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An unexplained overlap between *Sophist* 232b1-236d4 and *Republic X*. The case of the sophist as a painter

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Abstract: Although most scholars agree that the lexicon of *Sophist* 232b1-236d4 is similar to that of *Republic X*, they leave undetermined whether they are theoretically compatible. Notably,

both dialogues elucidate the art of imitation through the metaphor of the painter who deceives his pupils through φαντάσματα. I argue that Plato's conception of imitation of the *Republic* is not only consistent with that presented in the *Sophist*, but also importantly integrates it.

Keywords: Plato, sophist, image, appearance, imitation, intellect, education.

1

In Plato's *Sophist* there are seven definitions intended to describe sophistry. Following Lesley Brown's summary they are

(D1) a paid hunter of young men who purports to teach excellence, (D2) a travelling salesman of knowledge; (D3) a stay-at-home retailer of products for the soul, whether produced by others, or (D4) by himself; (D5) a combative controversialist who deals in disputation for money; (D6) an educator who separates better from worse, revealing contradiction through cross-questioning, and finally (D7) a producer of images in men's souls, an imitator of the wise person, who is aware of his own ignorance when teaching via private cross-questionings. (Brown, 2010, p. 152)

My aim here is to shed some light on D7. More precisely, I will discuss the passage that introduces the seventh definition. This passage (232b1-236d4) occurs between a summary of the first six definitions and the seventh definition, which occurs at the end of the dialogue (264b11-268c4). It is widely believed that its vocabulary is similar to that of *Republic* X. Most notably, in both dialogues the art of imitation is elucidated through the metaphor of the painter, who produces apparitions (φαντάσματα). Yet, it is not clear to what extent the two arguments are theoretically compatible. Francis Macdonald Cornford argues that they are compatible and that in both dialogues the object of the painter stands at two removes from reality (Cornford, 1935, p. 187-199). Contrary to this view, Richard Stanley

Bluck and others hold that the analogy Cornford draws with the *Republic* goes too far given that the *Sophist* does not contain any explicit reference to grades of reality.¹ In making this argument, they leave undetermined whether the two passages are still theoretically compatible.

In what follows I will present an interpretation of 232b1-236d4 (henceforth seventh definition) which clarifies if and how the seventh definition is compatible with Plato's *Republic*. My main argument is that although the sophist is an imitator of the wise person and lacks knowledge, he appears to be wise in everything because the judgment of his pupils is not a result of reflection but rather of an unreflective acceptance of what appears. *Republic X* is not only consistent with this argument, but it also integrates it. More particularly, Plato's conception of imitation in the *Republic* integrates the conception of imitation in the seventh definition by adding the ontological distinctions of the middle books. Understanding is the result of a judgment that has Forms as its ultimate target. On the other hand, the false belief instilled by the sophist is the result of an uncritical judgment that arises from perception. This occurs through the lowest kind of reality: the shadows and reflections of the cognitive state of εἰκασία of book 6 and 7.

I begin in section 2 with the canonical interpretation of the most relevant similarities between the vocabularies of the two passages. In section 3 I analyze the seventh definition of the *Sophist*. In section 4 I turn to Plato's *Republic*. First, I expand on the overlap between the two dialogues, arguing that the seventh definition has similarities not only with *Republic X* but also with *Republic II*. Then, I explain to what extent the two dialogues are compatible.

¹ Cf. Bluck, 1975, p. 59-60; and De Rijk, 1986, p. 81, n. 1.

2

The sophist is most correctly (*Sph.* 233d2: ὀρθότατα) and truly (*Sph.* 268d4: ἀληθέστατα) revealed through the seventh *logos*.² This definition not only covers a larger portion of the text in comparison with the previous six definitions, but it also purports to summarize one of the earlier accounts of the sophist. The Eleatic stranger (henceforth ES) introduces the seventh definition of the sophist as a refinement of the most revealing (*Sph.* 232b3: μάλιστα κατεφάνη) account of the sophist so far discussed with Theaetetus, namely the fifth definition (*Sph.* 224d7-226a5). According to the fifth definition the sophist is an antilogician (*Sph.* 225b10: ἀντιλογικόν) who disputes in private discourse through questions and answers, and who must be distinguished from the figure of the judicial orator who, by contrast, disputes in public through long speeches upon what is just and unjust (*Sph.* 225b5-7).³ The seventh definition is special in that it seeks to refine this definition by examining what the antilogician makes people expert about (*Sph.* 232b12: περὶ τίνοϛ).

After some discussion, it appears that the antilogician is wise in everything (*Sph.* 233c6: πάντα): he is wise about divine matters, about things of the earth and of the heavens, about coming into being and being, about laws and politics, and questions concerning the crafts (*Sph.* 232c1-d8). In order to clarify this point, the ES introduces “a particular example that will make the issues clearer” (*Sph.* 233d3-4),⁴ shifting from the figure of the antilogician to that of the painter.

² The comparison between the seventh definition and *Republic X* is not affected by the way in which we interpret the validity of *Sph.* 232b1-236d4. Hence, it is not my intention to engage in the controversy about the adequacy of this definition. Cornford (1935, p. 173), Bluck (1975, p. 53), Notomi (1999, p. 277-278), Gill (2010, p. 171-172), Rickless (2010, p. 293), and Esses (2019, p. 308) believe that the seventh definition discloses the sophist’s essence. For contrasting views, see Dorter, 1994, p. 170; and Brown, 2010, p. 162.

³ It is clear that in turn the fifth definition refers to the digression of the *Theaetetus* (172c1-177b7), where Plato distinguishes the life of the philosopher from that of the lawyer.

⁴ All translations from the *Theaetetus*, the *Sophist*, and the *Republic*, sometimes slightly changed, are taken from Rowe (2012) and Rowe (2015).

