

Music Theory And Epicurean Philosophy

Post by "Eikadistes" of May 25, 2019 at 3:55 PM

[**Edit by Cassius**: This thread was started in response to my asking about Major and Minor key, which came up in the discussion of Romanze in Moll (the [Romance in Minor Key](#)" movie. I asked: [Nate](#) if you get a chance to glance at this thread: Can you explain to a non-musician like me what "minor key" is and how it is musically able to evoke sadness, as opposed to major key? I will look this up on Wikipedia but I would be interested in your comment.]

Yes! So, to dive into this, I'd like to talk about two, different, creative arenas.

First, we have an immediate phenomenology of music: **what is** music, and **how** do we experience music?

Second, we need to explore the cultural environment in which the appearance of structures like "major", and "minor" arise (because they are not, themselves, universal variables). Furthermore, I'll discuss "major" and "minor" specifically, to explain why those two structures (of many) are the most useful examples for non-musicians to regularly cite to acknowledge how human emotion corresponds with soundwaves.

First, **what is** music? *Music* is a storytelling art in which music-listeners accept sound as the medium through which the story is told; jumping deeper, **sound** is the reverberation of *mechanical energy* and, physically, *mechanical energy* is a **sin wave**. So, phenomenologically, music, as we experience it, is the story our minds spin when the mind anticipates patterns in the **sin waves** of mechanical energy (captured by the fleshy satellite dishes on either side of our cranium). Most of the time, we assume music to be an artificially-generated (i.e. intentional) composition--this is not always true, for Nature, itself, is inherently musical. The parts of our brain that register auditory impulses are simply looking for *periodic* (regularly patterned) sound waves. While most sounds we hear in nature are *aperiodic* (irregularly patterned) sound waves (which we call technically refer to as "noise"), that does not mean that natural patterns do not exist. For example, consider the "Wow! signal" [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wow!_signal]--which, in this case, deals with electromagnetic, and not mechanical waveforms, but still demonstrates the point, which is that the mind starts writing stories when it begins anticipating patterns, regardless of whether or not those patterns were intentionally-generated. To summarize, **music is the story that our minds spin, according to the patterns it interprets and anticipates from sound waves.**

Next, let's explore the perceived structures of **music**. Starting a few levels of scale above atoms, let's first acknowledge that our ears (the hosts of our internal auditorium) will only identify mechanical energy that vibrates between 20 and 20,000 Hz. That's the full sonic

spectrum with which we have to paint. But we don't use that full spectrum--the full spectrum sometimes looks like 'Waves Crashing On Rocks' or 'Volcanic Explosions', a lot of *musical colors* (notes) that, together, just create dissatisfying messes of mutually-indistinguishable farts. Herein, the musician's job is to select **a few musical colors** (notes) that most adequately express the acoustic picture they are trying to audibly paint. Like the colors of the rainbow, which reduce the visible spectrum of electromagnetic radiation vibrating between 430 and 770 THz to "Roy G. Biv", we identify the audible spectrum of sound by symbolic qualia. For example, the **mind** of a painter does not *mathematically* register light at 430 THz, but it does *artistically know precisely* what *deep red* looks like. Similarly, the **mind** of a musician does not *mathematically* register sound at 440 Hz, but we *know exactly* how 'Middle A' sounds. The qualities we use to express anticipatory patterns of mechanical energy (the C note), as with light (the color Red), correspond with cultural-linguistic symbols. So when we're talking about "major" and "minor", we need to discuss it within the system we call modern, "Western" music theory, and its antecedent.

Once upon a time, Pythagoras realized that you can "double" the **frequency** (*highness* or *lowness*--**pitch**) of a plucked string by **halving** its length. In modern language, an example would be middle 'A'--it works out mathematically that 880 Hz is the 'A' immediately above the middle 'A' at 440 Hz--*Pythagoras certainly loved numbers*, which is where we derive the flexible number '12' notes per set of repeating values (12 is divisible by 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6, and that was ... I don't know ... a source of arousal for Pythagoras? He based his entire music theory off of the ratio 3:2, which deserves a thread all on its own, but that's getting off-topic) . The original Hz for each note was based off of an explicit, mathematical ratio ... without delving into the volumes of information that describes the evolution of tuning, and the history of tones in Western music, let's just conclude that, by the 18th-century, musicians were using the standard tuning that we use today, **because**, earlier, purely ratio-based tunings would lead to ... sounds that aren't pleasing to contemporary ears (as *unusual* as I'm sure contemporary music would seem to ancient ears). I'm bringing up the following because we're Epicureans, and this provides some philosophical context into the history of music: in terms of *metaphysics*, Pythagoras **freaked out** when he realized that the very aesthetically pleasing number '2' did not have a perfect square root; similarly, he rejected certain pitches that could not be defined by the ratios of pure integers. This led to an attempt, for centuries, by philosophers to harmonize number theory, music theory, humor theory, and celestial science--so we get weird ideas like the Celestial Spheres, and the Perfect Forms of the Heavens that correspond with ratios which sound is capable of audibly expressing. That is just an example of how the ancient Greek search for 'ideal forms' can generate mathematical ideals that **may not be subjectively pleasing** (at least, not to many of us).

There's this **brilliant** episode of *Star Trek: Voyager* that beautifully demonstrates this: a planet of non-musical humanoids accidentally hear the ship's doctor sing an operatic piece. They are inspired by the music--utterly **inspired**. The inspiration echoes throughout the planet, and many of the alien beings begin attempting to emulate the operatic voice they so loved. Now, while these beings didn't sponsor the *subjective art of sound* we call *music*, they **did** have an

advanced understanding of number theory, so they could **only** comfortable **interface** with *human music* through an intentional analysis of mathematics (like good old Pythagoras). Twenty minutes of plot or so later, the doctor becomes dismayed to find that he is no longer a planetary celebrity: local musicians have--according to their own tastes--**surpassed** the doctor's operatic baritone. The doctor is hurt, but respectfully agrees to attend a performance to which he has been invited. He sits with other crewmates, and they listen with anticipation ... and, to the surprise of their anticipatory minds, the alien opera sounds like **abysmal trash**. Rather than making the subjective switch that Renaissance and Modern artists made, the aliens took a queue from Pythagoras, and employed advanced differential equations to determine which notes would be sung, and in which order they would be arranged. To the crew, it sounded like a computer generating tones according to a string of prime numbers, which, though being intentionally-composed, periodic sound waves (i.e. *music*) has no ability to tell humans a story--it just comes off as a brown fart. **What I want to convey with this example** is that the aliens most certainly had "a specific musical structure that corresponds to the subjective experience of pain " as well as "a specific musical structure that corresponds to the subjective experience of pleasure", but they weren't the same physical structures as "major" and "minor", which technically do not even have relevance to all human populations, but only those that can interface with the music tradition since the 18th-century.

