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Experiencing Chorus Within Magnesia: The Aesthetics of Music in *Laws* 2.

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Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

John Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*

ἀναγκαῖον φαίνεται ἔμοιγε, εἴπερ γε ἡμῶν
ὁ βίος ἔσται καὶ ὁπωσοῦν ποτε βίος.

Plato, *Philebus* 62c

Contents

Introduction

Across the annals of intellectual history, the name Plato resonates as a formidable figure, renowned not only for his philosophical brilliance but also for his uncompromising stance on the role of art in society. Within his dialogues, most notably in the *Republic* and *Ion*, a debate rages as Plato boldly advocates for the censorship of art, mainly imitative poetry.[1] His fervent hostility towards art knows no bounds, for even the revered poets of antiquity, Homer and Hesiod, fail to evade his absolute scrutiny. Plato envisioned the idyllic city—be it Kallipolis or Magnesia—where only the most pure and sublime art forms are allowed to thrive. This audacious proposition, rooted in Plato's moral and political philosophy, has long ignited the relevant literature. His controversial perspective on arts is interwoven with moral and political concerns. Critics and scholars have already dissected the implications of his bold call for artistic control, examining its impact on the moral fabric of society and the very essence of human nature. Yet, beyond these levels of censorship, Plato's overall work beckons us to delve into the realm of aesthetic philosophy, too.

In the second book of the *Laws*, Plato presents an extended discussion on the value of music. He uses the question '*what kind of music is appropriate for the city's elders*' (666a-d) as a starting point in his discussion. As they are the

[1] Cf. Moss (2007).

most honourable and respected community members, they need special supervision by the state to participate in and enjoy only the finest musical events. Moreover, music is placed in a central place in the city's education. Hence, the interlocutors agree on the necessity of understanding how to estimate the value of a musical experience (654d-e). Only qualitative music should be allowed in an ideal city. With the platonic criteria that follow (667a-671a), the legislators (*nomothetai*) of the city can lay down laws that allow only the best music artworks within their city.

I. Research Question and Thesis Structure

In this research endeavour, we embark upon an illuminating journey through the corridors of Plato's Laws 2, unravelling his thoughts on the aesthetics of music. The primary research question of the thesis, 'what is the aesthetic value of music according to the second book of the *Laws*?', serves as a guiding beacon for the comprehensive exploration of Plato's perspectives.

Regarding aesthetic value, it is widely recognised that there is no agreement on aesthetics on what this term contains.[2] Indeed, it is a value that exists both in artworks, natural objects and ordinary artefacts, as we admire in similar ways a painting, a noticeable piece of furniture, and a colourful sunset. These objects cover some personal needs. Nevertheless, when we consume food, the demand that guides us to that action is fulfilled. On the other hand,

[2] Stecker (2019) 19.

aesthetic experiences, though they cover a need, do not fulfil the necessity. Many people can hear again and again Mendelssohn's *Hebrides* experiencing every time a valuable aesthetic experience. As Roger Scruton notes, we are recalled to music because there is a form of intrinsic value that recalls us to the same experiences: the aesthetic value.[3] The aesthetics of music, the most ancient form of aesthetic philosophy,[4] aims to explore 'why some music [we] hear, elicit the "yuk" feeling, while every now and then a song touches [us] in a way that really matters—a way they would want to share with someone close to [us].[5]

Thus, aesthetic value is an intrinsic value that exists in experiences, which leads us to participate in those experiences just for their own sake. This thesis tries to explore the aspects of Plato's philosophy about what consists this intrinsic value, according to the second book of the *Laws*.

To fully comprehend his viewpoint, the primary question is divided into several subquestions that shed light on the multifaceted nature of his discourse. Listening to or making music is a time-consumable and intellect-involving process. As a result, we cannot avoid some kind of judgement when we are appropriately involved in such experiences.[6] Plato and the Greeks, in general, seem to recognise this principle. Even the theatrical performances were parts—among their other functions—of a judging contest. Thus, the first chapter

[3] Scruton (1999) 169.
[4] Scruton (1999) vii.
[5] Scruton (2018) 6.
[6] Ibid.

presents the criteria that the interlocutors of the platonic discussion set for judging the quality of music. Plato's criteria for a well-informed judgment is an important starting point for the discussion since most literature interprets the relevant passages, focusing on judging.

The next chapter is a comprehensive reading of the elements of musical quality, as for Plato, there is a distinction between the criteria to judge music and the features that characterise a piece of art per se qualitative. This chapter delves into the essence of quality according to *Laws* 667b-c. According to the platonic interlocutors, quality emerges from the coexistence of pleasure, correctness, and benefit. Hence, this chapter tries to interpret these three terms.

The final chapter presents the ways a piece of music can be inferior. A musical artwork can fail in either of the three elements of quality. As a result, it is classified as fraudulent music and unsuitable for the utopian city. Plato presents quite detailed ways a piece of music can fail in production or performance. With the method of the opposite sample, Plato helps the interpretation of the characteristics of qualitative music.

Finally, there are the conclusions of the thesis, where the chapters are synopsised, and the ideas are combined to answer the main research question.

II. Ancient Aesthetics? A Theoretical Problem

Aesthetic philosophy as a field has more than just the problem of defining aesthetic value. Sometimes is also challenging to acknowledge whether a piece

of philosophical writing participates in the discussions of aesthetics. Thus, platonic aesthetics indeed demand a theoretical foundation before any attempt to interpret an ancient text within this field of philosophy.

During the last century, there was a discussion about whether there was any real aesthetic thought during antiquity. No platonic dialogue which touches questions about the nature of good and art does so for the sake of the very results of the discussion. As even Halliwell argued, aesthetics in antiquity did not exist autonomously but were tangled in ethics or political philosophy.[7] Therefore, before discussing the aesthetic value of music, a new question arises: did ancient Greeks have aesthetic thought, or is our question an anachronism?

Paul Oskar Kristeller fiercely pointed out that the ancient writers, despite living among the beautiful art of the classical world, did not value them for the sake of their aesthetic quality but because of 'intellectual, moral, religious, and practical function or content'. Furthermore, they could not form a philosophical system of evaluating the beauty of art.[8] However, I find this approach too restrictive without a reason.

Halliwell criticised the argument by claiming that Plato's and Aristotle's ideas are much more similar to modern questions of philosophy of art and beauty.[9] Their writings also prove that a general conception of what art is and

[7] Halliwell (2009) 472.
[8] Kristeller (1951) 506.
[9] Halliwell (2002) 7-11.

how art can offer access to transcendent forms of beauty and truth existed. In fact, Plato considered beauty and truth too serious matters to leave them up to art and artists, as Iris Murdoch notes.[10]

Ancient thinkers had totally different cultural and social contexts. Denying their ability to conceptualise questions of aesthetics due to these differences is a rigorous interpretation, prone to the risks of generalisations. As Celkyte argues, 'if Plato and Aristotle raised issues and proposed ideas for thinking about aesthetic properties and art, then it does make sense to speak about Platonic and Aristotelian aesthetics'.[11] Thus, we can construe classical texts as aesthetic philosophy.

Finally, there is also another problem that may occur, that of anachronism. Someone must be extra cautious when exploring concepts that originate much later in antiquity. Sometimes, something familiar in today's philosophical discussions is not an obvious interpretation of an ancient text due to the different subcontexts of ancient and modern texts.[12]

III. Current Literature

Current literature has already created a solid base regarding the topic. Barker locates Plato's fundamental question in the kind of music suitable for the city's educated and honourable elders of the town. Hence, the interlocutors try to

[10] Murdoch (1977) 17.
[11] Celkyte (2020) 6.
[12] Cf. Celkyte (2020) 5.

find 'the best kind of song' (666d–e). Nevertheless, Barker criticises Plato, as the philosopher is content with abstract music qualifications rather than a systematic exploration of nature and the specifications of the finest kind of music. This capacity is forged by musical training and developed through experience in a well-established city. The judges have to be trained to interpret the elements of a piece of music correctly and estimate the prototype of imitation, the fidelity of imitation, and the ethical value of the representation. Therefore, aesthetics and ethics are combined, as music criticism is tangled to reliable, moral judgments.[13]

Moreover, Rocconi acknowledges the importance that Plato lavished on musical education as a means of order within the city. Hence, musical training is the synonym of intellectuality, and correct musical schooling trains the soul to discern real value: good (*kala*) dancing and melodies lead people to virtues. So, the ability to get benefited by a musical experience is dependent not only on the quality of the performance, but also on the own 'nature' (*phusis*) and 'habit' (*ethos*) of the person. Nevertheless, Rocconi summarises the estimation of a piece of art as a three-step process: exploring what is the original of the imitation, how correct the imitation is, and how well it has been acted. Plato's contribution to aesthetics highlights the importance of consistency between the content and the form of the artwork as an indicator of aesthetic value. But Plato

[13] Barker (2013).

is criticised as he avoids defining clearly the exact process of identifying beauty in music. This is a result of the complexity by which pleasure (*hēdonē*), correctness (*orthotēs*), and ethical utility (*ōphelia*) interact regarding art.[14]

Finally, Meyer synopsises in her commentary the interpretive tendencies of the musical aesthetic theory within *Laws*. Music, as a representational art, should not be judged according to the pleasure it provides but by the quality of the representation (668a–b). Although the original question seems to be what kinds of songs and dances are beautiful, the notion of correctness (*orthotēs*) is introduced in the discussion, as every activity or object with a goal can be judged based on its goal achievement. Hence, the pleasure from music is unconcerned as a criterion, as music has to be evaluated only according to its representational accuracy. The necessary estimations have to be held on what the object being represented is and how accurate the representation is. Meyer also recognises a third criterion: how well the representation employs 'phrases, tunes, and rhythms' (669b). She interprets this criterion in contrast to the vast majority of the literature locating the moral aspect of the quality on the first criterion.[15]

My thesis embarks on a fresh perspective, offering a more comprehensive interpretation. Instead of concluding the discussion focusing only on the criteria for judging music, I also argue that the philosopher, in fact,

[14] Rocconi (2012) & (2020).
[15] Meyer (2015).

explores the nature of the finest kind of music, despite Barker's criticism. That means that for Plato, the criteria for judging the quality of music differ from the elements that consist of the very quality. Finally, I use the passages about fraudulent music to define the aspects of quality more precisely.

