



**Transformation and Transcendence of Artistic Form in
Plato's Aesthetic Theory**

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Abstract

Nowadays, although our aesthetic ideas are based on modern theories and perspectives that have pervaded the art, the root of western tradition of art dates back to Greek and Roman art tradition. Theory of form in art tries to emphasize the materiality of artistic object, though in later theories, it has been more flexible and proposes issues such as content and function, as well as attributing concepts such as composition, color, technique etc. to the artwork. Plato by proposing mimesis theory and expanding its scope considered a pattern and framework for attitudes and thoughts in static arts such as painting, literature and dynamic performance arts such as drama and music, and managed to regulate and organize them. For Plato, in this process, *ēthos* functions as a determinant factor. This present study is an attempt to discuss this question with descriptive-analytical approach: "will artistic form in Plato's theories be important after proposing the representational attitude toward art?" The results demonstrated that Plato's samples of beauty, in addition to descriptions and implications about the features of artistic form in some conversations can be considered equal to artistic form and due to the reflective theory in its revolution process, artistic form development into transcendence ethical form.

Keywords: Artistic form, Ethical form, *ethos*, Mimesis, Plato

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Every subject offers reasons for colour, shape and texture . . . I can explore in paint, think in terms of paint as an alternative to a purely representational view. (Hill, 2006)

1. Introduction

The appearance and evolution of formalism in art occurred gradually and art was considered by the theorists as an appropriate setting for its codifying. According to Carroll, in any other human activity, with the exception of the arts, the presentation of the form hasn't considered as unique and special value (see: Carroll, 2002: 113). The significance of formalism in art can be perceived better by the views that are in contrast to it, i.e. art as representation. In the painting, for example the modern painter abandoned the objective imitation and illustration of nature, and they, by using colored shapes which were beyond representation, created visuals that were dramatic in terms of visual structure, shape, and design. In fact, this was the practical application of the motto of modern art, art for art.

In the pre-Plato's literature, the term 'mimesis' has been simply used as a concept for tragic actor in drama, The equivalents of imitation, representation, emulation and mimicry are not precise translations for the term of mimesis, so today's concept does not fit the meaning of ancient Greeks. "In Plato's dialogues, the term mimesis is used in many different, sometimes contradictory ways." (Lodge, 1990: 28-29). For example, in *Republic X*, Plato describes mimesis as a product of imitators (*Republic X*, 595c) and states that imitation is always "far removed from the truth"¹, and That is why it can create everything, because in each case, the appearance of objects embodied that it is not the true thing (*ibid*, 598b-c). In several dialogues, samples of painting and literature (poetry), music and etc. have been mentioned and regarded as imitative arts (*Cratylus* 423d, 430b; *Critias* 107c; *Sophist* 234a, etc.). In addition, Plato states that artist's work is not similar to the original (*Republic X*, 602a-d), and regards imitator artist as a deceiver who is unable to recognize the truth and essence of what he has represented (*ibid*, 598c-599b) and "imitation is an inferior things that consorts with another inferior thing to produce an inferior offspring" (*ibid*. 603b²). Poet produces artwork that arouses, nourishes, and strengthens this part of the soul and so destroys the rational one (*ibid*. 605b). If we want to simply summarize Plato's attitude toward art in such dialogues, we will confront to a dogmatic and hostile views of his art. So this study, based on description-analytical approach, tends to show that these dialogues are a part of Plato's dialogues and the investigation of his total dialogues about art ultimately will lead to an enriched view of Mimesis which ends to transcendence of artistic form and changing it.

Form: The definition of the form

In *Webster and Oxford dictionaries* the term 'form,' according to its meaning, refers to some common words such as:

"Shape, configuration, formation, structure, arrangement, exterior, outline, format, layout, Body, figure, frame, physique, anatomy, design, Semblance, embodiment, kind, sort, type, class, category, variety, genre, style, condition etc." (Webster, 1984: 355; Hornby, 2010: 609).

When using this word, according to the scope of the extension of this item's meaning and function in the main languages' culture, its technical load and specific definition in

¹ -This sentence translate by Cooper 1997: 1202.

² -Cf. *Republic VI*: 496 A, and on 489 D.

different special and art fields, different interpretations and meaning intentions of users are possible.

Form in art

What we consider as a necessary condition to be regarded as art, is certainly a feature that all artworks should contain, and form is one of those conditions. It's a feature which in all kinds of art such as painting, sculpture, play, photography, cinema, music, dance, literature, architecture, etc. is involved. In fact, any artistic structure, which somehow be a motivational of aesthetic feeling, can be regarded as the artistic form. Although form implies the shape and the outline or contour of an artwork, it is not limited to those features and somehow involves factors such as subject, content, and layout of the material, and the configuration or composition of the artwork. The totality of any artistic form has structures divided by other minor shapes and forms, and based on that, each artistic form can be seen as sections of a main code and other sub codes. For instance, a musical artistic form can be divided into minor branches like jazz, traditional, pop, and other forms, and considering the artwork's potential, these divisions can be protractile in every branch.

Of course, we should take into consideration that performing a painting, sculpture or artistic composition isn't merely producing something, but is a process which is simultaneously physical and conceptual, which means that the artist may use combinatory and formic facilities and equipment to display his/her desired subject or theme. When conducting an analysis of form (in this context, a formal analysis in relation to the appearance of the artwork, whether two or three-dimensional), we must pay attention to the following features:

- “composition in painting, sculpture, and architecture
- color in painting, sculpture, and architecture
- pictorial space in painting and relief sculpture
- light and tone in painting
- pattern, ornament or decoration in painting, sculpture and architecture
- line and shape in painting; line, shape and three-dimensional form in sculpture; three-dimensional form and space in architecture
 - architectural elements or features in buildings
 - volume and mass in architecture and sculpture
 - materials, techniques and processes in painting, sculpture and architecture, particularly as this theme overlaps with form, style, and function.” (Huntsman, 2016: 117).

