

“We Are the Champions”:

Mousikē and Cultural Chauvinism in Plato’s *Republic*

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“Where then, oh Socrates,
will we find a good singer of such things,
when you leave us?”

“Hellas is large,” he replied,
“oh Cebes, and there are doubtless good men in it,
and many barbarian races.
Among them all seek and examine such a singer,
sparing neither money nor toil,
as there is nothing on which
you could more favorably spend money.”

–Socrates, Plato’s *Phaedo* 78a

Scholarship on Plato and the poets often approaches the topic at the meta-level, investigating the reasoning behind the censoring of poetry in the *Republic* as well as the consistency of Plato’s treatment of poetry. Much ink has been spilt making sense of such tensions as Socrates’ selected purging of the contents of Greek poetry in Books II and III of the *Republic* and his apparent banning of all poetic *mimesis* in Book X,¹ the censure of poetry in the *Republic* yet the celebration of poetic madness in the *Phaedrus*,² and the incongruity of a writer as poetic as Plato condemning poetry.³ Not all commentaries focus on poetry in the abstract, however; some analyze Plato’s use of particular poets, notably Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Solon, Simonides, Aeschylus, and Euripides.⁴ Yet in the vast scholarly literature on Plato and the poets, Plato’s engagement with *non*-Greek poetry has largely gone unexamined.

In the case of the *Republic*, this represents a major oversight. After all, the dialogue opens with Socrates sharing his judgment on Greek versus non-Greek music. As later discussed in greater detail, it is appropriate when investigating poetry in the *Republic* to consider the role of music more broadly, for the Greek word *mousikē* (for which I will use the translation “music” or “the arts” interchangeably) encompasses poetry. Recalling how yesterday he went down to the Piraeus—Athens’ bustling port city and home to its massive population of mostly non-Greek slaves and *metics* or resident aliens—Socrates explains he was there to witness the inaugural staging of the Bendideia and “pray to the goddess,” presumably the Thracian (non-Greek) goddess Bendis.⁵ Socrates says he found both the procession of the Athenians and that of the Thracians “beautiful (καλῆ)” (327a). Though little is known of what these processions entailed, Athenian processions typically involved Athenians of all ages and sexes weaving their way through the city in colorful costume while carrying symbols and ritual objects. Along the way, or upon reaching the sanctuary, there would be performances of music and dance in connection with ritual acts of sacrifice. Socrates’ judgment of the Athenian and Thracian processions therefore likely reflects his attitude towards the Greek and non-Greek *mousikē* each emblemizes. By thus opening the dialogue, Plato alludes to the importance of the intersection between politics, culture, and the arts. He invites readers, in effect, to consider the dialogue’s treatment of poetry, and *mousikē* more generally, in terms of the arts’ embeddedness within particular cultures.

Plato’s interest in the political effects of foreign music re-emerges during the crafting of the city of speech. Despite Socrates’ positivity at the beginning of the dialogue towards incorporating Thracian *mousikē* into Athenian society, when it comes to Kallipolis he recommends guarding against changes to a new form of music. This is because it is essential to expose citizens to the right music, so once that music is discovered and set down in law there must be no innovation. If the music of Kallipolis is truly ideal—that is, if it is best at creating good characters—then it must be preserved; for change from the ideal form of music is necessarily change to a worse form of music. Though the guardians must watch for the internal development of any new forms of music, Socrates implies that the greatest danger comes from visitors from abroad when he says that if a man “should arrive in our city” expressing the desire to exhibit his skill in imitating all things, he “should be sent away to another city” because “there is no such man in our city among us, nor is it lawful for such a man to arise among us” (398a–b). Any poet whose poetry does not conform to the strict musical requirements of Kallipolis must, in other words, become or remain a foreigner.

