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PLATO AND ARISTOTLE ON THE ENDS OF MUSIC

Mary B. SCHOEN-NAZZARO

GREEK myths and legends tell of the wondrous effects of music. Traditionally, in ancient Greece, music was included in education and was part of religious and civic ceremonies. Music was an integral part of men's lives and readily accepted by them. Yet, when Greek philosophers attempted to go beyond the levels of myth and custom, they discovered, as Aristotle says, that "it is not easy to determine the nature of music or why anyone should have a knowledge of it."¹ Not only is a musical piece intrinsically complex, but when it is seen as related to man and his life even greater complexities enter into the picture.

Plato and Aristotle, the first Greek philosophers to examine the ends of music, recognized this and placed most of their discussions of music in their political works. There they examined the relationship which music has to the common good, particularly its place in education. They saw music as allied to the intricacies of man's nature and the perfection of nature.

THE ENDS OF MUSIC PROPOSED BY PLATO

For Plato man's first education is aimed at forming the whole person, with gymnastics directed primarily towards a child's body, and music directed principally toward his soul. Working together, they help establish and maintain the proper order in man's nature.² Not only does education begin by forming the fundamental parts of man, the body and the soul, but it also begins with movements which are natural to man. Plato explicitly indicates this with respect to choric training, which is identical with a child's education through gymnastics and music:

All young creatures are naturally full of fire, and can keep neither their limbs nor their voices quiet. They are perpetually breaking into disorderly cries and jumps, but whereas no other animal develops a sense of order of either kind, mankind forms a solitary exception. Order in movement is called *rhythm*, order in articulation—the blending of acute with grave—pitch, and the name for the combination of the two is *choric art*.³

Choric art begins with natural movements which are so easy that even a baby can perform them. Using these movements, music helps prepare the soul for acting

1. *Politics*, trans. B. Jowett, VIII, ch. 5, 1339 a 15.

2. *Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey, II 376e; IV, 441e; III, 411e-412a; *Timaeus*, trans. B. Jowett, 88a-c, 89e.

3. *Laws*, trans. A.E. Taylor, II, 664e-665a; cf. *Ibid.*, 672e, VII, 795d-e.

well, just as gymnastics, based on spontaneous physical movements, helps prepare the body for easily performing complicated maneuvers.

This first formation of the soul is called "education" by Plato to distinguish it from virtue. Education refers to the molding of the soul along good lines with regard to pleasure and pain; virtue adds understanding to good habits of pleasure and pain.⁴ Plato speaks of music as educating "through habits, by imparting by the melody a certain harmony of spirit that is not science, and by rhythm, measure and grace."⁵ Music puts order in the child's soul by training him to feel pleasure and pain properly, even though he may not understand what the proper way to feel them would be.

According to Plato, music is a useful instrument for education "because more than anything else rhythm and harmony find their way into the inmost soul and take strongest hold upon it."⁶ Music begins by striking the senses and then passing through the senses, it goes more deeply into the soul. Musical education, in turn, can go as far as the music itself goes. Plato insists that it should not just give dexterity to the fingers or strength to the voice; musical education should measure and order the movements of the soul by training the child to feel pleasure and pain in the right way.⁷ In reaching out and touching the soul, music should move the soul toward goodness. It can happen, however, that the soul is badly trained and deformed by music. In these instances musical training is carried to a wrong end: music must penetrate the soul, but it must not push it toward vice. One use of music suggested by Plato, then, is to mold the soul along good lines, that is, dispose it toward moral virtue.

The question now arises as to why Plato thinks that music can move the soul toward goodness or its contrary. He says that music prepares the young for virtue by familiarizing them with well-ordered emotion.⁸ To understand how music can do this we should look at what Plato says about lullabies:

This course (of rocking) is adopted and its usefulness recognized both by those who nurse small children and by those who administer remedies in cases of Corybantism. Thus 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 upon the children (like the victims of Bacchic frenzy) by employing the combined movement of dance and song as a remedy...

So whenever one applies an external shaking to affections of this kind, the external motion thus applied over-powers the internal motion of fear and

4. *Ibid.*, II, 653b-c. The word which Plato generally uses for education in the *Republic* and the *Laws* is *παιδεία*. In these passages he is using it in a broad sense to include gymnastics and moral formation and not in the narrower sense in which he uses it in the *Sophist*, 229d to refer to a more specifically intellectual education. The word which he uses for virtue is *ἀρετή*; cf. *Epinomis*, trans. A.E. Taylor, 977d.

