

NOISE POLLUTION: A LOOK AT THE EFFECTS OF ROCK MUSIC ON A LIBERAL EDUCATION

Alyssa Bornhorst

INTRODUCTION Music and Liberal Education

A music professor asked my Musical Styles class why they listened to music. One female student explained that she did not like the sound of silence. She would much prefer to listen to the radio than the sound of the wheels hitting the road on a long car ride home. Another student answered that when she was sad, she wanted to listen to sad music and when happy, playing happy music was only appropriate. Through her use of music she was able to connect with the universal which made her emotions relatable. Students also explained when they listened to music. Some liked to turn on songs while writing papers, others while they were out with friends. Their lives are accompanied by music and have their own musical score. Looking around on campus and seeing students with their headphones in their ears as they walk to class, on the treadmill at the recreational center and pouring out of the windows of residential halls, it is hard to deny that music is an important aspect in college students' lives today.

Many people develop a strong relationship with the music they listen to. They talk of the benefits of their music and how

it has changed their life. An example of this is recently NPR started a series on the positives of music entitled "Why Music Matters." The first article talked of a boy who was able to come out as gay to his parents through the aid of the Irish band The Cranberries.¹ Stories like these are common. Ask anyone and they can name a song that has gotten them through a hard time, another which reminds them of the person they love, another that reminds them of their time in high school or college or really anything. Everyone has a favorite musician or song that they have played over and over just to feel the experience the song gives them. They wear the musicians on their t-shirts and even talk as if they know them even though they have never met. Walking around on a college campus, you can hear music blaring out of a dorm room window or see students walking around with their headphones plugged into their ears. It is visibly and audibly apparent that students love their music.

In 1987, Allan Bloom stated that his college students had an addiction to music in his controversial book *The Closing of the American Mind*. He wrote, "Today, a very large portion of young people between the ages of ten and twenty live for music. It is their passion; nothing else excites them as it

Alyssa Bornhorst, of Minster, Ohio, is a 2012 graduate of the Ashbrook Scholar Program, having majored in Political Science and History.

¹ Anna Boiko-Weyrauch, *Finding Hope with the Cranberries*, <http://www.npr.org/2012/02/26/147368588/a-teen-finds-hope-with-the-cranberries-help> (March 22, 2012).

does; they cannot take seriously anything alien to music.”² Although the book touched on many controversial subjects, the pages that created the biggest stir and rallying point of defense amongst students contained the chapter on rock music. Bloom believed rock music threatened the ability of his students to have a meaningful relationship with their studies and therefore have a liberal education. Many accused Bloom of being stuffy, old-fashioned, and even a hypocrite. These accusations are not enough to dismiss Bloom’s arguments. His argument on the role of rock music in the lives of his students comes from his belief that *The Republic of Plato* is the text on education. Socrates uses music to educate his guardians and lead them to love learning and reason. Bloom takes this argument and applies it to rock music by explaining that it leads its young listeners to choose the life of feeling as the best life rather than the lifelong liberal education. They will not love reason, but instead uneducated passion.

Many of Bloom’s concerns about music remain true today. He stated the young no longer cared to listen to classical music. It was a special taste. Even those who listened to it seemed self-conscious and aware of their supposed musical snobbery. If classical music was edging off the radar in the 1980s, it no longer exists today except maybe to those who are students of music. Although students may be introduced to classical music through classes such as the abovementioned Musical Styles class, it is no longer played in the homes. Students do not grow up with this type of music, nor will they probably play it in their own homes. Another example of how music in the lives of students has stayed the same is in their addiction to music. He accused the students of an addiction to music. Should Allan Bloom take a walk on a university campus

today and comment upon students’ music, he would not find students too different. What Bloom described as an addiction to music is still here, although with some changes that allow for easier access. The Walkman has changed into an iPod. MTV no longer plays music anymore (except in the early morning hours), but Internet has furthered access to more music than MTV ever would have been able to. With the Internet has come YouTube, Pandora, Spotify, iTunes and the ability to pirate music.

Although there are similarities, there are changes than just mode and access of listening to music. No college student wants to be Mick Jagger as was the case in 1987. Bloom had pondered on whether or not Boy George or Michael Jackson would succeed him. Music has changed. Today rock music is not the primary taste of music. Most people listen to the Billboard Top 100 which features dance pop, rap and country. Many students listen to Lady GaGa and refer to themselves as “Little Monsters” who love their “Mama Monster.” Ke\$ha and Nicki Minaj are her equally gaudy peers. Not everyone shares this taste, but it is popular music in that it is most prevalent. Even those who would prefer to listen to something more alternative know who Lady Gaga is and a few songs whether they would like to or not. Even more so than in the Eighties, the popular taste in music is prevalent and inescapable. Those who do not enjoy football can avoid watching a football game, but if you do not like Lady Gaga it is nearly impossible to avoid her kitsch tunes. This makes what Bloom writes about music all the more important because now it really is everywhere.

Although Bloom’s argument on music is important, it is incomplete. Bloom only focuses on the passionate nature of music. He finds the lusty songs of The Rolling Stones to lead students to delight in feeling more than they delight in reason. In his understanding of Plato, Bloom is right in

² Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind*. Simon & Schuster, 1987. P. 68.

his argument about rock music. I will explore his understanding of rock music and Plato's musical education of the guardians in chapter one and two, but he does not address spiritedness in his attack on rock music. He focuses on rock's effects on the desiring part of the soul, but leaves spiritedness alone whereas in the education of the guardians, both passionate and spirited music are addressed and even censored if it does not lead the citizens to love reason. Today's spirited music such as heavy metal, punk rock, and gangsta rap can have as much of a detrimental effect on a liberal education as the more passionate music of rock has. In chapter three, I plan on looking at the problem of spirited music today and how it also forms an obstacle that makes it difficult to take a liberal education seriously in light of both Allan Bloom and *The Republic of Plato*. Looking at both passionate and spirited music will give a fuller explanation of how certain types of music can lead a student away from a liberal education.

CHAPTER ONE

Allan Bloom's Understanding of the Relationship Between Liberal Education and Rock Music

Introduction

Within the pages of Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, the Chicago professor offered a diagnosis of what he believed to be the illness of the modern university. Bloom thought universities had let down students by failing to offer them a proper liberal education. Among the reasons for the decline of a liberal education, Bloom listed rock music. Both liberal education and rock music provide answers on the nature of man and these answers are not compatible with each other. While a liberal education answers this

question "in relation to his highest aspirations as opposed to his low and common needs,"³ rock music provides the opposing answer focusing on physical feeling rather than the search for knowledge. When a student comes to the university to be given a liberal education, it cannot properly take hold because the answers the student should be seeking through his education have already been given to him by the music that blares in his headphones.

Bloom on Liberal Education

According to Allan Bloom, a university that provides a liberal education is supposed to lead the student into a lifelong study of books and ideas that will help the student answer the big questions "What is man?" and "What is the best way of life?" A truly liberal education is not an education that can be given by science, mathematics, psychology or even within the humanities. For Bloom the listed subjects lead to a faulty understanding of man as he believes they look at man at his worst. A liberal education needs to be able to look at both the heights to which he is capable and their faults to find their way to answering the above mentioned questions on man and the best of life. These areas of study also cannot make judgments which are essential for liberal education because the student needs to be able to determine whether a deed or idea is good or bad. Through answering those questions liberal education leads the student on a path to the "goal of human completeness"⁴ through the pursuit of truth and the best way of life, much like Socrates hoped to reveal the life of the philosopher as the best life to his student Glaucon. A liberal education is to be its own reward and fulfill-

³ Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind*. Simon & Schuster, 1987. P. 21.

⁴ Bloom, P. 19.

ment that should last a lifetime and not only within the four years at the university.

Liberal education's question of "what is man?" has many answers. This does not deter the student; Bloom writes that "Liberal education provides access to these alternatives, many of which are against the grain of our nature or our times."⁵ A liberal education opens the door to discovering these answers and really considering them even if they would be against the social norms of today. This is not an approach of relativity, but of questioning one's own way of life and understanding others. It is the desire to know, but within this desire acknowledging that there are ignorant and wrong answers. Describing the man who has a liberal education, Bloom writes, "The liberally educated person is one who is able to resist the easy and preferred answers, not because he is obstinate but because he knows others worthy of consideration."⁶ A man who believes that he has the answer of relativism will be unable to look at other possibilities seriously. The man who believes that everything is relative is closed off from looking at the possibilities of the best way of life in a serious manner. He will be dismissive or indignant towards any answers that do not jive with his ideal relativistic answers, nor will he be able to make the judgments necessary for liberal education.

A liberal education needs openness, but the open mind that is necessary for a liberal education is closing according to Bloom. There are two types of openness. Only one type is conducive for a liberal education. The other kind is detrimental. The kind of openness "that invites us to the quest for knowledge and certitude, for which history and various cultures provide a brilliant array of examples for exami-

nation,"⁷ is needed to create the serious liberally educated student. Openness that seeks for answers is needed for students to discover what is good for them and what will make them happy. A search for answers allows them to seriously consider the alternatives, rather than purely dismissing them as just another way of life no better or worse than our own. The second type is "the openness of indifference—promoted with the twin purposes of humbling our intellectual pride and letting us be whatever we want to be, just as long as we don't want to be knowers."⁸ This openness of indifference is antagonistic to the former as it claims that there is no truth and there can be no knowing. The former type of openness believes that there is only one right way to live. For the openness of indifference this cannot be right. This is the openness of relativism as the truth.

Bloom accuses the university students of the second type of openness and he describes them as "unified only in their relativism and in their allegiance to equality."⁹ The openness of indifference is only indifferent until it is challenged by someone that claims to know any truth other than relativism. Bloom describes the responses that students give when their version of openness is challenged. They ask whether he is an absolutist, a monarchist and are absolutely bewildered by what they see as intolerance rather than realizing that they have a wrong answer that needs to be explored and corrected. Bloom believes relativism is the only virtue taught in education up to college. He writes, "Openness—and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth and various ways of life and kinds of human beings—is a great insight to our times. The true believer is the real

⁵ Bloom, P. 21.

⁶ Bloom, P. 21.

⁷ Bloom, P. 41.

⁸ Bloom, P. 41

⁹ Bloom, P. 25

danger.”¹⁰ Knowing the truth and especially when the truth involves a belief in an answer that is considered intolerant is believed to create war, slavery, bigotry, and other types of racism and prejudice. Certainly all of these are problems, but rather than learning about them, solving these problems and finding a truth that actually is correct, the openness of indifference would rather not think about them at all. For there to be a correct truth would mean that some ways of life are better than others and because of this we cannot all be equal. The refusal to consider seriously the questions of the nature of man and the best way of life makes it impossible for the student to actually leave accomplishing the goals of a liberal education. The student cannot leave with a desire to pursue truth, because if there is no truth or the truth is relative then there is no reason to gain knowledge on these topics. Through this refusal to seriously look and consider other ways of life, relativism has aided in the destruction of liberal education.

Aside from its problems in education, relativism also has destructive qualities on the human soul. Bloom takes an active concern in the state of soul in the student, but only as it affects education and not morality. Within the lifelong search for completion in a liberal education, there is a search for the perfect soul. In relativism this perfect soul no longer exists and thus, there is nothing to make better or improve upon in that realm. The soul also cannot be degraded. Bloom muses upon the search for the perfect soul when he talks about the lack of literary interest in students. His students are bombarded with ideas and images about having the perfect body and are constantly on a quest to gain this physical ideal, “but deprived of literary guidance, they no longer have any image of a perfect soul, and hence do not long to have one. They do not even

imagine that there is such a thing.”¹¹ Students can no longer be liberally educated in literature. Within books, there is nothing for the student to relate to as everything is already acceptable. Allan Bloom gives the example of *Anna Karenina*. A student today would not be able to understand Anna’s great scandal in leaving her husband and son for Vronsky, as today that would be easily settled in an amicable divorce agreement with joint custody. The themes contained within books do not fit the idea of relativism and nonexistence of truth as there is a right and wrong within their pages.

Rock Music & Liberal Education

Allan Bloom states books were to attract the Eros of students while simultaneously educating it beyond sexual desire and this can no longer be done; however, this role is now been taken over only by music. In the education of Eros in the soul, books have been replaced by rock music. This makes music incredibly important. Bloom writes, “This is the age of music and the states of soul that accompany it.”¹² The state of the soul that Bloom saw in his students very much matched the music to which he claimed they were addicted, but would not lead them to liberal education. According to Allan Bloom, a student raised on rock music would have a difficult time having the character needed to have a liberal education rather than one who was not raised on rock music. Bloom gives several reasons that the student raised on rock music cannot have a liberal education. He first looks at the relationship students have with their music. The student who grew up listening to rock music will have wants that are contradictory to wanting knowledge. Rock music also degrades the imagination increas-

¹⁰ Bloom, P. 26

¹¹ Bloom, P. 67.

¹² Bloom, P. 68.

ing the difficulty for having a liberal education. By looking at these problems created by rock music below, we will have a better understanding of the role music plays in a liberal education.

Students and Music

Bloom describes the relationship between students and rock music as an addiction. He writes, “Nothing is more singular about this generation than its addiction to music.”¹³ He remarks that this addiction had not been seen since the late 19th century when Richard Wagner created symphonies and operas for the German upper class. Bloom explains that these listeners to rock are experiencing the same feeling as the listeners for Wagner, “They had the religious sense that Wagner was creating the meaning of life and that they were not merely listening to his works but experiencing that meaning.”¹⁴ Now the way we listen to music; however, is much different than when Wagner was creating symphonies. Democracy and technology has brought a major difference in the access to this music and feeling. Where Wagner was only accessible to the upper class, rock music is everyone’s music. The access and exposure to music has only increased with time. Bloom’s sentiments against students listening to their tapes on Walkmans could be applied today with the iPod and the Internet. Music is readily accessible at all times. New artists come up with new songs to put on the charts every day. Where once it was only one great talent at a time now we have plenty of new artists almost every week and their music is everywhere. Even buying groceries is accompanied by a light rock FM station playing Billy Joel while you pick out your produce. Music is constantly in an IV being pumped to the ears so that it’s

listeners are constantly able to live the life and meaning with those songs. The constant availability and changing of the music makes the state of soul created by the effects of music much more common.

Bloom believed that music’s hold on the soul was rediscovered with the rise of rock music in the Sixties and Seventies. He describes that before rock music many of his students did not believe that music had any significant effect on political and moral life. Now students understand *The Republic* when Socrates speaks of the power of music over the soul, because they have experienced it; however, they are threatened because, “Plato seems to want to rob them of their most intimate pleasure.”¹⁵ They are willing to attack Plato because their addiction to music is threatened. The differences between students from before the Sixties and after do not end there. Classical music used to be a part of the background of college students. Many had known more about this type of music than Bloom. After the birth of rock, this had taken a reversal as Bloom began introducing good students to classical musicians such as Mozart. Ever the educator, Bloom wrote, “It is interesting to see whether and in what ways their studies are complemented by such music.”¹⁶ When *The Closing of the American Mind* was published Allan Bloom declared classical music dead and it has remained so. Unless music is the area of study, most students have no interest in classical music. It is easier to go from classical to rock than it is for the rock listener to enjoy the symphony.

