

## **A Platonic Response to the Phenomenon of 'Mass Culture'**

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In this article we examined some of the views of Plato on music as they are set out in his treatises, *The Republic* and *The Laws*. The analysis does not insist so much on issues of Aesthetics, but attempts to identify how through music one can understand proposals for social and political transformation. It is noticed: a) that Plato is strict on the criteria laid down by him for the composition of a musical text, b) that it persists in the value of harmony, which excludes low quality rates and arbitrariness about what is nice, c) that in his view, the music should not satisfy vulgar and superficial tastes, but highlight human spirituality, which will be the counter-weight to mass and barbarism.

*Key words:* Harmony – Dialogue the Laws – Dialogue the State – massification – Music – Education – Plato – Spirituality – Philosophy of Art

### **'Mass culture' and music**

According to the views of the representatives of the Frankfurt School, one of the chief characteristics of the modern era is 'mass culture'. By this term they refer to the culture intended for the wider public which derives from a limited number of production centres and is directed by a totalitarian and monopolistic mechanism of control, the culture industry. It is designed for entertainment and for bridging the gap between the potential and the actual and not for transcending or

transforming reality, as much in its structures as in the perspectives which it has modified. Chief characteristics here are standardisation and preponderance of the quantitative element. There is no interest, indeed, in how modern man will gain freedom and will express his inner feelings through art. Artistically it is sought how to get into contact with the greatest number of artistic products which are on offer from the sources which nowadays produce and market them. The aim is to persuade modern man that he has needs and that only the culture industry can satisfy these. It is a question, nevertheless, of needs which are spurious, or express crude states and, as such, can be satisfied only with the purchase of specific products. And, indeed, these products are not recommended by the educated or the official conveyors – exponents of culture, but by those who control the entertainment industry. These factors of control undertake to gain popularity and to make pleasing to the grassroots strata the products which they themselves promote. They are therefore ordered in the interests of the capitalist system which at the present time aims at the economic exploitation of every aspect of human 'being' or social action. That is to say, this system aims to invest with its own characteristics every production which, in traditional terms, is characterized as intellectual. Under the guise of the democratic opening up of art to the politically and socially lower classes emerges a hail of artistic products which through their very profusion degenerate and lose their meaning and value. Simultaneously a contemporary person, because of the over-consumption of works of art, develops into a passive observer, a fact that opens up the way for the exploitation of culture by economic and political interests. That is to say, there develops even in the field of culture something equivalent to consumer products, an element aiming at the hegemony of individuals and the preservation of the social status quo. The above comprise one of the properties of the phenomenon of mass culture which appears in all forms of art. From this general rule music is not excluded. Because of its widespread influence, which is exercised on all popular strata, it is perhaps the most indicative case for understanding in depth and breadth the aforementioned phenomenon<sup>1</sup>.

In the modern era, therefore, one purpose for verifying music is observed, which we can confirm, is due to the more general cultural levelling which predominates. Music aims to be distinguished from those cultural cores which guarantee its quality. From different centres of social – and why not also political? – control a trivialised music is promoted, and so the radical and renovating powers of society are not given any chance to formulate substantial proposals about aesthetics. Nowadays, power, instead of serving the education of its citizens, has become involved in the manufacture of commodities and promotes it skilfully.

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<sup>1</sup> See characteristically, H. Marcuse in (Marcuse 1965) and M. Horkheimer in (Horkheimer 1938).

The contemporary capitalist system has succeeded in commodifying every aspect of individual and social activity. That is to say, this system aims to invest with its own characteristics every production which, in traditional terms, is characterised as intellectual. Thus it deprives the real creators of the ability to correlate the cultural and aesthetic with the popular pulse. It controls from above what citizens will hear, how they will hear it, for how long, and with what frequency. Aesthetic needs are defined independently of those conveyors who owing to their artistic training would be best qualified for such a task.

In such an atmosphere we lose the sense of rhythm, sound, aesthetics and the creativity of the avant-garde. An aesthetic of the instincts has been imposed. On a broad scale, increasingly, the music produced cultivates nothing but a state in which a person gravitates between a vulgar consumerism and an insatiable materialism. The situation in question has its justifications from the 'ideological' currents which have been prevalent. The tendency predominating in our era is the promotion in every way of efficiency and productivity. This concern for quantity of production in the interests of profit habituates citizens deeply to not exercising creativity but to accepting mechanically and repetitively what is offered them. It has fashioned indeed a social atmosphere which excludes the formulation of questions about how to safeguard the intellectual meanings of life, since questions of such a kind provoke controversy and scepticism about the status quo of what had once been established. A citizen who develops speculative thinking will uncover meaning in communication and in solidarity and not in his predominance in a rivalry which will widen his economic power. And since the personal toil of choice does not favour efficiency, citizens accept what is offered them from above carelessly and without elementary criteria of verification. So, the categorical imperative (*kategorischer Imperativ*), which is imposed on citizens does not under any circumstances promote their intellectual freedom, but their incorporation into what is highlighted by the ruling powers. These powers persuade them that only in such incorporation will they adjust themselves to the prevailing currents.

