



Mimetic Challenges of Learning to Be a Democratic Citizen

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1 INTRODUCTION

Critical theorist Theodor W. Adorno would be among the first to agree that a short history of Western civilization teaches us to not to trust in the wisdom of the masses. According to him, democracy does not live up to its concept. In his lecture *Aspects of the New Right-Wing Extremism* (1967, 2020),¹ Adorno warned that the prerequisites of fascism, such as the social atmosphere of coldness and increasing inequality, were present in his day: socio-culturally, if not directly politically. Thus, the most important lesson in history is that every measure should be taken to prevent a

¹ Until the 2020 publication, Adorno's 1967 lecture *Aspekte des neuen Rechtsradikalismus* has been accessible only as an audio record by Österreichische Mediathek.

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social climate of coldness because it creates fruitful soil for the recurrence of Auschwitz.

The thoughts Adorno formulated almost a half century ago are topical today, as anti-democratic populism strengthens its position in many places around the world. It can thus be argued that a democratic mindset (in the widest sense) is not part of the innate character of the individual; rather, it requires educational intervention and learning. In this chapter, I examine how the concept of mimesis can be utilized in educational theorizations of democratic citizenship and in fleshing out desirable and undesirable learning paths related to citizenship. I approach mimesis as an informal way of learning that is, at times, involuntary, unconscious, ambivalent and even accidental, and which, due to these characteristics, can lead to unwanted outcomes on occasion. I argue that such characteristics of learning are inescapable for us as human beings and, thus, also hold crucial importance for education for democratic citizenship.

The motivation for the article stems from the observation that the mainstream theories of learning (Geier, 2018; Vassallo, 2013; see, e.g., Hadwin et al., 2018; Järvelä & Hadwin, 2013) and education for democracy emphasize rational, conscious and individual autonomy as the basis of agency (see, e.g., Ata, 2019; Bohman & Rehg, 1999; Harriger, 2014; Owen, 2020; Siegel, 1988). My intention is not to question these dimensions in building and strengthening learning and democratic citizenship; rather, it is to put forward, alongside previous perspectives, one that addresses a human element that is crucial for democracy yet is not considered by the previous debates. The approach I propose, mimesis, understands humans as profoundly interactive with their external environment, with multifaceted and intertwined (conscious and unconscious) learning processes. Thus, the individual is viewed as an active agent and a mimetic learner who is always positioned in a web of interdependent relations.

For Adorno and his contemporary critical theorist colleague, Max Horkheimer, mimesis is a possibility and a threat. As will be elaborated in more detail below, in its favorable form, mimesis refers to the subject's modeling herself on her environment without losing herself; the internal aspect of the individual is directed to the external and, in this way, the unknown becomes intimately known (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002: 154). In its unfavorable form, mimesis takes the opposite direction: the individual makes her environment like herself by repositioning her internal instability in the external and can lose herself in the

collective. For Adorno and Horkheimer, this is an erroneous, destructive projection (*ibid.*), although in both cases, we can view these changes as processes of learning. In their original way, the two critical theorists join the long tradition that renounces the Cartesian dichotomous subject-object relationship in which human beings are bound to, but also, potentially, the designers of their world.

In the first section of this chapter, I briefly introduce the notion of mimesis, after which I examine Adorno and Horkheimer's account of it. In their view, the modern individual has a strong tendency toward unfavorable mimesis due to an unbalanced human-nature relationship. A social atmosphere of coldness is an undesirable outcome of this mimesis. Drawing on the theory of mimesis, I also argue for the importance of acknowledging the mimetic and epistemic power of emotions. The overall purpose of this chapter is to examine how Adorno and Horkheimer's philosophy, together with the notion of mimesis, can contribute to education for democracy.

