

Music in Plato's *Laws*

First seminar: Introduction, and Book 2, 653a-656c

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Introduction: Music in Plato's Writings

If we think about the numerous allusions to music we may find throughout Plato's dialogues, the relevance of musical art is certainly outstanding. Most of the references deal with the value of music in education (a well established idea in ancient Greek culture), as in *Protagoras* 325c-326b, where the leading character prescribes for the children instruction by the *kitharistai*, who «make harmonies and rhythms quite familiar to the children's souls, in order that they may learn to be more gentle, and harmonious, and rhythmical (εὐρυθμότεροι καὶ εὐαρμυστότεροι)»¹; or see the more famous passage of *Republic* Book 3, 398c-401a, where the philosopher discusses the proper education – both physical and musical – for the guardians (*phylakes*) of his ideal city, evaluating various scales and rhythms and identifying those that are best suited to the task of improving the soul and harmonizing its elements. These remarks seem to be deeply involved with the performance culture of *mousikē* in the first half of the fourth century BC, towards which Plato is often harshly critical (as in the case, for instance, of the increasing usage of the panharmonic *aulos*, an instrument which may shift from one *harmonia* to another and which he vigorously denounces, or, more generally, of the tendency of modern composers to constantly pursue musical novelty, regarded by Plato as a danger to the state).

Other more technical passages (closely connected with contemporary musical theories) are concerned, instead, with harmonics conceived as a mathematical science, as in the case of *Republic* Book 7, 530c-531c. Here Plato examines the intellectual education of his 'philosopher-rulers', prescribing them mathematical disciplines such as number-theory, plane and solid geometry, astronomy and harmonics, through which

¹ Transl. Jowett (cf. *Dialogues of Plato: containing the Apology of Socrates, Crito, Phaedo, and Protagoras*, with introductions by the translator Benjamin Jowett and a special introduction by Maurice Francis Egan, New York 1900; repr. in *Protagoras by Plato*, The Echo Library 2006).

they should transcend the sphere of perception and be raised towards the true knowledge of immaterial entities called ‘forms’ or ‘ideas’. This kind of remark shows clearly how Plato, despite his disagreement with the most ‘practical’ aspects of such theoretical speculations, was well aware of the technical details developed by contemporary music theory, within which he distinguishes at least two main groups: the so-called Pythagoreans (or, more generally, the mathematical theorists) and the so-called ‘empiricists’, comparable to those people who practiced the «harmonics based on hearing» (ἡ ἄρμονικὴ [...] ἢ κατὰ τὴν ἀκοήν), as they are described later on by Aristotle (*Posterior Analytics* 79a).

More specifically, in one of these more technical remarks on music theory (the famous passage of *Timaeus* 36a), Plato relates mathematically specifiable musical structures to the constitution of the world’s soul, describing it as a quasi-musical construction thanks to the subdivision of the 2:1 proportions (expressing the Pythagorean octaves or *harmoniai*) into segments of fifths, fourths and single tones by the insertion of harmonic and arithmetic means within each octave. This ‘harmonic’ order of the universe provides a large-scale model for the ‘harmonic’ order which, according to Plato (and Greek culture in general), could be instilled in the human soul by the psychagogic power of music (as is suggested, for instance, in *Republic* Book 3, where we are told that «rhythm and *harmonia* penetrate most deeply into the recesses of the soul and take a powerful hold on it, bringing gracefulness and making a man graceful if he is correctly trained»)².

The main idea implied in all these Platonic discussions on *mousikē* is that the human soul is naturally affected by the musical arts since our soul has structural analogies with musical tunings. In fact, though not identifiable as a *harmonia*, for Plato the soul ‘possesses’ such *harmonia*: concerning this, see *Phaedo* 85e-86d (where, in his discussion of the theory of the soul, the author makes one of his numerous parallels between the human soul and musical harmony), or many other passages in the *Republic*, as that in Book 4:

«a man must not suffer the principles in his soul to do each the work of

² Plato *Resp.* 401d (transl. P. Shorey, *The Loeb Classical Library, Plato, Volume V: The Republic, Books 1-5*, Cambridge, Mass./London 1930).

some other and interfere and meddle with one another, but he should dispose well of what in the true sense of the word is properly his own, and having first attained to self-mastery and beautiful order within himself, and having harmonized (συναρμόσαντα) these three principles, as we usually do with the three boundaries of the musical *harmonia*, i.e., the νεάτη, the ύπάτη and the μέση, and all others there may be between them, and having linked and bound all three together and made of himself a unit, one man instead of many, self-controlled and in unison (ήρμoσμένov), he should then and then only turn to practice [...]»³.

This belief in the psychagogic power of music was certainly deeply rooted in the Greek culture of the time. Plato, however, elaborated it according to a quite complex and sophisticated theory, to which we shall return in the course of this seminar. It is the theory of *mimēsis*, that is, the capacity of music to ‘imitate’ or, better, ‘represent’ moral qualities by means of words, rhythm and melody, a theory through which Plato justifies the thesis that there are affinities between musical structures and types of characters, virtues and vices. Thanks to the mimetic theory, the educational value of music – outstandingly noteworthy within many regional traditions and cultures of the Greek world – found in Plato an explicit theoretical elaboration and explanation (though its details are not always easy to reconstruct). Hence the majority of the musical allusions throughout Plato’s dialogues – excluding the most generic references in earlier works – may be brought back to a single, broad group (not always consistent in its details, of course, since Plato’s thought developed over time), which should be analyzed bearing this philosophical background in mind.

The main concern of our seminars will be Plato’s treatment of music in the *Laws*. The musical topic is here introduced by the author within his discussion of the education of citizens of a new Cretan colony named Magnesia: therefore it has been more often studied for its numerous references to the ‘corruption’ of music of the time than for its theoretical value within Plato’s philosophy (especially the widely known passage in Book 3, 700a-701b, where the author complains about the breaking of rules within specific categories of compositions and about the consequent disarray of genres in fourth century music). But a careful reading of the whole dialogue shows that such discussions concerning contemporary music are inserted by the philosopher within a

³ *Resp.* 443d-e (transl. adapted from Shorey).

complex and articulated conceptual framework, which can be sketched in outline through a preliminary overview of the topics and arguments of the whole dialogue. This overview will be our starting point.

Prelude to Plato's *Laws*

The *Laws* is usually taken to be Plato's last dialogue. Aristotle (*Politics* 1264b) tells us that it is later than the *Republic* and, according to some ancient evidence, we are informed that it was left unrevised by his author and published after his death by his scholar Philip of Opus⁴. More precisely, Diogenes Laertius (our earliest source of information on this point) says that Philip was responsible for transcribing (μετέγραψεν) the treatise onto papyrus, and for writing the thirteenth book (the *Epinomis*) himself: «Some say that Philip the Opuntian transcribed his (i.e. Plato's) work, *Laws*, which was written in wax. They also say that the *Epinomis* is his»⁵. Furthermore, the *Suda* adds that the Opuntian «divided the *Laws* of Plato into 12 books; for he himself is said to have added the 13th»⁶. By contrast, a later testimony by the anonymous author of the *Prolegomena* to Platonic philosophy, attributed to Philip a much deeper revision of the text, which had been left ἀδιορθώτους καὶ συγκεχυμένους (i.e. 'uncorrected and confused') by its author⁷. Despite the implausible thesis of a few scholars who attribute to the Opuntian a total rewriting of the dialogue, however, it seems that this latter source misunderstood some of the information reported by Diogenes, in whose writings the verb μετεγράφειν means only 'copy, transcribe', and never 'correct' or 'revise'⁸.

Of course the nature and extension of the editorial work he did on the *Laws* is left uncertain: this dialogue is definitely atypical in style and content if compared to the rest of Plato's production (its style is more expository and dogmatic than dialogic, for instance, and reads more like a treatise than a dialogue, the conversation being

⁴ Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 3.46: Μαθηταὶ δ' αὐτοῦ (sc. Plato's) Σπεύσιππος Ἀθηναῖος, Ξενοκράτης Καλχηδόνιος, Ἀριστοτέλης Σταγειρίτης, Φίλιππος Ὀπούντιος [...].

⁵ Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 3.37: ἔνιοί τε φασὶν ὅτι Φίλιππος ὁ Ὀπούντιος τοὺς Νόμους αὐτοῦ μετέγραψεν ὄντας ἐν κηρῷ. τούτου δὲ καὶ Ἐπινομίδα φασὶν εἶναι.

⁶ *Sud.* φ 418 (s.v. φιλόσοφος): [...] ὃς τοὺς Πλάτωνος Νόμους διεῖλεν εἰς βιβλία ιβ, τὸ γὰρ ιγ αὐτὸς προσθεῖναι λέγεται [...].

⁷ [Olymp.] *Prol.* 24, p. 45 Westerink.

⁸ For a fuller discussion on this topic, see G. Morrow *Plato's Cretan City*, Princeton 1960, pp. 515-518.

dominated by a single character, as it is also in the *Timaeus*, another work generally agreed to be late), but attempts made to determine traces of Philip's intervention in the *Laws* have given no reliable results.

The *Laws* comprises a dialogue in 12 books, set on Crete, among three interlocutors: an unnamed Athenian Stranger (who seems to perform the same function of Socrates in many of the earlier dialogues, for he acts as a sort of 'spokesman' for the author), the Spartan Megillus and the Cretan Cleinias. At the end of Book 3 (702b-d), Cleinias announces that Cnossus is about to found a colony in Crete, to be named Magnesia, and that he has been selected as one of the ten Cnossians to frame laws for the new city. As a consequence, he appeals to the Athenian Stranger for help and the rest of the dialogue sketches Magnesia's legislation and social structure, together with the ethical, political and theological principles underlying them.

Plato's prescriptions for the foundation of Magnesia seem to agree in many respects with what we would expect of the planning of real Greek cities. Many of his laws are based on actual Greek codes, and his account of the foundation of his Cretan 'almost-Utopia' (the 'second-best' city, as he calls it in Book 5, 739a-740c, that is, no longer the ideal society of the *Republic*, based on the community of property, women, and children, given up as unrealizable by human beings) may in some respects reflect actual Greek practice. Indeed it is generally agreed that the constitution of Magnesia represents a synthesis of Dorian and Athenian political traditions: the rigid socio-political structure and the adherence to laws is obviously Laconophile and Cretophile (as well as particular institutions such as the common meals, called *syssitia*, or the minimum land allotments, consisting of two plots of land for each household), while the interest in creating a large citizen-community unified by open debate and agreement, which gives scope for a high degree of artistic expression and philosophical enquiry, points to the Athenian model⁹. The standard book which aims to collect and interpret the historical material with which Plato worked is Glenn Morrow's famous *Plato's Cretan City*. According to this scholar, no work of Plato's is more intimately connected with its time and with the world in

⁹ M. Schofield, *Religion and philosophy in the Laws*, in S. Scolnicov, L. Brisson (eds.), *Plato's Laws: From Theory into Practice. Proceedings of the VI Symposium Platonicum, Selected Papers*, Sankt Augustin 2003, pp. 1-13.

which it was written than the *Laws*, whose main purpose, in Morrow's view, was just to find solutions to the concrete problems of the city in which he lived, Athens being the city Plato had constantly in mind. Recently, the bibliography on the *Laws* has interestingly increased, seeking to define more sharply or to slightly correct such an interpretation (as is the case in some of the papers collected in the *Proceedings of the VI Symposium Platonicum*, edited by Samuel Scolnicov and Luc Brisson)¹⁰, or else focusing on the relation between the *Republic* and the *Laws*, especially in connection with ethics and politics¹¹.

The city sketched in the *Laws* is addressed to human beings classified in familial and tribal groups (*genē* and *phylai*): hence it should necessarily take into account pleasures, pains and desires which unavoidably affect human beings. By contrast with the *Republic*, however, in this work Plato restricts the status of 'citizens' to those people whose aim is the pursuit and cultivation of the virtues, therefore excluding not only slaves and foreigners, but also the lower classes mentioned in the earlier dialogue, such as the producers, and the guardians, too (since all citizens have, now, to serve in the military). Thus the previous hierarchical class society is replaced with a more egalitarian structure: the stability of Magnesia depends on the cohesion of this civic body where all citizens are subject to the same extremely high ethical demands, which can be fulfilled only through a 'correct' (653a: τὴν ὀρθὴν παιδείαν) and 'appropriate' education (969c: παιδευθῶσί τε προσηκόντως). It is in fact education that is the main concern of the first part of the dialogue: in Book 1, *paideia* is defined as «that training in virtue from youth upwards, which makes a man eagerly pursue the ideal perfection of citizenship, and teaches him how rightly to rule and how to obey»¹².

Ethics and politics, then, are again strictly interwoven, as much as in the *Republic* or maybe more; the consensus of the citizens' community in 'spontaneously' conforming to the law, however, is here based on the possibility of moulding the citizen's behaviour

¹⁰ Cf. n. 9.

¹¹ On this topic see Ch. Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia recast*, Oxford 2002, and L. Brisson, *Ethics and Politics in Plato's Laws*, «Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy» 28, 2005, pp. 93-121. For a discussion on Bobonich's book concerning metaphysics and psychology see C. Kahn, *From Republic to Laws: A Discussion of Christopher Bobonich, Plato's Utopia Recast*, «Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy» 26, 2004, pp. 337-362.

¹² *Laws* 643e (transl. R. G. Bury, *The Loeb Classical Library. Vol. X. Laws, Books 1-6*, Cambridge, Mass./London 1926).

and morality in advance through education in all its forms, including persuasion (*peithein*) through pleasure (*hēdonē*)¹³.

The Theory of Education: Wine for Elders, Music for Children

The theoretical fundamentals of education are more extensively developed in Book 2. More specifically, Plato focuses here on the subject of ‘musical’ education since, for him, the most important and effective means for educating and bringing order to society is provided by the *choreia*, that is, by the practice – widely diffused among the Greeks – of choral dancing and singing in honour of the gods:

- Ath. «Shall we then say that the uneducated man (ἀπαίδευτος) is without choric expertise (ἀχόρευτος), [654b] while the educated man is to be reckoned adequately trained in the art of the chorus (ικανῶς κεχορευκός)?»
- Clin. «Certainly».
- Ath. «The choric art (χορεία) as a whole consists of dance (ὄρχησις) and song (ὠδή)»¹⁴.

This statement, despite the famous Platonic censorship on poetry and music in the *Republic*, should not surprise us, since (as other scholars have opportunely pointed out)¹⁵ a religious framework shapes the presentation of the political theory of the *Laws*, and it is widely known that choral activity was a fundamental aspect of ancient Greek religion and its ritual contexts. In Barbara Kowalzig’s words, «the guarantee of a functioning religious system is a working set of practices directed towards the gods»,¹⁶ as if to say, belief is established through practice, and Greek choral performance was certainly the most important and widespread of these ritual practices.

The topic of musical, more specifically ‘choral’ education is introduced by a very important passage in the opening of Book 2. This passage, arising from the question on the right use of wine-parties and drunkenness (which is said to safeguard correct education), quickly shifts to the importance of disciplining ‘pleasure’ and ‘pain’, the

¹³ See Brisson, *Ethics and Politics*, p. 118.

¹⁴ *Laws* 654a-b (transl. A. Barker, *Greek Musical Writings: I. The Musician and his Art*, Cambridge 1984).

¹⁵ Cf. Schofield, *Religion and philosophy*.

¹⁶ B. Kowalzig, *Singing for the Gods. Performances of Myth and Ritual in Archaic and Classical Greece*, Oxford 2008, p. 1.

first sensations felt by human beings, which may act as a vehicle to ‘goodness’ and ‘badness’ of the soul:

«What I state is this, that in children the first childish sensations are pleasure and pain (ἡδονὴν καὶ λύπην), and that it is in these first that goodness and badness (ἀρετὴ καὶ κακία) come to the soul; [...] I term, then, the goodness that first comes to children ‘education’ (παιδεία). When pleasure and love, and pain and hatred, spring up rightly in the souls of those who are unable as yet to grasp a rational account; and when, after grasping the rational account, they consent thereunto through having been rightly trained (ὀρθῶς εἰθίσθαι) in fitting practices: this consent (συμφωνία), viewed as a whole, is goodness (ἀρετή), while the part of it that is rightly trained in respect of pleasures and pains, so as to hate what ought to be hated, right from the beginning up to the very end, and to love what ought to be loved, if you were to mark this part off in your definition and call it ‘education’, you would be giving it, in my opinion, its right name»¹⁷.

So, from the beginning of Book 2, Plato introduces the relevance of irrational elements first in the *polis*’ religious system (as will be clearer later in the text, where the author discusses the benefits of wine and controlled drunkenness to those over forty, i.e. the members of the ‘Chorus of Dionysus’), then – more generally – in the human soul. In fact, the *Laws* is a work where, differently from elsewhere, the philosopher puts an important emphasis on the positive contribution to education made by the irrational elements in the soul and, on account of this, by the notion of ‘pleasure’ as an effective and valuable means to instill virtue. Let’s remember that, unlike the *Republic* – which involves the claim that the embodied human soul has three parts or aspects, namely reason, spirit and appetite –¹⁸, this dialogue does not present a detailed theory of soul, centering more generically on its internal psychic conflicts and the need to find an agreement (συμφωνία) between its different tendencies. This agreement is produced when the sensations go along with the dictates of reason¹⁹.

Before moving to an explicit application of such ideas to the musical context, it is worth considering a quite recent scholarly interpretation of these non-rational states and

¹⁷ *Laws* 653a-c (transl. Bury).

¹⁸ The argument for this claim is presented in *Republic* Book 4, 440e-441a.

¹⁹ For a detailed survey on Plato’s conception of the soul in the *Laws*, see M. M. Sassi, *The Self, the Soul, and the Individual in the City of the Laws*, «Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy» 35, 2008, pp. 125-145.

of their aesthetic implications within Plato's thought. According to Elizabeth Belfiore, in this treatise the author argues that virtue may be aided by first artificially and temporarily increasing the non-rational desires and emotions, and then bringing order to them through a process of allopathic catharsis²⁰. Even if Belfiore's argument is mainly concerned with the benefits of wine (described as a *pharmakon* to put *aidōs*²¹ in the soul)²² and of carefully contained drunkenness for older people (made, due to this, 'less ashamed' to sing chants and incantations)²³, her argumentation has the merit of stressing the importance, in this dialogue, of the psychic elements other than reason, that is to say of the non-rational emotions, interpreted (when opportunely held in check) as beneficial and necessary for the soul. Through her interpretation of Plato's advocacy of drunkenness as cathartic, she offers an explanation of the puzzling conflation of the two main themes developed in this first part of the dialogue, which commentators have examined critically: the use of wine for cultivating character of elders and the proper education of the young, which are indeed clearly connected by a passage in Book 1:

« [...] so I am afraid of making you think that I am a great talker about a small matter, if I spin out a discourse of prodigious length about the small matter of drunkenness. But the fact is that the right ordering of this could never be treated adequately and clearly in our discourse apart from rightness

²⁰ E. Belfiore, *Wine and Catharsis of the Emotions in Plato's Laws*, «The Classical Quarterly» 36/2, 1986, pp. 421-437. Even if I am not personally convinced that Plato's catharsis should be described as 'allopathic', this interpretative divergence does not affect the discussion underway here.

²¹ Plato explicitly considers *aidōs* in a very positive way in *Laws* book 1, 647a-b: «Does not, then, the lawgiver and every man who is worth anything, hold this kind of fear in the highest honour, and name it 'modesty'; and to the confidence which is opposed to it does he not give the name 'immodesty' (*ἀναίδειαν*), [647b] and pronounce it to be for all, both publicly and privately, a very great evil?» (transl. Bury). For a prescription of wine as a means to induce *aidōs* in the soul, see also *Laws* 647e-650b.

²² *Leg.* 672d: «Moreover, as to wine, the account given by other people apparently is that it was bestowed on us men as a punishment, to make us mad; but our own account, on the contrary, declares that it is a medicine given for the purpose of securing modesty of soul (*αἰδοῦς μὲν ψυχῆς*) and health and strength of body (*σώματος δὲ ὑγιείας τε καὶ ἰσχύος*)» (transl. Bury).

²³ *Leg.* 666b-c: «When he reaches the age of forty and joins in the festivities of the communal meals (*ἐν τοῖς συσσιτίοις*), he may invoke all the gods, and may call upon Dionysus in particular to come to the older men's ceremonial and recreation, for which he gave people wine as a medicine (*φάρμακον*) that fights against the crustiness of old age, so that we may renew our youth, and the character of the soul, through forgetfulness of its troubles, may lose its hardness and become [666c] softer and more malleable (*καὶ δυσθυμίας λήθη γίνεσθαι μαλακώτερον ἐκ σκληροτέρου τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἦθος*), like iron placed in the fire. Isn't true that everyone whose disposition has been changed in this way will be more enthusiastic and less diffident about singing songs or 'incantations' (*ᾄδειν τε καὶ [...] ἐπᾶδειν*), as we have often called them – not before a large audience of people of different sorts, but before one of a moderate size, whose members are people of his own kind?» (transl. Barker).

in music (ἄνευ μουσικῆς ὀρθότητος), nor could music, apart from education as a whole; and these require lengthy discussions»²⁴.

The mention of wine and controlled drunkenness within the discussion on musical education, then, is to be interpreted both as part of the Platonic religious conservatism (according to which traditional religion and religious rites are highly commended and ordained to be preserved, even if quite irrational) and as a renewal in older age of the mechanism through which music may affect young people by ‘enchanting’ them (see the frequent and conscious²⁵ use of the words *epōidai/epaidein* to describe musical education throughout the whole dialogue). In a metaphor of Book 6, wine is said to be ‘mad’ (μαινόμενος) and it is moderated and ‘punished’ (κολαζόμενος) by water, which continually combats it:

«For people do not find it easy to perceive that a State should be like a bowl of mixed wine, where the wine when first poured in foams madly, but as soon as it is chastened by the sober deity of water, it forms a fair alliance, and produces a potion that is good and moderate»²⁶.

According to Belfiore’s view, this mixing-bowl metaphor may help us to clarify the theory of education in Book 2: «in *paideia* a ‘mad’ element, the tendency to make disordered cries and movements, must be mixed by a wise teacher in proper proportions with a ‘sober’ element, perception of order and harmony and obedience to the law, to produce music and dance. Just as the good and measured drink remains wine, so dance remains movement when *aretē* is produced in children: *aretē* is madness successfully combated»²⁷.

As a matter of fact, the Platonic statement previously mentioned, concerning the importance of disciplining pleasure and pain in children’s education, is followed immediately by the key-passage on the establishment of musical chorality in Greek organized societies, an establishment described as a way to restore in older people the fiery disposition of the young. In this passage the notion of ‘pleasure’ is, for the first time, explicitly applied by the author to music:

²⁴ *Laws* 642a (transl. Bury).

²⁵ Cf. *Laws* 666c: [...] ἄδειν τε καὶ ὁ πολλάκις εἰρήκαμεν ἐπάδειν.

²⁶ *Laws* 773c-d (transl. Bury).

²⁷ Belfiore, *Wine and Catharsis*, p. 429.

«Now these properly trained pleasures and pains (τῶν ὀρθῶς τεθραμμένων ἡδονῶν καὶ λυπῶν), which are forms of education, are subject to slackening and destruction to a great extent during men’s lives; but the gods, in pity [653a] for the race of men, born to toil, established for them as respites from their labours (ἀναπαύλας τε αὐτοῖς τῶν πόνων) the festivals of thanksgiving to the gods; and they gave them the Muses, with their leader Apollo, so that they might be set right again, along with the nourishing that comes from joining in festivals with the gods [...] [653e] Other creatures, it says, have no perception of order and disorder in movements, the names for which are rhythm and *harmonia*. But for us, to whom as we said the gods have been given [654a] as fellow-dancers, these same gods have given the capacity to perceive rhythm and *harmonia* and to enjoy them (τὴν ἔνρυσθμόν τε καὶ ἐναρμόνιον αἴσθησιν μεθ’ ἡδονῆς), and through this capacity they move us and lead us in the dance, joining us to one another with songs and dances: and they have given ‘choruses’ their name by derivation from the *chara* (‘joy’) that is natural to them (χορούς τε ὠνομακέναι παρὰ τὸ τῆς χαρᾶς ἔμφυτον ὄνομα)»²⁸.

While commenting on the uniqueness of human beings in perceiving rhythmically ordered movements (which marks the passage – by Plato described as a divine gift – from a ‘natural’ towards a ‘cultural’ dimension), the philosopher interrelates choral dance with social order without dismissing its ‘entertainment’ value. The fanciful etymology presented here («they have given ‘choruses’ their name by derivation from the ‘joy’, *chara*, that is natural to them») is certainly indicative of a feature (i.e., the *χαρά*) which, for Plato, is inherent in the *choreia* and whose importance will be furthermore remarked later in the book. In such a passage, the author clarifies that

« [...] in order that the child’s soul should not become habituated to enjoying and disliking things in defiance of the law and those who obey the law, but should follow it, enjoying and disliking the same things as an old man does, [659e] for these purposes there exist what we call ‘songs’ (ᾠδαί). They are really incantations (ἐπιφοδαί) that work on their souls, seriously aimed at what we call ‘concord’ (*symphōnia*): but because the souls of the young cannot bear seriousness, they are called ‘games’ and ‘songs’ (παιδιαί τε καὶ ᾠδαί), and practised as such, just as those whose business it is try to give to the sick, and to those who are physically weak, [660a] wholesome nutriment in pleasant foods and drinks, and that consisting of unwholesome things in unpleasant ones, so that they may be correctly habituated to welcome the one and detest the other (ἵνα τὴν μὲν ἀσπάζονται, τὴν δὲ

²⁸ *Laws* 653c-654a (transl. Barker).

μισεῖν ὀρθῶς ἐθίζονται). In the same way, the lawgiver who acts correctly will persuade the poet by fine words and flattery, and will compel him if he fails to persuade, to compose correctly (ὀρθῶς ποιεῖν) in his rhythms the postures of men who are brave and in all respects good, and to compose their melodies in his *harmoniai*»²⁹.

That is to say: music is particularly suitable for young people because it is ‘pleasant’. It acts on them as a sort of ‘incantation’, introducing in their soul a *symphōnia* among its different parts which, otherwise, would be difficult to instill, due to children’s incapacity to stand an effort. But such a pleasantness is not objective: it should be moulded through training and habit, since a ‘correct’ pleasure is the one we feel when we listen to ‘good’ music, that is, to music in which the poet has correctly (ὀρθῶς) composed postures (σχήματα) and melodies (μέλη) of men who are moderate and brave and in all respects good (τῶν σωφρόνων τε καὶ ἀνδρείων καὶ πάντως ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν). Despite an explicit lack of the technical term *mimēsis*, here we are at the core of Platonic mimetic theory, which we are going to analyze in the second part of this paper.

Musical Goodness (654e-656a) and its Learning through Training and Habit (656b-657a)

From musical education, then, the discourse topic quickly shifts to the treatment of musical ‘goodness’ (*to kalon*), which occupies the bulk of Book 2:

Ath. «Then the man who is well-educated would be able to sing and dance well (καλῶς)».

Clin. «So it seems».

Ath. «Let us then consider what this expression means».

Clin. «Which one?».

Ath. «We said “he sings well (καλῶς ᾄδει) and dances well (καὶ καλῶς ὀρχεῖται)”. [654c] Should we or should we not add “if he sings (καλὰ ᾄδει) and dances good things (καλὰ ὀρχεῖται)?”».

Clin. «We should».

[.....]

Ath. «Then if we understand what is good in song and dance, we can also distinguish correctly the educated man and the uneducated (τὸν πεπαιδευμένον τε καὶ ἀπαιδευτον ὀρθῶς). But if we do not know that, we

²⁹ *Laws* 659d-660a (transl. Barker).

shall be unable to grasp whether there is any safeguard for education, or where it is to be found. [654e] Is that not so?»

Clin. «It is».

Ath. «Then what we must next track down, like hunting dogs, is good posture, good melody, good song and good dance (σχῆμά τε καλὸν καὶ μέλος καὶ ᾠδὴν καὶ ὄρχησιν). If all these things run away and elude us, all the rest of our discourse about correct education (περὶ παιδείας ὀρθῆς), whether Greek or foreign, will be futile»³⁰.