According to the canonical interpretation, it is exactly at this point that the similarities between the vocabulary of the *Sophist* and that of *Republic* begin. Let me list some of the most relevant ones.⁵

First, the sophist is identified with the figure of the painter who, through his art (*Sph.* 234b7: τέχνη), is capable of doing and making everything; the ES claims that the sophist can make him, Theaetetus, the sea, the earth, the heavens, the gods, and anything else whatsoever (*Sph.* 233e5-234a5). The figure of the antilogician – who knows how to speak both for and against every subject, and was previously presented in the fifth definition and in the beginning of the seventh – is now replaced in the seventh definition by the figure of the painter who by virtue of a single art knows how to make images of everything (*Sph.* 233d9-10: δρᾶν μιᾷ τέχνη συνάπαντα ἐπίστασθαι πράγματα). This should not come as a surprise to the Platonic reader: in the tenth book of the *Republic* the figure of the painter was not only presented in the same terms, but was also identified with the sophist (*R.* 596d1: σοφιστήν). The similarities between the two vocabularies are indeed too striking to be overlooked: the painter makes everything (*R.* 596c2: πάντα ποιεῖ). As Plato writes, “everything that grows from the earth, he makes; every living creature he fashions, even himself. And on top of all that he does earth, heaven, gods, the things in the heavens, things in Hades under the earth – he fashions it all.”⁶

Second, Theaetetus and the ES consider the painter’s pretension to know anything he imitates to be a kind of play (*Sph.* 234a6, 234a9: παιδιάν). The same expression appears also in the *Republic*, where Socrates claims that “the imitative type knows nothing worth mentioning about the things he is imitating – imitation is a form of play (παιδιάν), not to be taken seriously” (*R.* 602b7-8).

⁵ Cf. Else, 1972; Gastaldi, 1999; Notomi, 1999, p. 124-133; and Teisserenc, 2012, p. 42-52.

⁶ *R.* 569c6-9: ζῶα πάντα ἐργάζεται, τά τε ἄλλα καὶ ἑαυτόν, καὶ πρὸς τούτοις γῆν καὶ οὐρανὸν καὶ θεοὺς καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ τὰ ἐν Ἄιδου ὑπὸ γῆς ἅπαντα ἐργάζεται.

Third, in both the *Sophist* and the *Republic* Plato argues that the painter is an image-maker (*Sph.* 235b8: εἰδωλοποιικήν; *R.* 599a7: εἰδώλων δημιουργία), or more specifically a producer of apparitions (*Sph.* 236b7; *R.* 598b5: φαντάσματα). The terms employed are exactly the same, providing some evidence for the connection between the two dialogues.

Fourth, according to Plato's *Sophist*, the sophist uses two stratagems in order to deceive his audience:⁷

(S1) he addresses the unintelligent ones among young children (*Sph.* 234b8: τοὺς ἀνοήτους τῶν νέων παίδων),

(S2) he shows his paintings at a distance (*Sph.* 234b8-9: πόρρωθεν τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐπιδεικνύς).

Similarly, in *Republic X* the painter *appears* to be an expert in all crafts in virtue of the same two stratagems:

(R1) he deceives children and people with no sense (*R.* X, 598c2: παῖδάς γε καὶ ἄφρονας ἀνθρώπους),

(R2) he exhibits his pictures at a distance (*R.* X, 598c3: πόρρωθεν ἐπιδεικνύς)

3

Although these similarities suffice to show that the vocabularies of the two dialogues are closely interconnected with one another, they do not prove their theoretical affinity. They do not exclude the possibility that Plato wants to convey different meanings through the use of a similar vocabulary. Thus, it is prudent to heed Bluck's warning that "it is always dangerous to press Plato's analogies farther than the context requires" (Bluck, 1975, p. 59, n. 3). In addition to pointing out the textual similarities, I need to take a step further and explicate the reasons why Plato's *Republic* is compatible with the seventh definition of the *Sophist*. Were this the case, I would not only

⁷ Cf. Else, 1972, p. 38.

prove a mere compatibility in the vocabulary, but also a theoretical affinity. That is to say, I would prove the existence of an overlapping argument between the *Republic* and the *Sophist*. Hence, let's turn to the theoretical continuity between the *Sophist* and the *Republic*. I will first proceed by analyzing the *Sophist*. Then, I will further my point by showing that this is compatible with Plato's *Republic*.

According to the seventh definition of Plato's *Sophist*, the namesake of this dialogue is an antilogician who possesses a wonderful (*Sph.* 233a9: θαῦμα) power through which he makes the young believe that he is wiser than everybody else about everything.⁸ How should we think of this wonderful power? Does it entitle the sophist to a privileged status, or is it just a form of deception that makes things appear different from what they are? Plato's ingenious etymological wordplay clearly suggests the latter;⁹ the sophist is like a conjurer (*Sph.* 235b5: θαυματοποιός), namely that person who, by hiding his tricks, makes them appear as real.¹⁰ This is also confirmed in the next lines of the text; the sophists appear wise in everything without actually being so (*Sph.* 233c6-8), tricking young people into thinking that they possess what they actually lack.

Now, in order to explain how this is possible, the ES introduces a παράδειγμα that will make the issue clearer. This is, as is well known, the metaphor of the painter, which is introduced as follows: "if someone claimed to know, through a single art (μῦξ τέχνη), not just how to speak or speak against (μὴ λέγειν μηδ' ἀντιλέγειν) on every subject, but how to make or do (ποιεῖν καὶ δρᾶν) everything" (*Sph.* 233d9-10). Just as the antilogician speaks or speaks against on every subject, so, the ES claims, the painter makes everything. They possess two analogous arts in that they treat all human knowledge and appear to be wise in everything. Yet, they differ in that they are products of two different acts, speaking and painting respectively.

