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Music Builds Character

Aristotle, *Politics* VIII 5, 1340a14–b5

Abstract: This essay offers a new interpretation of Aristotle’s remarks on how music affects the character of its listeners (Pol. VIII 5, 1340a14–b5). I will argue that these remarks appear less cryptic if we remember that Aristotle’s conception of moral virtue regards emotions not just as motivational forces (which help or hinder us from doing the right things) but as constitutive of virtuous behaviour itself. The main advantage of this approach to *Politics* VIII 5 is that it fits the dialectical setting of the text, which is marked by a disagreement over the powers of music and by the attempt to rely on empirical observations.

Keywords: Aristotle, music, emotions, moral virtue, likenesses of characters

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The eighth book of Aristotle’s *Politics* contains an outline of the so-called ethos theory of music, which is, for several reasons, difficult to comprehend. The following paper is offering a contribution to the interpretation of this outline. It focuses on one crucial passage in *Politics* VIII 5 and develops a way to approach this passage that has not been sufficiently acknowledged so far.¹

1 Setting the stage

In the last chapters of *Politics* VIII, Aristotle deals with the question whether music should be part of education in the ideal state he has been projecting since the beginning of Book VII. Among the reasons speaking in favour of this measure is the assumption that music can help to shape the character of the

¹ An early precursor of this paper was presented at the University of Helsinki in October 2008. I thank all the participants of the PMP Research Seminar on Ancient Moral Psychology for their helpful comments and criticism. For remarks on a later draft, I am especially grateful to Klaus Corcilius and Rolf Geiger as well as to the anonymous referee for *APEIRON*.

young: music contributes to virtue.² In a famous passage in *Politics* VIII 5, Aristotle tries to show that this assumption is correct. He explains how music affects the character of those who listen to it:

And since it so happens that music is one of the pleasures, and virtue has to do with enjoying, loving, and hating in the right way, obviously one must learn and become accustomed to nothing so much as correctly judging and enjoying decent characters and noble actions. In rhythms and melodies there is the greatest likeness to the true natures of anger and gentleness, and also of courage and temperance, all of their opposites, and the other characters. This is obvious from the facts: we undergo a change in our souls when we listen to such things. Someone who is accustomed to feeling pain and pleasure in things that are likenesses is close to someone who reacts in the same manner to the true things. For example, if one enjoys contemplating the image of something for no other reason than the very shape of it, he will necessarily take pleasure in contemplating the thing itself whose image he is contemplating. It so happens, however, that other perceptible objects – those of touch and taste, for example – bear no likeness to characters, although there is a faint likeness in objects of sight. For there are figures of this sort, though few, and everyone shares in this kind of perception. Furthermore, they are not likenesses of characters; rather the figures and colours produced are signs of characters, and these signs depict the body experiencing the emotions. This is not to deny that in so far as there is a difference even in the contemplation of these things, the young must not contemplate the works of Pauson but rather of Polygnotos or any one else among the painters and the sculptors who deals with character. But in melodies themselves there are representations of characters – that is clear. For, to begin with, the nature of the *harmoniai* is divergent, and as a result listeners are put into different dispositions and do not have the same way of reacting to each of them. Their reaction to some (the one called Mixolydian, for example) is more mournful and grave; but to some others (the more relaxed *harmoniai*, for example) they react in a more tender-minded way; and towards another (namely the Dorian, the only one of the *harmoniai* thought to have this effect) they have an especially balanced and calm reaction; and the Phrygian puts them into a state of inspiration.³ (1340a14–b5; transl. Kraut 1997, modified)

2 The other reasons are: music is a noble way of spending leisure time (*diagōgē*), music contributes to amusement (*paidia*) and relaxation (*anapausis*) (VIII 3, 1337b27–33; VIII 5, 1339a11–26). Though the overall argument is intricate, it seems obvious that, on Aristotle's view, each of these reasons has something to speak in its favour (VIII 5, 1339b11–31).

3 ἐπεὶ δὲ συμβέβηκεν εἶναι τὴν μουσικὴν τῶν ἡδέων, τὴν δ' ἀρετὴν περὶ τὸ χαίρειν ὀρθῶς καὶ φιλεῖν καὶ μισεῖν, δεῖ δηλονότι μανθάνειν καὶ συνεθίζεσθαι μὴθὲν οὕτως ὡς τὸ κρίνειν ὀρθῶς καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς ἐπιεικέσιν ἤθεσι καὶ ταῖς καλαῖς πράξεσιν· ἔστι δὲ ὁμοιώματα μάλιστα παρὰ τὰς ἀληθινὰς φύσεις ἐν τοῖς ῥυθμοῖς καὶ τοῖς μέλεσιν ὀργῆς καὶ πραότητος, ἔτι δ' ἀνδρείας καὶ σωφροσύνης καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐναντίων τούτοις καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἡθῶν (δῆλον δὲ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων μεταβάλλομεν γὰρ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀκροώμενοι τοιοῦτων)· ὁ δ' ἐν τοῖς ὁμοίοις ἐθισμὸς τοῦ λυπεῖσθαι καὶ χαίρειν ἐγγύς ἐστι τῷ πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὸν αὐτὸν ἔχοντα τρόπον (οἷον εἴ τις χαίρει τὴν εἰκόνα τινὸς θεώμενος μὴ δ' ἄλλην αἰτίαν ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν μορφὴν αὐτὴν, ἀναγκαῖον τούτῳ καὶ αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου τὴν θεωρίαν, οὐ τὴν εἰκόνα θεωρεῖ, ἡδέϊαν εἶναι). συμβέβηκε δὲ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἐν μὲν τοῖς ἄλλοις μὴδὲν ὑπάρχειν ὁμοίωμα τοῖς ἤθεσιν, οἷον ἐν τοῖς ἀπτοῖς καὶ τοῖς γευστοῖς,

Aristotle's interpreters have shown an ambivalent attitude towards this passage (in the following: **T**).⁴ On the one hand, the text is considered important evidence for the ancient ethos theory of music: the claim that different kinds of music have different ethical qualities and can, in some way or other, create those qualities in the listeners. On the other hand, there are strong doubts concerning the possibility of reconstructing that theory, and also concerning the question whether **T** is really of help for this task. Why is that?

It is for two reasons. First, the argument in itself is elusive. Scholars have always been puzzled by the way in which the representation and the arousal of an emotion through music are intertwined in **T**;⁵ and they have been wondering what Aristotle could have meant by the claim that music contains likenesses of characters 'themselves' (a18–21). Second, the cultural and musical background to which **T**, as *Politics* VIII in general, refers is no longer available to us. We know comparatively little about the practice that underlies the idea of musical ethos and about the attempts, namely by Damon of Oa, to systematize this practice.⁶ This lack of knowledge is unfortunate because Aristotle seems to rely on those attempts. He claims to provide nothing but an outline, and he explicitly refers to music theorists (*mousikoi*) and philosophers 'experienced in musical education' for deeper insights (VIII 7, 1341b27–32).

ἀλλ' ἐν τοῖς ὁρατοῖς ἡρέμα (σχήματα γὰρ ἔστι τοιαῦτα, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ μικρόν, καὶ πάντες τῆς τοιαύτης αἰσθήσεως κοινωνοῦσιν· ἔτι δὲ οὐκ ἔστι ταῦτα ὁμοιώματα τῶν ἠθῶν, ἀλλὰ σημεῖα μᾶλλον τὰ γιγνόμενα σχήματα καὶ χρώματα τῶν ἠθῶν, καὶ ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τοῦ σώματος ἐν τοῖς πάθεισιν· οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' ὅσον διαφέρει καὶ περὶ τὴν τούτων θεωρίαν, δεῖ μὴ τὰ Παύσωνος θεωρεῖν τοὺς νέους, ἀλλὰ τὰ Πολυγυγτώου κἂν εἴ τις ἄλλος τῶν γραφῶν ἢ τῶν ἀγαματοποιῶν ἐστὶν ἠθικός), ἐν δὲ τοῖς μέλεσιν αὐτοῖς ἔστι μιμήματα τῶν ἠθῶν (καὶ τοῦτ' ἐστὶ φανερόν· εὐθύς γὰρ ἢ τῶν ἀρμονιῶν διέστηκε φύσις, ὥστε ἀκούοντας ἄλλως διατίθεσθαι καὶ μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν ἔχειν τρόπον πρὸς ἑκάστην αὐτῶν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς μὲν ἐνίας ὀδυρτικωτέρως καὶ συνεστηκότως μᾶλλον, οἷον πρὸς τὴν μίξολυδιστὶ καλουμένην, πρὸς δὲ τὰς μαλακωτέρως τὴν διάνοιαν, οἷον πρὸς τὰς ἀνεμμένας, μέσως δὲ καὶ καθεστηκότως μάλιστα πρὸς ἑτέραν, οἷον δοκεῖ ποιεῖν ἢ δωριστὶ μόνη τῶν ἀρμονιῶν, ἐνθουσιαστικούς δ' ἢ φρυγιστὶ.

⁴ For recent discussion on *Politics* VIII 5–7, and for a survey of the exegetical problems as well as the relevant literature, cf. Halliwell (2002), chs. 5 and 8; Ford (2004); Woerther (2008).