Therefore in the face of this state of generalised barbarisation the mission of music is a heroic one. Certainly, it is not a question of the music which has been absorbed and levelled by the system of culture industry. We refer to the music which expresses a psychic event with strict artistic measure in such a way, that it becomes a spiritual acquisition. It concerns the music by which the artistic creator and the receiver of the work surpass their narrow subjectivity and are led to what could be characterised as spiritual transmutation (*transformation - remaining*) as for example occurs in his music. Responding to its specifications as artistic educator, it is called upon to confront reality as an oppressive totality and to acknowledge that it exercises intense social control and tries to eliminate all those healthy social powers creating art, culture, and revolution. Such music will

give society the opportunity to reveal its latent abilities and simultaneously will alert each person particularly to realise the significance of the existence of quality in rhythm and harmony. It is a matter of furnishing the contemporary individual with the means to oppose the levelling and massification imposed by the prevailing socio-political and economic system.<sup>2</sup>

One answer to the degradation of the arts and aesthetic values which dominates our era and one elucidation of the qualitative characteristics which must condition music can be encountered in the writings of Plato. In the extensive dialogues of *The Republic* (Πολιτεία) and *The Laws* (Νόμοι) the Athenian philosopher examines the position of music in the constitutions he introduces for the ethically and politically virtuous organisation of cities and its significance for the correct schooling of the young. We believe that his views guarantee us that counter-balance which would deal effectively with the excessive concern for quantity of production in the interests of profit to the detriment of quality of contemporary artistic spectacle and audition. Towards this confrontation we orientate the following analysis. In spite of the fact that between the phenomenon we are investigating and Plato's texts a vast distance in time is interposed, we estimate that the Athenian philosopher's thought can offer fertile grounds for contemporary critical theorising. Certainly with the passing of the ages theoretical concerns alter, but we would say that such an encounter is not beyond legitimacy. In proposing a totalitarian political system, Plato offers solutions for coping even with contemporary problems. The texts we have selected from the two dialogues are headed in the same direction, but we will examine them in separate sections for reasons of purely practical convenience.

### **Music in Plato's 'Republic'**

According to Plato, the first principle to be aimed at in the quest for the position of musical compositions is that they should pinpoint the rhythms reflecting the manner of life of the world and of the liberal man.<sup>3</sup> It is a question here of a mingling of aesthetic and ethical criteria. Propriety in manner of life and heroic morale comprise the springs for the constitution of rhythmic melody. The composer draws inspiration from higher forms of life in order to conceive how the musical sounds will be positioned in sequence, so as to render aesthetic catego-

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<sup>2</sup> For the meaning of music, see characteristically (Swanwick 1999, 19–42).

<sup>3</sup> See (Plat. Resp. 399e): “[...] Μὴ ποικίλους αὐτοὺς διώκειν μηδὲ παντοδαπὰς βάσεις, ἀλλὰ βίου ρυθμοὺς ἰδεῖν κοσμίους τε καὶ ἀνδρείους τίνες εἰσὶν” <[...] We must not pursue complexity nor great variety in the basic movements, but must observe what are the rhythms of a life that is orderly and brave’>. See also (Luccioni 1968, 140).

ries of the charming and the heroic. In some way, therefore, it is claimed by Plato that there is a structural and intellectual parallelism between sounds and morals. With this stance of his, the Athenian philosopher lends to the rhythm an architectonic order as far as the moral order supports in a strict geometrical manner all his work, that is to say, with stable principles – rules.

Consequently, studying the musical production manifested in a city, Plato distinguishes rhythms into two categories, supporting his distinction in a significant differentiation of their style. The first category corresponds to illiberal, violent, frenzied, and ethically defective people. The second corresponds to people who are characterised by the precisely opposite psychic states and attitudes to life.<sup>4</sup> This significant distinction of rhythms takes on a more specialised character and is supported in criteria of personality, mood, psychic equilibrium and manner of behaviour. Music, therefore, on occasion satisfies different anthropologic types. And since these types do not move simply on a level of self-reference but are extended also to the functioning of the social body, there is indirectly revealed the linkage between music and the composition, qualitative or otherwise, of social formulations. That is to say, the inner world of the subjects constitutes factors for the moulding of the state.

