

## Aristotle & Plato's Concepts Applying in Jazz Music

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**Keywords:** Plato, Paedo, Aristotle, Metaphysics, Jazz

**Abstract:** Cultural activities make a city become more recognizable. Jazz music is a part of these cultural activities. When a city combines the western jazz music with its traditional instruments, the performance manifested the characters of the city. Particularly in any Asian country, the musicians perform jazz music combine their cultural heritages with the western jazz in an innovative way. At the same time, each of the performance must make profits. To make profits, the performers have to emotionally touch the audiences' hearts through the music sound effects. Music conveys to the audiences with the unseen substance. The unseen substance is the emotional feeling and a story telling. Music touches audiences' soul. Plato's Phaedo is one of the philosophical evidences to explain how jazz music is being expressed. His philosophical theory does not only expose itself in the music. Rather, it finds manifestation in many other figures of expression, embracing the powerful narratives encompassing literature. Jazz music's rhythms and tones are powerful tools to arouse peoples emotional reaction to repression. Aristotle's Metaphysics will be discussed in this research, about how the these philosophical concepts apply to jazz music.

### 1. Introduction

Whenever we think about fashioning cities, musical cities, romantic cities, we directly connect a picture of those places such as New York, Paris, Shang-Hai, or Vienna. There are the icons that symbolize these cities. People build their cities; cities are also designed for people's need of living. People who live in cities without artistic activities are lower quality. In other words, these cities are dead cities because their cultures cannot be manifested for the entire world to see.

Jazz music for example, there are cities that have representative musical activities, for example, Chicago's Blues, Motown music of Detroit, Jazz of New Orleans, or Grunge music of Seattle. Aurelius Augustinus, Christian Philosopher of Rome said, "a symbol stands for or represents something other than itself" So, the function of it can be symbolizing, expressing, giving symptoms and indexes. So, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as the fact that jazz music is appreciated by the entire world, cities from non-western countries begin to combine their jazz music with their own traditional musical instruments. So, when jazz music is no longer performed only with Western musical instruments, instead, its performance includes traditional instruments of any country, what kind performance can it be? Jazz ensembles such as Sizhukong jazz ensemble (<http://www.sizhukong.com>), Afternoon tree ensemble, Orbit Folks ensemble, are the examples of the jazz ensembles that have given their performances not by only using western instruments.

Innovations, saving cultural heritages, internationalization are probably the priorities of these new ensembles, particularly in Asian countries. As we also talked about materialism and values in class, jazz music in other cultures than Western has to match the tastes of the audiences. Who are they performing to? Why are they playing such music by using different instruments than the standardized instruments? Everything that is being designed and created by Asian societies must have certain values for the purpose of good profits. Modern jazz music, on the other hand, has always been considered as the new way of conveying emotions, as well as a new language. The value of the existence of these new created performing styles has something to do with communication with the audiences. The audiences expect themselves to be emotionally and visually touched. "The syntax used in contemporary music is its synchronization, tone, and rhythm." Modern jazz music uses unfamiliar words and terminology that reveals the ever-changing surroundings. "Jazz music is a good example of music that exemplifies the society in which we live.

Jazz music was widely assumed to be different to the point of dominating attention in philosophical deliberations of music. “

Jazz started just after World War 1. It was considered by many to be music of inventiveness. Jazz music replicates and represents reality. It could also communicate and support sensuality and antagonism. “Jazz music was open to diverse musical possibilities whereby an artist may modify melodies and synchronization at will. It is extensively seen as unique and most prominent types of music in comparison to other music. “Jazz music has been known to manipulate many artists' work, from literature to other genres of music. Nearly every decade gave a new flavour to the music, but by the 1950's, jazz had grown into an established, complex music, with a niche and nuance for continuous change. Its success is attributed on American history by several best artists. Jazz is not a solitary art. It is highly attributed to its knack of expressing true feelings. Not only it exposes itself in the music but also finds manifestation in many other figures of expression, embracing the powerful narratives encompassing literature. “In all of its modes, jazz narrates people's emotional reaction to repression, expresses artistic capabilities and provides a tone of voice for those whose voices have been trampled into submission: it captured more than just an account of events. Jazz tells the story of a people who developed music that rose above racial boundaries and is an art that permitted the emergence of self-expression in a blatantly oppressed race.” Perhaps jazz music most critical influence lies in the culture from which it developed.

Composing a jazz harmony was equivalent to attending an inventive poetry slam with a fully collected sestina. It is a piece of art that calls for the consistent use of *duende* in all in compositions. So many people appreciate this type of music because it creates strong rhythm and often entailed inventiveness. In an exception to the rhythm section, the melody in jazz music was usually played in different ranges. “The temperament of music is more admirable as its power reached to the spirit and to the soul of the listener.” Jazz is now a kind of music that is recognized and appreciated throughout the world. It is an inherently transgressive art arising from the conflict of cultures, an aggressive mixture of emotions and expressions, each structured in its own right.