⁵ In short, Aristotle claims that music contains 'likenesses' (*homoiomata*) of characters and emotions, and argues for this claim, apparently, by referring to the fact that we feel certain emotions when listening to music. For an introduction to the problems that **T**, and the idea of music as *mimēsis* in general, raise for a philosophy of music, cf. Kivy (2001), ch. 1.

⁶ Cf. for a general introduction to the ethos theory of music: Anderson (1966); West (1992), esp. 246–53. The cultural practices which stand behind the idea that music has the power to shape our character are described by Lippman (1963). A collection of the relevant sources is provided by Barker (1984) and (1989). For a reconstruction of our knowledge about Damon of Oa, cf. Wallace (2004), esp. 257–67; and for the Greek modes, to which ethical qualities were above all ascribed, cf. Anderson (1966), 11–33; Mathiesen (1984); Barker (2007).

In the face of these difficulties, it seems natural to look for other sources that could help to gain a better understanding of **T**. In fact, there are several options. **T** can be, and has been, approached from different angles. (a) Some interpreters, for example, start from Aristotle's conception of *mimēsis* as developed in the *Poetics*. This suggests itself not only because **T** uses the vocabulary of *mimēsis*, but also because instrumental music is explicitly listed among the mimetic arts in *Poetics* 1 (1447a15).⁷ (b) Other interpreters take Aristotle's theory of sense perception as a background, for **T** distinguishes between works of art that depict visible and works of art that depict audible phenomena. This approach also matches the causal perspective that some lines of **T** seem to take.⁸ (c) Other interpreters again maintain that there is a technical sense of the term 'likeness' (*homoiōma*) which is to be gathered, for instance, from *de Interpretatione* 1 and which accounts for the asserted difference between true likenesses and mere signs of characters.⁹ (d) Finally, some interpreters start from Aristotle's theory of moral virtue and his moral psychology. Though education through music is not mentioned in the ethical writings, it is there that questions concerning the formation of character are in place.¹⁰

The interpretation I wish to propose follows (d) in that it relates **T** to Aristotle's conception of moral virtue. But this is neither to say that the other approaches are completely misguided, nor that (d) has been neglected. On the contrary: when reading *Politics* VIII 5, one of the first things that come to mind is to compare Aristotle's remarks on music and character formation with his general account of what the moral virtues are and how they are acquired. However, the insights arising from this perspective have not been sufficiently appreciated. There is a point to the perspective which is normally overlooked. In short, it is this: **T** appears less cryptic if we remember that Aristotle thinks of emotions (*pathē*) not primarily as motivational forces which help or hinder us from doing the right things, but considers a certain emotional reaction as constitutive of virtuous behaviour itself. It is by developing this idea that I will try to shed some new light on the text. Although my interpretation is in some way a supplement rather than an alternative to other interpretations – namely those that follow the approaches (a) to (c) – I will also

7 Furthermore, Aristotle describes rhythm (*rhuthmos*) and mode (*harmonia*) as two of the means by which *mimēsis* is generally accomplished (a18–28); and he claims that it is these means which account for the pleasure of tragic *logoi* (6, 1449b28–9). Cf. Halliwell (2002).

8 The approach draws on a passage in *Problems* XIX (919b26–37). Cf., e.g., Sörbom (1994); Anderson (1966), 111–16.

9 Cf. Pépin (1985).

10 Cf., e.g., the manifold references in Schütrumpf (2005), *ad loc.* Moreover, the *Nicomachean Ethics* ends, as is well known, with a request to treat now the subject of education, which is considered the natural task of an investigation into politics (X 9, 1181b12–23).

argue for its advantage. I will show that the approach is noncommittal in a respect in which Aristotle tries to be noncommittal, too.

The following interpretation of **T** will be preceded by a sketch of *Plato's* theory of music and education. This sketch will not only describe the background against which Aristotle develops his own account. It will also help us see what exactly is peculiar about the argument in **T** and how our interpretation can throw light on this peculiarity. Let me make some remarks on the comparison with Plato in advance.

It is widely accepted that Aristotle's account of education through music is influenced by Plato's treatment of the same subject in *Republic* II–III and *Laws* II and VII. Many interpreters even maintain that these accounts are essentially the same.¹¹ Be that as it may, it seems fair to say that Plato and Aristotle share at least the following basic idea which is also present in **T**.

Basic idea: The most important task of education is to shape the non-rational aspects of human behaviour and the non-rational part(s) of the human soul, respectively. The aim is, roughly, to achieve that people 'love and hate the right things'. Music can play a role here because music shows an impact on the non-rational part(s) of the human soul. In some way or other, music can 'make' us love or hate certain things.¹²

Particularly close are the parallels between *Politics* VIII 5 and *Laws* II, where the process of education and music's role within this process are tied to the concept of pleasure (*hēdonē*). Here, it is *qua* being pleasurable that music can help us to attain the state of loving and hating the right things.¹³

At the same time, it cannot be denied that Aristotle's account shows some differences to Plato's. Two of these differences, again to be noticed in **T**, are conspicuous. First, Aristotle ascribes the educational task to music in a narrow sense, a sense that is circumscribed by the terms *melos* ('melody', 'tune'), *harmonia* (usually rendered 'mode') and *rhuthmos* ('rhythm'). Plato, on the other hand, ascribes the educational task to music in a broad sense, a sense that includes text (*logos*) and different forms of bodily movement. (To mark this difference, I shall from now on use the term *mousikē* to denote music in a broad sense, and

¹¹ This view is held, e.g., by Anderson (1966), 146, and West (1992), 249. Woerther (2008), on the contrary, emphasizes the differences between the two authors' accounts (at 97–103).

¹² Cf. esp. *Leg.* II, 653b6–c4 (the speaker is the Athenian Stranger): '[T]he part of it [i.e., of goodness, virtue, P.B.] that is rightly trained in respect of pleasures and pains, so as to hate (*misein*) what ought to be hated, right from the beginning up to the very end, and to love (*stergein*) 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' (transl. Bury 1988).

¹³ Cf., e.g., *Leg.* II, 658e–660a; VII, 802c4–d6.

‘music’ to denote music in a narrow sense.) Second, Aristotle grounds his argument for the ‘basic idea’ on the observation that music is able to arouse emotions (1340a8–14). Plato makes this observation, too, but his attitude towards the emotional powers of music is a rather critical one. This holds especially for *Republic X*, where Plato argues that *sumpatheia*, the fact that the spectators of a stage play share the feelings of those they watch, spoils their souls: it is dangerous (605c–607a). (In the *Laws* the situation is somewhat different. We will come back to this point below.)

How can these differences be explained? One common way to explain them is by referring to the different starting points of the two philosophers. The argument of *Politics VIII* is, unlike that of the *Republic* or the *Laws*, motivated by a disagreement over the powers of music (1339a14–15). It seems reasonable to assume that this disagreement primarily concerns music in a narrow sense; and it seems reasonable on Aristotle’s part to start with the observable effects of music, so that he can proceed from common ground.¹⁴

To my view, there is some truth in this explanation, but if we content ourselves with it, we miss the interesting point. My claim is that even if there were agreement on the powers of music, **T** would not fit into a Platonic framework; and it would not fit because of a systematic divergence, namely, a divergence in the conception of moral virtue. The best way to explain Aristotle’s deviation from Plato is by referring to this conception. Having elaborated this explanation, we will see in which way **T** is connected to Aristotle’s theory of moral virtue.

The stage is set. In the following, I develop my interpretation by showing how Aristotle’s deviation from Plato is connected with a different conception of moral virtue. To reach this aim, it is necessary to compare the two accounts more thoroughly. So I shall begin with a sketch of Plato’s account, making clear what we can expect if we assume that Aristotle takes Plato as a model (2). A closer reading of **T** will then show why Aristotle does not meet these expectations and how he modifies Plato’s account. After explaining this modification in the indicated way (3), I will sketch what this approach tells us about the relationship between *Politics VIII* and *Nicomachean Ethics II* (4).

2 The Platonic frame

In what follows, I do not attempt to give a comprehensive account of Plato’s treatment of music and education. Instead, I confine myself to some features I

¹⁴ An explanation roughly along these lines is put forward by Anderson (1966), ch. 4.

take to be decisive for the comparison between Plato and Aristotle. The picture is thus reductive and simplified, but it reveals, I think, a crucial aspect of Plato's approach.¹⁵

Plato's theory of music and education (or, more precisely, that part of the theory we are interested in) is built on two basic assumptions. The first assumption is that music is *mimēsis*: in some sense or other music can be described as an 'imitation' of something. The second assumption is that music has strong psychological effects; it has an impact on the non-rational part(s) of the human soul.¹⁶ Large sections of the relevant argument in both the *Republic* and the *Laws* can be taken as an elaboration of these two basic assumptions. Let us have a look at both of them.