The above, concerning anthropological and ethical distinctions, are conducive to aesthetics taking on a particular clothing and provoking a particular sensation. Plato maintains that, when characteristics of decency and harmony exist, what follows is the impression of beauty. In the opposite case characteristics of indecency and disharmony are followed by the impression of ugliness. To make his reference more specific, it means that the same aesthetic impressions are provoked correspondingly also in cases of beautiful and ugly harmony<sup>5</sup>. This means that our everyday artistic production confirms that not each musical composition responds to that which is defined as aesthetically significant. Obviously, there is reference to stylistic questions which are interwoven with the question of whether certain aesthetic regulations are applied to a composition. The connection which is attempted to be shown here between aesthetics and ethics is based on their inner presuppositions. More particularly, musical harmony finds an equivalent

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<sup>4</sup> See (Plat. Resp. 400b): "[...] As to which are the feet appropriate to illiberality, and insolence or madness or other evils, and what rhythms we must leave for their opposites'. See E. Moutsopoulos in (Moutsopoulos 2004, 140).

<sup>5</sup> See (Plat. Resp. 400c): '[...] Seemliness and unseemliness are attendant upon the good rhythm and the bad'. For a systematic review of the question, see (Moutsopoulos 1989, 67–81) and (Moutsopoulos 1989, 193–197). The above work exhaustively employs the texts of Plato and the whole of the related bibliography. It is conveniently classified in the category of those monographs laying down rational and cohesive theoretical proposals. Not only are the views of Plato about music examined here, but also how these emerge in a particular cultural atmosphere.

expression in what we call melody. In ancient Greek terminology this consists of the method by which the principle of five tones and two semitones is organised in patterns. According to Plato, this melody reflects the inner order of the soul, of government and of the universe. Such an order constitutes also ethical quality, that is to say the concerted composition of the consequent virtues. In the dialogue *Gorgias* (Plat. Resp. 501d–508c) the Athenian philosopher highlights beauty as a geometrical connection between the virtues. On no occasion does he at any rate deal disdainfully with external natural ugliness except that in his political programme he sets as the goal of education robustness as the beauty of the body. Obviously, he will take the exterior ugliness as something for which a person is not accountable and, of course, which is not necessarily able to negatively influence his inner world.

Nevertheless since extra-aesthetic specifications have also been ascribed to music, its priorities have been defined in a particular way according to the process towards completion of the aesthetic result. According to Plato, rhythm and harmony come from the latter to clothe the words – obviously the poetic texts – and the reverse is not true. We would note, however, that with this proposal of his the Athenian philosopher deprives music of its autonomy, because he presents it as having an invested mission. And this is so because he does not recognise its autonomous character, does not, that is, mistake it for a form of art which liberates the imagination as much of the creator as of the listener. Since he ranks all forms of art in the political system which he proposes, he does not accept that music can be fluid and indeterminate or that it is an idiosyncratic language which reveals the wealth of the emotional life. Thus, he would not agree with the interpretation that a work of art aims to suggest rather than explain, to hint at rather than exhibit, to charm rather than to persuade. He would exclude, for example, the view that music describes an inexpressible dream. Plato therefore subordinates every artistic product to his political programming, lends to Aesthetics a character of political – and, of course, ethical – classification. The following are set in a higher perspective. But this succession is not unique. Therefore, we ascertain that the succession of words/rhythm and harmony by Plato is enlarged. The philosopher therefore points out that in the correct dimension of the question the written mode follows the mood and authority of the chosen soul, and not stupidity. Also the above follow the correct thinking, which for its part is supported in a style which is noble and of high achievements. Precisely these sequences must be aimed at by the young in order to respond to their mission, which is nothing other than the achievement of ethical and political virtue. This means that the

aesthetic factor constitutes a crucial anthropological need.<sup>6</sup> It is obvious from the above that Plato appreciates music through clearly extra-aesthetic criteria. Or: he ascribes positive characteristics to aesthetic criteria only when these follow and resemble a value-system, which he himself considers sufficient to transfer ethical and political life to higher spheres. Apart from the fact that he does not show deprecation for the objective factor in the composition of music – and more generally in the production of works of art – he considers necessary the compliance of each composer with objective criteria. As such criteria especially he considers also metaphysical principles. Only if the composer adopts them can he transform the world and so make the perfection of music known. Plato therefore, we would say, prepares the way for the systematic theories of Hegel (*Vorlesungen über die Esthetik*), in accordance with which characteristic of art's perfection is the interweaving of objective and subjective. He would also agree with Schopenhauer, who claimed that music is a universal language, whose melodies are nothing but general abstract expressions of the consequent feelings. Here he would locate the liberation of musical sound from the deviations of subjectivity. That is to say, with the inductive method the realism of the melody is made known – a situation which would fill Plato with enthusiasm.

