

Is Philosophy the greatest kind of music?

Reflections on Plato's Phaedo 61a

Introduction

When a musician talks about philosophy some caution may be in order. The situation could be embarrassing. Musicians tend to be highly subjective people. They have a desire for pathos, display and performance. They tend to follow their instincts and intuitions. They may lack the soberness and discipline of thinking demanded by philosophical questions. They are used to amplify their emotions and tend to mistake subjective convictions for truth. Worst of all: they rarely know when to remain silent. Anyone who doubts my warning is invited to consult the philosophical writings of Richard Wagner.

Mind you, the inverse situation is not necessarily more encouraging. When a philosopher talks about music his talk tends to distinguish itself by its lack of proper acquaintance with and understanding of the subject matter. Not many have the courage and honesty to admit their ignorance which does not prevent them from affording music various positions in the canon of the arts. And although music is occasionally afforded pride of place (eg. Schopenhauer or Nietzsche) and the musician is elevated to a "high priest of truth", certain aspects of the musical understanding create their own cause for embarrassment: How seriously can we take the talk of someone who prefers Rossini to Beethoven or Bizet to Wagner? Philosophers too, it appears, do not always know when to remain silent.

On this note the musician and the philosopher will need courage to face up to potential embarrassment or are alternatively advised to continue pursuing their art of song or silence.

Exposition of topic

I haven chosen as the topic of my talk the question whether philosophy is the greatest kind of music. Or rather: the question has chosen me- as may become evident. The question of course emerges from a remarkable passage in Plato's dialogue Phaedo. Socrates, who is spending his last day in prison and is about to be executed, is confronted by his visitors about some "music" or poetry he is reported to have composed- in particular some "metrical versions of Aesop's fables and the hymn to Apollo". In defence, Socrates reports a dream which he is supposed to have had on repeated occasions. The dream, Socrates reports, always appears to say the same

thing: "Socrates", it says, "make music and work at it". Socrates reports his interpretation of the dream as follows:

"I formerly thought it was urging and encouraging me to do what I was doing already and that just as people encourage runners by cheering, so the dream was encouraging me to do what I was doing, that is, to make music, because philosophy was the greatest kind of music (*philosophias men ouses megistes mousikes*) and I was working at that. But now after the trial and while the festival of the god delayed my execution, I thought, in case the repeated dream really meant to tell me to make this which is ordinarily called music (*demothe mousiken poiein*), I ought to do so and not to disobey." (Phaedo, 61 a)¹

I find this account remarkable for a number of reasons. Firstly, I find remarkable that Socrates' supposed commitment to music and poetry originates in a dream. There are a number of occasions in which Socrates reports dreams or addresses the issue of dreams (Critias, Timaeus, Philebus). From a passage in the Timaeus in particular, it appears evident that dreams are linked with powers of divination and prophecy (manteia)². And from a passage in the Theatetus³ we could conjecture that dreams are providing us with truthful insights were rational explanation is no longer possible. In any case, there is a mystical quality and prophetic certainty about dreams that seems peculiar to encounter in the context of Socrates. Why does Socrates, with Nietzsche the "non-mystic" par-excellence⁴ put so much emphasis on a dream? Is this perhaps a function of his situation, his impending death? Is it - as Nietzsche seems to assert- his bad conscience, his fear that there is a realm of truth from which the rational person is banned?⁵ Or is it an irony, an attempt to undermine music and poetry by association with divine inspiration?

I find further remarkable about this passage from the Phaedo that the dream places such an emphasis on making music and working at it. Why this emphasis on poesis- on making? Why the emphasis- by implication- that philosophy too is made and worked at?

