

**Third seminar: *Laws* 667b5-671a4**  
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**Part 1: 667b5-668c3**

This is an extremely intricate stretch of argument, and substantial parts of it need to be examined in some detail. We need to be clear from the start about the nature of the project that the passage is tackling. Its purpose is not to establish what kinds of music are worthwhile, like other familiar passages in Plato, but to discover the qualifications that a reliable judge of music will need if he is to identify the best music, ἥτις καλλίστη (667b2), and how he is to do it. It is about the means and methods that will underpin sound musical judgement, not – or not primarily – about its conclusions.

What the Athenian says in his speeches at 667b5-c7<sup>1</sup> amounts to something like this. Suppose there is something, no matter what, which has the attribute of *charis* – let’s translate it as ‘delightfulness’. The most worthwhile (*spoudaiotaton*) feature of anything like that, he asserts, must either be the *charis* itself, or the thing’s *orthotēs*, ‘correctness’, or its *ōphelia*, that is, the benefit it brings us. Food and drink, for instance, are things that delight us; they have *charis* ‘which we call *hēdonē*’, ‘pleasure’; but what we call its *orthotēs* and *ōphelia*, its ‘correctness and usefulness’ – i.e. its health-giving quality – is what we always say is its *orthotaton* feature. Again, learning has its own kind of delightfulness; it possesses *charis* (which again is identified with *hēdonē*), but what produces its *orthotēs* and *ōphelia* and *to eu* and *to kalōs* is truth. That is, it will be correct and useful and good and fine if and only if what is learned is true. I want to make three brief comments on this passage.

(a) At the outset there are three apparently different criteria, but in both these examples two of them, *orthotēs* and *ōphelia*, seem to be bundled together; and in the second example they are tied up with two other features as well – though probably *to eu* and *to kalōs* are just two ways of referring to the same thing. In at least some

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<sup>1</sup> Οὐκοῦν πρῶτον μὲν δεῖ τόδε γε ὑπάρχειν ἅπασιν ὅσοις συμπάρεται τις χάρις, ἢ τοῦτο αὐτὸ μόνον αὐτοῦ τὸ σπουδαιότατον εἶναι, ἢ τινα ὀρθότητα, ἢ τὸ τρίτον ὠφελίαν; οἷον δὴ λέγω ἐδωδῆ μὲν καὶ πόσει καὶ συμπάσῃ τροφῆι παρέπεσθαι μὲν τὴν χάριν, ἣν ἡδονὴν ἂν προσείπομεν· ἢν (c) δὲ ὀρθότητά τε καὶ ὠφελίαν, ὅπερ ὑγεινὸν τῶν προσφερομένων λέγομεν ἐκάστοτε, τοῦτ’ αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ τὸ ὀρθότατον.

cases, then, *orthotēs* and *ōphelia* are inseparably connected – whatever possesses the former produces the latter – and in some cases the same quality that produces them also produces the highest of all possible values, indicated by the phrase *to eu kai to kalōs*. But nothing like that is said of *charis* – there’s no suggestion that what produces it can bring with it anything else such as *orthotēs* or *ōphelia*, let alone excellence and beauty. It looks as if the other two features are being surreptitiously promoted, without argument, to a higher level of value than *charis*.

(b) We may get the same impression from 667c3, where something odd is being done with the concept of *orthotēs*. Initially, at 667b5-7, it was just one of three features which may be valued, but here the notion of ‘correctness’ is being used as an overall assessment which trumps all others, as if being *orthotaton* is equivalent to being *spoudaiotaton*. What I mean is that we started with three different criteria or scales of value on which things can be judged; they can be judged for their delightfulness, their correctness or their usefulness. But now the Athenian refers to the ‘most correct’ of the thing’s features as if it were the only one that mattered. There would be nothing wrong with that if ‘most correct’ were just a synonym for ‘most important’, but in the context it implies much more than that. In effect he is insinuating (as we’ll see more clearly as we go along) that the ‘correct’ way of judging must be one that focuses on a thing’s correctness, to the exclusion of other criteria such as *charis*; and so far he has offered no argument to support this position. We set out to enquire which of the three features should take precedence, but this way of putting it begs the question in favour of *orthotēs*.

(c) When the Athenian mentions *charis*, he makes a point of saying (twice here, several times again in the next bit of text) that it’s the same thing as *hēdonē*. Why? Given Plato’s usual low opinion of *hēdonē*, we might suspect that it’s another device for pushing *charis* to the bottom of the list of values. If that’s right, it seems a fairly underhand way of making a contentious point, since *charis* is typically a much more elevated kind of delightfulness than *hēdonē*. It is associated above all with a delicate kind of beauty, the bloom of youth or a lovely flower, for instance, and it’s the defining quality of the divine Charites, the ‘Graces’. Bonny MacLachlan wrote a

whole book about it.<sup>2</sup> Plato is already a bit out of line with normal usage in attributing *charis* to things we stuff in our mouths – not just the luxuries of high-class cuisine but *sympasēi trophēi*, ‘every sort of food’ – which again seems to downgrade *charis* to a vulgar and grubby level of evaluation, the realm of mere sensual *hēdonē*. But if that is what Plato is up to, why does he bother? Why does he mention *charis* at all? Why not just talk about *hēdonē* throughout? We may get some sort of answer to this question in the next part of the passage.

At 667c9 we move on to the *technai* that produce likenesses or ‘images’.<sup>3</sup> When they give *hēdonē*, the Athenian says, it would be ‘most just’ to call it *charis*. Here we go again, it seems, but now it’s the other way round. In these cases, but apparently not in the first group, what we have is a *hēdonē* that should rightly be called *charis*, rather than a *charis* which we normally call *hēdonē*. I suspect that this remark answers my question about why Plato introduced *charis* in the first place. The most prominent of the *technai* that produce likenesses are of course what we call the ‘fine arts’, and one might reasonably object to someone treating the kind of pleasure they give on the same footing as the kind given by a plate of sausages and chips. The distinction could well be made by saying that the food gives *hēdonē* and the work of art produces *charis*. The Athenian is introducing a discussion of music; he knows that *charis* is thought of as one of its special features, and that if he talked just about *hēdonē* he might have to face the objection that what music gives is not *hēdonē* at all, but *charis*. He seems to be doing his best to head off such attacks by confusing any distinction there may be between the concepts in advance, deflecting any opposition by what looks like rhetorical trickery rather than cogent argument.