A chain of relationships and consequences is formulated here by Plato, through which music is encountered in the light of a totality and not in isolation. A full anthropological system is evolved of internal states of higher quality range which according to its synthetic conclusion leads to the selection of the rhythm in a consciousness with lofty theoretical and ethical demands which are peculiar to it. The suitable rhythm therefore cannot arise from any random composer. The need for scientific competence in the matter is rendered obvious. For this reason the philosopher, generalising his position, observes that for the revelation of natural beauty we should apply to those experts who are in a position to pinpoint natural charm.<sup>7</sup> And here Plato remains consistent in his more general theoretical principles concerning art which we encountered in *The Republic*. His position is that each work of art, and, of course, music especially, acquires its real value when it is a product of the spirit and especially when it has as its primary source the Muses. From this point onwards it is established as a social and political benefit. So the Athenian philosopher considers that each authentic musical composition can function at the highest level educationally for the person – citizen. And this precisely because the composition in question does not reproduce vulgar situations of everyday routine, but with its melodies and rhythms brings

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<sup>6</sup> See (Plat. Resp. 400d): “[...] The rhythm and harmony follow the words and not the words these’. We could add that with such an interpretation music loses its independence because it is shown essentially in the light of clothing. See (Prunieres 1937, 233–235).

<sup>7</sup> See (Plat. Resp. 401c). See also Ev. Moutsopoulos in (Moutsopoulos 1989, 21).

onto the scene the content of higher rules of ethical and political life. In accordance with another of his general principles, Plato claims only the expert or the philosopher can reveal those rules. More particularly, at the level of art he considers that the philosopher possesses the criterion for locating those artists who have the spontaneous qualifications for select compositions (Plat. Resp. 386a–403c). Therefore the Athenian philosopher would be utterly opposed to the idea of the creation and distribution of musical compositions being undertaken by companies governed by empirical motives.

It is exceptionally interesting that the charm in question is not obtained after study and research but constitutes a supply of natural deposits. The pre-empirical bases of aesthetics come to the forefront and the *a posteriori* interpretation is excluded. There is therefore no reference to accidentals but to genuine properties. By extension to all those things we have referred to in the previous paragraph, we have to note that for Plato the acquisition of a value or of a talent primarily is a matter of natural specifications of their conveyor. Certainly, the analogous education also is necessary to put them in their suitable outlines. Education, indeed, not only activates the inner abilities but it also teaches them how and for what reasons their products should be presented to the remaining citizens. But without his tendency towards art, the realisation of the above is not easily attained. So Plato recognises – without of course insisting particularly – innate talent in the artist (Plat. Resp. 409d–412b). More generally anyway he considers that each personal talent should not remain within the limits of its possessor, but be established as social property with its products.

### **Music in Plato's 'Laws'**

Plato relates that public opinion seeks to propagate the attitude widely, in order to evaluate music positively as a criterion, we must define whether it possesses the power which provokes pleasure in the human soul. Evaluating, nevertheless, the position in question of useful specifications, he also claims that it is not permitted to be formulated this way just because it does not obtain the approval of the gods.<sup>8</sup> Obviously, here the appraisal is laid down concerning an evaluative downgrading of eudaemonism on the grounds that it results from those emotional states which are connected with crude and cheap pleasures. Such an interweaving

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<sup>8</sup> See (Plat. Leg. 655c–d): “Most people, however, assert that the value of music consists in its power of affording pleasure to the soul. But such an assertion is quite intolerable, and it is blasphemy even to utter it. The fact which misleads us is more probably the following”. For the criteria used by Plato to assess music aesthetically see (Moutsopoulos 1989, 227–255).



has an occasional and impermanent character and so is rejected ethically and, in consequence, as such can have no metaphysical foundation. At the opposite poles of a superficial euphoria the normative criterion is projected which interweaves the question of virtue with theological specifications, which because of their unchangeableness serve prescriptively, regulatorily, and teleologically. Variable entertainment without fixed perspective is eliminated by the horizon of the aesthetically significant. With this point Plato proposes to show that amusement, and much more vulgar pleasure, of the senses cannot constitute the ultimate or exclusive goal of music. According to his invariable policy, setting music in the perspective of the fulfilment of the individual – citizen, he highlights broader aims. On the one hand, the intellectual euphoria of the audience, that is secured by the architectonic symmetry of the musical forms. On the other hand, a deep emotional felicity, that results from emotions of transcendent order. Thus the Athenian philosopher considers that music is fortunate as a higher art with political extensions when it functions as a state which corresponds to religious ecstasy. In each case where reference is made to art in his *Laws* he highlights, directly or indirectly, the criterion of an emotion with universal characteristics and excludes petty gratification and degrading grief (Plat. Leg. 657a-b, 659d–660c). By extension we would note that an individual with a vacillating emotional world is not easily led to the achievement of ethical and political virtue. And such an outlook does not appertain to Plato’s philosophical proposals.

