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THE PROPAEDEUTIC ROLE OF MUSIC AND LITERATURE IN LIBERAL EDUCATION

Mary I. GEORGE

RÉSUMÉ. — Les philosophes grecs anciens ont reconnu à la musique et à la littérature un rôle important non seulement dans la formation morale, mais aussi en vue d'une éducation proprement intellectuelle. Les reformulations successives des disciplines préparatoires à la philosophie ont graduellement perdu de vue au cours des siècles ce rôle plus intellectuel de la musique et de la littérature, avec comme résultat cette tradition des sept arts libéraux. Cet article revient à l'intégrité de la vision grecque en proposant trois manières dont la musique et la littérature contribuent à la paideia, c'est-à-dire à une formation fondamentale en philosophie : 1) elles disposent à une appréciation du discours rationnel, quoiqu'à un niveau cognitif et non purement intellectuel ; 2) elles procurent des exemples qui favorisent l'acquisition d'une connaissance fondamentale de la méthode des disciplines philosophiques ; 3) elles disposent l'appétit à une appréciation de choses proprement philosophiques.

SUMMARY. — The ancient Greek philosophers recognized not only the influence of music and literature on proper moral development, but its impact on intellectual formation as well. This latter insight was gradually lost as the disciplines preparatory to a study of philosophy were reformulated through the ages, resulting in the tradition of the seven liberal arts. In this article we re-establish three ways in which music and literature contribute to paideia, i.e., to a basic philosophical formation, namely : 1) by disposing the student at a cognitive, though not purely intellectual level to an appreciation of rational discourse ; 2) by providing examples which aid the acquisition of a basic knowledge of method in the philosophical disciplines ; 3) by disposing the student at the appetitive level for appreciating matters philosophical.

Homer, obtaining by fate a divine nature, built
an ordered world of all kinds of verse.

(Democritus, D/K 21)

I. THE PROPER ROLE OF MUSIC AND LITERATURE IN LIBERAL EDUCATION: A QUESTION RARELY RAISED

The purpose and place of music and literature among the liberal arts and in a liberal arts education is a question of no mean importance, not withstanding the almost universal neglect it has suffered. It has too often been the case that the proponents of the liberal arts (and we are taking that expression in its fullest traditional sense here) have been content to repeat the time-honored, if not time-worn, reasons for their study, just as they were also simply content to pass on under this title those disciplines which the platonic tradition, among others, had established, and which later received the names of the Trivium and the Quadrivium [1].

Such facile acceptance of the liberal arts tradition has resulted in a general neglect of any serious examination of classical Greek thought regarding music's educational value [2]. Literature's role in education is the object of similar neglect. Although never listed as one of the liberal arts, it was studied from ancient times up to the end of the Middle Ages under the title of grammar [3]. At the end of the Middle Ages, however, the interests of the grammarian shifted away from literature to more speculative considerations. From this period on, grammar in a liberal arts context generally means speculative grammar [4]. Although literature eventually came back into vogue in the Renaissance, and to our day is considered an essential part of the Humanities, its place in a liberal arts program was no more an object of discussion than it had been before.

Our principal concern here, however, is not whether music and literature are liberal arts, but rather whether they can contribute in an indirect way to the acquisition of the liberal disciplines. As will become clearer through our development of this question, it is entirely possible that literature and music, although not strictly speaking liberal disciplines, can nonetheless contribute to the formation of judgement in those disciplines.

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1. The seven liberal arts are arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy (referred to as the Quadrivium), and grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic (referred to as the Trivium). The ancient Greeks never spoke about the seven liberal arts in those terms. Cassiodorus (480–575 A.D.) is thought to be the first to have place any importance on their being seven (cf. Thomas DAVIDSON, *Aristotle and the Ancient Educational Ideals* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892], p. 245). From Plato's time on the actual subjects taught coincide more or less with these seven. In the *Republic* (525–531) Plato assigns arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy as studies to be undertaken by the guardians, before studying dialectic. These disciplines were originally advocated by the Pythagoreans (cf. *Republic* 530d). Grammar early on was recognized as a necessary element in education. Dialectic and rhetoric were generally considered higher studies, the latter partly due to Isocrates' influence.
2. One notable exception is Mary SCHOEN, "Plato and Aristotle on the Ends of Music", *Laval théologique et philosophique*, Vol. XXXIV, nº 3, 1978.
3. Cf. H.I. MARROU, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, Trans. George Lamb, (New York: The New American Library, 1956), pp. 124, 224–226.
4. Cf. Paul ABELSON, *The Seven Liberal Arts* (New York: Russell&Russell, 1965), pp. 34 and 46.

The first thing to be done, before beginning an investigation of this matter, is to make clear what we understand by certain key terms: *liberal education, liberal art, paideia, propaedeutic.*

Since our purpose is not to address the more fundamental problems of liberal education and liberal arts, we shall content ourselves, as better suits this purpose, with defining them in a general way, more in keeping with accepted usage.

A liberal education is one which aims at liberating the mind through knowledge of the highest truths. Such an education excludes studies which aim at utility, i.e., at putting order in things which exist outside the mind, rather than at perfecting the mind itself. *A liberal art* is a speculative or theoretical discipline which involves some kind of "making", but of a non-material kind, e.g., a geometrical construction, or a sentence, or an argument, and so forth. These so-called arts differ from the more advanced philosophical disciplines which are to supply the "meat" of a liberal education either in that they bear upon objects which are more proportionate, but less worth knowing in themselves (and thus less liberating of the mind), or in that they only provide the tools necessary for thought. And this is why the liberal arts are proposed as the initial disciplines in a program of liberal education [5].

In the case of *paideia* and *propaedeutic* we shall be obliged to give more precise and less generally known definitions. Indeed, in respect to these terms what is novel is not just the conclusions which we are proposing here, but the very questions themselves which we must first raise and which are rarely brought up. This ignorance of the appropriate questions stems from a lack of familiarity with a notion key to understanding the requirements of liberal education, namely, the notion of paideia.