2 THE TWO BRANCHES OF MIMESIS

In what follows, I recapitulate the main characteristics and etymological background of the concept of mimesis, a broad notion that is best-known for its connections to art. In the Western philosophical tradition, mimesis plays a central role in the thoughts of Aristotle and Plato, originating in the ancient Greek words *Μίμησις* (imitation) and *μῖμος* (imitator). Plato understood mimesis as a *condition humana* that enables education (Wulf & Köpping, 2002: 56); because human beings are inherently prone to imitation, undesirable objects of imitation should, according to Plato, be excluded from the sphere of education, allowing a person to grow in the desired direction through good example. Aristotle shares Plato's view of the importance of mimesis and its educational relevance but disagrees regarding the content of educational reality (Wulf, 2008: 58; Wulf & Köpping, 2002: 79). According to Aristotle, even unfavorable objects should not be excluded from education, because encountering them in a controlled manner within the sphere of education teaches the child to avoid them in later life (Wulf, 2008: 58). For Aristotle, mimesis is aimed at progress. Mimesis is not limited only to the arts and philosophy but extends to the examination of the human being from physiological, psychological and historical perspectives (see, e.g., Mikkonen & Salminen, 2017); new media, artificial intelligence, new Nazism, the escalation of

societal violence and the process of socialization have also been studied from the standpoint of mimesis (Girard, 1972; Lawtoo, 2020, 2021; Wulf & Köpping, 2002).

According to Nidesh Lawtoo (2013: 2; 2019a: 722), mimesis theories can be mapped into two main branches: realism (familiar from art) and an interdisciplinary Homo Mimeticus approach that, according to Lawtoo, is a multifaceted, ‘slippery’ phenomenon. Erich Auerbach’s classic work *Mimesis* (1946) is probably the best-known representative of the realist approach, in which mimesis is understood as an imitation of reality that creates a copy of reality. The mimetic copy is like a mirror image that reproduces reality without being qualitatively similar (e.g., an object versus a reflection of that object in a mirror). The latter approach, Homo Mimeticus, understands the human being as a fundamentally mimetic creature. Here, mimesis suggests a materialized or corporeal agency or activity. It recognizes the individual as a being deeply interactive with her environment. I place Adorno and Horkheimer’s account of mimesis in this branch.

As mentioned before, in Adorno and Horkheimer’s conception, mimesis can be both destructive and helpful for the individual and democratic society. In destructive mimesis, the individual appropriates the exterior environment to her inner environment by projecting her own psychological makeup onto the outside reality and assuming that the two are alike. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, this identification is fallacious as the individual fails to experience the needed difference, which they call the non-identity, between the two environments. Instead, the individual thrusts identity and uniformity upon objects (see Zuidervaart, 2015), getting lost in her world relations and losing herself in the collective as a result. In the favorable, organic mimesis, the direction of identification is reversed; the individual makes herself like her environment without losing herself. As the individual adjusts herself to the environment—to the otherness—by opening to it and internalizing it, the unknown is learned through close, personal association (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002: 154). The Homo Mimeticus approach understands the subject as a deeply corporeal being whose mimetic processes are on some occasions intentional and, on others, unconscious and thus involuntary. For example, emotionally intense activities, such as laughter, love and violence, can be to some extent involuntary mimetic phenomena (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002: 152; Lawtoo, 2011) in the sense that they possess an autonomous, reproductive and communal character.

In light of contemporary empirical research, this means that the mere observation of such activities triggers an imitation reflex in our bodies as it activates ‘the motor areas deputed to the organization and execution of those acts’ (Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2008: 125; also quoted in Lawtoo, 2019b: 148; see also Lawtoo, 2011). Through autonomous communal activities, the individual simultaneously and unintendedly learns attitudes and values from her experience in different areas of her life sphere (see Eraut, 2004; Scheerens, 2009: 2).² Of course, mimesis can also be conscious and not always based on reciprocity. As an example of deliberate mimesis which is not reciprocated, we can take military rituals in which the attendants deliberately re-enact perceived discourses or acts (Kádár & House, 2021). Such mimesis is directed toward pre-existing behavior and not the present other.

Essentially, in the Homo Mimeticus approach the individual is seen as situated in a web of relationships with diverse processes of interaction that are often strongly mimetic. In what follows, I sketch out Adorno and Horkheimer’s view of mimesis after which I move on to consider the mimetic and epistemic role of emotions and how it relates to but also departs from Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s account.