In spite of this, the factor of eudaemonism is not overlooked from the perspective of the effect of music. It is valid but under strictly determined restrictions. Plato accepts that music is interwoven indissolubly with the spiritual pleasure completely alien to it although pursued by people without quality and existential depth. The distinction between the vertical settings of bounds, between two levels of happiness, leads him to assert that the more significant Muse is the one who delights as many people as put a high value on decency and education at a selective degree. Extending especially his position to its highest significant terminations, he projects in an almost axiomatic way as beyond comparison that the Muse who stirs pleasure in whichever person holds a distinct position among the rest concerning virtue and its training.<sup>9</sup> The reference of Plato to a Muse is set in

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<sup>9</sup> See (Plat. Leg. 658e–659a): “Συγχωρῶ δὴ τό γε τοσοῦτον καὶ ἐγὼ τοῖς πολλοῖς, δεῖ τὴν μουσικὴν ἡδονὴν κρίνεσθαι, μὴ μέντοι τῶν γε ἐπιτυχόντων, ἀλλὰ σχεδὸν ἐκείνην εἶναι. Μοῦσαν καλλίστην ἦτις τοὺς βελτίστους καὶ ἰκανῶς πεπαιδευμένους τέρπει, μάλιστα δὲ ἦτις ἓνα τὸν ἀρετῆ τε καὶ παιδείᾳ διαφέροντα” <“Thus much I myself am willing to concede to the majority of men, – that the criterion of music should be pleasure; not, however, the pleasure of any chance person; rather I should regard that music which pleases the best men and the highly educated as about the best, and as quite the best if it pleases the one man who excels all others in virtue and education”>. For a systematic review of the question see (Moutsopoulos 1989, 290–304). The reference to education adds to music the

the more general intention which he expresses in the *Laws* of combining artistic products with metaphysical powers. In his outlook, those citizens who have attained high levels of virtue, scientific education and aesthetic experience are linked immediately with the divine or are inspired by its provisions. In the category of lower metaphysical powers he sets also the Muses, who display such activities so as to communicate with individuals of special qualifications (Plat. Leg. 658e–659c). Therefore we could easily claim that Plato not only links Art, but more generally through Art he links the human being as ethical and political entity, with Metaphysics.

In the hierarchical classifications above the qualitative criterion of the aesthetically significant is not interwoven with the individual subjective moods and choices. It is not a question of what pleases a person occasionally or permanently but of whether his aesthetic taste responds to states of high morality and select education strict in their constitution and their demands. The artistic question is shifted afresh to the field of virtuous significance, that is, it marks out hierarchically what is to be aspired to from what is to be rejected, not with circumstantial and superficial criteria but on the basis of objectively determined data. So fashion and convention are excluded categorically, while stable objectivities and lasting regularities come to the forefront.

Precisely this comparativisation of subjective taste comprises the springboard for proposals for its transcendence. Here it needs to be noted that throughout the whole of his work the *Laws* (Plat. Leg. 636e–637e) the Athenian philosopher endeavours to show that the city can reach its – political and cultural – fulfilment only when subjective choices are marginalised or at least controlled. On no occasion he reduces the partial to a universal and a subjective criterion. He takes it as something related and possessing limited power and range, inadequate for revealing and making viable high level meanings and values. So, he clearly shows not to select the nominalist solutions. Therefore, Plato considers that people should aim at getting in touch with auditions which are qualitatively higher than their own tastes so as to alter their good taste for the better.<sup>10</sup> This means that taste shaped with investments from the subjective does not constitute a necessary and sufficient criterion for the quality of the consciousness resulting from the senses. And

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mission of a timely social institutional factor. Inherently the selected music is interwoven with the assimilation on the part of a person of social goods.

<sup>10</sup> See (Plat. Leg. 659c–d. See also (Brès 1973, 348) or Ev. Moutsopoulos in (Moutsopoulos 1989, 198–200). Plato grasps the danger of conventionally repeated custom and for that reason formulates proposals for renewal of the aesthetic criterion to which he adds anthropologic and social necessity. As Morrow in (Morrow 1960, 301) states, in Plato's opinion 'the rightly educated man loves what he ought to love (i.e. what the law prescribes) and hates what he ought to hate (i.e. what the law forbids)'. See (Morrow 1960).

this is because it arises from the spontaneity of certain individualised positions and choices not founded on the universality of objective criteria. The indirect but clear reference to the difference between the whole and the partial leads music to a pre-empirical area, adding archetypal character to its sources and thus excluding any legitimacy of power to the products of immediate aesthetic experience.