Many people including students find classical music to be boring. Being boring is considered a great and unforgivable crime amongst students. They have no interest and even are openly hostile to what they find to be boring. Students find rock music to be interesting. Rock music has catchy rhythms

¹³ Bloom, P. 68.

¹⁴ Bloom, P. 68

¹⁵ Bloom, P. 70.

¹⁶ Bloom, P. 69

and makes its point quickly whereas a classical symphony could take up to an hour or more to reach climax. Within a rock song, the climax happens quickly, often within three to four minutes. Satisfaction of the song is immediately gained and the listener can quickly move to the next song and reach the same feeling. A listener will listen to the songs over and over again to try to quickly feel the emotions that the rock song gives. After a while as often occurs when songs are overplayed on the radio, the song becomes stale and the listener moves to another song obsession. Classical music does not give instant gratification that rock music gives. A rock music listener oftentimes does not have the patience to listen to classical music.

Instead of listening to classical, they will be tuned into their television or their headphones constantly listening to whatever is popular at the time. One of the more famous passages in Bloom's book is in this chapter on music. He asks us to picture a thirteen year old boy watching MTV while working on homework. He explains that the boy has come from the product of the liberties fought over and secured through both philosophy and war. Unlike many in the world, he is comfortable and has time for leisure thanks to the economy of the United States. Science has helped provide him the means to watch the display on television or enjoy the sounds coming from his headphones. With all of the listed advances made, Bloom asks, "And in what does progress culminate?"¹⁷ The boy listens to what Bloom describes as orgasmic rhythms. He is not a boy who will think on the good life or dream of being great in any larger sense. Now With the easy access to music and with it being everywhere, the boy Bloom describes is now commonplace. Rock has created more people will not grow to have a need to discover the secrets of the world or

understand what it means to be a man. Rather they desire to be famous. Like the boy, they want to be a rock star like his hero Mick Jagger. Rock stars have become the new hero, the new high ideal.

It is Mick Jagger, as this new high ideal, whom Allan Bloom unrelentingly narrows in. By 1987, Mick Jagger would have been 44 years old and would have hardly been considered a youth, but this was the hero of the students as perceived by Bloom. This was the man who became the fantasies of both male and female, upper, middle and lower classes. Jagger appealed to everybody. Bloom writes, "In his act he was male and female, heterosexual and homosexual; unencumbered by modesty, he could enter everyone's dreams, promising to do everything with everyone; and above all, he legitimated drugs."¹⁸ This was the tool of commercially motivated record companies and the fans who adored him. He was a universal creature that gave everyone the justification for whatever they desired whether it was money, sex or both. The only thing that Mick Jagger stood against was that of convention and tradition. This London School of Economics student had distaste for politics and law. The idea of Jagger was supposed to be above these things putting feeling above that of reason. Within Jagger there was a contradiction. Within the lyrics and beats of Rolling Stones songs "were nasty little appeals to the suppressed inclinations toward sexism, racism and violence,"¹⁹ while at the same time "he managed not to appear to contradict the rock ideal of a universal classless society founded on love, with the distinction between brotherly and bodily blurred."²⁰ Jagger portrays the relativism that is a major barrier to a liberal education. This is the man who was the hero to students in the Sixties, Seventies

¹⁷ Bloom, p. 75.

¹⁸ Bloom, p. 78

¹⁹ Bloom, p. 78.

²⁰ Bloom, p. 78.

and some of the Eighties. Bloom compares the role of Jagger to that of Napoleon to young Frenchmen in the 19th century. Students in the 20th century want to grow up to be Mick Jagger.

But Jagger was a boy who never grew up. Even today, Jagger has a boyish quality despite being in his sixties. In his article on the 20th anniversary of the publication of *The Closing of the American Mind*, Mark Steyn writes an amusing anecdote about Jagger's perceptions of his "youth." Believing that he was to be interviewed in some hip music magazine, Jagger was infuriated to discover that he was to be put on the cover of *Saga*, a magazine for British seniors, as Pensioner of the Month. Steyn wittily comments, "When you think about it 'I Can't Get No Satisfaction' makes a much better anthem for seniors than it ever did for rebellious youth."²¹ With images of Mick Jagger and his bandmate Keith Richards in their early sixties, it is apparent that rock is not beautiful as it grows up. In fact rock isn't supposed to grow up or become old. Instead of admiring heroes that can take them from boyhood into manhood, rock music provides them with heroes and the soundtracks to provide them with perpetual boyhood. This is why it constantly has to provide its listeners with something new. Mick Jagger is no longer the hero of college students. It is likely that eventually the Rolling Stones will also be a special taste. However, the main idea of the music is unwavering. Even Lady Gaga still sings of the same themes of brotherly love and sex. Bloom believes that these rock star types have contributed nothing. He writes, "And what have we found? Not creative devils, but show business glitz. Mick Jagger tarting it up on stage is all that we brought back from the voyage to the underworld."²²

If there is nothing left to be discovered, then there is nothing that a philosophic education can give the student. The rock idea of the best life wrapped up in a three-minute song is already available without the work so they believe they do not need to have a liberal education.

The Different Ends of Rock Music and Liberal Education

Rock does not lead the student to a higher life of learning, but rather acknowledges the good life as the satisfaction of the bodily desires of man. It does not lead to the same life of searching for truth as liberal education in a university would wish the student to lead. Bloom writes, "Music is the soul's primitive and primary speech and it is *alogon*, without articulate speech or reason."²³ Music guides and directs the passions of the soul and for thinkers like Bloom the purpose of music is to lead these passions to higher ends. All music plays a balancing act between reason and passions with more of a tendency towards the latter. Rock music is entirely at the end of sexual passion without an acknowledging nod to reason to help moderate. Bloom writes, "Armed with music, man can damn rational doubt."²⁴ Music has the ability to soothe, console, and justify moods and actions. Bloom gives the examples of a worshipper being lifted in prayer while listening to Bach and the soldier who is given an extra dose of courage by the steady beat of the drum. It is much the same way as the person who likes listening to Lady Gaga and L'il Wayne while at a club. The music fits with what the person is doing. Gregorian chants certainly would not go well as background music to taking shots (and wouldn't encourage the action either), but party anthems such as Asher Roth's "I Love College" certainly fit

²¹ Mark Steyn, "Twenty Years Ago Today," *The New Criterion*, 2007.

²² Bloom, p. 79.

²³ Bloom, P. 71.

²⁴ Bloom, P. 72.

the mood and encourage the actions which usually lack any sense of reason. Certainly these are the correct styles of music for the ends even if the ends are not conducive to education or thinking. Rock music has its own ends as well and it could be suggested that there is a place for rock music. Bloom does compare rock music to junk food, therefore it could be suggested that, like junk food, rock music is fine in moderation. One should not engorge on cupcakes and cookies all day and one should not have rock music blaring on the headphones all day as well. In the universities though, rock does not have a place because just as a marathoner should watch what they eat, one who is searching for truth and reason should avoid anything that is hostile to this venture.

Rock recognizes its own hostility to reason. In the book *The Triumph of Vulgarity: Rock Music in the Mirror of Romanticism*, Robert Pattison writes, “In rock as in the Romanticism of Rousseau or Blake, feeling is primary, and reason is the check on feeling the feeling itself creates.”²⁵ Instead of reason keeping a check on passion, in rock these are reversed. When reason tries to exert itself as primary, rock puts reason and therefore education in its place. Many of rock’s well-known anthems fall in this archetype. Pink Floyd’s “Another Brick in the Wall Pt. 2” charges teachers to “Leave those kids alone!” and the students claim, “We don’t need no education, we don’t need no thought control.” Alice Cooper’s “School’s Out” is a celebration of the end of school, because “School has been blown to pieces.” When they are not violently hostile to education, they attempt to move education into the realm of feeling. Instead of being taught by a teacher, the members of Van Halen are “Hot for Teacher.” If it cannot be subjected to

feeling, especially sexual feeling, as in the case with the Van Halen song, it must be destroyed as is shown in Alice Cooper’s “School’s Out.”

One of rock’s main themes is sex. This is not the sex of love, but the sexual desires of high school boys discovering their first longings for the female form. Rock “treats [those desires] seriously, eliciting them and legitimating them, not as little sprouts that must be carefully tended in order to grow into gorgeous flowers, but as the real thing.”²⁶ Later in *Closing*, Bloom mentions that humans are the only creatures that are still not adults once they reach puberty. In any other creature this would be a fully mature adult, but for the human this is only the beginning. The human still has a long way to go before he is considered to be an adult. Bloom writes that this “means that the animal part of his sexuality is intertwined in the most complex way with the higher reaches of his soul, which must inform the desires with its insight, and the most delicate part of education is to keep the two in harmony.”²⁷ Rock music hinders this harmony by leaning the soul wholly to the sexual. It does not allow the student to grow up, but rather keeps him longing for days of youth. Rock music legitimizes their feelings and longings and even if the student cannot act on them, for the moment the song is on he can feel the emotions that go along with the actions. Constantly more music is churned out to whet these appetites and the student becomes saturated in this type of music. For Bloom, this makes it more influential than pornography.

Despite the problems and influence of rock, music will never allow itself to be ruled by reason as Bloom admits, “Pure music can never endure this constraint.”²⁸ Despite this, throughout history there have

²⁵ Pattison, Robert. *The Triumph of Vulgarity: Rock Music in the Mirror of Romanticism*. Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 103.

²⁶ Bloom, p. 73.

²⁷ Bloom, p. 134

²⁸ Bloom, P. 72.

been attempts to sway music's passionate tendency to more fitting passions. Bloom gives the examples of Bach's religious music and Beethoven's revolutionary music. This music cultivates the passions and harnesses their power to a higher good while simultaneously satisfying them. Bloom writes, "A man whose noblest activities are accompanied by a music that expresses them while providing a pleasure extending from the lowest bodily to the highest spiritual, is whole, and there is no tension between the pleasant and the good."²⁹ With this, it is easy to see the need for music that is not completely on the side of the passion as is the case of rock in the noble activity of liberal education, for if one's activities and their leisure are in discord; his life will be a continuous friction between one and the other. For Bloom, listening to rock music after class can only undermine what was put into your soul during the class. It is necessary to have the proper music for the proper ends.

The ends rock music "encourages [are] passions and provides models that have no relation to any life the young people who go to universities can possibly lead, or to the kinds of admiration encouraged by liberal studies."³⁰ For a liberally educated student who was raised on rock music, his studies will be filled with tension. His heroes are both philosophers moved by truth and lesser beings moved by what feels good. A student hoping to gain a liberal education does not desire the same life that rock music allows its listeners to feel through the music. As there is a tension between the feeling in rock music and the search for reason and knowledge in a liberal education, the concern is that the student who was raised on a diet of rock music will continue to search for those feelings. As Bloom puts it, "The first sensual experiences are decisive in determining the taste for the whole of life, and

they are the link between the animal and the spiritual in us."³¹ It is necessary to educate children in what will lead to their fulfillment, but the child raised on rock music will have an increasingly difficult time seeing liberal education as a choice that could lead to completion. Like a child given candy too early in life, he will most likely have distaste for that which is good for him. However, this is not a problem of the university, but a problem with the homes that creates these later difficulties. When a student comes to the university, he has something already placed where liberal education should go.

It is important to note is that Allan Bloom does not argue that it impossible for a student who listens to rock music to gain a liberal education. It is only more difficult. Bloom appears to suggest that rock music can even lead a very rare student towards philosophy. He writes, "Yet—if a student can—and this is most difficult and unusual—drawback, get a critical distance on what he clings to, come to doubt the ultimate value of what he loves, he has taken the first and most difficult step toward the philosophic conversion."³² Contempt and indignation are natural responses to those who question what we love. This is true from the highest cases such as religion or a favorite novel to something as trivial as a favorite television show. It is incredibly difficult for man to question what he loves, instead he justifies his tastes. When a student reads *The Republic*, he may feel angry when Socrates censors the poets and music, but he could also try to have a conversation with the text and relate it to his own life. If a student can have a conversation with a text even if it attacks what he loves, then it may very well be that a student can be led to philosophy from their questioning of the music that they love. Bloom writes, "So it may well be that through the thicket of our greatest corruption

²⁹ Bloom, p. 72.

³⁰ Bloom, p. 80.

³¹ Bloom, p. 79.

³² Bloom, p. 71.

runs the path to awareness of the oldest truths.”³³ Questioning what one loves is incredibly hard, but if a student is able to do so without indignation, but truly look at himself, then he might be able to find his way towards a liberal education.

More than likely, however, most students will be surprised and indignant that music can be questioned in such a way. They do not understand or believe that music can have a negative effect on their souls. Simultaneously, ask anyone about the music that he loves and he will describe it the way he would a friend or lover. Many describe music as life changing and that they could not live without listening to a certain musical artist. These phrases all suggest a relationship and a love of music. However, one must ask these music lovers, surely if music can have a benefit to life, then it should have the power to be a negative as well. Bloom is right to compare rock music with drugs, even though many rock listeners will not take part in narcotics. The results are similar. They both give the “user” thrill and delight before they are ready. Bloom writes, “It artificially induces the exaltation naturally attached to the completion of the greatest endeavors—victory in a just war, consummated love, artistic creation, religious devotion and discovery of truth.”³⁴ Rock music gives people ability to feel what the rock musician is feeling without actually doing anything, but turning on a song. It gives people the equal ability to feel the emotions that rock music is conveying, but it would seem that some emotions need to be experienced in a more natural way than imitation.

One of the problems Bloom has with rock music and liberal education is that despite the passionate nature of the music, his students have become less passionate.

The reason is that although rock music may encourage animal passion, they do not encourage human passion. An example of the difference in animal and human passion today is that hook-up culture is the norm amongst students, but most students do not write love letters or poetry to their love interest. Later in *Closing* Bloom looks at the relationships of his students. It is here that Bloom analyzes their souls. He describes them as nice, but self-centered. They form relationships with students of the opposite sex, but do not have love affairs. His students hold equality as of the utmost importance, but have no care for education. The term Bloom uses to describe these students is “flat-souled.” According to Bloom, the state of soul of the students affects their relationships with themselves and their peers which in turn affect their ability for a liberal education. They are unable to have love affairs with both books and people. As understood by Bloom, the state of soul molded by rock music is not conducive to the liberal education because it encourages and legitimizes sexual desire too early in life, thus the student is unable to develop a true and meaningful love for learning. They are inhibited from having a meaningful relationship with anything. He explains what he describes as “infantile passions” are based only on feeling not on thought. For those affected by rock music in the way Bloom describes, there is nothing that liberal education can offer. The student will be indifferent to other ways of life, actively hostile to education, and the pursuit of reason because within rock music feeling is supposed to primary. There is no truth to search for, only bodily feeling.

³³ Bloom, p. 71

³⁴ Bloom, p. 80.

Imagination

One of the important worries Bloom has about rock music is that “it ruins the imagination of young people and makes it very difficult for them to have a passionate relationship to the art and thought that are the substance of liberal education.”³⁵ Ruining the imagination does not mean the student will no longer have one, but that it will not be the imagination necessary for a liberal education. He will not be able to have an imagination necessary to explore the questions a liberal education tries to answer. Instead his imagination will stay mostly on the body. Most college students will be satisfied with the present and will long for nothing else, but a student with imagination will need and be open to a liberal education. Everyday concerns will not satisfy him and how he acts on this lack of satisfaction is important. With the help of imagination, the need the student has will create a passion for learning. For the liberal education to be a lifelong study, a student has to have a passionate relationship with it.

