

Θέατρο & Εκπαίδευση δεσμοί αλληλεγγύης

Γκόβας, Ν., Κατσαρίδου, Μ., Μαυρέας, Δ. (επιμ.). (2012).
Αθήνα: Πανελλήνιο Δίκτυο για το Θέατρο στην Εκπαίδευση
ISBN 978-960-9529-01-3

Theatre & Education *bonds of solidarity*

Govas, N., Katsaridou, M., Mavreas, D. (eds.). (2012).
Athens: Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network
ISBN 978-960-9529-01-3

Mimesis kai techne*

Hans-Wolfgang **Nickel**

i

Το άρθρο αυτό είναι ελεύθερα προσβάσιμο μέσω της ιστοσελίδας: www.TheatroEdu.gr
Εκδότης: Πανελλήνιο Δίκτυο για το Θέατρο στην Εκπαίδευση
Για παραγγελίες σε έντυπη μορφή όλων των βιβλίων: info@theatroedu.gr

This article is freely accesible via the website www.TheatroEdu.gr.
Published by the **Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network**.
To order hard copies write to info@theatroedu.gr

ΔΙΑΒΑΣΤΕ ΤΟ ΑΡΘΡΟ ΠΑΡΑΚΑΤΩ
Read the article below

Το άρθρο αυτό μπορεί να χρησιμοποιηθεί δωρεάν για έρευνα, διδασκαλία και προσωπική μελέτη. Επιτρέπεται η αναδημοσίευση μετά από άδεια του εκδότη.

Mimesis kai techne*

Hans-Wolfgang Nickel

*“Come then, O tuneful Muse ... grant me your aid in the tale
these (this) most excellent men (man) ‘and women’ compel me to
relate ...”*
(Phaidros 237 a)

Introduction: Feast / assembly (or conference!)

“... the gods, in pity for the human race thus born to misery, have ordained the feasts of thanksgiving as periods of respite from their troubles; and they have granted them as companions in their feasts the Muses.” (Nomoi 653 d); “people may fraternize with one another at the sacrifices and gain knowledge and intimacy, since nothing is of more benefit to the State than this mutual acquaintance.” (Nomoi 738 d, e), this “fellowship ... and association of every sort.” (Nomoi 771 d).

So feasts were given from the Gods as respite of troubles to promote fellowship / friendship and mutual acquaintance; they gave the rules, the rituals; they knew: life is stress, is a burden, human beings need help. We, the Gods, give them this help; we are present in the rituals, participating in the party, promoting mutual acquaintance, interaction.

Today we are without those rituals; we by ourselves have to arrange, to compose, even to invent rules for feasts and conferences. To create possibilities of encounter is an essential task for drama-pedagogues, aiming at encounter, interaction, mutual acquaintance. In my speech I try to give a special contribution to this aim: namely acquaintance with the past.

At first I'm looking back to the most interesting and momentous festival, the feast of Dionysos and the Greek tragedy.

Dionysos and Tragedy (Theatre, feast and polis)

Just to remember the structure of the Greek tragedy: a part of the dionysiai - a celebration, a festivity, a feast; on the scene conflicts and discussions - protagonist against antagonist (for instance Antigone against Kreon); in the *orchestra*, the dancing ground, another discussion, comments of the Chorus: what is right, what is wrong, what will happen, what should we do.

Then the audience, sitting in nearly a three-quarter-circle: everyone can see a lot of other spectators, can see the reactions, feel the emotions – really a community.

But that's not all: during the proagon in the Odeion the author had already explained, what he has written; he had communicated his intention. So the spectators are prepared: they know the mythos, the story. And after the performances there is the *ecclesia*, the meeting of the citizens in the Dionysos-theatre: a follow-up, a mutual evaluation.

In total: an intensive *interaction*, citizens preparing, citizens on scene, citizens judging, citizens observing; theatre as expression and medium of democracy – of a community. And, over all: interaction, discussion as aim and working tool. A well organized succession of doing - talking – doing.



Theatre and philosophy

Some hundred years later tragedy (theatre in general, or rather mimesis in total) is an important topic for philosophy, especially for Plato. In a lot of books you can read that Plato is against theatre; looking closer and more carefully into his texts you will see, that he is against the contents of tragedies - not against the form - and that he even recommends comedies and very special forms of "tragedy": *Politeia* and *Nomoi* (see below!).

Aristotle (43 years younger than Plato) in his poetics (*Περὶ ποιητικῆς*), tries to give a historical interpretation and to work out genesis and character of poetry (theatre) – somehow part of Lycurgus politics to rebuild Athens' reputation and prestige.

In order to understand how this theatre developed, how it was linked to society and why philosophy was interested in theatre a short look back into history is necessary.

Birth of the polis and of critical, rational thinking

Just to remember the historical situation: After the breakdown of the culture of palaces and kings (god kings) and the decline of ritual(s) we see around 600 the birth of the polis and of critical, rational thinking (logos instead of mythos; discussion instead of ritual(s) - the agora as a public space for common interests, open activities and permanent discussions (which Socrates liked, Plato not so much)); followed by an enormous social and cultural upheaval, the economic crisis deteriorating into a disastrous social crisis, making a social reorganisation necessary. No longer a dysnomia between gods and humans, but between classes (social groups): a deplorable chaotic state of affairs with privileges, partial interests, bonded labour, *seisachtheia* (liberation of the farmers by debt cuts).