“Despite the diversity of what count as ‘formal,’ there is one thing which all these examples have in common: in every case relationship between features are involved. In visual art relationships may be between shapes or between colors; in music they may be between notes or between instruments; in literature they may be between metrical units, words, parts of a plot, or presentations of themes. In every case it is ordering of the formal features which matters.” (Sheppard, 1987: 39). Although, based on this definition, any artwork structure, depending on the subject and content and also the way of combining materials, represents a specific form, the thing is that this form is specifically interpreted and defined in the viewer's subjectivity; based on his knowledge, experiences, unconscious status and mental backgrounds. Meanwhile, the role of moral and cultural values in recognition artistic forms is also determinative. So an artistic form can generally be described based on these three features, of course not specifically:

- structural properties which indicate the theme and content of the artwork
- composition feature of the artwork which indicates the influences, interactions and connections.
- human and cultural characteristics of the audience

Artistic form and Plato: Artistic form in the pre-platonic debates

According to the book *Memorabilia* by Xenophon, there is a short conversation between Socrates and Parrhasius about the way of representing in painting and its abilities. Though Xenophon style himself as a self-taught philosopher, but he degrades and weakened Socrates's philosophical dimension. However, what has been said about events or thoughts, can be used to recognize Socrates' thinking.

Socrates asked: "Is painting a representation of things seen, Parrhasius? Anyhow, you painters with your colors represent and reproduce figures high and low, in light and shadow, hard and soft, rough and smooth, young and old..." (Memorabilia, III, IX, I3-X, I).

In this conversation, Socrates displays his skill in understanding and describing the picture. He relates artistic form to mimesis (representation) and emphasizes that the painter tries to represent a transcript of reality using artistic form features (like size, light, tonality, texture, and color). In the following, Socrates relates artistic form to three kinds of beauty:

A. Divine beauty: the most beautiful artistic form is a form out of defects and deficiencies and has the most beautiful features. Also, since no model is perfect Socrates assumes that a painter chooses the best of each models and creates a 'perfect beauty' or an 'ideal portrait' (see *ibid.* III, X, 1-3).

B. Spiritual beauty: Socrates says whether a painter can represent *ēthos* or not, is that human spiritual and characteristic features shown through artistic form and its properties or not? In answer to Socrates's question, Parrhasius says no, because character has no color and no shape. Then Socrates immediately asks: can a painter show unstable spiritual states like kindness and hatred? Then Parrhasius agrees that by the gestures of eyes and the way of standing, it would be possible. Socrates convinced him that displaying facial gestures can trace the secondary character. At the same time, it was believed that by facial gestures and the postures of individuals could be shown that the person is moving or motionless. In addition, he concludes that most people prefer to observe good, pure, and lovely position in the painting. Anyway, what matters is that Socrates looks for a static image in painting which still has the potential of dynamic images (see *ibid.*, 5-8).

"*Ēthos* (ἦθος, ἔθος, plurals: ethe (ἦθη), ethea (ἦθεα)) is a Greek word originally meaning 'accustomed place' (as in ἦθεα ἵππων 'the habitats of horses,' [Iliad](#) 6.511, 15.268)." (Proscurcin Junior, 2014: 162-163). "The concept of 'ēthos' as a criterion of drama and painting found its earliest doctrinaire expression in Aristotle's *Poetics*¹. Passages from Plato and Xenophon to be cited reveal, however, that these authors were already familiar with such a criterion ... In modern scholarship the word is usually interpreted as referring to the permanent disposition of the mind, the character or personality, as it were, or the skill in portraying such (characterization)... To cite but a recent restatement of that view, Pollitt defines 'ēthos' as 'character' as formed by inheritance habits and self-discipline or what kind of man the hero basically is." (Keuls, 1978: 95-96). In *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, O. Sloane says: "ēthos from its inception, classical rhetoric has grounded persuasion upon a speaker's

¹ -According to Aristotle (1.2.1356a), there are three categories of *ethos*: A) *phronesis* – practical skills & wisdom; B) *arete* – virtue, goodness; C) *eunoia* – goodwill towards the audience (see also; K.Duke, 2005: 36, and Atkinson et al, 2000: 169, and Garver, 1994: 69).

knowledge of the varieties and complexities of human character.” (O. Sloane, 2001: 278). Furthermore, this term refers to the custom, habit and custom, habit, or usage. “In this connection we note a close similarity in meaning between *ēthos* and ‘folkways,’ namely, accepted and approved practice. Many folkways, however, are elevated to the position of mores; that is, they concern conduct deemed so vital to the group that to violate the group practice is considered to be destructive to the social welfare. As such, mores are welfare principles, and they are therefore invested with moral approval. The Latin ‘mores’ and the Greek *ēthos* are similar in meaning, but the two terms are not synonymous. The mores, as standards indicative of morally approved conduct, are included in the *ēthos* or group character. On the other hand, certain traits of character within the scope of *ēthos* cannot be called mores. The traits or qualities which make up *ēthos* are of course approved and respected by the society in question, but such traits do not necessarily have the status of welfare principles.” (M. Sattler, 1947: 55).

C. Efficient or functional beauty: Socrates questions grab artists' attention to understand how one can recognize something from an artistic form (including shapes and colors), by representation and non-sensory speech and maybe immaterial features. Therefore, the relation between form and representation provides us with a third kind of beauty that offers a brief speech and shape to us, that by using it we can investigate aesthetic impacts and our response to it.

