Body, Shadow and Death: Redefinition of the Origin of Painting with Tracing the Shadow

Liwen Chen *

Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong, China

* Corresponding Author Email: 19443994@life.hkbu.edu.hk

Abstract. The origin of things has always captivated people; for painting, there are several myths to illustrate it. In western, Pliny the Elder contributed one of the most antiquity stories in his Natural History; from 1770 to 1820, particularly in Britain and France, there are an increasing number of works based on this story, the majority of which are composed of the same elements: classical environment, two lovers, as well as shadow. Considering Joseph Benoit Suvée's the Invention of the Art of Painting in 1791 as a starting place, this paper intends to challenge Plato's reasonable rejection of shadows while, in the process, analyzing Hans Belting's theory of image anthropology, the present essay focuses on two key concepts of the shadow with the truth. Thus, Pliny argued that shadows may be genuine, whereas Plato held that they could be dangerously deceptive.

Keywords: Human body, Shadow, Truth, Illusion.

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the shadows in the myth about the origin of the painting mentioned in Pliny the Elder's Natural History, in which a Corinthians virgin, daughter of a potter from Sicyon, drew the profile of her beloved on a wall by the light of a candle, attempted to preserve it. The fable told that ancient Greece believed the invention of painting could be traced back to shadow, to begin using cast shadows, the Greeks established a "geometry of the light" that allowed them to locate objects with a steady source of illumination. Since the seventeenth century, allusions to this basic origin of art painting have become increasingly prominent. In the same way, when describing the ancient history of imitative art on the first page of their treatises, notable historians and philosophers of the time maintained the mythology of the defined shadow [1]. Perhaps more essential than the allegory itself is the fact that this primal narrative has had such a profound impact on the definition of shadow. As a corollary of this myth, the shadow becomes inextricably linked to the body and death, on the other hand, if summarized in a more poetic expression, love with tragedy meets at the crossroads through the shadow.

How does Pliny's mythical account explain the origins of the painting? Why did he choose to tell the narrative of a young couple's romance? What is the significance of the woman's depiction of the man's shadow in the tale? According to this myth, when human beings were trying to break free from their restrictions of cognition to find a path to truth, ancient intellectuals viewed painting as an imitation. If this conclusion is accepted, then displaying the shadows in this legend is likewise a straightforward method of recording, however, is the meaning of shadow restricted to this? It's as if in Pliny the Elder's story, capturing a person's shadow is equivalent to capturing a portion of that person's spirit, Plato's idea in the allegory of the cave set up a shadow-substance opposition claimed that the fundamental nature of reality is obscured by shadows [2, 3]. If this is true, the difference between Plato with the myth is a game of sensibility against reason. In this respect, Pliny's account can be interpreted as a rebuttal to Plato's allegory of the cave. and this essay seeks to provide comments and add to Plato's cave theory by tying it to Joseph Benoit Suvée's the Invention of the Art of Painting, which serves as an exceptional model for evaluating the nature of painting. Whereas previous doctrines concentrated on Plato's rational soul, the history of shadow painting, or the analysis of artworks created in response to this mythological story, this essay responds to Plato's ideology of shadows through a representative work and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the act of depicting shadows and the existence with Hans Belting's s image anthropology.

The author thinks that a classic work will better communicate the perspective that the existence of shadows might be related to mental representations and therefore recognized as a genuine presence leading to truth. The article aims to examine three key aspects of the author's thoughts, beginning with a systematic investigation of the act of outlining the shadow of the man in the fantasy to Plato's allegory of the cave with Hans Belting's theory, by elaborating on the parallels between shadows with Plato's theories while engaging in some substantially extended thinking, discussing shadows is indeed a form of visual transcendence. Then followed by a more thorough analysis of the dynamics of the two prominent characters in Joseph Benoit Suvée's painting, via the body treatment used to vouch for the validity of the paper's arguments, thereby concluding with a focus on the shadow that appears in the painting.