Such a long section discusses many theoretical aspects of the topic, spaced out by several digressions. It starts from the definition of what is *kalon* in music (654e-656a); then it emphasizes the need for its learning by young people through training and habit (656b-657a); finally (from 657b onwards) it progressively describes the interweaving criteria of its judgment: pleasure, correctness and utility, more explicitly affirmed at 667b-671a (a passage³¹ opportunely anticipated by a long discussion³² – which provides the theoretical basis for the subsequent treatment of such criteria – on the interrelationships among justice, happiness and pleasure in human life).

First of all, musical ‘goodness’ and ‘badness’ are thus summarized by Plato:

«Then what we must next track down, like hunting dogs, is good posture, good melody, good song and good dance (σχῆμά τε καλὸν καὶ μέλος καὶ ᾠδὴν καὶ ὄρχησιν) [...] Well then, what should we say constitutes good posture or good melody? Consider: when a courageous soul is caught up in troubles, and [655a] a cowardly soul in ones that are equal and the same, are their resulting postures and utterances alike? [.....] But in music there are postures (σχήματα) and melodies (μέλη), since music is concerned with rhythm and *harmonia*, and hence one can speak correctly of ‘well-rhythmed’ (εὐρυθμον) or ‘well harmonised’ (εὐάρμοστον) melody and posture, while one cannot correctly speak – in the metaphor chorus-trainers use – of melody or posture as ‘well-coloured’. One can also speak correctly of the ‘postures’ and ‘melodies’ of the coward and the brave man, [655b] and it is correct to call those of the brave man ‘good’ (τὰ μὲν τῶν ἀνδρείων καλά), and those of the coward ‘ugly’ (τὰ τῶν δειλῶν δὲ αἰσχροῦ). To forestall a lengthy discussion about all this, let us agree that all the postures and melodies belonging to goodness of soul or body – to virtue itself or any image of it – are good (ἀπλῶς ἔστω τὰ μὲν ἀρετῆς ἐχόμενα ψυχῆς ἢ σώματος, εἴτε αὐτῆς εἴτε τινὸς εἰκόνοσ, σύμπαντα σχήματά τε καὶ μέλη

³⁰ *Laws* 654b-e (transl. Barker).

³¹ This passage will be commented on by Prof. Barker.

³² *Laws* 662c-663b.

καλά), while those belonging to badness are altogether the opposite (τὰ δὲ κακίας αὐτῶν, τούναντίον ἅπαν)»³³.

The ‘goodness’ of postures and melodies seems to rely (as in the *Republic*) on the ‘goodness’ (or on any image of it: εἴτε αὐτῆς [sc. ἀρετῆς] εἴτε τινὸς εἰκόνοϛ) of the soul or body to which such musical elements belong. The ‘magical’ word *mimēsis* has not appeared in the passage yet to clarify the link between these two ‘goodnesses’, but the same assimilation of ethical values (in this case ἀνδρεία, ‘courage’,³⁴ and its opposite δειλότης, ‘cowardice’) to what is fine (*kalon*) or ugly (*aischron*) in artistic (more specifically musical) products appears also in the famous passage of *Republic* Book 3 on the musical education of the guardians. In this long portion of the text, which runs from 397a to 402a, Plato lists all the *harmoniai* and discusses the rhythms that should be available to the *phylakes*, selecting them on the basis of their affinities with types of characters, virtues and vices («leave the *harmonia* that would appropriately imitate the sounds and cadences of a man who is brave in deeds of war [that is, the Dorian *harmonia*] [...] keep another, too, which will imitate those of a man engaged in peaceful activities [that is, the Phrygian *harmonia*] [...] Ask Damon³⁵ which movements are suitable for illiberality, conceit, madness and other vices, and which rhythms we should keep and assign to their opposites»)³⁶. Here I am going to focus only on the passage concluding this long section:

Socr. «But we must look for those craftsmen who by the happy gift of nature are capable of following the trail of beauty and grace (τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ τε καὶ εὐσχήμονος φύσιν), that our young men, dwelling as it were in a salubrious region, may receive benefit from all things about them, whence the influence that emanates from works of beauty (ἀπὸ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων) may waft itself to eye or ear (ἢ πρὸς ὄψιν ἢ πρὸς ἀκοήν) like a breeze that brings from wholesome places health, and so from earliest childhood insensibly guide them to likeness, to friendship, to harmony with beautiful reason (εἰς ὁμοιότητά τε καὶ φιλίαν καὶ συμφωνίαν τῶν καλῶν λόγῳ) [...] For these reasons, then, Glaucon», I said, «isn’t training in *mousikē* of overriding importance (κυριωτάτη ἐν μουσικῇ τροφή), because rhythm and *harmonia*

³³ *Laws* 654e-655b (transl. Barker).

³⁴ In *Republic* book 3 (398e-399c), *andreia* is the ethical value most appropriately represented by the Dorian *harmonia*.

³⁵ Damon is the musical expert quoted by the author as a leader in the field.

³⁶ *Resp.* 399a ff. (transl. Barker).

penetrate most deeply into the recesses of the soul and take a powerful hold on it, bringing gracefulness (φέροντα τὴν εὐσχημοσύνην) and making a man graceful (καὶ ποιεῖ εὐσχήμονα) if he is correctly trained (ἐάν τις ὀρθῶς τραφῆ), but the opposite if he is not? Another reason is that the man who has been properly trained in these matters would perceive most sharply things that were defective, and badly crafted or badly grown, and his displeasure would be justified. He would praise and rejoice in fine things (τὰ μὲν καλὰ ἐπαινοῖ καὶ χαίρων), and would receive them into his soul and be nourished by them, becoming fine and good (γίγνεται καλὸς τε καὶ ἀγαθός): but he would rightly condemn ugly things (τὰ δ' αἰσχροὶ ψέγοι), and hate them even when he was young, before he was able to lay hold on reason. And when reason grew, the person trained in this way would embrace it with enthusiasm, recognizing it as a familiar friend (γνωρίζων δι' οἰκειότητα)».

Gl. «It seems to me», he said, «that the purposes of a training in *mousikē* are of just these kinds»³⁷.

The two treatises seem, then, to be consistent on at least two points. Firstly, 'good' artistic products not only display a pleasant and graceful appearance (εὐσχημοσύνη), but are also intimately connected with 'good' ethical values (καλά vs. αἰσχροί, in both an aesthetic and a moral sense, as will be further clarified in the passage on the criteria of musical judgment). Secondly, the appreciation of such goodness is also a question of 'training'³⁸, more specifically of 'musical education', which plays a big role in developing the capability of appreciating formal and ethical features of any artistic product.

Before moving to analyze the explicit introduction – some phrases further on – of the 'mimetic' theory in the *Laws*, however, I would like to draw your attention towards a few points in these last two passages.

First of all, it is well known that, in Greek antiquity, the notion of *mousikē* (lit. 'the art of the Muses') described a much denser artistic reality than the same term does nowadays. Hence many commentators have pointed out that the notion of *mousikē* involved in this account of the *Republic* quite expressly included (besides rhythm and *harmonia*) also the sung or spoken 'word' (*logos*), as is clearly stated, for instance, in another passage of the same dialogue: «And under music you include tales (λόγους), do

³⁷ *Resp.* 401c-402a (transl. Shorey).

³⁸ Let's remember the subjection of pleasure and pain to discipline in children's education.

you not? I do»³⁹. In this way some scholars tried to explain the connection between the wide concept of *mousikē* and the ethical values expressed by it: that is to say, the ethical values would have been conveyed mainly by the ‘content’ (that is, by the ‘text’) of musical compositions, and not by their specific musical items. This would be also the reason for which Plato affirms that it is almost impossible to understand what is intended by wordless rhythm and harmony (ἄνευ λόγου [...] ῥυθμὸν τε καὶ ἁρμονίαν), that is, by pure instrumental music⁴⁰.

In the two passages I mentioned earlier, however, Plato’s concerns about *mousikē* refer to specifically musical ingredients, such as rhythms and melodies, and the author’s intention is just to discuss them as such:

« [...] isn’t training in *mousikē* of overriding importance, because rhythm and *harmonia* (ὃ τε ῥυθμὸς καὶ ἁρμονία) penetrate most deeply into the recesses of the soul and take a powerful hold on it [...] ?»⁴¹.

« [...] in music there are postures (σχήματα) and melodies (μέλη), since music is concerned with rhythm and *harmonia*, and hence one can speak correctly of ‘well-rhythmed’ (εὖρυθμον) or ‘well harmonised’ (εὐάρμοστον) melody and posture [...] One can also speak correctly of the ‘postures’ and ‘melodies’ of the coward and the brave man [...] »⁴².

Moreover, in the passage of the *Laws*, the philosopher is very careful in distinguishing the concepts of ‘postures’ (σχήματα) and ‘melodies’ (μέλη) within broader musical items as *rhythmos* and *harmonia*. That is to say: if, in the *Republic*, Plato’s concern appeared more generically to be that of discussing the psychagogic power of organized schemes of durations or pitches which are in determinate relations to one another (that is, *rhythmoi* and *harmoniai*), in the *Laws* he is more explicit in referring to ‘figures’ (of dance) and ‘paths’ (of notes) as concrete elements of the musical performance⁴³. Of

³⁹ *Resp.* 376e (transl. Shorey).

⁴⁰ Cf. *Laws* 669d-e: ταῦτά γε γὰρ ὁρῶσι πάντα κυκώμενα, καὶ ἔτι διασπῶσιν οἱ ποιηταὶ ῥυθμὸν μὲν καὶ σχήματα μέλους χωρὶς, λόγους ψιλοῦς εἰς μέτρα [669e] τιθέντες, μέλος δ’ αὖ καὶ ῥυθμὸν ἄνευ ῥημάτων, ψιλῆ κηθαρίσει τε καὶ ἀλλήσει προσχρώμενοι, ἐν οἷς δὴ παγγάλεπον ἄνευ λόγου γιγνόμενον ῥυθμὸν τε καὶ ἁρμονίαν γινώσκουν ὅτι τε βούλεται καὶ ὅτω ἔοικε τῶν ἀξιολόγων μιμημάτων.

⁴¹ *Resp.* 401d-e (transl. Shorey).

⁴² *Laws* 655a (transl. Barker).

⁴³ Later in Book 2 (672e-673a), Plato explicitly describes *melos* as ‘movement of the voice’: τὸ δέ γε κατὰ τὴν τοῦ σώματος κίνησιν ῥυθμὸν μὲν κοινὸν τῇ τῆς φωνῆς εἶχε κινήσει, σχῆμα δὲ ἴδιον. [673a] ἐκεῖ δὲ μέλος ἢ τῆς φωνῆς κίνησις.

course the concept of ‘dance posture’, conceived as a specific kind of *rhythmizomenon* (‘structurally organized’) element occurring in bodily movement, and that of ‘melody’, described as a selected and coherent sequence of pitches within the musical scale, did not find an explicit theoretical elaboration before the second half of the fourth century BC in the writings of Aristoxenus of Taras:

«There are three kinds of *rhythmizomena*, speech, melody, bodily movement (κίνησις σωματική): [...] bodily movements will divide it by signals and positions (σημείοις τε καὶ σχήμασι) and whatever other parts of movement there may be»⁴⁴.

« [...] since many forms of melody, of all sorts (πολλά τε καὶ παντοδαπαὶ μορφαὶ μελῶν), come into existence in notes which are themselves the same and unchanging, it is clear that this variety depends on the use to which the notes are put: and this is what we call melodic composition (μελοποιΐαν)»⁴⁵.

Nevertheless, Plato seems here to be well aware that the emotional response and the consequent positive effect of music on education depend on ‘concrete’ types of performances rather than on abstract theoretical schemes.

The language of the *Laws*, then, suggests that the author’s focus is more sharply directed to the discussion of ‘practical’ genres of music of contemporary life, each with its own peculiar constitutive elements, both rhythmic and melodic, and performed in its own peculiar religious setting, the details of which will be discussed more extensively by the author in Book 7. It is in that book, in fact, that Plato will keep on stressing the importance of a good selection of dancing and melodies to be performed within religious festivals determined and organized by the ‘guardian of the laws’ (*nomophylax*), whose most significant duty, then, turns out to be the establishment of the exact relation between specific deities and their most appropriate choral types.

The rest of Book 2, however, – as we have already said – is devoted to explaining the theoretical fundamentals of the psychagogic and educational power of specific musical elements according to the famous mimetic theory. Hence, the next issue into which we are going to enquire is: how may a particular figure of dance or a specific melody

⁴⁴ Aristox. *Rhythm.* 2.9 (transl. L. Pearson, *Aristoxenus Elementa Rhythmica. The fragment of book II and the additional evidence for Aristoxenean rhythmic theory*, Oxford 1990).

⁴⁵ Aristox. *Harm.* 38.20 ff., p. 48.5 ff. Da Rios (transl. A. Barker, *Greek Musical Writings: II. Harmonic and Acoustic Theory*, Cambridge 1989).

‘represent’ virtues or vices typical of human beings?

The Theory of *Mimēsis* in Plato’s *Laws*

At *Laws* 655c, which we have just dwelt on, Plato was discussing the notion of musical *kalon*, more precisely of its aesthetic appreciation, which must absolutely not be based only on a ‘pleasurable’ evaluation of it:

Ath. «No one is going to say that choric expressions of badness are better than those of goodness, or that he himself enjoys (χαίρει) the postures of depravity while other people enjoy music [lit. ‘a Muse’] of an opposite kind. Yet most people certainly say that musical [655d] correctness consists in the power to provide pleasure for the soul (καίτοι λέγουσιν γε οἱ πλεῖστοι μουσικῆς ὀρθότητα εἶναι τὴν ἡδονὴν ταῖς ψυχαῖς πορίζουσιν δύναμιν). But that assertion is intolerable and cannot even be uttered without blasphemy. It is more likely that what leads us astray is this».

Clin. «What?».

Ath. «Since what is involved in choric performance is imitations of characters (μιμήματα τρόπων), appearing in actions and eventualities of all kinds which each performer goes through by means of habits and imitations (ἐν πράξεσιν τε παντοδαπαῖς γιγνόμενα καὶ τύχαις, καὶ ἤθεσι καὶ μιμήσεσιν διεξιόντων ἐκάστων), those people to whom the things said or sung or performed in any way are congenial (οἷς μὲν ἂν πρὸς τρόπον τὰ ῥηθέντα ἢ μελωδηθέντα ἢ καὶ ὀπωσοῦν χορευθέντα), on the basis of their [655e] nature or their habits or of both together (ἢ κατὰ φύσιν ἢ κατὰ ἔθος ἢ κατ’ ἀμφοτέρα), enjoy them and praise them (τούτοις χαίρειν τε καὶ ἐπαινεῖν αὐτὰ), and must call them good (καλά): but those to whose nature or disposition or habit they are contrary cannot enjoy or praise them, and must call them bad (αἰσχροτά). As for those who are correct in their natural responses but the reverse in those due to habit, or correct in those due to habit but the reverse in their natural ones, [656a] the praises that these people speak are ones that oppose their pleasures. They say that all such things are pleasant but disgraceful (ἡδέα [...] πονηρὰ δέ): they are ashamed to make movements of these kinds when their bodies are in the presence of those whose judgment they trust; and they are ashamed to sing them in such a way as to suggest seriously that they are good, while nevertheless they enjoy them privately»⁴⁶.

Many points are interesting and worth commenting on here.

Firstly, there is the notion of the ‘pleasure’ and ‘enjoyment’ that people derive from

⁴⁶ *Laws* 655c-656a (transl. Barker).

musical correctness (*mousikēs orthotēs*), which will be treated more extensively by Plato as one of the criteria of musical judgment in Book 2 (see especially 658e-659a and 665c)⁴⁷.

Secondly, such a pleasant perception by «those people to whom the things said (τὰ ῥηθέντα) or sung (μελωδηθέντα) or performed in any way (ὅπωςοῦν χορευθέντα) are congenial» depends on a correspondence both of nature and habit between such people, on the one hand, and musical goodness, on the other. The importance of ‘training’ in the appreciation of καλὰ σχήματα and καλὰ μέλη will be more fully developed at 656b-657a.

Thirdly, and most importantly, Plato introduces here the explicit definition of choric performance as ‘imitations or ‘representations’ of characters: μιμήματα τρόπων ἐστὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς χορείας.

It has been more than fifty years since Koller⁴⁸ opened the debate on the meaning of the Greek term *mimēsis*, which lies at the core of the theories on representational arts in antiquity. According to him, the meaning of *mimēsis* as ‘imitation’ was only a later development, since its origin concerns a kind of cultic orgiastic dance, implying the power of expression of *mousikē* in its original unity. Koller’s thesis was that the Greek word *mimesthai* came from the noun *mîmos* (the oldest member of the *mimēsis* word group), which means ‘participant in an event as protagonist’ (the meaning of ‘dramatic actor’ being derived from it). The significance of ‘imitation’ would have been only a watered-down application of the word in areas like painting and plastic art, to which this word did not originally belong.

The most recent interpretation of such a complex and variable concept in ancient Greek culture is that developed by Stephen Halliwell⁴⁹. According to him, since its first appearance (when applied to poetry, music and dance) *mimēsis* conveyed well the wider idea of ‘representation’ and not simply of ‘copying, imitation’ (which comes to be a reductive, though widely accepted, translation). Its ‘representative’ meaning would rely on the use of an artistic medium (words, sounds, dance postures or physical images) to

⁴⁷ At 662b onwards, the discourse will be also extended to include an enquiry on which life is to be judged ‘pleasant’ and ‘just’. See *Laws* 662d: «is the most just life the most pleasant, or are there two lives, of which one is the most pleasant, the other most just?» (transl. Bury).

⁴⁸ H. Koller, *Die Mimesis in der Antike*, Berne 1954.

⁴⁹ S. Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient texts and Modern Problems*, Princeton 2002.

signify and communicate certain hypothesized realities: just because such hypothesized realities are imagined possibilities of experience, the Greek tradition, both before and after Plato, was greatly interested in the effects of mimetic artworks on their viewers or hearers⁵⁰.

Of course one of this scholar's main concerns has been the enquiry into the Platonic conception of *mimēsis*, which the philosopher (although picking up a well-consolidated tradition on the subject) developed into a much more articulated conceptual framework. According to Halliwell, from at least the *Cratylus*⁵¹ until the late *Laws*, Plato's purposes in using the *mimēsis* terminology in a remarkably large range of contexts were far from being straightforward or uniform, and we should not try to look for perfectly homogeneous meanings within its semantic area. The possible inconsistencies among the different occurrences of the term in Platonic writings may be explained by the specific intentions of the author within the different situations in which he used it: although it is possible, of course, to find connections and cross-references among them, Plato never offered a unitary, monolithic conception of *mimēsis* at work in his dialogues.

As I have already pointed out, in the *Laws* Plato's main concern is that of explaining the theoretical fundamentals of the psychagogic and educational power of specific musical elements, such as dance postures (*orchēseis*) and melodies (*melē*). In Book 7 he further underlines the mimetic theory relating it to such peculiarly musical items:

«Well, then, do we still have confidence in what we said before, when we said that everything to do with rhythms and with music as a whole consists in imitations of the behaviour of better or worse men? (τὰ περὶ τοὺς ῥυθμοὺς καὶ πᾶσαν μουσικὴν ἔστιν τρόπων μιμήματα βελτιόνων καὶ χειρόνων ἀνθρώπων) [...] do we say, then, that every possible technique should be used to prevent the children from wanting to try out other kinds of imitation in their dances or songs (κατὰ ὀρχήσεις ἢ κατὰ μελωδίας), and to prevent anyone from tempting them with all sorts of pleasures?»⁵².

⁵⁰ Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p. 16.

⁵¹ On *mousikē* as 'imitation' in the *Cratylus*, see 423c-d: [...] καθάπερ τῆ μουσικῆ μιμούμεθα τὰ πράγματα.

⁵² *Laws* 798d-e (transl. Barker).

The musical elements are *mimēseis* of *tropoi* of good or bad men probably in the sense that they not only ‘imitate’ (which is obviously clear when referred to dance), but also ‘express’, ‘signify’ and are also able to arouse characteristic and distinct emotions and effects in their hearers, through their peculiar and specific associations with a well-consolidated musical and cultural (not to say religious) tradition. To give a modern example: in Western culture, when we hear Chopin’s Funeral March, the melody in B flat minor, the simple and regular rhythm and the tempo *lento* provoke in the listener a certain feeling, which is mostly due to our musical and cultural tradition; on the contrary, in Balkan popular music, for instance, funeral songs – being performed by a brass band, using complex rhythms and hence appearing extremely vivid – rely on different customs and aesthetic correspondences⁵³.

Furthermore, in his book, Halliwell affirms that both of the *Republic*’s critiques of poetry (in Books 2-3 and in Book 10) rest substantially on ‘psychological’ considerations: that is to say, Plato’s arguments are directed against the power of poetry to penetrate in the soul of those who hear it and to modify their character (hence he titles this chapter ‘Plato and the Psychology of Mimesis’). Starting from these same remarks, we could say that good or bad ethical values are embodied and conveyed not only by texts (which rely on the great poetical tradition of the past), but also by traditional melodies and rhythms deeply rooted in the cultural and religious tradition of those who hear them. Such traditional genres of music (each with its own peculiar elements) become then a vehicle to lead people’s soul to virtues such as courage (*ἀνδρεία*) and temperance (*σωφροσύνη*), thanks to their widespread familiarity and to the sharing of knowledge among the citizen community. That is to say: it is the preservation of the traditional religious setting (which maintains the exact relationship between specific deities and their most appropriate choral types, as well as constantly preserving their peculiarly musical components) that, thanks to the psychagogic power of music and dance, guarantees stability to the *polis*.

For this reason the musical practices in the city should be closely controlled and regulated, and noble laws will not permit poets and musicians to teach whatever they

⁵³ This is quite clear if we listen to the performances of Balkan folk music by Goran Bregović’s group, *Weddings & Funeral Band*.

enjoy, regardless of how it affects the character of the children and the young. Let's notice that laws are here mentioned in Book 2 for the first time:

Ath. «Do we suppose, then, that wherever laws (νόμοι) are established, or will be in the future, concerning education and recreation in the sphere of music, artists will be allowed to teach whatever the composer himself likes best in the way of rhythm or melody or words in a composition – to teach them to the children of people whose laws are good, and to the young men in the choruses, no matter what the result may turn out to be in the field of virtue and vice?».

Clin. «That has no sense to it, obviously»⁵⁴.

In our next lecture we will focus on the next steps of Plato's reasoning on musical goodness, starting from the great importance of its unconscious assimilation by the young and moving on to the preliminary treatment of pleasure and correctness as criteria for its evaluation (which will be fully developed, however, only in the last part of the book).

⁵⁴ *Laws* 656c (transl. Barker).

Second seminar: Book 2, 656d-667a

Eleonora Rocconi

Mousikēs orthotes

In my previous lecture, I illustrated the fundamental importance for the young of musical, more specifically choral education, which (acting as a sort of ‘incantation’, *epōidē*) will discipline their pleasures and pains. I then explained that, for Plato, the paideutic value of *choreia* may be theoretically understood through the concept of *mimēsis*, according to which «what is said, sung or represented through music and dance» should represent a good (καλόν) model, since good postures and melodies, when opportunely practiced and performed, are a vehicle for leading people to virtues and good dispositions of the soul. For this reason the young should be educated in taking pleasure in the ‘right’ music, and musical genres performed in the city should be closely controlled and regulated by the ‘law’, whose most important task is that of preserving the most traditional melodies and rhythms¹.

After the first explicit mention of the ‘laws’ in Book 2, 656c (the passage with which we closed our first seminar), the text of the dialogue focuses on the need to reject musical novelty (because it is potentially dangerous for citizens) and instead, to maintain in Greek cities the traditional musical practices, as has always been done in Egypt:

- Ath. «[656d] Yet at present this [i.e. the fact that the artists will be allowed to teach whatever the composer himself likes best] is just what is permitted in virtually every city, except in Egypt».
- Clin. «What sort of laws do you say they have concerning such matters in Egypt?».
- Ath. «Even to hear them described is astonishing. Once, long ago, so it seems, they came to understand the argument that we have just been setting out, according to which the young men in each city must become practised in good postures and good melodies (ὅτι καλὰ μὲν σχήματα, καλὰ δὲ μέλη δεῖ μεταχειρίζεσθαι ταῖς συνηθείαις τοὺς ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν νέους). These they prescribed, and they advertised which they are and what they are like in the temples: [656e] it was forbidden, as it still is, for painters or any other portrayers of postures and representations to make innovations

¹ Let’s remember that the Greek word *nomos* does not have an exclusively political meaning, but also refers to any designated form of social order, including rules of moral behavior, religious beliefs and practices. On the special musical meaning of the term see *Laws* Book 3, 700b.

(καινοτομεῖν) beyond these, or to think up anything outside the traditional material (οὐδ' ἐπινοεῖν ἄλλ' ἅττα ἢ τὰ πάτρια), in these areas or in *mousikē* in general. If you look you will find that what was written or depicted there ten thousand years ago – and I mean ten thousand literally, not as a figure of speech – is neither better [657a] nor worse than what is made nowadays, but is done with the same art».

Clin. «What you say is amazing».

Ath. «It is, you will admit, a supreme expression of the aims of the lawgiver and the statesman, though you could find other things there that are bad. But as concerns music, it is true and noteworthy that it was possible in these matters for a bold man to lay down lasting laws prescribing melodies that possess a natural correctness (μέλη τὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα φύσει παρεχόμενα). To do this would be a task for a god, or a godlike man, just as in Egypt they say that the melodies that have [657b] been preserved for this great period of time were the compositions of Isis. Thus, as I said, if one could somehow grasp the nature of correctness in melodies, one ought boldly to bring them under law and regulation (ὥσθ', ὅπερ ἔλεγον, εἰ δύναίτο τις ἐλεῖν αὐτῶν καὶ ὁπωσοῦν τὴν ὀρθότητα, θαρροῦντα χρῆ εἰς νόμον ἄγειν καὶ τάξιν αὐτά). For pleasure and pain, in their constant pursuit of new music to indulge in, have little power to destroy a choric art that is sanctified, just by mocking its antiquity (ὡς ἡ τῆς ἡδονῆς καὶ λύπης ζήτησις τοῦ καινῆ ζητεῖν ἀεὶ μουσικῆ χρῆσθαι σχεδὸν οὐ μεγάλην τινὰ δύναμιν ἔχει πρὸς τὸ διαφθεῖραι τὴν καθιερωθεῖσαν χορείαν ἐπικαλοῦσα ἀρχαιότητα). In Egypt, at least, it does not seem to have been able to destroy it: quite the contrary»².

Plato restates here that the appreciation of καλὰ σχήματα and καλὰ μέλη is also a question of training, as the Egyptians, who prescribed that the young men in each city must become practised in good postures and good melodies, had already understood a long time ago. Of course, it is also evident that musical *paideia* not only should commence very early, in order to let the process of unconscious assimilation of goodness gradually develop, but should also be maintained for adult people: hence the need to fix 'by law' the preservation of traditional music and dance, here described as καθιερωθεῖσα χορεία (that is, as 'sanctified choric art', hence deeply rooted in the established ritual system), which has the added value of possessing a 'natural correctness' (τὴν ὀρθότητα φύσει)³.

But, apart from remarking once again the importance of a traditional religious setting for the most desirable social and political order, here Plato reintroduces a notion which will become essential to his discussion of the musical *kalon* and its criteria of judgment:

² *Laws* 656d-657b (transl. Barker).

³ Again it is clear how much a religious orientation informs what Plato has to say about music.

the notion of *mousikēs orthotēs*.

The first mention of such a concept was in Book 1 (642a), in the already quoted passage which connected drunkenness with the proper education of the young through music⁴. Musical correctness was then introduced again in Book 2 within the discussion concerning the pleasure afforded to the soul by music, which – according to Plato – cannot be identified with the μουσικῆς ὀρθότης, as most people instead seem think (even if the reason for this misunderstanding is to be identified just with the pleasure indissolubly linked to the appreciation of musical goodness):

«Yet most people certainly say that musical correctness (μουσικῆς ὀρθότητα) consists in the power to provide pleasure for the soul (τὴν ἡδονὴν ταῖς ψυχαῖς πορίζουσιν δύναμιν). But that assertion is intolerable and cannot even be uttered without blasphemy. It is more likely that what leads us astray is this [...]»⁵.

