπληρουμένη καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλ’ ἢ μιμητικὴ.

²⁸² ἔστιν δὲ ὅπερ ἔφαμεν καὶ ταύτης τὸ μὲν εἰκαστικόν, ὃ καὶ πρὸς τὴν ὀρθότητα τοῦ μιμήματος ἀνατείνεται, τὸ δὲ τοιοῦτον οἷον εἶπομεν, φανταστικὸν καὶ φαινομένην μόνον τὴν μίμησιν παρεχόμενον.

²⁸³ διὸ δὴ καὶ τὰς ἐσχάτας αὐτῆς ἐνεργείας μέτροις τε καὶ ῥυθμοῖς κατεκόσμησεν.

The second form of poetry, called epistemic by Sheppard²⁸⁴, is mimetic because (*In Rem.* 179.5-15):

γινώσκουσα μὲν τὴν οὐσίαν τῶν ὄντων καὶ τῶν καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν ἔργων τε καὶ λόγων ὑπάρχουσα φιλοθεάμων, εἰς δὲ τὴν ἔμμετρον προάγουσα καὶ ἔνρυθμον ἕκαστα τῶν πραγμάτων ἐρμηγείαν. οἷα δὲ πολλὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ποιητῶν εὖροις ἂν γεννήματα, ζηλωτὰ τοῖς εὖ φρονούσιν, νουθεσίας καὶ συμβουλῶν ἀρίστων πλήρη καὶ νοεῶς εὐμετρίας ἀνάμεστα φρονήσεώς τε καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς προτείνοντα τὴν μετουσίαν τοῖς εὖ πεφυκόσιν, ἀνάμνησίν τε παρεχόμενα τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς περιόδων καὶ τῶν αἰδίων ἐν αὐταῖς λόγων καὶ τῶν ποικίλων δυνάμεων.

While it recognises the essence of the things that truly exist, and it loves to contemplate the beautiful and the good, both in words and in deeds, it also brings each of the subjects that it treats into an interpretation in meter and rhythm. You would find many of the creations of good poets to be of this type, worthy of emulation by those who are right-minded, full of advice and of the best counsels, and abounding in intellectual proportion. They hold forth a share of intelligence and the other virtues to those with a suitable nature and provide a recollection of the cycles of the soul and of the eternal *logoi* and diverse powers in them.

This form of poetry also works as an object of contemplation that can trigger *anamnesis* in those who listen to it with the proper mindset. While inferior to divine poetry, it still functions very similarly to it. It contemplates Intelligibles (albeit in a lesser form) and projects its contemplation into a creation that in its turn makes its viewer experience the vision of the creator.

These three (or four) types of poetry, then, are all equally mimetic, in the sense that all imply contemplation and consequent creation which represents the object of contemplation. Proclus' use of the term *mimesis* in this discussion is limited to the type of *mimesis* which I have designated as "inferior *mimesis*", and which is clearly criticized. This hierarchic definition of forms of poetry that represent forms of *mimesis* is fundamentally the same as the distinctions that have been discussed in the previous chapters. There is a "superior *mimesis*" which contemplates higher realities and whose products are worthier, and an "inferior *mimesis*" which contemplates mere Sensible reality and whose products are considered illusions and "shadow-painting". Proclus' main distinction seems to be supported by the fact that, contrary to Plotinus, "superior *mimesis*" is not performed through one's own power, but through the help of divinities.

²⁸⁴ Sheppard (1980).

Symbola as likenesses

One of the key features of the best form of poetry is that it is symbolic, in the sense that it uses *symbola*. These *symbola* (literally, “things that bring together”) are marks present in objects (not necessarily physical objects, words can be symbolic too, for example) which demonstrate the relationship between the object and other entities. All beings have this mark which connects them to their *seira*, the chain of being²⁸⁵. At the top of the chain are the leader-gods who create further links in their movement of *prohodos*. These chains go all the way down to irrational beings and even inanimate objects, like plants and stones. To give an example, the sunflower has a relationship with Helios, and can be used to invoke the god through the links of *sympatheia* that connect the metaphysical chain.

In the case of poetry, Proclus introduces the concept of symbolic veils, which are the key feature of divinely inspired poetry. He states (*In Rem.* 74.20-24):

εἰ γὰρ οἱ μὲν μῦθοι τὴν προβεβλημένην αὐτῶν ἅπασαν σκευὴν ἀντὶ τῆς ἐν ἀπορρήτοις ἰδρυμένης ἀληθείας προεστήσαντο καὶ χρῶνται τοῖς φαινομένοις παραπετάσμασι τῶν ἀφανῶν τοῖς πολλοῖς καὶ ἀγνόστον διανοημάτων (καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν, ὃ μάλιστα ἐξαιρετόν αὐτοῖς ἀγαθὸν ὑπάρχει, τὸ μηδὲν τῶν ἀληθῶν εἰς τοὺς βεβήλους ἐκφέρειν, ἀλλ’ ἔχνη τινὰ μόνον τῆς ὅλης μυσταγωγίας προτείνειν τοῖς ἀπὸ τούτων εἰς τὴν ἄβατον τοῖς πολλοῖς θεωρίαν περιάγεσθαι πεφυκόσιν).

After all, the myths have put out the fancy costumes that they project (instead of the secret truth that is established within) and utilize visible screens for thoughts that are invisible and unknowable to the many. And this is in fact the special good that belongs to them: they don’t disclose any of their truths to the profane masses, but instead extend only some traces of the entire mystagogy to those whose nature permits them to be turned from these things to a contemplation that is inaccessible to the many.

The divine poets are here praised for the same reason why they are condemned elsewhere. What they say about the gods is perverse. But if it is damaging to the youth that takes these myths literally, it is powerful for the sage who knows how to interpret and sees the mimetic relationship that goes beyond mere appearances. When scholars discuss *symbola* in relation to divine inspiration, they suggest that, to Proclus, *symbola* work in the

²⁸⁵ Shaw (1995); Van den Berg (2001).

opposite of a mimetic manner. The Homeric myths are useful for the ones who know how to interpret them, but one must learn to see the real meaning in the perverse stories, which, as Proclus says, is the opposite of their veils. The bizarreness of these myths prods the reader to question their meaning. Proclus says (*In Rem.* 198.15-19):

πρὸς μὲν γὰρ τὴν τραγικὴν ποιήσιν καὶ κωμικὴν ἰκανά· τούτων γὰρ τὸ ὅλον μίμησις ἐστὶν πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀκουόντων ἐξειργασμένη ψυχαγωγίαν· πρὸς δὲ τὴν Ὀμήρου ποιητικὴν τὴν ἀπὸ θεῶν ὠρμημένην καὶ τῶν ὄντων ἐκφαίνουσιν τὴν φύσιν οὐδὲν ἂν προσήκοι. καὶ πῶς γὰρ ἂν ἡ διὰ συμβόλων τὰ θεῖα ἀφερμηνεύουσα μιμητικὴ προσασγορευέοιτο; τὰ γὰρ σύμβολα τούτων, ὧν ἐστὶ σύμβολα, μιμήματα οὐκ ἔστιν· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐναντία τῶν ἐναντίων οὐκ ἂν ποτε μιμήματα γένοιτο, τοῦ καλοῦ τὸ αἰσχρὸν, καὶ τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν τὸ παρὰ φύσιν. ἡ δὲ συμβολικὴ θεωρία καὶ διὰ τῶν ἐναντιωτάτων τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων ἐνδείκνυται φύσιν.

These criticisms [Plato's in the *Republic* X] apply well enough to tragic and comic poetry, since the whole substance of these is a mimesis working towards the entertainment of its audience. But it has nothing to do with the poetry of Homer which takes its impulse from the gods, and which reveals the nature of the really existent. Moreover, how would poetry which interprets divine matters through *symbola* be called mimetic? For symbols are not imitations of the things of which they are symbols: opposites cannot be imitations of their opposites, for instance ugliness of beauty or that which is contrary to nature of that which is in accordance with nature. Contemplation through symbols demonstrates the nature of things even through the greatest oppositions.

It *seems* clear that *symbola* are not mimetic. Divine inspiration is characterized by the use of such mechanisms which seem to point towards their opposites. Contrary to this, the second type of poetry, which is called epistemic, works by use of *eikones*, which are straightforwardly images of their paradigms²⁸⁶. This is the contrast between inspiration and epistemic poetry, the former being characterized by unlikeness and the latter by likeness, and which is the main focus of much modern scholarship²⁸⁷. Robbert Van den Berg suggested that the previous translations of the phrase “ἡ δὲ συμβολικὴ θεωρία καὶ διὰ τῶν ἐναντιωτάτων τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων ἐνδείκνυται φύσιν” did not capture the significance of καὶ in the phrase²⁸⁸. Baltzly et al. have accepted this suggestion and rendered καὶ as “even”, rather than ignoring it or using it as a reinforcement of the superlative ἐναντιωτάτων²⁸⁹. Van den Berg's point is that this phrase is not saying that

²⁸⁶ Van den Berg (2001) 120.

²⁸⁷ Sheppard (1980) 199; Trimpi (1983) 216.

²⁸⁸ E.g., “For symbolic wisdom hints at the nature of reality through the medium of elements totally contrary in their nature”. Coulter (1976) 50.

²⁸⁹ Van den Berg (2001) 121.

symbola always represent their opposites, but that they can do so, even though they are not limited to that form of representation. John Dillon²⁹⁰ notes that Proclus is usually not rigid with his use of the words *symbola* and *eikon*, often using them as synonymous. While they might seem to be opposites, with one implying unlikeness and the other likeness, in reality, both are fluid in their relationships to their paradigms. As noted above, mimesis does not imply perfect likeness: that would not be the creation of a representation, but of a double. Therefore, an *eikon*, inasmuch as it is a mimetic product, always implies some unlikeness to its paradigm. Time and Eternity are *eikon* and paradigm, respectively. Being a metaphysical mimesis, it is one of the most perfect forms of imitation²⁹¹. Still, to compare Time to Eternity is baffling.

Likewise, *symbola* cannot imply perfect unlikeness. They work only insofar as they have a relationship to the chain of being that is being invoked. “The basis of theurgy is the likeness between a symbol and the god to which it belongs”²⁹². It is illogical to suppose that poetic *symbola* have no relationship to their meaning, otherwise their meaning would be non-existent. Van den Berg’s second argument follows this logic. If the symbol has no connection whatsoever to its referent, being absolutely unlike it, then there would be no reason to connect the two, which would render the concept useless. Furthermore, being opposites does not imply unlikeness: “Pairs of opposites, on the other hand, have something in common and may thus be said to be like each other in some respect or another”²⁹³. In the case of Homer, he hints at supra-natural realities through infra-rational concepts. They are extreme opposites, but both share the likeness of being outside the bounds of rationality. Likewise, a sunflower has a likeness to Helios²⁹⁴: they sit at opposite ends of their chain of being but share nonetheless that relationship that is essentially mimesis. Of course, as I have reiterated multiple times, mimesis does not imply the kind of likeness that is usually assumed for a painting and its model. Mimesis always implies a representation deeply inferior to its paradigm, ontologically speaking. The representation of gods doing perverse things is infinitely inferior to the reality of the relationships that the gods actually have with each other. Only through true contemplation can we ever understand reality in its own terms.