3 ADORNO AND HORKHEIMER ON MIMESIS: ORGANIC AND DESTRUCTIVE MIMESIS

For Adorno, the subject is Homo Mimeticus, that is, a fundamentally mimetic creature—for better or worse. Adorno and Horkheimer’s negative conception of mimesis and its realization is described in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in which the authors explain how the harmful developmental paths of Enlightenment suppressed innate organic mimesis. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the modern individual is geared toward the unfavorable form of mimesis due to the particular dynamics generated by the Enlightenment which led to increased instrumental

² According to Eraut (2004), implicit informal learning means that the learning is unstructured, unconscious and not acknowledged by the learner herself. Eraut further asserts that learning from experience usually contains implicit dimensions (ibid.). Scheerens (2009: 2) argues that in informal learning the ‘individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience ... from family, neighbours, from work and play, from the market place and from the library and the mass media’.

social relations connected to the expansion of instrumental reason (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002).

Adorno and Horkheimer's views have been challenged by many—perhaps most notably by the second-generation critical theorist Jürgen Habermas who in his *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1998) claims that his predecessors unjustifiably scorn modern societies' rationality, which is a 'specific theoretical dynamic that continually pushes the sciences, and even the self-reflection of the sciences, beyond merely engendering technically useful knowledge' (Habermas, 1998: 113). This dynamic does not only concern the sciences but stretches to the 'universalistic foundations of law and morality that have also been incorporated ... into the institutions of constitutional government, into the forms of democratic will formation, and into individualist patterns of identity formation' (ibid.). Habermas claims that Adorno and Horkheimer's 'oversimplified presentations fail to notice essential characteristics of cultural modernity' (Habermas, 1998: 114). While the degree to which Adorno and Horkheimer hold the Enlightenment to be the main culprit for everything which is bad and undesirable may indeed be untenable, their critical theories nevertheless contain insights worth scrutinizing and employing. In my view, these insights include their theory of mimesis, which underlines our interconnectedness with the environment and the dissolution of the untenable reason-emotion dichotomy familiar from the Western philosophical tradition.³

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, Adorno regards instrumental reason as one of the chief causes of despair in modern societies. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, an overemphasis on instrumental reasoning gradually expanded from the utilization of natural resources to an instrumental attitude toward one's fellow human beings, eventually becoming internalized as an individual's relationship to herself. In his radio speech, *Education After Auschwitz*, Adorno states that people who are unable to identify with others are internally cold and hold indifferent attitudes toward others (Adorno, 1969/2005: 201). When we relate to others instrumentally, we do not relate *with* them. In Adorno's view,

³ For example, Plato claimed that smothering irrational emotions was necessary for generating moral knowledge. Plato's student Aristotle associated rationality with men, regarding women as creatures of nature ruled by emotions (see Garside Allen, 1979). Israel Scheffler, for his part, repudiated the reason-emotion dichotomy advocated by the previous thinkers (Scheffler, 1991).

with its heightened levels of abstraction and rationalization, instrumental reason strains our mimetic ability, which is inseparably entwined with our corporeality (e.g., our senses and emotions) (Wulf & Köpping, 2002: 71). However, as an outwardly directed process, mimesis distinguishes the phenomenon of instrumental reason and attends to its expansion itself (ibid.).

Rationalized Enlightenment mimesis is, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, built on power and increasing distance from the object of mimesis. It replaces organic, bodily, ‘resonating’ recognition of nature with rational instrumental thinking, in which qualitative differences disappear (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002: 149–150), which they dramatically call the ‘mimesis of death’ (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002: 14, 19, 44–45). Their examples of the repression of organic mimesis include the religious ban on graven images and education that ‘cures’ children of childishness (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002: 148). From their point of view, the education of fully rationalized society prepares the individual for the objective behavior that is required by work life and, thereby, cancels the resonating mimetic relationship between the individual and her surroundings.

