

Metaphysical Dialogue between Philosophy and Music in Ancient Greece



Ethics, Epistemology and Metaphysics

Keywords: philosophical culture, ancient music and musical instrument, art, etc.

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Abstract

The main aim of this study will be the comparative analysis of essential similarities between philosophical culture from one side and of musical art in the ancient Greece from another side. Current emphasis of this study will stand over different historical periods, where philosophy like a more sophisticated technique of people’s thoughts, together with the musical creativity like art itself is in the metaphysic aspect will be commonly sublimated together. As such, the substances of music like spiritual creativity of a man has always been and has remained ones ‘confidential’ issue of philosophy, like the philosophy that has remained forever a pleasant music of human mentality! In this context, we will also talk about why philosophy and philosophers from all the artistic known forms of that time, the musical art they had appreciated like the most important creativity in the human social life. It is known that like the philosophy that aimed on formulating the moral character through deep analysis and smart wisdoms, this music has made through harmonious tunes and relevant instruments.

Greek philosophers appreciated music very much, being thus convinced that music like spiritual pleasure shows a strange counterweight, a true balance between the physical activity and mental activity of people. Moreover, the distinguished philosopher Plato considered that music enables us soften the wilder feelings and roughness, while Pythagoras confirmed that music refreshes and sharpens our brain, giving thus the penetration power to the contemplation.

It is well known that one of the specific duties of philosophy was that the human is taught to be cautious, non-concerned and happy. But this duty belongs to music, too! Therefore, since philosophy aims to achieve this through different theoretical and practical doctrines, music made that through special musical shapes, songs and special instruments. From all of the above said, it is clear that the position of music in artistic hierarchy of the ancient Greece was in the peak of the pyramid. Amazing is the way with whom the Greeks were so much philosophically cultivated and applied the music in their private lives socially and culturally. Greek philosophers appreciated music so much, believing that the spiritual pleasure represents a counterweight and strange balance between physical and mental activity of humans. Thus, while Plato considered that music enables someone soften the wild feelings and roughness, Pythagora has the conviction that the music refreshes the brain and sharpens it by giving in-depth power to the contemplation.

Besides, the issue of what role has the music in Greek town-states, respectively what was the status of it alongside other artistic disciplines, best reflects us Plato’s doctrine when the order and prosperity of the state is conditioned with the idea of how good was the music then and how the citizens were educated with it (Plato: 1980, p.135). To place the music on top of the art, has also contributed to the aspiration of Helens to what was called the integration of personality, this attribute was given only to those who besides the solid, mental, physical and ethical features have a musical sense, too. Of course, this wasn’t incidental. These divine and philosophic attributes of an ideal man (stronger, smart, good, brave) actually are closely related with the music for many reasons. The first attribute, the power, was achieved through training, where training is accompanied by the rhythmical music; the wisdom was achieved with philosophy, which when it is lectured or taught with the music it becomes easier and cleared for understanding, the goodness is earned through the good music, Apollo’s music which ennoble the human feelings, creating a moral personality; and in the end the courage which is achieved by listening and singing patriotic and heroic songs. The fact that in rapport with other arts in Greece the crown was always held with the music, all of the famous competitions, beginning from bizarre sport disciplines to the beautiful arts, were always held with the music.

