

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Musical Improvisation as the Place where Being Speaks:

Heidegger, Language and Sources of Christian Hope

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## *Introduction and Acknowledgements*

The thesis enters several under-examined areas. First, improvisatory music will be considered as a human phenomenon in the widest sense (Chapter 1), and a phenomenon destined to suffer relative decline in the cultural environment of the modern West (Chapter 2). In consequence, the language in which improvisatory music is now discussed in the West will be shown to carry a negative charge (Chapter 3). Among various philosophies of music in the Western tradition, none appears to have foregrounded improvisatory music specifically. However Heidegger's philosophy, it will be suggested, harbours inner trends which favour the idea of music as a central component in philosophical discourse (Chapter 4) and may be used as a starting point for a re-emergent understanding of musical improvisation as a metaphysical principle (Chapter 5). Improvisation in music will be seen to be linked to the centrality of hope in human experience, and this will be exemplified in relation to certain cultures and twentieth-century composers (Chapter 6). Further to this connection between improvisation and hope, improvisation in a Christian liturgical context will be examined. There is a dearth of existing discussion, not only regarding improvisatory music in Christian liturgy, but liturgical spontaneity in general (Chapter 7).

I wish to thank Dr Bennett Zon, my supervisor, for his versatile and wide-ranging guidance. From the Benedictine Community of SS. Joseph and Columba, Glenstal Abbey, Ireland, I am especially grateful to the Rev. Francis McHenry for bringing to my attention relevant work by Jacques Maritain, to the Rev. Patrick Hederman, without whose friendly support it might have proved difficult to complete the present work, and to the Rev. Gregory Collins for proofreading.

## PART ONE: MUSICAL IMPROVISATION AND ‘*HOMO SAPIENS*’

### *Chapter 1*

#### *Improvisation and Human Universals*

Ethnomusicologist Bernard Lortat-Jacob asked thirteen contributors to his collection *L’Improvisation dans les musiques de tradition orale* to join him in providing a short definition of improvisation.<sup>1</sup> From the highly diverse responses, certain phrases tend to emerge: improvisation is composition in real time; it is the desire for unique and unpredictable utterance; it is composition in movement rather than repose; spontaneity. For one writer, improvisation is where music becomes most fully human, because human behaviour is spontaneous. Nevertheless, it is understood that all improvisations are rooted in some kind of pre-existent model. This will presumably be the wider model implied by the stylistic horizon which the improviser adopts automatically as a result of his own musical culture, as when a Western European improviser improvises to sound like Western art music or folk music. Or it will be a wider cultural musical model which the improviser more or less consciously assumes, as when a European improvises so as to sound like Oriental or African music. Or again it may involve a model consisting of more specific pre-existent material, very often a pre-existent tune or motif. For another writer, an improviser can genuinely improvise only in a musical tradition with which he is familiar and does not play “anything that comes to mind”, but ‘anything that comes to mind’ within a predetermined, limited sound-conception.<sup>2</sup>

It will be suggested in what follows that improvisation is, pre-eminently, the universal of human music-making, being the expression of a human nature which combines the ability to produce sounds with an innate curiosity. Humans possess

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<sup>1</sup> See Bernard Lortat-Jacob, “Improvisation: quatorze définitions.” In *L’Improvisation dans les musiques de tradition orale*, Bernard Lortat-Jacob (ed.), (Paris: S. E. L. A. F., 1987), pp. 67-70.

<sup>2</sup> Lukas Foss, Notes, *Studies in Improvisation*. Improvisation Chamber Ensemble. RCA LM-2558 (1961), p. 12 (documentation *sic*). Cited in Gregory E. Smith, “In Quest of a New Perspective on Improvised Jazz: A View from the Balkans.” *The World of Music* 33, no. 3 (1991): 29-52; p. 33.

‘consciousness of the power of sound, which may be expressed with whatever means are available: at minimum the voice, the body, the activated environment.’<sup>3</sup> Exploratory sound-making of any kind, and for any purpose, is musical improvisation. If, as will be suggested, music inhabits all speech, then even prosodic inflections of the voice, its ‘timbre, tempo and inflection,’<sup>4</sup> can be the medium of musical improvisation and musical improvisation may share in the universality of language itself.

This raises the issue of musical universals, the idea that there are aspects of human musical behaviour which can be known to be common to the entire human race. There is already general agreement that music itself is universal, for ‘*[m]usic, like language and possibly religion, is a species-specific trait of man. All known human societies make music (and this includes societies in whose languages the word ‘music’ does not exist)*’.<sup>5</sup> This position is held with the qualification that ‘*[m]usic is universal, but its meaning is not.*’<sup>6</sup> In this connection, Titon and Slobin instance an Asian musician unfamiliar with Western music who, at an orchestral concert, enjoyed the prior tuning noises of the orchestra more than the works performed. However, the idea that all known societies make music by improvisation is unlikely to find strong current support within ethnomusicology. As Bruno Nettl observed in 1974, issues of improvisation have not been extensively addressed within this discipline, and it is still the case that ‘ethnomusicologists are only at the beginnings of their study of improvisational

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Orton, “From Improvisation to Composition.” In *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, vol 2, John Paynter, Tim Howell, Richard Orton, Peter Seymour (eds.), (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 762.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1998), p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Kofi Agawu, “The Challenge of Semiotics.” In *Rethinking Music*, Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), p. 141. Reference to John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (Seattle: Washington Univ. Press, 1973), p. 7. Note on typography: throughout the thesis square brackets, when placed within a citation, enclose any present alteration of, or interpolation made within the citation. Where such square brackets enclose a single letter, this indicates that an upper-case letter in the original source has been replaced in the present thesis citation by a lower-case letter (as here), or *vice versa*.

<sup>6</sup> Jeff Todd Titon and Mark Slobin, “The Music-Culture as a World of Music.” In *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World’s Peoples*, Jeff Todd Titon (ed.), (New York: Schirmer, 1996), p. 1.

technique'.<sup>7</sup> Moreover the very idea of universals, beyond that of the generalised universality of music itself, has been found controversial within ethnomusicology. Nettl considers that we know insufficient about anthropology and music history to speak with confidence of what is universal, or even define universality with finality.<sup>8</sup> Attempts to address this perceived problem include the work of Mary Louise Serafine who differentiates 'generic' processes, which are found in many cultures, from 'style-specific' processes, which are found in only one.<sup>9</sup> For Peter Jeffery 'nothing is truly universal except the human brain and the body it controls.'<sup>10</sup>

The methodological approach adopted by ethnomusicology is largely empirical in orientation. It is, as Nettl implies, details of the history and anthropology of the human race which furnish the data. If such empirical assumptions and no others are considered, any generalisations made about human beings (and universals are clearly generalisations) may always in theory be at risk of contradiction by some new empirical finding. However, the empirical approach to proving universal assertions is itself questionable. Karl Popper argues that the traditional paradigm of scientific induction is problematic. Induction involves a movement from 'singular statements' such as the results of experiments to 'universal statements' such as theories. Popper asserts that it is uncertain whether the mind may justifiably move from the singular to the universal simply on the basis of repeated inference. Theoretical discovery always requires a sort of 'creative intuition.' There cannot be logical justification for 'universal statements' about reality.<sup>11</sup> As Popper observed: 'The belief that science

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<sup>7</sup> Bruno Nettl, "Thoughts on Improvisation: A Comparative Approach." *The Musical Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (1974): 1-19; p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> See Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-Nine Issues and Concepts* (Urbana: Illinois Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 36-43.

<sup>9</sup> See Mary Louise Serafine, *Music as Cognition: The Development of Thought in Sound* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 39-42.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Jeffery, *Re-Envisioning Past Musical Cultures: Ethnomusicology in the Study of Gregorian Chant* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1992), p. 54.

<sup>11</sup> See Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1959), pp. 27-32.



proceeds from observation to theory is still so widely and so firmly held that my denial of it is often met with incredulity'.<sup>12</sup> Yet if Popper is right, empirical data can never ultimately support the claim to the existence of any universals. For Popper, universal statements, though unverifiable, can nevertheless be falsified.<sup>13</sup> However, even this is questioned by Michael Polanyi:

Sir Karl Popper has pointed out that, though not strictly verifiable, scientific generalisations can be strictly refuted. But the application of this principle cannot be strictly prescribed. It is true that a single piece of contradictory evidence refutes a generalisation, but experience can present us only with *apparent contradictions* and there is no strict rule by which to tell whether any apparent contradiction is an *actual contradiction*. The falsification of a scientific statement can therefore no more be strictly established than its verification. Verification and falsification are *both formally indeterminate* procedures.<sup>14</sup>

Echoing Popper's emphasis on intuition, Polanyi continues: '[T]he final sanction of discovery lies in the sight of a coherence which our intuition detects and accepts as real; but history suggests that there are no universal standards for assessing such coherence.'<sup>15</sup>

Consequently, the claim in what follows that improvisation is a musical universal is not based, nor could it be based, on wide-ranging cultural evidence for the universality of improvisation itself, evidence which is ever open to change, as musical cultural practices are understood afresh, or more cultures are discovered. The claim is based on a coherent intuition concerning the 'nature of the human brain and the body it controls,' which, as Jeffery asserts above, is 'truly universal.' Clifford Geertz concurs in a cautious formulation that '[t]he doctrine of the psychic unity of mankind, which so far as I am aware, is today not seriously questioned by any reputable anthropologist . . . asserts that there are no essential differences in the fundamental nature of the thought

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<sup>12</sup> Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: the Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (1963) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 46.

<sup>13</sup> See Popper, *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, pp. 40-42.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Polanyi, "The Creative Imagination." *Chemical and Engineering News* 44, no. 17 (25th April, 1966): 85-93; p. 85.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 90.

processes among the various living races of men.’<sup>16</sup> Applying this principle to music, ‘[e]ssential physiological and cognitive processes that generate musical composition and performance may even be genetically inherited, and therefore present in almost every human being.’<sup>17</sup> Keeping in mind the distinction between intuitions about a universal human nature, and empirical observations of human culture, the defence developed below of the universality of musical improvisation in human experience will not emphasise evidence for improvisation gathered across cultures and history, but rather stress argument from the universal nature of the human brain as exploratory and body as sound-producing. It will adopt this emphasis despite Nettl’s claim that ‘[d]emands of human physiology and anatomy do not provide a very convincing argument’<sup>18</sup> for universals. By contrast, for Donald Brown, ‘human biology *is* a key to understanding many human universals.’<sup>19</sup> For Leonard Meyer, ‘it is strange that musicologists . . . have ignored the discipline of biology’.<sup>20</sup>

What follows will consider first the implications of some current infancy research in the area of musical behaviour, while also recognising its inconclusiveness, for ‘[d]etailed information on the early musical responses and productivity of normal children prior to 2 years of age is notably absent’.<sup>21</sup> Here, ‘behaviour which could possibly be musically relevant is the ability of infants to mimic the intonational contour of speech. This is the pre-speech vocal exploration often called ‘babbling’.’<sup>22</sup> ‘Widely

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<sup>16</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 62.

<sup>17</sup> Blacking, *How Musical is Man?*, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Nettl, *Study of Ethnomusicology*, p. 42.

<sup>19</sup> Donald E. Brown, *Human Universals* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1991), p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Leonard B. Meyer, “A Universe of Universals.” *The Journal of Musicology* 16, no. 1 (1998): 3-25; p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> Linda Kelly and Brian Sutton-Smith, “A Study of Infant Musical Productivity.” In *Music and Child Development*, J. Craig Peery, Irene Weiss Peery, Thomas W. Draper (eds.). (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1987), p. 35.

<sup>22</sup> John A. Sloboda, *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music* (1985) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 200.

divergent views are held about all aspects of [the babbling] stage.’<sup>23</sup> According to Anthony Storr, babbling is not only imitation of heard sounds for it occurs ‘even if they are born deaf or blind.’<sup>24</sup> ‘Deaf mutes start babbling because they are biologically determined to do so, and stop it because they lack the ability to hear the sounds around them which would otherwise stimulate the development of their babbling.’<sup>25</sup> For infants with hearing, ‘[a]fter birth, vocal interchange between mother and infant continues to reinforce mutual attachment . . . The crooning, cooing tones and rhythms which most mothers use when addressing babies are initially more significant in cementing the relationship between them than the words which accompany these vocalisations.’<sup>26</sup> Storr favours this phenomenon as an interpretation of the origins of music in general: ‘It will never be possible to establish the origins of human music with any certainty; however, it seems probable that music developed from the prosodic exchanges between mother and infant which foster the bond between them.’<sup>27</sup> Initially more reminiscent of waves than of particular pitch attacks, a change occurs at about the age of a year and a half, when children can start to produce discrete pitches.<sup>28</sup>

In connection with possible links to adult musical improvisation, the exploratory nature of these vocal sounds should be emphasised. Sloboda confirms that ‘at about the age of 18 months . . . there is no evidence that children are attempting to imitate heard songs; rather it seems as though they are experimenting with melodic interval construction.’<sup>29</sup> This may describe an early expression of musical improvisatory activity, for it is in fact only later ‘[b]y the age of two-and-a-half [that] a new milestone

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<sup>23</sup> Salwa Anwar Ahmed Abd El-Rahman, “An Infant’s Language Progress: Crying, Babbling, and First Words.” Ph. D dissertation, University of Hull, 1987, p. 73.

<sup>24</sup> Anthony Storr, *Music and the Mind* (1992) (London: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Abd El-Rahman, “Infant’s Language Progress,” p. 95.

<sup>26</sup> Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> See Howard Gardner, *Art, Mind and Brain: A Cognitive Approach to Creativity* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), p. 150.

<sup>29</sup> Sloboda, *Musical Mind*, p. 202.

is reached. Children begin to attempt to *imitate* parts of the songs they hear around them.<sup>30</sup> This early sonic experimentation parallels the process of sentence acquisition: ‘Children do not just repeat the sentences they hear, but create new sentences by applying the rules they have abstracted from their language. A similar proposal can be made for the way in which children learn and create music’.<sup>31</sup> Just as infants know how to produce an unlimited number of sentences, so they appear to know how to create novel sequences in music. Linked to essential communication between mother and infant, sound exploration thus appears as a characteristic of human nature, with one possible explanation that ‘inborn in humans is a genetic motivation to train the language-handling network in the processing of simple, organized, but otherwise biologically irrelevant sound patterns - as they occur in music’.<sup>32</sup> For Kelly and Sutton-Smith genetic explanations are speculative,<sup>33</sup> while others propose that the elements of music are ‘a reflection of the organization of the human central nervous system.’<sup>34</sup> From yet another point of view, these sounds may arise first from facial muscle movements, experiments with mouth and tongue, which happen additionally to produce sound which is then found interesting, repeated and explored by the infant through muscle-sound association.<sup>35</sup> Thus, in the case of apparent babbling in deaf children, they might be moving muscles which only happen to produce sound.<sup>36</sup> However, whatever theoretical basis for babbling is proposed, Deacon can speak of a spontaneous, ‘unstereotypic’ ‘sampling’ where ‘human infants begin spontaneously

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 204.

<sup>31</sup> Rita Aiello, “Music and Language: Parallels and Contrasts.” In *Musical Perceptions*, Rita Aiello (ed.) with John Sloboda, (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), p. 42.

<sup>32</sup> Juan G. Roederer, “Physical and Neuropsychological Foundations of Music: The Basic Questions.” In *Music, Mind and Brain: The Neuropsychology of Music*, Manfred Clynes (ed.), (New York: Plenum, 1982), p. 42.

<sup>33</sup> See Kelly and Sutton-Smith, “Study of Infant Musical Productivity,” p. 51

<sup>34</sup> J. Craig Peery and Irene Weiss Peery, “The Role of Music in Child Development.” In *Music and Child Development*, Peery, Peery, Draper (eds.), p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> See Jean Aitchison, *The Articulate Mammal: An Introduction to Psycholinguistics* (1976) (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 77; 79.

and incessantly experimenting with sound production, sampling most of the range of possible phonemes that speech will later employ. No other mammal species' babies produce even a tiny fraction of the sort of unstereotypic vocal play that human babies produce.'<sup>37</sup> 'That all children babble, is more or less a universal view'.<sup>38</sup>

What also emerges from the above extracts is that the maintenance (though, given evidence from the deaf, possibly not the inception) of babbling presupposes the ability to listen. Human nature is that of a linguistic, heuristic animal who early in life listens to sounds, including those emanating from his or her body. Sound produced by the body will be investigated, as the whole of the environment is investigated by humans, in an exploratory way. Scruton concurs that the initial discovery by human beings that music can be made by them always involved improvisatory exploration of sounds. For Scruton, this is a corollary of the way in which humans listen. He identifies listening for listening's sake as exclusively human, for 'when we attend to the sound with no view to *informing* ourselves, we must inevitably take an interest in *how it sounds*, which is an interest in the act of listening.'<sup>39</sup> For Juan Roederer, '[p]itch probably is perceived by higher animals in nearly the same way as by humans. But animals are not spontaneously motivated to listen to abstract pitch successions and superpositions, nor

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<sup>36</sup> Mayumi Adachi, personal electronic mail communication, University of Sheffield, 2nd March, 2000. Adachi is a developmental psychomusicologist of international visibility.

<sup>37</sup> Terrence Deacon, *The Symbolic Species: The Co-Evolution of Language and the Human Brain* (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 251.

<sup>38</sup> Abd El-Rahman, "Infant's Language Progress," p. 107. Regarding the possibility of a link between babbling and speech, there is much division of opinion. In favour of such a link (the Learning Theory) see O. H. Mowrer, *Learning Theory and Symbolic Processes* (London: John Wiley, 1960); H. Winitz, "The Development of Speech and Language in the Normal Child." In *Speech Pathology*, R. Rieber and R. Brubaker (eds.), (Amsterdam: North Holland [*sic*], 1966). The Learning Theory holds that babies imitate the vocal sounds of carers who are associated with food and warmth. See Abd El-Rahman, *ibid.*, p. 74. Against the link with language (Maturation Theory) see E. Lenneberg, *Biological Foundations of Language* (London: John Wiley, 1967). Maturation theory holds that babies babble because 'biologically determined to do so.' Abd El-Rahman, *ibid.* There is 'no connection with later speech development.' *Ibid.*, p. 75. Similarly, Jakobsonian Theory holds that 'babbling is more maturational than a learning process [bearing] no connection with later speech development.' *Ibid.*, p. 76. See R. Jakobson, *Child Language, Aphasia and Phonological Universals* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968). All book references above from Abd El-Rahman, *ibid.* pp. 74-76.

<sup>39</sup> Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), p. 218.

do they respond emotionally to such events.’<sup>40</sup> This unique manner of listening will lead the human to take an interest in the sounds she can make herself, and cause her to make sounds for their own sake. Scruton notes: ‘Music begins when people listen to the sounds they are making, and so discover *tones*. Of all musical experiences, there is none more direct than free improvisation . . . and this should be understood as a paradigm of *listening* - the form of listening from which music began.’<sup>41</sup> Improvisation thus answers the question: “How do I sound?”

Ethnomusicology is a young discipline still concerned mainly with factual observation. An empiricist mindset which dominates it, along with certain other disciplines, discourages theory in the promotion of a common-sense rejection of ‘useless’ speculation as a diversion from everyday practical concerns.<sup>42</sup> Ethnomusicology’s position in fact resembles that of “mainstream” musicology in the early 1960s. Speaking of the latter in 1961, Arthur Mendel said: ‘Music history, being a young science, is still, to a greater extent than some other forms of history, concerned with establishing basic facts . . . We shall for some time to come continue to be busy establishing what are called individual facts . . . by reasoning from the evidence’.<sup>43</sup> Joseph Kerman observed: ‘Within a dozen years . . . [of] the Second World War . . . such leaders as emerged in the much larger field of musicology were notably deficient in thinking (and writing) about the philosophy or merely the unspoken assumptions underlying activity in their field.’<sup>44</sup> A recent commentator on the rise of ethnomusicology, Ann Schuursma, adopts a parallel critique of ethnomusicology.

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<sup>40</sup> Roederer. “Physical and Neuropsychological Foundations of Music,” p. 41.

<sup>41</sup> Scruton, *Aesthetics*, p. 217.

<sup>42</sup> See Keith Jenkins, “Introduction: On Being Open about our Closures.” In *The Postmodern History Reader*, Keith Jenkins (ed.), (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Arthur Mendel, “First Public Address: Evidence and Explanation.” In *The International Musicological Society: Report of the Eighth Congress, New York 1961*, vol 2 *Reports* (London and New York: Bärenreiter Kassel, 1962), p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Kerman, *Musicology* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1985), p. 163.

Ethnomusicology '[a] century or more ago . . . was beginning to emerge as a subject in its own right'.<sup>45</sup> 'By the beginning of the 1960s ethnomusicology was poised to grow out of its childhood and into its adolescence.'<sup>46</sup> 'In the prevailing atmosphere of positivism, the 1960s was a time to be as 'scientific' and 'objective' as possible.'<sup>47</sup> 'In the seventies . . . fieldwork method became increasingly important.'<sup>48</sup> It seems in fact only by the time Schuursma is publishing, in 1992, that this state of affairs is changing. She writes of how '[t]he diminishing of description-centered scholarship in favor of . . . interpretation . . . characterizes recent ethnomusicological research in America. The move away from 'objectivity' . . . and the emergence of research models based on . . . 'interpretive' anthropology . . . are keys to current research.'<sup>49</sup>

Ethnomusicologists sometimes affirm that there exists a universal human nature, as Jeffery's observation above demonstrates, even if the subject is not to the fore in discussion. Some recognition of the questions surrounding the idea of universals is reflected in publications in ethnomusicology cited by Schuursma. However, considering ethnomusicology's mainly empiricist traditions, it is not surprising that the arguments advanced in these recent articles would tend to suggest a lack of consensus on whether or not one may speak of universals in music, and, if so, what they might be.<sup>50</sup> The publication dates of Schuursma's selection of representative material,

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<sup>45</sup> Ann Briegleb Schuursma, *Ethnomusicology Research: A Select Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1992), p. xvii.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xix.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xx.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xxv-xxvi.

<sup>50</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 9-66, Chapter 2, "Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology" which cites a number of studies. They are: John Blacking, "Can Musical Universals Be Heard?" *The World of Music* 19, nos. 1-2 (1977): 14-22; Blacking '[c]onsiders musical processes, rather than musical products, vital to the discussion of universals in music . . . Concludes that much research needs to be done before we can even begin to speak of musical universals'. Schuursma, *ibid.*, pp. 12-13. Charles Lafayette Biolès, "Universals of Musical Behavior: a Taxonomic Approach." *The World of Music* 26, no. 2 (1984): 50-65; Biolès works 'from the basic premise that there are no absolute universals of music, but that all peoples have the same type of musical behaviour'. Schuursma, *ibid.*, p. 17. Frank Harrison, "Universals in Music: Towards a Methodology of Comparative Research." *The World of Music* 19, nos. 1-2 (1977): 30-36; Harrison claims that '[u]niversals are taken to mean elements in common use by all the world's inhabitants . . . Concludes that the most striking manifestation of universals in music is music's

considered in relation to the date of the publication of her *Bibliography* (1992), suggest that, at the time of the latter's compilation, any discussion on universals had not been significantly advanced for some years. Ethnomusicology is not alone in its quietude around philosophical issues of universality. It has been observed of the contemporary community of academic historians, whose discipline is likewise empirically based that '[q]uestions about relativism, truth, and objectivity are relegated to the philosophy of history or left to those few historians . . . with announced interests in such issues.'<sup>51</sup> In a similar vein, Joseph Kerman writes: 'Ethnomusicology encompasses the meaning and value of music along with everything else about it, but what is usually considered is the meaning of a musical genre to its culture and the value of a musical activity to its society.'<sup>52</sup> Alan Merriam's 'famous definition of ethnomusicology as 'the study of music in culture' carries with it a corollary saying what ethnomusicology is not. It is

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universality.' Schuursma, *ibid*, p. 23. Dane L. Harwood, "Contributions from Psychology to Musical Universals." *The World of Music* 21, no. 1 (1979): 48-64; Harwood 'outlines some of the questions faced in looking for 'universal' behavior'. Schuursma, *ibid*, pp. 23-24. Dane L. Harwood, "Universals in Music: A Perspective from Cognitive Psychology." *Ethnomusicology* 20, no. 3 (1976): 521-533; Harwood '[e]xamines the search for universals in music from the cognitive psychologist's perspective . . . what humans have in common in perceiving, remembering, understanding and using musical information'. Schuursma, *ibid*, p. 24. George List, "On the Non-Universality of Musical Perspectives." *Ethnomusicology* 15, no. 3 (1971): 399-402; List '[d]oubts that there is a universal response to music. The single universal aspect of music is that most people make it.' Schuursma, *ibid*, p. 32. David P. McAllester, "Some Thoughts on 'Universals' in World Music." *Ethnomusicology* 15, no. 3 (1971): 379-380; McAllester '[r]emarks that scholars stress differences among musics and that maybe it is time to look at similarities . . . there are probably no absolute universals in music because of human variability and complexity. Feels there are lots of near-universals'. Schuursma, *ibid*, p. 34. Leonard B. Meyer, "Universalism and Relativism in the Study of Ethnic Music." *Ethnomusicology* 4, no. 2 (1960): 49-54; Meyer 'help[s] to clarify the correlative problem of universality vs. relativity'. Schuursma, *ibid*, p. 38. J. H. Kwabena Nketia, "Universal Perspectives in Ethnomusicology." *The World of Music* 26, no. 2 (1984): 3-24; Nketia regards as universal the idea of 'processes capable of application . . . outside their original environment'. Schuursma, *ibid*, p. 44. Charles Seeger, "Reflections upon a given topic: Music in Universal Perspective." *Ethnomusicology* 15, no. 3 (1971): 385-398. Seeger presents the 'outline of a taxonomy hierarchy of the parameter of speech semantic variance, which he calls an abstract-universal-concept and concrete-particular-percept.' Schuursma, *ibid*, p. 56. Klaus P. Wachsmann, "Universal Perspectives in Music." *Ethnomusicology* 15, no. 3 (1971): 381-384. Wachsmann '[c]oncludes that music is a special kind of time and the creation of musical time a universal occupation of man.' Schuursma, *ibid*, p. 65. In addition, it is to be noticed that the following editions of the periodical *The World of Music* are wholly devoted to the discussion of possible musical universals: vol 19, nos. 1/2 (1977) and vol 26, no. 2 (1984).

<sup>51</sup> Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, "Telling the Truth about History." In *Postmodern History Reader*, Jenkins (ed.), p. 215.

<sup>52</sup> Kerman, *Musicology*, p. 16.



not the study of music or musics as autonomous systems or structures,<sup>53</sup> nor, on this definition, is it primarily a study of humankind's relationship to music in general.

Such a methodological stance, found within ethnomusicology, which inhibits a possible recognition of universals if they exist, would tend to be reinforced by the contemporary postmodern intellectual climate, in which totalising concepts, like that of universality, conflict with the prevailing rejection of grand narrative modes of interpretation. 'Postmodernism asserts that grand narratives of legitimation are no longer credible. Rather, we must now celebrate differences, multiple voices, conflicting perspectives, unorthodox readings.'<sup>54</sup> This postmodern stance whereby '[r]elativism is now an issue in every branch of knowledge from science to literature'<sup>55</sup> continues a longer trend for '[t]he postwar generation has questioned fixed categories previously endorsed as rational by all thoughtful men, and has denaturalized social behavior once presumed to be encoded in the very structure of humanness.'<sup>56</sup> Yet, whatever, and however extensive, the universal characteristics of mankind are taken to be, it has been claimed that, 'in the absence of a universal human nature, there would be no universal cultural pattern, and . . . in the absence of a universal culture pattern there could be no science of anthropology.'<sup>57</sup> As Clifford Geertz remarks, 'some conception of what a human individual is, as opposed to a rock, an animal, a rainstorm, or a god, is, so far as I can see, universal.'<sup>58</sup> Brown suspects that '*nowhere* in the ethnographic literature is there *any* description of what real people really did that is not

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 164. No documentation of citation from Merriam.

<sup>54</sup> Ellen Koskoff, "What Do We Want to Teach When We Teach Music? One Apology, Two Short Trips, Three Ethical Dilemmas, and Eighty-two Questions." In *Rethinking Music*, Cook and Everist (eds.), p. 545.

<sup>55</sup> Appleby, Hunt, Jacob, "Telling the Truth," pp. 216-217.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 211.

<sup>57</sup> Melford E. Spiro, "Human Nature in its Psychological Dimensions." *American Anthropologist* 56 (1954): 19-30; p. 26.

<sup>58</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (1983) (London: Harper Collins/Fontana, 1993), p. 59.

shot through with the signs of a universal human nature.’<sup>59</sup> Leonard Meyer writes of an early twentieth-century emphasis on musical universals.<sup>60</sup> Albrecht Schneider recalls the nineteenth-century hopes for ‘the universal principles underlying music-making’<sup>61</sup> in studies by Benjamin Ives Gilman and Herbert Spencer in the 1890s who were concerned to extract generalities from comparative cultural research. However, since the early twentieth century, comparative musicologists rejected a unified view of humanity, and were fascinated by cultural diversity partly as a result of distaste for ethnocentrism.<sup>62</sup> Thus ‘in the development of a general methodology of ethnomusicology as promulgated by leaders like Hornbostel, Sachs, Herzog, Kunst, Merriam and Hood, the non-universality of music looms as a major point of agreement’.<sup>63</sup>

Exploratory sound-production in infancy is defined as a universal human act, as will be shown in more detail in Chapter 5. This is true even if its individual manifestations may be culturally-specific in sound, given that the phenomenon is essentially imitative of heard sounds. This means that any methodological bias towards music as a culturally particular rather than a universal human phenomenon might be expected to inhibit in advance the range of discussion concerning how a universal infantile paradigm, if it exists, may perdure somehow in human music-making during the remaining lifetime of the human person. In addition, the examination of any connection between infant behaviour and human music-making could only take place in an interdisciplinary environment which linked psychology and ethnomusicology,

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<sup>59</sup> Brown, *Human Universals*, p. 5.

<sup>60</sup> See Meyer, “Universalism and Relativism,” p. 49.

<sup>61</sup> Albrecht Schneider, “Psychological Theory and Comparative Musicology.” In *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology*. Bruno Nettl and Philip V. Bohlman (eds.). (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1988), p. 293. References to Benjamin Ives Gilman, “On Some Psychological Aspects of the Chinese Musical System.” *Philosophical Review* 1, no. 1 (1892): 54-78; no. 2, 154-178: p. 54. footnote 1. Also Herbert Spencer, “The Origin of Music.” *Mind* 60 (1890): 449-468.

<sup>62</sup> See Nettl, *Study of Ethnomusicology*, p. 37.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

and this is an additional practical obstacle. Thus published interdisciplinary material, engaging the full expertise of both these disciplines, and discussing a possible connection between babbling and specifically *improvisatory* music practices in later life is at best exiguous. It is not possible to state categorically that any exists.<sup>64</sup>

‘Ethnomusicology tended to be shaped by the same theoretic currents which shaped anthropology.’<sup>65</sup> It is to writers from anthropology that reference will now be made for accounts of the nature of universality in human experience as it is understood by anthropologists in a given time or place. A shift towards an emphasis on the diversity rather than the universality of the human condition took place in both American and British anthropology in the early decades of the twentieth century, a shift which comparative musicology reflected not least in the replacement of the latter term by the term “ethnomusicology.”<sup>66</sup> It has been suggested that in Britain a renewed sense of the particular urgency of field-work tended to displace concern with generalities and implant a preference for particulars and accumulation of data.<sup>67</sup> This concern was generated in part by a fear that primitive peoples were fast disappearing.<sup>68</sup> Thus, ‘the hallmark of British anthropology in the first two decades of this century was a cautious and sceptical attitude to any grand theoretical formulation’<sup>69</sup> and the idea of

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<sup>64</sup> Eric F. Clarke, a scholar of international visibility in musical cognition, advises that he is unaware of any literature which addresses a possible connection between these two areas. He identifies as experts in the areas of infant vocalising Sandra Trehub, Laurel Trainer and Mayumi Adachi. Personal electronic mail communication, University of Sheffield, 22nd February, 2000. Adachi concurs that there is no absolute consensus on why infants babble. She distinguishes the theory that babbling is innate, whereby it is motivated by an exploratory impulse, from the theory that babbling is learned/facilitated, that is, arising from contact with caregivers. The positions are not mutually exclusive. In the former case, Adachi asserts, ‘it would not be so difficult to link between infants’ babbling and adults’ informal singing.’ She suggests that ‘adults’ improvisatory singing is a good topic for music psychology.’ Personal electronic mail communication, University of Sheffield, 25th February, 2000.

<sup>65</sup> Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 4-5.

<sup>66</sup> ‘The study-object of ethnomusicology, or, as it originally was called: comparative musicology, is the *traditional* music and musical instruments of all cultural strata of mankind . . . The position . . . is that each race, each population group has its own manner of musical expression’. Jaap Kunst, *Ethnomusicology: A Study of its Nature, its Problems, Methods and Representative Personalities to which is added a Bibliography* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff. 1959), pp. 1-2.

