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MUSIC AND MYTH:
THE ANCIENT GREEKS AND KWAKIUTL INDIANS

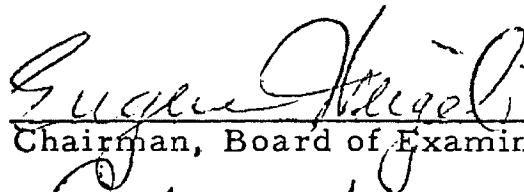
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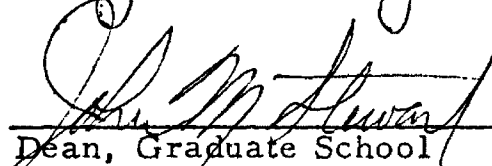
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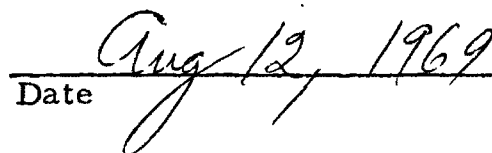
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"May the Muses give me gracious aid to light such a beacon of song."

--Pindar, Isthmia 4, 8.1, trans. Lattimore

CHAPTER I

ἔποχή

Without any preparation let us pose to ourselves a metaphysical question: Why is there music? Perhaps in self-defense the answers of the Romantic age come pouring out. Because the heart bursts forth in song. Because the soul seeks expression. Because music is a manifestation of longing after unattainable goals. Although these answers have the aroma of drawing room nicety, they hint at a kind of psychological necessity, setting music up as a human instinct, admittedly irrational. Probing deeper into the past we come across the intriguing notion that the entire cosmos is fundamentally musical, that the world-order is in constant "harmony."¹ This concept asserts that music is embodied by cosmological necessity, a kind of world-instinct. Though it illustrates a far-reaching rationalism, this concept also inflates the idea of music beyond comprehension; and

¹ Cf. Edward A. Lippman, Musical Thought in Ancient Greece (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 1 ff.

if the concept was intended to refer to this world-order, it invites reference to "the best of all possible world-orders" and thus gathers the aroma of other-worldliness. Nevertheless, the concept of a world in harmony shows a closer concern for the question "Why is there music?" than does, say, the metaphor "The heart bursts forth in song." The latter may have satisfied an age with considerably more care and exuberance than ours, but the heart today which "bursts forth in song" must face the rejoinder: "Who cares?" It is seldom put quite so bluntly. More often we hear: "I respect your position." "Each to his own taste." "Do your own thing, Baby." "Well, it's not my bag, but..." in any case the breadth of tolerance demonstrates a lack of care. Underneath the superficiality of ordinary language lies an admission to musical solipsism, which allows that music is egocentric to each individual, that music writ large is essentially a collection of individual tastes, and that musical agreement among individuals arises only by accident. Under such circumstances it would be absurd to claim that music is a universal language. Moreover, the possibility must now be raised that music is a non-essential activity. Its existence is called into question.

We ask again: Why is there music? How shall we answer? Because I will it? In that case I can cease to will it. Because somewhere out there a heart is singing? Whose heart? Singing what? Who cares? Because God saw fit to grant man a means of praising Him? Still, man can abandon this means; he can avoid music. Or worse yet, the giver can withdraw the means. If the question "Why is there music?"

is too annoying, we can, if we wish, inundate the question with clever semantic manipulation. We might in this case first insist on forcing a definition of "music." Then we could attempt to prove either that the question is circular (i.e., that the answer is already in the question), or that through failure to arrive at a satisfactory definition of "music," the question has no "meaning." Yet out of such a self-imposed dilemma the question would arise again unscathed.

Once more we ask: Why is there music? We cannot rest content with the answer: Because there is music. Taking the existence of music for granted amounts too easily to the tacit acceptance of a conceptual "package." We are interested in pursuing a manner in which the world, this world, appears to consciousness. Since the aim is to provide a basis for direct intuiting, it is necessary for us to lay aside our preconceptions about music. But preconceptions have a dogged persistence, almost as if they had a life of their own. Hence to say "Lay aside your preconceptions" does neither guarantee nor yet even bring the expectation that the preconceptions will be laid aside. It is with this consideration that the term [music] will continue to be used, though always now appearing as bracketed in order to remind us that the term [music] does not at this stage posit existence. The question "Why is there [music]?" must now be answered: Perhaps there is no [music.]

By intention, this bracketing of the conceptual subject matter is a procedure of the phenomenological method. The bracketing,

which indicates a suspension of belief, is called the epochē (in Greek, ἐποχή, a check, cessation).

CHAPTER II

PHENOMENOLOGY: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The phenomenological method, as a distinct method so named, has arisen principally through the efforts of the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). The method, as it was begun and as it continues to develop, may be described as an attempt to deliver philosophy from the poverty of specialization and from the curse of abstraction. By implication, and later through application, the phenomenological method extends into every discipline. By virtue of its aim the method encompasses the whole of human activity, since the first consideration is to explicate the structure of human consciousness, and in doing this, to disclose the phenomena as phenomena which we recognize as the "objects" of our consciousness.

It should be clear that the phenomenological method is directed always to the activity of consciousness and never to the abstract concepts as concepts which are thought of as symbolizing an activity; i.e., insofar as a concept is considered at all, it must necessarily be considered within the context of consciousness--it is a concept as formulated, or as judged, or as perceived, or as remembered, etc. By attending to concepts (or any other "object" of consciousness) in this manner, the thing attended to is always grounded in concreteness.

Significantly, the phenomenological method cannot become a closed body of philosophical dogma. It is a search for essences, though not in the Platonic tradition. Far from being immutable gems of intelligible being, phenomenological essences disclose themselves in the process of explication. Once disclosed, the essence does not then become the property of a fixed body of knowledge--to be given its place on the intellectual shelf, as it were. A phenomenological essence is accessible only during and through the context of investigating particular phenomena.

Besides Edmund Husserl, phenomenology as a recognizable movement embraces the thought and writings of such men as Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre and Gabriel Marcel, to name just a few. These men have concentrated largely on major traditional philosophical problems: being, time, perception, nothingness, etc. These problems occupy a primary place in phenomenology because they stand at the core of all experience. However, we must not suppose that these initial investigations are like building blocks upon which later investigation rests. Each new investigation must begin at the beginning; in no sense do phenomenologists compile a body of knowledge. If we wish to apply a concept to indicate what a phenomenological investigation is, let us say that it is a journey rather than a construction project.

While it is impossible to give a concise definition of the phenomenological method, we might consider a few of its characteristics. Positively speaking it is an invitation "to turn toward phenomena

which had been blocked from sight by the theoretical patterns in front of them."² Negatively it stands in protest to such preconceptions as Ockham's razor (the principle of simplicity or economy of thought, sometimes called reductionism) and dogmatic empiricism, which restricts experience to sense data alone. Yet even this negative aspect of the phenomenological method yields a positive result, since it is the preconceptions and habits of thought that narrow down our experience, and by exposing these habits, we may once again come to view phenomena in all their fullness.³

Any phase of [musical] experience could be examined phenomenologically. That the method is peculiarly well suited to the topic of this paper should become evident as we proceed. An explanation of this suitability is withheld for the present because it might raise a preconception which would endanger the effectiveness of the method.

Research concerned with [music] of the ancient Greeks has suffered from two factors: the nearly complete lack of surviving notational examples and the propensity to view ancient Greek [music] through their theoretical writings about [music.] The first factor precludes the re-creation of ancient Greek [music.] at least with any claim to historical authenticity. The second factor often tends

² Herbert Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, A Historical Introduction (2nd ed., The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), II, p. 658.

³ Ibid., II, pp. 653-701.

to produce exercises in constructing abstract theoretical systems in which it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between what is applicable to the Greeks and what is only applicable to the system per se.