From this point onwards the presuppositions for the investigation of the transcendental principle of aesthetic terminology are shaped. Plato, therefore, points out that the topic that should constitute the primary artistic goal is to clarify the limits of those melodies that from their natural deposits bequeath completeness. He appreciates, nevertheless, that one such attempt does not constitute something effortlessly attainable for human investigation. It belongs to the domain of God or some being with divine characteristics. In spite of this he claims that, if anyone could in any way apprehend the fittingness of melodies, s/he would without hesitation have to establish it as a law and institution in musical questions. So, musical composition is set in a legislative framework which reflects on metaphysical principles on an empirical scale.<sup>11</sup> Plato's position here is in accordance with everything put in the introductory text of the *Laws* (Plat. Leg. 624a–626d) as basis for the totality of political, cultural and legal questions which would develop consecutively. Therefore, there he claimed that each authentic value of the political system derives from the gods, when rulers and ruled as well as the totality of institutions and activities must draw their inspirations from there and their regulatory principles. This position has special signifi-

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<sup>11</sup> See (Plat. Leg. 657a–b): “Τοῦτο δ'οὖν τὸ περὶ μουσικῆν ἀληθές τε καὶ ἄξιον ἐννοίας, ὅτι δυνατὸν ἄρ' ἦν περὶ τῶν τοιούτων νομοθετεῖσθαι θαρροῦντα μέλη τὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα φύσει παρεχόμενα· τοῦτο δὲ θεοῦ ἢ θείου τινός ἀνδρός ἂν εἴη [...] Εἰ δυνατό τις ἐλεῖν αὐτῶν καὶ ὀπωσοῦν τὴν ὀρθότητα, θαρροῦντα χρὴ εἰς νόμον ἄγειν καὶ τάξις αὐτά” <“This, however, is a true and noteworthy fact, that as regards music it has proved possible for the tunes which possess a natural correctness to be enacted by law and permanently consecrated. To effect this, would be the task of a god or a godlike man [...] Hence, as I said, if one could by any means succeed in grasping the principle of correctness in tune, one might then with confidence reduce them to legal form and prescription”>. See also Ev. (Moutsopoulos 1989, 211) and (Moutsopoulos 1989, 307–309) where we read: ‘Le législateur qui surveillera le poète doit lui être supérieur; car ce dernier, devant souvent créer des personnages de caractères contraires, exprime les vérités de tous, vérités nécessairement contradictoires, sans qu’il puisse discerner de quel côté se trouve la Vérité réelle’. In (Brès, 1973, 60) we read: “Certes, dans la culture grecque et dans l’univers intellectuel de Platon, la musique est une notion beaucoup plus vaste que pour nous. Elle recouvre à la fois ce que nous appelons acoustique, ce que nous appelons musique et, peut être aussi, tout ce qui dans l’éducation, est intellectuel et spirituel. Elle est un des éléments essentiels de la παιδεία”.

cance for our view, since it excludes the production and distribution of musical products by sources with superficial, and still more with commercial, criteria.

Expressing the above scepticism concerning the range of human abilities, Plato accepts essentially that music does not belong to the domain of any individual whatsoever and that consequently the formation of a melodic composition is reduced to the field of a rare and select speciality. Music, belonging to the category of archetypes, is not subordinated to the terms of human conscience. Plato's position here constitutes a typical application of the principles which he follows in the entire development of the *Laws*, and especially in the fourth, fifth and twelfth book. With the intention to marginalise it, the autonomy of private people is opposed to the city, even their most select achievements are inserted into Plato's more general political designs. Thus he considers that, even when human conscience advances in its self-knowledge, essentially it recognises – reveals its political characteristics, which constitute reflections of metaphysical powers, with the unity and the good as their dominant factors. On the basis of these principles of his the Athenian philosopher not only sets authentic music in the metaphysical field, but also safeguards it from interpretations which are based exclusively on empirical data. Having a primary character, it continually escapes from the besieging moves of the one-track empirical interpretation. With a reduction in the metaphysical powers or in the way in which these are aroused in a person, such an incorporation of music into the province of the expert is established as attainable under the terms, namely, of the transcendence of empirical frameworks. So it turns out as obvious that these archetypal specifications do not render the law as a simple human decision but as a rational and cohesive institution which is interwoven with normality – and by extension with the transcendent absolute – of conditions. The creator-subject who is sought for constitutes a connection of the metaphysical and physical or embodies a transcendental reality. S/he is not subject to terms of relationship, uncertainty or casuistry. Here we need to note that, besides the fact that Plato in the *Laws* deals with the more personal and particular, he bases his observation in the light of his position that the aim of the political system is to set the divine in history. Consequently, each partial conception in whatever section does not acquire its meaning from itself but from the extent to which it contributes to the advancement of the aforementioned aim. Therefore, whatever is specified only by the conditions of the present has no place in such a perspective. It must be stable in its structure and in its goal, insofar as it will have become aware of the totality to which it belongs (Plat. Leg. 631b–c; 634d–e). By extension, therefore, a musical composition gains broader qualitative meaning when it has everlasting characteristics, when it can improve the intellectual life of every age.

