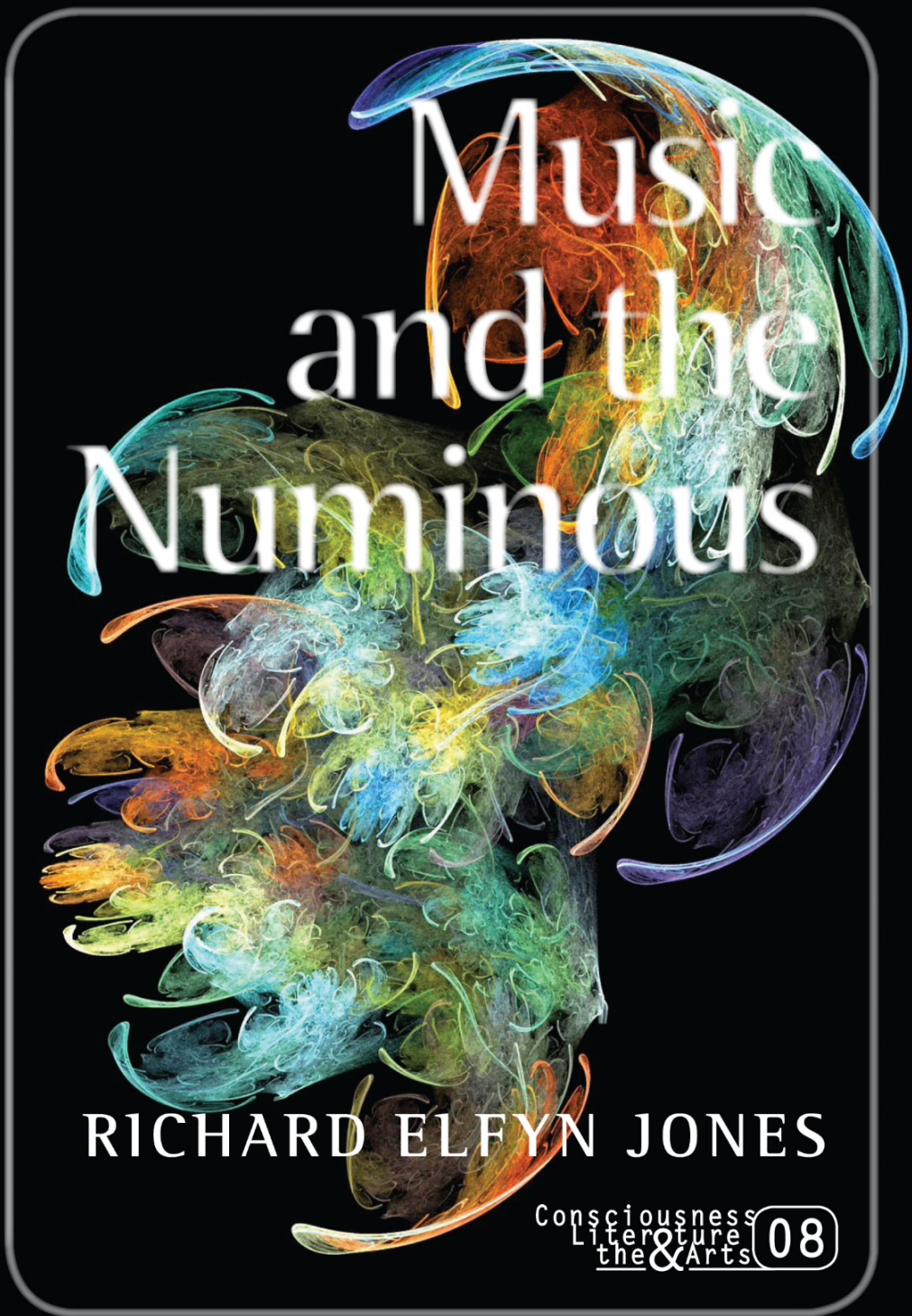

Music and the Numinous

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Chapter One
The Transcendental and Rational Discourse

As we formulate arguments which show music's ontological status we must use language, and do so inside a closed speech system, thus laying ourselves open to the scorn of the logical positivists, who would see our predications as no more than nonsense. For talk can often neither be verified nor falsified; its essential axiom, as George Steiner has suggested, is that the root of all talk is talk! In his book *Real Presences*, Steiner reminds us that one of the messages in Schoenberg's great opera *Moses und Aron* is contained in Moses's cry of abstention, "O Word, thou Word, which I lack". It is precisely because the golden-tongued Aron can discourse so eloquently on God and on man's fate that the ensuing symbolic lie of the Golden Calf is presented as a falsehood. To the inarticulate Moses, the stutterer, the only true statement is the music. The meaning of words and the meaning of music are set in opposition. For Steiner, to perform music and respond to it are themselves metaphysical experiences. Furthermore, to ask "what is music" may well be our way of asking "what is man?" But using words and expounding on this is difficult. The mass of critical verbiage about works of art in the form of discursive interpretation (as well as formal analysis) reflects the dominance of the "secondary" and the parasitic over the "primary", as Steiner has argued. No music criticism or musicology can tell us as much about the meaning of a piece of music as the performance of it, the great bulk of writings on music, in Steiner's opinion, being "benign illusions of significance."[1] The story about Schumann being questioned as to what was the meaning of a piece he had just played is a happy confirmation of this point - the composer said nothing and simply played the piece again.