How does one reconcile Socrates' expressed approval of foreign music at the dialogue's opening with his hostility towards it during the discussion of Kallipolis? This article argues that, upon close examination, the music of Kallipolis blends Greek and non-Greek elements. This suggests Socrates intends not to exclude foreign poetry, but, conversely, to ensure its inclusion. Socrates' insistence that the ideal city not change from a form of music that, as it turns out, harmonizes the Greek and the non-Greek makes sense as a response to the Athenians' segregation of Athenian and Thracian *mousikē* during the Bendideia. In light of evidence that Athenians were motivated to sanction the cult of Bendis less out of appreciation for Thracian culture than out of desire to shore up their own domination, and that Greek poetry played a major role in fostering this attitude of cultural chauvinism, Kallipolis' harmonizing of Greek and non-Greek represents an improvement upon Athens' approach to music. It reveals the sanctioning of the Bendideia to be but a half-measure, a token gesture that in actuality betrays the Athenians' unwillingness to harmonize with other cultures. Against the backdrop of this false harmony, Socrates recommends a musical education that promotes a simple harmony of two cultures. Kallipolis is not Socrates' final word, however. Rather, it represents a stepping-stone on the way towards the image of the cosmos that replaces the Homeric model: the eight distinct notes of the Sirens—matching the eight notes of the diatonic scale, each corresponding to a particular culture—forming a perfect harmony as presented in the Myth of Er. As the reference to the death-luring Sirens indicates, such a complex and divine form of *mousikē* may represent the peak of philosophic education rather than its beginnings. Nonetheless, this suggests the philosopher brings to political education the goal of promoting harmony between cultures, if only on a limited scale.

I. *Mousikē*, Education, and Politics

The topic of music first arises when discussing the education of the class of citizens whose job it is to guard the city. Socrates has just elicited his interlocutors' agreement that the character of the guardians is like that of a noble dog—spirited when defending its master from enemy attacks, yet gentle towards friends. To this end, Socrates proposes that guardians receive a dual education consisting of “gymnastics for bodies, and music (μουσική) for the soul” (376e). The goal of the guardians' education is to cultivate the proper character by tuning the spirited and philosophic parts of the soul “to the proper degree of tension and relaxation” (412a). If the *thumos* or spirit is tuned too high, then the *logistikon* or philosophic part will be drowned out and the guardian will

be savage and cruel. Conversely, if the philosophic part is tuned too high, then the guardian will be soft and weak-willed owing to a lack of spiritedness. It is important, therefore, that guardians receive the proper exposure to music.

The assumption that music can be used to shape character would not have seemed strange to most Greeks. To understand why, it is necessary first to grasp the meaning of “music” in the ancient Greek world. Any art over which the Muses preside, “music (μουσική)” in the ancient sense refers to a union of instrumental music, poetic speech, and dance.⁶ Hence, when Socrates first proposes education in music, he reminds that music consists not merely of rhythm and melody, but also “speeches (λόγους)” — both “true (ἀληθές)” speech and “myths (μύθους)” (376e–377a). Asserting the importance of the latter form of speech in educating children, Socrates launches into a discussion of “myth makers (τοῖς μυθοποιοῖς)” occupying most of Books II and III and reappearing in Book X. These mythmakers turn out to be the poets whose stories Socrates finds in need of censorship. Modern readers often struggle to make sense of why during a discussion on music Socrates quickly shifts to talking about poetry, yet for Plato's contemporaries the transition would have seemed seamless. While purely instrumental music existed—often accompanying libations, sacrifices, supplications, and other ceremonial rites—music was more commonly thought of in conjunction with poetry, as poets typically performed their stories to musical accompaniment. This is seen in Homeric epic, which depicts bards singing the stories of famous heroes. Even with the growing popularity of written work in Plato's day, poems were generally still sung in public, performative contexts, such as at *symposia* or festivals. Consequently, when Greeks thought of music, they inevitably thought of the performance of famous poems. It is therefore appropriate to think of the dialogue's censorship of poetry within the larger context of the censorship of music, for poetry is subsumed under the broader category of music.⁷

Both the lyrical and the sonic aspects of music are regarded in the *Republic* as capable of exercising immense influence on the soul. In terms of a musical work's speeches or lyrics, Socrates details at length the damage done to souls exposed at a young age to myths that depict gods and other heroes committing injustices such as egregious acts of violence and deception. Hearing repeatedly that the most celebrated beings engage in unjust behaviors habituates one to delight in these behaviors. It is important, therefore, that those training to be guardians hear tales that only celebrate truly just characters so they will gravitate towards good behaviors. Equally important, however, is the musical mode or the manner of rhythm and melody. In fact, it may be more

important. As Nina Valiquette Moreau argues, in Platonic thought “music assimilates itself to the soul as a kind of extra-rational perception or recognition that, in turn, prepares the soul for reasoned judgment.”⁸ This occurs owing to the structural similarities of music and soul. Even if good tales are told, they cannot have the proper effect if the wrong musical mode accompanies them. Singing of a hero’s just actions to a tune that elicits feelings of displeasure would likely orient guardians to develop distaste for justice. Hence, both components of music—the lyrics and the musical mode—must work together to produce harmony.