Post by "Eikadistes" of May 25, 2019 at 3:56 PM

So where do "majors" and "minors" fit into all of this? Prior to the Renaissance period, we would not have described any of the ratios that determine pitch by "major" and "minor". "Major-ness" and "minor-ness" come from tri-tones, or, a **chord** (multiple tones played simultaneously) that changes the form of a sin wave. Prior to the Renaissance period, we weren't playing with tri-tones. Monks from the Medieval period mostly sang melodies with no accompaniment, and it took hundreds of years to develop the concept of "harmony". Western music didn't become what we hear today, with multiple instruments and movements, until the *late-Renaissance* period. While there are truly fascinating mathematical patterns in music theory, and while we can diagram each and every note, interval, and chord by a rather elegant mathematics, our perception of "major-ness" and "minor-ness" largely originates from philosophers who attempted to equate emotional qualities from acoustic structures. Ultimately, music is rooted in language and culture, and our music is rooted in Renaissance-era refinement of Pythagorean theory (you can see how completely appropriate this topic is for Epicureans. Literally, the revival of classical materialism lead to a revision of idealistic music theory to the messy, emotional, asymmetrical music we know and love, today). Plato was one of the first to attempt to metaphysically link music and the human soul (and managed to be an uncompromising authoritarian while doing so). Without getting into a discussion of ancient Greek "modes" (which

deserves its own thread), Plato considered--for example--the Mixolydian mode, in which the Seikilos Epitaph was written, to be an "effeminate" mode, that "discourages men" from "action". **If he were around today, Plato would have been making speeches alongside Lynne Cheney and Tipper Gore to ban hip-hop, rap, metal, hard rock, punk--you name it.** A lot of philosophers spent time assigning emotional qualities to mathematical ratios. Aristotle wasn't a cultural totalitarian like Plato, but he was equally prejudiced against certain forms of music. Of the Mixolydian Mode he said that it makes me "sad and grave". Fuck him, and fuck Plato. The Seikilos Epitaph is beautiful, and I think the Memento Mori expressions are empowering. But, within the context of our own bodies, we're both right.

Now, I want to spend some time discussing my own, subjective music theory.

There is nothing inherently absolute about "majors" and "minors", anymore than there is about "fifths" or "sevenths" or "sustained seconds" or "sustained fourths", with the sole exception--by the theory I derived-- of "augmentations". An augmentation has exactly three notes between each note, all the way up, and down the musical spectrum. It is the only one that does this. Also, it sounds weird, and really gross if you just play it by itself without context. It sounds like a mess. It is also more symmetrical to modern music than any of the other sounds. Many of us suppose a "major" chord to be the "correct" sound. It's not. It's no more special than a "minor", or than a "minor second", which also sounds like a weird perversion. My point here is that--in my opinion--any mathematically perfect chords in contemporary music ... sound gross. Now, grotesque sounds have a time, and a place, and, depending on what's around them, relatively, can actually sound beautiful. But that too is highly subjective. But human life isn't about perfect ideals. Maybe the Star Trek aliens like music to be written with correspondance to Prime Numbers, but we don't. Our lives are hormonal, sweaty, happy, horny, hungry, scared, frightened, elated, and empowered. Our music reflects the diversity of our lives.

And, to get back to Cassius' original question, if I can answer this succinctly, "major" and "minor" are what they are because the expression of happiness (pleasure), and the expression of sadness (pain) represent the range of our colorful spectrum of our human experience, and have identified the sound of pleasure with brightness, light, gladness, and empowerment, while we identify that sound of pain as a shadow that darkens, weighs, and depresses. Subjectively, this language corresponds with the subjective experience of those sounds. So, we queue-in on those two chord structures.

Post by "Eikadistes" of May 25, 2019 at 3:56 PM

There are a variety of others, and I'd like to share my personal, artistic analysis of each of the twelve notes' relationship to the dominant root, or tonic, which determines the key of the song,

and the relative starting point.

r - This is our root, the Tonic, wherein any interval is in Perfect Unison. This is our setting, and our context.

b2 - This is our minor 2nd, a perversion that mutates and distorts.

sus2 - This is our major 2nd, a cushion that clouds, buffers, thickens, layers.

m3 - This is our minor 3rd, a shadow which darkens, saddens, weighs, and depresses.

3 - This is our major 3rd, a light that brightens, lightnes, gladdens, and empowers.

sus4 - This is a perfect 4th, a reassurance that polishes, reinforces, and encourages.

dim5 - This is our diminished fifth, an opposition that contradicts, opposes, sickens, and poisons

P5 - This is our perfect 5th, a strength that dominates, reinforces, supports, cradles, and extends.

m6 - This is our minor 6th, the augmentation that hints, twists, puzzles, and complicates.

6 - This is our 6th, an enchantment that intoxicates and romanticizes.

m7 - This is our minor 7th, a playful invitation that loosens and challenges.

M7 - This is our major 7th, a beautiful, softening that inspires memory, familiarity, yet hesitation.

r - We're back to our root, refreshed, balanced, centered, at musical equilibrium--we are home.

Plato and Aristotle both came up with their own version of this. So did Goethe. (So has your mind!)

Even looking through my old, written scribbles (which is where this comes from), I unintentionally use the word "shadow" with "minor" (when we say "minor" we are always *specifically* referring to the "minor 3rd"), and "light" with "major" (when we say "major" we are always *specifically* referring to the "major 3rd"). If each note is a character, then the Major Character and the Minor Character have the biggest personalities--so, too, do pleasure and pain. The root defines our position, and the "major" or "minor" determines our disposition. Everything else is a commentary on that disposition--in my **completely subjective opinion** . I herein purport that "Major" and "Minor" are--in a generalized sense--the values that we can, as a collective culture, identify as being the best reflections of pleasure, and of pain.

Again, though, at some point, we're all just aliens on different planets. That's why we all have unique musical tastes, and interpret those very slight nuances in chord structure quite differently. However, like culture, there are dominant trends that seem to direct our thought

through the use of common language.

That is why "major" is "happy", and "minor" is "sad".