My conclusion, above all, is that Proclus’ use of mimesis in both *Essay V* and *VI*

²⁹⁰ Dillon (1976) 254.

²⁹¹ *In Tim.* 458.

²⁹² Van den Berg (2001) 121.

²⁹³ *Ibid.* 122.

²⁹⁴ Proclus, *De Sacrificio* 148.10.

is limited to the semantical meaning of “inferior mimesis”. His use of mimetic terms is primarily connected to the idea of representation of characters and Sensible objects. The concept of mimesis, however, is not limited to its terminology, and it is clear that mimesis as a mechanism, particularly the “superior mimesis” variant, is clearly accepted and used by Proclus in many contexts, be it related to metaphysical reality, ethical emulation, artistic reproduction or religious mysteries.

Hymns

Proclus is the author of a corpus of *Hymns*, composed, according to Marinus, during the nights when Proclus could not sleep²⁹⁵. Seven of Proclus’ *Hymns* have reached us, preserved in a manuscript²⁹⁶ that contains the *Homeric Hymns*, Callimachus’ *Hymns*, and the *Orphic Hymns*. Proclus’ *Hymns* are more than the amateur poetical attempt of a philosopher. They are the crossroads where philosophy and Greek culture intersect, presenting the traditional Greek gods as the metaphysical entities of the Neoplatonic world, as well as using the poetic dialect of Homeric Greek and obeying the standard hexameters of Greek hymns²⁹⁷.

Following Plato’s claim that hymns are prayers to the gods²⁹⁸, Proclus’ own *Hymns* have a religious tinge, which is characterized by Neoplatonic theology. Nonetheless, while their religious side is potentially the main focus of their creator, the *Hymns* are poetic in form, which shows that, to Proclus, philosophical creation can be extended to various genres. Interestingly, this can be compared to the Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Parmenides* as a prayer²⁹⁹. Proclus interprets the singing of hymns as an *epistrophe* to the gods³⁰⁰, which is equivalent to the assimilation to God that is the ultimate goal of human life, particularly for the philosopher³⁰¹. *Epistrophe* is considered here a form of prayer. Another equivalent term for hymns, prayer and *epistrophe* is contemplation³⁰². Praying or hymn-singing are ultimately a mimetic process, which

²⁹⁵ *Vita Procli* 24.

²⁹⁶ Van den Berg (2001) discusses manuscript history in his introduction.

²⁹⁷ Sheppard (1980) 11.

²⁹⁸ *Laws* 700b1.

²⁹⁹ Van den Berg (2001) 25.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 20.

³⁰¹ Proclus, *In Tim.* I.210.30-211.

³⁰² Brisson (2016) 113.

involves the contemplative and the creative motions. The first elevates the soul to its causes (*theoria*), and the second is the soul's expression of its contemplation (*poiesis*), be it in the form of prayers, hymns, commentaries on the Platonic dialogues or even just teaching a class³⁰³. This process has a soteriological function³⁰⁴. It is by reverting back to our causes, and ultimately to God, that we can achieve our *telos* and escape the formless uncertainty of our embodied lives. This attempt at contemplating and reverting is not exclusive to the human soul. As Proclus puts it (*De Sacrificio* 148.10):

Ἦ πόθεν ἡλιοτρόπια μὲν ἡλίῳ, σεληνοτρόπια δὲ σελήνῃ συγκινεῖται συμπεριπολοῦντα ἐς δύναμιν τοῖς τοῦ κόσμου φωστῆρσιν; Εὐχεται γὰρ πάντα κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν τάξιν καὶ ὑμνεῖ τοὺς ἡγεμόνας τῶν σειρῶν ὅλων ἢ νοερῶς ἢ λογικῶς ἢ φυσικῶς ἢ αισθητῶς· ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ ἡλιοτρόπιον ᾧ ἔστιν εὐλκτον, τούτῳ κινεῖται καί, εἰ δὴ τις αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν περιστροφὴν ἀκούειν τὸν ἀέρα πλήσσοντος οἷός τε ἦν, ὕμνον ἄν τινα διὰ τοῦ ἤχου τούτου συνήσθετο τῷ Βασιλεῖ προσάγοντος, ὃν δύναται φυτὸν ὑμνεῖν.

Why do heliotropes move together with the sun and the moonplants with the moon, accompanying the lights of the cosmos in as far as possible? Because, since everything prays according to its own order and celebrates in hymns the leaders of the whole series noerically or with words or physically or perceptibly, the heliotrope too moves to the extent that it is flexible. And if someone would be capable of hearing it hitting the air as it turns around, he would observe that by means of this sound it renders to the King a kind of hymn, that a plant is capable of singing.³⁰⁵

This is a concept that Proclus employs within his definition of the *seirai*, the chains of reality that connect all existence to the heads of these chains, who are the gods. Since all things belong to a chain, they all share a likeness to the upper links of that chain. And thus, all things, while trying to contemplate their causes, are led to produce something that represents that attempt, which is what I have interpreted as mimesis. In the case of plants, their form of *poiesis* is the creation of a hymn composed through the sounds of their movements, or the mere act of movement, as in the case of the lotus which open and closes its flower according to the motions of the sun, to whom it prays. Proclus clarifies this comparison (*De Sacrificio* 149): “What difference is there between people who sing a hymn to the sun while opening and closing their mouth or lips and the lotus which opens and closes its leaves”³⁰⁶? Since the products of things that contemplate are themselves

³⁰³ Ibid. 127.

³⁰⁴ Nieva (2019).

³⁰⁵ All translations of the *Hymns* by Van den Berg (2001).

³⁰⁶ Τί δὴ οὖν διαφέρει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους αἶροντας ἢ τιθέντας <τάς> γένυς ἢ τὰ χεῖλη ὑμνεῖν τὸν

objects of contemplation, the movements of plants in their prayers could lead a human soul to contemplation of higher realities, since, arguably, these plants are enacting a form of “superior mimesis”, inasmuch as they are praying to higher beings in their chain. Following the mimetic logic which has been employed throughout the previous chapters, This follows that the movements of plants are worthy objects of contemplation that can bring to mind the higher realities, as much as a hymn sang by human lips. Humans should contemplate irrational beings not because they are irrational, but because every being is created according to the divine order. It also follows that “inferior mimesis” is not a possibility for the lower beings such as plants and animals, since they have no rational part of their soul. Inasmuch as “inferior mimesis” is a failed attempt at contemplation that represents a false belief, it is conditioned by the rational element in us that deems something credible. The inferior artist contemplates something Sensible and represents it in a lesser form, for he believes he is representing reality, as was Plato’s criticism. It is through a defective rationale that “inferior mimesis” is committed, but it is through reason, nonetheless. It seems that, in Proclus’ thought, plants are capable of a form of “superior mimesis”. As Van den Berg put it: “hymns are always about superior beings, never about inferior ones. This is consistent with the idea that hymns consist in a movement of *epistrophe* towards a causative principle, which, by its very nature, can of course never be to something inferior to the one that sings the hymn”³⁰⁷. It is relevant to remember, however, that, in Proclus’ thought, contemplation is not a faculty of the contemplating being itself, who cannot reach above with its own powers. It is always through a divine being that contemplation is achieved. It is not that plants are capable of “superior mimesis”, but that the gods are capable of making plants achieve true contemplation.

Proclus’ *Hymns* are likewise a form of reversion / contemplation. Even in *Essay V* Proclus claims³⁰⁸, as mentioned above, that philosophy is an imitation of the hymns sang for Zeus by Apollo. Moreover, throughout the hymns many references are made to anagogical motions³⁰⁹. And, as Van den Berg points out, Proclus saw both the *Parmenides* and the *Timaeus* as hymns to the gods. Furthermore, Proclus’ usage of the verb *hymnein* reflects the view that any philosophical discussion concerning higher metaphysical

ἤλιον, ἢ τὸν λωτὸν τὰ φύλλα συμπτύσσοντα καὶ ἀναπλοῦντα;

³⁰⁷ Van den Berg (2001) 21.

³⁰⁸ *In Rem.* 57.7-15.

³⁰⁹ E.g., I.33-38; III.1-18; IV.5-15; V.14-15; VI.8-12; VII.35-36.

entities is in a way a hymn³¹⁰.

Hymns (and prayers) work to elevate our souls into contemplation by means of theurgy. Through the use of *symbola*, the (lesser) gods can be invoked to possess us. This is distinguished from magic in the sense that it does not “make” the gods do anything against their will; it “persuades” them through the links of *sympatheia* and likeness that bind the *symbola* to the invoked gods. In the case of the *Hymns*, Proclus does not purport to achieve true contemplation through them, since the gods he invokes are lesser³¹¹. Proclus’ aim is to use these gods’ help to achieve true contemplation, by virtue of their presence within a divine chain. Prayer is still a way to achieve assimilation, but the invocation done in the *Hymns* is of the lesser gods, in order for them to take us to the higher gods.

Van den Berg establishes various types of *symbola* used in the *Hymns*³¹². First of all, he establishes the existence of both innate *symbola* which are present immaterially in the product of a cause (in the sense that all products are already present in their cause) and material *symbola* which are the products themselves. Van den Berg further divides the latter distinction into “linguistic objects” (special words or stories) and truly material *symbola*, such as stones or flowers, one example of which is Proclus’ mention (*Hymn* VII.21-22³¹³) of the Acropolis as a *symbolon* of Athena. In the case of innate *symbola*, since the human soul is a product of divine causes, it also has that immaterial token within it. Proclus sees himself as being imprinted with a *symbolon* of Athena’s chain, which he deduces from his affinity for wisdom and from Athena’s patronage of both his hometown (Byzantium) and the city where he lived (Athens). But one is not limited to only a singular patron god. In his *Hymn to Aphrodite*, Proclus invokes Aphrodite as patron of the Lycians, since Proclus’ parents were from Lycia³¹⁴. Proclus also uses what Van den Berg called the “linguistic *symbola*” by referring in his *Hymns* to specific mythological stories³¹⁵ that hold an allegorical meaning³¹⁶. Similar to Proclus’ defense of the Homeric myths in *Essay* VI, where the gods’ passionate actions are interpreted as metaphysical relations between

³¹⁰ Ibid. 24-28.

³¹¹ Ibid. 63.

³¹² Ibid. 91.

³¹³ ἡ λάχες ἀκροπόλῃα καθ’ ὑψιλόφοιο κολώνης, / σύμβολον ἀκροτάτης μεγάλης σέο, πότνια, σειρής / ἡ χθόνα βωτιάνειραν ἐφίλαο, μητέρα βιβλων, / πατροκασιγνήτοιο βησαμένη πόθον ἱρόν, / οὔνομα δ’ ἄστεϊ δῶκας ἔχειν σέο καὶ φρένας ἐσθλάς.

³¹⁴ *Hymn* V.1.

