



## PLATO'S IDEA OF MUSIC IN EDUCATION FOR INCULCATING MORAL VALUES

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of this study is to explore the reasons why Plato places importance on music in education and how Plato believes music, education, and morality are connected. Plato is one of the greatest philosophers in history. The principal concern of all of his theories is to establish justice in the state. To build justice, Plato advocates for proper education. Education can develop values like wisdom, courage, goodness, solidarity, harmony in the mind of the individual. The result of this study shows that music in education, according to Plato can inculcate the values deep within the soul. The early childhood, in particular, is Plato's priority for music in education. Because music has rhythm and sound which soften the minds of the children. As the children are imitative, they assimilate the music subconsciously and it gradually develops moral values. Plato warns at the same time, of the negative aspects of music. The music which does not convey morality, ethics, harms the child's soul. As aftermath, Plato suggests state supervision over the music.

**Keywords:** Plato, music, education, morality, values

### **1. Background**

Plato is acknowledged as one of the greatest philosophers of all time. His works are so influential across the world that western philosophy and western civilization are deeply indebted to his teaching. While a thousand-year-old philosopher, his philosophy is still important and brilliant in scientific terms. Even today the world's academics recognize his contribution to almost every field of academic discipline (Burgin, 2018).

Plato used to deliver lectures at Academy, founded by him. The class took notes from his lectures. But these lectures were not documented in any printed form whatsoever. What scholars have been studying on Plato to date can be called his popular

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reading (Copleston, 1946). The philosophy of Plato is rooted in the form of dialogue, in his writings. It is difficult to decipher Plato, expressing thoughts in his dialogues as a lecturer. Throughout his dialogues, various characters are seen debating philosophical theories by question-answering each other. However, the scholars have come to analyze cautiously what Plato's philosophical point of view is (Kenny, 2006).

Education is one of the main emphasis of Plato's philosophy. An essential consideration of his philosophy of education is about defining a good life. Education is a method of cultivating good in the human soul (Lawton & Gordon, 2002). Because the moral person according to Plato, is more elated than the immoral. The good person has two explanations for feeling fulfilled. First, the individual's soul is brimming with happiness. Second, the soul knows why it denies embracing earthly desires; the earthly desires only lead the soul to despair (Kenny, 2006).

In his most acclaimed work *Republic*, Plato initiates the argument explaining how the essence of justice looks like. He asserts that education is the fundamental element of creating a just society. He underscores the close connection between an individual and a society. The human being is filled with desires. When an individual stands for a social well being, these desires, only then, can be met. A person following social and personal ethical standards is thus the agent of a harmonious society (Lawton & Gordon, 2002).

From his childhood, Plato had been witnessing the rough side of a state structure. The civil disorder, unrest, violence, disgrace of morality agonized Plato's mind. The ethical standards were overpowered. The most eye-opener for Plato was Socrates's death. The death of Socrates had impacted him so deeply that his whole approach to life had changed. From that moment on, Plato pursued his progressive idea of social solidarity (Barrow, 2012).

A similar kind of situation is seen in this century. Many nations are threatened by crime and acts of moral turpitudes. The World Health Organisation (2006) observes that crimes of violent characters have been a common experience over the course of human history. However, the scale of criminal activities in this century has surpassed all the thresholds. Thousands of people die every year and billions undergo pain, trauma because of this violence.

In such contexts, Plato's idea of music in education becomes relevant. Plato emphasizes music especially for children (*Charmides*, 157) because music purifies, strengthens our character, and protects our health. Music can make the mind rationalized (*Republic* 401C-D). Plato in the *Phaedrus* (244) claims that the involuntary segment of human mental faculties can be stimulated and placated by music (Durant, 1961). The eyes and ears of the children are soothed by the elegance, music circulates. The soul of the child is guided to virtue and peace with the elegance of music. Plato strongly implies that childhood education should begin with music. Because music in education is an effective medium for reaching the core of the soul. Music contains beautiful beats and resonance which instill kindness into the soul (Domanski, 2007).