2. Notions of The origin of painting

2.1. Plato on shadow and painting

According to Pliny the Elder's myth, the painting began with a woman sketching her beloved's shadow. While the shadow appears to play a key role in this story, the shadow is fundamentally real, highlighting it as a reproduction of the real or a positive confirmation of the shadow's presence. Whereas Plato's description of the shadow seems to contradict this story's significance. For a cave allegory in The Republic VII, he depicts a group of people bound with their limbs also chained to the ground, allowing them to only look straight ahead at the flat wall. Behind them stood the same wall, which was surrounded by a walkway. A large fire raging behind the wall and passageway warmed and illuminated the cave. On the walled route, people walked with their possessions and antiquities on their backs. As a result, a sequence of dramatic shadows on the sole wall is visible to the imprisoned individual, and these shadows make up the only universe known to the individual. From this vantage point, it is clear that the shadow occupies a very low position in Plato's conception; this appears to be explored in terms of Plato's visible and intelligible worlds, which stem from The Republic's Analogy of the Divided Line (509d-510a) [4]. Simultaneously, he split reality into four levels, the first two of which are visible that correlate to image physical objects such as shadows, and physical objects, with the final two of which are comprehensible, as they relate to mathematical concepts and forms. To be more precise, persons on the first two levels regard the world as the ultimate "reality," and if these two levels are precisely distinguished, the shadow is unquestionably the lowest level of existence, while humans in the lowest level (e.g., convicts in caves) see the shadows of visible objects, as well as what they perceive as the real world is nothing more than the shadows forming it. The second layer's inhabitants observe the actual visible items that are employed to cast shadows. However, persons at these two levels always understand the world through the visual, or the "perceptible," as previously said, whereas those at the bottom and second levels can only have a weak conception of the real world via the visible world, yet not attain it. Furthermore, it is worthwhile to discuss why the shadow, despite its position in Plato's sequence, continues to be discarded.

This connects to the remaining two levels, in the third level, using the prisoner as a metaphor, refers to the allegory of the cave's most critical component. Plato attempts to visualize a prisoner bound in chains who breaks free and discovers a richer, more genuine world outside the depths of that cave, thus he realizes that the world he originally believed was real is simply an illusion of the true world. From this perspective, people at the third level already possess a certain amount of knowledge, the ability to tell the difference between real things and illusions, avoid conflating the two and possess the integrity necessary to comprehend the real world. Moreover, Plato asserts that knowledge must be of eternal objects. It is clear to see why the third level is addressed with mathematical objects, which are definite and irreparable in terms of mathematical properties; the most fundamental property drawn from these two characteristics is that mathematics is everlasting. Mathematical knowledge, on the other hand, cannot be grasped from the first and second layers of perception, but rather from the intellect. Ultimately, the fourth level reaches what Plato refers to as

the highest thought, the notion of the good, with the good serving as the superior concept that establishes the world's structure and final orientation. Connecting the third and fourth levels, if knowledge is the accurate comprehension of real objects, then the good is the creator of anything intellectually comprehensible.

To summarize, these four stages are a bottom-up process that is cohesive and complete. Plato's world is a world built on hierarchy and order, strictly divided into four levels by the two worlds of the visible with the comprehensible, though it's easy to see why shadows are at the bottom of the hierarchy and therefore should be discarded, the shadow, which is the lowest level, is itself an imitation of the same lower level of sensible objects, and indeed the sensible world is, in turn, an imitation of truth. If the highest level is the final goal of humanity, compared to shadows, it is a meaningless existence.

2.2. The determination of the number of network layer

Concerning painting, Plato considered shadows as a copy of copies of the truth, hence painting is placed on an equal footing to be viewed. Plato was outspoken in his criticism of the artist's status and even felt that painting as a form of artistic expression should be prohibited in a nation, a position that is widely recorded and may be compared to what the paper has said above. Plato views the artist as an imitator, and what they mimicked remains an imitation, thus he discusses his attitude toward the artist in terms of mimēsis. He regards the artist's existence as inferior to that of the craftsman, based on what Plato regards as three distinct modes of existence: the first is the idea of divine creation as form, i.e. the highest form of the comprehensible world; the second is the real object of the imitated form imitated by the technician; and the third is the artist's imitation of the real object, painting at this stage being equivalent to those shadows in the cave. According to this argument, the artist is not as authentic as the craftworker's imitation; at the very least, the artisan attempts to duplicate the form, whereas the artist only reproduces the copy.