<sup>67</sup> See Adam Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists: the Modern British School* (1973) (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

universality is clearly such a formulation. Similarly, for followers of the American Franz Boas ‘each population had its own culture . . . Moreover, this culture imposed distinct modes of experiencing the world.’<sup>70</sup> In America the Boasian trend continued to make headway, studying primitive peoples for their own sake, rather than to gather material for a general theory of the development of culture or society. The objective was “inside” description of the manner of life of non-western societies.<sup>71</sup> ‘The Boasian tradition of cultural anthropology was . . . always relativist, insisting that other people saw the world differently from ourselves’<sup>72</sup> and emphasising the differences between cultures. As Brown notes: ‘From 1915 to 1934, American anthropologists established three fundamental principles about the nature of culture: that culture is a distinct kind of phenomenon that cannot be reduced to others (in particular, not to biology or psychology), that culture (rather than our physical nature) is the fundamental determinant of human behavior, and that culture is largely arbitrary.’<sup>73</sup> In consequence, ‘this profound interest in the various cultures as unique patterns of human life more than ever brought to light the great extent of cultural differentiation . . . All human thought and action, or so it seemed, *must* be determined by culture.’<sup>74</sup>

In the 1930s and 1940s, Ruth Benedict and Melville Herskovits provided comprehensive philosophical theories which would seek to undergird an anthropological methodology based on cultural relativism. For Herskovits, ‘[t]he anthropologist attempts to view human behavior from out of the cultural context of which it is a part and thus foregoes interpretation inspired by a ‘preconceived frame of reference,’ hence also avoids interpretation indicated by the frame of reference of his

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p. 184.

<sup>71</sup> See J. Tennekes, *Anthropology, Relativism and Method: An Inquiry into the Methodological Principles of a Science of Culture* (Assen, Netherlands: Koninklijke Van Gorcum & Comp. N. V., 1971), pp. 4-5.

<sup>72</sup> Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists*, p. 187.

<sup>73</sup> Brown, *Human Universals*, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> Tennekes, *Anthropology*, p. 5.

own culture.’<sup>75</sup> Herskovits is concerned for “an epistemology that derives from a recognition of the force of enculturative conditioning in shaping thought and behavior.’ . . . All human judgements are based on experience and experience is interpreted by every individual in terms of his own enculturation.’<sup>76</sup> ‘For Herskovits reality as such is actually culturally determined: it makes no sense to speak of reality apart from one’s experiencing that reality.’<sup>77</sup> Consequently, ‘in terms of the framework of our knowledge of the psychocultural processes of enculturation, the relativist can only once again pose his basic query: *Whose* objective reality?’<sup>78</sup> ‘[Herskovits’s] thinking then, is as follows: All human judgements are determined by the culture in which the subject is enculturated; among the various cultures differences are so great that one cannot speak of, for instance, cross-cultural norms; hence: all human judgement is relative since the basis for cross-cultural validity is non-existent.’<sup>79</sup>

However, this philosophy is highly problematic:

How can Herskovits hold . . . that all human judgements are culturally determined (and thus ‘culturally relative’) and at the same time maintain that the scientist is required to be utterly objective in his investigation and to avoid all ethnocentrism? If there is no such thing as an ‘objective reality’ and if ‘the force of enculturative experience channels all judgements’ - how then can the anthropologist be objective in the sense intended by Herskovits?<sup>80</sup>

As has been observed, ‘[m]an may be culturally determined, but that does not detract from the fact that he is also socially, psychically, and biotically determined.’<sup>81</sup> Perhaps mankind’s music-making is profoundly determined by socially, biotically or psychically determined tendencies exhibited from the first moments of the life of the human person, such as vocal sound exploration. Another critical trajectory which has

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 9. Citation from Melville J. Herskovits, “Tender- and Tough-Minded Anthropology and the Study of Values in Culture.” *South Western Journal of Anthropology* 7 (1951): 22-31; p. 24. Reference to Melville J. Herskovits, *Man and His Works* (New York: [prob. Knopf], 1949), p. 63.

<sup>77</sup> Tennekes, *ibid*, p. 24.

<sup>78</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, “Some Further Comments on Cultural Relativism.” *American Anthropologist* 60 (1958): 266-273; p. 271.

<sup>79</sup> Tennekes, *Anthropology*, p. 11.

<sup>80</sup> See *ibid*, p. 31. Citation from Herskovits, “Further Comments,” p. 270.

<sup>81</sup> Tennekes, *ibid*, p. 219.

been adopted against cultural relativism entails pointing out that human culture (the diversity of which forms the basis of the relativist thesis) is itself rooted in the unity of human nature.<sup>82</sup> All cultures are a response to general aspects of the human situation and its biology. The helplessness of infants, need for food and warmth, the various capacities of old and young, male and female, all these present basic similarities far outweighing variations in the human condition.<sup>83</sup> ‘The relation between culture and nature is often viewed as if man had culture in addition to his nature. Essentially this is the same misconception as when *animal rationale* is interpreted as if man were animal plus intellect. On account of mind the whole man is another sort of being. On account of his culture the nature of man is utterly different from that of an animal: the nature of man is being culture.’<sup>84</sup>

So difficult has it proved to eradicate the idea of psychic and biological universals, that it is possible to identify a paradoxical survival of belief in them even within the American relativist ethos itself. As Geertz explains: ‘The fundamental identity of mental functioning in *homo sapiens*, the so-called ‘psychic unity of mankind,’ had remained a background article of faith among even the most thoroughgoing of them, anxious as they were to do away with any notion of primitive minds or cultural racism.’<sup>85</sup> However the fundamental mental identity as understood by them was restricted to the most generalised capacities, hardly more than the capacity for learning, feeling, abstraction, and power of analogy.<sup>86</sup> An American anthropologist, Ralph

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<sup>82</sup> See *ibid*, p. 26. Reference to Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, p. 475.

<sup>83</sup> See A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, with the assistance of Wayne Untereiner and appendices by Alfred G. Meyer, *Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University* 47, no. 1 (1952) “Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions,” p. 176.

<sup>84</sup> B. Delfgaauw, *Geschiedenis en Vooruitgang*, vol 1 (Baarn: n.p., 1962), p. 163. Cited in Tennekes, *Anthropology*, p. 58.

<sup>85</sup> Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, p. 150. ‘Boas and many other anthropologists took vigorous steps to employ anthropology to combat racism.’ Brown, *Human Universals*, p. 55. ‘It is extremely important to notice Boas’s concern with racism. In the early decades of this century the eugenics movements and other trends had succeeded in . . . incorporating racist criteria into the U. S. immigration laws.’ *Ibid*.

<sup>86</sup> See Geertz, *ibid*.

Linton writing in 1954 observed: ‘Every culture includes a number of values which are so abstract and so generalized in their expression that they carry little emotional effect in themselves, although they lie at the base of the whole cultural structure.’<sup>87</sup> He writes: ‘If universal values exist, they must be sought for at the level of the deepest and most generalized conceptual values, those which stand in closest relation to the individual needs and social imperatives shared by the whole of mankind.’<sup>88</sup> Linton opts in due course to present a list of thirteen universal values, demonstrating all the more forcibly that the latter will not go away.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, relativist influences continue to be strong in America. ‘The postmodernist movement in American anthropology is essentially a radical development of the Boasian programme . . . The ethnographic object is multi-faceted, it can only be partially and fleetingly glimpsed from any one perspective, and it cannot be analysed.’<sup>90</sup> There is a perception that all grand narratives have been ideologies in disguise, and date from the time when ‘scientists had promised that they would understand the world and change it for the better.’<sup>91</sup>

It has already been observed how ethnomusicology is rooted in anthropological traditions of scholarly enquiry. Bruno Nettl observes that many leaders in ethnomusicology have backgrounds in anthropology.<sup>92</sup> It is also significantly in American scholarship that the historical roots of ethnomusicology are particularly strong. It has been variously pointed out that ‘[e]thnomusicology has been sometimes

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<sup>87</sup> Ralph Linton, “The Problem of Universal Values.” In *Method and Perspective in Anthropology: Papers in Honor of Wilson D. Wallis*, Robert F. Spencer (ed.), (Minneapolis: Minnesota Univ. Press, 1954), p. 151.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 152.

<sup>89</sup> See A. L. Kroeber, “Critical Summary and Commentary.” In *Method and Perspective*. Spencer (ed.), pp. 284-285. Kroeber here summarises Linton in “The Problem of Universal Values.”

<sup>90</sup> Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists*, pp. 187-188.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, p. 188. Kuper is referring to the ‘naive optimism of the nineteenth century when science and progress were expected to abolish all evils’. Ignace Lepp, *Death and Its Mysteries* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. xxi.

<sup>92</sup> See Bruno Nettl, “The Institutionalization of Musicology: Perspectives of a North American Ethnomusicologist.” In *Rethinking Music*, Cook and Everist (eds.), pp. 300-301.

characterized as a North American field.’<sup>93</sup> ‘North America is the ancestral home for ethnomusicology’.<sup>94</sup> In this connection, it is of interest to show the genealogical descent from anthropology to ethnomusicology in terms of one or two specific scholars: thus, for example, Nettl says that George Herzog used ‘. . . Boasian anthropological perspectives’.<sup>95</sup> And in due course, the influence of Herzog was felt in its turn in the work of distinguished ethnomusicologist David P. McAllester author of *Peyote Music, Enemy Way Music, Myth of the Great Star Chant*, and *Navajo Blessingway Singer* (co-edited with Charlotte J. Frisbie).<sup>96</sup> It is reasonable to expect that whatever characterises American anthropological approaches will be prominent in ethnomusicology on account of the latter’s heavy weighting of American influence, and it has been noted here that cultural relativism has been the prevailing ethos of American anthropological thought for the greater part of the twentieth century.

However, ‘ethnomusicologists began in the late 1960s to return to the study of universals.’<sup>97</sup> Nettl writes in 1983:

Universals in the conceptualization of music and in musical behavior are harder to isolate, but let me attempt a short list. Surely first among them must be the association of music with the supernatural. All known cultures accompany religious activity with music . . . Further, there is the conception of music as an art that consists of distinct units of creativity which can be identified, by place in ritual, by creator or performer, by opus number. One does not simply ‘sing,’ but one sings *something*. Music is composed of artefacts, although cultures differ greatly in their view of what constitutes such an artefact . . .

Also in this category of universals is the musical association with dance and speech. There is no culture that does not have *some* dance with musical accompaniment, nor one whose singing is completely without words, without poetry. These, then, are a few universals of the sort present in all or at least the overwhelming majority of musics, in practically all cultures, but not in each musical utterance.<sup>98</sup>

Neil Sorrell notes in 1992: ‘The new discipline of ethnomusicology, while drawing most of its impetus from the differences between cultures and examining each in its

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<sup>93</sup> Bruno Nettl, “The Dual Nature of Ethnomusicology in North America: The Contributions of Charles Seeger and George Herzog.” In *Comparative Musicology*, Nettl and Bohlman (eds.), p. 266.

<sup>94</sup> Daniel Neuman, “Epilogue: Paradigms and Stories.” In *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, Stephen Blum, Philip V. Bohlman, Daniel M. Neuman (eds.), (Urbana: Illinois Univ. Press, 1991), p. 275.

<sup>95</sup> Nettl, “Dual Nature of Ethnomusicology,” p. 270.

<sup>96</sup> See Jeff Todd Titon, description of contributors. In *Worlds of Music*, Titon (ed.), p. xvii.

<sup>97</sup> Nettl, *Study of Ethnomusicology*, p. 37.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, p. 40



own right, is nevertheless motivated by this need to discover universals that unite rather than divide humankind.’<sup>99</sup> It is noteworthy that these remarks, despite a willingness to consider issues of universality, nevertheless retain a preoccupation with musical characteristics displayed by cultures, rather than music-making tendencies exhibited by the human person, as, for instance, in infantile sound production.

This subsequent shift to universals within ethnomusicological discussion, as described by Nettl, seems to have been a late reflection of a slow resurgence of the idea of universality within anthropology itself, whose incipient developments can be traced to Britain in the 1920s and which represented a counter-trend to American relativism. Part of Wissler’s *Man and Culture* (1923), a book not much noticed at the time, was devoted to this problem of the universal categories of culture. Malinowski published his *A Scientific Theory of Culture* in 1944. He sought to show a universal culture pattern on the basis of the needs of the biotic substrate. In 1945, Murdock wrote “The Common Denominator of Cultures.”<sup>100</sup> This British movement was still only a tentative beginning of recovery of interest in universality, and it could be said even after the Second World War that a considerable division was present in Britain between the more empirical anthropology represented by Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, and the new movement to universal principles represented by Edmund R. Leach. Leach had been influenced by the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Lévi-Strauss felt he could ‘get ‘behind’ the flux of real behavior to the unconscious generating structure . . . Beyond the unconscious models lies the human mind, and the final goal is to uncover the universal principles of human mentality.’<sup>101</sup> The confused atmosphere at the time,

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<sup>99</sup> Neil Sorrell, “Improvisation.” In *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, vol 2, Paynter, Howell, Orton, Seymour (eds), p. 783.

<sup>100</sup> See Tennekes, *Anthropology*, pp. 121-123. References to Clark Wissler, *Man and Culture* (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1923); Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture* (New York: North Carolina Univ. Press, 1944); George P. Murdock, “The Common Denominator of Cultures.” In *The Science of Man in the World Crisis*, Ralph Linton (ed.), (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1945).

<sup>101</sup> Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists*, p. 165.

the criticism by Leach of British empirical approaches and the rise under his aegis of the new structuralist methodology based on Lévi-Strauss, have been well characterised. Leach described the followers of Radcliffe-Brown as “butterfly collectors” while the latter in turn distrusted the theoretical and deductive demands of Lévi-Strauss’s approach.<sup>102</sup> Leach’s approach based on Lévi-Strauss made considerable headway and ‘in 1959, delivering the first Malinowski memorial lecture, which he provocatively entitled ‘Rethinking Anthropology’, Leach challenged his audience [to] . . . drop comparison in favour of generalization’.<sup>103</sup> In due course, Leach’s ideas generated a school based on structuralism.<sup>104</sup> ‘[In the 1960s and 1970s] social anthropology was a small field, with fewer than two hundred professionals in Britain.’<sup>105</sup> Perhaps all the more because of the rapidity of personal interaction this smallness in numbers facilitated, by the 1960s a rising generation was reappropriating the idea of universality with vigour: ‘The generation that came into the discipline in the 1960s, as research students or as young lecturers, were influenced by structuralism . . . Later they were impressed by what Quentin Skinner identified as the revival of grand theory in the social sciences.’<sup>106</sup> As a consequence of the changing ethos, the paradoxical balance between universality and relativity was now more discriminatingly acknowledged: consequently, ‘[t]hat thought is spectacularly multiple as product and wondrously singular as process has . . . come to be a more and more powerful animating paradox within the social sciences’.<sup>107</sup> In 1991, Brown could write that ‘what we know about

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<sup>102</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 177-178. Reference to Edmund R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology* (London: n.p., 1961), p. 2. The confrontation was perhaps more subtle than these remarks suggest. As Kuper notes: ‘[Radcliffe-Brown’s] ultimate goal was not in doubt. This was to formulate generalizations about the common features of all human societies.’ Kuper, *ibid*, p. 51.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, p. 156.

<sup>104</sup> See *ibid*, p. 173.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, p. 180.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, p. xi.

<sup>107</sup> Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, p. 151.

universals places clear limits on the cultural relativism that anthropologists have developed and disseminated widely.’<sup>108</sup>

This revival of interest in universals has been shown to be a British phenomenon, which might imply that, on account of deep American roots and influence, ethnomusicology will have been found slow to embrace it. Despite more recent expressions of balanced support for, and interest in universality from within the ethnomusicological community as instanced above (quoting Nettl and Sorrell), the influence of American relativism has been pronounced in the continuing formation of its methodology. Alan Merriam, who published an influential book *The Anthropology of Music* in 1964, had earlier said, as was noted above, that ethnomusicology is ‘the study of music in culture.’<sup>109</sup> There is a strong flavour of Herskovits in this assertion; indeed, Merriam’s 1964 book is dedicated to Herskovits.<sup>110</sup> It has been claimed that ‘[b]eginning with Alan Merriam’s *The Anthropology of Music* (1964), the assumption grew that ethnomusicology is the study of music in its cultural context . . . Each music derives from its own cultural surrounding and history.’<sup>111</sup> This assumption parallels those of the scholars who gave birth to the relativist tradition in America where ‘[a]nalysis of separate cultures . . . was seen as a means to the end, i.e., to gain insight into the cultural factor within human existence.’<sup>112</sup> Ringer, publishing in 1988, speaks of ‘the stress on music as a cultural phenomenon which became the hallmark of ethnomusicology with its strong anthropological bias, especially in the wake of World War II.’<sup>113</sup> Lupwishi Mbuyamba, publishing in 1992 observes that ‘the

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<sup>108</sup> Brown, *Human Universals*, p. vii.

<sup>109</sup> Alan P. Merriam, “Ethnomusicology: Discussion and Definition of the Field.” *Ethnomusicology* 4, no. 3 (1960): 107-114; p. 109.

<sup>110</sup> See Merriam, *Anthropology of Music*, p. v. [No page number marked on page.]

<sup>111</sup> Pirkko Moisala, *Cultural Cognition in Music: Continuity and Change in the Gurung Music of Nepal* (Jyväskylä: Gummerus Kirjapaino Oy, 1991), p. 9.

<sup>112</sup> Tennekes, *Anthropology*, p. 6.

<sup>113</sup> Alexander L Ringer, “One World or None? Untimely Reflections on a Timely Musicological Question.” In *Comparative Musicology*, Nettl and Bohlman (eds.), p. 187.

ethnomusicologist will search for the role and function of music within a given tradition.’<sup>114</sup> The same writer points to ‘the apparent irreducibility of musical languages. In the name of specific identities we are tempted, in fact, to regard musical worlds in terms of juxtaposition and incompatibility.’<sup>115</sup>

One problem of confining musical investigation to cultural factors in this way was anticipated by Leonard Meyer, writing in 1960:

What we should ask about, when considering the problem of universals, is not whether the data itself is common to different cultures - any more than we decide whether there are scientific laws on the basis of particular physical events. What we should ask is whether, beneath the profusion of diverse and divergent particulars, there are any universal principles functioning. Stated thus it becomes apparent that the descriptive method is less satisfactory for dealing with the problem of universalism vs. relativism precisely because it ignores those psychological concepts which might provide common principles for interpreting and explaining the enormous variety of musical means found in different cultures.<sup>116</sup>

There is a parallel with Popper here, since, for Meyer (see the second half of his first sentence), a hiatus exists between purely empirical methodology and a capacity to settle matters of universality. Meyer also speaks here of the importance of ‘psychological concepts,’ ‘universal principles’ functioning beneath the outward forms of music-making, of which, it may be suggested, infantile vocalising is one. In a recent article Meyer writes: ‘[O]ne cannot comprehend and explain the variability of human cultures unless one has some sense of the constancies involved in their shaping.’<sup>117</sup> ‘Recognizing the existence of universals and theorizing about their nature is indispensable because we can construct a coherent aesthetic and a viable history of music only by scrupulous attention to *nature as well as to nurture*, [emphasis added] and by trying to understand and explain their intricate interactions. . . The *real* [emphasis original] work remains to be done.’<sup>118</sup> Meyer’s insistence here on a consideration of human ‘nature’ is consistent with the aims of the present Chapter

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<sup>114</sup> Lupwishi Mbuyamba, “World Music: Musics of the World.” In *World Music: Musics of the World*, Max Peter Baumann (ed.). (Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel, 1992), p. 71.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p. 76

<sup>116</sup> Meyer, “Universalism and Relativism,” pp. 118-119.

<sup>117</sup> Meyer, “Universe of Universals,” p. 3.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

which seeks to show the foundations of human music in universal phenomena of infant vocalising; indeed, Meyer touches briefly upon issues of infant psychology.<sup>119</sup> It might be possible to describe infant vocalising as a biological universal productive of human musical cultural forms. This would accommodate Meyer's preferred recent formulation that there are, strictly speaking, no musical universals<sup>120</sup> but only 'acoustical universals of the physical world and the bio-psychological universals of the human world.'<sup>121</sup> Infant vocalising would certainly be accommodated within the latter category. The present writer would not wish to follow Meyer's claim that there are no musical universals, but prefers to speak in this context of a universal of human nature (babbling) giving rise to a musical universal (improvisation).

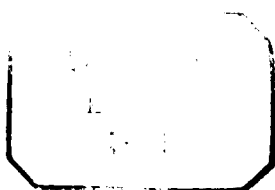
If there is a prejudicial weighting in the ethnomusicological community against the search for universals, arising from the American cultural antecedents of the discipline itself as currently pursued, it would not be unreasonable to speculate that aspects of musical universality may have gone unrecognised, or under-recognised. It has been shown how music in general has been widely acknowledged as a human universal by ethnomusicologists, but it will be suggested here that it is to musical improvisation that this universal label properly attaches. The term "music" is ambiguous. "Music" can have its basis in a wide variety of processes: the musical event may be based on a score which in turn may be more or less strictly interpreted; the score may be read in performance or it may be previously memorised; again, there may be no external representation of the music in existence and, if this is the case, the music may be memorised in the context of an oral tradition, or it may be created on the spur of the moment, that is, in improvisation. Indeed, even in improvisation itself, stylistic or cultural influences may be deliberately embraced, or they may be less conscious and

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<sup>119</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>120</sup> See *ibid*, p. 6.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*.



more elusive; in addition, music may be improvised from a memorised scheme,<sup>122</sup> or more freely. Permutations and possibilities ramify as to how music might be defined. What exactly lies at the heart of this “music” which is claimed by ethnomusicologists to be a human universal, when music is produced through so many different cultural practices?

The suggestion here, is that improvisation is a universal whose implications ethnomusicologists do not yet fully recognise and which undergirds the entirety of humanity’s music-making. If ethnomusicology has not been successful in discriminating this most specific aspect of music’s universality, enough has already been said to demonstrate that this state of affairs may have arisen in consequence of an imbalance in the method employed by ethnomusicologists to the present time, resulting in the inability so far to address with confidence the search for universality itself, or to recognise its importance. For Meyer, ‘[ethnomusicologists’] preoccupation with the peculiarity of cultures led to the neglect of universals, including those of human bio-psychology.’<sup>123</sup> This is not to imply that no hints whatsoever have already arisen in ethnomusicological writing to suggest that universality may be correctly attributed to musical improvisation in some form. For example, without actually adverting to the *apologia* for improvisation which his definition of music here clearly implies, John Blacking has written:

Music is like many of the paintings and sculptures of traditional African societies: the art was in the making rather than in the finished piece. The labour of love was what mattered and what uplifted human beings, and the subsequent fate of its product was comparatively unimportant. The intricate body-paintings of the Nuba were washed off after a ritual; and I have seen women of the Nsenga of Zambia spend over two hours making a beautiful sculpture on the ground for a girls’ initiation ritual, knowing that it would be destroyed in two minutes when the young novices danced on it. Similarly, there is nothing left after a musical performance except the memory, and perhaps the retention, of feelings.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> See Leo Treitler, “Medieval Improvisation.” *The World of Music* 33, no. 3 (1991): 66-91.

<sup>123</sup> Meyer, “Universe of Universals,” p. 5, footnote 7 (pp. 5-6).

<sup>124</sup> John Blacking, *‘A Commonsense View of all Music’: Reflections on Percy Grainger’s Contribution to Ethnomusicology and Music Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 24-25.

This passage contains an unacknowledged description of improvised music: only of such music can it be said that there is ‘nothing left after a . . . performance except the memory.’ Elsewhere, Blacking’s remarks seem to point to the idea of improvisation as a fundamental expression of the nature of human society, although he does not come to this conclusion explicitly:

A culture is always being invented and re-invented by individual decision-making, and although it may give the impression of being more permanent than the individuals who constitute it, and cultural evolution has depended on the accumulation of knowledge and the expansion of societies, it is really humanity that is permanent and constantly evolving, and culture that is transient and dependent on human whim.

Music expresses these contradictions of the human condition most faithfully . . . Its structures reflect the replication and repetition of ideas and sequences of action and the need to share sentiments and concepts, which are essential features of *culture*, while the obligation to remake music at every performance, and the possibility that it may be felt anew inside each individual body, reflect the evolutionary condition of *nature* that an organism, to survive, should constantly adapt to its changing environment.<sup>125</sup>

The musical ‘structures’ which reflect a culture may be regarded as the stylistic traits of that culture’s music, while the only way in which such musical traits can be truly ‘felt anew’ is in improvisation.

For Blacking elsewhere, ‘[t]he creation of music can be described as a sharing of inner feelings in a social context through extensions of body movement, in which certain species-specific capabilities are modified and extended through social and cultural experience. Music is a metaphor of feeling that draws on man’s own nature for many of its forms.’<sup>126</sup> ‘Inner feelings’ always flow spontaneously from the human person as part of the flow of life itself. Thus inner feelings artistically represented are most fully represented in real time. Similarly, ‘[w]hat distinguishes an improvisation from a performance is the human effort to compose in real time.’<sup>127</sup> Improvisation is ‘the spontaneous creation and performance of musical materials in a real-time format,

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>126</sup> John Blacking, “The Study of Man as Music-Maker.” In *The Performing Arts: Music and Dance*, John Blacking and Joann W. Kealiinohomoku (eds.), (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), p. 6.

<sup>127</sup> David Elliott, *Music Matters* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), p. 169.

where the reworking of ideas is not possible.’<sup>128</sup> It is thus the improvisatory aspect of making music that best expresses these ‘inner feelings’ identified by Blacking.

Moreover, Blacking refers above to ‘man’s . . . nature’ and to ‘species-specific capabilities . . . modified and extended through social and cultural experience.’ Infantile babbling is, as has been seen above, a species-specific capability, and, given its sonic characteristics, it would be arbitrary to dismiss its possible relationship to music-making later in the life of the human person, for much adult behaviour has roots in infancy. Such dismissal is not prevalent, and it is already accepted that the possibility of some historical continuation in the life of a human from his or her early babbling to the infant singing which arises out of it, and from this singing to adult spontaneous singing and music-making in general, represents one plausible account of the origins of musical activity in the developed human person.<sup>129</sup> However, despite babbling’s apparently exploratory character, a possible link with improvisation in adult music-making is scarcely made, and certainly not systematically explored.<sup>130</sup> Yet following Blacking’s observation above, it would be appropriate to look for musical

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<sup>128</sup> Ed Sarath, “A New Look at Improvisation.” *Journal of Music Theory* 40, no. 1 (1996): 1-38; p. 3.

<sup>129</sup> *Activity*, because babbling may probably not be regarded as the source of a person’s entire musical experience, since listening precedes it. Hearing infants maintain their babble because they can listen. *Developed*, because all ideas of the first origins of musical activity in primitive man are understood to be highly speculative. For various proposals put forward regarding music’s earliest origins see G. Révész, *Introduction to the Psychology of Music* (1946) (London: Longman’s, Green and Co., 1953), pp. 218-235; Storr, *Music and the Mind*, pp. 1-23.

John M. Holahan identifies three successive levels of babbling. See John M. Holahan “Toward a Theory of Music Syntax: Some Observations of Music Babble in Young Children.” In *Music and Child Development*, Peery, Peery, Draper (eds.), p. 104. Sometimes, certain aspects of babbling have been connected with singing, and other aspects not. ‘Moog distinguished between babbling as a precursor of speech and babbling that was considered music.’ Linda Bryant Miller, “Children’s Musical Behaviors in the Natural Environment.” In *ibid*, Peery, Peery, Draper (eds.), p. 207. Reference to H. Moog, “The Development of Musical Experience in Children of Preschool Age.” *Psychology of Music* 4 (1976): 38-45. Yet even babbling linked to speech must presumably train the prosodic or sonorous capabilities of speech, and the latter in turn might be connected with tones and hence singing and music.

<sup>130</sup> Adachi concurs that only certain aspects of babbling are a foundation for spontaneous singing, and also that the three phenomena, babbling, infant and adult spontaneous singing, have important characteristic differences, not least in quantity, resulting partly from varying levels of environmental stimulation. (Reference to Kelly and Sutton-Smith, “Study of Infant Musical Productivity,” n.p.) Nevertheless, Adachi asserts, ‘if you just focus on the fact that both children and adults sing casually, of course all spontaneous singing is similar and thus can be classified as one big phenomenon.’ Mayumi Adachi, personal electronic mail communication, University of Sheffield. 2nd March, 2000.



babbling's possible social and cultural consequences in adult musical practices. These practices might consistently reflect not only babbling's musical but also its exploratory properties which are suggestive of improvisation. Obviously, in suggesting that improvisation is a universal feature of music in this way, it is not implied that every musical event conforms to what common parlance would designate "an improvisation." The permanent residue of improvisatoriness within all music-making will find expression outside this confine.

In cultures such as the European, where music is often symbolically represented, as in notation, improvisatoriness will include the "expressiveness" which informs the performance of a symbolic text, for expressiveness necessarily involves real-time performance decisions. For example, even though a crescendo marking on a fixed score is already present in virtue of a decision taken by the composer of that score, its exact process of volume-growth, and indeed its overall degree, involve real-time performance decision-making. It generally escapes attention that this phenomenon is implicitly improvisatory: '[T]he 'interpretative' aspect of western music displays many of the properties of an improvised musical culture . . . condensed into a micro-realm of expressive adjustments which we 'hear through' much as in Schenkerian listening we 'hear through' foreground prolongations or embellishments to middleground and background levels'.<sup>131</sup> To another writer likewise the spontaneity called expressiveness seems to be widely regarded as part of the process of interpreting a fixed score.<sup>132</sup> Once it is seen that the idea of improvisation encompasses that of

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<sup>131</sup> Carl Humphries, "Between Act and Image: Continuity and Polarisation in the Creation and Reception of Musical Experience." Paper presented at the 3rd Triennial British Musicological Societies' Conference, University of Surrey, 15th-18th July, 1999, p. 4.

<sup>132</sup> See Patrik N. Juslin, "Emotional Communication in Music Performance: A Functionalist Perspective and Some Data." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 14, no. 4 (Summer 1997): 383-418; p. 390. References to Gabrielssohn, in press; A. Gabrielssohn, "Interplay between Analysis and Synthesis in Studies of Music Performance and Music Experience." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 3 (1985): 59-86; C. E. Seashore, *Psychology of Music* (1938) (New York: Dover, 1967); L. H. Shaffer, "How to Interpret Music." In *Cognitive Bases of Musical Communication*, M. R. Jones and S.

musical expressiveness in general, improvisation is seen to be fundamental even to forms of musical culture which emphasise the fixed text of music and with which musical improvisation in the more widely received sense of the term is not especially associated. Thus enlarged to include the expressive dimension, the improvisatory impulse becomes the non-negotiable aspect of any definition of music, in contrast to negotiable aspects such as memorisation of music, or writing down of music, or any other aspects which may or may not be present. For while a mechanical device like a pianola might reproduce a score exactly as it stands, humans introduce expressive freedoms and flexibilities arising from expressive spontaneity into their music-making. Even if, as in some Western pop-music performance styles, the live performance is expected to “sound like the record” in not displaying any on-the-spot expressive variety in its performance decisions, this restriction nevertheless takes place against the cultural horizon of a society in which expressive performance flexibility is the established norm. It represents a departure from a known norm, not the absence of a norm, and is no more indicative of any non-universality of improvisatory/expressive musical practices than the existence of a person who cannot walk would demonstrate the non-universality of walking. For Mantle Hood, universality is ‘high probability of occurrence.’<sup>133</sup> Where real-time expressivity is reduced to a minimum in a musical performance, as in these pop-music styles, this is not because, as a mode of musical creativity, it is absent from the musical culture which gives rise to that performance, but because it has been deliberately repressed in that performance context. Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff have written in a slightly different context: ‘[O]ne would not claim, because a particular artistic idiom made use only of black and white, that the

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Holleran (eds.), (Washington: American Psychological Association, 1992); L. H. Shaffer, “Musical Performance as Interpretation.” *Psychology of Music* 23 (1995): 17-38.

<sup>133</sup> Mantle Hood, “Universal Attributes of Music.” *The World of Music* 19, nos. 1-2 (1977): 63-69; p. 66.

intended viewers could not make use of principles of color perception.’<sup>134</sup> On this analogy, the pop musicians referred to here, in suppressing the spontaneity which belongs innately to human music-making, are like photographers or artists who have deliberately restricted their productions to black and white images. Something similar could be said of music by Reich and Glass which is deliberately predictable. In Reich and Glass, it is precisely the absence of expressive flexibility which is noticed by the listener, thus confirming that the context in which their music is received entails wider expectations concerning the expressivity of human music-making. Likewise, in ‘pre-recorded, usually electroacoustic music, whose tape or computer disc is itself the only authentic performance’<sup>135</sup> the absence of spontaneity is strongly featured, creating a marked presence-in-absence of the spontaneity which humans know to be present in normal music, and expect to hear, but which is here withheld through the use of novel compositional techniques. Stated another way, the withholding of musical expressiveness is a kind of reverse-expressive decision which alludes covertly to the expressiveness, and hence improvisatoriness, which is a universal feature of music. In so withholding, the performer is always aware of repressing something usual, in much the same way as a person who deliberately speaks in a monotone (for ‘[i]ntonation is universal . . . every language possesses intonation.’)<sup>136</sup> Although ‘[u]niversals are immutable, constraining relationships in the physical, biological and cultural worlds . . . their action can be qualified or contravened.’<sup>137</sup> Yet, to revert to the

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<sup>134</sup> Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (Cambridge MA: M. I. T., 1983), p. 279.

<sup>135</sup> George Pratt, “Aural Training: Material and Method.” In *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, vol 2, Paynter, Howell, Orton, Seymour (eds.), pp. 852-853.

<sup>136</sup> Daniel Hirst and Albert Di Cristo, “A Survey of Intonation Systems.” In *Intonation Systems: A Survey of Twenty Languages*, Daniel Hirst and Albert Di Cristo (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998). p. 1.

