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Alfred Robert Vergara Cruz

IMAGE AND RELATION: ARISTOTLE AND NEOPLATONISM BEHIND THE IMAGE CONCEPT

The philosophical discussion of the Image veneration during the Iconoclast controversy

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Rhet.	Rhetoric
Poet.	Poetic
Cat.	Categories
Phys.	Physics
Met.	Metaphysics
Top.	Topics
Grg.	Gorgias
Tim.	Timaeus
Tht.	Theaetetus
Phd.	Phaedo
Phdr.	Phaedrus
Rep.	Republic
Soph.	Sophists
Crat.	Cratylus
Frag.	Fragments
PG	Patrologia Graeca
Trad.	Translation
Adv. Haer.	Adversum Haereses
Gen	Genesis
Phil	Philippians

INTRODUCTION

Image? In these modern times, the image as an artistic production has become very common and available that no one would even think nor reflect upon what exactly an image is. We are all used to seeing images in its variety of forms and presentations offered to us by the continuous advancement in technology. On one side, it is amazing how at this moment the image can portray something as though it is real, imitating exactly the original. On the other side, it can be just something enclosed, with its forms and colors, without realizing something beyond its representation. It might seem that through this phenomenon, man has reached a deeper understanding of the image in terms of its capacity to represent and communicate. Yet, there is also this possibility that the image nowadays is not anymore the same in the original sense of the word.

Indeed, the reality of the image, more than simply considering its artistic and practical dimensions, has been an object of attention at various moments in history. The role it played especially in relation to man's spirituality or religion became crucial in understanding thoroughly its nature. Its flourishment within Christianity, more especially in the East, from its early centuries of existence even introduced new perspectives that goes beyond its materiality. One fundamental point in the development of the image theory was during the Iconoclast controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries. It was a moment when the Iconophiles not only defended its use, but also provided a systematic way of explaining its essence especially in the context of religious cult. This event will be the historical background of the present study.

In general, the study aims to analyze the concept of the image presented during the two major periods of the controversy. It will focus on the main arguments of both sides through some acts of the councils and some writings of the principal image defenders. Although a great part of the discussion is theological in nature due to its direct relation with the Christian faith, we will, above all, concentrate on the philosophical foundations that served as a basis for their notion of the image. It is not just a matter of presenting the philosophical aspects of its defense, but rather determining one of the main philosophical problems behind the debate. We will also include some possible philosophical influences in their works as proven in their citations, modes of reasoning and educational background of the time.

The first chapter will present a general overview of the origins of the image, serving as an introduction to the problems and arguments that would come out during the controversy. Likewise, it will intend to show a deeper outlook of the image, going beyond its aesthetic dimension. First, we will clarify the meaning of the term and other concepts related. Then we will look upon its ontological aspect, the image-prototype formula, based on three major Greek philosophers namely: Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus. From here, we will see its presence within the arts and its usage within the different cultures and religions. The last part will tackle the centrality of the image in Christianity, introducing other important notions of the image.

The second chapter will identify some of the problems involved in the use of the images especially its adaptation on part of Christianity leading to its climax in the Iconoclast controversy. One of its main concerns is the possibility of representing the Divine and the spiritual by means of the material medium of the image without falling into idolatry. Due to the multiple factors behind the debate, we will only focus on the initial arguments of both Iconoclasts and Iconophiles through the Council of Hiereia (754) and the Second Nicaean Council (787) respectively. From here we will determine some key ideas that would contribute to the development of the image theory in the second period. Although the arguments at this point were principally a defensive one, it would provide an initial drive in finding out one of the main problems of the controversy.

The third chapter will provide a deeper philosophical perspective of the image discussion through the principal works of the three image defenders of the time: John Damascene, Nicephorus of Constantinople and Theodore the Studite. Aside from providing a more systematic approach to the arguments that complement the previous ones, the three would demonstrate a certain philosophical influence in their concept of the image, in particular, Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism. It would be clearly manifested in their affirmation on the relation between the image and prototype, using Aristotle's category of relation. This reliance to philosophy, which characterizes mainly the second period, would help determine one of the main philosophical problems of the controversy as the central point of this study. Moreover, one part will dedicate on presenting the condition of Byzantine philosophy during these centuries in order to establish the ground for the philosophical formation of each of the image defenders.

The last chapter will analyze in a more profound way one of the main philosophical problems as demonstrated by the arguments presented: the notion of relation between image and prototype. But before, we will discuss the change of concept of the image from the first to the second period brought about by a more philosophical attitude of the Iconophiles. Then we will see how each one from both sides understood the relation between the image and prototype. To understand better the question, we will briefly reconstruct the development of the concept of relation, a category studied by Aristotle, used by Stoicism and also commented by Neoplatonic authors. In a synthetic

way, we will point out the steps that lead from the Aristotelian πρός τί to the Neoplatonic σχέσις, principally used by Nicephorus and Theodore to justify the use of images. Without neglecting the theological foundations and other aspects involved, the philosophical dimension of the image analyzed in this study will contribute to a better understanding of the image as it would develop further up until the present time.

Chapter I

THE PRESENCE AND ORIGINS OF THE IMAGE

In today's vast changing world, to ask someone about what he thinks or what he understands of the word "image", most probably, he would immediately refer to a photograph or digital images offered by the web and the advanced technologies. For example, *Google Search* on the internet provides the "image" option, where one can easily look for pictures of his interest. In fact, this current notion would even include animations, videos and movies, easily accessible at this point in time. By now, all this phenomenon seems very normal considering its advantages and usefulness in daily life. It is possible that at a certain moment, no one could imagine a world without these images. It is a reality that we must accept, that we are immersed in this world of images, which is simply understood as a visible reproduction of any reality.

Historically speaking, this present conception of the image is quite recent. In its initial reflections, it was not limited to a mere representation or production of something, but it was also conceived through other perspectives such as ontological, psychological, religious, etc. The understanding of the image has developed and changed through time due to many factors. As regards its different aspects, there are several possibilities by which it can be studied. For this reason, we do not pretend at this point to reconstruct a history of the concept of the image, which is an impossible task, considering the scope and limitations of this study. Instead, we will simply present in a synthetic manner some important aspects of the image, understood as εἰκών, that were present in the classical philosophical world, in some religions and in Christianity itself. Without encompassing the complex and articulate historical background of the image, this chapter will just serve as an introduction in order to understand better the possible influences, problems and arguments that would come out during the known Iconoclast controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries, wherein the image acquired a new meaning and relevance within the context of Christianity.