Plato, nevertheless, dealing with it realistically and under those terms where the question is fashioned in everyday course of events, discovers that in a city a

variety of musical melodies are composed which do everything else but respond to the institutional specifications which he set out to reveal. Having, nevertheless, made known to a certain degree these specifications to the legislators of music, a corrective intervention is attainable. At this point we need to note that the Athenian philosopher does not treat the lawmakers as simply institutional persons, but considers them in some way as the spirit of the city. He appoints them as responsible for carrying through the highest aims of the political system. Nevertheless, since the city is brought into action in many sectors, in each sector he estimates that that special lawmaker should be set who amid the partial will makes the general known. Therefore each lawmaker has become aware of what the city's mission is, knows the details of the place for which he legislates and understands when he should improve a situation with his laws (Plat. Leg. 770–781e). Therefore, Plato considers that with the regulations of the special lawmaker a musical composition can be altered from disordered to orderly. The order, on the basis that it disposes stable criteria of formulation, constitutes music infinitely better than its previous composition. The philosopher points out also that the intervention of order has substantial results only when the factor of seductiveness does not intrude itself in music.<sup>12</sup> Here he invests his aim concerning projection of the selected music with the addition of rational and cohesive idiom. So his position is that rhythmicity results exclusively from harmonious intensity of sounds that does not satisfy the provocative desires of the instincts but only the objective demands of logic. Once more he undertakes to deliver music free from emotional aberrations, which by their nature have no stability.

It is possible, however, for the opposite also to occur to the above. The very particular perspective with which Plato confronts the political question leads him to take into consideration the serious variations which appear day by day. In the *Laws* the Athenian philosopher shows that he realises in depth that the lawmakers do not have an easy task. People are often activated by their passions and have not the ability to understand what the aim of the city is. They estimate that the city is the place in which without control and without ethical and political criteria they can behave according to their appetites. Precisely for this reason they remain hemmed in by their subjectivity devoid of qualitative interests. Plato

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<sup>12</sup> See (Plat. Leg. 802c): "In truth, every unregulated musical pursuit becomes, when brought under regulation, a thousand times better, even when no honeyed strains are served up". Ev. Moutsopoulos observes in this connection: "Ainsi arrive-t-en, tout en procédant a la guérison de la maladie, a modifier la relation fondamentale entre essence et apparence, entre form et contene. C'est la un des problemes primordiaux de l'esthetique musicale platonicienne. L'artifice contraire protège contre les nourritures nocives a la sante" (Mousopulos 1989, 214). To speak generally, in the work of Plato the content of a musical composition possesses clear priority over its form.

points out that often innovations are attempted in melody that nevertheless do not result from some objective criterion but under the stimulus of dissolute passions. The passions in question, since they result from chaotic states of inwardness and from disorderly vehement states, are not identical and do not appear under the same conditions or for mutual aims.<sup>13</sup> We should note parenthetically that Plato develops the above chiefly in the eleventh book of *The Laws*, where he also elaborates questions related to economic transactions. There he also formulates proposals about how a lawgiver will lend authentic ethical and political characteristics to the method of handling and appreciating money. According to the philosopher, therefore, it is proposed for the musical melody that it should be internal, that is, founded on what the law determines, the archetype and regulative basis. The immorality of the inner world and the disposition to satisfy lower powers of existence cannot constitute secure indicators of musical quality. In passion rationality and regularity are not recognised – the fact which excludes any prospect whatsoever of qualitative intervention. It is a factor to be rejected from any rational organisation of thinking, acting and composing.

The final syllogistic re-assessment is to examine the position of the soul towards melodies with which it comes into contact. Plato accepts principally that every melody is the imitation of a state which is provoked by psychic emotion. But to guarantee a select quality in the emotion it is necessary to distinguish correct from erroneous imitation. In his estimation each erroneous imitation must be eliminated from musical compositions because it generates moral harm in the soul. In contrast, the correct should be projected and handled in songs to enchant the souls of the young and prompt them to aim continually at the acquisition of virtue. In his final observation he does not recognise autonomous character in music but stresses that it is defined by extra-aesthetic factors which are linked with ethical values and standards of virtue. Consequently, perfection in music is the fulfilment of the ethical life, or through music a person is moralised on an individual and collective scale.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See (Plat. Leg. 660b): ‘But I do know that novelties are always being introduced in dancing and all other forms of music, which changes are due not to the laws, but to disorderly tastes’. See (Moutsopoulos 1989, 166).

<sup>14</sup> See (Plat. Leg. 812c): “[...] In order that when dealing with musical representations of a good kind or a bad, by which the soul is emotionally affected, they may be able to pick out the reproductions of the good kind and of the bad, and having rejected the latter, may produce the other in public, and charm the souls of the children by singing them, and so challenge them all to accompany them in acquiring virtue by means of these representations.” A connection between realism and idealism emerges from the above text. The realistic approach of ethical variety is confronted by an idealistic interpretation of music. Human thought formulates a proposal concerning music in order to solve the ethical problems.