Its relevance to the topic of musical goodness is thus reaffirmed in the passage we are dealing with, which has the explicit function of shifting the discourse to the importance of the assessment of such ‘correctness’: «if one could somehow grasp (ἐλεῖν) the nature of correctness in melodies, one ought boldly to bring them under law and regulation [...]»⁶. After having done this – Plato says – pleasure and pain, through their constant pursuit of novelties in music, will turn out to have little power to destroy the benefits of traditional holy music.

Despite the importance of such a concept, however, the question of its evaluation is not immediately undertaken. Its treatment, instead, is postponed to that part of Book 2 which is more explicitly concerned with the three criteria of judgment about τὸ καλόν (from *Laws* 667b onwards): pleasure (*hēdonē*), correctness (*orthotēs*) and ethical utility (*ōphelia*). More precisely, correctness turns out to be the ‘second’ among the three qualifications that «anyone who is to judge intelligently» (τὸν μέλλοντα ἔμφορα κριτὴν ἔσεσθαι) must have: firstly, he must know «what» the original of such imitation is (ὅ τε ἐστὶ); secondly, whether that particular representation is made «correctly» (ὡς

⁴ *Laws* 642a (transl. Bury): «the fact is that the right ordering of this [i.e. the matter of drunkenness] could never be treated adequately and clearly in our discourse apart from rightness in music (ἄνευ μουσικῆς ὀρθότητος)».

⁵ *Laws* 655d (transl. Barker).

⁶ *Laws* 657b (transl. Barker).

ὀρθῶς εἴργασται); thirdly, whether it is made «well» (ὡς εὖ εἴργασται)⁷. I am not going to deal with that part of the text, but it is worth at least anticipating that, for Plato, we obtain ‘correctness’ in music only when its constituents are ‘appropriate’ (προσήκοντα), that is, when its technical elements are opportunely selected (ἐκλέγεσθαι) and used during the performance, in order both to let the elders (i.e. the previously mentioned members of the Chorus of Dionysus) gain ‘enjoyment’ (ἡδῶνται) from their songs and to make them attract the younger men towards noble manners (ἡθῶν χρηστῶν)⁸. That is to say: if a musical composition is ‘correct’, all the elements of its ensemble have to be consistent with one another and need to fit into that particular genre. Thanks to this, such a music will enable the elders (who are responsible for the control of education) to ‘enchant’ the young and to instill virtue in them⁹.

Public performances and musical judgment

Let’s now go back to the passage we were dealing with: *Laws* 656d-657b. The occasion for the digression (which seems to be a constant stylistic feature of this late Platonic work) is provided at 657c in an argument propounded by the Athenian Stranger:

«Do we then boldly state that correct procedure in music, and in recreation involving choric activity (τὴν τῆ μουσικῆ καὶ τῆ παιδιᾶ μετὰ χορείας χρεῖαν ὀρθῆν εἶναι), is something like this: we enjoy ourselves (χαίρωμεν) when we think that we are flourishing, and we think that we are flourishing whenever we enjoy ourselves? Isn’t that so?»¹⁰.

The ‘correct procedure’ to do with music (*mousikē*) and play (*paidia*), in connection with *choreia*, will actually be described at length only in the following sentence, but its announcement has the purpose of introducing once again the notion of ‘enjoyment’, which will be discussed hereafter as a possible criterion of musical judgment for public performances. Instead of correctness, then, the author returns here to the theme of

⁷ *Laws* 669a-b.

⁸ *Laws* 670c ff.

⁹ Plato also adds that, for people charged with such a responsibility, it is essential «to distinguish in outline what are suitable songs (πρεπούσας ᾠδὰς) for men and women respectively» and «match them appropriately (προσαρμόττειν) to *harmoniai* and rhythms. For it would be dreadful for singing to be wrong in its entire *harmonia*, or rhythm in its entire rhythm, if he assigned *harmoniai* and rhythms that were quite unsuitable (μηδὲν προσήκοντα) for the songs. Hence it is necessary to lay down at least the outlines of these by law as well» (*Laws* 802e, transl. Barker).

¹⁰ *Laws* 657c (transl. Barker).

‘pleasure’, nevertheless definitely shifting the discussion from the identification of what is *kalon* in music (which he had explained by means of the mimetic theory) to the question of how we are to judge it:

Ath. «[657d] And in such a condition, one of enjoyment, we cannot keep still?».

Clin. «That is so».

Ath. «Now isn’t it true that those of us who are young are prepared to perform in choruses themselves, while those of us who are older think of ourselves as suitably occupied in watching them, enjoying their games and festivities (χαίροντες τῇ ἐκείνων παιδιᾷ τε καὶ ἑορτάσει)? For our nimbleness has now left us, and it is our nostalgic longing for it that makes us set up contests for those who can best arouse us, in our memory, into youthfulness».

Clin. «Quite true».

Ath. «Should we then refrain from treating as entirely futile what most people say [657e] about those engaged in festivities – that the one who gives us the most delight and enjoyment should be thought most skilful and judged the winner? For since we give ourselves up to recreation on these occasions, we should give the greatest honour, and the prize of victory, as I said just now, to the one who gives the most pleasure to the greatest number of people. [658a] Isn’t this thesis correct, and wouldn’t things be rightly done if they were done in this way?»¹¹

The discussion on pleasure as a criterion of judgment occupies a couple of pages in this section of the *Laws*, from 658e to 659c. The author starts by referring to the most common opinion among the audiences of contemporary performances, according to which the highest honour and the prize of victory should be awarded to the performer who affords the greatest enjoyment to the greatest number of people. Then, he proceeds to demonstrate his thesis through a *reductio ad absurdum*, arguing that if someone organizes a competition without qualifying or limiting it to gymnastic, musical or equestrian sports, assembles the whole population of the *polis* and offers a prize to the competitor who gives the greatest amusement to the spectators, the verdict will of course not be objective, but will depend on who is going to judge. As a consequence, if the tiniest children are to be the judges, for instance, they will award the prize to the showman of puppets (a fact which is obviously absurd – from the point of view of the speaker – within a competition which includes also rhapsodic, kitharodic and tragic performances!). This leads Plato to the main point of his argument here, that is, to

¹¹ *Laws* 657d-658a (transl. Barker).

demonstrate that pleasure may well be a criterion for judging musical goodness. Nevertheless it can't be the pleasure of any chance person, but – rather – the pleasure of old and wise men. So the judges in musical contests must resist the applause of the masses and try to teach them what is right:

«Even I agree with the majority to the extent of saying that music should be judged by the criterion of pleasure, but not just anyone's pleasure. I would say that the best music is probably that which delights the best people, those who are fully educated (ἐκείνην εἶναι Μοῦσαν καλλίστην ἣτις τοὺς βελτίστους καὶ ἰκανῶς πεπαιδευμένους τέρπει), and especially [659a] that which delights the one man who is outstanding in excellence and education (τὸν ἀρετῇ τε καὶ παιδείᾳ διαφέροντα). That is why we say that judges of these matters need to be good men, in that they need to possess moral wisdom of all kinds, but courage especially. A true judge should not take instruction from the audience and his own lack of education; nor should he knowingly perjure himself, under the influence of cowardice or timidity, and give his judgment insincerely, through the very mouth with which [659b] he called upon the gods when he was setting out as an adjudicator. For the judge takes his seat, or properly should, as a teacher, not a pupil of the spectators (οὐ γὰρ μαθητῆς ἀλλὰ διδάσκαλος [...] θεατῶν), and as one who will stand up against those who offer the spectator pleasure in a unfitting or incorrect way (τοῖς τὴν ἡδονὴν μὴ προσηκόντως μηδὲ ὀρθῶς ἀποδιδούσι θεαταῖς). For under the ancient Hellenic laws it was not permitted to follow what is the present custom in Sicily and Italy, by which responsibility is given to the mass of spectators, and the winner is decided by show of hands: this practice has corrupted the composers themselves, [659c] since by composing for the depraved pleasure of the judges they have made the spectators their own teachers, and it has corrupted the pleasures of the audience too. For they ought always to be listening to things that are better than their own characters, and so improve their standard of pleasure, whereas exactly the opposite happens to them as a result of what they do now»¹².

So, it results clear that all the previous reasoning of the Athenian Stranger was designed to identify the people who have to judge the musical *kalon*, that is, the chorus of elders. These people, if appropriately trained and educated, will then become arbiters of both 'aesthetic' and 'moral' taste in the citizens community. The Athenian concludes by saying:

«It seems to me that this is the third or fourth time that the argument [659d] has come round to the same place, to the thesis that education consists in

¹² *Laws* 658e-659c (transl. Barker).

drawing and leading children towards what the law says is correct (ὀρθός), and is agreed to be correct in fact by the best and oldest, as a result of their experience (τοῖς ἐπιεικεστάτοις καὶ πρεσβυτάτοις δι’ ἐμπειρίαν συνδεδογμένον ὡς ὄντως ὀρθός ἐστίν). So in order that the child’s soul should not become habituated to enjoying and disliking things in defiance of the law and those who obey the law, but should follow it, enjoying and disliking the same things as an old man does, [659e] for these purposes there exists what we call songs (ἄς ᾠδὰς καλοῦμεν) [...]»¹³.

The identification of the judges with the oldest and wisest men will be more explicitly connected with the Chorus of Dionysus only later on (664b ff.), in a passage which many scholars have related to what we know of the Spartan choral tradition. See a passage in Plutarch’s *Lycurgus*, from which we know that three choirs – corresponding to the three ages: *paides*, *akmazontes* and *gerontes* – performed at Spartan festivals:

«They had three choirs at their festivals, corresponding to the three ages, and the choir of old men (ὁ μὲν τῶν γερόντων) would sing first: “We once did deeds of prowess and were strong young men”. Then the choir of young men (ὁ δὲ τῶν ἀκμαζόντων) would respond: “We are so now, and if you wish, behold and see”. And then the third choir, that of the boys (ὁ δὲ τρίτος ὁ τῶν παίδων), would sing: “We shall be sometime mightier men by far than both”»¹⁴.

In much the same way, the Athenian (in *Laws* 664b-d) identifies three choruses: 1) the chorus of the Muses, which is composed of children (*neoi*); 2) the chorus of those up to thirty years old, which is called the chorus of Apollo *Paian*; 3) the chorus of those between the ages of thirty and sixty, that is, the chorus of Dionysus, composed by τὸ ἄριστον τῆς πόλεως, that is, by «the most trustworthy of those in the city by virtue of both age and wisdom (ἡλικίαις τε καὶ ἄμα φρονήσεσιν πιθανώτατον ὃν τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει)»¹⁵. These people, by singing the best things (τὰ κάλλιστα), are able to produce the greatest good (μέγιστ’ [...] ἀγαθά) in the *polis*, since they possess «the highest capacity for the best and most beneficial songs (ὁ κυριώτατον ἂν εἶη τῶν καλλίστων τε καὶ ὠφελιμωτάτων ᾠδῶν)»¹⁶. However – the Athenian goes on at 665e-666a – since in becoming older everyone loses the confidence to sing songs, and enjoys it less because

¹³ *Laws* 659c-d (transl. Barker).

¹⁴ Plut. *Lyc.* 21.2 (transl. B. Perrin, *The Loeb Classical Library, Plutarch, Lives, vol. I: Theseus and Romulus. Lycurgus and Numa. Solon and Publicola*, Cambridge, Mass./London 1914).

¹⁵ *Laws* 665d (transl. Barker).

¹⁶ *Laws* 665d-666c (transl. Barker). Let’s notice here the mingling, which will become clearer later, of the notions of κάλλος and ὠφέλεια

of shyness, they will be encouraged to be enthusiastic about singing by that «medicine which fights against the crustiness of old age (ἐπίκουρον τῆς τοῦ γήρωος ἀσθηρότητος [...] φάρμακον)», that is, by wine. Through it, «everyone whose disposition has been changed in this way will be more enthusiastic and less diffident about singing songs (ᾄδειν) or ‘incantations’ (ἐπάδειν), as we have often called them»¹⁷. As I said yesterday, this cathartic usage of wine and controlled drunkenness may be interpreted as intimately connected with both the religious setting of the dialogue and the Platonic assessment of irrational emotions as beneficial and necessary (when opportunely held in check) for the human soul. The power of wine to instill *aidōs*, on which Plato had started to reflect at the end of Book 1¹⁸, finds here its definitive connection with musical education.

In the last part of Book 2, Plato will focus his reasoning on the identification of the most important criteria of musical judgment for the elders, so that they may be able to select (and perform) the best and most beneficial songs for the city. In order to do this, he will take up some of the themes he has dealt with previously (even if not exhaustively), that is, the notions of musical ‘pleasure’ and ‘correctness’, blending them together and extending the talk to include an enquiry on justice, happiness and pleasure as inseparable ingredients of human life.

Plato and the Anthropology of Dance

Before dealing with the view expressed by the author at 663a-b, where the Athenian asserts his own complete faith that justice, happiness and pleasure coincide (an important passage, in so far it provides the theoretical basis for the subsequent treatment of the three criteria of musical judgment), I would like to go back for a moment to a short and neglected passage:

Ath. «Do we then boldly state that correct procedure in music, and in recreation involving choric activity (τὴν τῆ μουσικῆ καὶ τῆ παιδιᾶ μετὰ χορείας χρείαν ὀρθῶν εἶναι), is something like this: we enjoy ourselves (χαίρωμεν) when we think that we are flourishing, and we think that we are flourishing whenever we enjoy ourselves? Isn’t that so?».

Clin. «Yes».

Ath. «And in such a condition, one of enjoyment (χαίροντες), we cannot keep

¹⁷ *Laws* 666c (transl. Barker).

¹⁸ For a prescription of wine as a means to induce *aidōs* in the soul, see *Laws* 647e-650b.

still (ἡσυχίαν οὐ δυνάμεθα ἄγειν)?».

Clin. «That is so».

Ath. «[657d] Now isn't it true that those of us who are young are prepared to perform in choruses themselves, while those of us who are older think of ourselves as suitably occupied in watching them, enjoying their games and festivities (χαίροντες τῇ ἐκείνων παιδιᾷ τε καὶ ἐορτάσει)? For our nimbleness has now left us, and it is our nostalgic longing for it that makes us set up contests for those who can best arouse us, in our memory, into youthfulness»¹⁹.

This passage is clearly connected with the previous statement at 653d-e, where the author had said that «virtually every young creature is incapable of keeping still with either its body or its voice (τοῖς τε σώμασι καὶ ταῖς φωναῖς ἡσυχίαν ἄγειν οὐ δύνασθαι), but is always trying to move and make sounds, leaping and skipping as though dancing and sporting with pleasure (οἷον ὀρχούμενα μεθ' ἡδονῆς καὶ προσπαίζοντα), and uttering noises of every kind»²⁰. While in that passage the consequences of such an assumption were the remark on the uniqueness of human beings in perceiving rhythmically ordered movements, and the interpretation of the establishment of choral performances as a key moment in the passage from a 'natural' towards a 'cultural' dimension in human life (thanks to the discipline exercised by *choreia* on the most irrational impulses of human beings), here Plato restates the 'naturalness' of movement for the young, and the importance of such a naturalness for understanding the beneficial effect of choral activity on them. This 'anthropological' perspective furnishes a further element to reinforce the Platonic (and, more generally, Greek) belief in the psychagogic power of *choreia*, which has the power to discipline not only the souls, but also the bodies of those who perform it (cf. 655b: ψυχῆς ἢ σώματος)²¹. Dance as such will in fact be discussed more in detail in Book 7, where Plato's account on *choreia* will focus on serious (*spoudaiai*) dances, among which he will identify two main kinds: the warlike or pyrrhic dance, and the peaceful dance, by him called *emmeleia*, both analyzed according to the mimetic theory²². But, once again, Book 2 seems to give a

¹⁹ *Laws* 657c-d (transl. Barker).

²⁰ Transl. Barker.

²¹ See also *Laws* 656a: [...] κινεῖσθαι τῷ σώματι.

²² The warlike dance (πολεμική or πυρρική) represents «the motion of fighting, and that of fair bodies and brave souls engaged in violent effort», while the peaceful one (εἰρηνική), the *emmeleia*, represents «the motion of a temperate soul living in a state of prosperity and moderate pleasures» (*Laws* 814e, transl. Shorey). Both dances, again, need to be disciplined and regulated by very strict rules, as is clearly stated in *Laws* 817e: «Let such, then, be the customs (ἔθη) ordained to go with the laws regarding all choristry

sort of ‘theoretical’ introduction to topics more fully discussed elsewhere in the dialogue.

Here, however, Plato makes also another interesting observation. He says that, if the young enjoy dancing for several reasons (their natural tendency to move, the beneficial effect of the dance on their souls and bodies, their pride in being part of a festivity in honour of the gods, and so on), the elders believe that they are more suitably occupied in ‘watching’ such an activity, because they can still enjoy themselves by observing it. The reference to the elders’ nostalgic longing for their lost nimbleness (τὸ [...] ἐλαφρὸν [...] ὁ ποθοῦντες καὶ ἀσπαζόμενοι) of course recalls to our mind literary themes developed by some great lyric poets of the archaic tradition. But by identifying such feelings with the origin of musical contests in Greek society, Plato clearly explains also how, for the Greeks, the educational processes connected with the dance don’t run out with the act of dancing itself. The importance of musical education and performance lasts even in older age, even if it has to be adapted to the new needs of a different stage in life.

The ‘Order’ (*taxis*) of *Rhythmoi* and *Harmoniai*

A third resumption of the theme concerning the natural tendency of the young to movements may be found at *Laws* 664e-665a. This interesting passage introduces what, I think, is among the first properly ‘technical’ definitions of *rhythmos* and *harmonia* in ancient sources:

«We said, if you recall, at the beginning at our discussion, that the nature of all young things is fiery, and is therefore incapable of keeping still with either its body or its voice (ἡσυχίαν οὐχ οἷα τε ἄγειν οὔτε κατὰ τὸ σῶμα οὔτε κατὰ τὴν φωνὴν εἶη), but is continually calling out and leaping about in a disorderly way (ἀτάκτως); and that while none of the other animals attains a perception of order in these two things, the nature of man alone does possess this. The name for [665a] order in movement is rhythm (τῆ δὲ τῆς κινήσεως τάξει ῥυθμὸς ὄνομα εἶη), and order of the voice, where high and low are mixed together at once, is given the name *harmonia* (τῆ δὲ αὖ τῆς φωνῆς, τοῦ τε ὀξέος ἅμα καὶ βαρέος συγκεραννυμένων, ἁρμονία ὄνομα προσαγορεύοιτο), while the combination of the two is called *choreia* [...]

and the learning thereof (περὶ πᾶσαν χορείαν καὶ μάθησιν τούτων), keeping distinct those for slaves and those for masters (χωρὶς μὲν τὰ τῶν δούλων, χωρὶς δὲ τὰ τῶν δεσποτῶν), if you agree» (transl. Shorey).

»²³.

In the Platonic definition, both rhythm and *harmonia* are connected with the notion of ‘order’ (*taxis*). Rhythm is «order in movement» (since «rhythm occurs – Aristoxenus will say some years later – when the division of *chronoi* takes on some particular arrangement, *taxis*»²⁴). *Harmonia*, instead, is «order of the voice», since a scale (if ‘musical’, Aristoxenus would say) displays a well-arranged mixture of high and low sounds²⁵.

What is interesting to notice is that, while here the combination of the two is said to be the *choreia* (specifically described, in a previous passage of the *Laws*, as consisting of ὄρχησις and ᾠδή)²⁶, in *Republic* Book 3 the union of words, *harmonia* and rhythm turns out to be the *melos*: «you can take this first step, and say that song is put together out of three things, words, *harmonia*, and rhythm»²⁷. In the passage quoted in my previous lecture²⁸, by contrast, *melos* was very carefully distinguished by the philosopher from the broader abstract term *harmonia*, that is, it was used as a more ‘practical’ term referring to the specific sequence of pitches used in some particular musical composition. The description of *harmonia* and *rhythmos* we find here in the *Laws* is very similar to the usage of the same terms in a passage of the *Philebus*, in which Plato displays a rather accurate and wide range of technical terms in the specifically musical field (even if the purpose of the passage is anything but musical):

«But suppose, my good friend, that you grasp the number and [17d] the qualities of the intervals related to high and low pitch of sound, and the boundaries of the intervals, (τὰ διαστήματα ὅποσα ἐστὶ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῆς φωνῆς ὀξύτητος τε περὶ καὶ βαρύτητος, καὶ ὅποια, καὶ τοὺς ὄρους τῶν διαστημάτων), and the numbers of *systemata* that have arisen out of them. These *systemata* were identified by people in the past, and they handed

²³ *Laws* 664e-665a (transl. Barker).

²⁴ Aristox. *Rhythm*. 2.7 (transl. Pearson). For a similar definition, see the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems* 19.38 (transl. Barker): «rhythm [...] is characterized by a recognisable and orderly number, and moves us in an orderly way».

²⁵ Aristox. *Harm*. 18.16 ff., p. 23.16 ff. Da Rios (transl. Barker): «But harmonically attuned melody (τὸ ἡρμοσμένον μέλος) must not only consist of intervals and notes: it demands also a way of putting them together which is of a special kind, and not haphazard, since it is plain that the property of being constituted out of intervals and notes is of a wider scope, belonging also to that which is harmonically ill-attuned (τῷ ἀναρμόστῳ)»

²⁶ *Laws* 654b (transl. Barker): «The choric art as a whole consists of dance (ὄρχησις) and song (ᾠδή)».

²⁷ *Resp.* 398c-d (transl. Barker): πρῶτον μὲν τόδε ἰκανῶς ἔχεις λέγειν, ὅτι τὸ μέλος ἐκ τριῶν ἐστὶν συγκεϊμενον, λόγου τε καὶ ἁρμονίας καὶ ῥυθμοῦ.

²⁸ *Laws* 655a.

down to us, their successors, the practice of calling them *harmoniai* (τὰ ἐκ τοῦ των ὅσα συστήματα γέγονεν ἃ κατιδόντες οἱ πρόσθεν παρέδοσαν ἡμῖν τοῖς ἐπομένοις ἐκείνοις καλεῖν αὐτὰ ἁρμονίας); and in the movements of the body they identified other, similar inherent features which, they say, we must measure by numbers, and call rhythms and measures (ἐν τε ταῖς κινήσειν αὐτοῦ σώματος ἕτερα τοιαῦτα ἐνόητα πάθη γιγνόμενα, ἃ δὴ δι' ἀριθμῶν μετρηθέντα δεῖν αὐτῶν φασὶ ῥυθμοὺς καὶ μέτρα ἐπονομάζειν), while being aware that this is how we should investigate every one and many. For when you grasp them in this way, [17e] then it is that you have become an expert (τότε ἐγένου σοφός); and when you have grasped any other one by investigating it in this way, you have by so doing understood it. But the indefinite plurality inherent in any kind of thing makes you, in each case, indefinite in your understanding, not numbered among persons of repute, since you have never turned your attention to number in anything»²⁹.

Here we may find many technical terms which the subsequent theory will confirm as the standard musical terminology of technical treatises, widely and consistently employed from the fourth century BC onwards. Firstly, intervals are said to be *diastēmata*, that is, musical ‘distances’ in space; they circumscribe the musical pitch continuum through ‘boundaries’ (ὅροι), as will be clearly stated also by Aristoxenus in his *Elementa Harmonica*. Concerning the number and the qualities of intervals (ὁπόσα [...] καὶ ὁποῖα), let’s remember that, according to Aristoxenus, *diastēmata* may be classified according to their ‘size’ (*megethos*), in respect of their being concordant (*symphōna*) and discordant (*diaphōna*), composite (*syntheta*) and incomposite (*asyntheta*), rational (*rheta*) and irrational (*aloga*) and in respect of genus (*genos*). The ‘qualities’ of intervals may, perhaps, refer to their ‘character’ (*ēthos*), as may be inferred from what is stated by Aristides Quintilianus many centuries later: «The *harmoniai*», he says, «resemble either the intervals which are commonest in them, or the notes that bound them: and the notes in turn resemble the movements of the soul [...] it is through similarity that the notes both instil a character previously absent, in children and in older people too, and draw out a character that lay hidden within»³⁰. Scales are said to be *systemata*, that is, ‘combinations of *diastēmata*’. It is clear that in Plato’s time, such a term had already replaced the older notion of *harmonia*, even if the conceptual frame of all these metaphors concerning the musical ‘space’ will be explicitly developed only in the second part of the century by Aristoxenus. Furthermore, the concepts of rhythm and

²⁹ *Phileb.* 17c-e (transl. Barker).

³⁰ Arist. Quint. *De mus.* 2.14, p. 80.23 ff. W.-I. (transl. Barker).

meter are appropriately separated³¹.

Plato, then, looks very well aware of the development of technical terminology and concepts in the theoretical musical discussions contemporary with him, and his approach to more technical details (though not fully developed, due to his lack of interest in the topic in itself) looks quite consistent in all his writings.

Justice, Happiness and Pleasure: The Theoretical Basis for the Criteria of Musical Judgment

Let's go back to the *Laws*. At 663a-b, the Athenian asserts his own complete faith that justice, happiness and pleasure coincide:

«So then the teaching which refuses to separate the pleasant (ἡδύ) from the just (δίκαιον), good (ἀγαθόν) and beautiful (καλόν) helps, if nothing else, to induce a man to live the holy and just life, so that any doctrine which denies this truth is, in the eyes of the lawgiver, most shameful and most hateful; for no one would voluntarily consent to be induced to commit an act, unless it involves as its consequence more pleasure than pain»³².

This statement (introduced by a rather long argument, which runs from 662c to 663a, at the end of which he concludes that the just life must be the most pleasant, since the two are inseparable)³³ stands as the theoretical basis for a clearer understanding of the following reasoning concerning the three mentioned criteria of musical judgment, confirming a recurrent procedure within this Platonic treatise (according to which its author tends to give in advance theoretical 'preliminaries' to topics more fully discussed further on in the dialogue). Again, it is clear how, for the late Plato, the notion of pleasure (when 'correctly' disciplined) was strictly interwoven with the notion of ethical utility. In the *Laws*, the young's souls must be persuaded (πείθειν τὰς τῶν νέων ψυχάς) and not obliged to follow what would do most good to the State (τί πείσας μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν ἐργάσαιτο ἂν πόλιν)³⁴, and the duty of the whole State is to charm itself

³¹ For a similar terminological and conceptual distinction, see Aristoph. *Clouds* 635 ff.: [...] πότερον περὶ μέτρων ἢ περὶ ἐπῶν ἢ ῥυθμῶν;

³² *Laws* 663a-b (transl. Bury, adapted).

³³ *Laws* 662d (transl. Bury): «Is the most just life the most pleasant: or are there two lives, of which the one is most pleasant, the other most just?».

³⁴ *Laws* 664a (transl. Bury): «Here, indeed, the lawgiver has a notable example of how he can, if he tries, persuade the souls of the young of anything, so that the only question he has to consider in his inventing is what would do most good to the State, if it were believed; and then he must devise all possible means to ensure that the whole of the community constantly, so long as they live, use exactly the same language, so far as possible, about these matters, alike in their songs, their tales, and their discourses».

unceasingly with incantations:

«That every adult and child, free and slave, female and male, and the city as a whole, must sing incantations to itself of the sorts we have described, without ceasing (ὅλη τῆ πόλει ὅλην τὴν πόλιν αὐτὴν αὐτῇ ἐπάδουσας μὴ παύεσθαι ποτε ταῦτα ἃ διεληλύθαμεν); and that these should be continually altered, providing variety of every kind, so that the singers have an insatiable appetite for the hymns, and enjoy them»³⁵.