The word "paideia" comes from the word "παῖς", "child". Its original meaning in ancient Greece was that of nourishing and caring for a child's physical needs. Eventually the word came to mean upbringing in the sense of moral education. And finally, in the period of the Sophists, it came to refer to intellectual formation.

"Paideia", then, was a general word, more or less the equivalent of our word "education". Any of the numerous programs aiming at developing the student's mind, different as they might be, were all referred to as paideia.

Views as to exactly what constituted an education varied greatly from educator to educator. One understanding of paideia, remarkable both by its profundity, and in a secondary way, by the fact that it keeps a certain tie with the etymological meaning of the word, is that elaborated by Aristotle. In his *Metaphysics* [6], he points out the obvious fact that it is a mistake to pursue knowledge of a discipline before learning the method of that discipline, and he applies the term "paideia" to this knowledge of the

5. Cf. Hugh of ST. VICTOR cited in Thomas von Aquin, *In Librum Boethii de Trinitate Quaestiones Quinta et Sexta*, ed. Paul Wyser (Fribourg: Société Philosophique, 1948), p. 27: "However, amongst all these sciences, the ancients specially proposed seven in their own scholarly studies, in which disciplines they perceived there to be so much utility, ahead of all others, that whoever firmly acquired them would afterwards comes to a knowledge of the others more by inquiring and exercising than by hearing. For they are, as it were, certain pre-eminent instruments and rudiments by way of which the soul is prepared for the full knowledge of philosophical truth. These disciplines took the names of the trivium and the quadrivium, from the fact that by means of them, as by certain roads, so to say, the eager mind was introduced to the secrets of wisdom."

6. 995a12.

method [7]. This notion is elaborated on in the *Parts of Animals* [8], where he speaks of two ways in which one can be said to know a discipline : one consisting of a full and certain knowledge about the objects studied, and a second which he calls a certain "paideia". This "paideia" consists in the ability to judge whether an argument brought forth as proof is indeed the *sort* of argument valuable or pertinent in a given discipline, apart from any judgement as to whether the conclusion drawn is true or not. For instance, the person of paideia knows how "to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits" [9]. The lack of such knowledge can be most serious, as would be the case, for instance, if one sought mathematical certitude in ethics. Since ethical matters do not admit of so much exactitude, one would easily fall into many errors, although not all the conclusions one drew would necessarily be false. An educated person, in this first aristotelian sense of the word, is able to recognize that the particular method being used is appropriate or defective, without for so much having anything to say about the validity of the conclusions drawn.

Some examples will make it clearer what sort of judgements fall within the competence of the person possessing paideia. Suppose someone was to judge a particular doctor incompetent because, no matter what the illness, he always prescribed the same remedy. Such a judgement would require no professional knowledge of the appropriate cures for different diseases but could simply be based upon the general knowledge that different diseases call for different remedies.

Another example can be found in the comparison of a novel with a film based upon it. It is a fairly common experience among those who have read and appreciated a good novel for what it is, to be very often much disappointed at the film made from it. The inverse could equally well be true, since the aptitudes of different literary forms (here, the novel and the film) for different themes is not the same. Unless some serious adaptations are made when passing from one form to the other, the result may be far from satisfactory. Now, the person who recognizes this fact is not for so much able to give a detailed and definitive analysis of a literary work, even though in possession of a principle which will allow him/her to make a first judgement of a work.

We can well imagine that a person educated in literature (i.e., possessing paideia in literature) may judge that a particular sonnet is poor because it is lacking in metaphors, whereas a comic novel which also lacks them is not poor because of it [10].

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7. 1094b24.

8. 639a. Cf. also the *Eudemian Ethics* 1217a for another relatively developed passage on paideia.

9. *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1094b25, hereafter referred to as *N.E.* Translation from *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon [New York : Random House, 1968]. All other translations will be taken from this work unless otherwise indicated.

10. In several of his works, the well known English scholar C.S. LEWIS tries to inculcate this kind of judgment in the reader of literature. For example in *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (London : Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 1, 2, he points out that : "The misunderstanding of the genus (narrative poetry) I have learned from looking into used copies of our great narrative poems. In them you find often enough a number of not very remarkable lines underscored with pencil in the first two pages, and all the rest of the book virgin. It is easy to see what has happened. The unfortunate reader has set out expecting 'good lines' — little ebullient patches of delight — such as he is accustomed to find in lyrics... after finding that the poem cannot really be read in this way, he has given it up. Of the continuity of a long narrative, of the subordination of the line to the paragraph... he has no conception."

Such a judgement is very telling, although it bears on the way a given content is presented, rather than on that content itself. In the realm of things intellectual, the educated person would, for instance, knows better than to "accept probable reasoning from a mathematician, [or] demand from a rhetorician scientific proofs". And he / she also knows which considerations are to be made first, and which subsequently, which are of primary importance and which of secondary [11].

The sort of judgment just exemplified is more superficial than that which can be made by a person who has mastered the subject matter of a discipline. Whence the appropriateness of denominating such knowledge "paideia", a word whose etymological meaning is child, or, in other words, someone imperfect in knowledge. The ability to make such a judgement is nonetheless a needed step in acquiring mastery of a discipline, for a sound judgement as to any matter presupposes that one use the proper methodology (even though one might fall upon the correct conclusion *by chance*). Paideia of method, then, must constitute part of the first knowledge a student is to acquire. The other kind of knowledge which Aristotle denominates "paideia" or "beginner's knowledge" is firm knowledge of a discipline's basic principles. Any mistake as to these and any subsequent proceeding will also lead to the truth only by chance [12].

In this article *paideia* is to be understood in the way which Aristotle understands it: as knowledge of the beginnings of a discipline, and especially of its method. A *propaedeutic discipline*, in this context, is one the contact with which facilitates the acquisition of knowledge of the method and principles of the liberal disciplines. A propaedeutic discipline may have a certain claim to liberalness in its own right, but it is not for this reason that it is considered propaedeutic. In fact, it is generally the case that the more liberal a discipline is, the less it admits of serving a propaedeutic function, if for no other reason than, generally being more difficult, it is less in the reach of a beginner.