IV. The Problem of Music

Before further proceeding, one last clarification is necessary. According to the *Greek-English Lexicon*,[16] the word *mousikē*, usually followed by *tekhnē*, refers to '*any art over which the Muses presided*' and especially to '*poetry sung to music*'. Music, in its modern meaning, describes only a tiny portion of the ancient perception of the word. Moreover, there is also a more extended meaning of it, referring to 'generally, art or letters', which is quite usual in Plato's corpus.[17] Nevertheless, sometimes *mousikē* is divided by the poetry, referring mainly to the melody.[18] The etymological connection of the word to the Muses means that for archaic and classical Greek thought, anything relating to them was music, especially when considering that the musical experiences of antiquity reveal the strict connection of music with choral performance, either in lyric poetry or within the context of ancient drama. Hence, the melody was combined with poetry, dancing, even storytelling, and generally speaking performance.[19] On

[16] Liddell et al. (1978) s.v. μουσική.
[17] Cf. μουσικῇ καὶ πάσῃ φιλοσοφίᾳ προσχρώμενος (*TI*. 88c), μουσική, γράμματα, γυμναστική, as the three branches of education (*Prt*. 340a).
[18] *Sym*. 196e.
[19] Janaway (2009) 390.

the other hand, the etymology also reveals the divine originality of art for ancient Greeks.[20] In his dialogues, Plato tried to underline music's importance even further. In *Philebus*, Protarchus claims that music is necessary for human life if it is to be a life at all.[21] Thus, melody, poetry, and dancing are fundamental elements of life. This statement is presented as a practically self-evident idea primarily derived from Socrates' thoughts during the dialogue.[22] Plato also gives a definition of *mousikē* as the vocal actions which relate to the training of the soul towards virtue.[23]

In this thesis, the word *mousikē*, the etymologically connected words, and the English words chosen in the translation are used in this broader context of Ancient Greek culture, primarily for every activity related to the chorus as a moral education.

[20] E.g. *Leg*. 653c.
[21] ἀναγκαῖον φαίνεται ἔμοιγε, εἴπερ γε ἡμῶν ὁ βίος ἔσται καὶ ὁπωσοῦν ποτε βίος. (*Phlb*. 62c).
[22] Halliwell (2012) 15-6.
[23] *Leg*. 662c-663b

Chapter 1: Judging Musical Quality

Drawing evaluative conclusions about art is not a matter of modern aesthetics.[24] It is also a tiny part of aesthetic engagement. We spend fifteen hours listening to the four operas *Der Ring des Nibelungen* not just to make a well-informed judgment about its quality. However, that was not the case for this field of philosophy during antiquity. Thus, in this dialogue, Plato, after his criticism in the *Republic* over the idea and the quality of imitation and art in general, offers a specific proposal about the criteria to judge the quality of music. The Athenian seems to waver between the common thought of his era—the quality of music should be evaluated through pleasure—and his own proposal. These two different approaches to the topic need to be balanced. Thus, this chapter starts with the discussion about the criterion of pleasure. Then, it focuses on *Laws* 669a-b, the passage that the recent literature locates the platonic criteria for the quality of music, as Plato differentiates himself from the popular opinion of his era.

I. The Criterion of Pleasure (*Laws* 658e-659a)

> **Ex. 1:** *Συγχωρῶ δὴ τό γε τοσοῦτον καὶ ἐγὼ τοῖς πολλοῖς, δεῖν τὴν μουσικὴν ἡδονῇ κρίνεσθαι, μὴ μέντοι τῶν γε ἐπιτυχόντων, ἀλλὰ σχεδὸν ἐκείνην εἶναι Μοῦσαν καλλίστην ἥτις τοὺς βελτίστους καὶ ἱκανῶς πεπαιδευμένους τέρπει, μάλιστα δὲ ἥτις ἕνα τὸν ἀρετῇ τε καὶ παιδείᾳ διαφέροντα·* (*Laws* 658e-659a)

[24] Cf. Nanay (2019).

> *So, I am up to a point in agreement with the generally held view: art should be judged according to pleasure, but not by what gives pleasure to a random person. In fact, there is no finer Muse than she who delights the best people, those with a proper education and even more that individual who is outstanding in virtue and education.*[25]

In this passage, the Athenian seems to accept the popular opinion that the quality of music should be judged according to the pleasure that it offers. Strangely, Plato seems aligned with his era's popular belief, as stated in *Laws* 657d-e. However, he is not going to accept it uncritically. Thus, Plato emphasises that he has no particular interest in the pleasure of random people (*tōn epitykhontōn*). In fact, there is a specific social group within the city whose pleasure matters. The bests of people are delighted by the finest of the Muses. So, in search of music of the highest quality, the philosopher should entrust the criterion of those people who are distinct in education and virtue.

The problem of the passage lies in the selection of the judges. Who are the *beltistoi* and *hikanōs pepaideumenoi*? Bartels argues that the whole of book 2 of the *Law* forms a complex argument to support that the city's elders are the only ones suitable for evaluating the value of music.[26] Due to their life stage, they are also presented as the authority of the best life and music. They are aged enough to be suitably educated for their role and old enough to be virtuous. According to the teleological argument of the *Laws*, virtue is a matter of age to

[25] Translations of ancient Greek texts in this thesis are the author's original work unless otherwise stated.
[26] Bartels (2012)156-7.

a great extent, as virtue and eudaimonia can be completed only during old age. Their virtue is similar to the premature virtue of children, but to a different degree and with different results. They are able to perceive and contemplate objective goodness and truth. The *Laws* gradually describe a concept of insight resulting from an entire life. Experience is necessary for this state of insight and virtue, which can only be achieved through life per se. Thus, the elders' delight is a basis for understanding the fundamental quality of music.

However, according to Meyer, the Athenian does not accept the best people's pleasure as the criterion for judging the quality of music. He just describes the extensional equivalence between the finest music and what offers delight to the best educated and virtuous. In *Laws* 659a, he claims that the best judges demand wisdom, indicating that their decision is based solely on their sapience.[27]

Even though Plato's wording (*dein tēn mousikēn hēdonēi krinesthai*) clearly indicates evaluation, the rest of the book creates a substantive contrast.[28] In the *Laws* 659a, the Athenian rejects pleasure categorically as a criterion for the judgment of music. This problem of cohesion is solved if we read this passage not as a suggestion to judge the quality of music according to some kind of pleasure—a statement that the Athenian will refute later—but as a description

[27] Meyer (2015) 246.

[28] For further discussion over this passage, cf. below in *II. Pleasure the Imperfect Criterion* in *Chapter 1*.

of an interesting fact: the finest music happens to be the one that offers pleasure to the finest people of the city.

The confusion that this passage and its restatement letter create would not be out of place in early Platonic dialogues. However, it seems odd within the Laws. Plato should be more stable in his philosophical opinions in his very last dialogue. Nevertheless, this passage is neither an unstable opinion which changed nor a disorientation of the discussion to criticise his contemporaries. Plato uses this passage to emphatically describe the fact that aesthetic pleasure is an element but not a criterion of qualitative music.[29]

II. Pleasure: the imperfect criterion

Exploring pleasure (*ēdonē*/*kharis*) as a general quality indicator is reasonable before reaching the aforementioned conclusion. As *kalon* is an object of desire,[30] pleasure seems an excellent start to the interlocutors. Moreover, pleasure and pain are central aspects of platonic educational thought. At the beginning of the second book of the *Laws*, this dipole is presented as the first sensations of the children.[31] Pleasure and pain, in the metaphor of the puppets in *Laws* 1,[32] are the 'witless advisors'[33] and the 'iron cords',[34] which fundamentally move a

[29] Moss (2012) argues that in this passage, Plato identifies the elders' pleasure with aesthetic pleasure.
[30] Cf. Barney (2010) 363; *Men*. 77b-78b, *Grg*. 468a-c, *Resp*. 505d-e.
[31] *Leg*. 653 a-c.
[32] *Leg*. 644c-645c.
[33] δύο δὲ κεκτημένον ἐν αὑτῷ συμβούλω ἐναντίω τε καὶ ἄφρονε, ὧ προσαγορεύομεν ἡδονὴν καὶ λύπην; (*Laws* 654c).
[34] εἶναι τὴν τοῦ λογισμοῦ ἀγωγὴν [...] σκληρὰς καὶ σιδηρᾶς (*Laws* 655a).

person's mind. Besides its entertainment value, pleasure also has an educational one: it guides people to beauty. One receives pleasure from things he considers beautiful (*kalon*) and disgust from anything he believes is shameful or ugly (*aiskhron*).[35] Furthermore, Athenian claims that the Greek word for the chorus is etymologically derived from the word for joy, intending to present that the music aims, by definition, to offer pleasure to the audience and the participants.[36] This claim, if proven, will explain why pleasure is the *kalon* in music, as joy is its purpose.