Without guardians who possess harmonious souls, the city itself cannot be in harmony. Socrates makes clear the direct connection between music and politics in the following passage in Book IV:

So therefore, to put it briefly, the guardians of the city must cleave to this, so that they are not corrupted unawares but may in every way be on guard against it: not to allow innovations concerning gymnastics or music contrary to the established order. [...] For one must be aware of changes to a new form of music, taking it to be a danger to the whole. For nowhere are the ways of music (μουσικῆς τρόποι) moved without the greatest political laws being moved, as Damon says and I am persuaded. (424b–c)

Drawing on the work of Damon—an Athenian music theorist considered the leading authority on the moral effects of music—Socrates claims that music is not mere “entertainment,” but rather the foundation on which the entire social order rests. If guardians are not exposed to the right music, their society will develop bad *nomoi*, i.e., bad laws and customs.⁹ As Robert Wallace explains, “in Damon’s view (as Plato represents it), musical styles not only ‘fit’ behavior, they also determine or shape it, both for individuals and for society.”¹⁰ The closest Plato comes to explaining the mechanisms by which music influences politics is through Adeimantus’ comment that music “ever so little establishes itself, gently flowing underneath into the characters and habits; and from there it emerges larger in contracts among one another, and from the contracts it attacks the laws and regimes with much, oh Socrates, licentiousness, until ending with everything private and public turned upside down” (424d–e). This statement accords with the anthropological principle that the city is man writ large. Individual education matters because individuals are responsible for making and practicing the rules of their society, and they bring their education to bear on these political

activities. Hence, if music plays a central role in character formation, it follows that music will shape the character of a society.

One implication of the close relationship between music and *nomoi* is that if one wants to understand the nature of any given society, one can discover clues to its identity in its music. In essence, music can serve as a proxy for the general character of the whole society. Ancient Greeks generally believed that certain musical modes corresponded with particular regions, and that the type of music principally heard was expressive of the dominant moral character of each region. The *Republic* takes this idea further, suggesting a distinction might also be made between societies that feature a single musical mode and those that incorporate multiple modes. On one end of the spectrum lie timocratic regimes like Sparta, which generally emphasize a single mode: the spirited melodies and rhythms appropriate for warfare. On the other end of the spectrum are democratic regimes like Athens, which embrace all musical modes due to the multicolored dispositions of their citizens. Democratic people are the most likely to enjoy sweets from a variety of different lands and, according to Socrates, “in likening such food and such a way of life to melody and song in the panharmonic mode and in all rhythms, we would make a correct likeness” (404d–e). Regime types translate, in other words, into correspondent musical types. Regimes that reject diversity are monoharmonic, while those that incorporate the full diversity of human beings are panharmonic.

In the next section, I show why readers must take into account the monoharmonic-to-panharmonic spectrum when interpreting Socrates' warning to guard the city against new forms of music. While this warning may seem to operate to exclude foreign music, close inspection of the music of Kallipolis reveals it to be a harmony of two sets of myths and musical modes: one Greek, one non-Greek. Thus, when Socrates warns against changes to a new form of music, he means changes to either a monoharmonic (single mode) or a panharmonic (all modes) form of music. The music of Kallipolis lies somewhere in between, neither rejecting diversity nor indiscriminately embracing all ways of life. As sections III and IV will argue, this music functions merely as a form of early training, however; guardians must first become habituated to a music that harmonizes two opposing characters or cultures before they can withstand the sublime, panharmonic music of philosophy.

II. The *Mousikē* of Kallipolis: Simple Harmony

Though many have written on the *Republic*'s censuring of Greek music, often unnoted is that Socrates and his interlocutors go on to propose a form of music that harmonizes Greek and non-Greek myths and musical modes. In terms of the speech content of the music of Kallipolis, though Socrates approves of certain lines of Greek poetry (e.g., 389e, 393a), he implies that if they aim to produce citizens who do not do to their friends what they do to their enemies, they will have to look beyond traditional Greek myths. Against the Greek model of unrestrained violence, Socrates recommends a foreign tale of brotherhood, a tale he says is “nothing new [...] but a Phoenician thing” (414c).¹¹ The tale he tells is one of citizens as autochthonous, or as brothers born of the same earth—an unmistakable allusion to the myth of Cadmus. According to this myth, the Phoenician king Cadmus founded the ancient Greek city of Thebes by slaying a dragon and planting its teeth in the ground, from whence sprang a race of fierce, armed men called *Spartoi*. Since these men posed a danger to him, Cadmus threw stones at them until—each thinking a fellow *Spartoi* had hit him—they began fighting each other. The five who survived the slaughter helped Cadmus establish the city.