The next point he makes (667d5) is that the *orthotēs* of any work of this sort isn’t a product of the *hēdonē* it gives. What makes it ‘correct’ is something like the ‘equality’ of its dimensions and qualities with those of the object it represents. To that, I guess, we can say ‘fair enough’, so long as we notice that we are talking about its correctness only in so far as it is considered as a likeness, and not under any other

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<sup>2</sup> Bonnie MacLachlan, *The Age of Grace: Charis in Early Greek Poetry*, Princeton NJ 1993.

<sup>3</sup> ΑΘ. Τί δὲ τῆ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐργασίᾳ ὄσαι τέχνηαι εἰκαστικαί; ἄρ’ οὐκ, ἂν τοῦτο ἐξεργάζωνται, τὸ μὲν ἡδονὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς γίγνεσθαι παρεπόμενον, ἐὰν γίγνηται, χάριν αὐτὸ δικαιότατον ἂν εἴη προσαγορεύειν; ΚΑ. Ναί.

aspect. There may be other ways in which a piece of representational art can be ‘correct’; in some periods of history, for instance, the ‘correct’ kind of statue depicting a monarch would be one that showed him as a figure of dignified grandeur, and definitely not as the pudgy little fat man he may really have been. Oliver Cromwell is famously supposed to have demanded that his portrait be painted ‘warts and all’, precisely because that was not what most rulers of the time would have thought appropriate or ‘correct’. Again, a piece of classical music may be a complete failure in its attempt to represent a thunder-storm, but may still be ‘correct’ in the sense that its harmonic progressions and other such manoeuvres are technically flawless. I don’t mean these remarks as a criticism of Plato, or not yet, but they point to something we should bear in mind. When we call something ‘correct’ we always mean that it is correct by some particular criterion; and if we are going to insist that in the case of a *mimēsis* its faithfulness to the original is the only kind of correctness that matters, we shall need some higher-level argument to prove it.

Let’s turn to the next step, at 667d9.<sup>4</sup> What we’re told here, apparently as an inference from what has been said before, is that the only things that can ‘correctly’ be judged by the criterion of *hēdonē* are those that give neither *ōphelia* nor truth nor likeness, and also do no harm; all they produce is ‘the thing that goes along together with the others’, *hēdonē*, ‘which one might most beautifully name as *charis*’. Plato is obviously up to his old tricks with *hēdonē* and *charis*; here he is being graciously (or perhaps sarcastically) concessive: ‘what I’m talking about is dismal and decadent *hēdonē*, but by all means give it its pretty name *charis*, if you like’. That’s nothing new, but the breath-taking impudence of his main contention is enough to make what’s left of my hair stand on end.

What seems outrageous is the assertion that *hēdonē* or *charis* is only a relevant criterion of something’s value if the thing in question doesn’t produce any of the other effects listed; not only must it do no harm, but it mustn’t do anything useful or convey

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<sup>4</sup> ΑΘ. Ούκοῦν ἡδονῆ κρῖνοιτ’ ἂν μόνον ἐκεῖνο ὀρθῶς, ὃ μήτε τινὰ ὠφελίαν μήτε ἀλήθειαν μήτε ὁμοίότητα ἀπεργαζόμενον παρέχεται, μηδ’ αὖ γε βλάβην, ἀλλ’ αὐτοῦ τούτου μόνου ἕνεκα γίγνοιτο τοῦ συμπαραπομένου τοῖς ἄλλοις, τῆς χάριτος, ἣν δὴ κάλλιστά τις ὀνομάσαι ἂν ἡδονήν, ὅταν μηδὲν αὐτῇ τούτων ἐπακολουθῆ;

ΚΛ. Ἀβλαβῆ λέγεις ἡδονήν μόνον.

any truth; it mustn't even be a 'likeness' of anything. Why on earth not? Why shouldn't we value an accurate picture of someone for the pleasure it brings us rather than just for its accuracy, or an old clock for the enjoyment we get from its intricate design, even though it is also useful for telling the time? If a poem or a novel conveys something true about the human condition, why should that mean that I'd be wrong to value it for the pleasure I get from reading it? Maybe Plato has reasons, but if so he hasn't told us what they are. All he's done is to insinuate, and emphatically not to argue, that *hēdonē* or *charis* comes at the bottom of the list of a thing's worthwhile qualities; now he goes further, and asserts that if it has any other good features the enjoyment it gives us becomes irrelevant.

He's also still playing games with the concept of *orthotēs*; it's only things that produce nothing but *hēdonē* that can 'correctly', *orthōs*, be judged by that criterion. From the point of view of strict logic, the 'correctness' of making a judgement by certain criteria is independent of the fact that one possible criterion may be the thing's correctness as a representation. But as a subtlety of rhetoric it's another neat move, coming as it does immediately after the contention that an artefact's correctness cannot be judged by the pleasure it gives us. It inclines us to be persuaded that a 'correct' judgement cannot concern itself with pleasure if there is anything else to think about – which is nonsense, of course, but what wonderfully ingenious nonsense! I said that the reasoning made my hair stand on end, but I take off my hat to the writer.

The Athenian now makes another move designed to undermine the criterion of pleasure; these harmless pleasures, he assures us, are just *paidia*, 'play', if they don't do anything harmful or useful worth considering (667e5).<sup>5</sup> I suggest that we might reasonably retort: 'Why shouldn't we reckon the pleasure itself to be something useful, something which lets us forget our troubles for a moment, as Hesiod says about music,<sup>6</sup> and helps us to reconcile ourselves to the duties of our everyday lives?' Aristotle would have understood the point;<sup>7</sup> Plato apparently does not. And the

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<sup>5</sup> ΑΘ. Ναί, καὶ παιδιὰν γε εἶναι τὴν αὐτὴν ταύτην λέγω τότε, ὅταν μήτε τι βλάπτῃ μήτε ὠφελῇ σπουδῆς ἢ λόγου ἄξιον.

ΚΛ. Ἀληθέστατα λέγεις.

<sup>6</sup> Hesiod, *Theogony* 98-103.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Aristotle, *Politics* 1342a11-28.

Athenian’s subtle insinuations haven’t finished yet. 667e10: ‘Shouldn’t we assert, on the basis of what we are now saying, that it is absolutely inappropriate to judge any *mimēsis*, and indeed any equality, by the criterion of *hēdonē* and false opinion?’ – and he goes on to reiterate the point he made at 667d5-7.<sup>8</sup> But hang on a moment; how did false opinion come into the picture? Why should *hēdonē* be paired with it as if the one entailed the other? The only way of forcing them together is to suppose that in judging a piece of representational art for the pleasure it gives us we are judging the correctness of the likeness by the criterion of pleasure; and of course that’s not what we’re doing at all. The Athenian has driven a final nail into the coffin of *hēdonē* or *charis*, but he’s done so by another conjuring trick, not by anything we could call logic.