<sup>137</sup> Meyer, “Universe of Universals,” p. 5, footnote 6.

analogy of the black-and-white photograph, no amount of immersion in black-and-white photography ever causes humans to forget that the real world exists in colour.

The fundamental place occupied by improvisation in human music has perhaps now been persuasively suggested, and also the reason for the neglect of a similar conclusion among ethnomusicologists in favour of such universality accounted for. ‘Improvisation in one form or another has certainly existed, throughout the world, in most periods of musical history of which evidence remains.’<sup>138</sup> For Nettl, ‘[i]n a certain sense, the history of ethnomusicology is one of tension between the conviction that each culture has its own music, distinct from all others, derived from its own history, value structure, and types of social relationships, and, on the other hand, the search for musical universals.’<sup>139</sup> It is a hopeful sign that Nettl can observe that ‘[i]f the concept of improvisation can be said to be at all viable, it should be considered one of the few universals of music in which all cultures share in one way or another.’<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Alan Durant, “Improvisation: Arguments after the Fact.” In *Improvisation: History, Directions, Practice*, commentator Eddie Prévost (London: Association of Improvising Musicians, 1984), p. 6.

<sup>139</sup> Bruno Nettl, “On the Question of Universals.” *The World of Music* 19, nos. 1-2 (1977): 2-7; p. 2.

<sup>140</sup> Nettl, “Thoughts on Improvisation,” p. 4.

## Chapter 2

### *Improvisation in the Modern West*

#### *I European Musical Improvisation in Decline: the Historical Impact of the*

#### *'Cogito'*

Distinguishing the improvisation latent in musical expressiveness from improvisatory musical practices as more usually defined, it may be said that the later eighteenth century marks the beginning of a significant decline in improvisatory musical practice in Western Europe. From the point of view of human culture taken in its widest sense, this has resulted in an unprecedented state of affairs, for '[a]lthough it may be surprising to a Westerner, improvisation is at the centre of rather more musical traditions in the world than composition . . . It is actually only in Western music that there has ever been any significant period in which improvisation was *not* central.'<sup>1</sup> This decline was a consequence, it will be suggested, of the influence of Descartes (1596-1650) whose major philosophical works were starting to be widely read: 'By the middle of the eighteenth century, Cartesianism had passed . . . from opposition to power; in France at least, Descartes had become an establishment figure.'<sup>2</sup> A rich culture of musical improvisation prevailed in Europe up to this time. In connection with the eighteenth century itself it has been observed that only an expert improviser can come close to the essence of Baroque music.<sup>3</sup> In addition to Baroque styles of free improvisation, there were also those consequent upon the idiomatic performance of

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<sup>1</sup> Hazel Smith and Roger Dean, *Improvisation, Hypermedia and the Arts since 1945* (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1997), pp. 55-56. Reference to S. Frith, *World Music, Politics and Social Change* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Jolley, "The Reception of Descartes' Philosophy." In *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes*, John Cottingham (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), p. 418. Reference to (no given name) Bouillier, *Histoire de la philosophie cartésienne*, vol 2 (incomplete documentation), p. 547.

<sup>3</sup> See Sorrell, "Improvisation," p. 781.

particular styles of notation, such as the Italian harpsichord toccata and the harpsichord preludes of Louis Couperin.<sup>4</sup>

No longer widely practised as in the eighteenth century, European traditions of improvisation are also little studied. Ernst Ferand's *Die Improvisation in der Musik*, treating the history of European improvisation, was published in 1938. A book 'but little reviewed and . . . received with only mild enthusiasm'<sup>5</sup> it was regarded by Bruno Nettl in 1974 as still the most comprehensive general history of European improvisatory practices. For Nettl, 'in the area of scholarly conceptualization Ferand is still the last word'.<sup>6</sup> Larry Solomon, publishing about ten years later than Nettl could write that '[s]ince it rarely occurs as an academic study and its ephemeral nature does not submit easily to analysis, improvisation has gained a reputation of mystery and superstition.'<sup>7</sup> Solomon speaks of the unjustified neglect of improvisation 'considered unrefined, primitive, undisciplined, or inferior to composition.'<sup>8</sup> In 1997, Hazel Smith and Roger Dean wrote of the non-repeatable nature of improvisatory art which gives rise to the fact that 'there has been a long-standing prejudice against improvisation . . . The critic often presumes that such events are incomplete preparations for a later finished performance, and does not appreciate the quite distinct nature of an

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<sup>4</sup> See Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, "The Art of 'Not Leaving the Instrument Empty'." *Early Music* 11, no. 3 (July 1983): 299-308; p. 306. Tagliavini provides reference to a comparison 'of the two types of notation - that of the French *prélude non mesuré* and that of the Italian toccata' (ibid, footnote 47) in A. Curtis, Preface to Louis Couperin, *Pièces de clavecin*, Le pupitre, 18 (Paris: n.p., 1970); also to Davitt Moroney, "The Performance of Unmeasured Harpsichord Preludes." *Early Music* 4, no. 2 (April 1976): 143-151; p. 143.

<sup>5</sup> Nettl, "Thoughts on Improvisation," p. 1. Reference to Ernst Ferand, *Die Improvisation in der Musik: Eine Entwicklungsgeschichtliche und Psychologische Untersuchung* (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1938).

<sup>6</sup> Nettl, *ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Larry Solomon, "Improvisation (1)." In Larry Austin, AMM (Eddie Prevost and Keith Rowe), Derek Bailey, Harold Budd, Vinny Golea and Lee Kaplan, Elliott Schwartz, Larry Solomon, Malcolm Goldstein, John Silber, Davey Williams, Pauline Oliveros, "Forum: Improvisation," Barney Childs and Christopher Hobbs (eds.). *Perspectives of New Music* 21, nos. 1-2 (Fall/Winter 1982 and Spring/Summer 1983: combined edition): 26-111; p. 72.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*. The word 'inferior' appears as 'interior': in this context presumably a misprint.

improvised work.’<sup>9</sup> In 1999, R. Keith Sawyer noted: ‘Improvisation is a relatively new topic for creativity research, only beginning to receive attention in the 1990s.’<sup>10</sup>

The post-Cartesian marginalisation of improvisation will be shown to have its roots in the wider marginalisation of performance over against composition when performance comes to be associated with “body” within the Cartesian mind-body problematic. The structure of modern European language vocabularies, with their separate words for musical “composition” and “performance,” indicates how firmly established now within the European mind has become the distinction between the notated work of music, and the performing processes associated with it.<sup>11</sup> It will be argued that the severity of this dichotomy may be attributed to the fact that, after Descartes, this linguistic usage came ultimately to be a vehicle for one permutation of the Cartesian mind-body problematic (*cogito ergo sum*),<sup>12</sup> in which the composing of

<sup>9</sup> Smith and Dean, *Improvisation*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>10</sup> R. Keith Sawyer, “Improvisation.” In *Encyclopedia of Creativity*, vol 2, Mark A. Runco and Steven R. Pritzker (eds.), (San Diego: Academic Press, 1999), p. 31.

<sup>11</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989) gives the earliest known printed uses in English of these two words. It is interesting that the earliest given use of “composition” to mean “musical work” emerges only after the time Descartes’s ideas had begun to circulate in France, even though, in the sense of “process of writing music,” the word was not itself new. Thus a sixteenth-century use of “composition” is cited in which the word meant the composing process rather than the thing produced. ‘You lacke nothing of perfect musicians, but only vse [*sic*] to make you prompt and quicke in your compositions.’ Morley, *Introd. Mus.* p. 182 (1597). Cited in *OED*, vol 3, p. 624. In the sense of referring to the composed product, the first given use of “composition” is post-Cartesian. ‘The whole composition is most excellent.’ Pepys’ *Diary*, 12th February, 1666/7. Cited in *OED*, vol 3, p. 625. If it is implausible to propose that Descartes’s ideas affected within so short a time the English in which Pepys wrote, it is less implausible to suggest a single cultural force at work behind both Descartes’s ideas and changes in language, a mind/body conceptualisation of the human person which Descartes’s philosophy articulated and reinforced, and late seventeenth-century English also reflected.

The idea of musical “performance” seems to emerge in print only in the eighteenth century. ‘The Opera of Pyrrhus and Demetrius was performed with great applause.’ Steele, *Tatler*, no. 4, section 4 (1709). Cited in *OED*, vol 11, p. 543; ‘Several . . . songs are performed.’ Entick, *London IV*, p. 447 (1766). Cited in *OED*, vol 11, p. 543. Historically therefore, the word “performance” and its cognates would seem to have been precipitated as the “other” of “composition” in the latter’s rising connotation of musical product, to which Descartes’s ideas gave impetus.

Note on usage: throughout the thesis the genitive form “Descartes’s” will be used. For this usage (as opposed to the usage “Descartes’ ”) see R. W. Burchfield (ed.), *Fowler’s Modern English Usage* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), “Apostrophe (2),” section D, para 4, p. 61.

<sup>12</sup> ‘In the letter where [Descartes] says that the dictum, ‘I think, therefore I am,’ is so obvious that it might have come from anyone’s pen, he observes that its real value is that it can be used to ‘establish that this I which is thinking is an immaterial substance with no bodily element.’ Peter Markie, “The Cogito and its Importance.” In *Cambridge Companion to Descartes*, Cottingham (ed.), p. 142. Elsewhere Descartes writes: ‘Indeed, I do not know whether I have a body; you have shown me that it is possible to doubt it. I might add that I cannot deny absolutely that I have a body. Yet even if we keep all these suppositions intact, this will not prevent me from being certain that I exist. On the contrary, these

the musical work, being a largely noetic process, came to be equated with mind, and the performed process of music-making, being inherently physical, came to be equated with body. And just as in the Cartesian problematic, it is the mind which is privileged over the body, likewise, there now came about within Western music a long tradition of privileging the work over performance.

David Elliott draws upon philosopher Gilbert Ryle, and has sought to elucidate this musical composition/performance-based binarism by pointing out that, particularly with reference to the Cartesian philosophy of mind which gave rise to and fostered it, 'actions follow from verbal thoughts in a two-step sequence of think-act, think-act, ad infinitum. The first event is mental (speaking silently to oneself), and the second event is physical (bodily movement). The dualistic assumption is that thinking and knowing are always verbal and that bodily actions are nonverbal, or dumb.'<sup>13</sup> Where this model in epistemology is dominant within a particular culture, as it was in the West prior to the influence of Ryle in *The Concept of Mind* (1949), there will be a perception of action as subordinate to thought in every human sphere. However, as Ryle pointed out, in his refutation of this theory, if this 'think-act' sequence were true, 'the first event (verbal thinking) would become an action that would itself require a preceding act of theorizing, thereby leading us to the absurdity (or infinite regress) that no one can act until he or she completes an infinite number of verbal thoughts.'<sup>14</sup> According to such a theory, human activity could never begin. Ryle's insight has led to the contemporary view in which activity is in fact not the 'dumb' consequence of

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suppositions simply strengthen the certainty of my conviction that I exist and am not a body. Otherwise, if I had doubts about my body, I would also have doubts about myself, and I cannot have doubts about that. I am absolutely convinced that I exist, so convinced that it is totally impossible for me to doubt it.' From René Descartes, *The Search for Truth by Means of the Natural Light* (1701). Cited in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol 2. John Cottingham, Dugald Murdoch, Robert Stoothoff (eds.), (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press. 1985), p. 412.

<sup>13</sup> Elliott, *Music Matters*, p. 55.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Reference to Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Penguin, 1949), pp. 30-32.



the idea. Actions are '*nonverbal forms of thinking and knowing in and of themselves.*'<sup>15</sup> In the words of Ryle: 'Overt intelligence performances are not clues to the workings of minds; they are those workings.'<sup>16</sup> If Ryle's analysis of the Cartesian dichotomy is correct, it is clear that performance of music can no longer be considered as a marginalised counterpart to composition. In the modern view of Elliott and Ryle, the older binary model, when applied to the relationship between the noetic process of composing and the practical activity of music-making, tends in due course to make the latter subordinate, so that performing will be disesteemed. This state of affairs will be revised once we see more clearly that '*our musical thinking and knowing are in our musical doing and making.*'<sup>17</sup>

It is from some of its observable effects in various sociological aspects of musical activity that it becomes certain that such a marginalisation of practical activity in music has actually occurred. In the case of music education the consequences of this binarism have, for example, been serious. This is evidenced by the fact that over a long period until the 1970s in Britain and elsewhere, academic musical education and performing education were assigned almost exclusively to different types of institution: universities and conservatoires respectively. Underlying this methodological schism between academic and performing musical education was the erroneous assumption that performance, being chiefly a form of activity, was not a form of musical intelligence like the study of composition or analysis or music history, and could therefore not be accommodated within the thought-based milieu of the university. This schism arguably still prevails to some degree. 'Only in the last ten years or so has musical performance started to attract the range and level of scholarly

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<sup>15</sup> Elliott, *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Ryle. *Concept of Mind*, p. 57. Cited in *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Elliott, *ibid.*, p. 56.

attention it has always merited but inconsistently received.’<sup>18</sup> A parallel with current practice in psychology ‘where action has tended to be studied separately from perception and cognition’<sup>19</sup> has been identified by Eric Clarke.

Belief that thought could exist without action (*cogito ergo sum*) marginalised the idea that there is such a thing as musical performing intelligence. The performing of music was considered a matter of physical activity and emotional sensitivity, coupled with the modest intellectual requirement of being able to read and perhaps memorise notation. What was forgotten were the musical decisions required in performance, the skilful modification of performance in the light of these decisions, and the ability to evaluate alternative possible decisions while performing.<sup>20</sup> Yet holding together a piece as a convincing unity, or balancing polyphonic voices at the keyboard, or responding promptly to situations arising in performance are all intelligent acts and ‘a competent, proficient, or expert performer must continuously reflect upon, judge, and adjust his or her thinking-in-action on the basis of internalized sets of practical or heuristic understandings.’<sup>21</sup> Because improvisation is a species of performance, it was subject to a consequent attrition within this composition/performance matrix. It might be claimed that improvisation’s attrition was all the more severe than that of performance in general, since, while from one point of view it stands to be viewed as an expression of performance, seen as a phenomenon of composition-through-performance it occupies a no-man’s-land between composition and performance, with the consequence that it cannot be accommodated within the Cartesian dichotomy at all. It seems to be neither of the mind nor of the body.

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<sup>18</sup> John Rink, Review of Jonathan Dunsby, *Performing Music: Shared Concerns* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995). *Music and Letters* 77, no. 2 (May 1996): 253-257; p. 253.

<sup>19</sup> Eric F. Clarke, “Improvisation, Cognition and Education.” In *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, vol 2. Paynter, Howell, Orton, Seymour (eds.), p. 795.

<sup>20</sup> See Vernon Howard, *Artistry: The Work of Artists* (1982) (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), pp. 182-185.

<sup>21</sup> Elliott, *Music Matters*, p. 59.

The incipient decline of a strong improvisatory tradition, and the simultaneous gradual rise of the work under the impact of Cartesian philosophy, gave rise in the eighteenth century to a paradoxical tradition of improvisation within a musical culture that prized rational structure. This raises historical and aesthetic issues not yet explored.<sup>22</sup> Improvisation may be understood in this historical context to include semi-improvisatory practices within scored music, such as the practice of keyboard improvising above a figured-bass, or the free ornamentation of pre-existent compositions. However, it is clear that, in line with the present argument, both practices were in steady decline throughout the late eighteenth century.<sup>23</sup> More concretely, the decline of the continuo player was a consequence of the rise of the conductor,<sup>24</sup> who, of course, presides over and marshals the requirements of a score which in turn embodies a composition. The ushering aside of improvisation by a rising aesthetic based on the composition is here virtually personified. Ferand remarked that ‘[w]ith the gradual decline of the thorough-bass in the second half of the 18th century, the last traces of improvisation in Western ensemble music disappeared.’<sup>25</sup>

It is likely also that the growing use of ornamentation tables in the later eighteenth century tended to render more rigidly prescriptive an area of relative creative freedom for the performer, hitherto circumscribed only by a sense of orally transmitted tradition, and, in so doing, restrained improvisatory freedom. ‘Instructional and theoretical works come, through their sheer quantity, to assume a new importance to the student of ornamentation as the Classical period began and music publishing

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<sup>22</sup> See David Schulenberg, “Composition and Improvisation in the School of J. S. Bach.” In *Bach Perspectives*, vol 1, Russell Stinson (ed.), (Lincoln: Nebraska Univ. Press, 1995), p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> See Peter Williams, “Continuo.” In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol 4, Stanley Sadie (ed.), (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 685.

<sup>24</sup> See Jack Westrup, “Conducting.” In *New Grove*, *ibid*, p. 643.

<sup>25</sup> Ernest T. Ferand, *Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music: An Anthology with a Historical Introduction* (1956) (Cologne: Arno Volk Verlag, 1961), p. 19.

flourished.’<sup>26</sup> Perhaps ornamentation tables were increasingly needed for the guidance of players because the art of competent ornamentation was already in decline. Dennis Libby has suggested that ‘[w]ith the increase of amateur music-making in the 18th and 19th centuries there arose a large class of performers who could not be expected to have the knowledge or sensitivity necessary to provide their own ornamentation. This formed a further stimulus to writing it out.’<sup>27</sup> The prevalence of incompetent ornamentation may well underlie C. P. E. Bach’s strictures on ‘prodigal embellishments [which are] spices which may ruin the best dish or gewgaws which may deface the most perfect building.’<sup>28</sup> Peter Hurford suggests that improvised ornamentation had by this time become a ‘notorious practice.’<sup>29</sup>

The unsatisfactory performing of ornaments as referred to here by C. P. E. Bach could be understood by him as ‘prodigal’ in one, or another, or indeed a combination of two senses, and either sense has implications for a Cartesian interpretation of this particular development in performance practice. In the first sense, C. P. E. Bach may mean that players ornamented perhaps more profusely and certainly badly. Indeed, as has been observed elsewhere, ‘[m]any sources comment - usually they complain - about an increase of improvised ornamentation during the course of the 18th century, both among singers and instrumentalists.’<sup>30</sup> If there was indeed a proliferation in the quantity of ornamental activity it should be noted that this is not contrary to the

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<sup>26</sup> William Crutchfield in Andrew V. Jones and William Crutchfield, “Ornamentation.” In *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol 3, Stanley Sadie (ed.), (London: Macmillan, 1992), p. 764.

<sup>27</sup> Dennis Libby, “Improvisation: Western after 1800.” In Imogene Horsley, Michael Collins, Eva Badura-Skoda, Dennis Libby, “Improvisation 1.” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol 9, Sadie (ed.), p. 49.

<sup>28</sup> Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (1753) (London: Cassell, 1949), p. 81.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Hurford, *Making Music on the Organ* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), p. 107.

<sup>30</sup> John Spitzer, “Improvised Ornamentation in a Handel Aria with Obligato Wind Accompaniment.” *Early Music* 16, no. 4 (November 1988): 514-522; p. 520. References to Esteban de Arteaga. *Le rivoluzioni del teatro musicale italiano dala sua origine fino al presente* (Venice: n.p., rev 2, 1785). iii, pp. 5-6; Domenico Corri, *The Singer’s Preceptor* (London: n.p., 1810), trans. as *The Porpora Tradition*, Edward Foreman (ed.), (incomplete documentation.), pp. 2-3; Anon, *Wahrheiten die Musik betreffend - gerade herausgesagt von einem teitschem Biedermann* (Frankfurt: n.p., 1770), pp. 71-72; John Potter, *Observations on the Present State of Music and Musicians* (London: n.p., 1762), pp. 79-81.

present thesis that improvisation was in decline, for devaluation can lead to proliferation, and decadence can be linked to hypertrophy and exaggeration. A living tradition had formerly sustained ornamentation and provided a framework within which to contain it: tradition had sanctioned at this level of oral culture often highly specific ways in which ornamental practices were appropriate. This cultural framework was being undermined by a slow trend against improvisation which led inevitably to a rising sense that ornamentation was less important. Because the context for principles of ornamentation became less exigent, and a feeling for earlier practice was waning, ornamentation came to be perceived as a slight and indifferent matter, and became untrammelled from former guiding principles. These had of course included limiting principles indicating where ornamentation should not be inserted. In this interpretation of C. P. E. Bach's words, late eighteenth-century ornamentation had degenerated somewhat into a thoughtless reflex. Thus the decline of ornamentation here is understood not necessarily as a matter of diminishing frequency of occurrence, but more widely as the failure of improvisatory ornamentation to present itself to the listeners as tasteful in quantity, well-executed and attractive; a decline, that is to say, in its ability to enhance a performance.

C. P. E. Bach may mean 'prodigal' in another sense, however, or at least combined with another sense. This second sense is less obvious than the first, but of considerable interest in the present philosophical context. With the rise of the late eighteenth-century ideal of composition, which, as is being argued, rendered performing and improvisatory issues more and more subordinate, the score was increasingly viewed as the embodiment of a work which could be treated less freely by performers than hitherto, and C. P. E. Bach's stricture may result from gradually changing views of how a musical text should be treated in performance. He possibly

regards ornamentation as a decadent impulse on the part of performers, who failed to balance their improvisatory creativity with respect for the score. The improvised ornamental interpolations were perceived by him as perhaps to some extent stylistically ‘prodigal’ precisely as such, not because of the nature or amount of them, but simply because they were there at all. We know that, increasingly the ethos of the scored composition dominated the mindset of the Bach family, for there is an indication that within the circle of Bach’s composer sons, ‘embellishments, cadenzas, even entire pieces that might have originated in disciplined but still improvisatory flights of fancy could - indeed must - be fixed and brought to perfection by writing them down as precisely as possible.’<sup>31</sup> Improvisation must, for them, increasingly be captured within the sphere of the work. Examples of this principle that improvisatory music should find its way into notation are the highly florid and improvisatory notated keyboard *Fantasias* of C. P. E. Bach, which were ‘nothing but improvisations written down’<sup>32</sup> and it is significant that ‘[a]lthough Friedemann and Emanuel became famous for their improvisations and their improvisatory free fantasias, they appear to have written down few such pieces until relatively late in life.’<sup>33</sup> A possible implication of this chronology is that, as the prestige of the work considered as the normative expression of musical activity exerted increasing cultural pressure toward the end of the eighteenth century, these celebrated improvisers no longer felt it appropriate to leave their improvisations in unnotated form. It is also indicative of the rise of this trend towards notation that whereas C. P. E. Bach’s notated “improvisatory”-style *Fantasias* are numerous, his father J. S. Bach had only notated one complete work in this style, the *Chromatic Fantasia* for harpsichord, in addition to the *Fantasia* of the *Fantasia and Fugue in G minor* for organ. As Forkel claimed of the *Chromatic*

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<sup>31</sup> Schulenberg, “Composition and Improvisation,” p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Schoenberg and the New Music* (1987) (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), p. 269.

*Fantasia*, '[t]his fantasia is unique, and never had its like.'<sup>34</sup> Forkel presumably did not mean that Bach had never improvised anything else on the harpsichord resembling the *Chromatic Fantasia*. What Forkel meant to say here is that the *Chromatic Fantasia* was the only whole "improvisatory" piece of its type that J. S. Bach notated. J. S. Bach did not normally feel the pressure to notate this type of improvisation because the cultural pressure subsequently felt by his children to have their improvisations written out was not yet prevalent so as to affect him.

It has been observed by Darbellay that 'C. P. E. Bach's musical notation far exceeds in precision and thoroughness everything before it'.<sup>35</sup> Possibly Darbellay overlooks a possible antecedent in the precise notational principles of François Couperin in his harpsichord music, who may have influenced C. P. E. Bach through Quantz,<sup>36</sup> and, in connection with this textual precision, it may be significant that Couperin, like Descartes, is French. C. P. E. Bach's precision undoubtedly extended to every aspect of expression and even included keyboard fingering.<sup>37</sup> '. . . C. P. E. Bach's notation matches in fact . . . his aesthetics. To the degree that one is persuaded of a language's unambiguousness, it must be possible to codify it exactly.'<sup>38</sup> The new concept of the work in which music is codified as exactly as possible has to be unambiguous, for it is an outcome of Descartes's philosophy of clear and distinct ideas. This trend would lead eventually in the nineteenth century to a concept of the work so detached from performance considerations that, among other characteristics,

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<sup>33</sup> Schulenberg, "Composition and Improvisation," p. 33.

<sup>34</sup> Johann Nicolaus Forkel, *Über Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke* (1802) (Berlin: n.p., 1982), p. 98. Cited in George B. Stauffer, "'This fantasia . . . never had its like': On the Enigma and Chronology of Bach's Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in D minor, BWV 903." In *Bach Studies*, Don O. Franklin (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), p. 160.

<sup>35</sup> Etienne Darbellay, "C. P. E. Bach's Aesthetic as Reflected in his Notation." In *C. P. E. Bach Studies*, Stephen L. Clark (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p. 61.

<sup>36</sup> Douglas Hollick, personal communication, University of Hull, 6th December, 1999. Hollick is a harpsichord performer and teacher of international visibility, and a recognised expert on eighteenth-century keyboard practices.

<sup>37</sup> See Darbellay, "C. P. E. Bach's Aesthetic," p. 61.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 62.

occasionally '[c]omposers will notate intentions that cannot be realised in practice (something that C. P. E. Bach never does). For instance, in piano music there may be seen a crescendo on a single note, or there may be verbal remarks intended to make the performer think of helpful associations of images.'<sup>39</sup> An example of the use of an unplayable "crescendo" marking on a held piano chord is found in the fourth and fifth bars from the last of Liszt's *Sonata* in B minor<sup>40</sup> while an example of 'helpful associations of images' is found on the score of Ferruccio Busoni's piano transcription of the D minor *Chaconne* for solo violin by J. S. Bach, in which the pianist is exhorted to try to make the piano sound like trombones (*quasi Tromboni*).<sup>41</sup> In the Busoni, it is ultimately only the notated page which embodies the transcriber's conception, for only by filtering their act of listening to the piece through a familiarity with the score could any listener reasonably be expected to hear "trombones." Busoni's conception of the piece is thus found only in the mind's ear attentive to the notated page, rather than in the performance *per se*.

The decline in improvising in the freer sense of the term (solo keyboard fantasias, for example) is of greater significance here than the decline of semi-improvisatory practices (such as figured-bass). This is because the decline of the practice of improvising in the latter more limited sense within semi-improvised, precomposed contexts, which usually exhibit the desire to contain improvisation as far as possible within the confines of the precomposed work, does not show the decline of improvisation in such high relief as a situation where there is attrition in improvisation pursued for its own sake. Improvisation in the latter, freer sense was exhibited in the concerto cadenzas of the later eighteenth century, which despite having a thematic

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 61.

<sup>40</sup> Franz Liszt, *Sonata for Pianoforte*, in B minor (Milan: Curci, n.d.), p. 43.

<sup>41</sup> Bach-Busoni, *Chaconne in D minor*, for piano, from the Second Partita for solo violin by J. S. Bach, BWV 1004 (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, n.d), p. 12.



basis in the themes of the concertos in which they were set, were prized precisely as free improvising, in the sense that their duration and style were left to the performer to a far greater extent than in the more constrained improvising on a figured-bass or ornamentation of pre-existing scores. Moreover, unlike the figured-bass player, who functioned within the ensemble as a discreet accompanist, and unlike ornamentation, which was generally perceived as stylistically peripheral to the structure of a musical work, the concerto cadenza was a highly-featured improvisation by a prominent soloist presented as an accomplished individual contrasted with the relative anonymity of the orchestra. The concerto cadenza, associated as it was with the public concerts, rather than domestic music-making of the later eighteenth century could be described as a “public rite” which celebrated musical improvisation for its own sake, rather than an improvisatory practice exhibited *en passant* within contexts where the improvisatory nature of what is occurring does not form the main basis for the interest of the music being heard, as in the work of a figured-bass realiser. This arguably makes the decline of improvisation as reflected in the decline of the free concerto cadenza a more public attrition of improvisatory activity than the attrition of semi-improvisatory practices.

The decline of the improvised concerto cadenza at the end of the eighteenth century, when it was replaced increasingly by written-out cadenzas, is consequently a particularly symbolic moment in the decline of improvisation because it took place before the wider public of the proliferating concert halls. ‘Though a cadenza ought to give the impression of spontaneity, of on-the-spot improvisation on a theme or themes from the movement just played, by the late eighteenth century, these ‘improvisations’ frequently were written out and rehearsed beforehand’.<sup>42</sup> The number of cadenzas later decreased and came to be regarded chiefly as a means for displaying technical.

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<sup>42</sup> Reinhard G. Pauly, *Music in the Classic Period* (Eaglewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965), p. 137.

rather than improvisatory, musical skill.<sup>43</sup> This was the moment when improvisation capitulated in the presence of the crowd. The nineteenth century saw the rise of a middle class, growing numbers of amateur musicians, and the elevation of the individuality of the composer now released from aristocratic patronage; it also saw the rise of the modern concert hall and '[i]t is likely that this change, with its attendant standards of taste and behaviour, has not provided the most conducive environment for improvisation.'<sup>44</sup> Improvisation was also marginalised by the rising social role of composers and composition, both consequential upon the rise of the work. Carl Dahlhaus identifies particularly the years 1830 to 1847 as a transitional period in which there arose 'a new instrumental tradition emphasizing themes as a mode of musical cognition.'<sup>45</sup> These themes 'tended to produce 'logical' forms which . . . granted considerably more leeway to composers than to improvisers . . . In the same moment that improvisation reached its culmination as a part of cultural history, it was endangered from within by the march of compositional history.'<sup>46</sup>

Improvisation was in fact endangered at first in public, but not in private. Arguably, improvisation finally dwindled as a mainstream musical practice only later in the mid-nineteenth century '[w]ith the decline of the salon . . . in which improvisation was more at home than in the increasingly formal atmosphere of the concert hall'.<sup>47</sup> This point will be considered in more detail later. Despite such prodigious and famous exponents as Franz Liszt, the earlier cultural status of improvisation in mainstream Western musical practice prior to the mid- to late-eighteenth century was never regained. As a result, '[i]mprovisation is not generally

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<sup>43</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Sorrell, "Improvisation," p. 778.

<sup>45</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley: California Univ. Press, 1989), p. 137.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>47</sup> Libby, "Improvisation: Western after 1800," p. 50. For the decline of the salon see James Methuen-Campbell, "Chopin in Performance." In *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, Jim Samson (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), p. 201.

accepted as part of the mainstream musical process for today's concert-going public. It remains a somewhat 'fringe' activity, which one might meet in specialized concerts, in the new music 'ghettos'.<sup>48</sup>

## *II The Contradictions of the Work: Attitudes Against Improvisation*

In the binary mind-body model arising from Cartesianism, not only is practical music-making subordinated, but composition, as has been seen, is correspondingly privileged. At this point, the discussion will shift its emphasis to the other factor in the binarism: the work. A cultural shift to the musical work does, of course, have some antecedents prior to the eighteenth century. Looking back briefly to earlier watersheds in the history of the rise of the work, Jacques Charpentier has described a Western movement away from a more improvisatory culture at the end of the Middle Ages, when, from the time of the rise of staff notation and the representation of note lengths, an attempt was made to render the score an exact description of the intended music. '[F]rom that moment on, a musical work was no longer strictly musical; it existed outside itself, so to speak, in the form of an object to which a name was given: the score.'<sup>49</sup> Later, Caccini (c. 1545-1618) is another important earlier figure in the rise of the score. 'Caccini . . . exhibits a tendency to insist upon his right to exercise greater control over the performance of his music than had previously been the case. What was once improvised is increasingly composed into the score.'<sup>50</sup> These quotations might suggest that it was instances of the earlier rises of musical scores which engendered the rise of the musical work concept as much as the effects of a

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<sup>48</sup> Orton, "From Improvisation to Composition," p. 763.

<sup>49</sup> Jacques Charpentier, no documentation. Cited in Derek Bailey, *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* (London: The British Library National Sound Archive, 1992), p. 59.

<sup>50</sup> Tim Carter, "On the Composition and Performance of Caccini's *Le nuove musiche* (1602)." *Early Music* 12, no. 2 (May 1984): 208-217, p. 209. See also Giulio Caccini, *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* (1614).

Cartesian anthropology. In truth, all these influences have been important, and constitute separate, though parallel, cultural watersheds. It is however clearly the Cartesian watershed which, as the most recent, has had the most direct influence on developments from the eighteenth century onward.

Although composition is, especially since Descartes's influence, presumed to be the process productive of the "work," in reality the idea of the work as an identifiable and repeatable event proves elusive in the widest sense. Because a piece of music can never be repeated as exactly the same in respect of its expressive nuances, the idea of the work is seriously compromised. The presence of improvisatoriness in the form of real-time expression, as well as other possible factors, effectively deconstructs the work. 'With European art music we tend to think that we can determine the musical work from one performance, but even a computer composition that attempts to control all variables is dependent upon specific speakers in a specific room, to say nothing of the specific audience.'<sup>51</sup> As was seen, it is the idea of the work of music rather than the performing process of music which has been profoundly formative in European thought starting from the eighteenth century. Yet, as Dahlhaus has said, 'the idea that music is exemplified in works, no matter how firmly it has become rooted in the past century and a half, is far from self-evident.'<sup>52</sup> Kurt Blaukopf concurs that 'the score as an end result of musical creation is a relatively recent phenomenon in Occidental music.'<sup>53</sup> Against this point it might be objected that the notion of the "score" is dispensable here and that '[t]he concept of 'composition' could, with some justification, also be applied to music conceived without writing.'<sup>54</sup> However, the idea

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<sup>51</sup> José A. Bowen, "The History of Remembered Innovation: Tradition and Its Role in the Relationship between Musical Works and Their Performances." *The Journal of Musicology* 11, no. 2 (1993): 139-173; p. 167.