A. DEFINITION AND ETYMOLOGY OF THE IMAGE (εἰκών)

According to the Oxford English dictionary, an image is: *A representation of the external form of a person or thing in art; The general impression that a person, organization, or product presents to the public; A simile or metaphor*. Just reading the given definitions, we can already find key words such as "representation",

"art", "simile" and "metaphor", which could help us in our journey further to understand better the image. Likewise, there are other terms that are synonymous to image such as likeness, resemblance, picture, depiction, etc.[1] Although these definitions and terms may already give a general notion of the image in the ordinary use of the word, there is still much to discover, most especially, with regard to its philosophical and religious dimension within a particular historical and cultural context[2].

The word "image" comes from the Greek word εἰκών, which means likeness, image, picture, painting, simile, phantom, notion[3], icon and reflection[4]; and from the Latin word *imago*, which means representation in art of a person or thing, picture, likeness, phantom, simile, imitation[5]. The latter stems from the word *imitari*, which means to copy or imitate[6]. It both refers to artificial and natural image; and to an exterior object represented in the soul or even a figurative element of a discourse[7].

Similarly, the image can be understood in various ways depending on its use and application. It forms part of a complex reality that it cannot be reduced simply to its common realm of visual communications and the arts[8]. An image from a technical or artistic point of view is different from an image from a philosophical point of view. That is why it is important to determine the context by which the term or other terms are used. Analyzing the definitions given above, we can somehow determine one fundamental aspect of the image considering it from a philosophical perspective[9].

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[1] Cf. E. Reinhardt, *Voz "Imagen,"* in Á.L. González (ed.), *Diccionario de filosofía*, EUNSA, Pamplona 2010, pp. 564–565.

[2] As mentioned, this study will only focus on the concept of the image presented during the Iconoclast controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries.

[3] J. Morwood – J. Taylor, *The Pocket Oxford classical Greek dictionary*, Oxford University Press, Oxford; New York 2002, p. 98.

[4] N. Watts, *The Oxford New Greek Dictionary: Greek-English, English-Greek*, Berkley Books, New York 2008, p. 60.

[5] P.G.W. Glare, *Oxford Latin dictionary.*, Oxford University Press/Clarendon Press, London 1968, p. 831.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 833.

[7] Cf. E. Reinhardt, *Voz "Imagen,"* cit. p.564.

[8] Cf. J. Villafañe, *Introducción a la teoría de la imagen*, Pirámide, Madrid 1985 p. 29.

[9] Among the Greeks, they used various words to refer to the image, which express a certain richness as to its notion. Aside from eikon (εἰκών), other terms used are: eidolon (εἴδωλον) – illusion or shadow; phantasma (φάντασμα) – apparition; emphasis (ἔμφασις) – appearance; tupos (τύπος) – imprint. Cf. B. Cassin – E. Apter – J. Lezra – M. Wood, *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, Princeton University Press, 9/2/2014, pp. 245–247. Without analyzing each of these terms, we will only focus on the image understood as εἰκών in this study. Yet, one term that would be significant in some way in the succeeding chapters is εἴδωλον, present also in Plato and Plotinus, whose meaning acquired a pejorative understanding (an idol) especially within the Iconoclast controversy.

B. IMAGE AND PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

B.1. THE ONTOLOGICAL ASPECT: IMAGE AND PROTOTYPE

The image has been one of the objects of philosophical reflection throughout time. One of its significant aspects is the ontological one, as we will see in the works of the classical Greeks. In this sense, the image[10] or εἰκών is thought of as an external representation of an object that exists. It can also mean a visible symbol which represents something else in virtue of formal resemblance[11]. As seen in its etymology, it is classified into natural and artificial[12]. The former includes natural phenomenon like filiation and shadows of things; while the latter includes artificial productions like statues, portraits, stamps and seals[13].

If the image has to do with a certain representation, resemblance or likeness, there is another element that constitutes its essence: the one represented or the reference of its likeness. In other words, to talk about an image is to talk about something original or what is simply known as the prototype[14]. An image is always an image of something. Therefore, image is considered as part of the categories of signs and as part of man's way of knowing the world through signs[15]. The image portrays a specific

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[10]   One significant term that has to be clarified as distinct from εἰκών, is the Greek term φάντασμα, which in the English language is also translated as *image*. It refers to another sense of the image, mainly, its epistemological aspect: the mental images or representations in the mind. Some dictionaries of philosophy mainly define the image from this light since it serves as a central theme in the theory of knowledge and thus, is related to the method of philosophy itself. S. BLACKBURN, *The Oxford dictionary of philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford; New York 1994, p. 186.

It forms part of the thesis of Aristotle, which demonstrates the significant role of the images in attaining knowledge: there is no understanding without image (φάντασμα). Cf. ARISTOTLE, *On Memory*, 450 a 1 and *On the Soul*, 432 a 4-9. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὔτε μὴ αἰσθανόμενος μηθὲν οὐθὲν ἂν μάθοι οὐδὲ ξυνείη, ὅταν τε θεωρῇ, ἀνάγκη ἅμα φάντασμά τι θεωρεῖν· τὰ γὰρ φαντάσματα ὥσπερ αἰσθήματά ἐστι, πλὴν ἄνευ ὕλης. ἔστι δ᾽ ἡ φαντασία ἕτερον φάσεως καὶ ἀποφάσεως· συμπλοκὴ γὰρ νοημάτων ἐστὶ τὸ ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος. τὰ δὲ πρῶτα νοήματα τί διοίσει τοῦ μὴ φαντάσματα εἶναι; ἢ οὐδὲ ταῦτα φαντάσματα, ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἄνευ φαντασμάτων.

"Since it seems that there is nothing outside and separate in existence from sensible spatial magnitudes, the objects of thought are in the sensible forms, viz. both the abstract objects and all the states and affections of sensible things. Hence no one can learn or understand anything in the absence of sense, and when the mind is actively aware of anything it is necessarily aware of it along with an image; for images are like sensuous contents except in that they contain no matter".

[11]   E. BEVAN, *Holy Images.*, Allen and Unwin, London 1940 p. 13.

[12]   In the modern sense of the term, there are other types of images included such as photographic images and digital icons.

[13]   Cf. E. REINHARDT, *Voz "Imagen,"* cit. p.564.