Furthermore, in the *Laws* 658a-b, the Athenian and Cleinias construct a noticeable thought experiment about a *contest of pleasure* within their city. Their investigation is about delight in a general way, without any generic limitation, so they invite everyone who feels able to offer pleasure to participate in a performance of his art or sport because they want to discover pleasurable activities. However, they are reaching a deadlock: who will win justly (*tis an nikō dikaiōs*)?[37] With their assumption that there is a rightful winner, judging music according to its pleasure requires many limitations and determinations. In fact, this assumption is a fundamental element of the demolition of pleasure as an indicator of value in music, as Meyer notes.[38] Cleinias finds this question 'strange' or even 'ridiculous', according to Griffith.[39] He explains that he cannot

[35] This is the *sumphōnia* presented at 654c.
[36] More on the etymology and *Laws* 654a, cf. Ex. 2 in *Chapter 2*.
[37] *Leg*. 658c.
[38] Meyer (2015) 244.
[39] Schofield & Griffith (2016) 76.

answer without hearing and seeing the performances. Furthermore, the Athenian compare the winner whom the children would like to crown to the winner whom other social and age groups would prefer within their experiment.[40] This reveals the subjectivity of judging according to pleasure. Thus, a sub-question emerges: whose pleasure matters? And the Athenian gives his answer boldly in *Laws* 658e-659a, as explained above.

The first point of criticism over the criterion of pleasure is that it seems too subjective. The Athenian argues again in *Laws* 655c-e that it is necessary to have a correct nature to enjoy the delights of good music. Furthermore, a person's lousy nature or corrupted habituation may affect his judgement when it is based only on the criterion of pleasure. People may not be able to receive pleasure from music, due to their physical nature, such as people with reduced hearing ability. Or there may be a conflict between nature and habituation, as Bartels recognises when people receive delights known for being wicked, as described in the *Laws* 655d-656a.[41]

In summary, Plato describes pleasure as a very unstable, non-objective, and unreasonable value criterion. He is critical regarding the usage of pleasure as a criterion: the Athenian recognises that pleasure is suitable for judging quality only in minimal conditions of harmless pleasures.[42] Pleasure is not a

[40] *Leg*. 658c-d.
[41] Bartels (2012) 144-5.
[42] *Laws* 667d-668a.

criterion of high-quality music without determining what pleasure means or whose pleasure matters. Pleasure indicates value only to the extent that it offers pleasure to the appropriate people. The need for carefully choosing musical judges is a second problem by which the debate would be derailed. The result of this discussion would be similar to the guardians of the *Republic*. The pleasure of the educated person caused by an advanced musical experience is interpreted here as one of the results of this kind of music and not an indicator of quality in itself. Moss's reading of *Laws* 667e alongside *Laws* 669a-b concludes that pleasure arises naturally from accurate representations of human virtue.[43]

III. The Three Criteria of Plato (*Laws* 669a-b)

If pleasure is not a solid criterion for judging musical quality, then it is necessary to determine the real standards. The literature focuses mainly on *Laws* 669a-b.

> **Ex. 2:** *ἆρ' οὖν οὐ περὶ ἑκάστην εἰκόνα, καὶ ἐν γραφικῇ καὶ ἐν μουσικῇ καὶ πάντῃ, τὸν μέλλοντα ἔμφρονα κριτὴν ἔσεσθαι δεῖ ταῦτα τρία ἔχειν, ὅ τέ ἐστι πρῶτον γιγνώσκειν, ἔπειτα ὡς ὀρθῶς, ἔπειθ' ὡς εὖ, τὸ τρίτον, εἴργασται τῶν εἰκόνων ἡτισοῦν ῥήμασί τε καὶ μέλεσι καὶ τοῖς ῥυθμοῖς;* (*Laws* 669a-b)
>
> *So, regarding any likeness—in painting, music, and poetry, or anywhere—there are three things the person who is going to be a judicious judge needs to know: first, what the nature of the original is; second, how correctly was the imitation made; and*

[43] Moss (2012) 218.

> *thirdly how well the copy has been executed in any particular case, in language, melody, and rhythm.*

Music is representational art. Thus, the Athenian considers its judgement similar to the judgments of every representational art, painting, poetry, or any other. A judicious judge (*emphrōn kritēs*) must estimate three peculiar factors about the object: firstly, he must know the nature of the original; secondly, how correctly the imitation was made; and thirdly, how well the copy has been executed.

The first point that demands clarification is the emphasis of Plato on the judicious judge. As we saw previously, the question of who is suitable to evaluate music concerns Plato. His whole work is a complicated argument for the importance of experience and age to be able to assess virtue and value. Hence, he also uses this passage to form his argument. Even for the judgment of art, there are correct and wrong evaluative judgments, and these judgments matter. As a result, the music judges cannot be random people—a criticism of the randomly selected judges of Athenian drama contests—but selected ones, according to the general Platonic argument already described.

The first fundamental criterion that the Athenian sets for music is the knowledge of the original. Representational arts are discussed very extensively in *Ion* and the *Republic*. So, Plato does not rephrase the whole discussion here. The essential factor in evaluating music is, first of all, the original (*ho te estin*). There are two ways to read this phrase. The first reading suggests that the

Athenian considers the knowledge of the essence of the original fundamental. Nobody can understand enough a piece of art to evaluate it without knowing what its original is. For example, he would suggest that in order to evaluate Vivaldi's *Spring* from *The Four Seasons*, one must know that Concerto No. 1 in E major, Op. 8, RV 269, represents the season of spring. Without this knowledge in mind, no judgement can be accurate.

However, I assume that Plato had a second reading in mind, which refers to a more profound knowledge of the essence of the original, the platonic definition of 'spring' in the example above. This reading is compatible with the general concept of insight within the whole work of the *Laws*. The wise judge must not only recognise the original of representation but also know its essence insightfully. There is also a parallel passage before in support of this reading:

> **Ex. 3:** *Δεῖ δὴ καθ' ἕκαστόν γε, ὡς ἔοικε, γιγνώσκειν τῶν ποιημάτων ὅτι ποτ' ἐστὶν τὸν μέλλοντα ἐν αὐτῷ μὴ ἁμαρτήσεσθαι· μὴ γὰρ γιγνώσκων τὴν οὐσίαν, τί ποτε βούλεται καὶ ὅτου ποτ' ἐστὶν εἰκὼν ὄντως, σχολῇ τήν γε ὀρθότητα τῆς βουλήσεως ἢ καὶ ἁμαρτίαν αὐτοῦ διαγνώσεται.* (*Laws* 668c)
>
> *Now the man who is to judge a musical composition unerringly must know in each particular case the exact nature of the work; for if he does not know its essence—what its intention is and what the actual original which it represents,—then he will hardly be able to decide how far it succeeds or fails in fulfilling its intention.*

At first sight, it seems like the Athenian talks about knowledge of technical details. Nevertheless, the passage is more complex. A wise music listener should recognise precisely what it is (*ho ti pot' estin*), its essence (*tēn ousian*),

what it intends (*ti pote bouletai*), and what it represents (*hotou pot' estin eikōn ontōs*). This is an extended way for the Athenian to claim that it is necessary to know the original the artist has chosen. Only after learning this in-depth can a judge evaluate the actual value of a piece of music meaningfully.

The second criterion of the Athenian is correctness (*hōs orthōs*). Plato has already recognised correctness (*orthotēs*) as a quality in *Laws* 667c–d when the Athenian also claims that correctness is a manifestation of being good and *kalon* (*eu kai kalōs*). Hence, correctness is a matter of goodness and beauty. Different concepts have different definitions of correctness. Food's correctness is being appropriate for the consumer and the occasion, and correct learning means acquiring truth.[44] Still, the correctness of art, which is *mimēsis*,[45] consists in the accuracy (or 'equality', *isotēs*) in quantity and quality of the representation of the object.[46] As a result, judging the correctness of music depends on understanding the quality of mimesis,[47] a step that is possible only after knowing the essence of the original. The correction is based on the technically correct and wrong, and this is why the Athenian claims:

> **Ex. 4:** *Ὁ δὲ τὸ ὀρθῶς μὴ γιγνώσκων ἆρ' ἄν ποτε τό γε εὖ καὶ τὸ κακῶς δυνατὸς εἴη διαγνῶναι;* (*Laws* 668d)
>
> *And would a man who does not know what constitutes correct be able to decide as to the goodness or badness of a composition?*

[44] *Laws* 667b–c; cf. *I. Pleasure, Correctness, Benefit (Laws 667b-c)* in *Chapter 2*.
[45] The interlocutors describe it at the starting point as an 'imitation' (*mimēsis*) (*Laws* 667e) and finally, they recognise it as a representational art (*Laws* 668a).
[46] Cf. Ex. 4, *Chapter 1*.
[47] Cf. Meyer (2015) 301.

A correct critic must have technical knowledge. The Athenian does not explain what he means when he refers to someone who knows the right (*ho to orthōs gignōskōn*). Probably, it would be a repetition of the technical theory of music[48]. Given that, we can assume that the connoisseur of music ought to understand the tools that music offers: rhythm, harmony, and scales and to evaluate the application of the theory in practice to the piece of music under consideration. The value of the chosen musical schemes depends on their suitability and effectiveness in expressing the original and their correct usage. Accuracy is also essential, so it helps the auditor—even the non-expert—to access the original that the artist tries to present.