Socrates' decision to draw not only on the acceptable parts of Greek poetry but also on this non-Greek myth in constructing the music of Kallipolis is strange for two reasons. First, it is curious that the main myth designed to promote social order is not Greek, but non-Greek. This might not seem unusual if there were no such myths on which Socrates could draw in Greek poetry. Greek poetry was filled, however, with autochthony myths. The most popular version of the myth posited that all Athenians were descendants of Erichthonios, who miraculously sprang from the soil of Attica. The myth lent a sense of naturalness to the city, as opposed to the artificiality of cities with foreign founders. The Athenian myth's focus on the origination of the same from the same, on the lack of foreign blood in the Athenian genealogical tree, points to one of the myth's central functions: assuring Athenians of their superiority over foreigners.¹² From this it should be clear just how scandalous it is that Socrates recommends that the ideal city draw on the Phoenician myth of autochthony, rather than the customary Athenian myth. Through the device of literary allusion, Plato reminds his fellow Athenians that they are not the only ones who believe they are indigenous to the land, and that such myths are mere social constructions not to be taken as literal truth.

The allusion to Cadmus in Socrates' use of the Phoenician myth is strange, secondly, because Cadmus' founding of Thebes is a story of conflict and loss—hardly a fitting source for a myth

designed to promote social harmony and communal salvation.¹³ The noble lie is adopted to convince the guardians, and later the rest of the city, that “as though the land they are in were a mother and nurse, they must plan for and defend it, if anyone attacks it, and they must think of the other citizens as being brothers and born of the earth” (414e). Yet, the genesis of the tale reveals that Kallipolis cannot thrive without the influence of foreigners, thus calling into question the assumed division between citizens and foreigners. Who can justly be excluded from the brotherhood of Kallipolis, if the founding myth itself can be traced back to foreigners? Might other aspects of the city's identity be of foreign origin? If so, in fighting foreigners, are the guardians of Kallipolis, like the *Spartoi*, in some sense fighting themselves?

That Plato connects Kallipolis' myth of autochthony with the founding of Thebes is additionally illuminating. In Greek drama, Thebes serves as an “anti-Athens” or “mirror opposite of Athens,” a place where disorder and tragedy reign.¹⁴ Thebes is the land of Dionysus, descendent of Cadmus. Typically presented in the Greek pantheon as a foreign god, an outsider from the east, Dionysus brings chaos everywhere he goes. Nothing illustrates this more palpably than Euripides' *Bacchae*, where Dionysus' arrival occasions the destabilization of a formerly well-ordered society. By the end of the play, everything the city considers sacred comes undone. The old become young, men transform into women, and mothers kill their own young.¹⁵ Like wine, of which Dionysus is the god, the foreigner Dionysus breaks down all boundaries, making the impermissible permissible. Plumbing the depths of Socrates' seemingly off-handed remark that the noble lie is in fact a “Phoenician thing” one thus discovers the personification of barbarism at the heart of Kallipolis' educational project. The music used to educate Kallipolis' guardians to act boldly towards foreigners and gently towards fellow citizens draws for its content from the mythology of a place that epitomizes foreignness. In this way, Plato subtly exposes the discordance in Kallipolis' treatment of foreigners as natural enemies (470c).¹⁶

If there were any doubt after studying its lyrical content that the music of Kallipolis blends the Greek and non-Greek, these doubts are further dispelled when Socrates and his interlocutors arrive at a discussion of the second aspect of music: “the manner of song and melody” (398c). Specifically, he considers the proper harmonic mode and rhythm, which he says must fit with the speech. Given the kind of character the music must inculcate, Socrates eliminates the “wailing” modes—namely, the “mixed Lydian” and the “tight Lydian”—and the “soft” modes “suitable for symposia,” including the Ionian and some Lydian modes. Left are two modes: the Dorian and the