The soul's fuel is music, but then again, too much of it can turn music into risky business at times. Given that too much music makes one weaken above what justice is. Every kind of music cannot be accepted. Truth, wisdom, courage with contents of

mathematics, history, and science must be offered with music. No teaching should be introduced forcefully to the children as it was in the *Republic* (536). The kids' minds are tender. They should be taught very carefully, with affection and with enjoyment. Ethical norm needs to be maintained in all situations (Durant, 1961). One of the biggest criticisms towards Plato is his stiffness against some musical innovation. Plato claims any transformation in the mode of music could change the state's fundamental laws (Wadia, 1967).

## **2. Purpose of this study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the reasons why Plato imposes importance on music in education and how Plato believes that there is a correlation among music, education, and morals.

## **3. Methodology**

A qualitative inquiry involves different types of approaches of analysis, for instance, 'phenomenology', 'hermeneutics', 'grounded theory', 'ethnography', and 'content analysis'. Data are manifested, in qualitative content analysis, in words and themes. The words and themes allow illustrating an understanding of the results (Bengtsson, 2016. p. 8). This study is a qualitative content analysis.

For this article, the researcher used secondary data. The secondary data is a type of data set which someone else gathered for another primary purpose (Johnston, 2014). The secondary data analysis calls for innovative methodical procedures (Smith, 2006). In a qualitative content inquiry, purposive sampling is used commonly by researchers (Newman & Gough, 2020). Individuals and sites are deliberately chosen in purposive sampling to discern the core phenomenon. The researchers select samples that are rich in information (Creswell, 2012).

The researcher, in this article, based on journal articles, books, dissertations on Plato and his philosophy, categorized the review of the contents into two major parts – A. Plato's general views on education, B. Plato's theory of music and morality. Part A highlights the basic perceptions of Plato on the education and historical context of his educational views. Part B draws attention to values and values education in general, and Plato's theory on music and morality, Platonic guideline on music.

### **3.1 Limitation**

In qualitative content analysis, secondary data are analyzed to assimilate concepts as a part of the study. The prime pitfall of secondary source review is favoritism. The presuppositions, beliefs, and interpretations of researchers can twist the collection or analysis of data. In collecting and interpreting the data, the impartiality and subtlety of the researcher must be justified. Documents must be reviewed prudently and critically (Bowen, 2009). The researcher tried to avoid these limitations.

### 3.2 Plato's views on education: a historical perspective

Plato and his educational theories are arguably the most highly analyzed than any other writer of the pre-twentieth century. His educational ideas are incredibly clear, and his educational intent is closely linked to his social philosophy. Educational thinkers are inspired by those ideas until today (Lawton & Gordon, 2002). Plato was born in an affluent family in the past days of the Athenian Empire (Kenny, 2006). Because Plato's parents came from a well-to-do background, they came trying to give their son the best quality of education. Plato had soldier schooling. He was a decent sportsman. He was excellent at drawing, music, and writing dramatic, tragedy-like lines (Fuller, 1969).

'Cratylus' was the first mentor to introduce philosophy to Plato. 'Cratylus' was considered to be a strong follower of 'Heraclitus' a great philosopher who was famous for his most widespread saying, "You could not step into the same river even once" (Fuller, 1969. p. 123). Plato was profoundly inspired by Parmenides who saw such a steady reality as to exist. Only the rational mind can unveil the truth to light (Guthrie, 1967). Plato might have known Socrates from his early youth because his uncle 'Charmides' was a bosom companion of Socrates (Fuller, 1969. p. 123). He might never have been a protégé in the strict sense of the Socratic school, but he was a member of the Socratic circle from his young age. At Athens, he primarily intended to pursue a political career. Yet the sad demise of Socrates affected him so extremely that he reversed all his plans, and he dedicated his life vigorously to philosophy (Barker, 1960)