The idea was NOT *isomoiria* – but *eunomia*: trying to find a polis-system, a human order - what we now call "good government". No final solution: always conflicts between *demokratia*, *oligarchia*, *tyrannis*, always a contrast between *ploutos* (wealth) and *penia* (poverty).

And: Theatre as medium and expression of democracy.



Plato

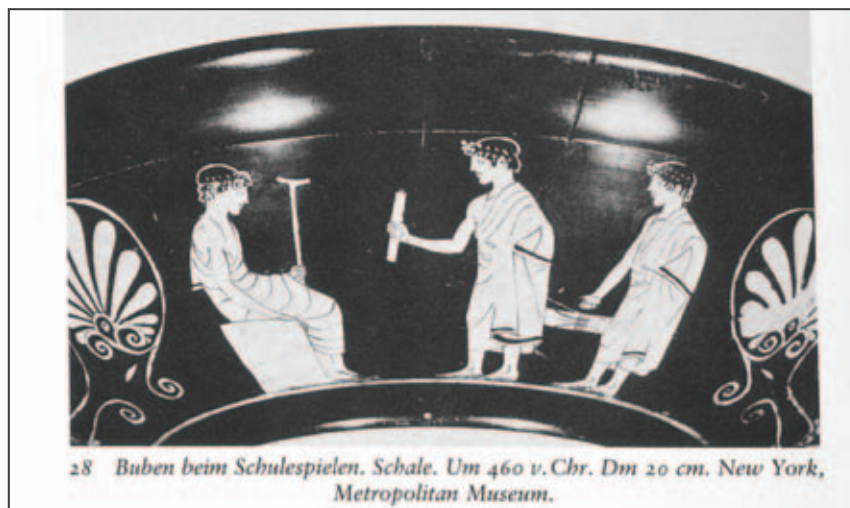
Plato (remember: he was 20 years old, when Socrates and Euripides died), driven to despair by the eternal coming and going of political systems, looks for a final solution, a definite answer; in “Politeia” and “Nomoi” he develops and describes his vision, his ideas.

1. The Importance of education and play

“... the right way is to take care of *the young men first*” (Eutyphron); “the beginning in every task is the chief thing, especially for any creature that is young and tender ... For it is then that it is best moulded and takes the impression that one wishes to stamp upon it.” (Politeia). So Platon wants to have “an officer of education of both boys and girls ... of the highest offices of State this is by far *the most important.*” (Nomoi).

The best education is “gymnastics for the body and for the soul music” (Politeia). Please note: “under music” Plato “include tales” (Politeia).¹

Play is THE method, THE way of education. So for Plato children’s plays are of enormous importance, they should “*learn by way of play and fun*” (Nomoi), because “nothing that is learned under compulsion stays with the mind. ... a free soul ought not to pursue any study slavishly” (Politeia).



Important however that “the program of games is prescribed and secures that the same *children always play the same games* and delight in the same toys in the same way and under the same conditions”; games should not “vary and *suffer innovations*”, because “those children who innovate in their games grow up into men different from their fathers” and as adults “they come to desire other institutions and laws” (Nomoi).

2. Plato’s notion and concept of imitation (*mimesis*)

Imitation is powerful, effective, amusing, but of inferior quality - only a third ontological gradation of reality. Plato’s “idea” is the real reality, is pattern, model, example, prototype, the central theme (“the king and the truth”); the existing “reality” is simply a copy, human products just copies of those ideas. Works of “art” finally only copy the copies, “three removes” from the ideas (“the king and the truth”). Plato gives the example of a painter: “... the most reasonable designation for him (the painter), that he is the *imitator* of the thing which those others produce. ... This, then, will apply to the *maker of tragedies* also, if he is an imitator and is in his nature three removes from the king and the truth, as are all other imitators.” (Politeia 597 e).² That means: “Mimetic art, then, is an inferior thing cohabiting with an inferior and engendering *inferior* offspring” (Politeia 603 b).

Nevertheless: imitations “provide *pleasure*” (Nomoi 802 c) - and: imitation is *effective*. Children imbibe “from the imitation ... the reality. Or have you not observed that *imitations, if continued from youth far into life, settle down into habits and (second) nature in the body, the speech, and the thought?*” (Politeia 395 c). In other words: “*beautiful and honorable pursuits tend to the winning of virtue and the ugly to vice*” (Politeia 444 e), because “it is, to be sure, *inevitable* that the man thus delighted becomes *assimilated* to those habits, good or bad, in which he delights” (Nomoi 656 b).³ So Plato finally suggests Politeia and Nomoi as the best, the

most “beautiful and honorable” imitation, a positive and true image of what a good Polis should be. “Of all the many discourses which I have listened to or learnt about, whether in poems or in a loose flood of speech like ours, they struck me as being not only the *most adequate*, but also the *most suitable for the ears of the young*” (Nomoi 811).

Before going on we have to recognize, that one of the difficulties and at the same time one of the highest successes of Greek philosophy was the creation of a philosophical, scientific language – a tool, which made it possible to discover and to discuss problems and questions. But this new language is not quite ours; it is e.g. responsible for the false impression that Plato esteems music and condemns theatre. If you read carefully and pay attention to the meaning of the old words, he is against “false” music and “false” theatre, he is fond of “good” music and “good” theatre. - So before continuing we have to be clear about the signification of some important words.