Before we address ourselves to the question of the propaedeutic value of music and literature, ambiguities concerning exactly what is covered by the terms "music" and "literature" remain to be cleared up. Also, in order to better situate our question it is helpful to consider very briefly some of the ways in which these disciplines have been thought to be liberal.

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11. Cf. *Parts of Animals*, 639a15: "Thus it is clear that in the inquiry concerning nature there must be certain limits such that according to these the way of what is brought forward as proof makes it acceptable as proof apart from whether it is true or not. I mean, for instance, should we take each single species severally by turn... and define what we have to say about it, in and by itself; or should we first establish as our basis the attributes that are common to all of them because of some common character which they possess?" (Translation mine)

12. Cf. *N.E.*, 1098b: "Now of first principles we see some by induction, some by perception... and others too in other ways. But each set of principles we must try to investigate in the natural way, and we must take pains to state them definitely... for the beginnings are thought to be more than half of the whole..." We will not insist upon paideia of principles because grasping the particular starting points of other disciplines is not aided in any manner by knowledge of music and literature.

1. *Music as Liberal Art*

The study of music in the context of liberal education generally refers to one of two very different things. One is a theoretical study whose principal concern is analyzing the mathematical ratios of the notes forming the various harmonies. It has little or nothing to do with listening to music, but is an application of the mathematical discipline, arithmetic, to the physical reality, sound. This tradition originated with Protagoras and Plato, was reinforced by Boethius and has been handed down more or less unchanged as a liberal art ever since [13]. Music, thus understood, liberates the mind, insofar as it is knowledge about the nature and properties of ordered sounds.

The other meaning of music is more in the line of what we call music appreciation. It involves seeing a proportion between the development of a musical imitation of an emotion or emotions and those emotions themselves. As Aristotle points out, it is natural for human beings to be delighted by imitations, because this delight is founded upon our natural desire to know [14]. Our minds delight in putting things together so as to see how they are related [15]. To be able to perceive how the composer's use of a given instrument, key or rhythm at a given time represents a given emotion, or facet of an emotion, is a activity of reason in conformity with its discursive nature, and thus a free activity [16]. Such an activity perfects reason itself in some way, as opposed to those activities which, although proceeding from reason, terminate in some action or product and are perfective of the will or of the product, rather than of reason itself. Such an enjoyment of music is what Aristotle is referring to when he says that: "our fathers admitted music into education, not on the ground either of its necessity or utility, for it is not necessary, nor indeed useful in the same manner as reading and writing... [t]here remains, then, the use of music for intellectual enjoyment in leisure." [17]

2. *Literature as liberal art*

During that period when literature was included as a liberal art under the title of grammar, it was nothing other than literary analysis. Literary analysis can refer to two different, if related, things: in one sense it refers to the discipline which teaches one *in*

13. Cf. ABELSON, *op. cit.*
14. Cf. *Poetics*, 1448b15.
15. Or, as St. Thomas AQUINAS states it: "all representations are delightful, and even those which are of things which in themselves are not delightful; for the soul rejoices in relating one thing to another, for to put things together is reason's proper and connatural activity, as Aristotle says in the *Poetics*." (*Ia-IIae Summa Theologia*, q. 32, art. 8, corpus).
16. This is the approach used by St. John's College. Cf. *Statement of the St. John's Program 1982-1983* (Annapolis, Santa Fe). We cite in part, p. 15: "The work of the tutorial includes an investigation of rhythm in words as well as in notes, a thorough investigation of the diatonic system, a study of the ratios of musical intervals, and a consideration of melody, counterpoint and harmony. None of these is done apart from the sounding reality of good music."
17. *Politics*, 1338a13. This is not to deny that sometimes "intellectual enjoyment in leisure" has another meaning, namely, a fitting relaxation from intellectual labor, entertainment which does not degrade the mind, but which is rather in keeping with the mind's natural motion.

general how to evaluate what poetic effect was aimed at, whether it was successfully brought about, and the means used to achieve it. In another sense it refers to the analyses of the particular works of literature themselves. And, finally, the study of literature may refer simply to familiarity with literary works, apart from any systematic effort at analysis.

In order to evaluate the liberality of literary analysis, one must keep in mind the fact that literature, like the other fine arts, is a representation or imitation [18]. As is the case with all representations, there is the possibility of comparing the representation with the thing represented. Since such an act is natural to reason, and has no utilitarian end (relaxation aside), it is liberal.

The liberalness of literary analysis is minimal, however; which explains in part why it is so rarely talked about. For works of literature, (as is also the case for works of music), are artificial constructions: human products which could just as well have been other or not at all. Liberal education, on the other hand, consisting of knowledge which is as certain and as perfect as possible, must bear on what is necessary and eternal. The study of literature, then, although in keeping with reason's natural activity of putting things together, finally liberates the mind very little, since its object does not admit of universal and certain knowledge. For this same reason, music, too, is liberal to only the slightest degree.

Must we therefore conclude that music and literature are not worth troubling over when there are so many other studies whose objects admit of certain knowledge? The answer to this question will become clear as we discuss the propaedeutic functions these disciplines can serve.

II. HOW MUSIC AND LITERATURE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE INITIAL FORMATION OF JUDGEMENT IN THE LIBERAL DISCIPLINES

Music and literature contribute to the acquisition of paideia in the liberal disciplines in principally three ways: 1. by providing models of judgement useful for acquiring paideia in these liberal disciplines; 2. by disposing the mind of the learner at a cognitive, but not purely intellectual level, for making intellectual judgements; 3. by disposing the appetitive faculties of the learner in such a way that he/she can properly appreciate rational discourse. Let us consider each of these points in turn.