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 25, 2019 at 4:04 PM

One final addition: there is a tremendous correspondance between sound, and evolutionary history. We're queued-in to listen to certain high pitches, because that is the sound our infants make. Cats know this, so they mimic the pitch of infants to get human attention. We have a tendency to appreciate rhythm, and low, percussive noises because--among other things--it acted as a social bonding mechanism for primate species. There are a number of evolutionary adaptations to music, and probably, the most important one is the development of speech as a way to communicate.

However, I do not believe that ancient, evolutionary history impacts our perception of "major" and "minor". I assign responsibility to Pythagoras, and the Renaissance's refinement of his ideas.

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 25, 2019 at 5:08 PM

Let me add these to visually demonstrate the thesis: "Majors" and "Minors" are subjective reflections of our language and culture, and not of an inherent mathematical purity.

For example, consider all notes modeled on a circle that grows as it proceeds, like a spiral. Consider it spirals from the center. Now, consider, like a clock with 12 hours, that each tick-mark represents a different note of 12 tones.

If we diagram a "Major" chord, being the root note, a major third, and a perfect fifth, it looks like this:



If we diagram a "Minor" chord, being the root note, a minor third, and a perfect fifth, it looks like this:

[Thumbnail=1](#) or type unknown

BUT, if we diagram the messy, weird-sounding "Augmented" chord, we have perfect symmetry:

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So, there isn't something physically *pure* about "Majors" and "Minors"--they just work really well with classical music, and contemporary, popular music (to our ears). Plato and Aristotle would have heard the "Major" chord to be absolute garbage (sort of how we hear an augmented chord), while they may have found the weird, augmented chord to be rather beautiful.

Post by "Daniel" of May 26, 2019 at 5:22 AM

[Quote from Nate](#)

So, there isn't something physically *pure* about "Majors" and "Minors"--they just work really well with classical music, and contemporary, popular music (to our ears). Plato and Aristotle would have heard the "Minor" chord to be absolute garbage (sort of how we hear an augmented chord), while they may have found the weird, augmented chord to be rather beautiful.

Brilliant, Nate! Really. You should have these posts published somewhere.

'Classical music,' far from being a universal phenomenon, represents a specific geographical and cultural epoch without equal in other eras or civilisations. Indeed, even in pre-Bachian Europe, the music the Church imposed on the Catholic ecumene was based on the imitation of the Greco-Roman musical tradition, which was fundamentally of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern origin and, arguably, deriving from an exclusive *melodic* sensitivity.

Shortly after Carolingian times—with the forced conversion of Saxon tribes that followed the Massacre of Verden and the restoration of the Empire—another musical sensitivity (in this case *harmonic*) starts to penetrate the musical universe of the Church, which had remained secluded until that point. What might have been the origin of such new sensitivity?

Musicologists refer to a 'pagan residue' existing in the indigenous cultures of Northern Europe (Thrasylbulos Georgiades, *Music and Language: The Rise of Western Music as Exemplified in Settings of the Mass*). Undoubtedly, a tonal system emerged, after a few centuries, from the opposition of the Church tradition and that of the indigenous music culture of Northern Europe.

Post by "Cassius" of May 26, 2019 at 5:42 PM

Related to this topic is this article [which I am adding to Filebase and am linking here.](#)

Philodemus on Ethos in Music

Author(s): L. P. Wilkinson

Source: The Classical Quarterly, Vol. 32, No. 3/4 (Jul. - Oct., 1938), pp. 174-181

Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Classical Association

Post by "Cassius" of May 26, 2019 at 6:42 PM

After reading that article, here are my thoughts:

My reading of this is that the Epicureans were critical of the view that music theory could lead to the embodiment of "ideas" in particular musical forms. They weren't opposed to music itself, and indeed found it pleasurable, but they opposed the theory of trying to use music to imitate ideal forms and thereby embody "good" or "bad" in the music itself.

If that is correct, that would be parallel to the general Epicurean view against Platonic ideal forms in general. It seems clear that Epicurus campaigned against the Platonic view that ideal forms exist to be embodied in word formulas (concepts) and mathematical formulas (geometry and math), so it only makes sense that they would campaign against the attempt to embody ideal forms into musical formulas.

Surely the Epicureans did not campaign against music in general, and surely they did not argue that music cannot evoke pleasure or pain. So it seems most likely to me that they were not campaigning against music itself, but against the idea that music can embody something (ideal forms) that don't exist. Probably this kind of view also describes what Epicurus was saying about poetry. ("Only the wise man will be able to converse correctly about music and poetry, without however actually writing poems himself.") We can converse about how poetry and music make us feel without giving ourselves over to abstract theories that they embody something in themselves. Just like geometry and math can have highly productive practical uses without being considered to be mystical in themselves.

I'm interested to hear any and all opinions about this. No doubt this formulation of my initial reaction could be improved.

Post by “Godfrey” of May 26, 2019 at 7:11 PM

Cassius, thanks for your synopsis! I got completely derailed by the untranslated Greek in the piece.

What you say makes perfect sense. I've been under the impression, without recalling the sources offhand, that Epicurus was somehow opposed to poetry and music. This has always seemed peculiar to me; your interpretation makes much more sense with EP as I understand it.

Post by “Cassius” of May 26, 2019 at 8:14 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

I got completely derailed by the untranslated Greek in the piece.

That is maddening, isn't it? These academics could SO easily translate the word, but instead they keep it in the original as if to keep the meaning to themselves! I feel exactly the same way. 😊

No doubt my explanation could be tweaked and improved, but it's probably going in the right direction. Godfrey I can't recall at the moment if you said you had finished reading DeWitt, but to me that is why he is so good. He looks for logical explanations consistent with the core theory, rather than acting as if there's no possible reasonable explanation and making himself look superior to Epicurus.

Your example is right on point too. Epicurus, who reveled in the public festivals, and can't imagine the good without the pleasures of smooth motion and similar, dislikes music and poetry???? How ridiculous, but that is exactly what the commentators lead you to believe.

I think you can trace this line of thinking in many directions through Epicurus. He's against the construction of Platonic idealism - of things that don't have a real existence - but he is 100% in favor of those things that DO have a real existence as revealed to us through our senses. Many of these seeming contradictions can be explained that way, but you won't find most modern commentators suggesting that, because they too "buy in" to the Platonic abstraction method and can't imagine that someone could sincerely challenge it.