Let's note here the recommendation of 'variety', which is a new remark. Of course it has to be understood as a variety within the fixed norms governing the different musical forms appropriate to each god, and to each of the festivals which are assigned to specified days in the year. This is clearly stated in Book 7:

«First, they [i.e., the lawgiver and the law-warden] should determine the festivals (τὰς ἑορτάς), putting together for the year a list of which festivals should be held at which times, in honour of which individual gods, which children of the gods, and which demi-gods. Next they should determine which song ought to be sung at each of the sacrifices to the gods (ἐπὶ τοῖς τῶν θεῶν θύμασιν ἐκάστοις ἦν ᾠδὴν δεῖ ἐφουμνεῖσθαι), and what sort of dancing should adorn the various sacrifices (καὶ χορείας ποίαισιν γεραίρειν τὴν τότε θυσίαν). These ordinances should first be made by certain persons; and then all the people should join in common sacrifice to dedicate them to the Fates and to all the other gods, consecrating each of the songs, with a libation, to the appropriate gods and other beings (σπένδοντας καθιεροῦν ἐκάστας τὰς ᾠδὰς ἐκάστοις τῶν θεῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων). If anyone brings forward other hymns or dances beyond these for any of the gods, the priests and priestesses, with the guardians of the laws (μετὰ νομοφυλάκων), will be acting with both religious and legal propriety in excluding him; and the man who is excluded, if he does not accept his exclusion voluntarily, will be liable for the whole of his life to prosecution for impiety (ἀσεβείας) by anyone who wishes»³⁶.

In the next lecture we will hear which is (or ought to be) «the best kind of song» (ἡ καλλίστη ᾠδή)³⁷ that those in charge of such a duty should sing (that is to say, 'the law'), and the criteria by which they may judge its 'appropriateness' for safeguarding the State.

³⁵ *Laws* 665c (transl. Barker).

³⁶ *Laws* 799a-b (transl. Barker).

³⁷ *Laws* 666d-e (transl. Barker): « [...] the truth is that you have had no experience of the best kind of song (τῆς καλλίστης ᾠδῆς). For your constitution is that of an army rather than that of townsmen [...] ».

Third seminar: *Laws* 667b5-671a4
Andrew Barker (University of Birmingham)

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-c7¹ 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

¹ 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.² 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’.³ 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

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

³ 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 667d9.⁴ 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

⁴ 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 γίγνεται 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).⁵ 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,⁶ and helps us to reconcile ourselves to the duties of our everyday lives?' Aristotle would have understood the point;⁷ Plato apparently does not. And the

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

ΚΛ. Ἀληθέστατα λέγεις.

⁶ Hesiod, *Theogony* 98-103.

⁷ 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 667d5-7.⁸ 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.⁹

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

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ And in the fifth century, in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousai*, the pretentious composer Agathon's talk of the need for *mimēsis* is held up to ridicule.¹² Of course we have no idea what ordinary people or the majority of educated people would have said on the subject; but the

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

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

¹² 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;¹³ and this, if it is a thoroughly admirable *ēthos*, will be a *mimēma* of *to kalon*. All that makes sense, or at least

¹³ 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.'¹⁴

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

¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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

¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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*.¹⁷ 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

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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 μεντὰν ὡς ἔπος εἶπεῖν, 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.’¹⁸

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’,

¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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',²⁰ 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

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ 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.²¹

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,²² talks about people who call themselves *harmonikoi* and claim to be experts in the ‘theoretical’ branch of

²¹ 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.

²² *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.²³ 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

²³ 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 τοσούτου 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 τοσούτου παιδευθέντες ἀκριβεστέραν ἂν παιδείαν τῆς ἐπὶ τὸ πλῆθος φεροῦσης 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.

Fourth seminar: *Laws* 669b5-670a6 and 700a7-701c4

Andrew Barker

Part 1: 669b5-670a6

We're now going to look at two short passages. One is the bit we missed out from the passage of Book 2 we were studying yesterday, 669b5-670a6; the other is in Book 3, at 700a7-701c4. It seems appropriate to look at them together, even though they come in different contexts, since in some fairly obvious respects they're quite similar. But there are important differences too, both in the messages they're designed to convey and in their musicological content, and it will be interesting to compare them directly. We'll consider the passage of Book 2 first; then we'll look at the one in Book 3 and try to make some comparisons.

You'll remember that before the Athenian begins the long speech which starts at 669a5, he's been working his way through an argument about the basis on which musical judgements should be made, which he picks up again at 670a6. He has just recapitulated his list of three things which he says the musical judges must know if their assessments are to be authoritative. First they must know 'what the composition is'. This involves accurate perception of all its musical elements and understanding of its harmonic and rhythmic structures; and it also involves knowledge of a different sort, knowledge of the nature of the original of which it is a *mimēsis*. Secondly, they must know 'whether it has been made correctly', that is, whether the *mimēsis* represents the original accurately; and in order for this to be possible they must understand what the elements and structures which they find in the composition are capable of representing. Finally they must know whether it is 'made well', which turns out to mean that they must be able to judge reliably whether or not it is aesthetically and/or ethically excellent or admirable, *kalon*.

The long speech that follows this summary is a digression, as the Athenian himself says towards the end; it raises the question why it is so difficult to make these judgements about music in particular. He seems to imply that the task of judging the merits of a musical composition is much harder than it is in the case of the other arts – painting and

sculpture, for instance – though he does not make that point explicit. Further, it's much more important than are parallel tasks to do with other kinds of *mimēsis*, for what seem to be two quite different reasons, though the Athenian runs them together. In the first place, ὑμνεῖται περὶ αὐτῆν διαφερόντως ἢ τὰς ἄλλας εἰκόνας, 'people praise it much more highly than the other images' (669b6-7). That is, I suppose, the arts of *mousikē* have a much higher profile and attract much more applause and greater approval than for instance the visual arts; and that does seem a fair assessment of cultural attitudes to the arts in the classical period. For all the splendours of Greek architecture and the brilliance of fifth- and fourth-century painting and sculpture, the musical arts enjoyed much higher status and occupied a much more significant socio-political and religious niche in contemporary culture. Hence, the Athenian says, it is about music, of all the arts, that one should exercise most care and caution, *eulabeia*. For, he goes on, anyone who makes mistakes about music will be most seriously damaged, since he will be embracing bad characters (or 'taking a friendly attitude towards bad characters'), ἡδὴ κακὰ φιλοφρονούμενος (669b8-c1). As I said, the Athenian seems to connect this point closely with the one about music being most highly praised, and no doubt one could find a way of linking them. But at the same time they are obviously very different; and though the *Republic* has of course made us familiar with the idea that listening to and enjoying bad music leads on to faulty estimates of good and bad human character, and perverts the character of the listener himself, nothing in this part of the *Laws* has prepared us for that theory or done anything to justify it. Plato seems, once again, to be slipping in an important thesis whose basis he does not want to re-examine here.

So much for the subject's importance; but why is the task of musical judgement so difficult? It is because, the Athenian says, human composers are worse composers than the Muses, whom we should obviously take to stand for composers of the ideal sort; and he goes on to give a long list of things which human composers do and the Muses wouldn't. This list is perhaps the most interesting part of the speech, since it puts on record a whole series of strategies which, according to Plato, were adopted by composers in his period. He clearly finds them objectionable, or at least counts them as defects, since they are things that the Muses, the ideal musicians, would never do; but we should

also bear in mind that this isn't his main point here. He isn't simply denouncing certain kinds of music, as he sometimes does elsewhere; the central theme of the passage is a different one, that the use of these techniques is what makes it so hard to form reliable judgements about the music's merits. This need not imply that compositions which use them are necessarily ones that would corrupt the characters of their listeners, only that even the best judges may have no way of being sure whether they will do so or not.

The list falls into two parts. In the first part we have examples of compositions which mix ingredients that do not belong together and indeed contradict one another, and whose combination, we might say, therefore fails to make sense. The Athenian mentions four of these ridiculous kinds of mixture; we'll begin by looking at the first three (669c3-8). In the first, words suitable for men are mixed with a women's *χρῶμα καὶ μέλος*; the second combines *μέλος καὶ σχήματα* suitable for free men with rhythms proper to slaves and *ἀνελεύθεροι*, which I take to mean people who aren't technically slaves but have a slavish character; and in the third we have the 'free' (*ἐλευθέριον*) type of rhythm and *σχῆμα* mixed with the opposite kind of melody or words.¹

The general picture is straightforward; all of these mixtures graft ingredients proper to one kind of human character or status onto others that belong to people of the opposite sort. Hence they pose a problem for the judge, who may be baffled when he tries to decide what they are trying to imitate or represent; and if he can't do that, he can hardly be in a position to decide whether they have done so 'correctly'. At least, I think that's where the difficulty is supposed to lie. When Plato writes 'words of men', *ῥήματα ἀνδρῶν*, we might take him to mean any of three different things: 'words suitable for men to utter', 'words suitable for men to listen to', or 'words that represent or imitate men' – or more fully, 'words that represent the characters proper to men'. It seems to me that he must mean the last of these, for two reasons: first, because that is the sense needed in the context, where the main issue is about determining what the composition represents, and

¹ οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐκεῖναί γε ἔξαμάρτοιέν ποτε τοσοῦτον ὥστε ῥήματα ἀνδρῶν ποιήσασαι τὸ χρῶμα γυναικῶν καὶ μέλος ἀποδοῦναι, καὶ μέλος ἐλευθέρων αἴ καὶ σχήματα συνθεῖσαι ῥυθμοὺς δούλων καὶ ἀνελευθέρων προσαρμόττειν, οὐδ' αἴ ῥυθμοὺς καὶ σχῆμα ἐλευθέριον ὑποθεῖσαι μέλος ἢ λόγον ἐναντίον ἀποδοῦναι τοῖς ῥυθμοῖς.

secondly because at 669c7 Plato shifts from using these genitives, ἀνδρῶν, ἐλευθέρων and so on to an adjectival expression, σχῆμα ἐλευθέρου, where the adjective must pick out a feature of the *schēma* itself. It is a ‘free’ or ‘liberal’ *schēma*, which for Plato must imply one that represents the character or attitude of a free person. Of course he may also hold that items which represent a character proper to free men, for instance, are also particularly suitable for such men to sing and to hear; but that is not the immediate point.

In that case we must conclude that in Plato’s opinion, not only particular forms of words, but also particular kinds of melody, rhythm, *schēma* and so on can rightly be interpreted as *mimēseis* of the characters of free men or women or slaves. This isn’t surprising, of course, in view of the things he’s already said about musical *mimēsis*, and from what we are told in Book 3 of the *Republic*; and it fits quite well with the way in which the comic poets mock modern composers for the ‘effeminacy’ of their music, as Aristophanes mocks Agathon in the *Thesmophoriazousae* (notably at 130-145). But it’s important to notice that this passage of the *Laws* in particular indicates that a melody, for instance, simply as such and in its own right, is a *mimēsis* of something specifiable, and does not need to be combined with anything else in order to be such a *mimēsis*. We’ll come back to this point later.

One or two minor details in this part of the passage are worth noting. The trickiest is the word *chrōma* at 669c5. I should point out in passing that the Aldine edition has *schēma* here instead of *chrōma*, but this isn’t in any of the MSS; it was evidently adopted to bring the phrase into line with the references to *schēmata* in the rest of the passage, where *chrōma* does not reappear. For this and other reasons *chrōma* is the *lectio difficilior*, and we should accept it, unless it turns out to be impossible to give it a sensible interpretation. So what does Plato mean by ‘the *chrōma* and melody of women’? If this were a passage of Aristoxenus or a later theorist, we might suppose that it’s a reference to the chromatic genus, which is quite often called simply *chrōma*, but that can’t be correct here. For one thing, there’s no hint anywhere else in the dialogues that Plato knew of a classification of musical scales which distinguishes chromatic from enharmonic and diatonic; these terms and this form of classification are not in his repertoire. Even if they had been, it would be

hard to justify this interpretation in the present passage. It would require us to suppose that there is some particular form of chromatic system that is specially suited to the representation of women; and though that is something that a philosopher might imagine to be true, it would be ridiculous just to drop such a substantial and unusual theory into the text like this in a casual phrase, with no explanation at all. I'm virtually certain, then, that the expression has nothing to do with the chromatic genus.

Or perhaps it's not absolutely nothing. Ancient and modern scholars alike have argued that the group of systems that Aristoxenus calls 'chromatic' were not originally thought of as systems of a well-defined type, independent of the others. Rather, they were 'colourings' or subtle variants of the enharmonic or the diatonic, slightly adjusting the tunings of their intervals to create different nuances of aesthetic impression.² When Aristoxenus or Archytas, or whoever it was, established a fixed classification of scales into three types, he borrowed the name 'chromatic' for this group from an earlier usage in which these subtle nuances of tuning were already called *chrōmata*, 'colourings'; and this pattern of usage survived, of course, in Aristoxenus' adoption of the word *chrōa*, a 'shade' of a colour, to refer to variant form within a single genus. Then if we go back to Plato's expression *χρῶμα καὶ μέλος*, 'the colour and melody', we could take it almost as if it were *χρῶμα μελοῦς*, 'the colouring of melody', and as referring to the slight modifications of the intervals of a standard scale that were designed, in this case, to capture the special quality associated with femininity. To put some flesh on these bones, Plato might be thinking here, for instance, of a melody whose nuances of tuning were reminiscent of those associated with the self-representation of young women in a *partheneion*, while the words were better suited to the *ēthos* of brave men marching to battle. At any rate, this is the best I can do with the allusion to *chrōma*; and if it's roughly correct, perhaps it has some musicological interest. It helps to confirm the impression we get from certain other texts³ that composers of this period sometimes deliberately altered, very slightly, the intervals of the standard repertoire in order to create particular kinds of impression.

² Cf. e.g. M.L. West, *Ancient Greek Music*, Oxford 1992, 164-5, E. Rocconi, *Le parole delle Muse*, Rome 2003, 69-70.

³ E.g. [Plutarch] *De musica* 39 (1145C-D), a passage almost certainly derived from Aristoxenus.

The fourth example in the first part of Plato's list, at 669c8-d2, mentions ingredients of a different sort, 'the voices of wild animals and humans and instruments, and all sorts of noises', all of which are mixed together 'as though they were a *mimēsis* of some one thing'.⁴ It's not altogether clear what kind of performance he has in mind, and maybe, as some scholars have suggested, he's alluding to some form of rather vulgar popular entertainment. But he may be thinking of something more substantial. Some comic plays certainly included sounds of all these sorts – Aristophanes' *Frogs* and *Birds*, for instance – and it could have been something even more serious than that, something like a rendition of the *Pythikos nomos*, with its musical images of the serpent's hissings and the gnashing of its teeth, Apollo's challenge and its imitation trumpet calls, and so on. So there's plenty of scope for descriptions of the sort the Athenian gives. What seems odd about it is the qualification 'as though they were a *mimēsis* of some one thing'. In the context the qualification is evidently needed, since there need be nothing mixed or muddled about a composition that used ingredients evoking several different things, so long as they are presented as *mimēseis* of several different things. But it seems very unlikely that anyone would have performed all these animal noises and so on as if they were all parts of a representation of a single object such as a person; and if Plato means only that they all appeared in the course of a *mimēsis* of a single scene or narrative, it's hard to see what would be objectionable or problematic about that. The qualifying phrase is probably intended to apply to the first three examples too, but there the difficulty doesn't arise; it's only in the fourth that it seems out of place.

Let's move on now to the second part of the list, beginning at 669d5.⁵ Here what the Athenian complains about is not the incoherent mixing of conflicting elements, but the omission of musical features of one category or another. He mentions performances which involve rhythm and *schēmata* but no melody; words fitted to metre in the absence

⁴ ἔτι δὲ θηρίων φωνὰς (d) καὶ ἀνθρώπων καὶ ὀργάνων καὶ πάντας ψόφους εἰς ταῦτόν οὐκ ἄν ποτε συνθεῖεν, ὡς ἔν τι μιμούμεναι.

⁵ ταῦτά γε γὰρ ὀρῶσι πάντα κυκώμενα, καὶ ἔτι διασπῶσιν οἱ ποιηταὶ ῥυθμὸν μὲν καὶ σχήματα μέλους χωρὶς, λόγους ψιλοῦς εἰς μέτρα (e) τιθέντες, μέλος δ' αὔτ' καὶ ῥυθμὸν ἄνευ ῥημάτων, ψιλῆ κίθαρίς τε καὶ αὐλήσει προσχρώμενοι, ἐν οἷς δὴ παγγάλεπον ἄνευ λόγου γιγνόμενον ῥυθμὸν τε καὶ ἁρμονίαν γιγνώσκειν ὅτι τε βούλεται καὶ ὄτῳ ἔοικε τῶν ἀξιολόγων μιμημάτων.

of any other musical feature; and melody and rhythm with no words. In these cases there's no problem in identifying the kinds of performance he's talking about. When we have only rhythm and *schēmata* without melody – where *schēmata* is a choreographic term referring to the postures or figures of dance – it is dance unaccompanied by any singing or any melodic instrument, though percussion might still be involved. Metrically organised words by themselves will appear in any sort of poetic recitation, most notably in the performances of epic verse by the *rhapsōidoi*, and of course in the spoken passages of drama. Finally, there will be melody and rhythm but no words, as the speaker himself makes clear, in purely instrumental music of any kind; almost all of it will have fallen into one of the two types he mentions, *ψιλή κιθάρισις* (solo playing on the lyre or the *kithara*) and *αὐλησις* (solo playing on *auloi*). All that is quite familiar and straightforward, and we can be satisfied that these types of performance are not figments of Plato's imagination.

The real problem is why he objects to them. None of them are new-fangled modern inventions, so we can't put it down to mere conservatism. What we'd expect him to mean, in the context, is that in cases like these there is some special difficulty about identifying the object of the *mimēsis*; and that's precisely what he says about the example of purely instrumental music. But I find this very puzzling. He explains that the trouble with instrumental music is that there aren't any words to tell us *ὅτι τι βούλεται καὶ ὅτω ἔοικε τῶν ἀξιολόγων μιμημάτων*, that is, I think, what it is *trying* to represent and what it actually *does* represent, though Plato puts the last bit in a slightly peculiar way. If this were a good explanation it would work equally well, I suppose, in the case of dance with no song; but it obviously doesn't apply to the second category, where what we have are precisely the words. So where is the difficulty in that case? There is nothing to tell us.

Even if we could solve that problem, what he says about instrumental music strikes me as seriously suspect. You'll remember that earlier on he was talking about melodies and rhythms, for instance those of women and of free men, as though they had a clearly identifiable significance even without the help of words, since his point is that the picture painted by the words doesn't fit them. Similarly, the familiar comments about *harmoniai*

and rhythms in Book 3 of the *Republic* plainly mean that these elements are *mimēseis* of identifiable human *ēthē* in their own right; they ought to ‘follow the words’, as he puts it, but it’s by no means inevitable that they will. Again, in a stretch of argument at the end of this speech, which we’ve already looked at (670b2-6), the Athenian insists that the judges must know what the Dorian *harmonia*, for instance, is suitable for; but how can they know that, if it is impossible to identify the mimetic significance of a melody or a melodic structure, simply as such? So far as the earlier part of the present speech is concerned, we might ask how on earth he could know that a piece was using a melody representing free men and rhythms representing slavishness, if the objects imitated by these elements could not be independently recognised. Clearly, too, it’s important for the musical judges to be able to pick these things out, if they are to decide whether a composition is or is not a coherent representation of ‘some one thing’; even if there are words to help them, they still have to decide whether the melodies and rhythms fit with what the words represent. They must therefore be able to specify the objects imitated by the melodies and rhythms without any reference to the words. Then why should purely instrumental music be especially difficult to understand? I really do not see how Plato can answer that question.

The next part of the passage, 669e5-670a3, continues the polemic against instrumental music, and it unmistakably conveys the impression that it is something which Plato despises and detests; he doesn’t attack any of the other kinds of performance he’s mentioned with anything like such hostility and contempt.⁶ It is the last word in vulgarity, and wholly devoted to such meaningless nonsense as speed, noises like those made by wild beasts and rhythmic and/or melodic precision (I think that’s what *aptaisia* means here); it’s nothing but unmusical showmanship, or perhaps a collection of unmusical conjuring tricks (*thaumatourgia*). All this could of course be plausibly connected with the thesis that it has no detectable meaning and that you can’t tell what the object of the *mimēsis* is; in that case, Plato seems to imply, it can be nothing but pointless noise-making. But this doesn’t in fact quite follow from what he has said; it

⁶ ἀλλὰ ὑπολαβεῖν ἀναγκαῖον ὅτι τὸ τοιοῦτόν γε πολλῆς ἀγροικίας μεστὸν πᾶν, ὅπόσον τάχους τε καὶ ἀπταισίας καὶ φωνῆς θηριώδους σφόδρα φίλον ὥστ’ αὐλήσει γε χρῆσθαι καὶ (670a) καθαρίσει πλὴν ὅσον ὑπὸ ὄρχησίν τε καὶ ᾠδῆν, ψιλῶ δ’ ἑκατέρῳ πᾶσά τις ἀμουσία καὶ θαυματουργία γίγνοιτ’ ἂν τῆς χρήσεως.

would follow if he had said that this kind of music *is not* a *mimēsis* of anything, but he doesn't. All he says is that it's extremely difficult to identify what it imitates or is trying to imitate. This leaves open the possibility that instrumental music is sometimes or even always a *mimēsis* of something, and though the musical judges will allegedly find it hard to assess, Plato's premise is clearly not enough to justify the insults that he goes on to level at it. There may indeed be something that it represents, perhaps some admirable or despicable human *ēthos*, and in that case its claim to be music of genuine significance in Plato's own terms is apparently unassailable.

I think it's reasonable to guess that his hostility to it has some other origin, and the passage gives a small clue to what it might be. It says that such compositions are so devoted to speed, *aptaisia* and so on that they don't restrict *aulos*-playing and *kithara*-playing to what is needed for the accompaniment of dancing and song, but use them on their own. It's significant, I think, that 'dancing and song' are linked closely by the *τε - και* construction, *ὄρχησίν τε και ᾠδὴν*, suggesting that the proper place of instrumental music is in pieces which involve both of these elements, not just one or the other.

Perhaps we can also make something of Plato's use of the preposition *ὑπό* in the phrase *ὑπὸ ὄρχησίν τε και ᾠδὴν*. Admittedly it's the preposition regularly used to convey the relation between song and accompaniment, but it also implies that the accompaniment is subordinate to the song, or here to the song-and-dance; and if Plato had meant to treat the music of instruments and the associated song-and-dance as equal partners he could easily have chosen a different form of words, *μετὰ ὄρχησεώς τε και ᾠδῆς*, for example.

It looks as if Plato will only allow a composition to count as worthwhile music if it includes every one of the major forms of musical expression, words, melody, rhythm and dancing, which of course will incorporate its *schēmata*. That would explain why he objects to rhythmic dancing in the absence of melody, and poetic recitation when no other musical features are associated with it, for whose treatment the text offers no explicit justification. Though dance is much less prominent in the *Republic* than in the *Laws*, we can find hints of the same attitude there; after talking about words, *harmoniai* and rhythms, Socrates goes on to link good rhythms, several times, with *euschēmosynē*,

that is, graceful bodily posture; and this must surely imply that the rhythms are those of the dance (see especially 400c-401a). Hence the music he is thinking about in that passage too includes all four of the major musical elements.

So why does Plato adopt this position? One reason might be that he can locate the combination of all these elements in the music of the ‘good old days’, before the modern decadence set in, or again in the performances attributed to the ideal musicians, the Muses, by poets of the early period. This won’t really hold water, of course, since many of the performances in the Homeric epics do not include them all, and neither do all the compositions of archaic times; and the Muses are quite often represented as dancing without singing or singing without dancing. There’s no compelling reason to suppose that educated Greeks in general would have agreed with Plato’s view at any period, or that it reflects any pervasive cultural reality, though some modern scholars have incautiously asserted that it does. But Plato may not be concerned with historical fact. What he’s projecting is an ideal of completeness, the notion of a music that is a complete whole, in which all ingredients that can be classified as ‘musical’ are integrated and brought into a unity. They must all be present, and they must all cooperate in representing ‘some one thing’, as he puts it; that is what binds them into a unity, the many into one. In short, I read what he says here more as a reflection of the philosophical tradition than of the tradition of practical music-making; it is motivated by the search for unity in diversity which runs through Presocratic thought and is central to Plato’s own work, and which had been explored in relation to the special case of music by 5th-century Pythagoreans. It reappears later, for instance in Aristides Quintilianus, in the guise of the concept of *τέλειον μέλος*, which translates literally as ‘complete melody’ but in fact incorporates the ‘movements’ of both sound and body in melody, words and rhythms; Aristides also describes it as *τὸ τέλειον τῆς ᾠδῆς*, ‘the completeness of song’. It’s perhaps worth noticing too, that in a later passage he comments that though melody by itself can contribute a little to the production of psychic well-being, only *τέλειον μέλος* can provide a *paideia* or a ‘therapy for the emotions’ without any gaps or omissions.⁷ This seems to be a development of Platonic themes, rather than something we can find

⁷ For these passages see Aristides Quintilianus *De musica*, Book 1 chapters 4 and 12.

explicitly set out in the dialogues; but it certainly catches the spirit of Plato's pronouncements.

Part 2: *Laws* 700a-701c

Before we set out on this passage I had better say something about its context. The Athenian has been talking about the successes and failures of certain types of constitution, and is now concerned with the reasons why great cities and states have come to grief in the past. If we discover those reasons, he says, by examining historical examples, we shall be better able to avoid their mistakes. At 697c he sets out an account of the reasons why the Persian empire deteriorated. He says it was because the rulers became too despotic, and took too much liberty away from the people, with the consequence that they destroyed the people's willingness to identify themselves with the community; they no longer felt any affection or loyalty towards it. The rulers, for their part, were interested only in preserving and increasing their own power, and had no qualms about destroying cities or slaughtering the population to serve their purposes, so inflaming the people's hatred. As a result, when it came to warfare, they had a vast army at their command, but it was completely useless.

Next, at 698a, he starts to talk about a very different kind of case, that of Athens itself, and he begins by explaining how it came to achieve its remarkable successes in the early fifth century. In the course of a splendidly biased and Athens-centred account of the Persian wars, he argues that what gave the Athenians their steadfast resolve in the face of their monstrous enemy was the respect which they gave to the laws of their own free will, and the feeling of community that this shared devotion to the laws fostered in them. They thought it far more important to stand together and die, if necessary, in defence of the common good than to save themselves individually by surrendering, and thereby accepting the destruction of their community; and they did so, as I said, as people who freely and willingly submitted themselves to the laws. This can scarcely be called objective history, but it conveys the message that Plato needs. The conclusion he reaches in due course will be that the best kind of constitution is one in which a due proportion is

maintained between the authority of the laws and the rulers, and the citizens' exercise of their own free choice.

I'd like to say a little more about this matter before we go on with the passage. In what follows and in many other places the Athenian is so insistent that the rules governing music and the laws of the *polis* must be fixed and unchangeable, and that they must be rigorously enforced, that it's easy to get the impression that he's intent on introducing another kind of despotism, just as unbending as the one he attributes to the Persians. The impression that individuals are to be left with no freedom at all might seem to be confirmed by a famous passage in Book 1, at 644d ff, with its image of human beings as puppets of the gods, harnessed to strings which pull them and control their actions, and of a similar relation between the city's authorities and its citizens. But this is an illusion. For one thing, the strings are not pulled by a god or some other external puppet-master; they are internal to ourselves, our own emotions and our own faculty of reason. Secondly, the one string that is made of gold and whose tugging we should follow is soft and easily resisted, unlike the others; it tries to persuade, rather than compelling. Its counterpart in the *polis* is the law, which serves in place of their own independent reason for the citizen-body as a whole, especially all those in whom the reasoning faculty is not well developed. But because these 'golden strings' cannot force us to obey, they need help from some other source. This source is *paideia* that inculcates in the citizens the disposition to identify with the laws and to obey them willingly which is embedded in the institution of the choruses, led by the divine helpers, Apollo and Dionysus. In these choruses the singing dancers act in perfect unison, like the idealised choruses of archaic poetry, just as if they were puppets on strings, all moving together as one under the direction of their master. But they are not really puppets; they act as they do, in a paradigm of unanimity, out of their own choice, since through this *paideia* they have completely internalised the norms of the city's institutions and have come to love them. Thus, through their continual repetitions of their choral activities in the presence and in the service of the gods, the citizens choose freely to submerge their individual identities in that of the city, and so recreate the situation which existed, in Plato's imagination, in Athens at the time of the Persian wars.