If we are to discourse with any confidence we should at least have an overview of previous writings, so the remainder of this chapter will seek to provide a historical survey of the vast literature of rational discourse which should give us a selective frame for our own

speculations later. In *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth,*[2] Joscelyn Godwin attempts to categorise the main levels of artistic endeavour. He describes the highest level as the "avataric" level, which is like that of a divine manifestation in the minds of those who respond to it. The avataric creator is an inspiration for followers to re-interpret and imitate according to the model. "For instance, the painting of Jesus and his mother originally attributed to St. Luke became the model for every subsequent 'Virgin and Child.' "[3] Among composers are those central to various traditions, most notably for our purposes figures like St. Gregory the Great, to whom all of Gregorian chant was at one time attributed, or Pérotin of Notre Dame, often said to be the creator of the first polyphony in four parts. Gregory's contribution became iconic for others, notably for those monks who composed "Gregorian" chants to re-create after the revealed pattern. This is inspiration of the "second level". Godwin explains that in Antiquity and Eastern cultures the task of the creative artist at this second level was to work strictly within the traditional forms bequeathed by the avataric masters, who often, as in the case of Orpheus or Sarasvati or the Chinese emperor Fo-Hi were regarded as divine or semi-divine revealers of wisdom. At this level the "maker of songs" was no different from, say, the lute maker. "The arts and the crafts, in short, are synonymous."[4] A third level of inspiration exists, but according to Godwin this is the creativity proceeding from the creator's own ego, from his subconscious mind. It is regarded as inferior "because it no longer has a connection with Memory" which, at the second level, the copying of canonical works of art or craft supplied.[5] Although our artistic heritage during recent centuries is largely the history of this third type of inspiration, we shall see below in the arguments put by F. David Martin how the concept of an avataric master has been perpetuated, not surprisingly, in sacred and other works by J.S.Bach.

Godwin continues his descent "through the creative hierarchy without a break to the position of the artist's audience",[6] who, ideally, should aspire to achieve an awareness of the Intelligible Beauty that is the source of the contemplated object, rather as Plato taught us in the *Symposium*, (210 d-e). In the traditional crafts this is reached by means of symbols, geometrical patterns, or, in fine art, animal emblems. In the traditional arts, the symbols are also overt but their meanings are often not understood except by the cognoscenti. Godwin goes on:

> It is up to the beholder to follow the symbol as far as his capacity allows, but his effort is sanctified by the fact that the object is true to its source. The only such musical art in the West is plainchant.[7]

Clearly there is in plainchant an inner continuity with the religious dimension, for its conventional signs over many centuries have come to be widely accepted as avataric and expressing the religious. As an icon its configuration or gestalt is immediately recognisable since it contains an embodied reference to its source which creates feelings of ultimate concern or reverence in the listener. Psychologically this creates the conditions for a greater awareness of a numinous reality. In our reaction to such music, as Rudolf Otto points out,

> musical feeling is rather (like numinous feeling) something "wholly other", which, while it affords analogies, and here and there will run parallel to the ordinary emotions of life, cannot be made to coincide with them by a detailed point-to-point correspondence.[8]

All music that is art (and all other arts) reveal something about higher presences, but certain genres must reveal these more directly because this has been their historical role. This is the case with plainchant or indeed with any religious music. In one sense at least, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* is ontologically different from Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, because Bach's masterpiece sets words which directly invoke religious feelings. Plainchant might be compared with Bach's oratorio in some respects, but has a more direct connection with religious feeling or liturgical activity. In his book *Art and the Religious Experience: The Language of the Sacred*[9] F. David Martin offers one interpretation the different degrees of ontological meaning of widely differing pieces of music, religious and secular, and points out that whatever all musics have in common there are obviously some types of works which have a greater claim to sublimity. Martin's arguments are striking and idiosyncratic and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. He examines an early and rather weak composition by Lennon and McCartney, *All My Loving*, to show that while it may indeed evoke emotion it fails "to inform about these emotions or anything else." What is lacking here is what Martin describes as "translucent iconicity."[10] In contrast, this is what Gregorian chant and much other religious music has. The "region" revealed by plainchant is symbolic of Being as a preserving agency that enables the past to be immanent in the present, and Martin attempts to show how the past is preserved in a particular way in the

present. The past is brought into ecstatic unity with the present and, indeed, the future. Underlying this is our sense of history being inextricably bound with our knowledge of time's passing, which is so central a feature of all metaphysical thought and which is a fundamental structural feature of music. Both life and music are transient, and our oneness in some mysterious sense with God is the proper solution to the problem of the transitoriness of life. It is relevant that by disclosing the main musical archetype of religious feeling the symbolic power of plainchant makes possible the immanence of any past in the present. If we allow *all* art to aspire towards being an immanent representation of a divine of a force, some would argue that there is a danger in "corrupting" the notion of transcendence. They might argue that a value judgement on individual examples should surely be made, as is already implied in Martin's reference to Lennon and McCartney. But a contrary argument could also be levelled, namely that we cannot deny a transcendent character to raw, familiar reality in art even if there is no suggestion of ultimate concern or reverence. For, logically we might not be able to disqualify even the most trivial pieces, since they also inevitably employ structures which are common to all instances of that particular art form and therefore are potentially as mysterious and transcendental as more overtly "religious" examples. For an attempt at rationalizing this we turn to Kant. The beauty we find in plainchant, for instance, and the specific connection it has with man's religious quest would tend to classify it as one of Kant's adherent beauties. For Kant, such objects as houses, palaces, arsenals, churches, summer-houses, and anything which is functional, in which appreciation of design (involving a pure sense of form) mingles with awareness of the end to be served (the practical), is called adherent.[11] Then the two satisfactions, that of our pure sense of form, and that which is practical, can coalesce in a single experience. Kant warns that in this dipolarity there is loss in purity, but with an attendant gain in richness, and he admits a greater importance to those experiences where we are aware at once of the form and the content, the form as a harmonious design, and the content as an apt instrument for some recognised good. Plainchant therefore ingresses into our daily existence as a thoroughly plausible manifestation of an adherent beauty, its liturgical function providing the strong practical function which is also overtly religious. But,

depending on your approach to what might be revelatory, the same might be true of music very different from plainchant.