<sup>52</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), p. 10.

<sup>53</sup> Kurt Blaukopf, *Musical Life in a Changing Society* (Munich: R. Piper, 1982), p. 256.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 257.

of the work is already highly problematical even prior to any consideration of the use of musical script, for even in the context of oral tradition the idea of the work is hardly valid at all. Here, in fact, even more obviously, it can be seen that the exact reproduction of a piece of music is impossible, because, having no text to which to refer, the degree to which no two performances can ever be the same is often all the more striking than in literate musical cultures. In oral cultures, the differences often extend beyond the question of varying expressiveness to the notes themselves. ‘Romanian ethnomusicologist Constantin Brailoiu has insisted (he was probably the first) that in fact there is no single standard version for a given popular song (identified by its title), since every time a new performance is recorded, we notice significant differences’.<sup>55</sup> Doing and making afresh thus always co-exist with whatever continuities enable us to recognise a heard piece of music as the “same” piece as we have heard before, because, in the words of Jean-Jacques Nattiez, ‘in all musico-symbolic forms, *process* coexists with stabler aspects.’<sup>56</sup> Where performance of any work is concerned, ‘[m]uch unspecified performance detail is provided by relevant traditions of performance practice, some is provided by the performer’s rehearsed interpretation, and some will be different every time due to the vagaries of human action.’<sup>57</sup>

This bias in Western thought towards the work has been identified also by Lydia Goehr as having developed after the late 1700s. Prior to this, most European musicians did not have the opportunity or intention to pursue music as an art centred

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<sup>55</sup> Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990), p. 87. Reference to Constantin Brailoiu, ‘Esquisse d’une méthode de folklore musical.’ *Revue de musicologie* 12, no. 40 (1931): 233-267. Brailoiu describes this as the ‘*impulse toward variation (Variations-trieb)*.’ Nattiez, *ibid.* Brailoiu’s term *Variationstrieb* (he does not hyphenate it) appears in Brailoiu, *ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>56</sup> Nattiez, *ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>57</sup> Jeff Pressing, *Synthesizer Performance and Real-Time Techniques* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992), p. 23.

on the independent product.<sup>58</sup> However, music came to need a counterpart to the objects of the respected fine arts, an object that could be considered as separate from everyday contexts, and be contemplated for its own sake. Whereas performances are transitory events, the idea of the work fulfilled this objectivising need.<sup>59</sup> One by-product of the rise of the work in this sense was the rise of the idea of “musical classics”: ‘In the year 1700 it would have seemed more than mildly ludicrous to put on regular public concerts offering only music more than twenty or so years old . . . Yet in 1776 a group of noblemen founded just such a musical society, the proudly backward-looking Concert of Antient music.’<sup>60</sup> Weber adds: ‘Music had no canon or classics before the eighteenth century . . . Works were composed, used, and discarded.’<sup>61</sup> Dahlhaus locates the paradigm-shift to the work perhaps slightly later than Goehr, and claims that it was Beethoven for whom ‘a musical text, like a literary or a philosophical text, harbors a meaning which is made manifest but not entirely subsumed in its acoustic presentation . . . a musical creation can exist as an ‘art work of ideas’ transcending its various interpretations.’<sup>62</sup> For Dahlhaus, the pre-Beethoven ideology can still in fact be detected, surviving as late as the work of Rossini for whom the score ‘is a mere recipe for a performance, and it is the performance which forms the crucial aesthetic arbiter as the realization of a draft rather than an exegesis of a text. Rossini’s musical thought hinged on the performance as an event, not on the work as a text passed down and from time to time given acoustical ‘explications’’.<sup>63</sup>

Yet, wherever it is situated chronologically, it will be clear that the later “strong” view

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<sup>58</sup> See Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 178.

<sup>59</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 173-174.

<sup>60</sup> William Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England: A Study in Canon, Ritual and Ideology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, p. 10. ‘Does he think I have his silly fiddle in mind when the spirit talks to me?’ Ludwig van Beethoven. Cited in Lukas Foss, “The Changing Composer-Performer Relationship: A Monologue and a Dialogue.” *Perspectives of New Music* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1963): 45-53: p. 46.

of the work will tend in due course to shift performance into the background, both performance of written music, and, as seen above, improvisatory performance.<sup>64</sup>

Although the unity and integrity of art-works had been discussed in earlier eras, ‘what emerges from such familiar notions in the late eighteenth century is the curious idea of the work of art as a kind of *subject*. It is, to be sure, a peculiar kind of subject, this newly defined artefact, but it is a subject none the less.’<sup>65</sup> Lawrence Kramer also concurs in linking the strong concept of the work to the Cartesian idea of the subject: ‘Classical music and the modern subject have interlocking histories, the crux of which is the formation of the concept of the aesthetic in the mid-eighteenth century.’<sup>66</sup> Kramer refers to modern studies which have ‘figured the musical articulation of self against other as the opposition of form and sensuous plenitude.’<sup>67</sup> In the context of the

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<sup>63</sup> Dahlhaus, *ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>64</sup> One by-product of this aesthetic was the prejudice which it engendered against composing with the aid of the keyboard. A composer can sometimes choose to explore his new ideas at the keyboard in what is essentially an improvisatory procedure preparatory to the process of writing them down. However, as Rosen writes of the nineteenth century: ‘The finer composer, it was felt, should be capable of elaborating the work of music solely in his head, and ought not to need the crutch of trying it out at the keyboard. This is an interesting example of the snobbish idealism that wishes to separate body and mind, with the body considered morally inferior to the less material, more ethereal mind. We have here an interesting aesthetic prejudice: the work of music should be conceived not directly in material sound, but as an abstract form. The realization in sound then oddly becomes secondary.’ Charles Rosen, “On Playing the Piano.” *The New York Review of Books* 46, no. 16 (21st October, 1999): 49-54; p. 51. ‘Schumann, in particular, felt ashamed of his reliance on the piano for inspiration.’ *Ibid*. A parallel aesthetic prejudice was present in the sphere of nineteenth-century poetry: ‘It may be hard for the people of today to understand either how little poetry was then heard, or how much it was read. Until Yeats spoke it was very little heard; so little, that many critics condemned the use of words that were spelled as though they did not rhyme, even if they were pronounced as though they rhymed. Writers using such words were told that they were using ‘cockney rhymes’ or ‘ear rhymes’. They would be trounced for rhyming ‘guest’ with ‘best’; and would have been flayed for rhyming (had they ever dared) ‘blood’ with ‘mud’ . . . ‘Blood’ . . . had to rhyme with such words as good or wood or hood. It was forbidden to rhyme it with could or would or should; as this was judged to look ill upon the page.’ John Masefield, *So Long to Learn: Chapters of an Autobiography* (London: William Heinemann, 1952), pp. 135-136.

<sup>65</sup> Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: California Univ. Press, 1995), p. 34.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35. References to Leo Treitler, “The Politics of Reception: Tailoring the Present as Fulfillment of a Desired Past.” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 116 (1991): 280-298; Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: n.p., 1991); Jeffrey Kallberg, “The Harmony of the Tea Table: Gender and Ideology in the Piano Nocturne.” *Representations* 39 (1992): 102-133; Lawrence Kramer, “Liszt, Goethe, and the Discourse of Gender.” In *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley: n.p., 1990); Lawrence Kramer, “Music and Cultural Hermeneutics: The Salome Complex.” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2 (1990): 269-294; Lawrence Kramer, “Fin-de-Siècle Fantasies: *Elektra*, Degeneration, and Sexual Science.” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5 (1993): 141-166; Philip Brett, “Musicality, Essentialism, and the Closet.” In *Queering the*

present discussion, we might wish to parallel his words ‘form and sensuous plenitude’ with the words “work and improvisation.” The emphasis on the musical work was further reinforced by the ideas of Immanuel Kant. The motif of Cartesian disembodiment resonates here too. In the *Critique of Judgement*, art is autonomous, ‘purposiveness without purpose.’<sup>68</sup> Thus removed from ordinary life, it is attended to with ‘an attitude independent of any motivation to do with utility, economic value, moral judgements, or peculiarly personal emotion, and concerned with experiencing the object ‘for its own sake.’<sup>69</sup> Before the rise of the autonomous work in the eighteenth century, ‘works were generally written to celebrate personal events,’<sup>70</sup> in a way which reinforced the link between music and society. The twentieth century saw some revival of this aesthetic. Hindemith, in his concept of *Gebrauchsmusik* supported ‘the view that music for specific uses and particular occasions - pageants, national events, civic presentations, even for teaching situations - is as valid as the Romantic approach to a composition as a ‘grand’ work of art.’<sup>71</sup> Yet Kant had argued that aesthetic judgement ‘concerns itself with particular objects, and is both ‘disinterested’ . . . and free of concepts . . . Its aim is neither scientific knowledge nor right action, but rather the contemplation of the individual object for its own sake, as it is in itself, in the light of the particular sensuous experience it generates.’<sup>72</sup> It is from the ideas of Kant, Hegel, Schiller, Coleridge and others, that the modern idea of the artistic artefact largely derives. After Kant, what had hitherto been socially situated

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*Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, Gary C. Thomas (eds.). (New York: n.p., 1994).

<sup>68</sup> Harold Osborne (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), unattributed article “Kant,” p. 622.

<sup>69</sup> C. Janaway, “Aesthetic Attitude.” In *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Ted Honderich (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), p. 8.

<sup>70</sup> Weber, *Rise of Musical Classics*, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Elliott Schwartz and Barney Childs, “Introduction: The Revolution in Musical Esthetics.” In *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, Elliott Schwartz and Barney Childs (eds.), (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. xiii.

<sup>72</sup> Roger Scruton, *A Short History of Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Wittgenstein* (1981) (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 159.



creativity in music, art, and drama was increasingly considered under the new and esoteric category of the aesthetic, and discussion of the nature of art considered in itself proceeded with new intensity.<sup>73</sup>

‘Ask any member of a local choir or orchestra if they have ‘their music,’ and they will understand you to mean not musical skill or memory or experience but a copy of the requisite printed (or occasionally hand-written) notated text.’<sup>74</sup> Contemporary thinking is, however, gradually moving away from this view of the musical work which exists in the form of a static score apart from any implementation in the human activity of music-making, a view whose parallel with the disembodied Cartesian *cogito* is so evident. Edmund Husserl, in the early twentieth century, put in place an important challenge to the *cogito*. For Husserl, the mind is not a self-contained *cogito*, for it always thinks of *something*: this characteristic he speaks of as the mind’s ‘intentionality.’ He writes: ‘[I]ntentionality is the fundamental characteristic of ‘psychic phenomena’ - and actually lays open the method for a descriptive . . . theory of consciousness’.<sup>75</sup> As a result of intentionality, ‘[t]he psychological does not constitute a world for itself; it is given as an ego or as the experience of an ego . . . and this sort of thing reveals itself empirically as bound to certain physical things called bodies. This, too, is a self-evident pre-datum.’<sup>76</sup> Therefore, the mind is now conscious of a world intuited as being as real as thought itself. This represents a break with the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy. ‘All experience, Husserl now claims, has a tri-partite structure: the ‘ego-cogito-cogitatum’. The subject-pole is the experiencing subject, the

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<sup>73</sup> See Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), pp. 20-21.

<sup>74</sup> Ruth Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 125.

<sup>75</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), p. 41. Cited in Michael Hammond, Jane Howarth, Russell Keat, *Understanding Phenomenology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 62.

<sup>76</sup> Edmund Husserl. “Philosophy as a Rigorous Science.” In *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, Quentin Lauer (ed.). (New York: Harper and Row, 1965). p. 85

transcendental Ego; the object-pole is the *cogitatum*, the object experienced; and the *cogito* is the stream of experiences which link ego and *cogitatum*.<sup>77</sup> Thus, contrary to Descartes, the *cogito* is now integrated with the world, the *cogitatum*. ‘The Cartesian question was, how do we know, given that we have at best our own clear and distinct ideas and nothing else, that the world exists as we suppose it does . . . Through the concept of intentionality, it has become absurd to attempt to distinguish between the contents of the mind . . . and the objects to which our consciousness is directed.’<sup>78</sup>

If this critique of Descartes’s *cogito* possesses some validity, it might be expected that in societies unaffected by Descartes’s ideas, music has always been more embodied, or integrated into social life. Anthony Storr concurs, observing that nowadays in the West we set aside particular periods of time for appreciating music and the other arts. These are often sequestered in places like concert halls and art galleries. On the other hand, in pre-literate cultures, the arts are more closely integrated with ordinary life: ‘In Western societies, the arts tend to occupy a special niche of their own, as if they might be a luxury rather than a vital part of human life. This has made it possible for the unenlightened to argue that music and the other arts are some kind of substitute for, or escape from, ‘real’ life.’<sup>79</sup> Indeed, in Eagleton’s slightly modified perspective, ‘[t]he assumption that there was an unchanging object known as ‘art’, or an isolatable experience called ‘beauty’ or the ‘aesthetic’, was largely a product of the . . . alienation of art from social life.’<sup>80</sup>

In order to take up a critical stance towards the Cartesian inheritance in Western music, it will be necessary to ‘renounce our myopic focus on works of art and look at the *social practices* of art,’ and also ‘look at the *interplay* between works, practices.

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<sup>77</sup> Hammond, Howarth, Keat, *Understanding Phenomenology*, p. 73. Reference to Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p. 50.

<sup>78</sup> Mary Warnock, *Existentialism* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 43.

<sup>79</sup> Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 89.

<sup>80</sup> Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p. 21.

and participants in the practices.’<sup>81</sup> There will then be less inclination to think of music chiefly in term of the work. In Western music, ‘[i]t is the work which imposes itself by its own power and which exerts its power over the public . . . The work comes between the public and the artist.’<sup>82</sup> Thus the performer becomes an intermediary between the listeners and a fixed musical object. ‘We have lost the feeling that the most important thing is the event and that music is primarily a process and not a fixed object. So the accepted terms of composition and performance never really give a feeling of what music *making* is, that the event of music making is primary.’<sup>83</sup> A foregrounding of music-making as living event naturally tends to empower the on-the-spot creativity which arises out of the musical event itself, liberating the improvisatory impulse.

### III *Schelling, Liszt and Improvisation*

If Cartesian assumptions tended to work against a positive appraisal of improvisatory musical practices, the rise of Kantian and subsequent German philosophy seems to have encouraged a certain mitigation of this trend. Kant’s influence is in fact paradoxical, since, as has just been shown, it consolidated the rising prestige of the work and the idea of the autonomous aesthetic. Kant certainly reinforced the stress on the composed work, the aesthetic artefact at the expense of concrete performance. His thought is, in this respect at least, especially uncongenial to any positive evaluation of improvisatoriness:

Specifically, for Kant, the art-work . . . suggests both formal necessity and formal finality. We feel that its parts fit together as if tending toward some ultimate goal, and we feel that the parts are so required by

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<sup>81</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, “The Work of Making a Work of Music.” In *What is Music? An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music*, Philip A. Alperson (ed.), (1987) (University Park Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1994), p. 109.

<sup>82</sup> Jean Düring, “Le Jeu des relations sociales: éléments d’une problématique.” In *L’Improvisation*, Lortat-Jacob (ed.), p. 21.

<sup>83</sup> Simone de Haan in Simone de Haan and Roger Dean, “Improvising the Listener: The Listener Improvises. An Edited Conversation.” *Sounds Australian: Journal of Australian Music* 32 (Summer 1991-1992): 45-50; p. 45.

the setting of this goal that, were a single note in the Mozart sonata different, were a single chord or counter-rhythm in the Beethoven symphony other than it is, we would, according to Kant, fear that the entire work would collapse.<sup>84</sup>

The improvisatory being ‘spontaneous, the fortuitous, the incomplete,’<sup>85</sup> it thus appears as an antithesis to the Kantian view of the art-work. However, Kant’s philosophy, insofar as it dealt in a new way with the imagination, seems also to have generated a counter-trend which actually favoured improvisatoriness, especially when expanded through the subsequent work of Fichte and Schelling. This counter-trend began to make itself felt in the private sphere of nineteenth-century music-making at the same time as the hegemony of the work was being consolidated in the public sphere, as will be seen. Although improvisation was never to reacquire the cultural status it possessed until the eighteenth century, this nineteenth-century counter-trend which fostered improvisatoriness against a new post-Kantian philosophical horizon continued into the twentieth century to form one important philosophical undercurrent to the twentieth-century musical *avant-garde*. To use a political metaphor, improvisation entered the opposition in the nineteenth century, and may be said to have embarked upon a fruitful career as a musical “other” outside the mainstream.

Kant’s view of the imagination effected a radical revision in the understanding of the process by which human intelligence comes to grips with the world in which it finds itself. For Kant, the mind is not simply *tabula rasa* receiving passively the information presented to it from outside, as, for example, in Locke’s contrasting view of the mind for which there is nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the experience of the senses.<sup>86</sup> For Kant, the mind is a power which synthesises what it receives and contributes from its own resources to what it finally comes to know. In

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<sup>84</sup> Daniel Herwitz, “John Cage’s Approach to the Global.” In *John Cage: Composed in America*. Marjorie Perloff and Charles Junkerman (eds.), (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1994), p. 192.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 193.

<sup>86</sup> See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690).

other words, humans mentally construct their world. For Kant, the synthesis which the mind makes of what it receives is ‘the mere result of the power of imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever’.<sup>87</sup> Kant described this new understanding of knowledge, with imagination at its heart, as his “Copernican Revolution.” Kant in his first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* argued that the immediate experiences presented by the senses could not explain the organised structure of the world to which everyday human experience bears witness. To explain the structure it is necessary to assume that understanding imposes preconditioned ways of thinking upon sense experience. Kant concluded that the mind itself provided organising categories and forms which explained why perceptions were coherent, why objects were perceived as unities, why they were causally interrelated, and why they were experienced in space and time.<sup>88</sup>

In that Copernicus, like Kant, reversed the perceived order of reality by pointing out that the earth goes round the sun, a comparison between the two men is useful. In Kant’s thought, the faculty of imagination, formerly disparaged by the Cartesian philosophical tradition in favour of reason is now situated, like the sun of Copernicus, at the centre of the mind. ‘Descartes’ commitment to rationalism prompted him to consider the image as no more than a quasi-material residue of sensory experience which, in fact, obscures the self-reflection of the *cogito*.<sup>89</sup> The philosophy of Descartes ‘yielded two kinds of reliable knowledge that reinforced each other. On the one hand, knowledge consists in rational logical coherence, discerned by a detached, disinterested, disembodied mind. On the other, knowledge comes from what is

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<sup>87</sup> Immanuel Kant *Critique of Pure Reason A* (1781) 78 / *Critique of Pure Reason B* (1787) 103.

<sup>88</sup> See Robert J. Richards, *The Meaning of Evolution: The Morphological Construction and Ideological Reconstruction of Darwin’s Theory* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1992), p. 22.

<sup>89</sup> Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination: Toward a Postmodern Culture* (1988) (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 161.

experiential, empirical, and factual.’<sup>90</sup> Because imagination could not be accommodated within either of these two categories, its role had come to be minimised. Yet now, for Kant, imagination organises the information presented to it by the senses. Kant’s insight remains the basis for modern cognitive psychology which, in words of Dane Harwood, ‘assumes that the human mind is active and flexible: we *construct* and synthesize our universe from moment to moment, rather than passively receiving a rigidly-structured environment. That is, we act upon our world, and in doing so give it meaning.’<sup>91</sup> In the twenty years after the publication of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant’s understanding of the power of imagination would be further developed especially by Fichte and Schelling. As one commentator on this later tradition explains: ‘Imagination is life in its most developed form or, as Schelling would say, in its ‘highest potency’.’<sup>92</sup>

Kant comes in his later work to attribute a particular significance to artistic imagination. In the *Critique of Judgement*, ‘Kant has effectively circumscribed the creative role of imagination; he has confined its full freedom within the boundaries of art.’<sup>93</sup> In the *Critique of Judgement* ‘the aesthetic dimension and the corresponding feeling of pleasure emerge not merely as a third dimension and faculty of the mind, but as its *center*’.<sup>94</sup> In Schelling, this view of imagination is extended. Thus, in the words of Herbert Read: ‘[Schelling] imagined, as basic to the universe, an energy, or creative impulse which, when unconscious, is manifested as nature: when conscious, as art . . . The ideal work of art and the real world of objects are products of one and the same

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<sup>90</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Bible and Postmodern Imagination: Texts Under Negotiation* (London: SCM, 1993), p. 5.

<sup>91</sup> Harwood, “Contributions from Psychology to Musical Universals,” pp. 51-52.

<sup>92</sup> E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Wordsworth and Schelling: A Typological Study of Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1960), p. 105.

<sup>93</sup> Kearney, *Wake*, p. 174.

<sup>94</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Enquiry into Freud* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 174.

aesthetic activity. Art is the only permanent revelation of the nature of reality.’<sup>95</sup> In this way Kant’s understanding of the imagination as the foundation of all knowledge leads in Schelling to an apotheosis of the artist. This was the philosophy which gave impetus to the Romantic movement in the nineteenth century. In Schelling’s words, ‘art is at once the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy’.<sup>96</sup> For Schelling, art visibly embodies the essence of being: ‘Art is not a mere imitation of existing phenomena - it is ‘the holy, eternally creative elemental power of the world, which generates all things out of itself and brings them forth productive’.’<sup>97</sup> As Carl Dahlhaus has observed, ‘[t]he concept of art first acquired metaphysical dignity in the Romantic era.’<sup>98</sup> According to this Romantic philosophy, the work of the artist unveils the essence or form of reality, and, essential to the unveiling effected by the artist is the principle of intuition. The genius of the artist consists of ‘an unconscious power which he possesses (or which possesses him) and which enables him for a moment to identify himself with the formative energy of the universe’.<sup>99</sup>

Having identified these developments in Kant and Schelling, the present discussion will return to Kant and examine also the rise of a subsidiary motif within the trends already outlined. This is the idea of spontaneity. For Kant, spontaneity lies at the heart of the imagination which, as was just seen, gives rise to our world. Spontaneity is ‘the mind’s power of producing representations from itself.’<sup>100</sup> He speaks, in the *Critique of Judgement* of ‘a faculty of *complete spontaneity of intuition*’<sup>101</sup> as ‘an understanding in the widest sense of the term.’<sup>102</sup> And again, for Kant, ‘*receptivity* makes cognition

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<sup>95</sup> Herbert Read, *The True Voice of Feeling: Studies in English Romantic Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1953), p. 167.

<sup>96</sup> Friedrich Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) (Charlottesville: Virginia Univ. Press, 1978), p. 231.

<sup>97</sup> Read, *True Voice of Feeling*, p. 16. No documentation of the quotation.

<sup>98</sup> Dahlhaus, *Schoenberg and the New Music*, p. 214.

<sup>99</sup> Read, *True Voice of Feeling*, p. 17.

<sup>100</sup> Kant *CPR* A 51/B 75.

<sup>101</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (1790) 406.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

possible only when combined with *spontaneity*. Now, this spontaneity is the basis of a three-fold synthesis necessarily occurring in all knowledge: namely, the *apprehension* of representations of the mind in intuition; the *reproduction* of these representations in imagination; and their *recognition* in a concept.<sup>103</sup> (Later, Heidegger would confirm the prominence of spontaneity in the Kantian understanding of knowing. He asks: ‘[D]oes Kant not generally suppose that understanding and reason are simply identical with spontaneity?’)<sup>104</sup> Arguably, what Kant means is that as experience rises up to meet the human mind and we synthesise it imaginatively in the process by which it becomes our knowledge, we do so by means of an extremely rapid succession of imaginative acts which are inherently spontaneous presumably because they are elicited by the unpredictable nature of the experiences with which they have continuously to grapple.

Moreover, there seems to be for Kant an artistic counterpart, and this artistic aspect of spontaneity is significant in the present context, because improvisation in music is artistic spontaneity in a particularly focused and indeed conscious form. In the case of the experience of the beautiful and consequent judgements of taste, Kant writes at one point in the *Critique of Judgement*: ‘Now, if in the judgement of taste the imagination must be considered in its freedom, it is . . . regarded . . . as productive and spontaneous (as the author of arbitrary forms of possible intuition).’<sup>105</sup> This implies that an improvisatory spontaneity lies at the heart of all artistic creation and perception. Of this citation from Kant, Crawford observes: ‘This view of the productive and spontaneous faculty (function) of the imagination has an air of plausibility about it for

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<sup>103</sup> Kant, *CPR* A 97.

<sup>104</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1997), p. 107.

<sup>105</sup> Kant, *CJ* 240 (paragraph 1 of the “General Remark upon the Exposition of the Aesthetical Reflective Judgement”). Cited in Donald W. Crawford, *Kant’s Aesthetic Theory* (Madison: Wisconsin Univ. Press, 1974), p. 89.



the creative activity of the artist'.<sup>106</sup> This could suggest that spontaneous art-forms like improvisation exemplify externally and with special clarity something centrally operative in all artistic creativity and human imagination in general. '... Kant says, somewhat obscurely, that in aesthetic judgement imagination and understanding enter into a 'free play.' It is from this free play that aesthetic delight arises.'<sup>107</sup> Kant does not develop this idea of free play in relation to musical creativity, although he does make one explicit reference to spontaneous improvised music in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, which though published in 1797, represented the substance of lectures given by him for thirty years.<sup>108</sup> Unfortunately the reference is not very illuminating. He refers to the case of an organist who improvises while holding a conversation and suggests that the conversation may illuminate his musical creativity in the same way as a microscope illuminates the nature of what it is used to examine, with the result that he improvises better than if he had not tried to hold a conversation while playing. The conversation is supposed to elicit the musician's "obscure ideas."<sup>109</sup> It is immensely improbable that any practising musician would verify this experience since such conversation would distract an improviser. Kant's low estimation of the importance of music among the arts<sup>110</sup> appears to be combined with a low level of insight into the musical creative process.

For Kant, spontaneity does not merely ground the experience of knowing other things: it grounds the knowing self. Kant writes: '[T]his representation ('I think') is an act of *spontaneity*, that is, it cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility.'<sup>111</sup> J. G.

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<sup>106</sup> Crawford, *ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Colin Lyas, *Aesthetics* (London: UCL Press, 1997), p. 26.

<sup>108</sup> See Mary J. Gregor, "Translator's Introduction." In Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1797) (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. ix.

<sup>109</sup> See Kant, *A* 136. In Kant, *ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>110</sup> See Bojan Bujić, "Aesthetics of Music." In *The New Oxford Companion to Music*, vol 1, Denis Arnold (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), p. 23.

<sup>111</sup> Kant, *CPR* B 132.

Fichte in his *Science of Knowledge* of 1794 echoes Kant's dual understanding of spontaneity when he writes: 'So far we have been considering possibilities of human thought. It was the spontaneity of the human mind which brought forth, not only the object of reflection - those very possibilities of thought, though according to the rules of an exhaustive, synthetic system - but also the form of reflection, the act of reflecting itself.'<sup>112</sup> Likewise: 'From this absolute spontaneity alone there arises the consciousness of self. - Not by any law of nature, nor by any consequence of such laws, do we attain to reason; we achieve it by absolute freedom, not through a *transition*, but by means of a *leap*.'<sup>113</sup> Fichte, indeed, considered that '[o]nly the ego existed. The world came to be because of it.'<sup>114</sup> Schelling differed in respect of this point: for him 'nature existed in its own right and preceded the human subject.'<sup>115</sup> Notwithstanding this distinction with Fichte, which makes of Schelling an objective, rather than, as Fichte, a subjective idealist, Schelling is in a line of philosophical influence from Fichte as well as Kant. In this way it appears that Schelling inherits an understanding of human thought and selfhood as both rooted in the idea of spontaneity. Having already seen above the place occupied by art in Schelling's philosophy, the time has come to draw out the implication of these preoccupations with art and spontaneity which clearly undergird Schelling's thought. Spontaneity and art: art and spontaneity. Where might such philosophical influences lead in the sphere of cultural influence and artistic practice?

The Romantic movement in European music, as will be seen, was sympathetic to the idea of musical spontaneity in the form of free improvisation when pursued in an intimate environment, and this will be shown to be in large measure a consequence of

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<sup>112</sup> J. G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge* (1794) (New York: Meredith Corporation, 1970), p. 198.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>114</sup> Johannes Hirschberger, *A Short History of Western Philosophy* (1971) (Guildford: Lutterworth, 1976), p. 149.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

Schelling's ideas. In connection with this nineteenth-century interest in improvisation, it might be possible to conjecture also a cultural influence of Friedrich von Schiller's idea of 'aesthetic play central to [the] concept of a fully realised humanity.'<sup>116</sup> For Schiller, the famous poet-dramatist (d. 1805), 'man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays.'<sup>117</sup> Perhaps one indication of this playful climate of thought in a musical context may be found in the adoption of the title "Impromptu" for short piano pieces, a title not known before 1822, and taken up by Schubert's publisher, Haslinger, in 1827, suggesting that the publishing house thought the improvisatory connotations of this title ("impromptu" means "improvised") would respond to current fashion and appeal to potential buyers of Schubert's music.<sup>118</sup> Schiller had observed: 'Man *adorns* himself. Free delight takes a place among his wants, and the superfluous is soon the chief part of his pleasures.'<sup>119</sup> Although it has been observed that '[t]he disciples of Friedrich Schiller are, after 1815, rare birds: few were inclined to accept play and aesthetic creation as privileged areas of humaneness'<sup>120</sup> yet, '[w]hat was striking in the years after 1815 was the coalescence of some romantic . . . values . . . into splintered or reduced interpretations of the high-romantic model, or into diminutive prettifications.'<sup>121</sup> '[D]iminutive prettification' aptly characterises the mode in which the genre of the musical impromptu takes up the Schillerian motif of aesthetic playfulness at this period, even if the actualities of Schubert's music rise above the trivialising connotations of Haslinger's title.

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<sup>116</sup> Patrick Gardiner, "Freedom as an Aesthetic Idea." In *The Idea of Freedom: Essays in Honour of Isaiah Berlin*, Alan Ryan (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), p. 37.

<sup>117</sup> Friedrich von Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1801) (Oxford: n.p., 1967), p. 107. Cited in *ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> See Arnold (ed.), *New Oxford Companion to Music*, vol 1, unattributed article "Impromptu," p. 903.

<sup>119</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1801) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), p. 136.

<sup>120</sup> Virgil Nemoianu. *The Taming of Romanticism: European Literature and the Age of Biedermeier* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984). pp. 6-7.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Taking in for a moment a rather broad sweep of history, it may be seen that the social context of Romantic improvisation differed somewhat from that of many former epochs, for now improvising is essentially emphasised as a solitary pursuit. Group improvisation is a well-attested practice at certain earlier periods in Europe. However, there is not seen in the nineteenth century much to compare with various sixteenth-century practices in this area. ‘Sethus Calvisius (1592) . . . describes, clearly and in detail, three main possibilities of ‘harmonia extemporanea’, as he calls improvised counterpoint . . . Calvisius believes, a ‘tolerable harmony’ may be produced.’<sup>122</sup> This practice of improvised vocal counterpoint was at one time prevalent in Church music and also many secular walks of life, though the following citation also locates its historical point of decline: ‘German theorists of the period 1550-1650 observed that extemporized counterpoint, although by then rare in churches, was still being practised among miners, horsemen, tailors, cobblers, shepherds . . . both during work and in public taverns.’<sup>123</sup> Such corporate musical improvising, which seems to have flourished widely in the Western culture of some earlier ages, seems long defunct once the nineteenth century is underway, at least as far as non-folk musics are concerned, even if its folk counterpart lived on into the twentieth century, as in the case of Hungarian gypsy bands.<sup>124</sup> Given the long link being made here between nineteenth-century improvisatory practices and the improvised counterpoint of the Baroque and earlier, the historical perspective adopted might at first seem somewhat diffuse. Yet it tends to throw into prominence a certain important generality, namely the fact that Romanticism, despite its concern for improvisatory spontaneousness, did not show any interest in the revival of musical improvisation as a group practice. One reason why

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<sup>122</sup> Ferand, *Improvisation in Nine Centuries*, p. 9.

<sup>123</sup> Rob C. Wegman, “From Maker to Composer: Improvisation and Musical Authorship in the Low Countries, 1450-1500.” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 49, no. 3 (1996): 409-479; p. 420. Reference to Ernest T. Ferand, “‘Sodaine And Unexpected’ Music in the Renaissance.” *The Musical Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1951): 10-27; pp. 17, 19, 25.

Romantic composers might have been expected to show such an interest in 'romanticism's yearning for remote times and places'<sup>125</sup> and concern for reviving antique customs, among which group improvisation clearly figures. 'Relationships to music of the past . . . became a conscious linking in the nineteenth century . . . One of the typical traits of the nineteenth century is the parallel growth of an urge to ever new horizons and a consciousness of dependence on history.'<sup>126</sup> However, not even Franz Liszt, who came to epitomise the improvisatory culture of the nineteenth century, and whose music reflects among other values a commitment to 'gypsy music . . . the indigenous music of the Hungarian people,'<sup>127</sup> seems to have shown any interest in improvising as a group activity, despite the fact that he may well have encountered folk music in such a corporate improvisatory style from his musically-conscious<sup>128</sup> Hungarian farmhouse background<sup>129</sup> close to the culture of village life. Liszt, descended from at least three generations of 'German peasants and craftsmen'<sup>130</sup>, would certainly have been aware of the popular musical culture of his homeland.