Music as 'imitation'

The idea that melodies, modes and rhythms are to be conceived as *mimēseis* ('imitations', literally) is developed within a wider framework. As mentioned above, Plato deals with *mousikē* in a broad sense, including text and different forms of bodily movement. In the *Republic*, the section on the musical education of the young guardians (II, 376c–III, 403c) is introduced by extensive remarks concerning the stories to be told (II, 376c–III, 392c) and the characters to be imitated, provided that the future guardians do participate in mimetic activity (III, 394d–398b; of course, only virtuous people should be imitated in their words and actions: 395b8–d1). It is only after these extensive remarks that Plato finally turns to rhythms and melodies, claiming that what has been said about the words can be applied to these dimensions of *mousikē*, too (398c1–d9). In a different but comparable manner, Plato's discussion of music and education in the *Laws* (Books II and VII) deals mainly with choral dancing (*chōreia*). Here, too, music in a narrow sense is treated as one element of an activity that com-

¹⁵ The picture is reductive because it picks out only one of the different roles that Plato assigns to music in his concept of education and his philosophy as a whole. For a comprehensive study, see Pelosi (2010). The picture is simplified because I put the aspect I am dealing with into two basic features, and I take for granted that there is no decisive difference between the *Republic* and the *Laws* in this respect. The assumption that the two dialogues do not differ essentially in their accounts of musical education is shared by a number of interpreters, including Pelosi (at 14), but it does not go undisputed; cf. once again Woerther (2008), at 94–7.

¹⁶ Note that by distinguishing these two assumptions I do not mean to deny that the imitative aspect of music and its psychological effect are closely connected in Plato's theory. They are, in fact, two aspects of one account.

prises different aspects and goes under the name of *mimēsis*; and again, music in a narrow sense is subordinated to the text.¹⁷

Concerning the understanding of Plato's concept of *mimēsis*, two points are usually considered important.¹⁸ First, *mimēsis* does not mean 'imitation' in the modern sense of providing a mere copy. It rather means 'representation', though – *nota bene* – representation in a wide and non-technical sense, designating what is common to acts of impersonation, image-making, reproduction, etc. Second, the activity of *mimēsis* should not be reduced to that of representing something. Strictly speaking, *mimēsis* is representation 'plus *x*', and there is no doubt that the interesting question goes 'what is *x*?' However, it can hardly be denied that representation in the wide and non-technical sense is one aspect of the Platonic concept of *mimēsis*. Since *mimēsis* is always *mimēsis of*, it always makes sense to ask what the object or content of a certain *mimēsis* is and what the different features of *mousikē* contribute to its representation (while taking into consideration that these questions do not cover the whole meaning of the term).

What, according to Plato, does music in a narrow sense contribute to the representation of an object? Normally, this question is answered in the following way. Just as virtuous people have to be represented in *what* they say, they have to be represented in *how* they say it. Therefore, full *mimēsis* includes an imitation of the 'tones' and 'accents', the speech-inflection and speech-rhythm, of a certain person's voice. To shape this aspect is music's contribution to the content of *mimēsis*.¹⁹ Assuming this answer is basically correct, we can say that on Plato's view

17 Cf., e.g., *Leg.* II, 660d–664d (what has to be told); II, 669b5–d2; VII, 802d8–e11 (music has to fit the text).

18 The literature on the topic of *mimēsis* is abundant, and there appears to be no agreement on how exactly this crucial notion is to be understood. In the following, I shall mainly draw on Halliwell (2002), Part I, and Janaway (1995), chs. 4–6. As is well known, the main problem lies in the fact that Plato uses the concept of *mimēsis* in apparently two different ways. In *Republic* III, *mimēsis* means something like (first-person) 'enactment' or 'impersonation', as opposed to (third-person) 'narration' (*diēgesis*: 392c–394c); whereas in *Republic* X, *mimēsis* rather stands for 'appearance-making' in general, which includes, e.g., the art of painting (595a–602b). Yet importantly, the two 'points' of *mimēsis* I am discussing in the following section can be observed in both contexts. Therefore, the question of whether and how *Republic* III and X might be integrated into one coherent picture can be put aside.

19 Cf. Lippman (1963), 196; West (1992), 248. The decisive passage in this context is *Republic* III, 399a5–b4 (the speaker is Socrates): 'I'm no expert on the *harmoniai*," I said, "but leave the one that would appropriately imitate (*prepontōs an mimēsaito*) the sounds (*phthongoi*) and accents (*prosōdīai*) of a man who is brave in deeds of war and in acting under pressure of any kind, and who, if he is faced with wounds or death or falls into another catastrophe, confronts his fate in all these situations with self-discipline and steadfastness. Keep another, too, which

music is (or should be) grounded in what is sometimes called a ‘pictorial representation’ of audible phenomena, namely, the speaking human voice.²⁰ That means, music does not represent by virtue of structural similarities, but by virtue of a ‘direct’ resemblance – melody springs from prosody. This assumption is for one thing supported by Plato’s critique of pure instrumental music.²¹ On a pictorial understanding of musical representation, it is in fact difficult to say whether any ‘worthy object’ is represented by musical instruments alone; and it comes as no surprise that Plato connects this kind of music with the imitation of animal noises. For another thing, the assumption fits with what Plato says about *orthotēs* in *Laws* II. Plato introduces the notion of *orthotēs* to provide a basis for normative judgements about *mimēseis*. *Mimēseis* must not be judged with reference to their appeal, they must be judged with reference to their ‘correctness’.²² Now, most interpreters agree that the notion of *orthotēs* should not be identified with, or reduced to, that of *verisimilitude*.²³ Just as *mimēsis* is more than representation, correct *mimēsis* is more than faithful representation. But the idea of ‘comparing’ a *mimēsis* with the object it represents in order to see whether or not this object is represented ‘correctly’ is at least part of the concept; and this part is in fact based on the idea of a resemblance between object and representation.²⁴ (Importantly,

will imitate those of a man engaged in peaceful activities, acting of his own will, not under pressure ...” (transl. Barker, modified); cf. also *Leg.* II, 654e9–655b8.

20 The topic of musical representation is intricate. For a concise introduction, see Robinson (1994); for the distinction between ‘pictorial’ and ‘structural’ representation, see Kivy (2002), ch. 10.

21 Cf. *Leg.* II, 669d6–670a3 (the speaker is the Athenian Stranger): ‘[A]nd further, the composers tear rhythm and posture away from melody, putting bare words into meters, setting melody and rhythm without words, and using the *kithara* and the *aulos* without the voice, a practice in which it is extremely difficult – since rhythm and *harmonia* occur with no words – to understand what is intended (*gignōskein hoti te bouletai*), and what worthwhile representation it is like. It is essential that we accept the principle that all such practices are utterly inartistic, if they are so enamoured of speed and precision and animal noises that they use the music of the *aulos* and the *kithara* for purposes other than the accompaniment of dance and song: the use of either by itself is characteristic of uncultured and vulgar showmanship’ (transl. Barker).

22 *Leg.* II, 667d5–668b7; cf., however, 658e6–659c5, where the Athenian Stranger concedes to *hoi polloi* that the pleasure of those who are highly educated and virtuous may serve as a criterion for the evaluation of *mousikē*.

23 Cf. Halliwell (2002), 138–47; Sier (2010), 146–8.

24 Cf., e.g., *Leg.* II, 667c9–d7: ‘(Ath.) Then how about the imitative arts (*technai eikastikai*) which produce likenesses? If they succeed in their productions, should not any concomitant pleasure which results therefrom be most properly called “charm” (*charis*)? (Cle.) Yes. (Ath.) But, speaking generally, the correctness (*orthotēs*) of these things would be the result not, primarily, of pleasure, but of equality (*isotēs*) in respect of both quality and quantity’ (transl. Bury); see also 668c4–e5.

there seems to be no difference on Plato's account between music and the other arts in this respect.²⁵)

The psychological effects of music

Let us now turn to Plato's account of the psychological effects of music. As already noted, the basic idea seems to be that education has to aim at making people love and hate the right things. This aim is related to the concept of *mimēsis* in the following way. What those to be educated have to develop *first* is an affective relationship ('love and hate') towards something which is presented to them by means of *mimēsis* ('the right things'), for example, towards certain forms of behaviour. Having acquired this relationship, they are either prepared for arguments justifying what has so far been merely represented (they will 'welcome the *logos*', as the *Republic* has it: III, 402a3–4), or they will behave in a certain way towards reality (as in the *Laws*, e.g., at I, 643c6–8). Music can help to attain this state because music has an impact on what we love and hate. But how does this work?

For a number of reasons, the answer to this question is rather difficult. First, Plato supplies nothing but a sketch. Especially in the *Republic*, he does not seem to be interested in the details of the explanation; and just like Aristotle he extensively refers to expert knowledge.²⁶ Second, also most notably in the *Republic*, Plato talks in a rather metaphorical way. Unfortunately, this also holds for the central passage Book III, 401d5–402a4, where it is claimed that 'rhythm and *harmonia* penetrate more deeply into the inner soul (*malista kata-duetai eis to entos tēs psuchēs*) than anything else does' and 'have the most powerful effect on it, since they bring gracefulness (*euschēmosunē*) with them'. Third, the psychological processes or mechanisms are spelled out differently, it appears, at different points of the argument;²⁷ and it is not easy to say whether

25 Cf. *Leg.* II, 669a7–b3 (the speaker is the Athenian Stranger): 'You are quite right. In regard, then, to every representation (*eikōn*) – whether in painting, music or any other art – must not the judicious critic possess these three requisites; he must know, in the first place, of what the representation is (*ho te esti*); secondly, how correct (*orthōs*); and thirdly, how well (*eu*) it has been executed in words and melodies and rhythms?' (transl. Bury, modified); see also *Resp.* III, 401a1–d4.

