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Architectural likenesses: models and plans of architecture in classical antiquity

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Object and image

Creating an image, a likeness of whatever object means producing and establishing a relationship with that object, a connection between the causing agent and the resulting product, between creator and creation. According to Genesis 1:26, God said, "Let us make man *in our image, after our likeness*," as the last and crowning act in creating the universe. This, in turn, begets an axiomatic correspondence: the visible world can be explained as a consequence of that primordial act and, conversely, can serve as the "reason" for the existence of an invisible higher being, shaped after the image of man, if we dare to strip the Biblical metaphor. The postulated metaphysical relationship between god and man is expressed by likeness.

According to another explanation of the world, by Plato, the visible objects around us have their perfect but invisible counterparts in the realm of *ideai* (ἰδέαι). All entities empirically accessible for us are but imitations, copies, of the originals existing in that spiritual, divine world.¹ The best possible, "ideal" form of a table, for instance, is derived from there and, as a more or less successful approximation to the ἰδέα of a table, bears witness to its ideal existence beyond the perceptible one. As good as a reproduction can match the original, the two are connected with each other through their being alike.

Whether visible or theoretically postulated, likeness, through *being alike*, represents connection: it documents interdependency and attests to similarity beyond the visible level to the degree of an analogous behavior of the two. Hence, cause and consequence can enter a reciprocal relationship and become interchangeable. Being alike constitutes *acting alike*, a point of view exploited in all kinds of magic practices. If you use, and act through, a likeness of someone or something, then you can influence the one through the other, reaching the original by means of what is or is meant to be *similar* to it, a *simulacrum* of it.

In the case of a pair of Egyptian wax puppets of the 5th c. A.D. (fig.1),² melted together in erotic embrace, the man rendered in dark brown, the woman of lighter color and stature, the spell-binding effect of the charm rests in the power of this analogy as the wrapping papyrus makes clear in its text, which adjures the daemons of the deaths. In the same way that these two models embrace each other in love, so a certain Theon wishes to be together with Euphemia with whom he is in desperate love: "Daemons, bind Euphemia to love me ... now, now, quickly, quickly."³ Other charms of this kind use, in what seems to have been a more widespread way, the piercing of a figurine in order to express and transfer precisely the desires of the sender.⁴

Remote as such wishful thinking may seem in our illuminated age, after the invention of photography c.1840,⁵ technology has not only provided us with ever more powerful media, dramatically shrinking the distance between imagined and actual reality. 'Virtual reality' is

1 Plato, *Polit.* 596a-597e; further Plato, *Symp.* 211d-212a; *Phaed.* 247c-e. On this cf. the commentary by O. Gigon (ed.), *Platon, Sämtliche Werke – Der Staat* (Zurich 1974) 25 f., and id. with L. Zimmermann. *Platon, Sämtliche Werke – Begriffslexikon* (Zurich 1974) 166-75 s.v. Idee.

2 *PColon* 3323: D. Wortmann. "Neue magische Texte," *BjB* 168 (1968) 85-102 no. 4 with figs. 7-11; recently R. W. Daniel and F. Maltomini, *Supplementum magicum* I (Opladen 1990) 162-73 no. 45.

3 Daniel and Maltomini *ibid.* l.17 f. and 53.

4 Daniel and Maltomini *passim*; a well-preserved example of this type of charm, *ibid.* 179 ff. no. 47 (Louvre inv. 27145; 2nd-3rd c. A.D. Egypt). I am obliged to E. R. Knauer for discussing this topic with me.

5 The reciprocal relationship between photography and painting has been analyzed in a seminal study by