It seems in fact that for the Romantic movement some ideological force weighed against the revival of corporate improvising, and this force is probably rooted in the philosophical milieu. As David Simpson points out, philosophical ideas at this period were a constant source of inspiration for artists: '[I]t seems almost impossible to overestimate the influence of Kant and his successors on the artists, writers and critics of the time. There was a continual and creative interchange between the poets and the philosophers, to a degree that may be impossible for us to imagine now'.<sup>131</sup> The

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<sup>124</sup> See Ferand, *Improvisation in Nine Centuries*, p. 21.

<sup>125</sup> Nemoianu, *Taming of Romanticism*, p. 8.

<sup>126</sup> Dahlhaus, *Aesthetics of Music*, p. 97.

<sup>127</sup> Ronald Taylor, *Franz Liszt: The Man and the Musician* (London: Grafton, 1986), p. 261.

<sup>128</sup> Liszt's father played the cello in the Esterházy court orchestra under Haydn. See *ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> See *ibid*, p. 1.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>131</sup> David Simpson, "Introduction." In *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Hegel*, David Simpson (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), p. 2.

improvising which characterised the nineteenth century was that of the private individual, and this particular emphasis was funded by the influential new Schellingian theory of private intuition, that of the solitary genius who communes with ultimate reality through artistic creativity. Strictly speaking, it might be incomplete to place the entire responsibility for the privatisation of improvisation on the shoulders of early nineteenth-century philosophy without regard to previous movements in the same direction. Ferand has interpreted the rise of the improvised concerto cadenza in the eighteenth century as an early shift towards the individualisation of improvisatory practice. For him, '[t]he cadenza in the instrumental concerto may be regarded as a kind of transition from ensemble to solo improvisation.'<sup>132</sup> This development, prior to the influence of Schelling, presumably has to be seen as a consequence of the rise of the dominance of the work-concept: improvisation had to be "quarantined" as a segregated occurrence within the concerto movement, in order that the movement's structural self-sufficiency might continue to be perceived as inviolate and its structural integrity as a fully scored work compromised as little as possible. Nevertheless, solo improvisation, as it came to be seen in the nineteenth century, was powerfully informed by the new Schellingian themes: 'The spontaneous outpouring of an artist's inspiration afforded a glimpse of genius in the very process of creating.'<sup>133</sup> Here is the artist abstracting the essence of being in accordance with the doctrines of Schelling, and intuition is a private experience for Schelling. 'The sole immediate object of transcendental concern is subjective; the sole organ of this mode of philosophizing is therefore the *inner sense*'.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Ferand, *Improvisation in Nine Centuries*, p. 19.

<sup>133</sup> Valerie Woodring Goertzen, "By Way of Introduction: Preluding by 18th- and Early 19th-Century Pianists." *The Journal of Musicology* 14, no. 3 (1996): 299-337; p. 305.

<sup>134</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 13.

Increasingly in the nineteenth century, the act of musical improvising belonged to the private forum, not only in the sense of being produced by an individual person rather than by or within a group, but also in the sense of failing to maintain a foothold in the increasing number of public concert halls. Public concerts increased, yet improvisation in public concerts did not thrive. Documents of the period strongly suggest that the public concert tradition which advanced rapidly in the nineteenth century gradually left improvising behind, further indication of the nuances of inspired solitary communion with reality which improvising had come to suggest. Inevitably this philosophical perception of the solitary artist communing with reality would entail that concert-hall improvising came to be seen as the inappropriate importation of a private activity into a public sphere. Improvisations on the piano at public concerts had more or less died out by 1830 and by the mid-nineteenth century there was a perception that public improvisation at the piano was a declining practice, associated with the period c. 1770 to 1830.<sup>135</sup> In 1842, the following review by Charles Hallé contains a reference to the decline of concert-hall piano improvising, here called a ‘free fantasy’: ‘His performance recalls the golden age, in which a Clementi, Mozart, Field, Klengel, Ries, Cramer, or Hummel was still in vogue; but he would have recalled that age even more had he also played a free fantasy, as those kings of the piano did. Unfortunately this most noble branch of piano playing, by which one used to recognize the true pianist, has been lost for the most part’.<sup>136</sup> Janet Ritterman has also written of this changing fashion:

In several of his early concerts, Chopin concluded the programme with an improvisation on vocal themes. This was not unusual: until about the 1830s, those performers most confident of their skills of spontaneous musical invention frequently ended their concerts with improvisations based on tunes likely to be familiar to the audience. As reviews indicate, the connection between improvisation and composed fantasies or variations was extremely close.

Contemporary comments on these improvisations also reflect changing views of the skills expected of the professional pianist. Until the late 1820s, audiences and critics alike appear to have been unstinting

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<sup>135</sup> See Goertzen, “By Way of Introduction,” p. 333.

<sup>136</sup> Review by C[arl] G[ollmick] in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 44 (21st September, 1842): 7-7. Cited in *ibid.*

in their admiration of the qualities demonstrated. But as concerts became more frequent, displays of this kind more predictable, and critics more experienced, concert reviews reflect more ambivalent attitudes towards the inclusion of improvised items. By the mid 1830s it was rare for an aspiring pianist to include an improvisation in a public concert.<sup>137</sup>

It is interesting to note that the date particularly associated with improvisation's public decline as identified in these citations coincides closely with the rise of Schelling's intellectual influence as described by another source. In connection with this date 1830, Frederick de Wolff Bolman's assessment dovetails neatly, when he says: 'The history of the complex period of German thought from 1830 until about the middle of the century is in no small measure a many-sided commentary upon the later thought of Schelling.'<sup>138</sup> These quotations show how, for the sensibility of the mid-nineteenth century, improvisation gradually dissociated itself from the public and communal spheres. Yet it is known that piano improvisation as a private culture flourished in the seclusion of private gatherings and in 'the intimacy of the salon.'<sup>139</sup> It was for performance in this type of milieu that Chopin, whose public performances were rare,<sup>140</sup> probably composed his *Fantasie-Improptu* (1835) and his three *Improptus* (1837, 1839, and 1842), composed pieces whose titles implicitly celebrate improvisation, and whose dates from after 1830 are suggestive in this Schellingian context.

It is to the cultural impact of philosophical ideas that this removal of improvisation to the private setting is attributable. It was noted earlier how it was in spontaneity that the Kantian self is constituted and how for Fichte, '[f]rom this absolute spontaneity alone there arises the consciousness of self.'<sup>141</sup> In such private piano improvisations as

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<sup>137</sup> Janet Ritterman, "Piano Music and the Public Concert, 1800-1850." In *Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, Samson, (ed.), pp. 25-26.

<sup>138</sup> Frederick de Wolfe Bolman, Jr., "Introduction." In Friedrich Schelling, *The Ages of the World* (New York, Morningside Heights: Columbia Univ. Press, 1942), p. 6.

<sup>139</sup> Ritterman, "Piano music and the Public Concert," p. 12.

<sup>140</sup> See Arthur Hedley and Maurice J. E. Brown, in Arthur Hedley, Maurice J. E. Brown, Nicholas Temperley, Kornel Michalowski, "Chopin, Fryderyk Franciszek." In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol 4, Sadie (ed.), pp. 294-295.

<sup>141</sup> Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, p. 262.



those of Franz Liszt, the spontaneously arising Fichtean self, and also the Schellingian artist with his free vision of ultimate reality, coalesced in order to fulfil their high calling as proclaimed by the philosophies of the day. Borrowing words of Jacques Maritain: ‘Now subjectivity is revealed, I mean as creative. At the same time and by the same token is also revealed the intuitive, and entirely individualised, way through which subjectivity communes with the world in the creative act.’<sup>142</sup> So close was the link between improvisation and the idea of the intimacy of the salon, that in due course, one writer even claims, ‘[w]ith the decline of the salon as a centre of musical performance, in which improvisation was more at home than in the increasingly formal atmosphere of the concert hall, improvisation gradually died out.’<sup>143</sup>

This is a large and unsubstantiated generalisation, although it certainly seems to be true in respect of the practice of preluding. By 1849, the pianist Kalkbrenner, referring to the custom whereby pianists had often improvised preludes before a piece, could protest: ‘How many of our best pianists can make an even moderately satisfactory prelude? And as for students there is not more than one in a thousand who try to go beyond the perfect cadence in improvisations.’<sup>144</sup> This state of affairs doubtless facilitated the emergence of sets of printed preludes for pianists who could not improvise. But even here, in due course, as Goertzen writes, ‘[t]he diminishing interest in preluding among amateurs is reflected in the drop in the number of new collections of preludes in many or all the keys published for piano after mid-century (though publication of sets for organ continued to be strong).’<sup>145</sup> As a result, ‘[o]ne finds fewer references to preluding in the later nineteenth century. It is clear, however,

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<sup>142</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington* (1952) (New York: Pantheon, 1953), p. 27.

<sup>143</sup> Libby, “Improvisation: Western after 1800,” p. 50.

<sup>144</sup> Frédéric Kalkbrenner, *Traité d’harmonie du pianiste, principes rationnels de la modulation pour apprendre à préluder et à improviser*, op. 185 (1849) (Amsterdam: A. J. Heuwegemeyer, 1970), p. 1. Cited in Goertzen, “By Way of Introduction,” p. 333.

<sup>145</sup> Goertzen, *ibid*, p. 335.

that the practice continued, at least among German- and French-trained pianists.<sup>146</sup> Even though improvised preluding undoubtedly declined, and although ‘[s]alon pianists thrived in the early romantic period and then died away never to return,’<sup>147</sup> it does not follow from this that improvisation suffered a decline, merely the loss of certain known stylistic and social outlets. As an increasingly private phenomenon it would inevitably be harder to document. The practice was probably sustained by ‘the establishment of the piano as a fixed feature in bourgeois homes.’<sup>148</sup>

In some cases the influence of post-Kantian philosophy upon musical practice came not merely through subtle cultural influences but directly through musical publications. Katharine Ellis remarks that: ‘Fétis’s aim in setting up the *Revue musicale* [in Paris] was primarily didactic . . . Much of Fétis’s philosophy of music derives ultimately from the German transcendental idealists, as indicated in a letter of 1838 to the Paris publisher Troupenas in which he listed specific works by Kant, Fichte and Schelling as primary influences on his philosophy of music.’<sup>149</sup> Ellis observes that this *Revue musicale*, produced virtually single-handedly by François-Joseph Fétis from 1827 to 1833<sup>150</sup> is a ‘supremely important cultural document.’<sup>151</sup> ‘[M]any of the ideas contained within his criticism represent the application to music of important cultural and philosophical notions of the 1820s.’<sup>152</sup> Ideas by Schelling are particularly noted as having been included in a lecture series published by Fétis in this magazine in the 1830s and 1840s, written by the influential Victor Cousin.<sup>153</sup> The significance of this

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid, p. 332.

<sup>147</sup> Harold C. Schoenberg, *The Great Pianists* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1978), p. 191.

<sup>148</sup> Nemoianu, *Taming of Romanticism*, p. 10.

<sup>149</sup> Katharine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France: “La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris, 1834-80”* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 34-35. Reference to Rosalie Schellhaus, “Fétis’s *Tonality* as a Metaphysical Principle: Hypothesis for a New Science.” *Music Theory Spectrum* 13, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 219-240; p. 222 and notes 13-14.

<sup>150</sup> See Ellis, *ibid*, p. 33

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> See *ibid*, p. 41. References to Victor Cousin, lectures (1836) subsequently published as *Du vrai, du beau et du bien* (Paris: n.p., 1853). Cousin was a ‘philosopher and educational administrator, born . . . in

becomes still clearer when it is realised that there was ‘a sudden expansion of the musical press in the 1830s, triggered in part by the success and example of Fétis’s *Revue*’.<sup>154</sup> ‘Fétis’s concept of genius was taken . . . from the German idealist notion of the creative artist as participating in a teleological process’<sup>155</sup> and, if his idea of genius was of this kind, this would have dictated the choice and slant of the articles which he made as editor, thus exercising an influence over the formation of philosophical attitudes in his readers. This would further suggest that a large measure of influence is attributable to the *Revue* in promoting Schelling’s ideas of art at this time within musical circles, not just in its own pages, but indirectly through publications set up, as was noted, to some extent in imitation of its success. The latter must often have deliberately pursued the same ideological goals and editorial policy as the *Revue* with a view to entering an intellectual market whose appetite had been whetted by Fétis’s philosophical outlook, and where lucrative sales might be achieved.

The influence of Fétis, and of Schelling upon Liszt during Liszt’s early years in Paris is well documented, and Liszt must in turn be regarded as a figure of supreme importance in any discussion of improvisatory music during the nineteenth century. Liszt arrived in Paris in 1827, and by the 1830s had become renowned as an improviser. Klára Hamburger places this musical phenomenon within a philosophical context:

Extemporization, identification with the instrument, an expression of the artist under the spell of the moment as a cosmic manifestation of nature - all this was a general mark of the romantic style, and particularly of the young Liszt . . . Musical works were born in these inspired moments of improvisation,

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1792 . . . [He] developed a system of thought to which he himself . . . gave the name eclecticism and to which his critics . . . gave the name spiritualism. [In] his later period [he came] under the influence of Schelling’. Sterling P. Lamprecht, “Victor Cousin.” In *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, vol 7, William D. Halsey and Emanuel Friedman (eds.), (London: P. F. Collier, 1984), p. 406. ‘[Cousin] introduced to France the work of the German idealists, especially Hegel and Schelling, both of whom he had met . . . Cousin borrowed what he considered the best elements from a variety of thinkers, including the mystical Plotinus, the rationalist Descartes, the sensationalists Locke and Condillac, the psychologist Maine de Biran, the common-sense Scottish school, and the idealists Plato, Kant, Hegel, and Schelling.’ F. X. J. Coleman, “Victor Cousin.” In *The Encyclopedia Americana: International Edition*, vol 8, Bernard S. Cayne (ed.-in-chief), (Danbury, Connecticut: Grolier, 1986), p. 121.

<sup>154</sup> Ellis, *ibid*, p. 7.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 41-42.

evanescent visions heard only once, by chance, or those later also committed to paper. Liszt's own individual abilities predestined him for this: already in his early childhood he amazed people first of all with his improvisatory talent. During his first years in Paris he hardly ever wrote down his compositions; at his recitals Ferenc Liszt the composer was represented not by finished compositions, but by the improvisations of the performer.<sup>156</sup>

Fétis influenced Liszt at this formative time: 'In 1832 [Liszt] heard lectures by Fétis on musical philosophy. Fétis, a learned Belgian scholar of great prestige, was the editor of the *Revue musicale* launched in 1827, the first Parisian musical periodical of importance.'<sup>157</sup> Liszt's connection not merely with Fétis but with his magazine, particularly under its subsequent title of *Gazette musicale de Paris* is illustrated by the fact that articles by Liszt appear in the magazine during the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>158</sup> He may even have been on its editorial board.<sup>159</sup> In addition, Alan Walker has preserved an account of a meeting in 1836 between Liszt and a certain Major Pictet at a private party, in which the latter engaged Liszt in an extended conversation on the fashionable ideas of Schelling.<sup>160</sup> To be considered a fashionable intellectual at this time it was certainly necessary to be *au courant* with the ideas of Schelling, and there is evidence that Liszt devoured philosophy and literature, at least in part as a result of a sense of the inadequacy of his schooling.<sup>161</sup>

As well as Liszt's importance as a figure who gave impetus to an improvisatory culture, Carl Dahlhaus has drawn attention to Liszt's opposition to Hegel's view that 'music appears as a stage on the way to poetry.'<sup>162</sup> At this period '[m]usic, especially instrumental music, seemed, to the cultured individuals among the many who despised it, an art without tradition, an art of humble rank, which did not reach up to poetry.'<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Klára Hamburger, *Liszt* (n.p.: Corvina, n.d.) (Originally Budapest: Gondolat, 1980), p. 34.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>158</sup> See Taylor, *Liszt*, pp. 27; 36: 43.

<sup>159</sup> See Peter le Huray and James Day, "Preface." In *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries*, Peter le Huray and James Day (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), p. xiv.

<sup>160</sup> See Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt*, vol 1 *The Virtuoso Years, 1811-1847*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), pp. 221-222.

<sup>161</sup> See Schoenberg, *Great Pianists*, p. 154.

<sup>162</sup> Dahlhaus, *Aesthetics of Music*, p. 57.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

The influence of Kant is felt in this prejudice.<sup>164</sup> This was the ‘common opinion felt as a challenge by Liszt’<sup>165</sup> who accordingly grasped ‘in the name of music what was poetry’s property.’<sup>166</sup> The programmatic nature of some of Liszt’s output finds explanation in the fact that ‘in Liszt’s view the program was a means of establishing the dignity of instrumental music, its claim to be ‘culture’ and not merely ‘enjoyment,’ as Kant had scornfully maintained.’<sup>167</sup> Liszt’s artistic profile appears, consequently, as that of a figure who promoted not merely the art of musical improvisation, but, more than this, promoted the art of music itself within the context of the promotion of musical improvisation. In arguing for the status of music, and at the same time maintaining a name for himself as a improviser, Liszt signals by his deeds an endorsement of improvisation as an important aspect of music in the form in which he seeks to promote it, and he would scarcely have improvised as much as he did if he had not felt that the idea of music as improvisation supported his particular understanding of instrumental music among the arts. In addition to his improvisatory emphasis, Liszt originated the idea of the solo recital,<sup>168</sup> as well as the ‘public concert devoted to a single composer - himself, as it happened’:<sup>169</sup> these three aspects, improvisation, solo performance and single-composer presentations share an implicit concern with the promotion of the ideal of Schelling’s artist as solitary, creative genius.

Influences from the philosophical thought of Victor Cousin himself, mentioned above as the pro-Schellingian contributor to Fétis’s *Revue* may also have played their

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<sup>164</sup> See Wayne D. Bowman, *Philosophical Perspectives on Music* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), pp. 85-86.

<sup>165</sup> Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music*, p. 61.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, p. 62.

<sup>168</sup> ‘The pianist Charles Salaman, who knew him from his first visit [sc. to London] recalled that . . . uneasiness . . . set in when Liszt puzzled the public by announcing ‘Pianoforte Recitals’.’ Taylor, *Liszt*, p. 73.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, p. 58. Also on this page is to be found a description of some of the amusing difficulties in which Liszt found himself when inviting hearers to submit themes or ideas for him to improvise upon, as when ‘themes’ such as ‘Milan Cathedral’ and ‘Railways’ had been put forward.’ Ibid.

part in Liszt's ideology. While in the context of the discussion of the relative values of music and poetry, Liszt would certainly not have been a follower of Cousin for whom 'the art *par excellence*, that which surpasses all the others, because it is incomparably the most expressive, is poetry,'<sup>170</sup> it remains the case that other implicit aspects of Cousin's thought would have fuelled a high valuation of purely instrumental, that is wordless, music in a way which paralleled Liszt's ideas. As Peter le Huray and James Day point out, 'if Cousin believed that music's 'proper effects' were 'vagueness,' 'obscurity' and even 'infinite,' he did not choose to develop the idea to its logical conclusion, namely that the highest forms of music were purely instrumental.'<sup>171</sup> A further ally in the field of contemporary philosophy, who shared Liszt's interest in promoting the status of music, was Schopenhauer, whose first edition of *The World as Will and Representation* had appeared in 1819. This early edition appears to have attracted 'little attention,'<sup>172</sup> and thus it is likely that any influence upon Liszt of Schopenhauer's philosophy, a philosophy according to which music is the direct representation of the will, is to be attributed to the 1844 edition which 'achieved success and a reputation for its author.'<sup>173</sup> 'Schopenhauer's discussion of art culminates in a celebration of music unrivalled in philosophical writing and which assigns to music pride of place amongst the arts.'<sup>174</sup> Liszt's advocacy of instrumental music, where '[t]he meaning lies in the music, and words cannot reach it'<sup>175</sup> has been shown by Ronald Taylor to parallel closely the philosophical ideas of Schopenhauer.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Victor Cousin, *Du vrai, du beau et du bien* (Edinburgh: n.p., 1854). Cited in *Music and Aesthetics*, le Huray and Day (eds.), p. 320.

<sup>171</sup> le Huray and Day. Introductory remarks to citations from Cousin, *ibid.* In *ibid.*, le Huray and Day (eds.), p. 313.

<sup>172</sup> le Huray and Day. In *ibid.*, le Huray and Day (eds.), p. 323.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Malcolm Budd, *Music and the Emotions: The Philosophical Theories* (1985) (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 76.

<sup>175</sup> Taylor, *Liszt*, p. 84.

<sup>176</sup> See Artur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* [publ. 1819 and 1844] (incomplete documentation). Cited in *ibid.*

It has been seen how the Kantian idea of spontaneity as the apex of the imaginary entailed that it was specifically spontaneous acts within perception which were the creative activity by which human reality was produced, including, as Fichte emphasised, the very sense of self. Schelling then further embraced artistic imagination within this Kantian conception of imagination rooted in spontaneous creativity. The Kantian idea of spontaneity was also embraced by Schelling in the form of a pronounced emphasis on freedom. ‘Freedom is our All-high, our Godhead, which we desire as the Final Cause of all things . . . perfect spirit is for us only spirit which is also absolutely free.’<sup>177</sup> It is reasonable to infer that Schelling’s emphasis on the role of freedom must at least in part take its rise from the central role which Kant’s epistemology grants to spontaneity. Clearly, freedom is only a potential to act in a certain way, whereas spontaneous activity is precisely freedom expressed in its fullness. For Schelling, freedom must indeed be implemented in action for, as he says: ‘man is born to act and not to speculate.’<sup>178</sup> One commentator remarks that for Schelling, ‘[t]he emphasis upon activity is recurrent, whether with reference to the activity of man or of nature.’<sup>179</sup> Thus the combination in Schelling’s metaphysics of the principles of the creative imaginary, freedom, action and art is highly suggestive in the context of a discussion of musical improvisation, since the latter too is practically defined as a conjunction of imagination, freedom, action and art. It is argued here that ideas in Schelling’s philosophy were culturally appropriated within circles of practising

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<sup>177</sup> Friedrich Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 2nd series, III (documentation *sic*) K. F. A. Schelling (ed.), (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1856-1861), n.p. Cited in James Gutman, “Introduction.” In Friedrich Schelling, *Of Human Freedom* (Chicago: Open Court, 1936), p. xlv. Schelling is echoing Kant and the spirit of the German Enlightenment: ‘[F]or this enlightenment . . . nothing is required but freedom, and freedom of the most harmless sort among its various definitions: freedom to make public use of one’s reason at every point. But I hear on all sides, ‘Do not argue!’ The officer says: ‘Do not argue but drill!’ The tax collector, ‘Do not argue but pay!’ The cleric: ‘Do not argue but believe!’” Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* (1784) Cited in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism*, Simpson (ed.), p. 31.

<sup>178</sup> Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, I, p. 243. Cited in Gutman, *ibid*, p. xxxvii.

<sup>179</sup> Gutman, *ibid*.

artists according to a reception which highlighted their application to improvisatoriness and funded Liszt's outlook.

There is, however, another central issue for Schelling's thought; namely the relation which holds between freedom, act and inner necessity. It has been observed that '[t]he conviction that genuinely free activity is action through inner necessity, appears early in Schelling's writings'.<sup>180</sup> Schelling writes of 'the testimony of all artists, that they are involuntarily driven to create their works, and that in producing them they merely satisfy an irresistible urge of their own nature'.<sup>181</sup> This idea of inner artistic necessity, which appears also in Schopenhauer, Schelling's near contemporary, subsequently 'migrates . . . into the vast abundance of late-nineteenth-century popular philosophy',<sup>182</sup> and acquires immense cultural influence. Freedom and act thus now conjoin with this very inner necessity, with the result that, in the words of Schelling, 'just as this inner necessity is itself freedom; man's being is essentially *his own deed*.'<sup>183</sup> Applying this combination to artistic imagination, improvisation might be interpreted as something which *has to happen* through inner necessity as part of the way in which imagination engages the world itself and the self is produced. This Schellingian philosophy that art expresses, in the highest degree, the spontaneity of imagining which, in Kant's sense, creates the world, gives rise to an implied ontological hermeneutic of artistic improvisation as an indispensable activity if human experience is to come into its fullness. Schelling himself also made some strong

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p. xxxviii.

<sup>181</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 222.

<sup>182</sup> Eberhard Freitag, "German Expressionism and Schoenberg's Self-Portraits." *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 2 (1978): 164-172; p. 171.

<sup>183</sup> Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, p. 63.



claims for music, when he observed in an early work that '[m]usic is . . . nothing other than the aurally perceived rhythm and harmony of the visible universe itself.'<sup>184</sup>

The forms of music are the forms of eternal things insofar as they can be contemplated from the perspective of the real . . . Thus music manifests, in rhythm and harmony, the pure form of the movements of the heavenly bodies, freed from any object or material . . . [Rhythm, harmony and melody are the] first and purest forms of movement in the universe . . . [M]usic soars through space to weave an audible universe out of the transparent body of sound and tone.<sup>185</sup>

Thus the kinship between Schelling's thought and specifically musical improvisation seems close.

Liszt's piano improvisation found philosophical nourishment within this tradition of thought. Indeed it has been noted that letters written by him in the 1870s and 1880s reveal 'his absorption in literary and philosophical movements. His references to and quotations from many authors attest the attention he paid to his reading.'<sup>186</sup> It is significant when evaluating the influence he in turn exerted on musical practice, that, in the words of one commentator '[h]is tours throughout Europe from [1840] until 1848 were received with a hero worship probably unequalled in musical history.'<sup>187</sup> His fame doubtless helped to keep improvisation alive, as did the personal influence he exerted over his numerous pupils.<sup>188</sup> Moreover, 'although he stopped giving paid concerts in 1847, he gave constant charity concerts to the end of his life and acted as musical director of the Weimar court.'<sup>189</sup> Comparison with a modern pop star could well be made.<sup>190</sup> On account of his extreme fame and recognition arguably the most prestigious exponent of nineteenth-century musical improvisation, and indeed one of

<sup>184</sup> Friedrich Schelling, "Philosophie der Kunst." (Lectures delivered at Jena, 1802-1803). In *Werke*, vol 3 (Ergänzungsband), Manfred Schröter (ed.), (Munich: n.p., 1959), pp. 142-155. Section 83. Cited in *Music and Aesthetics*, le Huray and Day (eds.), p. 280.

<sup>185</sup> Schelling, *ibid.* In *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol 5, [K. F. A.] Schelling (ed.), pp. 501-503. Cited in Mark Evan Bonds, "Idealism and the Aesthetics of Instrumental Music at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50, nos. 2-3 (1997): 387-420; pp. 403-404.

<sup>186</sup> Edward N. Waters, "Introduction." In *The Letters of Franz Liszt to Olga von Meyendorff 1871-1886 in the Mildred Bliss Collection at Dumbarton Oaks*, Edward N. Waters (ed.), (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 1979), p. xviii.

<sup>187</sup> Howard E. Hugo, "Introduction." In *The Letters of Franz Liszt to Marie zu Sayn-Wittgenstein*, Howard E. Hugo (ed.), (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1953), p. 5.

<sup>188</sup> See Schoenberg, *Great Pianists*, p. 170.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>190</sup> See Taylor, *Liszt*, p. xi.

the most cosmopolitan performance practitioners ever seen in Western music, Liszt was a major fountainhead of improvisatory practice. He 'loved to teach . . . attracted students from many countries, and . . . through them, dominated for a time the technique and philosophy of his instrument.'<sup>191</sup> It will be seen in a later Chapter that his indirect influence on Schoenberg, and, through him, John Cage may have contributed to the awakening of an improvisatory style of composition in the twentieth-century *avant-garde*, an awakening which slightly mitigates the general decline in the role of musical improvisation after the eighteenth century described in this Chapter as a whole. The influence of Schelling will be seen also to have been formative on improvisatoriness in Charles Ives.

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<sup>191</sup> Michael Murray, *Marcel Dupré: The Work of a Master Organist* (Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1985), p. 116.

## PART TWO: MUSICAL IMPROVISATION AND LANGUAGE

### *Chapter 3*

#### *Rewriting Improvisation: An Experiment in Demarginalising Discourse*

##### *I Improvisation: Its Marginalisation through Language*

A marginalisation of improvisation now inhabits Western vocabulary itself as a consequence of the cultural developments described in the last Chapter. Even when discussion of improvisation occurs in the context of an attempted objectivity in evaluating the nature of improvisation or, as it is sometimes called, extemporisation, such discussion tends to take place within the underlying influence of negative cultural critiques on account of the history and structure of these very words. The two terms, “improvisation” and “extemporisation” appear to be used interchangeably even within the more critical forum of musicological discourse. Ed Sarath has made a distinction between them with a view to labelling a broadly improvisatory type of musical process under two aspects which he seeks to identify. However the relationship between his distinguishing uses of these words and any distinction traditionally present between them in common usage, if any, is unclear.<sup>1</sup>

*The Oxford English Dictionary* gives the earliest known printed uses in English of these words, their cognates, and their derivations. An ambivalence in attitude towards what is referred to seems to inhabit the given instances of both words. Numerous examples are given for “improvisation” and its cognates in which the ability to improvise, especially in poetry or rhetoric, is strongly admired. However the negative connotations associated with the idea of off-hand-ness are also present in specific instances. Thus (1863): ‘[H]e let Gaddi have the credit of the improvised welcome.’<sup>2</sup>

The main force of the argument that the word “improvisation” has a negative

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<sup>1</sup> See Sarath, “New Look at Improvisation,” p. 6-7.

<sup>2</sup> George Eliot, *Romola* (1863) ii, p. xxvi. Cited in *OED*, vol 7, p. 753.

connotation, however, lies in aspects of it situated below the surface of its application to particular situations. The word “improvise” is, in its derivation, essentially privative, from the Latin *improvisus*, unforeseen, unexpected, that is to say, not *provisus*, from *providere*, to foresee. A word which, in its etymological structure, defines a thing in relation to what it is not, has the effect of implicitly comparing that thing with its “other.” Where that “other” is commonly felt to be a desirable quality (e.g., as here, foreseeability: something which can be foreseen can be prepared for, perhaps controlled, and control is linked to feelings of mastery and competence) then it may be said that the underlying cultural force of the word is negative, even when some specific instances of its usage do not necessarily reflect this. Moreover, the very development whereby precisely this, and not some other word, came to describe the activity in question may reflect a negative evaluation of the activity itself, an evaluation which the word it generated subsequently returns to reinforce. The unconscious effect of language habits profoundly affects the way reality appears. Indeed, people experience as they do largely because their language makes them see the world in a particular way.<sup>3</sup>

“Improvisation” being, by implication of the word itself, highlighted in terms of “that which is not prepared,” this word invites an implicitly unfavourable comparison of improvisation with the prepared and scored work. This is a historically conditioned perspective from within Western culture which is arguably at variance with wider historical, cultural, and philosophical perspectives, as will be demonstrated. It arises against a cultural horizon in which the score has risen to prominence, but this is only one kind of musical culture. The word “improvisation” also implicitly proposes that the salient attribute of improvisation is its unpreparedness, so that recognition of other

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<sup>3</sup> See Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, The Cresset Press, 1970), pp. 20-21.

attributes of the thing itself, like freedom and flexibility, is veiled by depreciating terminology. Ed Sarath has observed that ‘[t]he orientation in music theory toward study of composed-notated works, while giving rise to a rich tradition of analytical thought, has also engendered a deeply-rooted tendency to view all modes of musical expression through the formal and architectonic perspective of resultant structure’.<sup>4</sup>

Turning to the word “extemporisation” and its cognates, negative connotations appear more obviously in its surface usages than in the case of the word “improvisation” and the ambivalence in attitude to the thing described is clearly present. Once again *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives a number of uses in which the ability to extemporise, usually in speech, is admired. However, a long-established connotation of “extemporary” as meaning makeshift is also present. Thus (1636): ‘Many foolish things fall from wise men, if they speak in haste, or be extemporal’<sup>5</sup> (1812). ‘Th’extemporizer’s art who knows, Than pray had rather hear him blow his nose.’<sup>6</sup>

Unpreparedness need not be regarded as the salient characteristic of the phenomenon under discussion. For Jeff Pressing, ‘there is the perspective overwhelmingly found in historical Western texts, that improvisation is real-time composition and that no fundamental distinction need be drawn between the two.’<sup>7</sup> The word “extemporisation” seems indeed to embody just this ‘real-time’ understanding, deriving as it does from the Latin *extemporalis*, “arising out of the moment,” *ex tempore*.<sup>8</sup> Yet the term ‘real-time composition’ remains problematic. By using the term “composition,” it generates possible misunderstandings arising from the

<sup>4</sup> Sarath, “New Look at Improvisation,” p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Jonson, *Discov.* (1636). In *Works* (Routledge), p. 742/1. Cited in *OED*, vol 5, p. 593.

<sup>6</sup> Author not given. In *Religionism* 62 (1812). Cited in *OED*, vol 5, p. 594.

<sup>7</sup> Jeff Pressing, “Improvisation: Methods and Models.” In *Generative Processes in Music: The Psychology of Performance, Improvisation, and Composition*, John A. Sloboda (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p. 142.