Rockmore believes: “According to Xenophon, Socrates's view of aesthetics consists three main points. These include a distinction between the representative and imitative character of the fine arts and what nature makes, a distinction between the imitation and the idealization of nature, and the thesis that art represents not only bodies but also souls. The Socratic distinction between what art makes and what nature makes naturally leads to the Platonic concern between art as an end in itself and as a means to another end, which in his case is knowledge or truth. In this as in other respects, it is widely believed.” (Rockmore, 2013: 19).

Artistic forms in Plato's view

In some conversations, Plato describes artwork and in this regard, he directly talks about artistic forms such as line, color, shape, technique (for example, *skiagraphia* and perspective technique) and other perceptible features in artwork, or indirectly and unintentionally speaks of form by considering examples of beauty like *Harmonia* in music, proportion and *symmetria* (Συμμετρία) in architecture and painting:

Color and shape: “Plato frequently has used the term ‘color and form’ (χρῶμα καὶ σχῆμα) in reference not only to visual phenomena, but also to their recreation in painting.” (Keuls, 1978: 94). For example, *Meno* 75b; *Gorgias* 465b and 474e; *Cratylus* 432b; *Statesman* 277c; *Laws* 668e and 797c; etc.

In *Cratylus* 432b-c, Socrates remarks that a painter by color and form can reproduce *Cratylus*'s visual appearance, but a god can reproduce his softnesses, warmth, movements, soul and thought on it. In *Cratylus* 424d-e, he speaks of colors combination made by painter to create similarity (for example, for making meat, they combine different colors). Alternatively, in *Cratylus* 431c, the conversation is about reducing or adding to the lines and colors of the image, and Socrates notes that a painter who uses them in its rightful place makes a beautiful and good picture. However, if he does extreme or wastage in using the colors, though it's a picture but in beauty, they are not measured equally; in other words, it will be a bad picture.

In the *Philebus 51b-d*, Socrates mentions the beauty of mathematical abstractions of natural forms and uses the pure combined colors as a purpose of beauty, for observing ordinary objects as well as represented similarities. He does not see any significant difference between painting and nature, model and portrait as well as the beauty of the forms, whether available as reality or their represented appearances:

SOCRATES: Those that are related to so-called pure colors and to shapes and to most smells and sounds and in general all those that are based on imperceptible and painless lacks, while their fulfillments are perceptible and pleasant. By the beauty of shape, I do not mean what the many might presuppose, namely that of a living being or of a picture. What I mean, what the argument demands, is rather something straight or round and what is constructed out of these with a compass, rule, and square, such as plane figures and solids. Those things I take it are not beautiful in a relative sense, as others are, but are by their very nature forever beautiful by themselves. They provide their own specific pleasures that are not at all comparable to those of rubbing! And colors are beautiful in an analogous way and import their own kinds of pleasures (*Philebus 51b-d*).

Plato uses artistic form in the *Republic III* (373b) that is historically more recent than *Philebus*¹, for representational artists and Keuls believes that they are called representations for the reproduction of colors and forms (see: Keuls, 1978: 94). According to the *Republic X* 602c-e, Influence of color on trompe l'oeil² paintings is the visual error factor and the painter, using this weakness of human nature to deceives us.

Skiagraphía techniques: “The word ‘skiagraphía’ (σκιαγραφία) and its cognates ‘skiagraphema’ and ‘σκιαγραφέω’ are well attested in the sources from the Hellenic age.” (Keuls, 1978: 78; see also Keuls, 1997: 124-125). “The one technique for the breaking up of solid surfaces which is widely attested for the fifth century B.C. is skiagraphía, literally ‘shadow painting.’ It was developed by the Athenian painter Apollodorus³, who lived in latter half of fifth century ...most scholars consider the Latin ‘lumen et umbrae’ (light and shadow) a translation of skiagraphía ...Pliny and Quintilian (or the sources they paraphrase) consider the invention of ‘lumen et umbrae’ as marking the birth of true painting, as distinct

1 -Leonard Brandwood, who published his Ph.D. thesis about ‘The chronology of Plato's dialogues’ at Cambridge University in 1990, believes that “There was fairly general agreement that the *Laws* was the last work, preceded by the *Timaeus* and *Critias*, then the *Republic*, before them in reverse order of composition, according to the Majority view, came the *Philebus*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Politicus*, *Sophist*, *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus*; about the remaining works there was little or no accord.” (Brandwood: 2009: I).

2 -“A French phrase meaning ‘fool the eye,’ a painting or other visual arts that creates such a realistic image that the viewer may wonder whether it is real or an illusion.” (Fichner-Rathus: 2008: 120). “According to Pliny (HN35.61), Zeuxis, the great master of this technique, was born in the mid 5th c. BC in Heraklea, in South Italy, but lived and worked largely in Athens (c. 420–410 BC), Macedonia (c. 405 BC), and Ephesos in Asia Minor, where he died (c. 397 BC). An acquaintance of Socrates (cf. Pl. Grg.453c–d; Xen. Mem.1.4.3), Zeuxis perfected the art of shading, since, according to Quintilian, a 1st c. AD Roman rhetorician and art critic, he discovered the logical thread that connects light and shade’...Zeuxis was after the perfect imitation of reality, which very often bordered with visual trickery (The trompe l’oeil effect) ...Zeuxis had to compete for this title against his near-contemporary Parrhasios from Ephesos (who also lived and worked in Athens c. 420–380 BC). It is alleged that during one of their competitions, Zeuxis painted grapes in a basket that fooled real birds, who flew around them pryingly; then Parrhasios painted a mere curtain, which fooled Zeuxis himself, who thought that the real painting was hidden behind it.” (J.Smith & Plantzos, 2012: 175-176).