Plato's approach to painting was motivated by the quest for truth, which he advocated constantly. He believed that painting was deceptive, that it was always distant from the truth, both the skiagraphia viewed through the lens of painting also the poets' created stories about the gods were false. Plato inherited Socrates' assertion that truth must take precedence above all other considerations. Indeed, the truth here is truthfulness, because this criterion judges if paintings or poems contain falsehoods, they cannot be compared to the search for truth for its own sake. Additionally, Plato's critique of art is functionalist in nature. He believed that painting was a copy of copies, a shadow of a shadow, because people could either not know the truth through art, but could also derive no practical use from it. Plato interpreted this argument strongly by condemning Homer in The Republic and suggesting that the poet should be exiled. He contended Homer mentioned medicine, military, politics, and education in his works but was not useful in these fields, implying that if Homer was truly proficient in these fields and not merely imitating them, then it must have been useful; otherwise, he would have been simply displaced and chanting epic poems. Second, Plato used the bed as an illustration in his statement that painting is mimēsis. In this case, he describes the metaphor of three beds in The Republic X. One bed is a divine concept, then the second bed was fashioned by a carpenter who built it in the image of God. The painter arrives to draw the bed, imitating the carpenter's creation. The artist's bed is far from the truth in this scenario.

3. Response to Plato's notions

3.1 The form or Idea of things

The article presents a response to Plato's usage of the bed as an example of art being a copy of copies, based on a functionalist analysis. The first aspect is that the moment when Odysseus identifies with his wife is without a doubt the most moving story in Homer's Odyssey, in which the

Penelope (to Telemachus): "If he is Odysseus, truly home, beyond all doubt we two shall know each other better than you or anyone. There are secret signs we know, we two." Odysseus: "There is

our pact and pledge, our secret sign, built into that bed—my handiwork and no one else's! An old trunk of olive grew like a pillar on the building plot… I shaped that stump from the roots up into a bedpost, drilled it, let it serve as a model for the rest". Their secret! as she heard it told, her knees grew tremulous and weak, and her heart failed her. With eyes brimming with tears she ran to him, from Homer, Odyssey, Bk XXIII

The form of the bed is no longer an imitation of the highest form, as Plato asserts, but a naturally formed work of art also possesses the utilitarian nature advocated by Plato [5]. In this regard, it is possible to investigate the issue of order. Is it true that art exists first because of absolute reality and subsequently as a result of imitation? Perhaps Plato's statement is worth contemplating within itself, at least considering this anecdote, which demonstrates that art does not have to be copied to be made, in contrast, that a work of art generated naturally in nature signifies a new existence within itself.

Furthermore, when Plato uses the instance of the bed to show that the painting is a copy of copies, can it be interpreted that this is a reversal of Plato's theory of skiagraphia because in discussing the bed, Plato unintentionally explores whether the painting may be a depiction of the real, but what it conveys is far from the real? In this sense, the painting is unreal, but when examining Plato's functionalism, it can be seen that the shadow is not an illusion, as Plato believed, and The Invention of the Art of Painting by Joseph Benoit Suvée accurately represents the functionality of the shadow [6]. In this painting, all the shadows in this artwork are reasonably present as a result of reflections generated by objects lighted via lamp, which may appear to Plato to be illusory. However, the shadow of a man has a distinct meaning for the woman. Faced with profound loss, the act of tracing a man's shadow seems to be an automatic reaction on the side of the woman, as if leaving a man's shadow is a way of retaining a piece of the person she loves. This concept bears a strong resemblance to Odysseus's story. Similarly, there is no copy or "truth" for the woman; her inner emotions guided her and do so instinctively; the painting is no longer a copy of copies. The emotional value of a natural person is in the "origin of the picture." Pliny the Elder's account, in other words, is a tacit justification of Plato's argument that the direct act inspired by one's inner feelings gave birth to developing the painting. The large data prediction model for the user's electricity consumption is implemented in the Clementine software.