As great books play a major role in a liberal education, a student must be able to find companions within their pages and a student will need an imagination in order to do this. If a student does not have a love for a liberal education, at best it will only be a passing interest or a means to an end. Passion requires devotion and an ardent desire to be completed by the study. This yearning for completion is one of the requirements of a liberal education and without it philosophy becomes stale. Books become only historical texts that were only applicable to its time, not a pathway into truth and knowing. A student needs imagination to achieve a realization that the search for completeness can be found in education and not in a life of feeling. Rock steals this imagination away by leaving little to the imagination. They

have nothing to wonder at with the rock music education. Why imagine and dwell upon something when the alternative instant gratification is already available? Certainly the bar can always be set lower. The imagination necessary for liberal education needs something higher to reach up to. Rock music states these things do not exist, thus there is no reason to bother imagining them.

The lack of the imagination necessary for liberal education creates what Allan Bloom describes as flat-souled students. Instead of waiting until they are ready for human sexuality, student, they immediately participate in animal sexuality. After they are encouraged their animal sexuality, their human sexuality is no longer erotic. There is no sacred mystery to be inducted and for Bloom this means serious part of education is now missing. Bloom writes, “This road is the serious part of education, where animal sexuality becomes human sexuality, where instinct gives way in man to choice with regard to the true, the good and the beautiful.”³⁶ Bloom states that he does not understand much of this phenomenon. For him, our passions link the highest and lowest within man. With rock music educating this passion, there is nothing more these students feel they need to know. Bloom believes these students will not change much and in this sense they are already like adults. They cannot be philosophers. Bloom writes, “The world is for them what it presents itself to the senses to be; it is unadorned by imagination and devoid of ideals. This flat soul is what the sexual wisdom of our time conspires to make universal.”³⁷ The flat-souled student believes he can only be completed from feeling, rather than by the desire to know. There is no mystery in sex, thus the students believe there is nothing else for them to long after. In fact the mysteries of sex are no longer erotic.

³⁵ Bloom, p. 79.

³⁶ Bloom, p. 134

³⁷ Bloom, p. 134

Should imagination only be kept only to sex, then his studies will be very different than a student with a much broader imagination. Bloom explains, "A youngster whose sexual longings consciously or unconsciously inform his studies has a very different set of experiences from one in whom such motives are not active."³⁸ Sexual longings affect the imagination of the student. He gives the examples of those who travel to Europe. He writes a student who lacks an imagination is only a tourist. The student who travels to Florence looking to find his own Dante's Beatrice is looking for completion in the good. The latter student is much more able to see the beauty in his travels, but the latter does not realize that there could even be such a thing. The first example has imagination. The student needs to have an imagination in order to be liberally educated. He needs to be able to imagine what he could find in these places, but according to Bloom rock music harms the imagination by making the student believe there is nothing to imagine. They already know what will complete them and there is no ideal to imagine as the truth. Already enjoying what Bloom describes as the "easy, clinical and sterile satisfactions of body and soul,"³⁹ these students will no longer search for this completion within the university. Instead they will go to their classes and leave them searching for something else. The music they listen to will always be much more preferred than the studies within the liberal education. The latter will be something that they have to do, but the former holds all their longings and ideas of completion and the opportunity to instill a proper liberal education will be lost.

Through rock music "life is made into a nonstop, commercially prepackaged masturbational fantasy."⁴⁰ The fantasy des-

cribed by Bloom is the imagination rock gives to the student. Although fantasies do not involve action, they do guide the way people act, their thoughts on other people's actions and affects their soul. The fantasy created by rock does not mean that all listeners of rock music are going to become or even dream of becoming drug and sex addicts. Rock music is not going to create a class of Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain, and Sid Vicious types. Those people took the actions glorified in rock music whether it involved sex, heroin usage, killing their girlfriend, or killing themselves. In return those people were glorified themselves. Rock creates a group of people who want to be these mythic legends of rock, but it is impossible to survive this both physically and socially. These people are held back by these societal concerns and instead are able to live out their fantasies achieve the meaning of these lives through rock and roll music. Most rock listeners will never do lines of coke off bathroom toilets and some may not even drink, but in listening to this music they are able to live out this desire. The listeners are able to enter a world where feeling is the best life and reason is not. Even rock music recognizes this as true. Rock musicians portray the myth and are able to let their listeners live out their own fantasy. This is problematic for a liberal education, because a rock and roll fantasy still means the listener is yearning for the wrong things. The rock listener will want feeling rather than learning and thought.

The fantasy created by rock music does not stop students from attending classes, going to meetings, doing homework and living a normal life. They are willing to go through the motions, "but the meaningful inner life is with the music."⁴¹ The music, according to Bloom, is where they go to satisfy their highest aspirations. When the

³⁸ Bloom, p. 134

³⁹ Bloom, p. 136

⁴⁰ Bloom, p. 75.

⁴¹ Bloom, p. 75

student enters the university, this meaningful inner life is already there and it is difficult for a student to even embrace a liberal education, more than likely he will not realize that such a choice even exists. Bloom writes that rock music is “*the* youth culture and, as I have so often insisted, there is now no other countervailing nourishment for the spirit.”⁴² Because these young students are raised on rock music and feel passionately about it nothing else can hold their interest. Rock music claims a truth that everything is relative, but this is not true as rock music does not allow anything to take the place of itself within the student’s meaningful inner life. Many today cannot walk two steps out of the classroom without throwing on their headphones.

Conclusion

Bloom argues that as with drugs, most people will move on from rock with age. Bloom is wrong in to think people would give up the music they love. People are highly attached to their music and even though one day they must give up the dream of actually becoming Mick Jagger, they can still live out the rock and roll fantasy within their music. As this continues the rest of the world will continuously look dull and toil-some. Bloom writes, “It is as though the color has been drained out of their lives and they see everything in black and white.”⁴³ While in college, the student can live a life of feeling, but as he ages this becomes more and more difficult. Life gets in the way and eventually so does age. They go on living a routine and stable life, but there is no search for the good life or the best life. Even the ideals within rock music, constrained by society, no longer have the same magic. Rather, it is a portal to the past, to endless youth lived through song. They put on a suit

⁴² Bloom, p. 75.

⁴³ Bloom, p. 80.

and join the rat race, hoping to get ahead, buy a house, get married and have a comfortable life. However, Bloom warns that “this life is as empty and false as the one they left behind.”⁴⁴ Liberal education can lead to a life beyond this, a life beyond a desperate life of “quick fixes and dull calculation,”⁴⁵ but rather a pursuit of knowledge and truth and the constant search for the best way of life. However, while students are listening to rock music they will be unable to hear or understand what a liberal education has to offer. When they are older, perhaps they will wish that they had been wiser during this time and been more open to a liberal education, but by this time it will be too late.

CHAPTER TWO

Socrates and the Musical Education of the Guardians

Introduction

Allan Bloom’s strong opinion on rock music in *The Closing of the American Mind* was inspired by the role of music in the education of the guardians in *The Republic of Plato*. Bloom and Socrates both have different goals in education. The former wants to lead his students to a liberal education and the latter wants his guardians to be public spirited gentlemen. Despite this difference in goals, both want their students to love learning. Socrates uses censorship of the different aspects of music from the poet to the rhythms and harmonies in order to achieve his goal. In his chapter on rock music, Bloom tells us that his college students realize what Socrates is up to and are angry with him for taking the music they love away. Although Bloom cannot censor

⁴⁴ Bloom, p. 81

⁴⁵ Bloom, p. 81

rock music, he makes no disguise of his distaste for rock's blatant rhythm of sex. Rock's devotion to bodily passion makes it difficult for his students to fulfill their higher longings in a liberal education. Both thinkers agree there is a strong relationship between sex, music and education. Socrates' reforms remove music that leads to sex out of the city in speech. His education in music ends in love, but Socrates does not want his lovers to have sex. From looking at the education of the guardians in *The Republic*, we will see where Bloom borrows and diverts from Plato. Bloom's use of Plato is considered extreme by today's standards; however, when compared to the actual text he is more moderate.

Censorship of the Poets and their Tales

It is important to take a look at *The Republic* as a whole before we can understand the purpose of using music to lead to reason in education. After a conversation about the nature of justice, Socrates and Adeimantus determine they will be able to see justice in the city. Socrates asked Adeimantus, "If we should watch a city coming into being in speech, would we also see its justice coming into being, and its injustice?"⁴⁶ This leads them to found a city in speech. In discussing what the city needs, Socrates and Glaucon determine that the city will need guardians. Originally, this guardian class is only warriors, but they grow into being the rulers of the city. Socrates and Glaucon need to determine what characteristics will make a man a fit guardian for this city in speech. Socrates said to Glaucon, "Then the man who's going to be a fine and good guardian of the city for us will in his nature be philosophic, spirited, swift, and

strong."⁴⁷ For Socrates, that this should be the nature of the guardians is certain, but then this brings up questions on the education of these guardians. It is education where music comes in. Socrates explained to Glaucon that the best education is gymnastics for the body and music for the soul. The education is to begin when the guardians are young and before the age of reason. Socrates explained the reason to educate the guardians while they are young to Glaucon, "Don't you know that the beginning is the most important part of every work and that this is especially so with anything young and tender? For at this stage it's most plastic and each thing assimilates itself to the model whose stamp anyone wishes to give to it."⁴⁸ It is from here that Socrates begins to talk about the type of education the guardians will receive as children.

Beginning with the education in music, Socrates focuses on what does not belong. He first censors the poetry and speech in music. He asks Glaucon, "You include speeches in music, don't you?"⁴⁹ The poets write the words and tales for the music. Homer is the poet who receives the most criticism from Socrates. It is Homer with his tales of Achilles' rage over the death of Patroclus, tales of Hades, and the immorality of the gods that must not be allowed in the city. He is a great poet, but he does not contribute to the moderation that Socrates wants in the citizens. Socrates censors the tales of fighting and passionate anger in the gods, and he also makes note of their sexual immorality. This is important when we remember that his education in music ends in the separation of love and sex. This relationship between music and sex is important to Bloom as well. It is rock music's leading to sexual pleasure rather than any higher pleasure that Bloom has a

⁴⁶ 398a.

⁴⁷ 376c.

⁴⁸ 377b.

⁴⁹ 376e.

problem with. Socrates also shares this same problem with tales and poetry revealing bodily pleasure as the highest good. It is the tales of Homer that educate the young to believe that the satisfaction of the body is the highest pleasure whether it is in food, drink, or sex. He removes the tales of Zeus' insatiable sexual desire that causes him to forget his plans and the sex between Hephaestus and Aphrodite that excites laughter amongst the gods. The tales of the gods should include the virtue of moderation for the listeners which is, "being obedient to the rulers, and being themselves rulers of the pleasures of drink, sex, and eating."⁵⁰ These bodily pleasures do not allow for the citizen in the city of speech to be educated in the moderation that would lead to the creation of gentlemen. The best poets are exiled from Socrates' city in speech. He explains to Adeimantus, "We would fall on our knees before him as a man sacred, wonderful, and pleasing; but we would say that there is no such man among us in the city, nor is it lawful for such a man to be born there."⁵¹ Socrates does not shy away from censorship of poetry in the city, nor does he mind removing the poets from the city. They are honored, but sent away.

Allan Bloom has a Platonic criticism of the lyrics in rock music. In the previous chapter, the three great themes that Bloom heard in rock music were discussed. These themes were that of sex, hypocritical brotherly love, and violence. These themes are in line with the tales that Socrates banishes from the city. It is clear where Bloom gets his criticism from as Socrates censors poetry and music about sex and violence in the city. Socrates finds them to be problematic in the education of his guardians just as Bloom views them as problematic in the ability of college youth to gain a liberal education. Although there is a

similarity between what Bloom finds to be a problem in rock music's lyrics and Socrates' problem within the tales of the poets, Bloom fails to address this issue in the classical music that he loves. He introduces his students to classical musicians such as Mozart in order to see how the music accompanies their studies. However, both classical and opera have many of the same themes of sex, violence, and other passions that Socrates would much prefer to be removed from his city. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* tells the tale of a sexually promiscuous nobleman and features violence. Both promiscuity and violence are themes that Socrates would censor in the city in speech, but Bloom readily gives his students these works. If Bloom is truly being Platonic here how can he find there to be no problem with the passion in classical and opera and not with that of rock?

Bloom is often accused of being a snob and old-fashioned due to differing views on the passion in classical and rock music; however, I would argue that this is not necessarily the case. The answer lies not only within Bloom's understanding of rock music, but also the books where students gain their liberal education as "These books appealed to eros while educating it."⁵² *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina* are two books that Bloom mentions that clearly have a sexual theme including that of adultery. Students no longer read books and therefore the education of their Eros is now in the realm of music. This makes the education in music exceedingly important as there is nothing else to help guide Eros. It could even be suggested that education in music is more important for today than it was for Socrates' education of the guardians. The city in speech did not have to deal with the relativism that Bloom finds to be detrimental to a liberal education. Perhaps Bloom would argue that the classical music and the opera

⁵⁰ 389e.

⁵¹ 398a.

⁵² Bloom, p. 65

that he gives to his favorite students educate the Eros much in the same way that the aforementioned books do. He might have suggested the handling of the passions of sex and violence are not the same as they are in rock music. This is still different from Plato as Bloom keeps what Plato would censor, but it shows a greater understanding that sexual passion and violence in music is not something to be stamped out, but to be directed. Socrates does direct passion in music toward war. As stated previously Bloom's goal is not to create public spirited guardians, but liberally educated students and would not need to be concerned about having music directed towards war.

As stated the operas of Mozart would not belong in the city in speech, instead this city will "use a more austere and less pleasing poet and teller of tales for the sake of benefit, one who would imitate the style of the decent man."⁵³ In this statement Socrates seems to agree that it is the tales of sex, violence and gluttony within poetry which often make it so pleasing. The style of moderation does not make for great and pleasing works of music. The two styles are imitation and narration, imitation being the more pleasing of the two. Within imitation, the poet acts as someone else. He hides behind the words and acts the parts of the characters. Rather than acting the parts the storyteller explains what happened. Socrates prefers narration to imitation as he does not want the guardians to imitate poor characters. He explains to Adeimantus, "If they do imitate, they must imitate what's appropriate to them from childhood: men who are courageous, moderate, holy, free and everything of the sort; and what is slavish, or anything else shameful, they must neither do nor be clever at imitating."⁵⁴ He believes that in imitating these types of men, then they will

become like the men they are imitating. Socrates said to Adeimantus, "Or haven't you observed that imitations, if they are practiced continually from youth onwards, become established as habits and nature, in body and sounds and in thought?"⁵⁵ If they imitate a courageous man, then they will gain that virtue; however, if they imitate something shameful, then they could become shameful as well. When they listen to this music, they can imitate and feel the emotions of the music without committing the actions.