Difficulties of language

1. Τέχνη (*techne*)

Antiquity and Middle Ages have no special word for “art”/the fine arts (in German: “Kunst”/die schönen Künste; Greek: “Τέχνη”/Καλές Τέχνες/Τέχνες; Latin: “ars”/artes liberales); there is only one word, an umbrella term for all forms of production, for everything, which can be produced; also language is, speeches, personal habits are τέχνη.

So distinguishing only between *nature* and *human activity*, which is based on knowledge (know-how) and practical power (Aristotle), this open notion of producing whatever – founded on experience and reflection - doesn’t allow to differentiate between handicraft, fine art and science; moreover *techne* and the verbs *technazo*, *technao* designate the ability to produce as well as the product.

It’s the same for the Latin word “*ars*”: it marks the unity of knowledge and power, which is necessary for handicraft (*artes mechanicae*, *artes vulgares*), for artistic or scientific activities (*artes liberales*).

Only in modern times we find the differentiation between fine art and handicraft (beginning in the renaissance), whilst the specificity of science was worked out only during the end of 17th / beginning 18th century. Only in the present we see works of art as autonomous artefacts.

2. Μίμησις, μουσική (*Mimesis, music*)

Mimesis is originally related to dance; in the classical period the word has a more general meaning, related to all art-forms. Plato sees in mimesis mostly something negative (see above); Aristotle sees in mimesis a characteristic anthropological mark and a pleasure with a strong connection to learning: “First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man *from childhood*, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and *through imitation learns his earliest lessons*; and no less universal is the *pleasure felt in things imitated*” (Poetics, chapter 4). And: imitation is free for invention. In comparing “the poet and the historian” Aristotle says: “Their true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular” (chapter 9).

More complicated is the word *μουσική* - the art, the doing of the Muses; B. Jowett even writes in addition to his translation: “The Greek words *λόγος* and *μουσική* are untranslatable.” Like *techne μουσική* means all productions without separating “art” from “handicraft” or “science”; definitely it doesn’t mean what we call “music”: “under music he includes tales” (Politeia); or: “the part of music that concerns speeches and tales” (Politeia).⁴ B. Jowett summarizes in a footnote: “*μουσική* is playing the lyre, music, poetry, letters, culture, philosophy, according to context” (see above).

Platos laws (nomoi and politeia)

In order to protect his dream polis from changes and turbulences Plato gives very strict rules: “Education is the process of drawing and guiding children towards that principle which is pronounced right by the law and confirmed as truly right by the experience of the oldest and the most just” (Nomoi 659 d). “We can admit no poetry into our city save only hymns to the gods and the praises of good men.” (Politeia 607 a). If children “imitate they *should from childhood* up imitate what is appropriate to them - men, that is, who are brave, sober, pious, free and all things of that kind; but things unbecoming the free man they should *neither do nor be clever at imitating*, nor yet any other shameful thing” (Politeia 395 c). “The actions of ugly bodies and ugly ideas and of the men engaged in ludicrous comic-acting, in regard to both speech and dance, and the representations given by all these comedians - all this subject *we must necessarily consider and estimate*” (Nomoi 816 d); we

are allowed to see it and to see, how ugly it is, and to learn it “in order to avoid ever doing or saying anything ludicrous.” But it should be impossible to do it or to imitate it; therefore “*we will impose such mimicry on slaves and foreign hirelings*” (816 e).

As for the *tragedy*, it is not so useful. For “shall we not say that the part of us that leads us to dwell in memory on our suffering and impels us to lamentation, and cannot get enough of that sort of thing, is the irrational and idle part of us, the associate of cowardice? - Yes, we will say that. - And does not the fretful part of us present many and varied occasions for imitation, while the *intelligent and temperate disposition, always remaining approximately the same, is neither easy to imitate nor to be understood when imitated*, especially by a nondescript mob assembled in the theatre? For the representation imitates a type that is alien to them. - By all means. - And is it not obvious that the nature of the mimetic poet is not related to this better part of the soul and his cunning is not frame to please it, if he is to *win favor* with the multitude, but *is devoted to the fretful and complicated type of character* because it is easy to imitate? - It is obvious” (Politeia 604 d, e).

Plato’s solution: *Nomoi* and *politeia*; “all our polity is framed as a representation of the fairest and best life, which is in reality, as we assert, the truest tragedy.” If other tragedians are coming, asking “to set up” their “stage beside us in the marketplace”, then “the magistrates” have to decide, whether their compositions are “suited for publication.” If their “utterances seem to be the same as ours or better, then we will grant you a chorus, but if not, my friends, we can never do so” (*Nomoi* 817). So the tragedy is only allowed to present men, “who are brave, sober, pious, free and all things of that kind.”

Aristotle

For Aristotle, investigating the existing reality empirically, *mimesis* (theatre and poetry) don’t give a description of reality (like history), not an account, a faithful reproduction of events neither an invocation of the desirable, but rather a representation of a possibility, which *could* be reality, but is *not*. He sees imitation as a characteristic anthropological mark and indication, a distinctive anthropological attribute, linked to learning and supported by the pleasure it makes.

In his short, but very influential well-known *Περὶ ποιητικῆς* he gives three natural causes for poetry in general “each of them lying *deep in our nature* ...

- a) the *instinct of imitation* is implanted in man from childhood ...
- b) through imitation he *learns* his earliest lessons ...
- c) the *pleasure* felt in things imitated ... is universal” (see above).