³¹⁵ For example, the gigantomachy in *Hymn* VII.8; the *agon* between Athena and Poseidon for the patronage of Athens in VII.21; and the marriage between Aphrodite and Hephaestus in V.5.

³¹⁶ Sheppard (1980) 145 notes that the verb *allegorein* is usually replaced by mystery related vocabulary, such as *symbolon* and related verbs and adjectives.

divine beings, Proclus refers to the same stories in the *Hymns*, albeit without the “unseemly veil” that he criticized in *Essay V*. His *Hymns* follow the criteria that he established for the ideal poet of *Essay V*, that is, they speak about the gods in a veiled manner, but the veil is appropriate to the subject matter. Since *symbola* imply likeness to some degree, Proclus’ *Hymns* are examples of a mimetic process. He is representing metaphysical realities through symbolic language.

It is not straightforward how the *Hymns* might fit in a “superior mimesis” model. While Proclus is definitely looking into the divine realm, his contemplation seems to be more the fruit of discursive thought than the divine intellection discussed in Plotinus’ chapter. The *Hymns* are an attempt at producing contemplation through the invocation of the helpful gods. First and foremost, the *Hymns* are objects of contemplation. There are two categories into which the *Hymns* might fit. The *Hymns* can be the product of contemplation, and thus the creative phase of “superior mimesis”, or they can be an attempt at an object of contemplation made through “educated guess” (based on discursive investigations), and which creates contemplation afterwards. In a passage from his *Commentary on the Timaeus* where Proclus explains his theory of prayer, he claims that the first step of prayer is knowledge, meaning the knowledge of the divine hierarchies³¹⁷. This knowledge comes before the prayer itself, and thus is not a product of the contemplation that happens through that particular prayer. That knowledge is obtained prior, either through discursive or intuitive means. Proclus’ *Hymns* are then either a fruit of contemplation or of scientific knowledge. It seems to be a paradoxical concept. In the prayers, Proclus repeatedly asks (*Hymn I.39-44*) for divine inspiration which is essentially reversion and contemplation:

αἰεὶ δ’ ὑμετέροισιν ἀλεξικάκοισιν ἀρωγαῖς
 ψυχῇ μὲν φάος ἀγνὸν ἐμῇ πολυόλβον ὀπάζοις
 ἀχλὺν ἀποσκεδάσας ὀλεσίμβροτον, ἰολόχευτον,
 σώματι δ’ ἀρτεμίην τε καὶ ἀγλαόδωρον ὑγείην,
 εὐκλείης τ’ ἐπίβησον ἐμέ, προγόνων τ’ ἐνὶ θεσμοῖς
 Μουσάων ἐρασιπλοκάμων δώροισι μελοίμην.

May you always through your evil-averting help
 give holy light rich with blessings to my soul,
 once you have scattered the man-destroying poisonous mist,

³¹⁷ Proclus, *In Tim.* I.206.26-214.12.

and to my body fitness and gift-bestowing health;
bring me to glory, that in accord with the traditions of my forefathers
I may cultivate the gifts of the Muses with pretty locks.

Here, Proclus asks for both “holy light”, which is the illumination of the intellect³¹⁸, and the “gifts of the Muses”. “Holy light” is also mentioned in other hymns³¹⁹. The “man-destroying poisonous mist” is a reference to the *Iliad* V.121-132, when Athena disperses the mist that hides the gods’ true form from mortal eyes. This intertextuality, noted by Van den Berg³²⁰, functions as a theurgical *symbolon*. But divine inspiration is essentially reversion and contemplation, as is prayer³²¹. The use of *symbola* might reflect the possible divine inspiration of Proclus, since he connects the use of such mechanisms to theurgical efforts in *Essay VI*. It should be noted that by “the gifts of the Muses” Proclus is probably referring to philosophy as a form of *mousikê*. As seen in *Essay V*, the philosopher is the true *mousikos*.

But in his prayers for “holy light”, Proclus also mentions that this kind of inspiration can be achieved through books and rites (*Hymn IV.5-7*):

κλῦτε, σωτῆρες μεγάλοι, ζαθέων δ’ ἀπὸ βιβλῶν
νεύσατ’ ἐμοὶ φάος ἀγνὸν ἀποσκεδάσαντες ὀμίχλην,
ὄφρα κεν εὖ γνοίην θεὸν ἄμβροτον ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα.

Hearken, great saviours, and grant me from very divine books
pure light, scattering the mist,
so that I know well an immortal god from a man.

And (*Hymn VI.4-7*):

τεύχετε δ’ αἰγλήεσσαν ἐμοῦ βίότιο πορείην
βριθομένην ἀγαθοῖσι, κακὰς δ’ ἀπελαύνετε νούσους
ἐκ ῥεθέων, ψυχὴν δὲ περὶ χθονὶ μαργαίνουσαν
ἔλκετ’ ἐγερσινόοισι καθηραμένην τελετήσι.

Make the course of my life radiant,

³¹⁸ Van den Berg (2001) 182.

³¹⁹ *Hymns* III.15; I.40; VII.31, 33.

³²⁰ Van den Berg (2001) 182.

³²¹ *In Tim.* 211.9.

weighed down with good things, but drive the evil diseases
from my limbs; attract my soul, now madly raging around the earth,
once it has been purified through the intellect-awaking rites.

And finally (*Hymn* III.1-5):

Ὑμνέομεν, μερόπων ἀναγώγιον ὑμνέομεν φῶς,
ἐννέα θυγατέρας μεγάλου Διὸς ἀγλαοφώνους,
αἱ ψυχὰς κατὰ βένθος ἀλωομένας βιότοιο
ἀχράντοις τελετήσιν ἐγερσινόων ἀπὸ βιβλῶν (...)

We hymn, we hymn the light that raises man aloft,
on the nine daughters of great Zeus with splendid voices,
who have rescued from the agony of this world,
so hard to bear, the souls who were wandering in the depth of life
through immaculate rites from intellect-awaking books (...)

These three texts speak of both books and rites as capable of transmitting divine inspiration, having themselves been composed by divine inspiration. This follows the theory of the chain of inspiration, which claims that the audience of a divinely inspired poem (or other forms of creation) will in turn be divinely inspired. Since the *Hymns* themselves utilize *symbola* and are capable of using theurgy to create divine inspiration, the ones who read or hear Proclus' *Hymns* will be divinely inspired in turn - the chain theory seems to imply so - since the *symbola* act then as objects of contemplation that point upwards.

In conclusion, the *Hymns* of Proclus are a form of theurgy that puts into practice what Proclus established in *Essay VI* of his *Commentary on the Republic*. These poems act as a mimetic product of a contemplation of the higher realm, although it is inconclusive if that contemplation was discursive or intuitive (i.e., if they are products of philosophical inquiry or divine inspiration). The poems themselves, inasmuch as they use theurgic *symbola*, are objects of contemplation that provoke the superior form of contemplation – in Proclus' terms: divine inspiration.

Conclusion

Proclus has distinct views on mimesis, particularly dependent on the Neoplatonic

context in which he was inserted. The concept of theurgy led Proclus to discuss mimesis in its soteriological aspect as a form of ascent and to focus on the mimetic power of *symbola* and the *sympatheia* which connect the whole Neoplatonic reality through links of likeness. Furthermore, the religious context of Iamblichean Neoplatonism possibly led Proclus to see divine inspiration as a cornerstone of the revelatory status of Plato and other forms of divine knowledge passed down through books, which are an important element in Proclus' thought, which is made evident by his many references to books in the *Hymns*. While Proclus definitely has his own theories which employ mimesis as a creative and contemplative mechanism, he still abides by the distinction which I have found in both Plato and Plotinus. This is the distinction between "superior" and "inferior mimesis", which all three stages of Platonism employ in their metaphysical and artistic discussions.

Appendix I

Hinos de Proclo, Tradução

I - Hino a Hélio

- Escutai, ó Rei do Fogo noérico, Titã detentor das rédeas douradas
Escutai, dispensador da luz, que sustenta a vida, ó soberano
Que tem a chave da fonte e canaliza de cima
ao cosmo material uma abundante torrente de harmonia.
- [5] Escutai! Pois, estando acima do trono central do Éter
E possuindo o coração do cosmo, disco brilhantíssimo,
Enchestes todas as coisas com a tua Providência que desperta o intelecto.
Os planetas, dotados dos teus sempre-prósperos archotes,
Através de danças sem fim e sem descanso,
- [10] Sempre sobre os terrestres lançam gotas que geram vida.
Sob as viagens circulares da tua carruagem,
Todas as coisas geradas germinam de acordo com as estações.
O clamor dos elementos embatendo uns contra os outros
parou ao surgires (vindo) do misterioso gerador.
- [15] O inabalável coro das Moiras detém-se para ti,
E novamente enrolam o novelo do destino que agrilhoa,
Quando (o) desejares pois dominas ao redor,
Pois reinas com poder tudo à volta.
Da tua corrente o Rei do canto que respeita os deuses, Febo, surtiu.
Cantando as palavras dos deuses, acompanhado da cítara,
- [20] Refreia a grande onda da estrondosa geração.
Péon, do teu séquito de doces oferendas que afasta o mal, brotou,
E imputou a sua saúde, enchendo de uma harmonia toda inócua
O vasto cosmo. Cantam-te em hinos, como glorioso pai de Dioniso.
- [25] E também na mais funda das profundezas da Matéria como Euios Attis.
Outros como delicado Adónis te celebram em cantos.
Temem a ameaça do teu ágil flagelo os Daemones,

Nefastos aos homens e de temperamento selvagem,
Preparando males para as nossas miseráveis almas,
[30] Para que no fundo da vida ruidosa sempre sofram,
Por terem caído sob o jugo do corpo,
Esquecendo o pátio brilhante do Pai Celeste.

Mas, ó melhor dos deuses, coroado em fogo, bem-aventurado Daemon,
Imagem do Deus Pai de Tudo, ascensor das almas,
[35] Escutai e purificai-me sempre de todos os erros,
Recebi a minha súplica lacrimosa, protege-me dos pecados funestos,
Que me protejas para longe das deusas da vingança,
Apaziguando o ágil olho da Justiça que vê tudo claramente.
Que envies sempre uma luz santa e bem aventurada para a minha alma
[40] Com os teus favores que afastam o mal,
Quando dispersares a venenosa névoa assassina de homens;
E (que envies) uma saúde inabalável para o meu corpo,
Eleva-me para a glória, para que, nas leis dos antepassados,
Me cultive nos dons das Musas de adoráveis madeixas.
[45] Concede, pela piedade amorosa, uma firme felicidade,
Se desejares, ó Soberano. És capaz de facilmente realizar
Todas as coisas, pois tens o domínio e o poder ilimitado.
E se, graças ao novelo movido pelas estrelas, e graças à agulha
Que circula em hélices, algum mal vier para mim,
Tu, protege-me com a tua grande força.