Once again Bloom would agree with Socrates on the power of imitation and the emotions in music. Over and over again he compares the pleasure of listening to rock music with that of the pleasures of sex. Even Bolero's Ravel that Bloom mentions is only appealing to students who listen to rock music because it appeals to their desire for sexual pleasure. Bloom writes, "Rock music provides premature ecstasy."⁵⁶ This is a reference to the music that the youth listen too. It is too soon for them to understand adult sexual pleasure so instead they were handed animal sexual pleasure in musical form. He describes it as giving children everything they were told they had to wait until they were an adult for. Of course this is more pleasurable as they do not have to work for it or be educated for this type of pleasure. It is freely given to them. Although Bloom cannot censor this music, within *The Republic* it is the not so great poet that is allowed to stay and can only tell the tales of moderation that allow these citizens to be both obedient to their rulers and rulers of themselves in regards to their passions. The education of the guardians cannot lead them to behave contrary to this. They should not drag the body of Hector around out of anger or be so distracted by sex they cannot get

⁵³ 398b.

⁵⁴ 395c.

⁵⁵ 395d.

⁵⁶ Bloom, p. 80.

anything accomplished, but rather act as a decent man and rule themselves and the music they listen to should aid them.

The Modes of Music

After he deals with exiling the poets and the lyrics and style of music, Socrates turns his attention to the rhythm and melody of music. The melody consists of three parts: speech, harmonic mode, and rhythm. At this point in *The Republic*, Socrates has already determined what should be taken out of the speech in regards to the tales and poetry within music, and he proceeds to explain the relationship between these three parts of melody. He explains to Glaucon, “The harmonic mode and rhythm must follow the speech.”⁵⁷ The harmony and rhythm must follow the order that speech has set down for them. As Socrates has already determined what sort of speech there will not be in music, this allows for him to determine which modes of rhythm and harmony to dispose of based on the problematic speech. The modes that lead to wailing and lamenting, drunkenness, softness, rage, and idleness are all no longer to be included in the music of the city. As this musical education is for the guardians of the city, certainly these modes of drunkenness and wailing would not lead to the education necessary for the guardians.

There are only two modes that are left for the musical education of the guardians. These are what Socrates calls the violent and the voluntary modes. Socrates tells Glaucon the violent mode should imitate what would be the ideal guardian. This is, “a man who is courageous in warlike deeds and every violent work, and who in failure or when going to face wounds or death or falling into some other disaster, in the face of all things stands up firmly and

patiently against chance.”⁵⁸ When violent, the guardians should have courage in all things including death and failure. He should stand against chance, do his duty, and not allow fear to get in the way. It is understandable why a mode such as this would be left in the city in speech. If the music that imitates the sounds of the brave soldier are what the guardians hear when they are young, then they will imitate the brave soldier as well. Perhaps later this music will still their fear on the battlefield as they act as the song leads them to act. Soldiers who do not fear injury or death, but are encouraged by the warlike music to act bravely and violently towards enemies would be ideal. If death is not something to lament over, then these guardians will be willing to act more freely to defend the city. Fear of death will not be holding them back from action.

Interestingly, Bloom does not discuss the violent side of music. His focus on music is its influence on the passions and sex rather than its role in spiritedness and violence. Although he has a problem with the theme of violence in the lyrics of rock music, his main focus is the relationship between rock, sex and education. Plato’s focus is much more public minded. He wants the guardians to be educated as leaders of the city. Bloom’s students are not educated towards the presidency or for any public office. He is not leading his students towards the political, but rather the philosophical. Plato wants the guardians educated towards the devotion to the city. Bloom wants his students devoted to the pursuit of wisdom. Although Bloom does not touch on the role of spiritedness in music, the lack of spiritedness in his criticism of music could have been much different had Bloom written *The Closing of the American Mind* in the nineties rather than 1987. The rise of rap music with themes of violence from gang

⁵⁷ 398d.

⁵⁸ 399b.

violence to violence against women would have certainly lead to the question on the effects of this type of music on spiritedness and education.

The second mode that Socrates keeps in the city is “for the man who performs a peaceful deed, one that is not violent, but voluntary, either persuading someone of something or making a request—whether a god by prayer or a human being by instruction and exhortation.”⁵⁹ This music is the mode of the guardian at peace. Eventually the guardians will come back from war, back to the city. It would not be ideal if they continued to be courageous in violent acts while they were living in the city during a time of peace. This voluntary mode helps keep a balance to the violent mode. It will help in “holding himself in check for someone else who makes a request or instructs him or persuades him to change.”⁶⁰ Through the education in this music the guardian will continue to be a good citizen. Aforementioned is the need for the citizen to be able to be ruled and rule themselves. Music is supposed to aid in this as clearly a city will not function well if the citizen cannot do either. Socrates describes the man who listens to this voluntary music as being moderate and being content in his peaceful actions. Certainly this music would lead to the good citizen.

The second mode in music relates to Bloom’s understanding of music’s role in gaining a liberal education as well. A student must be able to be ruled and rule themselves in the classroom. They must be able to listen to hear the arguments of their professors and peers. An immoderate student will not be able to hear what is being offered to him. His passions will lie elsewhere. According to Bloom this is a consequence of rock music. The student can attend classes,

hear what the professor is saying, and even do well in these classes. However, there is a difference between hearing and understanding and taking it into one’s own life. When the student leaves the classroom does he dwell on Aristotle or does he immediately shove his headphones into his ears and start listening to Lady Gaga? As mentioned in the previous chapter, the student who does gain a liberal education begins a lifelong process while for other students their liberal education ends with their diploma. The meaningful life is now within the music and it is very difficult for a liberal education to take hold when this happens.

Composer Aaron Copland describes the same phenomenon in how we listen to music and helps support Bloom’s argument. Most people listen to music on the sensuous plane or for the pleasure within the music; however, as this is only a part of the bigger story only listening on this plane can be a problem. Copland writes:

They go to concerts in order to lose themselves. They use music as a consolation or an escape. They enter an ideal world where one doesn’t have to think of the realities of everyday life. Of course they aren’t thinking about the music either. Music allows them to leave it, and they go off to a place to dream, dreaming because of and apropos of the music yet never quite listening to it.⁶¹

Listening to music only on the sensual level described by Copland would be antagonistic to education because the student would be unable to think seriously. Those that only listen to music on the sensual level do not even want to think about the music, they

⁵⁹ 399b.

⁶⁰ 399b.

⁶¹ Copland, Aaron. *What to Listen for in Music*. McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1957. P. 11.

want to escape. They are not contemplating the truth that Bloom wants them to seek, but are only dreaming and are unable to handle their own life. Like Copland, Bloom sees the consequences beyond the classroom. He writes, “At best ordinary life is neutral, but is mostly an impediment, even a thing to be rebelled against.”⁶² In this circumstance music is something to escape to in all aspects of ordinary life be it a career, family, and friends. People prefer the dream to the reality.

After his discussion the modes of music, Socrates then discusses rhythm. He wishes to see, “Which are the rhythms of an orderly and courageous life; and when we have seen them, we’ll compel the foot and the tune to follow the speech of such a man, rather than the speech following the foot and the tune.”⁶³ The rhythms that match the voluntary and the warlike modes are the only rhythms to remain. These rhythms must come from the speech and the harmony; however, neither Socrates nor Glaucon can determine which rhythms are ill-suited to this task and which would allow them to achieve their goals. Socrates suggests that they, “Let these things be turned over to Damon. To separate them out is no theme for a short argument,”⁶⁴ and Glaucon readily acquiesces. Socrates never actually determines what are bad rhythms and what are good rhythms. Although he distinguishes between good and bad tales, musical modes, and even instruments, rhythm is left alone. The power of rhythm is acknowledged and discussed, but unlike the other parts of song, no specific rhythms are done away with. Socrates is willing to have a stance in the other aspects of the role music plays in education and moderation, but this he defers to Damon, an Athenian music expert.

Grace & Gracelessness

After the discussion of rhythm, Socrates explains how the parts of music follow from the soul. Socrates asks Glaucon, “But you are able to determine that grace and gracelessness accompany rhythm and lack of it?”⁶⁵ Glaucon agrees with Socrates that this is true. Although grace and gracelessness accompany rhythm, the rest of the parts of music follow from each other. Socrates explains rhythm follows the style of the music and both rhythm and harmony follow the speech. The style determines the rhythm, speech, and not vice versa. He then asks Glaucon, “What about the manner of the style and the speech?...Don’t they follow the disposition of the soul?”⁶⁶ According to Socrates, good style and speech follow the soul. If you have a good soul, then you will have good speech. Socrates is claiming that good or bad speech reveals your soul. Grace is a reflection of good rhythm which is preceded by good harmony that follows the speech and style that reveals the good soul. Socrates explains, “Good speech, good harmony, good grace, and good rhythm accompany good disposition, not the folly that we endearingly call ‘good disposition,’ but that understanding truly trained to a good and fair disposition.”⁶⁷ By good disposition, Socrates wants a man who is just and virtuous. He states that the good disposition accompanies rather than follows speech, harmony, and grace. Previously, Socrates stated the proper music will form the character of the guardians and this music has to be both moderate and courageous as is fitting for the guardians of the city. It could be that that the proper music and a good disposition go together.

When Socrates and Glaucon have this discussion about the orders of rhythm,

⁶² Bloom, p. 80.

⁶³ 400a.

⁶⁴ 400c.

⁶⁵ 400c.

⁶⁶ 400d.

⁶⁷ 400e.

harmony, style, speech and soul, they include grace. What Socrates means by grace is not clear, but Glaucon appears to understand him. Grace seems to be the way one moves and acts. The graceful man is endearing and pleasing. He is loveable. In contrast, the graceless man is repulsive. On the surface, grace appears to mean only physical action, for example a ballerina has grace. Socrates appears to intend grace to mean more than walking without tripping. Allan Bloom translates the Greek words “*eschemosyne*” and “*aschemosyne*” to mean grace and gracelessness. The root word “*scheme*” means posture, attitude or bearing. A man with grace would have these traits, but that does not make clear why it is necessary for the guardians to have grace. Socrates intends for music to lead the guardians to be public-spirited gentlemen and would seem to be a trivial concern if gentlemen were physically clumsy. Instead of grace in the body, Socrates wants grace in the soul of his guardian. A soul with grace would be upright and would not slouch in virtuous actions and would have the proper attitude to accompany the actions. Virtue in one good soul would not repel the soul of a similar temperament. There would be harmony within the citizens. A graceless man would be clumsy in his virtue. He could act virtuously for the wrong reasons and therefore would certainly have the wrong attitude. A graceless soul would create friction between members of the city and therefore it would be inharmonious and disunited. As the guardians are to be the leaders of the city, it is important for them to have grace in order to have a good soul to properly lead the citizens.

This grace is not only accompanied with music, although it is the superior way of doing so. Socrates stated that the young should search for good grace everywhere if this is to work and Glaucon agrees with him. It is important to look at the rest of the arts

in order to better understand how Socrates believes that music influences the souls of the young. Music is certainly under the banner of the arts, thus what Socrates says about the arts can be applied to music as well. All arts including painting, crafts, music, clothing, architecture, and others are full of either grace or lack grace. Socrates states, “And graceless, clumsiness, inharmoniousness, are akin to bad speech and bad dispositions, while their opposites are akin to, and imitations of, the opposite—moderate and good disposition.”⁶⁸ Due to this, Socrates further censors the artists in the city for the same reasons as music. The citizens of the city do not know whether what they are putting into their soul is bad or good. Socrates explains that this is a process that will happen in small amounts. If the art around them is bad, then slowly they will have put “some one big bad thing in their soul.”⁶⁹ If the city is not filled with what is noble and good, then the citizens will not have the opportunity to dwell upon the noble and good even if they do not actually realize that the above arts lead them to do so. They will not realize that such ideas even exist.

Much like the poets and musicians, the artists of the city must work to create what is “fine” in human nature. The idea is that an environment with the proper music and art will allow the citizens to be “benefitted by everything.”⁷⁰ This means the art will lead the citizens to have noble thoughts and they will be benefitted by it. The art of bad disposition will not lead to these benefits and is profitless. It will slowly degrade the soul of the citizens with something bad. Socrates argues that the environment where the citizens live can determine the type of souls that they will have. Twice Socrates describes the city with art of good disposi-

⁶⁸ 401a.

⁶⁹ 401c.

⁷⁰ 401c.

tion as a “healthy place”⁷¹ and is “like a breeze bringing health from good places.”⁷² It is healthy for the guardians to be led to noble thoughts. For the city not to have these characteristics would make the city and the citizens unwell. Although Socrates focuses on art and architecture, his argument helps lead to a better understanding of music’s role in education. If the art is censored then music must follow suit in order to properly educate the guardians.

Glaucon agrees with Socrates that the proper music and art will give the guardians the “finest rearing.”⁷³ In Socrates’ education of the young, music has the role of educating the passions. This is done before the child can learn to find pleasure in reason. The time between birth and reasonable speech is most critical for a proper education in music. This is why Socrates declares to Glaucon:

Isn’t this why the rearing in music is most sovereign? Because rhythm and harmony most all insinuate themselves into the inmost part of the soul and most vigorously lay hold of it in bringing grace with them; and they make a man graceful if he is correctly reared, if not, the opposite. Furthermore, it is sovereign because the man properly reared on rhythm and harmony would have the sharpest sense for what’s being left out and what isn’t a fine product of craft or what isn’t a fine product of nature.⁷⁴

Music is the most important of the arts. Although painting and architecture have the power to bring about grace, music is much stronger in its accompaniment with grace. The other arts work simultaneously with the

music, but the use of music is still the best way to accomplish this education in the guardians. It is the best way to lead the guardian students to love the noble. Out of all the arts, it is music that sticks to the soul the best. This is why it is important to censor the music that will not benefit the education of the guardians. Songs of symposia, lamenting and rage can lay claim on the soul just as well as the two modes allowed in the city. Grace helps lead a man to have a good soul. As the guardians are to be public spirited gentlemen and eventually the leaders of the city, it would not do for them to have bad souls created by bad music. With music of good grace, the citizens will be graceful as well and will have the moderation necessary for the city. Listening to the wrong types of music will create citizens that will be a detriment to the city. The man who is influenced by the stories of Achilles’ rage in Homer could act in a way that would cause problems in times of peace and lead to the dysfunctional running of the city.

The necessity for the guardians to be graceful creates need for the proper music education. This education does not necessarily mean they have a complete understanding of what is noble or leads to grace, but only what does not lead to this. The music will lead them to avoid what is not noble or lead to grace as it will be unfamiliar to them. They will be able to turn what leads to bad disposition away as it will not satisfy what rhythm and harmony has already put into the souls of the guardians. It will not have the grace that is already in their souls. Socrates tells Glaucon that the proper musical education will give the guardians the “right kinds of dislikes.”⁷⁵ The guardians will determine what is noble in what does not contain characteristics they find to be ugly, and not because they will know to like what is noble. Rather their reaction to what will give them a good disposition is based

⁷¹ 401c.

⁷² 401d

⁷³ 401d.

⁷⁴ 401e.

⁷⁵ 401e.

off of their negative response to what is ugly, and then they will be able to embrace the beautiful. Hearing the proper music will lead the guardian to appreciate beauty and “praise the fine things; and taking pleasure in them and receiving them into his soul, he would be reared on them and become a gentleman.”⁷⁶ It is love of the noble that will lead the guardians to become more than just warriors, but will lead them to be devoted to the public and eventually leaders of the city.