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 26, 2019 at 8:53 PM

I can agree that the intentional, *storytelling art of sound* we call **music** does not have "by itself" any inherent "power" besides the mechanical energy of a waveform, because **music** requires an audience who can interface with the acoustic narrative. If--like the crew of the Voyager--we are unable to interface with a composition that seems alien, then the narrative will be lost to us; thus, the "power" of **music** is only apparent to the human soul which interfaces with it. To those who *can* interface, the "power" is in our minds' ability to remember, and to imagine (not some mystical dimension or forms).

It's exactly like spoken language: if Elli speaks to me in Greek (of which I am not fluent), then my experience of her speech is simply the experience of a human female making labial, alveolar, velar, and glottal noises from her mouth, in my direction. Her **words (music)** therein have no "power" (because I cannot interface with them), and are reduced to grunts (sound). Certainly, if her grunts are meant to convey "Run! There's a fire!" then her words would have enough "power" to stir my soul to pump adrenaline through my muscles so I can escape the flames (but that's my mind, not her noises).

Sound "by itself" can only stir the senses to perceive. Indeed, it "'is unthinkable [...] that sounds which merely move the irrational hearing [faculty] should contribute'" or, conversely, corrupt the virtue nested within the soul of the listener. The soul's capacity to process mechanical energy through the eardrum, and relay it as various volumes of pitches does not require the mind to identify those mechanical impulses as anything except for the experience of processing mechanical energy as sound. Agreeably, "it is impossible to imitate things by voice and sounds; it is only possible to imitate their voices and sounds", because an event is an event, not a sound. Only a sound is a sound. Only a song is a song--that's why the music that **does** have "power" over us is what we remember from youth: it's not *music* anymore, it's *memory*.

This observation also demonstrates how violent video games are not the cause of mass shootings, and why gangster rap is not responsible for inner city violence--only personalities who can interface with that media can cause violence. The media, itself, is without any inherent moral or ethical dimension. We don't have any 'Justice' bosons that create 'Moral Fields' in which those ethical particles can be measured. The "power" of these things begins and ends with the subject's mind. "[I]t is possible for varying impressions to be received corresponding to predispositions".

I wish Philodemus were still around to tell Marvel and DC fans to respect each others: "[T]hus both in the case of the [scales] people differ, not in respect of the irrational perception, but in respect of their opinions [...], some [...] saying that [one] is solemn and noble and straightforward and pure, and the [other] unmanly and vulgar and mean, while others call the [one] severe and despotic, and the [other] mild and persuasive; both sides importing ideas which do not belong to either scale by nature."

The author elaborates on a few things I mentioned in the original posts, where Plato calls the Phrygian mode *sober* and *resigned*, while Aristotle thought it to be "ecstatic". He includes another anecdote that "Plato associated our modern key of C major with sorrow, weakness and self-indulgence, while Helmholtz associates it with brightness and strength, and Pauer with purity, innocence, manliness, and other virtues." For context, John Lennon's song "Imagine" was written in C major. As one of his sources wrote, "the whole matter is one of subjective imagination [...] based in the first instance on association".

It sounds like *Musicis* is to *Acoustics* what *Astrology* and *Alchemy* are to *Astronomy* and *Chemistry*. We can expect materialists to be critical of the *musicis* tradition--it attempted to equate the moral ideals implied by spoken words with the geometric ratios of acoustic instrumentation. Philodemus was correct to accuse the practitioner of this tradition of "seeking a knowledge of the non-existent", just as Epicureans were correct to accuse Platonists of seeking non-existent Forms, and correct to accuse religious populations of superstitiously responding to delusional fears.

Philodemus responding to Platonic and Peripatetic interpretations of modes reads to me like a physicist in the 1990s using a technical analysis of acoustics to show Biggie Smalls and Tupac how stupid the East Coast-West Coast hip hop rivalry was. *Music, itself*, is not emotional, because **we** are emotional. *Music, itself*, is not ethical, because **we** are the agents of ethics.

Post by "Cassius" of May 27, 2019 at 9:08 AM

Ben: I agree with what you say, Cassius Amicus, and interpreting Philodemus in the light of Epicurean criticism of Plato makes sense. But I also can't escape the notion that Philodemus was not aware of everything we have discovered about music therapy in recent times, and if he had known this, he might have changed his tune (pun intended).

Cassius Amicus: Ben what do you think Philodemus would have changed (or what would be different in the way this article represents Philodemus as saying)?

Ben: I would hope he would see instrumental music as something meaningful (though without the Platonic notion) in itself, that affects the mood, and can be useful in therapy, and contributing to the good life (eudemonia).

Cassius:

Ben wrote: "I would hope he would see instrumental music as something meaningful (though without the Platonic notion) in itself, that affects the mood, and can be useful in therapy, and

contributing to the good life (eudemonia)." Absent absolutely clear proof to the contrary (which is why I am suspicious of aggressive reconstruction of fragmentary texts) I have to believe that what you have just stated Ben WAS generally the Epicurean position. Lucretius would not have written his poem, and Epicurus would not have enjoyed the public festivals and talked about smooth motion, had they not derived pleasure from poetry and music.

It seems very likely to me that the contention that the Epicureans were against ALL music and ALL poetry is malicious misrepresentation of their true position, calculated to marginalize them and dissuade people from learning more about their philosophy. When evidence is conflicting I think it should be interpreted in a way consistent with what we are sure of as to the basics of the philosophy. We know that Epicurus embraced all kinds of pleasures; we know that certain kinds of music and poetry in certain contexts are pleasurable; therefore we can be sure that Epicurus appreciated music and poetry, and that the issue he had was something deeper than is superficially portrayed by his enemies.

And anyone who suggests that pleasure of any kind is anti-Epicurean is himself displaying that he does not understand Epicurus. "PD8. No pleasure is a bad thing in itself, but the things which produce certain pleasures entail disturbances many times greater than the pleasures themselves. VS 37. When confronted by evil nature is weak, but not when faced with good; for pleasures make it secure but pains ruin it."

Post by "Elli" of May 27, 2019 at 9:53 AM

I do not why it pleases me to hear that melody by Morricone entitled "the ecstasy of gold", and why when I created a video with an article on "epicurean friendship" by G. Kaplanis in the Garden of Thessaloniki, I had put this melody as a background. 😊

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOr0na6mKJQ>

Post by "Cassius" of May 27, 2019 at 9:55 AM

Very nice - I do not think I have ever heard that!

Post by "Elli" of May 27, 2019 at 10:32 AM

I just found the WHY, I like this melody !!! This melody is connected with those movies that have guns and shooting.