At 668a6 we come to music itself for the first time in the passage. ‘Don’t we say that all *mousikē* is imagistic and mimetic?’ Cleinias seems to agree; and if you look forward a few lines to 668b9, you’ll see that the Athenian restates the claim with extra emphasis. ‘This is something that everyone would agree about *mousikē*, that all its compositions are *mimēsis* and *apeikasia*, image-making. Wouldn’t all composers and listeners and performers chorus their agreement to that?’ ‘They certainly would,’ says Cleinias.<sup>9</sup>

This thesis is obviously needed to bring music into connection with the argument that we’ve been looking at. But we aren’t given any reasons for believing it – except that

<sup>8</sup> ΑΘ. Ἄρ’ οὖν οὐ πᾶσαν μίμησιν φαίμεν ἂν ἐκ τῶν νῦν λεγομένων ἥκιστα ἡδονῆ προσήκειν κρίνεσθαι καὶ δόξῃ μὴ (668a) ἀληθεῖ—καὶ δὴ καὶ πᾶσαν ἰσότητα· οὐ γὰρ εἴ τῳ δοκεῖ ἢ μὴ τις χαίρει τῳ, τό γε ἴσον ἴσον οὐδὲ τὸ σύμμετρον ἂν εἶη σύμμετρον ὅλως—ἀλλὰ τῷ ἀληθεῖ πάντων μάλιστα, ἥκιστα δὲ ὀτρωῦν ἄλλῳ;

ΚΛ. Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν.

<sup>9</sup> ΑΘ. Οὐκοῦν μουσικὴν γε πᾶσάν φαμεν εἰκαστικὴν τε εἶναι καὶ μιμητικὴν;

ΚΛ. Τί μὴν;

ΑΘ. Ἦκιστ’ ἄρα ὅταν τις μουσικὴν ἡδονῆ φῆ κρίνεσθαι, τοῦτον ἀποδεκτέον τὸν λόγον, καὶ ζητητέον ἥκιστα ταύτην (b) ὡς σπουδαίαν, εἴ τις ἄρα που καὶ γίγνοιτο, ἀλλ’ ἐκείνην τὴν ἔχουσαν τὴν ὁμοιότητα τῷ τοῦ καλοῦ μιμήματι.

ΚΛ. Ἀληθέστατα.

ΑΘ. Καὶ τούτοις δὴ τοῖς τὴν καλλίστην ῥῆθιν τε ζητοῦσι καὶ μοῦσαν ζητητέον, ὡς ἔοικεν, οὐχ ἥτις ἡδεῖα ἀλλ’ ἥτις ὀρθή· μιμήσεως γὰρ ἦν, ὡς φαμεν, ὀρθότης, εἰ τὸ μιμηθὲν ὅσον τε καὶ οἶον ἦν ἀποτελοῖτο.

ΚΛ. Πῶς γὰρ οὐ;

ΑΘ. Καὶ μὴν τοῦτό γε πᾶς ἂν ὁμολογοῖ περὶ τῆς μουσικῆς, ὅτι πάντα τὰ περὶ αὐτὴν ἐστὶν ποιήματα μίμησις τε (ε) καὶ ἀπεικασία· καὶ τοῦτό γε μῶν οὐκ ἂν σύμπαντες ὁμολογοῖεν ποιηταί τε καὶ ἀκροαταὶ καὶ ὑποκριταί;

ΚΛ. Καὶ μάλα.

everyone does. It isn't obvious that that's a good reason for believing it; it certainly isn't the sort of reason that would have impressed the Socrates of Plato's *Crito*, for instance. But regardless of that, is it true that every composer, listener and so on in Plato's time would really have accepted it? The question I'm asking isn't meant to point a finger at Plato himself in *Republic* Books 2-3, where he distinguishes between some bits of poetry that are mimetic and others that are not; he's drawing a different kind of distinction there, and in *Republic* Book 10 he sets out the position he's championing here and attributing to everyone, that all the arts embraced in *mousikē* are just as much forms of *mimēsis* as painting and sculpture. Just as a picture is not the person depicted but a *mimēsis* of them, and just as what we find in Homer's poetry are not the real actions but only *mimēseis* of them, so a piece of music represents or 'imitates' something that is not really there in the composition or the performance. (I shall not try to investigate thoroughly the question of what *mimēsis* is and how Plato understands the concept; Eleonora Rocconi has already said a good deal about it, and Egert Pöhlmann will say more when his turn comes.)

So would every fourth-century Greek have agreed that a piece of music invariably refers to something other than itself, something that it imitates or represents? The answer seems to be 'No'. Aristoxenus, for one, shows no sign of thinking of music in that way, even in passages preserved in the Plutarchan *De musica* where he is dealing with much the same issues as Plato is here; the structure of his argument and its overall theses are so close to this passage of the *Laws* that he must certainly have used it as his model.<sup>10</sup> But the concept of *mimēsis*, which is the foundation of Plato's treatment, has been completely eliminated from Aristoxenus' version. Again, there's a passage in one of the Aristotelian *Problems* which distinguishes clearly between the *mimēsis* inherent in the songs given to soloists in late fifth-century tragedy and other music that is non-mimetic, including the singing of the chorus in the same tragedies and all the music of earlier tragic compositions.<sup>11</sup> And in the fifth century, in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousai*, the pretentious composer Agathon's talk of the need for *mimēsis* is held up to ridicule.<sup>12</sup> Of course we have no idea what ordinary people or the majority of educated people would have said on the subject; but the

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<sup>10</sup> See [Plutarch] *De musica* 31-36 (1142B-1144F).

<sup>11</sup> [Aristotle] *Problemata* 19.15 (918b13-29), cf. 19.48 (922b10-27).

<sup>12</sup> Aristophanes *Thesm.* 146-158.

Athenian's assertion seems at best highly questionable. The view that all music is *mimēsis* is one on which Plato insists, but we shouldn't let him deceive us into believing that everyone in the world agreed with him. Nor, I may add, does he ever produce a cogent argument to demonstrate that it is true, not even in Book 10 of the *Republic*.

Let's go back to where we were. At 668a9 the Athenian draws the inference that music shouldn't be judged by the criterion of pleasure, or thought of as *spoudaia*, seriously worthwhile, on account of the pleasure it gives. Here his logic is impeccable; I've disputed his contentions about mimetic arts in general and his assertion that music must be mimetic, but if we accept them the inference follows. But the last part of this sentence is another matter: the music we should seek out as being *spoudaia* is 'the one that contains the likeness of the *mimēma* of *to kalon*', ἐκείνην τὴν ἔχουσαν τὴν ὁμοιότητα τῷ τοῦ καλοῦ μιμήματι.