In contrast to Adorno and Horkheimer’s view, the long canon of Western philosophy, from Aristotle to Dewey to more recent formulations, has taken education to be the decisive driving force on the path to a better and more just society (see, e.g., Aristotle’s *Politics*; Dewey, 1916; Noddings, 2013). While we need not endorse Adorno and Horkheimer’s dim view according to which the Enlightenment smothered all constructive development paths, with its education objectifying the educated, in my view the authors rightly question the Enlightenment’s deep-seated faith in reason, one result of which was the reason-emotion dichotomy mentioned above. In many contemporary educational theorizations this dichotomy is detected as the negation of the role of emotion and corporeality which can, at its worst, lead to distorted educational ideals and harmful educational implications (see Huhtala & Holma, 2019). With its emphasis on our interconnectedness and corporeality, mimesis bridges the reason-emotion divide.

Adorno and Horkheimer further assert that the properties of organic mimesis did not completely disappear during the Enlightenment. According to them, the connection to mimetic qualities lies in certain bodily gestures and behavior that are categorized as taboo in Enlightenment society. The individual encounters her mimetic properties in

the other as isolated residues in the rationalized environment (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002: 149–150). Adorno and Horkheimer argue that traces of an organic mimesis hide in the almost suppressed gestures of encountering the other: touching, nestling, soothing and coaxing (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002: 149). The gestures linked to organic mimesis are rejected because the emotional impulses associated with them are incompatible with Enlightenment society, in which ‘only enthusiasm is desirable’ (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002: 149). They assert that traces of organic mimesis provoke aggression because they are reminiscent of the fear of the unknown, which the individual had to suppress in order to survive (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002: 149–150)⁴; furthermore, they make an important connection between the rejection of difficult emotions and the risk of self-deceptiveness which may result. The idea here is that when distressing emotions are not properly addressed but smothered or cast aside, they do not vanish but can take a different, possibly distorted form. The danger is that if instinctual and emotional impulses are continuously neglected, they might burst out uncontrollably (see, e.g., Huhtala, 2016: 692).

Thus, in destructive mimesis, the emotional impulses of which the subject is unaware, but which nevertheless belong to her, are relocated in an object: a potential victim. As a concrete example of destructive mimesis Adorno and Horkheimer refer to antisemitism, asserting that anti-Semites project their own internal fears onto Jews. The emotion of fear is subjugated to mimetic re-creation as the individual (an anti-Semite) reproduces her original emotion while recasting it outside herself. As the ‘material’ of the mimetic repetition is the internal environment of the individual, its secondary address is more or less incidental; in other words, the victim of destructive mimesis might have been any vulnerable group in society (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002: 154; Adorno, 1967/2020). To put it in another way, an individual’s own vulnerability and weakness are psychologically ‘solved’ by projecting them upon something or someone else. When the individual removes her inner source of tension and assigns it outside herself, it become easier to combat. The

⁴ Adorno and Horkheimer claim that in the early dawn of civilization, the individual had first to defeat the unpredictable, frightening forces of nature in order to promote his own freedom. According to their view, the quest for liberation from nature is inextricably linked to instrumental reason and the assumption that knowledge is power (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002: 1–34).

individual mimetically likens her interior environment with the exterior environment as she projects her inner psychological makeup onto others. Transcending mimesis discussions, the contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2004, 2010, 2018) has put forward similar interpretations of the intertwining of psychological and social levels. For example, according to Nussbaum, the reaction of disgust toward a specific minority is often a matter of psychological factors caused by our animality, referencing the fact that humans submit to the laws of nature, that human life is also limited and vulnerable. According to Nussbaum, the consciousness of the vulnerability and the finiteness of life produces difficult emotions that may be projected onto another.

As already noted, in the case of the organic mimesis identification takes the opposite direction: the subject makes herself like her environment. Here, the internal aspect of the individual is tuned to the external, and the unfamiliar becomes intimately familiar (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002: 154). Organic mimesis signifies adaption in the sense of belonging or kinship. The adaption to the other is based on what is perceived but also on attunement in the spirit of empathy. Organic mimesis involves a certain uncontrollability and creativity due to the openness toward the other. Hartmut Rosa (2018: 584) describes it as ‘the key to a relationship between subject and world, that is not geared to controlling the object and closing off the subject, but rather a resonance-sensitive opening to the object’s irreducible otherness and self-sufficiency’.⁵ Thus, Adorno’s mimesis, in its positive sense, enables an individual to dismantle harmful instrumental relationships within herself and with others. Ernesto Verdaña (2009: 500) puts it in the following way: ‘Mimetic rationality seeks to find the ways in which the subject’s experience of the world is not merely instrumental’. Organic mimesis takes full advantage of our corporeality, which enables us to learn about others and ourselves in a way that is not based on increasing distance and mastery.