It strikes me as most remarkable that Socrates describes philosophy as the "greatest kind of music". Socrates seems to think of music in two different senses. There is firstly the ordinary

¹ Plato, Phaedo (trans. Harold North Fowler, Loeb Classical Edition, Harvard University Press: Cambridge: 1995)

² "no man achieves true and inspired divination when in his rational mind, but only when the power of his intelligence is fettered in sleep or when it is distraught by disease or by reason of divine inspiration. But it belongs to a man when in his right mind to recollect and ponder both the things spoken in dream or waking vision by the divining and inspired nature, and by means of reasoning to discern about them all wherein they are significant and for who they portend evil or good in future, the past or the present."² Timaeus 71e

³ Theatetus 202a ("a dream for a dream")

⁴ Nietzsche, Die Geburt der Tragödie, p. 77

⁵ Nietzsche, Die Geburt der Tragödie, p. 82

music, verses set in rhythm, harmony, melody and accompanied by dance. However, there is also an implication that music can be a more fundamental phenomenon than ordinary music. This grounds the remark about philosophy as the greatest music. It provides my greatest puzzlement. How could philosophy be music of any kind- let alone "the greatest kind"? How could an aesthetic phenomenon, the practice of sound, of melody, rhythm and harmony be identified with the theories, arguments and investigations of reflection known as philosophy?

Some remarks on method

In order to investigate particularly the last question further, I would like to propose to look at the relevance of music in Plato's writings. What does Plato have to say about music? Before I proceed, however, I need to make a qualifying remark: As I have pointed out the dream urges Socrates to "do" (poiein) and "work at" (ergazou) philosophy and music - as the case may be - not to talk about them. Naturally, philosophy and music are and can be talked about, as any thing can be. In the case of music we are well aware of a difference between the talk about music and the making of it. The difference is manifested in the difference between the musician and the musicologist. In the case of philosophy the distinction between talking about philosophy and doing it seems less clear- used as we are to the talk of contemporary academic philosophy and almost exclusively interpretative approaches to philosophy. What does it mean to "do" or "make" philosophy"?

Developing a provisional, entirely speculative analogy between music and philosophy, we may say that doing philosophy is a performative process. It requires a practical, executive skill,. The skill perhaps of questioning, of keeping an investigation on track, of renewing the argument and inquiry with a view to the subject matter, etc. It requires that with our philosophical skill, philosophy is established always anew and again in every instance of doing it. Talking about philosophy presupposes that we have something to talk about, that we have philosophy and its products ready to hand and in front of us. We may be entirely mistaken to think that philosophy is an assembly of philosophical works and statements in a clearly defined subject area. Talk about philosophy may well turn out to be irrelevant to the doing of philosophy just like the talk of musicology may well be irrelevant to music and its concrete performance. Talk about philosophy may forget that the products of philosophy are fictional without the performative process of production.

I offer these reflections not in order to proclaim anything. It is quite clear that they are speculative and in need of being put to the test. At this point they are offered as a qualifying background for my brief exposition of Plato and perhaps for the entirety of this talk. If these remarks have any significance, then this talk may turn out to be a disappointment: It will remain preliminary, a pre-concert talk- just as the talk about chairs and tables remains preliminary to the making of them and to the ultimate practice of real carpentry.

Plato's conception of music and its relevance to philosophy

When we look at the passage from the Phaedo we notice the extended use of the term "music". It is quite clear from the context that Socrates and his friends do not refer to music in an ordinary sense. For Socrates music is a fairly extended term. In the most general understanding it refers to any activity inspired by the muses. The muses, the goddesses of art and creative activity, such as poetry, dance, song and music, derive their name from the Greek word mosthai – searching we are told in the Cratylus⁶. Music then is a search- for what we may immediately ask?