To consider Kwakiutl Indian culture in mutual thematic context with the ancient Greek affords the opportunity of viewing archaic [musical] phenomena in a variety of juxtapositions. With respect to the ancient Greeks, we shall center our attention upon the remnants of songs, i.e., poetry, to see what [musical] phenomena are described. With respect to the Kwakiutl, we have detailed information of [musical] phenomena from the personal recollections of individual Kwakiutl Indians, from the data gathered by anthropologists (most notably Franz Boas), and from the recordings of Kwakiutl songs collected by musicologist Dr. Ida Halpern.⁴

In spite of all this information on the Kwakiutl, there are some rather serious problems. Kwakiutl personal recollections often appear in quite oversimplified English, often in a somewhat jerky and imprecise grammatical fashion. Anthropologists have not wished to tamper with their data in the interest of maintaining "authenticity;" as scientists they feel so compelled. However, the native Kwakiutl language is rich in concrete expressions, to such an extent that the oversimplified accounts in English do not convey very

⁴ Ida Halpern (songs collected by), Indian Music of the Pacific Northwest Coast, Folkways Ethnic Library FE 4523 (New York: Folkways Records and Service Corporation, 1967).

successfully the power inherent in the native tongue. Consequently one runs the risk that these Kwakiutl accounts might too easily be regarded in terms of the noble savage, simple life stereotype. To say that the life of a Kwakiutl was not simple is certainly an understatement. We must make every effort to keep this stereotype from screening our understanding of the material.

In terms of historicity we shall be dealing with the ancient Greeks ca. 800-400 B.C. and with the Kwakiutl Indians of the 19th and 20th centuries A.D. Information on the two cultures presented in juxtaposition is intended to raise the possibility that each may complement the other, somewhat in the manner of [musical] counterpoint. Although this procedure might be referred to as the comparative technique, I wish to guard against any preconception of a one-to-one relationship between the two cultures; I also do not want to self-impose the limitation of mere factual similarities.

If this technique produces yet a third "[musical] culture," which is neither ancient Greek nor Kwakiutl Indian, then it is in that third "[musical] culture" that the phenomenological essence may disclose itself.

One major presupposition ought to be exposed. The author owes a potlatch to Mircea Eliade, whose extensive scholarship might very well be called a Phenomenology of Myth. The experience of reading M. Eliade's books has opened avenues of awareness without which this thesis would not be what it is.

CHAPTER III

SOME PHENOMENOLOGICAL DISTINCTIONS

The decision to use the term "archaic" to describe the ancient Greek and Kwakiutl cultures was based on the etymology of the word. In the ancient Greek ἀρχή (archē) means "a beginning or origin" and also "the first place or power, sovereignty, dominion, command."⁵ The two cultures here under investigation are both "archaic" in the sense that their mode of living points, by intention, to its origins. This is evident throughout the sources of information, whether literary, archaeological, anthropological, or [musical.] Although Martin P. Nilsson has said that "primitive mentality (I would prefer to say 'archaic mentality' here) is a fairly good description of the mental behavior of most people today except in their technical or consciously intellectual activities,"⁶ surely it is in terms of our technical/intellectual activities that our culture may be specifically said to be our culture, and not some other. The point is, ours is not an "archaic" culture, since the conscious intention of our

⁵ Liddell and Scott, An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon, founded upon the 7th ed. of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

⁶ Quoted by E.R. Dodds in The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. viii.

technical/intellectual activities is directed at playing down or even eliminating these "archaic" tendencies. But the observation that "primitive (or archaic) mentality" abounds in our culture is evidence that the present phenomenological investigation is possible; i.e., it is because of our ability to tap our own archaic consciousness that we may be able to disclose and explicate a phenomenological essence of archaic [music.] Certainly our [musical] culture of today is not predominately an archaic [musical] culture.

Another term which will be used extensively throughout this paper is "myth" or "mythical". There is considerable risk involved in the use of this term. "Myth" must be understood as meaning an account of origins. But it is more than just an account, for myth must be considered as a phenomenon--e.g., myth as it is exemplified in ritual. Thus it is not easy to distinguish between the account of origin and the origin as itself an original event, or to put it another way, between the medium and the message. It is not entirely clear whether or not archaic man made the distinction between myth as ritual (commemorating a mythical event) and myth as mythical event; perhaps for archaic man the ritual is the original event. Notice that to say "The singer is the song" is not the same thing as saying "It's the singer, not the song." In the latter case one submits to dogmatic empiricism.

It is my considered judgment that the foregoing question should be viewed in the light of Husserl's phenomenological investigation

into the structure of consciousness.⁷ Taking myth and ritual as exemplifications of identity and multiplicity, we make the following case. A given myth (as original event) exemplifies identity; i.e., it is presented to the consciousness as that myth and no other. Then consider the multiplicity of possible rituals which commemorate that myth. To the archaic understanding, and to our own as well, a ritual is an act of remembering. Any remembering and the thing remembered are always presented to the consciousness together; i.e., identity and multiplicity are presented as coexistent. To separate the two as individual concepts requires a further act of consciousness. Even an imperfect remembering (or partial forgetting) is presented to the consciousness coexistent with its corresponding thing remembered. In this instance the thing remembered (or to be remembered) appears as identical to itself as an intended perfect remembering. The point is, each ritual as an instance of multiple events refers immediately to its intentional identity: the myth as original mythical event. The point holds true as long as ritual maintains its myth as its intentional "object" and particularly in the context of the oral tradition.

If the foregoing explication is clear, we should now be able to understand the meaning of myth as we shall use the word. Phenomenologically we take myth to mean myth-and-ritual, for this is the manner

⁷ Edmund Husserl, Cartesian Meditations, An Introduction to Phenomenology, trans. by Dorian Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), passim.

in which myth is first presented to the consciousness--with identity and multiplicity as coexistent. Conceptually we take myth to mean the original mythical event as if it were something in itself, but remembering from above that to formulate this concept--to extract identity from the given coexistence of identity and multiplicity--requires a further act of consciousness, and that this concept is not immediately given.

Perhaps the greatest risk in using the term "myth" in this investigation arises from its being commonly used in a perjorative sense to connote "a fabulous legend or false tale, as opposed to historical fact." For the purposes of this investigation (and for archaic man also), nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, archaic man clearly distinguished between myth and legend.⁸ Legends "can be told anywhere and at any time, myths must not be recited except during a period of sacred time."⁹ It is easy to write off the importance of this distinction by calling in a handy concept: taboo. This term is popularly perjorative too, evidently on the assumption that a taboo is grounded in irrationality or superstitious belief. In some cases this may be so, but not with respect to the taboo against the irresponsible recitation of myth.

Aron Gurwitsch distinguishes two sectors of consciousness:

⁸ Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), pp. 8 ff.

⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

thematic and marginal.¹⁰ The thematic field of consciousness consists of whatever one is intentionally engaged with at any given time-- the intentional "object." The marginal field of consciousness consists of whatever else one is conscious of at that same time, which is not made thematic, but any of which could be made thematic because it is there. This distinction is of course purely conceptual. There aren't really two fields of consciousness, there is only consciousness itself. But the concepts may be useful in discussing how the taboo against the recitation of myth works.

One of the problems with a taboo of this kind is the possibility of an "accidental" remembering of the myth, appearing either as if responding to some stimulus or simply coming forth through the memory as if by its own accord. The important point, I think, is whether any particular remembering of a myth remains in the marginal field of consciousness or whether that remembering is taken up as a direct intending, i.e., becoming thematic. And even if made thematic, the question remains, in what manner does the myth appear? For only by undergoing the ritual can it be said that ~~the~~ myth is fully "recited." One must not recite the myth (i.e., do the ritual) except during the time and at the place that are proper to that myth. The practical significance of the taboo is that it preserves, by intention,

¹⁰ Aron Gurwitsch, Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology, trans. by Fred Kersten (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1966), pp. 200 ff. and pp. 267 ff.

the concreteness of the myth-ritual. To violate the taboo, which the universally portable written tradition certainly makes possible by writing myths down, is to invite abstractness and consequently to risk losing direct contact with this world.

A test case: When a myth appears in the context of its corresponding ritual at a specific time and place, not only is that myth-ritual thematic to the consciousness, but also the specificity of that time and of that place extends the identity of that myth into the marginal consciousness. In this way, irrelevancies which may be lying in wait in the marginal consciousness are intended to be kept out of the thematic field entirely and to be crowded out of even the marginal field as far as this is possible.