5. *Republic*, VII, 522a; cf. IV, 425a.

6. *Ibid.*, III, 401d-e.

7. *Laws*, II, 673a; 654b; VII, 812d.

8. *Ibid.*, II, 659d-e.

frenzy, and by thus overpowering it, brings about a manifest calm in the soul and a cessation of the grievous palpitations of the heart which had existed in each case. Thus it produces very satisfactory results. The children it puts to sleep; the Bacchantes, who are awake, it puts into a sound state of mind instead of a frenzied condition, by means of dancing and playing....⁹

When a child is too excited for his own good, his mother tempers his emotion by slowly rocking and singing to him. The baby picks up the rhythm of this movement and he relaxes. Thus the mother counteracts the action of one emotion by substituting another emotion for it. A lullaby makes a baby feel all right by making him feel the way he should feel, that is, inducing a calm, balanced movement in him.

There are two important points contained in Plato's comment on lullabies. The first is that music moves the listener emotionally, and the second is that music can make him feel right. These two facts taken together explain why music can dispose a child toward virtue.

Plato states in several places that music reproduces or imitates the emotions. In the *Laws* he remarks that "rhythm and music generally are a reproduction expressing the moods of better and worse men."¹⁰ In the *Republic* he says that we can recognize in music different types of emotional movements such as "sobriety, courage, liberality, and high-mindedness, and all their kindred and their opposites, too, in all the combinations that contain and convey them."¹¹ For Plato music's power over emotional states is founded on its force as an imitation of emotion. When someone listens to a piece, he picks up its emotional movement and begins to move in the open way. To paraphrase Plato, musical movement, containing an expression of emotion, conveys this emotion to the listener.

Since music moves the listener emotionally, by repetition it can familiarize him with certain emotional states. Plato explains that when music familiarizes someone with a disposition appropriate to a particular circumstance, it makes him feel right. This is how it disposes him toward virtue. The rightness of music is judged by the fittingness of the emotion reproduced in the listener. The best music is not only a good imitation in the sense that it is effective in moving the listener, but it is also an imitation of a good or well-ordered emotion.¹² Music can also put an improper order in the emotions, stirring up the listener too much in some circumstances and not enough in others. Plato sees unsuitable music as disposing toward vice when "by gradual infiltration it softly overflows upon the character and pursuits of men."¹³

According to Plato, whether it is for weal or woe, music naturally forms the soul according to its own image in a subtle and powerful way. It penetrates deeply and directly, pushing its way into the soul of the listener, moving his emotions and giving them its shape. The music departs, but it leaves its mark on the listener.¹⁴

9. *Ibid.*, VII, 790e-791b.

10. *Ibid.*, 798d-e.

11. *Republic*, III, 402a; cf. 398d-400c.

12. *Laws*, II, 668b-d; 669a-b; cf. 670e-671a; *Republic*, III, 395c-d.

13. *Republic*, IV, 424d; c.f. III, 401b-d, *Laws*, II, 659e.

14. *Ibid.*, III, 401d-e.

Once a child has become accustomed, through music, to letting his emotions run away with him, he will continue to find excessive emotion pleasing. On the other hand, if he has become familiar with measured emotion, he will find that pleasing. This is the basis of Plato's attitude toward music as an instrument of moral formation: music can dispose a child toward virtue because it directly moves him on the emotional level. This imitation of emotion, then, is the second, and the most fundamental, end of music suggested by Plato.

Not only *can* music dispose toward virtue, but it is very effective in doing so. The reason for this leads us to the third end which Plato assigns to music, that of giving pleasure. Plato speaks of the singing of the Dionysian choir as having the power to "give the performer an innocent pleasure," and he characterizes this pleasure as "in very deed fortunate."¹⁵

Plato indicates two reasons why music gives us pleasure. The first is that it is natural for us to "perceive and enjoy rhythm and melody."¹⁶ Perceiving and enjoying ordered movements is common to all human beings; this is particularly true of emotional movements, which are even within the grasp of infants. The second reason is that each individual is attracted to certain rhythms and melodies more than others because these particularly please him:

Those who, from temperament, or habit, or both at once, find words, melodies or other presentations of the choir to their taste cannot but enjoy and applaud the performance, and further pronounce it good, whereas those who find it repugnant to temperament, taste, or training can neither enjoy nor applaud, and so call it bad.¹⁷

The listener particularly enjoys music that is suited to him.