As regards the third criterion, Generally, scholarship faces problems in translating and interpreting this passage.[49] It seems more like a repetition of the second. Correctness and excellence seem to express the same idea of technical perfection, but the Athenian clarifies that it is a different and distinct level.[50] The knowledge of 'how well the representation has been made' is the last of the three, indicating a more advanced level of judgement. Generally, there is a consensus that the Athenian refers to the ethical aspect of the aesthetic criticism of music[51]—the original selection matters for the final result's quality. The

[48] For more on the technical part of music, see *I. Wicked Pleasures (Laws 655d-656a)* in *Chapter 3*.
[49] Cf. Meyer (2015) 306, Hatzistavrou (2011) 375, and Janaway (1995) 178.
[50] Barker (2013) 397.
[51] Barker (2013), Bartels (2012), and Rocconi (2012, 2020). Meyer's (2015) differentiation does not affect the consensus: she does not reject the ethical extensions of the passage; she just locates the reference to ethics in the second knowledge prerequisite instead of the third.

original of the mimesis has not only to be expressed correctly but also to be something *kalon* itself. As something per se *kalon*, it is also good, beautiful, and useful on its own. The imitation quality is revealed by how much *kalon* it is: 'in fact, the true musical judge thinks about music in terms of what is beneficial', as Bartels states.[52] The musical experience is an action with specific results in the participant's soul. These results are based on the quality of imitation and, of course, on the object being imitated. Hence, the quality of the original is the decisive factor for the value of the final artistic product.

IV. Conclusion

Indeed, the Athenian present in first place pleasure as the criterion for judging music which is rephrased later. This is not a cohesion problem, since with this passage, Plato presents a useful for the future tautology: what offers pleasure to the best people is also the best kind of music. Nevertheless, pleasure as a criterion does not accurately disclose the quality. There are many problems if someone decides to use pleasure as the quality criterion in art. The platonic criteria for judging music are different. First of all, as a representational art, music imitates an original. Knowing or understanding the original and comparing in matters of similarity and proportions is necessary to evaluate musical quality. Secondly, quality and beauty are a matter of correctness. The artist should use the correct tools that his art offers to create an even artwork,

[52] Bartels (2012) 136.

and the judge must be able to recognise them and asses their function in representation. Finally, the piece of music must have moral excellence. It is interesting how the current literature reads these short passages differently, reaching different conclusions. In fact, it is impossible to recommend a reading of the Platonic aesthetic theory of the second book of *Laws* that is totally coherent and resistant to criticism.

Chapter 2: What is Musical Quality?

This chapter aims to explore the Platonic definition of musical quality as presented in the second book of the *Laws*. The focus of the chapter will be on the aspects that impart the quality of a piece of music, according to Plato. A qualitative piece of music (1) should bring pleasure to both the performers and the audience, (2) it should be correct both in its composition and execution, and (3) it should have a positive effect on the soul and the community. These aspects are necessary for a piece of music to be qualitative but are also evaluated differently in terms of their importance. Plato uses these terms precisely and narrowly, in line with his overall philosophical beliefs and support of his political or ethical arguments. It is, therefore, fundamental to understand what Plato meant by these three aspects and how they fit into his more extensive theory about art.

I. Pleasure, Correctness, Benefit (*Laws* 667b-c)

During the discussion, the Athenian argues about the quality of the music. He is looking for the 'finer' music, criticising the Dorian musical education (*Laws* 666d–667a) and describing the aspects of the music of high quality (*Laws* 667a–670e). The Athenian zooms out to form an argument about everything that offers pleasure in deductive reasoning. He introduces his ideas about the quality of pleasuring objects with an example from everyday life or an analogy.

Ex. 1: *Οὐκοῦν πρῶτον μὲν δεῖ τόδε γε ὑπάρχειν ἅπασιν ὅσοις συμπαρέπεταί τις χάρις, ἢ τοῦτο αὐτὸ μόνον αὐτοῦ*

> *τὸ σπουδαιότατον εἶναι, ἢ τινα ὀρθότητα, ἢ τὸ τρίτον ὠφελίαν; οἷον δὴ λέγω ἐδωδῇ μὲν καὶ πόσει καὶ συμπάσῃ τροφῇ παρέπεσθαι μὲν τὴν χάριν, ἣν ἡδονὴν ἂν προσείποιμεν· ἣν δὲ ὀρθότητά τε καὶ ὠφελίαν, ὅπερ ὑγιεινὸν τῶν προσφερομένων λέγομεν ἑκάστοτε, τοῦτ' αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ τὸ ὀρθότατον.* (*Laws* 667b-c)
>
> *In the first place, it must be the case for everything that offers some enjoyment that its most crucial element is either this charm in itself, some form of correctness, or thirdly its benefit. For example, meat and drink and nutriment, in general, bring with them, as I say, the charms we should call pleasure. Nevertheless, as regards their correctness and benefit, in any situation, we name beneficial the healthiest among them, which is also the most correct.*

There are three main elements to consider regarding actions that offer delight. The first is pleasure, which exists by definition (as they take into consideration pleasurable things); then, the correctness and benefit. Nutrition and food are self-explanatory examples of everyday life, as they have to do with a fundamental need of human beings. The delight of food consumption is the pleasure of taste and flavour. One can expand the definition of pleasure by adding the social gratification of a well-organised banquet. Music, on the other hand, can offer pleasure in multiple ways too. Melody and rhythm can generate emotions while being a member of teams such as a chorus or participating in religious celebrations provide delight.

Alongside pleasure of any kind that eating generates, it also offers benefits, given that the selected food is the right one. It is easier to define correct and beneficial food than in any abstract concept or act like art. As a result, Plato starts his argument as such. Proper and beneficial food is the one that is the

most healthy and nutritious. In other words, the one that better serves its purpose. The same aspects apply to music, too: correct and beneficial music is that one which better serves its purpose.

Plato argues that offering pleasure is not the element that differentiates qualitative pieces of music from others. A *pleasurable something* has to be at the same time correct and beneficial to be considered qualitative, as it happens with food. Food of high quality is that which not only offers delights but at the same time is suitable and beneficial. Thus, whatever offers pleasure—music in our case—has to be at the same time correct and beneficial to be recognised as of high quality.

However, this passage leaves enough space for discussion, as some problems appear. First, what exactly is the correctness of food and how it differs from the benefit is very obscure. It seems clear enough that in the food example, *orthotēs* and *ōphelia* regard the same characteristic of eating. Nevertheless, this raises the question of why did Plato separate the concept into two words and why they are described so distinct in the introduction of the example (*ē tina orthotēta, ē to triton ōphelian*). As it seems for the later discussion over the correctness and benefit of music, they are indeed two distinct aspects. However, Plato probably chose to simplify his example as his aim was not to define food quality but rather music. In a complete description of this example, the correctness of music would probably be the proper food selection according

to the occasion, daytime, or any other restriction, while the how healthy the food is would remain a property of benefit.

The second question that arises is what is the benefit of music. Its pleasure and correctness seem comprehensible to a reader, but what kind of benefit should a piece of music offer? At the end of the day, isn't the very delight a considerable benefit in itself? Here lurks the last problem of the passage. The literature recognises that Plato returns in this point of the *Laws* to the preliminary question of whether pleasure is the correct criterion for judging music or not, as stated in *Laws* 657c-659c.[53] However, this is only one of the functions of this passage. Indeed, it is an introduction to *Laws* 667b-668a, where Plato lists the minimal number of cases in which pleasure is a reasonable and sufficient criterion of qualitative judging to conclude that it is not enough for music and, generally, representational arts (*Laws* 668a–b). On the other hand, Plato recognises that pleasure is an inherent characteristic of (musical) quality, regardless we can use it as a criterion or not. The presence of delight is equally necessary as the existence of correctness and benefit, by definition. Nevertheless, their importance for evaluating quality is not equal, but here Plato talks mainly about quality characteristics, not the criteria.

[53] Meyer (2015) 293.

II. Music, Chorus, and Pleasure

Laws 667b-c presupposes that music belongs to the category of actions which offer pleasure. This conviction was established almost at the beginning of book 2 with the Athenian's fanciful etymology of chorus. According to the Athenian, the Greek word *khoros* is derived from the Greek word for joy and exultation, *khara*, because it is 'implanted' in their own nature.

> **Ex. 2:** *χορούς τε ὠνομακέναι παρὰ τὸ τῆς χαρᾶς ἔμφυτον ὄνομα* (*Laws* 654a)
>
> *they have given the choir its name from the joy implanted in there.*[54]

Choral music offers pleasure to the audience and the participants by its nature. Pleasure is considered a determinant factor and a starting point of a discussion over music. Without indicating any value alone, pleasure exists within qualitative music.

