

Revisiting Plato's Theory of Mimesis in the Age of AI-Generated Literature

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Abstract:

With the recent acceleration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) and the profound impact it has had on literary creation, there has been a range of philosophical questions raised regarding creativity, authorship, originality, and representation. Today's AI tools, like ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and other large language models, can generate poems, stories, essays, novels, and other pieces of writing that sometimes sound like human-written content in terms of style and sophistication. Although technological progress has led scholars to reassess traditional models of literary production, this is not the case with respect to the assessment of texts produced by AI. Although new technologies have encouraged scholars to revisit old theories of literary production, classical philosophical concepts have received little attention for their evaluation of AI-generated texts. This paper rediscusses Plato's Theory of Mimesis in order to determine whether AI-produced literature is authentic creativity or a sophisticated form of imitation. The study builds on Platonic philosophy, specifically *The Republic* and *Ion*, which maintains that literature is a form of imitation, citing formal imitation as a more basic level and structural imitation as a higher level—AI systems work by statistically learning patterns from human-created literature, without the direct experience or contemplative grasp of reality that is characteristic of the literary arts. Qualitative philosophical research, textual analysis and conceptual analysis are used in this paper to discuss human literary creativity and algorithmic text generation, and the issues of authenticity, aesthetic value and artistic intentions are compared. In addition, the paper introduces the original Platonic AI Mimesis Model (PAIMM), which further develops Plato's hierarchy of reality to explain the literary production of AI in the digital era. The results show that while AI can be a powerful aid to literary productivity and even make creative writing more accessible, it can never match the human imagination, intentionality, moral awareness, emotional experience, or philosophical insight. Rather than being an alternative to human creative control, AI is a sophisticated

creative tool that relies on human creativity. To provide a new perspective on creativity in the 21st century, the research combines classical philosophy and modern research on AI, enriching the fields of literary theory, digital humanities, philosophy of technology, and AI ethics.

Keywords: Plato, Mimesis, Artificial Intelligence, AI-generated Literature, Literary Theory, Digital Humanities, Computational Creativity, Authorship

1. Introduction

The advent of Artificial Intelligence has started one of the most disruptive changes in human intellectual history. The generative AI models have proven to be very capable of generating essays, novels, poetry, dramatic dialogues, literary criticism, and creative narratives that are getting closer and closer to human-authored texts. The difference is that while traditional computational systems required specific programming, modern large language models utilize deep neural networks fed by vast amounts of text, empowering them to create coherent and contextually advanced pieces of literature. There have been a lot of debates on the philosophical and literary aspects, as generative AI has been adopted quickly in the field of education, publishing, journalism, and creative industries. The issues of originality and creativity, authorship, authenticity, and artistic ownership have emerged as central concerns in the field of literary scholarship today. Is it possible for machines to produce literature? Is AI creative or does it simply copy previous human creations? What is the difference between algorithmic text generation and imagination? These questions give us an opportunity to revisit the Classical philosophical theories on art. Plato created one of the earliest developed systematic theories of artistic representation over two thousand years ago in the name of Mimesis. Plato proposed in *The Republic* that art is a representation of the real, which is only a flawed representation of the Forms. In consequence, artistic productions are far removed from the highest truth. Poets are people who imitate appearances not reality and appeal to feeling more than reason, thus Plato's doubts about the poet.

While Plato's actual critique was of oral poetry and dramatic performance, his philosophical basis provides the lens to consider AI-generated literature. Modern AI systems are not produced through personal experience or independent awareness. Rather, they create new texts via detecting statistical connections in huge amounts of human-authored language. AI, in many aspects, is a replicator of pre-existing literary genres or styles, not a standout original. However, in spite of the many works which have investigated aspects of AI ethics, computational creativity and digital humanities, there are relatively few works which have critically explored aspects of AI literature from a Platonic aesthetic perspective. The existing scholarship is often

primarily concerned with capacities of the technology and does not attend to the philosophical questions of representation and truth. Therefore, one should revisit the theory of Plato as a way to create a greater conceptual understanding of machine-generated creativity. The aim of this paper is to fill this gap by examining the question of whether AI-generated literature is to be seen as a true art or as a high-tech version of Platonic mimesis. It also suggests a theoretical model of AI Mimesis (AI-MM) that is based on Plato's ideas, which is the first ever to illustrate the link between human creativity, machine learning, and literary production. To answer the following research questions, the study explores:

- Can AI-generated literature be considered as an authentic creative act?
- What does Plato's philosophy of mimesis have to do with the literary productions of artificial intelligence?
- Does algorithmic creativity have a conflict with Platonic Philosophy or does it reinforce it?
- What does the literature created by AI mean for literary theory and authorship?

The interdisciplinary contribution to the field of literary philosophy, artificial intelligence, digital humanities, aesthetics, and computational creativity makes this study relevant. The paper brings together classical philosophical discourses with modern developments of AI technologies and presents a fresh outlook on the one of the most pressing intellectual issues of the twenty first century.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Plato's Theory of Mimesis

One of the main concepts in Western aesthetics, that of mimesis was formulated by Plato, especially in *The Republic*. Plato believed that there is an eternal and perfect realm of Forms, and that physical objects are imperfect copies of these ideal Forms. Artist representations are imitations of physical reality and thus are "imitations of imitations" which fall on the third level of existence. Poems and dramas reproduced appearances, not truth; hence, Plato had a fairly dim opinion of poetry and drama. While there are many scholars who would dispute this claim, others like Julia Annas (1981), Stephen Halliwell (2002) and Alexander Nehamas (1982) have established that Plato's critique of poetry is primarily epistemological in nature. His interest is in the possibility of artistic imitation to mislead the audience by convincing them that something is apparent when it is not. Such interpretations also offer a useful guideline to comprehend AI-generated texts, which also make representations without first-hand experience.

2.2 Aristotle's Response to Plato

Aristotle set out to refute Plato's negative evaluation of mimesis by re-understanding it as a natural human process. In *Poetics*, he claimed that it is through imitation that one learns, feels and thinks. Literature does not alienate the audience from the truth, it shows universal experiences of humans through a structured story and catharsis. Contemporary literary critics sometimes contrast Plato's skepticism and

Aristotle's more positive understanding of the creative process in the arts. This is especially important in the context of literary production, where discussions about AI tend to swing from the Platonic standpoint of AI as a mere imitation to the Aristotelian belief that AI can help with creativity.

2.3 Creativity and Artificial Intelligence

The field of computational creativity is a key interdisciplinary research area that is a fusion of fields in artificial intelligence, cognitive science, philosophy, psychology, and literary studies. In contrast, Margaret Boden (1998, 2004) provides a classification of three types of creativity: combinational, exploratory, and transformational; and argues that AI exhibits some types of computational creativity, but not conscious intentionality. Proponents like Colton, Wiggins, Veale, and Jordanous claim that AI can produce output that is novel and valuable, but current systems are still limited by relying on algorithmic computation and human-designed architecture. AI doesn't feel, perceive, experience or have its own intentions like humans do. Transformer-based language models have recently added massive new powers to the literary arts of AI. Research on GPT-type systems shows exceptional proficiency in creating poetry, fiction, and dialogue. But there is still discussion in the academic world about the nature of statistical language prediction – whether it is true creativity or an imitation of patterns.

2.4 AI-Generated Literature

With the development of generative AI, literary work has been revolutionized. Novels, poems, scripts and translations are now routinely published with the help of AI. Digital humanities scholars explore how AI affects authorship, narratives, stylistics and literary interpretation. Some researchers suggest that AI is making creative writing more accessible by eliminating technical hurdles. Some scholars believe that AI is helping to make creative writing more accessible by removing technical barriers. There are also worries about the ethical implications of AI-written content, such as concerns about originality, copyright, plagiarism, and cultural homogeneity. There are concerns about intellectual property and derivative creativity, as AI models are based on existing human texts. There are a few established areas of scholarship that currently focus on technology, ethics, or law. In contrast, there are comparatively fewer works that study AI-produced texts using classical philosophy, e.g. Platonic aesthetics.