[14]   Some use the term "archetype" and "original"

[15]   Cf. E. SENDLER, *L'icona immagine dell'invisibile: elementi di teologia, estetica e tecnica*, Edizioni paoline, Roma 1985 p.75.

dimension of reality accessible to the human mind, not limited to what is sensible. When the image reflects something abstract and intelligible, it then becomes a symbol. In this case, the union between the symbol and its meaning becomes analogical.

At this point, it is important to distinguish between a sign and a symbol as regards images. In general, the semiotic meaning in a symbol is doubled through a multiplicity of significance that no longer depends on simple code of a sign[16]. If in the sign, the image conventionally refers to a certain representative identity connected to it; in the symbol, the signifier-meaning nexus appeals to a meta-language that enriches the proper sense with a figurative sense[17]. It is one of the key points for us to understand later the use of images in religion, especially Christianity, in order to represent the supernatural[18]. This is because the figurative sense gives the symbol a profound and transcendent meaning that cannot be totally communicated. Thus, the representation is subject to a certain dissymmetry, producing an aura of mystery[19]. In other words, the image can become an epiphany of a mystery that leads to the infinite[20].

The existence of a prototype in relation to the image demonstrates a common base for all types of images: its reference to a reality. It serves as its ontological basis even for mental images. An author specifies this relation as the "iconic modeling of reality"[21]. With this idea, the image directs to an object of reality, sensible and intelligible, without forgetting the great number of possibilities an image can represent. The relation between image and prototype opens to variety of image types, depending on the degree of their correspondence[22].

B.2. CLASSICAL NOTION OF THE IMAGE

The ancient Greeks have been the pioneers of the development of the concept of the image throughout history. In the same way as to the other branches of philosophy, the great contribution of the classical peri-

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[16] J.J. WUNENBURGER, *Filosofia delle immagini*, G. Einaudi, Torino 1999 pp. 278-279.

[17] *Ibid*. p. 279.

[18] Cf. E. SENDLER, *L'icona immagine dell'invisibile*, cit. pp. 76-77. Symbolism as regards Christian image will be discussed further within the section on the transition from an aniconic religion to an iconic religion (See I, C.4.c.)

[19] J.J. WUNENBURGER, *Filosofia delle immagini*, cit. p. 280.

[20] Cf. J. PENA VIAL, *Imaginacion, simbolo y realidad*, Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago de Chile p. 129.

[21] Cf. J. VILLAFAÑE, *Introducción a la teoría de la imagen*, cit. pp. 30-35. Toda imagen posee un referente en la realidad independientemente de cuál sea su grado de iconicidad, su naturaleza o el medio que la produce. Incluso las imágenes que surgen del nivel de lo imaginario, mantienen con la realidad nexos, que a veces son más sólidos de lo que una primera lectura hiciera suponer.

[22] Cf. *Ibid*. pp. 39-43.

od serves as a means of understanding better the problems and innovations of the succeeding periods. It is not just a matter of knowing what they said in the past, but rather reflecting on how they conceived the reality around them, especially its ontological meaning. According to Yarza, Greek philosophy does not pertain to a period of an outdated civilization, but it constitutes the beginnings of a knowledge different from myths and religions, characterized by the desire to know the whole of reality in a rational way and for the sake of no other end but knowledge and contemplation[23].

As to this part, we will only consider three philosophers[24]: Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, whose thought and ontology would contribute to a deeper understanding of the concept of the image during the Iconoclast controversy. In this section, we do not pretend to exhaust each philosophers' notion of the image, also considering the complexity and ambiguity in which they treated the term. Instead, we will only indicate in a synthetic manner their general ideas on the image present in their works, focusing on the model and the relation between image and prototype.

B.2.a. The sensible as image of the intelligible in Plato[25]: The deception of art

Plato's notion of the image (εἰκών) is founded in his theory of Forms or Ideas wherein the sensible world is an image of the intelligible world, better known as the world of Ideas[26]. It serves as the central point of Platonic thought. Through this doctrine, he affirms the existence of two orders of reality: the sensible and the intelligible, which is present in his dialogues like for example in *Timaeus*:

> And having been created in this way, the world has been framed in the likeness of that which is apprehended by reason and mind and is unchange-

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[23] I. Yarza, *Filosofia Antica*, EDUSC, Roma 2016 pp. 10-11.

[24] Without disregarding other philosophers, we will only consider these three because in their ontological approach to the image, it is very much present the model and relation between image and prototype, which would be the key idea of the defense of the image during the Iconoclast controversy. Specifically, Plato's theory of forms and ideas is crucial in relating the sensible and intelligible through the concept of the image in the religious context. As regards Aristotle, aside from his notion of simile and metaphor, his category of relation would be an important factor in understanding the main issue of the image debate. While the Plotinian image and relation would contribute to the development of Christian thought in the succeeding centuries, not only in the image-prototype relation but also in the Trinitarian relations.
Another important classical philosopher, not included in this study, whose thought on creation also reflects the model image and prototype is Philo of Alexandria. For a detailed discussion, see I. Yarza, *Filosofia Antica*, cit. pp. 341-344.

[25] As for the English translation of Plato's works, we will use Plato, *The Collected Dialogues Including Letters: Edited by Edith Hamilton*, Princenton, New Jersey 1994.

[26] Cf. A. Besançon, M. Rizzi (ed.), *L'immagine proibita: una storia intellettuale dell'iconoclastia*, Marietti 1820, Genova ; Milano 2009 p. 43.

able, and must therefore of necessity, if this is admitted, be a copy (εἰκόνα) of something. Now it is all-important that the beginning of everything should be according to nature. And in speaking of the copy (εἰκόνος) and the original we may assume that words are akin to the matter which they describe; when they relate to the lasting and permanent and intelligible, they ought to be lasting and unalterable, and, as far as their nature allows, irrefutable and invincible – nothing less[27].

From this vision of reality, it is understandable that the image belongs to the sensible realm. The εἰκών is always sensible in a way that a spiritual reality can never be an image of another spiritual reality[28]. The two worlds are not in the same plane. For him, the world of Ideas is the true reality while the other is its copy or imitation. Considering this dualistic approach, sensible realities form part of the lower level within this hierarchy, which in the end leads to a notion of the image as a derived reality and in some way, inferior to its prototype. Another consequence of this idea is how Plato conceives man's nostalgia for the intelligible, desiring to be united with the divine:

> Evils, Theodorus, can never be done away with, for the good must always have its contrary; nor have they any place in the divine world, but they must need haunt this region of our mortal nature. That is why we should make all speed to take flight from this world to the other, and that means becoming like the divine so far as we can, and that again is to become righteous with the help of wisdom[29].