Similar Development Phases of Philosophy and the Ancient Music

When it's about the metaphysical dialogue between philosophy and music through different functions that they had in the life of Helens, I think that this thing can be reflected more faithfully in the same evolutionary path through philosophy and musical art during the history. With other words, if we know better the development of the history of Greek philosophy and analogously the development of Greek music, then we will easily understand that the development path of these two (philosophy and music) through the ancient history was almost the same. This means that ups and downs that the philosophy has experienced through its life in the antiquity, were joined with the music. Thus, for example, like the Greek music started from the first phase of its development (760-600) it was characterized with the primitive practical music and with instruments of poor musical shapes like the philosophy of this phase was characterized with the vulgar conceptions and naïve philosophical doctrines. This phase was once the sign of establishment and formation of these two social activities. In the second phase of development (600-450) which for the music reached a genuine zenith, came alongside discoveries of some new instruments and new musical shapes, too, where this made the broader establishment of the music of one crucial case in the educational process of Ancient Greece. Same with this, the philosophy of this phase has achieved the culmination, thus showing new philosophical conceptions, such as: the first philosophic schools, where philosophy together with the music were considered important subjects in the entire educational process of Greece that are considered to be the two main columns in building of the personality. During this phase, comes into consideration the clarification and definition of music as a socio-cultural phenomenon, but also as a specific artistic discipline, too. Here indeed are established the philosophical foundations of the music of the ancient Greece. Like philosophy that has for its purpose building of the moral personality through philosophical interpretation and in-depth analysis, also the music has contributed through harmonic melodies of relevant instruments. As a result of this theological alliance moral and educational linking of music with philosophy is a tragedy which can't survive without one of these two elements. In conclusion, the main function of tragedy stands exactly in the chance to educationally indicate in the psyche and ethos of the public. Through this, the text of tragedy that shows philosophical elements is realized through moral cleansing of the psyche from the ugly thoughts, while the melody of tragedy which shows the musical element is realized through moral transformations of anti-generous lusts. The music of the third phase (440-300) same like the philosophy is characterized with last stoic attempts for further maintenance of life and its all values which like that are weighed in previous periods. This has been proven by the grand philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle who lived exactly during this period of time and who by acting in their philosophical schools and in the public opinion of that time (the thing about which we will talk later) has lost all the opportunities, ways and tools in attempt that philosophy and music should keep the main aim for them, so that the socio and moral education of the citizens is shown in the creation of good people for the good state. In reality, all this developmental phase went to the notation of these two colossus of the philosophy of Greece, the fact which later will be heard that these were the worthiest philosophers who testified in the setting of philosophical foundations of psycho-moral and socio-educational role of the music in the ancient Greece.

Musical Formation Like an Argument for the Completed Education

Yet by the time of remarkable philosophical schools, along with the philosophy of music they became so important subjects in the overall process of Greek education that were counted as two fundamental pillars for the construction of the human personality. In particular, it highlighted specific function of music, which should help achieve ideal health of the body and soul. (Raimi 2005, p.135)

For this reason, from all arts of that time, Greek philosophers mostly appreciated music, which for these reasons was mentioned in the educational plans of schools from these philosophers and was installed with special care. This old Hellenic art was considered as the roof of the building on a complete personality, because

they were convinced that without this component other features were incomplete, deficient. A man who throughout his education has failed to learn to sing or execute any instrument, Greeks reckoned it as a mediocre or a person not sufficiently educated! Thus, some of the glorious personalities of the Greek history (e.g. Themistocles) felt publicly humiliated because of the lack of his proper musical training. And because of this lack of musical training, prominent people of that time, often after gaining important functions, attended private lessons to follow outstanding musicians in order to learn to play any of the instruments of that time.

Music was privileged from Greeks as an art because it played a moral and emotional role. As with the help of special melodies people were working until they activated their physical or mental moods; with its help they maintained their military moral; thus being sublimed, excited and excited in public (as in a play, concert or theatre); it entertained people's rejoice at weddings and other cheerful occasions, and so on. In other words, people tempered their emotional structure. This proves the scholar Kuintilian, who in his famous work "The music" Book II, chapter IV, speaks about how the brand can affect the overall music in the human life and wrote that music encourages and facilitates military bravery of long marches, facilitates navigation and heavy works made by bare hands, thus sufferings to appear as comforts. Greeks treated music as exclusive art from the cause that it was the only artistic discipline that was present in all of the most important moments of the human life. And starting from the moment of birth of the man, which was marked with music, special moments (like birthdays, graduation, employment, weddings, etc.), were always filled with music and fun, relatives and friends, till the the day of death, when the man is buried in the painful musical suite.

They even believed that music has a powerful impact on the animal emotional world, for shepherds playing pleasantly on a flute the melody while the cattle were grazing, on running rivers and at home. The centre of music and art was the ancient Greece, which also confirmed that if the artist or musician did not meet the standards of any manifestation of musical instrument in public had the right to assign an outrageous frustration and revolt, and were asked to be punished publicly. While this does not happen in other art events (like the oratory, acting, sculpturing, poetry, etc.), where the unsuccessful artist was only despised publicly. For this phenomenon Greeks pronounced them as traitors, rebels, conspirators and their children, too, by punishing them having no right for education.. However, this approach represented a very severe punishment, because it deprives the individual from the natural law - the possibility that s(he) can be indignified and disrespected from citizens in the polis (state). From all this it becomes clearer that why the ancient Greeks appreciated music most from all other arts. Moreover, it became subject and ambition of the two most basic social activities, family education and school education. Back then music was needed due to the fact that it had to carried out social and psychomoral emotions, where the latter could distinguish the good music from bad, the useful music from harmful.

