

Should Artistic Creativity Have Restraints?

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Should music and art follow structure and rules, or be “free” to uninhibited human expression? The history of the arts shows a conflict between Apollonian and Dionysian elements. This article shows that true artistic freedom can only exist within the confines of God’s laws.

Around the beginning of the twentieth century, the Austrian composer/conductor Gustav Mahler and his wife attended the world premiere of Arnold Schönberg’s second string quartet. The work was received with typical Viennese intensity, with violent and hostile outbursts prevailing. Nevertheless, Mahler had protested, and vocally defended Schönberg.

On the way home Frau Mahler asked him, “But did you really like that piece?” Mahler’s reply was that, no, actually he didn’t, “but,” he added, “*the younger generation is always right.*”

This rather startling anecdote was recounted by Roger Sessions, eminent American composer and teacher, to illustrate an attitude toward music that was also his own. He was occupying the prestigious Charles Eliot Norton chair of poetics at Harvard during 1968-1969, which gives the world’s leading figures in the humanities the opportunity to explain their aesthetic philosophy and artistic craft.

Mr. Sessions went on to explain that “certainly Mahler did not mean to imply that the younger generation is always right in every instance and in every detail What Mahler was asserting was the sovereign right of the younger generation to its own experiences, its own experiments, and its own interpretation”

On the surface, this analysis would probably strike most people as being reasonable, understandingly tolerant, and even prudent. At the least it is fashionable and in keeping with the prevailing artistic attitudes of our times which assert that creativity must be *un-restrained* if it is to progress.

This disposition of mind was embraced and amplified by Mr. Sessions as he proceeded in his series of lectures. While he acknowledged that music is *designed* and *controlled* movement of sound in time, he went on to explain that any artist (which would include painters, sculptors, and writers, as well as composers) should be “*free to follow his own way,*” *free to ignore rules and conventions,* *free to do “anything he chooses,”* and *free from governmental or theological restraints and considerations.*

Therefore, he concluded, it is essential for the composer to see that tradition implies *constant change*, and that *acoustical physics and mathematics, as well as philosophical judgments, have no relevancy whatever as determinants of musical criteria.* Consequently, the free, liberated composer can tell himself that “this is right, since this is the music which I want to bring into being.”

A Different Viewpoint

But there is another side of the coin that needs to be considered. Two other composers of even greater stature, Igor Stravinsky and Paul Hindemith, were also given the opportunity of occupying the Norton chair of poetics. Stravinsky, whose style has exerted enormous influence

on music over the past fifty years, delivered six lectures at Harvard during the 1939-40 academic year.

Contrary to what the general public expected from him (for they wrongly understood him as a revolutionary, when in reality he was a neoclassicist who searched for and found security in the past), Stravinsky's tack was strikingly and fundamentally different from that of Sessions. He began by explaining that *order* and *discipline* are necessary elements of music. In fact, "art is the contrary of chaos. It never gives itself up to chaos without immediately finding its living works, its very existence, threatened." Consequently, innovation within bounds is not the same thing as artistic revolution and anarchy.

Stravinsky then went on to explain that "*the essential aim of music*" (and, I might add, of the arts in general) "*is to promote a communion, a union of man with his fellow-man and with the Supreme Being.*"

Furthermore, such endeavor becomes art only when it is organized by *conscious* human action. (*Webster's Dictionary* also defines art as "the *conscious* use of skill and creative imagination, especially in the production of aesthetic objects." The reason for the emphasis on the word "conscious" will be made clear later in the paper.)

Therefore, this means that *conscientious and responsible selection and/or rejection of materials must be made*, as well as the thoughtful and expert fashioning of them. (Compare this approach with the words of Beethoven which were written in a letter to Louis Schlosser in the 1820s: "I change many things, discard others, and try again and again until I am satisfied.")

In other words, a composer's style and worth boils down to the *way* he organizes his conceptions. Needless to say, a person such as Richard Wagner, whose style of endless melody attempted to compensate for a *lack* of order, represented, to Stravinsky, one who was a high priest of "the cult of disorder," whose music was more improvised than constructed.

Therefore, Stravinsky felt compelled to write that "human activity must impose *limits* upon itself. The more art is controlled, limited, worked over, the more it is free. If one does not establish limits, his production is given over to fantasy and the caprices of imagination."

"As for myself," he went on to explain, "I experience a sort of terror when, at the moment of setting to work and finding myself before the infinitude of possibilities that present themselves, I have the feeling that *everything* is permissible to me. If everything is permissible to me, the best *and the worst*; if nothing offers me any resistance, then any effort is inconceivable, and I cannot use anything as a basis, and consequently every undertaking becomes futile."

"Will I then have to lose myself in this abyss of freedom? To what shall I cling...?"

He answered this by showing that he had the basic and timeless elements of music to fall back on. Solid things such as the acoustically based raw materials of the common scale and its relationships, strong and weak accents, and infinite rhythmic variety. Such down-to-earth, inexhaustible riches delivered him from unrestricted, theoretical freedom. If art went outside such concrete foundations, it was heretical.

Therefore, Stravinsky's freedom consisted of his moving about within the framework of the musical regulation just described. To him, whatever diminished this restraint, diminished strength. He learned that true freedom, like that which is defined by the Biblical doctrines of liberty and law and grace, is obtained *by acknowledging and submitting to the absolute of law and order*. Therefore, genuine artistic freedom is not acquired, as so many today seem to think, by the renunciation and abrogation of natural form and physical law.

Before taking leave of Stravinsky, we need to mention yet another related artistic issue to which he referred. Namely, the eternal conflict between Classic and Romantic ideals, or between Apollonian and Dionysian elements.

For those unacquainted with the latter terms, Apollo was the god of sunlight, prophecy, music, and poetry in Greek mythology. The adjective "Apollonian" is therefore used in reference to anything resembling Apollo, who was identified with things harmonious, measured, ordered, or balanced in character.

In contrast, Dionysus was the Greek god of wine. Consequently, the adjective “Dionysian” is commonly used in reference to things sensuous, frenzied, or orgiastic in character. With these terms and definitions in mind (terms that have become symbolic down through the ages of the timeless and continual clash of opposing forces), note now Stravinsky’s analysis.