Let's get a preliminary problem out of the way first. It seems odd that the Athenian doesn't say 'the likeness of *to kalon*', but 'the likeness of the *mimēma* of *to kalon*', which must be some third item, not the music and not *to kalon* itself, but another 'imitation' or 'image' which is represented, in its turn, by the music. If we are to make sense of this form of words we have to go back again, I think, to *Republic* Book 10, where Plato distinguishes three levels of reality. At the highest and most real level we have the form, something like justice or courage or beauty itself; next we have a material object or an action which has the attribute of being just, courageous or beautiful, and is said to be less real than the form in which it participates or of which it is an 'imitation'; and finally there is the work of art, which depicts or represents the material object or the action, and is thus only an imitation of an imitation. Hector's actions are, perhaps, an image or *mimēma* of the form courage, and Homer's depiction of his actions is a *mimēsis* of a *mimēma*. If this scheme is what Plato had in mind in this passage of the *Laws*, it will explain his curious way of putting his point. We may also relate it to passages in *Republic* Book 3, where the ultimate object of musical *mimēsis* is said to be the *ēthos* of a human soul;<sup>13</sup> and this, if it is a thoroughly admirable *ēthos*, will be a *mimēma* of *to kalon*. All that makes sense, or at least

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<sup>13</sup> E.g. *Republic* 400c7-e3.



Platonic sense, and I don't think we should be too puzzled by the Athenian's form of words. Perhaps Plato expected readers familiar with the *Republic* to pick up the allusions and fill in the gaps for themselves; anyone who had not studied the earlier text might not even have noticed the oddity of his expression.

But his remark introduces something else that the passage hasn't prepared us for. We've been told to believe that the 'correctness' of a *mimēsis* consists in its accuracy as a representation of the thing imitated; but we have not been told before that the value of a *mimēsis*, what makes it or does not make it *spoudaia*, is the nature of the thing that is imitated. No doubt that's a point that could be excavated from the *Republic* too, but it seems debatable. Must we accept that the aesthetic or the ethical or the socio-political value of a work of representational art depends wholly on the excellence of the characteristic 'imitated' by the person or thing it represents? I don't see why. The *Republic* says so, but even if we accept Plato's views about moral and civic education he has a problem on his hands. Suppose that Socrates is, for Plato, an incarnation of virtue and excellence. What sort of image of him is a painter or sculptor supposed to produce? If it depicts his physical appearance accurately, it will be as ugly as he was, and not at all the sort of art-work that would satisfy Plato in the *Republic*; but if it sets out to represent visually the excellence he embodies, that is, his admirable *ēthos*, it must presumably be a visual interpretation of the notion of the perfect human being and must ignore what he actually looks like. Then if the *mimēma* of virtue is the living and breathing Socrates, the painting or sculpture will fail as an accurate *mimēsis* of the *mimēma*; and if the genuine *mimēma* of virtue is not the flesh-and-blood Socrates but the *ēthos* of Socrates' soul, it will be unrecognisable as a portrait of Socrates. What is the artist supposed to do? I won't go on about these problems; the immediate point is only that the Athenian has smuggled in another assumption for which he gives no justification. The value of a *mimēsis* depends on the value of what it represents.

If we allow all the inferences that have been offered us so far, the Athenian's next speech poses no new problems; we must judge pieces of music for their 'correctness', the faithfulness with which they imitate the relevant object, and not on the basis of the pleasure they give us; and I've already made some comments on the remarks that follow (668b9), where he insists that all music is *mimēsis* and likeness-making, and

asserts – confidently but questionably – that absolutely everyone will agree on this point. After that, at 668c4, he starts to move into new territory, to examine closely the details of the qualifications a competent judge of music must possess if his judgements are to satisfy the guidelines that have been set out so far.

Before we turn to those issues, I want to add something to what I've said about Plato's way of handling his topic. I've suggested that at a number of crucial points in the discussion his arguments don't add up, and that there's a good deal of sophistical wriggling and rhetorical skulduggery going on. I think that's true, but I don't want to leave you with the impression that I think the poor old chap has lost the plot and has lapsed into incompetent senility in his final years. Far from it; I'm full of admiration. Even if one can poke logical holes in the reasoning, the passage we've been looking at shows the hand of a literary genius, persuading us along with a subtle control of linguistic nuance that the best poets might envy. At first sight this way of presenting a philosopher's thoughts seems very different from the Socratic logic-chopping of the early dialogues and the subtly argued metaphysics of works like the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, and perhaps it owes more to the orators and the sophists than Plato would have liked to admit. But we should remember that pure logic is by no means Plato's only instrument of persuasion at any stage of his career. In Socratic dialogues like the *Laches* or the *Charmides*, for instance, we are seduced by his colourful characterisations and the drama of his narratives; the *Gorgias* is a vivid battleground of competing personalities and underhand rhetorical tricks, used by Socrates himself as much as by his opponents; in *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus* Plato's myths, metaphors, similes and shifts in literary register play a large part in promoting the messages he is trying to convey. The techniques he uses in this passage of the *Laws* are not the same; they are quieter and less obtrusive, depending mainly on small verbal manoeuvres and carefully placed ambiguities. But from a purely logical perspective his arguments in all the dialogues often fall short of proof, almost always suppress essential premises and are sometimes patently invalid; and in that respect the *Laws* is no different. We should remember that Plato was not just a great philosophical thinker but an astonishingly versatile philosophical publicist, who has now devised yet another very effective way of presenting his thoughts to his readers, drawing us into the landscape of his mind and enticing us to engage with its contents; and if we begin to notice the gaps in the speakers' reasoning and the linguistic

manoeuvres by which we've been lured down these paths, so much the better. Then we shall begin to think, not just to read, and maybe we shall find ways of convincing ourselves – which is the only kind of conviction worth having – that perhaps the old boy was right after all.