1. *The fine arts provide an aid to the acquisition of paideia in the liberal arts*

One of the first lessons to be learned in both music and literature is how to be able to determine the pleasure proper to each of the particular *forms* found in these arts. This is an obvious prerequisite to passing judgement on any particular work in a given

18. More specifically, the particular object represented in literature is human action and character; in music, human emotion.

form. To seek the gayness and lightness of a waltz throughout an extended work such as a concerto, or to judge a symphony worthless because one cannot march to it, is to make an error in judgment belying a lack of paideia. To expect the unity proper to a tragedy in a comic novel, is equally to apply the wrong criteria. Aristotle insists on this point in the *Poetics* [19], and many other writers on the subject in subsequent centuries have followed suit [20]. Their common theme is that one must judge a thing for what it is, and not for what it was never meant to be.

The proper judgement of anything requires first and foremost an understanding of the kind of thing it is an instance of, and what can be rightfully expected from that kind of thing, be it a certain use or a certain kind of knowledge. This latter knowledge is a principle of judgement having the broadest possible scope, and is the basis upon which other more detailed rules of judgement are elaborated. For instance, if a tragedy aims at a catharsis of pity and fear, it must also be plain that it cannot be written in a light, springy verse, nor can it exceed a certain length, for too many episodes dilute the tragic effect.

Although it is not simple to learn such rules as will allow one to judge literature or music in the way we have described [21], it is nonetheless true that we have greater facility in judging things artistic than in judging natural things (and *a fortiori* immaterial realities). As the authors of the works of art (or insofar as we have the same nature as their authors), we cannot find the same mystery in them as in natural things. For this reason, learning the basic rules of judgement in music and literature can serve as an aid for the even more difficult task of acquiring judgement in matters intellectual. This aid takes the form of providing more proportionate examples which will then serve as points of comparison [22]. For example, one who is aware that there are different standards of judgement for different literary works is prepared to expect that in like fashion, in the case of intellectual objects which are quite different from one another, there will doubtless also be different standards of judgement. So too, one who is aware that different themes in literature often require different literary forms will not need lengthy explanations in order to appreciate the fact that different philosophical matters require the use of different forms of logical argument. Or again, someone aware that one must first know what end a given musical form aims at, before one judges any particular example of it, will be more likely to insist upon an initial exposition of the end and kind of knowledge sought in a given liberal discipline.

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19. "[W]e must not demand of tragedy any and every kind of pleasure, but only that which is proper to it." (*Poetics* 1453b)

20. We have already referred to C.S. LEWIS, who is certainly one of the most noteworthy modern authors to insist upon the importance of using appropriate criteria. Cf. *op. cit.* Cf. also, *The Discarded Image*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964) and *Spencer's Images of Life*, Ed. Alastar Fowler, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

21. Cf. *N.E.* 1181a18, "[A]s though judgment were not the greatest thing, as in matters of music. For while people experienced in any department judge rightly the works produced in it... the inexperienced must be content if they do not fail to see whether the work has been well or ill made — as in the case of painting."

22. Note how in the beginning of this article paideia in literature was called upon to explain what paideia in general consists in. Cf. also Dorothy Sayers, "The Lost Tools of Learning", in *A Matter of Eternity*, ed. Rosamond Kent Sprague (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Willian B. Eerdmans, 1973), p. 114 for another example of paideia in the arts being used to shed light on paideia in the intellectual order.

This is no more than an application of the principle that one ought to teach method and cultivate judgement with regard to things more proportioned first, before going on to other things — milk before meat. Once paideia, or knowledge of the method which enables one to appreciate music and literature, is acquired, it can serve as a model from which we can more readily understand what paideia in the speculative disciplines involves.

2. *Music and literature foster reason's natural motion, before it is a question of presenting universal truths to it*

A second way in which knowledge of the fine arts contributes to the formation of the speculative intellect arises even before it is a question of our acquiring paideia in them. Simple familiarity with good works of music and literature disposes us in such a way that embarking upon speculative matters we tend spontaneously and quasi-instinctively to look for certain things which ought to be found, if matters are properly presented. It is a well known fact that the ancient Greeks attached great importance to the notion that the young become predisposed to the *good* by being exposed to good art and music [23]. Somewhat less known is the fact that they also saw this exposure of the young to good art as a means of predisposing them to the *true*. This theme, if less developed in antiquity, is nonetheless clearly well founded. Consider what Plato says on these matters:

> And is it not for this reason, Glaucon, said I, that education in music is most sovereign, because more than anything else rhythm and harmony find their way to the inmost soul and take strongest hold upon it, bringing with them an imparting grace, if one is rightly trained, and otherwise the contrary? And further, because omissions and the failure of beauty in things badly made or grown would be most quickly perceived by one who was properly educated in music, and so, feeling distaste rightly, he would praise beautiful things and take delight in them and receive them into his soul to foster its growth and himself become beautiful and good. The ugly he would rightly disapprove of and hate while still young and yet unable to apprehend the reason, but when reason came the man thus nurtured would be the first to give her welcome, for by this affinity he would know her [24].

Although Plato does not distinguish here between moral and intellectual virtue, reflection on experience reveals that what he is saying about good music's beneficial influence does pertain to both. Consider, for example, the fact that beauty and order are found in both the fine arts and in the philosophical disciplines. In the philosophical disciplines, it is generally recognized that "it belongs to the wise to order", and that

23. Note that this opinion is echoed in our day by Alan BLOOM, *The Closing of the American Mind*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 79: "[... bad music not only corrupts morals], [i]t ruins the imagination of young people and makes it difficult to have a passionate relationship to the art and thought that are the substance of liberal education."

24. *Republic* 402a. All translations of Plato are taken from *The Dialogues of Plato*. Ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966).

"the beautiful [is] the beginning... of the knowledge... of many things"[25]. And it is certainly a defensible position that "the chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness, which the mathematical sciences demonstrate in a special degree"[26]. Notice, also, how often the words "unclear", and "beautiful" and, in ancient Greek, "ἀναρμοστία" (inharmonious) are used with regard to intellectual matters. Thus, given that the realm of sensible things is that which is more known to us, and that it is through an understanding of this realm that we come to an understanding of things intellectual, it seems highly improbable that someone who lacked an idea of what constitutes clarity, beauty and harmony in the case of sensible things would have any facility in recognizing them in their analogical forms in things more abstract.