<sup>8</sup> See *OED*, vol 5, p. 593.

effects of the composition/performance binarism (Chapter 2, Section I) whereby what is referred to may be in some sense perceived as not quite fully performance as well. Moreover, the strict sense of ‘real-time composition’ is that of an act of composing in standard notation or other symbolism which takes place at the same speed as the performance of the work composed. For example, if a composer writes a line of music in minims where each minim is to be played at five second intervals (minim equals twelve) and also writes down each minim on his manuscript paper at five second intervals, this could be deemed real-time composition. If this compositional methodology ever came to be prevalent enough to need a descriptive term, the obvious term would be “real-time composition.” It would then appear inappropriate if the latter term were already in use for improvisation, to which it is less applicable. Nor is the expression “real-time music” any more satisfactory than “real-time composition” as a substitute for “improvisation.” While this expression avoids the word “composition,” the term “real-time” is itself still problematic. The intended idea of music produced in “real time” is that of music arising as far as possible within a single stretch of clock time, where there is no conscious contribution from “preparation time,” for example, prior composition in manuscript. Yet such preparation time is not unreal. Music is no less real for having been produced over more than one stretch of time, as in composition followed by performance.

Western prejudices in favour of the work described in Chapter 2 are all the more paradoxical when it is seen that, although the musical score became the ideal expression of music in Western culture after Descartes, the score’s repeatability in realisation, and thus its identity, are ultimately illusory. As was seen, musical works are dependent on performances which are inherently variable events. This recognition of variables undermining the work is threatening for those who believe in the stability

of the work as something existing apart from specific and varied instantiations in performance, interpretation, context and reception. Stigmatising improvisation was perhaps a psychological mechanism for projecting cultural anxieties about the unstable nature of the work, for all those attributes which impair the work's stability are still more evident in improvisation. Thus improvisation was made a scapegoat, laden with these cultural anxieties. No less than improvisation, the musical work is dependent on contextual realisations which are never identical, even though this uniqueness attaching to all realisations of a work may not be as obvious as in the case of improvisation. Conversely, however, the improviser is not bound by the musical decisions of a decontextualised present, but anticipates and remembers over a larger span in a way analogous to the procedures of a composer of a musical work. His or her improvisation does not proceed unthinkingly, that is, with no regard for form, but she remembers what she has previously done in the same improvisation, and anticipates what she will do in the same improvisation, and this affects the way her improvisatory performance decisions are made at any given instant. Indeed, '[o]ne of the most significant recent issues in ethnomusicology concerns the argument that improvisation, far from being unencumbered by structure, models and formulae, planning, and disciplined study, can involve as much of these elements as composed music does.'<sup>9</sup> Thus, work and improvisation are seen not to be polar opposites but the two outer points on a creative continuum of lesser-to-greater musical spontaneity.

There may be a parallel between the bi-polar view of musical creativity presented here and Bakhtin's understanding of language:

Bakhtin proposed two opposing forces in language: the one toward unity and the need to understand each other, and the other toward the specific and the desire to express our uniqueness. The unifying or centripetal force, as Bakhtin called it, manifests itself in an abstract set of postulated normative conventions which operate to keep the possibilities of communication open. The stratifying or centrifugal force is more omnipresent and apparent through the presence of stratified dialects and sub-

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<sup>9</sup> Rolf Groesbeck, "Cultural Constructions of Improvisation in *Tāyampaka*, a Genre of Temple Instrumental Music in Kerala, India." *Ethnomusicology* 43, no. 1 (1995): 1-30; p. 1.

languages particular to certain professions, classes or generations. This dichotomy can also be expressed as the tension between individual expression and communication or between innovation and tradition.

Every verbal speech act is a unique utterance which acts as the focal point in the reciprocal relationship between these two forces.<sup>10</sup>

In words of Bakhtin: ‘Language . . . is never unitary. It is unitary only as an abstract grammatical system of normative forms, taken in isolation from the concrete, ideological conceptualizations that fill it, and in isolation from the uninterrupted process of historical becoming that is characteristic of all living language.’<sup>11</sup> Likewise, music is never unitary, but an intersection of textuality and sound-event. The score must be converted into sound: conversely, even the improviser constructs a text by analogy. Indeed in the latter case, it is the creation of an analogical text that gives rise to an improvisation rather than to the production of random sounds. (‘Random sounds’ here means random sounds without aesthetic intent: clearly an attempt to produce them with a view to their being received as a musical work, as in some twentieth-century styles, constitutes the production of a “text.”) Again, in Bakhtin’s words, ‘[e]very concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The process of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersects in the utterance.’<sup>12</sup>

Likewise, in the case of the musical work:

Even in the most note-specific music . . . dynamics, tempo, phrasing, rhythmic placement, accent, rubato, timbre, use of vibrato and portamento and all of the other factors that a performer adds to the pitch content are highly variable . . . It is clear that we believe that some part of the work exists among these nuances, or we would not be trying to recover anything by the use of historical performance practices.<sup>13</sup>

Musical improvisation appears, when contextualised in relation to these ideas of Bakhtin, as a type of musical productivity in which the centrifugal is allowed particular foregrounding. Sound, not the fixed score is the starting-point for what is produced, and the centripetal, or “textual” dimension has to be recovered in and through the

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<sup>10</sup> Bowen, “History of Remembered Innovation,” p. 143.

<sup>11</sup> Mikhail Mikhailovitch Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination, Four Essays* (Austin: Texas Univ. Press, 1981), p. 284. Cited in *ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> Bakhtin, *ibid*, p. 272. Cited in Bowen, *ibid*, pp. 143-144.

<sup>13</sup> Bowen, *ibid*, pp. 148-149.



creative process, in a way which is the mirror image of the idea, more familiar to literate musical cultures, of adding expression to the performance of an existing score. In improvisation, it is the analogical “score” which is added to the performance.

## *II Improvisation: Seeking a Demarginalising Discourse*

Western European discourse on improvisation is written from a standpoint inside the same culture as that which earlier marginalised and largely still marginalises this type of music. As will be seen in more detail later, in twentieth-century Western philosophy, it is widely understood that the human mind cannot think anything without seeking language in which that thing best comes to expression. This means that improvisation can only be given full existence in conjunction with words attempting to describe it. Yet current conventional Western discourse, it was seen, harbours repressive forces which have distorted understanding of improvisation. Following ‘Derrida . . . Lacan, Foucault, Althusser . . . language creates experience rather than merely reports it.’<sup>14</sup> ‘The content of our lives - consciousness, the unconscious, experience, even self - is constructed from semantic and semiotic symbols we encounter in our interactive dialogue with the world.’<sup>15</sup> For Gadamer, ‘Being that can be understood is language’<sup>16</sup> and ‘language is the universal medium in which understanding itself is realised.’<sup>17</sup> This entails that, since Western discourse on improvisation will be unconsciously bound within a vocabulary and conceptual structures generated by the historical marginalising process described in Chapter 2, no continued use of this “improvisation” discourse can ever avoid perpetuating that marginalisation to some degree, even if only that of subtle prejudice.

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<sup>14</sup> Maureen O’Hara, “Constructing Emancipatory Realities.” In *The Fontana Postmodern Reader*, Walter Truett Anderson (ed.), (London: Harper Collins, 1996), p. 149.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 151.

<sup>16</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (1960) (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), p. xxii.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 350.

Still more problematically, consider as an unsubtle consequence of the same marginalisation the following from *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*:

It is scarcely surprising that evidence about improvisation should be sparse and often imprecise. Writers were often more concerned to criticize what they considered excessive or tasteless embellishment than to give positive advice as to what was appropriate. For music of the repertory conclusions have to be based on inference and hypothesis, one source of which is the tendency of what was once improvised embellishment to graduate into notated melodic decoration.<sup>18</sup>

The writer is trying to discuss improvisation in an unbiased way. He usefully observes that improvisation has tended to be discussed relatively little, and that what little was said tended to be negatively critical. He indicates that one reason why improvisation has received discussion is that it found its way into notation, and introduces thereby some useful suggestion of how it was discussed from the standpoint of, and marginalised by, the work. However, at the end of the citation, which makes explicit improvisation's marginality, he reveals an inability to transcend the negative discourse he correctly identifies. Improvisation, he notes, can become notated, and when this happens, it *graduates*. By way of further illustration, it is notable that both medieval plainchant and modern jazz are now discussed musicologically without marginalising discourse. Consider now the near-comic effect of applying this type of marginalising discourse in these cases, by means of the following invented absurdities:

- i) In the later Middle Ages, plainchant graduated into polyphony.
- ii) Thanks to Gershwin's *Rhapsody In Blue*, jazz has now graduated into the sphere of art music.

Because the marginalised nature of improvisation has not yet been systematically addressed in musicology, a remark exactly parallel to these grotesques has found its way into a mainstream musical dictionary.

A demarginalising discourse on improvisation, however desirable, cannot be achieved with words which perpetuate a marginalising discourse, for such attempted

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<sup>18</sup> Jones, in Jones and Crutchfield, "Ornamentation," p. 760.

demarginalisation will be weighted by the marginalising connotations of its vocabulary. Thus any modern European attempt to adopt a demarginalising critique of improvisation using existing vocabulary and concepts implicitly adopts an impossible standpoint in which the writer does not belong to the same cultural transmission as perpetuated the marginalisation. Such discourse seeks, impossibly, to evade fully the prejudices latent in the vocabulary in which the writer is bound. ‘The problem with the project of restoration is that it is attempted on the assumption that we are now out of a living connection with tradition’.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, for Gadamer, more generally, a wholly unsituated or unprejudiced discourse is never available, whatever the vocabulary. ‘[P]rejudgements are not something we must or can dispense with; they are the basis of our being able to understand history at all.’<sup>20</sup> ‘Gadamer in fact tries to show that our ‘judgements,’ which contain our most self-consciously methodical efforts to ‘understand,’ do not break free from our ‘prejudices’; our knowledge always remains part of our ‘being’.’<sup>21</sup> Gadamer follows Heidegger here, for whom ‘[a]n interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us.’<sup>22</sup> For Gadamer, these prejudgements live on in language.<sup>23</sup> Thus, not even *revised* vocabulary can demarginalise improvisation for those who do the revising, even though it may achieve this effect for later generations. Engrained prejudice always remains ensconced in deliberate methodological attempts to circumvent it, as here, and “positive discrimination” in the use of language, the consciousness of compensation, still reverberates with the prejudiced values of a disowned cultural horizon. Its users remain within the horizon of the same prejudice.

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground: ‘Phronesis’ and ‘Techne’ in Modern Philosophy and in Aristotle* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 111-112.

<sup>20</sup> Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1969), p. 182.

<sup>21</sup> Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground*, p. 112.

<sup>22</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1927) (London: SCM, 1962), section 32, pp. 191-192.

<sup>23</sup> See Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground*, p. 138.

Between undesirable marginalising and immediately unattainable demarginalising discourse there is a middle way, however. Again with Gadamer, once the unavoidable situation of prejudice is acknowledged, a new type of discourse can seek not to transcend but to work productively within that situation. A *post*-marginalising discourse will be described in what follows, which will occupy an intermediate position between existing marginalising discourse and fruitless attempts at demarginalising discourse. At its best, post-marginalising discourse recognises that, bound within existing vocabulary and conceptual structures, demarginalising discourse is unattainable and that ‘[t]radition furnishes the stream of conceptions within which we stand, and we must be prepared to distinguish between fruitful presuppositions and those that imprison and prevent us from thinking and seeing.’<sup>24</sup> The word “improvisation” imprisons in this sense. For Gadamer, ‘[i]nterpretation is most fruitful when undertaken by an ‘historically effected consciousness’ which has been sensitized to the boundaries of its own comprehension.’<sup>25</sup> It is ‘a consciousness of one’s hermeneutical situation with the prejudices that are embedded in it.’<sup>26</sup> Thus, “[e]ffective-historical consciousness’ strives toward a reflective appropriation of the effect of tradition on and in one’.<sup>27</sup> At its best, post-marginalising discourse is a conscious movement away from marginalising discourse within the given limitations of existing marginalising language, and it is motivated by a compensatory desire to understand what is discussed with minimum bias, though using the existing terminology. It may, however, be approached from the opposite direction. Writers who think they are successfully demarginalising “improvisation” discourse may, by

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<sup>24</sup> Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, p. 183. Reference to Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* [(Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1960)], p. 263.

<sup>25</sup> David Clifton Robinson, “From Quantum Moment to Ritual Moment: Notions of Time and the Development of Theological Models.” Ph. D dissertation, New York Graduate Theological Union, 1995, p. 93.

<sup>26</sup> Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground*, p. 120.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

undiscriminatingly preserving the existing vocabulary and a certain conceptual structure of marginalising discourse, also lapse into a kind of uncritical post-marginalising discourse by default and without knowing they are doing this. One such is Leo Treitler.

Treitler's discourse on musical transmission in Western plainchant follows the historical development of "oral" (hence richly improvisatory tradition), through "written," to "literate" transmission. ("Transmission" refers to 'processes by which music is passed on.')

<sup>28</sup> Treitler builds upon the Parry-Lord theory of formulaic transmission in ancient epic poetry. Milman Parry's assertion of the formulaic principle in connection with the Homeric epics was revolutionary in the history of the understanding of orality. For Parry, Homer's poetry is made up substantially of prefabricated parts, consisting of often highly predictable formulas.<sup>29</sup> The formulas made continuity in the recitation possible at times when the singer was at a loss for words.<sup>30</sup> For Treitler, the formulae of plainchant are not, however, fixed and repeated motifs like the Homeric for Parry, designed to facilitate an invariant type of memorisation, but rather flexible conventions used to 'generate . . . afresh':<sup>31</sup> 'Thus the central concept of Treitler's view of oral transmission seems not to be the "formula" (as it was for Parry) but what [Treitler] calls the 'generative system'.'<sup>32</sup> Treitler believes a trained chanter would have used a generative system to recreate

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<sup>28</sup> Jeffery, *Re-Envisioning Past Musical Cultures*, p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982), pp. 22-23.

<sup>30</sup> See Eric A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1986), p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Jeffery, *Re-Envisioning Past Musical Cultures*, p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> Jeffery, *ibid.* Reference to Leo Treitler, "From Ritual through Language to Music." In *Schweizer Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft*, N. F. 2 (1982 [recte 1984]): 109-123; p. 118, footnote 6. For 'further bibliography on generative reformulations of the Parry-Lord theory' Jeffery refers the reader on the same page (footnote 3) to John Miles Foley (ed.), *Oral Traditional Literature: A Festschrift for Albert Bates Lord* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1981), pp. 72-74; 113.

chants afresh at each performance, and that a scribe would have done likewise each time he wrote chants down.<sup>33</sup> For Treitler:

it does not matter whether the generation is an actual aural performance (an example of oral transmission) or a mental recreation made during the act of writing the melody down in music notation (an example of written transmission). The two processes are not ‘fundamentally different’ from each other, but they are both to be clearly distinguished from performing or writing that relies directly on previously written prescriptive notation.<sup>34</sup>

When it is a notated manuscript, rather than a ‘generative system,’ that determines the details of a performance or a writing out, then Treitler would speak of ‘literate transmission,’ the kind that (I understand him to believe) musicologists trained in the literate tradition of Western art music sometimes presuppose unwittingly whenever they work with medieval chant manuscripts (it is called ‘The Modern Paradigm’ in Treitler).<sup>35</sup>

Treitler is trying to rediscover the importance of improvisation in Western practice: he is, in short, seeking to demarginalise it. Nevertheless, an essential post-marginality in Treitler’s discussion of improvisation is rooted, as will be explained, in his use of the words “oral,” “written” and “literate” to describe forms of transmission. In addition to this, he is setting up binarism based on “orality” and “literacy.” This is clear from the citation above from Jeffery (footnoted citation 34): “oral” and “written” transmission belong together as ‘not ‘fundamentally different’,’ while “literate” transmission is distinct. Treitler certainly wishes to make a demarginalising claim for the importance of oral and hence improvisatory traditions which historically underpin Western music, especially the semi-improvisatory ‘generative’ practices which gave rise to plainchant prior to the rise of notation in the eighth and ninth centuries, of which he comments: ‘In place of . . . an act of composition that produces a piece which, in the absence of writing, is submitted to memory and then repeatedly *reproduced* in performance, we might think of a repeated process of performance-composition’.<sup>36</sup> This process falls

<sup>33</sup> See Jeffery, *ibid.*, p. 15 (main text).

<sup>34</sup> Jeffery, *ibid.* Reference to Leo Treitler, “Oral, Written, and Literate Process in the Transmission of Medieval Music.” *Speculum* 56 (1981): 471-491; p. 480.

<sup>35</sup> Jeffery, *ibid.* References to Treitler, *ibid.*; also to Leo Treitler, “Transmission and the Study of Music History.” In *International Musicological Society, Report of the Twelfth Congress, Berkeley, 1977*. Daniel Hertz and Bonnie Wade (eds.), (Basel: Bärenreiter, 1981), pp. 202-211.

<sup>36</sup> Leo Treitler, “‘Centonate’ Chant: *Übles Flickwerk* or *E PluribusUnus*?” (italics original) *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 28, no. 1 (1975): 1-23; p. 11

The basic link between orality and improvisation is of course more fundamental than Treitler’s particular approach to it. The link lies in the fact that it is fixed symbolism outside the music itself, such

somewhere between 'the reproduction of a fixed, memorized melody and the extempore invention of a new one.'<sup>37</sup> Yet, in having recourse to the vocabulary and conceptual structure of a literate/oral binarism, he does not, in fact, demarginalise oral and improvisatory music, and so his critique is unconsciously post-marginalising.

This is because hidden value judgements inhabit the binarism of orality and literacy. In the present-day West, orality is perceived as the marginalised "other" of literacy. This particular value judgement is not inevitable or invariant for all cultures. It has not been true for all societies that, where both literate and oral forms of verbal transmission have been present, the oral dimension has been marginalised in relation to the literate. Ong points out that earlier cultures in which both were available did not necessarily attach more value to the written than to the spoken word. Sometimes '[w]itnesses were *prima facie* more credible than texts because they could be challenged and made to defend their statements, whereas a text could not'.<sup>38</sup> 'Hearing rather than sight . . . dominated the older noetic world in significant ways, even long after writing was deeply interiorized.'<sup>39</sup> '[E]ven today, we speak of 'auditing', that is, 'hearing' account books, though what an accountant actually does today is examine them by sight.

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as literate notation, which makes it easy to attempt to fix a performance for repetition. It is such symbolism which oral cultures lack. 'The further back one goes in music history, the fewer aspects of performance there are that composers established precisely in writing.' Howard Mayer Brown in Howard Mayer Brown and James W. McKinnon, "Performing Practice." In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol 14, Sadie (ed.), p. 370. Apart from fixed symbolism, attempts to fix performances flounder on the imperfect nature of the human memory and this causes improvisation to arise as an expedient in performance when memory fails. Apart from such improvisation as an expedient, there is also improvisation as something poetically creative for its own sake, and in oral societies where fixed symbolism is not available this latter aesthetic is arguably the only way of inventing new music. Clearly the two categories may overlap; indeed, the distinction between expedient and poetic creativity need not be present to the oral mind, even though Finnegan's field-work would suggest that some oral societies can distinguish improvisation as filling in for lost memory from improvisation as a creative art in its own right. She refers to 'specific genres in Zulu and Xhosa where there is a poetic tradition of *both* memorization *and* improvisation.' Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality*, p. 167. Reference to J. Opland, "'Scop' and 'Imbongi' - Anglo-Saxon and Bantu Oral Poets." *English Studies in Africa* 14 (1971). Treitler's view of plainchant improvisation is that it adopts the former model, for the generative system was not intended to promote improvisation and creativity. Its 'object and effect is to preserve traditions, not play loose with them.' Leo Treitler, "Homer and Gregory: The Transmission of Epic Poetry and Plainchant." *The Musical Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (1974): 333-372; p. 346.

<sup>37</sup> Treitler, "'Centonate' Chant." p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 96.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

Earlier, residually oral folk could understand even figures better by listening than by looking.’<sup>40</sup>

These quotations describe social conditions in which literate and oral communication survived together but without any marginalisation of orality. However, nowadays, a different set of value judgements from those described above inhabits the words “literate” and “oral.” The former term, used in writing by a literate like Treitler, writing for literate modern readers, in a shared horizon of literate education, does not only refer to an idea, it expresses a *camaraderie*. From this *camaraderie* non-literates are excluded as marginal “illiterates.” Written from within, and into, the horizon of Western literateness, the word “literate” *has* a primary resonance of approbation, while “oral” possesses a primary resonance of denigration. No amount of secondary explanation to the effect that oral culture is *really just as valorisable after all* as literate culture wholly eradicates these primary resonances of approbation and denigration which arise from a vernacular use of these terms, existing as a semantic foundation from which any more refined or specific uses are distilled explicitly only in the second instance. Finnegan writes: ‘We tend to associate [illiteracy] with an individual or group that has failed to master the generally accepted skills of the culture and is thus cut off from the cultural heritage of contemporaries without having anything of his or their own to put in its place.’<sup>41</sup> However, this judgement does not apply to non-literates in cultures lacking in written communication, who in their own context may be as well educated as educated literates are in a literate society. The reason why it is easy to slip into the habit of mind of thinking of non-literate oral culture in terms of illiterate Western culture, is the primary resonance of the word “literate” used by us as a term of approbation.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality*, p. 60.



Moreover the cultural emphasis on justifying any second-instance connotation of the type which Treitler desires to attach to these words “oral” and “literate” bears witness to the power of the primary resonance and the constant need to suppress it. For Westerners, “oral” can never lose its primary derogatory connotation of “illiterate”: “illiterate” means “under-educated” and “under-educated” implies “marginal.” Although considered on their own terms oral cultures are neither under-educated nor marginal, semantic structures which imply this bias have invaded Treitler’s discourse so that he continues the handing on of values he seeks to challenge. Wishing to demarginalise, he has, by default, in consequence of his discourse, post-marginalised. Although he achieves within the chosen semantic structures a relative reduction in the marginalised conception of improvisation, by at least discussing the importance of orality, Treitler nevertheless perpetuates a bias whereby the discussion arises from the standpoint of literacy. However ‘[y]ou cannot without serious and disabling distortion describe a primary phenomenon by starting with a subsequent secondary phenomenon and paring away the differences. Indeed, starting backwards in this way - putting the car [*sic*] before the horse - you can never become aware of the real differences at all.’<sup>42</sup> Likewise in words of Finnegan: ‘Over many years studying aspects of oral literature, I have been increasingly struck by the strength of the European preoccupation with *written* forms and the way this colours thoughts and definition - the ‘literacy paradigm’ of scholars, as it is well put in Treitler.’<sup>43</sup> Treitler, however, does not break with this ‘literacy paradigm’ he identifies, and his discourse is post-marginalising despite its attempt to be demarginalising.

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<sup>42</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality*, p. 124. Reference to Leo Treitler, “Orality and Literacy in Transmission of Medieval European Music.” Paper at International Council of Traditional Music Conference, “The Oral and Literate in Music,” Tokyo, published in Tokumaru and Yamaguti, 1986.

### *III Improvisation, or "Primary Transmission?"*

The present discussion will now re-open the question of whether post-marginalising discourse concerning improvisation can be transcended in favour of demarginalising discourse for the modern Western European mind, and, if so, how. In fact, as will be seen, discussion of improvisation may occur in any one of four species of discourse: non-marginalising; marginalising; post-marginalising and demarginalising. The list below will sufficiently clarify the next main point in the present discussion, which is that a demarginalising discourse may in fact be established if existing vocabulary and semantic structures are subverted. It may be thus established, however, not *for us* who subverted the vocabulary, but only over a subsequent trans-generational process of change. The meaning of the fourfold classification may be summarised as follows:

- 1) Non-marginalising discourse: This discourse is found in social contexts where improvisation has never been marginalised.
- 2) Marginalising discourse: This discourse is found in social contexts where improvisation is devalorised in relation to other forms of musical creativity.
- 3) Post-marginalising discourse: This discourse is found in social contexts where improvisation has been seen, but is no longer seen, as marginal. The vocabulary used is the same as that employed in marginalising discourse. However, within the same vocabulary, there is an attempt to correct marginalising attitudes.
- 4) Demarginalising discourse: Like post-marginalising discourse, this discourse is also found in social contexts where improvisation has been seen, but is no longer seen, as marginal. However, unlike post-marginalising discourse, it employs deliberately new vocabulary which breaks with the marginalising vocabulary still present in post-marginalising discourse.

Thus demarginalising discourse is about new vocabulary and conceptual structures. Demarginalising discourse aspires to the condition of non-marginalising discourse, and although never attaining this condition for the first generation of users, sometimes approaches it asymptotically. It is a construct to emulate the evaluative neutrality of non-marginalising discourse in the latter's freedom from marginalising conceptions. Demarginalising discourse will seek to minimise as nearly as possible to vanishing point the weight of marginalising bias in the language in which improvisation is discussed. It can never do so completely, for it is still implicated in a biased interpretation of what it describes. Those who first use it know it is invented, and why. Demarginalising discourse says, in effect "we ought not to be biased," which implies that "we still are biased." An idea which needs rehabilitation by means of positive linguistic discrimination in this sense is, culturally, still marginalised, and figured within the horizon of old prejudices. Yet, despite this retained prejudice, demarginalising discourse is not simply "*post-post-marginalising*." This is because, for a new generation of speakers growing up to use demarginalising discourse unself-consciously rather than as an adopted strategy, it could become non-marginalising discourse, and free discussion of improvisation from the specific historical biases inhabiting "improvisation" and "extemporisation." It will no doubt introduce other biases, because, following Gadamer, judgement is never free from prejudice.

One possible demarginalising term already considered is 'real-time composition,' as discussed by Pressing. Potentially to our cultural descendants, it is non-marginalising with respect to specific biases connected with the words "improvisation" and "extemporisation" which prejudicially overstress the unprepared dimension of this type of music. The term's relative usefulness in this respect is apparent. Yet, in addition to reservations expressed above to the effect that 'real' here counterfactually valorises

audible “production” time over “preparation” time, it also opposes some conception of “real” to “unreal” time (hallucinations, dreams, perhaps) and implicitly valorises as normative those psychological states in which humans are presumed to be aware of “real,” “objective,” presumptively “scientific” time, rather than states dominated by “subjective” perceptions of time (as when time goes slowly in boredom, quickly in euphoria). There is a particular model of time-consciousness in mind. It is already possible to see how subsequent generations might come to see “real-time” as a marginalising term and might seek to replace it with their own new demarginalising discourse of a kind which might not marginalise other forms of temporal experience, the latter seen as no less real by them, or, indeed more real than our “real” clock time. They might perhaps point out that, if “real” time is defined as time in which reality is disclosed to the mind, this might be taken to include a scientist’s reaching a valid conclusion in a dream, in which case, presumably his dreamed time is real time. ‘While we dream, we are busy exploring the links between old and new memories, which may help explain how we can sometimes solve problems in our sleep.’<sup>44</sup> Yet, though arguably real, dream time is not always like clock time, or even sequential. Unending complications arise for “real-time” terminology in the case of somebody who actually improvises music while asleep. In what sense or senses is he producing music in “real” time? Another perhaps less frivolous formulation of the same difficulty is linked to strong associations in some non-western cultures between improvisatory music and trance states where clock time is not perceived. In these cultures improvisation is sometimes actually the vehicle for achieving detachment from the sense of clock time. It becomes in this situation the antithesis of what Pressing refers to as ‘real-time composition.’ (Shamanic ecstasy and its links to musical

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<sup>44</sup> Helen Philips, “Perchance to Learn.” *New Scientist* 2205 (25th September, 1999): 27-30; p. 29.

improvisation are discussed later.) Thus it is apparent that the demarginalising status of “real-time” discourse is, from the first, highly vulnerable to review, and it would not be as durable as other discourses which might be advanced on the basis of more critical stances adopted in regard to notions of temporality.

An attempt will now be made to set up a demarginalising discourse of improvisation with minimum conceptual bias and maximum durability. The basis for this new discourse will be Treitler’s post-marginalising discourse already discussed, which is largely correct in substance, though weak in choice of terminology. Treitler’s discourse-structure will first be illustrated in the form of a pyramid. The three elements of the pyramid, descending, indicate the passage of the history of transmission, each lower element chronologically subsequent to the one above. (This is because Treitler’s categories “oral,” “written,” and “literate” are in chronological order: ‘Even after ‘written transmission’ had become common alongside oral transmission, it took many centuries to complete the shift to ‘literate transmission’.’)<sup>45</sup> The size of the type-face suggests the associations which subliminally attach to the words used in Treitler’s post-marginal classification when received by modern Western European listeners and readers, for whom “oral” tends to suggest “ignorant,” “literate” tends to suggest “educated,” and “written,” situated in middle place for Treitler, and associated for the same listeners and readers with the basic ability to write, tends to suggest some kind of intermediate level of social empowerment and integration:

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<sup>45</sup> Jeffery, *Re-Envisioning Past Musical Culture*, pp. 15-16. References to Treitler, “Oral, Written, and Literate Process in the Transmission of Medieval Music,” pp. 481-482; Leo Treitler, “Oral and Literate Style in the Regional Transmission of Tropes.” *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 27 (1985): 171-183.

ORAL TRANSMISSION

WRITTEN TRANSMISSION

LITERATE TRANSMISSION

This post-marginalising trichotomy will now be reclassified in terms of demarginalising discourse. It is important to remember that no issue is here being taken with at least the broad historical accuracy of Treitler's analysis, but with its value-laden terminology. A new pyramid, in which the three concepts proposed by Treitler are renamed, is now proposed thus:

PRIMARY TRANSMISSION

ABSTRACTED TRANSMISSION

SILENT TRANSMISSION

This new trichotomy seeks to be, in the ideas to which it refers, identical to Treitler's, but its discourse and consequently its value judgements are revised. In this new pyramid, "primary transmission" corresponds in all but name to Treitler's "oral transmission," "abstracted transmission" in all but name to Treitler's "written transmission," and "silent transmission" in all but name to Treitler's "literate transmission." As with the first pyramid, the size of the type-face suggests the valuations which subliminally attach to the words in the new demarginalising classification. In this second pyramid, Treitler's former "oral" transmission, inhabited by the marginalising term "oral," becomes *primary transmission*. Like oral transmission, primary transmission is defined as transmission free of written connections in any form, yet primary transmission, because of the high valorisation inhabiting the word "primary," is described with a positive connotation, as a core

phenomenon of musical transmission, a historical fact which literary and musical studies of primary oral cultures attest. This is why it now appears in the largest type-face. In Jeffery's words:

Oral transmission is not a peculiar feature of some music at certain times, but rather a universal characteristic of almost all music at almost all times. What we call 'oral transmission' is what most human beings throughout history have known simply as 'music' - something to play or hear rather than something to write or read. We modern Westerners are the ones who do things differently, and our preference for writing is our handicap.<sup>46</sup>

In the new pyramid, primary transmission is thus no longer represented as the "other" of some more highly-prized mode of musical creativity, such as the score or the work, as was the case when it was cast as "oral transmission" in relation to "literate" in Treitler's scheme, exemplified in the first pyramid.

In the new pyramid, after primary transmission, *abstracted transmission* is the equivalent of Treitler's "written transmission." However, rather than being implicitly valorised more highly than "oral transmission," through being described by a word ("written") which suggests a level of social empowerment slightly above that of illiterate persons, as in Treitler, it is represented as a process of music's being *abstracted* from its primary form and thereby brought into a relation with something other than itself, the text, and, in a sense, sundered from itself, from its own integral presence to itself. Next, *silent transmission* is equivalent to Treitler's "literate transmission." "Literate transmission" stood implicitly at the high point of prestige in Treitler's classification on account of the resonations of the word "literate." In the new pyramid, however, "silent" becomes the "other" of "primary," the latter being the high point of prestige in the new classification. The transmission formerly valorised as "literate" in Treitler thus now becomes the "other" of the transmission which Treitler marginalised as "oral," and their places of relative prestige are reversed. It would hardly be possible to think of a more devaluative adjective to apply to music than

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<sup>46</sup> Jeffery, *ibid.*, p. 124.

“silent.” Even *4' 33''* by John Cage includes noises from the soundscape of real life (birdsong, coughing of audience, etc.). Yet, indubitably, the musical score, mere paper or parchment, is silent. It is as far from producing musical sound as anything that can be imagined. A score is somehow a transmission of music without any musical sound being produced. A notated text is not the musical work for ‘music exists as sound . . . . Indeed, music is commonly thought not to exist except as sound, real or imagined, and the notated version is no more than a source of advice or instructions for recreating the music.’<sup>47</sup> Despite this, under Treitler’s post-marginalising category of “literate,” the score enjoyed the highest valuation within music of all the three components of his scheme. Paradoxically, the score became “the music.” The true culturally subordinate role of “literate” or, as it is here renamed, silent transmission, is of course also shown clearly by the fact that primary (for Treitler “oral”) transmission can exist alone in a culture apart from the other two elements. Moreover, the products of silent (for Treitler “literate”) transmission are brought to life only by events, performances, which transcend the notated information and reinstate the expressive flexibilities characteristic of primary, “oral” musicianship, not to mention the sound itself. It is clear that to suggest that primary transmission is the marginalised “other” of silent transmission, as Treitler’s post-marginal conceptual framework does with its terms “oral” and “literate,” is inappropriate to the facts under description.

Moreover the term “silent” transmission is more inclusive than Treitler’s “literate” transmission. The former leaves room for the possibility of forms of symbolism which people in oral cultures might have used to try to fix musical performances but which were non-literate. Even if Treitler does recognise the possibility of fixing performances other than by writing or notation in the literate sense, “literate

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<sup>47</sup> Stanley Boorman, “The Musical Text.” In *Rethinking Music*, Cook and Everist (eds.), p. 405.



transmission” is not an apt term to use for the manifestations of such hypothetical instances, since “literate” derives from *littera*, “letter,” a Latin word which did not refer to a broader range of symbols but only to the written symbol. There is no reason to assert definitively that oral cultures (including medieval oral cultures) could not have tried to fix performances by referring agreed aspects of a performance to selected exterior objects or events other than written symbols, and especially to human gestures. Agreed conducting gestures could have functioned like prescriptive notation.<sup>48</sup> Even if no documentary evidence supports this use of gestures in respect of early plainchant transmission, any term which purports to describe all possible cases where performances are prescriptively fixed (and Treitler’s term “literate” does so purport) needs to be able to refer to the widest possible spectrum of such practices, if ever history provides evidence for their existence, and “literate” does not successfully describe those which may not have been written down. Any such prescriptive transmission based on non-literate symbolism, if it existed, would of course still be the “other” of primary transmission, because human beings must still produce music by primary transmission to be thus fixed.