Phrygian. According to Aristotle, the Dorian is the mode most capable of inducing one to act “moderately and steadily,” whereas the Phrygian has an “inspiring (ἐνθουσιαστικὸς)” or stimulating effect (*Politics* 1340b1–5). Put differently, the Dorian is a grave and serious mode typically associated with military music, whereas the Phrygian is a wild and playful mode commonly associated with orgiastic ecstasy. Aristotle critiques Socrates’ decision to include both modes, rather than the Dorian alone, on two counts. First, he contends that the effect of the Phrygian mode corresponds with that of the *aulos*; it thus makes no sense for Socrates to allow the Phrygian mode yet forbid the *aulos*. Second, Aristotle argues that the proper mode for education is the Dorian, which is “most expressive of a manly character,” unlike the Phrygian mode, which is “orgiastic (ὀργιαστικά)” and “emotional (παθητικά)” (*Politics* 1342a28).¹⁷ The mode is aptly named, as Phrygia is often considered the other birthplace of Dionysus. Despite Aristotle’s critiques, Plato’s ideal city integrates rather than suppresses the Dionysian impulses present in mankind. Just as the lyrical content of the music of Kallipolis drew on a non-Greek myth, the melody incorporates a harmonic mode associated with non-Greeks. The music of Kallipolis represents a harmonizing, then, of Greek and non-Greek.

In light of the harmony of Greek and non-Greek present in the music of Kallipolis, Socrates’ decision to reject panharmonic instruments—or those capable of playing a variety of notes—might seem contradictory. Socrates’ prime example of a panharmonic instrument, the *aulos*, could emit multiple sounds from each aperture as opposed to the singular sound made by striking a string on the lyre. It is therefore rejected. As with the noble lie that formed the speech content of Kallipolis’ music, Socrates insists, “*It’s nothing new we’re doing, my friend [...] in choosing Apollo and Apollo’s instruments ahead of Marsyas and his instruments*” (399e, emphasis added). This time, however, the reference is not to a Phoenician tale, but to a Phrygian one (Herodotus 7.26). According to the myth, Athena invented the *aulos*, but threw it away when she discovered it ruined her beauty by making her cheeks puff out when she played it. Picking up the discarded instrument in Phrygia, the satyr Marsyas became so proficient at playing it that he dared to challenge the god Apollo to a musical contest. Judged by the Muses, the contest resulted in Marsyas’ defeat when, unlike Apollo with his lyre, Marsyas proved incapable of playing his instrument while hanging upside down. Consequently, the satyr was skinned alive and his hide nailed to a tree. Again, Socrates references a myth whose violence seems to undercut the intended effect of instilling gentleness in the soul through music. In this case, the violence is directed towards Marsyas. Is it a

coincidence that, in the *Symposium*, Alcibiades compares Socrates to Marsyas, noting his ability through words alone to send listeners into a frenzy (215a–e)? Could the rejection of the *aulos* actually be a symbol of Athens' rejection of Socrates and, by extension, of philosophic discourse, with its capacity to speak in various ways?

An indication that this may be so is found in the lines following the reference to the Apollo-Marsyas myth. Whereas Glaucon swears “by Zeus” that they have not done anything new, Socrates swears “by the dog” that they have purged the city—a swear unique to Socrates that refers to the dog-headed Egyptian god Anubis, whose job it was to weigh souls in the afterlife (399e). As this shows, Socrates speaks a more panharmonic language than would be allowed in a Greek version of Kallipolis. This self-negation only serves, however, to demonstrate the problem with Glaucon's assumption that Kallipolis will be Greek (470e).¹⁸ Returning to the musical backdrop of the *Republic*, the Bendideia, the next section shows why it is plausible to interpret Socrates' discussion of the music of Kallipolis as an attempt to break the spell that Greek poetry has cast on his interlocutors: the spell of cultural chauvinism. The power of this spell is dramatized in three ways: (1) through the separation of Athenians and Thracians at the Bendideia, (2) through the efforts of Socrates' *metic* interlocutors to blend in by mimicking the evocation of exclusively Greek poetry in Athenian discourse, and (3) through the prejudice against non-Greeks that Socrates' Greek interlocutors exhibit even as they critique Greek poetry.