Relationships: Friendship, Love, and Sex

These guardians will be influenced by their surroundings, and are unaware that it will “lead them to likeness and friendship as well as accord.”⁷⁷ A healthy diet of the good art will lead the citizens to friendship. They will be able to find companions in their shared understanding of the noble. The surroundings that Socrates desires for his young might be described by Allan Bloom and many others as “roots.” Bloom writes, “The state of nature concerning friendships and love today, there is doubt about both, and the result is a longing for the vanished common ground, called roots, without the means to recover it.”⁷⁸ Socrates wants his guardians to have their roots in the noble in that they will be able to recognize, converse and defend the fair and noble as their own. They will reject the ignoble because it is unfamiliar to them. When describing students in the eighties, Bloom finds them to be mediocre. They are not “great-souled,” but rather only nice and self-centered. As the students are self-centered, this makes them separate from each other. This separation makes it difficult for them to have the friendship that Socrates wants in his guar-

dians. Instead of having any roots or any influence of the noble and fine as Socrates has in city in speech, these students today share only one thing. As Bloom understands it, the youth culture is that of rock music. This is where the roots of the students of the university have been growing.

Although rock music is what the students have in common it does not lead them to the friendship desired by Socrates, which is completed by reasonable speech. Instead rock music is antagonistic to this goal of shared speech. As the music of rock is loud, it is impossible for those at a rock concert to have any conversation that would lead to the search of any higher good. This is only the surface of the problem. For Bloom, the effects of rock music will change how the students relate to one another because of the way rock has helped shape their souls. Instead of delighting in reasonable speech, “With rock, illusions of shared feelings, bodily contact and grunted formulas, which are supposed to contain so much meaning beyond speech, are the basis of association.”⁷⁹ Rock’s focus on feeling changes friendship from one of a search for the good to one of feeling. Friendship no longer involves shared knowledge. Instead, among college students, friendship tends to revolve around the experience of drinking and sex with titles such as drinking buddies and friends with benefits. In college dorm rooms, the students will split between those who drink and those who do not. The foundation for friendship is on this rather than any shared understanding of the noble. According to Bloom, there is now nothing to counteract this. There is no noble and fair art to surround the students to create the roots of common conversation.

In regards to the fine products of nature, they could refer to the companions these guardians will surround themselves

⁷⁶ 402a.

⁷⁷ 401d.

⁷⁸ Bloom, p. 109.

⁷⁹ Bloom, p. 75.

with. They will be able to tell if something of the good is missing by nature within these people. Being able to notice if something is missing in nature in regards to people could lead them to reject friendship with those who do share their same understanding of the noble, while embracing those that do. Plato places a heavy emphasis on friendship and this shared background as it is important for the citizens to be friends. The guardians will be able to recognize each other after shared conversation, after they realize they both enjoy speeches, reason and have love of the same things. The music of rock does not lead to the Platonic definition of friendship. Bloom's university students are not really friends because there is no finding of friendship based on this shared understanding of the noble. This is not to say that friendship over shared love of learning does not exist, but it is probably rarer than people would like to admit although it could certainly grow as the friendship strengthens. Plato wants his citizens devoted to each other, willing to fight in battle, and willing to listen and be persuaded by one another. As many friendships fail to have these characteristics, they do fail to reach Plato's definition of friendship.

Music's affects on the soul and bringing grace to the guardians are accomplished before "he's able to grasp reasonable speech."⁸⁰ The musical education is the most important when the citizen is able to enjoy not only just pleasing speech as is located in poetry and songs, but the speech of debates, learning, philosophizing, and other sorts of conversation. However, although the effects of music are much more prevalent in the young, it is certainly true that there are also effects on those that have reached the age of reason which is why the poets are exiled rather than only censured with an ancient version of a PG-13 label. Regardless, hearing the right kinds of music will lead to

an understanding of beauty that would otherwise not be placed in the souls of the young. It prepares them for reason. As they will not be listening to music that praises lack of reason such as symposia or lamenting, they will be unlikely to act in those ways as well. As they reach the age of reason, they will not be drawn to this type of speech as it will not be familiar to them. Instead, they will look for the speech that matches the music they heard when they were young.

After the discussion on music's sovereignty, Socrates then moves on to make a few final comments on music. He remarks to Glaucon, "We'll never be musical—either ourselves or those whom we say we must educate to be guardians—before we recognize the forms of moderation, courage, liberality, magnificence, and all their kin."⁸¹ This is the first time liberality and magnificence are mentioned in *The Republic*. After the musical education of the passions in moderation and courage, these two virtues could be the beginnings of the education in reason. The educated guardian should be able to recognize these virtues and their opposites in all things. The man who has all of these would be the most fair. Socrates tells Glaucon, "It's the musical man who would most of all love such human beings, while if there were one who lacked harmony, he wouldn't love him."⁸² The unmusical man is undeserving of love.

Socrates continues the discussion of love when he asks Glaucon, "Does excessive pleasure have anything in common with moderation?"⁸³ Glaucon responds in the negative as excessive pleasure is similar to pain as it drives men out of their minds. They become irrational. Socrates takes the virtue of moderation to exclude the pleasures of sex. He asks Glaucon, "Can you tell of a greater or keener pleasure than the one

⁸⁰ 402a.

⁸¹ 402c.

⁸² 402d.

⁸³ 402e.

connected with sex?” To which Glaucon responds, “I can’t, nor a madder one either.”⁸⁴ Socrates wants love to become musical and moderate. The excessive pleasure of sex does not fit in with this. Being driven out of one’s mind is not something that Socrates wants in his guardians and therefore sex cannot be connected with love. If it’s mad it can only corrupt love and make it unmusical. He is not trying to stamp out Eros, but is trying to direct it elsewhere to love of wisdom and love of the city. Socrates explains to Glaucon there must be a new law within the city to make sure that sex does not intermingle with love, “A lover may kiss, be with, and touch his boy as though he were a son, for fair purposes, if he persuades him.”⁸⁵ If the musical education of the guardians has been successful, love will not need the pleasure of sex. The guardian that goes further than a kiss with the one he loves will be “subject to blame as unmusical and inexperienced in fair things.”⁸⁶ This is certainly not a severe repercussion, but Socrates does find the relationship between sex, love and music to be important. He finishes the conversation about music and education stating, “Surely musical matters should end in love matters that concern the fair.”⁸⁷ Music matters do end in the proper role between love and sex. For Socrates these two things do not belong together. The musical man who loves properly will love “his boy” because he is fair and noble, not because he can have sex with him. The love of the body should not overcome that of the love of the soul.

Like Socrates, Bloom also finds the relationship between music, love, and sex to be problematic for the liberal education. It’s not that Bloom wants to hinder love and sex; instead he finds that his students are no longer passionate about them in a human

way. Rock music leads to animalistic passions rather than human Eros. In this way the passion in rock’s music makes us less passionate as humans. Bloom writes, “Rock music has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal, to sexual desire—not love, not *eros*, but sexual desire undeveloped and untutored.” The sex is not the sex of love, but only serves the purpose of gratifying physical feeling. Bloom finds that the “eroticism of our students is lame” and does not include a search of completeness in another human being. Students are no longer lovers, but rather stay in passionless relationships. He writes that wonder is the main expression of Eros, and wonder also helps bring about philosophy. This lack of Eros robs the wonder needed to encourage the students towards a liberal education. Wonder leads to questioning and without questioning, the student can never ask himself, “What is the best life?” Rock music encourages this way of thinking about sex and eros. The word love is often used as a euphemism for sex as is quite clear in Led Zeppelin’s “Whole Lotta Love.” There is no romantic persuasion, no wonder, not even a relationship, but physical feeling on a base level. If it is love, it is only love for one’s body.

Gymnastics

The second part of the education of the guardians is that of gymnastics. Although not as important as music in the education, it reveals that the education is incomplete especially in regards to the goal of educating the guardians into gentlemen. This is something that Allan Bloom does not include at all in *The Closing of the American Mind*, but this is probably because of the difference in their goals. Spiritedness is not the focus of Bloom’s critique of music, nor does he include any discussion of the role of spiritedness in a liberal education. The guardian needs spiritedness though as it is

⁸⁴ 403a.

⁸⁵ 403b.

⁸⁶ 403c.

⁸⁷ 403c.

necessary on the battlefield. According to Socrates the best education is, “Gymnastics for the bodies and music for the soul.”⁸⁸ The child is supposed to be educated in music before that of gymnastics; however, without the blending of both of them the education is incomplete. Located in the middle of the discussion about music, talk of gymnastics seems to be an off topic transition. It is the education of the souls of the guardians that Socrates wants to achieve. For Socrates, the state of the body is an indication of the state of soul. He says to Glaucon, “A good soul by its own virtue makes the body as good as it can be.”⁸⁹ Of course there are limitations to this as they last four words “as it can be” suggests, but Socrates wants the guardians to use gymnastics to better their bodies as a reflection of their souls. The gymnastics of Socrates is not the rigorous program of an Iron Man athlete, but instead it is related to the music in which it complements. It strengthens the body and the spirited part of the soul, but still leads to the end of learning. The sickly body cannot take part in learning without needing to stop and take care of some malady or other. On the opposing side, the man who is too concerned about his body, who takes care of it with a strict regimen, and focuses on the perfect body rather than the perfect soul will not be able to take part in learning.

As we later see in book three gymnastics is not only for the body, but for the soul as well. Socrates explains to Glaucon:

“Now I, for one would assert that some god gave two arts to human beings for these two things, as it seems—music and gymnastic for the spirited and the philosophic—not for soul and body, except incidentally, but rather for these two. He did so in

order that they might be harmonized with one another by being tuned to the proper degree of tension and relaxation.”⁹⁰

There needs to be a proper amount of each education in order to make a perfectly musical human. Both of these educations work with each other in order to accomplish their goals of leading the guardians to grace and love of learning. Gymnastics works with music in order to both temper and give courage to the guardians, but they need to be in balance. For example, a man who is too spirited and who cares too much about the body cannot think or love reason. Socrates explains, “That it also makes any kind of learning, thought, or meditation by oneself hard; it is always on the lookout for tensions and spinning in the head and holds philosophy to blame.”⁹¹ It is important to note Bloom does not include anything about gymnastics in the chapter on music, but Socrates views them as two parts of the whole. Music is superior, but it is this moderate exercise that allows the guardians to be able to protect and defend their city and keep them in good health in order to appreciate learning. The role of spiritedness reveals a connection between soul and body. Although Socrates previously states that the good of the soul influences the health of the body, in regards to spiritedness this is ambiguous. If there is no music and only gymnastics, then the spirited part of the soul leans towards cruelty and corruption. Courage and moderation is the goal leading towards learning. The balance can also be tipped in favor of music. Those who only listen to music, but never touch gymnastics become soft and feeble. They are also unable to think because they do not have the spirited nature to help them. The man with the perfect mix of these two educations is

⁸⁸ 376e.

⁸⁹ 403c.

⁹⁰ 411e.

⁹¹ 407c.

the one that is most musical. This is the man who will become leader of the city.

Conclusion

In conclusion, after looking at *The Republic*, it becomes very clear where Allan Bloom's argument on the problematic nature of rock music comes from. Both thinkers are concerned with music leading to thought and the relationship between music, sex and love. Bloom and Socrates recognize that their students are deeply influenced by the tales and emotions in the words, melodies, harmonies and rhythms of music. Where they divide is on the role of spiritedness in music. Bloom solely focuses on passion within music, where Socrates looks at both the spirited and passionate parts of the soul. As previously stated, Bloom most likely does not look at the role of spirited music in education because of the differing goals of teaching liberally educated students and guardians leaders of the city. He also probably does not look at the spirited nature of music because Bloom only looks at rock music which (excluding heavier forms of rock) is more passionate than spirited in nature. Although it may seem that Socrates only focuses on spirited music to make a stronger leader, this music is also supposed to help lead the guardians to thought and help keep the balance between the passionate and spirited parts of the souls. Bloom makes a mistake in not considering this part of music in his chapter on music's role in education especially with the spirited direction that music (rock and other genres) have taken in the early nineties and later.

CHAPTER THREE

We're Not Going to Take It: Spirited Music and a Liberal Education

Introduction

Spirited music is also a hindrance in leading a student to a liberal education by leading its listeners to become indignant to any other way of life. They will not be able to think seriously in the way that is necessary for a liberal education. In *The Republic*, Socrates explains to his listeners that music educates both passion and spiritedness so that the guardians come to love learning and eventually become philosopher kings of the city in speech. Allan Bloom used Socrates' musical education of the guardians to explain his problem with rock music's approval of animalistic sexual desire. However, Bloom's understanding of music's role in education is incomplete as he only looks at the passionate and sexual realm of music. As we learned in *The Republic*, music is also supposed to educate spiritedness to be subordinate to reason in order to overcome mindless passion and be able to more fully participate in learning. Of course music is always going to be tuned into passion, but Socrates argues that spirited music has its role in education as well. At its best spiritedness is an ally to reason. It is subordinate to reason and allows the soul to have courage. When the spirited part of soul is not allied with reason it is coarse. It is vicious, angry, and temperamental. When it discovers that a life of honor does not bring stability, the spirited part of the soul will once again make way for the desiring part of the soul and seek money. Spirited music such as punk rock, heavy metal and gangsta rap have as much affect on the soul's ability to gain a liberal education as does passionate rock music, but perhaps with even greater

consequences. To show how spirited music closes the mind to the thought that is necessary for a liberal education, I will first look at *The Republic* and how spiritedness fits into the education of the guardians, then I will look at different examples of spirited music and will finish by explaining how this type of music is not compatible with the openness needed for a liberal education.

Spiritedness and The Republic of Plato

Spiritedness is one of the three parts of the soul as explained by Socrates in *The Republic*. These three parts include the calculating or reasonable part, the desiring part and the spirited part. Ideally, the reasonable part of the soul would be master of the desiring and spirited part, but this is not always the case. Spiritedness is first introduced in book two where Socrates discusses the noble puppies. The guardians of the city are to be like these noble dogs with the proper education and have an “irresistible and unbeatable spirit...so that its presence makes every soul fearless and invincible in the face of everything.”⁹² Using the example of noble puppies, Socrates explains the virtues of spiritedness. A person with a healthy spirited part of their soul would be courageous and would not be frightened by death. It would seek the pleasure of honor and would be loyal. When the soul is not in balance and when spiritedness dominates or is allied with the desiring part of the soul, spiritedness is cruel and coarse (410d). It seeks to dominate and the person is considered to be hard. The only way to prevent this imbalance from occurring is through education.

Socrates begins the discussion of the guardians’ education in book two when he talks about the noble puppies and ends it when he determines that guardians with the

character created by this education should be the rulers of the city. As aforementioned in chapter two, the education needed to create these qualities is the proper mixture of music and gymnastics which will lead them to a character that will love reason (376e). Throughout the discussion of education it appears that the balance of music and gymnastics are what is needed to make sure the guardians have the proper character to be able to have a love all that is noble and reasonable. With only gymnastics, the soul becomes hardened and as Socrates asks Glaucon, “Isn’t he filled with high thought and spirit, and doesn’t he become braver than himself?”⁹³ The man with an education of gymnastics without music does not think. Therefore he acts in a way that is impulsive and irrational. He will be quick to anger and quick to fight. The spirited part of the soul needs music in order to temper this nature and ally it with reason in order to overcome this desire. With the right music, spiritedness can become courageous, brave, and loyal especially in the name of patriotism or even can help the guardian overcome bodily desires in order to help him delight in reason. Through an education in music, Socrates argues, spiritedness will ally with reason in order to keep the desiring part of the soul from becoming tyrannical. However, music with a spirited nature can also create the same character in its listeners.