In the more ordinary meaning, music (mousike) as distinguished from poetry refers originally to a unity of poetic performance, dance and instrumental music. As Edward Lippman points out:

"Greek music worthy of the name necessarily involved language. Wordless music was regarded as inferior, and instrumental performance can be distinguished as techne (which is in no wise different from the craft since it lacks imitative capacity) from the more elevated mousike (which generally designates vocal music)".....melody with word and gesture produced an art of extraordinary definition, especially since the unifying factor, rhythm was identical in all three components; there was no complex interplay of three patterns, but a single rhythmic expression, which was apparently the most important aspect of Greek music...the unity of Greek rhythm was further solidified by unison singing and "unison" dancing"⁷

This strong identification of word, dance and tone and the unifying power of rhythm dissolve over time when a new music, a predominantly instrumental - and wordless music develops. In its emancipation from the word, this music separates rhythm from poetic meter, which appears to have had far reaching cultural, social and educational implications, some of which are particularly criticised by Plato in the Republic.

⁶ Cratylus 406a

⁷ Lippman, p. 54

There are two central phenomena of particular relevance to Plato's conception of music: harmony and ethos.

Harmony

The concept of harmony is very fundamental and again rather extensive. It has a diverse range of applications extending to Plato's conceptions of cosmos, the human soul⁸, political life, discourse, dialectic, medicine and thought in general. On many occasions the concept of harmony as the fitting together of disparate elements- provides Plato with an interdisciplinary bridge. It appears to denote an ontologically fundamental phenomenon- a position which it quite possibly inherited from the Pythagoreans or Heraclitus. A passage, which indicates the nature and fundamental relevance of harmony well, is the speech by Eryximachus in the dialogue Symposium. Here, the medical practitioner Eryximachus, draws a parallel between medicine and music as arts which draw opposites together through love:

" And so not merely is all medicine governed, as I propound it, through the influence of this god ⁹, but likewise athletics and agriculture. Music also, as is plain to any the least curious observer, is in the same sort of case: perhaps Heraclitus intends as much by those perplexing words 'the One at variance with itself is drawn together, like harmony of bow or lyre'. Now it is perfectly absurd to speak of a harmony at variance, or as formed from things still varying. Perhaps he meant, however, that from the grave and acute which were varying before, but which came afterwards to agreement, the harmony was by musical art created. For surely there can be no harmony of acute and grave while still at variance: harmony is consonance (symphonia) and consonance is a kind of agreement (homologia); and agreement of things varying, so long as they are at variance, is impossible."¹⁰

What is remarkable in this passage is the conception that agreement (homologia) is created or drawn together from things at variance with each other (diapheromenon). Agreement (homologia) or the same (shared) logos is formed by introducing

"a mutual love and unanimity. Hence in its turn music is found to be a knowledge of love-matters relating to harmony and rhythm".¹¹

It is the relationship to the shared logos (homo-logos) that creates harmony. Whatever searches for and establishes this harmonious relationship is called music.

⁸ Phaedo 86 a-d, . The Phaedo, eg. develops a hypothesis that the soul is harmony, a notion which is discarded because it becomes unclear how musical harmony can persist independently of its constituents (the lyre and the strings).

⁹ Asclepius, who is notably the son of Apollo and thus of particular relevance to Socrates. Cf also Socrates' final statement at the end of Phaedo

¹⁰ Symposium, 187a/b

¹¹ Symposium 187 e

As Erixymachus suggests, the conception of harmony is relevant to more than simply the narrow musical meaning. As a matter of fact it only unfolds its full significance in the context of discussions about the cosmos, the Gods, the soul, etc.

How does this search for harmony progress, how is the drawing together in the "shared (homo-)logos" achieved?

Harmony is discovered by "conjecture (stochasmos) through skillful practice"¹². One hits upon harmony like an archer hits his mark. The path leading to the actual success of the archer remains in the final analysis mysterious and elusive. There can be no comprehensive account why and how an archer hits the mark; there can be no comprehensive account how harmony is established between things at variance except to say that the "homo-logos" is aimed at, guessed and established through skilful practice. Finding the shared logos and creating harmony remains a mysterious act. We are unable to provide a detailed, comprehensive discursive analysis of it.