## Conclusions

In accordance with what we have examined we conclude with the following three findings: By means of music Plato attempts to alter social and political facts according to rational criteria. He adds an advanced cultural dimension through which he defines collective actions in a strict way with an obvious aim, both to clear it of every possible alteration of the terms for which they exist. When the action of social formulations does not aim at the further and further maturing of a person, music is found to be opposed to them in irreconcilable juxtaposition. He formulates a radically alternative proposal for life and offers a world independent of every condition which serves the superficial. For this reason he can easily be characterised as a revolutionary force, an outlook which we will touch on in the following paragraph.

In Plato's constructing of a musical composition, using as material particular archetypes of existence and life, he formulates inherently but clearly an anthropological proposal of a special type. The aesthetic subject constitutes a complete harmonious presence which combines creatively the *metaphysical* and the *physical* and lays down the terms for a timely existential transformation. In this sense we would say that it does not work so much reconstructively or correctively but chiefly revolutionarily. Here is no question for the private individual of a meek and costless compromise but for the person of a liberation of the inner powers that refuses to co-operate and collude with the trivialisation of mediocrity and the domination of barbarism.

Interweaving music with morality, Plato frees it from a one-dimensional artistic confinement. He establishes it as an accomplishment of existential dimensions and historic perspectives. Besides, he constructs it with strict scientific demands and gives it the possession of metaphysical inalterability. In such a framework the rhythm of music is a rejection of incorporation into the monolithic and utilitarian power. We would say that he formulates the denial of denial in a Hegelian manner. He reveals the primary sources of existence and reinstates in their field each individual or collective action. So he restores to duty what was diverted from its fitting course in nature.

All the above, of course, presuppose that Plato – as a genuine ancient Greek – adopts an integrated interpretive paradigm for the totality of theoretical disciplines. From what we have reported, it has become obvious that he does not attribute autonomous characteristics to aesthetic creation. Thus he endeavours to show that its mission is to provide what is ethically significant for the citizens in an entertaining way. And this most probably since he appreciates that in many cases, ethics does not have the ability in itself to highlight its principles. To personalise the relationships, we would say that in the work of the Athenian philosopher aesthetics understands its ethical character and its social – political mission.

So he undertakes the task, at a meta-aesthetic level, of transforming the citizen's way of life and of fulfilling the aim of the collective life. The question at issue so far is whether ethics with social and political goals can accompany aesthetic or analogous goals. The question is also epistemological. Is it feasible or legal for an ethic and an aesthetic to be expressed in the same notional categories?

And this speculation is unavoidable, since the disciplines of Ethics and Aesthetics have differences as regards what they define as significant. Ethics refers mainly to that action which is determined by duties of a high level. Aesthetics aims at the cultivation of a higher 'taste'. Therefore the goal which they serve does not result from the same criteria. Plato so far at a second level of analysis reveals a conjunction of theirs, when he describes the transformational influences of Aesthetics in human inwardness, when he highlights the conquest of the qualitative over the quantitative as its aim. As, indeed, we have established, he presents the two disciplines as being defined by the political planning and in this light being interconnected. Consequently, politics is the kind which includes ethics and aesthetics as its forms and provides them with a system of common categories, as for example the good. Nevertheless, it is a question of forms which constitute its actual content. Through education politics endeavours to activate the ethical and aesthetic innate habits of the citizens. By combining even these two factors it achieves two objectives: a) the moral is not limited to the strict observance of standard rules and b) the aesthetic not to remain in the simple use of an artistic talent. And in answer to the previous paragraph, we can mention that a concept-category, regardless of its original source, may have moral and aesthetic content in terms of composition, and not of quote. Consequently Plato's *Politics* does not aim at an adaptation or subordination of the citizen to the predominant 'ideology'. On the contrary, he releases whatever, as choice is bequeathed by human inwardness, which the Athenian philosopher considers is the expression of conditions of absolute value.

All the above, of course, must be dealt with under the terms set forth by the following question: to what society is Plato addressing himself? Or, do his proposals include every human being? There is no doubt that the society to which he addresses himself is different from the contemporary society. For example, not all the residents of a district had political rights. However, the Athenian philosopher, adopting significant human principles, does not get entangled in arguments about the institution of slavery. As far indeed as points of the *Laws* refer to slaves, he does not consider them as simply tools (Plat. Leg. 916c). He recognises both rights and abilities. Independently, anyway, of this pioneering stance, regarding the facts of his age, his proposals concerning art are formulated for whatever is activated within the political system. Therefore, he evaluates negatively each citizen who is tied to vulgarities and adopts habits which class him with the mass consequently, maintaining the analogies, Plato constitutes a refuge of ideas for



essential proposals towards the problems of a subsequent age, which will lack spirituality and will be directed by competitive targeting and expansion of quantitative power. For the citizen he recognises a crowning position in the historical progress of his city, in a direction which will gradually remove the different oppressive needs and lead to the realisation of the 'Kingdom' of freedom.

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