**Part 2: Laws 668c4-671a4 (temporarily omitting 669b5-670a6).**

The judge who will not make mistakes, we are told at 668c4, must know (or 'recognise', *gignōskein*), in the case of each individual composition, *hoti pot' estin* – what that composition is. This is a mysterious remark – what does 'knowing what the composition is' really amount to? Perhaps we can find out by looking at what the Athenian says next. 'For if he does not know its *ousia*, what it *bouletai* and of what it is really an image, he will hardly discern the correctness of the *boulēsis* or even its incorrectness.'<sup>14</sup>

But this seems to make the mystery even more puzzling. Let's deal with what looks like a minor problem first: what is the thing whose 'incorrectness', *harmartia*, might or might not be detected at the end of the Athenian's speech? One would naturally suppose that he means 'the correctness or the incorrectness of the *boulēsis*, but that can't be right; the text has *hamartian autou*, not *autēs*, and the masculine or neuter *autou* can't refer to the feminine *boulēsis*. We have to assume, I think, that it must refer instead to the composition, the *poiēma*, so that the Athenian is saying that it will be hard for someone who doesn't know the relevant things to recognise the correctness of the *boulēsis* or the incorrectness of the composition.

Now let's go back. 'Knowing what the composition is' seems to be glossed as 'knowing its *ousia*, what it *bouletai* and of what it is really an image'. The word *ousia* doesn't help much by itself in interpreting the expression 'what it is'; *ousia* is just the abstract noun from the verb to be, so that referring to something's *ousia* and referring to 'what it is' amount to much the same thing. It's the next bit, 'what it *bouletai* and of what it is really an image' that will answer our question if anything

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<sup>14</sup> Δεῖ δὴ καθ' ἕκαστόν γε, ὡς ἔοικε, γινώσκειν τῶν ποιημάτων ὅτι ποτ' ἐστὶν τὸν μέλλοντα ἐν αὐτῷ μὴ ἀμαρτήσεσθαι· μὴ γὰρ γινώσκων τὴν οὐσίαν, τί ποτε βούλεται καὶ ὅτου ποτ' ἐστὶν εἰκὼν ὄντως, σχολῆ τὴν γε ὀρθότητα τῆς βουλήσεως ἢ καὶ ἀμαρτίαν αὐτοῦ διαγνώσεται.

does. The difficulty here is in deciding whether the phrase refers to two different things, or to just one thing in two different ways; and what creates the problem is an ambiguity in the verb *bouletai*. That's why I haven't yet translated it. In its most common uses *boulesthai* is to want or wish; and if we let that meaning guide us we shall understand the Athenian as meaning 'what it intends', 'what it is trying to do or to convey'. If that's right, the phrase must be referring to two different things, (a) what the composition is *trying* to represent, perhaps meaning 'what the composer intended', and (b) what it *really* represents, by actually being an image of it'. Obviously the two things may not always coincide. But secondly, *boulesthai* is regularly used of words and statements, and in that case to ask '*ti bouletai?*' is to ask 'What does it mean?' This must be what it actually means, not just what the speaker was trying to convey; and in that case 'what it *bouletai*' will be synonymous with 'of what it is really an image'. The Athenian's expression will be a hendiadys, and he's talking about just one thing, not two – what the composition really represents.

Can we decide between the two possible meanings? It's quite an important question, if we are to understand the theory of musical judgement that's being proposed. The judge must know 'what the composition is', its *ousia*; but does that require him to know not only what the composition represents but also what it, or its composer, is *trying* to represent? Perhaps that seems rather unlikely. If all we are presented with is the composition itself, how can we know what the composer intended, as well as what he has actually produced? And how can that intention be part of what the composition itself is, even if it does not succeed in what it was trying to do? We may well be inclined to think this interpretation implausible and to choose the other one; what it *bouletai* is what it means, and this is the same as 'of what it is really an image'.

But now we should go back to the first point I mentioned, about the word *autou* at the end of the Athenian's speech. If it refers to the *poiēma*, as apparently it must, we are being told that a person who fails to grasp 'what it is' will be unable to recognise 'the correctness of the *boulēsis* or even the incorrectness of the composition'. Now if the *boulēsis* is the actual meaning of the composition, as my second interpretation suggests, talking about the correctness or incorrectness of the *boulēsis* will apparently be no different from talking about the correctness or incorrectness of the composition.

In that case the sense of the Athenian's remark will be that such a person will be unable to recognise the correctness or the incorrectness of the composition's representation. This would be intelligible; but it's then very hard to explain why he confuses the issue by saying *autou* rather than *autēs*, as if he were referring to two distinct items. If we go back to the first interpretation of *boulēsis* we could explain that peculiarity: he would be talking about a case in which the intention is correct but the execution of it in the composition is incorrect. I don't know how this problem can be settled. Perhaps the strongest point in favour of the second interpretation, which keeps mere intentions right out of the picture, is that such intentions seem to play no further part in the discussion. Why would Plato introduce them if our understanding of them was irrelevant to the process of judgement? If the argument were proceeding on purely logical lines that point might be reckoned conclusive; but we have seen already that this is not the situation. I'm genuinely uncertain about it, and it's all very tantalising.

One thing does emerge clearly from this passage, however. As the Athenian construes it, the *ousia* of a composition, 'what it is', is intimately connected with what it represents. It will not be revealed by any description of the composition simply as itself, without reference to the thing it 'imitates', whether or not it also involves reference to the thing it is trying – perhaps unsuccessfully – to imitate. What it is, essentially, is an image, and an image of something, and its 'being' cannot be detached from its relation to that other thing. This claim is crucial to the discussion that follows.

Let's bear that in mind and move on to 668d1. A person who can't recognise the correctness, *to orthōs*, (of the composition or its *boulēsis*) won't be in a position to recognise *to eu kai to kakōs*, its goodness and badness. This time the Athenian realises that he's saying something pretty obscure; he says he'll try to make it clearer, and goes on to do so by expanding his point more fully.<sup>15</sup> This is one of Plato's characteristic strategies. His central speakers often introduce a new idea by expressing it briefly and obscurely, and then apologise for the obscurity and offer to

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<sup>15</sup> Δεῖ δὴ καθ' ἕκαστόν γε, ὡς ἔοικε, γινώσκων τῶν ποιημάτων ὅτι ποτ' ἐστὶν τὸν μέλλοντα ἐν αὐτῷ μὴ ἀμαρτήσεσθαι· μὴ γὰρ γινώσκων τὴν οὐσίαν, τί ποτε βούλεται καὶ ὅτου ποτ' ἐστὶν εἰκῶν ὄντως, σχολῆ τὴν γε ὀρθότητα τῆς βουλήσεως ἢ καὶ ἀμαρτίαν αὐτοῦ διαγνώσεται.

explain it more clearly; this gives them a good excuse for developing the idea at some length. Here the Athenian does so by means of an analogy, just like Socrates in similar cases elsewhere.