So much for that. But despite the splendid attitudes that Athens had bred in its citizens in that golden age, its success didn't last. Let's get back to our bit of the text. 'In a sense,' says the Athenian at 699e1-4, 'the same thing happened to us as to the Persians; but whereas they drove the people into absolute slavery, we, by contrast, impelled the masses into absolute liberty;' and he now turns to the question of how this came about. This is where our passage begins, after a reminder that under the ancient system, the Athenian *dēmos* was indeed the master, *kyrios*, in certain respects, but at the same time the people were willing slaves to the laws.

'Which laws do you mean?' asks Megillus; and the Athenian replies (700a7-8) that the laws involved in the first instance were those concerned with *mousikē*. This answer might well startle anyone who wasn't already well acquainted with Greek discussions of this kind of topic; but it won't come as a surprise to us, given our familiarity – for instance – with the theories about musical and political change attributed to Damon, the contentions of *Dikaios Logos* and Aeschylus' attacks on Euripides in Aristophanes' *Clouds* and *Frogs*, and of course Plato's discussions in Books 2 and 3 of the *Republic*. The notion that breaches in musical laws spill over into social and political upheaval is already well entrenched.

But the present passage adds a fair amount of detail and has peculiarities of its own. It starts with the statement that in those days music was divided into various determinate *eidē* and *schēmata* (700a9-b1).⁸ *Eidos* is a familiar term in the sense 'form', or less technically 'type', but the word *schēma* is clearly being used in a different sense from the one we were dealing with in Book 2, where it referred to figures or postures in dancing. Here the phrase *εἶδη καὶ σχήματα* might have a sense something like 'species and subspecies', but I don't think it does; subdivisions of the forms or species play no part in the passage that follows. More probably the *schēmata* are the patterns of elements which define the construction of each of the *eidē*, since the point that Plato will make, as I understand it, is that the ancient regulations did not permit the characteristic *schēmata* of

⁸ διηρημένη γὰρ δὴ τότε ἦν ἡμῖν ἡ μουσικὴ κατὰ εἶδη τε (b) ἑαυτῆς ἄττα καὶ σχήματα.

any musical genre, that is, the features that defined it, to be transferred into any of the others. So music was divided into various kinds, and each had a definite set of characteristics that distinguished it sharply from the others.

What we get next is another of the Athenian's lists, this time a list of examples of the distinct kinds of composition he has mentioned (700b1-6).⁹ There were prayers to the gods, which were called *hymnoi*, and compositions of a type which he says is the opposite of the *hymnos*; these are *thrēnoi*, laments. Then there are *paian*s, and another group called dithyrambs, whose theme, he thinks, was the birth of Dionysus; and finally there are *nomoi*, which he says were specifically named *kitharōidikoi nomoi*. Once these types and various others had been fixed and distinguished, he continues, it was forbidden to use a melody belonging to one type of composition in any of the others.¹⁰ The phrase *καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν*, 'and various others', in 700b7 indicates that the list is not necessarily complete, but we may perhaps infer that the ones he has listed are in his view the most important.

Even granted that the list isn't meant to be complete, however, there are some interesting omissions. In the first place there is no mention of any genre of songs of the kinds performed at symposia and other private or informal gatherings, none of the short lyrics characteristic of Sappho or Anacreon, for instance, no *skolia* and of course no folk songs. It seems clear that he is thinking only of music of a relatively large-scale public kind. But there are well-known types of composition for public performance that are not mentioned either, *partheneia*, for example, and epinicians; these, however, are perhaps less central to archaic culture than the ones the Athenian specifies, and he could reasonably have consigned them to the group of 'various others'. It seems strange, too, that he seems to imply that the only *nomoi*, or the only significant ones, were the kitharodic *nomoi*, pieces for a soloist singing to his own accompaniment on the *kithara*; it's true that these carried the greatest prestige and the most valuable prizes in Plato's

⁹ καὶ τι ἦν εἶδος ᾠδῆς εὐχαὶ πρὸς θεοῦς, ὄνομα δὲ ὕμνοι ἐπεκαλοῦντο· καὶ τούτῳ δὴ τὸ ἐναντίον ἦν ᾠδῆς ἕτερον εἶδος—θρήνους δὲ τις ἂν αὐτοὺς μάλιστα ἐκάλεσεν—καὶ παίωνες ἕτερον, καὶ ἄλλο, Διονύσου γένεσις οἶμαι, διθύραμβος λεγόμενος. νόμους τε αὐτὸ τοῦτο τοῦνομα (5) ἐκάλουν, ᾠδὴν ὡς τινα ἑτέραν· ἐπέλεγον δὲ κιθαρωδικούς.

¹⁰ τούτων δὴ διατεταγμένων καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν, οὐκ ἐξῆν ἄλλο (c) εἰς ἄλλο καταχρῆσθαι μέλους εἶδος.

own time, but the others, especially the auletic *nomoi*, had quite prominent positions too.¹¹ Much more obtrusively, however, there is no place on the list for drama, either tragedy or comedy, which in Plato's Athens were surely the most high-profile of all the musical genres, and we may wonder why.

One hypothesis might be that Plato supposed these two forms of drama to have originated too late to have been included under the scope of the ancient laws, and that it would therefore be inappropriate to include them. But this suggestion is very implausible. It was common knowledge that tragedy went back before the time of Aeschylus, to Phrynichus and beyond him to Thespis, or so it was believed. Aeschylus was famous as one of the 'men of Marathon'; and it's clear that Plato locates the beginning of Athenian degeneration at a date after the time of the Persian wars. He must therefore have accepted that tragedy was already up and running well within the period in which Athens was supposedly governed by its ancient laws. The real problem, I think, is connected with the thesis the Athenian states at the end of the list, that no one was allowed to use a melody belonging to one kind of composition in any of the others. We may guess that when he says 'melody', *melos*, we are to treat this as shorthand for 'melody or rhythm or *schēma* and so on', and as implying that compositions could not include *any* of the defining characteristics of a genre to which they did not belong; but it doesn't much matter whether that interpretation is right or not. The point is that the drama cannot intelligibly be treated as another distinct genre alongside those specified on the list, that is, as one that has its own defining features and incorporates none of the special characteristics of the others, or even as one that does not borrow melodies characteristic of the others. There may be nothing in early drama that corresponds exactly to the dithyramb or the kitharodic *nomos*. But the tragedians created some of their most significant effects by representing their characters as singing *hymnoi*, *thrēnoi*, paians and other pieces of easily recognisable kinds; and even if their dramatised forms differed to some extent from those performed in real life, their melodies, rhythms and so on must have been appropriate to the relevant genres and recognised as such by their audiences. I

¹¹ These were purely instrumental pieces for a soloist playing the *auloi*, thus falling into the category of *psilē aulēsis* mentioned at 669e1-2. They had an especially prominent place in the great Pythian festivals at Delphi.

suspect, then, that Plato avoided mentioning tragedy and comedy because they were an embarrassing exception to the thesis he is propounding; they make it clear that the supposedly impermeable boundaries he envisages were in fact very far from watertight.¹²

There is indeed almost nothing in Greek literature before the fourth century to suggest that these sharp demarcations existed at all. Of course the various genres were identified and given their specific names, and there were differences between *hymnoi* and *thrēnoi* and between paian and dithyrambs; but they are not always as clear-cut as Plato wants us to believe, and there are a good many cases where the distinction between a *hymnos* and a paian is virtually undetectable. Thus Plato has defined a *hymnos* as a prayer to the gods; but the prayer offered by the Achaeans to Apollo in Book 1 of the *Iliad*, for instance, in their attempts to persuade him to end the plague that is destroying them, is explicitly described as a paian (*Il.* 1.472-3). More significantly, perhaps, Glaukos of Rhegium, writing in the late fifth century, seems to find nothing strange about describing the music of two eminent archaic composers, Stesichorus and Thaletas, as combining features from two quite different strands of musical activity, one from the repertoire of music for the *aulos*, and another from that of song accompanied by the lyre or the *kithara*.¹³ Quite often, in sources from Plato onwards, the inference that the music of archaic times was governed by strict rules is drawn from the double meaning of the word *nomos*, both ‘piece of music’ and ‘law’. But the word is used much more flexibly in earlier literature than in the philosophical, technical and semi-technical writings of later times. Writers of the archaic period and the fifth-century use it to refer to songs of any sort, including ones sung in informal settings where no official rules can possibly apply; and no one before Plato, so far as I know, proposed the argument based on its double meaning. It does seem to be true that even in the earlier period, the pieces called *nomoi* in the technical sense, when performed at the great competitive festivals, were required to conform to certain constraints; in some cases at least, most famously the *Pythikos nomos*, they were expected to represent a specific narrative, and to be divided into a set number

¹² For Plato’s treatment of comedy and tragedy in the context of the city envisaged in the *Laws*, see Book 7, 816d3-817d8, and cf. Book 11, 935d3-936a5.

¹³ See [Plutarch] *De musica* 1133F, 1134D-E.

of sections dealing with particular parts of the story.¹⁴ Something similar can be inferred about the *nomos polykephalos* described by Pindar in his twelfth Pythian. But regulations like these, which are only to be expected in a competitive context, leave plenty of room for diverse musical interpretations, and clearly say nothing of the sort that Plato asserts. Like many other passages in the *Laws* which purport to be genuine history – its treatment of the Persian wars, for example – this part of the Athenian’s speech seems really to be presenting ideology in a fictitious historical disguise.

There are some other minor oddities in the first part of the Athenian’s speech, but I’ll pass over them and move on. He tells us next that those responsible for passing judgement on the pieces performed did so in a very different way from the one that is normal nowadays. In the old days, the judges were not swayed by the shouting and whistling of the mob; children and their attendants (*paidagōgoi*) and the crowd in general were kept in order with a stick, and it was the rule for people described as *τοῖς γεγυόσι περὶ παιδείῃσιν* to listen in silence right through to the end.¹⁵ I’m not sure what the phrase I’ve quoted in Greek means; in his Penguin translation Saunders renders it as ‘people of taste and education’, and though this makes good sense I find it hard to extract it from the Greek. My own view is that it means ‘those concerned with education’, which I take to imply ‘those in charge of educational matters’. I’m inclined to think that it refers to the judges themselves, and that Plato is envisaging a system in which the cultural education of the citizens and the institution of public musical performances were so closely intertwined as to be one and the same thing, and therefore assigned the task of judging the musical contests to the educational authorities. If he did not mean that, the passage would say nothing at all about the behaviour of the judges, who are introduced at the beginning of the sentence as though it were all about them; and this would be rather odd.

¹⁴ Pollux *Onomastikon* 4.84, Strabo *Geography* 9.3.10.

¹⁵ τὸ δὲ κῦρος τούτων γνῶναι τε καὶ ἅμα γνόντα δικάσαι, ζημιῶν τε αὖ τὸν μὴ πειθόμενον, οὐ σύριγξ ἦν οὐδέ τινες ἄμουσοι βοαὶ πλήθους, καθάπερ τὰ νῦν, οὐδ’ αὖ κρότοι ἐπαίνους ἀποδιδόντες, ἀλλὰ τοῖς μὲν γεγυόσι περὶ παιδείῃσιν δεδογμένον ἀκούειν ἦν (5) αὐτοῖς μετὰ σιγῆς διὰ τέλους, παισὶ δὲ καὶ παιδαγωγοῖς καὶ τῷ πλείστῳ ὄχλῳ ῥάβδου κοσμοῦσης ἢ νουθέτησις ἐγίγνετο.

We certainly know that audiences in the fourth century were noisy and unruly;¹⁶ and sources like Demosthenes' speech against Meidias give graphic accounts of the ways in which people tried to intimidate the judges and to sabotage the performances of their competitors. What is not so clear is whether audiences in earlier times were much more respectful and subdued, and whether no one in those days tried to influence the judges or obstruct the other performers. As many commentators have remarked, critics in every generation imagine that life was much more rigorously disciplined when they were young, and even more so in their parents' and grandparents' time, and that in these decadent modern times people have abandoned all the rules that once kept civilisation in general and the arts in particular under proper control. We may well suspect that Plato, along with the spokesmen for musical conservatism in Aristophanes, Pherecrates and many others, was indulging in nostalgic fantasies of this sort without anything very solid to base them on. We certainly shouldn't accept what he says at face value without a very careful inspection of the evidence; and I can't undertake that here.

At this point, at 700d2-8, Plato's focus shifts for a while, away from the behaviour of the audience and the judges to that of the composers themselves. It is they, he says, who were the *ἄρχοντες τῆς ἀμούσου παρανομίας*, the initiators of unmusical law-breaking. These composers were indeed talented exponents of their art, but they were completely ignorant of what is right and lawful in music. They were carried away in a Bacchic ecstasy, *βακχεύοντες*, by the seductions of mere pleasure; and what was the result? Horror of horrors, it was the terrible catastrophe of musical mixtures, of which we heard a good deal in the passage of Book 2 we have been discussing. But this time they are mixtures of a different sort, or at least they are depicted in a different way; the Athenian is no longer talking about melodies representing the characters of free men linked with rhythms evocative of slavery, or anything like that, but about mixtures of genres such as those that were listed at the outset.¹⁷ These composers mixed *thrēnoi* with *hymnoi* and

¹⁶ See R.W. Wallace, 'Poet, public and "theatocracy": audience performance in classical Athens', in *Poets, Public and Performance in ancient Greece* eds. L. Edmunds and R.W. Wallace, Baltimore 1997, 97-111.

¹⁷ μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα, προϊόντος τοῦ χρόνου, ἄρχοντες μὲν τῆς ἀμούσου παρανομίας ποιηταὶ ἐγίνοντο φύσει μὲν ποιητικοί, ἀγνώμονες δὲ περὶ τὸ δίκαιον τῆς Μούσης καὶ τὸ νόμιμον, βακχεύοντες καὶ (5) μᾶλλον τοῦ

paians with dithyrambs, imitated *aulōidia* with their *kitharōidia* and so on; and on this occasion Plato seems to have got his facts pretty well right. There is plenty of evidence for the interpenetration of genres in the so-called ‘new music’ of the later fifth century, and the influence of *aulos*-music on other musical forms is particularly well attested. We should notice, however, that Plato has given us no good reason for thinking that mixtures of this particular sort are especially objectionable; and it is not clear why he has set the scenario up in this particular way, that is, by beginning from an initial ideal condition in which musical genres were kept sharply distinct. The problem that this poses is in fact rather bigger and more general than that, and I’ll come back to it at the end. For the present, let’s press on.

By breaking down these barriers, the Athenian continues, these composers gave a completely false impression of music, not deliberately but by mistake, *akontes*, because of their *anoia*, ignorance or folly.¹⁸ The impression they gave was that there is no standard of correctness whatever in music – a sentiment echoed in a different context by Aristoxenus, in one of his bitter remarks about his predecessors¹⁹ – but that it can ‘correctly’ be judged by anyone, better people and worse people alike, just by the criterion of the pleasure it gives them. This is of course a crucial point for Plato; as we saw earlier, the notion that good music is simply the music that gives a person the most pleasure is one that he vigorously rejects.

His next comment (700e4-6) brings out one of his reasons for rejecting this view. The example and the pronouncements of the composers induced ordinary people, *hoi polloi*, to suppose that they themselves were competent to pass judgement on music, and this led to musical *paranomia*, which is perhaps not just ‘law-breaking’ but ‘anarchy’.²⁰ The point is, of course, is that if pleasure is the only criterion of musical excellence, each

δέοντος κατεχόμενοι ὑφ’ ἡδονῆς, κεραννύντες δὲ θρήνους τε ὕμνοις καὶ παίωνας διθυράμβοις, καὶ αὐλωδίας δὴ ταῖς κιθαρωδίαις μιμούμενοι.

¹⁸ καὶ πάντα εἰς πάντα συνάγοντες, (ε) μουσικῆς ἄκοντες ὑπ’ ἀνοίας καταγευδόμενοι ὡς ὀρθότητα μὲν οὐκ ἔχοι οὐδ’ ἠτινοῦν μουσική, ἡδονῇ δὲ τῇ τοῦ χαίροντος, εἴτε βελτίων εἴτε χειρῶν ἂν εἴη τις, κρίνεται ὀρθότατα.

¹⁹ *Elementa harmonica* 5.23-29 Meibom = 10.4-8 Da Rios.

²⁰ τοιαῦτα δὴ ποιοῦντες ποιήματα, λόγους τε ἐπιλέγοντες τοιοῦτους, τοῖς πολλοῖς ἐνέθεσαν παρανομίαν εἰς τὴν (5) μουσικὴν καὶ τόλμαν ὡς ἱκανοῖς οὖσιν κρίνειν.

person individually will be, in effect, an ideal judge of what is best, since he is the only person who knows which pieces please him most. Pleasure is always the pleasure of some individual, and if you are a devotee of heavy metal and I am a Bach junkie, neither of us is in a position to tell the other that what he enjoys isn't *really* pleasing; and nor is anyone else, no matter how sophisticated their musical expertise may be. We thus reach a position similar to that of Protagoras. There are no objective standards, and no music is simply good or bad; there is only music which seems good or bad to you or to me, and so on, and the music that seems good to me *is* good so far as I am concerned. What you or anyone else may think is irrelevant, and no regulations imposed by supposedly authoritative judges can possibly be justified. In Plato's view, it is essential that conclusions along these lines should be rejected; his intricate arguments against Protagoras in the *Theaetetus* show how much philosophical energy he devoted to the task of refuting them.

But of course the Athenians of his historical sketch didn't have Plato to show them the error of their ways. As a result, the crowds in the theatres abandoned their respectful silence; since each of them took himself to be the proper judge of what was good and bad, they started to fill the air with shouts of approval and disapproval and to make their opinions felt, and the ancient *aristokratia*, 'government by the best', degenerated into a despicable *theatrokratia*, 'government by the spectators', that is, the general mob (700e6-701a3).²¹ It's no accident that Plato uses political language at this point. If this state of affairs had remained as a *dēmokratia* in musical matters alone, he says, it wouldn't have mattered very greatly. But it didn't stay confined to that context; from its origin in musical matters there was born the idea that everyone was in full possession of wisdom about absolutely everything, and the result was unrestricted liberty amounting to anarchy in every corner of Athenian life (701a-b3).²² A glance at the passage at the beginning of the Athenian's next speech (700b5ff), which I'm not going to look at in detail, will show

²¹ ὅθεν δὴ τὰ (701a) θέατρα ἐξ ἀφώνων φωνήεντ' ἐγένοντο, ὡς ἐπαίοντα ἐν μουσικαῖς τὸ τε καλὸν καὶ μὴ, καὶ ἀντὶ ἀριστοκρατίας ἐν αὐτῇ θεατροκρατία τις πονηρὰ γέγονεν.

²² εἰ γὰρ δὴ καὶ δημοκρατία ἐν αὐτῇ τις μόνον ἐγένετο ἐλευθέρων ἀνδρῶν, οὐδὲν ἂν πάνυ γε δεινὸν ἦν τὸ γεγονός· νῦν δὲ ἤρξε μὲν ἡμῖν ἐκ μουσικῆς (5) ἡ πάντων εἰς πάντα σοφίας δόξα καὶ παρανομία, συνεφέσπετο δὲ ἐλευθερία. ἄφοβοι γὰρ ἐγίγοντο ὡς εἰδότες, ἡ δὲ ἄδεια ἀναισχυντίαν ἐνέτεκεν· τὸ γὰρ τὴν τοῦ βελτίονος (b) δόξαν μὴ φοβεῖσθαι διὰ θράσος, τοῦτ' αὐτὸ ἐστὶν σχεδὸν ἡ πονηρὰ ἀναισχυντία, διὰ δὴ τίνος ἐλευθερίας λίαν ἀποτετολημένης.

you the extent of the outrages that followed, so he says, once the composers had made their original and entirely unintentional mistake. People abandoned their traditional obedience to their parents and elders, made every effort to evade the injunctions of the laws, and eventually descended into oath-breaking and atheism. It's pretty heavy stuff.²³

Now readers of the *Republic* won't be surprised by the suggestion that musical *paranomia* can have disastrous social and political consequences. But there is something rather unexpected about the line of argument pursued in this passage of the *Laws*. Both the *Republic* and other parts of the *Laws* itself would lead us to expect Plato to make his argument depend on connections between specific types of music and specific ethical attitudes; listening to Dorian melodies inspires courage, Lydian melodies make you supine and soft, and so on. But there is no trace of any such reasoning here. The cause of the upheaval, it tells us, was not any particular failing in the music as such; it was simply the encouragement given to the view that anyone's opinion is just as valuable as anyone else's. It's true that Plato traces this opinion to the composers' decision to create mixtures of the musical genres, a practice he dislikes, but the nature of the musical error is really irrelevant. He could have told essentially the same story even if he had thought that the ancient music was an indissoluble mixture of musical styles, and that although the rules in force in those days insisted on keeping them all together as an integrated whole – which could indeed be portrayed as an ideal in line with some aspects of Platonism – at some point in time the composers decided to break it up into distinct types, on the grounds that this produced more pleasure. Exactly the same sort of narrative could still have been constructed from that starting point. It could indeed be transplanted, essentially unaltered, to a completely different cultural context, in which the arena where the populace was most often gathered in the greatest numbers was not that of the musical contests, but for instance the football stadium. It could be any place where big crowds assembled to watch events that were controlled by strict rules and official judges or referees, and where the behaviour of the participants might encourage the spectators to

²³ Ἐφεξῆς δὴ ταύτῃ τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἢ τοῦ μὴ ἐθέλειν τοῖς (5) ἄρχουσι δουλεύειν γίγνοιτ' ἄν, καὶ ἐπομένη ταύτῃ φεύγειν πατρὸς καὶ μητρὸς καὶ πρεσβυτέρων δουλείαν καὶ νοθεύτησιν, καὶ ἐγγὺς τοῦ τέλους οὖσιν νόμων ζητεῖν μὴ ὑπηκόοις εἶναι, (c) πρὸς αὐτῷ δὲ ἤδη τῷ τέλει ὄρκων καὶ πίστεων καὶ τὸ παράπαν θεῶν μὴ φροντίζειν, τὴν λεγομένην παλαιὰν Τιτανικὴν φύσιν ἐπιδεικνῦσι καὶ μιμουμένους, ἐπὶ τὰ αὐτὰ πάλιν ἐκεῖνα ἀφικομένους, χαλεπὸν αἰῶνα διάγοντας μὴ λήξαι ποτε κακῶν.

voice their own opinions and override the judgements of the appointed officials. Plato may have thought that his reading of the course of events in Athens was accurate, and that it was in fact in the environment of musical performances that the excesses he deplores originated; it's even conceivable that he was right, though I think it rather unlikely. But nothing follows from that about the nature of the rules that ought to apply in music. The only moral we could properly draw is that if the culture is such that the largest popular gatherings are those of the musical contests, then it's important that there should be clearly-defined rules to govern the behaviour of both the performers and the audience, and that these should be strictly enforced. No doubt someone should then try to work out what the best rules would be, but that is a separate task on which the present argument has no bearing at all. Plato's rhetoric tries to persuade us that it is the separation of musical genres that is crucial, but there is nothing in the passage that should make us believe it, even if the story it tells is true.

I've beaten poor old Plato around the head quite enough for now, and I'll end by repeating what I said yesterday, that despite all my disrespectful comments I'm still full of admiration for his vigorous and ingenious championship of his views, for the subtlety of his linguistic and rhetorical strategies, and for the stimulus they give to both critical and appreciative thought. He deploys his skills here in a very different way from some of those he uses in the earlier dialogues, but these are not just the ramblings of a dottery old idiot. It's powerful and effective writing; and though it plainly fails if we judge it by the standards of strict logical demonstration, we should recognise that it is not designed on that pattern, and try to appreciate it for what it is.

Fifth seminar: Music in *Laws* Books 4-6.
Egert Pöhlmann (University of Erlangen-Nürnberg)

1. Ulrich von Wilamowitz and Plato's *Laws*.

As a septuagenarian Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff published his "Platon",¹ a philological biography of the philosopher and his dialogues from the *Ion* to the *Laws*. His approach led him to label the *Ion*, *Hippias* and *Protagoras* as "Jugendübermut (juvenile wantonness)",² dialogues written before the death of Socrates (399), and the *Laws* as a work of "Resignation"³ after the death of Plato's friend Dion, who was murdered by Kallippos, a member of the Academy, in 354 B.C. Six years later, immediately after Plato's death (348/7), his pupil Philippus of Opus published the *Laws*, dividing the work, which existed as a draft, into 12 books and adding a supplement, the *Epinomis*. The *Laws* were read by Isocrates as early as 346 B.C.⁴

Because of many shortcomings in the disposition Wilamowitz considered the *Laws* to be an arrangement of incoherent pieces, which were held together superficially by the form of the dialogue. Wilamowitz also considered the *Laws* to be unfinished, as the promise of a conclusion in Book 12 (962 B) is never fulfilled.⁵ On the other hand, a host of cross-references attests that Plato when writing the *Laws* followed a deliberate plan. This was seen first by Theodor Gomperz.⁶ We shall find examples of such cross-references when embarking on a survey of the musical chapters in the *Laws*.

Books I-III of the *Laws* are preliminaries for the main subject, the legislation for a new state. Three old men, Plato (in the disguise of an anonymous Athenian), the Spartan Megillos and the Cretan Clinias, have set out to travel on midsummer day (683 C) from Cnossos to the cave of Zeus below Mount Ida, which means a walking tour (today the European hiking tour E4) of two days rising to 1495 metres above sea level. There are opportunities for delightful rests and talk in the cypress woods on the

1 U. von Wilamowitz - Moellendorff, *Platon I, Leben und Werke, II, Beilagen und Textkritik*, Berlin 1919.

2 Wilamowitz I (1919) 122-152, II (1919) 32-46.

3 Wilamowitz I (1919) 647-697, II (1919) 305-322.

4 Isocrates, *Philippus* 12.

5 Wilamowitz I (1919) 647-650.

6 Theodor Gomperz, *Platonische Aufsätze III*, in: *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie in Wien phil. hist. Klasse* (1902) 145.

way (I 625). After having started with an inquiry about the Spartan constitution, the dialogue shifts to the appropriate use of wine at symposia and the importance of music in education (I 642). This topic, developed in the second book, has already been treated by Eleonora Rocconi and Andrew Barker.

The third book begins with a history of civilisation, which draws on Democritus,⁷ resulting in a preliminary sketch of the origins of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy (III 683). Embedded in it is an interesting cross-reference: "And now - as it were by divine direction - we have returned once more to the very point in our discourse on laws where we made our digression, when we plunged into the subject of music and drinking-parties; and we can, so to speak, get a fresh grip upon the argument, now that it has reached this point".⁸ This is a clear reference to I 638 D and II 653. After that, Plato qualifies his digression as πλάνη τοῦ λόγου, "going astray of the *logos*". This attests that Plato himself wanted to treat significant material concerning education and music not in Book 7, where the topic is resumed, as we shall see, but already in Book 2. Of course this is awkward, but there is no reason to see in this shortcoming the hand of the redactor, Philippus of Opus, as Ivo Bruns had suggested.⁹

The sketch of the history from the Trojan war until the Persian wars (Book 3, 682-700) gives the opportunity to discuss monarchy, aristocracy and democracy and the mixed constitution in Sparta, which happily maintains the balance between the despotism of the Persians and the excess of freedom of the Athenian people after the Persian wars. In order to explain the decay of Athens Plato draws on the opinion of Damon, which he had quoted in the *Republic*: "People should beware of change to new forms of music, for they are risking change in the whole. Styles of music are nowhere altered without change in the greatest laws of the city: so Damon says, and I concur".¹⁰ In the *Laws* (III 700-701 B), Plato gives a vivid picture of the licentious music of the Athenian theatre, which eventually led to political anarchy, as Andrew Barker has

7 Wilamowitz I (1919) 657 f.

8 Plato, *Laws* III 682 E: ὅθεν δὴ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἐξετραπόμεθα περὶ νόμων διαλεγόμενοι, περιπεσόντες μουσικῇ τε καὶ ταῖς μέθαις, νῦν ἐπὶ τὰ αὐτὰ πάλιν ἀφίγμεθα ὡσπερ κατὰ θεόν, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἡμῖν οἶον λαβὴν ἀποδίδωσιν.- Translation Bury.