Not being bound to reality and truth, “*a more philosophical and a higher thing than history*” poetry and theatre experience and receive a creative liberation, are open for further developments. Institutions, organisms, art forms are able to grow out of possibilities or dispositions (*dynamis*) and gradual realization (*energeia*) step by step into a final destination (*telos*). In this development public discussions play an important part.

Social “games”

Classical Greece not only cultivates philosophy and the “arts”, but also a lot of social games; in Athens we find an abundance of *agonoi*, discussions, debates, generating practice and theory of rhetoric, developed by professional champions of speech, conversation and debate, the *sophistes*. Also the brilliant dialogues of Socrates/Plato, mostly in search of truth, were sometimes only verbal “battles”, competitions in defending and attacking arguments, full of tricks, play and game.

Summary: Theatre/drama in education (Spiel - und Theaterpädagogik)

So in classical Athens, in the old Greek Theatre and the classical philosophy we find a complete description, characterisation and practice of what today is called “drama/theatre in education” (in German: Spiel- und Theaterpädagogik):

- Body: “gymnastics for the body” (*Politeia*) - not in the direction of performance, but of feeling and expression.
- *Interaction/communication*: the feasts, the discussions, rhetoric ...
- *Role-Play*: Socrates: “And now I ... proceed with the discourse upon Love which I heard one day from a Mantinean woman named Diotima: in this subject she was skilled, and in many others too ... Well, I also had my lesson from her in love-matters; so now I will try ... by narrating to you all on my own account, as well as I am able, the speech she delivered to me” (*Symposion* 201 d). But: Diotima never existed. Socrates not only invented a foreign lady, he also improvised a long dialogue with this lady,

extremely rich in substance.- Another example: if in an rhetorical agon a sophistes doesn't want to answer, Socrates takes over his role, giving himself questions and answers, trying to provoke the opponent.

- *Preparation of a theatre-visit*: the pro-agon.
- *Theatre*: tragedy, comedy - a theatre of citizens (an amateur-theatre)
- *Theatre-follow-up*: chorus and ecclesia (discussing theatre)
- *Feast*.

And also we find a wonderful characterisation of "the method" (OUR method, the *midwife-method*) in Theaitetos: "You are truly fond of argument, Theodorus, and a very good fellow to think that I am a sort of bag full of arguments and can easily pull one out and say that after all the other one was wrong; *but you do not understand what is going on: none of the arguments comes from me, but always from him who is talking with me. I myself know nothing, except just a little, enough to extract an argument from another man who is wise and to receive it fairly. And now I will try to extract this thought from Theaetetus, but not to say anything myself*" (161 b).

A theatre-pedagogue gives tasks, problems, questions, not answers and solutions.

Outlook

We can not change society; but we can integrate and develop small groups, even communities (schools e.g.). A lot of such small groups and little changes may cause bigger changes (e.g. in the school-system, the curriculum). So let us try to promote fellowship (which you may call solidarity) and mutual acquaintance.

Appendix: Important quotations

A) Plato (English translation: B. Jowett)

Communication

... the gods, in pity for the human race thus born to misery, have ordained the feasts of thanksgiving *as periods of respite from their troubles*; and they have granted them as companions in their feasts the Muses ... Nomoi 653 d

... the people may fraternize with one another at the sacrifices and gain knowledge and intimacy, since *nothing is of more benefit to the State than this mutual acquaintance*; ... Nomoi 738 d, e

... assemblies ... first, to offer thanksgiving to the gods and their attendants, and secondly, to *promote fellowship* amongst ourselves and the *mutual acquaintance* we spoke of, and association of every sort. Nomoi 771 d

Education

... the right way is to take care of *the young men first*, to make them as good as possible, just as a good husbandman will naturally take care of the young plants first and afterwards of the rest. Eutyphron 2 d

Do you not know, then, that *the beginning in every task is the chief thing*, especially for any creature that is young and tender? For it is then that it is best molded and takes the impression that one wishes to stamp upon it. Politeia 377 a,b

... an officer ... of *education of both boys and girls ... of the highest offices of State this is by far* the most important. For in the case of every creature - plant or animal, tame and wild alike - it is the first shoot, if it sprouts out well, that is most effective in bringing to its proper development the essential excellence of the creature in question. Nomoi 765 d, e

Emotion

... the mortal form of *soul*, which has within it passions *both fearful and unavoidable* - firstly, pleasure, a most mighty lure to evil; next, pains, which put good to rout; and besides these, rashness and fear, foolish counselors both and anger, hard to dissuade; and hope, ready to seduce. And blending these with irrational sensation and with all-daring lust ... Timaios 69 c, d

Do you not regard anger, fear, yearning, mourning, love, jealousy, envy, and the like as *pains of the soul* and the soul only? - I do. - And shall we not find them full of *ineffable pleasures* ... mixed with pains, which we find in mournings and longings? ... And you remember, too, *how people enjoy weeping* at tragedies? - Yes, certainly. - And are you aware of the condition of the soul at comedies, how there also we have *a mixture of pain and pleasure*? Philebos 47 e, 48 a

Habitus

... *imitations, if continued from youth far into life, settle down into habits and (second) nature in the body, the*

speech, and the thought ... Politeia 395 c, d

Then is it not also true that beautiful and honorable pursuits tend to *the winning of virtue* and *the ugly to vice*? - Of necessity. Politeia 444 e