Because mimesis is about the relationship between the self and the other, it enables individuals to cultivate an empathic relationship with the other. According to Nussbaum (2010), the development of

⁵ The translation is my own. See the original: ‘*der Schlüssel zu einer Art des In-Beziehungs-Tretens zwischen Subjekt und Welt, die nicht auf Beherrschung des Objekts und Schliessung des Subjekts hin angelegt ist, sonder auf der resonanzsensiblen Öffnung des letzteren für die irreduzible Andersheit und Eigenständigkeit des Objekts*’.

the democratic mindset must be supported by means of the humanities because they can foster imagination and empathy, which are also crucial for organic mimesis. More specifically, the ability to treat others empathetically can prevent the erroneous mimetic projections discussed above. According to Adorno, however, changing unjust social conditions through emotions such as compassion or empathy is not sufficient in itself, because ‘the idea of compassion contains nothing about changing the circumstances that give rise to the need for it, but instead... these circumstances are absorbed into the moral doctrine and interpreted as its main foundation’ (Adorno, 1963/2000: 173). Adorno’s idea is that, because our compassion often stems from the unfair circumstances faced by the other, anchoring compassion as a starting point in social relations can prevent the realization of simply additional development (see also Freyenhagen, 2013: 131). In the same spirit, Touko Vaahtera (2020) points out that empathy is problematic because it can be directed at those who do not really deserve it. Empathy toward such persons (who, e.g., consciously discriminate against others) can intervene with a course of action we set up to rectify the unethical situation. Michalinos Zembylas (2008), for his part, points out that experiencing the misfortune or injustice of others does not necessarily evoke any transformative action in us. In this way too, such ‘novel’ emotions can hinder a change toward a better future. Thus, in regard to education for democracy, paying attention to the role of emotion requires critical examination from various perspectives, on both the individual and social levels.

4 THE EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATION OF MIMESIS AND THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS

In this section, I outline how Adorno and Horkheimer’s concept of mimesis is fruitful in formulating novel theoretical insights of education for democracy, enabling a conception of informal learning connected to education for democracy that heeds the epistemic and mimetic role of emotions. As I argue, it is crucial that this dimension is taken into consideration in educational theorizing. I also demonstrate that, when considering contemporary empirical knowledge from fields such as neuroscience, their theory holds vital importance in respect to fostering development of the democratic mindset.

Both research (see, e.g., Freedom House Nations in Transit, 2017; V-Dem, 2019) and our everyday experience tell us that anti-democratic

populism and hostile confrontations have increased in Western democracies. In recent years, the state of democracy has also deteriorated in countries that have long been model democracies (Freedom House, 2020; V-Dem, 2020). While the reasons behind these undesired developments are diverse and difficult to identify, there is, nevertheless, an urgent need to take every measure to fight against a social atmosphere of hostility and coldness. According to Adorno, in times of social change, unaddressed feelings from the past, such as fear or trauma, have the opportunity to surface which he suggests was the case with the rise of the right-wing radicals of his time (Adorno, 1967/2020). As I see it, Adorno is right in that emotions have a crucial impact on the social order. For example, properly considering the role of emotions in our thinking processes may help us to understand how it is possible that the far-right movement, which glorifies authoritarianism, not only survives time and time again but also succeeds within the framework of democracy. Based on current empirical research, we know, for example, that the effects of fear are manifold. Among other things, it distorts and skews our perceptual capacity, impairs our decision-making abilities and reinforces motivated closed-mindedness (Chajut & Algom, 2003; Easterbrook, 1959; Jameson et al., 2004; Mogg et al., 1990; Thórisdóttir & Jost, 2011: 790). Thus, fear is an action-facilitating emotion that exposes the individual to political and psychological manipulation. If we take the above seriously, it becomes obvious that what may at first sight appear as the wisdom of the masses could be in fact collective opinion stemming from fear.