III. Correctness

The second element that the Athenian takes under consideration is correctness. He often uses this notion, even in the ambiguous manner of the example of food, as it is an essential term for the rest of the argument.[55] Correctness is a trait that regards any object or activity with a specific goal, defining the successful realisation of this aim. Hence, to explore the definition of musical

[54] During classical antiquity, the chorus included not only singing but also dancing. Despite ancient Greek *khoros* being a peculiar and more extended concept, I consider chorus and choir acceptable translation solutions. On choral song and dance in Plato's days, cf. Athanassaki & Bowie (2011), Billings et al. (2013), and Calame (2013).
[55] Meyer (2015) 293.

correctness, it is necessary to approach the goal of representational arts (*mimēsis*) and, more specifically, the purpose of music. The archaic Greek beliefs about poetic inspiration were associated with truth and divinity, proving their correctness or even divinity by definition,[56] but Plato followed a different path. Art as *mimēsis* has to verify its correctness. In the *Republic*, he is a fierce critic of *mimēsis* in general as it is not a straight path to the truth (in the metaphysical sense of the Forms) but a misprint. Socrates emphatically states about the artists:

> **Ex. 3:** *φαντάσματα γὰρ ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ὄντα ποιοῦσιν* (*Rep.* 599a)
>
> *For they produce phantoms, not realities.*

This is why Halliwell notes that the treatment of *mimēsis* in the Laws seems to return to subjects already closed in the *Republic* 2-3 and 10.[57]

As poetic correctness is not given for Plato, despite the previous Greek tradition, some aspects certify it. Different categories of concepts have different definitions of correctness. For example, the correctness of food is other than the correctness of learning; but the correctness of art, which is *mimēsis*,[58] consists in the accuracy of the representation of the object:

> **Ex. 4:** *Τί δὲ τῇ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐργασίᾳ ὅσαι τέχναι εἰκαστικαί; […] Τὴν δέ γε ὀρθότητά που τῶν τοιούτων ἡ ἰσότης ἄν, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πᾶν εἰπεῖν, ἐξεργάζοιτο τοῦ τε*

[56] Cf. Murray (1981).
[57] Halliwell (2002) 65.
[58] Music is still presented as a representational activity. The interlocutors will describe it as an 'imitation' (*mimēsis*) at *Laws* 667e. Finally, they will recognise it as a representational art at *Laws* 668a6–7.

> τοσούτου καὶ τοῦ τοιούτου πρότερον, ἀλλ' οὐχ ἡδονή. (*Laws* 667c-d)
>
> *Then what about the representational arts, which produce likenesses? […] But, roughly speaking, the correctness of these things would be the result of accuracy in quantity and quality rather than of pleasure.*[59]

Art correctness demands accuracy (or 'equality', *isotēs*) in quantity and quality. A painting of a building cannot portray it in its actual dimensions. However, the painter has to shrink it proportionally. Thus, correctness has to do with the accurate or proportional representation of the original, the object of *mimēsis*.

Nevertheless, the Athenian speaks roughly (*hōs epi to pan eipein*). Meyer argues that in this rare locution, the Athenian does not intend to acknowledge that, in some cases, correctness in representational arts is not a matter of accuracy but to remain sceptical about the terminology.[60] Indeed, *isotēs* is an obscure term for accuracy, and even in the explanation within the context of the aforementioned example, it describes only a minor proportion of the correctness. Plato's terminology demands clarification. Hence, later the Athenian claims that correctness is a manifestation of being good and *kalon* (*eu kai kalōs*, *Laws* 667c). Correctness is a matter of goodness and beauty.

[59] The last phrase is indeed a difficult one, as Meyer (2015) 296 also recognises: 'While the Athenian here invokes the representational arts as instances of the things that 'bring us enjoyment' (667b5–6), the qualification 'should any arise' (*ean gignētai*, d2) indicates that he is not claiming that such arts always produce pleasure when they succeed in producing a likeness'.

[60] Meyer (2015) 297.

According to Plato before the *Laws*, being beautiful is not just the aggregation of a set of characteristics, rather than it is participation in the Form of beauty. The same applies to goodness, truth, and every other moral or metaphysical term used to describe the quality of music.[61] In the early Platonic dialogues, Socrates eagerly seeks to define the concepts under consideration without any success. In *Euthyphro* 6d-e, Socrates requests his interlocutor to tell the essential form by which all pious things are pious. There is no solid definition of piety or what classifies someone as pious. The same applies to the terms under discussion. Even though the phenomenon by which something participates in the form is comprehensible,[62] Plato does not achieve to define the terminology he uses.

Nevertheless, this is not a problem for the aesthetic discussions in the *Laws*. The interlocutors are indifferent about such a discussion. Unlike other dialogues, the characters are not even philosophers but rather ordinary people; meanwhile, Socrates is totally absent from the conversation. They care about musical quality not in philosophical terms but in a practical and political way. Thus, correctness is consisted in being accurate, good, and beautiful without any deeper explanation within the *Laws*.

[61] Vocabulary with moral connotation is widespread in aesthetic discussions; for more on the language of aesthetics, cf. Scruton (1999) 379-379.
[62] Schematically: Beauty is X; A-object is X; therefore, A-object is beautiful. Cf. Ferejohn (2009) 152.

IV. The Benefit of Music

The third characteristic of high-quality music is the benefit it offers to human beings. In the food analogy, the benefit is correlated to correctness if we consider healthiness and being nutritious as properties of correctness. Food of high quality, because it is correct, scilicet, healthy and nutritious, is also beneficial. To understand better the benefits of music, it is helpful to contextualise it as a musical experience: a person's participation in a musical, either as an audience or performer. In this case, what are the benefits?

The Greeks considered music an essential factor in their educational systems, as they recognised the effects of it on the human soul. Thus, music was already a fundamental part of Greek education during Plato's era. This point of view derived from Pythagoreans and evolved through the Sophists, Plato, and Aristotle.[63] In the *Laws*, education has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, it describes the education the children receive from their families during their first years of life. On the other, *paideia* also means *khoreia*.[64] The education the city offers to the citizens is the participation to the chorus, and the result of this education is the ability to take pleasure in rhythm and harmony.[65] In the lengthy discussion of the *Laws*, a teleological theory is revealed. The interlocutors discuss the process of growing up and parallel it with the process

[63] Woerther (2008) 89.
[64] Bartels (2012) 143.
[65] *Leg*. 654a.

of acquiring virtue. It is teleological because it describes the process by which people can become complete (to reach their *telos*). Ageing becomes a process of virtue via correct education (*paideia*).[66] Since the education which the city offers is choral music, the path to human beings' *telos* is through participation in choruses. Plato develops his idea on how this happens in both utopian dialogues he wrote.

In the *Republic*'s interlocutors organise the guardians' training with an emphasis on music, as before even gymnastics, guardians are introduced to music.[67] Music, as a mimetic art, is capable of imitating moral attitudes through various rhythms and harmonies.[68] Rhythm and harmonies are able to penetrate deeply into the inner part of the soul and affect it.[69] Thus, moral character was believed to be formed to a considerable extent by music. Music does not deserve the same rejection as other representational arts and crafts, which can also represent moral concepts. According to *Republic* 401d–e, music can influence human beings in a very particular and beneficial way: by grace (*eusxēmosynē*).

> **Ex. 5:** *Ἆρ' οὖν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὦ Γλαύκων, τούτων ἕνεκα κυριωτάτη ἐν μουσικῇ τροφή, ὅτι μάλιστα καταδύεται εἰς τὸ ἐντὸς τῆς ψυχῆς ὅ τε ῥυθμὸς καὶ ἁρμονία, καὶ ἐρρωμενέστατα ἅπτεται αὐτῆς φέροντα τὴν εὐσχημοσύνην, καὶ ποιεῖ εὐσχήμονα, ἐάν τις ὀρθῶς τραφῇ, εἰ δὲ μή, τοὐναντίον;* (*Republic* 401d-e)

[66] Bartels (2012) 139-42.
[67] For more about music education in Plato's ideal city, cf. Stamou (2002) 6-8.
[68] *Resp*. 401a.
[69] Stamou (2002) 5.

> *Well, I said, Glaucon, this is why education with music and poetry is the most important: because rhythm and melody penetrate the deepest parts of the soul and, seizing it with great power, bringing within him grace and giving him beauty if one is adequately educated, while if not, the opposite happens.*

Woerther argues that a particular mechanism called 'homoeopathy' describes how music affects the human soul.[70] Plato does not analyse the exact function of this mechanism. Thus, Woerther refers to a fragment from *De Musica* of Aristides Quintilianus, where music is considered the way to educate the irrational part of the soul. Music can resemble certain moral qualities (*homoiotēs*). Constant exposure to repetitive sounds with particular ethos imparts to the listener characteristics of this ethos. This capability of music presupposes a mysterious connection between a metaphysic world of sounds and the human soul. As Woerther states,

> [t]he homoeopathic mechanism can be summed up as follows: a person's sounds (*phthoggoi*) and vocal modulations (*prosōidiai*) in respect to a certain practical activity become the object of a musical *mimēsis* (representation), which consists of harmony, rhythm, and speech. The musically mimetic elements of harmony, rhythm, and speech are absorbed by the *psychē* (soul) and more particularly the *ēthos* (character), and when they are heard, they stimulate the virtues that are conveyed by the imitative harmony, rhythm, and speech in question.[71]

Thus, the benefit of music is connected to education and moral philosophy, proving that Plato could not consider aesthetics as a separate philosophical field. Contrary, he observes in the music the power to form the soul, and as a

[70] Woerther (2008).
[71] Woerther (2008) 94.

result, the correct music, music with beauty and truth as its characteristics, forms a similar ethos to the people who enjoy it.