2.5 Digital Humanities and Literary Theory

Artificial intelligence has become an increasingly important part of digital humanities in the field of literary scholarship, with applications in text mining, computational stylistics, authorship attribution, sentiment analysis and automated literary criticism. Machine learning algorithms are used to spot linguistic trends, thematic structures and literary trends from the past. While digital humanities prioritize computational approaches, some scholars call for the integration of technology and philosophy in the analysis. Literary theory remains as a foundational concept in the understanding of creativity, representation, interpretation and aesthetic

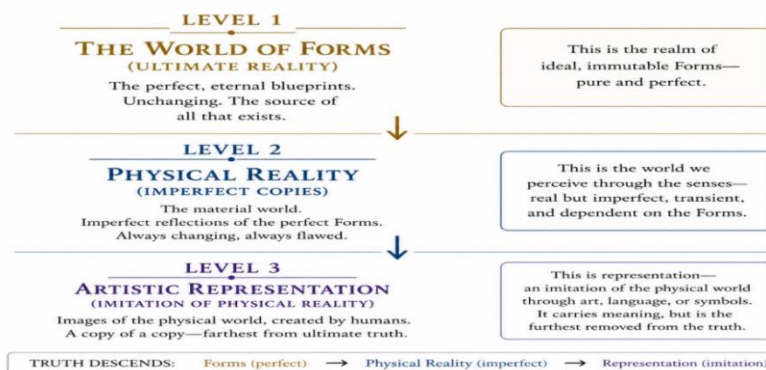
experience. The incorporation of Plato's concept of mimesis with AI-generated texts is a valuable interdisciplinary project that connects ancient philosophy with modern computational technology.

2.6 Research Gap

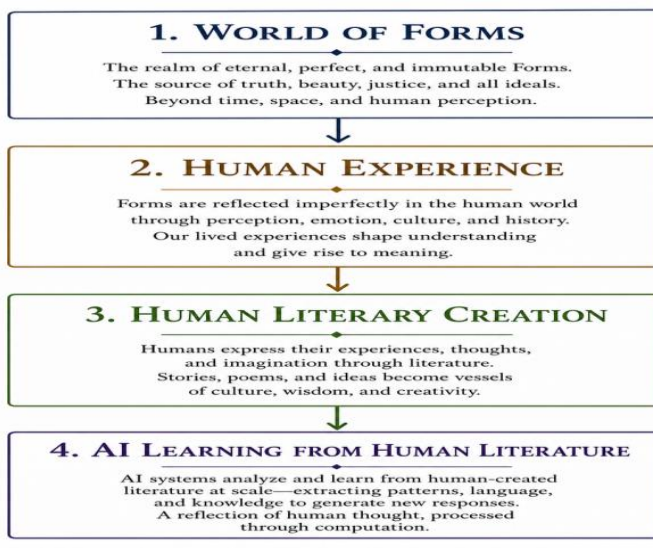
The current body of research reveals substantial progress in computational creativity, digital humanities, and AI ethics. There are, however, some significant gaps to be filled. First is the fact that most of the research in AI does not measure the implications of the technology but only the technological performance. Second, in literary studies, AI-enhanced writing is often addressed without a proper development of classical theories about artistic representation. Thirdly, although the theory of mimesis was relevant to matters of imitation and originality, the concept has been little utilized when applied to generative language models. Moreover, there is no comprehensive philosophical framework to explain why literature produced by artificial intelligence is considered as a form of representation in the hierarchy of representation that Plato proposed. Also, there is a lack of a comprehensive philosophical explanation that explains why literature produced by artificial intelligence is regarded as a form of representation in the hierarchy of representation that Plato proposed. To fill these gaps, this study will create the Platonic AI Mimesis Model (PAIMM), which will be an original contribution to the field of literary philosophy and AI studies.