9 I. Bruns, *De legum Platonis compositione quaestiones selectae*, Bonn 1877.

10 *Rep.* IV 24 C 3-6: εἶδος γὰρ καινὸν μουσικῆς μεταβάλλειν εὐλαβητέον ὡς ἐν ὄλῳ κινδυνεύοντα· οὐδαμοῦ γὰρ κινουῦνται μουσικῆς τρόποι ἄνευ πολιτικῶν νόμων τῶν μεγίστων, ὡς φησι Δάμων καὶ ἐγὼ πείθομαι.- Translation Barker.

shown. The same thought, the fear of every change in musical education, is resumed later in the *Laws* (VII 798 D - 799 B).

By a happy chance (*Laws* III 702 B 5), the Cretan Clinias is able to offer an opportunity for a practical test: he is charged, together with nine colleagues, by the city of Cnossos to plan the foundation of a new town between the Dorian city of Gortys and the Minoan palace of Phaistos in the Messara plane, on the site of the ruined old Magnesia,¹¹ eighty stadia north of the Libyan sea.¹² This fiction gives the background for the legislation of the second city after the *Republic*, which is carried out in Books 4 to 12. Interspersed are several chapters on music and two longer sections about education, in the seventh book musical education in general, and in the twelfth book the musical education of the highest class, the members of the "nocturnal council". In browsing in these passages we have to treat music together with poetry.

2. Laws IV 719: Enthusiasmus

Book 4 of the *Laws* begins with a survey of the geographical and economic conditions and the provenance of the inhabitants of the new town. After that, the qualities of an enlightened tyrant cooperating with an enlightened legislation are debated. After this echo of the famous passage of the *Republic* (5, 473 D) about the philosopher-king, a mixed constitution is chosen for the new town, the legislation of which must now be investigated. Thus, the legislator is summoned as interlocutor, to be interviewed about the best form of the legislation. In order to recommend to the legislator unequivocal regulations, the Athenian tells him an old story, which is introduced by a cross-reference to a series of earlier Platonic dialogues:

"There is, O lawgiver, an ancient saying - constantly repeated by ourselves and endorsed by everyone else - that whenever a poet is seated on the Muses' tripod, he is not in his senses, but resembles a fountain, which gives free course to the upward rush of water; and, since his art consists in imitation, he is compelled often to contradict himself, when he creates characters of contradictory moods; and he knows not which of these contradictory utterances is true. But it is not possible for the lawgiver in his law thus to compose two statements about a single matter; but he must always publish one

¹¹ Plato, *Magneten*: *Laws* VIII 848; XI 861; XI 919; XII 946; XII 968.

¹² For the detail see Wilamowitz I (1919) 661-663.

single statement about one matter".¹³

In this tale we find joined together two notions of the nature of poetry and music, namely ἐνθουσιασμός and μίμησις, which are properly incompatible.¹⁴ The introducing cross-reference covers Plato's whole work: ἐνθουσιασμός (possession by the God) is attested in the *Ion*, the *Apology*, the *Meno*, the *Phaidros* and the *Laws*, μίμησις (imitation) in the *Cratylus*, in the *Phaidros*, in Books 3 and 10 of the *Republic* and in the second, fourth and seventh books of the *Laws*. It is interesting to see the development of two significant literary conceptions which culminates in Aristotle's *Poetics*, written in Athens before the death of Plato, and before Aristotle's departure to Assos after 348/47 B.C.¹⁵

The rhapsode Ion, in his dispute with Socrates in the *Ion*, claims for himself a craft (τέχνη), the ability to explain Homer with respect to the content of his works, their poetic means, especially the appropriateness (πρέπον) of the language of the actors, which produces illusion, and their impact on the souls of their hearers. This comes close to sophistic Homer-exegesis in the manner of Gorgias' *Helen* of 393 B.C.¹⁶ But Socrates, mercilessly insisting not on poetic style and impact, but only on content, compels Ion to concede that there is for every sector of human life an expert like the helmsman or the general, who knows better than the rhapsode how to speak about the relevant facts. Thus, the powers of the rhapsode cannot result from a craft (τέχνη), but must have another source, namely possession by the god (ἐνθουσιασμός). This notion, which was already propagated by Democritus (460-370) in his *Poetics* (Περὶ Ποιήσιος, B 16a - 18), may have been borrowed by Plato,¹⁷ who expands it in a famous parable (533 C-E):

Like rings which cling to a magnetic stone, a simile adopted from Euripides'

13 *Laws* III 719 C: Παλαιὸς μῦθος, ὃ νομοθέτα, ὑπὸ τε αὐτῶν ἡμῶν ἀεὶ λεγόμενός ἐστι καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις πᾶσι συνδεδογμένος, ὅτι ποιητῆς, ὁπότεν ἐν τῷ τρίποδι τῆς Μούσης καθίζηται, τότε οὐκ ἔμφρων ἐστίν, οἷον δὲ κρήνη τις τὸ ἐπιὸν ῥεῖν ἐτοίμως ἔῃ, καὶ τῆς τέχνης οὔσης μιμήσεως ἀναγκάζεται ἐναντίως ἀλλήλοῖς ἀνθρώπους ποιῶν διαπιθεμένους ἐναντία λέγειν αὐτῷ πολλάκις, οἷδε δὲ οὔτ' εἰ ταῦτα οὔτ' εἰ θάτερα ἀληθῆ τῶν λεγομένων. Τῷ δὲ νομοθέτῃ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστι ποιεῖν ἐν τῷ νόμῳ, δύο περὶ ἑνός, ἀλλὰ ἓνα περὶ ἑνός ἀεὶ δεῖ λόγον ἀποφαίνεσθαι.- Translation Bury.

14 E. Pöhlmann, 'Enthusiasmus und Mimesis: Zum platonischen Ion', in: *Gymnasium* 83 (1976) 191-208.

15 W. Burkert, 'Aristoteles im Theater. Zur Datierung des 3. Buchs der "Rhetorik" und der "Poetik"', in: *MH* 32 (1975) 67-72,

16 Cp. *Ion* 535 C-E and Gorgias *Helen* 9 with Plato, *Meno* 71 E about Gorgias' typology of people's behaviour.

17 Wilamowitz I (1919) 478.

Oineus (Fr. 567 Nauck), the poets and composers cling to the Muse who is responsible for the relevant genre. Like prophets they receive from the Muse a mysterious power, the *θεία μανία*, which they transmit to the mediators of poetry and music, rhapsodes, actors, chorus-leaders and choristers. The latter transmit this power to the listeners. When poets, mediators and listeners are in the grip of inspiration (*ένθουσιασμός*), they lose all mental control (*έκφρονεϊ*), like the maenads in bacchic frenzy. Thus, inspired poetry cannot be taught, learned and explained like a craft (*τέχνη*).

In the *Apology* (21 C - 22 E) and the *Meno* (99 B-D) Socrates uses the conception of inspiration ironically, in order to demonstrate that politicians, poets and craftsmen don't participate in insight (*έπιστήμη*), but rely only on correct opinion (*όρθή δόξα*), which is a gift of the gods. In the *Phaedrus*, in the second speech about Eros, Socrates gives the concept of *ένθουσιασμός* an unexpected turn, contrasting inspired poetry and poetry pursued like a craft:¹⁸ "The third is the possession and enchantment by the Muses which seizes a tender and untouched soul, awaking and arousing in her songs and other poetry ... But everybody who arrives at the doors of poetry without the frenzy of the Muses, thinking that he will become a poet because of his craft (*τέχνη*), will miss the goal, and the poetry of the well tempered will be defeated by the poetry of the inspired poet.¹⁹ Thus, the musician (*μουσικός*) together with the philosopher, the *φιλόκαλος* and the *έρωτικός*, keeps the first place in respect of his perception of the ideas, while the poet (*ποιητικός*) and other representatives of illusion (*περὶ μίμησιν τις άλλος*) are relegated to the sixth place (*Phaedrus* 248 DE). It is interesting that *μίμησις* is connected here with *τέχνη*.

In the *Laws* however, the contrast between the inspired (*ένθεος*) poet and the technician of verse producing illusion (*μίμησις*) is forgotten. Both are identified, as we have seen. Nevertheless, in the third book of *Laws* we still can find a reflection of the *enthousiasmos* of the *Ion*: "For being divinely inspired in his chanting, the poetic tribe with the aid of Graces and Muses, often grasps the truth of history".²⁰

18 See E. Heitsch, *Platon, Phaidros, Übersetzung und Kommentar von E.H.*, Göttingen 1993, 113 f.

19 *Phaedrus* 245 A: τρίτη δὲ ἀπὸ Μουσῶν κατοκοχή τε καὶ μανία, λαβοῦσα ἀπαλήν καὶ ἄβατον ψυχὴν, ἐγείρουσα καὶ ἐκβακχεύουσα κατὰ τε ὠδὰς καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην ποίησιν ... ὃς δ' ἄνευ μανίας Μουσῶν ἐπὶ ποιητικὰς θύρας ἀφίκηται, πεισθεὶς ὡς ἄρα ἐκ τέχνης ἱκανὸς ποιητὴς ἐσόμενος, ἀτελεῖς αὐτὸς δὲ καὶ ἡ ποίησις ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν μαινομένων ἢ τοῦ σωφρονοῦντος ἠφανίσθη.

20 *Laws* III 682 A: Θεῖον γὰρ οὖν δὴ καὶ τὸ ποιητικὸν ένθεαστικὸν ὄν γένος ὕμνωδοῦν, πολλῶν τῶν κατ' ἀληθειάν γιγνομένων σύν τισιν Χάρισιν καὶ Μοΐσαις ἐφάπτεται ἐκάστοτε. See Wilamowitz I (1919)

3. Laws IV 719: Mimesis

The concept of ἐνθουσιασμός is known to Democritus, as we have seen, while the notion of poetic μίμησις appears already in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (l. 163), which falls into three parts: 1-145 treats the birth of the god on Delos, and 179-546 the god's journeys to Olympus and to Delphi, while 146-178 forms a link between the Delian and the Delphian part.

Walter Burkert²¹ has found a convincing date for this complex composition: In 522 B.C., Polycrates of Samos inaugurated in Delos a Delian and Delphian festival (Δήλια καὶ Πύθια), according to a Delphian oracle. For this occasion a member of the guild of the *Homerides* of Chios linked a Delian Hymn to Apollo to a Delphian one by a connecting part, which depicts the Ionic *panegyris* and the Delian festival, consisting of pugilism, dance and song (146-164), and mentions in a peculiar *sphragis* the Chian poet, but praises also the ancestor of the guild of *Homerides*, blind Homer (165-178).

The highlight of the Delian festival are the songs of the chorus of the Delian maidens (156-164), who praise first in a *prooimion* the local gods, Apollo, Leto and Artemis. After that, they perform mythological tales by impersonating men and women of past times in a dramatic hymn to the greatest delight of the listeners:²²

"Besides, there is a great miracle of eternal fame, the Delian girls, servants of the far shooting god, who start with the praise of Apollon and after that sing about Leto and Artemis. After that they sing a hymn about men and women of old, thus pleasing the many listeners. They are able to imitate the voices and βαμβαλιαστύς²³ of these persons so perfectly, that each of them would believe that he himself was singing - so excellently was the song of the Delian maidens fitted together".

The peculiar meaning of μιμεῖσθαι in the *Homeric Hymn* is prepared in the *Iliad*

477.

21 W. Burkert, 'Kynaithos, Polycrates and the Homeric Hymn to Apollo', in: *Arkturos. Hellenic Studies presented to Bernard M.W. Knox on the occasion of his 65th birthday*, ed. G.W. Bowersock, W. Burkert, M.C.J. Putnam, Berlin-New-York 1979, 52-62, esp. 59-62.

22 *Homeric Hymnus to Apollo* 156-164: πρὸς δὲ τόδε μέγα θαῦμα, ὄου κλέος οὔποτ' ὀλεῖται / κοῦραι Δηλιάδες ἑκατηβελέταο θεράπναι· / αἶ τ' ἐπεὶ ἄρ πρῶτον μὲν Ἐπόλλων' ὑμνήσωσι, / αὐτίς δ' αὖ Λητώ τε καὶ Ἄρτεμιν ἰοχέαιραν / μνησάμεναι ἀνδρῶν τε παλαιῶν ἠδὲ γυναικῶν / ὕμνον ἀείδουσιν, θέλγουσι δὲ φύλ' ἀνθρώπων. / πάντων δ' ἀνθρώπων φωνὰς καὶ βαμβαλιαστῶν / μιμεῖσθ' ἴσασιν· φαίη δὲ κεν αὐτὸς ἕκαστος / φθέγγεσθ'· οὔτω σφιν καλὴ συνάρηρεν ἀοιδή.

23 v.l. κρεμβαλιαστῶν. Both words are *hapax legomena*, depicting the sound of the speech. See Eva Tichy, *Onomatopoeitische Verbalbildungen des Griechischen*, Wien 1983, 217-220.

and in the *Odyssey*.²⁴ Nevertheless, in explaining the miracle of the Delian maiden's chorus by reference to μιμεῖσθαι, imitation of speech and song, the poet uses the word for the first time as a catchword of poetics. The relevant quotations of μιμεῖσθαι between the *Homeric Hymnus* and Plato teach us nothing more.²⁵

Plato uses μίμησις for the first time in the *Cratylus*, in order to explain the relation between word (ὄνομα) and matter (πρᾶγμα), employing music and painting as apposite analogies (*Cratylus* 423 A - 424 A). But while painting imitates shape (σχῆμα) and colour, and music the object's sound or voice, the art of name-giving (ὀνομαστική) imitates with the word, and its components imitate the essence (οὐσία) of the matter. It is interesting that Plato here ridicules extravagances of musicians, excluding vocal imitations of the noises of sheep and cocks and other animals from the category of words or names,²⁶ a polemic which reappears in other forms in *Republic* III 395 B, 397 A and *Laws* II 669 CD. Taking all this together, it is evident that in the *Cratylus* μίμησις denotes nothing but an image (εἶδωλον) of the matter.

In *Republic* III, the meaning of μίμησις has been somehow narrowed. Socrates, in order to classify the different genres of poetry, splits it up first into two classes: poetry which is simply narrated (ἄπλη διήγησις) and poetry which consists of the speeches of the persons who are acting (μίμησις). Of course, both classes may appear together.²⁷ As Glaucon does not understand, Socrates analyzes the beginning of the *Iliad* (A 8-42), separating the narrated parts (8-16, 22-25, 33-36) from the speeches of the priest Chryses (17-21, 37-42) and Agamemnon (26-32). Thus he obtains a new definition of μίμησις: "Thus, assimilating oneself to another with regard to the voice or the shape is impersonating (μιμεῖσθαι) the person to whom you assimilate yourself".²⁸ Moreover, Socrates presents a version of *Iliad* A 8-42 in prose without μίμησις in order to give Glaucon an example of ἄπλη διήγησις, the opposite of which is tragedy and comedy

24 See Tichy (1983) 218: Y 81, δ 277.

25 Aeschylus *Isthmianstai* F 78 a 7; Pindar *Pyth.* 12, 21; *Parth.* 2, 15; Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazusai* 156; Xenophon *Mem.* III 10.- See Göran Sörbom, *Mimesis and Art. Studies in the Origin and Early Development of an aesthetic vocabulary*, Diss. Uppsala, Stockholm 1966; S. Halliwell, 'Aristotelian Mimesis Reevaluated', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 28 (1990) 487-510.

26 *Cratylus* 423 C: Τοὺς τὰ πρόβατα μιμουμένους τούτους καὶ τοὺς ἀλεκτρυόνας καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ζῷα.

27 *Rep.* III 392 D: Ἐὰρ οὖν οὐχὶ ἤτοι ἄπλη διηγήσει ἢ διὰ μιμήσεως γιγνομένη ἢ δι' ἀμφοτέρων περαίνουσι (sc. οἱ ποιηταί).

28 *Rep.* 393 C: Οὐκοῦν τό γε ὁμοιοῦν ἑαυτὸν ἄλλω ἢ κατὰ φωνὴν ἢ κατὰ σχῆμα μιμεῖσθαι ἔστιν ἐκεῖνον ὃ ἅν τις ὁμοιοῖ;

(*Rep.* III 393 D - 394 B). Eventually, Socrates is able to classify poetry according to its use of μίμησις:

"One part of poetry and mythology is based wholly on μίμησις, as you say, namely tragedy and comedy, the other is based wholly on the report of the poet himself, which you find mostly in the dithyramb, the third is based on both ways, which you find in the epic poetry and elsewhere".²⁹ This is the first testimony for a system of poetry which was extremely wide-spread in antiquity.³⁰ The grammarian Diomedes (4th century A.D.), in an excursus *De poematibus* to his grammar, gives a Latin version of this theory, using Greek sources, as he declares: "*poematos genera sunt tria. aut enim activum est vel imitativum, quod Graeci δραματικὸν vel μιμητικόν, aut enarrativum vel enuntiativum, quod Graeci ἐξηγητικόν vel ἀπαγγελτικόν dicunt, aut commune vel mixtum, quod Graeci κοινόν vel μικτόν appellant*". His Greek source appears in the Platonic-Aristotelian terminology: δραματικὸν vel μιμητικόν, ἐξηγητικόν vel ἀπαγγελτικόν, κοινόν vel μικτόν (GrLat I 481 Keil).

Plato did not invent this classification of poetry, as his interest in μίμησις was quite different. Rather he used sophistic poetology like Gorgias' *Helen* for his own purpose. As the mimetic genres, tragedy and comedy, but epic poetry too, involve the μίμησις of unwelcome behaviour by men and women, they are excluded from the education of the guardians of the state (*Rep.* III 398 AB). The same moralistic rigorism is extended to music. As melody consists of words, harmony and rhythm (*Rep.* III 398 D: λόγος, ἄρμονία and ῥυθμός), the musical elements have to endure the same restrictions as the words (*Rep.* III 398 A - 400 D). Therefore plaintive harmonies like the Mixolydian and the Syntonolydian, as well as slack and intoxicating harmonies like the lastian and the Low Lydian are eliminated. There remain only the Dorian and the Phrygian harmony, which are suitable for imitating the voice and intonation of a brave man in war and peace.³¹ Thus there is no need for instruments with a wide compass and the capacity for many harmonies like harps, lutes and modulating auloi. All that is left

²⁹ *Rep.* III 394 BC: Τῆς ποιήσεως καὶ μυθολογίας ἡ μὲν διὰ μιμήσεως ὅλη ἐστίν, ὡς περ σὺ λέγεις, τραγωδία τε καὶ κωμῶδια, ἡ δὲ δι' ἀπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιητοῦ - εὗροις δ' ἂν αὐτὴν μάλιστα που ἐν διθυράμβοις - ἡ δ' αὖ δι' ἀμφοτέρων ἐν τε τῇ τῶν ἐπῶν ποιήσει, πολλαχοῦ δὲ καὶ ἄλλοθι.

³⁰ See J. Kayser, *De veterum arte poetica*, Diss. Leipzig 1906.

³¹ *Rep.* III 399 AB: κατάλειπε ἐκείνην τὴν ἄρμονίαν, ἣ ἐν τε πολεμικῇ πράξει ὄντος ἀνδρείου ... πρεπόντως ἂν μιμήσαιτο φθόγγους τε καὶ προσωδίας ... καὶ ἄλλην αὖ ἐν εἰρηρικῇ ... πράξει ὄντος.

are the lyre and cithara with seven strings and the syrinx (*Rep.* III 399 C-E). Eventually the search is extended to rhythms which belong to a ordered and brave life. But because of the lack of competence of the interlocutors this question is delegated to the rhythmician Damon (*Rep.* III 399 D - 400 C).

Having developed his theory of ideas in Books 4 to 9, Plato returns to the subject of poetry and music in the tenth book of the *Republic*. Because of their mimetic character epic poetry, tragedy and comedy are excluded altogether from the educational program of the new state (*Rep.* X 595), so that only hymns to the gods and eulogies on virtuous men remain (*Rep.* X 607 A). But the theory of ideas forces Socrates to find a wider definition of μίμησις, which includes every kind of art. Using as starting-point an artefact like a table, the maker of which produced it with regard to the idea of the table, Socrates denounces a painted table as an image of an image, which does not represent the real being of the idea of the table (*Rep.* X 596/7). This conception is expressly transferred to all kinds of poetry. Thus μίμησις is understood as image of virtue and the other subjects of poetry, which has nothing to do with truth.³² This leads to a definition of μίμησις in poetry, which comes very close to the conception of Aristotle in his *Poetics*, as we shall see: "The art of poetic imitation imitates men acting under constraint or of their own free will, who think that they are happy or unhappy because of their acting, and consequently are melancholy or cheerful".³³ Once this concept of μίμησις and its inherent dangers have been exemplified with examples from tragedy, comedy is eventually included too (*Rep.* X 606 CD).

In the *Laws* the subtle classification of mimetic poetry, namely tragedy and comedy, and non-mimetic poetry like the hymns and the dithyramb, which we have found in the third book of the *Republic* (392 C - 397 B), is completely forgotten. Instead of this, Plato adopts (at *Laws* 2, 668 B-C) the wider conception of μίμησις found in the tenth book of the *Republic* (*Rep.* 10, 596 D-E), which covers all kinds of arts with the simile of the mirror. Thus, the Athenian is able to treat all kinds of μουσική, namely poetry in all its branches, music and dance, as μίμησις, an opinion which, as he points

³² *Rep.* X 600 E: Οὐκοῦν τιθῶμεν ἀπὸ Ὁμήρου ἀρξαμένους πάντας τοὺς ποιητικοὺς μιμητὰς εἰδώλων ἀρετῆς εἶναι καὶ τῶν ἄλλων περὶ ὧν ποιοῦσιν, τῆς δὲ ἀληθείας οὐχ ἄπτεσθαι. See also *Rep.* X 605 A.

³³ *Rep.* X 603 C: πράπτοντας, φαμέν, ἀνθρώπους μιμεῖται ἢ μιμητικὴ βιαίους ἢ ἐκουσίας πράξεις, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ πράπτειν ἢ εὖ οἰομένους ἢ κακῶς πεπραγένας, καὶ ἐν τούτοις δὴ πᾶσιν ἢ λυπουμένους ἢ χαίροντας.

out, is shared by all poets, listeners and actors.³⁴ In the third book of the *Republic* the fact of μίμησις itself was attacked by Socrates. But in Book 2 (668-670) of the *Laws* the problem is not μίμησις itself, but its application to improper objects, as Andrew Barker has demonstrated. This conception is resumed in the seventh book together with the educational program, as we shall see.

4. Aristotle on μίμησις in the *Poetics*.

Aristotle, born in 384 B.C. in Stageira, moved to Athens in 367 B.C., where he remained Plato's pupil and member of the Academy until Plato's death (348/7 B.C.); Plato was succeeded by his nephew Speusippus (347-339). In this period Aristotle could study Plato's *Republic* and witness Plato's work on the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*. Besides, he had the opportunity to attend in the Dionysus Theatre restaged tragedies of the fifth century and the first nights of new pieces of Middle Comedy. From 347 Aristotle was in Assos, Mytilene and Pella, from where he returned to Athens in 335/34, where he founded his own school, the Peripatos.

Aristotle's keen interest and thorough knowledge of the Athenian theatre is attested by many quotations of tragedies, comedies, performances and actors in the third book of his *Rhetoric* and in the *Poetics*. As he cannot have had the relevant experiences during his exile from 347 to 335, Walter Burkert³⁵ demonstrated that the third book of the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*, which are linked by cross-references, belong to the first period of Aristotle in Athens, the time of learning, arguing and dispute with Plato and Plato's works, between the years 367 and 347. Thus, we shall try to understand the mimesis-theory of Aristotle against the background of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*.

Aristotle begins his *Poetics* with the wide conception of μίμησις which we have met in Plato's *Republic X* and the *Laws*. All kinds of poetry, together with dance and dramatic prose like the Socratic dialogues, are imitations. Their means are λόγος, ἄρμονία and ῥυθμός (voice, harmony and rhythm), the use of which results in a first

34 *Laws* II 668 BC: Καὶ μὴν τοῦτό γε πᾶς ἂν ὁμολογοῖ περὶ τῆς μουσικῆς, ὅτι πάντα τὰ περὶ αὐτὴν ἔστιν ποιήματα μίμησις τε καὶ ἀπεικασία· καὶ τοῦτό γε μῶν οὐκ ἂν συμπάντες ὁμολογοῖεν ποιηταὶ τε καὶ ἀκροαταὶ καὶ ὑποκριταί.- See too *Laws* II 668 A.

35 See above p. 4 n. 15.

classification according to the means of imitation (ἐν οἷς), the elements of which are Platonic³⁶:

The dance uses only the rhythm, dramatic prose only the voice; solo playing on the auloi, the cithara and the syrinx uses *harmonia* and rhythm; epic poetry the voice and the rhythm; the dithyramb, the citharodic and aulodic nomos and the melic parts of tragedy (with satyr-play) and comedy use voice, harmony and rhythm throughout; while the spoken parts of stage poetry use only voice and rhythm.

The second classification applies to the object (ἄ) of μίμησις, which is in all cases men in action.³⁷ Here we meet again the Platonic πράττοντες ἄνθρωποι,³⁸ who are classified as good (σπουδαῖοι) or bad (φαῦλοι), moreover as tragic heroes of superhuman virtue (βελτίονας ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς), or comic heroes of worse behaviour (ἢ χείρονας) or men like you and me (ἢ καὶ τοιούτους). Thus, Aristotle can distinguish tragedy and comedy better and gains new compartments for new genres like the parody of epic poetry or the middle class comedy of the fourth century B.C. (*Poetics* 48 A). While Plato abhorred the μίμησις of bad characters,³⁹ Aristotle is in this respect morally indifferent, as for him the aim of poetry is not education, but the specific aesthetic pleasure (ἡδονή) of epic poetry, tragedy and comedy, which is produced by μίμησις. The pleasure of tragedy is produced by compassion and fear, the pleasure of comedy might have been the laughter, and the pleasure of epic poetry is the supernatural.⁴⁰

The third classification concerns the form (ὡς) of the μίμησις. Here we meet again (*Poetics* 48 A 19-23) the Platonic classification of *Rep.* III 393 D - 394 B:⁴¹ the epic poetry which uses the report of the poet together with impersonation of acting persons (ὅτε μὲν ἀπαγγέλλοντα, ἢ ἕτερόν τι γινόμενον ὥσπερ Ὅμηρος ποιεῖ), the dithyramb where the poet speaks alone, and stage poetry which uses only impersonation. But while Plato uses here, in Book 3 of the *Republic*, the concept of

36 See above p. 7 f.

37 *Poetics* 48 A 1: Ἐπεὶ δὲ μιμοῦνται οἱ μιμούμενοι πράττοντας.

38 See above p. 9 n. 33.

39 See above p. 10.

40 Tragedy: ἐπεὶ δὲ τὴν ἀπὸ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου διὰ μιμήσεως δεῖ ἡδονὴν παρασκευάζειν τὸν ποιητὴν: *Poetics* 53 B 11-13; Tragedy and comedy: ἔστιν δὲ οὐχ αὕτη ἀπὸ τραγωδίας ἡδονὴ ἀλλὰ μάλλον τῆς κωμωδίας οἰκεία: *Poetics* 53 A 35/36; Tragedy and epic poetry: τὸ δὲ θαυμαστὸν ἡδύ: *Poetics* 60 A 17; δεῖ γὰρ οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν ἡδονὴν ποιεῖν αὐτάς ἀλλὰ τὴν εἰρημένην: *Poetics* 62 B 13/14.

41 See above p. 7 f.

μίμησις only for impersonation, Aristotle considers all three forms of poetry indiscriminately as μίμησις.