“What is important for the lucid ordering of the work [of art] — for its crystallization — is that all the Dionysian elements which set the imagination of the artist in motion and make the life-sap rise, *must be properly subjugated* before they intoxicate us, and *must finally be made to submit to the law*: Apollo demands it.”

The conflict between these opposing elements has raged throughout the intellectual history of mankind. Its consideration is fundamental to the formulation and establishment of artistic ideals. The desire of some for balance and order has constantly been challenged by others who desire “freedom” from these elements.

*Therefore, what needs to be evaluated most profoundly by the creative community — way above contemplation of style or technique — are the **ends** of these opposing philosophies.*

Is true freedom achieved through anarchy and the elimination of regulation? Or is it the result of law and order? These questions are as relevant to composers, writers, and artists as they are to theologians and heads of governments.

Still Another Concept

Paul Hindemith occupied Harvard’s chair of poetics during 1949-1950. Up until his recent death (Stravinsky also died a few years ago) he was recognized as Germany’s foremost composer.

Hindemith’s attitudes toward music resemble those of Stravinsky in many respects. However, he introduced yet another fundamental concept which we need to consider, that Stravinsky did not cover.

He started out by showing that many musical facts which we think are stable are, in reality, very unstable. For example, a piece of music goes through ever-renewed resonant resurrections and deaths by repeated, variable performances. No stability here. Periods of appreciation of a piece alternate with periods of neglect. No stability here either. And sound, the ever-present ingredient of music, because of the differences in concert halls, instruments, and the many tendencies and irregularities of performers, is the frailest quality of all.

Therefore, “*we have to turn to the immaterial, the spiritual aspects of music*” in order to find values that are not subject to instability.

While this may at first sound impossible, since music is a physical phenomenon, Hindemith went on to say that order is necessary in music because it is an image of a *higher* order.

We need to think about this for a moment. God is a God of order, not confusion. His physical creation is one of limitless *order and balance*, not rambling chaos. Therefore, should not we humans, created with a body of marvelous order, by a God of infinite order, also desire and emulate order and balance in all our endeavors? Only the irreverent would think otherwise.

Hindemith, a neoclassicist like Stravinsky, then turned to the books, *De musica*, of Augustine (who lived from 354 to 430 A.D.), and the *De institutione musica* of Boethius (who lived from 480 to 524 A.D.). Augustine was, of course, the famous Catholic prelate whose numerous works exerted great influence on the development of his church’s doctrine. Boethius was a distinguished Roman statesman, philosopher, and mathematician whose writings, along with those of Cassiodorus, transmitted the knowledge of ancient Greek music to the Middle Ages.

The significant thing about these two books is that they deal with music as a power that can influence minds. True, both writers were reacting in part to the degeneracies of the declining Roman Empire. Music had fallen from the high science of the Greeks to a form of sensuous, materialistic, pastime. Many songs were indecent, dancing was immodest, and melodies were

cast in effeminate fashion. Professional performers were obsessed with vain, virtuosity-for-its-own-sake, exhibitionism.

Augustine tried to show that music can be more than just a base and irresponsible play of sounds. Rather, it can and should be converted into *moral power*. Therefore, music that does not aim at such a goal has no place in society.

Hindemith immediately clarified this somewhat stringent pronouncement by stating that, “Admittedly the dividing line between a devaluated or basically worthless music and a lightweight music of some moral value may not be clearly discernable. Moreover, our Augustinian theorems may not be lenient enough to serve as a guide through this moral-musical no man’s land, and there may exist other cases of doubtful musical value in which vigorous decisions may lead to unjust or even entirely false judgments. No wonder, therefore, that many people try to approach the problem of musical responsibility from another angle.”

However, the nature of the issue did not deter Boethius from wading right into the heart of the matter. The very first sentence of his book contains its principle thesis. **“Music is related to us by nature and can ennoble or corrupt the character.”**

This is a very profound and far-reaching statement. If music (or any kind of creativity for that matter) has power, *then does it not follow that those who create have the moral responsibility to deeply and wisely consider the effects of what they are doing?*

Many things are technically possible — atom bombs, meaningless art, dissonant atonal music. The question is, *should* such things be created? What are their effects on human beings?

The Ancients on Music

The power of music and the arts to influence and help mold character has been one of the most thought about, controversial and important artistic and philosophical issues of history. Notice a few of the many comments and observations that have been made about this subject.

In the sixth century B.C., the Chinese philosopher Confucius saw that there was a connection of higher origin between the physical laws governing music and the universe. He also observed that **“the music of a peaceful and prosperous country is quiet and joyous, and the government is orderly; the music of a country in turmoil shows dissatisfaction and anger, and the government is chaotic.”**

This ancient “Apollonian-Dionysian” dichotomy was further explained by his following remarks: “In ancient music the dancers move in formation forward and backward in an atmosphere of peace and order and a certain luxury of movement. . . . The music begins with the civil dance movements and ends with the military dance movements, and there is a continuity of movement from the beginning to the end, while the measure of the classical music prevents or checks the dancers who are inclined to go too fast. After listening to such music, the superior man will be in a proper atmosphere to discuss the music and the ways of the ancients, the cultivation of personal life and the ordering of national life. This is the main sentiment or character of ancient music.”

Confucius then contrasts this with the modern music of his day: “Now in this new music, people bend their bodies while they move back and forth, there is a deluge of immoral sounds *without form or restraint*, and the actors and dwarfs dressed like monkeys mix (or mix with) the company of men and women, behaving as if they didn’t know who were their parents or children. At the end of such a performance it is impossible to discuss music or the ways of the ancients. This is the main sentiment or character of the new music.”

In ancient Greece, Pythagoras explained the basic laws of musical acoustics by showing the correspondence between pitches of notes and intervals and the length of a musical string. Furthermore, music had moral value because it reflected and was based upon such absolute numerical relationships.

Like Confucius, Plato also saw a connection between the character of a man and the music that represented him. He observed that overly intricate rhythms and melodic complexities were conducive to depression and disorder. He also felt that each of the modes (or scales) in use during his day had a different “ethos” or character. Music must therefore be of the right sort, since the wrong kind could be damaging to society.