A passage in the dialogue Cratylus can help us to clarify and deepen our understanding of these aspects of harmony. The passage occurs in the context of an investigation of names and their application to objective realities. The dialogue has established that "names possess a certain natural correctness"¹³ and following this abstract argument Socrates and his interlocutor (Hermogenes) investigate the essence of the name of the God Apollo. Apollo is of major significance to Socrates being the God with whom Socrates associates and identifies himself most. The Phaedo itself is rich with references to Apollo: Socrates - through his symbolic association with the swans gives his own swan song¹⁴ in the Phaedo proving himself - like they- as one of Apollo's fellow servants. The dialogue opens with a reference to Apollo: The festival for "Apollo" (the return of the ship from Delos) directs the time of Socrates' death. It closes with a reference to the son of Apollo and God of healing, Aesculapius, in the famous last words of Socrates to Crito. In the mythical figure of Apollo, it appears that Socrates' existence and the characteristics of music and philosophy are most closely drawn together.

In the Cratylus Socrates points out that in his view Apollo's name is admirably appropriate to his powers and functions:

¹² Philebus 56a

¹³ Cratylus 391b

¹⁴ "And you seem to think I am inferior in prophetic power to the swans who sing at other times also, but when they feel that they are to die, sing most and best in their joy that they are to go to the gods whose servants they are...And I think I am myself a fellow servant of the swans, and am consecrated to the same

"...no single name could more aptly indicate the four functions of the god, touching upon them all and in a manner declaring his power in music, prophecy, medicine and archery...His name and nature are in harmony; you see he is a musical god. For in the first place, purification and purgations used in medicine and in soothsaying, and fumigations with medicinal and magic drugs, and the baths and sprinklings connected with that sort of thing all have the single function of making a man pure in body and soul...this is the god who purifies and washes away and delivers (apoloun) from such evils...and because he is always by his archery the controller of darts (bolon) he is ever darting (aei ballon). And with reference to music we have to understand that "alpha" often signifies together and here it denotes moving together in the heavens about the poles, as we call them, and harmony in song, which is called concord. And this god directs the harmony, making them all move together, among both gods and men.¹⁵

It appears that the combination of the four functions (harmony, purification, ever-darting and prophecy) in one divine persona somehow inform each other. As we have seen above this is certainly the case in relation to harmony and the ability to take aim (Toxike). It also appears to be the case in relation to harmony and an intuitive, inspired, "prophetic" (mantike) ability to intuit the shared (homo) logos. Finally, harmonisation can be seen as a process of purification – an initially opposing relationship is drawn together and brought into balanced agreement, eliminating contamination and strife. As Euximachus' speech suggests, harmony in the areas of medicine especially or in relation to the nurture of the soul in philosophy and music can be conceived as purification.

In its richness of meaning, harmony emerges as an ethical phenomenon. The creation of harmony, the making of music appears to combine a number of functions which are ordinarily thought to be significant in areas such as medicine and philosophy. It becomes quite clear, however, that the musical phenomenon of harmony is a fundamental notion which reaches into the latter areas, rather than vice versa.

Music and Ethos

The important ethical and educational significance is born out by a number of references in Plato particularly in book III of the Republic. The immediacy with which music is seen to act upon the soul in fact privileges it to be of supreme educational importance:

"And is it not for this reason, Glaucon, said I, "that education in music is most sovereign, because more than anything else rhythm and harmony find their

God and have received from our master a gift of prophecy no whit inferior to theirs and that I go out from life with as little sorrow as they." (Phaedo, 84e/85a)

¹⁵ Cratylus 405a

way to the inmost soul and take strongest hold upon it bringing with them and imparting grace, if one is rightly trained and otherwise the contrary?"¹⁶

Together with gymnastics music shapes character, temperament and disposition. A "good and sober" (agathon, sophronos)¹⁷ disposition is created by good rhythm and harmony. In addition music is seen to soften and sensitise the spirit. In this it needs to be balanced by education in gymnastics which hardens the spirit leading in excess to "pride and high spirit"¹⁸ It is important to strike a balance between both forms of education - as Plato indicates:

"Then he who blends gymnastics with music and applies them most suitably to the soul is the man whom we should most rightly pronounce to be the most perfect and harmonious musician, far rather than the one who brings the strings into unison with one another."¹⁹

A musician is someone who balances and harmonises the ambivalent requirements of the soul and the spirit through a balanced, harmonic engagement with gymnastics and music.