Plato insists that no music should be accepted or rejected simply because it is pleasing. The question must be asked: To whom is this music pleasing. As we know just actions by looking at what the just man does, so we know good music by seeing what the good man likes:

The standard by which music should be judged is the pleasure it gives—but not the pleasure given to any and every auditor. We must take it that the finest music is that which delights the best man, the properly educated, that above all, which pleases the one man who is supreme in goodness and education.¹⁸

It is not a case of *à chacun son goût*; in musical matters everyone's taste is not equally good. In fact, Plato warns that it can be dangerous to listen to pleasant music without regard for the kind of music that pleases, because a man cannot listen frequently to the same type of music without growing "like what he enjoys whether good or bad."¹⁹ Musical pleasure should be at the service of virtue by familiarizing the listener with well-ordered emotions.

15. *Ibid.*, II, 670e; VII, 813c; cf. *Statesman*, trans. J.B. Skemp, 288c.

16. *Laws*, II, 654a.

17. *Ibid.*, 655c-d; cf. *Ibid.*, VII, 802c-d.

18. *Ibid.*, II, 655a-b; cf. *Ibid.*, d-e.

19. *Ibid.*, 656a-b; cf. *Ibid.*, 659e-660a, 667b-c.

Furthermore, Plato places great value on music's ability to develop habits of taste because these habits are extended to other areas. When a good musical education puts the right measure in a child's emotions, it instills in him an almost natural attraction toward what is good and aversion to anything bad before he can understand why things are good or bad. At first the child judges the goodness and badness of things by their affinity with his own state and the consequent pleasure which they bring. If the child has been well-formed, he may eventually become able to understand *why* something is good or bad because "when reason came the man thus nurtured would be the first to give her welcome, by this affinity he would know her."²⁰ When a man has been properly molded by music, his emotions will present no obstacle to his understanding of virtue.

For Plato musical pleasure is not an end in itself; it should be subordinated to another end, fostering virtue in the soul. Unless reason enters in to determine what music will bring harmony to the emotions, the listener risks falling under the sway of music that brings irrational pleasure and disposes him toward vice instead of virtue.²¹ Plato accepts pleasure as an end of music but insists that it be used at the service of virtue.

There is a fourth end of music which Plato indicates, that of indirectly preparing the intellect for learning. He suggests that music does this in two ways. First, it does this by disposing the listener toward moral virtue and so predisposing him for learning. In the *Protagoras* Plato urges children to study music so that they "become more balanced, more capable in whatever they say or do, for rhythms and harmonious adjustment are essential to the whole of human life."²² Music's influence extends to all of man's activities inasmuch as the acquisition of moral virtue is a prerequisite to the acquisition of intellectual virtue.

Secondly, he indicates that music prepares the intellect for learning "in the way of liberal education," which does not give the child any specialized training or knowledge.²³ A musical education neither trains a child to be a skillful musician nor teaches him a science. What Plato says about all the fine arts as fostering learning can be applied to music in particular. He speaks of these arts as preparing the mind for understanding by providing a cultural formation. They do this first by arousing and feeding man's love of knowledge and secondly by purifying and sharpening his perceptions.²⁴ For Plato music directly touches the emotions and remotely prepares the intellect for learning, so that this end which refers to the intellectual life is consequent upon its effect in the moral order.

20. *Republic*, III, 401e-402a.

21. *Timaeus*, 47d-e.

22. *Protagoras*, trans. W.K.C. Guthrie, 326a-b.

23. *Idem*. Here Plato is speaking of the art of music which is concerned with the musical sounds themselves and their influence on the listener. In the *Republic* he speaks of a study which considers the mathematical relations involved in music and draws the mind away from becoming toward an understanding of being. There music is seen as related to the science of mathematics, which man approaches in a specifically intellectual way. *Republic*, VII, 521d, 522c, 525a-d, 526a-b, 530c-531c.

