

Plato, Political Affect, and Lullabies

Mattering: Feminism, Science & Materialism
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Plan of the talk

- Political Affect
- Difference and development
- Communicative musicality
- Music and bio-social evolution
- Plato's *Laws*: Music and political affect in infant development

Political Affect

- Emotional character of groups
- Corporeality and moral intuition
- Rationality and moral judgment
- Political philosophy's concern with social-somatic subjectification practices

Difference and Development

- “Horizontal” difference: different embodiments
- “Vertical” development
 - Evolution
 - Ontogenetic development
- “Granularity”
 - Neither unmarked “human” nor utterly singular
 - Different regimes of corporeal training

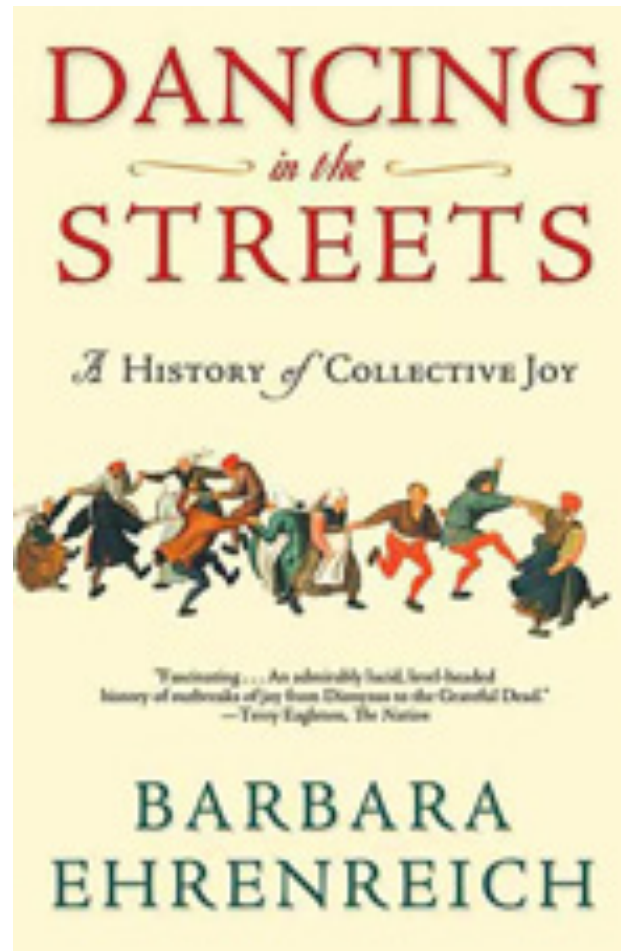
Communicative musicality

- Trevarthen / Dissanayake
- Rhythmic interaction of infant and caregiver
- Primary intersubjectivity
 - Turn-taking
 - Affective attunement
 - Development of emotional control

Music and bio-cultural evolution

- Cambridge School: Ian Cross, John Bispham
- Neither a spandrel, nor just sexual selection
- Bispham:
 - “constellation of concurrently operating, hierarchically organized, subskills”
 - “overlapping internal oscillatory mechanisms”
 - “exaptively evolved from fundamental kinesthetic abilities”
- Group dancing and singing, not just listening