Another case: When a myth appears in the context of its corresponding ritual but in a different (i.e., non-specific) time and place, even though that myth-ritual may be thematic to the consciousness, the non-specificity of time and place present a special problem, particularly to the eye. In this case, irrelevant stimuli are constantly in the marginal field and quite easily can become thematic.¹¹ Whenever there is an attempt on the part of the participants in a ritual to create an illusion, this may be regarded as a way of solving the problem. A successful illusion, however, requires special

¹¹ The Greek epic poet's blindness might be introduced here to illustrate, however speculatively, that with regard to the recitation of myth, when displaced by migration, blindness might be a definite asset to the preservation of the myth's identity.

effort, and consequently is all too easily given up as not being worth the trouble. (The Kwakuitl winter ceremonial, rich in illusion, receded rather quickly after the invasion of Western civilization. There is a curious twist of irony here. Notice that the word "illusion" means literally "a playing with".)

CHAPTER IV

MYTHICAL TIME AND LANGUAGE

One feature of the modern Western world which we might recognize as almost ubiquitous, at least in the proverbial humdrum work-a-day world, is our awareness of clock time. The seconds tick by with mathematical precision, and regardless of one's personal orientation, or subjective time-consciousness, there is the notion that the relentlessly objective clock time is the norm par excellence against which all other appearances of time are measured.

Contrasted with this modern clock-time consciousness is archaic time-consciousness which consists of two radically different kinds of awareness of time.¹² First, and to archaic man most excellent, is mythical time or sacred time. It is that time in the beginning (*ἐν ἀρχῇ*) when exemplary models received their Being--looked upon most often by archaic man as a divine gift. Archaic man's second awareness of time is of historical or profane time. This is roughly equivalent to the modern concept of historical time, except that for archaic man, historical time means quite rapid decay. Little

¹² This entire section on time is derived generally from Eliade's Cosmos and History (New York: Harper and Row, 1959) and The Sacred and the Profane (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), both trans. by Willard R. Trask.

more than one year of uninterrupted historical time would wear out the world. Consequently the primary function of the myth of eternal return is to negate historical time by entering sacred time and by re-enacting the myth of origin either really or symbolically through ritual.

This act of interpenetration of historical time by mythical time effects for archaic man a major advantage. It means that when he steps back out of mythical time into historical time, he enters a new historical time, one that is discontinuous with the previous historical time. This new one commences its decay immediately, but from a newly rejuvenated state.

Because of modern connotations, one might expect archaic man's awareness of mythical time to be of an ultra-serious nature and of historical time to be less serious. Actually it is more the reverse. Mythical time is playfully structured owing to its playful events. The cosmos, nature and the immortals are engaged in inter-play. When archaic man performs a ritual he enters the play-sphere.¹³ His best and perhaps even his only means of entry is through [music.] "When a performer sings his sacred song his supernatural power becomes manifest."¹⁴

¹³ Cf. Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens, A Study of the Play-Element in Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), passim.

¹⁴ Franz Boas, Kwakiutl Culture as Reflected in Mythology, Memoirs of the American Folk-Lore Society, Vol. XXVIII (New York: G.E. Stechert and Co., 1935), p. 83.

At this point an aphorism is suggested: [Music] of archaic man is play.

The act of a myth-ritual is a kind of time-machine. It is theoretically perfect just as the memory is theoretically perfect. And as blind fate accounts for a lapse in memory, so does blind fate stop the mythical time-machine or send it off course. Archaic man realizes this and sometimes alludes to it with sadness. But so long as he maintains his contacts with mythical origins, he remains archaic man. To him, this contact is his source of dignity, as well as his identity. To forget this or to de-mythologize himself is to become historical man--to submit to death and decay.

Another feature of the modern Western world is our widespread propensity to distribute idle chatter. We tend to regard that which is written as somehow more important and more "meaningful" than that which is merely spoken. Thus a written work so often appears in triplicate. It might almost be said that we regard duplication (including Xerography, phonograph records and audio and video tape) as natural to the written tradition--indeed, as natural to language itself.

But to the archaic understanding language is, like other exemplary models, a divine gift, to be handled with care and skill. Indiscriminate use of language within an oral tradition will soon clog up the memory until irrelevancies and abstract concepts send the oral tradition into decay.

Historical time has a wearing effect on language, this much archaic man knew very well. But there are two ways of looking at this, which in our categorical haste we are apt to miss if we simply subscribe to the concept: evolution of language. First, since language depends largely upon memory for its continuity of meaning, any kind of forgetting can change the language. This forgetting may sometimes result in substituting, so that an approximation acts as a place setter, temporary and waiting to be discarded upon accurate recollection of the word(s) forgotten. When the linguistic place setter becomes permanent, through failure of the memory to correct it, we call that the evolution of language. In a language which is pretty thoroughly abstract, such as our own contemporary usage, the concept of evolution is perhaps fitting; but to archaic man, whose language is by nature concrete, the act of forgetting is an exemplification of decay, not of evolution.

Archaic man's language is grounded in concreteness. When forgetting results in the introducing of a linguistic place setter, that place setter is abstract, much like the independent variable "x" in symbolic logic or algebra. Archaic man knows a responsibility, that of seeking to accurately recollect so that he can reinstate the concreteness and oust the abstract usurper.¹⁵

¹⁵ Someone once said, "I can make my words mean whatever I want them to mean--as long as I am consistent." This is language for language's sake. Let us not confuse consistency with precision. Henri Bergson's charge against philosophy is as much a charge against

"There are many sharp shafts
 in the quiver
 under the crook of my arm.
 They speak to the understanding; most men need
 interpreters.
 The wise man knows many things in his blood; the
 vulgar are taught.
 They will say anything. They clatter like crows
 against the sacred bird of Zeus."

--Pindar, Olympia 2, 13.3-14.1, trans. Lattimore.

Pindar's imagery of archery is a good one, for it implies the
 bull's eye--taking the concept of precision as a concrete phenomenon.
 Pindar must have been fond of the image; he used it again:

"There are many arrows of song
 my speech has skill to sound forth in their honor."

--Isthmia 5, 7.4-5, trans. Lattimore.

By the same image, consider mere logical consistency as, say, hitting
 three feet below the bull's eye with amazing consistency.

A while ago the aphorism " [Music] of archaic man is play" was
 offered. Another is now suggested: Since archaic man's language
 is concrete, it is playful, too. Archaic man's language in its most
 precise way plays contrapuntally along with nature. Archaic nature

language usage. "What philosophy has lacked most of all is precision.
 Philosophical systems are not cut to the measure of the reality in which
 we live; they are too wide for reality. Examine any one of them,
 chosen as you see fit, and you will see that it could apply equally
 well to a world in which neither plants nor animals have existence,
 only men, and in which men would quite possibly do without eating
 and drinking, where they would neither sleep nor dream nor let their
 minds wander; where, born decrepit, they would end as babes-in-arms;
 where energy would return up the slope of its dispersion, and where
 everything might just as easily go backwards and be upside down."
 Henri Bergson, The Creative Mind, trans. by Mabelle L. Andison
 (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1946), p. 11.

is playful; archaic language is playful. In this fundamental sense we may say that archaic language is an imitation of nature. Onomatopoeia is a case in point.

Perhaps the most easily recognizable pattern of playfulness is repetition. Repetition by itself is suggestively comic. A trivial example is to repeat (a trivial example is to repeat) whatever someone else is saying (whatever someone else is saying). Need I say more? (Need I ___ ___?) It is possible to consider the repetition in Homer's epics primarily as a manifestation of playfulness, and only secondarily as a means of making them easier to remember.

Anyone who has watched the Rowan and Martin show should have recognized the tragi-comic duality manifested in the awarding of the "flying fickle finger of fate." The Greek poet Sappho presented herself with a similar award:

μήτε μοι μέλι μήτε μέλισσα

One need not understand Greek to recognize the playfulness exhibited by the fact that each of the words begins with the same letter "μ". Translation into English yields a tragic lament: "neither for me honey nor honeybee," and perhaps more precisely: "Now will I neither taste honey nor even enjoy the comfort of the honeybee's presence." (Trans. by the author.) In order to preserve the spirit of incantation, one might go so far as to suggest "flying fickle finger of fate" as a translation of Sappho's lament, even in the face of the linguistic arguments for not doing so.