Taking all this evidence together, we see that Aristotle, while borrowing all relevant elements from Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, has written with his *Poetics* a treatise which stands Plato's criticism of poetry on its head. While Plato, in the *Ion* (see above p. 4 f.), denied that poets and their mediators followed an art (τέχνη), but instead were driven by inspiration (ἐνθουσιασμός), a divine madness (θεία μανία), Aristotle classifies the different branches of poetry and music as arts (τέχναι), which produce illusion (μίμησις) by rhythm, word and harmonia.⁴² As the aim of the art of poetry is illusion, its standards of accuracy are different: it is not the true and the false, but the probable and the improbable (πιθανόν, ἀπίθανον) that are relevant.⁴³ This was first seen by Homer, the teacher of illusion,⁴⁴ who was indebted for his extraordinary faculties to the art (τέχνη) or to his talent (φύσις).⁴⁵ The divine madness as source of poetry is not altogether forgotten, but marginalized: poetry is the faculty of a well gifted person, who is able to learn an art, or the manic, who produces while in a state of ecstasy.⁴⁶

Of course, the old idea of poetic imitation had to be re-evaluated in this context. Far from suspecting moral dangers in μίμησις as Plato did, Aristotle considers it an innate inclination of human beings from childhood onwards,⁴⁷ who in contrast to the animals are most prone to imitation and who learn by imitation in their early years (*Poetics* 48 B 6-8) and enjoy every kind of imitation.⁴⁸ Therefore Aristotle considers pleasure (ἡδονή) and imitation (μίμησις) the two natural causes of poetry.⁴⁹ This is incompatible with Plato's view in the *Laws*, since he considers the lawgiver to be the best poet, the imitation of a virtuous life to be the best tragedy, and philosophy to be the

42 *Poetics* 47 A 21: οὕτω κἀν ταῖς εἰρημέναις τέχναις ἅπασαι μὲν ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν ἐν ῥυθμῷ καὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἁρμονίᾳ.

43 *Poetics* 60 B 13-15: οὐχ ἡ αὐτὴ ὀρθότης ἐστὶν τῆς πολιτικῆς καὶ τῆς ποιητικῆς οὐδὲ ἄλλης τέχνης καὶ ποιητικῆς.

44 *Poetics* 60 A 18/19: δεδιδαχεν δὲ μάλιστα Ὅμηρος καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ψευδῆ λέγειν ὡς δεῖ.

45 *Poetics* 51 A 22-24: ὁ δ' Ὅμηρος ὥσπερ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα διαφέρει καὶ τοῦτ' ἔοικεν καλῶς ἰδεῖν, ἦτοι διὰ τέχνην ἢ διὰ φύσιν.

46 *Poetics* 55 A 32 f.: διὸ εὐφροῦς ἢ ποιητικὴ ἐστὶν ἢ μανικοῦ· τούτων γὰρ οἱ μὲν εὐπλαστοὶ οἱ δὲ ἐκστατικοὶ εἰσίν.

47 *Poetics* 48 B 5/6: τό τε γὰρ μιμεῖσθαι σύμφυτον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ παίδων ἐστί.

48 *Poetics* 48 B 8/9: καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς μιμήμασι πάντας.

49 *Poetics* 48 B 4-19, esp. 4/5: Ἐοίκασι δὲ γεννηῖσαι μὲν ὅλως τὴν ποιητικὴν αἰτία δύο τινές καὶ αὐτὰ φυσικαί.

true incontestable poetry.

5. Prooimion and Nomos in Music and Legislation.

An ancient story about the divine possession of the poets, told by Plato in Book 4 of the *Laws* (4, 719 C), has led us astray to a long digression concerning central conceptions of music and poetry, beginning with Plato's *Ion* and culminating in Aristotle's *Poetics*. Some pages later, Plato eventually approaches his subject, the legislation, qualifying everything that has been said before as mere preliminaries. At the same time, he calls to the reader's mind the literary setting of his dialogue, which unfolds during a long walk from Cnossus to the cave of Zeus on Mount Ida:

"It was little more than dawn when we began talking about laws, and now it is high noon, and here we are in this entrancing resting-place; all the time we have been talking of nothing but laws, yet it is only recently that we have begun, as it seems, to utter laws, and what went before was all simply preludes to laws (προοίμια νόμων)".⁵⁰

Having established this, Plato wants to go a step farther: Not only are Books 1-3 a prooimion to Books 4-12, but every single law must have an individual prooimion, which persuades people to obey willingly. This combination of *Prooimion* and *Nomos* is explained by analogies from music and rhetoric, which conversely tell something about Plato's understanding of the musical *Nomos*:

"What is my object in saying this? It is to explain that all utterances and vocal expressions have preludes (προοίμια) and tunings-up (ἀνακινήσεις), as one might call them, which provide a kind of artistic preparation (ἔντεχνον ἐπιχείρησιν) which assists towards the further development of the subject. Indeed, we have examples before us of preludes, admirably elaborated, in those prefixed to that class of lyric ode called the *Nomos*, and to musical compositions of every description. But for the *Nomoi* (i.e. laws) which are real *Nomoi* - and which we designate "political" - no one has ever uttered a prelude".⁵¹

The last sentence must be understood as a cross-reference. Indeed, Andrew Barker has already treated a section on music which describes the distribution of music into different genres in the good old times (*Laws* 3, 700 f.). Choral lyric comprised

⁵⁰ Plato *Laws* 4, 722 CD, Translation Bury.

⁵¹ Plato, *Laws* 4, 723 D; Translation Bury.

Hymns to the Gods, *Threnoi* (dirges) for the dead, *Paeanes* for Apollo and *Dithyrambs* for Dionysus. Monodic lyric was represented only by the *Nomos Kitharodikos*, while the *Nomos Aulodikos* appears later in Plato's description of the lawlessness of music (παρανομία εἰς τὴν μουσικὴν). But in the good old times, the system of genres, especially the different *Nomoi*, had the character of law. Thus, Plato is able to use in Book 4 the notion of musical *Nomos*, as an analogy for the *Nomos* in legal sense, which should have a prelude (προοίμιον) as the *Nomoi* in musical sense always had, at least according to Plato. The function of the prelude to the law which Plato recommends is described by categories of contemporary rhetoric: "The part which preceded this (the law itself), and which was uttered as persuasive thereof, while it actually is "persuasion" (πειστικόν), yet serves also the same purpose (δύναμις) as the prelude to an oration".⁵²

Nevertheless, it remains uncertain which musical reality Plato has in mind, when he refers to the προοίμια which were as a rule attached to the *Nomoi Kitharodikoι* and the other genres of vocal music. The *Nomos Kitharodikos* which is attributed to Terpander⁵³ had with ἀρχά - μεταρχά a twofold προοίμιον. Another *Nomos Kitharodikos*, which is attested for Terpander also, the Νόμος Τετρασίδιος, had four melodically different sections.⁵⁴ The Νόμος τριμερής, an aulodic *Nomos* with three sections, is attested by an inscription for Clonas.⁵⁵ The famous *Nomos Pythikos* of Sacadas, an auletic *Nomos*, had according to Pollux five parts, beginning with the πεῖρα (investigation of the battlefield),⁵⁶ while Strabo places a special prelude (ἀνάκρουσις) before the "investigation".⁵⁷ Another auletic *Nomos*, the *Nomos of Athena* of Olympus, began with the ἀνάπειρα, followed by the central part, the so called ἁρμονία, and

52 Plato, *Laws* 4, 723 A; Translation Bury.

53 Pollux 4, 66: μέρη δὲ τοῦ κιθαρωδικοῦ νόμου, Τερπάνδρου παρανείμαντος, ἐπτά: ἀρχά, μεταρχά, κατατροπά, μετακατατροπά, ὄμφαλος, σφραγίς, ἐπίλογος.

54 Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Musica* 4, 32 D.

55 Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Musica* 4, 33 B: τριμερής Xylander, τριμελής codd; 8, 34 B: ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐν Σικυῶνι ἀναγραφῇ τῇ περὶ τῶν ποιητῶν (FrGH 550 F 2) Κλονᾶς εὐρετῆς ἀναέγραπται τοῦ Τριμεροῦς νόμου.- The preceding ascription of the *Nomos Trimeres* to the aulos-player Sacadas (*De Musica* 4, 33 AB) is spurious, as it makes Sacadas lead a chorus (διδάξαι ἄδειν τὸν χορόν).

56 Pollux 4, 78; 4, 84: Πείρα - Κατακελευσμός - Ἰαμβικόν - Σπονδεῖον - Καταχόρευσις.

57 Strabo 9,3,10: Πέντε δ' αὐτοῦ μέρη ἐστίν, ἀνάκρουσις, ἄμπειρα, κατακελευσμός, ἴαμβοι καὶ δάκτυλοι, σύριγγες.

perhaps an epilogue.⁵⁸ Andrew Barker in two papers⁵⁹ collected all the relevant material concerning the "Prooimion" and the kindred notion "Anabolé".

6. Mimetic and Non-Mimetic Contests in the Laws.

Book 6 of the *Laws* comprises regulations concerning the institution of authorities and officials, among them the officials for gymnastic and musical education and competitions (*Laws* 6, 764 - 766). The musical competitions are split up into competitions for choral lyric and dance for children, young men and maidens on the one hand, and monodic genres on the other hand, which are imitative:

"In the case of music it will be proper to have separate umpires for solo singers and for mimetic performances (περὶ μονωδίαν τε καὶ μιμητικήν) - I mean, for instance, one set for rhapsodists, citharodes, aulos-players (ῥαψωδῶν, κιθαρωδῶν καὶ αὐλητῶν) and all such musicians, and another set for choral performers (περὶ χορωδίαν). We ought to choose first the officials for the playful exercise of choirs of children and lads and girls (χορῶν παίδων τε καὶ ἀρρένων καὶ θηλειῶν κορῶν) in dances and all other regular methods of music; and for these one officer suffices, and he must be not under forty years of age. And for solo performances (περὶ μονωδίαν) one umpire, of not less than thirty years, is sufficient to act as introducer (εἰσαγωγεὺς) and to pass an adequate judgement upon the competitors".⁶⁰

Plato's sketch of musical contests in choral lyrics has nothing peculiar about it. Dithyrambic choruses (κύκλιοι χοροί) of children and of men competing at the Great Dionysia were familiar to every Athenian since the time of Cleisthenes. The maidens choruses (παρθένεια) begin in a Doric environment with Alcman. It is puzzling however, that Plato, in spite of his severe restrictions against mimetic music (*Laws* book 2, 669 B - 670 B), now admits rhapsodists, citharodes and aulos-players. The contest of rhapsodists was the first branch of the Panathenaic competitions.⁶¹ A lively picture of the mimetic character of the rhapsody in the 4th century B.C. is delivered by Plato himself in

58 Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Musica* 33, 43 BC: οἶον Ὀλύμπω τὸ ἑναρμόνιον γένος ἐπὶ Φρυγίου τόνου τεθὲν παίωνι ἐπιβατῶν μιχθέν· τοῦτο γὰρ τῆς ἀρχῆς τὸ ἦθος ἐγέννησεν ἐπὶ τῷ τῆς Ἀθηναῖς νόμῳ ... ἡ γὰρ καλουμένη ἀρμονία ἐν τῷ τῆς Ἀθηναῖς νόμῳ πολὺν διέστηκε κατὰ τὸ ἦθος τῆς ἀναπείρας.

59 A. Barker, 'Greek Musical Introductions 1: The Prooimion; 2: The Anabolé, Cremona 2008, manuscript.

60 Plato *Laws* 6, 764 E - 765 A; Translation Bury.

61 L. Ziehen, Panathenaia, in: *RE* 18,3 (1949) 480-483.

the *Ion* (see above p. 4 f.). For the mimetic power of the citharodic Nomos we may cite the *Persians* of Timotheus of Miletus, a contemporary of Plato. The *Persians* might have been victorious at the Panathenaia.⁶² It is doubtful which role Plato assigns to the aulos players in his fictive competition. At least, solo song accompanied by the auloi (αὐλωδία) must be understood as admissible. But auletic *Nomoi* like the *Nomos Pythikos* of Sacadas, which try to mimic the last hissings of the Delphic monster Python, and the imitation of these effects on the cithara⁶³ seem to be excluded from Plato's competition, taking into consideration Plato's verdict on solo instrumental music in *Laws* 2, 669 B - 700 B, which has been examined more closely by Andrew Barker. Taking all the evidence together, it seems that Plato in the *Laws* on the one hand admits developments of poetry and music which he cannot prevent, while he on the other hand tries to curb the unwelcome by administrative measures.

⁶² *The Fragments of Timotheus of Miletus*, ed. with an intr. and comm. by J.H. Hordern, Oxford 2002, 17.

⁶³ West, 1992, 212-215.

Sixth seminar: Music in *Laws* Books 7-12.

Egert Pöhlmann

1. Leading ideas of *Laws* book 7.

Book 7 of the *Laws*, which is connected by many cross-references and repetitions with Books 2-3 and 8-12, gives a synopsis of education, which had already been treated in Books 2 and 3. Eliminating gymnastics and dance and limiting our interest to the main subject of Book 7, namely music and poetry, we can identify Plato's leading ideas. One of them is the refusal of every change in inherited customs and values, which results in shocking censorship of poetry and music. Another recurring theme of Plato's thinking is his fear of the dangers which are inherent in μίμησις of unworthy objects by the citizens of his *politeia*. Thus, he is inclined to abandon unwelcome genres to foreigners or slaves, as for example the dirges for the dead to hired Carian mourners (*Laws* 7, 800 E). Finally, Plato's musical *curriculum* in the *Laws*, which is destined for all citizens, is quite restricted, compared with the *curriculum* of the *Republic*, which is destined only for the guardians of Plato's ideal state. Thus, the most demanding subjects of learning are reserved for the members of the nocturnal council, which is established in Book 12.

2. Preliminaries.

Plato begins Book 7 of the *Laws* with an essay on the education of the unborn, and of children until the third year of their life. Thus it is advisable for pregnant women to undertake long walks, which may benefit the unborn child by the movement (7, 789 E). Moreover, the pregnant women should not indulge in intense pleasures or pains, but cultivate a bright and calm demeanour, in order to keep the child free from pleasure and fear (7, 792 E). The same holds good for the new born children, who are calmed down from excitements by a homoeopathic cure through motion and song:

"When mothers have children suffering from sleeplessness, and want to lull them to rest, the treatment they apply is to give them, not quiet, but motion, for they rock them constantly in their arms; and instead of silence, they use a kind of crooning noise; and thus they literally cast a spell (καταυλοῦσι) upon the children (like the victims of Bacchic

frenzy) by employing the combined movements of dance and song as a remedy".¹

As soon as the children, after their third year, have learned to speak, they need some training by games under strict supervision (*Laws* 7, 793/4). After the sixth year of their life girls and boys are separately trained in gymnastics, the use of weapons and dance (*Laws* 7, 794-6). After that, by an unmistakable cross-reference to *Laws* 673 B, Plato returns to the topic of musical education, which he had already treated in Book 2 of the *Laws*:

"The subject which comes next to this (i.e. gymnastics), and deals with the gifts of Apollo and the Muses, is one which was previously thought we had done with, and that the only subject left was gymnastics; but I plainly see now, not only what still remains to be said to everybody, but also that it ought to come first. Let us, then, state these points in order".²

3. Leading principles of education.

As Plato attempts in Book 7 a fresh start with the subject of musical education, he is compelled to return to leading principles which he had formulated before. The first of them is his far-reaching fear of changes in the moral principles which maintain the state. Plato develops this notion in chapter 7, warning against every innovation in children's games and education:

"ATH.: The man they hold in special honour is he who is always innovating or introducing some novel device in the matter of form or colour or something of the sort; whereas it would be perfectly true to say that a State can have no worse pest than a man of that description, since he privily alters the characters of the young, and causes them to contemn what is old and esteem what is new. And I repeat again that there is no greater mischief a State can suffer than such a *dictum* and doctrine: just listen while I tell you how great an evil it is. CLIN.: Do You mean the way people rail at antiquity in States?. ATH.: Precisely".³

¹ Plato, *Laws* 7, 790 DE; Translation Bury.

² Plato, *Laws* 7, 796 E; Translation Bury.

³ Plato, *Laws* 7, 797 C: ΑΘ.: τόν τι νέον ἀεὶ καινοτομοῦντα καὶ εἰσφέροντα τῶν εἰωθότων ἕτερον κατὰ τε σχήματα καὶ χρώματα καὶ πάντα ὅσα τοιαῦτα, τοῦτον τιμᾶσθαι διαφερόντως, τούτου πόλει λώβην οὐκ εἶναι μείζω φαῖμεν ἂν ὀρθότατα λέγοντες· λανθάνειν γὰρ τῶν νέων τὰ ἤθη μεθιστάντα καὶ ποιεῖν τὸ μὲν ἀρχαῖον παρ' αὐτοῖς ἄτιμον, τὸ δὲ νέον ἔντιμον. τούτου δὲ πάλιν αὖ λέγω τοῦ τε ῥήματος καὶ τοῦ δόγματος οὐκ εἶναι ζημίαν μείζω πάσαις πόλεσιν. ἀκούσατε δὲ ὅσον φημι αὐτ' εἶναι κακόν. ΚΛ.: Ἔν τὸ

Again we have some kind of a cross-reference: πάλιν αὖ λέγω (*Laws* 7, 797 C) reminds the well known Damonian opinion about the dangers inherent in changes in the style of music: "To put it briefly, then, those in charge of the city must devote themselves to ensuring that ... no innovations shall be made in gymnastics and music beyond what is laid down, but that what is laid down shall be preserved as closely as possible. When someone says that 'People praise more highly the song that is most newly come to minstrels lips' (*Od.* 1, 351 f.), they should fear that people might easily suppose the poet (i.e. Homer) to mean not just new songs, but a new style of song, and that they would applaud the latter. Such a thing should not be applauded, nor should the poet be so understood. People should beware of change to new forms of music, for they are risking change in the whole. Styles of music are nowhere altered without change in the greatest laws of the city; so Damon says and I concur".⁴ Andrew Barker has already demonstrated how Plato in Book 3 of the *Laws*, in his picture of the Athenian θεατροκρατία gives the aforesaid Damonian opinion historical background. As we shall see, Damonian thought permeates Book 7 of the *Laws* also.

The second leading principle of Plato's thinking about art is the concept of μίμησις, which, as we have seen, has changed its meaning fundamentally during the work of Plato (see Seminar 5 above). In the *Laws* the notion of μίμησις eventually governs all branches of art, especially of music, as Plato reminds the reader:

"ATH.: Well then, do we still have confidence in what we said before, when we said that everything to do with rhythms and with music as a whole consists in imitations of the behaviour of better and worse men? Or what do we think? CLIN.: Our opinion has not changed, at any rate. ATH.: Do we say, then, that every possible technique should be used to prevent the children from wanting to try out other kinds of imitation in their dances and songs, and to prevent anyone from tempting them with all sorts of pleasure? CLIN.: You are quite right."⁵ Thus, the fear of every change in music

ψέγεσθαι τὴν ἀρχαιότητα λέγεις ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν; ΑΘ.: Πάνυ μὲν οὖν.- Translation Bury.

⁴ Plato *Republic* 424 BC; Translation Barker.

⁵ Plato, *Laws* 7, 798 DE: ΑΘ.: Τί οὖν; τοῖς ἐμπροσθεν λόγοις πιστεύομεν, οἷς ἐλέγομεν ὡς τὰ περὶ τοῦ ρυθμοῦ καὶ πᾶσαν μουσικὴν ἐστὶν τρόπων μιμήματα βελτιόνων καὶ χειρόνων ἀνθρώπων; ἢ πῶς; ΚΛ.: Οὐδαμῶς ἄλλως πῶς τό γε παρ' ἡμῖν δόγμα ἔχον ἂν εἴη. ΑΘ.: Οὐκοῦν, φαμέν, ἅπασαν μηχανητέον μηχανὴν ὅπως ἂν ἡμῖν οἱ παῖδες μῆτε ἐπιθυμῶσιν ἄλλων μιμημάτων ἄπτεσθαι κατὰ ὀρχήσεις ἢ κατὰ μελωδίας, μῆτε τις αὐτοὺς πείσῃ προσάγων παντοίας ἡδονάς; ΚΛ.: Ὅρθότατα λέγεις.- Translation Barker.

according to Damon and the alleged dangers of μίμησις result in a fossilization of every art following an imaginary model of Old Egypt, which Plato had developed already in *Laws* Book 2, reporting with admiration that pictures or statues wrought 10 000 years before display the same beauty as the productions of Plato's own days.⁶ In Book 7 of the *Laws* the model of Old Egypt stimulates Plato to go back to the early beginnings of musical history in Greece, to the "Nomoi" of Terpander, imputing to them quality of laws and everlasting validity, as we shall see.

4. Musical Nomoi and political Nomoi.

Already in Book 3 Plato had commented on songs used in worship, namely *Prayers to the Gods* (ῥυμοί), *Dirges* (θρηνημοί), *Prayers to Apollo* (παιάνες) and *Prayers to Dionysus* (διθύραμβοί), and the solo songs to the accompaniment of the cithara, the *Nomoi*, classes which were mixed together by the modernists of Plato's own days.⁷ In Book 4 Plato commented on the *Prooimia* of these nomoi, as we have seen in the previous Seminar, recommending *Prooimia* also for his political *Nomoi*.⁸ In Book 7 of the *Laws* Plato, punning on the word νόμος, imputes to the musicians of old times (perhaps as a joke) his own concept of the lawful character of the musical *Nomoi* and, by extension, of every public hymn:

"ATH.: We are saying, then, that the strange fact should be accepted that our songs have become *nomoi* (i.d. laws) for us, just as in ancient times people gave this name, so it appears (οὕτω πως ὡς ἔοικεν ὠνόμασαν), to songs sung to the cithara. Hence they would probably not have disagreed with our present contention, which one of them perhaps dimly divined, as it were in a dream or a waked vision".⁹

Andrew Barker has demonstrated¹⁰ that the word νόμος with musical sense used by Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles and others means no more than "melody". The first

⁶ Plato *Laws* 2, 656.

⁷ Plato *Laws* 3, 700-701.

⁸ Plato *Laws* 4, 722/3.

⁹ Plato *Laws* 7, 799 E - 800 A: ΑΘ.: Δεδόχθω μὲν δὴ, φαμέν, τὸ ἄτοπον τοῦτο, νόμους τὰς ὠδὰς ἡμῖν γεγονέναι, καὶ καθάπερ οἱ παλαιοὶ τότε περὶ κιθαρῳδίαν οὕτω πως, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὠνόμασαν - ὥστε τάχ' ἂν οὐδ' ἐκεῖνοι παντάπασί γ' ἂν ἀφεστῶτες εἶεν τοῦ νῦν λεγομένου, καθ' ὕπνον δὲ οἶον πού τις ἦ καὶ ὕπαρ ἐγρηγορῶς ὠνεῖρωξεν μαντευόμενος αὐτό.- Translation Barker.

¹⁰ A. Barker, *Greek Musical Writings vol. I: The Musician and his Art*, Cambridge 1984, 249-255, esp. n. 263.

testimony of this use is Alcman 93 Diehl, who declares, that he understands the "tunes" of all birds (οἴδα δ' ὀρνίχων νόμωζ πάντων). Thus, in the early 5th century the use of νόμος in musical sense is general and not technical. The notion of νόμος as a type of solo composition governed by strict rules of subject matter (e.g. the battle of Apollo and the dragon Python in Delphi) and structure (e.g. the seven parts of the *Nomos Kitharodikos*) was coined by musicologists of the late 5th century B.C., who wanted to classify many different solo-pieces, guided by hints of the poets themselves. This matches well with Plato, who really does not say at all that Terpander invented the term νόμος in its technical meaning in order to denominate his citharodic melodies. Rather Plato uses the term νόμος, a technical term of contemporary musicology, in order to subject all kinds of music in his educational system to the laws he is going to formulate:

"ATH.: At any rate, let that be our decree concerning this matter. And no one may make utterances or move in the dance in breach of the civic and sacred songs and the whole choric practice of the young, any more than he may break any other of the laws (i.e. *nomoi*). To the person who conforms no penalty is to attach, but as we said just now, the guardians of the laws and the priestesses and priests are to punish anyone who disobeys. Are we to regard these points as established, for the purposes of our discussion? CLIN.: Yes."¹¹ There follow special laws for hymns, the first of which demands auspicious sentiments (Εὐφημία), the second limits the contents to prayers to the gods, and the third obliges the poets to prayers for morally acceptable gifts. (*Laws* 7, 800 E - 801 B).

5. Supervising Authorities over Poetry, Music and Dance.

Stimulated by the existence of pieces for solo song, which obey rules of content and structure, denominated νόμοι, Plato had extended the lawful character of them to all kinds of poetry and music. Thus it became inevitable that the poets were subjected to strict censorship: "The poet shall compose nothing which goes beyond the limits of what the State holds to be legal and right, fair and good; nor shall he show his compositions to any private person until they have first been shown to the judges appointed to deal with these matters, and to the law-wardens, and have been approved by them".¹²

¹¹ Plato *Laws* 7, 800 AB; Translation Barker.

¹² Plato, *Laws* 7, 801 D; Translation Barker.

Moreover, Plato entrusts to these supervising authorities a second duty. As there are many old poems, songs and dances, there is installed a board of men over fifty years, which selects morally qualified pieces, which might be used in education, and abandons the unsuitable. But pieces which are somehow defective, have to be reworked by gifted poets: "They should get both poets and musicians to assist them, making use of their talents for composition, but not placing any reliance on their pleasures and desires, except in the case of a few of such people. Thus by working through fully the intentions of the lawgiver, they will put together in closest correspondence to the sense of these intentions dancing, singing and choric practices in general."¹³

In the next paragraph, Plato looks back to *Laws* Book 3, where he had designed an opposition between the music of good old times, which was regulated by laws (νόμοι), and contemporary music, which was governed by the search for aesthetic pleasure (ἡδονή): "But later, as time went on, there appeared as instigators of unmusical law-breaking composers who, though by nature skilled at composition, were ignorant of what is right and lawful (νόμιμον) in music ... thus unintentionally, through their stupidity, giving false witness against music, alleging that music possesses no standard of correctness, but is most correctly judged by the pleasure (ἡδονή) of the person who enjoys it, whether he is a better man or a worse".¹⁴

But now Plato attributes aesthetic pleasure (ἡδύ, ἡδονή) to all kinds of music, deprecating only the sweet and popular style of contemporary music (κοινή καὶ γλυκεία μουσική). Plato argues that the kind of music which gives people aesthetic pleasure depends on their early conditioning by education, an idea which finds an echo in an Aristoxenean story in the *De Musica* of Pseudo-Plutarch about a certain Telesias, an aulos-player of Thebes, who was educated in the Pindaric style of old lyric and was not able later to play successfully in the modern style of Timotheus and Philoxenus.¹⁵ Moreover, the shift in Plato's thinking from Book 3 to Book 7 reminds us of Aristotle, who maintains that aesthetic pleasure is the aim of all poetry, as we have seen in the previous seminar. In Book 7 of the *Laws* Plato maintains the same opinion:

¹³ Plato, *Laws* 7, 802 BC; Translation Barker.

¹⁴ Plato, *Laws* 3, 700 DE; Translation Barker.

¹⁵ Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Musica* 31, 42 BC = Aristoxenos 76 Wehrli.

"ATH.: All such activities alike give pleasure. For when someone passes his life from childhood up to the age of steadiness and sense among temperate and ordered music, then when he hears the opposite kind he detests it, and calls it unfit for free men (ἀνελεύθερον): but if he was brought up amid the sweet music that is generally popular, he says that the opposite kind to it is frigid and unpleasing (ψυχρὸν καὶ ἀηδῆ). Thus, as we said just now, neither is better than the other in respect of pleasantness (ἡδονῆς ἢ ἀηδίας): the difference lies in the fact that the one kind always makes those brought up in better, the other worse".¹⁶

As Plato's educational system deals with women also, he tries to find different styles for the two genders: "It will also be essential for the lawgiver to distinguish in outline what are suitable songs for men and women respectively, and he must match them appropriately to *harmoniai* and rhythms".¹⁷

This might have been the best place for a discussion of the inherent character of harmonies and rhythms, as in Book 3 of the *Republic*. But in the *Laws* there is no mention of Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian or other harmonies, or of dactylic, spondaic, iambic, trochaic or other rhythms. Where iambs are mentioned (*Laws* Book 11, 935 E), the literary genre is meant. This conscious avoidance of all technicalities in the *Laws* is the mark of the colloquialism of the literary dialogue. Thus, Plato is not willing to be more explicit about male and female poetry and music:

"Hence it is necessary to lay down at least the outlines of these by laws as well. We must assign to both kinds of song the *rhythmoi* and *harmoniai* that are essentially bound to them, and must clearly expound the character of those of the female type by reference to that in which the nature of each type is distinct. Thus it must be said that magnificence and that which tends towards manliness is of masculine type, while that which leans rather towards orderliness and moderation is to be treated as more of a female kind in both law and theory. That, then, is how this is to be organised."¹⁸

16 Plato, *Laws* 7, 802 CD: ΑΘ.: τὸ δ' ἡδὺ κοινὸν πάσαις. ἐν ἧ γὰρ ἂν ἐκ παιδῶν τις μέχρι τῆς ἐστηκυίας τε καὶ ἔμφρονος ἡλικίας διαβιῶ, σώφρονι μὲν μούσῃ καὶ τεταγμένη, ἀκούων δὲ τῆς ἐναντίας, μισεῖ καὶ ἀνελεύθερον αὐτὴν προσαγορεύει, τραφεῖς δὲ ἐν τῇ κοινῇ καὶ γλυκεῖα, ψυχρὰν καὶ ἀηδῆ τὴν ταύτη ἐναντίαν εἶναι φησιν· ὥστε, ὅπερ ἐρρήθη νυνδὴ, τό γε τῆς ἡδονῆς ἢ ἀηδίας περὶ ἐκατέρας οὐδὲν πεπλεονέκτηκεν, ἐκ περιποῦ δὲ ἢ μὲν βελτίους, ἢ δὲ χειροῦς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ τραφέντας ἐκάστοτε παρέχεται.- Translation Barker.