The analogy is with the ‘images’ created by the visual arts. It would be impossible, he argues, (668d5) for someone who didn’t know what each of the ‘bodies’ (*sōmata*) that are imitated is to know whether the picture or statue represents them correctly. He expands on the notion of ‘knowing whether they are represented correctly’: one must know whether the proportions and positions of the limbs are right, whether they are appropriately arranged, whether the artist has given them the right colours and shapes and so on, or whether they are all hopelessly muddled. But you obviously can’t know that sort of thing unless you know what the *memimēmenon zōion*, the creature represented, actually is.<sup>16</sup> All that seems fair enough; but it’s only a preliminary to the point he’s really trying to make.

This emerges at 668e7. Suppose that we do know that what is represented is a man, and that the artist has represented him with all the right colours and shapes and so forth. Does it necessarily follow, the Athenian asks, that if we know this much about the representation, we shall also be in a position to know whether the work is or is not *kalon*, fine or beautiful or excellent? Here Cleinias’ response is intriguing. ‘No,’ he says. If that were so pretty well all of us would be able to recognise *ta kala tōn zōiōn*.<sup>17</sup> Obviously he’s agreeing with what the Athenian’s question suggests: knowing that the picture or statue represents a man accurately doesn’t immediately equip us to judge whether it is *kalon*. But his way of putting the point is curious. The Athenian has used the word *zōion* just before, at 668e5, where it refers unambiguously to a living creature of some sort; it is that which is imitated, not the imitation. But in Greek the word can also mean ‘a picture’, and one would expect Cleinias to be talking about pictures here; that’s what the Athenian was asking about. He could have made the meaning clear by talking about *eikones* or *mimēmata* instead of *zōia*, and I suspect

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<sup>16</sup> Δεῖ δὴ καθ’ ἕκαστόν γε, ὡς ἔοικε, γινώσκειν τῶν ποιημάτων ὅτι ποτ’ ἐστὶν τὸν μέλλοντα ἐν αὐτῷ μὴ ἀμαρτήσεσθαι· μὴ γὰρ γινώσκων τὴν οὐσίαν, τί ποτε βούλεται καὶ ὅτου ποτ’ ἐστὶν εἰκῶν ὄντως, σχολῆ τὴν γε ὀρθότητα τῆς βουλήσεως ἢ καὶ ἀμαρτίαν αὐτοῦ διαγνώσεται.

<sup>17</sup> ΑΘ. Τί δ’ εἰ γινώσκοιμεν ὅτι τὸ γεγραμμένον ἢ τὸ πεπλασμένον ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος, καὶ τὰ μέρη πάντα τὰ ἑαυτοῦ (669a) καὶ χρώματα ἅμα καὶ σχήματα ἀπέλιφεν ὑπὸ τῆς τέχνης; ἄρα γε ἀναγκαῖον ἤδη τῷ ταῦτα γνόντι καὶ ἐκεῖνο ἐτοιμίως γινώσκειν, εἴτε καλὸν εἴτε ὅπη ποτὲ ἔλλιπες ἂν εἴη κάλλους; ΚΛ. Πάντες μεντᾶν ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν, ὡς ξένη, τὰ καλὰ τῶν ζώων ἐγινώσκομεν.

that Plato has introduced the ambiguity intentionally. Since ‘what the image is’ depends so crucially on the real characteristics of the thing whose image it is, knowing that this picture is beautiful cannot be disentangled from knowing that the object it portrays is beautiful. The beauty of the *zōion* is the same in the picture as it is in the creature it accurately represents; and if we asked Cleinias which of them he is referring to, he could legitimately answer ‘Both’.

The notion that a picture will be beautiful (or whatever exactly *kalon* means) if and only if the object depicted is beautiful strikes me as thoroughly unsatisfactory as a theory of beauty in art. It invites us to agree that we cannot judge whether a depiction of something is *kalon* except by first identifying the object it portrays, then checking that it has done so accurately, and then making a judgement as to whether the object depicted is *kalon*. The *kallos* of the *mimēsis* depends wholly on that of the thing that is imitated. This seems to me to be nonsense, but I won’t pursue it further; what matters is that it’s an essential ingredient of Plato’s position, and it’s brought out more transparently in the Athenian’s next speech, starting at 669a7.

After telling Cleinias that he’s absolutely right, he goes on: ‘Then isn’t it true that in the case of every image, in painting and in music and everywhere, a person who is to be an intelligent judge must have the following three qualifications? He must know, first, what it is, secondly how correctly, and thirdly how well any one of the images has been made in words and melodies and rhythms.’<sup>18</sup>

This corresponds precisely to what I was saying just now. I don’t think it makes much difference if we construe the repeated word *hōs* as meaning ‘that’ rather than ‘how’, so that we are being told that he must know *that* the image is made correctly and *that* it is made well. The one oddity here is in the phrase *hōs eu eirgastai*, ‘that it has been made well’ or ‘how well it has been made’. We might take this to mean ‘that it has been made skilfully’, or ‘how technically perfect the depiction is’, or the like. But that would immediately collapse into ‘that it has been made correctly’,

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<sup>18</sup> ΑΘ. Ὁρθότατα λέγεις. ἄρ’ οὖν οὐ περὶ ἐκάστην εἰκόνα, καὶ ἐν γραφικῇ καὶ ἐν μουσικῇ καὶ πάντῃ, τὸν μέλλοντα ἔμφρονα κριτὴν ἔσεσθαι δεῖ ταῦτα τρία ἔχειν, ὃ τέ ἐστι (b) πρῶτον γινώσκειν, ἔπειτα ὡς ὀρθῶς, ἔπειθ’ ὡς εὖ, τὸ τρίτον, εἴργασται τῶν εἰκόνων ἠτισοῦν ῥήμασί τε καὶ μέλεσι καὶ τοῖς ῥυθμοῖς;  
ΚΑ. Ἔοικε γοῦν.

which was the Athenian's second point; and in any case it isn't what he's been leading up to, which is that the judge must be able to decide whether the image is *kalon*. I don't think we can escape the conclusion that *hōs eu eirgastai* means 'that what the artist has made is beautiful'; making something well is making it *kalon*. It's a rather strange way of putting it but it must be what is intended, and of course it fits with Plato's general position, especially when we remember that *eu* is the adverb attached to the adjective *agathos*, which names the highest of all values, the good. Nothing can count as being 'made well' unless the product can properly be reckoned *agathon*, and especially though not only in the case of the fine arts that means that it must be *kalon*. So what a reliable judge must know is first what the work of art is, which depends directly on what it depicts, secondly whether the representation is accurate or 'correct', and thirdly whether it is *kalon*; and this, we must again recall, depends on whether the object depicted is *kalon* itself. All three of the issues he must be able to tackle are concerned both with the work itself and with the object represented, with a special emphasis on the latter. We may object to the third contention, that the artefact's beauty depends wholly on that of the object imitated, but we can see how it emerges from the entanglement of the *ousia* of the image with that of the object it depicts. If 'what the image is' is so closely dependent on what the object is, then it may well seem to follow that its beauty, too, cannot be distinguished from that of the object.