One of the clearest expressions of tragi-comic duality comes from Archilochus (ca. 680-640 B.C.):

εἰμὶ δ' ἐγὼ θεράπων μὲν Ἐνναλῖαο ἄνακτος
καὶ Μουσέων ἐρατὸν δῶρον ἐπιστάμενος.

I am these: A companion in arms to the warlike
leader (Ares)
and one who understands the Muses' beloved gift.

--Trans. by the author.

Archilochus is both soldier and songmaker. The playfulness in his craft as songmaker is displayed in another fragment:

ἐν δορὶ μὲν μοι μάζα μεμαγμένη, ἐν δορὶ
δ' ἴνως Ἴσμαρικός, πίνω δ' ἐν δορὶ κεκλιμένος.

By spear my barley-cake is won (kneaded), by spear
Ismaric wine,
I drink it, leaning against a spear.

--Trans. by the author.

That a tragic image, the spear, is used playfully, the translation shows, but what it doesn't show is the incantation-like repetition in the first line.

ἐν δορὶ μὲν μοι μάζα μεμαγμένη
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Notice that six out of seven consecutive syllables (underscored)

begin with the letter "μ". In Greek, the song begins as a table prayer, addressed to the spear itself, somewhat like: "O Spear, that brings to me my daily bread," except that the phrase in Greek sounds more compelling. The songs of Archilochus display much

vicious satire. In this fragment, too, I believe Archilochus is saying: "Spear, I grant you my respect; you serve me well. Now I charge you to bear the weight of my jokes."

A young poet in Portland, Oregon, composed a poem:

"Purple Cat
 Purple
 Cat
 Purple Cat
 Purple
 Cat
 Purple Cat
 Purple
 Cat
" etc.¹⁶

This poem commemorates, or mimics, the sequence of presentation of a neon sign advertising a Portland pub. It is easy to imagine how historians might be puzzled by having the poem in hand long after its concrete referent was displaced by urban renewal. In this case the repetition in itself is all too obvious, but that is all that is obvious.

¹⁶ Source: the author's own amazing memory.

"From lovely Salamis: I come a herald,
With a well-made song instead of talk."

--Solon, Fr. 2, 1-2, trans. Bowra.

CHAPTER V

GREEK MOUSIKĒ

In archaic culture the language of poets is still the most effective means of expression, with a function much wider and more vital than the satisfaction of literary aspirations. It puts ritual into words, it is the arbiter of social relationships, the vehicle of wisdom, justice and morality. All this it does without prejudice to its play-character, for the setting of archaic culture itself is the play-circle.¹⁷

To speak of a poet with respect to archaic culture is to speak of a songmaker whose activity is to compose "mousikē." The word "mousikē" means literally "pertaining to the Muses." Hesiod identifies the Muses as the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (Memory).

(See Theogony 50-104)

Come you then, let us begin from the Muses, who by
their singing
delight the great mind of Zeus, their father, who lives
on Olympos,
as they tell of what is, and what is to be, and what
was before now
with harmonious voices, and the sound that comes sweet
from their mouths
never falters.....

* * *

¹⁷ Huizinga, Homo Ludens, p. 134.

and they
 in divine utterance
 sing first the glory of the majestic race of
 immortals
 from its beginning.....

--Hesiod Theogony, 37-45, trans. Lattimore.

In as much as the Muses "tell of what is, and what is to be, and what was before now," they act as the exemplary model of the functions of the human memory. Present events are capable of being remembered (becoming a future event but referring back to a past event). Just as Memory, mother of the Muses, is the exemplary model of the human memory as an identity, so are the Muses the exemplary models of the human memory in its multiplicities of rememberings. The identity is a unit; the multiplicities are activities of identity. Let us take care not to press ontological significance onto what Hesiod presented as if chronologically; i.e., Memory, as mother, prior to the Muses, as daughters. From the archaic point of view, the events described by Hesiod take place in mythical time, and in this context the events occur all at One Time. It is significant that Hesiod begins the Theogony, not with Chaos, but with the origin of the Muses. Chaos must wait until line 116.

When the early Greek songmaker calls to the Muses directly, his is an appeal for them to grant that his song be memorable.

Hail, then, children of Zeus:
 grant me lovely singing.

--Hesiod Theogony, 104, trans. Lattimore.

But the song is not really "his" song, for the song is executed through his memory. He does not, however, have possession of his memory

as he may be said to possess an ordinary utensil. Consider this song by Archilochus:

Some barbarian is waving my shield, since I was obliged
to leave that perfectly good piece of equipment
behind
under a bush. But I got away, so what does it matter?
Let the shield go; I can buy another one equally
good.

--Trans. Lattimore

Can you imagine Archilochus' saying the same thing about his memory? We are here dealing with the oral tradition, which depends upon the memory of sound and rhythm. The songmaker is, in effect, the medium through whom the Muses act.¹⁸

Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilleus
and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold
upon the Achaians.

--Homer Iliad, 1.1-2, trans. Lattimore.

Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story
of that man skilled in all ways of contending,
the wanderer, harried for years on end,
after he plundered the stronghold
on the proud height of Troy.

--Homer Odyssey, 1.1-5, trans. Fitzgerald.

In sum, the appeal says: Grant me Mousikē.

Mousikē to the ancient Greeks signifies an act of ritual. The songmaker's appeal to the Muses declares his intentions and his hopes: Sing, Muses, and let mythical time interpenetrate historical time, that by this process rejuvenation will attend, and man, though mortal,

¹⁸ Charles Rowan Beye, The Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Epic Tradition (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1966), pp. 15 ff.

may participate, howsoever briefly, in the immortality which is the sole property of the happy and carefree gods.

At the serene king's word, a squire ran
to bring the polished harp out of the palace,
and place was given to nine referees--
peers of the realm, masters of ceremony--
who cleared a space and smoothed a dancing floor.
The squire brought down, and gave Demodokos
the clear-toned harp; and centering on the minstrel
magical young dancers formed a circle
with a light beat, and stamp of feet. Beholding,
Odysseus marvelled at the flashing ring.

Now to his harp the blinded minstrel sang.

--Homer Odyssey, 8.254-264, Trans. Fitzgerald.

There is a parallel in Kwakiutl practice, for example, the batons to be used to beat time accompanying a song will be distributed with great ceremony.

Here we see described Mousikē in the fullness of its concrete usage. Here we find verbal recollection, melodic recollection, and rhythmic recollection operating within a magic play-circle. It would be very nearly nonsense to speak of verbal, melodic and rhythmic as separate elements of ancient Greek Mousikē. The lowest common denominator of Mousikē is the organic union itself, which our language forces us to put clumsily as: $\frac{\text{melody-verse-dance.}}{\text{r h y t h m}}$. Even that representation is misleading, since it appears to indicate rhythm as the common denominator. If by common denominator we mean that the same rhythm permeates the melody, the verse and the dance, we may be correct, but there is a problem in viewing Mousikē in

¹⁹ Thrasybulos Georgiades, Greek Music, Verse, and Dance, trans by Erwin Benedikt and Marie Louise Martinez (New York: Merlin Press, 1956), passim.

this manner. Take, for example, the Homeric oral tradition. One may speak of the rhythmic technique of epic hexameter as the underlying structural system of the Homeric poems. But epic hexameter as an abstract concept, pure and simple, will not of itself serve as a means of generating a Homeric epic--certainly not in terms of Mousikē. (No more than, say, a set of rules on the Bach chorale style, statistically derived from Bach's chorales, will generate another Bach chorale. What it will generate is a statistical chorale, but that is an entirely different game. To call the statistical chorale an "approximation" of a Bach chorale is idle mischief.)

Let us recall the Kwakiutl example introduced on the preceding page. The batons have been passed out, the singer begins his song, the people beat the batons (a kind of dance with the hands), and the singer's bodily movement is yet another dance. There are at least three different rhythms appearing simultaneously. Altogether they generate yet another overall rhythmic feeling, which can be remembered through an oral tradition, but in no way could one generate this overall rhythmic feeling from the verse text alone.