⁸ *Sph.* 233b1-2: δυνατοὶ τοῖς νέοις δόξαν παρασκευάζειν ὡς εἰσὶ πάντα πάντων αὐτοὶ σοφώτατοι.

⁹ Cf. Centrone, 2008, p. 95, n. 66.

¹⁰ Similarly, in *Smp.* 203d5-8 Plato argues that the sophist is a hunter (θηρευτής) always contriving some tricks, a juggler (γότης), and a poisoner (φαρμακεύς).

Immediately after that, the ES goes back to the art of the antilogician by introducing the metaphor of the spoken images (234b5-235a9); thanks to this other art (*Sph.* 234c3: ἄλλην τέχνην) the antilogician deceives the young into thinking that he has knowledge about everything through their ears, rather than through their eyes, that is, with words rather than with paintings. Then, in the remaining part (235a10-236d4), the ES returns again to the metaphor of the painter. Having almost caught the sophist in a net, the ES purports to refine the metaphor of the painter so that the sophist will not be able to escape anymore (*Sph.* 235a10-b3).

This double shift causes many problems for the Platonic reader. Particularly, it is difficult to understand how the sophist appears to be wise in everything. The seventh definition is not only condensed, but it is also split into two analogous arguments which are presented through the powerful device of the metaphor. In order to cope with this difficulty, I propose to proceed as follows: first, to consider the metaphor of the spoken images. Second, to turn to the metaphor of the painter. Since the two figures are analogous, we expect that what holds true for the former also holds for the latter. If we were to find an interpretation that holds for both metaphors, then, I think, we could claim to be on the right track. In fact, then, and only then, could we provide an interpretation that accounts for the seventh definition as a whole.

Let us start with the context in which the metaphor of the spoken images is introduced. The analogy arises from the ES's claim that the painter's pretension to make everything through his single art is a sort of game. The metaphor of the painter is presented as follows:

someone who uses a painter's expertise (τῆ γραφικῆ τέχνη) to produce imitations (μιμήματα) bearing the same names of the actual things that they imitate will be able, if he shows his paintings from a distance (πόρρωθεν τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐπιδεικνύς), to dupe the unintelligent ones among young children (τοὺς ἀνοήτους τῶν νέων παίδων) into thinking that he is perfectly able to accomplish anything he puts his mind to. (*Sph.* 234b6-10)

There are three points that are worth mentioning here. First of all, the painter addresses a specific kind of audience, namely the unintelligent ones among young children. This is a recurrent pattern throughout the seventh definition. Rather than convincing mature adults, the sophist deliberately chooses to persuade the young. Second, he produces imitations bearing the same names as the actual things. It is through these images that he persuades young people that he is wise in everything. Third, he shows his paintings from an unreliable viewpoint. The paintings resemble the object only when viewed at a distance (*Sph.* 234b8-9). This viewpoint alters the judgment of children, making them believe that the paintings are the objects they depict. Were the paintings to be viewed from a different viewpoint, namely, from close up, it could be seen that they do not actually resemble the objects they depict.

Immediately after that, the ES translates what he has just said into the metaphor of the spoken images. In so doing, he preserves the existing pattern, by projecting it into a different context. He argues that:

so then are we surprised to find some other art, this time to do with words (περι τοὺς λόγους), by which it is actually possible to bewitch (γοητεύειν) the young (τοὺς νέους) – standing, as they do, as yet far away from the truth of things (ἔτι πόρρω τῶν πραγμάτων τῆς ἀληθείας ἀφαστῶτας) – by way of their ears, and using words: an art that treats everything by showing its young hearers spoken images (εἶδωλα λεγόμενα) so as to make them think that true things are being said, and indeed that the person saying them is the wisest of all about all things? (*Sph.* 234c2-7)

The first two points, previously presented in the metaphor of the painter, are perfectly mirrored in the metaphor of the spoken images. Like the painter, the antilogician persuades young people into believing that he is wise in everything. He does so by showing images to his audience. However, this is not the case for the third point. Unlike the painter, the antilogician does not use paintings; his art has to do with λόγοι. As a result, the physical distance of the discourses

of the painter is projected into an epistemological distance: the spoken images are presented to young children far from the truth.¹¹

What is the meaning of this projection? The picture that comes to the fore in this metaphor is characterized by three elements: the fact that the antilogician addresses young children, that the children are without experience (*Sph.* 234d5-6), and that they are far from the truth (234c4-5). As the ES clarifies, it is only when people are advanced in age (*Sph.* 234d4: προϊούσης ηλικίας) insofar as they have lived longer (*Sph.* 234d3: χρόνου ἐπελθόντος), that they are able to get a clear grasp on things through their experiences (*Sph.* 234d5: διὰ παθημάτων).¹² On the other hand, when they are still young they are far from the truth, and thus they can be easily deceived. At this first stage, their immaturity makes them believe the opposite of what they will believe later on when

the apparitions contained in the words (τὰ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις φαντάσματα) they once heard are completely overturned by the realities borne in on them as they act out their lives (ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν ἔργων). (*Sph.* 234d7-e2)

What is first believed to be big is then believed to be small. Similarly, what was believed to be easy is then believed to be difficult. The reason for this overturning is maturity.¹³ It is only with

¹¹ Cf. Notomi, 1999, p. 139.

¹² By the same token, Theaetetus argues that this seems right to him, at least so far as someone of his age can judge (*Sph.* 234e3: ὡς γοῦν ἐμοὶ τηλικῶδε ὄντι κρῖναι). He thinks he is one of those young people still standing at a distance from truth (*Sph.* 234e4: τῶν ἔτι πόρρωθεν ἀφεστηκότων εἶναι). It is only with maturity that people grasp the true nature of the things.