24. *Republic*, III, 411c-d.

Plato, then, assigns four ends to music, and he sees a certain order between them: first, music moves the emotions; second, it gives pleasure; third, it disposes toward moral goodness; and fourth, it disposes toward learning. The most fundamental end of music is the moving of the emotions. This is the reason why music pleases and can dispose toward virtue. Musical pleasure is subordinated to moral goodness; it can, but should not, be used to encourage badly ordered emotions in the listener. Finally, the art of music has a remote influence over the intellect which follows from its ability to introduce the listener to well-ordered emotions.

THE ENDS OF MUSIC PROPOSED BY ARISTOTLE

Like Plato, Aristotle discusses music with reference to its place in education. The goal of this education, according to Aristotle, is to make men good by bringing reason, habit and nature into harmony. Art and education fill up the deficiencies of man's nature, perfecting, completing and fulfilling it.²⁵ Beginning with what is most fundamental in man, education first touches the appetite and then proceeds to the formation of reason.²⁶ In this context Aristotle points out three generally accepted reasons for including music in education, each based on a different effect music produces in the listener. He says that music was sought for the sake of amusement, as conducive to moral virtue, or in the interest of intellectual enjoyment.²⁷

The first end of music, which Aristotle discusses, is giving pleasure. He says that this is what most men look for in music, and he compares it to sleeping or drinking which are pleasant because they provide amusement and relaxation.²⁸ He explains that the pleasure music gives comes from the relaxation it provides tired men, describing it as a "remedy of pain caused by toil," and warning that, like medicine, it should be used with caution and introduced only at suitable times."²⁹ He continues the comparison between pleasure and medicine, saying that music can "give an innocent pleasure to mankind" when by it "all are delighted."³⁰

Aristotle calls up common opinion as witness that music is pleasing, and he quotes the poet Musaeus as further evidence of this.³¹ Since pleasure is good for men, and music is "one of the pleasantest things," Aristotle concludes that even if pleasure were the only benefit to be derived from music, "on this ground alone we may assume that the young ought to be trained in it."³² We can infer from what

25. *Politics*, ch. VII, 1332 a 9-b 10, ch. 17, 1337 a 1. The Greek word which Aristotle uses for education is *παιδεία*. For a detailed explanation of how education takes its direction from its goal, the perfection of man's nature, see *Ibid.*, ch. 14, 1333 a 16-b 5.

26. *Ibid.*, ch. 15, 1334 b 6-28.

27. *Ibid.*, ch. 5, 1339 a 11-25. The Greek words which Aristotle uses for these words are: *παιδία*, *παιδεία*, *διαγωγή*. These words are translated by Rackham as "amusement," "education," and "intellectual enjoyment" or "entertainment."

28. *Ibid.*, ch. 3, 1337 b 29; ch.5, 1339 a 16-20.

29. *Ibid.*, 1339 b 15-20, 25-31; ch.3 1337 b 40.

30. *Ibid.*, ch. 7, 1342 a 15-16.

31. *Ibid.*, ch. 5, 1339 b 20-24.

32. *Ibid.*, ch. 5, 1339 b 20-25.

Aristotle says that by learning to play an instrument or to sing more or less well, an individual is assured of being able to partake of the universal delights of music at will. This alone is a good reason for having and learning music because, as Aristotle points out, "music has a natural sweetness."³³

Aristotle says that from this natural delight in music comes another benefit: influencing character. As he points out, experience shows *that* music influences character because people are stirred up by some kinds of music.³⁴ In an earlier passage Aristotle indicates *how* music can influence someone's character for the better. There he states that music's ability to conduce to virtue is founded on two things: its ability to form our minds, that is to move us, and its ability to habituate us to true pleasures.³⁵ In saying that music moves us, Aristotle implies that music has another end besides the three already explicitly stated.