The last point I want to make about this speech is that Plato has now returned us from his image to the real topic, music. Though the Athenian mentions *graphikē* and refers to the arts in general at the beginning of the speech we've been looking at, by the time he reaches the end he's concerned only with words, melodies and rhythms, that is, the ingredients of *mousikē*; and we'll be concerned exclusively with music throughout the rest of the passage. But I'm not going to tackle the whole of it now. For the present I'm going to leave out most of the next long speech, and I'll come back to it in my next discussion, when we'll be able to compare it with a rather similar passage in Book 3. So far as the present argument is concerned it's a bit of a digression and we can manage without it; the line of thought we're involved with in the last bit we've considered, 669a-b, is picked up again towards the end of the long speech at 670a6. When we come back the main part of that speech I'll try to relocate it in its context, but that won't be what mainly occupies us.



So let's pick up the thread at 670a6. The gist of what the Athenian says is that the people he's talking about, the fifty-year-olds who must be the judges of music as well as singers, need to be trained to a much higher level than is needed for merely singing in a chorus. In particular, they must both *εὐαισθητῶς ἔχειν* and *γινώσκειν* the rhythms and the *harmoniai*. If they do not, they won't be able to grasp whether the melodies are 'correct'; they won't know, for instance, what the Dorian *harmonia* or the rhythm the composer has associated with it are suitable for, and whether the choice of these ingredients is correct or not.<sup>19</sup> The point is elaborated a little further on, at 670d (part of a long sentence running from 670c8 to e4); they must be sufficiently trained to be able to 'follow', *συνακολουθεῖν*, every detail of the movements of the rhythms and the notes of the melodies.

What exactly does the Athenian mean? The first thing to notice is that the expressions *εὐαισθητῶς ἔχειν* and *γινώσκειν* don't mean the same thing; they point to two quite different abilities that these people must acquire. They correspond rather closely, I think, to what Aristoxenus in the *Elementa harmonica* calls *αἴσθησις* and *διάνοια*, the first being a perceptual capacity and the second an intellectual one. In saying that the fifty-year-olds must have been trained to *εὐαισθητῶς ἔχειν*, Plato means much the same as Aristoxenus does when he says that a student of harmonics must 'train his *αἴσθησις* to accuracy',<sup>20</sup> and he must do so for the same reason. That is, no matter how much you know about music, it will be useless for the purpose of judging the merits of a composition you hear performed, unless you can also perceive, very accurately, all the details of the work's ingredients – its rhythms, its intervals and scale-systems and so on – and recognise what they are. But at the same time this perceptual competence is not enough on its own. You must also understand, *γινώσκειν*, the rhythms and *harmoniai* you detect in the piece; and this must clearly

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<sup>19</sup> ἡμεῖς δέ γε οὐχ ὅτι μὴ δεῖ ταῖς Μούσαις ἡμῶν προσχρῆσθαι τοὺς ἤδη τριακοντούτας καὶ τῶν πενήκοντα πέραν γεγονότας σκοπούμεθα, ἀλλ' ὅτι ποτὲ δεῖ. τότε μὲν οὖν ἐκ τούτων ὁ λόγος ἡμῖν δοκεῖ μοι σημαίνειν ἤδη, τῆς γε χορικῆς Μούσης ὅτι πεπαιδευῆσθαι (b) δεῖ βέλτιον τοὺς πενήκοντούτας ὅσοις περ ἂν ἔδειν προσήκη. τῶν γὰρ ῥυθμῶν καὶ τῶν ἀρμονιῶν ἀναγκαῖον αὐτοῖς ἔστιν εὐαισθητῶς ἔχειν καὶ γινώσκειν· ἢ πῶς τις τὴν ὀρθότητα γινώσκειται τῶν μελῶν, ᾧ προσήκειν ἢ μὴ προσήκειν τοῦ ὄριστί, καὶ τοῦ ῥυθμοῦ ὃν ὁ ποιητὴς αὐτῷ προσῆψεν, ὀρθῶς ἢ μὴ;

Κλ. Δῆλον ὡς οὐδαμῶς.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. *Elementa harmonica* 34.25-30 Meibom = 44.3-6 Da Rios, where we are told that students need to train both perception and reason in this way.

involve understanding at least some elements of what we call musical ‘theory’. It must, as I said, be a competence of some intellectual sort.

What kind of ‘theory’ is involved? Is it the kind of technical knowledge that Aristoxenus offers in his works on harmonics and rhythmic, or some more-or-less Pythagorean version of the same material? Or does it include that and something else as well, or again, is it something completely different? Plato doesn’t pause to explain, but there’s enough in the text to let us draw some conclusions. First, if these people are to make judgements about a composer’s uses of the Dorian *harmonia* or anything else of that sort, clearly they must know what the Dorian *harmonia* is; and similarly, if they are to ‘follow’ every nuance of the rhythms and notes, they must not only notice them perceptually but must be able to recognise what they are. This will certainly involve an understanding at least of the rudiments of harmonics and rhythmic; and despite Socrates’ and Glaucon’s contempt for it at *Republic* 531a-b, the harmonics had better be of the broadly ‘empirical’ sort characteristic of Aristoxenus’ immediate predecessors, the so-called *harmonikoi*. It would be worse than useless to demand a Pythagorean, mathematical approach, still less one of the very abstract sort that the *Republic*’s Socrates briefly recommends (531c); no one could possibly apply those forms of analysis directly to a composition presented to them in performance.<sup>21</sup>

But that can’t be the end of the matter. In order to do what’s required of them, the musical judges must not only be able to recognise the Dorian *harmonia* when it is used, but must also understand ‘what it is and is not suitable for’, so that they can decide whether or not the composer’s use of it is ‘correct’. This takes us beyond anything included in harmonics, at least as Aristoxenus conceived it; it belongs to the same context as the discussions in *Republic* Book 3 – which may or may not be based on ideas that originated with Damon – about the ethical and emotional affinities of each of the *harmoniai*, and what each of them imitates or represents. The writer of the Hibeh musical papyrus, perhaps the sophist Alcidamas,<sup>22</sup> talks about people who call themselves *harmonikoi* and claim to be experts in the ‘theoretical’ branch of

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<sup>21</sup> Anyone who is uncertain about the kinds of theory adopted by these various schools of thought might try my book *The Science of Harmonics in Classical Greece*, Cambridge 2007.