As we have noted, we need to go back further than the music of the early church if we are to examine the philosophical sources of a revelatory theory of art. Firstly, we need to consider Plato's Doctrine of Ideas to see if we can apply it to art. In it are contained the distinctions made by Plato between reality and appearance, between universals and particulars, knowledge and opinion. Plato thought that the objects of sensory experience and of scientific knowledge are only imperfectly and derivatively real in so far as they imperfectly approximate to, or are "imitations" of, the "ideas" which are the divine maker's prototypical "forms" of real things - animals, plants, earth, air, fire and so on. Though there are many beds there is only one "idea" or "form" of a bed. Just as a reflection of a bed in a mirror is only apparent and not real, so the various particular beds are unreal, mere copies of the one real bed made by the divine imager. A philosopher is a man who understands this, who knows of this vision of truth, of the ideal, of the absolute and eternal and immutable. In other words he has knowledge. Merely having a love of "beautiful things" is not real wisdom since this is to do with the particulars, the mere reflections of ideal entities. In any case they are full of contradictions and always partake of opposite characters so that, according to Plato, we cannot have knowledge (which is infallible) about these, only opinions.

In the last book of the *Republic* there is a clear exposition of the doctrine of ideas or forms, which precedes Plato's condemnation of painters,(for his doctrine of divine enthusiasm had room for poets and musicians but not for artists). The following is a famous quotation (from elsewhere in Plato, the dialogue *Ion*), where he accords a special status to the poet as a vessel for divine musing:

> That's why the god relieves them of their reason, and uses them as his ministers, just as he uses soothsayers and divine prophets – so that we who listen to them may realize that it is not they who say such supremely valuable things as they do ... but that it is the god himself who speaks, and addresses us through them. [12]

Similarly, human music is seen as an imitation of the divine melody which can tune the soul to that eternal harmony which it is the musician's task to bring from heaven to earth. It is the function of

music to imprint upon the soul the hallmark of its divine origin. The hypothesis here is that there is a cosmic source for music contained in the concept of "the music of the spheres" from which human music is derived. This divine music box is imitated by musicians. And this evidence of an aesthetic element in the cosmos was further refined by the Pythagoreans into a form of primitive psychology by the introduction of the soul in the form of a harmony, or at least a musical attunement based on numerical proportion and illustrated by sweet concords on the strings of the lyre. As the lyre goes out of tune when touched by an unskilled performer, so the harmonious disposition of the soul will be sensitive to mishandling. The mechanics of all this attains a high degree of speculation and may strike us as unpromisingly theoretical in character. (This is cryptically summed up by Iris Murdoch in *The Fire and the Sun*, where she refers ironically to Plato's high regard for music – "the fine art preferred by God is music - but inaudible, of course!"[13]) Clearly for Plato there is an inspired artistic activity which imitates the ultimate reality of the Ideas themselves. The works of painters and sculptors did not belong to this higher activity because they were reproductions, "imitations of imitations", and twice removed from reality, but those most intangible of expressive phenomena, human song or chords (which at that time were deemed sweetly plucked concords on the lyre), seemed to form a bridge between the visible and the invisible. And ever since, man has explained the mystical qualities of song by reference to this Platonic justification.

This profound implication of the transcendental ulteriority of music needs to be considered in relation to metaphysical concerns by Plato which have been central to Western philosophy since his time. For instance, one fundamental question which has been asked many times over the centuries is whether the Form of the Good (to use a Platonic/Aristotelian gloss on the Deity) is overwhelmingly the universal object of desire, that which draws all souls towards itself. For Plato, the chief good of man is the contemplation of this absolute Good, and once one experiences this vision then one will not willingly busy oneself with worldly matters, but will apply oneself to the study of eternal verities. Music-lovers may not fathom how or why God as self-sufficient and "wholly other" can be included in any metaphysical discussion of music. The answer lies in the conception of God as immanent. While the idea of a self-sufficient God is clearly

expounded by Plato we should also remember his presentation of the opposite conception, one of God as manifestly of this world too, and therefore inextricably bound to what we value in life and nature. Thus, having formulated the doctrine of a transcendental God, Plato develops a metaphysical notion of an immanent God, to the extent that a logical ground for the existence of this world is deduced. Faced with the nonsense of a world full of things which are supererogatory additions to the Eternal, we can therefore accept that mundane artefacts and utilities can indeed derive from the Idea of the Good. God as transcendental or God as immanent? is the question posed. Scholars have suggested that it seems to have caused confusion even for a thinker of Aristotle's stature. In the *Endemian Ethics* Aristotle contradicts Plato by asserting that One who is self-sufficient can surely have no need of the service of others, nor of their affection, nor of social life, since He is capable of living alone and He cannot have need of friends.