This was in line with the principal purpose of ancient Greek education, which was to make a certain kind of man, instead of preparing a man for a certain kind of job. While they differed as to what the standards should be, the Greeks recognized that proper education was the deliberate molding of human character in accordance with an ideal. Consequently, they also believed that the poets, musicians, philosophers, and orators (or statesmen), had an *educational* mission, because they were the primary ones who influenced and shaped the characters of the citizenry.

Such thoughts were further defined by Plato in his well-known works, *The Republic* and *Timaeus*. Because he held that virtue could exist only in a society founded upon sound principles, he went on to outline the requisites of an ideal state, foremost of which was its educational system.

Due to its effect on the mind, music was elevated to a position of extraordinary educational importance. Judgments were made on the ethical qualities of the various modes, which even resulted in the banning of some of them. The guiding force of such decisions was always the quest to determine what produced the most virtuous character in the citizens of the ideal nation.

Consequently, Plato’s core curriculum was a balance between *music* — because rhythm and melody affect the emotions and find their way into the inward places of the mind, and *gymnastics* — because of its ability to train and develop the body.

Aristotle was of a more “Dionysian” bent than was his teacher Plato. In his *Politics* he accepted all the modes but acknowledged that they had predictable powers, which could mold character. Therefore, only the most ethical were to be preferred for education.

However, because the others excited the passions and drove the soul to mystic frenzy, which emotions were also in the heart of man, there was an “illiberal,” recreational and purgative or cleansing value in experiencing them. But if music was to be a liberal art (the aim of which concerns itself with the development of character), it must do *more* than just entertain and relax the hearer. *It must have the ability to move the mind and lead it to virtue.*

Therefore, while Aristotle permits more latitude than Plato, he still maintains that emotions must be kept in check, and that pleasure must be of the right kind if moral improvement is to be attained.

The Breakdown of Artistic Stability

The opposite end of the pole was vigorously expressed by the Roman philosopher Sextus Empiricus around 200 A.D. In Book VI of his treatise *Against the Mathematicians*, he flatly stated that he didn’t believe in any ethical power of music. As far as he was concerned, music was a mere play of sounds and forms which couldn’t express anything. Consequently, music can’t be used as a means of education, since all the stories about its moral power were just plain bunk!

This totally materialistic viewpoint expressed the feelings of the age. Athenaeus, the Greek rhetorician and grammarian who lived in Rome at that time, wrote in his *Sophists at Dinner* that “in ancient times the Greeks were music-lovers; but later, with the breakdown of order, when practically all the ancient customs fell into decay, this devotion to principle ceased, and debased fashions in music came to light, wherein every one who practiced them substituted effeminacy for gentleness, and license and looseness for moderation.”

As already explained, Augustine and Boethius picked up this aesthetic gauntlet in quick order. Although their concepts differed in some respects (Augustine maintained that the mind absorbs music and transforms it into moral strength, while Boethius insisted that the ethos or

power of music acts upon the mind), both were cautious of the sensuous elements of music and saw that its power could be one for either good or evil, and both restated the Platonic-Aristotelian ethic.

Such ancient Greek conservatism was well-suited to the needs of the Catholic Church at that time, as it was conducive to the maintenance of an artistic order which lasted for centuries. Thomas Aquinas further reinforced this basic philosophy, which has affected the artistic expression of the entire Western world for over 1500 years, by teaching that the basis of music was mathematical and consequently a reflection of celestial movement and order.

In view of this legacy, it is little wonder that Luther assigned particular qualities to a given mode, or that Calvin, taking an even more cautious view, warned against music that was voluptuous, effeminate, and disorderly. Furthermore, both clerics emphasized that the words of the Bible used in church music must not be obscured or jeopardized by the music.

The transition into eighteenth century Romanticism was characterized by German and French philosophers, astronomers, and mathematicians such as Kepler, Descartes and Leibniz. Such men saw the basis of music as mathematical and consequently one of proportion and order that was related to other observations of science.

However, a drastic and dramatic change in aesthetic philosophy and approach suddenly began to take place — one from which we have not yet recovered. Unlike the order, symmetry and tradition that characterized the preceding Classical or Apollonian era, the Romantic movement, which was *Dionysian in spirit*, rebelled against such stable standards and embraced the ideals of unbridled imagination and emotion, the mysterious and melancholy, and the often-unfathomable and remote.

Philosophers such as Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Bergson jumped on the bandwagon and had a cultural heyday. Kant put music at the bottom of the artistic hierarchy, and held that it was negligible in the service of culture because of its “fantasy” characteristics. Hegel acknowledged the power of music and even felt that it was somehow connected with the emotions. But to him, philosophy far superseded the arts.

However, it was Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Bergson who broke most completely with Platonic and Apollonian idealism. While they saw that art is a search for order, a human necessity where the emotions themselves gravitate toward containment and expression, they also maintained that it must provide for *everything* — “the ugly, the chaotic, the frenzied, the inharmonious” — for all these elements belong to this human universe no less than the well-ordered and beautiful.

Therefore, to these philosophers and the Romanticists, art was accountable for *everything*. The dream world of Apollonian utopianism had finally been crushed by Dionysian dynamism! As Schopenhauer put it, the composer was now free to reveal “the *inner* nature of the world, and express *the deepest wisdom in a language which his reason does not understand*.”

Nietzsche, the philosopher most espoused by Hitler and the Third Reich, went even farther by glorifying the Dionysian ideal and making it *primary*, over even the most ideal unions of opposing forces. This was the intellectual climate from the last half of the nineteenth on into our present century. Of such was the dominant spirit of European Romantic music.

The Ominous Transition

A deep understanding of the shift from an Apollonian to a Dionysian approach in the arts is so fundamental and important to a proper formulation of valid Christian aesthetic ideals, that we need to back up for a moment to look at several other contributing factors.

For thousands of years, music was held to be not only an art, but a science as well. The ancient discovery that the relationships of musical tones are measurable by specific mathematical proportions intimated that all of nature is an orderly, related process. Hence,

Plato's belief that music was a force regulating the universe through the mathematical relationships inherent in musical intervals.