The anthropological priority of primary transmission is not opposed to the fact that the composed products of silent forms of transmission, once such transmission is established within a culture, may not merely record, but also actually influence compositional procedures within the limits of the same culture. That is to say, ability to write down music in a given culture may not only record, but can stylistically affect music composed in that culture. Thus, for that culture the lineaments of the already proposed descending pyramid:

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<sup>48</sup> The musical sign-language, or *cheironomy* of the ancient Egyptians may have functioned in this way. See Kunst, *Ethnomusicology*, p. 51.

## PRIMARY TRANSMISSION

## ABSTRACTED TRANSMISSION

## SILENT TRANSMISSION

may be obscured, as happened in the West where primary transmission was marginalised. This point may be illustrated. High complexity of counterpoint is a silently transmitted (or “literate”) genre. Oral musical cultures have not constructed music of this type, precisely because it requires the complex symbolisation only possible with silent transmission and, arguably, scored notation. It cannot be imagined or built up by a human mind without some external *aide-mémoire*. The contrapuntal complexity of the type which increasingly characterises Western music after the rise of organum and came to a climax in the eighteenth century, is not found in oral cultures, and ‘[i]t is hardly surprising that, with the development of a sophisticated graphic notation, Western instrumental music has been able to rise to heights of extraordinary complexity.’<sup>49</sup> As has been noted:

In the 16th century much music was printed in partbooks. When composers stopped writing each line of their music successively and began to conceive the entire polyphonic complex simultaneously, they may have worked with wax tablets which could be erased once the parts were copied out.<sup>50</sup>

The interest of this citation is that it illustrates how the desired complexity of composition here called eventually for the mnemonic aid of wax tablets. But the previous ability to notate the contrapuntal lines successively by means of partbooks itself foreshadowed and inspired the wax-tablet method for imagining polyphonic complexity ‘simultaneously.’ Thus the later music in this example could be conceived only with the aid of wax tablets able to display all the parts at once to the eye, yet these

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<sup>49</sup> Philip Alperson, “On Musical Improvisation.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, no. 1 (1984): 17-29; p. 22. Reference to Walter Wiora, *The Four Ages of Music* (New York: n.p., 1965), pp. 130-135.

<sup>50</sup> Brown, in Brown and McKinnon, “Performing Practice,” p. 378.

wax tablets are a historical development of the partbooks. Here, complexity of counterpoint first elicited a need for silent transmission in the form of part-books; this silent transmission, consisting of part-books, then itself suggested higher possibilities in complexity of counterpoint through wax tablets, which served as a development of the part-books. Silent transmission influenced compositional style.

Specific musical cultures (most of modern Western music included) can thus be formed as a result of the rise and development of silent transmission; indeed, it is hard to avoid the suggestion that some of the notated polyphony of the late Middle Ages was validated in its musical construction by the look of the page, rather than solely the effect of the sound. Late Medieval and early Renaissance composers appear to have been fascinated by musical symmetry, including visual, for ‘balancing of proportionally related sectional divisions and even of symmetrically organized mensurations in motets and secular songs all demonstrate that what we might call the extra-auditory dimension of music was valued as highly as what was heard.’<sup>51</sup> Virginia Newes writes of retrograde canonic writing at this period which cannot be perceived by hearing the music but only by looking at it.<sup>52</sup> Foucault’s analysis of the Renaissance *episteme* as based in the idea of the world as written “text” is suggestive of the powerful influence the musical text may have had on compositional practice. For Foucault, the world was understood as a text written by God, ‘[a] universe where words were symbolically ordered amongst themselves in the same manner as things and were read as perfect mirrorings of things. [In] the *episteme* of the Renaissance . . . words resembled things and things resembled words.’<sup>53</sup> There was thus every reason

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<sup>51</sup> Virginia Newes, “Writing, Reading and Memorizing: the Transmission and Resolution of Retrograde Canons from the 14th and early 15th Centuries.” *Early Music* 18, no. 2 (May 1990 misprinted on Contents page as May 1989): 218-234; p. 218.

<sup>52</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Richard Kearney, *Modern Movements in European Philosophy* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1986), p. 287. Reference to Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (n.p.: Pantheon, 1970 and n.p.: Tavistock, 1972).

why music should resemble its own text, the thing resemble the “word.” Thus silent transmission in the West was reciprocal with musical styles, by both recording and also generating them.

The musical score does not only have the power to generate compositional styles in this way (most modern Western music was conceived in dependence upon the notated symbol) but can even influence primary transmission (improvisation) within a culture. Treitler’s problematic trichotomy, in addition, as has been seen, to adopting post-marginalising discourse in his designations “oral,” “written,” and “literate,” fails, according to Jeffery, to account for such situations as where “oral” transmission is influenced by “literate” transmission. Jeffery prefers Brian Stock’s analysis “orality, textuality, and literacy”<sup>54</sup> which he considers is better able to suggest influences of “literate” transmission upon “oral” transmission. “Textuality” is a more nuanced and inclusive idea than Treitler’s “written transmission,” since it can describe not only the writing down of oral material, but also a state of orality influenced by literacy where ‘oral discourse effectively . . . function[s] within a universe of communications governed by texts.’<sup>55</sup> Unlike Treitler, for whom there is but one orality, Stock distinguishes two types of orality: ‘pure orality, that is verbal discourse uninfluenced by the written mode’ and ‘verbal discourse which exists in interdependence with texts’ which is . . . ‘the type of orality for which the Middle Ages furnishes the most abundant evidence’.<sup>56</sup>

A new term will be adopted here: *post-primary transmission*. Post-primary transmission is the practice of primary transmission where it reflects stylistic influences rooted in silent transmission, in the manner just described by Stock. (To

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<sup>54</sup> See Jeffery, *Re-Envisioning Past Musical Cultures*, p. 16, footnote. Citation from Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (n.p.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1983), p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Stock, *ibid*, p. 3. Cited in Jeffery, *ibid*.

<sup>56</sup> Jeffery, *ibid*. Citations from Stock, *ibid*, p. 8.

revert momentarily to more familiar terminology, post-primary transmission will here be the term for improvisation in a musical style which arose in consequence of notation.) A good example of post-primary transmission is improvised counterpoint. Although inseparable in creative *élan* from the spontaneity of primary transmission, it is clear that, in style, Medieval and Renaissance improvised counterpoint consciously or unconsciously imitated the notated vocal polyphony and its musical structure as heard in the churches of the period, and this fact makes for its correct classification as a form of post-primary transmission. There is direct evidence for this influence of notated compositional techniques on improvised counterpoint for '[in] addition to . . . works presenting species counterpoint in terms of written composition, there are others that use contrapuntal species to teach vocal improvisation - singing 'above the book' (*super librum*) as Tinctoris called it.'<sup>57</sup> This implies that counterpoint by silent transmission and improvised counterpoint shared a pedagogy. Another major form of post-primary transmission in the West has been the figured-bass.

When the vocabulary through which improvisation is discussed is adjusted, this will engender a wider cultural reception of the fact that, as Nettl observes: '[T]he approaches developed in ethnomusicology can underscore something already understood but rarely expounded, that oral (or more correctly, aural) transmission is the norm . . . and that it dominates the musical life of a society and the life of a piece of music.'<sup>58</sup> It is this perspective that any demarginalising discourse seeks to re-express. Given that conceptual structures are historically conditioned here, it is suggested that the form of demarginalising discourse just advanced (primary, abstracted, silent and post-primary transmissions) represents a relatively durable proposal because its terms of reference are based in less shifting human categories than others which might be

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<sup>57</sup> Joel Lester, *Compositional Theory in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1992), p. 30.

<sup>58</sup> Nettl, *Study of Ethnomusicology*, p. 200.

thought of, including those linked with “real time.” The new terminology presupposes human concepts of sequential priority, removal, and presence/absence/degree of sound. These are probably less mutable human ideas than others which might be proposed with a view to changing cultural attitudes to improvisation.

## Chapter 4

### *Music and Metaphysics: Discovering the Hidden Heidegger ?*

#### *I Heidegger and the Linguistic Turn*

It is notable that, already from within the musicological community '[e]fforts to characterize the improvisatory mode of expression from a listener's perspective have been made in recent writings in aesthetics using the analogy of speech.'<sup>1</sup> For example, for Francis Sparshott, humans tend to listen to improvising as they listen to speech, listening past any "mistakes" in order to attend to the development of the underlying ideas.<sup>2</sup> Christopher Small associates musical improvisation with conversation.<sup>3</sup> Sawyer has sought to apply 'semiotic theory and analysis to both musical and verbal improvisation.'<sup>4</sup> For him, 'both linguistic and musical performance, as found in cultural contexts, are forms of creative improvisation'.<sup>5</sup> Group musical improvisation, in particular, is seen by him as resembling verbal conversation.<sup>6</sup> Thus '*group improvisational performance* could provide a new perspective on the semiotic attempt to apply models of language to musical performance.'<sup>7</sup>

Speech is a major preoccupation in twentieth-century Western philosophy. The twentieth-century linguistic turn in Western philosophy has been a development comparable in importance to the turn to the subject of Descartes's *cogito*. Thinkers such as Heidegger, Gadamer, Wittgenstein and Derrida all redefine philosophy in linguistic terms. Many today would no longer accept a model of knowledge according to which a "self" has experience of an "objective" world which it then translates into

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<sup>1</sup> Goertzen, "By Way of Introduction," p. 311. Reference to Alperson, "On Musical Improvisation," drawing on Francis Sparshott, *The Theory of the Arts* (Princeton: Princeton Univ Press, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> See Alperson, *ibid*, pp. 23-24. References to Sparshott, *ibid*, p. 255; p. 609, footnote 40; David Sudnow, *Talk's Body* (New York: n.p., 1979).

<sup>3</sup> See Christopher Small, "No Meaning Without Rules." In *Improvisation*, Prévost (commentator), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> R. Keith Sawyer, "The Semiotics of Improvisation: The Pragmatics of Musical and Verbal Performance." *Semiotica* 108, nos. 3/4 (1996): 269-306; p. 269.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 272.

<sup>6</sup> See *ibid*, p. 274.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 270.

language. ‘There is no subject and no object, no self and no world to which we have privileged access: there is only representation, only language, propagating and disseminating itself across the face of the world. Indeed, the ‘world’ is nothing more nor less than the sum of linguistic self-production.’<sup>8</sup> ‘Because philosophy has been so dominated by the Cartesian standpoint, the erosion of Cartesianism has been interpreted by some as signalling the ‘death of philosophy.’ If anything is dying, however, it is the intellectual rule of a particular model of knowledge and reality.’<sup>9</sup> The older idea that language arises in the self as a result of contact with objects has roots in Judaeo-Christian tradition. In *Genesis*, God, having created things, names them. However, according to the terms of many linguistic philosophies, language precedes experience: the world is modelled to fit language. This implies that language determines the way people think, a view which Chomsky’s theory of innate, deep structures in language tends to support.<sup>10</sup>

‘[T]he thought that all our perceptions are imprisoned by language itself - not any particular language but the very practice of articulation - is disarming. It really does seem . . . to make language the sole constituent of such a reality.’<sup>11</sup> Not all philosophies representing the linguistic turn, however, go as far as to ‘make language the sole constituent’ of reality. The latter position, better described by the term ‘linguistic determinism’<sup>12</sup> should not be taken as synonymous with the linguistic turn as a whole. Such determinism ‘pretty much coincides with the ‘theory of linguistic relativity’ put forward by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf.’<sup>13</sup> In this theory,

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<sup>8</sup> George Pattison, *Agnosis: Theology in the Void* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 139.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1987), p. 114.

<sup>10</sup> See Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Truth: A History and a Guide for the Perplexed* (1997) (London: Transworld, 1998), pp. 201-202.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Pinker, *The Language Instinct* (1994) (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 59.

<sup>13</sup> Gary B. Madison, *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity: Figures and Themes* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990), p. 84.



‘reality would be constituted differently in accordance with the different ways we use to speak about it, and, in the final analysis, there would be as many ‘realities’ as there are languages.’<sup>14</sup> However, the ‘famous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic determinism,’ states Stephen Pinker, ‘is wrong, all wrong.’<sup>15</sup> For example, if humans sometimes utter or write a sentence and then realise that it was not quite what they meant to say, this implies that there is a “what they mean to say” that is different from what was said. Indeed, sometimes no available words seem properly to convey a thought. Similarly, humans often remember the gist of an idea, not the exact words, so there has to be a gist that is not the same as the words themselves. Moreover, if thoughts depended on words no new words could be coined nor could a child learn a word to begin with.<sup>16</sup> Pinker refers to a body of scientific studies ‘that break the word barrier and assess many kinds of nonverbal thought.’<sup>17</sup>

An attempt will be made in Chapter 5 to present musical improvisation as part of the overall phenomenon of language and to situate it within the linguistic-philosophical framework proposed by the thought of Martin Heidegger. For Heidegger, situated in the tradition of the linguistic turn, language is the condition of experience and the medium in and through which we exist.<sup>18</sup> Heidegger’s understanding of language is as the place where “Being speaks” or “Being is given.” Elucidating Heidegger’s idea that Being “speaks” or “is given,” John Macquarrie writes: ‘We cannot say ‘Being is’ . . . but we do say, ‘There is Being’ . . . In German, the words are *Es gibt*, ‘It gives’ . . . Heidegger says clearly that Being is a gift of the ‘It gives’ and that Being belongs to

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Pinker, *Language Instinct*, p. 57. Reference to Edward Sapir, *Language* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1921).

<sup>16</sup> See Pinker, *ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>18</sup> This position is stated in Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 34, pp. 203-211. It is well summarised in Palmer *Hermeneutics*, pp. 124-161.

giving. The ‘It gives’ is the ultimate in Heidegger’s philosophy.’<sup>19</sup> Because it is in language that “Being speaks,” in words of another commentator: ‘Speech speaks in order to summon the world and things to their essence, whereby the world worlds and the thing things.’<sup>20</sup> ‘World’ refers here to something that *happens* in language, as in a dynamic event. When the world shows itself in language, it is in this dynamic state of ‘worlding’.<sup>21</sup> In what follows, Heidegger’s *Es gibt* will be rendered as “Being speaks” rather than “Being is given,” for since Heidegger considers that Being is given in and through language, “Being speaks” would seem to be a more attentive rendering of the German than “Being is given.”<sup>22</sup>

Heidegger does not conceive of human knowledge of reality in terms of the Cartesian subject-object model, nor does he follow the Sapir-Whorf determinist model of language. ‘[L]anguage neither ‘refers’ to ‘extra’-linguistic reality nor does it merely ‘express itself’; language is the way in which, as humans, we *experience* what we call reality, that is, the way in which reality exists for us.’<sup>23</sup> Something more exists than language, namely experience, and language expresses this experience. However experience is not “outside” language, something other than language to which language merely refers. Language is the meaning of experience and the two belong to each other. Thus language does not merely articulate experience; it *is* experience which comes to acknowledge itself to be this or that experience. For example, if we find a more subtle way of describing an emotion, it is our emotional life itself which becomes

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<sup>19</sup> John Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity* (London: SCM, 1994), p. 98.

<sup>20</sup> Theodore Kisiel, “The Language of the Event: The Event of Language.” In *Heidegger and the Path of Thinking*, John Sallis (ed.), (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ. Press, 1970), p. 98.

<sup>21</sup> See Lawrence Ferrara, *Philosophy and the Analysis of Music: Bridges to Musical Sound, Form and Reference* (New York: Greenwood, 1991), p. 132.

<sup>22</sup> The phrase “Being speaks” will be used frequently in the present work. Where reference to Heidegger’s own ideas forms the context for its use, it will be enclosed, as here, in inverted commas. Where the phrase is contextualised anew, in relation to the new ideas which will form the original basis of this thesis, it will appear without inverted commas. Occasionally, the context has been such that it has not been possible to determine decisively which usage is more appropriate.

<sup>23</sup> Madison, *Hermeneutics of Postmodernity*, p. 165.

more refined, not just the way we describe it. ‘If it is true, as Heidegger said, that language is *das Haus des Seins* [the House of Being], it is even truer that it is the home of meaningful experience. Experience is not really meaningful until it has found a home in language, and without lived experience to inhabit it, language is an empty, lifeless shell.’<sup>24</sup> Belief that we have captured a wordless thought is illusory for words of some kind are always hovering in the background.<sup>25</sup> Our “prelinguistic and metalinguistic dawnings, dumbnesses and silences in which the immediate meeting with the world expresses itself” . . . happen only against a background of language towards which, in some way or another they are always being drawn.<sup>26</sup> Indeed when the mind tries to find the right words to say what it wants to say, this generally occurs *within* words; the unsatisfactoriness of the present formulation incites us to look for a better one; we do not start from a pristine, pre-linguistic thing-in-itself. Thus neither experience and understanding, nor language are available independently of each other; they are an indissoluble unity.<sup>27</sup> ‘How can I know what I think till I see what I say?’<sup>28</sup> Ineffable or obscure ideas do not constitute an exception to this principle whereby all thinking gravitates towards at least some form of linguistic expression. In such instances the language in which the thoughts are expressed may take the form of phrases like: “I see what I mean but I don’t know how to say it,” or “I have an idea which no words suffice to express.”

The view that language is integral to human thought process finds support from the natural sciences. There is a scientific presentation of the human person not simply as a

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. For the phrase ‘House of Being’ see Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason (Der Satz vom Grund*, Pfullingen: Neske, 1957) (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1991), p. 96.

<sup>25</sup> See Dwight Bolinger and Donald A. Sears, *Aspects of Language* (1968) (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), pp. 135-136.

<sup>26</sup> Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground*, p. 138. Citation from Hans-Georg Gadamer, “On the Origins of Philosophical Hermeneutics.” In *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (1977) (Cambridge MA: M. I. T. Press, 1985), p. 179.

<sup>27</sup> See Dunne, *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> E. M. Forster, no documentation. Cited in Frank Whitehead, *The Disappearing Dais: A Study of the Principles and Practice of English Teaching* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), p. 13.

creature who speaks language, but a creature whose mode of existence is biologically defined in terms of language. Terrence Deacon propounds the view that language is not added to thought but is the source of it: 'The remarkable expansion of the brain that took place in human evolution, and indirectly produced prefrontal expansion, was not the cause of symbolic language but a consequence of it.'<sup>29</sup> He remarks also that 'the requirements for efficient speech analysis and production have all the qualities to become progressively internalized in patterns of neural architecture. It is even conceivable that there could be some degree of genetic assimilation of specific, highly regularized phoneme-distinction mechanisms.'<sup>30</sup> If, as Deacon speculates, language produces the form of the brain as we know it, it may thus be claimed anatomically, in a manner parallel to the Heideggerian speculations treated here, that language is the origin of the human person. Chapter 1 suggested that, in babyhood, babbling and language acquisition may be allied with exploratory musical vocalisation. In Chapter 5 such musical vocalisation will be integrated into and included in the philosophical claims made for language by Heidegger and corroborated by the natural sciences.

Heidegger's understanding of the primordially of language is arrived at from a phenomenological consideration of the structure of human understanding. Understanding appears not chiefly as a specific type of activity initiated so that it may be applied to specific situations. This model cannot be foundational, since it provides no way of understanding the act of understanding itself. Humanity cannot stand outside understanding in order to objectify it in this way. '[Understanding] can never be objectified, for it is within understanding that all objectification takes place.'<sup>31</sup> For Heidegger, understanding is the whole of our lived experience, not a special kind of event within it. It is not a tool for something else, but the medium in and through

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<sup>29</sup> Deacon, *Symbolic Species*, p. 340.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 336-337.

<sup>31</sup> Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, p. 228.

which we exist: an event of the world *upon* man, not an autonomous activity *of* man. 'Understanding is . . . the medium by which the world comes to stand before a man; understanding is the medium of ontological disclosure.'<sup>32</sup> Man cannot survey understanding from the outside: understanding is the standpoint from which all that is seen is seen, so it cannot be an object. Our being-in-the-world, and our understanding are one and the same thing.

The world comes to stand before man through his five senses, and this impressionability is already understanding. However the world does not come to stand for man purely in the vague impress of sounds, sights and stimuli in the wider sense. The world also comes to stand for man as a shared world. My existence is interlocked with that of others. The deeper meaning of the world cannot be grasped as though I alone existed, and must include also what other people understand by the world. However, my primary sensory wash cannot perceive what other people understand by the world. They have to communicate this to me, and they do this through language. Another reason why the world can only fully come to stand for me through language is that this shared world is not just a world of the present, of the now. It has a past, and much of the world's richness of meaning comes down from the past. Just as I have no sensory access to other people's thoughts, neither have I direct sensory access to the past. Both the shared and the historical nature of my being-in-the-world must therefore come to stand for me through language. 'Language is equally as primordial as understanding, for understanding is linguistic; it is through language that something like a world can arise for us.'<sup>33</sup> In short, it is through language that the world comes to stand before me, because the world is co-understood: 'Being-with belongs to Being-in-the-world, which in every case maintains itself in some definite way of concerned

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Being-with-one-another.’<sup>34</sup> ‘Language for Heidegger is not a mere instrument of communication, a secondary device for expressing ‘ideas’: it is the very dimension in which human life moves, that which brings the world to be in the first place.’<sup>35</sup> A ‘world’ exists in the human sense only where there is language. For Heidegger, language has an existence of its own. Human beings come to participate in language and only thereby acquire their humanness for language exists prior to the individual person as the horizon within which the person’s life arises, and contains ‘truth’ less in the sense of being a means for the exchange of information than in being the medium in which the real is disclosed to contemplation.<sup>36</sup>

For Heidegger, in *Being and Time* language is primordially speech discourse. ‘*The existential-ontological foundation of language is discourse or talk.*’<sup>37</sup> And in another place, he observes: ‘Being with one another in the world, having this world as being with one another, has a distinctive ontological determination. The fundamental way of . . . having world there with one another, is *speaking* . . . It is predominantly in speaking that man’s being-in-the-world takes place.’<sup>38</sup> For Deacon also, ‘the primary language medium’<sup>39</sup> is speech. Pinker cites an experiment involving a baby suggesting that the primary linguistic activity is speech,<sup>40</sup> while, in words of Walter Ong, ‘language is so overwhelmingly oral that of all the many thousands of languages . . . spoken in the course of human history . . . most have never been written at all . . . The basic orality of language is permanent.’<sup>41</sup> Once this speech-oriented, and consequently

<sup>34</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 34, p. 204.

<sup>35</sup> Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p. 63.

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 34, p. 203.

<sup>38</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time* (1924) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 8E.

<sup>39</sup> Deacon, *Symbolic Species*, p. 339.

<sup>40</sup> See Pinker, *Language Instinct*, pp. 263-264.

<sup>41</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 7. Ong cites B. Siertsema, *A Study in Glossematics: Critical Survey of its Fundamental Concepts* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1955); Garrick Mallery (ed.), *Sign Language among North American Indians compared with That among Other Peoples and Deaf-Mutes* (1881) with articles by A. L. Kroeber and C. F. Voegelin. *Approaches to Semiotics* 14 (The Hague: Mouton, 1972): A. L. Kroeber, “Sign Language Inquiry.” In Mallery, *ibid.*; William C. Stokoe, Jr, *Semiotics and Human*

auditory and vocal character of language is understood, it suggests that a link between music and language may exist, so that music may join hands with language as being equally (in Heidegger's phrase) the place where "Being speaks." There is perhaps a depth-layer at which language and music coalesce as the voice of Being for the human person. In Chapter 5, musical improvisation will be seen to be integrated with human language, where "Being speaks," and to be an equiprimordial human propensity with speech. The starting-point for the investigation will be the pre-linguistic babbling of the infant, which appears to be linked to a musical exploration. As a preparation for this, what follows in the present Chapter will suggest that Heidegger's ideas regarding language are already conducive to an interpretation which sets music in some sense at the heart of his linguistic philosophy, even though this is not a conclusion which Heidegger himself ever drew from them, nor one widely represented in the critical literature.

## *II Heidegger, Art and the Human Person*

Heidegger's understanding of the human person is sufficiently at variance with traditional Western understandings for him to coin a new concept to encompass it. The word for Heidegger's new concept is *Dasein*. Only *Dasein* consciously reflects on existence as existence and asks the ontological question, 'Why is there anything at all?' *Dasein* designates man 'in respect of his being.'<sup>42</sup> '[I]f this kind of being is found elsewhere than in humanity, then the term *Dasein* could be appropriately applied.'<sup>43</sup> However, Heidegger's view is that undoubtedly '[h]uman beings . . . are special kinds

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*Sign Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972); Munro E. Edmondson, *Lore: An Introduction to the Sciences of Folklore and Literature* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 323, 332.

<sup>42</sup> John Macquarrie, *Existentialism* (1972) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 66.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

of beings in that their way of being embodies an understanding of what it is to be.’<sup>44</sup> There is no *Dasein* which is not human. Moreover *Dasein* does not understand its existence in the first place conceptually. ‘. . . *Dasein*’s understanding of being is not a belief system implicit in the minds of individual subjects, as Cartesian philosophers have generally held.’<sup>45</sup> For Heidegger, *Dasein*’s understanding of Being arises as a result of pre-theoretical, intuitive experience and its fundamental situatedness within language. The reason why it is important to distinguish *Dasein* from a broadly transcendental or Cartesian view of the human subject bears directly on the question of Being. Being is not known *by Dasein* as subject, but rather disclosed linguistically *in Dasein*. Disclosure must precede knowledge *by*, since apart from the fact that the real is disclosed, it cannot be an object of knowledge: ‘Truth in its original sense is . . . the happening of unconcealment [Unverborgenheit]’.<sup>46</sup>

For Heidegger, Being in the first instance intuitively disclosed in *Dasein* may subsequently be elucidated philosophically according to a conception of “world and earth.” In this elucidation, “World’ is neither the aggregate of beings present at hand nor simply a representation on the part of human beings. World is that non-objective and non-object-like dimension [das Ungegenständliche] which first makes possible all of our manifold ways of comporting and relating ourselves to beings.’<sup>47</sup> Whereas ‘world’ is the sphere of Being’s unconcealment, ‘earth’ is the protective, sheltering and preserving agency out of which unconcealment happens. A scientific-calculating attitude can to a degree objectify and control the earth, yet it cannot render the earth

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<sup>44</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s ‘Being and Time’, Division I* (Cambridge, MA: M. I. T. Press, 1991), pp. 14-15.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>46</sup> Günther Pöltner, “Mozart und Heidegger: Die Musik und der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes.” *Heidegger Studies* 8 (1992): 123-144. Unpubl. translation by Nicholas Walker, as “Mozart and Heidegger: Music and the Origin of the Work of Art,” p. 5. It is perhaps significant of the dearth of published material on any relationship between Heidegger’s thought and music that, to date, this is the only article on that theme in the periodical *Heidegger Studies* since its inception in 1985.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid* (trans.), p. 4. Reference to Martin Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1960), pp. 44f.



comprehensible as the earth, in the sense of man's prior dwelling place. Whereas nature can be seen as a source of energy for our exploitation, earth as such cannot be opened up. There will for ever be more to discover and this makes earth as such mysterious and undisclosable.<sup>48</sup> However, '[t]his 'strife' of world and earth is not an absolute polarisation, since '[e]arth mostly withdraws but will also rise up into the world, for example, when humanly manipulated or named as 'nature,' and human decision and action is always based on and drawn towards, something not fully mastered - the earth.'<sup>49</sup>

As has often been noted 'every known society has various forms of esthetic expression: music, the dance, and graphic arts.'<sup>50</sup> Heidegger develops the polarity of world and earth by asserting further that Being is unconcealed in an interaction between the primordial forces of world and earth as disclosed in art. 'There is this 'existing-in-itself' of nature, its way of eluding us . . . To experience this 'eluding' means to open up to the fascinating closedness, to the 'earthness' of nature. Art attempts nothing else.'<sup>51</sup> For example, the weight of a stone may be measured and its colours analysed as light waves, yet these analyses fail to describe the feel of the stone's weight in the hand, or the impact of its colours on the eye. Art, however, can bring these unquantifiable aspects of the stone to light and disclose them.<sup>52</sup> Thus, for Heidegger, 'the peculiar character of a work of art consists in bringing world and earth to each other'<sup>53</sup> for 'it is by virtue of setting up a world and setting forth the earth that the work is a work.'<sup>54</sup> '[T]he elemental contention between World and earth is

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<sup>48</sup> See Walter Biemel, *Martin Heidegger: An Illustrated Study by Walter Biemel* (1973) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 99.

<sup>49</sup> Jeff Collins and Howard Selina, *Heidegger for Beginners* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 1998), p. 130.

<sup>50</sup> Constantin Brailoiu, *Problems of Ethnomusicology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), p. 165.

<sup>51</sup> Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1998), p. 298.

<sup>52</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Biemel, *Heidegger*, p. 97.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

stabilized and made manifest under the guise of the work's form.'<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the things of 'earth' are used, humanised and disclosed as 'world' in the art-work not only through what the art-work may depict, but through the medium it employs: 'The element in which art creates . . . is brought forth into its ownmost, proper character [sein Eigenstes]: 'the metals come to gleam, the colours to glow, the tone to resonate, the word to speak'.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, 'the work of art . . . lets the material element or stuff be completely itself.'<sup>57</sup> So it comes about that works of art belong to both world and earth. They are not things of earth like grass or sunshine, nor are they practical items of equipment from the human world like tables or tools. Art-works constitute an interstice between the arena of human projects and decisions and the uncontrollable background of 'earth' against which humans live out their lives, an interstice without which human life could not be understood.

Even when an art-work imitates an object in the world, as in representative painting, clearly for Heidegger art is ultimately true at a deeper level than representation. Fundamentally, the art-work does not imitate truth, it discloses it: art does not simply affect a subject by imitating an object, but enlightens her or him by disclosing it in a way which presents it as more truly itself. 'The beautiful is thus not explained in terms of subjective experience, of how the work affects a subject, but in terms of the openness that becomes manifest in a work of art, of the basic phenomenon of unconcealedness.'<sup>58</sup> In other words '[t]his altered approach shows the work as being demanded by truth itself, in the sense of the installation of truth, its taking concrete form.'<sup>59</sup> Heidegger gives the example of a Greek temple, which does not represent

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<sup>55</sup> William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. 407.

<sup>56</sup> Pöltner, "Mozart and Heidegger," p. 4. Citation from Heidegger, *Ursprung*, p. 47.

<sup>57</sup> Pöltner, *ibid.* Reference to Heidegger, *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Biemel, *Heidegger*, p. 106.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

anything, but has primordial significance in the fact that it embodies both a world and the earth. The world is where human life and culture take place; the earth is the primordial material disclosed in the temple. The truth of the work of art takes place in the revealing action of this coming together.<sup>60</sup> By choosing an architectural art-work, which is not mimetic or representative, Heidegger illustrates how the ultimate happening of truth in art is not intrinsically linked to the idea of representation.<sup>61</sup> As manifested in the temple, '[a]rt is . . . neither . . . a realm of cultural achievement, nor . . . a manifestation of spirit, but belongs rather to the appropriative event [Ereignis] from out of which the 'meaning of being' . . . is first determined.'<sup>62</sup>

Where an art-work does represent some material object, one important consideration is that it simultaneously reveals what it depicts, yet at the same time is not actually that thing, hence concealing it. Therefore, '[i]t is art that allows the later Heidegger to delineate, to make as palpable as he can, the antinomy of truth's simultaneous hiddenness and self-deployment'.<sup>63</sup> This is the hiddenness of 'earth' contrasted with the self-deployment of 'world.' Nor is the art-work chiefly defined in terms of something the artist produces. Instead, both artist and art-work are concomitant expressions of the way in which Being comes out of concealment. Artist and work belong together. 'The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither *is* without the other.'<sup>64</sup> For Heidegger the work of art does not chiefly express the feelings of the artist but brings Being itself to light. As an example of representative art, a painting by Van Gogh is instanced by Heidegger and shown to be, on a deeper level, a revealing as well as a representation of what is depicted.

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<sup>60</sup> See Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, pp. 267-268.

<sup>61</sup> See Pöltner, "Mozart and Heidegger," p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Heidegger, *Ursprung*, p. 99. Cited in Pöltner, *ibid*, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> George Steiner, *Heidegger* (1978) (London: Fontana, Harper Collins, 1992), pp. 134-135.

<sup>64</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes." *Holzwege* (1950) (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1957), p. 7. Cited in Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, p. 267.