3 -Pliny believed that Apollodorus, “by modeling forms, had imitated species, phantasmata, thing as they are seen. Apollodorus called shadow painter because he used oppositions of light and dark within the contours of form.” (Summers, 2007: 28).

from the art of drawing.” (ibid., 72). Plato and Aristotle are among those who pointed this technique in their works. The Skiagraphía technical features described by Plato as follows (ibid., 78-79):

- A. It is a device meant for viewing from distance (Parmenides 165c; Timaeus 286e; Laws 663c).
- B. Color surfaces are broken up into distinct patches or dots (Parmenides 165c; Republic, IX: 586b-c; Laws 663c-d).
- C. It features the mutual intensification of contracting color (Republic, IX: 586b-c; Laws 663c).
- D. It is (in Socrates' view) suitable for painting of landscapes but not for representation of living creatures (Cratylus 107d-c).
- E. It is a metaphor for deception or for blurring of issues vs. distinct outlining (Republic, II: 365c, 583b and 602d; Philebus 69b).
- F. In Theaetetus 208e, Plato uses it as ‘shadow painting’:

Socrates: Then if a man with correct judgment about any one of the things that are grasps in addition its difference from the rest, he has become a knower of the thing he was a judger of before... well, at this point, Theaetetus, as regards what we are saying, I'm for all the world like a man looking at a **shadow-painting**...

Keuls believes, the first and third features indicate that Skiagraphia is a divisionist technique exploiting optical color fusion and the history of this technique is the Hellenistic era. The color combination parts are not distinguishable closely and must be displayed from a proper distance. Although Plato himself is the most important source for this technique, it is not mentioned directly skiagraphia by him, but referred to it as a metaphor. It is noteworthy that mentioning the names of artists in Plato's dialogues was individual-based and respectful, but it was with no further information about the artists. Moreover, in Plato's implications to famous painters and sculptors, no aesthetic discrimination or judgment is mentioned. It is interesting that in Plato's time, the painters of fifth century were criticized. In that time, two aesthetic debate were proposed; ‘Form’ or ‘outline’ debate against color and concept of ēthos debate. The reflection of these two debates as criteria in the dialogues is obvious, Parrhasius for outline and Zeuxis for color and Polygnotous for ēthos (see: Keuls, 1978: 88).

Apollodorus and Parrhasius are not mentioned by Plato, but Polygnotous (Ion 532e, Gorgias 448b) and Zeuxis (Gorgias 453c, etc.¹) are mentioned several times. Zeuxis has been introduced as fine art artist by others, though Plato described his method as obsolete.

Harmonia in music: “In the Greek word ‘ἁρμονία,’ the root ‘Har’ means the straps or belts connecting timbers and ship to each other, and (another meaning for this term is) “to link” and ‘to join.’ For example, in Homer, when making a boat, Odysseus would bind up timbers to each other by using nails and clamps and make a structured thing hardly interconnected. In addition, in the myth of Hesiod, we confront with Harmonia the daughter of Ares (god of war) and Aphrodite (beauty goddess) and Cadmus or Cosmos (universe). Therefore, a vision of the world of technology and art has been extended to the whole universe and harmony and balance through myth has become a model for explaining the universe and its system. On other hand, Harmonia has its originality in confrontation, conflict and war, and it is the outcome of beauty.” (Beheshti, 1388: 86).

¹ -According to Keuls, maybe the character of Zeuxippus of Herakleia in *Protagoras* 318b be considered as Zeuxis, because he also came from Herakleia (see: Keuls, 1978: 90).

“The Pythagoreans made an important empirical discovery, regarding music: it was the discovery of the relation between the lengths of stretched strings and the pitch of their vibration, or, in other words, between the ratios of lengths and the corresponding intervals—thus, 1:2, the octave; 2:3, the fifth; 3:4, the fourth. The idea that qualitative differences might depend on, might be ultimately controlled by, mathematical ratio was a profound revelation to the Pythagoreans, and the interval of the octave (the Greek name for which was ‘harmonia’) appeared to be particularly fundamental: for it involved the opposition of odd and even, unity and duality, but ‘harmonized’ them completely.” (Beardsley, 1966: 27). Plato pays particular attention to the established rules of music in Pythagoreans point of view and he says:

SOCRATES: But you will be competent, my friend, once you have learned how many intervals there are in high pitch and low pitch, what character they have, by what notes the intervals are defined, and the kinds of combinations they form—all of which our forebears have discovered and left to us, their successors, together with the names of these modes of harmony. And again the motions of the body display other and similar characteristics of this kind, which they say should be measured by numbers and called rhythms and meters. So at the same time they have made us realize that every investigation should search for the one and many. For when you have mastered these things in this way, then you have acquired expertise there...(Philebus, 17c-e)

Therefore, according to Plato, when a person can be a musical expert who came to know about ‘harmony,’ ‘rhythm’ and ‘meter.’ In Addition to, Plato does not just observe the rules of music, but also examines and categorizes the content of music, therefore, in this area, he removes the ‘dirges and lamentations’ modes (such mixo-Lydian and syntono-Lydian) and ‘softness, and idleness’ modes (such Ionian and Lydian) because of the inappropriateness of training courageous and warriors men and he allows only ‘Dorian and Phrygian’ modes (Republic, III: 398d- 399a). He also believes, about the meter in poetry, we should only look for the meter which is in proportion to men's life and order, that is, an order that leads to moderation in human behavior and not outside of it (ibid., 399e and 400d). Plato by expressing characteristics of beautiful song and good meter, considers them as a subordinate of good theme and also the good theme is considered as a factor of beauty and proportionality in the meter and music tracks and finally, it concludes that, the beauty and musicality and harmony in music, like other fine arts and crafts are representing a noble spirit (Ibid.: 400d-e). Also according to Plato, poetry and music are very important for civility; because rhythm and harmony are penetrating easier than anything else in the human soul (ibid., 401d). On the other hand, he believes that, it is through rhythm and harmony and content that you can transfer valuable concepts to the music listener (ibid., 402c-d):

SOCRATES: ...Therefore, if someone's soul has a fine and beautiful character and his body matches it in beauty and is thus in harmony with it, so that both share in the same pattern, wouldn't that be the most beautiful sight for anyone who has eyes to see?