Yale University's Cannon, Johnson, and Waite summed up such Greek philosophical thinking in their excellent book, *The Art of Music*. "If the harmony which exists between tones is the product of mathematical proportions, could it be possible that other aspects of the world are regulated by the same numbers? May not the succession of the seasons, the ebb and flow of the tides, the balance and discords of the human spirit, all be related through the same proportions? May not music be the foundation of the universe? As a result of such speculations, music became the companion of arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, as a science that measures and explains the causes and relationships of the universe."

With this in mind, let us briefly follow the course of such scientific and philosophical thinking, to see how it related to the development of Romantic concepts and ideals.

After the academic sterility of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance of the fifteenth century was a rebirth of intellectual vigor. A fervent search was made to uncover the knowledge and ideals of the past. The dignity of man was restored and the object of all the arts was to faithfully produce and explain the beauties of nature. Architecture contained balanced elements. The artist looked at the world around him and recorded with realistic perspective, the features and details of man and nature. The physical laws that govern music were reexamined and composers created pieces of balance and proportion.

But things began to change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Since the time of the Egyptian astronomer Ptolemy (who flourished in the second century A.D.), man had blindly believed that the earth was stationary. He also thought that the planets and a fixed number of stars revolved around the earth.

Then came Copernicus (1473-1543). He shook the thinking world by theorizing that the earth revolved around the sun. New stars were then discovered by Brahe in 1572 and Kepler in 1606 and the idea of a limited heaven could no longer be maintained. Kepler also showed in 1609 that the planets revolved in ellipses rather than in perfect circles and the theorizings of Ptolemy were completely invalidated.

Because mathematics was the key that opened the door to all these new discoveries, men again began to assume, as the Greeks had done before them, that the path to truth must lie in mathematical demonstrations. Kepler even stated that "nothing can be known completely except quantities or by quantities." The scientific age was born and man began to reexamine and reject much of what he had previously held to be true.

The Protestant Reformation and the Counter-Reformation took place and men everywhere were compelled to make agonizing decisions about some of their most basic religious beliefs. The arts became correspondingly overemotional during this period and produced the era called the "Baroque," which at that time was a contemptuous term meaning "extravagance" and "bad taste."

Then along came the French philosopher Descartes (1598-1650), who resolved to doubt everything he knew. He exalted and deified the faculty of reason, and had a profound influence upon his followers who began to reexamine everything in the spirit of the scientific method. All the arts were rationally analyzed and the various emotions that art sought to imitate were catalogued and given specific formulas. In music, for example, anger was expressed by wide intervals and a rapid rhythmic motion, while sadness was portrayed by the smallest intervals, a subdued tempo, and chromatic harmonies.

Up to this time the arts were basically still utilizing forms of balance and proportion, which in turn produced clarity and coherence. But the seeds of change and decadence had already been sown and full-blown rebellion was just around the corner.

The Destruction of True Art

The eighteenth century produced an intellectual upheaval that has resulted in the complete refashioning of the artistic world. The ruling nobility and intelligentsia became weary with rational discipline, which they felt could teach them only how to imitate. Seeking to break the chains of reason, they turned to the principles of originality and imagination that constituted the heart of Dionysian thinking.

At that time, this is what the world was looking for. Man didn't want to be bound by rational laws. What he wanted was freedom from *all* authority, and artistic liberty to do as he pleased.

Scores of influential writers, mainly from England, rose to this battle cry. They pleaded the cause of originality and imagination, stating that "natural geniuses are to be preferred before those who have formed themselves by rules and submitted the greatness of their natural talents to the corrections and restraints of art."

Genius was described as a specially endowed ability of the human mind to invent new ideas *and create new forms of art*. It was a capacity that few men had. Ideas from geniuses did not come rationally and systematically. Instead, they arose emotionally and spontaneously and were fashioned without restraint.

These beginnings of Romanticism did not take hold everywhere at once. Some men sought a middle ground between reason and emotion, while others countered by trying to reestablish past ideals in a neo-Classic movement. It was a turbulent period that produced the short-lived German Classic era within the context of a wider and longer-lasting European movement of Romanticism.

The German philosopher Kant added fuel to the fire by claiming that beauty can never be created by the application of definite rules or specific laws. Instead, he haughtily proclaimed that "fine art is only possible as a product of genius."

It is interesting to note that it was during this period that instrumental music emerged as the primary mode of musical expression — after having been subordinate to vocal music for literally thousands of years. This was due to the fact that the less clear language of instruments lent itself better to the fuzziness of the new ideals.

Even the music of Bach and the well-known composers of the Classic Era — Hayden, Mozart, and Beethoven — illustrate the shifting ideals of this troubled age. While these men, for the most part, still used rational and symmetrical forms upon which to build their music, they began to introduce sharp dissonances, unorthodox chord progressions, abrupt alternations between major and minor modes, and wide, unvocal intervals that were at complete odds with previous musical practice.

The nineteenth century brought a quick flowering to the Romantic Era. Creative men now thought that *they alone* were the ones who were able to frame the laws that govern the world and its tastes.

Consequently, composers during this turbulent period consciously ignored the balanced and proportioned forms that their predecessors had used. Instead, they created music that was characterized by a nervous diversity of style, and a rambling *freedom of form* that became the rule of the musical world after them. They also supported their melodies with persistently dissonant chords and chromatic accompaniments that destroyed the rules of conventional harmony and created tonal ambiguity.

This is not to say that much Romantic music is not beautiful. Beauty can obviously result from even asymmetrical organization and unorthodox harmonic structure *if such factors are not carried to extremes*, and if other elements such as fineness of melodic line and rhythmic interest are present.

Nevertheless, it is a historic fact, which is true to human nature, that *the spirit of the Romantic concept has produced artistic excesses that have led to a major deterioration in all the arts!* As will be illustrated, you cannot embrace total freedom of form and completely disregard acoustical and other natural, physical laws without losing contact with reality and proper aesthetic values.

Therefore, we need to realize that today's artistic culture and climate are the product of Romantic ideals. We also need to keep in mind that the Romantic Movement was historically unique, having at its core the commitment to the necessity of originality and difference. Unlike other ages, which embraced commonly held beliefs that drew men together, Romanticism revolved around an ideal that drove them in opposite directions.