My epicurean friend George Kaplanis likes the exercise with guns and shooting. I like guns and shooting too, but I did not try to exercise with guns because I'm afraid of the guns... George's fearlessness of the guns makes me to imagine that I can do it too. That sense of his fearlessness makes me to feel pleasure. The fearlessness of Epicurus on the issue of death makes us to not fear too, and any fear when is eliminated it produces pleasure. So, Epicurus or Philodemus on the issue of music he wanted to eliminate the fears that provoked by Plato et.al. Because Plato and his gang had spread around fears that are against our pleasure.

When a composer composes a melody, we feel something of his hedonic calculation among pleasure and pain. This is reinforced when the melody has verses with words.

Post by “Godfrey” of May 27, 2019 at 3:03 PM

This Morricone music gives me pleasure because it takes me back to the 1970s. Clint Eastwood movies were quite popular then, which led to an interest in the so called (perhaps inappropriately) "spaghetti Westerns" that Eastwood had been in in the 60s. My friends and I would sneak beers into the theater where we would watch his latest movies and have quite a good time.

I haven't seen many of his movies since then, but his latest, "The Mule", is a tale of a life poorly lived and is an interesting bookend to the Sergio Leone movies. I'm curious if the Leone movies are worth another look: I just remember them as really bleak westerns with great music.

Post by “Elli” of May 27, 2019 at 3:19 PM

by the same director Sergio Leone there is a movie of 1959 entitled "The last days of Pompeii" that is the city near our known Herculaneum.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDpKCkxtP-Q>

Post by “Hiram” of May 28, 2019 at 3:27 PM

Interesting discussion.

I'm curious to know what others think (since Lucretius in DRN often acts as an anthropologist and looks at primitive humans, anticipating that their behavior initiated as a natural response to the environment and then evolved via culture / rational management by people) about an observation I've made for many years:

In nature documentaries, when monkeys and other species engage in musical expressions (calls and call and response behavior), it's typically TERRITORIAL, or for protection from dangers (also in a way an expression of social and territorial instinct) and to this day a lot of music in our species is also territorial or patriotic or enhances a sense of tribal identity. Singing together is the ultimate "cultural machine" to create a collective psyche. People sometimes go to churches / temples just for the music, and this gives them a sense of community.

And so it has always seemed to me that music has always played a role in consolidating social units, and appeals to the social / tribal instinct.

This does not exclude romantic / pair-bonding and other uses of music.

I don't remember if Lucretius mentions music and how it originated, but I do know that he mentions music / dancing in his portion on neural pathways where he talks about habituation

<https://theautarkist.wordpress.com/2016/06/20/hap...e-rerum-natura/>

Post by "Hiram" of May 28, 2019 at 4:13 PM

Also, this ties to Polystratus' claim that the noble and the vile and pleasure / aversion are REAL natural phenomena even if subjective, and that they exist as relational properties of bodies.

I say this because watching a documentary about primate evolution, I learned that the universally REPULSIVE reaction humans have to the sound of FINGER NAILS ON CHALKBOARD has been traced back to the sound of certain monkeys who warn each other of danger. Like other triggers for fight-or-flight instinct, this sound immediately awakens all the tribe members in some monkey troops and is used to warn of predators.

So the theory is that our repulsion to this is due to a VERY ANCIENT inherited ancestral memory from our remote past as early primates.

And if so, this means that at least CERTAIN sound vibrations, tones or rhythms have this property and other properties that are NATURAL, not cultural, and then via culture we have

rationally and consciously built on these initial natural drives to develop musical expressions, among other behaviors.

On the relationship between pleasure and rhythm / anticipation of sounds and repetition, we have of course Marian Diamond's study on chanting and its slowing the heart rate and blood pressure.

Post by “Hiram” of May 28, 2019 at 4:23 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

So it seems most likely to me that they were not campaigning against music itself, but against the idea that music can embody something (ideal forms) that don't exist. Probably this kind of view also describes what Epicurus was saying about poetry.

What Philodemus said was that PHILOSOPHY HEALS THROUGH WORDS, Logos heals the soul.

While reason (and words) is not in the canon, it has a therapeutic / healing role in the practice of philosophy itself.

The idea is that we can reason with our unlimited desires to bring them under control, and in this form of cognitive therapy I have to cite Principal Doctrine 20

<https://theautarkist.wordpress.com/2017/03/31/dio...al-doctrine-20/>

So it's not just about being anti idealism, there's a specific therapeutic utility that was being discussed in the Philodeman scroll with regards to music, and he was arguing that music could only heal the soul (through the practices of repetition and memorization, etc.) IF it contained the words of healing philosophy, which were the ones that had the potency to heal.

Post by “Mousikos” of May 29, 2019 at 7:03 AM

[Quote from Hiram](#)

So it's not just about being anti idealism, there's a specific therapeutic utility that was being discussed in the Philodeman scroll with regards to music, and he was arguing

that music could only heal the soul (through the practices of repetition and memorization, etc.) IF it contained the words of healing philosophy, which were the ones that had the potency to heal.

And this is what I **completely** disagree with. There is legitimate music therapy, using instrumental music, that affects moods and feelings, and facilitates physical healing. For some pointers, see <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/healing-t...ic-201511058556>

Post by “Cassius” of May 29, 2019 at 7:39 AM

Mousikos I read back through the thread to try to be sure I understand your point, but I am not sure that I do. Can you clarify what it is you are agreeing or disagreeing with. We are talking in layers here without quotes from Philodemus to be certain of what we are talking about. That's what bothers me about the whole issue of using these texts, though I understand and share the desire to try to use them.

I don't really know WHAT Philodemus is saying without precise texts to dissect.

So my question Mousikos is could you state more clearly your view? Are you disagreeing with Hiram's statement that music needs Words/Philosophy in order to be "healing"?

If that is what Philodemus said I would probably disagree with it too, but it's hard to even talk about this without listing out what Philodemus said with some degree of quotation.

Post by “Hiram” of May 29, 2019 at 1:35 PM

[Cassius](#) you have the scroll in French. You can put it through google translate and use online dictionaries.

[Mousikos](#) I suppose there are different things that are meant by “therapeutic”. Philodemus said that as far as philosophy, it heals through words, and I think I remember seeing the word logos. I take great pleasure in music, but it seems like the benefits of different kinds of music do not correlate with the benefits of memorizing the healing words of philosophy. These are specifically meant to treat concrete, specific false beliefs like fear of death and of gods, or unlimited desires. The benefits of music do not correlate to this and are non-philosophical. They are different.