The first point to consider when trying to understand how music disposes someone toward virtue, or vice, is that music moves us, or imitates emotion. Aristotle says that experience shows us that when listening to music "our souls undergo a change;" for him "rhythms and melody supply imitations which hardly fall short of the actual affections."³⁶ In the *Problemata*, he explains that music is very similar to the emotions because both are movements: the musical rhythm moves faster and slower, and the melody moves up and down.³⁷ Not only is music itself a movement on the sense level, but, as Aristotle indicates, it is also a principle of other movements: music is a movement which moves us.³⁸ In the *De Anima*, Aristotle says that the emotions are movements; they are movements of man, a composite. He warns us that they are not movements of the soul alone, but rather of a man with a soul.³⁹ Further on in the same treatise, Aristotle indicates that the emotions are principles of movement as well as movements themselves; emotions move both men and brutes on the sense level.⁴⁰

According to Aristotle music imitates the emotions because, like the emotions, it is a principle of movement on the sense level. He describes how different kinds of music move us in different ways according to the emotion imitated:

The musical modes differ essentially from one another, and those who hear them are differently affected by each. Some of them make men sad and grave, like the so-called Mixolydian, others enfeeble the mind, like the relaxed modes, another again, produces a moderate and settled temper, which appears to be the peculiar effect to the Dorian; the Phrygian inspires enthusiasm.... The

33. *Ibid.*, 1304 b 17.

34. *Ibid.*, 1339 b 40-1340 a 15.

35. *Ibid.*, 1339 a 21-24.

36. *Ibid.*, 1340 a 23; b 18-19.

37. *Problemata*, trans. E.S. Foster, XIX, ch. 27, 919 b 7; cf. *Politics*, VIII, ch. 5, 1340 a 29-35, 39-40.

38. *Problemata*, XIX, ch. 27, 919 b 36, ch. 29, 920 a 3-6.

39. *De Anima*, trans. J.A. Smith, I, ch. 4, 408 b 7; cf. *Ibid.*, III, ch. 10, 433 b 18: "Appetite in the sense of actual appetite is a kind of movement, while that which is in motion is the animal."

40. *Ibid.*, III, ch. 10 433 b 26-30; cf. 433 a 22 and *De Motu Animalium* trans. A.S. Farquharson, ch. 8, 701 b 37.

same principles apply to rhythms; some have a character of rest, others of motion, and of these latter again, some have a more vulgar, others a nobler movement.⁴¹

Music sets up a proportion between its own movement and that of the listener. Through music a harmony arises between the sound and the soul of the listener, and he is moved. This movement is so close to our own emotional movement that, as Aristotle points out, some people identify music and the soul.⁴² From what Aristotle says about the power of music to move the listener in harmony with itself, it follows that the skillful musician will be able to reproduce almost any emotion so that it can be felt and recognized by the listener. He will be able to make him melt with tenderness or bristle with rage. Even the most hardened heart will reverberate if the right string is plucked. This is what imitating emotion entails.

Aristotle says that because music imitates emotion, it can affect the character. He points out that music can imitate either well-ordered or disordered emotions.⁴³ It is effective in leading us toward moral virtue because in moving us emotionally, it is able to "habituate us to true pleasures."⁴⁴ He says that the pleasure we naturally find in music can lead us to enjoy good emotional dispositions:

Since then music is a pleasure and virtue consists in rejoicing and loving and hating aright, there is clearly nothing which we are so much concerned to acquire and to cultivate as the power of forming right judgments and of taking delight in good dispositions and noble actions.⁴⁵

According to Aristotle, emotions are good or bad as they are well-ordered or badly ordered. A good emotion is properly measured; a bad emotion is either excessive or deficient in a given circumstances.⁴⁶ It is reason which determines whether or not an emotion is well-ordered.⁴⁷

From what Aristotle says about the emotions, we can conclude that for him music will be good or bad according to whether it moves us in a well-ordered or disordered way. Through the pleasure it gives the listener in different types of

41. *Politics*, VIII, ch. 5, 1340 a 40-b 10. For a commentary on how music imitates the emotions cf. ARISTOTLE, *Treatise on Poetry*, trans. Twining, I, 71-72: "It appears then in the first place that Music, considered as affecting, or raising *emotions*, was called imitation by the ancients, *because* they perceived in it that which is essential to all imitation, and is, indeed, often spoken of as the same thing—resemblance. This resemblance, however, as *here* stated by Aristotle, cannot be immediate; for between *sounds themselves*, and *mental affections* there can be no resemblance. The resemblance can only be a resemblance of effect:—the general *emotions*, *tempers* or *feelings* produced in us by certain sounds, are *like* those that accompany actual grief, joy, anger, &c—and this, as far, at least, as can be collected from the passage in question, appears to be all that Aristotle meant." Twining says that we are easily confused as to the nature of musical imitation because we take the word "imitation" to be equivocal when applied to painting, poetry and music. Actually, it is analogous, and we are confused because the difference between the imitations in these arts is more obvious than the similarity. *Ibid.*, 3-4.