Plato had already struggled with the contradiction which arises from the idea of an immanent God in *Republic* 509b, where even bad things are derived logically from the eternal source. For our purposes the main question which this raises is the nature of the relationship between the transcendental and the immanent. Why does God as Being manifest himself also as a God of Becoming, and what is the nature of this process? A satisfactory answer to this question will present us with an imaginative means of evaluating worldly things including art. In particular, we are bound to become more aware of the significance of works of art, and of music in particular, for it is precisely in this area that the artist presses most persuasively his claim to be "another god" (to use a Renaissance commonplace). The question posed has been of perennial fascination ever since Plato's time, and we cannot overestimate its influence on Western thought. Yet, in *Timaeus* 33d Plato argues that it is better for the world to be self-sufficient. Thus we may logically ask why should mundane entities exist, or have to exist at all? What possible purpose have they for a God whose perfection is already realised and who surely cannot be enhanced by anything else? But Plato assumes paradoxically that the absolute Perfection cannot be fully perfect if it is in supreme isolation. He asks, is it then less perfect if existing alone? Thus was instituted the notion of a God immanent in the world, a fecundity who

brought temporal and material things into existence in a richly pluralistic and variegated universe.

If the temporal and the material exist, and if time and multiplicity are so fundamental to our existence, perhaps we can deduce that they have to be attributes of a God even if he be separate from us, out of time and wholly unitary. The answer may lie in the saying, *Omne bonum est diffusivum sui* (everything should be as far as possible like Himself). This is how the Middle Ages saw it, and this concept of two Gods in one has underpinned a great deal of philosophical conflict over the centuries. The notion of the immanent God had logically spawned a divine craftsman, the demiurge who filled the world with all kinds of creatures and things. For confirmation that a connection exists between the Ideal world and ours it is logically necessary therefore for all eternal essences to have temporal counterparts (see Plato's *Timaeus* 39e, 42e, 51a and 92c). Thus comes into existence the principle of plenitude.

History has learned from Plato's famous simile of the Cave in the *RepublicVII* that the sensible world is seen as an idle flickering of insubstantial shadow-shapes, at two removes from God. This allegory of human enlightenment tells of those who are destitute of philosophy likened to naïve prisoners in a cave, who have a fire behind them and a wall in front. All that they see are shadows of themselves and of objects behind them cast on the wall by the light of the fire. Inevitably they regard these shadows as real, as the "whole truth", for they have no notion of the objects to which they are due. This story illustrates the difference between the sensory faculties and the intellectual, together with the corresponding difference between their proper objects. If we can accept that not all the cognitions we have are of sense-transmitted objects, this will allow us to suppose that some things can never be seen and touched, yet may still exist. Thus, having no real stability our thoughts are not the direct basis for any knowledge of real things. Plato teaches us that at least they can be subdivided into belief and conjecture. Conjecture is simply our awareness of false visible things, mirror reflections and so on. No doubt the objects and even the shadows do have some reality, but this reality is incomplete and raises paradoxes. Here is where the intellect must step in to make a distinction and give us the stability for which we seek through the lower of its two subdivisions, namely hypothesis, which is the reasoning from set assumptions. But this method also

falls short of the whole truth. Plato formulates an all-embracing truth by tracing all hypotheses and beliefs and conjectures to a final unity, a single idea in which all the partial existences and arbitrarily grounded fragments of truth could take their places and thereby show all their interrelations one with another. Words by Dante spring to mind, those describing his own ultimate vision of God "wherein I saw the scattered leaves of the universe in one volume composed."

We must now ask what this has to do with the arts and music. In searching for an answer we recall that it is the experience of many persons that great art allows us a glimpse of our world without our "selves" superimposed onto it. This is explored by Iris Murdoch in *The Sovereignty of Good* where she discusses the power of art that is not mediocre as directing the "attention ... outward, away from self."[14] As a result, what is truly beautiful is inaccessible and separate from us, and from life and nature and the temporal process. As an aspect of the Good, art is separate from say justice, morals and other virtues because of its extra dimension and its ability to encapsulate (in Murdoch's disconcerting simile) an "absolute pointlessness". But according to Murdoch, the pointlessness of art is not the pointlessness of a game; it is the pointlessness of human life itself, and form in art is properly the simulation of the self-contained aimlessness of the universe. Good art reveals what we are usually too selfish and too timid to recognize, the minute and absolutely random detail of the world, and reveals it together with a sense of unity and form.[15] Dante's words consolidate the essential mystery of the "pointless" affirmation in a tangible, earthly form of the higher Good. It is a metaphysical paradigm which was widely held in the Greek world.

Following on from this we learn from Plotinus that the arts are not to be slighted on the ground that they create by imitation of natural objects. From Plotinus we recognise that the arts give us bare reproduction of the things seen but go beyond to the Ideas from which nature itself derives. They make good where nature is defective, having the vision of beauty in themselves. So the cause of painters and sculptors is happily retrieved. More importantly there is a justification here of the thesis which forms the central concern of this present book, which is the belief that the work of art, and here specifically music, reveals something of which the natural world is an imperfect image or symbol, and can reveal it more luminously if not more truly than inartistic nature.

The writings of Plotinus reflect a more exclusive and wholehearted mysticism than is to be found in Plato. In his fifty-four essays, or *Tractates,* which were later arranged in six *Enneads*, Plotinus outlines a sometimes very obscure and idiosyncratic philosophy. Behind the visible world as its ultimate source and ground is what Plotinus calls the One, which is ultimate reality in its "first hypostasis" and which is beyond all conception and knowledge. This is variously described as the Good, or the Infinite. Different functions of the One are known as its second and third hypostasis, the second hypostasis being Intellect or Mind, the Divine Knower (*nous*), the Platonic Forms (or ideas), thus the archetypes and prototypical patterns of the visible world. The third hypostasis is the All-Soul (psyche), or principle of creativity and life. These three hypostases make up a single transcendent Being, from which all reality proceeds by emanation. Plotinus tries to overcome the Platonic dualism of Being and Becoming by *connecting* what belongs respectively to greater and lesser reality. As Monroe C. Beardsley points out in *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present*, Plotinus's metaphors of Being overflow,