26 Cf. esp. the treatment of modes and rhythms in *Resp.* III, 398e1–400c6.

27 Here are some examples: (1) Sometimes, Plato talks about 'moulding' the soul in a rather literal sense. The soul is said to acquire a property (some kind of 'harmony' or 'movement', say) that is present in the music to which it is exposed. This idea can be detected already in the notion of grace (*euschēmosunē*) as it is used in *Republic* III, 401d5–402a4. For *euschēmosunē* (literally: 'fine shape') is a concept which is applicable to works of art as well as human

we are dealing with different aspects of one explanation or rather with different, more or less independent, approaches. In the present context, however, it is not necessary to go into this question, because here something else is important.

We said that Plato's account of music and education is based, first, on the claim that music is *mimēsis* in the sense of representation, and, second, on the claim that music has strong psychological effects. Now, obviously, Plato assumes a strong connection between these two claims. For it seems that properly understood the concept of *mimēsis* comprises the idea of representation as well as the idea of psychological impact,²⁸ and a similar link is offered by the concept of beauty (*kalon*), since the beautiful appears to be true as well as attractive.²⁹ Conceptually, however, the two claims are of course independent. To ask what a certain *mimēsis* represents and whether this representation is 'correct' or not is *not* the same as to ask in which way music affects our souls. And for the most part, these two questions can in fact be distinguished quite neatly.

Let us now take one further step and regard the two aspects as it were from an ethical perspective. From here, the distinction between music as representational and music as having a certain psychological effect mirrors a distinction between two different ethical issues: the issue of determining what the virtues are and what virtuous behaviour consists in (this is what can be told or shown or imitated) and the issue of developing an adequate moral psychology (this is what underlies the use of musical means for character formation). Then on a closer look from this perspective, it becomes clear that the separation of the two aspects can help us to mark an important step. By distinguishing content and correctness from psychological effect, we can see how Plato is diverging from an intellectualist account of virtue as it dominates his early dialogues, how the question of what X 'knows' or 'opines' is separated from the question of what motivates X to do something. Take, for example, Plato's thesis that courage, the

beings; and when Plato describes rhythm and mode in d8 as *pheronta tēn euschēmosunēn, kai poiei euschēmona*, he takes them as evoking a property that they themselves possess (for another example, cf. *Leg.* VII, 790c5–791b3). (2) At other points, Plato emphasizes the aesthetic aspects of music and develops the 'idea of a superimposition of ethical and aesthetic contents' (Pelosi 2010, 52). Here, the basic thought seems to be that love of virtue derives from, or is identical with, love of grace and beauty. For a thorough discussion of this educational strategy, cf. Richardson Lear (2006). (3) In the *Laws*, as already mentioned, it is the concept of pleasure that proves to be important. Broadly speaking, the psychological impact of music here is put down to the fact that singing and dancing are fun. See, e.g., I, 631e3–632b1; 636d5–7; 643b4–e6; II, 653c7–654a7; VII, 802c4–d7.

²⁸ That is one of the basic ideas in Halliwell's approach (2002, ch. 2); cf. Pelosi (2010), 53–4.

²⁹ Cf. Richardson Lear (2006), 107–12.

virtue of the guardians, can be defined as a true and stable opinion, as developed in *Republic* IV, 429c5–d1 (the speakers are Socrates and Glaucon):

“I mean that courage is a kind of preservation (*sōtēria*)”, I said. – “Preservation? Of what?” – “Of the opinion (*doxa*) formed by education, under the influence of law, about which things are to be feared. When I talked about its preservation in all situations, I meant keeping it intact, through pains, pleasures, desires and fears, without rejecting it.” (transl. Griffith in Ferrari 2000)

This passage, which here serves as a mere example, goes quite well with the two aspects of music mentioned above. In dealing with the role of music in education, we can ‘separate’, so to speak, the truth of the opinion from its stability. The content and correctness of *mimēsis* belong to the ‘true-opinion-side’ of the theory, while the psychological effects of music belong to the ‘stability-side’ – with the basic idea that this stability is, initially (*Republic*) or ever (*Laws*), not (only) provided by *justifying* the opinion, but (also) by making people *love* it.

The Platonic frame for the interpretation of **T** is now set up. It is constituted by a distinction between two aspects of music that play a role in Plato’s educational programme and by a correspondence we noticed between these two aspects and two different ethical issues. A crucial feature of that frame is that it is noncommittal with respect to the notion of musical ethos. It does not presuppose any musicological assumptions. Rather, it defines the conditions which have to be met if music is to play a role in education at all. If music (or *mousikē*) is to play that role, it has to be equipped to convey some content, and it has to show an influence on the non-rational part(s) of the human soul. Under the assumption that Aristotle basically follows the lines of Plato in *Politics* VIII 5, it seems natural to ask how **T** fits into this frame.

3 A closer look at T

Let us now take a closer look at **T**.

[i] And since it so happens that music is one of the pleasures, and virtue has to do with enjoying, loving, and hating in the right way, obviously one must learn and become accustomed to nothing so much as correctly judging³⁰ and enjoying decent characters and noble actions. (1340a14–18)

30 It is not easy to say how the brief reference to correct judgements (*krinein orthōs*) relates to the context of the present argument. Possibly, Aristotle merely wants to claim that ‘enjoying, loving, and hating in the right way’ includes enjoying, loving, and hating the right things,

Aristotle starts by claiming that music is pleasurable and that education means habituating the young to love and hate ‘in the right way’. As mentioned above, these claims remind us of *Laws* II, where the same pedagogic idea is presented: what has to be avoided in the first place is that people love or desire what is wrong.

Under the assumption that Aristotle follows the lines of Plato, we can say that passage [i] introduces the second of the two aspects we have distinguished above: music has strong psychological effects. It seems reasonable to expect Aristotle now to talk about the first aspect: about music as *mimēsis*, as (part of) a representation of those ‘right things’ to which we have to grow accustomed. On first glance, that is indeed what he does:

[ii.a] In rhythms and melodies there is the greatest likeness to the true natures of anger and gentleness, and also of courage and temperance, all of their opposites, and the other characters. [ii.b] This is obvious from the facts: we undergo a change in our souls when we listen to such things. [iii.a] Someone who is accustomed to feeling pain and pleasure in things that are likenesses is close to someone who reacts in the same manner to the true things. [iii.b] For example, if one enjoys contemplating the image of something for no other reason than the very shape of it, he will necessarily take pleasure in contemplating the thing itself whose image he is contemplating. (1340a18–28)

By claiming that music contains ‘likenesses’ or ‘images’ (*homoiōmata*), Aristotle introduces a concept that Plato himself uses when talking about *mimēseis*. A *mimēsis* can be conceived as a likeness of that very thing it is a *mimēsis* of.³¹ In [iii.a], Aristotle combines the two aspects (music as pleasurable and music as containing likenesses) and expresses, as it were, the very point of this educational strategy. If we are accustomed to feeling pleasure and pain *en tois homoiōis*, we are close to react in the same way *pros tēn alētheian*, that is, we are close to behaving virtuously, provided the *homoiōmata* are of the right things.

So far, Aristotle seems to meet our expectations. But if one compares these lines thoroughly to our sketch of Plato’s account, one notices some conspicuous differences.

First, it is explicitly rhythms and melodies, that is, aspects of music in a narrow sense, which are said to contain *homoiōmata*. The claim is emphasized: if one takes the ‘true natures’ as a standard (*para tas alēthinas phuseis*: ‘compared with the true natures’), it is rhythm and melodies that more than anything else (*malista*) contain these likenesses (cf. [ii.a]). Plato, as we have seen, considers music in a narrow sense as just one aspect of a representation that combines

which requires correct judgement in these matters. Since the point is not taken up in the following sections of **T**, we can set this question aside.

³¹ *Leg.* VII, 812c1–4; cf. also *Leg.* II, 667c9–e4, where Plato talks of *homoiotēs*.

many different features. What is more important, he is reluctant to ascribe to ‘music alone’ the capability to represent something beyond the noises of animals (see, once again, *Leg.* II, 669d6–670a3).

Second, music is said to contain *homoiōmata* of anger (*orgē*) and gentleness (*praotēs*), as well as of courage (*andreia*) and temperance (*sōphrosunē*) (cf. [ii. a]). While courage and temperance are virtues of character, and gentleness is sometimes labeled a virtue, sometimes an emotion,³² anger is no doubt an Aristotelian example for an emotion. So we have two kinds of examples, and the question arises whether there is some connection between them. Against the background of our Platonic frame, one may even wonder why Aristotle talks about emotions at all.

Third, that melodies and rhythms contain *homoiōmata* is not explained by pointing to some kind of resemblance between them and the things they are likenesses of (which would be the natural approach if one adheres to a pictorial conception of musical representation as Plato apparently does). Instead, it is explained by referring to some kind of causal effect (*metaballomen gar tēn psuchēn*). Here, in [ii.b], Aristotle is most probably talking about an immediate effect, because he claims that *while* listening to such things (*akroōmenoi*), our soul undergoes a change, not: *after* having listened to them again and again. The easiest way of reading passage [ii] is thus: that rhythm and melodies contain likenesses of emotions and virtues is obvious because we feel certain emotions while listening to music. (This is the bewildering combination of representation and arousal we have mentioned in section 1.)