The artist became a kind of philosopher, prophet, and seer all rolled into one — the “divinely inspired” genius who created his own boundaries and brought back from each foray into the limitless regions of the mind, a unique and, above all, different, fresh, and original work of art.

Notice the description by the authors of *The Art of Music* of how creativity was brought about in this period. “Romantic art is an instinctive art. The artist *cannot explain* how he has created his masterpiece, for in a very real sense it is the product of nature working through genius. He must wait for inspiration to seize him in order to create. The tools of reason which had aided the artist of the Enlightenment are useless to the Romanticist except perhaps for the secondary task of weighing and polishing the pure ore of the imagination.”

The layman needs to realize that this is still the approach of many artists, composers, and writers who have been trained in this tradition. The ideal of the conscious use of balance and order as tools of composition has been dethroned and ridiculed. No longer is art, as the dictionary defines it, “the *conscious* use of skill, taste, and creative imagination in the production of aesthetic objects.”

By the middle and end of the nineteenth century, art, in general, had totally deteriorated. The word “decadent” was a product of this period. It originally referred to a group of late nineteenth century French and English writers who tended toward artificial and abnormal subjects and style. Even the word “Romantic” was originally a term of scorn which was used in connection with bizarre seventeenth and eighteenth century writing that emphasized the magical and improbable.

Returning to the world of Romantic music, Wagner created the feeling of a never fulfilled, forever unsatisfied sense of hopeless longing, by denying resolution to the leading tones in the chords he used. Richard Strauss produced simultaneous, multiple dissonances and tonal confusion in his continual effort to express violent and perverse emotions.

The arch-bohemian Debussy totally wrecked the traditional system of harmony and musical composition, and led other revolutionary tradition-breakers such as Arnold Schönberg and Alban Berg into the twentieth century. He also devised subtle, unnerving dissonances and conflicting rhythmic patterns, and, while not totally rejecting tonality, prepared the way for the atonalists by introducing chords outside a composition's key signature which produced the unstable feeling of wavering between keys.

English and French writers, preoccupied with the forces of sentiment, irresistible passion and lustful emotions, emphasized these ideals in their works. They advocated the loosing of man's boundless forces of emotional inspiration and ecstasy. Rational thinking was replaced by irrational sensuousness.

Then something new was introduced.

A few decades earlier, the German poet Goethe had written that “Man cannot remain in a state of consciousness very long; he must, again and again, escape into the unconscious, for there lie his roots.” Restating the same theme, a number of Russian novelists began to theorize and write about the “inner life” of man and his deep complexity, which they felt did not proceed in a rational, orderly manner.

Suddenly the whole world became obsessed with the “unconscious”!

True reality appeared unfathomable. The new subject of psychology burst forth, and the “unconscious” became the object of artistic and scientific exploration.

Clear aesthetic thinking and rational art were things of the past.

The New Foundation

The beginning of the twentieth century was an era of troubled anxiety. Darwin's theory of evolution had appeared on the scene, and rebellion and confusion increased even more. Man was now confronted with doubts about the reality of his own being. Were his actions and destiny determined by mysterious, evolutionary power over which he had no control? Or was he master of his own destiny? What was reality?

One man who thought he was answering these questions was the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Few people realize the almost unbelievable effect his teachings have had upon the arts in recent times.

In the early part of the century Freud wrote *The Ego and the Id*, in which he made the fantastic assertion that "*psychoanalysis cannot accept the view that consciousness is the essence of mental life.*" He rightly observed and admitted that such a thought was so inconceivable to most people that they would think it absurd and refutable simply by logic.

But as it turned out, "most people" did not include countless "intellectual" musicians, writers, and artists. Incredibly, *they believed him* and began basing their art on his teaching!

Freud wrote that what he called the "Ego" was that part of the mind that represented reason and sanity. But it was the "repressed" part of the mind, the "Id," that contained the hidden passions of man that influence and direct the "Ego." Therefore, the mysterious, unconscious "Id" part of the mind was actually more real than the conscious, sane and rational "Ego" part of the mind. From this he then deduced that "we are lived by unknown and uncontrollable forces."

In a later work, *Anatomy of the Mental Personality*, Freud elaborated further on his strange theories. He explained that what he called the "Id" was the peculiar behavior that he had been observing in *neurotic mental patients in insane asylums*. He described the unconscious "Id" as a state of mind which was irrationally chaotic and which had no values or morality.

In other words, Freud sought to discover normality by poking around in the abyss of maladjustment — which is, as one writer put it, "somewhat like describing the law-abiding citizen through the reprehensible habits of the underworld." Needless to say, Freud missed or slighted some very basic questions such as, what the normal and healthy state of the mind is like.

Unbelievably, what most have missed completely is that *Freud was describing an abnormal and tormented mind that was often controlled by an invisible, outside force that people (including psychoanalysts) do not understand*. He was studying the same kind of mind that Jesus and His apostles understood and successfully dealt with in their day (**Matthew 4:24, 10:1; Mark 3:14-15; Acts 5:16**).

But Freud clothed his findings in such complicated, scientific-sounding terminology that he actually convinced the gullible, unstable world that the mind he portrayed was hidden and locked up in *everyone*, and that each person should strive to find and unlock the "unconscious reality" that was within him.

He got the world to believe that the characteristics of an insane, perverted mind were the standards and definition of what a sound, balanced mind should be!

This satanic, completely false teaching had an electrifying impact on Western thinking — particularly around Vienna where Freud was practicing his profession. Writers, composers, and artists were deeply influenced by this revolutionary analysis of the human mind. The world-famous German writer Thomas Mann was taken in by it. So were a whole generation of composers and "Expressionist" painters who sought to depict weird emotions rather than those that were normal, rational, and edifying.

The Art of Music accurately describes the situation in these words: "In Freud's nocturnal world of the unconscious, *more irrational and haunted than the Romantics had ever imagined*, Arnold Schönberg [the composer] and his Viennese colleagues discovered the *psychoneurotic subject matter* of their astonishing works created in the epoch of the First World War. The generation of Expressionist artists strove to depict the self as the repository of the hidden, nameless horrors that lurk beneath the surface of life. Painters found appropriate means of

expression in the use of rough, clashing surfaces and the technique of the palette brush. Musicians utilized asymmetrical, distorted rhythms and jagged melodic lines. Above all they exploited the values of dissonance, avoiding consonance *because of its association with the external world of conventional beauty.*”

These are the almost unbelievable influences that have directly fashioned our present-day art, literature, and music. Few people realize how demented and upside down the world has become.