As we have seen above musical education places some emphasis on the "right training" and - by implication on the exposure to the "right" kind of music. The contrast implied here is, firstly, between Greek music of a conservative kind in which word, harmony and rhythm are clearly unified and music is firmly placed in the service of the text. This is distinguished from (almost purely) instrumental music which emphasises harmonic and rhythmic richness.

Plato defends the purity of the former, "simpler" kind of music against a more modern, presumably predominantly instrumental kind of music on account of the psychic and educational effects of music. He has a clear contrast and moral rank order in mind: The ethically superior "Apollonian" music of harmonic and rhythmic simplicity is imitative and symbolic of a "life that is orderly and brave". It is contrasted with more luxurious and excessive "Dionysian" music. The latter is imitative without moral distinction and concern. It loses itself in the sensual pleasure of harmonic and rhythmic richness and in the seductive tonal qualities of "polyharmonic", many stringed instruments such as the flute or the aulos.

While all music for Plato is imitative, it is clear that such imitation must occur in the context of clear ethical standards in order to avoid that the instinctive power of music has a debilitating effect on listener and player. Plato's moral valuation of music does not only extend to its general

¹⁶ Republic 401e

¹⁷ There are a number of references to the importance of a "sober" disposition and its relationship to harmony (Rep. 404e; 401a)

¹⁸ Republic 411

¹⁹ Republic 412a

structure and character but includes the evaluation of modes of tonality. Certain "dirge like modes" or "certain Ionian and also Lydian modes that are called lax" are to be avoided in favour of the original Greek "Phrygian and Dorian" modes which would "best imitate the utterance of men failing or succeeding, the temperate, the brave."²⁰

It is interesting in this context to note a parallel between the seductive powers of music, particular of the dionysian kind and the seductive powers of Socratic philosophy and rhetoric in particular. While Socrates associates himself on many occasions with Apollo (and by implication with all aspects of the powers of this God, ie. the musical powers of healing, purification, divination, harmonisation and "hitting upon the mark") he is also described as enchanting and seductive to his audience in a dionysian sense. There is a direct reference of this in the Symposium in which Alcibiades complains that Socrates has seductive powers akin to the Aulos player Marsyas.²¹ Alcibiades characterises Socrates as a "piper" and a "satyr" who makes his audience feel astounded and entranced:

"For when I hear him I am worse than any wild fanatic; I find my heart leaping and my tears gushing forth at the sound of his speech, and I see a great numbers of other people having the same experience. When I listened to Pericles and other skilled orators I thought them eloquent, but I never felt anything like this; my spirit was not left in a tumult and had not to complain of my being in the condition of a common slave: whereas the influence of our Marsyas here has often thrown me into such a state that I thought my life not worth living on these terms....And there is one experience I have in the presence of this man alone, such as nobody would expect in me- to be made to feel ashamed by anyone; he alone can make me feel it"

The emphatic parallel here between music and Socrates' philosophising draws attention to the emotional and existential power shared by Socratic philosophy and music. The Socratic practice of philosophy produces emotional reactions in his listener akin to those produced by an inspired musical performer. Like a musician, Socrates does not simply express psychic states or insert understanding into ignorant pupils. His provocative questioning, dialectical investigation and ability to draw people into an argument which essentially is personally relevant, effect changes in the life and being of his interlocutors by creating in the first instance a state of profound perplexity (*thaumazein*). Such wonderment effects in those with appropriate courage- a conversion or a turn of soul, a change in the life of his listeners.