II - Hino a Afrodite

Cantamos hinos à corrente de muitos nomes de (Afrodite) da espuma
nascida,
E à grande nascente real, da qual todos os imortais amores alados
Brotaram, dos quais uns dispararam flechas noéricas contra às almas
[5] Para que, sofrendo a picada anagógica da saudade,
Desejem (as almas) ver o pátio feroso da mãe.
Outros, graças às vontades que afastam o mal e a providência do pai,
Desejando aumentar o universo infinito com gerações,

- Incitaram nas almas um desejo da vida terrestre.
- [10] Outros supervisionam sempre os caminhos variados
Dos cantos matrimoniais, de modo que produzem
Uma imortal raça de homens que muito sofrem a partir da raça mortal.
E nos trabalhos da Citereia geradora do amor todos se interessam.
Mas, ó Deusa, pois tens ouvidos que ouvem ao longe
- [15] Por todo o lado, quer cerques o grande céu,
Onde dizem que tu és uma alma divina no eterno cosmo,
Quer habites no éter acima dos ciclos das sete órbitas,
Depositando poder inquebrável sobre as tuas correntes,
Escutai, e que guies a minha muito cansativa viagem da vida,
- [20] Ó soberana, com os teus justíssimos dardos,
Refreando o impulso arrepiante dos profanos desejos.

III - Hino às Musas

- Cantamos hinos, cantamos hinos à luz que eleva os homens
Às nove, de bela voz, filhas do grande Zeus,
Que protegem das agonias insuportáveis
As almas que vagueiam nas profundezas da vida
- [5] Através de ritos imaculados vindos dos livros que acordam o intelecto
E ensinaram-nas (almas) a desejar seguir com urgência o trilho
Para lá do abismo do esquecimento
E a irem puras até ao astro parente do qual foram separadas
Quando caíram no cabo da mundo gerado,
- [10] Enlouquecidas com as sortes materiais
Mas, ó Deusas, refreiem também o meu turbulento ímpeto
E inspirem-me através das palavras noéricas dos sábios
E que a raça dos ímpios mortais não me afaste
Do divino, brilhante e frutífero caminho
- [15] Puxai sempre do ruído da geração errante
Para a luz sacra a minha alma deambulante,
Cheia das vossas colmeias que fortalecem a mente
E possuindo a glória da tua eloquência que seduz o espírito.

Pois eu próprio sou também de sangue Lício.
E eleva de volta a alma da desgraça para a grande beleza,
[15] Enquanto ela foge da picada destrutiva do terrestre desejo.

VI - Hino comum a Hécate e a Jano

Saudações, ó mãe dos deuses, de muitos nomes, bem-nascida;
Saudações, Hécate que guarda as portas, de grande força; mas tu também,
Saudações ó Jano ancestral, Zeus imperecível; Saudações, ó Zeus supremo
Tornem radiante o caminho da minha vida,
[5] Carregada com coisas boas, expulsem as funestas doenças
Dos meus membros. A minha alma que agora em frenesim
Rodeia a terra elevem quando for purificada pelos ritos que acordam a alma.
Sim, rezo, deem (me) as mãos, revelem-me, a mim que necessito,
Os caminhos revelados pelos deuses. Observarei a preciosa luz
[10] A partir da qual é possível fugir ao mal da negra geração.
Sim, rezo, deem (me) as mãos, puxem-me para o porto da piedade
Com as vossas brisas, pois estou cansado.
Saudações, ó mãe dos deuses, de muitos nomes, bem-nascida;
Saudações, Hécate que guarda as portas, de grande força; mas tu também,
[15] Saudações ó Jano ancestral, Zeus imperecível; Saudações, ó Zeus supremo.

VII - Hino a Atena de muitos conselhos

Escutai-me, filha de Zeus detentor da égide,
Que salta da fonte do pai e do topo da tua corrente
De espírito viril, portadora de escudo, de grande força, fidalga,
Palas, nascida de Tritão, lanceira, do elmo dourado,
[5] Escutai. Aceita em bom espírito (este) hino, ó Soberana,
Nunca abandones em vão as minhas palavras ao vento,
Tu que abriste os portões da sabedoria usados pelos deuses
E derrotaste a raça dos gigantes terrestres que lutaram contra os deuses.
Tu que fugiste do desejo de Hefesto apaixonado,

- [10] E guardaste a cinta inconquistável da tua virgindade.
Tu que no esconderijo do Éter salvaste o coração (ainda) não mutilado
Do soberano Baco quando foi despedaçado pelas mãos dos Titãs
E ao pai trouxeste-o, para que, através das misteriosas vontades,
- [15] Um novo Dioniso renascesse de Sêmele à volta do Cosmo.
O teu machado, cortando pela raiz as cabeças das bestas dos sofrimentos
de Hécate que tudo vê, adormeceu a geração.
Tu que amaste o sagrado poder das virtudes que acordam os mortais.
Tu que ordenaste toda a vida com variadas artes
- [20] Dispondo artes demiúrgicas noéricas às almas.
Tu que recebeste a acrópole na colina de crista alta,
Símbolo do grande topo da tua corrente, ó Senhora.
Tu que amaste a terra, berço dos homens, mãe dos livros,
Enquanto resistias ao desejo sagrado do teu tio,
- [25] E concedeste à cidade ter o teu nome e nobres mentes.
Aí geraste uma oliveira como sinal que se vê ao longe
Da contenda para os vindouros, junto da borda mais alta do monte,
Quando uma agitada onda imensa vinda do mar
Lançava-se contra os Cecrópidas por comando de Posídon
- [30] Flagelando tudo com as suas estrondosas ondas.
Escutai-me, tu de quem brilha uma sacra luz.
Dai-me, ao errar pela terra um abençoado porto,
Dai uma sacra luz vinda das tuas palavras sagradas à alma
E também sabedoria e amor. Soprai para o (meu) amor
- [35] Uma força tal e tão grande que, vindo das barrigas das terras,
Novamente (me) puxará em direção ao Olimpo até à morada do teu nobre
pai.
- Se algum obstáculo terrível me dominar a vida,
Pois sei que sou despedaçado por muitas e várias ações profanas,
Por vários lados, as quais cometi em espírito insensato,
- [40] Sede graciosa, ó tu que dás conselhos moderados, que preservas os mortais,
Não deixes que me torne em espólio e presa para as terríveis vinganças
Estendido no chão, pois eu proclamo ser teu!
Dai aos (meus) membros uma saúde inquebrável e firme,
E afastai a multidão de doenças amargas que comem a carne.
- [45] Sim, rezo, ó Rainha, e com a tua mão imortal

Parai todas as terríveis agonias negras.

Dai à viagem da minha vida ventos calmos,

Filhos, leito, glória, boa aventura, felicidade amável,

Persuasão, conversas entre amigos, uma mente astuta,

[50] Poder contra os inimigos, autoridade entre os povos.

Escutai, escutai, ó Soberana. Como grande suplicante

Venho a ti por (grande) necessidade. E tu, emprestai-me o gentil ouvido.

Appendix II

Comentário à *República* de Platão, Ensaio V: Os ensinamentos de Platão sobre a poética, as suas ideias, o melhor gênero e ritmo

42. Primeiro é necessário falar e discutir sobre a razão pela qual Platão não aceita a poesia, mas expulsa-a da cidade correta, mesmo se a ungindo com mirra, como é costume das estátuas nos rituais mais sagrados, assim a coroou como sagrada, tal como é costume coroar as estátuas. Pois bem, isto é o que é digno de examinar:

1. Se a poesia é algo divino em si, por que razão é expulsa da cidade divina? Se não tem nada de divino, por que razão é honrada com as honras dos deuses?

2. Segundo, porque que raio não admite acima de tudo a tragédia e a comédia, mesmo embora estas contribuam para as expiações das paixões, que nem é possível excluírem totalmente nem, por sua vez, são seguras de cedermos excessivamente, mas necessitam no momento certo de um estímulo que, se se completa durante o espetar destas (comédia e tragédia), nos esvaziam destas coisas no resto do tempo.

3. Terceiro, de que modo no *Simpósio*, por um lado compeliu ambos Agatón e Aristófanes a concordar que a comédia e a tragédia têm origem na mesma ciência, mas por outro lado na *República* não deseja que haja um mesmo escritor para as duas, mesmo sendo as coisas mais próximas uma da outra, nem que haja um ator para as duas, embora sejam ambos imitadores.

4. Quarto, porque que raio nega saber quais os cantos de simpósio e quais os fúnebres, nem quais o interlocutor propõe como melhores do que os outros e mais próprios para a educação, mesmo que Sócrates diga saber algo sobre ritmos graças à tutoria de Dámon, e nomeando aqueles que ele ensinou.

5. Quinto, o que é a música verdadeiramente por si só, e quais são os modos de música o secundário e terciário. **43.** Parece que diz coisas diferentes em distintos sítios sobre isto: tanto considera a poesia como um tipo de música como a distingue da música.

6. Sexto, que tipo de harmonias admite como útil para a educação, que é necessário os poetas da *República* praticarem, e qual das imagens rítmicas elege. Pois parece que deixa estas coisas indefinidas, sendo necessário definição para aqueles que discutem sobre a educação.

7. Sétimo, o que é que diz serem os erros dos poetas de acordo com ele, e por que

razão as próprias musas nunca falhariam. Descobriremos através destas investigações como era ele o melhor crítico de poesia, e não o pior, como alguns consideraram antigamente por causa do elogio dos poemas de Sólon no *Timeu*.

8. Oitavo, qual é o melhor poeta segundo Platão, e a partir de que vantagens de conteúdo e expressão é caracterizado. Pois é necessário que um seja de todas as formas o mais correto, aquele para o qual, olhando, consideramos que se deve julgar a poesia.

9. Nono, qual é o objetivo da poesia correta segundo ele. Pois é necessário que o correto de todas as coisas seja levado até algum objetivo, e por causa deste ou falhando ou acertando é possível atingir o correto ou o disforme de cada coisa das que tentamos [fazer].

10. Décimo, qual é o poeta no universal para o qual o poeta no particular olha e atingirá o objetivo pessoal. Pois não existe nada das coisas verdadeiramente boas que não exista muito antes no [mundo dos] universais do que [no mundo] dos particulares.

Primeiro ponto. Começando desde o início, falemos. Por que razão não aceita a poesia, embora esta tenha sido bem considerada como educativa naquele tempo, quando estabelece os modelos da educação. **44.** Pois parece provável que, visto que toda a prática dos poetas é mimética, compreendeu que os poetas falhavam em relação a estas duas coisas na mimese: umas vezes imitando os factos sobre os quais escrevem desigualmente; outras vezes com semelhança, mas sendo imitadores de coisas diversas, produzem da mesma forma imitações diversas. Então, sempre que imitem as coisas dos deuses ou as coisas dos heróis [Platão diz que] os imitam desigualmente sem saberem, ao tentar descrever algo por linguagem com emoções, mesmo sendo contrária à natureza dos seres, ou contra os costumes à cerca destes, tanto em narrativas forjadas como sem narrativas, assemelhando as coisas heroicas aos costumes da humanidade, arrastando para estas coisas (heroicas), através de palavras, as paixões: a ganância, a subjugação, a arrogância, a intemperança (Platão diz que estas coisas são totalmente indignas dos heróis que nós aceitamos serem filhos dos deuses), usando como cortina [para esconder] a verdade sobre os deuses uma linguagem vergonhosa que não é fácil para os que escutam e particularmente para os que são jovens julgarem.