Although Socrates does not specifically say it, with *The Republic* there seems to be two different types of spirited music. As aforementioned, a proper spirited character is brave and loyal, whereas an improperly spirited soul is coarse and hard. Spirited music also takes on these differences. When Socrates begins the discussion of the proper education of the guardians, he begins by eliminating tales of the gods he finds inappropriate. Within the tales of the gods Socrates eliminates those that tell of

⁹² 375b.

⁹³ 411c.

excessive anger or the wars within the gods. He further explains, “They are far from needing to have tales told...about battles of giants and the many diverse disputes of gods and heroes with their families and kin...we are somehow going to persuade them that no citizen was ever angry with another and that to be so is not holy.”⁹⁴ Socrates seems to believe that listening to coarsely spirited tales such as these leads its citizens to act in this manner as well. Wrongful spiritedness is directed towards fellow citizens and family members and this is something Socrates believes should be discouraged. Achilles is an example of a spirited man, but he has all the vices of spiritedness rather than its virtues. This is problematic as Achilles is a hero that many look up to despite his violent actions such as the dragging of Hector’s body and his beating of the river god. Achilles contains “two diseases that are opposite to one another—illiberality accompanying love of money, on the one hand, and arrogant disdain for gods and human beings, on the other.”⁹⁵ These tales affect the young in a problematic way and Socrates does not believe that they would lead the guardians to have the character that would love learning; instead they will attempt to imitate Achilles and love what he loves.

Even though Socrates removes the tales of violence in music and poetry, he still keeps a violent mode of music. His decision to keep a violent mode of music seems to be contradictory, but the violence within this mode is intended as an aid to patriotism and war to protect the city in speech (399b). This is still a very different violence than that of Achilles. Although both the tales of Achilles and this violent mode have to do with battles and war, the mode that Socrates approves reveals that there is an appropriate spiritedness as opposed to the spirited tales of the

gods and Achilles. The violent and warlike mode that Socrates approves seems to encourage the virtues of spiritedness. It encourages spirited deeds such as being courageous on the battlefield, while calming fears of death or injury while both succeeding and failing on the battlefield. It is not thoughtless as are the tales of Achilles on the battlefield. Socrates does not want his guardians acting unreasonably as Achilles does when he drags Hector’s body, but instead to fight for something higher than themselves and to not fear the consequences when the worst should happen. The violent mode is necessary for the citizens to be willing to fight for their city, but it would seem that there would be further benefits to this mode. Through this music, the guardians are able to overcome their fear of death in order to fight for the higher cause of their city. It could be suggested that this music would allow them to overcome the needs of the body for other causes as well.

Although the violent mode of music that Socrates wants kept in the city of speech seems to bring a lot of benefit in giving the guardians the appropriate character necessary to lead them to love reason, this is only done if it balanced with the voluntary mode of music (399b) which needs to be further balanced by an education in gymnastics. Without this proper mixture, the soul will be imbalanced with either the desiring or the spirited part dominating the reasonable part. If any of these three parts of the education is out of order, the soul can become overly spirited and therefore become too hard, or if there is no gymnastics in the education, the soul will become soft (411b). The spirited part of the soul will love honor and victory and will aid reason, but with an improper education they will seek these virtues for the wrong reasons such as violence and anger towards other citizens with no thought to a higher reason such as patriotism. Violence for the sake of violence alone would be

⁹⁴ 378d.

⁹⁵ 391c.

unreasonable and therefore contradictory to the type of education in reason and moderation that Socrates wishes his guardians to have. As the aim for this education is to lead the citizens to love reason, being excessively violent or soft would get in the way of this goal.

Socrates reveals how excessive spiritedness leads men to love other than reason when he addresses the regimes later in *The Republic*. In Book VIII, Socrates describes to Glaucon what it would be like if spiritedness ruled in the timocratic regime. These men will be “afraid to bring the wise to the ruling offices...and in learning toward spirited and simpler men, men naturally directed to war than peace.”⁹⁶ In their preference to exercise their spirited natures in order to gain honor and victory they will prefer the more simple and spirited ruler rather than one who is wise. In the spirited regime the men seek honor, but the wise ruler would not honor them for thoughtless violence as a simple and spirited ruler would be inclined to do. Also, a wise ruler would want to have a just reason for war, whereas the spirited ruler would want to go to war which would give the spirited citizens ample opportunity to gain honor even if there is no higher end. Instead of looking for wisdom themselves, the citizens of a spirited regime secretly desire money. Socrates explains that they have this character “because they weren’t educated by persuasions but by force—the result of neglect of the true Muse accompanied by arguments and philosophy while giving more distinguished honor to gymnastic than music.”⁹⁷ The timocratic regime as described by Socrates reveals some of the consequences of an improper education in music and gymnastics as well as the dangers of the spirited part of the soul ruling.

In Book IV of *The Republic*, Socrates asks Glaucon, “Isn’t it proper for the calculating part to rule, since it is wise and has forethought about all of the soul, and for the spirited part to be obedient to it and its ally?”⁹⁸ Glaucon agrees with Socrates that this is the role of the spirited part of the soul. It aids reason and if properly reared allows the soul to not be swallowed up by the desiring and passionate part of the soul. The spirited part is an ally to reason in its ability to forego the needs and the pleasures of the body in order to obtain some higher good such as love of wisdom. An example of spiritedness, Socrates gives the example of a man that has been a victim of an injustice who is willing to forego bodily needs such sleep, food, and drink in order to obtain justice. The ability for spiritedness to overcome the body can be applied to pleasure as well. A modern example could be a Friday night where a student wants to go out drinking when it is necessary for him to work on a paper. His spiritedness helps him to decline the pleasure of drinking in order to work on his paper. It will aid him in delighting in reason; while at the same satisfying a spirited need for honor should he do well on the paper. In the case of the violent mode of music for the guardians, spirited music was to help them gain courage in order to be willing to die for their city. These guardians are not to fight in a blood thirsty and unreasonable manner, but instead their spirit is lead by their reason to act in a thoughtful and courageous manner. An education with the mixture of music and gymnastics as well as the balance between the violent and voluntary mode in music are supposed to allow for this harmony between reason and spirit. At first it appears that music educates the soul in order to prepare it to receive reason and gymnastics educates spirit, but throughout *The Republic* music has a bigger role in the

⁹⁶ 547e.

⁹⁷ 548b.

⁹⁸ 441e.

education of spirit in order to allow the soul to be more open to reason.

Socrates also asks Glaucon in Book IV, “Won’t a mixture of music and gymnastic make them accordant, tightening the one and training it in fair speeches and learning, while relaxing the other with soothing tales, taming it by harmony and rhythm?”⁹⁹ With this question, Socrates is suggesting that although gymnastics is part of the education of spiritedness, music can also soothe and calm this part of the soul. It tempers the spirited part of the soul while allowing reason to grow stronger. Music helps these two parts of the soul become allies. This would also seem contrary to the necessity for music to aid spiritedness in dominating the desiring part of the soul, it would seem that soothing it would not aid in this goal. We must remember even though spiritedness is supposed to aid reason in overcoming the desiring part of the soul that all the parts of the soul must be kept in balance. As aforementioned, should spiritedness overcome its rule by reason it would become coarse and vicious and would join with the desiring part of the soul to overcome spiritedness. Therefore, it is necessary that spiritedness should be roused in the aid of reason, while being soothed to make sure it does not join forces with the desiring part of the soul. An education in music aids this goal by helping the guardian to have the appropriate character that will love reason while at the same time calming the spirited part of the soul through the use of the voluntary mode of music. Once again, a balance is needed to make sure the guardian does not become too soft and it is balanced with the violent mode of music which will rouse spiritedness, not to a vicious pitch as Socrates suggests is the case in the tales of the wars of the gods, but instead to higher end such as patriotism. The

balance of these two modes allows the benefits of spiritedness such as courage and loyalty to be drawn out while suppressing the vices such as viciousness and needless violence.

The education of the guardians begins with the desire to create the disposition of noble dogs. At first it seems impossible to create this character in the guardians. Socrates and Glaucon are not sure it is possible for the spirited guardian to be gentle with the citizens, just as a spirited noble puppy cannot have this nature and a gentle nature at the same time. However, they soon discover that these two traits can be combined with the proper education. The noble puppies are the proof Socrates needs that he can get the character he wants within the guardians. Socrates explains to Glaucon, “You know, of course, that by nature the disposition of noble dogs is to be gentle as can be with their familiars and people they know and the opposite with those they don’t know.”¹⁰⁰ Initially this description does not seem as though it will lead to someone who will love learning. If they hate what they do not know then they will be opposed to learning as this will be new to them. But Socrates still describes the noble dog as philosophic “in that it distinguishes friendly from hostile looks by nothing other than by having learned the one and being ignorant of the other.”¹⁰¹ It is this characteristic that Socrates tells Glaucon makes the noble dog a lover of learning, because that is how it knows what is its own. This seems to be a contradiction, but through an education of music and gymnastics they are to learn to love and know reason and order. They will hate what they do not recognize as reasonable. In this way they will have to learn in order to determine and embrace what is their

⁹⁹ 442a.

¹⁰⁰ 375e.

¹⁰¹ 376b.

own and reasonable, and hate what is not their own and unreasonable.

The guardian is to be “in his nature be philosophic, spirited, swift, and strong.”¹⁰² Being found in nature, these traits are in the guardians without the influence of music and gymnastics. The need for a musical and gymnastics education reveals that having these characteristics naturally is not enough to lead the guardians to love wisdom and reason. The musical education allows these traits to be supported and drawn out or with the wrong education the traits will be corrupted. Not all the citizens in the city in speech are going to have the same nature as the guardians, but this will not be known until later. Therefore, the education allows for these souls to develop properly. In Book III, Socrates describes the problems of having an improper education. They will either be too coarse should they have an excessively spirited education or too soft if their education is overly musical. Spiritedness needs to be educated because it is the part of the soul where anger and indignation reside. It is clear from Socrates’ desire that spiritedness when properly reared is good as it is an important trait to have in the guardians. Although Socrates wants the guardians to be vicious to enemies, he is fearful that they could be vicious to their fellow citizens. The noble dog reveals that it is possible to combine both violence towards what one does not know and gentleness and affection towards what one does know. These guardians eventually are led to be lovers of learning and much later the philosopher kings of the city in speech. Spiritedness must be cultivated to aid these guardians in this endeavor; however, if spiritedness is not properly reared by an education of gymnastics and music, like the desiring part of the soul, it can be antagonistic to the aim of philosophic and courageous guardians.

¹⁰² 376c.

In order to understand how spiritedness can aid reason, it is important to look at what the benefits are of having the spirited part of the soul properly educated. All parts of the soul take pleasure in something. For reason that is wisdom and knowledge, for desire that is the bodily pleasures, and for spiritedness that is honor and glory. Properly educated spiritedness will be allied to reason. The spirited desire for honor can be soothed by recognizing the search for wisdom as an honorable feat, while simultaneously satisfying reason’s desire for learning. There are additional benefits to properly educated spiritedness. It not only helps creating one’s own by love of the city, but it also is the basis of friendship. In *The Politics*, Aristotle writes in reference to the nature of the guardians, “For as to what some assert should be present in guardians, to be affectionate toward familiar persons but savage toward those who are unknown, it is spiritedness that creates affectionateness; for this is the capacity of soul by which we feel affection.”¹⁰³ The spirited guardians are not to be savage with each other, but gentle. Later Socrates suggests that the surroundings of the guardians should educate and lead them to grace and friendship. Even noble dogs evoke ideas of loyalty and protection which further the notion of friendship in the spirited and philosophic guardians. As we have seen in Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind*, friendship is an important aspect in a liberal education. A friendship within a liberal education creates a desire between two people to converse about the good while encouraging each other to live the good life. They are loyal, courageous and steadfast in their friendships as opposed to those that are merely considered nice, separate and selfish within their friendships. A friendship within

¹⁰³ Aristotle, *The Politics*. trans. Carnes Lord, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, 1327b40-1328a3.

a liberal education is supposed to be a true mingling of souls as they search for wisdom and reason. If spiritedness is not educated, these souls can be inhibited from being friends in this manner as coarseness and viciousness are not considered characteristics of a friendship that desires to seek reason.

Another important aspect of properly educated spiritedness concerns the alliance of reason; a man is able to ignore the good of the body in order to obtain some higher good. According to Socrates, men will endure all sorts of physical pains such as hunger, thirst, death, cold, and even sex when spiritedness has been motivated. In *The Republic*, Socrates' explains that the violent and warlike mode of music should lead the courageous guardians to face injury and death for the city.¹⁰⁴ In this case they forget their body for the higher good of the preservation of the city. Another example where the reason and spirited parts of the soul ally themselves against the desiring is in the case where injustice to a man is done. Socrates asks Glaucon, "Doesn't his spirit in this case boil and become harsh and form an alliance for battle with what seems just; and, even if it suffers in hunger, cold and everything of the sort, doesn't it stand firm and conquer..."¹⁰⁵ Although there is a desire within the soul to perhaps give up and get out of the cold or desires to drink, the spirited element along with reason is able to master these bodily desires in order to benefit the higher good of justice to himself. The part of the soul which forbids the man to give into his bodily desires comes into being when reason informs the spirited part of the soul. Without this alliance, the man would be enslaved by the desiring part of his soul. Spiritedness can ally itself with both the philosophic and passionate part of the

soul. As long as it is properly educated it will always fight for reason, but if it is given a corrupt education then it will set itself on the side of passion and will subjugate the philosophic part of the soul.

Music tames the spirited part of the soul in order to keep it under the control of reason. Without its subservience to reason, spiritedness is violent and blood thirsty. Joined with the desiring part of the soul, it is barbarism. Without the rule of reason, a spirited man is savage and cruel. This is why it is necessary for the parts of soul to be harmonized by music. The proper music will create a man with a harmonious soul, but without this balance, the man will not only be cowardly, but also vulgar. When Socrates describes to Adeimantus and Glaucon the spirited regime, he describes a ruler who "is a lover of ruling and of honor, not basing his claim to rule on speaking or anything of the sort, but on warlike deeds and everything connected with war; he is a lover of gymnastic and the hunt."¹⁰⁶ The spirited ruler does not rule based on reason or love of learning, but because he is stronger than others. Although he listens to his betters, he is violent towards slaves and is a brute. He will constantly need opportunities to prove his strength because this is the basis of his rule. From looking at a man rule by spirit alone, it is easy to see how such a man could not be lead towards a life of reason. Haughty people tend think very highly of the importance of their own opinions. Without the music of the voluntary mode, the man in the timocratic regime will be unable to hear the arguments and persuasive speech of others. The reason why this happens is due to their education. Socrates explains to Glaucon, "This is because they weren't educated by persuasion but by force—the result of neglect of the true Muse accompanied by arguments and philosophy while giving

¹⁰⁴ 399b.