> like a spring, and of a central source of light that grows dimmer with the distance from it we may think of the various parts of reality, including nature and the visible world, as participating in the light of Being and Becoming in one sense overcome by this conception of all things as ordered in a continuous degree of greater and lesser reality, but the contrast between the Visible and the Intelligible World remains in the distinction between nature and the Forms of the Second Hypostasis.[16]

For Plotinus the beauty of the visible world is its mirroring of the invisible and art can reveal an "Authentic Beauty" or "Beyond Beauty" (even though, paradoxically, to achieve "Absolute Beauty" is not to see it!) His observations on music, although cryptic and fantasy-laden, are fascinating in their assertion of important verities:

> Any skill which, beginning with the observation of the symmetry of living things, grows to the symmetry of all life, will be a portion of the Power There which observes and meditates the symmetry reigning among all beings in the Intellectual Cosmos. Thus all music - since its thought is upon melody and rhythm - must be the earthly representation of the music there is in the rhythm of the Ideal Realm.[17]

It is in the spontaneity of artistic expression that we see reflected the important concept of emanation, a difficult idea (for our purposes

identical perhaps with "immanence") in which Plato's thoughts became crystallised in the work of Plotinus and others. In Plato's *Republic* VI.508 the term *aporroia* was introduced and this came to play a central role in the cosmology of Neoplatonism. It was applied originally to the emission of light and heat by the sun. Later it was adapted, in particular by Plotinus, to describe the derivation of the many from the One. It found its way into Christian theology through the work of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and his Western translator and interpreter, John Scotus Eriugena, and a number of other thinkers.

Dionysius the Areopagite, and much later John Scotus Eriugena, appropriated the concern of Neoplatonism to make the existence of the world intelligible by relating it to the being of the One from whom it took its origin. They sought to revise the Christian understanding of creation in the light of this. Aquinas pursued their endeavour with greater circumspection but with clear acknowledgement of the source of their inspiration. He introduces the topic of creation by referring to "the procession" of the creatures from God.[18] He writes of "a prolongation, as it were, into the lives of men of the … *processiones*, within the Blessed Trinity." Furthermore, "the coming forth of a divine Person comes before and is more perfect than that of the creature, for a divine Person issues as the full likeness of its principle whereas the creature is but a partial likeness."[19] As Keith Ward explains:

> If Thomas means to say that the same act by which God understands the divine self, by which God is, is the act by which God wills the world, then this world is in all its detail, part of God's being what it is. If this world is contingent, then God must be contingent in some respect.[20]

The most serious objection to the concept of emanation from the viewpoint of Christian orthodoxy is that in its original usage it implies a continuity of being, or nature, between the original source and that which emanates from it, such as to obliterate or weaken the radical distinction between the Creator and the creature, which is held to be basic to Biblical faith. Emanation comes close to the concept of generation; in fact, the original model of emanation, namely the derivation of light from a luminary, was frequently used even in Christological debates of the early church as an illustration of the generation of the Son (meaning that it is the same "in being" as the

source), and it eventually found its way into the Nicene Creed in the phrase "light from light". But that was specifically in relation to the Son. The point was that that which is derived from God by generation is indistinguishable or inseparable from its source. In contrast, that which is created is of another substance or being.

The process of emanation in the Neoplatonic world scheme does not result in an identity of being between the emanant and its source, but in a diminution, or dilution, which progresses as the emanent moves further from its source, until it reaches the nadir of nothingness. One who named the rungs of an ascending progressive ladder was St.Augustine and he listed the hierarchic chain as follows: bodily animation, sense, art, virtue, tranquillity, the entrance, observation. Elsewhere this progression takes the form: "of the body, through the body, about the body, toward the soul, in the soul, toward God, with God."[21] The Christian doctrine of creation is often imbued with a paradox which nicely balances the pantheistic absorption of things into divinity by the recognition of God's likeness everywhere, and the theory of God's sublime aloofness and distinction from finite things. The transcendental and the immanent are played off ambiguously against each other. Clearly, if things are like him then they must be beautiful, but in a strictly limited degree. Hence while things may aspire to becoming the One, they must resign themselves to becoming mere "harmonies" of the One. Therefore, if God has communicated a likeness of his own beauty then there may be degrees of likeness to God resulting in a hierarchy of beauty. Working this out in a modern context is demanding to say the least, and fraught with a hazard previously mentioned, namely that of asserting as truth what has been conditioned by one's own (often unreliable) psychological motivation and agenda.

St. Augustine also wrote about imitations of God's beauty. In many places in the *De Ordine* and *Soliloquia* St. Augustine addressed God as he in, by, and through whom all good and beautiful things have their qualities. We note this because, among the early fathers, St. Augustine was the one most concerned with aesthetic matters, although he seems to have had a divided mind about the importance of beauty, for he clearly felt that earthly beauty may prove to be a trap. In one place he deplores the satisfaction in musical harmony "for the sake of vulgar pleasure."[22] (Knowing exactly what he means is of course impossible for us in our ignorance of what sort of sounds he

refers to). He sees a danger in men being too enamoured of transitory earthly satisfactions. In particular, physical beauty is regarded as the lowest grade of beauty and not comparable to beauty of soul.