Kenny (2006) arranges Plato's dialogues into three phases. The first phase includes 'the *Euthyphro*', 'the *Lysis*', 'the *Hippias Major*', 'the *Hippias Minor*' where Socrates plays a notable role as a questioner and performer who knows nothing. Plato is flourishing in the second phase, as seen in his famous work 'the *Republic*' and other works like 'the *Phaedo*', 'the *Gorgias*', 'the *Protagoras*', 'the *Meno*'. The leading character of this phase is Socrates again. Nevertheless, Socrates, in these dialogues, does not appear as a questioner rather he, like a teacher expresses his philosophical concepts strongly. Socrates is a secondary personality, at times absent, in Plato's final phase of works. In 'the *Theaetetus*', 'the *Parmenides*', 'the *Philebus*', 'the *Sophist*', 'the *Laws*' Plato is seen more explicitly (Kenny, 2006. pp. 38-40).

It is worth noting at the time of Plato's birth that there was no such country as named Greece as we now see it. The lands included on the map, in Greece, was an island country that belonged to Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Moreover, different groups had lived on these islands. They shared a culture they had in common. Yet they had been battling each other for years. The Athenians and the Spartans were both vitriolic to each other (Lawton & Gordon, 2002). But for a perfect state, Plato aimed at combining Athenian and Spartan education (Barker, 1960)

Aristotle in *Politics* as cited in Schofield (2010) says that an orthodox Greek upper-class-education of that age in Athens traditionally included three parts – reading and writing, physical training, music. The Athenian culture evolved greatly from the fifth century BC and this influenced their educational thinking and practice. Athens founded its rhetoric teachers in the fifth century BC. It invited many teachers from different parts of the world to establish educational institutions in Athens. Some of these pedagogues

were so acclaimed that they introduced an influential philosophical discipline named Sophist. Whereas the Spartans were dubious about modernist thought and never accepted non-natives; for outsiders, entrepreneurs, Athens was still a secure palace. The Athenians habitually welcomed invention without exception. Tourists, immigrants were treated as if they were an Athenian. (Lawton & Gordon, 2002).

Spartan schooling was primarily focused on physical activity. In school, there was no space for literature or music. Many people could not read and write. Spartan schooling never sought to make a human as a complete being since it wanted to instill bravery and create gladiators. Education was promulgated to train citizens to fit in with society. A social education scheme was compulsory (Barker, 1960).

Spartan society, in general, was conservative, and so was their education. Even when Athens was a modern-day community in nature and culture, one would call Sparta an archaic kind of society. Sparta was, practically, a state of war. There was barely any room for individual liberties. The state had used to impose authoritarian and inflexible control over its inhabitants since the very beginning of Spartan history. At an early age of seven, the Spartan kids were compelled to take up the state-regulated education. No member of the family had any opinion or authority over its members. The state used to make decisions on everything from individuals to broader communities. The Spartan youth were given schooling as an ancient manner of public education. The school was housed in a building and taught the exact lessons required for war. Every lesson had military quality in it. The state thought such stringent laws might preserve harmony among the people (Barker, 1960).

### **3.3 Plato's general views on education**

Plato describes education as the element which compels and guides youth towards the just. That just which the law encourages, and which the experience of the elders proves right (*Laws* and the *Republic's* 3rd and 8th book). The sole purpose of education is to refine the lower animal instincts of young people. Education takes people, surrounded by violence, terror, and cruelty, back to peace. Plato reasons why people become civilized with proper education and a favorable nature, and why their ferocious characteristics come out of the absence of these two (*Laws* 766A). Childhood is the ideal time to impart guidance on lawful conduct (*Laws* 644E-645A) (Domanski, 2007).

Plato's views on education aim at transforming the soul into logic, ratio, and prudence from the senses, desires, and obedience. He concludes that education plays the most central role in achieving a city's harmonious existence and that if a city disregards education, then its other activities will not maintain its significance. For a well-functioning city, it is imperative to place spiritual and moral education together. He finds this example to be the key resource for youth moral education and urged older people to set a positive example for younger people (Nasaina, 2018). Education will liberate the soul from the body, and travel towards truth. Truth resides in the mind, and it can be brought to light only by education. Plato's conviction about education is best understood through the *Republic*, where he uses his famous cave metaphor. Sense guides the

individual to see the shadows represented on the cave wall and the world of light comes to view only through education (Nasaina, 2018).