According to Adorno, far-right propaganda is tailored to address the feelings of the recipient: the far-right supporter (Adorno, 1967/2020). Emotions are constantly at play in thinking processes and every action, one dimension of which is that they contain mimetic attributes founded on something that contemporary empirical scientists call ‘mirroring reflexes’ (Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2008). The mimetic attributes of emotions enable the individual to partake of another’s emotions directly, without the involvement of conceptual understanding: ‘Emotions, like actions, are immediately shared, the perception of pain or grief, or disgust experienced by others, activates the same areas of the cerebral cortex that are involved when we experience these emotions ourselves’ (Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2008; also quoted in Lawtoo, 2019b: 148); thus, to some degree, emotions are mimetically contagious (see Lawtoo, 2019b). In other words, as Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia state, part of learning from

another's experience happens at a direct corporeal level outside the scope of our conceptual understanding.

Despite the subjective 'feeling' of emotions, many of our emotional reactions are trans-subjective (mimetically transmitted from one individual to another), as well as trans-generational (see, e.g., Costa et al., 2018; Debiec & Sullivan, 2014). Not only do we respond with automatic emotional reactions when witnessing emotions experienced by others, as demonstrated by Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia, we also interpret our subjective emotions through communal historical and cultural discourses (Zembylas et al., 2014). In the latter case, emotions of the previous generations have settled into forms of communication through which individuals contract their present emotions. What is more, emotions affect our actions and decision-making, even when we want to act 'purely' rationally (Cohen, 2005; Damasio, 1994; Kahneman, 1994, 2003). Lawtoo (2019b: 149) further notes that the dramatic gestures and movements of charismatic populist leaders, as well as the tonality and rhythm of their speech, exercise unconscious mimetic power over the individual. To elaborate, the tone of a charismatic leader, for example, can beget deeply experienced mimetic identifications in the audience, generating support for such a speaker (Lawtoo, 2016: 138). Thus, the human mimetic character as well as the role of emotions in our thinking processes should be taken into account in theories of education for democracy. If they are not properly recognized, theorizations about education for democracy and populism cannot be successful, as they do not capture the true nature of the researched phenomena.

5 DISCUSSION

Adorno and Horkheimer's two-track interpretation of mimesis indicates that they associate mimesis inextricably with humanity. However, their views regarding the education of Enlightenment society (discussed above) are, to say the least, negative. After all, traditionally, education has been seen as a resource for creating a better future society. Adorno and Horkheimer's views on education and society are perhaps easy to ignore as over-critical pessimism; however, if we accept the assumption of humankind as *Homo Mimeticus*, they may have something important to tell us: mimesis is both an opportunity for and a threat to citizenship in a democratic society.

Mimesis demonstrates an individual's vulnerability and openness to otherness. The mimetic identification of the individual with the environment occurs continuously, and not all its forms are conscious or voluntary; we interact and learn unceasingly from each other at multiple levels. At its best, mimesis supports an individual's reciprocal world relations in such a way that it advances her development into an independent and unique personality. In its destructive form, the individual can lose herself in the collective. Through Adorno and Horkheimer's mimesis, one can study the anti-democratic dynamics associated with the atmosphere of social coldness (e.g., the manner and language involved in the communication of charismatic populist leaders) and mimetic learning. We constantly receive different levels of messages from our environment, which resonate with us on the levels of emotion, consciousness, the subconscious and behavior. Some of these messages settle in us and continue to circulate through us.

If the mimetic aspect of the individual is genuinely taken as the starting point for learning and education for democracy, we cannot assume that the change of direction to better social conditions will take place by rational and deliberative means alone. Furthermore, if we consider what strengthening a democratic mindset could mean from the perspective of Adorno's philosophy and mimesis in general, then awareness of the role of emotions and realization of diverse interdependencies should play crucial roles. Each of us is (involuntarily) open to mimesis, but that is what connects us to our ability to acknowledge others and develop a more just society. There is also an inalienable ethical dimension to recognizing the mimetic nature of humankind: one must consider the responsibility that arises from the mere fact that we exist in the life spheres of others.

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