¹³ Rosen takes the *iunctura* ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν ἔργων more literally. He argues that: “as the Stranger’s terminology makes evident, it is the business of life, affairs (πρᾶξις), and practical encounters with things (ἔργα), rather than abstract speeches, that cure us of sophistry. This remark of the stranger, while sound, is thus inconsistent with the methodological context of the discussion,” Rosen (1983, p. 167). However, as I have already noted above, the sophist addresses young children because they are unintelligent. The inexperience of the young person goes hand in hand with his lack of intelligence. Moreover, as Movia (1991, p. 213) elucidates “è stato giustamente osservato che l’intenzione platonica non è di distruggere i

the first traces of the beard that people start actively employing the intellect.¹⁴ Before that age, young people make judgments unreflectively, without using their intellect (*Smp.* 181d1-7). In that stage, they accept the false beliefs put into them by the sophist without going through a process of reflection; they simply take for granted what they have heard.¹⁵ Later on in their life, with the development of their intellect, they rationally examine the beliefs of the sophist. In so doing, they come to realize that these beliefs are false, and thus they reject them.

Thus far, I have drawn attention to the metaphor of the spoken images. My main point has been that whereas *appearances* (which are available from birth) are unreflectively accepted; *how things are* (and thus truths) can only be gained through reflection; and reflection comes only with experience. The sophist *appears* to be wise in everything because young people make judgments without the aid of intelligence. On the contrary, mature people are able to reject the sophist's false beliefs in virtue of their rational reflection.

With this in mind, let us turn to the metaphor of the painter. The ES goes back to this metaphor by restating that the sophist is a conjurer (*Sph.* 235b5: θαυματοποιός). This is in line with the end of the metaphor of the spoken images, where the antilogician is claimed

ragionamenti o i discorsi (λόγοι) a favore dei fatti: Platone, se si può usare questo gioco di parole, vuole dei ragionamenti che siano di fatto, cioè veramente tali; egli, insomma, ritiene che, quando la realtà sia veramente studiata, attesta principi di natura razionale, cioè le idee." For further evidence on this point, see section 4 below.

¹⁴ For more passages of this sort, see Delcomminette, 2014.

¹⁵ This sophistic conception of education is confirmed in *R.* 518b6-c2: "So, I said, if this is true, our view on the whole subject should be this, that education is not what it's claimed to be by some of those who profess to provide it. What they claim is pretty much that if knowledge isn't present in a soul, they can put it there—as it were, putting sight into the eyes of the blind." See also *Smp.* 175c6-e6. This is a recurrent pattern in the Platonic corpus. See, for instance, Burnyeat, 2012, p. 27, for the *Theaetetus*; Scott, 2006, p. 13, for the *Meno*; and Bonazzi, 2012, p. 9, n. 12, for the *Phaedrus*. For a more general account, see Teloh, 1986, p. 7.

to be a magician (*Sph.* 235a8: γόητα) insofar as he produces imitations of actual things.

Then, the ES goes on by dividing the art of the painter, that is, the art of image-making, into two forms. The first form, which is the product of the sophist, is the apparition (φάντασμα; *Sph.* 236b4-7). It is special in that it appears to resemble the object, even though it is not like it (*Sph.* 236b6-7: ἄρ' οὐκ, ἐπεὶ περ φαίνεται μὲν, ἔοικε δὲ οὐ). It does so in virtue of the inadequacy of the context in which it is seen; the painting is at a distance from the viewer. The second form is the likeness (εἰκῶν). In contrast with the apparition of the sophist, this type of painting actually resembles its object.

How should we interpret the fact that that the painter deceives his viewers because he shows his φαντάσματα from a distance, that is, that the distance is physical rather than epistemological? As we have seen above, this is the main difference with the metaphor of the spoken images. I argue that this can be interpreted in two different ways. First, the audience is misled by the unreliable viewpoint from which they view the painting. Were they to have viewed the object from a reliable viewpoint, namely from close up, they would not have been deceived. On this reading, the judgment based on perception is sufficient to grasp the truth of things if the perception takes place in an adequate situation. Second, the audience is misled because perception is not sufficient. A reliable judgment goes beyond the unreflective acceptance of what we perceive, and it rather requires the intervention of the intellect. Contrary to the first judgment, this second one is view-independent. It relies on reflective calculations and not on the subjective appearances that depend upon a particular viewpoint.

On the whole, I prefer the second interpretation. This is clearly in line with my reading of the metaphor of the spoken images and points toward the same conclusion: young people are deceived because they pass their judgment without the aid of the intellect. There are two considerations that count in favor of this interpretation.

The first concerns the type of works that the sophist produces, namely the φαντάσματα. When the sophist produces them, he takes into account a problem inherent to perception. Whereas the parts viewed from a distance *appear* smaller, those viewed from close up *appear* bigger. The sophist, being aware of this illusion, modifies what appears disproportionate so that it appears proportionate; he enlarges the parts viewed from distance and reduces the parts viewed from close up (*Sph.* 235e6-236a2). The result is that the disproportionate representation gives the impression of being the original object and, consequently, that the φάντασμα is assumed to be the product of a knowledgeable person. In order to emphasize the inaccuracy of perception, the ES repeats twice that the sophist paints large-scale works (*Sph.* 235e5-6; 236b5): they are the most subject to distortion as several of its parts are viewed from distance. Take, for instance, the Parthenon, the most famous temple in Ancient Athens. It was built so as to appear proportionate from the perspective of the viewer. The optical refinements were employed for counterbalancing the illusions of human vision. In this way, the proportions of the temple that would normally have been employed by a geometer were replaced by those that gave an appearance of symmetry. The deceit occurs because perception is not reliable enough.¹⁶