Analogía, Symmetria and Méτρο in architecture and painting: In *Philebus* 55d-56b-c, Plato divided manual arts to ‘more closely related to knowledge itself’ and the other ‘less closely,’ and the criteria for this division is ‘measure.’ He admires techniques such as architecture for using mathematical proportions and size, and in contrast, painters are blamed for changing proportions and size (changing the features of an artistic form). In the following, he followed by Pythagoras and say, the beauty essence is in order (τάξις/taxis), measure (μέτρο/méτρο), proportion (αναλογία/analogía), symmetry

(συμμετρία/Symmetria) and harmony, that means, the criteria for beautiful is the correct arrangement among the components:

SOCRATES: That any kind of mixture that does not in some way or other possess measure or the nature of proportion will necessarily corrupt its ingredients and most of all itself. For there would be no blending in such cases at all but really an unconnected medley, the ruin of whatever happens to be contained in it... But now we notice that the force of the good has taken refuge in an alliance with the nature of the beautiful. For measure and proportion manifest themselves in all areas as beauty and virtue (Philebus, 64d-e). Well, then, if we cannot capture the good in one form, we will have to take hold of it in a conjunction of three: beauty, proportion, and truth. Let us affirm that these should by right be treated as a unity and be held responsible for what is in the mixture, for its goodness is what makes the mixture itself a good one (ibid., 65a). ...that pleasure is not a property of the first rank, nor again of the second, but that first comes what is somehow connected with measure, the measured and the timely, and whatever else is to be considered similar...the second rank goes to the well- proportioned and beautiful, the perfect, the self-sufficient (ibid., 66a-b).

Accordingly, Plato believes that, measure and proportion must be sought in beauty and virtue, and since the essence of good is in measure and proportion, good is perfect and cannot be without proportion. Beautiful is genuinely proportion (*αναλογία/analogía*) and unity. Furthermore, In *Sophist* 235d-236c, Plato speaks of the structure of two different types of images and names them as 'eicastic' art (copy-making) and 'phantastic' art (appearance-making) (ibid., 236c). The difference between these two art products is the knowledge of 'proportions'. In eicastic art, the artist produces an imitation by keeping to the proportions of length, breadth, and depth of his model, and also by keeping to the appropriate colors of its parts (ibid., 235d-e), but this manufacture sculpture or drawing is not as same as the real one. The eicastic artist doesn't claim to make something real, he just produces in his images the proportions that seem to be beautiful instead of the real ones (ibid., 236a), he also considers real proportions and image proportions. In phantastic art, it is adverse, and the artist claims that the image is equal to real. That's why it is tricky and phantastic. Actually the relation between philosopher and sophist is like the relation between eicastic artist and phantastic artist.

The value of form in Plato's view

Plato's references to the features of an artistic form, such as color and form and techniques such as *skiagraphía*, proportion and measure etc., have been made solely in the form of debates on painting, architecture, poetry, music and theater. Plato's theoretical framework has focused on the use of mimesis's theory, which, in addition to criticizing these domains, establishes a connection between Plato's epistemology and aesthetics:

The usage of mimesis from art to epistemology

"The term of 'mimesis' (ancient Greek: *mīmēsis* [μίμησις], from *mīmeisth'ai* [μίμεισθαί]), whose origin is uncertain, is usually translated as 'imitation.' The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'mimesis' as a figure of speech, whereby the supposed words or actions of another are imitated and the deliberate imitation of the behavior of one group of people by another as a factor in social change. It further defines 'mimicry' as the action, practice, or art of mimicking or closely imitating... the manner, gesture, speech, or mode of actions and persons, or the superficial characteristics of a thing." (Rockmore, 2013: 12). The

significant changes that have occurred in the meaning of this Keyword are important. The researchers point out that before Plato, mimesis did not have a very precise meaning, but did not necessarily apply only poetry and deception. “Earlier ancient Greek philosophers criticize poetry for spreading false stories about the gods. Around 500 BC, Xenophanes attacked Homer and Hesiod for this reason, and Heraclitus called for Homer to be excluded from competitions and thrashed.” (ibid., 14). During the Plato's philosophical period, mimesis has been discussed in the early conversations¹ such as *Apology*, *Euthyphro*, *Ion*, and medieval treatises such as *Cratylus*, *Sophists*, *Republic* (especially books II, III and X), and the later treatises such as *Timaeus* and *Laws* and the dimensions of this word are extended:

A. **Early conversations and mimesis as imitation:** according to Gebauer & Wulf, “In the early dialogues, writing is not yet understood as mimesis and mimesis has not yet been restricted to questions of art. Initially Plato uses the concept more in the general sense of imitation” (Gebauer & Wulf, 1995: 31).

B. **Cratylus and the formation of artistic mimesis:** “Perhaps the nearest Plato comes to providing a definition of pictorial mimesis is in the *Cratylus* 422e–423e, which may be the earliest Platonic dialogue in which the subject of artistic mimesis arises. In the course of attempting to work out a hypothetical semantics of language (later rejected, we need to remember), Socrates here sketches an analogous ‘semantics’ of visual signification (sēmainein, Cra.422e) based on the idea of resemblance or correspondence.” (Halliwell: 2010: 178).