3.2 Nuances of the image

Further inspection of the nuances of this image reveals other clues that connect to the aforementioned idea. The shadow, according to Vernant, is eidolon [7]. When a person's pure shadow departs from their body, death is frequently invoked. The "shadow" seeks to capture life rather than create an illusion by imitating it with an image. The vision is conveyed in this painting, the woman appears unfazed by the man's touch by her motions, her neck arched forward as if attempting to focus her eyes on the shadow of the wall rather than on the man beside her, her slightly open lips, with her left hand demonstrating an unusual bent all give a sensation of tension to the viewer, not of agony associated with loss, but rather of focused caution. With the man's departure, this line left on the wall is, simply expressed, a visual reaction. In the objective world, the world perceived by the eye is visually imposed on the eye; it is direct action, and the world is present when one goes to face or stare. On either side, this creative act of a woman sketching shadows establishes a new possibility. This potential reveals the core of the act, in there the act of seeing transcends its sensory context, wherein the shadow is given a formal appearance, at the same time, it becomes both a part of the woman's subsequent memories and a part of the man's life.

From another angle, this woman's practice of concentration is not just a way of capturing life, but also a way of responding to herself. The artwork results from inner emotion, with desire and loss as the two prominent sensations, so she does not conceal her refusal to let go of her beloved, nor is she overpowered by the sorrow of imminent loss. She exerted every effort in this emotional domain, tracing her beloved's shadow and achieving an emotional breakthrough. The woman's behavior is a means of confronting her subjective emotions and objective limits - it is her natural expression. She requires a true lover, yet she is powerless to prevent her partner from departing. She knows well that

the shadow cannot take the place of her love, and hence, it is much tougher to elevate the shadow to the rank of a substitute. The substitute cannot compensate for the genuine presence. When confronted with the reality that her lover would cease to exist, this woman reacts in a way that creates a purely subjective space between absence with presence; the shadow outlined cannot compensate for her emptiness, but it also cannot erase the fact that the man is departing.

That the body makes shadows stems from a simple physiological experience, then as a result of this work, shadows cannot simply be defined as objective images produced by the body; rather, the shadows express extremely real emotion [8]. When the viewer focuses on the man in this drawing, one of the most obvious details is that the man's hand is always away from the woman's body, which may reveal a wave of eroticism [9]. However, when the spectator shifts their gaze to the wall and observes the wall shadow, everyone sees only the shadow that reveals the man's hard side face. Could it not be considered the purest form of the soul? The same is true from a female perspective. Without the shadows of the brush or the dynamism of the hands, the woman's core spirit is presented in a way that is devoid of color. The author carefully placed the woman's sensory organs in shadow, creating a stark contrast with her glowing body beneath the flame [10]. Is this a nod to the practice of recording shadows as a natural part of life? Finally, as the audience returns their attention to the lovers' shadows on the wall, they notice that there is no agony of separation or sorrow of loss in the shadow; all they see are two interwoven shadows, which appear to be the most ideal condition of their love for one another.

4. Conclusions

This essay compares and contrasts the significance of shadow in Plato's and Pliny the Elder's Natural History, as well as offering a new perspective on the concept of art as imitation in light of Joseph-Benoit Suvée's painting. Beginning with Plato's visible and sensible world, the paper analyzes the four levels of cognition, therefore compares the lowest level of cognition, the shadow, to the hierarchy of painters, casting doubt on the theory that Plato, in his quest for truth, regarded the shadow as an illusory being and painting as an imitation. Plato's distaste for painting is partly because of the deceptive role of shadows in skiagraphia and partly due to his functionalist critique of painting. This essay partially refutes Plato's assertion by examining Invention of the Art of Drawing by Joseph-Benoit Suvée, the young woman's representation of her departing lover's shadows, arguing that the shadows represent the emotions that tremble within a woman's heart in the face of loss and absence, so the shadows are no longer illusory existences, but romantic realities, thus equally effective. Hence, Individuals should no longer be constrained by the shadows in this "visible" environment brimming with seeds of human contemplation. The shadows in caves, the lines of shadows traced by women in legend, should be viewed more humanely, a gaze that liberates humans from the shadows' imprisonment.

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