Moreover, Plato also treats music as a contact point with the divine:

> **Ex. 6:** *Θεοὶ δὲ οἰκτίραντες τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπίπονον πεφυκὸς γένος, ἀναπαύλας τε αὐτοῖς τῶν πόνων ἐτάξαντο τὰς τῶν ἑορτῶν ἀμοιβὰς τοῖς θεοῖς, καὶ Μούσας Ἀπόλλωνά τε μουσηγέτην καὶ Διόνυσον συνεορταστὰς ἔδοσαν, ἵν' ἐπανορθῶνται, τάς τε τροφὰς γενομένας ἐν ταῖς ἑορταῖς μετὰ θεῶν.* (*Laws* 653c-d)
>
> *However, the gods took pity on humankind, born in misery, and ordained intervals of respite from their toils in the form of festivals to the gods. And they have granted them as companions in their feasts the Muses and Apollo, the master of music, and Dionysus, so they are nurtured during these festivals in the company of the gods.*

Religious festivals are gifts from the gods to humankind to soften the toils of everyday life. The feasts, the occasions when choruses took place, were introduced by the gods, especially the deities of arts and music. Dionysus and Apollo, alongside the Muses, are the celebration's leaders.[72] In return, they nurture humans with their company. Meyer states that there is a passage with

[72] The Muses are patrons of poetry, song, and dance; Apollo is associated with music and lyra; Dionysus is the god of wine, whose festivals involve drunkenness. Each of the deities is the patron of one chorus in Magnesia: the chorus of the children, dedicated to the Muses; the chorus of people between 18 and 30 years old, dedicated to Apollo, and the chorus of people between 30 and 60 years old, dedicated to Dionysus (*Leg*. 664c-d). The discussion around the last chorus becomes more complex as it was strange for the cultural standards of Athens to participate in a chorus in such an age. On the other hand, Clinias does not seem to be surprised, as the three choruses were a Spartan tradition. Plutarch (*Lycurgus* 21.2) describes Spartan festivals where a chorus of old men led, followed by a chorus of young men, and finally a chorus of children; [Meyer (2015) 279]. The Platonic chorus of the elders has two functions. Firstly, it performs the finest kind of music, the one that is beautiful and appropriate for education (*Leg*. 668b, 670a-e). Moreover, it is also a drinking companion, in which the participants try to rejuvenate themselves by getting drunk and being able to perform without hesitation (*Leg*. 666b–c and 671a–671e).

similar language in *Symposium* 202e, describing rituals requested by the gods with promised benefits in exchange.[73]

The choruses of Magnesia are not only a way of religious contact with the deities to get a benefit[74] but also the most natural behaviour, according to Bartels, as it is the correct use of the divine gift for emotional attunement.[75] In the seventh book of the *Laws*, Plato describes the ideal life. The interlocutors suggest that one should live his life playing, scilicet sacrificing, singing, and dancing. This is the way to win the divine favour and gain power.

> **Ex. 7:** *παίζοντά ἐστιν διαβιωτέον τινὰς δὴ παιδιάς, θύοντα καὶ ᾄδοντα καὶ ὀρχούμενον, ὥστε τοὺς μὲν θεοὺς ἵλεως αὑτῷ παρασκευάζειν δυνατὸν εἶναι, τοὺς δ᾽ ἐχθροὺς ἀμύνεσθαι καὶ νικᾶν μαχόμενον.* (*Laws* 803e)
>
> *We should live out our lives playing at particular pastimes—sacrificing, singing and dancing—to be able to win gods' favour and to repel our foes and vanquish them in a fight.*

The ideal life is consisted of living in a mystic condition with music as the epicentre. This is the way to receive the gods' blessing and win every war.

V. Conclusion

According to *Laws* 667b-c, whatever belongs to the extended class of things which offer pleasure is qualitative if and only if it is also correct and beneficial. Music offers benefit by definition and by popular etymology. Moreover, as a representational art, music has to be correct in terms of representation. It must

[73] Meyer (2015) 212.
[74] Cf. *Ti*. 47d-e, where Plato states that harmony is a gift from the gods to help harmonise people.
[75] Bartels (2012) 143.

perform the imitation accurately to be good and beautiful. Meanwhile, it is necessary to offer benefits to the audience and the performers. For ancient Greeks, music had a unique way of affecting people's souls. So, qualitative music has to offer a positive imprint on people. Finally, the aesthetic discussion of the *Laws*—though philosophical—is not interested in defining beauty and truth as in the previous dialogues of Plato. The interlocutors do not delve into the metaphysics of the Forms, as in the *Republic*. The benefit of music, as presented in the *Laws*, is more practical and political in comparison to the *Republic*. Participation in choruses offers the blessing of the gods alongside the transfiguration of the soul in a unique way through the grace of enjoying pleasurable and correct melodies, harmonies, and verses.

Chapter 3: Fraud Music

Plato has already defined musical quality as the concentration of three characteristics: a piece of music should offer pleasure, be correct, and provide a benefit.[76] This is the definition of the quality of music, while the process of estimating it is instead an exercise of knowledge.[77] Nevertheless, as there are three characteristics of qualitative music, there is also an equal number of ways to fail in the quality of the composition. The delight from a piece of music may be corrupted. Moreover, there are many ways to fail in correctness. A musician can fail in technical matters during the performance, or the failure may lie within the representation. Finally, a piece of art may not fulfil the last quality characteristic: being beneficial. This chapter explores the ways of failure in Plato's three aspects in the *Laws*. With the counterexample method, this study demonstrates better the deeper meaning of these three features.

I. Wicked Pleasures (*Laws* 655d - 656a)

The first level of quality failure regards pleasure. The Athenian explores how one could end up enjoying the joy of something while knowing it is wicked.

> **Ex. 1:** *Ἐπειδὴ μιμήματα τρόπων ἐστὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς χορείας, ἐν πράξεσί τε παντοδαπαῖς γιγνόμενα καὶ τύχαις, καὶ ἤθεσι καὶ μιμήσεσι διεξιόντων ἑκάστων, οἷς μὲν ἂν πρὸς τρόπου τὰ ῥηθέντα ἢ μελῳδηθέντα ἢ καὶ ὁπωσοῦν χορευθέντα, ἢ κατὰ φύσιν ἢ κατὰ ἔθος ἢ κατ' ἀμφότερα, τούτους μὲν καὶ τούτοις χαίρειν τε καὶ ἐπαινεῖν αὐτὰ καὶ προσαγορεύειν καλὰ ἀναγκαῖον, οἷς δ' ἂν παρὰ φύσιν ἢ*

[76] Cf. *Chapter 2*.
[77] Cf. *Chapter 1*.

> *τρόπον ἤ τινα συνήθειαν, οὔτε χαίρειν δυνατὸν οὔτε ἐπαινεῖν αἰσχρά τε προσαγορεύειν. οἷς δ' ἂν τὰ μὲν τῆς φύσεως ὀρθὰ συμβαίνῃ, τὰ δὲ τῆς συνηθείας ἐναντία, ἢ τὰ μὲν τῆς συνηθείας ὀρθά, τὰ δὲ τῆς φύσεως ἐναντία, οὗτοι δὲ ταῖς ἡδοναῖς τοὺς ἐπαίνους ἐναντίους προσαγορεύουσιν· ἡδέα γὰρ τούτων ἕκαστα εἶναί φασι, πονηρὰ δέ, καὶ ἐναντίον ἄλλων οὓς οἴονται φρονεῖν αἰσχύνονται μὲν κινεῖσθαι τῷ σώματι τὰ τοιαῦτα, αἰσχύνονται δὲ ᾄδειν ὡς ἀποφαινόμενοι καλὰ μετὰ σπουδῆς, χαίρουσιν δὲ παρ' αὑτοῖς.* (*Laws* 655d-656a)
>
> *Choral dances imitate different types of characters found in all kinds of actions and situations, with each performer playing out his part by relying on dispositions of their imitations of others. If people, by virtue of their innate character, habits, or both, find what is spoken or sung—or any part of the performance—to their taste, they are bound to enjoy it, applaud it and call it good. Those who find it opposed to their nature, taste or habitual disposition find it impossible to enjoy or applaud it, and they call it evil. For people whose natural inclinations are correct but habitual tendency is not proper—or whose habitual disposition is right but natural inclinations are the opposite—for these people, what they applaud is at odds with what they enjoy. They say, of a particular performance, that it is enjoyable but morally bad; they would be embarrassed to make those kinds of bodily movements themselves, in front of people whose opinion they respected, embarrassed to sing those songs (because that would suggest they really did think they were good). Deeply, though, they do enjoy them.*

The Athenian structures his argument on his conviction over the origin of pleasure. The choral dances, a part of the noblest subset of music, represent all kinds of characters and actions in every situation in a mimetic way. For example, suppose someone wants to represent a generous person. In that case, he either expresses his own generous personality or—in case he lacks such a character—chooses to imitate a person who has it. Thus, participation in the chorus is a kind of role-playing, an educational exchange of roles among the

citizens. The participants feel delighted when they find any element of the performance in agreement with their nature or habituation.[78] They tend to call these things beautiful (*kala*). On the other hand, they cannot get any pleasure from something against their nature or habituation and call these actions ugly (*aiskhra*). In brief, a generous person enjoys participating in a musical experience expressing generosity and dislikes incidents of meanness.[79]

However, people's natures and habituations are different. Some have correct nature and habituation; meanwhile, others have one or both of them corrupted. People who hold a moral nature and maintain their habituation unadulterated tend to get pleasure from qualitative musical experiences. Contrariwise, corrupted people, either by nature or by choice and circumstances, do not have a precise sensor and criterion for quality.[80] As a result, they have guilty pleasures. Despite comprehending immorality, they separate morality and beauty, believing that a morally wrong show might be enjoyable. And even if they are afraid to dance or sing this immoral music in front of their superiors, they still enjoy them in the innermost part of their heart. This passage is not a general psychological discussion about inner conflict. A discussion like this had already been completed in *Laws* 1 in the passage with

[78] By claiming that some personality aspects are derived from someone's nature, the Athenian does not mean they cannot change; instead, they have simply arisen without training. On the other hand, with the terms *ethos* and *synētheia*, he means both the very training or education and the result of this process. Cf. Meyer (2015) 232.