For a classical development of the Augustinian view we go to St. Thomas Aquinas who, in a famous passage in the *Summa Theologiae*[23] formulated the three conditions that are required in order to ascribe beauty to anything: integrity or completeness (*integritas sive perfectio*), right proportion or consonance (*debita proportio sive consonantia*), and radiance (*claritas*). Aquinas' formulation was essentially a theological one since he associates beauty with the Son: wholeness, because he truly possesses the nature of the perfect Father; consonance, because he is the Word; and radiance, because he is the Word, the radiant light of understanding. This applies to both natural and artistic beauty and Aquinas generally insists that all three conditions are required. But clearly there are many instances where only one or two are applicable. A verdant meadow in spring may not be fully beautiful. It may have radiance and perhaps a sense of completeness but lack harmony (although that would not be needed for us to perceive its beauty). In art criticism we may judiciously accept Aquinas' trio of conditions and, if so, this would serve to justify an assertion from a much later period, namely Hegel's claim that the beauty of art is higher than that of nature. But here we come up against essential differences between one art and another. Perhaps Aquinas' analysis may be more appropriate to the visual arts or to things in which form is a fundamental consideration. This would certainly reflect the general tone of much ancient and medieval aesthetics.

In Aquinas' opinion, although a creature or some aspect of nature or a work of art may represent and resemble God to the extent that it has some perfection, it clearly does not represent him as it might something else in the same species or genus. Aquinas accepts the impossibility of any straightforward comparison of earthly things with God. Like some other theologians he claims that God's nature is simple, for he is not composed of matter and form, and his essence and existence are the same. This leads him to predict that the perfections which pre-exist in God in a unified and simple way are represented differently in creatures and things and in a diverse and manifold way.[24] He was able thus to speak of creation's likeness to God without treating him as one being alongside others and without

losing sight of the religious requirement that the object of worship far surpasses any other reality. If "beautiful" and "beauty" are attributed to God and to things or creatures in different ways, then God gives beauty to things or creatures according to their proper nature. In other words, the process is analogical. Each kind of thing is good or beautiful in its own way. Therefore, instead of looking for a nature or form that, in its beauty, is common to diverse beings, we should rather look at the context and admit that there is no single and unique referent. To borrow an idea from Wittgenstein, things may have a "family resemblance" and a network of similarities rather than a common definition. Later Thomists coined the phrase Analogy of Proper Proportionality to describe the word frames which can help to clarify analogous resemblances. The analogy is founded on,

> The ontological (transcendental) relation in which each being stands to every other being in virtue of the very act of existence whereby all that is exists. Beings are analogical in *be-ing*. That is to say every being exercises the act of existence in proportion to its essence. The analogy of proper proportionality alone accounts for the diversity of beings and their unity in being [25]

The notion is similarly expressed by Maritain when he says:

> Like the one, the true and the good, the beautiful is being itself considered from a certain aspect; it is a property of being ... Thus everything is beautiful, just as everything is good, at least in a certain relation. And as being is everywhere present and everywhere varied the beautiful likewise is diffused everywhere and is everywhere varied.[26]

That all three conditions in Aquinas' trio need not be met is surely feasible. For instance, doesn't the integrity of many works of literature and music, especially in the Romantic period, eschew formal beauty, as is often suggested? Perhaps, or perhaps not. If chaos and shapelessness are absent, and in art that is almost always the case, then surely some formal coherence (beauty) is present. We are only too aware of the overriding importance of meaning and feeling in a Mahler symphony, and Aquinas' trio of conditions may seem weak and limited in this, as in many another, romantic context. Also, we may not expect a modern work to have radiance; in fact, we are only too aware that there is that phenomenon for which Yeats's phrase "terrible beauty" is well suited. But underlying this, of course is the possibility that here too, paradoxically, there is a "radiance." And this

is by no means a twentieth-century experience, for there is profundity and emotion to be found in those great works of art to which the term "beautiful" seems inappropriate. Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, and Grünewald's *Crucifixion* are all far removed from our time, and clearly we need either to extend our concept of beauty in our discussion of them or to bring in different concepts which should have the same status as beauty. In so doing we are essentially concerned with artistic truth, and a connection seems essential with those other affective and moving qualities of art, with art's ability to stir our feelings and imagination and its capacity to enlarge our emotional range. We may distinguish different media, too, looking perhaps for imagination and moral insight in literature, emotion in music, and so on. Some arts reflect the world of nature whilst others look more to the inner world, corresponding perhaps to the different realms of spiritual experience.

To leap many centuries we note that it was Leibniz (more than any other modern philosopher) who echoed Aquinas in taking seriously the idea of a creation with God as author and man profiting therefrom. He wrote:

> In God is found not only the source of existence, but also that of essences, insofar as they are real. In other words, He is the ground of what is real in the possible. For the Understanding of God is the region of the eternal truths and of the ideas on which they depend; and without Him there would be nothing real in the possibilities of things, and not only would there be nothing in existence, but nothing would even be possible.[27]

Since God is omniscient Leibniz's concept of the "substance" is not in any way approximate but is complete in every detail and with regard to every one of its properties. Every possible substance, not only the ones proceeding to a finite form in this world, is represented in the mind of God by what Leibniz calls its complete individual notion. And every unfolding of a substance's "programme" has an inexorable inevitability. In view of its specifications every substance contains a law of the continuation of the series of its own operations, but complete knowledge of a substance is known only to God, not to us. One of the key ideas of Leibniz's ways of establishing the existence of God is his assertion that possibles could not exist without the existence of a Being who could produce the possible.[28] This is no novel idea, deriving as it does from Aquinas's fifth proof for the

existence of God, whereby things are seen to achieve their end by design rather than fortuitously. It follows that whatever lacks knowledge cannot achieve its end without direction from some intelligent Being, which we call God.