Philosophical Interpretation of instruments

From all these considerations, it becomes clear that ancient Greeks with the help of their wisdom (philosophy) and large experience of life had collected during their numerous cruises in the Mediterranean, really knew how to interpret all instruments and apply play on them in the most appropriate ways. It is also a testimony to the genius of the people, where musical instruments were used as preparations for the maintenance of psychophysical balance and moral cultivation of mentality in the society. But this development was not the the case, because 'all artists and holders of culture at that time were setting thier tasks through the art of idealized life, where later it would be realized and placed in the highest degree of perfection "(Novakovic 1976, p.34). The generous collection of old Greek instruments represented a fruitful background to such philosophical research that would later produce philosophical explanations for moral and educational functions and psychosocial music. Usually, stringed instruments served for personal pleasure, for concerts, for private inaugurations, listening to poetry and philosophy, or simply for recreation. Also, these spiritual instruments served for blissful

moments, for religious rites, for military exercises and attacks, as well as the emergence of the drama. On the other hand, striking instruments were used to maintain tact and rhythm of the music, as with the stringed instruments, where the moral and educational role of the psychosocial music depended on these instruments, it is enough to stop the analysis of the two main instruments: the stringed instrument (Lyra), and the instrument with a mild grease (Aulos).

In ancient Greece lyra (or guitar) was synonymous to measure the emotional music, but (aulos), was synonymous with emotional and pathetic music. These two ancient Greek instruments were treated with special care, since (lyra) was attributable to the God Apollo, whom the Greeks reckoned it as a symbol of intellectual enlightenment and (aulos) was attributable to the deity Dionysius, which the Greeks honored it as symbol of euphoric celebrations and merriment. This means that the music was identified with the function of lubricant metaphysical philosophy, which aimed for wisdom and moral enlightenment. Meanwhile (aulos) music was identified with passion and exaltation that is contrary to the ideal primordial philosophy - intellectual maturity and moral stability.

Greek philosophical spirit was present in all segments of society ranging from the most diverse activities, crafts, and sciences to the arts of ancient Greece, but its full expression was found exactly in music. The reason is that Greeks were convinced that music ennoble the soul, calms the feelings, provides power, versatility, dexterity, pride, dignity, etc., but it could also discourage, cause laziness, indolence, inertia, clumsiness, negligence, apathy, rudeness etc. (Ismaili 2000, p. 55). So, herein precisely lays the answer why the ancient Greeks so highly prized lyra and music. They knew that music troubles feelings, while lyra calms them. That's why the legend of the musical duel between Apollo and Marsias, who had opposing ideas about music, prevails with harmony. Victory of Apollo, who was at the same time God of oratory, figuratively reflects the victory of philosophy towards impetuous passion. Quite characteristic is another myth, which metaphorically shows how Athena, goddess of wisdom (symbol and allegory of philosophy) had thrown (aulos) an ancient Greek wind instrument and cursed anyone who would play with it. This clearly demonstrates that "philosophical cult" of the Greeks had set itself the cultural heritage of their art. And that it had a great importance for the life of the Greeks then, because music was seen as a skill at the time of the Gods, which had featured miraculous supernatural influence.

More interesting is to break down the attitude of Plutarch, one of the last great representatives of Greek philosophy and culture, who is talking about the advantages and disadvantages of the two most important Greek instruments (lyra and aulos). According to him those who can simultaneously play on an instrument and sing represents a potential opportunity for the man to speak about philosophy. And those who have not blown in aulos because during this time they dealt with philosophy, could not help themselves helped calm their souls, relax and be harmonious in relation to philosophy. Therefore, in this context, it is understood that Plato's suggestion about the perfect state "can be obtained lyra (guitar)." (Plato 1980, p.132). During this analysis, we attempted to explain why lyra as the main representative of stringed instruments was estimated that much as aulos, which was the leading representative of spiritual instruments. Thus, it can be said that this practice was a result of the Greek mentality and mindset for a harmonious society, which actually aimed to be the idealized life of the Gods in Olympus.

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