On the other hand, the division of the two realities does not totally separate the two as if there is an absence of relation between them. Although Plato affirms that the world of Ideas transcends the sensible world, he, at the same time, affirms that the former is the cause of the latter. It is a relation that connects the two, explaining in some way the relation between the one and the many. Without solving all the difficulties that this problem entails; he tries to explain this relation in terms of participation (μέθεξις) or imitation (μίμησις). In other dialogues, he uses the ideas of community (κοινωνία) and presence (παρουσία)[30]. As he says in *Phaedo*:

> Because it partakes of that absolute beauty, and for no other reason. Do you accept this kind of causality? Yes, I do. Well, now, that is as far

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[27] *Tim.*, 29 b. τούτων δὲ ὑπαρχόντων αὖ πᾶσα ἀνάγκη τόνδε τὸν κόσμον εἰκόνα τινὸς εἶναι. μέγιστον δὴ παντὸς ἄρξασθαι κατὰ φύσιν ἀρχήν. ὧδε οὖν περί τε εἰκόνος καὶ περὶ τοῦ παραδείγματος αὐτῆς διοριστέον, ὡς ἄρα τοὺς λόγους, ὧνπέρ εἰσιν ἐξηγηταί, τούτων αὐτῶν καὶ συγγενεῖς ὄντας: τοῦ μὲν οὖν μονίμου καὶ βεβαίου καὶ μετὰ νοῦ καταφανοῦς μονίμους καὶ ἀμεταπτώτους—καθ᾽ ὅσον οἷόν τε καὶ ἀνελέγκτοις προσήκει λόγοις εἶναι καὶ ἀνικήτοις, τούτου δεῖ μηδὲν ἐλλείπειν

[28] Cf. A. Besançon, *L'immagine proibita*, cit. p. 44.

[29] *Tht.*, 176 a.

[30] I. Yarza, *Filosofia Antica*, cit. p. 113.

as my mind goes; I cannot understand these other ingenious theories of causation. If someone tells me that the reason why a given object is beautiful is that it has a gorgeous color or shape or any other such attribute, I disregard all these other explanations – I find them all confusing – and I cling simply and straightforwardly and no doubt foolishly to the explanation that the one thing that makes that object beautiful is the presence in it or association with it, in whatever way the relation comes about, of absolute beauty. I do not go so far as to insist upon the precise details - only upon the fact that it is by beauty that beautiful things are beautiful[31].

In general, we can deduce a certain structure from Plato's understanding of nature and reality. First is the existence of a model or prototype, the Ideas, and the copy or image of this model, the sensible reality. He also introduces a third element, the maker or Demiurge, who forms the sensible world out of the Ideas as models and matter[32]. At least from this perspective, the image is considered in relation to a prototype.

Going to the arts, Plato's image is related to his notion of μίμησις or imitation[33]. The imitation of the real entity is considered an image (εἰκών)[34]. Instead of manifesting the truth, it becomes a means to conceal the truth and draw away people from it by means of deception[35]. This criticism is directed not only to painters but also to poets. He considers both as people who reproduce without understanding[36]. In a certain sense, it reveals a negative vision[37] of the arts as he clearly says in the *Republic*:

> Consider, then, this very point. To which is painting directed in every case, to the imitation of reality as it is or of appearance as it appears? Is it an imitation of a phantasm or of the truth? Of phantasm, he said. Then the mimetic art is far removed from truth, and this, it seems, is the reason why it can produce everything, because it touches or lays hold of only a

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[31] *Phd.*, 100 c-d.

[32] See *Tim.*, 28 b-29 a.

[33] His understanding of mimesis (μίμησις) does not only depend on aesthetic theories, but it also extends to other broader topics of his philosophy: political organization, education, the ideal of justice and the nature of philosophical knowledge. M. POTOLSKY, *Mimesis*, Routledge, New York, N.Y 2006 p. 17.

[34] A. PREUS, *Historical dictionary of ancient Greek philosophy*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham; Boulder; New York 2015 p. 98.

[35] Cf. I. YARZA, *Introducción a la estética*, EUNSA, Pamplona 2013 pp. 25-26.

[36] Cf. M.J. EDWARDS, *Image, word, and God in the early Christian centuries*, Ashgate Pub. Ltd., Farnham, England; Burlington, VT 2013 p. 48.

[37] Considering at the same time the complexity of this topic, Plato's theory of art is not at all negative. In fact, in one of his dialogues, *Laws*, he shows a favorable consideration about art. Cf. F.C. COPLESTON, *A history of philosophy. Greece and Rome 1*, Continuum, London 2003, pp. 257–260. "Thus those who are seeking the best singing and music must seek, as it appears, not that which is pleasant, but that which is correct; and the correctness of imitation consists, as we say, in the reproduction of the original in its own proper quantity and quality". *Laws*, 668 b 4-7.

small part of the object and that a phantom, as, for example, a painter, we say, will paint us a cobbler, a carpenter, and other craftsmen, though he himself has no expertness in any of these arts, but nevertheless if he were a good painter, by exhibiting at a distance his picture of a carpenter he would deceive children and foolish men, and make them believe it to be a real carpenter[38].

Mimetic art for Plato is an imitation of nature, which at the same time, is an imitation of the world of Ideas. Consequently, art lacks an independent reality, reducing it to mere appearance. In fact, artistic images for him are only shadows of the things they imitate, without any rational truth[39]. Within the hierarchy of the Platonic world, art belongs to the inferior part, far from the perfection of the Ideas.

This, then, was what I wished to have agreed upon when I said that poetry, and in general the mimetic art, produces a product that is far removed from truth in the accomplishment of its task, and associates with the part in us that is remote from intelligence, and is its companion and friend for no sound and true purpose.
Mimetic art, then, is an inferior thing cohabiting with an inferior and engendering inferior offspring[40].

The Platonic mimesis cannot be understood without his concept of participation. If art is an imitation, it has something in common with the original or model. Plato calls this relation likeness, in which both art and model participate[41]. Moreover, understanding what likeness means, is crucial in understanding a certain difference between image and prototype. It indicates that the image made by human hands is by nature limited and cannot achieved a perfect resemblance[42]. In other words, the image is not an exact copy of the prototype. In *Cratylus*, he clarifies:

I should say rather that the image, if expressing in every point the entire reality, would no longer be an image.
Then you see, my friend, that we must find some other principle of truth in images, and also in names, and not insist that an image is no longer an image when something is added or subtracted. Do you not perceive that images are very far from having qualities which are the exact counterpart of the realities which they represent?[43]

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[38] *Rep.*, X, 596 e – 597 a.