Ambas estas coisas (seguintes) mostram uma mimese desigual: Por um lado imediatamente quando as coisas não são adaptadas àquilo que imitam; por outro lado, quando são adaptadas, mas não diretamente, por causa da aparência inadequada devido ao véu da composição de narrativas. É necessário que o imitador forneça pensamentos próprios às coisas, pois as imagens são desejadas como próprias de cada coisa, e [é

necessário que o imitador] escolha palavras apropriadas aos pensamentos. **45.** E por isso [Platão] costumava dizer muitas vezes sobre a poesia dos mitos dos deuses que mente não belamente, chamando bela mentira àquilo que esconde a verdade através de palavras bonitas. Mas sobre a imitação das coisas heroicas não disse que mente belamente, mas disse que totalmente mente ao mostrar os heróis a serem como os homens. Quando é necessário dizer as coisas verdadeiras mente porque as paixões que atribuem aos heróis são muito inapropriadas, quando é necessário mentir mente não belamente por causa da linguagem ser muito inapropriada para os deuses, linguagem a qual utilizam nos mitos divinos.

Mas a razão disto, a qual Platão no *Timeu* revela claramente, é que a raça imitadora é capaz de imitar acima de tudo as coisas nas quais foi criada, mas o que está fora destas coisas torna-se difícil de imitar em atos e mais difícil ainda de imitar em palavras. Logo, [os da raça imitadora] nem são capazes de atribuir feitos apropriados aos heróis e [através] destas coisas imitar a natureza deles que produz atos [tanto] humanos [como] moderados, nem palavras que eles diriam dirigindo-se a quaisquer guerras ou à paz, ou [dirigindo-se] aos deuses ou aos homens, mas que muitos dos homens diriam ou blasfemando contra os deuses ou falando com demasiada confiança ou bajulando os homens ou cometendo Húbris.

Por esta razão é que falham em relação aos deuses, utilizando linguagem que é habitual para si e na qual foram educados, tanto quanto imaginam ser útil para a cortina sobre os deuses, os furtos, as rapacidades, os erros, os adultérios, as batalhas e as conspirações dos deuses, faltando bastante no aplicar cada palavra às coisas sobre as quais falam, tanto quanto é próprio dos bem-educados e que são da linguagem comum nas cidades corretas, tanto as de cima como as de baixo, como a justiça, a lei, a simplicidade, o respeito e todas as coisas do género, coisas que são naturais aos bons cidadãos.

Não é tolerável para estes dizer coisas vergonhosas e ilegais, pois não consideram útil poluir a língua [que é] o órgão das himnódias dos deuses e da comunhão com o Bem através da vocalização destas coisas. **46.** E [Platão] flagelou os poetas por causa da mimese duplamente desigual. Fazem a mesma coisa como se um pintor, propondo imitar Aquiles, pintasse Tersites, ou pintasse Aquiles, mas omitisse a natureza masculina à qual nas *Leis* [Platão] chamou [uma representação] bem unida com o certo.

E maldisse a imitação desigual nos poetas doutra forma por causa da representação da vida nas imagens e de todo o género de costumes e tipos imitando da mesma forma cobardes, indisciplinados e ignorantes como homens corajosos, temperados

e inteligentes. Esta diversidade é totalmente imprópria para a educação que procura moldar os costumes dos que são educados apenas nos feitos bons e nas palavras boas.

A nossa alma regozija-se por natureza com imitações, e por isso somos todos amantes de mitos, e todos, quando somos jovens, se nos acostumarmos a viver com todo o tipo de imitações, assimilamo-nos a elas por causa da empatia e tornamo-nos alguns iguais a elas e acabamos por ter costumes diversos devido a nos alegrarmos com coisas diversificadas e sendo moldados por imitações variadas. A razão pela qual a poesia dos costumes diversos é melhor do que a dos simples é a mesma que antes dissemos estar escrita no *Timeu*, a raça mimética [consegue] imitar mais facilmente estas coisas, nas quais foram educados. Pois os poetas que são educados como homens complexos e de todos os tipos não atingem a imitação dos [homens] simples e não moldados e de produzir poemas iguais a estes (homens simples), [poemas] que são capazes de, moldando[-os], fazer os outros que estudam os poemas semelhantes em relação às mesmas coisas.

Então, por exemplo, encontraremos entre os homens de hoje os maiores admiradores dos quais a maioria é de costumes complexos. **47.** Pelo menos existe o argumento que todo aquele que admira, logo se assemelha ao admirado, e todo aquele que tem prazer, concorda com o que apraz. Em relação às leis que regem a educação para os jovens, é necessário resguardar contra esta poética, visto que é um prazer para as crianças, e não é útil para a virtude, mas quanto maior for o prazer para eles, maior também é o dano. Pois será eleita a musa mais austera, a que à virtude diretamente conduz. Pois nem nos admiramos com a medicina que dá prazer, mas com a que cura. E a educação é a medicina das almas, concerta a anomalia e a distorção das paixões nas almas, de tal modo que é necessário eleger esta musa, todos os poemas e todos os hábitos para a liderança dos jovens, não aquilo que, sendo prejudicial, apraz à juventude, mas aquilo que dê disciplina, embora seja duro.

Duas coisas, para que falemos resumidamente, duas razões para não ser aceitável a poética para a educação ideal: Nas coisas que imitam corretamente (os assuntos humanos) a variedade da imitação; e nas coisas que imitam não corretamente a desarmonia da imitação e isto é dúplice: ou na linguagem apenas, ou também nos feitos, como observámos.

Visto que interpretamos todos que a poética das musas é sagrada e que chegou inicialmente à humanidade graças à inspiração delas, igualmente, presumo, enviando esta para fora da sua cidade por causa das razões referidas, [Platão] não considerou necessário expulsá-la porque não a honrava, mas honrou-a como sagrada para as musas com as

mesmas honras das estátuas, com mirra e grinaldas. Mas não pensemos que, mesmo se por acaso esta poética não pertencer na melhor cidade, [Platão] considerou esta como imprópria e prejudicial a todos os tipos de vida, mas que é própria de alguns, que beneficiem das palavras desta poética. **48.** Tal como o próprio diz, mesmo a [poesia] que imitou incorretamente a coisas divinas tem lugar nos mistérios intermédios, nos quais as coisas ditas simbolicamente mostram-se claras ao serviço dos deuses como um todo e a recitação destas [coisas simbólicas] contribui para toda a arte hierática. Visto que a própria vida dos ouvintes já está estabelecida entre os deuses e já escutam estas histórias, sem prejuízo, através destas narrativas os últimos dos espíritos são evocados, e enfeitando através destes símbolos fazem com que a providência divina, sem obstáculos, vá destes [espíritos] até nós, como se estivessem cheios com as palavras e os feitos que regozijam. Assim encontraríamos a imitação dos caracteres variados [como] útil a alguns, aos quais o não-diverso é mais prejudicial do que o [próprio] diverso. É por isso que é útil para aquela cidade que é totalmente tirânica, pois não permite regozijar apenas com a pior forma de vida, mas introduz uma educação através de uma imitação de caracteres múltiplos, incluindo igualmente os hábitos melhores e os piores. Pois tal como esta diversidade é prejudicial para esta forma divina e real da cidade, assim também é útil para a forma pior e tirânica. Isto divide-se em dois pontos: o melhor ou o pior do que a diversidade. O melhor, por um lado, ao utilizar a diversidade, seria prejudicado [por ela], tornando-se pior, enchendo-se do pior, e o pior do que a diversidade, por outro lado, ganha [com a diversidade] e torna-se melhor, usufruindo do melhor.

Então se a poesia é útil para algumas outras cidades, logo é exilada como não concordante com a [cidade] ideal, mas mesmo assim é honrada. **49.** Pois afirmamos que toda a arte hierática é própria de algum deus, mas não desejaremos por causa disto tornar os nossos guardiões em artesãos, pois têm como única ocupação apenas a salvação da cidade. Então [Platão] expulsa as artes para a cidade de baixo [inferior], e igualmente expulsa a poética para outra cidade. Aquelas [artes] completam as necessidades instrumentais aos políticos e aos líderes, como se submetem e não discordam da ordem delas em favor dos salvadores da cidade. Mas não é possível incluir entre as artes a poética que está cheia de espírito e afirma que ensina, para que não preparemos fortificações [inimigas] desde a cidade inferior e não engrandeçamos os hábitos opostos aos hábitos dos guardiões.

Então desta maneira resolvemos o primeiro dos problemas.

[2] Então o segundo [problema] (este é o expulsar a comédia e a tragédia, estranhamente,

embora seja possível através destas saciar moderadamente as paixões e, estando saciadas, conter bons feitos propícios à educação, curando o sofrimento delas). Isto forneceu Aristóteles com muito pretexto para acusação e forneceu aos que defendem esta poesia pretexto contra os argumentos de Platão, assim desta forma resolveremos de acordo com o que [foi dito antes].

Todos os imitadores de caracteres múltiplos, através da imitação, facilmente entram nas mentes da audiência, através da diversidade tornam-se prejudiciais para eles (pois, sejam as imitações de que tipo [forem], é forçoso que aquele que as sente torna-se semelhante a elas, através das imitações), e isto é o mais contrário à educação das crianças à virtude. A virtude é simples e muito semelhante à própria divindade, da qual dizemos que o Uno é especialmente próprio. É necessário que aquele que se tornará semelhante ao Uno fuja da vida contrária à simplicidade, de tal modo que deve purificar-se de toda a diversidade. **50.** Mas se isto é assim, também é sobretudo necessário que aquele que é jovem, devido à facilidade de moldar a juventude, se afaste o mais possível de todos aqueles hábitos que nos arrastam para aquela [diversidade]. Então é óbvio que protegeremos os ouvintes contra a tragédia e a comédia porque são imitações de todo o tipo de caracteres e que precipitam para o prazer, para que o agradável delas, arrastando o suscetível para a simpatia, não encha a vida dos jovens com males originados nas imitações, e, em vez de uma moderação expiatória das paixões, não cause nas almas um estado de opressão difícil de limpar, o qual suprime o que é uno e simples, moldando coisas opostas a isto a partir da amizade por imitações de todos os tipos.

Logo, estas poesias atraem diferentemente aquela [parte] da alma que está mais exposta às paixões; esta [a comédia], provocando o deleite no prazer e conduzindo para o riso excessivo; aquela [a tragédia], exercitando o deleite pela dor e arrastando para os lamentos sórdidos, e na medida em que cada uma dela faz o seu trabalho melhor, tanto mais alimenta o nosso lado patético. Então diremos que é necessário que o político arranje algumas formas de purgar estas paixões, mas não de tal modo que intensifique a nossa dependência emocional delas, [mas] pelo contrário, de tal modo que dê, harmoniosamente, rédea curta às ações destas. Então diremos que aquelas poesias, porque têm, além da diversidade, também a imoderação na estimulação destas paixões, estão longe de ser úteis para a expiação. Pois as expiações não estão nos excessos, mas nas atividades moderadas que têm pouca semelhança àquelas das quais são expiações. Se não é necessário que os educados por nós se tornem amantes da dor e do riso, não será necessário que eles se associem com as imitações múltiplas de ambas estas duas paixões.