Post by “Cassius” of May 29, 2019 at 2:29 PM

Hiram I am not saying this in frustration at you but at the situation - **I want to see QUOTES!!**

Unfortunately it's not at the top of my list to find a decent scanner, OCR, and then work through Google translate. At some point I probably will, but in the meantime I just have to wait before I form a firm opinion.

[Quote from Hiram](#)

Philodemus said that as far as philosophy, it heals through words, and I think I remember seeing the word logos.

I can imagine the possibility that he said exactly that, but I would not presume that he is endorsing words as the only way of engaging in philosophy. Is the study of nature limited to words, or is it not done primarily through the senses. Is the study of nature different from philosophy, or is one a part of the other? There are so many opportunities for false starts if we don't have reliable quotations.

Post by “Hiram” of May 29, 2019 at 3:51 PM

Alright so here is what I wrote years back about Philodemus' scroll on music:

<http://societyofepicurus.com/reasonings-on-philodemus-on-music/>

Here, he says that the origins of dance were unthinking, uncontrolled, as if by nature:

Quote

It is not true that the men of yore exercised in dance ... with the purpose not only of seeing their bodies gain utility and to reach the dispositions of good people ... but also to carry in their soul equally the good performance that they saw manifesting throughout their bodies, and to try to keep their soul constantly beautiful for the rest of their lives.

In fact, neither of these reasons was the origin of humanity's first impulse to dance, or of its transmission by those who received it ... It was, on the contrary, their ignorance

of nature and exultation that brought them to form, **in a manner that was instinctive and unthinking**, as if forced, a circle in order to produce with their hands, their feet, and other parts of the bodies the organized movements ...

This, again, is consistent with the tendency in Epicurus and Lucretius to assign the origin of many cultural forms to nature **ORIGINALLY**, which then **AND ONLY AFTER** was refined, perfected, and developed rationally by culture.

Concerning our questions about the therapeutic use of music, he argues that people who can't sing or dance are able to be virtuous, so he rejects the idea that **ONLY** the irrational aspect of music is therapeutic (he words it like this: "provides harmony to the soul").

He also argues that **ONLY** reason "softens our souls and would deprive us of our savagery". He juxtaposes reason and **UNREASON** for comparison, accusing unreason of inventing things that are 1. not "produced by nature", and 2. have no importance.

These are the direct Philodemus quote that I lifted from the scroll:

Quote

If they say that only these irrational realities provide harmony to the soul, then their error is double: it means those who can't sing or dance, or who are unfamiliar with music, can't be virtuous.

... And those that say that we are sweetened by music because she **softens our souls and would deprive them of their savagery**, one may consider them perfect imbeciles. **In fact, it is only reason-because she teaches that none of the strange things that unreason invents has been produced by nature and that, furthermore, nothing of what she produces has any importance-that can perfectly reach this result**, once it has attained its perfection, and while she is still on the path to perfection, it can alleviate in proportion.

... The Epicureans do not underestimate music for lack of culture; to them, only philosophy counts.

Post by "Elli" of May 30, 2019 at 3:59 AM

Music therapy, fragrance therapy, chromo therapy, logos therapy, choir therapy. All these are pseudosciences for our manipulation and making us anthropoids of the masses.

Pseudosciences, indeed, are doing a great job for making us more idiots.

However, I do not read in any survival sources that Epicurus used somewhere the word "logos". Logos is a dangerous word that is used first by Heraclitus and meant a philosophical word/logic based on eimarmeni and fate, and then this word was taken gratefully by the stoics and christians to transform it to a god for being crucified and then resurrected to the heavens.

Philodemus did not know what would follow when he used this word.

Epicurus speaks for prudence that is higher than philosophy and teaches us in reality through our experiences past, present and expectation of future, how to set our limits on pleasure and pain for any desire and any issue. Prudence can't be achieved through music therapy, fragrance therapy, chromo therapy, logos therapy, choir therapy and the like. And the stomach can't be fulfilled with air.

Moreover, I do not get any clear evidence from anywhere that the music, choring and dancing could eliminate humans' fears on death and god. If those means that are still used by all the people in the societies of men, why then this world is not inhabited by angels ?

Music is just a pleasure, but actually, it neither fulfills the stomach from hunger and thirst nor it builds a shelter to not feel cold at winter nights. Music and the like does not lead to pure pleasure and eudaemonia.

Example how the music and lyrics in a union is a dangerous thing that does not lead a society of men for doing the right hedonic calculation :

Music by Mikis Theodorakis, and verses of the poet "sun of justice" by Odysseas Elytis.

Sun of justice perceivable by the mind (it means the absolute justice by Plato and as given by a god)

and you, myrtle glorifying, (myrtle is the virgin Mary)

don't, I beg you (thrice) don't

forget my country! (this means that we the greeks are beggars begging the bigger countries that have more power to not forget us that we live in a country as good christians).

The above song with the music was understood and was sung by the greeks as a revolutionary song. HA HA 😄

What do you don't understand? Idealism keeps well everywhere.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niqrjP1VDeY>

Post by “Cassius” of May 30, 2019 at 5:20 AM

Ell I what do you understand the point of this material to be?

When I read a sentence like "The Epicureans do not underestimate music for lack of culture; to them, only philosophy counts", that means nothing to me at all, and I tend think the lack of meaning arises from the mangling of the text rather than from Philodemus.

I need to spend more time rereading the old academic article that Ed Lee posted because I am not comfortable with any of this yet. I will accept that the fault is mine but I can't yet with confidence state even the most basic position that is supposedly being made by Philodemus on music.

Unless I see exact quotes, with notes as to which words we're perfectly clear and which words were guessed at or even made up, very little of this has much credibility with me.

And one point keeps coming back to me: that these commentators Sen to agree that it was Philodemus' method to quote his enemies followed by his own views and go back and forth. Unless the surviving text is very clear it's possible that what it appears Philodemus is says may be him quoting something he does not believe.

But my main point is that unless we have a clear statement of what words were clear and what were "reconstructed" the final product is little more than speculation.

Post by “Elli” of May 30, 2019 at 6:47 AM

[Cassius](#) you said : When I read a sentence like "The Epicureans do not underestimate music for lack of culture; to them, only philosophy counts", that means nothing to me at all, and I tend think the lack of meaning arises from the mangling of the text rather than from Philodemus.