¹⁶ There is further evidence for this point in the passage that defines the φάντασμα. The ES argues that: “What then? What shall we call something that appears to resemble the beautiful (τὸ φαινόμενον εὐικένας τῷ καλῷ) because it’s being viewed from a non-beautiful viewpoint (διὰ τὴν οὐκ ἐκ καλοῦ θέαν), and if one acquired an ability to see such large things adequately (τὰ τηλικαῦτα ἰκανῶς ὁρᾶν), is actually not like what it claims to resemble? Since it appears to resemble the original but it is not like it, we’ll call it a ‘semblance’ (φάντασμα), won’t we?” (*Sph.* 236b4-7). According to the ES, the sophist’s paintings do not represent the truth insofar as they create those proportions that resemble the originals only when they are viewed from a non-beautiful viewpoint. Despite the fact that the case seems to address specific types of perception only, I want to argue that it pertains to perception in general. As I take it, the lack of beauty in the viewpoint addresses a problem inherent to perception. The ES argues that if one had the ability to grasp the actual proportions through sight he would realize that the semblance appears to resemble what it claims to resemble, even though it is unlike it. However, since human sight does not possess this ability, no one can rely on perception. Human sight is incapable of obtaining an adequate understanding of the proportions of the

The second concerns the distinction with the other kind of paintings that the ES presents in the *Sophist*, namely the likenesses (εἰκόνες). Contrary to the sophist's paintings, which distort the proportions of the original object so that it appears proportionate, the likenesses keep "the proportions of the original in terms of length and breadth and depth."¹⁷ This contrast is indeed noteworthy. On the one hand there is the φάντασμα. Its purpose, as we have just seen, is to give the appearance of resembling the original object. In order to do so, it takes into account the perspective of the viewer and the illusion of human perception, and it eventually produces an optical symmetry. On the other hand, there is the εἰκών, the aim of which is to faithfully represent the original object. Its proportions are established independently of how they appear from a certain viewpoint and regardless of the problems inherent to perception.¹⁸ Rather than producing an optical symmetry, it produces a geometrical one.¹⁹

The implication underlying this distinction is that the viewer who prefers the εἰκών to the φάντασμα relies on calculation and not on perception. She is persuaded that the εἰκών of X more accurately reproduces X than its φάντασμα because she does not merely base her judgment on what appears. Quite the reverse. Instead of unreflectively accepting the φάντασμα, she measures the actual proportions of the object. As a result, she comes to realize that the εἰκών is the only reliable representation of the object; this is the only type of painting whose measurements match those of the original object.

To sum up, in this section I have argued that in the seventh definition of the sophist there are two metaphors that purport to clarify the essence of the sophist, that is, that he appears to be wise in everything without actually being so. First is the metaphor of the

object. It does not possess the ability to see (ὁράω) things adequately (ικανῶς). Thus, the φάντασμα deceives due to the unreliability of perception.

¹⁷ *Sph.* 235d7-8: κατὰ τὰς τοῦ παραδείγματος συμμετρίας τις ἐν μήκει καὶ πλάτει καὶ βάθει.

¹⁸ So Teisserenc, 2012, p. 48.

¹⁹ Cf. Vilella-Petit, 1991, p. 84-86.

spoken images. According to this metaphor, the antilogician persuades young people, through spoken images, that he can speak about everything. The deceit occurs because young people are far from the truth. Second is the metaphor of the painter. Like the antilogician, the painter persuades young people that he can paint everything. However, unlike the antilogician, the painter shows his images, namely his paintings, to young people at a distance. My main argument is that, taken together, the two metaphors point toward the same conclusion: the sophist appears to be wise in everything because he addresses young people. He addresses young people since they pass their judgments unreflectively, without the aid of reason. This explains why they are deceived. Truth and being are the result of a rational judgment, not of a judgment ruled by appearances.

4

I turn now to Plato's *Republic*. In what follows I will argue that Plato's *Republic* presents the same two figures of the seventh definition of the *Sophist*. On the one hand there is the figure of the poet who deals with λόγοι and produces images of words, on the other hand there is the figure of the painter who deals with paintings. I will show that the two figures are as closely interconnected as in the *Sophist* and that they point toward the same conclusion.

The opening of *Republic X* refers back to the critique of the art of imitation of the second and third book. Socrates abruptly begins the tenth book by claiming that there are many reasons "why our city was founded in absolutely the right way, but not the least of those reasons is the way we treated poetry" (*R.* 595a2-3). In so doing, he recalls the critique of poetry of *Republic II* and *III* yet focuses instead on painting.

What is interesting about this connection is that it establishes a relation which is in line with that of the seventh definition of the *Sophist*. Whereas in *Republic II* the deception of the art of imitation occurs through λόγοι, in *Republic X* it occurs through paintings. As we have seen above, we find the same relation in the *Sophist*. The

deception of the sophist is explained both through the metaphor of the spoken images and through the metaphor of the painter. The similarity is indeed striking and worthy of further attention. Λόγοι and paintings are closely interconnected to one another just as in the *Sophist*. The poet of *Republic II* is to the painter of *Republic X* as the metaphor of the spoken images is to the metaphor of the painter. This is not only clear from the relation between the two books but also from the explicit arguments of the text. In *Republic II* Socrates claims that

when a discourse (τῷ λόγῳ) gives a bad image (εἰκάζει) of the nature of gods and heroes, it is like a painter (γράφει) painting a portrait (γράφων) that is nothing like (μηδὲν εὐκότα) the intended subject. (*R.* 377e1-3)

The *false discourse* of the poet mirrors the *false contents* of the painter's paintings because the two arts are analogous. What is perhaps even more interesting is that the similarities between the *Sophist* and the *Republic* also hold internally; if on the one hand *Republic II* contains the salient arguments of the metaphor of the spoken images, on the other hand *Republic X* contains those of the metaphor of the painter.