Plato's views on education are connected with his other works. His educational thoughts have to be interpreted under his moral and political ideas – the human race has the right to enjoy happiness and satisfactory life (Turan, 2011). Barker (1960) asserts that Plato advocates for two great institutions – a system of common education by the state and the social order of communism. The system of common education by the state will train its citizens. The social order of communism will free people from the burden of earning a living. He explains from the *Republic* (416 B and 423D-E) that of the two institutions, a new education is superior to new social order.

Plato supports equality in education. He opposes discrimination based on the male and female for their biological identity. Like other men, every woman should get the same privilege to proper education, the same opportunity to obtain a prestigious place in state business (*Republic*, 453 F). If a woman shows talent and potential, she should never be judged for sex. Plato is highly concerned with the birth of a child. In the *Laws* (789), he states that a child cannot be educated properly if the child is not born properly. For this reason, Plato warns that men and women with an improper condition of health will not be accredited to have children. Most significantly, a child's education should commence even before birth (Durant, 1961).

Plato insists that education is the state's primary duty (Turan, 2011). Explaining from Plato's *Laws*, Stally (1983) claims that the state has to train its citizen at whatever skill they wish to follow (*Laws* 643B). If a child wants to be an architect, similar types of toys should be provided, and if a child wants to be a warrior, he should be taught accordingly (*Laws* 643B-C). In Plato, abstract sciences in education bear meaning. He maintains that to guide the soul to the pure intellect, every person should be trained in abstract sciences, numbers, geometry, and astronomy. This training leads to dialectics which gradually attracts youth to accomplish philosophical wisdom. A pearl of philosophical wisdom is a guard of moral development and an addition to scientific education (Turan, 2011).

Plato gives priority to music and gymnastics in education (Turan, 2011). In the *Republic* (376 e), Plato's answer to the definition of education is the combination of music and gymnastics (Plato, 1968). He sticks to prevention rather than cure. He refuses the acceptance of law-courts, pleaders, and pleas, as well as the healthcare system as the former one is just a sign of the soul and the latter a sign of unhealthy bodies. If a proper education in music and gymnastics is afforded, there is no need for lawyers and doctors (Barker, 1960). Because music educates the philosophical component of the soul and gymnastics stimulates body and discipline (Turan, 2011).

### **3.4 Values and values education**

Values education is widely recognized by a variety of names including 'moral education', 'character education' and 'ethics education' (Lovat, 2010, p. 3). Values education implies the transmission of values through education. Ignaciamuthu (as cited in Pereira, 2016) defined values as some quality or behavior that are inherently valuable, acceptable, and

universally acclaimed. Values are perceived as moral beliefs, ethical principles with an ideal way of behavior with personal uprightness and virtue. In a monocultural society, children can be interposed to a set of agreed values and ethics. Nonetheless, in a pluralist society, this approach is not straightforward. People from different groups, in such a society, follow their particular set of values. On this account, some shared values like avoiding violence, mutual respect, common laws have to be followed (Halstead, 2005). Values education, in this regard, plays its role. Education aims at growing the whole human being. Value education seeks to teach a person for life – to make them a better person, to help others, and to enjoy a better quality of life. The education system, therefore, needs to incorporate educational principles into the curriculum and begin to foster principles such as compassion, loyalty, empathy, justice, integrity, and diligence in students (Pereira, 2016).

From early childhood, where morality is his primary concern, Plato stressed values education. What we call schooling today can, in platonic words, be considered nothing more than vocational education. According to Plato's notion of education, it can hardly be called the highly trained, or highly qualified professionals as educated, who have no ethical education. The low skilled workers, on the other hand, who have been taught moral training from their young age, may be regarded as educated (Domanski, 2007).