Homeric epic is generated through the memory. To the archaic understanding, the memory as a songmaking device is a divine gift. To the twentieth century understanding, particularly with regard to the Parry-Lord theory of oral versemaking (see A.B. Lord, The Singer of Tales, based on an empirical investigation of Yugoslav epic), the epic poem is made possible by formulae; i.e., stock phrases, repetition,

similies using similar metric units, etc. In our investigation we must adhere to the archaic understanding.

Consider the Muses themselves as songmakers. Their function as described in the Theogony is to celebrate the origin of the gods in a ritual.

Let us begin our singing
 from the Helikonian Muses
 who possess the great and holy mountain
 of Helikon
 and dance there on soft feet
 by the dark blue water
 of the spring, and by the altar
 of the powerful son of Kronos;
 who wash their tender bodies in the waters
 of Permessos
 or Hippokrene, spring of the Horse,
 or holy Olmeios,
 and on the high places of Helikon
 have ordered their dances
 which are handsome and beguiling,
 and light are the feet they move on.
 From there they rise, and put a veiling
 of deep mist upon them,
 and walk in the night, singing
 in sweet voices, and celebrating
 Zeus...Hera...Athene...Apollo
 * * *
 and all the holy rest of the everlating
 immortals.

--Hesiod, Theogony, 1-21, Trans. Lattimore.

The Muses, as described here, do not just sing, for the ritual of preparation is as much a part of their singing as is finally the "content"--celebrating the immortals. Speaking purely conceptually, one could outline the above passage so as to say: First the Muses went through a rather elaborate ritual, during which they danced and bathed, then they sang about the gods. When put this way, one could easily bring forth a case when: Being pressed for time, the Muses

now dispensed with their usual preparation and began immediately to sing of the gods. Such a case is of course only an imaginary violation of the original, and indeed the case is absurd, since "being pressed for time" while in mythical time makes no sense. But it illustrates how myth becomes mythology. Recalling the earlier discussion concerning the initial co-existence of myth and ritual, we can see that in the present case also, in order to arrive at the Muses' singing of the gods, pure and simply, without the preparatory ritual, we had to make the secondary act of consciousness--i.e., the act of separating the ritual from the song which follows. It illustrates another point, also. The mythical event of the Muses as presented by Hesiod is a description of Mousikē, but after our own act of separating the ritual and the song into distinct parts, we are left with a description of [music] in its basically abstract meaning.

Turning now from the Muses as songmakers, let us consider the human individual as songmaker. Hesiod describes (more accurately perhaps, he commemorates) the actual gift of his craft.

And it was they (the Muses) who once taught Hesiod
 his splendid singing
 as he was sheperding his lambs
 on holy Helikon,
 and these were the first words of all
 the goddesses spoke to me,
 the Muses of Olympia, daughters of Zeus
 of the aegis:
 'You shepherds of the wilderness, poor fools,
 nothing but bellies,
 we know how to say many false things
 that seem like true sayings,
 but we know also how to speak the truth
 when we wish to.'

So they spoke, these mistresses of words,
 daughters of great Zeus,
 and they broke off and handed me a staff
 of strong-growing
 olive shoot, a wonderful thing;
 they breathed a voice into me,
 and power to sing the story of things
 of the future, and things past.
 They told me to sing the race
 of the blessed gods everlasting,
 but always to put themselves
 at the beginning and end of my singing.

--Hesiod, Theogony, 22-34, Trans. Lattimore.

Here again is described a ritual, a kind of initiation rite, in which are instructions to always refer to the Muses at the beginning and end of his singing. These instructions, if properly carried out, act as a guarantee that Hesiod's multiplicities of singings will be cradled in the identity of his origin as a singer. Insofar as the Muses are immortal goddesses, Hesiod has good reason not to forget these instructions, since carrying them out places him in the position of singing with cosmic significance. We might wonder what would happen if Hesiod either forgets or deliberately refuses to include the Muses specifically in his singing. Obviously, his singing would no longer be Mousikē, i.e., no longer pertain to the Muses. And since the Muses are the daughters of Memory, we must assume that Hesiod's singing would no longer be memorable--that is, worthy of being remembered.

Consider then the birth of a Kwakiutl Indian songmaker, the testimony of Charlie Nowell:

From the time I am first put in my cradle, they be watching
 for the string to come off from the button of my belly.

If you want your baby to be a canoemaker, they give it to a man to put on his wrist while he is making a canoe. They gave mine to my father, and he put it on his right wrist while singing. They say they took me out of my cradle and wrapped me up and put me inside a wooden drum. He began to hit the drum with his fists and began to sing. He put me in the drum and sing like this four times to make me like he was--a maker of songs. I could have been like him, and I was when I was a young man. I made winter dance songs and love songs, but we don't make them any more.²⁰

The Kwakiutl paid close attention to the significance of grounding the songmaker's identity in a specific act of ritual. Because of this and also because of the critical importance of the memory in Kwakiutl songmaking, I am taking the liberty of referring henceforth to Kwakiutl [music] as Kwakiutl "mousikē," since it is evident that Kwakiutl songs as phenomena were functioning in the same manner as Greek Mousikē.

²⁰ Clellan S. Fold, Smoke from their Fires, the Life of a Kwakiutl Chief (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1941), p. 45.

CHAPTER VI
KWAKIUTL "MOUSIKĒ"

One of the most significant things about Kwakiutl "mousikĒ" is the specific identification of place. Equally significant is that a Kwakiutl song always belongs to someone in particular. It is his song, he is in the song, and along with this special ownership go all the rights and privileges of performance, which are, literally, the rights to transfer the song to another as a gift.²¹

Very often Kwakiutl songs are contained in boxes, as for example the songs used in the winter ceremonial. When a cedar box contains the masks for the Thunderbird dance, it is said that the dance itself is in the box. So, too, is the song. By giving the box of paraphernalia to another, a Kwakiutl makes a gift of more than meets the eye; by intent he gives "mousikĒ", which includes the song, the dance, the masks, the rights of performance, and knowledge or "memory" of correct performance, including the direct access to supernatural assistance. The importance of correct performance becomes more evident by considering its mythical referent.

²¹ Dr. Halpern was able to record Kwakiutl songs only after considerable patience and understanding, since finally her recording of the songs was tantamount to her being considered worthy to receive them as a personal gift. We who listen to the records are of course robbers. See monograph to Folkways Ethnic Library, FE 4523, p. 5.

The Kwakiutl people comprise more than twenty tribes, and each tribe is subdivided into several numayma (similar to clans). "The ancestor of a numayma (sometimes also of a tribe) appeared at a specific locality by coming down from the sky, out of the sea, or from underground, generally in the form of an animal, took off his animal mask, and became a person...The Thunderbird or his brother..., the gull, the Killer Whale, a sea monster, a grizzly bear, and a ghost chief appear in this role."²² The cross-identity of men and animals is revealed. One numaym claim that another numaym "stole their wolf dance when they found the box containing the wolf masks."²³ Losing their wolf dance represents for that numaym a rather serious loss of prestige, since the box containing the wolf masks must be understood as a magic treasure obtained from supernatural beings. In another instance "a hunter steals the mask of the Grizzly Bear who begs for its return and gives in exchange the grizzly bear winter dance."²⁴

The "mousikē" of the Kwakiutl is not a peculiarly human mode of being-in-the-world; it is rather a manifestation of organic inter-relationships between human beings, animals, myth-people, and natural "objects", such as rocks, trees, the sea, etc. These inter-relationships exemplify the being-with-the-world which these "creatures

²² Franz Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, ed. by Helen Codere (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 42.

²³ Boas, Kwakiutl Culture, p. 67.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 80.

and things" enjoy. The playfulness displayed in these relationships is evident, for example a woman of the tribe called the Sandstone Ones was given this song when she dreamed about the Sun:

Don't let us hesitate to dance with our Lord,
The-One-to-whom-we-Pray, haai' haai' haai'a haai' haai'
haai'.²⁵

We must not here (nor elsewhere) confuse sacred play or playfulness with irresponsibility. For the Kwakiutl, there is a right way of playing which is not only ethically correct but perhaps more important, ecologically valid. Consider, for example, a prayer to the Salmon. When a man spears a sockeye salmon, he hauls it into his canoe, and after clubbing it once ritually and removing the spear point, he holds up the salmon with both hands and addresses it directly:

We have come to meet alive, Swimmer. Do not feel wrong about what I have done to you, friend Swimmer, for that is the reason why you come that I may spear you, that I may eat you, Supernatural One, you, Long-Life-Giver, you, Swimmer. Now protect us, (me) and my wife, that we may keep well, that nothing may be difficult for us that we wish to get from you, Rich-Maker-Woman. Now call after you your father and your mother and uncles and aunts and elder brothers and sisters to come to me also, you, Swimmers, you Satiater.²⁶

Arriving back home with the salmon catch, the man's wife then prepares a fresh mat in the house upon which the salmon are placed.