²⁰ Republic 399c

²¹ Symposium 215b- 216b

What is the significance of achieving such a conversion? As we know from the Republic, true knowledge, vision of the idea of the Good is not effected by accumulating an understanding of the world of becoming but requires firstly the sustained, fundamental shift and turn of the soul towards the contemplation of essence. There appear to be a number of approaches possible to affect such a turn. In the Republic eg. Plato identifies a number of studies (mathesis) that have the potential to effect such a turn. These include the theoretical contemplation of harmony- understood here as a kind of abstract, pythagorean contemplation of harmonic mathematical relationships²². Most importantly, however, the awakening and conversion of "the soul to the contemplation of true being"²³ is effected by the study of dialectic²⁴.which "attempts systematically and in all cases to determine what each thing really is".²⁵ The perspective of dialectic with which Socrates confronts his interlocutors evokes a profound emotional response. It relativises individual, temporal existence and places the investigator in an elevated position. It turns the gaze of the soul upwards searching no longer for everyday solutions but for pure "knowledge of that which always is and not of a something which at some time comes into being and passes away"²⁶. The realisation that being is always encountered as being in time directs our attention to the phenomenon of temporality. A search for freedom from temporality becomes the distinguishing feature between the philosophical and non-philosophical attitude. Since the stance which remains trapped in the temporal perspective of ordinary becoming or presence (Heidegger's ontic being) remains unable to ascend to true knowledge and the vision of the Good- the highest vision of philosophy the attempt to ascend towards contemplation of the Good provides with an important relativisation of ordinary human existence. In this context the question if the contemplation of being qua being, independent of a temporal perspective can be reached or just attempted shall remain open.

Music and Existence

Returning to our more immediate topic we have seen above that music - or perhaps better genuine music- is for Plato essentially not a techne, an art of sound. The musical person is someone who leads a particular kind of life, who

²² Republic 530d

²³ Republic 525a

²⁴ Republic 534e/535a

²⁵ Republic 533b

²⁶ Republic 527b

"has tuned himself with the fairest harmony, not that of a lyre or other entertaining instrument, but has made a true concord of his own life between his words and his deeds, not in the Ionian, no, nor the Phrygian nor in the Lydian, but simply in the Dorian mode, which is the sole Hellenic harmony."²⁷

The harmony between word and deed, between thought and life distinguishes the philosopher from the sophist. As a professional provider of understanding and education, the sophist does not worry about the truthfulness and harmony of his own life but rather about remaining competitive and attractive in his teaching. He keeps his thought no matter how sophisticated at arms length to himself- a tradeable ware. The realisation that philosophical thought requires agreement with the life of the thinker, that truthfulness relies on practical exercise of character and a sound condition of the soul has the potential to make the sophisticated consciousness feel embarrassed- as Alcibiades implies. It is embarrassing to realise that thinking which has the potential to aspire to the Good and to freedom from the grounded, everyday concern by leading the soul consistently, is grounded in a technical, theoretical engagement with products of philosophy. These on their own do not make anyone wiser and resemble the exercise of instrumental virtuosity which does not make anyone a better musician.

Plato's understanding of music as existentially relevant can be met with some scepticism. Does his conception apply to music as we understand it? Music in the 20th century is predominantly a commodified artform, a cultural product range. It is provided by professionals, purchased by consumers and visited by tourists. Music is traded in the market place as something to "hear and feel"- either hear here or take-away. In education, music is -with exception- of receding importance compared to more useful studies such as science or commerce. It is considered to be a recreational activity, perhaps able to decorate our lives and enhance the pleasure and enjoyment of free time. More ambitious educators may occasionally emphasise its value in promoting intellectual development, proving its value to the useful pursuits after all. To assert its ethical or existential relevance would be considered unacceptable. Surely, music is an aesthetic phenomenon in which any notions of morality or ethos are simply misplaced or even outright dangerous and threatening to stylistic plurality? Can Plato's understanding of music be applied in any meaningful to this phenomenon?