A separate consideration of the two fine arts in question will bring out in greater detail how each fosters reason's natural motion.

a) How music fosters reason's natural motion

Someone who is familiar and fond of good music, and who knows what the sensible beauty of it consists in, will have less difficulty in loving and appreciating order and beauty which is not directly sensible than someone who does not have this appreciation. A person habituated to music which has no unity is poorly prepared to detect the difference between a discourse which is unified and one which consists of a series of more or less random comments strung together. When something foreign or irrelevant is introduced in a discourse, it is unlikely that such a person will have any sentiment of uneasiness. Moreover, a person not accustomed to music having a recognizable build-up to some definite climax will tend to fail to appreciate that an argument should consist of determinate premisses leading naturally to a conclusion, since a discourse is not only a whole, but a moving from the known to the unknown[27]. *A fortiori*, a person who does not even have a sense that something is wrong when faced with a disordered argument, will not have any intellectual ability to judge.

The mode of understanding proper to human beings consists in going from one thing to another in a certain order. An appreciation of music does not simply require the sense of hearing, but also an ability to appreciate the order present in the sounds. And this is why even the higher animals cannot appreciate music fully. Now it is true that enjoying music, at least in the first instance, makes very little demand on reason: no abstract object is presented which would require an effort on the part of reason to be grasped. Nonetheless, reason is involved in music appreciation, and on account of this, exposure to music, be it good or bad, has an effect on reason. As Plato tells us:

> ... animals at large have no perception of the order or disorder in these motions, no sense of what we call rhythm or melody. But in our case, the gods of whom we

25. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, 1013a23.

26. *Ibid.*, 1078b. Mathematics, when not simply techniques for calculation, can be considered part of philosophy.

27. This is one reason why music is a more suitable propaedeutic discipline than are the plastic arts which are essentially static.

> spoke as giving us for companions in our revels have likewise given us the power to perceive and enjoy rhythm and melody [28]. And when [the young] have learned to play the lyre, [the masters] teach them the works of good poets of another sort, namely the lyrical, which they accompany on the lyre, familiarizing the minds of the children with the rhythms and melodies. By this means they become more civilized, more balanced, and better adjusted in themselves, and so more capable in whatever they say or do, for rhythm and harmonious adjustment are essential to the whole of human life [29].

If there is reason to believe that good music fosters reason's ability to appreciate order, there is also evidence which indicates that bad music does just the opposite. For the fact that the disordered music listened to in our day accompanies an ever increasing inability for even the most basic reasoning does not seem to be a coincidence. Rock music, so popular among the young, has the very defects which we have just described. It often lacks a determinate beginning, middle, and end: just as it often simply fades out, instead of really ending, so too it often allows of being turned on and off at any point, as lacking a development of the sort which would call for a definite ending. This is in sharp contrast with both classical and folk music (the popular music of another time), where missing the last few measures leaves one with a distinct sense of disappointment. Good music has a determinate direction and goal, and its unity is such that absence of any of its parts is readily noticeable, and thus jarring [30].

One also might mention that the relative subtlety of the expression of emotions [31] in classical music generally escapes those who have been raised on music which is based on loudness, strong beat, marked discordance. If only but the most gross differences do not escape such individuals on the level of sense, there is little reason to hope that at the level of intellect they will be capable of making any fine distinctions.

b) How literature fosters reason's natural motion

In the case of literature, just as in the case of music, the simple familiarity with good works, prior even to any intellectual analysis of them, develops one's natural ability to appreciate order, whereas habituation to bad works destroys this ability. It is in fact easier to see this in the case of literature, since literature, inasmuch as it involves a discourse in words, bears a greater resemblance to liberal studies. The elements of literature which most resemble elements in the speculative order are attached to plot. Let us just look at what Aristotle considered to be the most general criteria which a plot would have to answer to if it were to be any good at all:

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28. *Laws*, II, 653d-654a.
29. *Protagoras*, 326a,b.
30. Cf. *N.E.*, 1106b10: "[W]e often say of good works of art that it is not possible either to take away or to add anything, implying that excess and defect destroy the goodness of works of art, while the mean preserves it..."
31. A very common opinion among young people is that classical music is "quiet" music. As a matter of fact classical music expresses the whole gamut of human emotions: heart-rending anguish, burning anger, passionate longing, and not just sanguine gaiety or other less intense emotions.

> The unity of a Plot does not consist, as some suppose, in its having one man as its subject. An infinity of things befall that one man, some of which it is impossible to reduce to unity; and in like manner there are many actions of one man which cannot be made to form one action... The truth is that, just as in the other imitative arts one imitation is always of one thing, so in poetry the story, as an imitation of action, must represent one action, as complete whole, with its several incidents so closely connected that the transposing or withdrawal of any one of them will disjoin and dislocate the whole. For that which makes no perceptible difference by its presence or absence is no real part of the whole [32].

The unity of a discipline, too, does not stem from simply bearing on the same subject. Nor is a discourse unified simply because the same words are repeated in successive sentences. In all the liberal arts, and in philosophy as a whole, there is a need to determine with great care the method or way by means of which a particular subject is approached, since the same subject can be looked at from many points of view. It is also necessary to avoid the use of words or phrases whose only principle of unity is their material identity, and not their cognitive content. Someone used to a random juxtaposition of sentences, more or less pertinent to a story, is not likely to find anything wrong with the same sort of thing when it occurs in a philosophical discourse.

Moreover, we call a good plot "logical" when the conclusion does not "pop out of thin air", but follows as the normal or expected consequence of events having taken place earlier in the story. Such expectation does not, however, exclude any element of surprise in the outcome of a story — something which constitutes the specific pleasure of a mystery, for example — but only that such surprises as there are should find sufficient justification in the events related earlier in the story [33]. It is quite obvious to us that "the unravelling of the plot must arise out of the plot itself, it must not be brought about by *deus ex machina*" [34].