Sitting down alongside the mat, the wife picks up one of the salmon

²⁵ Franz Boas, The Religion of the Kwakiutl Indians, Part II: Translations, Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology, Vol. X (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), p. 183.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 207.

with her left hand. In her right hand is her fishknife. She addresses the salmon:

Welcome, Supernatural One, you, Swimmer, you have come trying to come to me, you, who always come every year of our world, that you come to set us right that we may be well. Thank you, thank you sincerely, you Swimmer. I mean this, that you, please, will come next year that we may meet alive, that you, please, protect me that nothing evil may befall me, Supernatural One, you, Swimmer. Now I will do what you came here for that I should do to you.²⁷

It is clear from this example that the Kwakiutl understood the notion of ecological balance, which to a human being spells the difference between being-with-the-world (as a bona fide member of the world-order in the concrete sense) and merely being-in-the-world (as an alien, real or potential). This ceremony, which is play with cosmic intent, is the Kwakiutl's awareness of the ecological balance. Two aphorisms were offered earlier: 1. [Music] of archaic man is play. 2. Since archaic man's language is concrete, it is playful, too. In both cases the game is to play along with the world, for as Huizinga puts it: "Play is older than culture, for culture, however inadequately defined, always presupposes human society, and animals have not waited for man to teach them their playing."²⁸ "Play cannot be denied. You can deny, if you like, nearly all abstractions: justice, beauty, truth, goodness, mind, God. You

²⁷ Ibid., p. 207.

²⁸ Huizinga, Homo Ludens, p. 1.

can deny seriousness, but not play."²⁹ Archaic man made a practice of actively pursuing this playfulness which is the phenomenological essence par excellence of his being-with-the-world.

The Kwakiutl winter ceremonial clearly takes place in mythical time. Head-Wolf's speech:

'Now welcome, great friends, sit down comfortable in your seats. Come, friend,' said he, as he called by names the dancers. 'Come and take care of us in this house which has become different on the ground beginning this night; and you also, all (you) friends, you have come into this assembly house which has become different on the ground, my house for the winter ceremonial.'³⁰

Every effort is made to eradicate the memory of their profane history. This is accomplished by the elaborateness of the ritualistic procedures of purification as well as by the changing of everyone's names. Even the secular aristocratic structure gives way to the set of patterns based on the ownership of sacred privileges.

It is clear that with the change of name the whole social structure, which is based on the names, must break down. Instead of being grouped in clans, the Indians are now grouped according to the spirits which have initiated them.³¹

The winter ceremonial is the Kwakiutl way of setting the world aright, using the mode of operation closest to themselves, i.e.,

²⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁰ Boas, Religion of the Kwakiutl, p. 65.

³¹ Franz Boas, "Secret Societies," p. 148, quoted by Eliade in Rites and Symbols of Initiation, trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 152.

³² Boas, Kwakiutl Culture, p. 73.

reinstating their identity, thus setting themselves aright with the world.

The thematic intent of the winter ceremonial is most interesting. That the responsibilities of individuals are great is well documented. For example, mistakes in songs or dances are punishable by fines. Worse than the fine, to the Kwakiutl, is that an error in performance brings shame on the one who fails.

A chief is ashamed because his daughter who was to be initiated, dies by an accident and does not return. The people are put to shame on account of an accident in the winter dance. They leave and become an inland tribe.³²

But in spite of the seriousness which accompanies an error in performance, the thematic intent of the winter ceremonial is an attitude of playfulness. The acts of distributing paraphernalia display this intent. Head-Wolf brings in the tallow and says:

'Indeed, friends, shall I not go on and announce this sound of my privilege with my sacred song, that I may bring the supernatural power to come into this tallow?' said he as he sang his sacred song, shaking his rattle. As soon as his sacred song was ended he said, 'op, op, op.' Then he said, 'Now, this tallow will go that you may rub it on your faces, friends, to remove your secular faces,' said he. Now a number of men went and took the tallow and distributed it among the dancers,...then Head-Wolf spoke again and said, 'O friends now the supernatural power has gone into this tallow and your minds will change.'³³

In like manner follows the owner of the privilege of distributing

³² Boas, Kwakiutl Culture, p. 73.

³³ Boas, Religion of the Kwakiutl, p. 66.

the shredded cedar bark which wipes off the secular faces. After this is done, Head-Wolf speaks again thus:

'Now, this is done, friends, now you have wiped off your summer faces; now you have wiped off your sickness; and you have wiped off your quarrels; now you have wiped off your troubles. Now you will put on the happy maker on your faces. I mean this, now come friend Sea-Hunter-Body, you who own the privilege of taking care of the charcoal.'³⁴

...and even
 when a man has sorrow fresh
 in the troublement of his spirit
 and is struck to wonder over the grief
 in his heart, the singer,
 the servant of the Muses singing
 the glories of the ancient
 men, and the blessed gods
 who have their homes on Olympos,
 makes him presently forget his cares,
 he no longer remembers
 sorrow, for the gifts of the goddesses
 soon turn his thoughts elsewhere.

--Hesiod, Theogony, 97-103, trans. Lattimore.

These blessings he gave:
 laughter to the flute
 and the loosing of cares
 when the shining wine is spilled
 at the feast of the gods,
 and the wine-bowl casts its sleep
 on feasters crowned with ivy.

--Euripides, The Bacchae, 379-385,
 trans. Arrowsmith.

It is clear that the winter ceremonial of the Kwakiutl is fun. Indeed, the one necessary ingredient of playfulness is that it be an activity that is fun. An error in ceremonial performance interrupts the fun, for it interjects a note of utmost seriousness into the

³⁴ Ibid., p. 67.

course of play. The Kwakiutl devised a way of coping with this seriousness in order to maintain the thematic intent of playfulness. For example, when a dancer stumbles and falls, he is obliged to pretend to drop dead, for it is said that "the winter ceremonial jumped out of his body and took his strength to the winter ceremonial of the woods."³⁵ Should the dancer neglect this obligation, one of the officials pretends to kill him.

He carries a Sparrow staff, which has the form of a lance. A knife which slips readily into the staff is attached to its end. When stabbing the neck of the fallen dancer, he pulls the knife back by means of a string. Concealed in the shaft of the lance is a bladder or piece of bottle kelp containing blood. When the knife is pulled back it cuts the receptacle and the blood flows over the dancer's neck. Some of these staffs are made like tongs. When the neck of the fallen dancer is struck the tongs open and blood flows out of a hidden bladder.³⁶

The "dead" dancer is then removed ceremoniously. He disappears and is initiated into rebirth by Cannibal-at-North-End-of-the-World.

To archaic man death and error are in themselves both artless, for they bring shame to identity,³⁷ an identity which is disclosed in his playing with a playful world. And as "mousikē" is not solely a human concern, i. e., "mousikē" does not appear as a human invention, neither is shame a purely human attitude. For as shame follows a

³⁵ Boas-Codere, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 280.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 280.

³⁷ Kwakiutl culture has been categorized by anthropologists as a shame-culture because of the prominence awarded to the idea of prestige. (See Boas, Kwakiutl Culture, p. 72 ff.) The same concept has been applied to the Homeric age of the Greeks. (See E.R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational, pp. 28 ff.)

loss of prestige, shame indicates that the intended identity has been jeopardized.

The mountain goats hang their heads because an uninitiated human being has seen them dancing without their skins.³⁸

Thunderbird is jealous of Woodpecker whose wife produced berries by her song.³⁹

A chief is ashamed because the trees praise the greatness of his rival.⁴⁰

The mountain goat, Thunderbird, man: each must live up to his own identity and when each succeeds there is an ecological balance, since the various identities are interlocked in cosmic identity and play.