Let me start with *Republic II*. The second part of this book targets the education of young people—the same people addressed by the antilogician in the *Sophist*. The crucial argument underlying this passage is that the poets producing immoral stories should be banned from the city and replaced by those artists producing stories approved by the city-founders (*R.* 378e7-389a4). This is so because young people are most malleable, taking on whatever stamps one wants to impress on them (*R.* 377a12-b3). Thus, it is necessary to control the moral conveyed by the stories in order not to corrupt them.

The first piece of supporting evidence comes from this argument. The recurrent use of the verb πλάττω (377b1-2: μάλιστα γὰρ δὴ τότε πλάττεται πλάττειν; 377c3: πλάττειν τὰς ψυχάς) that is, to mold, shows that young children take for granted what they hear from the poets without any kind of resistance whatsoever. The beliefs are

simply instilled in them from outside. This explains why their stories should be approved by the city-founders. Since young people are senseless,²⁰ they cannot themselves overturn the false beliefs of the poets, and thus the stories must be controlled. On the contrary, when they have lived longer and are advanced in age, they become capable of overturning the false beliefs they once heard. Using the same argument that the ES presents in the *Sophist* (234d7-e2), Socrates argues that the young let into their souls beliefs “that are for the most part opposite to the ones we’ll think they should have when they are grown up” (R. 377b7-9).

Note that in this case there is no doubt that maturity is linked with intelligence. False beliefs are only uprooted when young people grow up. What happens when they become mature? In the later stages of their life people no longer rely on what appears but rather determine the nature of the things for themselves through an active use of their intellects. *Republic VII*, whose object is the education of mature people rather than that of young senseless people, confirms precisely this thesis: it fulfills the program of education of the *Republic* started in the second book through a reorientation of the intellect (R. 518c4-d1); mature educated people turn their souls away from the visible realm to the intelligible, moving from an uncritical acceptance of appearances to a critical reflection on how things are. The result is that people are now free, finally released from the chains of the visible realm in which they uncritically accepted the things they viewed or heard when they were young and unintelligent.²¹

Further, besides the malleability of young people, there are two additional arguments corroborating the connection between *Republic II* and the metaphor of the spoken images. First, when Socrates considers the traditional view that the poets have of gods, namely, that they are liars making us believe false things, he compares god to a wizard (R. 380d1: γόητα). Along much the same lines as the ES in

²⁰ R. 378a3: ἄφρονάς τε καὶ νέους.

²¹ On the connection between *Republic VII* and *Republic X* see Burnyeat, 1997, p. 242-243; and Burnyeat, 2010, p. 44-45.

the *Sophist*, Socrates does so because, in this traditional view, which he eventually rejects, gods deceive us into thinking that they appear to us in every guise, making us believe that they are what they actually are not. Once again, it is by offering us a mere φάντασμα that they fool us, either with words or deeds (ἢ λόγῳ ἢ ἔργῳ), into believing false things (R. 382a1-2). Second, we find again the thesis according to which λόγοι are images (εἶδωλα). Socrates argues that the false claims made by the gods through words are false images of being that are experienced by the soul (R. 382b1-c1).²² The ES echoes this in the *Sophist* by claiming that the false λόγοι are εἶδωλα λεγόμενα that bewitch the soul of the young.

So much for *Republic II*. What about *Republic X*? I hope section II has done something to show that *Republic X* and the metaphor of the painter use the same wording. In this last part of this section I want to go further than that and claim the two passages are also complementary.

Republic X criticizes the art of imitation by focusing on the figure of the painter, namely the person who appears to have knowledge about everything by exhibiting his pictures at a distance to children with no sense.²³ There is no doubt that these similarities are striking. Yet, despite this fact, only Cornford has sought to determine if and how the two arguments are compatible.²⁴ The merit of his interpretation consists in a close reading of the two dialogues as interconnected with one another. On the other hand, its limitation lies

²² The distinction at stake is that between falsity about being, which is claimed to be the true falsehood (R. 382b8: ἀληθῶς ψευδός), and falsity about images of being.

²³ The intrinsic connection between poems and paintings in *Republic X* is emphasized by Storey (2014, p. 84). Many scholars have objected that the parallel Plato draws between the poet and the painter is not legitimate. However, it goes beyond the aim of this paper to analyze whether the argument is logically sound parallel or not. For a detailed discussion of the relevant literature about this problem, see the recent discussion of Scott (2016).

²⁴ See the introduction above. Another attempt was made by Else (1972). However, his developmental analysis is far from being convincing. In short, his point is that Plato wrote the seventh definition of the *Sophist* before *Republic X*. Later on, Plato integrated *Republic X* to the first nine books as a kind of afterthought.

in the overly narrow part of the text of *Republic X* that he takes into account. If the first part of the argument focuses on the ontological status of the painter's paintings, which is indeed not to be found in the *Sophist*, the second part, *viz.*, the one he overlooks, turns to the effects that the painter produces on the soul. In what follows, I will argue that it is precisely in this second part that the theoretical compatibility between *Republic X* and the metaphor of the painter occurs.

The transition to the effects on the audience takes place in 602c:²⁵ Socrates asks Glaucon “what sort of element (πρὸς δὲ δὴ ποῖόν) in us does it [the imitation of the painter] relate to, and have the capacity (τὴν δύναμιν) to affect?” (*R.* 602c4-5). Then the conversation continues as follows:

What sort of thing are you talking about?

Something like this. If we rely on our sight, I think we find the same magnitude appearing to differ (οὐκ ἴσον φαίνεται) in size when we see it from distance.

We do.