[39] M. Potolsky, *Mimesis*, cit. p. 22.

[40] *Rep.*, X, 603 b.

[41] Cf. M.J. Soto Bruna, *Voz 'Imitación'*, in Á.L. González (ed.), *Diccionario de filosofía*, EUNSA, Pamplona 2010, pp. 569-570. Cf. *Soph.*, 236 a-b. τὸ μὲν ἄρα ἕτερον οὐ δίκαιον, εἰκός γε ὄν, εἰκόνα καλεῖν; ναί. καὶ τῆς γε μιμητικῆς τὸ ἐπὶ τούτῳ μέρος κλητέον ὅπερ εἴπομεν ἐν τῷ πρόσθεν, εἰκαστικήν;

[42] Cf. A. Besançon, *L'immagine proibita*, cit. pp. 44-45.

[43] *Crat.*, 432 c-d. ὁρᾷς οὖν, ὦ φίλε, ὅτι ἄλλην χρὴ εἰκόνος ὀρθότητα ζητεῖν καὶ ὧν νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν, καὶ οὐκ ἀναγκάζειν, ἐάν τι ἀπῇ ἢ προσῇ, μηκέτι αὐτὴν εἰκόνα εἶναι; ἢ οὐκ αἰσθάνῃ ὅσον ἐνδέουσιν αἱ εἰκόνες τὰ αὐτὰ ἔχειν ἐκείνοις ὧν εἰκόνες εἰσίν;

Instead of giving art value as a craft and creation of man, it turns out as an image or imitation[44]. This power of man is just an illusion for he is limited to represent being[45]. That is why, at some point, he distinguishes human art from divine art, which is nature[46]. From here we see that Plato does not totally defy art. Being an artist himself, for him the true art is not the art produced by human skills, but the art that leads to beauty and truth, which in the end, is what the philosopher does. More than the concept of art, he appreciates more the concept of beauty. The real mimesis is the imitation of the beauty of the intelligible world. Thus, true art comes from knowledge, that is, the philosopher, the only one who has the capacity to perceive the transcendental beauty[47].

The concept of beauty is very much important to Plato because of its relation to the truth and good. He rejects mimetic art in terms of production because it lacks the truth. To contemplate beauty, one must discover the mark of the transcendent in all sensible reality, which at the same time, brings the person to the supreme principle: the Good and the One. For him, beauty does not coincide with the first principle but reflects it. What makes possible the perception of beauty on the part of man is *eros*, which is the yearning or the desire for the infinite and the nostalgia for the one's origin and destination. In the end, the ultimate perfection of man: the contemplation of beauty itself[48].

From here we can introduce another concept that Plato introduces as regards beauty in terms of the image: *agalma* (ἄγαλμα). In Greek, *agalma* literally means pleasing gift and statue in honor of a god. He discusses this idea in his two Dialogues: *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*. In general, he thinks that beauty is not simply a matter of sensible perception, as we normally understand it, but also something that can be captured by the intellect by means of contemplation. It focuses on the desire to seek the absolute beauty and its essence. This concept connects with *eros* as the yearning for the infinite. That's why it is a higher form of beauty sought for by the philosopher, whom he also refers to as the lover. In a way, we can see here how Plato's concept of image in relation to beauty brings with it an affective dimension. Beauty which the soul desires is not only to be contemplated but also to be loved. As Plato says in *Phaedrus*:

> Mark therefore the sum and substance of all our discourse touching the fourth sort of madness – to wit, that this is the best of all forms of divine possession, both in itself and in its sources, both for him that has it and for him that shares therein – and when he that loves beauty is touched by such madness, he is called a lover. Such a one, as soon as he beholds the

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[44] Cf. M. Potolsky, *Mimesis*, cit. pp. 16-17.

[45] Cf. *Ibid.* p. 23.

[46] Cf. *Soph.*, 266 d.

[47] Cf. I. Yarza, *Introducción a la estética*, cit., pp. 24-28.

[48] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-34.

beauty of this world, is reminded of true beauty, and his wings begin to grow; then is he fain to lift his wings and fly upward; yet he has not the power, but inasmuch as he gazes upward like a bird, and cares nothing for the world beneath, men charge it upon him that he is demented. Now, as we have said, every human soul has, by reason of her nature, had contemplation of true being; else would she never have entered into this human creature; but to put in mind thereof by things here is not easy for every soul. Some, when they had the vision, had it but for a moment; some when they had fallen to earth consorted unhappily with such as led them to deeds of unrighteousness, wherefore they forgot the holy objects of their vision. Few indeed are left that can still remember much, but when these discern some likeness of the things yonder, they are amazed, and no longer masters of themselves, and know now what is come upon them by reason of their perception being dim[49].

B.2.b. Image as simile and metaphor in Aristotle[50]*: The cognitive dimension of art*

Aristotle uses the term image (εἰκών) in a different sense from what we have just seen in Plato, although we can also find some similarities[51]. For Aristotle, the image refers more to a figure of language called simile, mostly found in *Rhetoric*. He relates it to metaphor saying that the two has a slight difference[52]. As he says, *the simile, as has been said before, is a metaphor, differing from it only in the way it is put; and just because it is longer it is less attractive*.[53] Through this idea, we can determine a fundamental relation that is present in Aristotle's concept of the image: simile or likeness

The use of metaphor, which is also present in *Poetics*, forms part of his arguments on the composition of a speech, emphasizing its capacity to present before the eyes some aspects of reality[54]. He justifies its use affirming that the best way to persuade is to provoke the listeners the exercise of reason and the pleasure of recognition. And to find a good metaphor, one does not learn it from instruction and technical ability, but instead, from one's capacity to grasp the likeness between realities that at first sight seem distant[55].

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[49] *Phdr.*, 249 e – 250 a.

[50] As for the English translation of Aristotle's works, we will use ARISTOTELES, *The Basic Works of Aristotle: Edited by Richard McKeon*, Random House, New York 1941.

[51] Plato also uses the term εἰκών to refer to simile or likeness, which will also be present in Aristotle. For example, *Sophists*, 236 a-b.; According to Kirby, it is not surprising that Aristotle picks the term here. Cf. J.T. KIRBY, *Aristotle on Metaphor*, «The American Journal of Philology», 118/4 (1997), p. 544.

[52] Cf. *Rhet.*, III, 4, 1406 b 20.
The simile also is a metaphor; the difference is but slight.