<sup>22</sup> *Pap. Hibeh* 13. The best text of this fragment is in M.L. West, ‘Analecta musica’, *ZPE* 92 (1992), 16-17. Useful discussions include A. Brancacci, ‘Alcidamante e PHibeh 13 “De musica”’, in *Aristoxenica, Menandrea, fragmenta philosophica*, ed. F. Adorna, Florence 1988, 61-84, and G. Avezzu, ‘Papyrus Hibeh I.13: Anonymi fragmentum *De musica*’, *Musica e Storia* 2 (1994), 109-138.

musical studies, and he comments especially on their claims about the ethical significance of different kinds of melody. He denounces them as ridiculous charlatans, but it's clear that such theorists existed, and perhaps not all of them were as incompetent as this writer makes out; and the kind of 'theory' they propounded (and attempted to demonstrate by performing musical examples) seems to have included both strictly technical material and propositions analogous to those in Book 3 of the *Republic*. Whether they were good or bad at the job is beside the point; in principle, at least, the kind of training they offered is exactly what is required in this passage of the *Laws*, and Plato's conception of it may not be entirely a figment of his own imagination.

The remarks in this passage serve as a complement to what the Athenian said earlier, for instance at 668d-669a, about judging the 'correctness' of an imitation. In the earlier passage what he focussed on was the need to know the nature of the original, the thing that the work of art imitates. Here he is concentrating on the other part of the relation, the work of art itself; we can't judge its correctness unless we know all about it too – in this case the composition and all its ingredients – and understand what they are capable of representing. That makes good sense; and it also gives us a fuller grasp on what was said earlier about the *ousia* of the composition. Certainly this is closely dependent on the nature of the object represented, as we have seen. But knowing 'what it is' cannot be detached from knowing about its technical structure, and knowing what that structure – the Dorian *harmonia*, for instance – is 'suitable for', as the Athenian puts it, which I take to mean 'what it is capable of representing'. Clearly, if we don't have knowledge of that sort, we won't be in a position to make any judgement about its merits or deficiencies as a *mimēsis*, just as we won't if we don't have any knowledge of the represented object.

But there's one more twist to the discussion. The sentence I mentioned at 670c8-e4 goes on to explain the purpose for which the judges must be able to 'follow' the details of the rhythms and notes. It is so that they can survey the *harmoniai* and rhythms, and select those that are suitable for singing by people of a certain age and a

certain kind.<sup>23</sup> That is a new point, though it is very much what the whole discussion has been aiming at. Judging whether a composition is suitable for certain people is not at all the same as judging whether it is suitable as a *mimēsis* of a certain kind of object. No doubt the two are connected, but the Athenian does not explain how; he links them only through the use of the same verb for ‘being suitable’, *προσήκειν*, in both contexts, slipping the second one in as though it were merely a repetition of the other. His strategy depends on the same kind of verbal dexterity that we found in the first part of today’s passage; Plato perhaps uses it here simply in order to short-circuit what might otherwise be a long stretch of argument.

The passage we are discussing ends at 671a4, but the last thing I want to mention is what the Athenian says at the end of the sentence we’ve been considering, at 670e2-4. The musical judges must have three kinds of competence, as we have seen; they must be able to discern what the composition is, whether it is made correctly, and finally whether it is *kalon*. Their ability to make this third kind of judgement, we are now told, raises their understanding to a level above even that of the composers themselves; composers must of course know all about rhythms and *harmoniai*, but it’s by no means inevitable that they will also understand ‘the third thing, whether or not the imitation is *kalon*’. This needn’t imply that they won’t be able to grasp what their music ‘imitates’; given what I’ve been saying about what ‘understanding rhythms and *harmoniai*’ involves, the Athenian is apparently conceding that they will. But the excellence of the *mimēma* depends, as we’ve seen, directly on that of the object imitated, and it seems quite reasonable for Plato to exclude from the province of mere musicians the evaluative understanding that would enable us to make judgements on the excellence of these non-musical originals. So I don’t think there’s anything specially problematic about these remarks; in the context of Plato’s general assumptions they aren’t even odd. What does seem strange, however, is that the discussion ends at just this point. The Athenian introduces the topic of the highest

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<sup>23</sup> ΑΘ. Τοῦτ’ οὖν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἀνευρίσκομεν αὖ τὰ νῦν, ὅτι τοῖς ᾠδοῖς ἡμῖν, οὓς νῦν παρακαλοῦμεν καὶ ἐκόντας τινὰ (d) τρόπον ἀναγκάζομεν ἄδειν, μέχρι γε τοσοῦτου πεπαιδεῦσθαι σχεδὸν ἀναγκαῖον, μέχρι τοῦ δυνατὸν εἶναι συνακολουθεῖν ἕκαστον ταῖς τε βάσεσιν τῶν ῥυθμῶν καὶ ταῖς χορδαῖς ταῖς τῶν μελῶν, ἵνα καθορῶντες τὰς τε ἀρμονίας καὶ τοὺς ῥυθμούς, ἐκλέγεσθαι τε τὰ προσήκοντα οἷοί τ’ ὦσιν ἂ τοῖς τηλικούτοις τε καὶ τοιούτοις ἄδειν πρέπον, καὶ οὕτως ἄδωσιν, καὶ ἄδοντες αὐτοὶ τε ἡδονὰς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀσινεῖς ἡδῶνται καὶ τοῖς νεωτέροις (e) ἡγεμόνες ἡθῶν χρηστῶν ἀσπασμοῦ προσήκοντος γίνωνται· μέχρι δὲ τοσοῦτου παιδευθέντες ἀκριβεστέραν ἂν παιδείαν τῆς ἐπὶ τὸ πλῆθος φερούσης εἶεν μετακεχειρισμένοι καὶ τῆς περὶ τοὺς ποιητὰς αὐτούς.

and most important level of judgement; but whereas he goes on at considerable length about the two lower levels, he says nothing whatever, in the passage we've been discussing, about the qualifications a person will need if he is to make judgements of this last and crucial sort, or about the way in which he can acquire them. Yet these are surely among the most important things we would want to know. It's worth noting the almost exactly parallel situation that arises in the Aristoxenian discussion of similar issues which we find in the latter part of the Plutarchan *De musica*. It differs from Plato's in several significant ways; but as I said earlier, it is structured in very much the same way as his; and it stops short at exactly the same point, without any examination of the basis on which judgements at this highest level can or should be made. We may well wonder why these two quite elaborate discussions both fail to address this last and most urgent issue. But I have no answer to that question and I'll say no more about it.