Now, "*deus ex machina*" is an expression which is used not only with regard to literature, but in philosophy as well. Its counterpart in philosophy consists in gratuitously assigning a cause in order to explain a given effect. For example, Aristotle blames Anaxagoras for using...

> ... reason as a *deus ex machina* for the making of the world, and when he is at a loss to tell from what cause something necessarily is, then he drags reason in, but in all other cases ascribes events to anything rather than to reason [35].

And the expression has the same meaning in common usage today.

A person who has acquired paideia in literature, and who thus recognizes that gratuitously introducing a cause to explain a given outcome makes for a poor story,

32. *Poetics* 1451a16, a30.

33. The same sort of thing is true in the portrayal of character, for if a character is well portrayed he should not act at one moment as if he were one character and another as if he were some other.

34. *Poetics*, 1454b.

35. *Metaphysics*, 985a18.

has a better chance of noticing a lack of connection between premisses and conclusion in philosophical reasoning than one who has not acquired this paideia, all other things being equal.

The plot of a work of literature not only bears some resemblance to an argument in its movement from cause to result, it bears a further, and more specific, resemblance to a dialectical discussion: In both there is a setting out of a "problem", followed by a solution, which is the untying of the problematic knot established at the start. The beginning part of a good work of literature is generally a series of events delineating some problem from which the hero must escape (Couple falls in love. Couple's parents are violently opposed to their union...); and this corresponds to the setting up of a dialectical problem (The void would seem to exist, otherwise things would not have anywhere in which to move; but then again some things are plainly seen to move by mutual displacement...). And in both literature and dialectic there is a dénouement or solution of the problem or problematical situation. Familiarity with good literature, then, would seem to dispose one to more readily appreciating a dialectical discussion: how a problem is set up, the movement from problem to solution. This disposition first takes the form of a feel or sense. And this sense gives one an advantage later on when one is formally taught about the elements of a dialectical discussion and their order: it will be as if one already knew them in some way; they will not seem strange [36].

If lack of familiarity with good literature is to be lamented, even more so is habitual contact with bad literature, that is, bad in the sense that it lacks unity and expresses only the random meanderings of unguided imagination. Such works, lacking beginning, middle and end, can be read starting anywhere (and often are). A steady diet of such works cannot be consumed without detriment to one's natural ability to recognize order, especially in things of the mind. To Socrates' question, "are we on the way to or from the finish line", the student raised on such literature is likely to answer, "What difference does it make?" [37]

In our day watching television is an additional factor contributing greatly to the development of certain habits detrimental to the intellectual life. It is not an uncommon practice to come in half-way through a program, watch a bit, and then switch to some other program during the commercials, never watching a single program all the way through to the end, but simply regarding whatever seems most amusing at the

36. Cf. PLATO, *Phaedrus* 263dff for an excellent example of someone who could have drawn profit from an exposure to good literature. We cite in part:

> Do you find any cogent reason for his next remark, or indeed any of his remarks, occupying the place it does? ...
>
> [Phaedrus:] You flatter me in supposing that I am competent to see into his mind with all that accuracy.
>
> [Socrates:] Well, there is one point at least which I think you will admit, namely that any discourse ought to be constructed like a living creature, with its own body, as it were; it must not lack either head or feet; it must have a middle and extremities so composed as to suit each other and the whole work.
>
> Then ask yourself whether that is or is not the case with your friend's speech. You will find that it is just like the epitaph said to have been carved on the tomb of Midas the Phrygian... [I]t makes no difference what order the lines come in.

37. Cf. *N.E.* 1095a30.

moment. No one plot — that is, no rational sequence in which there is some principle unifying the events which take place — is followed out to its logical conclusion ; rather there is but a random juxtaposition of images. Moreover, certain programs never even rise to the level of having a plot to speak of, and some have formats which in fact intentionally avoid plot, relying on sensorial stimulation to keep their audience. In such a context, it is hardly surprising that the inability of students to recognize the meanings of words such as "therefore" or "consequently" is so common a teacher's lament. Perhaps a better diet of literature, films and television programs would curtail their tendencies to intersperse words at random in a written text without any regard for their logical or semantic import.

Moreover, those television programs which require no mental effort to follow, either because they are of a purely factual nature or because they present no rational problems, or because they are based on a logic which seems to affirm that a sequence of events is sufficiently justified by the fact that one event follows another in time, must also share the responsibility for students' inability to get interested in a problem. So often their only reaction to an effort to present a problem, with its pro's and con's, is to grow impatient, and to ask for the answer.

And inasmuch as music touches us at a younger age, and more directly than literature ("Nothing moves the soul like song"[38]), exposure to bad music will be much more harmful than lack of familiarity with good music. To pervert the natural tendency to appreciate order in music thus affects the young person even more profoundly than perverting this tendency with regard to literature. Plainly, with regard to both, if it is a beneficial thing to cultivate the natural appreciation for order, it is more important to prevent its perversion.

3. *Good music and literature*
disposes the appetitive faculties of the learner
in such a way that he/she can properly appreciate rational discourse

a) Music's propaedeutic role on the part of the appetite

Music disposes not only the mind of the student to liberal learning, but the appetitive faculties as well. Music is one thing without practical utility which we readily appreciate ; it is "naturally sweet to us"[39]. Thus, it fosters appreciation for liberal knowledge by providing an introduction to the joys of knowledge desirable for its own sake and not for any utilitarian end. Such an introduction is especially necessary in our age, where the prevalent mentality would reject the pursuit of such knowledge because it is useless.

In our age of mass production and disposable goods, it is not hard to understand why people fail to recognize that anything non-functional could be desirable (craftsmanship is not economical, and, after all, plastic furniture is much more practical

38. "Nihil immutat animam sicut cantus." St. Thomas, cited by Fr. Jasmin BOULAY in « Le rôle de la musique dans l'éducation », *Laval théologique et philosophique*, Vol. XVII, 1961, nº 2, p. 270.