As I could understand this phrase : "The Epicureans do not underestimate music"... since they do not want to be considered and by themselves and in the societies of men as barbaric, cynics and ascetics i.e. those that have a lack of culture i.e. ethos and habits that unite men in the societies... "but to them, only philosophy counts" here is another issue : Epicureans' teacher Epicurus remarked in his epistle to Meneoceus that prudence (practical reasoning that derives by our experiences) is higher than philosophy, because with prudence we are able for the right hedonic calculus to judge rightly and accordingly on the issue of music and the like (arts) all the hyperboles (extravagances) or dangerous messages (see my example).

Because on the wise man we read also :

-The wise man is the only person who can converse correctly about music and poetry, but he will not himself compose poems. (Epicurus was right the most of the poems have lack of clarity. The only he wanted is clarity in written and oral texts. Lucretius's poem DRN has clarity, and I am sure that it would be considered by Epicurus as a masterpiece).

-The wise man will find more pleasure than other men in public spectacles. (Public spectacles were the celebrations for gods, and also the theaters that were built all over Greece in which music and dancing were united with roles of actors).

- The wise man will not live like a Cynic, as he says in his second book on Lives, nor become a beggar. Because the wise man will show a regard for his reputation to such an extent as to avoid being despised. (the cynics, the enemies of Hellas, as Epicurus said. Cynics, the ascetics, sociopath-antisocial that were living as beggars without doing anything creative, and when they were encountering people in the Agora, laughing at them, and criticizing ironically the others either for their achievements or wrongdoings).

Post by "Cassius" of May 30, 2019 at 8:13 AM

@Nate - You kind of got the ball rolling on the subject of music with your music theory post, in response to my question about major and minor key. But aside from Post 11 above [Music Theory And Epicurean Philosophy](#) I am not sure I recall your weighing at a "high level" on this Philodemus discussion. I know I am distracted and probably making mistakes because I am not focused on this enough, but I would be interested in your (or any others' comments) organized like this:

(1) What philosophical positions on music were taken by pre-Epicurean / non-Epicurean Greek philosophers?

(2) What position did Epicurus take in response to those previous philosophers' positions? (I am presuming that Philodemus is following Epicurus, which I think we should presume unless there is some clear evidence otherwise, else this whole discussion is pretty hopeless.)

Other than questions which would arise from Epicurean rejection of Platonic idealism, such as "Can music embody a particular idea?" I don't even have a clear picture of what the issues are.

(I edited this to reference post eleven, and combine three questions into two.)

Post by “Elli” of May 30, 2019 at 9:45 AM

(1) What philosophical issues are involved in music?

(2) What positions on those issues were taken by pre-Epicurean / non-Epicurean Greek philosophers?

I found some issues in the following :

Still on this issue of the nature of music, it has to be pointed out that in the passage of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems* to which reference was made above it is admitted that not everything in musical sounds imitates character (*ethos*), for this applies to the arrangement of higher and lower sounds but not to their mixture (*mixis*) ; further, consonance (*sumphonia*) is expressly said to have no moral character. Probably mixture is supposed to contribute to consonance, in any case that the beauty which music presents and the pleasure it procures depends on these aspects. There are thus two dimensions of music, one which has to do with character and the other which has not, but which both possess aesthetic significance. Plato must have been aware of this fact, for, as we have already seen, in *Republic* IV, in a context in which he talks of music, he is induced to point out that certain qualities, such as gracefulness and gracelessness, are also to be found in the products of painting, of architecture, of weaving, and so forth (cf. 400e ff.). In the case of these disciplines in fact certain formal qualities of beauty, such as symmetry, which have not to do with character, play an important role (as we shall see below, ch. 29), but there must be a point of contact between them and music, which lies precisely in the fact that certain formal qualities of beauty are also to be found in music. It has to be admitted, however, that in the passage I am considering Plato is not relying on any such neat distinction, for he is willing to talk of moral traits, such as the negative ones of evil disposition and illiberality, and of images of evil (*eikones kakias*) also in the case of the products of those other arts.

Finally, it has to be stressed that the doctrine which is present in the dialogues also finds a significant expression in a passage of the *Timaeus* in which, after having considered the usefulness of the sense of sight, he considers the usefulness of the sense of hearing and that of voice. The passage deserves to be quoted in full :“For not only was speech (*logos*) designed for this same purpose, to which it contributes in the largest measure, but also that part of music (*mousiké*) that is serviceable with respect to the hearing of sound¹⁶ is given to us for the sake of harmony. Harmony, having motions akin (*sungeneis*) to the revolutions of the soul within us, has been given by the Muses to him whose dealings with them is guided by intelligence, not for irrational pleasure (*hedone alogos*), which appears now to be its utility, but as an ally against the disharmony that has come into the revolution of the soul, to bring it into order and consonance (*sumphonia*) with itself. Rhythm, again, was given us from the same entities as a

help to the same intent, for in most of us our condition is lacking in measure and poor in grace." (47c6-e2). The parallel he draws here with sight lies in the fact that the observation of the ordered revolutions in the heavens, which are a manifestation of (cosmic) intelligence, is of help in bringing order in the motions of thought inside us (cf. 47b). The idea that there are revolutions in the souls that are similar to those of the celestial bodies was introduced in a former part of the dialogue. It implies that the same harmony is present in the heavens and in our soul, when this reproduces in itself, by imitation (*mimoumenoi*, 47c3), the order of the heavens. (The same suggestion, in the simplified form that there is an imitation [*mimesis*] of the divine harmony in mortal movements, comes back in 80b.)

Music is thus seen as an expression of this cosmic attunement and concord. This position is close to Pythagoreanism and goes beyond the idea that harmonies and rhythms are imitations of movements in our soul. (The Pythagoreans notoriously asserted that there is a celestial music - what will be called, anachronistically, the music of the spheres - that is inaudible to most men. Plato was certainly familiar with this view and, though he probably did not take it seriously, it remains significant that he supposed that the world-soul is divided into harmonic intervals and made the celestial movements depend on this 'musical' structure, cf. *Timaeus*, 35b ff., together with the commentary by F.M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, London 1937, pp. 66-72. [17](#)) 40

On the other hand, there remains the idea that there is an affinity (*sungeneia*) between them and those in our soul, for only in this way can music exercise the effect of introducing order in the movements in our soul. This is seen as the aim that is to be pursued by humanly made music. Presumably pleasure is to be rejected as an independent (alternative) aim of music (as of the other beautiful arts) and as 'irrational', but not when it arises from an accord between the harmony in the musical sounds and that of the 'revolutions' in the soul. In fact, when coming back to this motif, in 80b, Plato is not excluding any pleasant reaction to the reception of harmony in one's soul, but keeps distinct pleasure (*hedoné*) as what is felt by silly people from the good cheer (*euphrosune*) which is felt by the intelligent ones. As to education, this must be meant to realize this sort of accord. (*Paideia* is not mentioned in the *Timaeus* in this connection, but later on, in considering vice as ignorance resulting from lack of *paideia*, cfr. 86d-e, and in presenting *paideia* itself as the remedy for this situation in 87b. Gymnastics, music and philosophy are clearly taken as parts of *paideia* in 88c and said to contribute to a condition of harmony and proportion or equilibrium between body and soul.)

source : <https://journals.openedition.org/etudesplatoniciennes/997>

Post by "Hiram" of May 30, 2019 at 9:53 AM

Someone just sent me this to link @ the music scroll page

The Surprising Benefits Of Playing An Instrument For people of all Ages: Reduce Stress, Learn faster, Improve Your Brain Function And So Much More...