51. Duas coisas então fizeram que Platão não aceitasse a tragédia e a comédia na cidade ideal como não sendo dignas, para os jovens, de atenção: uma, a diversidade das imitações destas [poesias], como foi investigado; outra, a estimulação imoderada das paixões, as quais [ele] deseja refrear tanto quanto possível; e terceiro [em adição] a estas, a tolerâncias delas [da comédia e tragédia] para com os erros em relação a toda a raça divina e heroica. Não se afastam de todo das conversas que fogem para a impiedade, blasfemando contra os deuses, escrevendo para os heróis discursos indignos de heróis; se os nossos jovens acreditarem nestes discursos, serão educados numa vida gigântica e na fantasia ateia, devido à qual, ao crescer, todo o coro das virtudes arruinar-se-á. Pois não deseja [o coro] existir em harmonia com a vida ateia e arrogante face aos mais fortes. Mas se não acreditarem, nem se as poesias tivessem algo de útil, não considerariam credível por causa da incredibilidade sobre elas em relação às coisas maiores. Pois, por natureza, se nós desconfiarmos daquelas coisas que são dignas de muita atenção também não daremos a nossa atenção àquelas coisas que são menos dignas. E Platão, prevendo estas coisas, não dá um coro aos que fazem este tipo de imitações, nem deixa aos que são jovens escutá-las, por causa das três preocupações, como foi investigado:

- Por causa da viciosidade dos pensamentos / doutrina
- Por causa da imoderação das paixões
- Por causa da diversidade em todo o tipo de vida.

Destas, uma é um mal para a faculdade cognitiva em nós; outra para a faculdade apetitiva e a outra para toda a alma.

52.[3] Mas, tendo sido estas coisas examinadas, avancemos para aquilo que propusemos como familiar ao que foi [dito] anteriormente, como pode concordar consigo próprio [ser consistente], [se] no *Simpósio* à força faz a comédia e a tragédia próprias da mesma arte, mas na *República* diz que as mesmas não são relacionadas uma com a outra e não são produzidas pela mesma habilidade, por causa da geração da nossa natureza fragmentada em coisas diferentes para coisas diferentes, de tal modo que em relação à tragédia apenas, nem todos têm as metades da mesma poesia iguais para o todo, mas uns são corretos numas partes desta e outros noutras, e assim também com a comédia.

Então a verdade é que é possível a todos perceber que a alma humana, devido à distância da vida e à queda desde a energia universal para a particular, caiu na [vida] mais dupla. Aquela tornou a própria cósmica, tendo visão para o todo e administrando em conjunto com os deuses tudo, olhando pouco para a gênese, enquanto o líder neste mundo está acostumado a contemplar o todo. Mas a descida para esta forma aconteceu porque

ela [a alma] foi conduzida do todo e do tudo para o mais definido. Por um lado, preferindo, [em vez] do *logos* cósmico, de acordo com o qual já vivera primordialmente, apenas a vida mortal, por outro lado, depois disto, atirou-se para outra [vida] mais fragmentada, a humana, em vez da providência da totalidade da vida mortal como um todo. E depois disto, fixando a sua vida de acordo com a vida de algum ser humano, como a do filósofo, pondo de lado o *logos* comum do ser humano. E depois disto, vestindo uma vida nesta região, nesta cidade, nesta família, e assim tornando-se particular em vez de universal, e por causa da queda para esta existência, toma outras características, umas por causas próximas, como os pais e o esperma, e outras [por causas] do ambiente e da natureza própria em si, e outras [por causas] circunstanciais da vida própria aos lugares nos quais calhou cair a última queda. **53.** Através destas coisas todas, a natureza dela [da alma], estando verdadeiramente despedaçada, limitou a sua capacidade para as artes, ciência e devoções diversas, e outra [alma] produziu outras [capacidades para as artes, ciências e devoções], e não para todas estas mesmas, visto que ela divide as vidas relacionadas com estas coisas, em relação aos poderes dela. Isto então é a maior verdade de tudo o que eu disse, como é possível a alguns escrever comédia e a outros tragédia e a outros não é possível escrever todas as partes da comédia ou igualmente da tragédia.

Mas, é necessário aos que fazem estas poesias duas coisas: o conhecimento e a vida. O conhecimento para que tenham a arte de como preparar o tratamento de cada [parte] e através de que partes, e como as organizar e através de que tipo de personagens, coisas que os que escrevem sobre estes assuntos estão habituados a discutir. A vida [ou aptitude], para que produzam uma imitação [correta] de caracteres, [como] que tipo de coisas, de circunstâncias e de personagens são, e para que não se tornem imitadores incorretos das coisas que sugerem, [logo] é possível haver um conhecimento técnico para ambas, aquilo que Sócrates diz no *Simpósio* (pois não diz que o mesmo [poeta] imita a tragédia e a comédia, mas que o mesmo sabe escrever comédia e tragédia); Mas, forçosamente, a habilidade de imitar através de caracteres já não é uma para ambas as poesias. E Sócrates na *República* diz que o mesmo [poeta] não é capaz de imitar tragicamente e comicamente. Pois, a imitação é sobretudo a criação de caracteres, mas o mesmo carácter não é próprio para a tragédia que se deleita nos lamentos, [como] para a comédia que se deleita no riso.

Logo, Sócrates, razoavelmente dividindo o técnico do ético num momento disse que um mesmo poeta sabe fazer ambas, e noutra momento disse que o mesmo não pode imitar ambas. Pois é necessário técnica e carácter para ambas, e destas duas, a técnica é

comum a ambas, mas o caracter é diferente por propriedade. Já [foi dito] muito sobre isto.

54.[4] O que diremos sobre a quarta [questão]? Como é que Sócrates nega saber os diferentes tipos de harmonias, [enquanto] diz que ouviu algumas coisas sobre ritmos junto de Dámon, e passou o conhecimento destas coisas para Gláucon, adicionando “tu és músico”?

De acordo com isto, digamos em favor desta investigação que é próprio do político dizer algo sobre harmonias e sobre ritmos, mas não [da mesma maneira] como é próprio do músico. É necessário que seja próprio deste [político] o trabalho de determinar que tipo de modo de harmonias são próprios para a ascensão e educação dos jovens, mas ao outro [músico] é próprio investigar aprofundadamente as distinções entre as [diferentes harmonias], quais instigam o deleite na dor da alma, quais dão licença ao deleite no prazer e quais moderam as ações de ambas [estas paixões]. Deve então, se for verdadeiramente músico, investigar quais as próprias para as constituições. Portanto, dizem corretamente que nem o político deve ser ignorante na música, nem o músico ignorante na política. Pois, destes, o que é ignorante na música, por causa do seu desconhecimento de música, não saberá que harmonia contribui para a educação. E destes, o apolítico aceitará todas as harmonias igualmente, [tanto] as que têm tendência para a incorreção [como] as que contribuem para a educação. Embora a música professe que torna a alma simpática às coisas belas e adversa às coisas feias.

Então, Sócrates, defendendo o que é próprio para o político, como demiurgo de uma constituição, passa para outros a distinção das harmonias, enquanto o próprio traça apenas os tópicos da harmonia com tendência para a educação. Assim como pertence ao verdadeiro político definir o objetivo do general e contra quem fazer guerra, [contra] aqueles que tentarem cometer injustiça, e deixar a este [general], como especialista, as direções, as coisas da guerra e as [suas] divisões, onde, como e através de que coisas fazer guerra. **55.** Assim também, o político comandará ao médico curar aqueles que for necessário, nos casos onde não se está a prolongar a morte, mas permitir-lhe-á conhecer as direções da saúde, se é possível [curar] através de dietas, ou se através de fármacos ou se através de cirurgias. Do mesmo modo, o político mandará ao orador discursar e convencer que as coisas justas e as coisas proveitosas são as mesmas coisas, mas deixará ao orador distinguir e conhecer as formas de discurso, usando as quais é possível convencer, e as diferenças entre elas, se é necessário convencer os ouvintes através de discursos augustos ou se através [de discursos] éticos ou [se através de discursos] que tenham maior intensidade. Convencerá cada um, através das coisas apropriadas.

Assim então, o político até em relação às harmonias estabelecerá a coleção de tópicos delas, e deixará ao músico os detalhes próprios das diferenças entre elas. Por causa destas coisas, Sócrates diz que não conhece as harmonias, nem quais as dos funerais nem quais as dos simpósios, mas apenas [diz] que determina aquilo para que é necessário que o educador olhe, para aquela harmonia que cause ordem ao educando em todas as ações, em todas as circunstâncias e em todas as paixões, [aquela que] o torne homem nas coisas violentas e nos constrangimentos, e que não o torne relaxado com a energia da vida, aquela que o torne sensato nas licenças e nas vontades e que não o torne desarmonizado por causa da presente boa conduta [bem estar]. Pois das coisas que acontecem, as indesejadas costumam tornar humilde as almas, mas as desejadas relaxam-nas. **56.** Mas se, [embora] negue conhecer as harmonias por causa do que é próprio ao político, diz algo sobre ritmos, a culpa disto talvez seja a ignorância de Gláucon. Pois disse que conhecia as harmonias e as formas entre elas, mas disse que não conhecia os ritmos, [ou] mesmo se alguns destes seriam uteis para a educação. Então, para que demonstrasse as utilidades desta [música] para a educação e para que não fosse deixado incompleto por ele o raciocínio [ou diálogo] sobre o poder destas coisas e sobre o todo da música, disse poucas coisas, como é razoável, sobre ritmos, chamando à atenção como nestas coisas há [algo] educativo e que leva à virtude. Logo, continuando no [tópico do] político, mas / e não desejando mudar [o tema] para o músico, passando a teoria dos ritmos para Dámon, conclui uma só coisa a partir de todas [estas] coisas, que é necessário que o educador procure a eloquência, a harmonia e o bom ritmo, olhando talvez aqui para o todo da alma.

Através da boa linguagem e eloquência, o racional é aperfeiçoado em nós, através da boa harmonia e do bom ritmo o irracional é ordenado. Originando esta [a boa harmonia] nos poderes das almas (pois estas harmonizam-se antes das energias), e o bom ritmo manifestando-se apenas nas ações. Pois, os movimentos são ordenados através dos ritmos, visto que o ritmo é a ordenação destes, de acordo com o qual são medidos no tempo e há neles o primeiro e o seguinte).