39. *Pol.* 1340b17.

when it comes to cleaning). However, even in those times and places where people are more contemplative by temperament and custom, the very difficulty of intellectual matters can make them turn away from disinterested knowledge: After all, "learning is painful"[40]. Whence all can profit from having their appetite whet for these things, and music is especially apt for doing this: "The study [of music] is suited to the stage of youth, for young persons will not, if they can help, endure anything which is not sweetened by pleasure, and music has natural sweetness."[41] Once we have tasted the more refined pleasure of something going above the purely sensible, we are more likely to pursue other pleasures of this sort, even in the face of attendant difficulties.

b) Literature's propaedeutic role on the part of the appetite

Although no other fine art appeals so spontaneously to us as does music, our appreciation of literature, too, is quite natural. A sign of this can be found in the love most children have for stories. Thus, familiarity with literature also tends to make us conscious of the fact that utility is not the absolute measure of worth, and that some things are desirable in themselves.

A second role which literature plays with regard to disposing the appetites to speculative learning is it "teaches us how to wonder"[42]. This observation of St. Albert appears to be in the same vein as the well known remark Aristotle makes when discussing wonder's role as a first principle of philosophy: "Even the lover of myths is in a sense a lover of Wisdom, for the myth is composed of wonders."[43]

Wonder is the beginning of philosophy on the part of the appetite. It is consequently of critical importance that it not be stifled, but fostered. However, one might question whether that wonder which is the source of philosophy and that which belongs to the poetic arts are not in some important ways different and fundamentally opposed. Contrary to what St. Albert says[44], children who wonder at a story — about how the elephant got its trunk, for instance — do not go on to seek any more philosophical explanation of the matter, but rather delight in hearing the same fictional explanation over and over again. In other words, they seem to want to stay in this state of wonder.

The philosopher, on the other hand, does not want to stay in this state of wonder. Rather, wonder is a goad which stimulates the philosopher to discovering the cause responsible for what initially amazed him, *which, when discovered, will extinguish wonder*[45].

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40. *Politics*, 1339a28.
41. *Ibid.*, 1340b17.
42. Literally: "gives us the mode in which we should wonder", ("dat modum admirandi"). St. Albert the Great, *Metaphysica*, in *Opera omnia*, ed. Berhardo Geyer (In Aedibus Aschendorff: Monasterium Westfalorum, 1960), p. 23.
43. *Metaphysics*, 982b17.
44. St. Albert, *ibid.*, "The poet makes up a story to arouse wonder, and the wonder in turn arouses the desire for inquiry, and this is what philosophy consists of."
45. Cf. *Metaphysics*, 983a17.

The question of the nature and relation of philosophical wonder and poetic wonder are matters of some subtlety, and it would take us too far for our principal purpose to embark on a treatment of them here. We will limit our remarks to the observation that philosophical wonder is rarely found in an individual who lacks poetical wonder of the sort which is aroused by an intriguing plot. Witness the fact that most of the great philosophers had some interest in literature. Moreover, children who are bored by stories often suffer from a general disinterest in solving problems, especially of the philosophical kind which seek the relations of cause and effect. A child who is jaded when it comes to things that he/she ought to naturally delight in is not likely to take interest in intellectual matters which so often go beyond even adult capacities. Thus, it seems probable that if one has never experienced wonder in regard to literature, one will not be able to wonder readily about the more difficult matters of philosophy.

III. CONCLUSION

1. *Music and literature's three propaedeutic roles*

It should be clear now that although music and literature have very little liberating effect upon the mind, it is nonetheless worthwhile familiarizing oneself with them, if only on account of the very valuable propaedeutic functions which they serve. Certainly one could argue that music and literature provide other benefits to the development of a well-rounded person: purgation of emotion, relaxation befitting a human being, etc. However, our particular concern has been to show their more immediate contribution to the intellect's ability to freely contemplate the highest truths which is via the propaedeutic functions which they serve.

We have seen that the role which music and literature play in providing models for the paideia of the speculative disciplines is of considerable value. For without paideia in at least one of these disciplines, the possibility of readily grasping what paideia is in speculative science is substantially diminished. Though it is possible for someone to be disposed by nature in such a way that he/she readily acquires elements of paideia by observing things which are not products of human art, (certain people have a feel for certain disciplines), still, discoveries made by an individual in virtue of a natural gift suffer from being incomplete. We see, then, that one advantage of a systematic acquisition of paideia in some fine art is that it provides a more complete model for paideia in speculative matters. A better mind undoubtedly will be able to get by with less paideia in the fine arts. In the case of certain individuals, familiarity with one of the fine arts might suffice. A background in music, for example, might make up for a deficiency in literature. However, there is an advantage to familiarity with a variety of such arts, since this protects the mind against a habituation to one art which might impede one's ability to appreciate the others. Plainly one should avoid specializing, as, for instance, in something like epic poetry, while neglecting music and the visual arts, and even the other parts of poetry.

To reiterate some of the particular advantages of possessing paideia in the said disciplines: The person who sees that even within an art there are differences in the

objects treated is less likely to confuse two different arts with one another. The one who realizes that in art the good artist takes care to use the appropriate instrument of the variety at his disposal is less likely to be surprised that in philosophy, too, care must be taken as to the use of the various logical tools. And the one who sees that a literary form like the novel is limited to the expression of determinate effects and ends is less likely to expect that some other work in words should be capable of just any effect whatsoever. He will not, for example, expect an emotional uplifting from a philosophical treatise, nor argumentation from a work of literature. Clearly, then, for the greater well-being of one's intellectual life, one should acquire paideia in some fine art for which one has aptitude and interest, and preferably in several.

As for encouraging reason's natural appreciation of order, familiarity with music and literature, while not indispensable to the philosophical disciplines, certainly contributes to their well being. It is also true, however, that some individuals naturally have more sensitivity for order and beauty than do others. And where natural deficiencies exist (such as being tone-deaf), generally little can be done about them. Whatever aptitude for music or literature one has, however, should be reinforced by good habit, so that later, in matters intellectual, one will welcome what is orderly and reasonable like a friend.