¹⁰⁵ 440c.

¹⁰⁶ 549a.

more distinguished honor to gymnastic than music.”¹⁰⁷ Although this man is mixed, he will still be unable to hear reason, because the spirited part of his soul dominates.

Although this ruler originally does not love money, later in his life after he has been abandoned by reason and music, he becomes much more attached to finding honor in the acquisition of money which puts the passionate and desiring part of the soul back in control. Socrates describes the spirited connection between honor and money in the transition from the timocratic man to the oligarchic man. Adeimantus tells Socrates, “There is no other transformation so quick and so sure from a young man who loves honor to one who loves money.”¹⁰⁸ First the spirited man who loves honor seeks honor in warfare, but after discovering that he cannot seek security in a life of honor, he turns to seek security through money instead. This puts the desiring part of the soul back in control, but instead of desiring more bodily pleasures, he seeks “the enjoyment of no other honor than that resulting from the possession of money and anything that happens to contribute to getting it.”¹⁰⁹ An education in music will help prevent this imbalance from occurring by taming spiritedness and allowing reason to be in command. In the transition from spiritedness to desiring, reason will also be subjected to this desire for gain as it will only be able to think on ways to gain wealth, which will keep it from thinking about the good and noble.

The consequences of an overly spirited man can be prevented by an education in music. In this way, music creates the character within the guardians that will make it easier for them to love learning. The balance between music and gymnastics is supposed to keep these two parts of the soul in harmony to make sure that a guardian does not

become soft because of too much music or become hard due to an abundance of gymnastics. Too much spiritedness can lead that part of the soul to quit being an ally to reason and to follow its own desires. Spirited music can lead the guardian to this hardening of the soul as well. In *The Republic*, Socrates does away with tales of violence and unreasonable spiritedness in the tales of gods. Although warlike music is kept, it is kept in balance with the peaceful music of the voluntary mode. As aforementioned, heavy metal, punk rock, and gangsta rap could be considered today’s examples of warlike music. Later rap music especially shows the transition from the more violent rap music to music that expresses a love of money and a luxurious lifestyle. Without the proper education, this music could lead the student to become too hard, too haughty, and too indignant to have a liberal education. Later, a love of money will replace a love of wisdom furthering the inability for the student to have a liberal education. Without an appropriate education for this excess of spirit, he will not have the proper character in order to actually hear the arguments, nor have the reason to make his own. Socrates does not give a detailed explanation on how the proper education in music would be organized. He describes what should not in an education and that the musical education should begin when the citizen is young, but he does not explain how the different modes of music should be organized. Socrates allows both a violent and a voluntary mode of music, but how these two should be taught to the students is not given.

¹⁰⁷ 548c.

¹⁰⁸ 553d.

¹⁰⁹ 553d.

Spiritedness and Contemporary Music

The problems of spirited music are still prevalent today. In contemporary America, the effect music has on spiritedness is easiest to see at concerts. Often big music fests such as X-Fest or the Warped Tour do not usually feature dancing. Instead fans take part in mosh pits, slamming into each other, crowd surfing, and head banging. Looking into the crowd, it doesn't look like a group of people enjoying the music, but rather an exercise in the release of aggression as a musical fight club. Aggression is often a much forgotten aspect of rock music (with those like Bloom only focusing on the sexual aspect), but if rock music is only about sex then instead of motions of violence at a rock concert, there would be more sensual and rhythmic dancing as was the case in early rock 'n roll with Elvis Presley. An interesting thing to note though is that despite the occasional riot individuals in a mosh pit are not angry with each other. They throw punches, kick and knock into each other, but the moment someone is on the ground a hand is immediately there to help the fallen up to continue the "fight" again. Although this action could be viewed as friendly and is in no way vicious, helping someone up to continue moshing is still not leading them to reason. Instead they return to flailing about. It is apparent that the spirited part of the soul is reacting to the music, but at the same time everyone seems joined together in agreement to be one another's punching bags. The spiritedness is different in that this group is not seeking honor, but they are acting in a crude, vicious, and coarse manner that Socrates would have found to be a hindrance in a love of wisdom and delight in reason. This spirited release of aggression in mosh pits would have been quite contrary to the goal of the voluntary mode of music to lead to

peace within the citizens even if all members of the mosh pit are in agreement in their violence.

Heavy metal and punk rock are forms of music that allow teens and young adults to release aggression. The popularity of these styles of music makes sense when we look at where else they can express this behavior. Many young adults, specifically males, on the whole tend to be competitive and spirited in nature. Martha Bayles, an art critic, writes that "apart from a few sanctioned outlets such as athletics and the military, our society represses these natural tendencies. Young males spend the bulk of their time in environments in which the only way to win approval is to sit still, obey instructions, study hard, and get a good job."¹¹⁰ In other words, although there is certainly music for the soul, there is no gymnastics as well. Unless a student is active in athletics or has taken it upon himself to exercise his spirited side, there is no other outlet. Music allows an emotional release because they are able to feel the emotions of a spirited song such as Pantera's "Walk" without actually doing the lashing out that the song threatens to do, but this release still has an effect on the soul regardless of whether or not there are any actions tied to it or not. Instead of soothing their spirited natures so that it will be allied with reason, music corrupts it into thoughtless violence, hardness, and viciousness even if it is mutual. For many, the mosh pit is where this behavior ends, but the idea of a multitude of repressed spirited teenagers with no healthy release should create as much concern as the passionate side of rock music does in its antagonism to a liberal education. Although these mosh pit participants are releasing their aggression at concerts, what happens when they do not have a concert to

¹¹⁰ Bayles, Martha. *Hole in the Soul*. The University of Chicago Press, 1994. P. 254.

go to release this aggression? When they do not have someone who is willing to be the punching bag? Those who have an outlet such as this are few and these outlets are not always available. The dangers of this are much more than physical violence towards another which is why a balance between a properly violent and voluntary modes of music are necessary. A spirited soul can be coarse and vicious in ways that are not violent as well. If a spirited education is all a person receives an outlet will matter very little. The citizens in the timocratic regime had an outlet, but they still did not desire wisdom.

As there has always been passionate music, spirited music has also always been around. An example of this is George Root's Civil War song "Battle Cry of Freedom." This song was incredibly popular with the Union Army and eventually was put into different lyrics for the Confederate army as well. This is an interesting thing to note, because it suggests the power of the music is not just within the lyrics, but within the rhythm and harmony of the song as well. The lyrics gave a rallying call for the Union Army to "Hurl the rebel crew from the land that we love"¹¹¹ which certainly suggests violence for the sake of a higher good of the preservation of the Union. Also, the song makes reference to the positive virtues of spiritedness by saying, "We will fill our numbers with the loyal, true, and brave."¹¹² Root's patriotic song would very easily fit within Socrates' violent mode of music. The violent mode of music is supposed to help lead spirited part of the soul to be under the control of reason. It rouses the man to action for a higher good, while at the same time soothes it so that it will face death without fear and keeps him from acting vicious in this spirited mode. It is a call for victory and

action against those who threaten the higher good of the Union. Success will lead the Union Army to not only gain honor, but to fight for the good of their country and preserve the Union even if it means giving up their lives in order to do so. The actions called for in the lyrics of this song are not mindless or vicious calls for blood, but contemplative of the reasons for war. The problem is not spiritedness in music simply, but rather where the song leads the spirited part of the soul. Root's war rallying anthem had a purpose, but other styles of spirited music do not. Certainly the music is angry, but to what end? Fighting a war for one's country is a noble end, but when there is no end to the music it will only stir up the spirited part of the soul towards viciousness, rather than lead to a higher good.

An example of a contemporary spirited song that seems to have no real higher purpose is the Twisted Sister anthem, "We're Not Going to Take It." A major hit in 1984, it was also the song that led to an uproar over the explicit lyrics led by Tipper Gore. In the song lead singer Dee Snider declares, "This is our life/This is our song/We'll fight the powers that be."¹¹³ What is the noble reason that Twisted Sister desires to enact violence on the powers that be? Dee Snider explains within the lyrics, "Your life is trite and jaded/boring and confiscated."¹¹⁴ Unlike the first example, this rock anthem is a battle cry for freedom against oppressive parents and authority. The music video features a young boy playing guitar to the music he is listening to in his room. His tyrannical father (with probably some repressed issues) comes walking in knocking over books, telling his son that he is a slob and then asks what the son is going to do with his life. In a much more manly voice than his age the son ex-

¹¹¹ Root, George F., "Battle Cry of Freedom," *Blue and Gray: Songs of the Civil War*, 2002

¹¹² Root, "Battle Cry of Freedom"

¹¹³ Twisted Sister, "We're Not Going to Take It," *Stay Hungry*, 1984

¹¹⁴ Twisted Sister

claims to his father, “I want to rock!” The power of the guitar sends the father out the window as the son turns into the heavily eye-shadowed Dee Snider and Twisted Sister continue throughout the video to chase around and abuse the father. Unlike Root’s anthem, this song’s reason for spiritedness is because of a boring and oppressive authority figure. In the city in speech, during times of peace the music is supposed to allow the citizens to be gentle with one another. They are supposed to persuade by arguments. This anthem is certainly a song during peace time, but Snider and gang are not trying to use reason to explain why their boring parent is oh so oppressive, but are instead using brute force.

A common theme within music is the fight against authority. This theme does not fall under either the violent or the voluntary modes that Socrates keeps in his city in speech. The voluntary mode is where this music is most problematic as this mode is for the citizens in peace time. It allows them to be easily ruled and peaceful to their fellow citizens. This voluntary mode allowed them to hear and make arguments helping them to reason. It would also lead them to “acting moderately and in measure and being content with the consequences.”¹¹⁵ Unlike “Battle Cry of Freedom,” this Twisted Sister song is not for the purpose of war or patriotism. Listeners would have been teenagers and young adults going to school and living life in a peaceful condition, none of them would have been on a battlefield and even if so, this song would probably not be an appropriate song to lead into war. This song rejects the voluntary mode that Socrates allows within the city in speech because of its aggression against authority. Instead of being willing to hear and make arguments, the song is a rallying cry for only action against this authority.

¹¹⁵ 399b.

Music that follows in the example of “We’re Not Going to Take It” are not willing to be content with the consequences of immoderation, but instead try to fight against them.

When compared with the aforementioned George Root song, “Battle Cry of Freedom,” the call for spiritedness within these rock and rap songs appears to be childish. This is the same accusation Allan Bloom had for rock music in *The Closing of the American Mind*. Bloom argued that rock music did encourage human sexuality, but instead a sexuality that had never grown beyond being childish and animalistic. The same argument could be given against these anti-authority spirited songs. Their anger stays that of a teenager anxious to get his way. It isn’t a reasoned argument, but instead a temper tantrum in musical form. Instead of encouraging thoughtful human spiritedness for a higher good as was the case for Root’s song, the examples given encourage the viciousness that Socrates finds problematic in leading his citizens to love learning. The voluntary mode of music for the peaceful citizens is supposed to lead the citizens towards “acting intelligently, not behaving arrogantly.”¹¹⁶ This music should not have any spiritedness within it, as it should temper the spirited part of the soul in order to allow reason to lead. This rock music could be considered music for a time in peace. It is citizens’ music, not necessarily warrior music therefore should not be spirited and should encourage the same virtues as the voluntary mode. Spirited music within rock and rap is not intelligent as they do not seem to think about their reasons for acting violently. Authority is bad, but they never explain as to why this is so. The spirited music of rock and rap is incredibly arrogant as it assumes the right to be aggressive on the belief that what is boring is oppressive. It doesn’t bother to explain their op-

¹¹⁶ 399b.

pression or why they are exactly fighting, but the higher good that is very apparent in Root's song is missing in these anthems.

The fight against parental authority within rock music and later in rap music is a fight for meaning in life. When Dee Snider accuses his parents of living a life of boredom, he is declaring that this will not be his life. The solution to this problem is just as stale as the accusation. Youth are always going to rebel against their parents and think their way is better. This is nothing new. For Twisted Sister, the solution to living a meaningful life is to rock. For others the solution includes violence. Both of these solutions are in contradiction to the meaningful life that liberal education is supposed to give its students. Most of this music is listened to junior high kids who look up to rock bands. They are just starting to test the boundaries with their parents whom they most likely see much the way Twisted Sister has described them. They seem boring. Nothing seems more terrible than to end up like these parents. As The Who sang in 1965, "The things they do look awfully cold/I hope I die before I get old."¹¹⁷ Everyone has felt this way about someone in a position of authority growing up, but songs like "We're Not Going to Take It," "My Generation," "Fight for Your Right (To Party)," and many others give a spirited solution of violence and indignation to fight against the adult's contrived version of a meaningful life. This does not mean that kids who listen to Twisted Sister's anthem are going to kill their parents, but instead they are going to live out a meaningful life through these songs. Eventually the songs will become at best a source of nostalgia remembering the days when they thought they were fighting for something good and at worst a stale reminder of the lackluster life they are living now. They will yearn for rebellious youth while their own children

will think they too are boring and jaded. Instead of finding purpose through a love of learning, as is the goal for Socrates' education in music, they will find it difficult to find purpose in anything.

Why has life become so boring? As Nirvana announced in the early Nineties, "Here we are now/entertain us" spirited music fights against what they see as life's mundane and oppressive character. There is nothing meaningful or interesting about life. It needs to entertain, but it is doing a poor job. The teenagers and young adults of the late seventies up until today have been able to enjoy the benefits of the Sixties and seventies. The idea was that free love and making love, not war would have added to a more fulfilling life. One would think that growing up after the Sixties would be a less oppressive, jaded, and boring than growing up in the stereotypically conservative Fifties. But life is still cruel and dull for those who receive the benefits of women's liberation and Civil Rights movements, for those who did not protest against the Vietnam War, and for those who are able to find both contraceptives and a willing partner easily. Perhaps it is that they no longer have anything worthwhile to fight against, so they fight against the lack of anything to protest. Even the age of sexual freedom has proved disappointing with AIDS and other problems. Allan Bloom suggests that rock music handed everything about sex to its listeners that normally they would have been unable to experience until they were older. It could very well be that this easy access through music has made people disenchanted towards the social acceptance of this free love. Maybe life has become more boring because there is nothing to imagine. There is no erotic mystery to life when it is all out there in the open. It is very clear that something is missing from life for those who seem disenchanted and restless. The reaction to all this is anger.

¹¹⁷ The Who, "My Generation," *My Generation*, 1965

Anger touches all aspects of life within spirited music even sex. This would seem peculiar as sex and anger are not typically associated with one another. As aforementioned spiritedness and eros can gang up on reason and many songs show these two parts of the soul allied together. Despite the affinity of many of these singers to dress like women, females are often attacked lyrically. As critic Martha Bayles explains, “The mid-1980s were the heyday of rock videos depicting female victims chained, caged, beaten, and bound with barbed wire, all to whet the appetites of twelve and thirteen year olds.”¹¹⁸ Violence against women has always been a part of rock music. Regardless of whether or not the actions are actually committed, lyrics and actions on stage depict a very hostile attitude towards women. Of course, this is not necessarily sexist as heavy metal tends to be an equal opportunity employer in regards to whom they direct their aggression against. As rock music has a problem with all forms of oppression, women are just another problem on the list. This view of women is probably more unjustified than the problem with other authority figures such as government, parents, and teachers, because women are not necessarily authority figures. The stereotypical woman within a rock song is annoying, whiny, promiscuous, and either joins in or gets in the way of the rocker’s good time. When she gets in the way, she is oppressive. Some songs are not so bad in their negative view of women. For example John Mellancamp only needs a lover who won’t drive him crazy and knows when to leave him alone. The problem is when this turns into physical and sexual violence. This is not to say that there are not hard rock ballads about love (or sex), but that there is a spirited way in which rock treats both women and sex.