III. The Cultural Chauvinism of Greek Music

To understand why Socrates proposes guarding a form of music that harmonizes the Greek and the non-Greek, one must return to the music that provides the backdrop for the entire conversation—the music of the festival of Bendis. The earliest evidence dates the inaugural celebration of the Bendideia to around 429/8 B.C. This was a momentous event, as it was the first time a group of foreigners had been granted *enktēsis*, or the right to own property (*IG* II² 1283). Generally, Athens restricted land ownership to citizens and to exceptional foreigners who had performed great services for the city. Allowing Thracian residents of the Piraeus to own land on which to build a religious shrine was thus a major symbol of their welcoming into the community of Athens. According to Robert Garland, by the end of the fourth century B.C. so many foreign cults had entered Athens and received state sanctioning to build temples that this was likely no longer seen as an exclusive privilege.¹⁹ Though the term “multiculturalism” is anachronistic, the

Bendideia represents one of the first major movements towards greater incorporation into Athenian society of Athens' growing *metic* population.

Yet as Socrates' description of the separate processions of Athenians and Thracians indicates, in practice the Bendideia worked as much to include Thracian immigrants as to exclude them. Segregating the *orgeōnes* or cult groups of Bendis into citizen-worshippers and Thracian worshippers allowed Athenians to uphold the Thracians' "otherness" even while elevating their status. As one scholar observes, "two different ethnic groups worship the same goddess, participate in the same sacrifices and festival, are organized into similar associations bearing the same name, yet never mix or fuse into one single group."²⁰ The visible, public segregation of Thracian worshippers into their own procession during the festival is but one obvious manifestation of Athenian ambivalence towards Thracians. Athens' decision to recognize the cult of Bendis itself is strange. Whether through the grotesque customs of Thracians described in Herodotus' *Histories* or the depiction of Thracians committing outrageous acts of violence in tragedies such as Sophocles' *Tereus* and Euripides' *Erechtheus*, Greek poetry typically portrays Thracians as a "primitive and backward society of fierce fighters" whose "[b]elligerence was matched only by rapacity, perfidy, and drunkenness."²¹ Thracians were regarded, in other words, as the epitome of barbarism. If they were to be assimilated into Athenian society, it would have to be while holding them at arm's length.

If Athenians viewed Thracians as exceptionally barbaric, then why did they approve of the cult of Bendis at all? Though much speculation surrounds Athens' motivation for officially sanctioning the Bendideia, the decision was likely in large part political. After all, in the face of a war with Sparta, the Athenians hoped to acquire in the Thracians powerful allies abroad. Honoring a Thracian goddess would have solidified the alliance between Athens and the Thracian king Sitalkes negotiated a few months earlier. Athenians may also have hoped to secure the loyalty of the large Thracian population residing in Athens, many of whom were probably serving in the Athenian military. The festival that sets the backdrop for the conversation of the *Republic* therefore signifies less a merging of cultural horizons than an instrumental use of foreigners for the sake of Athens' empire. Athens thus exhibits one model for dealing with the novel forms of music that other lands bring. Insofar as it suits their political interests, such forms of music are given expression. Little attempt is made, however, to harmonize with these different forms of music. The

Thracians remain an exotic other from whom the Athenians must keep their distance—an attitude learned through portrayals of Thracians in Greek poetry.

That Greek poetry encourages cultural chauvinism is also demonstrated through Socrates' interlocutors. His first two interlocutors, the *metics* Cephalus and Polemarchus, both quote Greek poets as sources of authority for their understandings of justice. In doing so, they mimic the speech patterns of Athenians, performing in a way that renders them virtually indistinguishable from full-fledged citizens. Though they would later be persecuted by the Thirty Tyrants, in the dialogue's dramatic setting during the Peloponnesian War, Cephalus and Polemarchus represent wealthy, well-integrated *metics* who understand the unspoken rule that to live in Athens they must pass themselves off as best they can as Athenians; this means quoting Greek poetry, not their native Sicilian poetry, despite its flourishing state in this time period.²² Moreover, though Socrates' Greek interlocutors, Glaucon and Adeimantus, exhibit greater comfort with criticizing Greek poetry, they too continually demonstrate a preference for Greeks over non-Greeks. In light of all this, the protected harmonizing of Greek and non-Greek in the music of Kallipolis seems like a step towards ameliorating the typical Athenian treatment of non-Greek music. As I argue in the next section, the music of the cosmos in the Myth of Er suggests that mature philosophic education builds on this model of musical education as a simple harmony of two cultures, attempting to teach the value of harmonizing with various cultures.