### **3.5 Plato's concept of music in education and morality**

Plato perceives music as an umbrella concept that includes musical studies as well as literary courses. He uses music as a study of understanding of life in any of the three forms – media, speech, or sound (Domanski, 2007). While no specific concept emerged from Plato on the content of music, three parts – the words, the melody, and the rhythm could be the parts of the music. From this trigger, Greek music schools of that day included drawing, dancing, reading, writing, numbers work, playing instruments, and singing (Dalton, 1914).

Every Athenian of that day used to take lessons on literature, art, numerical and figural science rudiments, and general culture. Plato figures out the concept that instruments such as literature (starting with stories for the kids) and music (playing, singing) are the most successful to get the best from a child. Music and other forms of art embody the character in the soul of the one who creates it and in the soul of the one it refers to. One form of art is different from another form, yet all the forms have common traits to offer – character, good or bad. Hence every form of art in its core is nothing but educational (Nettleship, 1951).

Athenian presents two explications in *Laws* 653C-654D as to why the music is essential. First, bolstering childhood education by music is crucial. When people get older, the intrinsic power of education weakens in terms of discipline and morality (Stalley, 1983) Music in education yields the self-control and courage in the soul. A self-controlled mind can recognize between the great and the frivolous (Nettleship, 1951). Thus, the Gods impart music festivals as a recreational medium with the implied intention of reestablishing good habits. Second, music is a means of creating harmony

within us. The children, like other living creatures naturally, cannot remain calm for a prolonged period. But then again, human beings exhibit a remarkable trait of coming to order using rhythm and melody. Such Gods gifts inspire people to sing and dance. So, a well-educated person has to be able to sing and dance (Stalley, 1983).

Plato categorizes the soul into three parts in the *Republic* (Book 4) – ‘the rational part’, ‘the courageous or spirited part’, and ‘the appetitive part’. The highest section of the soul is ‘the rational part’ which tries to achieve the goodness of the divine. Moral courage and being reasonable are the features of ‘the spirited part’ and ‘the appetitive part’ seeks material craving (Copleston, 1946. pp. 208-209).

In his philosophical study, Plato focuses on the soul that has a certain capacity. Through seeing and hearing the capacity is best carried out into the outside world. The soul acquires the knowledge and beauty of the world by using our eyes and ears. Plato argues that we need to enhance our capability to comprehend the world around us to understand the good. The universe includes music, color, real objects, images, men and women, and then through music we need to capture the exquisiteness of these. The point is to learn music and by learning music, we will be able to read the world and the beauty of it (Nettleship, 1951).

Music is meant to reason the soul, and music has the attributes to instill reason as unintentional learning within the soul of the children. The rhythm, expression, and tone of musical instruments, with strong soul appeal, implies moral suggestions (Barker, 1960); Schofield, 2010). Music, in education, is a way of training of mind (Barker, 1960). Education in the forms of dance and song (*Republic* 401C-D) can be provided by music. All who know what is true in song and dance are treated as well-educated (*Republic* 401C-D), as opposed to those who only sing and dance well. The well-educated people can use their rational senses to draw a distinction between right and wrong, refined through music. We, irrefutably, introduce morality into musical styles (*Laws* 645A-656D, 803D-E) (Domanski, 2007).

One of the central arguments is Plato's notion of the human soul with a connection to music and morality. The human soul is not a passive subject of education, but rather an active one. Sometimes the educators miss the power of the human soul, trying to circulate objects into it. Plato has always been for the creative, active mind. Objects are not needed to present to the soul rather the soul channels itself to the objects with the environment. Education, in Plato's idea, results in turning one's sight towards the lights. The art of a teacher is found to set the lights. Plato in the *Meno* said the soul has it all inside itself; the lights in the form of education illuminate the beauty and truth of the soul (Barker, 1960). The earliest childhood is the ideal time to offer a piece of well-thought-out music and dance study plan (Domanski, 2007). This is why Plato considers art, particularly music, as an educational instrument for inculcating moral values in children. The music that begins at infancy extends to youth (Barker, 1960).