42. *Politics*, VIII, 1340 b 19.

43. *Ibid.*, ch. 2, 1340 a 19-20.

44. *Ibid.*, ch. 5, 1339 a 33.

45. *Ibid.*, 1340 a 16-19.

46. *Ethics*, II, ch. 5, 1105 a 26-28; cf. *Ibid.*, ch. 2, 1104 a 10-25.

47. *Ibid.*, ch. 6, 1106 b 25-26, 1107 a 1.

emotional movement, music can dispose him to enjoy well-ordered or disordered emotions. If music familiarizes the listener with balanced emotional movements, it fosters virtue in him. On the other hand, if it familiarizes him with excessive or deficient emotional movements by stirring him up or calming him down too much, it prepares the ground for vice. As Aristotle says, "The habit of feeling pleasure and pain at mere representations is not for removed from the same feeling about the realities...."⁴⁸ This is especially true of musical imitations which "hardly fall short of the actual affections."⁴⁹

It is evident from what Aristotle says about both music and virtue that music only *disposes* toward moral virtue, and does not give this virtue directly. In defining moral virtue, he says that it entails the right choice of what is appropriate according to reason. In saying that music is an imitation of emotion, he implies that music can only directly move someone in an emotional way; music cannot directly touch reason. Since music does not touch reason directly, it cannot give knowledge of, but only familiarity with, well-ordered emotions. In this way, it disposes the listener toward virtue but does not make him virtuous.

After establishing that being pleased and pained by imitations is very close to having the same feelings for the realities, and after showing that music imitates emotion, Aristotle concludes:

Enough has been said to show that music has a power of forming the character, and should therefore be introduced into the education of the young.⁵⁰

Music, then, should be included in education because one of its ends is disposing toward moral virtue.

Giving intellectual enjoyment is the last reason which Aristotle mentions for training a child in music. This is why music was traditionally included in education:

It is clear that there are branches of learning and education which we must study merely with a view to leisure spent in intellectual activity, and these are to be valued for their own sake.... There remains, then, the use of music for intellectual enjoyment in leisure; which is in fact evidently the reason of its introduction, this being one of the ways in which it is thought that a freeman should pass his leisure....⁵¹

Aristotle objects to children studying music, since intellectual enjoyment is noble and suited to the perfection found in men rather than to the imperfection found in children.⁵² This objection throws some light on the nature of this end of music. Aristotle explains that the pleasure that comes with the intellectual enjoyment of music is noble because it entails delight in noble music.⁵³ Music can be called noble

48. *Politics*, VIII, ch. 5, 1340 a 24.

49. *Ibid.*, 1340 a 22.

50. *Ibid.*, 1340 b 10-14.

51. *Ibid.*, ch. 3, 1338 a 9-24.

52. *Ibid.* ch. 3, 1338 a 32, ch. 5, 1339 a 30. From this we can conclude that the intellectual enjoyment found in music is not the same as the pleasure mentioned by Aristotle as the first end of music.

53. *Ibid.*, ch. 6, 1341 a 13-15.

to the extent that it induces a well-ordered emotional state in the listener and brings him the kind of pleasure that the virtuous man feels, but Aristotle indicates that music can bring noble pleasure in another way, as well.

This second kind of pleasure is noble because it is tied to an intellectual enjoyment of music. Men do not find intellectual enjoyment in merely feeling and enjoying well-ordered emotional movements. Intellectual enjoyment comes from contemplating the emotional order imitated by music. When our emotions are well-ordered by music, we feel good. But men not only enjoy feeling, they also enjoy knowing. As Aristotle points out at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, "All men by nature desire to know," and knowing involves seeing order.⁵⁴ Music gives intellectual enjoyment because in it there is an order which men like to consider.