Politics of music



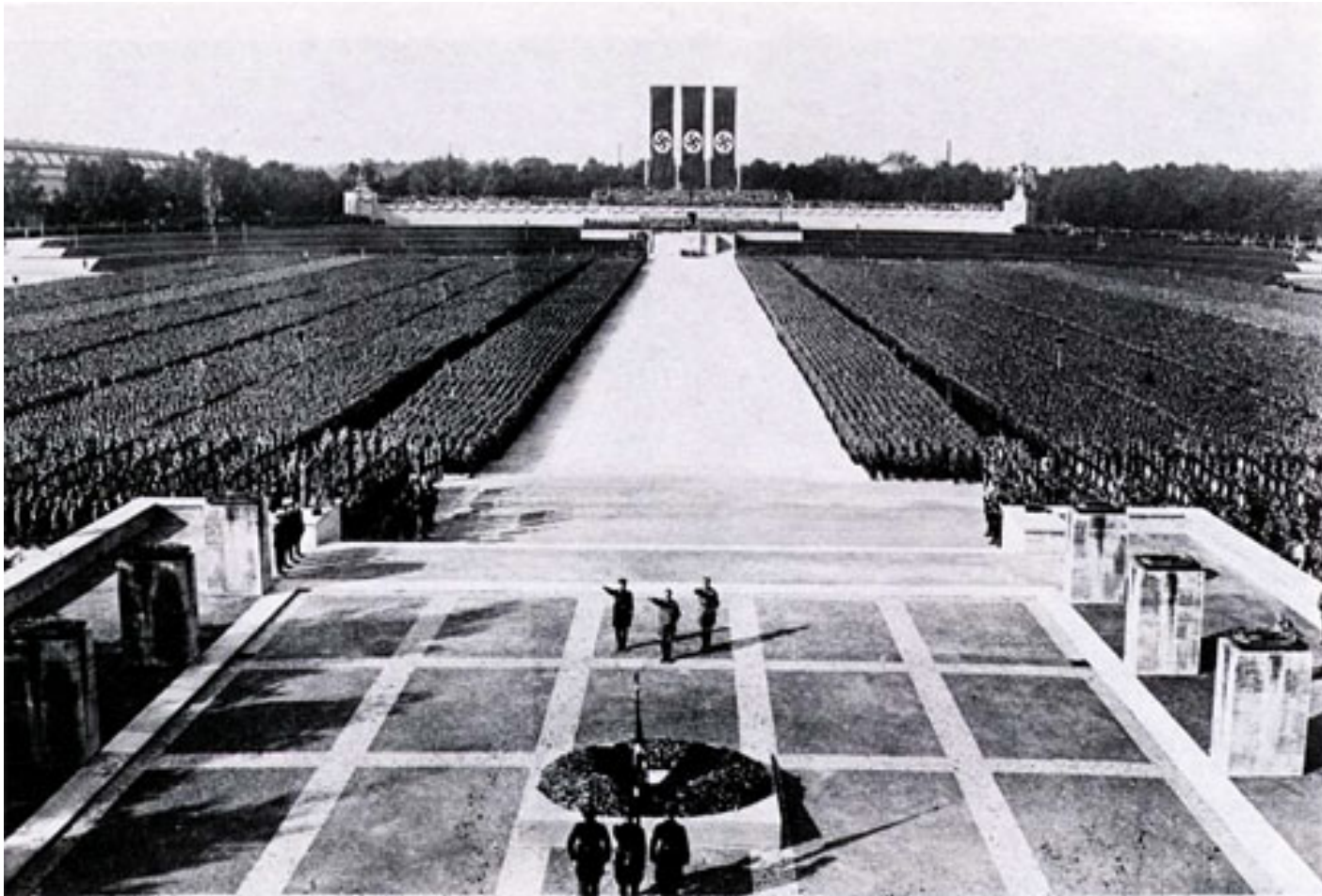
Dance and drill in human history



Infantry drill



Entrainment: the dark side



Rice planting at the end of *Seven Samurai*



Plato (and Aristotle): Political Affect, music, and infants



Republic 402a

- [the properly raised citizen child] “will rightfully object to what is ugly [i.e., what is wrong and shameful] and hate it ... before he can grasp the reason [*logos*].”