[53] *Ibid.*, III, 10, 1410 b 16-17. ἔστιν γὰρ ἡ εἰκών, καθάπερ εἴρηται πρότερον, μεταφορὰ διαφέρουσα προθέσει· διὸ ἧττον ἡδύ, ὅτι μακροτέρως· καὶ οὐ λέγει ὡς τοῦτο ἐκεῖνο· οὐκοῦν οὐδὲ ζητεῖ τοῦτο ἡ ψυχή.

[54] I. YARZA, *Filosofia Antica*, cit. p. 259.

[55] *Ibid.* pp. 259-260. Cf. *Rhet.*, III, 10, 1410 b20-28.

Metaphors must be drawn, as has been said already, from things that are related to the original thing, and yet not obviously so related – just as in philosophy also an acute mind will perceive resemblances even in things apart… Liveliness is specially conveyed by metaphor, and by the further power of surprising the hearer; because the hearer expected something different, his acquisition of the new idea impresses him all the more[56].

These words of Aristotle on determining likeness in things help us to identify another significant aspect of the image: representation. The articulation of likeness is a kind of representation[57]. This idea brings us to another aspect of the image, related more to the arts, called μίμησις. Both verbal metaphor and artistic mimesis in painting, music and trage- dy, depend upon one's ability to perceive likenesses and represent them[58]. From this, we can see, at least from a general overview of Aristotle's met- aphor, two basic components with a relation of likeness. An image has to do with a certain likeness[59].

As to the arts, Aristotle groups them as well under the rubric of μίμησις[60]. However, Aristotle's view of art is related to his notion of man, especially his actions. Without doubt, his famous work, *Poetics*, provides a general theory of art and poetry. Focusing on tragedy, he intends to analyze different aspects of the human actions, including the productive one. Thus, art is not just limited to the imitation of nature, as Plato affirms, but rather it is an imitative act, rooted in man's nature[61]. The focus is not on what is imitated, which is the form, but on the man or subject who imitates. Art is considered more as part of human action wherein the subject or the artist imitates reality; a reality that is there be- fore him, as matter is constituted reality by the form[62]. As he says:

It is clear that the general origin of poetry was due to two causes, each of them part of human nature. Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world and learns at first by imitation. And it is also natural for all to delight in works of imitation… Imitation, then, being natural to us – as also the sense of harmony and rhythm, the meters being obviously species of rhythms – it was through their original aptitude, and

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[56] *Rhet.*, III, 11, 1412 a 11-20. δεῖ δὲ μεταφέρειν, καθάπερ εἴρηται πρότερον, ἀπὸ οἰκείων καὶ μὴ φανερῶν, οἷον καὶ ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ τὸ ὅμοιον καὶ ἐν πολὺ διέχουσι θεωρεῖνεὐστόχου… ἔστιν δὲ καὶ τὰ ἀστεῖα τὰ πλεῖστα διὰ μεταφορᾶς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ προσεξαπατᾶν: μᾶλλον γὰρ γίγνεται δῆλον ὅ τι ἔμαθε παρὰ τὸἐναντίως ἔχειν, καὶ ἔοικεν λέγειν ἡ ψυχὴ "ὡς ἀληθῶς, ἐγὼ δὲ ἥμαρτον".

[57] J.T. Kirby, *Aristotle on Metaphor*, cit., p. 537.

[58] *Ibid.*

[59] It is interesting that in the definition given in the first section (I.A), the terms "simile" and "metaphor" are included.

[60] M. Potolsky, *Mimesis*, cit. p. 33.

[61] Cf. I. Yarza, *Introducción a la estética*, cit. p. 37.

[62] Cf. A. Besançon, *L'immagine proibita*, cit. pp. 55-56.

by a series of improvements for the most part gradual on their first efforts, that they created poetry out of their improvisations[63].

In addition, the products of art, including the image, are compared to other existent realities found in nature. They have the same reality because they are created and founded on the same λόγος, in accordance with the cosmic order and under the attraction of the Prime Motor. Such perspective gives the works of art a particular value that can be appreciated and cultivated, similar to other sensible realities. In simpler terms, art has a nature of its own[64]. For example, he treats poetry like any natural objects. It imitates not only the physical form but also the process of nature[65].

From this perspective, Aristotle's understanding of mimetic art is more positive than Plato. For him, μίμησις is a natural tendency of man, which is actualized through the arts and its production. Here we see how Aristotle focuses on knowledge[66] in this aspect. In the same way as ethics, the production of art involves two types of knowledge: universal and practical. As regards the former, it involves the knowledge of how to do things in terms of reflection; as regards the latter, it involves the knowledge of doing things in terms of skill or habit[67]. At the same time, this is also manifested in how Aristotle conceives the drama or the play not just as a reproduction of historical events but as a representation of the universal[68]. In *Poetics* he says:

> The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse – you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history; it consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars[69].

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[63] *Poet.*, 4, 1448 b 5-24.

[64] Cf. M. Potolsky, *Mimesis*, cit. pp. 34-35.

[65] *Ibid*. p. 34.

[66] In some of his writings, Aristotle refers to the image in its epistemological aspect: intellectual knowledge starts from the images. For this reason, he uses the term φάντασμα, translated as imagination.

[67] Cf. I. Yarza, *Introducción a la estética*, cit., p. 39.

[68] Cf. M.J. Edwards, *Image, word, and God in the early Christian centuries*, cit. pp. 55-56.

[69] *Poet.*, 9, 1451 b 1-7.

B.2.c. The procession of images in Plotinus[70]: The contemplative vision of art

The image[71] (εἰκών) in Plotinus is reflected in his ontological structure of reality, especially, the relation between the One and the many. He conceives it as a separation between the sensible and the intelligible wherein the First Principle, the One, transcends absolutely the former. As part of the intelligible realities, he distinguishes three hypostases in terms of procession: The One, the Spirit and the Soul. His notion of procession is the central point of his philosophy. Everything proceeds from the One as its only principle, and everything should return to the One[72]. It reflects his preference for the intelligible over the sensible.

The relation between the One and the many is explained in terms of the image. Within his procession, each hypostasis is an image of the previous one[73]. The Nous is the first image of the One and is the strongest unity after

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[70]   As for the English translation of Plotinus' Enneads, we will use PLOTINUS – B.S. PAGE, *The Six Enneads. Translated by Stephen MacKenna and B. S. Page.*, 1952.