<https://guitarsignal.com/guides/benefit...ing-the-guitar/>

Post by “Elli” of May 30, 2019 at 11:01 AM

Plato is not excluding any pleasant reaction to the reception of harmony in one’s soul, but keeps distinct pleasure (*hedoné*) as what is felt by silly people from the good cheer (*euphrosune*) which is felt by the intelligent ones.

Plato smashed the pleasure to 1000 pieces, and gave ready food for those that want to fool the masses. Higher pleasures for the soul, lower pleasures for the body. Harmony of the soul, disharmony of the body. Soul separated from the body for going straight on heavens or for reincarnation. Music for the soul, music for the body. Pleasure for the silly ones, euphrosyne (cheerful) for intelligent ones. Do not care at all, the spheres in the Universe play music for the harmony and the care of your soul. Who told that “And, when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it.” Ah, Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist* . Bravo Plato and Coelho you are the most "intelligent" men among those that have total ignorance! 😄

Post by “Elli” of May 30, 2019 at 11:51 AM

"Meditate therefore by day and by night with the playing of a guitar and upon the violins and pianos that go with these, whether by yourself and in the company of another guitarist like yourself, and never will your soul be in turmoil either sleeping or waking but you will be living like a god among men, for in no wise does a man resemble a mortal creature who lives among the immortal guitars, violins and pianos blessings". - Pseudo-Epicurean.

Post by “Elli” of May 30, 2019 at 12:06 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/970-music-theory-and-epicurean-philosophy/>

Oh, yes, and many of the Nazis were playing guitars, violins, and pianos, but they did not hesitate to spread all the murders and disasters first in Europe, and then in the whole world. And many of the Japanese played instruments and did not hesitate to bombard the Pearl Harbor. And many of the Americans played instruments and they threw atomic bombs to them. Sorry, I do not accept this article for any evidence that the music makes us for finding inner peace, harmony and the like. ELIMINATION OF FEARS does not come from such things. EXPERIENCES in life and prudence do not come from the playing of the guitars. The pleasures of the moment comes from Aristippus the Cyrene. Epicurus in his bed death did not ask for music, he asked for a glass of wine as an analgesic, and as he remembered all the past conversations on philosophy with his friends, and as he cared for the future generations with the children of Metrodorus. There are many musicians in this world that are idealists and living a life in confusion and fears about death and god.

The article that is posted as above is only speculations/opinions. For me it goes to the pseudoscience. It has the bad smell of <<idealism>> and the fantastic, and it has nothing to do with science and epicurean philosophy.

Post by “Cassius” of May 30, 2019 at 1:12 PM

Life goes by so quickly and time is so short. I want to read that article as soon as I can but haven't yet..... What I AM convinced of, without reading the article, is that that's probably an Epicurus vs Plato debate going through the heart of the music issue.

Post by “Mousikos” of June 1, 2019 at 12:18 AM

[Quote from Hiram](#)

I suppose there are different things that are meant by “therapeutic”. Philodemus said that as far as philosophy, it heals through words, and I think I remember seeing the word logos. I take great pleasure in music, but it seems like the benefits of different kinds of music do not correlate with the benefits of memorizing the healing words of philosophy. These are specifically meant to treat concrete, specific false beliefs like fear of death and of gods, or unlimited desires. The benefits of music do not correlate to this and are non-philosophical. They are different.

Yes, it could be that Philodemus has a specific meaning of *therapeutic* in mind. Obviously, philosophy treating specific false ideas is completely different from music treating emotions and facilitating physical healing. Nevertheless, both are demonstrably therapeutic, in their own way.

Post by “Mousikos” of June 1, 2019 at 12:27 AM

[Quote from elli](#)

Music therapy, fragrance therapy, chromo therapy, logos therapy, choir therapy. All these are pseudosciences for our manipulation and making us anthropoids of the masses. Pseudosciences, indeed, are doing a great job for making us more idiots.

As far as music therapy goes, you are wrong. There is scientific research that shows there are valid applications of music therapy, with real, measurable results. For more information, see <https://www.musictherapy.org/about/quotes/>

Post by “Joshua” of June 1, 2019 at 2:10 AM

We are animals thrown up by the seeds of things, before we are philosophers. Children wailing helpless on the shores of life, before we are men and women. Music doesn't affect us like philosophy does, but it certainly affects us. It affects us like sunlight and verdure, like clear air and space to move in. Penicillin will cure the fool as easily as the wise man, but none will argue for that that it is not medicine. It will purge the disease, but it will not make you strong. You've got to make yourself strong, with discipline and purpose.

With music, you may interrupt the mind's endless restless anxiety. You may take a pause to purge for a time your own fretful neuroses, and begin, in the intervals, to clarify your thoughts. Coming to your senses in a literal way, you will have calmed the turbulence of the mind, and primed the pump of thought for wise recollection. That will be the time for discipline, and right reason. That will be the time to bathe your mind once again in the precepts of true philosophy.

It is true that we frequently squander those moments of elevation, and true that they are not a sufficient condition of happiness. But as men are not gods, we are not always in a mood receptive to wisdom. When I'm frustrated and angry, I am closed off to wisdom. But a little later, when the heart rate has settled and the amygdala calms down, I look back and see how silly I was a moment ago. We need that withdrawal, from stress and anxiety and struggle.

Music, and conversation, and wine, and a walk in the garden may move us into a such a state. Music cultivates the soil of the mind--it will not grow into good on it's own, but if one takes the opportunity to nurture the seed of philosophy in that rich loam, can it fail to bear fruit?