[5] Disto [já] chega. Contemplemos a próxima [questão], o que é necessário que conheçamos sobre a música e poesia, de acordo com ele [Platão], como se relacionam umas com as outras e quantas ordenações / categorias de música há. Esperaríamos que juntasse a música à poética, visto que diz que o poeta se senta no trípode da musa e visto que diz que a inspiração pela musa, que toma a delicada e pura alma, incita e excita para as odes e outras [formas] de poesia, mas [logo] separa uma das outras, tal como quando, ordenando as vidas, estabelece o músico na primeira posição, exatamente [como faz] com

o amante da beleza, mas ao poeta colocou-o em sexto, exatamente [como faz] com todos os imitadores. **57.** Na verdade, parece que ele contempla muitas formas de música e atribui toda a raça poética sob a categoria de música, mas não fecha toda a música na [categoria] poética. É de valor diz, delimitando todas as formas de música primeiro, qual a que ele chamaria música poética.

(1) Nós dizemos que a própria filosofia é a maior música, tal como o maior erotismo, se quiseres afirmar que a coisa mais erótica não é regular a lira, mas [regular] a própria alma com a melhor harmonia, por causa da qual a alma é capaz de organizar todas as coisas da humanidade e cantar em hinos perfeitamente as coisas divinas, imitando o próprio Líder das Musas que canta em hinos o pai com odes noéricas, e contém o cosmo todo com vínculos inquebráveis, movendo todas as coisas, de acordo com o que Sócrates diz no *Crátilo*. Logo, diria também que primeiramente a música inspirada está no filósofo (pois passa despercebido à maioria que o filósofo é inspirado), e ainda mais as coisas nobres da música educativa, e todas estas coisas de um modo simples, olhando para as quais consideramos a música digna de estudo por todos. E o mais elevado dos músicos é assim, o mesmo, como dissemos, que o filósofo, aquele que falha em nada das coisas boas em relação à música.

58. (2) Mas chama a possessão musical das musas por outra expressão, como incitante e excitante das almas para a poesia inspirada. “Pois,” diz, “aquele que atinge as portas da poética sem a loucura das musas é um poeta incompleto e a sua poesia, a de um homem sã, é ultrapassada pela poesia dos loucos. Aqui, o poético e o músico vão para o mesmo [ponto], a música inspirada aperfeiçoando o poeta inspirado. Diz que a possessão pelas musas não inspira para alguma outra coisa que não o tornar-se poeta, um cantor em hinos dos feitos nobres que aconteceram outrora, e que incita, através destes, os vindouros para o zelo da educação. Aqui, mostra qual, acima de tudo, é o papel da poética, estando relacionado com a educação, e quão grande, e que não está relacionado com a legislação, mas verdadeiramente terceiro desde a verdade, educando, através de encômios dos que foram nobres, aqueles que invejam os hábitos dos nobres. Certamente assim era um modo de educação habitual entre os antigos, através da experiência / exemplo dos que viveram de acordo com a virtude, levar outros à virtude graças à imitação destes. A mesma coisa é demonstrada por aquele que, no poeta, diz o seguinte:

“E aprendemos as glórias dos homens de outrora”.

E:

“Não vês tal a glória que divino Orestes entre todos os homens ganhou”?

E:

“*Pois, nunca vi tais homens, nem verei. Eram os mais fortes*”.

Cada um destes [versos] educa, mas através de paradigmas. Este não é o método do legislador, mas é dizer qual o verdadeiramente bom [homem], e como o educando se tornará semelhante [a esse], a educação do legislador é por universais, não por exemplos particulares.

59. (3) Também designa uma terceira forma de música, já não, como a anterior, inspirada, mas na mesma é anagógica através de harmonias visíveis em direção ao belo invisível das harmonias invisíveis. Pois este músico é amante do belo, tal como o amante, este é lembrado do [verdadeiro] belo através das aparências, aquele através dos sons. Enumera este na primeira vida com o amante e faz três os que escolhem a vida anagógica e introspectiva desde últimos até novamente aos primeiros, a partir de onde caíram até aqui, o filósofo, o amante e o músico. Este age de acordo com algum belo que está nas harmonias e ritmos e a partir disto sobe para as harmonias e ritmos invisíveis que já não são apreensíveis através dos sons, mas visíveis ao *logismos* da mente. O outro age de acordo com todo o belo que está no sensível, sendo lembrado do belo simples, mas não de algo [particular]. O terceiro é enviado longe de todas as formas sensíveis para a [natureza] divina das formas noéticas, cujas formas sensíveis são ícones, e atingiu antecipadamente o objetivo do músico e do amante. Algo particularmente belo é certamente e de todas as formas belo, e alguma forma particular é de todas as maneiras uma forma. O espectador de todas as formas conhece ambos, tanto o belo simples, que é uma forma particular, e a coisa bela específica. Portanto, este tipo de música estará na mesma categoria que o filósofo.

(4) Ainda conta outra música em adição a estas, a que é educativa dos caracteres através das harmonias e dos ritmos em prol da virtude, [música a qual] descobre quais as harmonias e ritmos capazes de educar as paixões das almas e de moldar com os melhores caracteres em todos os assuntos e circunstâncias, e quais as opostas às anteriores que torcendo ou relaxando-as, tornam [as almas] desafinadas, e levam-nas para a desarmonia e arritmia. **60.** E poderás dizer que esta é a música educativa ordenada sob o político e está na mesma categoria que a ginástica, para a qual Sócrates olhando, na *República*, inicia os raciocínios sobre as harmonias e sobre os ritmos, tal como olha para aquela antes desta quando ,procurando aquelas ciências que têm algo que atraia para a verdade, decide não aceitar a harmonia que é sensível, mas aquilo que é anagógico para os rácios universais, colocando a nossa mente nas coisas noéticas em vez de nas sensíveis.

De acordo com ele, os tipos de música são tais; já é claro como a poesia tem de ser ordenada sob a música, quer inspirada, quer não, da qual se deve distinguir aquela que é anagógica. A vida primordial tinha esta [música], e separou-a da poética por ser mimética, não desejando esta [música] viver mimeticamente, mas [desejando] levar-se para longe dos imitadores e para [perto] dos paradigmas das harmonias e dos ritmos neste mundo.

[6] Mas já que estas coisas foram definidas, não deixemos indefinidas aquelas coisas secundárias a estas, quais as harmonias que pensa serem necessárias ao poeta de adotar para a educação dos jovens, e quais os ritmos que exige ao poeta que procure, visto que proíbe a cultivação de todas as harmonias e de todos os ritmos como sendo causa de uma diversidade *amusical* para os caracteres dos educandos? Parece, em todo o caso, graças às razões que dissemos, que transfere o juízo destas coisas [para outros] e que nos deixa em *suspense*, com sede de ouvir qual é sobre estas coisas lá [nesse diálogo] a opinião de Sócrates que é o mais elevado dos músicos. Tal como eu penso, e ele próprio confessa, ao dizer que a filosofia é a melhor música e que ele nunca abandonou esta em toda a vida, e, mantendo estas coisas, ele, irónico, diz que nada soube até aos dias finais. Então qual era a sua opinião sobre a harmonia e sobre o ritmo, dos que levam à educação, nos quais exige que componham os poetas, que cantarão para os jovens, e só aos quais diz que dará um coro, e não aos imitadores de caracteres de todos os tipos?

61. Em relação aos ritmos, sobre os quais dizer ter ouvido Dámon e aceitou aquilo que disse, é claro que aceitou, de entre os compostos, o Marcial, que é composto por um Iâmbico, um Dáctilo e um Pírambo. Isto cria um carácter masculino e preparado para todas as empresas forçosas e involuntárias.

De entre os ritmos simples [admite] o dáctilo heroico, sobre o qual diz ter ouvido lições de Dámon que regulou o dáctilo e o heroico, mostrando como considera que esse ritmo é produtivo de organização e de equilíbrio de coisas boas destas. E que a partir destas duas, torna a alma ao mesmo tempo ágil e gentil. Ambas estas coisas bem misturadas uma com a outra de tal modo que criam uma verdadeira educação. Pois, no *Político* diz que não se deve apenas tomar dos caracteres o ágil, que é por si só instável e incerto, nem também o gentil, que separado do outro é lânguido e impotente. Então, ambos os ritmos, quando juntos, introduzem a moderação um do outro.

Novamente em relação às harmonias, aquelas dos funerais e dos simpósios, destas umas relaxam o deleite no prazer, outras incitam ao deleite na dor, então já expulsas estas, [alguns] consideram que Sócrates aceita as restantes, das que Dámon ensinou, a harmonia

Frígia e a Dórica como educativas. Mas discordam uns dos outros, uns dizem que, segundo ele, a Frígia é pacífica e a Dórica polêmica, mas outros, contrariamente, dizem que a Frígia, como estimulante, é polêmica, e a Dórica, como acalmante, pacífica. Mas encontramos-lo no *Laques*, dizendo claramente que o homem bom e verdadeiramente educado é aquele que se adaptou não à lira nem aos instrumentos da educação, mas aquele que se aplicou à sua alma, nem na harmonia Frígia, nem na Jónica, nem na Lídia, mas na Dórica que é a única harmonia grega. Pensamos que ele considera que apenas esta entre [todas] as harmonias é suficiente para a educação, e a Frígia é própria para as coisas sacerdotais e inspiradas (diz ele no *Minos*, claramente, que apenas os cantos do Olimpo movem os que têm disposição natural a êxtase para a possessão). **62.** Mas dos ritmos, [ele diz que] o Marcial não é próprio para a educação das almas dos jovens, mas é próprio para o marchar para as coisas da guerra e para suportar a necessidade, e daí o ritmo recebe o seu nome. E que apenas o Dáctilo Heroico regula os educados e organizá-los totalmente em igualdade. Parece-me que desta forma disse ter ouvido Dámon a definir este ritmo, como contribuindo verdadeiramente para a ordenação da vida e como formativo.

Logo, diremos que ele pensa que apenas uma harmonia – a Dórica – e apenas um ritmo – o Dáctilo Heroico – são próprios para os poetas que certamente irão educar. Pois, há uma comunhão entre estes, de acordo com a lógica da igualdade. Tal como o ritmo Dáctilo é composto em igualdade de *arsis* e *thesis*, assim também a harmonia Dórica harmoniza o igual *logos* para ambos os tons. Pois, em relação a ela há duas tetracordas que cantam divididas por tom. A lógica da igualdade é própria para as virtudes das formas irracionais, removendo os excessos e as faltas que fazem parte da desigualdade.

63. Que cheguem estas coisas que foram demonstradas, quais as harmonias e quais os ritmos que [ele] escolheu para a poesia educativa. Que, tal como rejeitava a diversidade na imitação e por causa disto expulsava esta poética, assim também rejeitava nas harmonias e nos ritmos os hábitos diversos destas que conquistam os ouvidos da maioria, e mostra que condena, dos instrumentos, os chamados pan-harmónicos, o trágono e o próprio aulos, este é semelhante aos pan-harmónicos por causa da multiplicidade de buracos, cujo nome deve-se a ser possível ostentar todas as harmonias através deles.

Então, resumidamente falando, é necessário que o poeta contemple totalmente estas duas coisas na sua obra: tanto nas imitações como nas harmonias e nos ritmos, o belo e simples, dos quais o primeiro é noérico e o segundo divino. E sensatamente [o fará]. Pois é necessário que a alma se assemelhe a estas coisas que são anteriores a ela. O

corpo e a matéria são posteriores a ela, esta é uma deformidade e o corpo é um compósito.