SOCRATES: And if the primary names are indeed names, they must make the things that are as clear as possible to us. But how can they do this when they aren't based on other names? Answer me this: If we hadn't a voice or a tongue, and wanted to express things to one another, wouldn't we try to make signs by moving our hands, head, and the rest of our body, just as dumb people do at present? (*Cratylus*, 422c-d). **SOCRATES:** In the first place, if we imitate things the way we imitate them in music, we won't be naming them, not even if the imitation in question is vocal. And the same holds if we imitate the things music imitates. What I mean is this: each thing has a sound and a shape, and many of them have a color ... It doesn't seem to be the craft of naming that's concerned with imitating these qualities, however, but rather the crafts of music and painting... And what about this? Don't you think that just as each thing as a color or some of those other qualities we mentioned, it also has a being or essence? Indeed, don't color and sound each have a being or essence, just like every other thing that we say ‘is’? (ibid., 423d-e).

“Pictorial mimesis, on this admittedly rudimentary account, uses a visually organized field (shape and colour) to produce ‘likenesses’ (homoia, homoiotētes) of things. But the *Cratylus* (430a-431d), importantly acknowledges that the relationship between a graphic image or likeness and its object or model is not confined to the copying of actual particulars in the world. In addition to images such as portraits, which are by definition correlated with individuals, there are images that represent imaginary members of classes such as ‘man’ and ‘woman,’ or even, perhaps, the classes themselves.” (Halliwell, 2010: 178; see also Halliwell, 2002: 45-47). This subject is also being addressed in other conversations such as *Republic VI*, 488a And rejects the dependence of mimetic beauty of the artwork into correspondent one-to-one with a model (hypothetical) that these are contradictory with the famous mirror analogy in the *Republic X*, 596d-e.

¹ -According to Halliwell, What was it that mimesis could bring to Plato's philosophical scrutiny of poetry that was lacking in the reflections on the subject he gives to Socrates in the *Apology*, *Ion*, and *Euthyphro* (and in further passages on poetry in Protagoras and Gorgias) (see: Halliwell: 2002: 43).

C. **Republic and changing the concept of mimesis:** In the *Republic*, regardless of the dissension in the chronology of this essay¹, we encounter a different use of the concept of mimesis. That means, Plato in the *Republic II* (373b, 377e, 378a) and *Republic III* (392d, 393d, 394d-e, 395a, 396b, 397a, 398a, 399a-d, 400a) and *Republic X* (595b, 596b, 598b-c, 599a-d, 600c-e, 6001a, 602b, 605a-d), has used mimesis in various categories such as representation in art (music and literature), education, ethics, psychology, politics etc. for example in the *Republic II* (373b) Plato uses the term 'imitators' for everyone, who uses color and form in the music, poetry, and so on. In the following, in the 377e and 378a, he uses mimesis to educational and psychological issues that means he considers to the consequences of mimesis for listeners of poetry stories such as Hesiod and Homer. Mimesis is used here for the pictorial representation, because the poets like novice painters, create an incomplete (flat and without a shadow effect) image of gods and heroes that are different from the original. In *the Republic III* (392d), as in the *Republic II*, dialogue continues on mimesis in literature and music, by educational concern about young people. "In the style or 'lexis' of poetry, story and narrative, Plato distinguishes between 'diegesis' and mimesis. Here, mimesis means the person's acting and his performance on the scene, which is lacking of the poet's statements and explanations." (Beheshti, 1388: 101). In the *Republic X*, the concept of mimesis has a negative aspect, so that the deep cleavage has been created between the third and the tenth book for example, in 596b and 598c, "Plato critic 'mimeisthia' as imitation, and the poetry and all the other arts and techniques are just a effort of imitating, it's also "thrice removed from reality"² of Ideas For example, if we have the idea of a 'bed,' the second bed is tangible and the table is painted in the third steps of the truth."³ (ibid., 102). This negative aspect often have results such as dogmatic readings and generalizations to Plato's entire artistic theory.

D. **Sophist and division of mimesis:** Plato believes in the *Sophist*, the imitator, sometimes knows what he imitates and sometimes does not know (*Sophist*, 267b). In the following, he divides the imitators into two categories, someone who emulates only a vague idea that means, imitation based on thought or 'belief-mimicy,' and the art of someone who knows the subject of imitation and calls it 'informed-mimicy.' (ibid, 267e).

E. **Timaeus and epistemological mimesis:** In *Timaeus*, which is one of Plato's later treatise, mimesis is raised in relation to epistemology and metaphysics (see *Timaeus*, 29e-30d, 37d, 39d-e, 46c-47e). According to Nair, "In the dialogue on creation, *Timaeus*, Plato has the title character discuss the mimetic relation between image, imitation and time. *Timaeus* states that the world we live in has been created

1 -Brunwood believes that the *Republic* is related to the later era of Plato, and before *Timaeus* and *Critias* wrote (Brandwood: 2009: I) While Copleston believes it has been written after *Cratylus* (see: Copleston: 1993: 138-141), but Rockmore believes that the *Republic* is written sooner than *Cratylus* (see: Rockmore: 2013: 200).

2 - B. Jowett has used this phrase for analyzing of this conversation (see: Plato, 1996: cxlvii).