In recent years, nevertheless, jazz music has grown to be an important subject matter for scholars due to the effect it has had not only all over the world but also on America History. Subsequent to this precedent, most succeeding theories about music inherited a distinctive modernist preconception about literature. Literature is continuously evolving, and its imaginative value cannot be reduced to social functions and moral effects. Consequently, whatever is true regarding literature is true on music. While this paper focuses on the jazz piece of music, the philosophical aspects Plato and Aristotle, in regards to jazz music as well as the surrounding context that contributes to our understanding of them have also been applied.

## **2. Plato's Phaedo**

Plato's Phaedo is acknowledged for the role of conveying Plato's philosophy. It is widely known to be a masterpiece of ancient Greek literature. Besides philosophical argumentation, it contains a story framing device that is similar to the chorus in Greek tragedy and fable. Plato's writings that brought about a renewed awareness in modes were rediscovered during ancient history. “It was believed that the ancient Greeks were convinced, of a certain king who had once been enthused to arms by the reverberation of a flute playing the melody in the Phrygian mode.” It now emerged that the philosophers of that day mixed up all of the Greek modes.

Plato, an influential philosopher in the middle Ages, was widely known to be a masterpiece of ancient Greek literature that used *figura*, *anima*, and *effectus* in his work. His social structure theory embodied a governing class, and workers. According to him, “the human soul contained reason, spirit, and appetite. “He wrote a variety of literature, which attracted readers from the entire world. One such work was the Phaedo, acknowledged for its significant role of conveying Plato's philosophy. In Plato's Phaedo, he offers his own distinct philosophical *effectus*, amidst discussing whether or not virtue can be taught. It could carry and promote temperance, aristocracy, and chastity. “In his works Plato explored the mind and matter, soul and body, intellect and sense, reason and emotion that have become deeply ingrained in present philosophy. “This directly applies

to jazz music as it contained a strong rhythm and often entailed inventiveness. Apart from that, just as Plato's work was recognized, jazz was also recognized and appreciated throughout the world. Jazz was an inherently transgressive type of art arising from the conflict of cultures, an aggressive mixture of emotions and expressions, each structured in its own right.

According to Plato, the soul and body were separate. Nevertheless, one must first begin to understand Plato's thoughts on "mortality of the soul." Here, Plato exemplifies in his works the transcendent power of self-identity that is also found within jazz music. "In applying the philosophy of Plato's *Phaedo* into jazz music, with particular focus on his arguments for immortality, issues that stem out are particularly those emphasizing the issue of mortality and self-identity. "Jazz music expresses true feelings the same way Plato offers his own unique philosophical concept, infused with his mentor's brilliant sophistry.

His philosophical theory does not only expose itself in the music. Rather, it finds manifestation in many other figures of expression, embracing the powerful narratives encompassing literature. "In all of its modes, jazz narrates people's emotions and provides a tone of voice captured more than just an account of events. "The temperament of music is more admirable as its power reached to the spirit and to the soul of the listener just like Plato's literature is recognized and appreciated throughout the world. It is an inherently transgressive art arising from the conflict of cultures, an aggressive mixture of emotions and expressions, each structured in its own right. Indeed jazz music illustrates the results of mortality that is found in Plato's *Phaedo*, and more vitally, conventional ways of understanding and overcome it.

### **3. Aristotle's Metaphysics**

Aristotle's metaphysics is one of the most important works of Aristotle's philosophy. It assesses what can be asserted, not just because of its existence but because of the special qualities it possesses. Aristotle attempts to find through cause the real meaning of contentment, purpose and temperance. "His approach is pure common sense, to some extent long-winded, with a belief that one needs to gain familiarity in these areas to completely realize what they signify." He uses everyday occurrences in trying to explain these issues which also directly applies to jazz music as it uses rhythms' and tones to arouse people's emotional reaction to repression,

Aristotle discusses metaphysics in a series of fourteen books where he explores the wisdom and knowledge of life. The general principle of metaphysics is "being qua being" which essentially means "being understood as being". Aristotle's metaphysics in a way defies the very essence of physics by incorporating elements of consciousness, philosophy and psychology something that many physicists oppose. In his hypothesis, it is suggested that the world we live in and everything we perceive as real is in fact an illusion that is only created by our minds. "Our consciousness and experiences through observation are what shape and mould our lives and our reality." Scientists of the modern age have put forward that the mind, which is the most powerful universal tool, exists, not within, but parallel to the physical world described in quantum mechanics. The mind exists as an independent tool which affects and is conversely affected by the physical world.

Aristotle aims to discuss the fact that the riddle of consciousness has not been solved. According to him, the human race fundamentally understands awareness through being conscious of ourselves; by looking at it from the inside. The difficulty of understanding consciousness, in terms of what we perceive as reality, is in reconciling the two perspectives. "The metaphysics hypothesis made it possible for a whole new discipline of physics to be established." Scientists rely on facts to provide a reason for the existence and occurrence of things. I however believe that some of the greatest physicists who made major breakthroughs that provided reason and logic to the meaning of life still had the idea that there existed a link between reality and the mystical consciousness of being.