[7] Estando concluídas por nós estas coisas, olhemos qual a coisa que censura a certa altura nos poetas do tempo dele e por causa de que coisas diz que eles não atingem a verdadeira música. As musas nunca cometerem os erros que estes cometem mostra que eles se afastam da verdadeira música e são levados a agradar a grande multidão. Entre estes [erros] que ele diz que os poetas que conhece cometem, há um que é o não tornar [as harmonias] apropriadas às formas de vida que imitam os discursos, as harmonias e os ritmos, utilizando palavras de homens nas mulheres, e nos homens as das mulheres, e destas até de não virtuosas. Isto não é próprio da imitação correta, tal como [atribuir] ritmos dos corajosos aos cobardes e vice-versa. **64.** Outro erro é confundir as harmonias e os ritmos em relação às formas de discursos e tecer juntas as coisas que não deviam ser tecidas juntas, como arrastar a harmonia Dórica para os discursos fúnebres e a Lídia, que é de lamentos, para as coisas dos homens. [Ele diz que] é necessário que a harmonia obedeça ao discurso, e o ritmo à harmonia. E se é um discurso de homem, as coisas restantes [devem] ser do mesmo modo, e se é uma lamentação, cada coisa tem de ser da mesma força. E parece que através disto, assim explica que, estando as harmonias divididas de acordo com as formas de vida, os poetas, usando todas para todas sem ordem, exibiram a opinião de como não existe esta diferença nas harmonias, mas que são todas possíveis de encaixar em todos os caracteres. E que por acaso se lamenta em harmonia Jónica, e que nos simpósios intervém-se em harmonia Mixolídia. Alguns escolheram escrever isto, enquanto admitem que existem diferenças de discursos e ritmos, e que não se junta o discurso do corajoso com o cobarde, nem que o ritmo do corajoso é próprio do cobarde. É ridículo que não se divida a harmonia de acordo com estas coisas, sendo os extremos separados desta maneira e que cada uma seja própria a caracteres diferentes. Então isto que eu disse é aquilo que parece que ele censura nos poetas, o misturar todas as coisas. O primeiro [erro], é o não produzir discursos, harmonias e ritmos que concordem com os caracteres e formas de vida sugeridos, mesmo se estes não estiverem tecido uns com os outros ao acaso. Isto é próprio daquele que nos ensina que é necessário levar o uso e a organização destas coisas todas para a realidade. E que as ideias devem seguir esta realidade, as [ideias] que têm a função principal nos discursos, aos quais se torna próprio que as harmonias sigam, tal como os ritmos sigam estas.

65. E se descobrimos corretamente as coisas ditas nas *Leis*, é talvez claro que assumiríamos que é o melhor crítico dos poetas aquele que acima de tudo utiliza estes critérios poéticos e que distingue as medidas de todos estes – discursos, harmonias e

ritmos, e não como a alguns pareceu fraudulento por causa das palavras no *Timeu* sobre os poemas de Sólon, que transmitiu para o ancião Crítias que, falando sobre um homem seu próximo, era necessário que falasse, falando coisas oportunas. Para além de lançar um louvor sobre a poesia de Sólon por causa da licença de pensamentos e de linguagem. Ele ser o mais livre dos poetas é mostrado pela falta de medo nestas coisas, não refletindo na elegância das palavras, o que a maioria considera ser o mais importante, adornando os versos, nem a variedade de ideias, o que alguns idolatram, tornando obtuso o carácter que leva à virtude. De tal modo que me parece que este nome apropriado para o carácter específico dos poemas de Sólon é digno dele, mesmo que Crítias seja o crítico.

Mas, sendo estas coisas suficientes para esta investigação, segue-se que digamos qual será o melhor poeta segundo Platão, quais as coisas que o descrevem, umas em relação à pragmática e outras em relação à expressão. É necessário que a poesia louvada, segundo ele, como verdadeira, quer fale sobre os deuses ou sobre os Daemones, observe estes tópicos que ele próprio descreveu, cantando em hinos sobre eles como apenas benfeitores, e como imutáveis tanto quanto à essência como à potência e à atualidade, e como possuidores da verdade congénita às uniões com o Uno. Mesmo que molde alguns mitos sobre eles, tal como é necessário moldar (pois, Platão concede a mitologia aos poetas, pois, diz ele, se estiver destinado a ser poeta, é necessário que faças mitos e não discursos), então é necessário que moldem semelhantemente às coisas sugeridas, mas que não desejem esconder estas coisas através de desigualdades.

66. [Deve tomar] dos nomes naturais aquilo que é concordante com a natureza, como casamentos, partos, a educação dos que nasceram e constituições que são concordantes com a natureza e não monstruosas. [Deve tomar] dos [nomes] éticos as coisas válidas e merecedoras de serem sempre adornadas com o Belo e Bom, como a Lei e a Justiça, e o respeito dos filhos para os pais, e a transmissão de autoridade dos pais para os filhos. Estas coisas seriam cortinas dignas das perceções dos deuses, arrastando para eles conceitos posteriores a eles. E se falar sobre heróis e sobre homens, [deve] escrever as coisas próprias dos heróis para os heróis, sem qualquer tipo de cortina, investindo-lhes a apatia própria aos semideuses, e [quando falar] sobre homens [deve] apontar para o louvor dos sempre nobres, e adornar com discursos os feitos deles, servindo-se da imitação destas coisas e ignorar os feitos dos meus, para que sejam úteis aos jovens em prol da lição, e dedique o seu tempo às narrativas dos assuntos melhores, sempre procurando o carácter simples em vez do diverso em relação à imitação.

Então, é necessário, segundo ele, que este seja o conteúdo da poesia. A eloquência

de acordo com o estilo e secundária aos pensamentos, deve ser principalmente narrativa e aderente às reflexões que foram ditas, se a certa altura for necessário haver imitação (pois Platão determinou isto tal como [fez] com a mitologia, assim também o poeta é imitador), forçosamente é necessário que a imitação não participe da diversidade, mas que seja imitação dos nobres apenas, e se alguma vez imitar algo patético, nem será livre de castigo nem haverá deleite na imitação. Familiarmente a estas coisas, [esta poesia] [deve], compondo em poesia, respeitar a harmonia que aponta para a virtude e [deve] especialmente servir-se desta.

67. E se alguma vez admitir alguma das outras, enquanto imita algum dos maus durante um bocado, deve tornar óbvio que se afasta desta forma da harmonia, como não excelente, mas por ser incapaz de a suportar, para que seja concordante com o Político. E se utilizar ritmos, [deve] tecê-los apropriados à harmonia, maior parte das vezes, [compondo-os] seriamente, os outros, menos vezes, [compondo-os] como brincadeira. Assim será a harmoniosa consigo mesmo.

De tal modo a poesia, segundo ele, será uma habilidade mimética [que funciona] através de mitos e discursos com harmonias e ritmos capazes de dispor as almas dos ouvintes em concordância com a virtude.

[9] Então esta é a melhor forma de poética para ele. A próxima [questão], [a seguir a esta], qual é o objetivo da poesia, é fácil parra todos de deduzir. Pois, se o poeta é um imitador, o facto de que não tem o objetivo no prazer, tal como compreendem aqueles que consideram que ele admite todas as ações para a mimese, e que se serve de todas as harmonias e é emulador de todos os ritmos para que torne a poesia deleitosa, o que não é correto, [Platão] nas *Leis* mostrou-o, deduzindo assim: O poeta é imitador. Todo o imitador tem como objetivo fazer o semelhante ao paradigma, quer seja para dar prazer ou não. Logo, é óbvio que o poeta não fará o seu objetivo simplesmente deleitar. É claro também que, se for de facto destinado a ser este tipo de poeta que mencionámos, olhará para o Bem como objetivo, e isto é bem sabido. Diremos que não há outro objetivo de todo o hábito em prol da virtude, quer com imitações, quer sem imitações, a não ser o bem. O que é isto, é digno de examinar, aquilo que a forma precursora da vida política, elevando a alma para o objetivo teórico, mas para o político. Por isso dissemos que é forçoso que o político defina para o poeta as medidas das atividades, como para o general, para o médico e para o orador, e ele comanda que componha os tropos que disse, utilizando estas medidas, levando os poemas para este objetivo.

68. [10] Tendo sido isto observado por nós, penso que é óbvio para nós a última

das questões, qual o poeta no todo, para qual político que está acima dele olha. Tal como há outro general no todo, e outro orador e outro médico, este comanda a batalha cósmica pelo Pai, fazendo com que as coisas melhores conquistem sempre as inferiores, e entre isto não fazendo com que o poder destes pereça (pois estas coisas são de todo necessárias para que tudo seja composto de opostos), o outro dá poder à natureza no todo, para que todos os corpos sejam coerentes e para que seja indestrutível e imune, tendo o todo estas coisas segundo a natureza, o outro convence com palavras noéticas as coisas que o político noético no todo desejar, a viver. Assim, de alguma forma o outro poeta é cósmico, unicamente mitológico, que faz imitações perceptíveis das coisas imperceptíveis e imitações belas das coisas belas, faz imitações concordantes com a natureza das coisas concordantes com a mente, servindo-se de harmonias, através das quais faz a virtude conquistar no todo, sendo o mal derrotado. Dá ritmo aos movimentos, de tal modo que se movem de acordo com o logos, produzindo uma harmonia via e um ritmo a partir de tudo.

Eu diria que este poeta não é outro se não o grande cúmplice do grande político, e grande educador como verdadeiro deus, olhando para a mente dele. Pois, o grande político, Zeus, é cantando em hinos, de quem ele diz que surgiu a política. **69.** O colaborador dele em toda a ordenação no todo, tanto nos movimentos agudos como nos graves, tanto nas revoluções de órbita mais curta como nas de órbita maior, não é outro do que Apolo, poeta das coisas que são imitações rítmicas e harmônicas. E Ares é o maior general entre eles, deus patrono das batalhas e que incita todas as coisas para a oposição cósmica. E o demiurgo da persuasão não é outro do que Hermes, através do qual os outros deuses falam em assembleia com os outros, e Zeus fala com todos, mobilizando o Hermes em si. E Asclépio torna todas as coisas detentoras de acordo com a natureza, através do qual o todo não adoece, nem envelhece, nem os elementos escapam dos seus vínculos insolúveis. Então, se é necessário que eu diga as que são inefáveis, é claro aquele que é o Poeta. [Ele] incita as sereias a cantar, orando uma só voz e um só tom, como conta o mito no décimo livro da *República*. Incita também, como Timeu diz, os ciclos das almas divinas a racionalmente se moverem ritmicamente em rotação. E todas as coisas originadas pelas almas são poemas / ações de Apolo, harmônicos e rítmicos. Que o poeta do nosso mundo, olhando para ele, cante em hino os deuses, cante em hino os homens bons em mitos e sem mitos, ou, virando-se para outras coisas que saiba que peca contra a poética e contra Apolo.

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