The Present Chaos

Notice now several important examples of how Freud’s insidious teachings were transmitted and applied to today’s arts.

Composers at the turn of the century knew that the limits of traditional harmony had already been reached. Increasingly complex chords and the novelty of excessive modulation obscured key relationships. Well-defined tonalities that produced clear form and musical meaning disappeared. As the German composer Paul Hindemith wrote, “In no other field of artistic activity has a period of *overdevelopment* of materials and of their application been followed by such confusion as reigns in this one.”

The time was ripe for something revolutionary to happen to music. And happen it did — in the form of “atonal” music. The musical world hasn’t been the same since.

When atonal music first began to invade the concert halls several decades ago, audiences were both shocked and outraged. Here was music that had no semblance of melody, no key relationships or stable tonal centers, and no harmony that even remotely hinted at a consonant sound. Even the common scale that had served man for thousands of years was totally discarded. Nothing rational was left for the listener to hang on to.

The man responsible for all this was the Viennese composer Arnold Schönberg (1874-1951). He was an avid intellectual disciple of Freud which resulted in his basing his music on themes of psychological conflict and the “inner world” of the subconscious. *As early as 1912 he began to feel that music did not have to be rationally comprehensible. Instead, shocks and disordered mental stresses, which according to Freud were elements of the unconscious, must replace normal human emotions in music.* Also, since traditional musical relationships are no longer valid and are to be discarded, differences between consonance and dissonance are nonexistent. He even went so far as to claim that there is no natural relationship between the tones of the scale.

But we have already seen that even the ancient Greeks knew that *there is a natural relationship between the notes of a scale that is inherent in the physical laws of music.* Any book on acoustics or the physics of music will verify this fact.

Note also Hindemith’s comment on Schönberg’s ideas and technique: “This rule of construction is established arbitrarily and without any reference to basic musical facts. It ignores the validity of harmonic and melodic values derived from mathematical, physical, or psychological experience; it does not take into account the differences in intervallic tensions, the physical relationship of tones, the degree of ease in vocal production, and many other facts of either natural permanence or proven usefulness.”

What Schönberg wanted and got was complete musical anarchy. He rejected the authority of acoustical physical law and embraced a totally irrational and abstract concept of music. He composed music that was without any reference to normal human sensibility. In the words of one writer, “Even with the [musical] score in front of him, the listener cannot easily discern the melodic lines of the tone row with which this fabric is woven.”

Alban Berg (1885-1935) and Anton von Webern (1883-1945), who were Schönberg’s most gifted pupils, continued using their teacher’s themes of distraught minds, insanity and subconscious terror. They were, as one musicologist phrased it, “deeply aware of the

discoveries of psychoanalysis; *the only appropriate means of expressing their tortured psyches was the new language of atonality.*"

Note that!

It is beyond the capacity of normal, sane music to portray the abnormal, insane emotions that Freud studied and tried to describe! Only atonal music can do this. Normal music is the product of normal minds. Atonal music comes from mixed-up minds.

The same kind of deterioration has taken place in all the other arts as well. Because of widespread acceptance and application of Dionysian Romantic ideals and Freudian teachings, there has been a general dissolution of the rational artistic approach. Many in the visual arts now feel that their roots must be in the "unconscious" so they can go "beyond the surface" of outward reality. Because of this, a tragic number of artists and writers have been taught to destroy all traces of reality in order to get to the "essence" of what they are trying to portray.

Instead of a painting being a picture of an observation, the *act* of painting has, for some, become an irrational and unconscious experience. Artists uninhibitedly are "letting themselves go" to be led by unguided, spontaneous incentive.

The famous American painter, Jackson Pollack, candidly described this absence of rational, conscious control. "When I am in my painting," he said, "*I'm not aware of what I'm doing.*" Edward Albee, the writer, admitted the same thing when he said, "*I didn't have any idea of what I was doing.*"

Because such an irresponsible approach to artistic creation is occasionally in vogue and may even appeal to some few from time to time, its dangers need to be clearly spelled out and understood so that unsuspecting people do not open themselves up to evil power and influences which could overcome them. Once again, ancient Greece provides several pointed examples that illustrate the heart and gravity of the matter.

Homer, antiquity's most famous and influential epic poet, who authored the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, frankly admitted that the source of his poetry and knowledge was from the "inspiration" of a spirit being called a "Muse." He openly stated that "*it was a god that inspired my mind with all the varied ways of song.*"

Other Greeks who came after Homer also spoke of the "divine inspiration" of the poet. They knew that *an unusually gifted poet was sometimes not in his right mind*. The fourth century B.C. Greek writer Democritus even stated that no one could be a great poet unless he was *mad*.

To anyone familiar with the Bible, the source of such "inspiration" is clearly not the true God whose spirit is one of a *sound* mind (**II Timothy 1:7**). Therefore, the "divine inspiration" which produces madness in a person's mind must be from an altogether different source.

A further examination of Plato's writings, which go so far as to suggest that such "higher inspiration" was the origin of most artistic and poetic creation and philosophy during his day, helps to pinpoint the true source of such productivity.

In his *Phaedrus*, Plato describes "the state of being possessed by the Muses" as a kind of "madness which on entering a delicate and virgin soul, arouses and excites it to frenzy in odes and other kinds of poetry, with these adorning the myriad exploits of ancient heroes for the instruction of posterity. But he that is without the Muses' madness when he knocks at the door of poesy, fancying that art alone will make him a competent poet — he and his poetry, *the poetry of sober sense, will never attain perfection, but will be eclipsed by the poetry of inspired madmen*" (245A).

In the *Apology*, Socrates consults the poets and soon concludes that it was not by natural, human wisdom that poets wrote poetry, but, *like diviners and soothsayers*, by a kind of genius and inspiration (22B).