We must not forget that far more important than being familiar with good art, is being preserved from habitual contact with bad art. For though the person who simply lacks contact with good art, lacks a first stimulation of the mind towards recognizing order and proceeding in an orderly way, still his/her capacity for these things remains intact. Repeated exposure to bad art, on the other hand, results in a habituation to disorder which supplants reason's natural capacity to appreciate order. When such habits take root at a very early age, reason generally becomes a permanent slave, being indeed dominated to such a point that it does not even recognize that it is enslaved.

We might note that the ability to judge a fine art, as an intellectual capacity and a form of paideia itself, is more like the paideia of the speculative disciplines than is the simple familiarity with good art. But simple familiarity with good art, and above all avoidance of habituation to bad art, while more remote from speculative paideia, are more fundamental to its acquisition. Without the right exposure to the fine arts, one's chances of ever acquiring paideia (much less science) are slim.

As far as the appetite is concerned, music [46] and literature are helpful for giving us an appreciation for things gratuitous, especially in the face of the utilitarian bent of our age. However, they are not absolutely necessary. And to poetry can be assigned the additional role of first stimulating our wonder about problems.

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46. Note that we have not been talking about the liberal art of music which consists in measuring and compounding ratios of a thing of limited being, namely, sound. Certainly, as a speculative discipline, it is one which is more easily acquired since it bears on something sensible. However, its study does not seem to offer any particular advantage for acquiring paideia. Certainly it does not predispose the mind to order more than does the learning of the mathematical sciences themselves. And it is at the very least dubious that its method, one involving measuring and calculation, provides a model for acquiring the mode of proceeding proper to other speculative disciplines. Any benefit such a study might have for one's intellectual formation as a whole is much more limited than that to be obtained from music as we have been treating it.

2. *Ars longa, tempus fugit*

Even if we grant that music and literature are of great propaedeutic value, one might still wonder if they are worth devoting so much of our precious time to — time which might perhaps seem better spent on the more truly liberal disciplines.

Yet when one thinks about it, familiarization with good music and literature is something that should begin in the home, during childhood. Children take a natural interest in these things. Some explanation, at least in the case of music, can be given to young children, showing them that music is a representation, and how different instruments are used (à la Peter and the Wolf), as well as what different rhythms and scales there are, and how they may be employed to different effects. Literary appreciation is a bit more subtle a matter, and is best introduced later on, but it is hardly a discipline to be reserved for the university level. In fact, if children are gradually exposed to different literary genres, as they grow old enough to appreciate them, through good-quality representative works of each, the development of their critical faculties will be an easy matter.

It takes no detailed observation of children to see that long before reason is fully awakened, the inner sense powers are active. These powers participate in reason, and are necessary foundations for it. The development of these lower faculties cannot be overlooked in the name of addressing the highest faculty, without prejudicing reason's development. Forcing a child to skip the natural steps in his intellectual development is destined to have the same effect as forcing a plant to flower : namely, unnatural lack of resistance to disease and premature death.

Certainly children are also particularly well disposed for learning facts. Their memories are exceptionally retentive because all seems new and wonderful to them. Yet however important the acquisition of factual knowledge may be, we must bear in mind that it does not, in and of itself, foster reason's ability to go from the known to the unknown. A surfeit of facts can even stifle this ability. The very randomness of the information fact books contain, however useful, leads to the well-known habit of leafing through such collections, since they imply no intellectual order between the different facts, and thus require no effort on the part of the reader to tie one thing to another. We may readily go from the number of marsupials in Tasmania to the birth date of Napoleon, to the satellites of Jupiter — no one of these facts requires a previous knowledge of all those preceding it in the book, nor, especially, any reasoning from the previous knowledge [47].

A good story, on the other hand, does demand an effort on the part of the child to see how the events recounted hang together to form a whole. From this point of view,

47. We do not mean to say, of course, that no book of facts has any order, or that previous parts are never necessary to the understanding of the later ones. In an historical narrative, for example, the previous events may alone allow us to understand the following ones. Even here, however, fiction is more orderly than fact, and many an historian has been strongly tempted to go beyond the data to what "must" have happened (or, perhaps, to what "should" have happened.) The relation between pure facts seldom leaves much room for the development of a rational order.

good stories have a irreplaceable role to play in education, and make more suitable reading for the young than do non-fictional works.

The aspect of wonder is also not to be neglected. A child, or young person, pushed precociously into philosophy, risks being motivated by the desire to be more clever than others, rather than by wonder. Uncorrected, such a motivation will lead him/her away from true wisdom. Nature requires the development of the lower faculties, before the higher. Poetic wonder, which involves more the imagination than reason, seems to be intended as a stepping-stone to intellectual wonder.

Of course one does not want to raise a child on music and literature alone, lest he/she become habituated to their mode to the point that it becomes an impediment to the appreciation of any other form of discourse[48]. As Newman justly remarks, those whose education has consisted principally in literary studies tend to lack a sense of rigor and of critical judgement[49].

Our answer, then, to the problem of lack of time for music and literature is that there is no reason that they not be studied when one is young, and not yet ready for more difficult studies anyway. Without pretending to give any definitive program for approaching these two fine arts, it seems fairly safe to give certain general guidelines: simple familiarity with these arts can start from childhood; a more conscious awareness of the imitative nature of music can be introduced very soon after; literary appreciation can be started in grade school, and studied more intensively in high school (especially when one considers how high school curricula often consist of little other than purely utilitarian courses, spiced with a few frivolous electives). Although appreciation of these arts should gradually leave more and more space for the serious disciplines as one grows older, at least one reason for a continued interest in them should be plain: We continue to need the lessons in paideia which they can provide us with, such as the continual reminder that we must not seek mathematical certitude everywhere which the study of literature will always furnish us with.

48. As Aristotle points out in the *Metaphysics* (995a): "The effect which lectures produce on a hearer depends on his habits; for we demand the language we are accustomed to, and that which is different from this seems... unintelligible... Thus some people do not listen to a speaker unless he speaks mathematically... while others expect him to cite a poet as witness."

49. Cf. John Henry NEWMAN, in *Nature of University*, (London and Toronto: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1928), pp. 155, 156.