In such a case it is, to be sure, *inevitable* that the man thus delighted becomes *assimilated* to those habits, good or bad, in which he delights, even though he is ashamed to praise them. Nomoi 656 b

Play

... a free soul ought not to pursue any study slavishly; for while bodily labors performed under constraint do not harm the body, nothing that is learned under compulsion stays with the mind. ... Do not, then, my friend, keep children to their studies by compulsion but by play. 536 e, 537 a Politeia

First, as regards counting, lessons have been invented for the merest infants to learn, by way of play and fun, modes of dividing up apples and chaplets ... adapting the rules of elementary arithmetic to play; ... Nomoi 819 b, c

I assert that there exists in every State a complete ignorance about children's games - how that they are of decisive importance for legislation, as determining whether the laws enacted are to be permanent or not. Nomoi 797 a

For when the program of games is prescribed and secures that the same children *always play the same games* and delight in the same toys in the same way and under the same conditions, it allows the real and serious laws also to remain undisturbed; but when these games vary and suffer *innovations*, ... when the man they hold in special honor is he who is always innovating or introducing some novel device ... ; whereas it would be perfectly true to say that a State can have *no worse pest than a man of that description, since he privily alters the characters of the young, and causes them to contemn what is old and esteem what is new.* (Cf. the warning against innovation in children's games, Nomoi 424. But music is *παιδεία* as well as *παιδία*. Cf. Aristotle's three uses of music, for play, education, and the entertainment of leisure, *Politics* 1339 a 16). Nomoi 797 b, c

... those children who innovate in their games grow up into men different from their fathers; and being thus different themselves, they seek a different mode of life, and having sought this, they come to desire other institutions and laws ... frequent changes in matters involving moral approval and disapproval are, as I maintain, of extreme importance, and require the utmost caution. Nomoi 798 c

... our youth must join in a more law-abiding play, since, if play grows lawless and the children likewise, it is impossible that they should grow up to be men of serious temper and lawful spirit. - Of course, he said. - And so we may reason that when children in their earliest play are imbued with the spirit of law and order through their music, the opposite of the former supposition happens - this spirit waits upon them in all things and fosters their growth, and restores and sets up again whatever was overthrown in the other type of state. - True, indeed, he said. Politeia 424 e, 425 a

Platos concept of imitation

a poet ... his art consists in imitation ... Nomoi 719 c

... all music is representative and imitative ... Nomoi 668 a

... dancing, singing, and the whole of choristry ... all alike provide pleasure. Nomoi 802 c

... celebrated in song by poets ... Menexenos 239 b

And *under music you include tales, do you not?* - I do. - And tales are of two species, the one true and the other false? - Yes. 376 e Politeia

... the best guardian? - What guardian? said Adeimantus. - Reason, said I, blended with culture⁵, which is the only indwelling preserver of virtue throughout life in the soul that possesses it. 549 b Politeia

(The Greek words λόγος and μουσική are untranslatable.)

the part of music that concerns speeches and tales. Politeia 398 b

... the most reasonable designation for him (the painter), that he is the imitator of the thing which those others produce. ... This, then, will apply to the maker of tragedies also, if he is an imitator and is in his nature three removes from the king and the truth, as are all other imitators. - It would seem so. Politeia 597 e

Mimetic art, then, is an inferior thing cohabiting with an inferior and engendering inferior offspring. Politeia 603 b

Tragic poetry ... It is quite obvious, in her case, Socrates, that she is bent rather upon pleasure and the gratification of the spectators. - Well now, that kind of thing, Callicles, did we say just now, is *flattery*? - Cer-

tainly. - ... And those speeches are spoken to a great crowd of people? - Yes. - Hence *poetry is a kind of public speaking*. - Apparently. - Then it must be a *rhetorical public speaking* or do you not think that the poets use rhetoric *in the theaters*? - Yes, I do. - So now *we have found a kind of rhetoric addressed to such a public as is compounded of children and women and men, and slaves as well as free*; an art that we do not quite approve of, since we call it a flattering one. - To be sure. - 501 e - 502 d Gorgias

Positive notion of imitation

Prudence, and virtue in general; and of these the begetters are all the poets and those craftsmen who are styled "inventors." ... for the number of goodly deeds shown forth in them, *the manifold virtues they begot*. Symposium 209 a, e

And a third kind of possession and madness comes from the Muses. This takes hold upon a gentle and pure soul, arouses it and inspires it to songs and other poetry, and *thus by adorning countless deeds of the ancients educates later generations*. Phaidros 245 a

Role

... if they themselves want something, they themselves fawn and shrink from no contortion⁶ or abasement in protest of their friendship, though, once the object gained, they sing another tune. 575 e, 576 a Politeia (*σχήματα* was often used for the figures of dancing)

But when he delivers a speech as if *he were someone else*, shall we not say that he then assimilates thereby his own diction as far as *possible* to that of the person whom he announces as about to speak? - We shall obviously. - And is not *likening one's self to another speech or bodily bearing* an imitation of him to whom one likens one's self? - Surely. - In such case then it appears he and the other poets effect their *narration through imitation*. - Certainly. - Politeia 393 a

Republic (Politeia)

Education ... is it hard to find a better than that which long time has discovered? Which is, I suppose, *gymnastics for the body and for the soul music*. - It is. - ... And under music you *include tales*, do you not? - I do. - And tales are of two species, the one true and the other false? - Yes. - Politeia 376 e (*μουσική* is playing the lyre, music, poetry, letters, culture, philosophy, according to context).