[79] Cf. *Leg*. 669c and 802c–e, where the correspondences between different rhythms and 'harmonies' to different kinds of people are explained.

[80] For more on this conflict, cf. Bartels (2012) 144-5.

the puppets' metaphor.[81] Contrary, it explains that a piece of music can fail to be aesthetically superior given its pleasure if it offers wicked joy.

II. Incorrections (*Laws* 669d-670a)

The next level of failure regards correction. The Athenian is very detailed about wrongdoings in correctness. First of all, there are mistakes because of the usage of inconsistent composition elements during their imitation. The artists use phrases, melodies, gestures, and rhythms in their attempts to imitate their original, which are unsuitable for their goal.[82] Moreover, they may unify distinct objects and represent them as a single thing.[83] This error reveals a misapprehension of the idea or the object being represented. Lastly, artists employ elements during their creation without any representational intent:

> **Ex. 2:** *ταῦτά γε γὰρ ὁρῶσι πάντα κυκώμενα, καὶ ἔτι διασπῶσιν οἱ ποιηταὶ ῥυθμὸν μὲν καὶ σχήματα μέλους χωρίς, λόγους ψιλοὺς εἰς μέτρα τιθέντες, μέλος δ' αὖ καὶ ῥυθμὸν ἄνευ ῥημάτων, ψιλῇ κιθαρίσει τε καὶ αὐλήσει προσχρώμενοι, ἐν οἷς δὴ παγχάλεπον ἄνευ λόγου γιγνόμενον ῥυθμόν τε καὶ ἁρμονίαν γιγνώσκειν ὅτι τε βούλεται καὶ ὅτῳ ἔοικε τῶν ἀξιολόγων μιμημάτων· ἀλλὰ ὑπολαβεῖν ἀναγκαῖον ὅτι τὸ τοιοῦτόν γε πολλῆς ἀγροικίας μεστὸν πᾶν, ὁπόσον τάχους τε καὶ ἀπταισίας καὶ φωνῆς θηριώδους σφόδρα φίλον ὥστ' αὐλήσει γε χρῆσθαι καὶ κιθαρίσει πλὴν ὅσον ὑπὸ ὄρχησίν τε καὶ ᾠδήν, ψιλῷ δ' ἑκατέρῳ πᾶσά τις ἀμουσία καὶ θαυματουργία γίγνοιτ' ἂν τῆς χρήσεως.* (*Laws* 669d-670a)

[81] *Leg*. 644d–645c). In this metaphor, Plato explains the conflict of impulses from the different strings that pull a person in different directions. The golden string guides someone to act according to his mind, and the iron one according to pleasures and pains. However, Meyer (2015; 233) notes that both 'nature' and 'habituation' in this passage refer to the iron string.
[82] *Leg*. 669c.
[83] Ibid.

> *They see all this jumble; some composers separate rhythm and movement from melody, composing bare words in metre or tune and rhythm without words, using the unaccompanied sound of cithara or reed pipe, wherein it is almost impossible to understand what is intended in this wordless rhythm and harmony, or what noteworthy original they are a likeness of. Such methods, as one unavoidably ought to realise, is the height of vulgarity, with its absurd love of speed, flatness,*[84] *and animal humming causing it by the extended use of reed pipe and cithara beyond their regular use as an accompaniment to dance and song. The unaccompanied use of either of these instruments is the height of bad taste and juggling.*

In this passage, the Athenian is very detailed regarding musical incorrectness. Firstly, an artist may fail to match rhythm and dancing movements according to the proper melody. Moreover, bare words in metres or music without lyrics, the power of *logos*, are a corrupted form of art. Often, bare words (*logous psilous*) mean generally prose; however, this passage indicates words not set to music to be structured by harmony and rhythm. This is why Hatzistavrou read here a prohibition of the Homeric poems.[85] Finally, the usage of the unaccompanied sound of cithara or reed pipe cannot disclose any quality.[86]

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[84] Dexterity or mechanical accuracy.

[85] Hatzistavrou (2011) 380n18.

[86] 'The kithara was a lyre, usually with seven strings, and an instrument famously associated with Apollo, which would be taught to boys of aristocratic families. The reed pipe (*aulos*) was, in many variant forms, the other main instrument common in Greek music-making. It was popular at parties, in the theatre, at weddings, and in religious cults, but disapproved of by Plato and Aristotle for use by citizens.' Schofield & Griffith (2016) 92. Regarding the translation of aulos, Meyer (2015; 315) is critical of the standard translations as 'flute' and 'reed pipe'. Significantly, she finds the 'reed pipe' imperfect as it creates confusion between *aulos* and a *syringx*. However, Scott's (2018) suggestion of 'double-oboe', for lack of an equivalent modern instrument, sounds odd.

For Plato, all these deviations are samples of vulgarity. As music is a representational art, the ability to make the connection from the piece of art to the original is fundamental. Otherwise, the creation process is not art-making, rather than a 'conjuring or juggling',[87] a trick to impress the crowd rather than anything meaningful with any aesthetic value. It is entirely unmusical showmanship because it displays an absence of the original. Art has no value when the audience cannot understand the object being imitated—or there is no such an object. It is a failure to use music as a representational art in general, probably derived from ignorance of the representational function of music. Hence, the musical experience is not meaningful but is demoted to just one activity to get pleasure. As a result, the correct usage and interpretation of the musical possibilities are necessary for creating and understanding music of high quality respectively. Correctness must be executed in every aspect, and technical accuracy exists to serve the transfer of the message of the original.

III. Fail to Offer Benefit (*Laws* 817b-c)

As qualitative music's third characteristic is the benefit it offers to whoever participates in the aesthetic experience, the benefit is also a field where it can fail. Despite the ambiguity and obscurity of 'benefit'—or the persistent denial of Plato to define the term—it is somehow clear that it refers to a broader moral and political benefit that art offers. This benefit helps to acquire the fairest and

[87] Liddell et al. (1978) s.v. θαυματουργία.

best life. It is a kind of art that creates and maintains the conditions for a regime with the ultimate goal of the perfect and completed lifestyle.

> **Ex. 3:** *πᾶσα οὖν ἡμῖν ἡ πολιτεία συνέστηκε μίμησις τοῦ καλλίστου καὶ ἀρίστου βίου, ὃ δή φαμεν ἡμεῖς γε ὄντως εἶναι τραγῳδίαν τὴν ἀληθεστάτην. ποιηταὶ μὲν οὖν ὑμεῖς, ποιηταὶ δὲ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσμὲν τῶν αὐτῶν, ὑμῖν ἀντίτεχνοί τε καὶ ἀνταγωνισταὶ τοῦ καλλίστου δράματος, ὃ δὴ νόμος ἀληθὴς μόνος ἀποτελεῖν πέφυκεν, ὡς ἡ παρ' ἡμῶν ἐστιν ἐλπίς·* (*Laws* 817b-c)
>
> *Our constitution is consisted in every aspect as a representation of the fairest and best life, which is—as we have already said—indeed the truest tragedy. You are composers;*[88] *and we are also composers of the same things, your rivals in art and opponents in the best drama, which is the true law alone and by nature competent to complete, as our hope is.*

In this passage, Plato returns one more time to the rivalry between representational arts of low value (such as poetry and painting in the *Republic*) and real art, philosophy. The artists are competitors to philosophers because philosophers are the authors of the most beautiful and truest tragedy. Artworks must be approved before entering the city. On the other hand, engagement with music transforms someone's character for the better or worse, as analysed extensively in the *Republic*.[89] Music in the modern meaning and gymnastics offers the harmony of the parts of the souls.[90] That is the value of choreutic education for the city and the individual. As Halliwell claims, for Greeks, a soul without musical education 'lacks the ability to respond authentically to non-

[88] Referring to the poets. The Athenian narrates a hypothetical dialogue between the city's legislators and the poets.
[89] E.g. *Resp*. 411a-b.
[90] *Resp*. 409e-410a.

material forms of beauty and truth', which is why a philosophical life is identified with living next to the Muses.[91] Music of high-quality equals philosophy, while non-qualitative music is a rival to philosophy and truth.

This passage is also a self-reference. Plato comments on his work naming himself a composer and his work the truest tragedy. The *Laws* is a piece of music (in the broadest sense of the word). As a piece of art, it also works as an example. In fact, Plato claims: 'if you want to look into a perfect piece of art, overlook everything else and look here'. The benefit of the correct piece of art is a political and moral revolution; a fraudulent piece of music cannot provide such a benefit.

In Phaedo, Socrates narrates to Cebes a recurrent dream he had during his life.[92] Cebes asks Socrates why he started writing poetry only when he ended to prison. Socrates answers that many times during his life, he had a dream which, despite its variety, always concluded with a voice motivating him to make music and work at it.[93] He interpreted the voice as a call to continue what he was already doing because philosophy was the most significant kind of music.[94] Despite finally reassessing the voice and starting to follow the literary meaning of the message, Socrates reveals that music and philosophy are, in a way, equivalent. *Phaedrus* 60d-61b, alongside *Rep*ublic 411d-c, describes *mousikē*

[91] Halliwell (2012) 17.
[92] *Phdr*. 60d-61b
[93] *Phdr*. 60e.
[94] *Phdr*. 61a.

and *amousia* on a broader spectrum. Music is not just an art but also the philosophical function of mind or soul if we follow Socrates' argument, which fuses the concepts of music and philosophy.[95] Nevertheless, music does not deviate from its typical elements: tone, rhythm, poetry, dancing etc. Integrating the right kind of music into one's life depends on the value of the elementary characteristics of the piece of music. Hence, qualitative music offers the benefits that also philosophy provides. On the other hand, when failing to produce high-value music, the piece of art is detrimental to society and individuals. As a result, it stands against the philosophers and their perfect way of life.