IV. The Music of Philosophy: A Complex Harmony

Whereas Plato begins the dialogue with the Bendideia and its musical model of diversity without harmony, he ends with a more truly harmonic music composed of diverse notes, presented through the Myth of Er. The myth tells of the death of a soldier named Er who returned to life twelve days later to convey what he had seen during his time in the afterlife. As Claudia Baracchi argues, Er is a warrior but he is also “an other image of the philosopher,” for like the philosopher he brings to his fellows a message of striving to learn what makes a good life and to develop the virtues such a life requires.²³ Plato's casting of the warrior-philosopher Er as “by race a Pamphylian” hints that to be a philosopher one must exhibit a panharmonic nature, for “Pamphylian” is derived from the Greek words *παν*—the neuter form of the word meaning “all”—and *φυλή*, which means “race” or “tribe.” Er therefore comes from a place of “all races.” Why does Plato specify Er's origins? What is symbolized by the meaning of the name Pamphylia, a region not in Greece proper but rather in

Asia Minor? Does it represent the ultimate equalizing of mankind that takes place in death?²⁴ Could it signify that Er's myth is a tale for all mankind?²⁵ Both of these interpretations suggest a fundamental unity among the world's myriad cultures, a common humanity.

Er's image of the cosmos reiterates the motif of unity with diversity. According to Er, there exists a "spindle of Necessity" whose whorl, like a nesting doll, contains eight whorls of varying colors lying within one another. From above, the rims of these whorls look like circles and "upon each of its circles stands a Siren being carried around with it, uttering a single sound (φωνὴν μίαν), one note (ἓνα τόνον); out of all eight (ὀκτὼ) producing the accord of a single harmony (μίαν ἁρμονίαν)" (616c–617b). Around the whorl and equidistant to one another sit the Fates—Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos—who "sing to the Sirens' harmony (ἁρμονίαν)" (617c). Plato alludes here to Pythagoras' famous theory of the harmony of the spheres, which holds that the heavenly bodies are separated from one another by intervals corresponding to the harmonic length of strings and that the movement of these bodies produces a celestial music audible only to those who escape the bondage of the sensory world. Drawing on Pythagoras' theory, the eight whorls on the spindle of Necessity represent the eight notes of the diatonic scale. The highest of all harmonies in the *Republic* thus brings together a series of distinct notes that, played together, make up a single, beautiful chord.

Most importantly, against the cultural chauvinism that Greek music encourages, Er's myth of the afterlife can be seen to promote a harmony of diverse cultures. Plato did not need to specify that there were eight different notes; it would have sufficed to mention that the Sirens and the Fates sing in harmony. Again, the detail that eight different notes produce the cosmic harmony most likely serves as an allusion to the diatonic scale. This scale consists of seven different modes and a repeated octave. The name of each mode strikes home the point: Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian. These are the names of various Greek and non-Greek ethnic groups. From this it is hinted that Plato imagines cosmic harmony as consisting of some harmonious blend of diverse *nomoi*.

What, however, can bring about this harmony? The myth, and arguably the dialogue as a whole, suggests harmony comes from knowledge. The close relationship between the two is indicated in Er's account of the cosmos through the dual images of the Sirens and the Fates producing the eight-noted harmony. In Homer's *Odyssey*, the Sirens boast, "For we know all in wide Troy / the Greeks and Trojans suffered by the will of the gods / And we know all that happens upon the

much-nourishing earth" (12.189–91). The Sirens are therefore connected with omniscience. Likewise, Plato portrays the Fates as having complete knowledge of everything that has passed, is passing, or will pass. Harmony is consequently linked with knowledge. Remembering that in the *Symposium* Alcibiades also compared Socrates to a Siren, perhaps Er's image of perfect cosmic harmony symbolizes the final destination of philosophic education. In other words, Plato rewrites the story of Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens—this time portraying the journey not of the political leader but of the philosopher as involving exposure to the Sirens' panharmonic music. Given that the Siren song lures sailors to their death, perhaps this serves as an indication that philosophical education is best suited to more mature leaders, as it threatens to lure one away from the body politic. The harmonizing of two cultures in the music of Kallipolis thus represents a kind of musical education safe for leaders in training to hear, preparing them for the finale: the panharmonic music of the spheres.