Since music is fundamentally an imitation of emotion, this order will be aesthetic (in the etymological sense of the term) and not mathematical. As Aristotle says, numbers do not move us; when mathematical proportions change, we are not altered.⁵⁵ On the other hand, musical harmony makes us bend with its fluctuations; our emotions rise and fall with the music. Just as sound that leaves us indifferent and unmoved is not musical for Aristotle, so the mathematical beauty of harmonic progressions will not be the measure of the enjoyment given by a piece. Rather, for Aristotle the intellectual enjoyment of music will be based on the contemplation of the proportion between the development in a musical imitation and the emotion itself. When listening to music, a man can enjoy seeing the relation which exists between an emotion and its imitation. As Aristotle says, it is natural for man to be delighted by imitations because this delight is founded on their natural desire to know. This natural enjoyment of imitations through melody is, according to Aristotle, not only at the root of our enjoyment of music but also the source of musical creation itself.

When music establishes a suitable emotional order in the listener, it can bring enjoyment beyond that found in other imitations. Not only will a man be pleased by seeing the relation between the imitation and the reality, but he will also delight in contemplating the suitability of the emotion imitated. He has added pleasure in realizing that he is being moved in a way which is in tune with the feelings of a virtuous man.

Intellectually enjoying music requires experience and understanding both to recognize imitations and to appreciate an appropriate emotional order when it is created. Music can move children in a well-ordered way, but they can only be pleased with this order. They cannot understand why this order is good. This is why Aristotle says that the intellectual enjoyment of music is beyond the grasp of children. Musical education can only prepare children for the intellectual enjoyment they will have when grown up. This delight, proper to well-educated adults, is the fourth end that Aristotle gives for music.

54. *Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Hope, I, ch. 1, 980 a 21, ch. 2, 982 a 19.

55. *De Anima*, I, ch. 4, 407 b 38-39, 408 a 5-10.

56. *Poetics*, trans. Bywater, ch. 4, 1448 b 5-24.

Aristotle, then, assigns four ends to music: giving pleasure, disposing toward virtue, imitating emotion, and giving intellectual enjoyment. The order that he sees between these ends can be inferred from what he says about the principles of education in general and the place of music in education in particular.

Giving intellectual enjoyment will be the highest end and the last to be achieved.⁵⁷ Aristotle insists that the perfection of the higher faculties is achieved after that of the lower ones, and that men can perform lower functions well before they can perform higher ones.⁵⁸ As understanding and intellectual development will come after the training of the appetite, so also the end of music related to the intellect will be the highest and at the same time the last attained.

Imitation of emotion will be the first end, in the sense of the most fundamental. This can be gathered from the fact that it is presupposed to both disposing toward virtue and giving pleasure. It is because music moves the listener that it can both please him as it does and help dispose him to virtue by ordering his feelings well.

As we have seen, for Aristotle disposing toward virtue follows from the pleasure-giving effect of music. In the order of generation, then, the end of music which is disposing toward virtue will succeed that of giving pleasure.

On the other hand, giving pleasure should be subordinated to disposing toward virtue. Aristotle's conviction that musical pleasure should be subordinated to moral goodness is behind his opinion that instruments which only serve for giving pleasure should not be given to children, for whom music should serve as a means to goodness.⁵⁹ The type of musical pleasure allowed in a given circumstance is measured by whether or not that higher end, virtue, is sought. From this we can conclude that for Aristotle pleasure is ultimately subordinated to virtue.

Consequently, Aristotle sees the following order in the ends of music: the most fundamental is imitating emotion; pleasure follows from this; disposing toward virtue is above pleasure; intellectual enjoyment is the highest.

THE SIMILARITY OF THE ENDS OF MUSIC PROPOSED BY PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Now that we have examined the ends of music proposed by Plato and Aristotle, we can compare them. Plato assigns four ends to music: moving the emotions, giving pleasure, disposing toward moral goodness and disposing toward learning. Aristotle, also, sees music as having four ends: imitating emotion, giving pleasure, disposing toward moral virtue, and giving intellectual enjoyment. Except for the last, these ends readily appear to be the same. However, a careful examination of what both Plato and Aristotle mean by the last end of music indicates that they are speaking of essentially the same thing.

57. *Politics*, VIII, ch. 5, 1339 a 30-34.

58. *Ibid.*, VII, ch. 15, 1334 b 7-28.