The difficulty in these questions is not in finding an answer to them, but in posing them in the first place: They presuppose that music can be considered independently from its process of

²⁷ Laches, 188d

creation. They presuppose that music is quite readily apprehended and referred to. However, are the making or performance of music and the reflection about music directed towards the same? Only if we somehow assume that there is an object, a work, perhaps which is in the one instance created or perhaps re-created and in the other reflected upon. However, the work in the first sense is quite clearly not the work in the second sense. We are dealing with two different modes of human existence – not two different attitudes to the same work or object. In making music we are not dealing with any object at all (only in reflection we are- but then we are talking about the second instance anyway). As performers or co-performers (ie audience) we are with and in the work itself. Music making is a mode of being in the world. The concrete practice and performance of music taken qua practice does not objectify music. It just simply makes it come into existence. In coming into existence music as the work receives its defined structure- formal, harmonic, melodic and rhythmic characteristics. These become characteristics of a musical object, which we recognise, understand somehow and even evaluate or refrain to evaluate. For our purpose it is irrelevant if the performance takes the form of actual external manifestation (sound) or is conducted in a process of inner hearing (imagination)

Music and Temporality

It appears that music has a peculiar, ambiguous ontological status due to its peculiar relationship with time. On the one hand we can see that music is in time. However, time is also in music- created by music and only experienced through the performance of music. Both perspectives, the immanent temporal and the external temporal perspective, appear to be irreconcilable from a theoretical perspective, yet in the phenomenon of music they become harmonised. Sound itself lives in the instant in order to disappear immediately. However in the peculiar definitions of melos and rhythmos music condensates into a solidified object in finite temporality. The musical work remains as a finite trace of music as "energeia"²⁸, as an infinitely fleeing process. Alexander von Humbold has described this phenomenon most beautifully in relationship to language:

"Language, grasped in its real essence, is something continual and passing on in every moment. Even its fixing by means of writing always preserves it only incompletely, like a mummy; writing stands in need again and again, of people's efforts to imagine from writing a living performance. Language itself is

²⁸ see also the 17th century philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder who identifies music as an "energetic art". (see: his Erstes kritisches Waeldchen)

no work (ergon) but an activity. Its true definition, therefore, can only be genetic."²⁹

Music, too requires living performance. It transcends finite temporality in a mysterious way when consciousness finds itself both enveloped by the infinity of the instant and confronted with the finitude of the work.

Philosophy and Temporality

Due to its peculiar, transitory nature Adam of Fulda calls music in the 15th century a "meditatio mortis", a meditation on death³⁰ - suggesting the parallel between the transitory character of music and life. Socrates suggests that "those who study philosophy aright study nothing but dying and being dead".³¹ A study of "dying and being dead" can not remain theoretical- it is practical in investigating life and caring for the "sound condition of the soul"³². In its love of wisdom the soul desires the "communion" with the "realm of the everlasting, the immortal and the changeless"³³. However, in its attention to the senses and the body, the soul remains grounded and is "dragged back" to the visible, finite world. The study of "dying and being dead" liberates the soul from its concerns for the everyday. Waking up to the dissonance between birth and death, between finite temporality of life and infinite temporality of the instant the soul feels compelled to search for the shared logos which harmonises its being and the opposing forces of life and death. The shared logos is the bios, the arch which harmonises and places in agreement the phenomena of coming into existence and ceasing to be. Where philosophy- through song or silence- cares for its condition it appears to be -indeed- "the greatest kind of music".

²⁹ Carl Dahlhaus, Esthetics of Music, (trans. W. Austin), Cambridge University Press: Cambridge: 1982, p.

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³⁰ Carl Dahlhaus, Esthetics of Music p. 11

³¹ Phaedo 64a

³² Phaedo 90e for the need to be in "sound condition"

³³ Phaedo 79d