3. Theoretical Framework: Plato's Theory of Mimesis

This study's theoretical basis is the concept of Mimesis of the Greek philosopher Plato, as presented in the book *The Republic* (Books II, III, X). Plato's philosophy is based on the difference between the world of the Forms, which is eternal, and the material world that is perceived by the senses. Plato believed that the most real form of reality is the immutability of Forms (Plato's most beautiful and universal forms are Beauty, Justice and Truth). Physical objects are imperfect manifestations of these Forms, while artistic representations imitate these already imperfect objects. The hierarchy of Plato can be illustrated as below:



This is Plato's criticism on poetry and art, based on this hierarchy. Artists mimic appearances not essences; thus the works of artists have the lowest epistemological rank. Artistic mimicry is an imitative form of art that primarily engages emotions and not reason, and can detract from the philosophical truth. If we use this scheme to look at the literature created using AI, there is another layer of mediation. AI systems are not simply copying reality; they are being trained by statistical patterns of millions of human texts. As a result, AI can produce literature that can be perceived as literary imitation and not as a true reflection of lived experience. In this paper, it is therefore suggested that Plato's hierarchy be extended to:



This developed hierarchy is the foundation for the proposed Platonic AI Mimesis Model (PAIMM). In this context, AI stands in a derivative epistemological role. The author's literary production is not derived from his personal experiences, on purpose consideration or philosophical knowledge but from algorithmic analysis of existing texts. While AI shows impressive language skills, it is not conscious, emotionally aware, morally discerning, or existentially engaged, which is what is generally considered as creative literature. However, it does not signify that AI has no value itself. Instead, it's a sign that AI should be seen as a sophisticated tool for collaborative creativity. The human artist is the one who is still in charge of intentions and aesthetics, while AI serves as a powerful mediator that enhances the range of possibilities that can be expressed without assuming autonomy over artistic will. Therefore, Plato's theory still holds merit when considering the literature produced by AI and its ability to differentiate between representation and imitation, originality and truth.

5. Analysis: AI-Generated Literature Through the Lens of Plato's Theory of Mimesis

Generative Artificial Intelligence has revolutionized literary creation, making it a partnership between humans and smart machines. With its unmatched fluency in producing poetry, stories, essays and dramatic dialogues, Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude and Llama have sparked a debate among scholars about the nature of creativity, authorship and literary originality. This section examines and seeks to demonstrate that AI-generated literature is a philosophically derivative form of imitation and a technologically advanced one. This section examines and attempts to prove that AI-generated literature is a technologically advanced but philosophically derivative form of imitation; according to Plato's Theory of Mimesis.

5.1 AI as an Imitator Rather than an Originator

Plato believed that all works of art are copies or imitations (mimesis) of physical things, and physical things are copies of the eternal Forms. Therefore, art is a double remove from reality. When it comes to generative AI, however, this structure is even more intricate. AI cannot see and experience the external world as humans do and cannot think philosophically about universal truths as humans do. Rather, AI is able to identify statistical patterns within the billions of documents already written by humans and forecast the most likely order in which words will appear. So AI is not a representation of reality, but a copy of the representations of reality that have been created by humans. Philosophically, there is a difference. While human writers craft literature from their personal experiences, feelings, imagination, and moral insights, AI recombines linguistic patterns from human-generated corpora to create text. Thus, AI-generated texts can be seen as an instance of representation of representation, a development of the hierarchy of representations proposed by Plato.