Even if we follow Nelson Goodman in his famous claim that resemblance is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for representation,³³ it seems doubtful whether having a certain causal effect is an adequate criterion for calling something a ‘likeness’ of something else. (Just imagine two objects which have the same causal effects while having nothing in common that would suggest calling the one an ‘image’ or ‘likeness’ of the other.) What it is beyond doubt, though, is that this approach is totally different from Plato’s pictorial and straightforward account of musical *mimēsis*.

The apparent deviation from Plato is continued by the following lines:

[iv.a] It so happens, however, that other perceptible objects – those of touch and taste, for example – bear no likeness to characters, although there is a faint likeness in objects of sight. [iv.b] For there are figures of this sort, though few, and everyone shares in this

³² In *Nicomachean Ethics* IV 5, Aristotle conceives of gentleness as a virtue of character having to do with anger (1125b26); in *Rhetoric* II 3, he conceives of it as the emotional state opposed to anger (1380a6–9).

³³ Cf. Goodman ²1976, ch. 1.

kind of perception.³⁴ [iv.c] Furthermore, they are not likenesses of characters; rather the figures and colours produced are signs of characters, and these signs depict the body experiencing the emotions. [iv.d] This is not to deny that in so far as there is a difference even in the contemplation of these things, the young must not contemplate the works of Pauson but rather of Polygnotos or any one else among the painters and the sculptors who deals with character. (1340a28–38)

Instead of a distinction between correct and incorrect representations or imitations – that is the distinction we know from Plato³⁵ (cf. the remarks on *orthotēs* in section 2) – Aristotle now introduces a distinction between ‘signs’ (*sēmeia*) of characters, which are what the visual arts (at best) depict, and ‘likenesses’ of characters, which are to be found in music.³⁶

However this distinction is to be understood (we will come back to this point below), it would obviously not be in place within Plato’s scheme. We know that Plato ascribes to music a unique effect on the soul, but in terms of *mimēsis* (*qua* representation of something) there is in principle no difference between music and the other arts on his account. What is more: being aware of Plato’s pictorial conception of musical *mimēsis*, a conception that takes the speaking voice as its starting point, one may even wonder how this approach could ever go beyond what Aristotle would call depicting a *sign* of a character.

So it seems, on first view, that Aristotle does not differ from Plato by introducing a wider conception of musical representation (a conception not restricted to the imitation of audible phenomena, but allowing for ‘structural’ correspondence as well).³⁷ He rather differs from Plato by telling a causal story;

34 Some commentators suggest to emend the puzzling remark καὶ πάντες τῆς τοιαύτης αἰσθήσεως κοινωνοῦσιν (a31–2) to καὶ οὐ πάντες τῆς τοιαύτης αἰσθήσεως κοινωνοῦσιν, i.e., ‘and *not* everyone shares in this kind of perception’ (cf. Pépin 1985, 25, n. 6). The passage could then be taken as follows. As a matter of empirical fact, not everyone recognizes emotions when these are depicted by the visual arts (whereas, again as a matter of empirical fact, everyone feels certain emotions when listening to music). This reading has the advantage of fitting with Aristotle’s critical stance on the visual arts. However, it remains unclear what the objection really amounts to and how it relates to the overall argument of passages [iv] and [v].

35 As well as from *Poet.* 25.

36 Cf. the discussion by Halliwell (2002), 158–64.

37 Pace Halliwell (2002), 158–61, who takes passages [ii]–[iv] to indicate that Aristotelian mimetic likeness is ‘iconic’. It is no doubt true that Aristotle ‘considers music’s capacity to embody “likenesses of character” as a matter of *intrinsic* qualities of tone and rhythm, qualities that are “in” the sounds’ (160); but it is not at all clear whether he also claims that the listener *perceives* these likenesses (different kinds of kinetic correspondence, say), which would have to be the case if music were to ‘signify naturally’ (the listener has to know that what she perceives is a sign).

and, again on first view, it is not clear how this causal story fits into the frame of representation at all.

By identifying the signs of characters with the signs of certain emotions, [iv.c] follows the path of passage [ii] and strengthens the connection between emotion and virtue. This tendency is continued by the following lines:

[v.a] But in melodies themselves there are representations of characters – that is clear.
 [v.b] For, to begin with, the nature of the *harmoniai* is divergent, and as a result listeners are put into different dispositions and do not have the same way of reacting to each of them. [v.c] Their reaction to some (the one called Mixolydian, for example) is more mournful and grave; but to some others (the more relaxed *harmoniai*, for example) they react in a more tender-minded way; and towards another (namely the Dorian, the only one of the *harmoniai* thought to have this effect) they have an especially balanced and calm reaction; and the Phrygian puts them into a state of inspiration. (1340a38–b5)

That melodies themselves contain *mimēmata* of characters themselves is again shown by referring to an effect (cf. [v.b]) which is again, it seems, an emotional effect (cf. [v.c]) – though Aristotle admittedly does not use the common names of the emotions here. (Note, however, that in 1340a7–14 Aristotle refers to the emotional effects of music, including *enthousiasmos*, as a proof for the thesis that music has an effect on the character of the soul.)

After this closer look at **T**, we are now in a position to pin down Aristotle's deviation from Plato. Assuming, as we did, that passage [i] refers to *Laws* II and introduces the second of the two aspects we have distinguished in Plato's account (the psychological effect), what do we expect? We expect some remarks on the first aspect, that is, some remarks on music as representational. Then, what do we obtain? We obtain an argument that, while using the *vocabulary* of *mimēsis*, refers primarily to music's power to arouse emotions.

So, on first view, it seems that Aristotle intermingles the two aspects which we have kept apart and which are, as we said, at least conceptually independent. When he should be talking about music as representational, he is talking about music as having a certain psychological or causal effect. On a closer look, things are even more complicated. That music arouses emotions is taken as a proof for the thesis that music contains likenesses of these emotions (cf. [ii]); and that music contains likenesses of emotions is closely linked to, or even identified with, the thesis that music represents different characters.³⁸ Roughly,

³⁸ a19–20: the virtues are named together with the emotions; a22–3: Aristotle is obviously pointing to an emotional effect; a32–5: the signs of the virtues are conceived as changes that the body undergoes when someone is in a certain emotional state; a39 ff: the emotional effects

Aristotle seems to claim that by arousing certain emotions music represents certain characters, which is in fact quite far from what we know from Plato.

Aristotle's interpreters have offered a number of interesting accounts for this peculiarity. Broadly speaking, these accounts develop the idea that *T*, though in fact dealing with *mimēsis*, does not deal with (pictorial) representation. Pépin (1985), for example, focuses on Aristotle's use of the word *homoïōma* and emphasizes how wide the term is. On his interpretation, the term *homoïōma* stands for any correspondence (resemblance, similitude) holding between two different kinds of concepts or fields of experience. This correspondence can be the result of an imitation in the literal sense of the word, that is, it can be the result of a 'pictorial representation' – but it need not. Hence, it would be wrong to illustrate the idea of producing *homoïōmata* by the idea of drawing pictures: 'la notion d' ὁμοίωμα n'est partout réductible à celle d'image' (29). Woodruff (1992) argues that it is completely misleading to think of Aristotelian *mimēsis* in terms of representation. According to his account, *mimēsis* really is a matter of having a certain causal effect: 'Mimesis is the art of arranging for one thing to have an effect that properly belongs to another: *M* is a *mimema* of *O* just in case *M* has an effect that is proper to *O*. Mimesis is, in effect, an intervention in natural causal processes' (91). Halliwell (2002), while also holding that 'mimesis entails something like a kinetic or dynamic correspondence' (245), does not hesitate to call *mimēseis* representations. His account rather aims at showing how rich a concept *mimēsis* is: '[T]he *Politics*' discussion of music sets up a model of mimesis that is enactive in the double sense of positing both a representational tracing of emotion "in" the work (or performance) and, at the same time, the communication of that emotion to the audience' (161).

The approach I wish to suggest takes a different route. It lies off and, so to speak, 'before' the subtle questions of *mimēsis*.

Once again: the first impression is that when Aristotle is supposed to be talking about music as representational, he is talking about music as having a certain psychological effect. Now, what happens when we regard this impression from the ethical perspective we took at the end of section 2? (Remember: it was from this perspective that the separation seemed especially instructive.) In that case, the impression takes the form of a reproach. Aristotle, it seems, does not distinguish properly between two different ethical subjects. For when he purports to be talking about the 'content' of virtue or virtuous behaviour (what music or *mousikē* is supposed to represent), he is really talking about moral psychology, because he refers to music as arousing emotions.

of the modes are taken as a proof for the claim that in the tunes themselves there are *mimēmata* of the virtues.

Is that a just reproach? If we have a Platonic concept of virtue in mind, maybe. For Plato considers emotions primarily as *motivational forces*. His interest lies in the question of how to avoid that the emotions seize power and lead us to do the wrong things.³⁹ If we instead follow an Aristotelian concept of virtue, things start to look quite different. For in Aristotle's ethical theory, the emotions are indeed not, or not primarily, the subject of moral psychology; they are first of all part of the *definition* of virtue.