[71] Aside from εἰκών, Plotinus also uses the term εἴδωλον to refer to images. As to its meaning, he generally uses εἴδωλον in the sense of εἰκών. F.E. PETERS, *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon*, NYU Press, 1967, p. 46.this new reference book fills a great need and should prove exceedingly useful to all students and scholars in classics, philosophy, theology and linguistics. The book defines and translates key terms used by pre-Christian philosophers up to the time of Proclus, with special references to the writings of the philosophers as they developed nuances and new meanings for the terms. Entries are arranged in dictionary style, but a knowledge of Greek is not necessary to use the book, since an English-Greek index provides the reader with Greek equivalents of English terms, with cross-reference to the main text. Its great value is that it isolates terms and allows the reader to follow their individual careers, while at the same time it offers an evolutionary history of the concept instead of a mere definition." He uses other terms interchangeable with εἰκών (likeness) such as εἴδωλον (image), ἴχνος (trace) and σκιά (shadow) to refer to a thing as an image of the paradigm that causes it. B.INWOOD, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, OUP Oxford, 27/6/2013, p. 267.
Ennead, III, 6, 18. Ὁ τοίνυν νόησιν μεγάλου ἔχων, εἰ αὐτοῦ ἡ νόησις δύναμιν ἔχοι μὴ μόνον ἐν αὐτῇ εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἷον πρὸς τὸ ἔξω ὑπὸ δυνάμεως φέροιτο, λάβοι ἂν φύσιν οὐκ οὖσαν ἐν τῷ νοοῦντι, οὐδέ τι ἔχουσαν εἶδος οὐδέ τι ἴχνος τοῦ μεγάλου, ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ οὐδενός του ἄλλου.
The Ideal Principle possessing the Intellection [= Idea, Noesis] of Magnitude- assuming that this Intellection is of such power as not merely to subsist within itself but to be urged outward as it were by the intensity of its life- will necessarily realize itself in a Kind [=Matter] not having its being in the Intellective Principle, not previously possessing the Idea of Magnitude or any trace of that Idea or any other.

[72]   I. YARZA, *Filosofia Antica*, cit., p. 351.

[73]   Cf. *Ennead*, V, 1, 7. Εἰκόνα δὲ ἐκείνου λέγομεν εἶναι τὸν νοῦν· δεῖ γὰρ σαφέστερον λέγειν· πρῶτον μέν, ὅτι δεῖ πως εἶναι ἐκεῖνο τὸ γενόμενον καὶ ἀποσώιζειν πολλὰ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἶναι ὁμοιότητα πρὸς αὐτό, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ φῶς τοῦ ἡλίου…
The Intellectual-Principle stands as the image of The One, firstly because there is a certain necessity that they first should have its offspring, carrying onward much of its quality, in other words that there be something in its likeness as the sun's rays tell of the sun.

the absolute unity of the One. In the same way, the Soul is an image of the Nous. Even the production of the physical world from the Soul is also conceived by means of the image[74]. Yet, at the same time, every descending procession, as any other derivative image, entails a poorer ontological dimension marked by multiplicity.

> Again, all that is fully achieved engenders: therefore, the eternally achieved engenders eternally an eternal being. At the same time, the offspring is always minor: what then are we to think of the All-Perfect but that it can produce nothing less than the very greatest that is later than itself. The greatest, later than the divine unity, must be the Divine Mind, and it must be the second of all existence, for it is that which sees The One on which alone it leans while the First has no need whatever of it. The offspring of the prior to Divine Mind can be no other than that Mind itself and thus is the loftiest being in the universe, all else following upon it- the soul, for example, being an utterance and act of the Intellectual-Principle as that is an utterance and act of The One. But in soul the utterance is obscured, for soul is an image (εἰκόνα) and must look to its own original (ἀρχετύπων): that Principle, on the contrary, looks to the First without mediation- thus becoming what it is- and has that vision not as from a distance but as the immediate next with nothing intervening, close to the One as Soul to it[75].

More than reflecting the intelligible, the image is also conceived in terms of participation to what it images[76]. This is where Plotinus finds difficulty in explaining the generation of matter, which for him is indetermination and non-being. How is it possible that matter participates in its form, non-being

[74] For a detailed explanation of each procession, see I. Yarza, *Filosofia Antica*, cit., pp. 359–371.

[75] *Ennead*, V, 1, 6. Καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντα, ἕως μένει, ἐκ τῆς αὐτῶν οὐσίας ἀναγκαίαν τὴν περὶ αὐτὰ πρὸς τὸ ἔξω αὐτῶν ἐκ τῆς παρούσης δυνάμεως δίδωσιν αὐτῶν ἐξηρτημένην ὑπόστασιν, εἰκόνα οὖσαν οἷον ἀρχετύπων ὧν ἐξέφυ· πῦρ μὲν τὴν παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ θερμότητα· καὶ χιὼν οὐκ εἴσω μόνον τὸ ψυχρὸν κατέχει· μάλιστα δὲ ὅσα εὐώδη μαρτυρεῖ τοῦτο· ἕως γάρ ἐστι, πρόεισί τι ἐξ αὐτῶν περὶ αὐτά, ὧν ἀπολαύει ὑποστάντων ὁ πλησίον...

[76] Cf. *Ennead*, V, 9, 5. Τὰ μὲν δὴ αἰσθητὰ μεθέξει ἐστὶν ἃ λέγεται τῆς ὑποκειμένης φύσεως μορφὴν ἰσχούσης ἄλλοθεν· οἷον χαλκὸς παρὰ ἀνδριαντοποιικῆς καὶ ξύλον παρὰ τεκτονικῆς διὰ εἰδώλου τῆς τέχνης εἰς αὐτὰ ἰούσης, τῆς δὲ τέχνης αὐτῆς ἔξω ὕλης ἐν ταυτότητι μενούσης καὶ τὸν ἀληθῆ ἀνδριάντα καὶ κλίνην ἐχούσης. Οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν σωμάτων· καὶ τόδε πᾶν ἰνδαλμένα μετέχον ἕτερα αὐτῶν δείκνυσι τὰ ὄντα, ἄτρεπτα μὲν ὄντα ἐκεῖνα, αὐτὰ δὲ τρεπόμενα, ἱδρυμένα τε ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτῶν, οὐ τόπου δεόμενα· οὐ γὰρ μεγέθη· νοερὰν δὲ καὶ αὐτάρκη ἑαυτοῖς ὑπόστασιν ἔχοντα.
It is by participation that the sense-known has the being we ascribe to it; the underlying nature has taken its shape from elsewhere; thus bronze and wood are shaped into what we see by means of an image introduced by sculpture or carpentry; the craft permeates the materials while remaining integrally apart from the material and containing in itself the reality of statue or couch. And it is so, of course, with all corporeal things. This universe, characteristically participant in images, shows how the image differs from the authentic beings: against the variability of the one order, there stands the unchanging quality of the other, self situate, not needing space because having no magnitude, holding an existent intellective and self-sufficing. The body-kind seeks its endurance in another kind; the Intellectual-Principle, sustaining by its marvelous Being, the things which of themselves must fall, does not itself need to look for a staying ground.