5.2 Human Creativity versus Algorithmic Generation

Human creativity is multidimensional, involving cognitive, emotional, memory, imagination, intentionality, culture and ethical aspects. Literary creation is not just a measure of the speaker's command of language, but of the living experience and existential reflection. In contrast, AI-generated literature is fundamentally computational. Through statistical learning, Large Language Models can detect semantic relationships, stylistic conventions, and narrative structures. The texts that are produced may be coherent, elegant and consistent in theme, but they are not "on purpose". Plato's concept of artistic value is related to the relation to truth and knowledge. AI cannot have an independent epistemic authority in the field of literature because it is not self-aware and does not possess any philosophical understanding. The difference can be expressed as follows:

Human Author	AI Language Model
Lived experience	Pattern recognition
Emotional consciousness	Statistical prediction
Moral responsibility	Algorithmic optimization
Intentional creativity	Computational generation
Original perception	Learned textual imitation

Therefore, while AI demonstrates extraordinary linguistic competence, it remains dependent upon prior human creativity.

5.3 AI and the Platonic Critique of Poetry

Poets were criticized by Plato for appealing to emotion rather than rational truth. Plato believed that poetry has the ability to portray illusion as reality, and thus can mislead the people. This philosophical worry is further compounded by generative AI. Emotional depth, philosophical dialogue, and literary sophistication can be conveyed in AI-generated stories without understanding. People often interpret the narratives produced by machines as intentional, but the meaning is not really intended, but rather stems from statistical correlations. The phenomenon is very similar to Plato's criticism of imitation. Poems are already a copy of appearances; AI-generated poetry could be seen as a copy without you, the artist, being there. As such, AI takes up the Platonic question of the epistemological gap between artwork and reality.

5.4 AI and the Question of Originality

Originality is one of the major debates about issues pertaining to AI-generated literature. Traditional modern copyright law tacitly presupposes that the originality is the product of human intellectual effort. But, AI does not replicate existing texts, it comes up with new words and phrases that are combinations of existing linguistic structures. Platonically, the idea of originality is problematic. According to Plato, art never creates absolute originality since it imitates physical reality. AI enters into this idea of making a literary work when it creates literature from fiction, instead of real-life data. So, there is a layering of originality:



5.5 Revisiting Mimesis in the Digital Age

There is a need to extend instead of reject Plato's theory for the digital age. Whereas the traditional triad of Forms, Reality, and Art is replaced by AI's layers of representation. Instead of the traditional hierarchy, AI adds layers of representation—Forms, Reality, and Art. This paper contends that Plato's reflection on mimesis remains highly significant, given that the AI-produced work of literature is a quintessential illustration of the very notion of imitation that Plato deemed to be the axis of artistic activities. Unlike ancient poetry, however, AI-produced literature relies solely on computational learning from human-created literature. Thus AI does not cancel out Plato's theory nor is it an alternative to it, but it is yet another piece of evidence that mimesis is still philosophically relevant.

6. Discussion and Original Conceptual Framework

6.1 Discussion

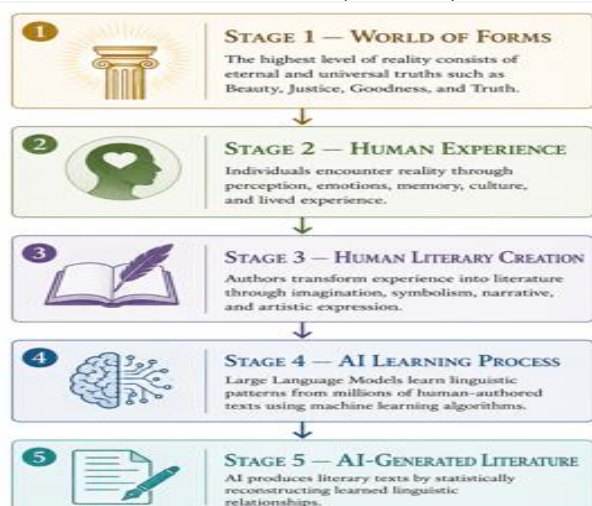
The preceding analysis shows that Plato's philosophy provides a valuable theoretical framework for the study of current literature produced by AI. Technological change has transformed the ways in which literature has been produced, but has not yet changed the philosophical issues of truth, originality, and artistic authenticity. Generative AI poses a quandary to traditional notions of authorship and it also bolsters Plato's doubts about the role of imitation. AI doesn't have a personal memory, emotional consciousness, intentionality, ethical accountability, or existential experience, unlike human writers. As a result, AI written works are mostly statistically rebuilt from pre-existing human text, and not necessarily based on personal experience. However, claiming that AI cannot make a valid contribution to literature simply overlooks its usefulness. AI enhances creativity, streamlines the writing process, supports multilingualism, and makes creative writing more accessible. The philosophical question now becomes, How does this change the question: *Can AI make literature?* To AI: *What is an AI literary creator?*