And the same things appear both bent and straight, if we look at them first under water and then out of water – both concave and convex, too, because of the way our sight vacillates about colours, and clearly every sort of confusion (ταραχή) is present there by itself in the soul (αὕτη ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ). It's this aspect of our nature that shadow-painting (σκιαγραφία) exploits as effectively as any jugglery (γοητείας), conjuring (θαυματοποιία), too, and all those other kind of trickery (μηχαναί). (*R.* 602c6-d4)

To begin with, notice that the painter is still identified both with the wizard (γόης) and the conjurer (θαυματοποιός). They are analogous since they both exert their powers on the part of cognition that goes by visual appearances. In certain cases—viewing objects that

²⁵ Cf. Shorey, 1935, p. 448, n. a: “the antithesis of περί and πρὸς marks the transition.”

are either near or far away, concave or convex, or simultaneously in and out of water—the soul is confused, and thus easily deceived, because the appearances are view-dependent. If on the one hand, the object viewed from close up *appears* bigger, on the other, when it is viewed at a distance, it *appears* smaller.²⁶

What does this mean? Only at the end of the argument does it become explicit. Yet, there is here a sort of anticipation underlying the text that further corroborates the core proposal made in this study. In setting out the part of the soul that the painter affects, Socrates refers to shadow-painting (σκιαγραφία). The least we can say, I think, is that this concept is normally used in a pejorative way. The word describes a situation in which the soul is deceived because it relies on the senses.²⁷ As Socrates makes clear in the following lines:

measuring, counting and weighing (τὸ μετρεῖν καὶ ἀριθμεῖν καὶ ἰστάναι) provide most welcome protection against this sort of thing, preventing our being ruled by what merely appears (τὸ φαινόμενον) larger or smaller, or more, or heavier, and allowing what has actually done the calculations and the measurements and the weighing (τὸ λογισάμενον καὶ μετρήσαν) to rule instead. (R. 602d6-9)

²⁶ This clearly reminds us of the description that the ES employs in the *Sophist* in order to characterize the φαντάσματα.

²⁷ See for instance the *Phaedo*. As is well known, Socrates criticizes the cognitive power of the senses insofar as they fool the soul. He argues that “the investigation through the eyes is full of deceit, as is that through the ears and the other senses [...] [what the soul examines through the senses] is different in different circumstances and is sensible and visible,” *Phd.* 83a4-5; 83b2-4. This is to be contrasted with the case in which the soul actively employs the intellect, grasping the unchanging reality of what is intelligible and invisible. As I take it, it is under this light that the concept of σκιαγραφία in the *Phaedo* must be understood. When Socrates argues that virtue *separated from intelligence* (*Phd.* 69b5-6: χωριζόμενα δὲ φρονήσεως), is but a σκιαγραφία of virtue, possessing *nothing healthy or true in it* (οὐδὲν ὑγιές οὐδ’ ἀληθές ἔχη), he is stressing the vulnerability of what is detached from intelligence, its inability to reach the truth.

Σκιαγραφία deceives souls that are ruled by what appears, rather than by reflection.²⁸ This explains why the painter deceives his audience. Since the audience is not ruled by measurements and weighing, it relies on what appears. A judgment of this sort is contingent and context-dependent, and thus it can easily fool the soul. On the contrary, when the soul forms beliefs with an active mental effort, it gains a certain kind of stability that allows it to discard the deceptions that resulted from perception. Echoing the argument that ES will use in the *Sophist*, Socrates argues that it is only when we are ruled by measurements and weighing that we get closer to the truth.²⁹ Intellect is what protects the soul against these sorts of appearances, which do not partake of truth.

Does this entail that, through the aid of the intellect, we reach a pure, unchangeable truth, which could not be otherwise? No; it does not if we take into account the overall meaning of the two passages. In the *Sophist*, Theaetetus argues that an image “resembles the true original” (*Sph.* 240a8: τὸ πρὸς ἀληθινὸν ἀφωμοιωμένον); that is to say, it resembles the truth without being the truth (*Sph.* 240b2: οὐδαμῶς ἀληθινόν γε, ἀλλ’ εἰκὸς μὲν).³⁰ Or, in other words, it gets close to the truth without being the that which really is (*Sph.* 240b3: τὸ ὄντως ὄν). Although it is not truly, it is really a likeness (*Sph.* 240b11: εἰκὼν ὄντως) that is modeled upon the original object. Contrary to the φάντασμα, the εἰκὼν is the result of an active use of the intellect, truly resembling, but not being, the object it depicts.³¹

²⁸ Once again, in accordance with the *Sophist*, whereas the acceptance through the senses is uncritical, the acceptance through measurements is critical. On *Republic X* see Lorenz (2006, p. 71, 96).

²⁹ This is also noted by Moss (2007, p. 421 n. 12).

³⁰ On the constitutive difference between images and true being see Leszl, 2001.

³¹ *Phdr.* 247c3-e6 goes in the same direction; according to this argument human discourse is incapable of grasping the being that really is (οὐσία ὄντως οὔσα, 247c7). If on the one hand, in the *Sophist*, every kind of image, and thus λόγος, is defective and falls short of being the truth that really is, on the other hand, the *Phaedrus* restates this by showing that the λόγος of the poet is incapable by itself of singing about the region above the heaven. That is to say, in both dialogues language is an imitation of true being; at most it *resembles* the being that really is, by saying something true about it. Yet, it will never be identical to it because of its

In like manner, in the *Republic* Socrates argues that measuring and counting are never totally immune from confusions, acquiring an uncertain and not ultimate truth. However, and this is the crucial point, this is already sufficient in order to reject the beliefs that come from perception; the soul, calling for help from reasoning and intelligence (*R.* 524b4: λογισμὸν τε καὶ νόησιν), produces something which is at the same time *healthy and true*.³²