... *the battles of the gods in Homer's verse are things that we must not admit into our city* either wrought in allegory or without allegory. For the young are not able to distinguish what is and what is not allegory, but whatever opinions are taken into the mind at that age are wont to prove indelible and unalterable. For which reason, maybe, we should do our utmost that the first stories that they hear should be so composed as to bring the fairest lessons of virtue to their ears. Politeia 378 d, e

This, then, said I, will be one of the laws and patterns concerning the gods to which speakers and poets will be required to conform, that God is not the cause of all things, but only of the good. Politeia 380 c

We will beg Homer and the other poets not to be angry if we cancel those and all similar passages, not that they are not poetic and pleasing to most hearers, but because *the more poetic they are the less are they suited to the ears of boys and men who are destined to be free and to be more afraid of slavery than of death*. Politeia 387 b

But if they imitate they should *from childhood up* imitate what is appropriate to them - men, that is, who are brave, sober, pious, free and all things of that kind; but things unbecoming the free man they should *neither do nor be clever at imitating*, nor yet any other shameful thing, lest from the imitation they imbibe the reality. Or have you not observed that *imitations, if continued from youth far into life, settle down into habits and (second) nature in the body, the speech, and the thought*? - Yes, indeed, said he. - We will not then allow our charges, whom we expect to prove good men, being men, to play the parts of women and imitate a woman young or old wrangling with her husband, defying heaven, loudly boasting, fortunate in her own conceit, or involved in misfortune and possessed by grief and lamentation - still less a woman that is sick, in love, or in labor. - Most certainly not, he replied. - Nor may they imitate slaves, female and male, doing the offices of slaves. - No, not that either. - Nor yet, as it seems, bad men who are cowards and who do the opposite of the things we just now spoke of, reviling and lampooning one another, speaking foul words in their cups or when sober and in other ways sinning against themselves and others in word and deed after the fashion of such men. And I take it they must not form the habit of likening themselves to madmen either in words nor yet in deeds. For while knowledge they must have both of mad and bad men and women, they must *do and imitate nothing of this kind*. - Most true, he said. 395 c, d, e, 396 a

A man of the right sort, I think, when he comes in the course of his narrative to some word or act of a good

man will be *willing to impersonate the other* in reporting it, and will feel no shame at that *kind of mimicry*, by preference imitating the good man when he acts steadfastly and sensibly, and less and more reluctantly when he is upset by sickness or love or drunkenness or any other mishap. But when he comes to *someone unworthy* of himself, he will not wish to liken himself in earnest to one who is inferior, except in the few cases where he is doing something good, but will be embarrassed both because *he is unpractised in the mimicry of such characters*, and also because he shrinks in distaste *from molding and fitting himself the types of baser things*. His mind disdains them, unless it be for jest. 396 c, d, e

If a man, then, it seems, who was capable by his cunning of assuming every kind of shape and imitating all things ... (we) should say to him that there is no man of that kind among us in our city, nor is it lawful for such a man to arise among us, ... but we ourselves, for our souls' good, should continue to employ the more austere and less delightful poet and tale-teller, who would *imitate the diction of the good man* and would tell his tale in the patterns which we prescribed in the beginning, when we set out to educate our soldiers. 398 a, b

Theatre

Mimetic poetry, we say, *imitates human beings acting* under compulsion or voluntarily, and as a result of their actions supposing themselves to have fared well or ill and in all this feeling either grief or joy. Politeia 603 c

And shall we not say that the part of us that leads us to dwell in memory on our suffering and impels us to lamentation, and cannot get enough of that sort of thing, is the irrational and idle part of us, the associate of cowardice? - Yes, we will say that. - And does not the fretful part of us present many and varied occasions for imitation, *while the intelligent and temperate disposition, always remaining approximately the same, is neither easy to imitate nor to be understood when imitated*, especially by a nondescript mob assembled in the theatre? For the representation imitates a type that is alien to them. - By all means. - And is it not obvious that the nature of the mimetic poet is not related to this better part of the soul and his cunning is not frame to please it, if he is to *win favor* with the multitude, but is *devoted to the fretful and complicated type of character* because it is easy to imitate? - It is obvious. - 604 d, e

And so we may at last say that we should be justified in not admitting him into a well-ordered state, because he stimulates and fosters this element in the soul, and by strengthening it *tends to destroy the rational part*, just as when in a state one puts bad men in power and turns the city over to them and ruins the better sort. Precisely in the same manner we shall *say that the mimetic poet sets up in each individual soul a vicious constitution* by fashioning phantoms far removed from reality, and by currying favor with the senseless element that cannot distinguish the greater from the less, but calls the same thing now one, now the other. - By all means. - 605 b, c

I think you know that the very best of us, when we hear Homer or some other of the makers of tragedy imitating one of the heroes who is in grief, and is delivering a long tirade in his lamentations or chanting and beating his breast, feel pleasure, and abandon ourselves and accompany the representation with *sympathy and eagerness*, and we praise as an excellent poet the one who most strongly affects us in this way. - I do know it, of course. - But when in our own lives some affliction comes to us, you are also aware that we plume ourselves upon the opposite, on our ability to remain calm and endure, in the belief that this is the conduct of a man, and what we were praising in the theatre that of a woman. - I do note that. - Do you think, then, said I, that this praise is rightfully bestowed when, contemplating a character that we would not accept but would be ashamed of in ourselves, we do not abominate it but take pleasure and approve? - No, by Zeus, he said, it does not seem reasonable. 605 c - e