It is crucial to understand this Aristotelian concept and its relation to Jazz music.

"Aristotle's metaphysics applies directly to jazz music, as both try to reach a person's mind, and soul. "Jazz is one of the most highly regarded musical genres in the world and enjoys a deep rooting in the African American subculture. The genre came into being through the expression of a particular category of people who found comfort and meaning in this music. Jazz is ideally a

musical piece that may not necessarily contain vocals or lyrics, I am thus of the opinion that the essence of jazz music was founded in the sound and rhythm.

The aspect of unity and multiplicity comes into play where in terms of jazz music and the African American people. While each entity is independent and singular, they are inherently part of each other. Each is characteristic of its being, because of the other. Therefore, it is through it, the group of people who enjoyed this music found a spiritual and emotional connection that not only allowed them to enjoy their roots, but to understand the meaning of what they were going through. Jazz became a way of being conscious of one's own existence and being and gave one a chance to appreciate their true originality and authenticity as a person. "This music is an amalgam of varying emotions as well as instruments relying on the performer's style and its synchronization to the harmonies and melodies of the human soul. "The latter is the essence of jazz music as it expertly brings to life the tradition of the said peoples.

#### **4. Aristotle Poetics**

In his poems, Aristotle claims that human beings are imitative beings; feeling an urge to create art that replicate and represent reality. Aristotle argues that poetics can vary depending with their mode as well as communicate and support sensuality and antagonism which directly applies to jazz as it brings out the same effects.

Aristotle defines poetics as the repetitive use of language, rhythm and harmony either together or separately. He describes it as having the capability of embodying real life objects, or events, as opposed to philosophy which is a set of ideas. "Aristotle views poetics as a medium through which the human race comes to terms with both positive and negative things in their environment." He divided poetics into tragedy and epic story where the initial deals with lofty matters while the latter deals with matters of life that are intangible. "He heavily relies on tragedy, believing that it is a powerful and figurative tool that is used to demonstrate universal themes and emotions." In this regard, the whole idea of poetics, according to Aristotle, is progressive and evolutionary in nature thus being able to remain relevant from generation to generation. It allows us to create a real and tangible world of imagination while still acknowledging what is fictional. Ideally, Aristotle proposes that poetics are an art that allows the human race to cope with everyday phenomena and still preserve tradition.

He uses the term "catharsis", to define the experience and purifying effect of art. "He goes on to describe that the emotions that are elicited in a drama or tragic performance i.e. pity and fear often build and are then replaced with stronger, positive emotions as the story or performance comes to a conclusion. "Here the audiences are taught to experience negative emotions with the promise of an impending victory. Despite the fact that poetics is art and not reality, it acts as a kind of therapy that helps the audiences to cope and anticipate a better tomorrow in dealing with real life pain and tragedy. It is unfortunate that our real life struggles are unpredictable and one has to deal with emotions with no guarantee of a positive future, poetics provided an entity of empathy regardless of its being fiction.

All this is particularly true when it comes to jazz. Jazz music and Aristotle poetics have so many similarities. For starters, Jazz music is a musical genre that was and still is an embodiment of the teachings of Aristotle. It is a genre that arose in the midst of tragic human suffering and allowed humans to appreciate life's small pleasures. Jazz music seeks to combine melody, harmony and rhythm with each note. "Jazz is unrelentingly poetic in nature and stimulates the senses as well as the human spirit. "Unlike other figurative music genres, Jazz strikes different chords and cadences affecting different individuals in different ways. Not only does it do this but jazz is innately a kind of poetics in which the African American community of the time found solace.

The fear and tragedy of the time required that communities found ways to get them through the hard times. As music is a universal tool to express emotion as well as bring unity, the community created and established jazz for therapeutic purposes as well as a way to preserve their culture. The Aristotelian teaching is well proved and demonstrated in this respect. Nonetheless, the texture of the music is crisp and beautiful capturing the rough but exotic nature of the subculture. This musical

genre is timeless as it skilfully captures the agelessness of ethnic civilization.

## 5. Conclusion

Jazz music replicates and represents reality. It could also communicate and support sensuality and antagonism. Despite the fact that jazz music is recognized and appreciated throughout the world, it will be always be rejected and disregarded by many philosophers as it overlooks previous customs and values. Initially, jazz music obtained attention from philosophers who perceived it as a prevailing philosophy of music. Even now, a mounting number of philosophers view jazz music as an aesthetically rich and fundamental field that has been marginalized by cultural aesthetics. They argue that jazz music provides significant counterexamples to ingrained principles in the philosophy of literature.

Therefore, if there is significant dissimilarity between jazz music and literature, widening the argument to include jazz music might encourage philosophers to re-evaluate its temperament. Despite the fact that jazz music is recognized and appreciated throughout the world, it will be always be rejected and disregarded as it overlooks previous customs and values. As much as many people view jazz music as an aesthetically rich and fundamental field that has been marginalized by cultural aesthetics, it is still argued that jazz music provides significant counterexamples to ingrained principles in the philosophy of literature. Regardless, whatever is true regarding literature is true on music.

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