This is precisely what Socrates confirms in the upshot of the whole discussion (and repeats later on in *R.* 605a7-c3):

This was what I wanted us to agree (διομολογήσασθαι) about when I was saying of painting (ἡ γραφικὴ), and the production of imitations in general (καὶ ὅλως ἡ μιμητικὴ), that if the product it fashions is far removed from the truth (πόρρω μὲν τῆς ἀληθείας), the element in us that it talks to, dallies with and befriends, for no healthy purpose, or any true one either (ἐπ' οὐδενὶ ὑγιεῖ οὐδ' ἀληθεῖ)—is itself no less far removed from intelligence (πόρρω δ' αὖ φρονήσεως). (*R.* 603a10-b2)

Now, this eventually leads us back to the problem from which we began. To what extent is *Republic X* compatible with the seventh definition of the *Sophist*? The upshot of the present discussion is that the two passages are not only compatible, but also that *Republic X* integrates the seventh definition. The point of intersection between the two passages is that the painter deceives his young audience because it lacks intelligence: being devoid of intelligence the audience is far from truth, and thus it gropes in the dark, constantly shifting its opinions, which are not the result of a critical reflection. This explains why the deception of the sophist occurs. Further than

constitutive difference, which prevents it from fully possessing the colorless, formless, and intangible being. Cf. Werner, 2012, p. 95-97.

³² Similarly, in a crucial passage in the second sailing in the *Phaedo*, Socrates argues that “ἔδοξε δὴ μοι χρῆναι εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα ἐν ἐκείνοις σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν,” *Phd.* 99e5-6. The images of λόγοι, although they are a second-best that indirectly refer to reality, they are superior to the images that come from perception; it is through these discourses (εἰς τοὺς λόγους) that we examine the truth of reality (τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν).

that, *Republic X* integrates the seventh definition of the *Sophist* in that it introduces the ontological distinctions of the middle books.³³ As Susan Levis acutely observes, in *Republic X* Plato

criticizes poetry in light of his treatment of Forms and their participants (*metechonta*) in Books 5-7. Pivotal here is Plato's identification of Forms as the ultimate reference points of both judgment and action, and his strong distinction within the realm of appearance between its inferior and superior constituents. (Levin, 2001, p. 155)

That is to say, the intelligible forms are the points of reference for understanding. They are the *sine qua non* for obtaining the ἐπιστήμη, which can only be the result of an active use of the intellect and not of perception.³⁴ On the other hand, the sensible images, and more particularly the shadows and reflections of εἰκασία in books 6 and 7,³⁵ are the points of reference for poetry and paintings; they are

³³ Here I fully agree with Vegetti (2007, p. 31-32) who argues that “si presenta come un sostegno offerto alle tesi critiche sulla poesia formulate nei libri II e III dell’ opera: sostegno ora reso possibile dagli sviluppi dell’ontologia eidetica formulate nei libri V-VII (benché sia omesso qualsiasi riferimento all’ idea del buono), e all’ uso estensivo del modello dell’ illusionismo pittorico per interpretare tutta la dimensione mimetica [...] É particolarmente chiara la vicinanza degli argomenti del *peri mimeseos* [R. 595a-608b] a quelli formulate nel *Sofista* contro l’ illusionismo appunto sofistico (233a sgg.), alle *Leggi* per la concezione bipartite dell’ anima, e ad alcuni spunti dello stesso dialogo (Libro VII) sul tema dell’ imitazione.”

³⁴ With the words of *Republic VI*, “when the soul directs itself towards something lit by the rays of truth (ἀλήθειά), and towards what it is (τὸ ὄν), it grasps and recognizes it at once, and appears to possess intelligence (νοῦν ἔχειν φαίνεται); but when it directs itself at what comes into being and passes away, mingled as that is with darkness, it can manage no better than beliefs, its power weakening as these move up and down, this way and that, just like something of no intelligence at all (καὶ ἔοικεν αὐτῷ νοῦν οὐκ ἔχοντι)” (R. 508d4-9).

³⁵ Whereas Nettleship (1937, p. 347) and Vegetti (2007, p.13) relate the images of *Republic X* to the shadows of the cognitive state of the εἰκασία in the dived line (R. 510a), Levin (2001, p.156) relates them to the shadows of the allegory of the cave (R. 514a-515a). It is not my intention to decide whether they relate more to one book than the other. More generally, I think that they refer to the (same) ontological status of the shadows of book 6 and 7.

grasped through perception and stand at three removes from reality.³⁶ They are the furthest from the truth, standing at the very bottom of the realm of τὸ ὁρατόν, and thus they are the most suitable for deceiving. The result is that when the sophist seeks to instill the false belief that he is all-knowledgeable, he makes use of these sensible images which are ontologically and epistemologically inferior to all other types of reality.³⁷ In so doing, he appears to be wise in everything without actually being so.³⁸

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³⁶ On this point, I agree with Moss, 2014, p. 222-227.

³⁷ It is clear that in the *Republic* the intrinsic relation between the degrees of reality and the degrees of knowledge is crucial. The higher the reality is, the higher is the degree of knowledge. This could explain why *Republic X* starts with an ontological claim, that is, the images of the painter are three removes from the truth, and ends with a psychological/epistemological one, namely, what is far from truth addresses that element in us that is far from intelligence. In this way *Republic X* integrates both the arguments of *Republic II* and *III*—contrary to those scholars who hold that the book is problematic (most notably, White, 1979; and Annas, 1981) – and those of the seventh definition of the *Sophist*. For the interdependence between the degrees of reality and the degrees of knowledge see also *Tim.* 29b and *Cra.* 439c-440b, along with the very good remarks of Vegetti (2003, p. 150-153).

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