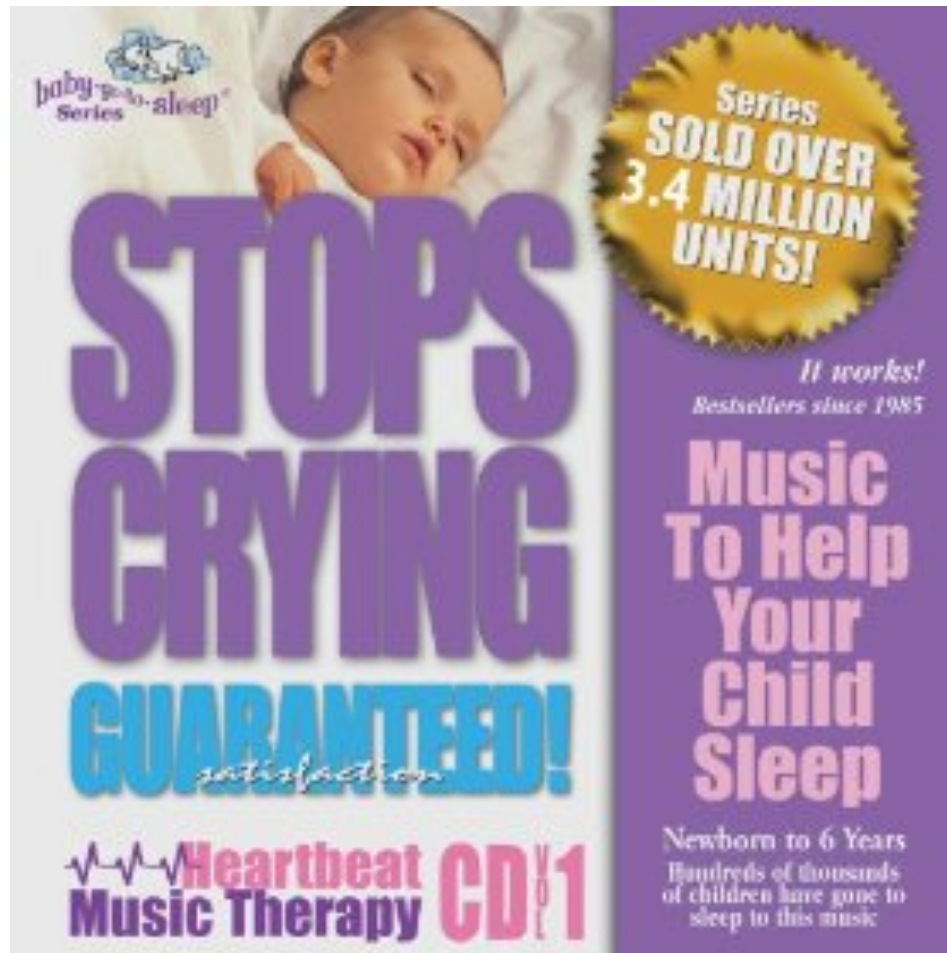
Laws, Book 7

- Nurture and education of infants can only be matter of advice to masters of households rather than law binding citizens
- Even if habits of petty misdeeds can have bad political effect later by interfering with emotional control

Laws, 790e

- “fright is due to some morbid condition of soul. Hence, when such disorders are treated by rocking movements, the external motion ... dominates the internal” (790e)

Plato's hope: a science of lullabies



The image shows the cover of a CD titled "Heartbeat Music Therapy CD #1". The top left features a logo for "baby-to-sleep Series" with a small illustration of a baby. The central image is a close-up of a sleeping baby's face. The text "STOPS CRYING GUARANTEED!" is prominently displayed in large, bold, purple and blue letters. Below this, the word "satisfaction" is written in a small, cursive font. At the bottom left, the title "Heartbeat Music Therapy CD #1" is written in a mix of red and purple fonts, with a heartbeat line graphic. On the right side, a gold starburst graphic contains the text "Series SOLD OVER 3.4 MILLION UNITS!". Below this, the text "It works! Bestsellers since 1985" is written in a small, italicized font. The main title "Music To Help Your Child Sleep" is written in large, bold, pink letters. At the bottom right, the text "Newborn to 6 Years" and "Hundreds of thousands of children have gone to sleep to this music" is written in a small, black font.

baby-to-sleep Series

**STOPS
CRYING
GUARANTEED!**

satisfaction

**Heartbeat
Music Therapy CD #1**

Series
**SOLD OVER
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*It works!
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**Music
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Newborn to 6 Years
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Plato's frustration

- Masters must rely on “guesswork” of slave nurses for lullabies to soothe infants (792a)
- Nurses have embodied skill / know-how
- But neither nurses nor lawgivers can explain
 - how lullabies in general work
 - nor which ones are needed in specific cases
- So they don't have knowledge
- They can only describe, not prescribe

Plato, Political Affect, and Lullabies

- So despite importance of communicative musicality in developing proper “bodies politic”
- i.e., social-somatic training in which dispositions to correct corporeal-affective moral intuitions are reliably produced
- There is an irreducible reliance on irrational embodied skill / know-how of the nurses