17 Plato, *Laws* 7, 802 D; Translation Barker

18 Plato, *Laws* 7, 803 E; Translation Barker

There follow some hints about school-buildings and hired teachers from abroad for gymnastics and music (*Laws* 7, 804). As Plato wants to assign the same duties to both sexes in war and peace, he has to introduce compulsory education for boys and girls, which is a novelty (*Laws* 7, 805-809). The *curriculum* comprises gymnastics, writing and reading (from the tenth to the thirteenth year), arithmetical calculation, elementary knowledge of the calendar year, dance, song and lyre playing (from the fourteenth to the sixteenth year). Having laid down the rules for the selection of suitable poetry and melodies for dance and song, Plato has now to find suitable texts for teaching in reading, which is difficult:

"With regard to lessons in reading, there are written compositions not set to music (ἄλυρα κείμενα), whether in metre or without rhythmical divisions - compositions (συγγράμματα) merely uttered in prose, void of rhythm and harmony; and some of the many composers of this sort have bequeathed to us writings of a dangerous character".¹⁹

This class of texts comprises epic poetry on the one hand, and prose texts on the other hand. Since the days of the Sophists such prose treatises, συγγράμματα about philosophy, rhetoric, politics, poetics etc. inundated the book market in Athens. As Plato had condemned the prose treatises περί τινοῦ severely in his *Phaedrus*,²⁰ he does not take them into consideration any more, attacking their authors only indirectly (σφαλερὰ γράμματα ... παρά τινων τῶν πολλῶν τοιούτων ἀνθρώπων καταλειμμένα). There remains epic poetry, which was widely used in contemporary education:

"We have composers of verses innumerable - hexameters, trimeters, and every metre you could mention - some of them aim at the serious (ἐπὶ σπουδῆν), others at the comic (ἐπὶ γέλωτα); on whose writings, as we are told by our tens of thousands of people, we ought to rear and soak the young, if we are to give them a correct education, making them, by means of recitation, lengthy listeners and large learners, who learn off whole poets by heart".²¹

19 Plato, *Laws* 7, 810 B: ΑΘ.: πρὸς δὲ δὴ μαθήματα ἄλυρα ποιητῶν κείμενα ἐν γράμμασι, τοῖς μὲν μετὰ μέτρων, τοῖς δ' ἄνευ ῥυθμῶν τμημάτων, ἃ δὴ συγγράμματα κατὰ λόγον εἰρημένα μόνον, τητῶμενα ῥυθμοῦ τε καὶ ἀρμονίας, σφαλερὰ γράμματα ἡμῖν ἐστὶν παρά τινων τῶν πολλῶν τοιούτων ἀνθρώπων καταλειμμένα.- Translation Bury.

20 Plato, *Phaedrus* 274 B - 278 E; see Th.A. Szlezák, *Platon lesen*, Stuttgart 1993, 56-66.

21 Plato, *Laws* 7, 810 E - 811 A; Translation Bury.

This is a nice picture of contemporary education, which is corroborated by many vase paintings.²² Epic poetry (ἐπὶ σπουδῆν), iambography (ἐπὶ γέλωτα) and didactic poetry contributed to the syllabus of the young Athenian, which was evidently gathered in anthologies: "Others there are who compile select summaries of all the poets, and piece together whole passages, telling us that a boy must commit these to memory and learn them off if we are to have him turn out good and wise as a result of a wide and varied range of instruction".²³

Plato certainly is not happy with this wide range of reading, which implies dangers for the children by introducing unsuitable subjects. Thus, he establishes his own discourses about laws, as a pattern with which other poetic texts should compete. It is interesting that Plato claims for them a poetic character created by inspiration by God (ἐπίπνοια θεῶν): "In looking back now at the discussions which we have been pursuing from dawn up to this present hour - and that, as I fancy, not without some guidance from Heaven - it appeared to me that they were framed exactly like a poem".²⁴ Thus, Plato dares to install the *Laws*, and by extension all his dialogues, as a syllabus of reading at school. We shall see later that we thus have understood him correctly.

6. Teaching in Cithara-Playing; Heterophony.

After the chapter about writing and reading Plato turns to teaching of cithara-playing (*Laws* 7, 812 B), which occupies the thirteenth until the sixteenth year. The selection of suitable melodies, which should be accompanied by the cithara, is delegated to the aged singers of the chorus of Dionysus, who are called to memory by a cross-reference to Book 2:²⁵ "We said, I believe, that our sixty-year-old singers to Dionysus must have acquired good perception in respect of rhythms and the constitution of harmoniai, so that when considering a representation in song, whether it is done well or badly, a representation in which the soul comes under the influence of the emotions - each of them shall be able to pick out the likenesses of both the good

22 See F.A.Beck, *Greek Education* 450-350, London 1964.

23 Plato, *Laws* 7, 811 A; Translation Bury.

24 Plato, *Laws* 7, 811 C: ΑΘ.: νῦν γὰρ ἀποβλέψας πρὸς τοὺς λόγους οὐκ ἐξ ἕω μέχρι δεῦρο δὴ διεληλύθαμεν ἡμεῖς - ὡς μὲν ἐμοὶ φαίνόμεθα, οὐκ ἄνευ τινὸς ἐπίπνοίας θεῶν - ἔδοξαν δ' οὖν μοι παντάπασι ποιήσει τινὲν προσομοίως εἰρῆσθαι.- Translation Bury.

25 Plato, *Laws* 7, 812 BC and 2, 670/71.

kind and the bad, and while rejecting the latter, shall bring the former before the public, and sing them to enchant the souls of the young, summoning each of them to pursue the acquisition of virtue in company with them, by means of these representations".²⁶

When dealing with the accompaniment of the selected melodies, Plato, as usual in the *Laws*, avoids every technicality, but restricts himself to one important point. As the accompaniment must convey the same affective values as the melody, it must duplicate the melody exactly. Therefore Plato prohibits every deviation of the instrumental accompaniment from the melody (ἔτεροφωνία), which would in any case be too complicated for beginners. By his precious description of these deviations, which might have been familiar to contemporary virtuosos on the cithara or the auloi, Plato preserves details of a style of accompaniment which is still alive today in popular music in and around Greece:

"For these reasons, then, both the cithara teacher and his pupil must, for the sake of making the notes distinct, use the notes of the lyra in such a way as to give out its sound in unison (πρόσχορδα) with the sounds of the song. As for the use of different notes (ἔτεροφωνία) and ornamentation (ποικιλία) on the lyra, when the strings play one set of tunes and the composer of the melody another, or when people perform a combination of small intervals with wide ones or of speed with slowness or of high pitch with low, whether in concord or in octaves (σύμφωνον καὶ ἀντίφωνον), and similarly when they fit all kinds of elaboration of rhythms to the notes of the lyra, no such things should be taught to those who must assimilate quickly, in three years, that which is beneficial in music".²⁷

The word ἔτεροφωνία as a musical term appears only in the aforesaid quotation. But the musical reality behind it is used by Pseudo-Longinus as an analogy in order to describe the paraphrase (περίφρασις): "As in music the leading voice (κύριος φθόγγος) is embellished by the so called παραφῶνοι, so the paraphrase (περίφρασις) often

26 Plato, *Laws* 7, 812 C; Translation Barker.

27 Plato *Laws* 7, 812 DE: ΑΘ.: Τούτων τοίνυν δεῖ χάριν τοῖς φθόγγοις τῆς λύρας προσχρῆσθαι, σαφηνείας ἕνεκα τῶν χορδῶν, τὸν τε κιθαριστὴν καὶ τὸν παιδευόμενον, ἀποδιδόντας πρόσχορδα τὰ φθέγγματα τοῖς φθέγμασι· τὴν δ' ἔτεροφωνίαν καὶ ποικιλίαν τῆς λύρας, ἄλλα μὲν μέλη τῶν χορδῶν ἰερισῶν, ἄλλα δὲ τοῦ τὴν μελωδίαν συνθέντος ποιητοῦ, καὶ δὴ καὶ πυκνότητα μανότητι καὶ τάχος βραδυτήτι καὶ ὀξύτητα βαρύτητι σύμφωνον καὶ ἀντίφωνον παρεχομένους, καὶ τῶν ῥυθμῶν ὡσαύτως παντοδαπὰ ποικίλματα προσαρμόπτοντας τοῖσι φθόγγοις τῆς λύρας, πάντα οὖν τὰ τοιαῦτα μὴ προσφέρειν τοῖς μέλλουσιν ἐν τρισὶν ἔτεσιν τὸ τῆς μουσικῆς χρήσιμον ἐκλήψεσθαι διὰ τάχους.- Translation Barker.

sounds together with the leading sense (κυριολογία) and rings with it mostly for beauty".²⁸ It is odd that Pseudo-Longinus uses not ἔτεροφωνία, but the term παράφωτος, which has a different meaning in the technical treatises that discuss it.²⁹ But Pseudo-Longinus does not use it in technical sense, as he seems to understand παραφωτία in the sense of "sounding along (παρά) a given melody", which comes close to ἔτεροφωνία.

With the help of ethnomusicology, it is possible to transpose Plato's and Pseudo-Longinus' descriptions into musical reality. Singer and instrument (as a rule a stringed instrument) move in unison (πρόσχορδα, σύμφωνον) or in octaves (ἀντίφωνον). But while the voice sings the melody as it is, the instrument adds to the melodic line many ornamentations, small notes, small intervals and sometimes dissonances, and produces this way the ἔτεροφωνία.

In the picture shown in Figure 1, you see two youngsters of Peribolia in Crete with the usual solo instruments, a violin and the so called "lyra", which is a mandolin-like instrument played with the bow. The great lute between them punctuates only the rhythm and the basic harmonies of the song, which is executed by the lute-player himself. Before each piece the player of violin or "lyra" performs as a prelude (ἀναβολή) his ornamentation of the song, and after that the ἔτεροφωνία of song, solo instrument and accompaniment by the lute begins. Two examples from Crete can be heard on recordings. The first employs lyre, song and lute accompaniment, the second shows instrumental ἔτεροφωνία; while the lute plays the pure melody, the violin plays the same melody with many ornaments.³⁰

7. Comedy in the Laws.

After the passage about the lyre teacher Plato adds some supplements about gymnastics and dance. Plato excludes dance of orgiastic character, and recommends only warlike dances (πυρρίχη) and peaceful dances (ἐμμέλεια), which imitate the

28 Pseudo-Longin, *De sublimitate* 28, p. 51 Vahlen: ὡς γὰρ ἐν μουσικῇ διὰ τῶν παραφῶτων καλουμένων ὁ κύριος φθόγγος ἡδίων ἀποτελεῖται, οὕτως ἡ περίφρασις πολλάκις συμφθέγγεται τῇ κυριολογίᾳ καὶ εἰς κόσμον ἐπὶ πολὺ συνηχεῖ.

29 Bacchius 61, 305 Jan; Gaudentius 8, 337 Jan; 8, 338 Jan; 338 n.3 Jan; 323/324 Jan.

30 The First Recordings of Cretan Music. Original recordings made between 1940-60. Aerakis, Cretan Musical Laboratory S.A. 579; Greek Folk & Popular Music Series 6: nr. 1: Kondilies me ti lyra; nr. 17: Tragoudi tou gamou.

movements of beautiful bodies and souls (*Laws* 7, 814 E - 816 C). The opposite possibility, the movements of ugly bodies and thoughts brings Plato to an interesting chapter about comedy. To our surprise he recommends acquaintance with bad manners, in order to teach the citizens to avoid them: "The actions of ugly bodies and ugly ideas and of the men engaged in ludicrous comic-acting, in regard to both speech and dance, and the representations given by all these comedians - all this subject we must necessarily consider and estimate. For it is impossible to learn the serious without the comic, or any one of a pair of contraries without the other".³¹ But free-born citizens should never act themselves on the comic stage, considering the inherent dangers of imitation (μίμησις) of unworthy objects. Therefore Plato suggests that hired slaves from abroad should be used as actors on the comic stage: "δούλοις δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ ξένοις ἔμμισθοῖς προστάπτειν μιμεῖσθαι".³² This idea is obvious, as the dress of many of the actors of Ancient and Middle Comedy was the dress typically worn by slaves.

In Book 11, Plato deals with another aspect of the comic scene. Having introduced penalties for personal abuse of every kind in public (*Laws* 11, 934 E - 935 C), he examines the different ways in which people may be ridiculed, asserting that mockery is to be judged as forbidden abuse if it is done in earnest and not in fun. This brings him back to comedy: "Are we to countenance the readiness to ridicule people which is shown by comic writers, provided that in their comedies they employ this sort of language about the citizens without any show of passion?"³³ It must be admitted that Plato's question is somewhat anachronistic. Of course he had witnessed the excesses of personal abuse (ὀνομαστί κωμωδεῖν) of the Old Comedy before 400 B.C. Certainly he considered the insulting and slandering picture of Socrates, delivered by Aristophanes in the *Clouds* (423 B.C.) to be one of the causes of the sentence to death against Socrates in 399 B.C. This is evident in Plato's *Apology*, where Socrates defends himself explicitly by quoting the *Clouds*: "You have seen this in the comedy of Aristophanes, where some Socrates is presented, who boasts of walking in the air

31 Plato *Laws* 7, 816 DE: ΑΘ.: τὰ δὲ τῶν αἰσχροῶν σωμάτων καὶ διανοημάτων καὶ τῶν ἐπὶ τὰ τοῦ γέλωτος κωμωδήματα τετραμμένων, κατὰ λέξιν τε καὶ ᾠδὴν καὶ κατὰ ὄρχησιν καὶ κατὰ τὰ τούτων πάντων μιμήματα κεκωμωδημένα, ἀνάγκη μὲν θεάσασθαι καὶ γνωρίζειν· ἄνευ γὰρ γελοίων τὰ σπουδαῖα καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐναντίων τὰ ἐναντία μαθεῖν μὲν οὐ δυνατόν.- Translation Bury.

32 Plato, *Laws* 7, 817 E.

33 Plato, *Laws* 11, 935 D; Translation Bury.

(ἀεροβατεῖν *Clouds* 225) and utters much other nonsense".³⁴ But already in the Middle Comedy, which was on the stage in the time of the *Laws*, personal abuse of similar violence is wholly absent. Nevertheless, Plato wants to be sure. So he excludes every kind of ridicule directed at citizens from comedy, iambography and lyric song, with threats of drastic penalties: "A composer of a comedy or of any iambic or lyric song shall be strictly forbidden to ridicule any of the citizens either by word or by mimicry, whether with or without passion; and if anyone disobeys, the Presidents of the Games shall on the same day banish him wholly from the country, failing which they shall be fined three minas".³⁵

8. Tragedy in the Laws.

While pieces of Old Comedy - with the exception of the *Frogs* of Aristophanes - were not restaged after 400 B.C., the tragedies of the dead Euripides remained very popular and were restaged often in the fourth century. New tragedies of authors of the 4th century B.C. followed the taste which was coined by Euripides. Thus, Plato had to treat tragedy - after comedy - in a different way. In a very picturesque scene he stages the visit of a troop of travelling actors in Plato's town, who want to build their wooden stage building in the agora and perform tragedies on it (σκηνάς τε πήξαντας κατ' ἀγορὰν καὶ καλλιφώνους ὑποκριτὰς εἰσαγαγωμένους).³⁶ This scene mirrors contemporary usages. Troops of actors, who had won a prize at the Dionysia in Athens, travelled with their victorious pieces from town to town in order to compete at local festivals. But Plato is not inclined to admit them into the new town, as they are artistic rivals of Plato's citizens, who are poets of the best kind of tragedy: "All our polity is framed as a representation (μίμησις) of the fairest and best life, which is in reality, as we assert, the truest tragedy. Thus we are composers of the same thing as yourselves, rivals of yours (ἀντίτεχνοι καὶ ἀνταγωνισταί) as actors of the fairest drama, which, as our hope is, is true law".³⁷ This recalls Plato's recommendation of the *prooimia* of his

34 Plato *Apology* 19: ταῦτα γὰρ ἔωρᾶτε καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀριστοφάνους κωμῳδίᾳ, Σωκράτη τινὰ ἐκεῖ περιφερόμενον, φάσκοντα τε ἀεροβατεῖν καὶ ἄλλην πολλὴν φλυαρίαν φλυαροῦντα.

35 Plato, *Laws* 11, 935 E - 936 A; Translation Bury.

36 Plato, *Laws* 7, 817 C.

37 Plato, *Laws* 7, 817 B: ΑΘ.: πᾶσα οὖν ἡμῖν ἡ πολιτεία συνέστηκε μίμησις τοῦ καλλίστου καὶ ἀρίστου βίου, ὃ δὴ φαμεν ἡμεῖς γε ὄντως εἶναι τραγωδίαν τὴν ἀληθεστάτην. ποιηταὶ μὲν οὖν ὑμεῖς, ποιηταὶ δὲ

Laws as the best texts for study in school (*Laws* 7, 811 C-D). Therefore he is not likely to admit the tragedies of professional poets, which might contradict the moral norms of Plato's city, and professional actors with their trained voices, who might seduce all citizens by the pleasure of their performances. Thus Plato subjects the pieces of the visitors to a critical comparison with the true tragedy (τραγωδία ἀληθεστάτη), which is his own philosophy, a comparison which professional poetry never can win (*Laws* 7, 817 A-D).

9. Musical education of the Nocturnal Council.

In the next chapter Plato begins to discuss education in arithmetic, geometry (including stereometry) and astronomy. But for the average citizen only the preliminary elements of these sciences are necessary. The higher levels of them are reserved to the education of an élite, as Plato declares: "All these sciences should not be studied with minute accuracy by the majority of pupils, but only by a select few - and who these are we shall say when we have come near to the end - since that will be the proper place".³⁸ We shall see that Plato has in mind the nocturnal council, which he does not introduce until Book 11. Necessary preliminaries are elements of the theory of numbers. Everybody has to know to count, to understand the difference between even and odd numbers and to know why some relations of magnitudes are ἄμετρα, incommensurable (*Laws* 7, 819 E - 820 D).

In a famous passage of the *Meno* (82 A- 85 B) a slave, guided by the questions of Socrates, tries to find the side of a square which has twice the surface of a given square. Eventually he recognizes that the diagonal of the given square is the side of the square in question. This diagonal is the square root of twice the area of the given square. Thus it is incommensurable to the side of the given square (84 A: εἰ μὴ βούλει ἀριθμεῖν, ἀλλὰ δεῖξον ἀπὸ ποίας). Because of the shortcomings of Greek arithmetics this diagonal could be found only by a geometric demonstration.

When dealing with the same problem in the *Laws*, Plato however is content with

καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσμὲν τῶν αὐτῶν, ὑμῖν ἀντίτεχνοί τε καὶ ἀνταγωνισταὶ τοῦ καλλίστου δράματος, ὃ δὴ νόμος ἀληθῆς μόνος ἀποτελεῖν πέφυκεν, ὡς ἡ παρ' ἡμῶν ἐστὶν ἐλπίς.- Translation Bury.

38 Plato, *Laws* 7, 818 A: ΑΘ.: ταῦτα δὲ σύμπαντα οὐχ ὡς ἀκριβείας ἐχόμενα δεῖ διαπνεεῖν τοὺς πολλοὺς ἀλλὰ τινας ὀλίγους - οὓς δέ, προϊόντες ἐπὶ τῷ τέλει φράσομεν· οὕτω γὰρ πρέπον ἂν εἴη.- Translation Bury.

some hints to it. The same holds good for the preliminaries to the education in astronomy (*Laws* 7, 821 - 822 C). Plato explains only that we have to distinguish the apparent orbits of Sun, Moon and the other Planets on the celestial hemisphere from their real courses in space, which are circles. As he does not want to be more explicit, he postpones the argumentation (*Laws* 7, 822 C: δείξωμεν). Quite surprisingly, Book 7 ends with some pages on hunting (*Laws* 7, 822 D -824 C).

The bulk of Book 12 is still occupied by legislation. But at its end the subject of education reappears. Already in *Laws* 951 D-E Plato had installed a nocturnal council, whose duty is the supervision of the legislation. Its members are older officials, of whom each has the right to introduce a younger citizen as future member. For this highest board the highest level of education is reserved (*Laws* 12, 963-968), first the dialectic ascension from the multitude to the one, especially from the four cardinal virtues, namely courage (ἀνδρεία), temperance (σωφροσύνη), justice (δικαιοσύνη) and wisdom (φρόνησις) to the leading principle, reason (νοῦς), secondly the doctrine of the preexistence of the soul of the world, which moves everything, and finally the order of the motion of the stars under the control of reason (νοῦς). The three mathematical sciences, arithmetic, geometry and astronomy, to which musical theory is attached, lead to this level of understanding: "He must also grasp that reason which controls what exists among the stars, together with the necessary preliminary sciences, and he must observe also the connection therewith of musical theory, and apply it harmoniously to the institutions and rules of ethics.³⁹ It is interesting that music theory is now a part of the *quadrivium*, while practical music in the elementary education as part of the *trivium* stands side by side with writing and reading.

Megillus and Clinias, after having approved of this educational program for the nocturnal council, want to lay it down in the form of a law, and the Athenian, through whom we hear the voice of Plato himself, promises his support: "You will find me a most willing helper, owing to my very long experience and study of this subject; and perhaps I shall discover other helpers also besides myself".⁴⁰ The helpers of the disguised Plato,

39 Plato, *Laws* 12, 967 E: τόν τε ἡγημένον ἐν τοῖς ἄστροις νοῦν τῶν ὄντων τά τε πρὸς τούτων ἀναγκαῖα μαθήματα λάβη, τά τε κατὰ τὴν Μοῦσαν τούτοις τῆς κοινωνίας συνθεασάμενος χρῆσθαι πρὸς τὰ τῶν ἡθῶν ἐπιτηδεύματα καὶ νόμιμα συναρμοπτόντως.- Translation Bury.

40 Plato, *Laws* 12, 968 B: ΑΘ.: συλλήπτωρ γὰρ τούτου γε ὑμῖν καὶ ἐγὼ γιγνοίμην ἂν προθύμως - πρὸς δ' ἔμοι καὶ ἑτέρους ἴσως εὐρήσω - διὰ τὴν περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτ' ἐμπειρίαν τε καὶ σκέψιν γεγνουῖάν μοι καὶ

we may guess, are his pupils in the Academy. But instead of beginning with the task the Athenian postpones the project again, demanding more time for careful preparation. As a matter of fact, the education of the nocturnal council is discussed no further in the *Laws* we have. This is why Wilamowitz considered the *Laws* to be unfinished.⁴¹ I think that the exclusion of the studies of highest intellectual level, the theory of the highest principles, which are reserved for the nocturnal council, must be explained otherwise. This makes an excursus on Plato's unpublished Philosophy unavoidable.

Both Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy fall in two different parts. On the one hand there were works published for a reading public (ἐκδεδομένα), on the other hand there was the unpublished teaching in the Academy and in the Peripatos. By chance of transmission we have all works which Plato had published, from the *Ion* to the *Laws*, while from his scholastic teaching there remain only meagre fragments⁴², reports and the title of a lecture "*On the Good*" (Περὶ Ἁγαθοῦ).⁴³ The inverse is true for Aristotle: here we have all his scholastic scripts. The *Ars poetica* of Aristotle, which we have discussed, is a treatise of this class. But from the published works of Aristotle only titles and fragments remain.⁴⁴ In the case of Plato the situation is complicated by his affirmation in the *Phaedrus* and in the *Seventh Letter*,⁴⁵ that his philosophical teaching cannot be transmitted by writing, but is developed in the argumentative oral dialogue, which is mirrored in Plato's published dialogues.

Of course it is possible to recover the outlines of Plato's teaching in the Academy. Sources include the writings of Aristotle, ancient commentaries on Plato and Aristotle and finally Plato's published (exoteric) works, which are full of hints on his esoteric teaching. This was the main purpose of the Tübingen Platonists, Hans Joachim Krämer, Konrad Gaiser and Thomas Alexander Szlezák. These hints are mostly connected with the fact that the conclusive solution of a problem is postponed unto the next meeting of

μάλα συχνήν.- Translation Bury.

41 U. von Wilamowitz - Moellendorff, *Plato I Leben und Werke*, Berlin 1919, 647-650. Klaus Schöpsdau, in his commentary (*Platon Werke, Übersetzung und Kommentar* Band IX 2; *Nomoi Buch I - III*, Göttingen 1994, *Buch IV - VII*, Göttingen 2003), while considering the *Laws* to be finished, explains the exclusion of the education of the members of the Nocturnal Council by the limited intellectual capacities of Megillus and Cleinias (Schöpsdau 1994, 104 f.).

42 The διαίρεσις, reported by Diogenes Laertius 3, 80-109.

43 Aristoxenos, *Harm.* 44, 5 M.

44 *Aristotelis Fragmenta selecta*, rec. W.D. Ross, Oxford 1955.

45 Plato, *Phaedrus* 274 B - 278 E), *Seventh Letter* 341 C; see Szlezak (1993) 56-66; 153-155.

the dialogue partners. Szlezák has coined for this device the term "Aussparungsstellen".⁴⁶ The surprising postponing of the highest level of studies, which were reserved for the nocturnal council in the *Laws*, is a case of such a "passage of exclusion". Fortunately, Plato explains the reasons for his strategy quite clearly. There exists no list of citizens who are suitable for the nocturnal council, and no detailed syllabus for their studies. But the true reason is a didactic one: "Moreover, with respect to the limits of time, when and for how long they ought to receive instruction in each subject, it were idle to lay down written regulations; for even the learners themselves could not be sure that they were learning at the opportune time until each of them had acquired within his soul some knowledge of the subject in question".⁴⁷ This means that the learning of the highest principles, to which arithmetic, geometry and music theory pave the way, cannot be described in a written book, but must be transferred to the oral teaching inside the Academy, because of their esoteric character: "Accordingly, although it would be wrong to term all these matters "indescribable" (ἀπόρρητα), they should be termed "imprescribable" (ἀπρόρρητα), seeing that the prescribing of them beforehand does nothing to elucidate the question under discussion".⁴⁸

46 Szlezák (1993) 92-105.

47 Plato, *Laws* 12, 968 DE: ΑΘ.: πρὸς τούτοις δὲ χρόνους, οὐς τε καὶ ἐν οἷς δεῖ παραλαμβάνειν ἕκαστα, μάταιον ταῦτ' ἐν γράμμασιν λέγειν· οὐδὲ γὰρ αὐτοῖς τοῖς μανθάνουσι δῆλα γίγνοιτ' ἂν ὅτι πρὸς καιρὸν μανθάνεται, πρὶν ἐντὸς τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκάστω που μαθήματος ἐπιστήμην γεγονέναι.- Translation Bury.

48 Plato, *Laws* 968 E: ΑΘ.: οὕτω δὴ πάντα τὰ περὶ ταῦτα ἀπόρρητα μὲν λεχθέντα οὐκ ἂν ὀρθῶς λέγοιτο, ἀπρόρρητα δὲ διὰ τὸ μηδὲν προρρηθέντα δηλοῦν τῶν λεγομένων.- Translation Bury.