59. *Ibid.*, VIII, ch. 6, 1341 a 20-b 1, 8-12. Aristotle makes a similar distinction in discussing the various modes. He says that exciting modes which please people with unregulated tastes are not suitable for disposing the listener toward virtue: *Ibid.*, ch. 7, 1341 b 33-1342 a 30.

As we have seen, Plato sees the fourth end of music as linked to liberal education, giving an indirect, rather than a direct, preparation for learning. Consequently, this end is tied to the specifically musical, rather than the mathematical, aspect of music. Yet, as part of a liberal education music goes beyond disposing toward moral virtue and aims at forming the intellect in some way.

Aristotle, also, places music among liberal studies.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the intellectual enjoyment given by music is founded on music imitating emotion, rather than on the mathematical aspects of music's nature. Finally, since the enjoyment here stems from seeing the order between the imitation and reality, music can prepare someone for knowing and ordering more complex things later on. In speaking of music as either disposing toward learning or in giving intellectual enjoyment, Plato and Aristotle are referring to essentially the same end of music.

Although Plato and Aristotle agree on the number and nature of the ends of music, they seem to place a different emphasis on music's power to please. Aristotle allows more freedom in the use of various kinds of music, placing more value on music's power to please and seeing it as less subservient to virtue than does Plato. For instance, Aristotle permits a lower music that is too stirring to be well-ordered in terms of virtue to be played at the theater, even though he refers to such music as perverted.⁶¹

Plato, on the other hand, criticizes it as shameful for someone to find pleasure in "perverted" music because taking pleasure in imitations of unregulated emotions inevitably leads to enjoying these emotions themselves.⁶² Plato does not deny that pleasure is a measure of goodness in music, but he insists that it is the pleasure of the good man which is the standard. In fact, he speaks of the songs of the Dionysian choir as being able to "both give the performers an immediate innocent pleasure and provide their juniors with a lesson in proper appreciation of sound character."⁶³ Although Plato does not see music as serving *just* for education, he is undeniably harsher than Aristotle in his attitude toward the type of music permitted to be played for its pleasure-giving effect. One reason seems to be the need which Plato sees for attacking the notion that any pleasure derived from music is the measure of its goodness. Another reason is that Aristotle holds that some people can listen to perverted music and remain untouched if as children proper "education will have armed them against the evil influence of such representations."⁶⁴

Even with regard to the musical modes Aristotle is more broad-minded than Plato. Not only does he permit the use of more modes than does Plato, but he even criticizes the other philosopher for his unrealistic attitude toward education through music. He insists that his own position is based on principles of education suited to human nature: not only is what is right and fitting to be taken into account

60. *Ibid.*, ch. 3, 1338 a 32.

61. *Ibid.*, ch. 7, 1342 a 16-27.

62. *Laws*, II, 655d-1 656a, 656d.

63. *Ibid.*, 670d, cf. *Ibid.*, 658e-659a.

64. *Politics*, VII, ch. 17, 1336 b 24.

when determining the means of education, but also what is within the scope of the one to be educated. According to Aristotle the nature of the one to benefit from the music determines to some extent the type of music used for education.⁶⁵

When we look at certain passages of the *Laws*, the criticism leveled by Aristotle against the rejection of certain modes in the *Republic* falls less heavily. As was seen in the discussion of Plato's opinions on music, he forbids the use of certain modes because in excessively stirring up or calming down the listener, they impede, rather than foster, virtue in him. In the *Laws* Plato indicates that the type of music chosen depends on the nature of those performing or benefitting from it. In one place, he speaks of different songs suited to men and women.⁶⁶ In another place he speaks of three choirs distinguished according to the age of the singers; the songs sung by each choir are appropriate to their particular condition.⁶⁷ From this it can be concluded that in some way, although not in exactly the same way as Aristotle, Plato sees the type of music chosen in a particular instance as dependent upon the nature of the one performing or benefitting from it.

In spite of a difference in emphasis, Plato and Aristotle would seem to understand the nature of the ends of music in basically the same way, and to see these ends as ordered to each other in essentially the same way. Any opposition between them in these matters is only superficial. There is actually a fundamental similarity in their views on the ends of music and how they ultimately serve man's perfection.

65. *Ibid.*, VIII, ch. 7, 1342 a 17-35.

66. *Laws*, III, 802d-e.

67. *Ibid.*, II, 664c, 666d, 670d.