³⁸ Boas, Kwakiutl Culture, p. 73.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 70.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 72.

"nor silence yet these songs. I did not make them
that they might rest in sleep."

--Pindar, Isthmia 2, 9.3-4, trans. Lattimore.

"Wake for them the high strain of song,
and praise old wine, but the blossoms of poetry
that is young..."

--Pindar, Olympia 9, 5.9-6.1, trans. Lattimore.

"Men prefer the song which is newest to them
listening"

--Homer, Odyssey, 1.351-2, trans. Beye.

CHAPTER VII

FORKED CONCLUSION

The question must finally be raised explicitly: Do the Muses still sing, and if so, through whom? The untroubled spirit can supply the quick and easy answer of subjective relativism: Each to his own Muse. Unfortunately this assessment requires the potential existence of several billion Muses to account for its solipsistic leanings. Even though true solipsism is but an imaginary construct, Franz Kafka, writing in the 1930's, gave us this deeply pessimistic view in a very short story entitled Couriers:

They were offered the choice between becoming kings or the couriers of kings. The way children would, they all wanted to be couriers. Therefore there are only couriers who hurry about the world, shouting to each other--since there are no kings--messages that have become meaningless.

They would like to put an end to this miserable life of theirs but they dare not because of their oaths of service.

Trans. by Clement Greenberg.

Nowadays at the end of the 1960's, a Kafka-like view has become more or less thematic to the common tongue. The fear and discomfort arising out of "meaninglessness" and "alienation" are widespread, and the fact of their being widespread is no comfort, either. Many are concerned and many continue to search for a ray of hope. The situation is faced in different ways. As homo sapiens we are confused, no longer sure-footed rationalists. As homo faber (Man the Maker) we still put some trust in our abilities to fabricate solutions to problems. A few of us regard the solution to the problem of "meaninglessness" as being no different from the solution to the problem of getting men on the moon.

In Kafka's terms, we ask: Are there now only individual singers, since the Muses are gone? And are the songs meaningless? In view of the present situation, it would be unthinkable to answer with an unqualified "no." What does it mean to say the Muses are gone? We recall that the Muses, as presented in Hesiod, are exemplifications of the functions of the memory. We are aware of a functioning memory, then surely we are aware of the Muses. But what is their manner of appearing?

Recalling Hesiod again, the Muses said to him:

'You shepherds of the wilderness, poor fools,
 nothing but bellies,
 we know how to say many false things
 that seem like true sayings,

but we know also how to speak the truth
when we wish to.'

--Theogony, 26-28, trans. Lattimore.

Insofar as we are aware of "meaninglessness," it is evident that the Muses are feeding us false sayings. Why? Because we are not worthy of the truth? Such an answer comes easily. It assumes that we are not worthy because we are guilty; it assumes a fallen condition--the human condition. The trouble with guilt is that Western civilization has managed to live with it for well over two thousand years. Guilt has become for many an empty abstraction, a piece of excess baggage. Surely "being worthy" to accept the gift of the Muses is a matter of choice. We can choose as archaic man did, to play with and within the world. So doing does not guarantee a priori truth, but it keeps us in preparedness to receive truth when the Muses give it.

For every one good thing the immortals bestow on men
two evils. Men who are as children cannot take this
becomingly;
but good men do, turning the brightness outward.

--Pindar, Pythia 3, 11.6-8, trans.
Lattimore.

Also whatever appears now as meaningless may once have had meaning. The meaning is forgotten. It is like the ritual which outlasts the memory of its original mythical event. The song is ended but the melody lingers on. Can we recover lost meaning? Is it accessible through the memory? Phenomenologically we can answer this in the affirmative, since the meaning refers to this world and no other. Somewhere in the back woods of our consciousness lies the possibility

of disclosing lost meaning. We may regard this possibility as being lodged in the remnants of the archaic consciousness. The difficulty in pursuing this lost meaning is the barricade of abstract concepts that acts as a screen which holds back what we are really after. It is the thematic intent of phenomenology to remove this screen in order to gain direct access to this world.

To play with and within the world as homo ludens, Man the Player, is swift and dangerous. It has always been so, but it is more particularly dangerous now because of the screen of abstraction. Modern homo ludens can undertake to enter mythical time directly just as archaic man did, but unlike archaic man who made the journey equipped with supernatural paraphernalia, modern man must go in naked and unpurified, ready or not, to suffer the consequences. Archaic man here gives us a vision of the consequences.

1. DIONYSUS, MINK AND VIRGIL THOMSON

Cadmus

We implore you, Dionysus. We have done wrong.

Dionysus

Too late. When there was time, you did not know me.

Cadmus

We have learned. But your sentence is too harsh.

Dionysus

I am a god. I was blasphemed by you.

Cadmus

Gods should be exempt from human passions.

Dionysus

Long ago my father Zeus ordained these things.

--Euripides, The Bacchae, 1344-1349,
trans. Arrowsmith.

With one voice they cried aloud:
'O Iacchus! Son of Zeus!' 'O Bromius!' they cried
until the beasts and all the mountain seemed
wild with divinity. And when they ran,
everything ran with them.

--Euripides, The Bacchae, 724-728.

'At this we fled
and barely missed being torn to pieces by the women.
Unarmed, they swooped down upon the herds of cattle
grazing there on the green of the meadow. And then
you could have seen a single woman with bare hands tear
a fat calf, still bellowing with fright in two, while
others clawed the heifers to pieces. There were ribs
and cloven hooves scattered everywhere, and scraps smeared
with blood hung from the fir trees. And bulls, their
raging fury gathered in their horns, lowered their heads
to charge, then fell, stumbling to the earth, pulled down
by hordes of women and stripped of flesh and skin more
quickly, sire, than you could blink your royal eyes.'

--Euripides, The Bacchae, 733-747.

As for the quality content of rock music, let me comment only that its lovers tend to behave like addicts. But for that matter, so did the 'cats' and 'alligators' of the 1930s listening to swing played by name-bands.

--Virgil Thomson, N Y Review,
June 19, 1969, p. 33.

He (Mink) covered his face with his black bear blanket hung all over with shells of clams, as he was squatting down dancing, going to the right around the fire in the middle of the house. As soon as he arrived at the doorway he began the words of his song in this way,

Ya ha ha, ya ha; ya ha ha, ya ha.

Mink is wearing over his face the middle of the face of Wolf. Ya ha ha, ya ha.

As soon as the song had words, Mink lowered his hand so that the head of the double-headed serpent was seen sitting on his head. As soon as all the Myth people saw the double-headed serpent their bodies became contorted for a while.

--Boas, Religion of the Kwakiutl, p. 91.

Then Mink ran out of the doorway. Then he took off the head of the double-headed serpent which was sitting on his head. He took the head of the eldest one of the princes of Wolf and put it on his head. Then he covered his face with his hands as he was dancing into the house. He was dancing around the fire in the middle of the house. As soon as he arrived at the doorway there began the words of the song of Mink,

Ya ha ha, ya ha, ya ha ha, ya ha.

Mink is wearing over his face the princes of Wolf, ya ha ha, ya ha.

That was, it is said, when they stopped their song and the four friends ran out together, that is Mink, for they escaped from the Wolves when Mink lowered his hands and when the Wolves saw plainly the late prince sitting on the head of Mink, the head that had been cut off. Now the Wolves in vain pursued Mink and his three friends. The Wolves did not get them. Now all the Myth people went out after this. Then they were ashamed and they just scattered. Now they left Crooked-Beach after this. They did not live together after this on account of what had been done by Mink, the great beginning of the Sparrows. Now they were no more men after this. Now some are quadrupeds, others birds on account of what was done by K'ax, the Mink.

Boas, Religion of the Kwakiutl, p. 91-92.