3 -This issue becomes clearer in the two other dialogues of Plato in the same treatise; "This, then, is what I wanted to get agreement about when I said that painting and imitation as a whole produce work that is far from the truth, namely, that imitation really consorts with a part of us that is far from reason, and the result of their being friends and companions is neither sound nor true... Then imitation is an inferior thing that consorts with another inferior thing to produce an inferior offspring..." (*Republic X*, 603a-b). "Now, this excitable character admits of many multicolored imitations. But a rational and quiet character, which always remains pretty well the same, is neither easy to imitate nor easy to understand when imitated, especially not by a crowd consisting of all sorts of people gathered together at a theater festival, for the experience being imitated is alien to them..." (*Republic X*, 604e).

in the greatest similarities to the creator himself (29e-30d). The metaphors used in this philosophical debate on creation are particularly visual and give the impression of the first creator as a kind of pictorial artist... [Nair quoted from Melberg] Platonic mimesis culminates in 37d with the logical problems of time described by Timaeus when he says that creation was made in relation to the principle of similarity. It was not possible, says Timaeus, for the creator to make the image that is our world eternal and constant; he adds that the world carries traces of its constant origin as a 'moving image of eternity' (37d) and what we call time is nothing but an image (eikōn) of eternity." (see: Nair: 2007: 178).

F. **Laws and the most accurate mimesis:** In the *Laws*, adjustment and innovation forms outside traditional framework are prohibited, general in the arts (656e). "Plato affirms that an accurate product of mimesis has the same quantity and quality of the original (668b), and a sound judge (art critic) of mimesis must know three things: what the original of a work is, whether it has been correctly made, and whether it has been well made in language, melody, and rhythm (669a-b). Knowledge, not pleasure, must be the judge, dance may be mimetic of good people both at war and at peace (814d-816d)." (Woodruff, 2005: 335).

From artistic form to ethical form

According to Woodruff, "All of Plato's positive, knowledge-based uses of mimesis depend on these principles: agents of mimesis should choose an original that they know to be good, and they must insure that the products of their Mimesis have at least some of the good qualities of the original object." (ibid.). Then, we can classify the Platonic mimesis into these two principles:

A. **Divine model or utilizing a good model:** In *Republic V*, 472d, Socrates states that a painter can create an 'ideal portrait' with the use and combination of the best features of several models. Therefore, painting should be more than mere copying of appearance and indicating the use of a divine model of a painter (see: Keuls, 1978: 94). The reference to the divine model is also found in the Socrates dialogue in the *Memorabilia* (*Memorabilia*, III, IX, I3-X, I). In *Republic VI*, 488a, Socrates in the painting goat-stags refers to the concept of 'composite beauty,' which was apparently a literary 'topos' before Plato: Gorgias, *Helen* 18; Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 10, 3 (see: Keuls, 1978: 41-42).

B. **Consisting of good qualities or ēthos:** Here, the term 'good qualities' does not only have meaning such as the beauty of the artistic form, but artistic forms must carry moral values. "Socrates is the first moral philosopher, but Plato is the first philosopher who places moral philosophy within a broader conception of philosophy². Aristotle notices that³, whereas Socrates confines himself to ethics, Plato tries to connect Socratic concerns to more general issues in metaphysics and epistemology." (Irwin, 2007: 70). In the dialogue between Socrates and Parrhasius in the *Memorabilia*, Socrates asks him whether a painting can or should represent the ēthos? In other words, can it be shown with the artistic form and its spiritual attributes and personality traits of humans (See: *Memorabilia*, III, X, 5-8). Plato also follows

1 -See also Melberg, 2003: 24-25, and Boradi, 2011: 174, and Halliwell, 2002: 333.

2 - Of course, Penner quotes from Prichard and writes: "Plato is also trying to produce a theory of what is morally right (as above), arises, as a futile effort on Plato's part to address a worry about motivating people to act morally." (Penner et al, 2007: 3).

3 - See Met.987bl-2, and PA 642a28-31.

Socrates's moral concern about art and expects art displaying spiritual qualities and moral values. He states in *Republic III* (401a-d):

Now, surely painting is full of these qualities, as are all the crafts similar to it; weaving is full of them, and so are embroidery, architecture, and the crafts that produce all the other furnishings. Our bodily nature is full of them, as are the natures of all growing things, for in all of these there is grace and gracelessness. And gracelessness, bad rhythm, and disharmony are akin to bad words and bad character, while their opposites are akin to and are imitations of the opposite, a moderate and good character...Is it, then, only poets we have to supervise, compelling them to make an image of a good character in their poems or else not to compose them among us? Or are we also to give orders to other craftsmen, forbidding them to represent—whether in pictures, buildings, or any other works a character that is vicious, unrestrained, slavish, and graceless? Are we to allow someone who cannot follow these instructions to work among us, so that our guardians will be brought up on images of evil, as if in a meadow of bad grass, where they crop and graze in many different places. Every day until, little by little, they unwittingly accumulate a large evil in their souls? Or must we rather seek out craftsmen who are by nature able to pursue what is fine and graceful in their work, so that our young people will live in a healthy place and be benefited on all sides, and so that something of those fine works will strike their eyes and ears like a breeze that brings health from a good place, leading them unwittingly, from childhood on, to resemblance, friendship, and harmony with the beauty of reason?