It is well known that Aristotle describes the virtues of character (*aretai êthikai*) as connected with appropriate emotional responses. The courageous is not someone who is totally fearless, but someone who fears 'in the right way'; the moderate is not 'insensible' but feels pleasure of a certain degree; and so on. Yet for Aristotle, the virtues of character are not only connected with emotional responses, they are also constituted by them.⁴⁰ That the courageous feel fear is part of the definition of courage (I simplify); it is a necessary condition for the ascription of a certain disposition of character.⁴¹ Accordingly, at least some of

39 In the present context there is no room to argue for this claim in greater detail. But the basic idea should be clear already if we take a brief look at the partition of the soul that underlies the *Republic's* account of the virtues (for a thorough interpretation of this partition, see Lorenz 2006, 1–73). According to this account, a human being is virtuous, and hence in a good condition, when all three parts of the soul, i.e., the rational (*logistikon*), spiritive (*thumoeides*) and appetitive (*epithumêtikon*) part, fulfil their proper functions (IV, 441d12–e2). This kind of fulfilment includes that the rational part *leads* and the non-rational parts *obey*, i.e., that there is no motivational conflict between the three of them (441e4–442b9; 442c11–d1). If one takes into account that among the specific attitudes that Plato ascribes to the non-rational parts of the soul are such typical emotions like anger (e.g., 440a5–6), one can see straight away how these emotions are integrated into a 'motivational perspective'. Particularly revealing in this context is Plato's critique of mimetic poetry in *Republic X*. For here, the main concern is obviously that the emotions could be strengthened in such a way that they are no longer controllable and take the lead (603b–607a; cf. also the above quoted definition of courage, where the emotion of fear is named along with, e.g., pleasure as one of the influences that could lead to a 'loss' of the right opinions: IV, 429c5–d1). Now, many interpreters, the most influential being M. Nussbaum (1986), chs. 5–7, maintain that Plato's attitude towards the emotions changes after the *Republic*, i.e., that he takes them in some way or other more 'seriously'. This change, however – if there is any – need not imply that Plato no longer regards the emotions as motivational forces. This is indicated already by the famous similes of the carriage pulled by two different horses (*Phdr.* 246a–257b) and the puppet pulled by different strings (*Leg.* I, 644d7–645c6). For a short overview of Plato's theory of the emotions, see Knuuttila (2004), 5–24.

40 Halliwell (2002), 159, mentions this aspect but does not make use of it in his interpretation of T.

41 This characterization of the Aristotelian position is a simplification for two reasons. First, there appear to be some virtues of character which are not individuated by the emotions they are connected with, but rather by the kind of action they refer to, as, e.g., the virtue of 'openhandedness' (*eleutheriotês*) which has to do with the giving and taking of money (*EN* IV 1).

the virtues are also differentiated by the emotions they are connected with. Distinguishing different emotions is a means of distinguishing different virtues. The crucial point now is that none of these observations do include any assertion concerning moral psychology. The question, for example, how Aristotle would describe the role emotions play in virtuous action is independent of the definitional aspects we have been talking about. It belongs to a different level or type of investigation.

So, in essence, my suggestion is that when mentioning emotions, **T** refers to an aspect within the definition of moral virtue. It is constitutive of courage (part of what courage or courageous behaviour *is*) that the courageous *feel fear*, and it is constitutive of moderation (part of what moderation or moderate behaviour *is*) that the moderate *feel pleasure*. Under these conditions, I think, it comes as much less of a surprise that in *Politics* VIII 5 Aristotle connects the arousal of an *emotion* with the representation of a *virtue* (we will come back to this point below).

The difference to which I trace back Aristotle's deviation from Plato is hence that for Aristotle the emotions belong to the 'content' of moral virtue or virtuous behaviour, whereas for Plato they belong to its psychology. To illustrate this difference, it is useful to take a look at how the *Laws* deal with the subject of the emotions. In section 1, I claimed that Plato's attitude towards this subject has changed. In the *Republic*, his stance appears to be unconditionally critical. *Republic* X explicitly warns about the dangers of *sumpatheia* and takes this as a reason to expel the poets. In *Laws* I, however, Plato sketches how a deliberate arousal of emotions could serve the aims of education in a more positive way (646a–650b).⁴² Now, importantly, the basic idea of this sketch is that of an 'emotional training'. Inducing fear (*phobos*) is useful, because being familiar with that emotion, we can more easily defeat it in situations of danger. Inducing shame (*aischunē*, a fear of a different kind according to Plato: 646e3–647a1) is useful, because shame keeps us from doing what is ignoble. So, again, the emotions are treated as forces that either help or hinder us from doing the right things. In an Aristotelian framework, however, a person who is able to defeat her fears would not possess courage, but 'self-control' (*enkrateia*); for it is only the self-controlled who *has to* defeat her non-rational desires in the first place

Second, in those cases in which the virtues are in fact individuated by the emotions they are connected with (e.g., courage), it would nevertheless be wrong to *reduce* virtuous behaviour to an emotional response. For, of course, a virtue of character also includes the disposition to *act* in a certain way (cf., e.g., *EN* II 6, 1106b16–27). We will come back to this point in section 4 below.

⁴² Note that Plato is here talking about emotions induced by the consumption of alcohol. An interesting discussion of the subject is offered by Belfiore (1986).

(*EN VII 2*, 1146a9–12): the desires and emotions of a virtuous person are, by definition, of the right degree.⁴³

On the basis of a first impression, we accused Aristotle of not properly distinguishing between questions concerning the ‘content’ of virtuous behaviour and questions concerning its psychology. Now it has turned out that this accusation is unwarranted; and drawing on our ethical perspective, it seems more adequate to describe Aristotle’s deviation from Plato in a quite different way. Just as Plato in the *Laws*, Aristotle starts with the claim that music is pleasurable and that being virtuous means feeling pleasure and pain correctly; but he defines the *object* in which we take pleasure or pain when listening to music differently. For Aristotle, this object is an emotion.⁴⁴ We can now draw two conclusions.

First conclusion

In the first section of this paper I mentioned a view according to which the differences between Plato and Aristotle are due to their different starting points. Unlike Plato, Aristotle recognizes a disagreement over the powers of music. Therefore, he tries to ground the argument on the observable effects of music, like the effect that music arouses emotions. Apart from that, so it is held, his account is just the same as Plato’s.

I said there is some truth to this view. Aristotle in fact argues on an empirical basis,⁴⁵ and he in fact takes over the ‘basic idea’ of Plato’s account as expressed in the *Laws*. However, I claimed, the view misses the interesting point,

⁴³ Note that Plato himself characterizes the good man as self-controlled in *Laws I*, 644b6–7. Another illustrative passage in this context is *Nicomachean Ethics II 3*, where Aristotle discusses the different connections between pleasure or pain and virtue. Here, he explicitly distinguishes between pleasure as a motivational force and pleasure as accompanying the emotions the virtues of character are concerned with: ‘For virtue of character has to do with pleasures and pains: it is because of pleasure that we do bad things, and because of pain that we hold back from doing fine things. ... Again, if the virtues have to do with actions and emotions, and every emotion and every action is accompanied by pleasure and pain, this will be another reason (*kai dia touto*) for thinking that virtue has to do with pleasures and pains’ (1104b8–16; transl. Rowe in Broadie and Rowe 2002, modified). As the text makes clear, Aristotle claims to be talking about two *different* reasons for the assumption that virtue of character has to do with pleasure and pain.

⁴⁴ In this respect, **T** is, interestingly, closer to *Republic X*, i.e., to Plato’s *critique* of the mimetic arts, than to *Republic II–III* where Plato’s stance on *mimēsis* is more affirmative.

⁴⁵ An illustrative example is *Politics VIII 5*, 1340a5–14, where Aristotle refers to the ‘inspiration’ (*enthousiasmos*) of the soul which is aroused by the melodies of the legendary *aulos*-player Olympus.

and now we can see why this is the case. To underpin Plato's account empirically, it seems appropriate to emphasize the fact that music is pleasurable, since this is the effect the account explicitly refers to. Pleasure is the psychological basis of *Laws* II. Whereas it is hard to say how the empirical fact that music arouses emotions could supply essential support to the argument of *Laws* II; and if we take *Republic* X seriously, it seems even problematic to bring this effect of music into play. But if we combine the *Laws*' account of how music influences character with an Aristotelian conception of moral virtue – which is in short what I have suggested here – things look different. For in that case the virtues of character are defined as appropriate emotional responses; and to that version of the account the empirical fact that music arouses emotions does supply essential support. So there is much more to Aristotle's deviation from Plato than the common view assumes.

Second conclusion

In the first section of this paper, I announced that my interpretation takes a certain perspective: it reads **T** against the background of Aristotle's conception of moral virtue; and I said that there is a point to this perspective which is normally overlooked. This point is now easy to be grasped.