But she was foaming at the mouth, and her crazed eyes rolling with frenzy. She was mad, stark mad, possessed by Bacchus. Ignoring his cries of pity, she seized his left arm at the wrist; then, planting her foot upon his chest, she pulled, wrenching away the arm at the shoulder-- not by her own strength, for the god had put inhuman power in her hands. Ino, meanwhile, on the other side, was scratching off his flesh. Then Autonoe and the whole horde of Bacchae swarmed upon him. Shouts everywhere, he screaming with what little breath was left, they shrieking in triumph. One tore off an arm, another a foot still warm in its shoe. His ribs were clawed clean of flesh and every hand was smeared with blood as they played ball with scraps of Pentheus' body.

The pitiful remains lie scattered, one piece among the sharp rocks, others lying lost among the leaves in the depths of the forest. His mother, picking up his head, impaled it on her wand. She seems to think it is some mountain lion's head which she carries in triumph through the thick of Cithaeron.

--Euripides, The Bacchae, 1121-1143.

The rhythm formerly known as rock-and-roll, nowadays as rock, has lately been the subject of dithyramb in the press and of ecstatic cries even from musicians. I am sure there must be excellence in some of it. Not in the rhythmic patterns, however, which are likely to be oversimple and quite monotonous, having early got crystalized that way for serving a public aged nine to fourteen. Their monotony has nevertheless facilitated poetic expansion, so that we have now in Bob Dylan, for instance, a current-events verbal content comparable in wit and in forthrightness to that of Caribbean calypso. Unfortunately that same monotony invites, as a substitute of pain for tedium, high amplification. As a result, I have not looked far in rock for masterpieces. Mostly the numbers I have heard have been flawed by rhythmic poverty and by an over-insistent level of delivery.

--Virgil Thomson, N Y Review, p. 33.

They said that Dionysus was no son of Zeus, but Semele had slept beside a man in love and fathered off her shame on Zeus--a fraud, they sneered, contrived by Cadmus to protect his daughter's name. They said she lied, and Zeus in anger at that lie blasted her with lightning. Because of that offense I have stung them with frenzy, hounded

them from home up to the mountains where they wander,
crazed of mind, and compelled to wear my orgies' livery.

--Euripides, The Bacchae, 28-34.

Cadmus the king has abdicated,
leaving his throne and power to his grandson Pentheus;
who now revolts against divinity, in me;
thrusts me from his offerings; forgets my name
in his prayers. Therefore I shall prove to him
and every man in Thebes that I am god
indeed. And when my worship is established here,
and all is well, then I shall go my way
and be revealed to other men in other lands.

--Euripides, The Bacchae, 43-50.

"A century where the only gods are immediately useful,
and grow angry only as their worshipers do."

--Leroj Jones.

Here ends homo ludens.

2. PHENOMENOLOGY AND "MOUSIKĒ"

I feel obliged to discuss the affinity (hinted at earlier, see above p. 7) between archaic "mousikē" and the phenomenological method itself.

As we have seen, phenomenology is an attempt to rediscover the world, this world. Insofar as our consciousness of the world is framed by patterns of thought which "intellectualize" or "mathematize" the world, phenomenology makes thematic the intent to disclose these patterns which are limiting factors in order to gain direct access to phenomena as it is immediately presented to consciousness. The point is, if the phenomenological method is used correctly, we should undergo a fuller awareness of phenomena than we are ordinarily accustomed.

The question I wish to ask is this: Did archaic "mousikē" as intended by archaic man perform the same function in archaic times as is the aim of phenomenology today? At this stage my answer is a qualified "yes." The major issue of qualification stems from the differences in the cultural points of view. Archaic "mousikē", functioning in a mythical context, enjoyed the power of collective consciousness. The individual was responsible, as an individual, for correct performance, but he was also assured that those about him knew and cared. Phenomenology, on the other hand, emerges in a society which caters to solipsism.

"Mousikē" as a re-assertion of primordial Being is a process

in the oral tradition which remembers its exemplary model. The memory is thematically recognized as a playful device. Phenomenology, on the other hand, comes within the written tradition, and insofar as it is an activity of philosophy, homo sapiens has thematic priority over homo ludens.

"Mousikē" can fall into decay by becoming overly self-conscious. Homo ludens, the very source of its power, can also be "mousikē's" call to abstraction. There can be no denial that "[music] for [music's] sake" can be fun, but its presence is at the same time a distraction from "mousikē". "Mousikē" answers the question "Why is there [music]?" with a display of testamentary conviction. Phenomenologists would like to answer the question "Why is there Being?" with the best precision homo sapiens has at his disposal.

Can phenomenology be playful? Can "mousikē" be philosophical? Would cross-pollination between "mousikē" and phenomenology be advisable? This thesis may be said to have pursued this possibility.

There is one final question to be raised. Does any "mousikē" exist right now? Solipsistically of course the answer can be "yes." Indeed, I could answer with a song and dance. But since I can also deny it and since under the rules of solipsism my world is the world, any answer is futile. Solipsism is an abstract game.

The question is better put in Kwakiutl terms, for example: To whom does the grizzly bear award his dance? Whom do the trees praise? It would not surprise me to discover the grizzly bear awarding his dance to the trees and the trees, in turn, praising

the grizzly. As for my fellow man, I am ashamed to report that he considers the grizzly almost more trouble than he can bear, and that his noise level generally overpowers anything the trees might have to say. His [music] deafens "mousikē".

Here ends homo sapiens.

3. KAFKA'S SEQUEL

OR

THE MUSES ARE NOT AFRAID TO USE FOUR-LETTER WORDS

After they had de-mythologized most everything in sight, they grew weary of carrying messages around. Then, too, there were no longer enough trees from which to manufacture paper. The messages, which had formerly been recopied from time to time on a fresh scroll, were being lost. Many were forced to commit their messages to memory. No one was happy. Then someone invented the computer and announced that he was going to build a computer big enough so that it would carry the messages of everyone in the world and still have plenty of room left over. And so it was done, and with the burden of carrying messages lifted from everyone's minds, the people began to poke around, hoping to dig up lost messages and put them in the computer.

Then someone said, "What are we doing this for? We're not couriers anymore. We're kings! We're all kings! We're free! Now the computer is our courier, and we can direct our own messages for it to carry." The idea was popularly taken up. People sent in messages as fast as they could invent them. Several times the computer had to be enlarged. Then one day the grim truth appeared. The computer's caretakers realized that it was no longer feasible to enlarge the computer. But they also realized that they couldn't afford to tell this fact to the people-kings. So they devised a plan. They instructed the computer to continue to accept and store

all new messages, but to begin an updating function. It worked like this. When a message in storage had not been requested for a specified period of time, that message was to be discontinued. The caretakers had to keep the plan a secret, since otherwise there would always be some troublemaker who would request esoteric messages just to keep them from being deleted.

The plan worked for quite awhile, but it didn't solve the problem in any fundamental sense. It only bought time. Eventually the population explosion, accompanied by an information explosion, outpaced the computer's capacities. The computer then ceased to accept any new information. The people-kings were now kings without couriers.

There came one among them, saying, "Ours is a time for re-definition. Ours is a time for interpretation. We must sift through the accumulated information and find a new way to collate and codify this data, so that we can once again proceed to invest in our future with the kind of meaningful information which we all desire."

Here and there were murmurs of discontent. "Our leader's policy will at best only buy a little more time. What we should be asking is: Why the devil do we have the computer anyway?"

A voice replied, "The computer is all we got, my friend."

"Look, what have we got? A sleeping giant with its memory banks jam-packed full of the doodlings of idle kings."

"I respect your opinion, but please calm down a bit. What we desperately need is to sit down to some meaningful dialogue."

"The devil take your respect! You're so goddam desperate for dialogue you'd respect the opinion of a horse's behind if you thought you could gain any comfort from it."

"What strong words you use, my good fellow. You are an angry young man, then?"

"No, it is not I who am angry. As for my own part, I would be kept silent by my shame. But my gods are angry, even flatulent with rage. They speak through me. We who are beyond dialogue cannot understand. But one day the truth will come to penetrate the nostrils of our Being. Now may Zeus of the loud stroke zap you with a strong stink, and as you writhe in discomfort, may you also be pelted in like manner by Hera...Athene...Apollo...Mink...Seal...Salmon... Grizzly Bear...and all the holy rest of the everlasting immortals."

Here ends homo faber.

"The conclusion you jump to may be your own."

--James Thurber

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