¹¹⁸ Bayles, p. 254.

During the 1980s, the Parents Music Resource Center founded by Tipper Gore listed what they considered to be the “Filthy Fifteen.” This was a list of fifteen songs that they believed should be banned due to content such as sex, violence, occult affiliation, and suicide. One of the songs listed was heavy metal band W.A.S.P.’s song entitled, “Animal (Fuck Like a Beast).” In the song, lead singer Blackie Lawless tells his woman, “I do whatever I want to ya/I’ll nail your ass to the sheets/A pelvic thrust starts to sting ya/I fuck like a beast.”¹¹⁹ The words to “Animal” certainly reflect spiritedness and desire gone wrong. This is not the sex in rock music that Allan Bloom has a problem with, but instead sex for the sake of physical domination over another. The cover of the single for “Animals” continues to suggest sexual violence. It features a close up of a man’s pelvis area with a saw coming out of leather pants. His hands are covered in blood. This saw also comes out in W.A.S.P. concerts where they would sing this hit song “while pretending to batter a woman’s skull and rape her with a chain saw.”¹²⁰ With the effect that music has on the soul, it is very clear that this type of music would have a negative effect on both the spirited and passionate parts of the soul.

The combination of sex and spirited part of the soul as is shown through this style of music is not discussed by Socrates, but one can assume that he would find it to be problematic. One thinks of the man with a tyrannical soul. Socrates explains to Adeimantus, “A man becomes tyrannic in the precise sense when, either by nature or by his practices or both, he has become drunken, erotic, and melancholic.”¹²¹ In a way all of these characteristics are present

¹¹⁹ W.A.S.P., “Animal (Fuck Like a Beast),” W.A.S.P., 1984.

¹²⁰ Bayles, p. 254.

¹²¹ 573c.

within this type of rock music. Either they are celebrating the rock 'n roll lifestyle of drugs, drinking and sex or they are angry and mournful over conventional life and those that play an oppressive role within it. The way that Socrates describes the life of the tyrannical man could be very similar to the legendary parties rumored to be held by rock stars such as Motley Crue and others. He tells Adeimantus, "I suppose that next there are among them feasts, revels, parties, courtesans, and everything else of the sort."¹²² These would be vices led by the desiring part of the soul, and they lead to further desires. Being able to have free access to these desires are not enough, and they continue to search for more going from one desire to the next. When he loses them, he rages and tries to get them "by deceit or force."¹²³ Although access to none of these desires, have not been lost to these musicians or their listeners, perhaps the easy access to them has dulled their pleasure and wasn't all it was promised to be which could possibly lead to rage as well. It could be suggested that this anger is taken out musically on women which would explain the prevalence of violence and sex in this music.

Heavy metal is not the only guilty party in regards to violence towards women within its music. Rap music has received much criticism in its portrayal of women. In *The Marshall Mathers LP*, rapper Eminem declared, "Slut, you think I won't choke no whore/'til the vocal cords don't work in her throat no more?"¹²⁴ At the end of the song, Eminem laughs and then says, "I'm just playing ladies. You know I love you."¹²⁵ Once again this song is spirited, but with no direction. Instead, Eminem suggests it is only a joke. It is not exactly sexual in nature

like W.A.S.P.'s song, but it is violence for no higher reason. Eminem's personal life has shown a history of unstable women, which probably served as an inspiration for the song, but Eminem is not the only rapper that has a violent attitude towards women. References to crude names such as bitches, sluts and hoes reveal a coarsely spirited position. Rap both wants to have sex with women and often brag about it as 2 Live Crew's "Me So Horny," but hate women for what they term as crazy sluts as in Eminem's "Superman" and money hungry hoes as in Kanye West's "Gold Digger." In response to both W.A.S.P. and Eminem, the question is certainly why this violent portrayal of sex and women? The argument that they are only making music about what they know cannot apply in the way that rock singers only singing about sex does. Although they may have violent backgrounds, they are obviously not raping women with chainsaws or choking them to death and if they have committed murder as Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols did to his girlfriend Nancy, nobody condones these actions. These musicians would claim that it is only artistic expression, but there is no real productive end. Listeners are not going to be off killing women, but they are still experiencing the meaning and emotions of the music. Instead of soothing the spirited part of the soul so that it can be allied with reason, the music irritates it and it has no outlet to be directed towards.

Spirited Music and Liberal Education

All of the above harms the possibility of the student to have the character necessary for a liberal education. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom focuses on three different characteristics these students are supposed to have. The first is openness. This is not the openness of

¹²² 573c.

¹²³ 573e.

¹²⁴ Eminem, "Kill You," *The Marshall Mathers LP*, 2000.

¹²⁵ Eminem, "Kill You."

relativism, but the openness that allows for the student to learn about different answers to the good life. The second is the capacity for friendship. This involves both their fellow students and professors and the books they study. For them to be able to have a friendship and love of the books these students study, the student must have an imagination that allows them to see outside of themselves and the age they live in. All of these combat the problems that hinder a liberal education. As discussed by Allan Bloom, the main problem that threatens a liberal education is relativism. Although this is a type of openness, it still hinders a liberal education as it denies the existence of any truth or good life. Along with the passionate music declaimed by Bloom, spirited music has its own negative effects on the character necessary for a liberal education. By encouraging indignation, the student will become angry at the suggestion that there actually could be a best way of life. Instead of questioning, learning, and discussing, they will be closed off. Passionate music leads the students' completion elsewhere to more physical pleasures, but spirited music suggests there is no fulfillment. Instead of seeking the good life in liberal education, the student will be indignant and hostile to the possibility of such a thing. Even more so than passionate music, the wrong kind of spirited music could lead students away from a liberal education by asserting that there is nothing actually there.

It has been suggested in chapter two that the passion in rock music has the effect of making us less erotic. According to Bloom the student needs to be erotic in order to have the potential for a liberal education. Being erotic and having an imagination are intertwined and important for the student to develop a love for the books and friendship with each other. He suggests that rock music makes us less erotic by giving us the idea of the satisfaction of sex before we are ready.

We never have to imagine it or long for it, because it is already given to us. The Sexual Revolution should have led to something great, but instead turned into a de-eroticization of sex. It wasn't great, but instead almost boring. Allan Bloom writes, "The lion roaring behind the door of the closet turned out, when that door was opened, to be a little, domesticated cat."¹²⁶ In this way there is nothing to imagine, and what is given is not even something worth imagining, but instead is degraded. It was hoped that the sexual revolution was going to be a release of long history of oppression which would lead to acting out on all kinds of ideals, but instead it is nothing exciting. Free love of the body was not as satisfying as it was hoped to be. Of course people would be angry about this letdown. All that was promised is not what it seems to be. It is not surprising then that sex and passion would be further distorted by violence. In a way it is acting out on this great letdown. In this type of music the erotic given to them before they are ready and it is further distorted by its violence. It is not something to seek out at will, but also to debase. When imagination is distorted like this, a liberal education is impossible to achieve. It is no longer a possibility that anything will have any sort of satisfaction whether it is the idea of free love or a liberal education, so instead of seeking it they will scorn a liberal education's claim to lead their students to the good. The imagination is not there, but it is still combated against. Anything that could be beautiful or noble needs to be degraded. There is no need to imagine if it has already been given to you, and even if imagination is kept it is ugly thoughts rather than focused on searching for the good it is fed on distorted spiritedness which creates restless indignation rather than a searching imagination.

¹²⁶ Bloom, p. 99.

The sexually and physically spirited music we are considering can only have a negative impact on the student's ability to find companionship in books and in others. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Bloom focuses on the students' need to develop a meaningful relationship with books and friends in order to have companions in his path towards knowledge and the discovery of the best way of life. *The Republic* also suggests that the music and surroundings of the citizens of the city in speech should lead them to friendship. As in the case of overly passionate rock music, the wrong kind of spirited music is not conducive to either of these aims. It can be presumed the violent mode that Socrates suggests is compatible with friendship as it encourages enmity against what one does not know rather than what one does know. It is also supplemented by the voluntary mode which makes a peaceful citizen. This is not to suggest that students are going to be acting in a violently spirited manner towards each other, but the negative effects of spiritedness such as indignation, coarseness, and a brutish manner could change the way friendships are made. Of course these would not be friendships in the way that Socrates hopes his citizens will be in their shared understanding of the noble, but instead they would be joined in their anger and indignation. Real friendship is rare and "requires two persons who experience the urgency of the need to know, who have the intellectual gifts for knowing, who are not overpowered by other passions of body or soul, and for whom knowing is more important and more pleasant than anything else."¹²⁷ Spiritedness would get in the way of this desire to know and would keep true friendships from forming.

For a liberal education to truly take hold in a student, their studies should be

their meaningful life. Allan Bloom explains that for many students, their meaningful life is within the music. For those who listen to spirited music, they may really feel as though they are fighting the power within the three minutes of the song, but once the song is over they are living the mundane life they fear. A liberal education cannot be given to these students because this inner life has already been placed in their souls. The feeling of indignation is common to spiritedness. When the student is presented at the university to search for the best life through a liberal education, they will be indignant towards this alternative. It is not what they know and life. In fact a liberal education will challenge these things. Therefore, they will not be open to hearing the arguments that are put forth. Likewise, they will be unable to make reasoned arguments for their music beyond referring to those who have problem with it as old-fashioned, snobbish, and out of touch which are the same arguments that their heavy metal and gangsta rap music gives them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, improperly spirited music threatens liberal education in a different way than passionate music. Although both types of music encourage the relativism which encourages the openness that opposes liberal education, one indignantly claims there is nothing to seek completion in, while the other encourages its listeners that the best life is that of feeling. The passionate rock music that Allan Bloom has a problem with leads the listener to seek their completion in bodily feeling. It does not search for something higher because it is only an ideal. With this music, the ideal is only brought lower to that of the body rather than the mind. In this way it is not truly relativistic because it still claims the best life is that of physical satisfaction which anyone can achieve. In contrast, the student's

¹²⁷ Bloom, Allan. *Love and Friendship*. Simon & Schuster, p. 418.

character created by a spirited education gone wrong denies the existence of a liberal education with indignation and anger. They've already attempted finding the good life in the body and it has proved to be unsatisfactory. If improper spiritedness is willing to attack and contort a pleasure such as sex, they will be willing to attack a higher pleasure such as a liberal education. Therefore anything higher than them is something to be degraded and made coarse and violent. They will not be able to have an imagination that will take them anywhere outside of their day to day life because there is nothing worth imagining. A liberal education will not exist for them because they declare it does not exist.

CONCLUSION

A Continuing Problem

Both passionate and spirited music can lead to difficulty in being liberally educated. Through the previous chapters we have seen how they can harm the student's ability to have an imagination, true friendship, and love for learning. The wrong kind of music can cause the listener to have a character that is contradictory to a liberal education. The listener of passionate music will try to seek pleasure through the body. He will not know that he can find satisfaction in thinking and talking about questions such as "what is man?" or "what is the best way of life?" Books and thinking will hold no pleasure for him. The listener of spirited music will become too indignant to have a liberal education. Through spirited music, he will be too hard to actually hear the arguments that liberal education will give him. He will remain unconvinced. Certainly, this is a problem, but it remains to be asked. Is there a solution? Bloom does not offer any answers to this problem and Socrates' education of the guardians is not

something that we would ever be able to implement in the United States. Even if we wanted to go as far as Socrates, we live in a country that loves their first amendment right to freedom of speech so much that censorship would be out of the question. There is no policy solution to the problems of passionate and spirited music and liberal education. Therefore, both Socrates and Bloom lead to more questions about music and education.

Both Allan Bloom and Socrates suggest that the problem begins before the student reaches the age of reason. Therefore it is not the responsibility of the university to fix the problem. When Allan Bloom writes of his students, he claims parents are too afraid to teach their children values and believe that students will get them from school and their peers. After all, every generation has its own set of values. But if a musical education is most important before the student reaches the age of reason as Socrates states in *The Republic* then parents should be willing to educate their children. Parents are the only people who can get around the censorship problem. It is normal for parents to censor what their children watch on television or in movies. Therefore, it is within the role of parents to be sure that the music their children listen to does not fall into the categories of overly passionate or spirited music. After all, most parents would not allow young children to watch overly violent or sexual television; this censorship in the home should be the same for music as well.

Even after playing appropriate music for children, it would be naïve to think that he would never grow to listen to music that both Allan Bloom and Socrates find antagonistic to a liberal education. As I have written, it is nearly impossible to avoid listening to popular music as it is everywhere. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Bloom writes books also have the power to educate

in Eros and now that students no longer truly love books, this places all the power in the hands of music. By educating students in books while they are young, this diminishes some of the power music would have. Once again this puts the responsibility on the parents. They should read to their children when they are young and encourage a love of books. If rock music diminishes imagination, reading books would allow the imagination to stay alive. Instead of living a life through their music alone, they would also find a life in the ideas and themes in literature. Books will lead them to love learning. As the student mentioned in *The Closing of the American Mind* seeks to find his Beatrice in Italy, readers of books also develop love for the characters within books and the situations within them become real to the students. Books also lead to thought which is impossible to music to do alone. Reading uses the mind. One has to actually think about what he is reading in order to actually get anything out of it. Those who listen to music only on the sensual level as suggested by Aaron Copland are still able to get what they want out of music without even thinking about it.

Another problem that would need to be addressed is that most people listen to music without thinking about it. Instead of changing the music itself, we need to change the way we listen to music. It can no longer be primarily the background noise to go along with whatever we are doing. Instead, listening to music should be an activity within itself. Certainly, thinking seriously about every song that comes on the radio is unreasonable, but we need to think about music much more seriously than we currently do. Listeners to music cannot do so only on the sensual level, but must be lead to think about the music itself. They must listen for something instead of merely listening to something. Thinking about music activates the mind and can be a part of a liberal education as well. By thinking

about music, we can be aware of its effects and still enjoy it. One of the ways to lead a student to think about music is to have a young child learn how to play an instrument. Through learning an instrument they have to think about music in a very different way than what they would have by only listening to music. They have to become active participants within music rather than passive listeners.

In conclusion, there are a few ways we can encourage a love of learning and alleviate the negative effects of passionate and spirited music. Bloom and Socrates both want music to lead the listeners to think. The problem Bloom saw with rock music was that it did not lead its listeners to love a life of thought that was necessary for a liberal education. By having parents censor inappropriate music and read books to their young children, they can alleviate the effects of passionate and spirited music while encouraging a love of learning and imagination. When a person reached the age where passionate and spirited music would be appropriate, then they should be lead to think actively about the music rather than only listen passively. Although the rock music problem has no easy solutions, it can be hoped that the above listed would help alleviate the negative effects of music while making it possible to love a liberal education.

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