The concept, Plato attempts to convey is that the goal of education is not to pour knowledge into the mind. It aims at discovering what is the greatest covert in the soul. The soul needs to be surrounded by goodness and honesty to produce the best. Plato states the human soul by nature is mimetic. This tends to subsume the environment



around, just like a plant grows according to the soil it is planted. Once the soul is encircled by vice, the mind gets used to it. Education is responsible for setting the right around the soul. The purpose of education at an early age is to introduce different types of imaginative forms that symbolize goodness. Gradually with age, rational forms will be presented. Plato accredits religion as the correct form of presenting goodness. If we want the human soul to live a virtuous life, it is imperative to introduce the true nature of the Gods before the minds of the children. It is the most successful and intelligible way (Nettleship, 1951).

### **3.6 Platonic regulation on music**

The concept of value-based musical education cannot, in Plato's opinion, be left to the whim of the teachers, nurses, or parents. Plato strongly suggests the laws of the state will include the necessary standards for true education. Because art and culture play a critical role in character education; the finest music and literature should be widely practiced under the supervision and direction of the state (Domanski, 2007). They cannot be unregulated because music and dance can turn out to be dangerous and harmful to the infant, society at large. Plato admires the Egyptians who set up strict music standards; the rules they felt were ethically appropriate. According to the *Laws* (656 D- 657D), the state must originate an outline of how music should be, and what it should contain. No more music can be used just for pleasure. It should be teaching what is right. The content of the music has to be perfect, notably educating justice and contentment. The eminence of music depends not on the pleasure it creates but, on the righteousness, it inculcates into the soul. A puerile amusement may be treated lightly but for music. Because music is an imitative art. A pandemonium in music guides to general lawlessness as there is a correlation between music and social change. – it's seen in patriotic songs, social change songs that music can help promote habits, values, and beliefs (Stalley, 1983).

The notable idea of Plato in the *Republic* (387E) is that he was critical of the music of his time of being convoluted. He stands for simple music. Human being has to be simple to live smoothly for that music has to be simple with few rhythm varieties, and scale. Every form of art should make sense at the very first experience so that people can assimilate it with ease (Nettleship, 1951).

Many of Plato's critics maintain that he is firmly opposed to music in terms of creativity. In the *Laws* (798E-802E, 812A 813A) he responds with a significant example by concentrating light on Athens, where lawlessness in music eventually dismantled Athens. His theoretical point is that because music is mimetic by definition, and is synonymous with the character, the internal composition of music affects greatly whether people perform or find satisfaction from music (Stalley, 1983). Sir Ernest Barker contends that if Plato is perceived as advocating for the music to serve morality it is a misapprehension. To offer emotions, the independence of art forms is very significant. If this self-reliance in music is obstructed, it can never reach the children's ethical faculties. Plato rejects the view that art needs to be didactic in the sense that art is a State servant. As for Plato, art does not need to express moral ideals but rather an art itself is a matter

of ethics. True art is a pure copy of life, i.e. art should be made up of honesty and goodness (Barker, 1960)

#### 4. Conclusion

Education takes the individual's soul towards divinity. Music as a means of education reaches directly into the mind. Music teaches the heart to love, to act morally. Plato argues music develops reason in the soul. Through ears and eyes, music transfers wisdom, bravery to the soul (Barker, 1960). In the *Laws* (Book II), Plato asserts with an importance that a person who knows music but has no understanding of good and evil cannot be expected to be treated as an ethical individual (Plato, 1908). Dalton (1914), shows that ethical values, agreeable conduct can be taught by music. Plato emphasizes the tender mind to teach moral values. Because at a tender age, children want to learn and assimilate. They are naturally mimetic at an early age. If the children are raised under the atmosphere of kindness, good manners around, they produce the best for the society (*Republic* Book III 400-405).

#### Acknowledgment

The author would like to acknowledge the support and suggestion of all the faculty members of IER, University of Chittagong, especially the Honorable Director of IER Professor Dr. Mohammed Bashir Ahmed.

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