This paper gives a critique of AI as an autonomous creative consciousness, suggesting that it is a Computational Mimetic Agent instead.

6.2 Original Conceptual Framework

The Platonic AI Mimesis Model (PAIMM)

To reinterpret Plato's theory for the era of generative AI, this study proposes the Platonic AI Mimesis Model (PAIMM).



Conceptual Interpretation

Unlike the three-tiered structure of the original hierarchy by Plato, the suggested scheme has two extra tiers that denote machine learning and artificial intelligence outputs.

This is evidence that artificial intelligence literature does not represent reality in itself, but represents human representations of reality.

Thus, AI generated literature = Computational Mimesis, not Original Artistic Creation.
 PAIMM-Components

DIMENSION		HUMAN CREATIVITY	AI CREATIVITY
	Knowledge Source	Lived Experience	Training Data
	Consciousness	Present	Absent
	Emotion	Genuine	Simulated
	Intentionality	High	None
	Moral Judgment	Present	Human-Dependent
	Creativity	Experiential	Computational
	Originality	Contextual	Recombinational
	Authorship	Human	Collaborative

Literary Studies

The work suggests that literary theorists should re-examine such notions as authorship, originality, creativity, and interpretation within the scope of generative AI.

Philosophy

It proves the pertinence of Plato's mimesis theory when dealing with new technologies. Far from being outdated, classical philosophy can provide useful ideas to interpret AI-generated creativity.

Digital Humanities

The suggested approach combines computer science with philosophical studies, thus promoting collaboration between literary critics, philosophers, and computer scientists.

Artificial Intelligence Ethics

The interpretation of AI as an imitating machine strengthens the importance of clarifying questions about authorship, copyright, and intellectual property when applying AI ethically.

Education

The research makes possible the reasonable implementation of AI-based writing tools in educational process, where people should employ AI to improve their critical thinking and revision skills.

Creative Industries

AI can be not a replacement for authors but rather a smart assistant in writing, editing, translating, and experimenting with different styles and tones of speech. Human imagination is still vital in creative writing.

8. Conclusion

The rapid advancement of generative Artificial Intelligence has revolutionized literary production, questioning long-held beliefs about creativity, originality and authorship.

This paper argues that AI-produced literature is best understood as a sophisticated kind of computational mimesis rather than as an autonomous artistic creation. AI is not human, does not have consciousness, lived experience, emotional awareness, or intentionality. Its literary production is the result of an algorithmic analysis of pre-existing human texts, which places AI in an extended hierarchy of imitation.

The proposed Platonic AI Mimesis Model (PAIMM) extends the original philosophical framework of Plato, by inserting machine learning as a middle stage between human literary creation and AI generated texts. This model makes a novel conceptual contribution to literary philosophy and digital humanities by demonstrating that AI is a computational mimetic agent, not an independent creative subject.

The study finds that human creativity is epistemologically different from algorithmic generation. Instead, let us consider AI a collaborative literary device that enhances human creativity without replacing the distinct human capacities for imagination, ethical reflection, and aesthetic judgment.

Future work may refine the PAIMM framework by comparing Platonic mimesis with

Aristotle's Poetics, Indian aesthetic theories such as Rasa and Dhvani, phenomenology and contemporary theories of computational creativity. This cross-disciplinary study will contribute to the ongoing discussion on the shifting relationship between artificial intelligence and literary philosophy.

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