If my interpretation is correct, then Aristotle's theory of moral virtue *itself* provides a rationale for the perplexing idea that the arousal of an *emotion* can be connected with the representation of a *virtue*, because in that theory the virtues of character are identified with emotional responses. This rationale, to be sure, does not account for everything. Neither does it account for the distinction Aristotle draws between signs and likenesses of characters, nor for the connection he draws between causal reaction and representation.⁴⁶ This is why I take my approach to be a *supplement* to the approaches mentioned in section 1. However, the rationale deserves more attention than might be presumed in the

⁴⁶ That is, it does not account for the use of mimetic vocabulary. Yet the following parenthetical remark seems to me to be in order. In his ethical writings, Aristotle objects against a mere 'outward resemblance' when he distinguishes between (a) doing *what* the virtuous person does and (b) doing something *in the way* the virtuous person does it (cf. *EN* II 4, 1105b5–10). It might be that the distinction between signs and likenesses of characters expresses a similar concern. Aristotle's thesis would then be that, strictly speaking, there is no way of 'outwardly representing' someone who is virtuous as opposed to someone who is, e.g., merely self-controlled or just fortunate (cf. also the conspicuous expression in *Pol.* VIII 5, 1340a23: *en tois homoiois*, i.e., 'in the likenesses', instead of *pros ta homoia*, i.e., 'in relation to likenesses'). In that case, there would be an ethical argument for the idea that the representation of a virtue is to be connected with some kind of inner process.

first place, for it perfectly fits the dialectical setting of **T**. The rest of this section is devoted to expounding what is meant by this.

The dialectical setting of **T** may be characterized by two important features. First, in *Politics* VIII Aristotle does not develop anything as ambitious as Plato's *chōreia*. His main concern is whether children should learn to play a musical instrument;⁴⁷ and it is for that reason already that **T** focuses on music in a narrow sense. Second, as we have said, the argument of *Politics* VIII is motivated by a disagreement over the powers of music.⁴⁸ Therefore, Aristotle refers primarily to music's observable effects, and it is to be expected that he avoids dependence on controversial claims.

Let us now assume, in a kind of thought experiment, that Aristotle takes over the 'basic idea' from Plato, and that being pleasurable and arousing emotions are the *only* observable effects of music: how far can we get on this basis? Within a Platonic framework, the answer is: not very far. We would be either compelled to expand our basis by adding elements like a text, since music alone does not represent in the required way. Or we would be compelled to reduce music's role in education to some kind of emotional training, which reminds us of *Laws* I but is not what **T** suggests. Whereas within an Aristotelian framework we get much further. Here, what we have is basically what we need: emotion and pleasure mark a 'content' and the affective relationship that has to be gained towards it. There is neither need to add further elements, nor to enter the intricate discussion on whether instrumental music is representational in a more ambitious sense. Hence, the approach fits the dialectical setting of **T** because it makes use of, and gets by on, the very elements the passage offers. The interpretation is, as I said above, noncommittal in a way in which Aristotle tries to be noncommittal, too.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Politics* VIII 6 where Aristotle deals with the question whether the young should participate in musical performances or merely listen to them. Though it is true that Aristotle speaks of singing (*adein*) as well as 'playing' (*cheirourgein*: 1340b20–1) here, his major concern is to specify which musical instruments are appropriate for the education of the young (1341a17–b8). Moreover, as we have already seen, Aristotle's definition of *mousikē* does not mention *logoi* but only elements of music in a narrow sense.

⁴⁸ There are two, unfortunately post-Aristotelian, sources for this disagreement at our disposal: (i) the so-called 'Hibeh-Papyrus on music', dating from the third century BC and briefly attacking the notion of musical ethos in general (Barker 1984, 183–5); (ii) the fragments of the treatise *On Music* by the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus of Gadara (first century BC; cf. the discussion by Halliwell 2002, 249–56) who rejects 'the principle that music can affect and change the psyche for good or bad and, in particular, that it can do so by expressing and transmitting qualities of "character" (*ēthos*) or the emotions associated with them. Not surprisingly, therefore, he [Philodemus] repudiates the whole idea that music is a mimetic art, one that can incorporate "likenesses" ' (Halliwell, at 250). Cf. also Anderson (1966), ch. 5.

Let me push this point a little further. If we approach **T** as it were from the perspective of *mimēsis*, the gap to be bridged by the interpretation appears to be rather wide, because we would have to explain, first, how an emotion can be the representational content of a *mimēsis* and, second, how the arousal of an emotion relates to its representation. If we instead approach **T** as it were from an ethical perspective, bearing in mind that Aristotle identifies the virtues of character with emotional responses, the gap appears to be, if not totally closed, at least much narrower. For now the question is rather ‘How can we achieve that the young take pleasure in certain emotional responses?’, and the answer is provided by the two observable effects of music Aristotle is mentioning in **T**: ‘We can achieve it by arousing both emotions and pleasure through the means of music.’⁴⁹

The idea that emotion and pleasure are ‘all we need’ can be developed even further when we take a closer look at Aristotle’s procedure in the *Ethics*. Just like Plato, Aristotle holds, and takes as self-evident, that virtuous action is always right or correct (*orthos*). Furthermore, he claims that the virtuous person has not only true opinions, but acts from knowledge (cf. *EN* II 4, 1105a31). Yet, when defining the virtues of character in *Nicomachean Ethics* II, Aristotle puts this aspect into the phrase ‘to act in accordance with the *orthos logos*’ (II 2, 1103b32) and postpones its discussion to a later part of the investigation, namely, Book VI. The ‘right things to do’ are in fact not in focus when Aristotle develops his theory of moral virtue. Moreover, Aristotle thinks it legitimate to identify the correct emotional response with an emotional *degree*, with a mean (*mesotēs*) between excess and deficiency (*EN* II 6, esp. 1106a26–b35). Although he makes clear that this scheme is not the whole story, he uses it throughout his account of the different virtues of character (*EN* III 6–V). Now, the idea that a virtue of character can be defined as a disposition to an emotional response which is neither excessive nor deficient is, to be sure, difficult to understand; and its interpretation is still a matter of debate.⁵⁰ But it seems fair to say – and this is the interesting point in the present context – that whatever can make us accept this idea can help us to accept the related idea that different emotions

⁴⁹ An additional argument could possibly be drawn from the fact that Aristotle sees pleasure and pain as concomitants of certain processes (i.e., comings to be: *genesis*) or activities (*energeiai*; cf. *EN* VII 12, 1152b33–1153a17; X 3, 1173a29–b20). To take pleasure in, say, a perceivable object is to take pleasure in the activity of perceiving that object (*EN* X 4, 1174b14–23). Accordingly, to take pleasure in an emotional reaction could be conceived as taking pleasure in whatever process or activity the feeling of that emotion consists in. This, at least, seems to be the ‘natural’ way in which an emotion can become the intentional object of pleasure or pain.

⁵⁰ Cf. for a recent discussion of that topic, Rapp (2006).

‘represent’ different character traits. This is the upshot of the ethical perspective on **T**.

There is now one loose end left to be taken up. It is the claim that the suggested approach tells us something about the relation between *Politics* VIII 5 and *Nicomachean Ethics* II. This claim shall be addressed in the final section.

4 On the relation between *Politics* VIII 5 and *Nicomachean Ethics* II

So far, I have tried to show how Aristotle’s theses about music and character and his deviation from Plato relate to his account of moral virtue. This account helps us to understand why Aristotle can connect the arousal of an emotion with the representation of a character in a way not open to Plato. The fact, however, that this approach fits **T** better than other approaches do does not mean that it entails no problems of its own. This holds especially if one assumes that Aristotle is *reducing* characters to emotions in *Politics* VIII 5, and if one takes seriously that he is focusing on music in a narrow sense only. These apparent features of the argument are difficult to be squared with his theory of the moral virtues in the *Ethics*. Let me point out two aspects of this theory.

(1) According to the *Ethics*, a moral virtue is not characterized by any emotional response whatsoever, but only by the *appropriate* one. Whether an emotional response is appropriate depends on a variety of factors which Aristotle usually summarizes by the term ‘as one should’ (*hōs dei*). These factors describe, so to speak, the situation someone is in, when they are reacting in a certain way (cf. *EN* II 6, 1106b18–23). Hence, Aristotle claims: ‘to be affected when one should, at the things one should, in relation to the people one should, for the reasons one should, ... is best’ (b21–2). All this holds notwithstanding the fact that Aristotle identifies the appropriate emotional response with an emotional degree.

(2) According to the *Ethics*, moral virtues are characterized by emotional responses, but they cannot be reduced to them. This is not only because moral virtues are dispositions (*hexeis*) instead of affections (*pathē*: *EN* II 5). It is also, and mainly, because they include certain forms of behaviour or action.⁵¹ Interestingly, these forms of behaviour play a decisive role in the educational programme of the *Ethics*:

⁵¹ Aristotle repeatedly states that virtue of character has to do with emotions (*pathē*) as well as actions (*praxeis*; e.g., *EN* II 6, 1106b24–5; III 1, 1109b30).

[W]hereas we acquire the virtues of character through having first engaged in the activities, as is also the case with the various sorts of expert knowledge (*technai*) – for the way we learn the things we should do, knowing how to do them, is by doing them. For example people become builders by building, and cithara-players by playing the cithara; so too, then, we become just by doing just things, moderate by doing moderate things, and courageous by doing courageous things. (*EN* II 1, 1103a31–b2; transl. Rowe, modified)

Now, on a Platonic account of education, these two features of the theory could easily be covered by the wide conception of *mousikē*, that is, by the conception that includes texts and bodily movements. The aspects of the situation which determine the appropriateness of an emotional response could be *told* or *shown*; and the activities which have to be repeated again and again to establish the disposition could be *imitated*, either by some kind of dance (cf. *Leg.* II), or within a stage play (cf. *Resp.* III). Then, how can these features be covered by music in a narrow sense, by rhythms and melodies alone, even if they are played or sung by the children themselves?⁵² It seems that by excluding *logoi*, Aristotle neglects the cognitive aspects of the virtues of character (and perhaps also of the emotions); and by excluding dances or stage plays, he neglects the role that repeated action plays for the acquisition of these virtues.