Nineteenth-century thinkers were well aware of the different modes inhabited by the different art forms. For our purposes we shall concentrate on one eminent nineteenth-century figure who draws these strands together. In so doing we can move from a general view of metaphysics to a more specific consideration of the ontological power of music. Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy, more than any other's, holds a strange fascination for musicians, in particular his assertion that there are strict limits on the reach of the intellect and that the abstraction of reason, even when useful, cannot possibly be taken as an indication of the nature of reality. Schopenhauer published his major work, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation) at the age of 30. It is a survey of the whole of human activity and knowledge in the light of a philosophical attitude that saw the universe, in all its variety and richness, as something to be transcended. Unlike many philosophers, and in direct opposition to those for whom philosophy is a purely verbal, conceptual activity, Schopenhauer's work is rooted both in the burgeoning romanticism of his time and in his personal experiences. This existential activity identified him more with creative artists than with philosophers. Although immensely erudite, he was never an academic in the professional sense, and this was summed up in his student days when he became disillusioned with his teachers Fichte (in particular) and Schleiermacher. He is often assumed to be a deeply pessimistic writer. A perpetual conflict certainly existed in him between feeling and reason, between the subjective and the objective, inevitably perhaps because of his emphasis on the Will and determinism.

The main elements of his philosophy were formulated by intuition early in life. For Schopenhauer the universe is a cosmic illusion brought about by what he called the Will (the fundamental reality underlying all knowledge and reason).[29] This manifestation, the "thing-in-itself ", inhabits one's consciousness and expresses itself in archetypal ideas. One can be released from bondage to the Will and its productions only if it can be extinguished from consciousness. This has been falsely interpreted by many as extinction in nothingness.

Furthermore, Schopenhauer's universe is hierarchic ranging from the pure Will down to its most unconscious productions. We all have the potential to know its inner workings, and it is "art, the work of genius"[30] in particular, which gives the closest idea of what the Will itself is like. Artistic endeavours have the Platonic Ideas as their models, and these Ideas are the very essence of the world. This aesthetic attitude infuses Schopenhauer's philosophy, and, despite Schopenhauer's very limited knowledge of it, music is elevated above all the arts. The other arts represent it at second or third hand - for they only depict its "productions." That so many of his closest philosophical predecessors had failed to say much about art and its relation to a higher existence troubled Schopenhauer, who could really only look to Plato and Kant for any truly significant contribution, and Plato's work, in Schopenhauer's view, was tainted by his hostility towards art. (This came about, as we have seen, because of Plato's view that works of art are mere imitations of things and events in the phenomenal world).

Schopenhauer formulated a doctrine which categorised the Will's self-objectification in the world of phenomena into four categories: inorganic matter, plant life, animal life and human life, with a progression in terms of value and significance from lower to higher.[31] Schopenhauer saw the different arts connected to the appropriate category. The medium most appropriate for the communication of a perception of the beautiful differs according to the grade of the Will's objectification to which the object seen as being beautiful belongs.[32] For instance, the art most appropriate for communicating insights in inorganic matter or inanimate nature is architecture. When such things as flowers and trees are seen as beautiful, this is usually conveyed by painting and, indirectly, by verbal description. In animal life the physical presence of animate objects, their solidity and mass, make them more clearly expressed in the three dimensional form of sculpture. In the highest category, that of humans, language comes into its own. In particular, the power of drama is inexorable, combining as it does the dramatic unfolding of events in time simultaneously with the articulation of inner thoughts. The verbal arts stand almost supreme in the artistic hierarchy corresponding to the grades of the Will's objectification.

But the highest of all the arts is music, which is regarded by Schopenhauer as having a special quality. Presumably, for

Schopenhauer, this quality makes music essentially different in kind from the other arts.[33] Unlike the other arts it does not find its subject matter in perceptions of anything in the world of phenomena. All works of art that are not music, says Schopenhauer, either represent objects or events in the phenomenal world or are decorative or have a practical use. The very fact of music's separation from the phenomenal world has led some people to regard it as other-wordly, a view endorsed by Schopenhauer. According to him,

> all the arts except music communicate knowledge of something which is intermediate between the noumenon [the "thing-in-itself"] and phenomena, namely Platonic Ideas.[34]

Music by-passes the Platonic Ideas, and unlike the other arts speaks of the noumenon directly. And since the noumenon is an indivisible and undifferentiable whole then music is a direct articulation of it and a manifestation of the whole of it. It is therefore an alternative to the Ideas. So profound is this power that music provides a symbolic alternative to the world. And not so symbolic either, for it succeeds concretely in doing what philosophers do in abstraction. It is the most direct representation of the Will, indeed it is the Will made audible, a non-conceptual representation of an inner life. Philosophy itself is no more than a translation into conceptual terms of what music expresses, giving some rationale to what, in music, we sense purely intuitively. For Schopenhauer music seems to be the romantic reincarnation of the ancient notion of universal harmony. He describes it as,

> in the highest degree a universal language, which is related indeed to the universality of concepts, much as these are related to the particular things. Yet its universality is by no means that empty universality of abstraction, but of a quite different kind; it is united with thorough and unmistakable distinctness. In this respect it is like geometrical figures and numbers, which are the universal forms of all possible objects of experience and are *a priori* applicable to them all, and yet are not abstract but perceptible and thoroughly definite.[35]

He goes on:

> We could just as well call the world embodied music as embodied will; this is the reason why music makes every picture, indeed, every scene from real life and from the world, at once appear in enhanced significance, and this, of