If you would reflect that the part of the soul that in the former case, *in our own misfortunes, was forcibly restrained, and that has hungered for tears and a good cry⁷ and satisfaction, because it is its nature to desire these things, is the element in us that the poets satisfy and delight*, and that the best element in our nature, since it has never been properly educated by reason or even by habit, then relaxes its guard over the plaintive part, inasmuch as this is contemplating the woes of others and it is no shame to it to praise and pity another who, claiming to be a good man, abandons himself to excess in his grief; but it thinks this vicarious pleasure is so much clear gain, and would not consent to forfeit it by disdaining the poem altogether. That is, I think, because few are capable of reflecting that what we enjoy in others will inevitably react upon ourselves. For after *feeding* *fat the emotion of pity* there, it is not easy to restrain it in our own sufferings. 606 a, b

(This contains a hint of one possible meaning of the Aristotelian doctrine of *κάθαρσις*, Poet. 1449 b 27-28. Cf. *Κουφιζεσθαι μεθ'ἡδονῆς* Pol. 1342 a 14)

Does not the same principle apply to the laughable, namely, that if in comic representations, or for that matter in private talk, you take intense pleasure in buffooneries that you would blush to practise yourself, and

do not detest them as base, you are doing the same thing as in the case of the pathetic? ... And so in regard to the emotions of sex and anger, and all the appetites and pains and pleasures of the soul which we say accompany all our actions, *the effect of poetic imitation* is the same. For it waters and fosters these feelings when what we ought to do is to dry them up, and it establishes them as our rulers when they ought to be ruled, to the end that we may be better and happier men instead of worse and more miserable. - 606 d

Then, Glaucon, said I, when you meet encomiasts of Homer who tell us that this poet has been the educator of Hellas, and that for the conduct and refinement of human life he is worthy of our study and devotion, and that we should order our entire lives by the guidance of this poet, we must love and salute them as doing the best they can, and concede to them that Homer is the most poetic of poets and the first of tragedians, but we must know the truth, that *we can admit no poetry into our city save only hymns to the gods and the praises of good men*. For if you grant admission to the honeyed muse in lyric or epic, pleasure and pain will be lords of your city instead of law and that which shall from time to time have approved itself to the general reason as the best. - Most true, he said. Politeia 607 a

Laws (Nomoi)

Education is the process of drawing and guiding children towards that principle which is pronounced right by the law and confirmed as truly right by the experience of the oldest and the most just. 659 d Nomoi

You oblige the poets to teach that the good man, since he is temperate and just, is fortunate and happy, whether he be great or small, strong or weak, rich or poor; ... Nomoi 660 e

... were I a legislator, I should endeavor to *compel the poets and all the citizens* to speak in this sense; and I should impose all but the heaviest of penalties on anyone in the land who should declare that any wicked men lead pleasant lives, or that things profitable and lucrative are different from things just; ... 662 b, c Nomoi

The actions of ugly bodies and ugly ideas and of the men engaged in ludicrous comic-acting, in regard to both speech and dance, and the representations given by all these comedians - *all this subject we must necessarily consider and estimate*. For it is impossible to learn the serious without the comic, or any one of a pair of contraries without the other, if one is to be a wise man; but to *put both into practice is equally impossible, if one is to share in even a small measure of virtue*; in fact, it is precisely for this reason that one should learn them, - in order to avoid ever doing or saying anything ludicrous, through ignorance, when one ought not; *we will impose such mimicry on slaves and foreign hirelings*, and no serious attention shall ever be paid to it, nor shall any free man or free woman be seen learning it. ... Let such, then, be the *regulations for all those laughable amusements* which we all call "comedy" ... Nomoi 816 d, e

... to what are called our "serious" poets, the tragedians ... this should be the answer, "Most excellent of Strangers, we ourselves, *to the best of our ability, are the authors of a tragedy at once superlatively fair and good; at least, all our polity is framed as a representation of the fairest and best life, which is in reality, as we assert, the truest tragedy*. Thus we are composers of the same things as yourselves, rivals of yours as artists and actors of the fairest drama, which, as our hope is, true law, and it alone, is by nature competent to complete.

Do not imagine, then, that we will ever thus lightly allow you *to set up your stage beside us in the marketplace*, and give permission to those imported actors of yours, with their dulcet tones and their voices louder than ours, to harangue women and children and the whole populace, and *to say not the same things as we say about the same institutions, but, on the contrary, things that are, for the most part, just the opposite*. In truth, both we ourselves and the whole State would be absolutely mad, were it to allow you to do as I have said, *before the magistrates had decided* whether or not your compositions are deserving of utterance and *suited for publication*. So now, ye children and offspring of Muses mild, do ye first display your chants side by side with ours *before the rulers*; and if your utterances seem to be the same as ours or better, then we will grant you a chorus, but if not, my friends, we can never do so." Nomoi 817 a, b, c, d