Accordingly, Plato believes that the productions of mimetic arts, including paintings, sculpture and architecture, must represent good traits and human abilities. This belief in *Laws* (669b) becomes more exhaustive and a theoretical form for art criticism. According to it, "Plato's judgment of the beauty of any mimetic image (eikōn) is required to know three things: first, the identity of the object shown; second, how 'correctly' (orthōs) it is represented; ...third, how 'well'¹ (eu) it has been depicted." (Halliwell, 2010: 181). In these two dialogues, Plato seems to form in the process of re-expanding the concept of mimesis, generalizes the principle of ethical form to all mimesis. In dialogues of *Republic III*, 401a-d and *Laws* 669b are the Plato's most extensive statements about the mimetic art that deals with this issue, in the visual arts, the artistic form is not just a neutral embodiment of the object, but also has an emotional and communicative value, and this is the thought that Xenophon reflects in the *Memorabilia* from the dialogue of Socrates with the Parrhasius. On the other hand, "he states that painting is 'full' of formal manifestations of 'character' (ēthos) and he speaks of mimesis in a way that should be construed, in part at least, ... saying that beautiful form (euschēmosunē) involves mimēmata of good character." (ibid.). On the other hand, with these statements, we can observe that the idea of mimesis enriched in Plato's dialogues than the Socrates in Xenophon. "in Xenophon's anecdote it is a case of character (ēthos) showing 'through' the figures depicted; while in *Republic III* it is a matter of the form of the mimetic artwork as a whole (including that of individual figures) serving as a medium for affective and ethical attitudes. In both contexts, but much more forcefully in the *Republic*, mimesis is taken to be inescapably engaged in making moral sense of the human world not just registering appearances, but actively construing, interpreting and judging them. That gives us a vital sense of why beauty in the figurative arts is regularly taken in Plato to entail something other, or more, than optically definable or apprehensible accuracy. Mimetic beauty, for Plato, is an expressive form of ethical value." (ibid., 182).

1 - This term translate as 'moral value' by Cooper 1997: 1360

Conclusion

The artistic form is one of the most important issues in art history, which is well known in all arts fields, including painting, architecture, performing arts, music. formalistic ideas include topics such as how to arrange lines, colors, shapes, volumes, techniques, and so on, in two-dimensional or three-dimensional arts, concentration to the content of the artwork (which can be religious or political, ethical education or philosophical worldview etc.) and studying how the components of an artwork are interacting. It is said that formalistic theories are against representational theories of art, which argue that art like a mirror just represents nature, while the ideas of formalism, which are the heritage of modernism, include the motto 'art for art,' and they do not consider the art except the color and the line and the compositions.

The origin of the representational theory of art (mimesis) turned its back on ancient Greece and Plato is apparently the first philosopher extended the usage of 'mimesis' from the performing arts to static representational arts. In this regard, he describes and narrates categories of art and enriched it. Though Plato considers mimetic arts such as painting, poetry, music, and theater, etc. but we can observe the traces of an artistic form in his dialogues and even dialogues before him (for example, the conversation of Socrates in *Memorabilia*), although Plato does not explicitly address this issue and care it. So, with regard to what has been said so far, the following points can be drawn :

First: In his dialogues, Plato directly has described the color and form (in dialogues such as *Meno*, *Gorgias*, *Laws*, *Cratylus*, *Statesman* etc.), the technique of *skiagraphia* (*Theaetetus* and *Philebus*, the *Republic* etc.) and the perspective, or indirectly with a few examples of beauty such as harmony in music (*Republic* and *Philebus* etc.), the proportions and symmetry in architecture and painting (*Philebus*, *Sophist* and *Republic*) has discussed the artistic form within the framework of mimesis theory.

Second: Plato tries to expand the dimensions of his mimesis theory in art. For this purpose, we observe that in the parable of the mirror and the bed (*Republic X*, 596b-d), the products of painting and poetry in his philosophical perspective are 'three step removed from reality.' But this issue shouldn't give us any preconceptions that would disregard and undermine Plato's care about painting; because in the *Cratylus* (430a-431d), he rejects of the relationship between a graphic image and its model merely be limited to copying its real features in the world. In this dialogue, he goes beyond the description of tangible things and goes to sensible matters and tries to decode the nature of the image.

Third: Plato has a positive and negative attitude in all his treatise on mimesis. As Woodruff points out, if we look at the categorization of dialogues in a positive view, we will find two general principles: A) Divine model or utilizing a good model: Plato refers to 'combination beauty' and 'ideal portrait' in the dialogue of the *Republic V* (472d and 488a) as Socrates also pointed out in Xenophon, in order to make a portrait, the painter selects the best models and combines them because there is no perfect model. B) Consisting of good qualities or *ēthos*: in the *Republic III* (401a-d) and *Laws* (669b) Plato states that the painting should be full of good characters (*ēthos*), the beauty of the form is not merely a subject of appearances and tangibles, but appearances must convey ethical values. However, these dialogues refer to the same subject that Socrates has also posed, but Plato's theory has a greater richness, because Socrates has discussed the good character (*ēthos*) in general. Though in Plato's dialogues, structure of mimetic artistic form as a combination of color functions, outline and *ēthos* is manifested in format of ethical form which, in addition to having visual features and perceptual capabilities of the artistic form, includes new particularities of ethical and human values, the beauty of figurative arts, as a factor in expressing appearances, serves the attitude and description of the superior humanistic values. On this basis, On this basis, though Plato firstly began to have interests and concerns about refining art and purifying it. The meaning of Transcendence the artistic form into the

ethical form within the framework of mimesis's theory is that Plato, by altering the values of the artistic form, gradually transcends it to an ethical format. In other words, it can be said that the history of the ethical concern of the artistic form is referred back to Socrates as a production mimicry. Thus, in order to preserve and protect the utopian society from moral pestilences, Plato has defined and formulated some principles for the legislator, considered as the doctrine of the philosopher-king (Republic, V: 473c-d), and by extending dimensions of the mimesis theory, use this theory in many categories such as education, politics, ethics, epistemology, psychology, sociology, art etc. In art, also, this theory penetrated to all fine arts, and established a communication between aesthetics and epistemology while criticizing the art itself.

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