Doctrine Of Ethos

Music in Ancient Greece
Doctrine of Ethos

• Claims that Music has ethical powers and can affect character
Music in Ancient Greece

- Music was an integral part of everyday life
- Functioned much like it does in our culture today: Religious Ceremonies, Wedding ceremonies and receptions, drinking songs, public theatre/concerts, athletic events etc.
Music in Ancient Greece

• Poetry and Music were intertwined
  – True music had words/poetry set to it
• Music was a prominent part of education
• They believed that even their Gods played music
Aulos
Lyre
Music Of Ancient Greece

• Seikolos Epitaph
  – Oldest surviving composition, dated 200 B.C. to 100 A.D.
    • https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seikilos_epitaph
Doctrine of Ethos

- Philosophers recognized the effect music had on individuals as well as society
- Most philosophers agreed that music had powers that could effect mood and characters, or your *Ethos*
  
  - Greek word meaning ‘*character*’
Imitation

• Your *Ethos* is a product of the environment around you
• “Liberal and beautiful music will create a similar [liberal and beautiful] kind of soul”
• Your soul, or ethos, or character imitates the music that is around it
• Greeks had specific ‘Modes’ (scales)
Plato

- Believed in imitation so strongly that he thought music should be regulated
- Imitation was for good or for evil, sought regulation as not to awaken the wrong ethos
- Thought Virtue was simple, therefore was portrayed by simple music
Plato cont.

• Dismissed instrumental music and virtuosity.
• Strongly against complex music and innovation
• “For the introduction of a new kind of music must be shunned as imperiling the whole state; since styles of music are never disturbed without affecting the most important political institutions.
• These only obscured the imitation of virtue
• “Music is the movement of sound to reach the soul for the education of its virtue.”
Aristotle

- Student of Plato
- Agreed with the theory of imitation saying “like attitudes arise from like activities”
- Disagreed on other planes
Aristotle Cont.

- Thought that most understanding was to be found in the music itself, not the words (valued instrumental music)
- Recognized value in music not only for education/ethics, but for entertainment
- Thought music could be used to purge negative emotions, calling this *Katharsis*
Works Cited

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