Music in Plato’s Republic

“[A ruler] must beware of changing to a new kind of music, for the change always involves far-reaching danger. Any alteration in the modes of music is always followed by alteration in the most fundamental laws of the state.”

Music in Plato’s Republic

Plato would ban:

- the flute and aulos (associated with Dionysus; lyre is OK)
- makers of the flute and aulos
- 4 of the 6 available modes
- sudden modulation (change in mode)

Dionysus – god of wine, nature, fertility; orgiastic rites
Apollo – god of sun, prophecy, music, poetry

Contest of Apollo & Marsyas, c. 350 BC

Compare Kong Fuzi

. . . we must discriminate sounds in order to know the airs; the airs in order to know the music; and the music in order to know [the character of] the government. Having attained to this, we are fully provided with the methods of good order. (Book of Rites, Sixth Century BCE)

Compare Kong Fuzi

Kong Fuzi is said to classify music into two types:
- positive music (shi yin, proper sound), with attributes of harmoniousness, peacefulness, and appropriateness, is an important educational tool capable of inspiring virtue and appropriate attitudes [would Ancient Greeks call it Apollonian?]
- negative music (chi yue, extravagant music), with attributes of inappropriate loudness (like thunder and lightning) and wanton noisiness, stimulated excessive and licentious behavior [Dionysian]
Gender roles & music

Socially constructed
- for example
- in the Andean highlands of Peru, in the music of the Aymara, drums are primarily played by women
- in the US, drums are primarily played by . . . ?
- how are such categories maintained?
- in some Australian Aboriginal societies, if a woman gazes on a sacred flute, it is burned
- why no Asian or Asian-American rock or pop stars in the US/Europe yet? Not a problem in classical music!

For that final exam question

Think (and write about) how these tendencies change (or don't change) for various social groups (political, gender, race, class, etc.) and social attitudes about sex, drugs, respect, authority, authenticity, work, money, religion and so on. (Don’t rely on stereotypes about social change – back it up with facts.)

More on that final exam question

- Think about changes in music that came before social changes; is there a connection? Coincidence or causality?
- Think about changes in music that seem unconnected to any social changes
- Are there social changes not reflected in music?
- Beware of technological determinism (but consider it!)

Authenticity – another (recent?) social construction

- How phony is “keepin’ it real”? “Check it out.” An issue ever since *Catcher in the Rye* (1951)?