In the *Laws*, it is proclaimed as an accepted truth that "*whenever a poet is enthroned on the tripod of the Muse, he is not in his right mind*" (719C).

In the *Meno* the epithet "divine" is applied to poets and statesmen, as well as to "diviners and prophets, who say much that is true *without knowing what they say*" (99D).

But the fullest and clearest description of the true source of ancient Greek artistic expression is found in the *Ion*.

“It is not by art, but by being inspired and possessed, that all good epic poets produce their beautiful poems; and similarly with all good melic poets — just as the Corybantic revelers are not in their right mind when they are dancing, even so the melic poets are not in their right mind when they are composing their beautiful strains.

“On the contrary, when they have fallen under the spell of melody and meter, they are like inspired revelers, *and on their becoming possessed* — even as the Maenads are possessed and not in their right senses, when they draw honey and milk from the rivers — the soul of the melic poet acts in like manner, *as they themselves admit*. For the poets tell us (as you remember) that they cull their sweet strains from ‘fountains flowing with honey,’ and bring them to us like bees, they are ever on the wing. And what they say is true; for the poet is a light and winged and holy being; *he cannot compose until he becomes inspired and out of his senses, with his mind no longer in him; but, so long as he is in possession of his senses, not one of them is capable of composing, or of uttering his oracular saying.*

“Many as are the noble things that they say about their themes of song, like your own sayings, Ion, about Homer, yet inasmuch as it is not by Art that they compose but by the gift of God, *all that the poet can really succeed in composing is the theme to which he is impelled by the Muse.*

“Thus, one of them composes dithyrambs, and another hymns of praise, and another epic or iambic verses; and each of them succeeds in one kind of composition only, for it is not by Art that they produce these poems but by a power divine.

“And the reason why God takes away their senses when he uses them as his ministers” (see **II Corinthians 11:14-15**), *“even as he uses the ministrations of soothsayers and prophets divine, is in order that we who hear them may know that, since they are out of their senses, it is not these poets who utter the words which we prize so highly, but it is God himself who is the speaker, and it is through them that he is speaking to us”* (533E-534D).

This incredible quote is one of the most lucid and chilling illustrations of the fact and product of demon possession in the history of the arts. Plainly, Homer and many poets like him were possessed and directed by evil spirits. The Greek poet Hesiod even preserved the words of the Muses (demons) who summoned and inspired him to become a poet. He quotes them as saying, *“We know how to tell many lies which are like truth, we know also how to utter the truth when we wish”* (*Theogeny*, 27).

Clearly, such spirit beings are from Satan who is the father of liars and the god of this world (**John 8:44; II Corinthians 4:4**). It is impossible for the true God to lie (**Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18**). Therefore, Satan is the real source of the irrational, uncontrolled, extrasensory “inspiration” that is sometimes sought after by foolish and ignorant people.

Consequently, the creative world needs to see the danger of seeking such supposedly inspired shortcuts to creativity. It also needs to acknowledge that *sound artistic production is the end result of the hard work of a sound mind.*

Furthermore, instead of clothing such examples of demon influence and possession with cloaks of sentimentality and respectability, the creative world needs to be aware of such realities, and take note of its considerable vulnerability to such influences. Even though much of its productivity down through the ages has been sound, it needs to keep such examples in mind as sobering lessons of what can really happen if one gives himself over to the guiding force of spiritual powers that have not been correctly identified and guarded against.

Returning once again to our overview of artistic history, the paintings and words of Pablo Picasso, the world-famous artist who recently died, further illustrate the disintegrative trend of today’s art. His figures of women are not in the image of humankind, nor are they in the image of any creatures that have ever existed. He has the reputation of being the first person in the history of art to paint a square breast. He publicly stated that he felt free of any duty to imitate true life. He broke completely with the forms of human anatomy and the laws of linear

perspective. Instead, he painted scenes as if he was viewing an object from all sides at the same time. Like Schönberg, he felt compelled to present a new kind of “hidden reality,” rather than just an imitation of the “outer shell” of experience.

Besides modern music and art, there are many other deviate forms of expression on the loose. There is one called “Dadaism” that is based on deliberate irrationality and negation of the laws of conventional beauty and organization. There are also types of poetry that are characterized by a completely free and undirected assemblage of linguistic sounds in which there is rarely any discernable form or rational coherence.

Germany has produced a group of writers who have even begun to divorce language from human communication. To them, words are just independent objects of sound that are to be completely detached from human meaning. They claim that human emotions deform and misuse words. Therefore, all rational content — even all sentence structure — must be eliminated because it can’t convey the “new, not-yet-graspable way” of writing.

Along the same line, there is a growing number of composers who write their music “by chance.” Their leader, the contemporary American composer, John Cage, claims that true artists have to give up “everything that belongs to humanity.” Therefore, composers should clear their minds of conventional music and abandon the desire to control sound. Only then will they be able to find the ways of “letting sounds be themselves,” instead of vehicles of man-made theories and expressions of human sentiments.

While some may feel that every last corner of today’s arts is not yet corrupt, it does not seem that such a condition is far off. The new ideals of music, art, and literature are creeping into all levels of society. Current radio, television, and theatrical productions are being strongly influenced by them. So are movies, photography, design, modern dance, jazz, advertising, sculpture and education. One new opera is not only “topless,” but in the words of its own program, is “*moving in a world that Freud verbalized. Its theme is the dilemma of modern man. Its materials are seduction, adultery, impotence, homosexuality, narcissism and depravity.*”

The world has been so bombarded by these ideas over the past hundred years that it has lost much of the soundness and balance it may once have had. Its discernment has become so jaded and imperceptive that it has made peace with, and even pays homage to, men like Schönberg and Picasso. Atonal music is becoming the legitimate “classical music” of our time, being increasingly accepted and approved in concert halls and conservatories all over the world. Most modern composers now write their music in some variation of Schönberg’s style.

Likewise, countless aspiring young painters study and strive to emulate the works of modern art that hang in our museums. Literature is becoming increasingly more sensuous and perverted. “Freedom of expression” has become today’s dominant artistic ideal. Rational and proportioned forms taken from natural examples have been replaced by incoherence and uncontrolled fantasy. Artistic order, balance, and beauty are on the threshold of oblivion.