in being?[77] Without completely solving the problem, he just mentions the role of matter as a desire of reality, appropriating itself to the form, using an example of an image[78]. In another part of the *Ennead* he says:

> By this Non-Being, of course, we are not to understand something that simply does not exist, but only something of an utterly different order from Authentic-Being: there is no question here of movement or position with regard to Being; the Non-Being we are thinking of is, rather, an image of Being or perhaps something still further removed than even an image. Now this [the required faint image of Being] might be the sensible universe with all the impressions it engenders, or it might be something of even later derivation, accidental to the realm of sense, or again, it might be the source of the sense-world or something of the same order entering into it to complete it[79].

With this transcendent One and descending procession, Plotinus' concept of the image is not limited to the sensible reality but to the intelligible reality as well. An intelligible reality can be an image of another intelligible reality. At the same time, we can initially perceive a negative notion of the sensible image, considered as something imperfect, which lacks being due to its material composition. On the other hand, there is still room left as to its positive dimension, especially knowing that he considers the world as beautiful caused by the immanence of its principle within[80]. In this sense, the phenomenal world is an image of the intelligible world[81].

In terms of the arts, the image for Plotinus has a role to penetrate the deepest root and principle of reality, the One. Also, it serves as a connection that permits the artists, who works on the material, to go beyond and to arrive at the contemplation of the intellect where the forms, the ideas and the models are found[82]. In fact, he affirms that art is the point where things begin

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[77] Cf. I. YARZA, *Filosofia Antica*, cit., pp. 369-370.

[78] Cf. *Ennead,* III, 6, 7.

[79] *Ennead*, I, 8, 3.

[80] Cf. *Ennead*, III, 8, 11 and *Ennead* V, 8, 12 Ὁ δὲ οὔ φησι μάτην ἐλθεῖν παρὰ τοῦ πατρός· εἶναι γὰρ δεῖ αὐτοῦ ἄλλον κόσμον γεγονότα καλόν, ὡς εἰκόνα καλοῦ· μηδὲ γὰρ εἶναι θεμιτὸν εἰκόνα καλὴν μὴ εἶναι μήτε καλοῦ μήτε οὐσίας. Μιμεῖται δὴ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον πανταχῆ· καὶ γὰρ ζωὴν ἔχει καὶ τὸ τῆς οὐσίας, ὡς μίμημα, καὶ τὸ κάλλος εἶναι, ὡς ἐκεῖθεν· ἔχει δὲ καὶ τὸ ἀεὶ αὐτοῦ, ὡς εἰκών· ἢ ποτὲ μὲν ἕξει εἰκόνα, ποτὲ δὲ οὔ, οὐ τέχνῃ γενομένης τῆς εἰκόνος. Πᾶσα δὲ φύσει εἰκών ἐστιν, ὅσον ἂν τὸ ἀρχέτυπον μένῃ.
Still the manifested God cannot think that he has come forth in vain from the father; for through him another universe has arisen, beautiful as the image of beauty, and it could not be' lawful that Beauty and Being should fail of a beautiful image. This second Kosmos at every point copies the archetype: it has life and being in copy and has beauty as springing from that diviner world. In its character of image, it holds, too, that divine perpetuity without which it would only at times be truly representative and sometimes fail like a construction of art; for every image whose existence lies in the nature of things must stand during the entire existence of the archetype.

[81] I. YARZA, *Filosofia Antica*, cit., p. 370.

[82] Cf. M. BETTETINI, *Contro le immagini: le radici dell'iconoclastia*, Laterza, Roma 2006, pp. 26–27.

their return and reintegration towards the One[83]. From here we see a contemplative vision of Plotinus as regards the arts. For him, the production of art cannot be separated from the act of contemplation. In fact, contemplation is necessary for an artist to produce a work of art. The higher the contemplation, the more intense and beautiful the production of man. His idea of mimesis is more related to Aristotle in the sense that he focuses more on the subject who produces than the production itself[84].

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Without going through all the details of the works of these three major Greek philosophers, at least at this point, we can understand as an introduction, how the image (εἰκών) was conceived not only from an artistic point of view but also from an ontological perspective: the relation between the unity and multiplicity of beings, between the sensible and the intelligible. For Plato, the sensible world is an image (εἰκών) of the intelligible world, the cause and the prototype of the former. In Aristotle, he talks about image in terms of simile and metaphor, introducing the relation of likeness (εἰκών) between two realities. And for Plotinus, the image is not only limited within the sensible realm but extends to the intelligible as well. Each hypostasis of his procession is an image (εἰκών) of the previous one, its prototype. In addition, these same ideas would have an impact on their notion of the image in the arts in terms of μίμησις or imitation, especially in Plato and Aristotle, presenting a fundamental model: image and prototype with a relation of likeness.

As we continue our study, we will see little by little how these initial concepts would influence the image's relation with man's spirituality and eventually, with Christianity's notion and adaptation of images.

C. IMAGE AND RELIGION

From the classical notion of the image, we have seen how it is understood, ontologically speaking, beyond the artistic production of man. Such concept gives way to a deeper perception of the relation between sensible and intelligible realities. It serves as the beginning of man's journey towards the principle of all reality, leading him gradually to know and to relate with this Being as an expression of his spirituality. For this reason, the image (εἰκών) has also been reflected upon in a religious sense. In fact, those who make images have always helped men to imagine the deities they believed in, but to which they could not see[85]. Within the historical element in the arts of all religions, buildings, statues, paintings, and furnishings became a testimony of the faith of each generation, considered as a precious instrument of communication and indispensable of tradition[86].

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[83] Cf. A. Besançon, *L'immagine proibita*, cit. p. 68.

[84] Cf. I. Yarza, *Introducción a la estética*, cit., pp. 49-50.

[85] Cf. É. Gilson, *Pintura y realidad*, EUNSA, Pamplona 2000, p. 292.

[86] Cf. T. Verdon, *Breve storia dell'arte sacra cristiana*, Queriniana, Brescia 2012, p. 6.