IV. Conclusion

The second book of the *Laws* offers a detailed approach to the question of the characteristics of a qualitative piece of music. Moreover, it also approaches the failure of these characteristics. First of all, a piece of music may be of low quality because it offers wicked delights to people. In addition, people with corrupted natures or habituations probably will not hesitate to enjoy them. Furthermore, a piece of music can be incorrect in various ways. The worst failure regarding correctness is that of representation. Creating a work of art where the audience is unable to understand the meaning, the original of the representation, is not only pointless but also against the very nature of art. Finally, a piece of music fails to benefit the audience and the participants. Beneficial music is equivalent

[95] Halliwell (2012) 40.

to philosophy. Hence, its benefits are similar to what philosophy offers. A life with music, scilicet life alongside Muses, is a portal to incorporeal forms of truth. As a result, a philistine life means ignorance; it is a life similar to the imprisoned in the allegory of the cave.

Conclusions

Within the second book of Plato's Laws, a profound exploration of the aesthetics of music unfolds, delving into the intricate relationship between music and morality. In the previous chapters, I endeavoured to approach and interpret Plato's late beliefs about the aesthetic value of music, examining his arguments regarding the proper selection, composition, and performance of musical pieces. Moreover, the reading of *Law*'s relevant topics led to the exploration of the essence of the very quality. By critically analysing Plato's views on the functions of music, I aimed to shed light on his understanding of how music form can transform individuals with its benefit.

As this thesis draws to a close, this concluding chapter further endeavours to distil the essence of this inquiry, synthesising the key insights garnered through an in-depth analysis of Plato's writings. By revisiting the central themes and arguments presented in the preceding chapters and shedding light on their implications for our understanding of the aesthetics of music, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the contributions made in unravelling the philosophical foundations underlying Plato's perspectives on music and its impact.

In conclusion, this Thesis offers a comprehensive exploration of Plato's ideas on the aesthetics of music. By unravelling the philosophical foundations underlying Plato's perspectives and engaging in a broader scholarly dialogue,

this research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the role of music in fostering individual and societal well-being, ultimately encouraging a deeper understanding of the profound influence that music can wield in shaping our shared human experience.

I. Aesthetics in the Laws

Throughout the last century, scholars debated the existence of aesthetic philosophy in ancient Greece. Kristeller argued that attributing the concept of aesthetic philosophy to the ancient Greeks was anachronistic, as the conceptual framework and terminology of aesthetics as it exists today were not present during that time. Moreover, Plato was against the autonomous existence of different fields of philosophy, including aesthetics.[96]

Nevertheless, while acknowledging the absence of a direct parallel to modern aesthetics in ancient Greece, it is essential to recognise the rich intellectual tradition that embraced the study of beauty, art, and the emotional impact of various art forms. While the ancient Greeks did not possess a comprehensive systematisation of aesthetic principles akin to those developed in subsequent centuries, they demonstrated a keen interest in exploring the nature of beauty, the role of art in society, and the emotional and moral effects of artistic experiences.

[96] Cf. *II. Ancient Aesthetics? A Theoretical Problem* in *Introduction*.

Thus, as stated in the introduction, even though the ancient Greeks did not possess a formal aesthetic philosophy in the same sense as it is understood today, they did engage in profound inquiries and deliberations on aesthetics. During the discussion, the interlocutors raise questions that are of aesthetic nature. The Athenian is looking for the 'finer' music (*Laws* 666d–667a) and then proceeds to describe the characteristics of the music of superior quality (*Laws* 667a-670e). Moreover, they are looking for the criteria to judge the quality of music (*Laws* 669a-b). Even though these questions cannot be examined as a part of a unified theoretical framework akin to modern aesthetics, they are enough to recognise the need for scholarship on Plato's aesthetics. It is essential to acknowledge the existence of significant discussions and inquiries on aesthetic matters within their intellectual and cultural milieu.

II. Musical Quality and its Judging

In Plato's Laws, the concept of musical quality is explored extensively, shedding light on the criteria for evaluating it and the essential elements contributing to its very quality. Plato regards music as a mimetic art, so his three criteria for judging musical quality are the knowledge of the nature of the original, how correctly the imitation was made, and how well the copy has been executed. These criteria are intimately connected with the three essential elements that define the quality of music. According to *Laws* 667b-c, whatever

belongs to the extended class of things which offer pleasure is qualitative if and only if it is also correct and beneficial.

First, Plato underlines the importance of the correct judge of music. A specific social group within the city, the best people, those with a proper education and outstanding virtue, are suitable for such a role. He argues that the judgment of music should not be based on the pleasure experienced by random individuals but by those who possess the necessary qualities of education and virtue. However, Plato does not actually consider the pleasure of the best people as the criterion for judging music's quality, rather than merely describing an interesting fact—that the finest music happens to be the one that offers pleasure to the best people of the city. In this interpretation, pleasure is a consequence of the music's quality rather than a direct indicator of it.

Nextly, pleasure alone is deemed an unstable and non-objective indicator of value in music. Hence, Plato proposes alternative criteria for judging music's quality in *Laws* 669a-b. He compares music to other representational arts, such as painting and poetry, suggesting that a judicious judge should possess three pieces of knowledge. Firstly, he should understand the nature of the original—the essence of what the music represents. Secondly, he should assess how accurately the imitation has been made. Finally, he should evaluate how well the copy (the music itself) has been executed in terms of language, melody, and rhythm.

The judge should have a deep understanding of the original being represented and possess the technical knowledge to evaluate the correctness and excellence of the music. Correctness, in this context, refers to the accurate representation of the object and the proper application of musical techniques. On the other hand, excellence relates to the original's quality, which serves as the basis for evaluating the final artistic product.

Overall, Plato's criteria for judging the quality of music involve a combination of aesthetic and ethical considerations. Musical judgment is intertwined with reliable, moral judgments, and the quality of the original being represented plays a decisive role in evaluating the value of the music.

At the same time, it is crucial to recognise that these judging criteria are distinct from the three elements of pure quality.

The first element, pleasure, is an inherent aspect of music. Plato recognises that music brings enjoyment and delight to performers and the audience. This is also underlined in the discussion about judging criteria. While pleasure is an essential element of music, Plato argues that it can be deceptive and lead to the acceptance of inferior or morally problematic compositions. Therefore, while pleasure should be present, it is not a sufficient element on its own.

The second element, correctness, holds great significance in Plato's music discussion. In representational arts like music, correctness involves the faithful depiction of the object being portrayed. Plato emphasises the need for

music to adhere to a structured and disciplined framework, reflecting the true nature of what it seeks to convey. This is the reason he is so critical of kinds of music that he considers ‘fraud’.

The third element, benefit, relates to the positive effects that music should have on the soul and the community. Plato maintains that music should contribute to individuals' and society's moral and intellectual development. While he does not provide explicit definitions of the benefits music should bring, it is clear that Plato envisions music as more than a mere source of pleasure. The benefits encompass moral education, emotional catharsis, social cohesion, and even religious elevation. By emphasising the importance of benefit, Plato elevates the purpose of music beyond pure entertainment and underscores its potential for profound impact. Choral music is the epicentre of the city’s education. As a result, it must offer beneficial education.

III. Recommendations for Further Research

The interpretation of this study, which examined the aesthetics of music in Plato's Laws, provides valuable insights into the criteria and elements of musical quality as understood by Plato. However, further research is warranted to expand and contextualise these findings within the broader framework of Platonic philosophy and its influence on subsequent philosophical and cultural traditions.

Firstly, a comparative analysis between the interpretations of Plato's thoughts about music and art in general in other dialogues, such as *The Republic* or *Ion*, could offer a more comprehensive understanding of his overall views and the evolution of his thoughts during his lifetime. This comparative approach would allow for a deeper exploration of any potential shifts or developments in Plato's thinking on music throughout his corpus. Furthermore, examining the interpretations of Platonic thoughts about music in Neoplatonism, a philosophical tradition that emerged in the later Hellenistic period and influenced subsequent philosophy, could shed light on the reception and reinterpretation of Plato's ideas on music.

IV. Epilogue

In conclusion, this thesis has explored the concept of musical aesthetics within the framework of Plato's *Laws*. Through an examination of the book, we have uncovered the profound significance of high-quality musical experiences in Plato's philosophy. Pleasure, correctness and benefit of music lead individuals on a journey of aesthetic appreciation. Thus, for Plato, participation in the chorus is an essential experience. Qualitative music holds the potential to evoke powerful emotions, awe, and a sense of connection with the divine. It offers a pathway to the human *telos*.

Due to the importance of musical experience, it is necessary to be able to acknowledge the quality of a piece of music. Within Magnesia, the last utopia

of Plato, the elders are suitable to judge the quality of the music to participate only in its finest kind. They should be able to understand the nature of the original of the representation, assess how accurately the imitation has been made, and evaluate how well the music has been executed.

Plato is very clear within the *Laws*: for a complete philosophical life, you need to participate in the chorus to get the benefits of music. Being able to evaluate the quality of music is a necessity to choose only the finest and most beneficial pieces of art. For only those can guarantee a complete life, reaching the end.

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