Chapter Two
Music as Sublime Organism

Some of the issues raised so far are common to all the arts. Now we should enquire as to what is music's province and what makes it unique. To start, there are some elementary facts. Among the various sensory experiences we possess, musical experience is the only one that belongs predominantly to our own lives. Light and colour, sound, smell, taste, solids, fluids, gases, the heat and the cold, are all to be found in nature outside ourselves. The whistle of the wind is also found in nature and outside ourselves but could be described as a musical experience only by some exaggeration. Generally speaking music has a decisive border, its transcendence not being found elsewhere in nature. Musical sound is set apart, and its traditional connection with the soul and with feelings has divorced it from the intellect, at least as far as its essence is concerned. Its outward, technical manifestation absorbs the theorists, provided the ultimate question is not posed - how is music possible? This is more profound even than it looks, for in it is hidden a deeper question, namely what is the nature of this world if it contains this extraordinary phenomenon called "music", which admittedly is a term open to various definitions? Traditionally philosophy has not been enthusiastic to find an answer, since its energies have been focused in different areas. Truth, Virtue and Beauty, the three subjects of Logic /Epistemology, Ethics and Aesthetics respectively will not suffice to explain the essence of music, even when all three can be made to cohere in an interdisciplinary way. By itself, the aesthetic response falls short because it tends to confine itself to judgements of taste, aesthetic value and theories of beauty. These are not the categories that concern us here, except insofar as they relate to a metaphysical source (i.e as outside sound *per se*).

We start with melody, or at least the individual notes that might make up a melody. Here is our first mystery - what is it that differentiates a nondescript musical phrase (albeit that is put together

move towards the power of 2, to seek resolution there as a natural centre of gravity.

Zuckerkandl's arguments are helped by his careful scrutiny of Lipps' theories. In *Sound and Symbol* Zuckerkandl maintains that the frequencies of the first two notes of the opening of Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* (B and C sharp) have the ratios 8:9, thus there must be a tendency from the note C sharp to the note B, the former seeking the latter as its home base. It seems that, according to Lipps, the disturbances in the relationship of pulses and their subsequent removal (certainly as far as classical music is concerned) accounts for the play of forces which is found in melody. It is a theory that has much to commend it, especially when the argument is extended to embrace the functions of key in our Western tonal system. Here, a different gravitational pull from the one Lipps describes can be seen. Now we consider not the notes B and C sharp *per se*, but B as 1 and C sharp as 2, the first and second degrees of the B minor scale; 2 points beyond itself to 1, and this directional pointing is found in each note of the scale. When we hear notes, we place them in the seven-note system. In developing Lipps' hypothesis Victor Zuckerkandl noticed that owing to their greater stability 3 and 5 serve their most unstable adjacent notes, especially the higher, as the nearest points of support. 4 tends to resolve on 3, 6 to 5; 4 gravitates towards 1 across 3, 6 across 5 and so on. Since our Schubert example is in the minor we should point out that the effect in the minor mode is different from the major, (a complex topic in itself). The fifth note of Schubert's melody, A, is a minor seventh and thus predisposed to fall to 6 rather than, say, to rise to 8. As we explore the various gravitational forces at work in an unaccompanied melody such as this one, we become ever more aware of the elusive and complex character of these forces, for if we compare similar situations like 4-3 with 6-5 we notice essential differences such as to confirm the subtlety of our tonal system.

A difference exists between melody and harmony insofar as we assume that any reasonably musically literate person can construct a harmonic progression or a tonal scheme. This is the reason why harmony and counterpoint are such eminently teachable subjects. But knowing full well that it is perhaps a gift from the gods we rarely attempt to teach melody. The intellectual basis which we find in harmony and counterpoint is foreign to melodic invention. Heinrich Schenker's analytical system surely obeys a correct intuition in

looking for quasi-melodic outlines behind classical pieces, but it never succeeds in defining why the melodic invention of works should be so often seductive, for his system is essentially to do with formal structure. Harmonies therefore are generally simple discoveries. But melody often entails creation at the highest level of the imagination, and the composer as creator need not feel that his own participation in that creative process is less metaphysically significant because of the personal gifts which he alone exercises. Where a composer's own creations lose value and indeed credibility is when they are mechanical inventions. This is the issue raised by all methodically contrived music from early canons to motivic organisation of a 12 note series. Sadly, many modern scores have elevated the constructive processes above the genuinely musical revelations of the inner ear, a fault which, for example, Bach the great constructor never succumbed to, even in his wildest forays into constructionism.

The organic process which is called melody symbolises certain fundamental characteristics of the natural world, most obviously biological structures (however improbable this might seem). The biologist Jakob Von Uexküll in his *Theoretische Biologie*[5] saw the action of "melodic laws" in organisms as a "genetic melody", (for instance in the way fish develop.) This poetic analogy underlies a serious scientific point about the genesis of organisms. The scientific aspect of music we have been concerned with so far is that of physical laws. But the creative aspect of music would seem to relate music just as convincingly with a science fundamentally different from physics, namely biology. Certainly, there is in biology as in physics and chemistry a dependence on causality. But physical causality is not apparent when, for instance, an egg is cut in two and two new whole organisms are the result. The individual parts of the new organisms have no correspondence with the individual parts of the egg, so there is no causal chain here - it is a purely biological process. While conceding that this apparently mysterious process can be scientifically accounted for, there appears to be a miraculous place-transcending order at work that is not dissimilar to that found in music. Uexküll makes a further identification of musical process with biology on two levels - firstly the level of nature, the way life is organised (whether life as feeling and thought as in music or as an organic process as in biology), secondly, the metaphysical level, where both music and biology in rather similar fashions simulate a form of creativity that is

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