Notes

1. On the irreconcilability of the two discussions, see Annas. Some resolve the contradiction by arguing that the dialogue prohibits not all poetry, but only imitative poetry (e.g., Greene; Collingwood 46–50). More persuasive, however, is the argument that imitation of good characters is permissible, but multifariousness, or representation of all things indiscriminately, is prohibited. For variations of this argument, see Belfiore, "A Theory of Imitation in Plato's *Republic*"; Nehamas 215; Ferrari 125; Janaway; and Lear.
2. For an overview of this literature, see Büttner. Also see Gonzalez.
3. One resolution is that Plato is not devoid of appreciation for poetry, but thinks it must be harnessed to serve truth and the social good. Scholars debate whether this involves poetry simply being overseen by philosophy or being subsumed by it (in which case, Plato's own myths might provide an example of "good" poetry—although this, too, is a matter of debate). See Partee; Griswold; Elias; Burnyeat; Halliwell; and Levin.
4. Some examples include Thayer; Saxonhouse "Comedy in Callipolis"; Belfiore, "Lies Unlike the Truth"; Sansone; and Planinc.
5. Translations of the ancient Greek are my own, developed in consultation with Bloom's.
6. For more on music in ancient Greece, see Lippman; West; and Pelosi. For a collection of all of Plato's writings on music, with notes and commentary, see Barker (two volumes).
7. For more on the relationship between music and poetry, see Landels, especially Chapter One.

8. Moreau 197.
9. *Nomos* was also a term in music used to denote a class of traditional melodies. West 215–217.
10. Wallace 258. Though much of what we know about Damon comes from references in Plato’s dialogues, various sources confirm that he was not just a music theorist, but also an important political advisor. According to Aristotle, Damon “was believed to suggest to Pericles most of his measures, owing to which they afterwards ostracized him” (*Athenian Constitution* 27.4). It is interesting that Plato has Socrates recommend the ideas of an ostracized music theorist, given that the ideal city will banish any poet who does not make the right kind of music. Could this be another indication that the Athenians have cast out and let in the wrong influences?
11. The Phoenician Tale is not usually regarded as part of the musical education of the guardians. However, Socrates links the tale to the discussion of music when he precedes it by referencing “those lies that come into being in case of need, of which we were just now speaking, some one noble lie” (414b–c). Justification for these lies appears in two places prior to the telling of the Phoenician Tale: just after Socrates introduces the subject of music, where such tales are explicitly cast as one form the speech content of music might take (377a) and, again, in the midst of their discussion of what the poets should and should not say (389b–d). Though midway through Book III Socrates claims that “it’s likely we are completely finished with that part of music that concerns speeches and tales” (398b), he continues in Book III to discuss what is right and wrong in the content of Greek poetry and to quote from it (404b–c, 408a, 408b–c). It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the Phoenician Tale is one of the stories to be sung as part of the musical education of the guardians and, indeed, the education of the whole city.
12. For more on Athenian autochthony myths, see Loraux.
13. Even more telling is the term “Cadmean victory” (also known as a “Pyrrhic victory”), which refers to a victory attained at as great a loss to the victor as to the vanquished—a term evoked in Plato’s *Laws* (641c). Might this suggest that the founding of Kallipolis is but a Cadmean victory, i.e., not a true victory?
14. Zeitlin 144.
15. For an excellent analysis of these transformations, see Saxonhouse “Freedom, Form, and Formlessness.”
16. For other examples of dissonance in Kallipolis, see Strauss; Saxonhouse “Comedy in Callipolis”; Forde; Roochnik; and Berger.
17. This attitude is shared in Plato’s *Laches* by the character Laches, who rejects all modes including the Phrygian, in preference for the Dorian—the “sole Hellenic harmony” (188d). For a survey of the debate on why Plato includes the Phrygian mode, see Anderson 107–109.

18. Against this assumption, Socrates muses that the ideal city could be about to arise “in some barbaric place (τινι βαρβαρικῷ τόπῳ) somewhere far outside of our range of vision” (499c–d).
19. Garland 108.
20. Pache 9.
21. Sears 147. On depictions of Thracians in tragedy, see Hall Chapter Three.
22. Monoson.
23. Baracchi 139.
24. Deneen 102.
25. Cooper 121.

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