Advice to the Law-warden: What advice then would you give the Law-warden? ... About the pattern by which he should be guided in respect of the particular subjects which he permits or forbids all the children to learn. - I am not wholly at a loss for a pattern. For in looking back now at the discussions which we have been pursuing from dawn up to this present hour - and that, as I fancy, not without some guidance from Heaven - it appeared to me that they were *framed exactly like a poem*. And it was not surprising, perhaps, that there came over me a feeling of intense delight when I gazed thus on our discourses all marshalled, as it were, in close array; for of all the many discourses which I have listened to or learnt about, whether in poems or in a loose flood of speech like ours, they struck me as being not only the most adequate, but also the most suitable for the ears of the young. Nowhere, I think, could I find a better pattern than this to put before the Law-warden who is

educator, that he may charge the teachers to teach the children these discourses of ours, and such as resemble and accord with these; and if it should be that in his search he should light on poems of composers, or prose-writings, or merely verbal and unwritten discourses, akin to these of ours, he must in no wise let them go, but get them written down. In the first place, he must compel the teachers themselves to learn these discourses, and to praise them, and if any of the teachers fail to approve of them, he must not employ them as colleagues; only those who agree with his praise of the discourses should he employ, and entrust to them the teaching and training of the youth. *Nomoi* 811 b - e

B) Aristotle: Poetics (English Translation by S. H. Butcher)

- Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy also and Dithyrambic ... are all in their general conception modes of imitation (*mimesis*).
- Since the objects of imitation are men in action, and these men must be either of a higher or a lower type (for moral character mainly answers to these divisions, goodness and badness being the distinguishing marks of moral differences), it follows that we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are. ...
- Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy as better than in actual life.
- There is still a third difference - the manner in which each of these objects may be imitated. ... the poet may imitate by narration - in which case he can either take another personality as Homer does, or speak in his own person, unchanged - or he may present all his characters as living and moving before us.
- Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. ...
- For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and ... it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse.
- Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament ... ; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity (*eleos*) and fear (*phobos*) effecting the proper purgation of these emotions (*katharsis pathematon*). ...
- The Plot (*mythos*), then, is the first principle (*arche*), and, as it were, the soul (*psyche*) of a tragedy: Character holds the second place.

Remark: Mythos here means fable in the sense of Brecht ("Fabel"); english plot; i.e. connection and succession of actions.
- The poet and the historian ... Their true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular.

Notes

(*) (Editors' note) imitation and art

¹ *μουσική* is playing the lyre, music, poetry, letters, culture, philosophy, according to context (see below).

² In Phaedros, 248 e, the imitator is only sixth in the scale; see also *Politeia* 587 c.

³ See Bourdieu (*habitus*)

⁴ In the German translation Plato designates the "vollkommensten Wächter" ("the best guardian") as "mit Musik vereinigte Rede, welche allein, wem sie eingepflanzt ist, die Tugend lebenslang bewahren kann" (*Politeia* 549 b). English translation of B. Jowett: "the best guardian ... : Reason blended with culture, which is the only indwelling preserver of virtue throughout life in the soul that possesses it." –

German: "mit Musik vereinigte Rede" = English: "reason blended with culture"; just an example, how difficult translations are!

⁵ <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D8%3Asection%3D549b#note-link1>, retrieved on December 30th, 2012.

⁶ <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D9%3Asection%3D576a#note2>, retrieved on December 30th, 2012.

⁷ <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D10%3Asection%3D606a#note3>, retrieved on December 30th, 2012.

References

- Aristotle (2008). *Poetics* (trans. S.H. Butcher). New York: Cosimo Inc.
- Plato (1960). *The Republic and Other Works* by Plato (trans. B. Jowett). Garden City, New York: Dolphin Books, Doubledat & Co.
- Plato (1937). *The Dialogues of Plato* (trans. B. Jowett). vol II, New York: Random House.

Prof. Dr. Hans-Wolfgang Nickel was born in 1933 in Dortmund Germany. Studies: Theatre Sciences, German Literature, Pedagogy, Cultural Sciences in Saarbrücken, Berlin, Paris and Vienna. 1960 PhD in Theatre Sciences in Vienna, 1961 teacher in Berlin (primary and secondary schools), 1964 lecturer at the Pedagogical University Berlin, implementation of the subject "Schulspiel" (educational drama), professor for "Spiel- und Theaterpädagogik" (drama/theatre-pedagogy). Since 1981 professor at the University of the Arts, founding of the department Drama/Theatre-Pedagogy. Chairman of the Association for Drama/Theatre Berlin (1983-1992). Member of the board of the German Association for Drama/Theatre (1987-1993). Vice-president of the University of the Arts Berlin (1985-1989). Cooperation's with institutions and universities/ workshops at home and abroad: especially Austria, Switzerland, Turkey, Israel; and Singapore, USA, China, Manila, South America, Bangkok; member of the board of AITA/IATA. Many publications concerning drama, theatre, improvisation, puppetry, masks, drama/theatre pedagogy. Since 1970 regularly critiques about children- and youth-theatre (*Berliner Lehrerzeitung*). Recent publications: a) Hoffmann, K./Krieger, U./Nickel, H.-W. (Hg.): *Masken – eine Bestandsaufnahme mit Beiträgen aus Pädagogik, Geschichte, Religion, Theater, Therapie*. Berlin: Schibri 2004, b) Dörger, D./Nickel, H.-W.: *Spiel- und Theaterpädagogik studieren*. Berlin: Schibri 2005, c) Dörger, D./Nickel, H.-W.: *Improvisationstheater. Das Publikum als Autor. Ein Überblick*. Berlin: Schibri 2008, d) Nickel, H.-W.: *Regie: Thema und Konzept*. Berlin: Schibri 2009 (2. edition)