Dionysus has completely subjugated Apollo.

A Spiritual Answer

How are we to evaluate this panorama of aesthetic history? What lessons can we learn from the turbulent story of human creativity?

Because of the obvious excesses and misuses of Dionysian ideals that have just been described, our immediate reaction might be to totally reject all Dionysian artistic elements and fervently dedicate ourselves to Apollonian standards. But this, as we shall see, would be a hasty mistake. Let’s take a hard look at the facts of the matter.

One inescapable truth is that time is not the infallible and unerring criterion for judging artistic worth that some think it is. Instead, history shows that man’s creative judgment and output has been fickle and unstable in direction and purpose, and that what is of worth does not always last. Moreover, man has become more unbridled as time has progressed, and his

aesthetic appetites are clearly without bounds. Therefore, *some kind of restraint is needed to keep the artistic world in check and on a balanced, even keel.* But in view of the many different temperaments of the human race, what kind of controls would work and be acceptable to everyone? Who or what would determine and enforce such constraints?

Plato and Hitler, even though they symbolize diametrically opposing ideals, would both say the *state*. And then each of them would proceed to choose those elements which most supported their feelings of what was artistically best for man and impose them on society.

But there are dangers inherent in both camps. Embracing and appointing only Apollonian ideals could be stifling and repressive. It could easily result in the denial and proper expression of the stronger passions of man's nature. It could also produce such extreme formality and stylization that variety of beauty would be suppressed, and emotional feeling would oftentimes not be conveyed. Furthermore, artistic components that are inherently good could be arbitrarily and subjectively discarded. For example, the modes or scales which Plato rejected as being too sensual are all in accord with musical and acoustical law.

There are also grave pitfalls in accepting only Dionysian ideals. Such art ends up denying the examples and absolutes of natural law and form and becomes ugly and inartistic because of its irrational, chaotic, and often uncontrolled nature.

In this regard, our sense should tell us something, and warning signals should begin to flash, when our voices and ears have difficulty producing and comprehending unmelodic musical intervals and patterns, or when our eyes cannot make anything concrete out of what they see. *You cannot disregard acoustic law or natural proportion and not bring on a penalty!*

Although science has shown that continual demand for and exposure to decadence and novelty can make our senses tolerant of almost anything, such snobbish and vain indulgence does not constitute a valid criterion for judging true artistic values. *Just because something can be done doesn't make it right, or mean that it should be done!* Therefore, people should not be afraid or hesitant to heed their natural reactions toward works of art when obvious distortions are present.

True and proper art in any field does not disregard reality, natural proportion, spiritual law, physical law, or the human senses. If any of these limitations is violated, artistic boundaries have been exceeded and restraints are needed.

But man has constantly sought to go beyond these restrictions. How can he be sure that these factors and ideals are proper guidelines and controls? Who should administer them?

Strange as it will sound to most in this world, creative man in his unconverted state *cannot know* such things until he seeks, and is given to understand, the reality and power of the *Great Creator*. Once he comprehends this, and after he repents of going contrary to the revealed knowledge and ordained principles of God, he will come to love God and seek His wisdom and example. Only then will he want to emulate, in his own feeble creative efforts, the *supreme* beauty, order, and standards that are inherent in God's laws and creation.

Therefore, man will not have the wisdom to make correct artistic judgments that can be applied to all cultures and styles of production, until he first acquires a spiritual attitude and approach toward his craft, and the restraint (and freedom) of God's Spirit. These factors, plus a thorough knowledge of the aesthetic and physical laws which form the basis of his art, are *requisite* for suitable artistic production.

Furthermore, only when creative man is blessed with these essentials will he be able to properly discern his artistic responsibility and the end effects of his own creativity. Only then will he be able to rightly evaluate and take into account the boundaries of God's physical laws and the examples of nature which pertain to his art.

With such restraints and perception, which are the blended product of both God's Spirit and individual judgment (rather than the oppressive results of dictatorial authority or civil edict), *great latitudes and varieties of style and personal taste can flourish in an artistic framework and climate that will never go beyond its proper boundaries.*

Also, creative man must come to understand the necessity of seeking God's guidance, rather than just his imagination, in the things he does. When Aaron and his sons were appointed to the priesthood, God gave instructions to those who made their garments "for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office," **Exodus 28:1-3**.

The same Divine guidance in artistic productivity was given by God to Bezaleel and his helpers who made the things pertaining to the Tabernacle. "*And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the heart of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee,*" **Exodus 31:3-6**.

Therefore, man must learn that the same God, who created all the absolute laws and inspiring examples for mankind to follow and imitate in his own limited way, is still in His heaven ready to give the same wisdom to those who seek it.

In conclusion, creative innovation must be viewed as a very real power that needs to be wisely directed and controlled. As we have seen, philosophers and dictators have realized this and made efforts to regulate it in their own subjective ways. Consequently, while such power is not moral in the sense of being able, like God's Spirit, to impart to humans the ability to keep spiritual law, *it nevertheless does have the force and capacity to influence and activate human emotions!*

Therefore, it needs to reflect and impart the essence of Godly character and example.

The power of music is illustrated by the Bible in many places. David's playing refreshed and strengthened Saul to the point where the evil spirit departed from him, **I Samuel 16:23**. Its part in producing a worshipful, thankful, and joyous attitude toward God is constantly emphasized. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High," **Psalms 92:1**. "Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King," **Psalms 98:5-6**.

The apostle Paul repeatedly instructed Christians to give thanks to God and to keep themselves in a proper Godly attitude and frame of mind by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, **Ephesians 5:19**. They were also encouraged to teach and admonish each other by the same means, **Colossians 3:16**, and to keep their minds on things that were pure and lovely, **Philippians 4:8**.

Therefore, in order to achieve these ends, music and all other artistic production must reflect the order and balance of God's creation and of His spiritual and physical laws. *Art which disregards these elements is perverse and cannot produce a Godly effect.*

Consequently, the sensuous, Dionysian components of man's nature must be controlled and expressed within the framework of Apollonian concord and regulation. All such elements must indeed be properly subjugated and made to submit to the law.

The Mind and Spirit of God demand it!

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