T is problematic, therefore, if we assume that the passage tells the whole story, that listening to the right tunes, or maybe playing them on a musical instrument, ‘automatically’ leads to virtue. This view can hardly be squared with Aristotle’s remarks on education in the *Ethics*. How can we deal with this problem?

One way of dealing with it would be to argue that **T** does indeed not contain the whole story. One could, for example, (a) try to show that in the wider context of Book VIII, Aristotle is talking about music in a broad sense (*mousikē*), which would bring the argument closer to Plato’s account in *Laws* II. This reading is proposed by a number of scholars, but its evidence is at best controversial.⁵³ Or one could (b) try to show that Aristotle conceives listening to music as

⁵² As a third problem, one might add that emotions themselves are complex phenomena according to Aristotle. They combine someone’s feeling pleasure or pain with their having certain opinions and their undergoing certain bodily changes (*Rh.* II 1, 1378a19–21). Since different emotions are distinguished primarily by the judgements they are connected with (as is evident from Aristotle’s treatment of the emotions in *Rhetoric* II 1–11), one may wonder how music in a narrow sense could ever arouse different emotions without evoking certain beliefs in the listeners. For a short overview of Aristotle’s theory of the emotions, see Knuuttila (2004), 24–47.

⁵³ The view is summarized, and criticized, by Ford (2004). A crucial passage in this context is VIII 5, 1340a12–14, where Aristotle, somehow unexpectedly, talks about the emotional effects of *words without music*: ἔτι δὲ ἀκροώμενοι τῶν μιμήσεων γίνονται πάντες συμπάθεις, καὶ χωρὶς τῶν ῥυθμῶν καὶ τῶν μελῶν αὐτῶν. ‘Furthermore, everyone who listens to *mimēseis* comes to

some kind of ‘emotional training’ (as in *Laws* I) which is either accompanied by verbal instructions (cf. 1341a25) or precedes the confrontation with ‘real situations’ (cf. 1340b15–17).⁵⁴ In that case, music would, so to speak, only cover the emotional dimension of virtue, which would bring *Politics* VIII closer to the *Ethics*. This latter view, although attractive, is somehow speculative, because the text does not explicitly treat those other dimensions of education; and in the corresponding passages of the *Ethics*, music plays no role at all. Furthermore, the suggestion obscures the fact that Aristotle seems to identify the arousal of an emotion with the representation of a character, which we have described as the decisive difference between *Laws* I and *Politics* VIII 5.⁵⁵

Another way of dealing with the tensions between Aristotle’s remarks on music and character in *Politics* VIII 5 and the educational programme of the *Ethics* is (c) to stress the differences between the two arguments. This is the way I prefer.

Of course, it is legitimate to ask whether the two treatises go together or not. It is legitimate to ask whether listening to music is some kind of preparation, or some kind of complement, or perhaps even a substitute for the repeated actions

have similar emotions, even apart from the rhythms and melodies of those *mimēseis*’ (transl. Kraut, modified). Ford (at 320–5) presents a number of arguments that speak in favour of the following emendation suggested by Susemihl: καὶ χωρὶς τῶν λόγων διὰ τῶν ῥυθμῶν καὶ τῶν μελῶν αὐτῶν. The passage would then state that we are affected by the rhythms and melodies of *mimēseis* even *apart from the words*. Though I agree with Ford that it would be wrong to read too much into these lines (e.g., to regard them as connecting *Politics* VIII intimately with the *Poetics*), I am not sure whether it is really necessary to emend a13 in the suggested way. Rather, I would follow an interpretation indicated by Pépin (1985), 22, which treats a12–14 as a kind of preparation for T: If we listen to *mimēseis*, we are affected by the words already (a12–14), but we are even more affected by music (T).

54 VIII 6, 1341a24–5 (arguing that the *aulos* is not suited for education): ‘And let us add that it also counts against the *aulos* as an instrument of education that playing the *aulos* prevents from speaking’ (transl. Kraut, modified). Unfortunately, the status of this assertion is rather unclear because it is not said *who* is prevented from saying *what*. VIII 5, 1340b14–17: ‘And the teaching of music is appropriate to their nature at this stage of life. For because of their age the young do not willingly put up with anything unsweetened with pleasure, and music by nature is one of the sweeteners’ (transl. Kraut). This passage can be taken as implying that when they grow older, the young will be confronted with ‘unsweetened reality’.

55 What about the ‘third problem’ we mentioned in n. 52? This problem is that Aristotle connects the emotional effects of music with the different modes and at the same implies that the modes themselves are distinguished by purely musical factors. So it seems difficult to explain the emotional effects of music while sticking to an Aristotelian (partly ‘cognitive’) theory of the emotions. Such an explanation, however, is not what Aristotle is trying to provide in *Politics* VIII 5. He just states that the modes have these different effects and emphasizes the empirical character of his argument (1340b5–7).

that *Nicomachean Ethics* II is talking about. In a way, it is even self-suggesting to raise this question, because Aristotle uses the same pedagogic idea here and there: education means habituating the young to take pleasure and pain in the right things (*EN* II 3, 1104b11–12). Despite this undeniable similarity, however, one should not forget that *Nicomachean Ethics* II and *Politics* VIII 5 are dealing with different questions. In the *Ethics*, Aristotle tries to explain how virtues of character, as opposed to intellectual virtues, are acquired. In this context, he is especially interested in the relationship between actions and dispositions, and he takes the technical skills (*technai*) as a model to explain this relationship.⁵⁶ In the eighth book of the *Politics*, Aristotle asks whether certain studies which are part of the usual *curriculum* of his days should also be taught in the ideal state he is projecting. With reference to music, this question can be put as: Should the children of an ideal state learn to play a musical instrument, or is this a superfluous, maybe even an ignoble activity?⁵⁷

So, strictly speaking, we have no reason to expect *Nicomachean Ethics* II to talk about ordinary ‘school subjects’. (By the way, Plato does not do this, either. Instead, he is developing a rather ambitious educational programme; and perhaps it would be more adequate to compare this programme with *Nicomachean Ethics* II than with *Politics* VIII.) Nor do we have reason to expect *Politics* VIII 5 to give a full account of how the virtues of character are acquired (although Plato’s treatment of music and education is embedded into such an account). What we may expect is an answer to the question whether playing a musical instrument might contribute to the acquisition of these virtues. Let us take a final look at passage [iii] to conclude this argument:

Someone who is accustomed to feeling pain and pleasure in things that are likenesses is close to someone who reacts in the same manner to the true things. For example, if one enjoys contemplating the image of something for no other reason than the very shape of it, he will necessarily take pleasure in contemplating the thing itself whose image he is contemplating.

It is true that the idea expressed in this passage is reminiscent of *Nicomachean Ethics* II 3, 1104b11–12 (we must take pleasure and pain in the right things). But it is put in a way that allows us to adapt it to many different approaches. Anything that turns out to be a likeness of a character, and that is something in which we take pleasure or pain, can be employed as a means of education (cf. [iii.b], and [iv.d]). This might hold for certain works of art as well as for certain

⁵⁶ Cf., e.g., *EN* II 1, 1103a31–b25; II 4; II 6, 1106b8–16.

⁵⁷ Cf. once again *Politics* VIII 6, esp. 1340b33–1341a17, where Aristotle talks about the aims and *limits* of musical education (in the sense of learning to play a musical instrument).

forms of behaviour or for whatever else. So passage [iii] turns the focus towards the question of *what* can be conceived as a likeness of a character; and when Aristotle claims that music contains these likenesses, he neither needs to claim that nothing else is containing these likenesses or is containing them at a higher degree (although this might in fact be what he claims), nor needs he to claim that listening to music is sufficient or even necessary to establish the kind of disposition the *Ethics* is talking about. For the only thing he wants to claim is that music has an influence on our character; and insofar as it shows this influence, it is reasonable to make music part of education in an ideal state.⁵⁸

So my suggestion is to drop the search for a direct connection between Aristotle's remarks on music and character in *Politics* VIII and his educational programme in the *Ethics*. For if we try to combine these passages to an alleged 'Aristotelian account of education', we might miss the decisive point of **T**: the claim that rhythms and melodies contain likenesses of characters. As I have tried to show, it is this claim that should be explained by referring to Aristotle's ethical theory.

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⁵⁸ Perhaps we can elucidate the difference in the following way. When Aristotle talks about repeated activities in *Nicomachean Ethics* II, he is dealing with a respect in which virtues are similar to technical skills. Virtues of character are not sciences (*epistēmai*), they are rather like *technai*. Whereas when Aristotle talks about taking pleasure in something in *Politics* VIII, he is dealing with a respect in which virtues are different from technical skills. For a *technē*, it does not matter whether something is done with pleasure or not.

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