Heidegger considers Van Gogh's painting of an old, worn-out pair of shoes. The painting enables us to experience the innermost reality and meaning of the shoes, for however carefully scientific knowledge might analyse the shoes, its discoveries about their physical nature would be pure abstractions; while the knowledge obtained by the wearer of these shoes is essential to knowing them as they are, but it is interested knowledge, knowledge of the shoes in actual use. Only through the painting do the shoes achieve their full being. Long after they are of no more scientific interest or of no more practical use, the truth of the shoes is preserved by the painting.<sup>65</sup> 'The Van Gogh painting is not an art-work because it provides a correct and factual representation of a pair of shoes. There is not a simple copy relation to the real shoes. It functions as a work of art because it discloses the being of the shoes'.<sup>66</sup>

In general it is useful, when considering this theory of Being as revealed in art, to remember that the link between truth and art found in Heidegger in fact represents a philosophical recovery. 'Even [the] suggestion that [art] means nothing depends on the emergence of the notions of aesthetic autonomy . . . in the 18th century'.<sup>67</sup>

### *III Heidegger, Poetry and Music*

Despite these illustrations drawn from the sphere of the visual arts, Heidegger in fact privileges the linguistic work of art, in the form of poetry. Like all art, poetry hides and reveals its meaning, because although it uses words in the sense of signification, hence revealing what is said, the words are also intended to tail off into extended realms of allusion and connotation and hide themselves in possibilities of meaning not laid bare by their univocal sense. However, poetry is privileged, because

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<sup>65</sup> See Steiner, *Heidegger*, pp. 133-134.

<sup>66</sup> Ferrara, *Philosophy and the Analysis of Music*, p. 129.

<sup>67</sup> Andrew Bowie, "Adorno, Heidegger, and the Meaning of Music." *Thesis Eleven* 56 (1999): 1-23; p.

language possesses the additional general quality, in view of the linguistic turn which Heidegger represents, of being the prior medium in which the whole of human existence and understanding take place. Thus poetry becomes in a certain sense the paradigm of art. ‘The definition of art in terms of poetry offered by Heidegger does not at all mean reducing all the arts to poesy, but rather that, in all art, what is projected or composed . . . is truth in the sense of unconcealedness. Language itself . . . is that through which entities are brought into the open.’<sup>68</sup> Poetic language discloses Being in a special way, for ‘Heidegger will say that, in order to open oneself to a ‘moment of vision’, it is necessary to *break* with everyday discourse.’<sup>69</sup>

Heidegger says little about music in his philosophical writings. It might therefore be deduced that the subject of music has no bearing on his thought; alternatively, it might be speculated whether his thought is implicated with music in ways which he himself never realised but which commentators may be able to discern. As Pöltner observes: ‘In the treatise on the work of art . . . [m]usic plays virtually no role. I am . . . interested in attempting to render the fundamental features of art, as uncovered by Heidegger, fruitful with regard to music.’<sup>70</sup> The same writer notes a reference in Heidegger’s *Der Satz vom Grund* to a letter attributed to Mozart ‘which is capable of placing one of the central claims of Heidegger’s essay on the work of art - the priority accorded to poetry - in a new and different light. In view of Heidegger’s silence concerning music, this prioritisation appears to be rather questionable.’<sup>71</sup> This letter will be discussed in Section V. Perhaps music represents an unconscious agenda, or at

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<sup>68</sup> Biemel, *Heidegger*, p. 111.

<sup>69</sup> Susan Marguerite Bowles, “Rupture in the Temporality of Music in Relation to Heidegger’s Concepts of Angst and Nothingness: A Practical Study to Show that the Early Writings of Martin Heidegger offer a Resolution to certain Dichotomies in Music Aesthetic Theories which Relate to Affective Response to Music.” M. Phil dissertation, University of Essex, 1996, p. 30.

<sup>70</sup> Pöltner, “Mozart and Heidegger.” p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1. References to Heidegger, *Satz vom Grund*, p. 117 (the allusion to Mozart); Heidegger, *Ursprung*, p. 83 (the priority accorded to poetry).

least an unrecognised implication, in Heidegger's philosophical project, hidden from Heidegger himself, and this hermeneutical wager will guide the explorations constituting the remainder of the present Chapter.

It has been noted by others that Heidegger is concerned to make the point that "Being speaks" as a voice within language and that "within" here is ambiguous. Clearly the presence of Being is "within" language in the sense of being veiled and hidden. But there is also a possible nuance whereby "Being speaks" through *a medium which is itself within language*, in other words, that it is not language but something which is itself, in turn, hidden within language, which is the essential unveiling of Being. No less than being expanded verbal meaning (that is to say, allusive, suggestive, metaphoric), poetry is about the musicality of sound in language. Everything points to Heidegger's interest in poetry not just as poetic meaning but as poetic sound. William and Harriet Lovitt, commenting on passages in *On the Way to Language*, make these observations:

He can say, in a passage in which he is emphatically distinguishing the word from anything whatever that the word might name forth, 'It, the word, gives (*Es, das Wort, gibt*)' . . . [H]e does suggest that perhaps 'the disposing enduring (*Wesen*) of the word' - i.e., primal Saying, which holds sway therein - 'conceals in itself that which gives Being.' It is worth noting here that for Heidegger what we may call the musicality of language as finally spoken forth as uttered words is as intrinsic as the carrying of meaning.<sup>72</sup>

For Lovitt and Lovitt, in this quotation, it is the word set apart and distinguished 'from anything whatever that the word might name forth' which '*gibt Sein*': the word does not give Being but '*conceals in itself* that which gives Being.' It is not the word considered in its every aspect, but some hidden aspect of the word which is the source of the poetic word as "ontophany." In fact, the ontophany is not in the naming power but in the sounding power of the poetic word. 'Primal showing-Saying is, Heidegger

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<sup>72</sup> William Lovitt and Harriet Brundage Lovitt, *Modern Technology in the Heideggerian Perspective*, vol 1 (Lampeter, Dyfed: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), p. 155, footnote 46. References to Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), p. 266, translated as *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 135; also to *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p. 196, trans. *On the Way to Language*, p. 90; also to *US*, pp. 193f., tr. *WL*, p. 88; and to *US*, pp. 204ff., tr. *WL*, p. 98.

says, itself ‘the mode (*Weise*)’ - not so much in the sense of kind or manner as in that of melody or song (*melos*) - ‘in which the Bringing-to-pass-that-owns-forth (*Ereignis*) speaks’.<sup>73</sup> Heidegger wrote: ‘Saying is the mode in which Appropriation speaks: mode not so much in the sense of *modus* or fashion, but as the melodic mode, the song which says something in its saying’.<sup>74</sup> Heidegger proceeds to quote from a poem, “Celebration of Peace” by Hölderlin:

Much, from the morning onwards,  
 Since we have been a discourse and have heard from one another  
 Has human kind learnt; but soon we shall be song.<sup>75</sup>

In another place he quotes Hölderlin who identifies poetry and song: ‘Poets have mostly arisen at the beginning or at the end of a world period. With song the nations step out of the heaven of their childhood into active life, into the land of Culture. With song they return into original life.’<sup>76</sup> No less than Hölderlin, Heidegger appears to believe that music crowns verbal language and hence understanding of Being. Indeed, for Heidegger:

The saying of the more venturesome which is more fully saying is the song. But  
 Song is existence . . .

To sing, truly to say worldly existence, to say out of the haleness of the whole pure draft and to say only this, means: to belong to the precinct of beings themselves. This precinct, as the very nature of language, is Being itself. To sing the song means to be present in what is present itself. It means: *Dasein*, existence . . . The song is hard because the singing may no longer be a solicitation, but must be existence.<sup>77</sup>

In this adulation of the “music” of poetry, Heidegger comes close to asserting that music is the place where “Being speaks.” It is also clear at this point that his conception of song here as a possible place where “Being speaks” seems linked to the prosodic aspect of the spoken word. In the present context, this recalls again the

<sup>73</sup> Lovitt and Lovitt, *ibid*, pp. 154-155. Citations from *US*, p. 266, tr. *WL*, p. 135.

<sup>74</sup> Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 135.

<sup>75</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments* (Ann Arbor: Michigan Univ. Press, 1967), p. 438. Cited in *ibid*.

<sup>76</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe: Ausgabe letzter Hand* (Collected Works: Author’s Final Revision), Hermann Heidegger (series ed.), (Frankfurt: n.p., n.d.), 39. 20 (*sic*). Cited in Safranski, *Heidegger*, p. 284.

<sup>77</sup> Martin Heidegger, “What are Poets For?” In *Poetry, Language, Thought* (1971) (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 138-139.

phenomenon of infantile babbling, which may first train the human person in the sonic prerequisites, or prosody, of speech as well as in the activity of music-making. As the fountainhead of the “music” of speech, perhaps the ontological announcement which Heidegger attributes to speech prosody is made first to the infant through its pre-speech babbling, which is equivalently an early discovery of music. This observation does not yet purport to constitute a conclusion, but builds up a picture preparatory to an investigative process to be pursued in Chapter 5.

It may be asked why Heidegger failed to incorporate discussion of music in the wider sense, rather than simply verbal music, into his philosophy, and he himself has provided glimpses of his reasons. The following extract seems to express reservations that, if music were to be examined, it could only be in the light of the kind of calculative thinking, closed to ‘receptivity and mystery’,<sup>78</sup> which he consistently repudiates as the controlling attitude of supposed knowledge of Being by a human subject, rather than knowledge by openness to Being in *Dasein*:

And let no one suppose that we mean to belittle vocal sounds as physical phenomena, the merely sensuous side of language, in favor of what is called the meaning and sense-content of what was said and is esteemed as being of the spirit, the spirit of language . . . We are instead referred to melody and rhythm in language and thus to the kinship between song and speech. *All would be well if only there were not the danger of understanding melody and rhythm also from the perspective of physiology and physics, that is, technologically, calculatingly in the widest sense. No doubt much can be learned this way that is correct, but never, presumably, what is essential* [emphasis added]. It is just as much a property of language to sound and ring and vibrate, to hover and to tremble, as it is for the spoken words of language to carry a meaning.<sup>79</sup>

Although Heidegger’s (here italicised) point is probably made with explicit reference to the music of words, it is clearly applicable to the whole of music. He may believe that any discussion of music must come so close to “calculation” that silence is preferable. Lovitt and Lovitt have speculated that, for Heidegger, music, compared with other arts, may have reflected insufficiently the concealing as opposed to the

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<sup>78</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus, “Heidegger on the Connection between Nihilism, Art, Technology and Politics.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Charles B. Guignon (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), p. 302.

<sup>79</sup> Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 98.



revealing aspect of Being's arising in *Dasein*, and that this accounts for Heidegger's silence regarding music. For '... Being happens ... first of all as a self-concealing. Not all ever apprehend the unconcealing vouchsafed in a work of art. And, in time, that unconcealing always dims, as Being's happening as concealing gains upon it. When new peoples arise, the ... power of the former works vanishes, as does the milieu to which they spoke.'<sup>80</sup> However, music's unconcealing, they suggest, does not dim. Heidegger's silence regarding music may result from his realisation that music centuries old may still speak with an undimmed vitality. The works of J. S. Bach, for example still speak to men and women of our own day vividly, despite the different cultural milieu of their origin. Lovitt and Lovitt suggest that music's immediate power to speak meaningfully may have rendered music difficult for Heidegger to accommodate within this concealing aspect of his understanding of the art-work.<sup>81</sup> Yet, if Heidegger's written commitment to music is not apparent, anecdotal evidence of his personal interest in music abounds. Safranski records his response to hearing in private a performance of Schubert's piano *Sonata* in B-flat, of which he remarked appreciatively: 'This we can't do with philosophy.'<sup>82</sup> An incident is recorded after a performance of Sophocles' *Antigone* in Hölderlin's translation with music by Carl Orff: '... Carl Orff saw a man approaching ... this stranger suddenly grabbed Orff's hands and, touched with emotion, said to him, 'Thank you for bringing ancient tragedy back to life. My name is Heidegger'.<sup>83</sup> Here, '[t]wo human beings belonging to the creative class ... recognised ... their nearness to each other: one gives a new life to

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<sup>80</sup> Lovitt and Lovitt, *Modern Technology*, p. 138.

<sup>81</sup> See *ibid*, footnote.

<sup>82</sup> See Georg Picht, "Die Macht des Denkens." In *Erinnerung an Martin Heidegger*, Günther Neske (ed.), (Pfullingen: n.p., 1977), p. 205. Cited in Safranski, *Heidegger*, p. 333.

<sup>83</sup> Heinrich Wiegand Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger 1929-1976* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1993), p. 162.

the original unity of Greek verse and song, the other calls thinking - which is getting lost in science - back to itself out of the original meaning and power of words'.<sup>84</sup>

The implied metaphysical importance of music for Heidegger's understanding of poetry may lie in the paradox that, ultimately, although "Being speaks" in language it cannot really be "said" at all. 'In distinction from the linguistic work of art, what is expressly and properly opened up in music is the non-objective character of the relation to world: that is why the resonating sound here takes the place of the word.'<sup>85</sup> This is perhaps why Heidegger emphasises the sonic aspect of poetry as ontologically disclosive at least as much as the referential aspect. It is where poetry approaches the condition of music. The same limitation on poetry is identified also by Frings: '[T]here remains a fundamental difference between poetry and music. In every one of its words standard poetry must 'name' something.'<sup>86</sup> George Steiner has deplored Heidegger's failure to make the leap of seeing that his reflections were leading him in the direction of music. Steiner speaks of the instinct by means of which humans attribute an immense but neither paraphraseable nor otherwise restateable meaning to music. He remarks that music may distantly suggest Heidegger's concept of Being. 'Here too there is brazen obviousness and impalpability, an enveloping nearness and infinite regress. Being, in the Heideggerian sense, has, like music, a history and a meaning, a dependence on man and dimensions transcending humanity.'<sup>87</sup> Steiner notes that music is almost wholly absent from Heidegger's considerations, a drawback, for it is music which might best have instanced Heidegger's central proposition that meaning can be plain and compelling but untranslatable into any other code.<sup>88</sup> There is

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Pöltner, "Mozart and Heidegger," p. 13.

<sup>86</sup> Manfred S. Frings, "Harmony and the Logos: The Origin of the Musical Work of Art." In *Understanding the Musical Experience*, F. Joseph Smith (ed.). (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1989), p. 200.

<sup>87</sup> Steiner, *Heidegger*, p. 44.

<sup>88</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 131-132.

a problem inherent in poetry's disclosure of Being which is not found in the case of music's parallel or deeper disclosure, the problem that although the verbal language of poetry is at a remove from daily life it nevertheless shares most manifestly the same verbal medium as forms of language which do not open up the vista of Being as clearly or may even be deleterious to *Dasein's* deeper engagement with Being. 'Assertion' (*Aussage*), 'discourse' (*Rede*) and 'idle talk' (*Gerede*) are just as much functions of language for Heidegger as poetry (*Sagen*).<sup>89</sup> Poetry is simultaneously other than, and the same as these other three modes of language, precisely because, despite its apartness, it is indeed just another mode of language. Music, precisely because it is not implicated in the referentially explicit meaning of verbal language, but only resembles language through sonic expressiveness, is, unlike poetry, quarantined from association with lower verbal activities thus retaining a non-objectivity which, for Steiner, echoes Being itself. Yet, while mysterious in its meanings, music is still 'the universal idiom which, being 'free from concepts,' can be understood by anyone who is open to the influence of the surrounding world.'<sup>90</sup> It is 'a peculiar 'reference without predication' that touches the heart, but numbs the tongue.'<sup>91</sup>

A reason why Heidegger may not have spoken more in a philosophical context of music which 'numbs the tongue' is thus that the word is ill-equipped to express that which in music is true. The truth of music lies in the irreplaceable event of music which, more unequivocally than other art-forms, cannot be represented in the verbal medium. 'Music, in essence, neither requires titles nor does it name anything.'<sup>92</sup> 'Music is most itself when it is least other things.'<sup>93</sup> Like Schumann, if we are called

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<sup>89</sup> See Kearney, *Modern Movements*, pp. 44-50.

<sup>90</sup> Scruton, *Aesthetics*, p. 467.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>92</sup> Frings, "Harmony and the Logos," p. 200.

<sup>93</sup> Bowman, *Philosophical Perspectives*, p. 87.

upon to explain music, we can only play it again.<sup>94</sup> As Bowie has observed in another context, '[w]e are evidently confronted here with problems of a hermeneutic circle that affects any attempt to explore the meaning of a . . . non-semantic form of articulation with semantic means.'<sup>95</sup> Although all art-works embody more than can be reduced to words in this way, it may be that Heidegger's silence about music is a response to an appreciation of the fact that, in the case of music, this consideration is particularly powerful. Moreover, if music is a privileged point of access to Being, though unacknowledged by Heidegger himself, this might suggest some integral connection between the human person's formative infant encounters with the musical dimension and the entire human experience of openness to the unveiling of Being. In Chapter 5, it will be shown how, as an extension and development of the exploratory infantile paradigm of vocalising, improvisatory music is in fact the place where Being speaks to humans throughout their lives.

#### *IV Poetry, Music and Maritain*

One twentieth-century thinker who, unlike Heidegger, did seek to develop a systematic understanding of poetry's musicality, and take a subsequent step of arguing for music's supremacy among the arts is Jacques Maritain. For Maritain, rather as for Heidegger, Being "speaks" in poetry: 'Poetic knowledge . . . is knowledge of the very interiority of things . . . poetry, like Platonic *mousikè*, enjoys a universal dominion over all the arts which have to do with beauty.'<sup>96</sup> For Maritain, this position seems to have roots in Hölderlin and Heidegger. He writes: '. . . Hölderlin, according to an essay by Heidegger, thought that 'in poetry man concentrates or retires into the inmost depth of human reality. There he penetrates . . . through that infinite quietude in which all

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<sup>94</sup> See Steiner, *Heidegger*, p. 44.

<sup>95</sup> Bowie, "Adorno, Heidegger," p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> Maritain, *Creative Intuition*, pp. 236-237.

energies and relations are at play'.<sup>97</sup> Moving from poetry to music, and the latter's priority, Maritain's position is influenced by Thomas Aquinas: 'Poetic experience is still freer, still more immersed in the internal recesses of subjectivity, still closer to the need and longing of the spirit for utterance, in the composer than in the poet - 'where the word stops, there starts the song, *exultation of the mind bursting forth into the voice,*' as St. Thomas puts it.'<sup>98</sup>

Regarding poetry, Maritain speaks of 'the essential difference which separates the poetic sense from the logical sense . . . [T]he poetic sense is to the poem what the soul is to man - it is the poetic intuition itself communicated to the work in its native, pure and immediate efficacy.'<sup>99</sup> Poetry in fact arises from a poetic experience or intuition which is itself musical: thus, the musicality which is connected with poetry is more than - though it includes - the musical sound of the poem as spoken. '[T]he very first effect, and sign, of poetic knowledge and poetic intuition, as soon as they exist in the soul - and even before the start of any operative exercise - is a kind of musical stir produced in the depths of the living springs in which they are born.'<sup>100</sup> Maritain distinguishes between the musicality of the words (even inner words not yet uttered in outward speech) - and the musical stir, linked with poetic intuition itself, in which words play no part. The latter *precedes*, the outpouring of words. It is a kind of inaudible unformulated song in the heart, and is the first sign whereby the inner presence of poetic experience is recognised.<sup>101</sup> Maritain explains that '[this is a] dynamic charge or *intuitive pulsion*, both imaginal and emotional . . . a complex of

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, pp. 240-241. Citation from Martin Heidegger, "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung" (incomplete documentation). Maritain quotes also from Mallarmé, who 'called the state of poetic experience 'ecstasy'.' Reference to Mallarmé, letter to H. Cazalis, 25th April, 1864. In (no given name) Mondor, *Propos sur la Poésie* (Paris: Rocher, 1946), p. 39.

<sup>98</sup> Maritain, *ibid*, p. 251. Citation from Thomas Aquinas, *Comment. in Psalm.*, Prolog. (documentation *sic*).

<sup>99</sup> Maritain, *ibid*, p. 258.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, p. 300.

<sup>101</sup> See *ibid*, p. 300-301. Reference to Raïssa Maritain, "Magie, Poésie, et Mystique." In *Situation de la Poésie* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1938), p. 63.

virtual images and emotion, stirred in the fluid and moving world of the creativity of the spirit, and essentially tendential, dynamic, and transient'.<sup>102</sup> This pulsion is stirred to consciousness: '[T]here is in the soul of the poet an enlarged musical stir, a music no longer almost imperceptible, but more and more cogent, in which the soundless rhythmic and harmonic relations between intuitive pulsions, together with their soundless melody, emerge into consciousness.'<sup>103</sup> Maritain recapitulates: 'I would say that there are two essentially distinct musics, in the designation of which the word music has only an analogous sense, the music of the intuitive pulsions, within the soul, and the music of words - and of the imagery contained in words - which will pass outside the soul, into the external world'.<sup>104</sup>

It is the music of the intuitive pulsions which is the truer and deeper music: '[T]he poetry of the Poem or the Song [is] the *poetry of internal music* . . . When I said that the poetic sense is the soul or the entelechy of the poem, I thought especially of the Poem properly so called, or of the poetry of internal music. It is only in regard to it that this statement is entirely true.'<sup>105</sup> Consequently, 'the music of intuitive pulsions appears in the foreground . . . it has become the royal instrument of poetic expression. The reader immediately listens to it, and in his soul are awakened intuitive pulsions akin to those in the poet's soul.'<sup>106</sup> This in turn entails, that in matters of creative inspiration, the 'first rank'<sup>107</sup> belongs to music: '[M]usic, taken in its nature . . . has the peculiar privilege, as we have observed, of expressing - beyond any possible meaning

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<sup>102</sup> Jacques Maritain, *ibid*, p. 302.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, p. 303.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, p. 304. Reference to T. S. Eliot, *The Music of Poetry: Ker Memorial Lecture* (Glasgow: Jackson, 1942), p. 25.

<sup>105</sup> Maritain, *ibid*, p. 394.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, p. 316.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p. 402.

of words - the most deeply subjective, singular and affective stir of creative subjectivity, too deep-seated to be possibly expressed by any other art.'<sup>108</sup>

Thus, for Maritain, a 'musical unconscious'<sup>109</sup> underlies poetry. It may credibly be suggested that Heidegger, in writing philosophy, also wrote a kind of poetry - poetry within which, as Maritain would say, intuitive musical pulsions play their creative part. Heidegger may be considered a poet, not only because he regarded poetry as the place where "Being speaks," but because, perhaps alone among modern Western philosophers, he also viewed his own philosophic - indeed all - writing as ideally an act of poetic composition. 'Pure prose is never 'prosaic.' It is as poetic and hence as rare as poetry.'<sup>110</sup> 'The speech of genuine thinking is by nature *poetic*. It need not take the shape of verse; as Heidegger says, the opposite of the poem is not prose; pure prose is as poetic as any poetry. The voice of thought must be poetic because poetry is the saying of truth . . . the thinker of first rank must accomplish . . . a thinking which has all the purity and thickness and solidity of poetry, and whose saying *is* poetry.'<sup>111</sup> Heidegger wants us to 'attend to language exclusively as language'<sup>112</sup> even when it is engaged in the task of discursive philosophy, and this makes of his philosophising a poetic act which corresponds to Maritain's idea of poetic composition. The poetic character of Heidegger's philosophical work is of course consistent with his belief in a relationship between truth and poetry. For Heidegger: 'As the clearing and the concealing of beings truth happens insofar as it is poetised'.<sup>113</sup> Heidegger's own philosophical writings must, on his own principles, be included within this poetic conception, or by implication of his own philosophy, truth cannot to any great extent

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 404.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p. 94.

<sup>110</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Language." In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 208. (First essay from *Unterwegs zur Sprache/On the Way to Language*.)

<sup>111</sup> Albert Hofstadter, "Introduction." In Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. x-xi.

<sup>112</sup> Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, pp. 119-120.

<sup>113</sup> Heidegger, *Ursprung*, p. 82. Cited in Pöltner, "Mozart and Heidegger," p. 7.

be revealed in them. In short, a Maritainian musical unconscious, if it exists, inhabits Heidegger's philosophic writing. Moreover, because, for Heidegger, poetic language does not merely *clothe* or express philosophical ideas but *is, qua* poetry, the unveiling of the real, this musical unconscious in his writing, inasmuch as it is the inner life of all poetry, becomes the inner life of his ontology itself, inasmuch as the latter is poetic, not just poetically expressed. As a poet-philosopher for whom poetry is ontology rather than simply the stylistic envelope of ontological insight founded wholly on conceptual thought, the musical unconscious from which Heidegger's poetry-philosophy arises *is* ontological in its own right and music appears as the hidden foundation of his philosophy, as of poetry in general. Stated succinctly, unless Heidegger's philosophy is poetry, it contradicts itself, and, if it is poetry, it may be a product of what Maritain has called the musical unconscious.

#### *V Heidegger, Music and Temporality*

The title of Heidegger's *magnum opus* is *Being and Time*. So far, the present discussion has not dealt with Heidegger's conception of the temporality of Being. For Heidegger '[t]ime is not a medium we move in as a bottle might move in a river . . . it is something I am made out of before it is something I measure.'<sup>114</sup> It is indeed with Heidegger that time first becomes a significant category in the Western philosophical tradition. Since all attempted metaphysical descriptions of Being in the Western tradition have been constructed in time, and are time-conditioned, shifting intellectual paradigms, which constantly supersede one another, Heidegger's solution to this endless inconclusiveness in traditional ontology has been to situate the understanding of Being in relation to time itself. He writes at the opening of *Being and Time*: 'Our

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<sup>114</sup> Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p. 63.



aim in the following treatise is to work out the question of the meaning of *Being* and to do so concretely. Our provisional aim is the Interpretation of *time* as the possible horizon of any understanding whatsoever of Being.’<sup>115</sup> He notes that, at any given historical moment, there is a particular, implicit way of understanding Being. This means that the notion of Being is itself a shifting idea and subject to mutation.<sup>116</sup> Such philosophical shifts continue through the history of Western metaphysics, in which the fundamental “being” or “beings” have been variously defined as “Forms” (Plato), “the Unmoved Mover” (Aristotle), “Spirit” (Hegel), and still other ways. Heidegger seeks to break with this inconclusiveness, by asserting that the deepest and most enduring reality of Being lies in the fact that Being goes on temporally from moment to moment, and does not lie in the static metaphysical systems with which man has tried to define it. The latter come and go, and presuppose this temporal process within which they are formulated.

Music is a temporal art which requires that sounds being heard in a performance are placed in the context of sounds just heard and are linked to an anticipation of sounds to come. In this sense, music links time with art. By contrast, a painting or a sculpture is not in this sense a temporal art-form, since it may be taken in by the eye in an instant, and even if its details are made the object of a more prolonged contemplation, it is not necessary for those details to be considered in any particular order for the work to be experienced. There is some suggestion that Heidegger at least speculated that time-consciousness may actually be dependent on music. This would make of music the place where “Being speaks” in a further sense, by linking music as much to

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<sup>115</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 19. [No page number marked on page.]

<sup>116</sup> ‘The very word *being* (or its functional equivalents) must remain empty and devoid of any real meaning to us moderns so long as we remain oblivious to the way it came to be and since then has become. It is a term we constantly use, but only because it is one we have inherited from a long and largely overlooked tradition of thought. Its apparent meaningfulness is simply the result of long acquaintance . . . [I]t is necessary to undertake a fundamental enquiry into the history of the concept of being, an archaeology of being’. Madison, *Hermeneutics of Postmodernity*, p. 130.

Heidegger's idea of temporality as to his idea of poetry. As though to demonstrate a link between music and his temporal ontology, he exhibits an interest in what he believed to be Mozart's creative processes. Heidegger believed he had found evidence that for Mozart when planning a composition:

during a trip in a coach, or when on a stroll after a good meal . . . soon one part after another comes to me, as though I were using crumbs in order to make a pastry according to the rules of counterpoint . . . Then it becomes ever larger. . . and the thing truly becomes almost finished in my head . . . so that afterwards I look over it with a glance in my mind . . . and hear it in the imagination not at all serially, as it must subsequently come about, but as though all at once . . . <sup>117</sup>

Unlike the "now" of scientific measurement, the "now" of human experience anticipates and remembers. For Heidegger, '[e]xisting as ecstatic temporality, Dasein is outside itself - alongside its world. It is at once ahead, behind and alongside other daseins.'<sup>118</sup> As Frings observes: 'We think that so-called objective, measurable time is 'the' time . . . But we forget that 'lived' time is quite different precisely because the protensive and retentive nows of meaning are neither measurable nor 'clockable''.<sup>119</sup> Mozart's ability to imagine the sound of the finished musical composition 'not at all serially' but 'all at once' - protensively and retentively - seems, in Heidegger's commentary on Mozart's letter, to exhibit '[t]he concealed unity of bringing-into-view and listening [which] determines the essence of the thinking that is entrusted to us humans who are thinking beings.'<sup>120</sup> In other words, Mozart's ability to imagine the temporal flow of music simultaneously suggests to Heidegger the way in which Being is experienced "now," but in an ecstatic temporality which encompasses past and future. Mozart's experience also suggests for Heidegger the primordial 'listening' whereby Being is hearkened to poetically in language. However, the conception of language in this particular instance is clearly enlarged to entail music, for music is what Mozart is hearkening to, not poetry. Mozart may well not have written this letter, but

<sup>117</sup> Letter wrongly attributed to Wolfgang Mozart. Cited in Heidegger, *Principle of Reason*, p. 67.

<sup>118</sup> Bowles, *Rupture in the Temporality of Music*, p. 61.

<sup>119</sup> Frings, "Harmony and the Logos," pp. 196-197.

<sup>120</sup> Heidegger, *Principle of Reason*, p. 67.

might still have composed music in the way described, and Heidegger is impressed by the fact that Mozart's experience might suggest an anthropology based on *Dasein* as its most satisfactory explanation. (Presumably it is an argument in favour of the idea of *Dasein* if it can explain or illuminate something otherwise obscure.) Like *Dasein*, 'Mozart thinks a gathering of time - not linear, not clock-measurable'<sup>121</sup> and he thinks it in a 'listening.' However this is a musical rather than a verbal listening as in the case of poetry. It has already been seen that, for Heidegger, Being comes to humans through poetic listening; here, however, the 'listening' to which Heidegger has referred is Mozart's listening to musical ideas. This points to the idea that, for Heidegger certain human experiences in connection with music like Mozart's might grant privileged, perhaps essential insight into the nature of *Dasein*. For Bowles also, 'certain musical experiences . . . can reveal something of what it means for us to be primordially temporal beings . . . [T]he medium of music is well suited to opening up this experience of authenticity.'<sup>122</sup>

In a Heideggerian interpretation of music, the temporality of music, because it would link music to the temporality of Being itself, would become one of music's most significant dimensions and take on considerable importance in any analysis or interpretation of music's own nature. A Heideggerian view of music could thus possibly meet an existing need in musical aesthetics. As Bowles argues: '[T]he concentration on music-as-object rather than music-as-temporality . . . [has] been the main stumbling-block for music aesthetic theory . . . [W]e have seen that in the contemporary music aesthetic theories . . . there is an over-all tendency to concentrate on the non-temporal (the 'static') and the 'object'.<sup>123</sup> Ferrara makes the point that analytical theories which concentrate on music as the 'object' such as the Schenkerian

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<sup>121</sup> Collins and Selina, *Heidegger*, p. 78.

<sup>122</sup> Bowles, *Rupture in the Temporality of Music*. Abstract before the text.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, p. 40.

are unable to account for the widespread attribution of emotional feeling to the experience of music, as advanced, for example by Susanne Langer.<sup>124</sup> Perhaps it is because such object-based theories fail to consider the temporal experience of music that they are cut off from participation in any discussion of widely held assumptions about music's perceived link with mood and emotion. Object-based theories cannot account for the way the music feels to the listener as it unfolds in time, as all music does, and time is precisely the continuum in which music is widely felt as emotion.

Moreover, at the very point at which a piece of music unveils itself to a listener for the first time, object-based theories of analysis can have nothing to say. They offer no discussion of the experience of a person's first encounter with a piece of music, despite the fact that a first hearing is sometimes an experience of superior and unrepeatable significance for the listener. Not knowing what is coming next is part of the experience of hearing a musical work for the first time. This experience will include anticipating what is about to happen in a musical work, as, for example, when the ear anticipates the resolution of a suspension.<sup>125</sup> Yet this aspect of experiencing music assumes a temporal experience of the music not included when music is viewed holistically as a 'static' object. 'Current analytical concepts and methods reflect the premises of the Western philosophic tradition. Temporal and aurally-apprehended structures are denied reality because they cannot be said to 'exist' in the way that spacial and visually apprehended structures do.'<sup>126</sup> Complementing conventional methods of music analysis, therefore, both Ferrara and Lochhead propose phenomenological approaches to support an understanding of the temporal experience of music.<sup>127</sup> These approaches

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<sup>124</sup> See Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1951), p. 235.

<sup>125</sup> See Judy Lochhead, "Temporal Structure in Recent Music." In *Understanding the Musical Experience*, Smith (ed.), p. 129.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, p. 124.

<sup>127</sup> See Ferrara, *Philosophy and the Analysis of Music*, p. xiii. Also Lochhead, *ibid*, p. 132.

are phenomenological because they seek to allow the music to announce itself on its own plainly temporal terms: '[P]henomenology involves the description of things as one experiences them, or of one's experiences of things'.<sup>128</sup> Other commentators have noted a recent increase in studies of phenomenological music analysis.<sup>129</sup> Jean-Jacques Nattiez is one example of a recent thinker who has sought to recover in analysis this sense of the real-time experience of all music. Publishing in 1990, Nattiez writes that 'the musical work is not merely what we used to call the 'text'; it is not merely a whole composed of 'structures' . . . The *essence* of a musical work is at once its genesis, its organization, and the way it is perceived.'<sup>130</sup> Ferrara's proposed analytical strategy ('eclectic analysis')<sup>131</sup> seeks to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the experience of music. Essentially he is concerned that the music should be allowed to yield to understanding not only those aspects of itself which the fixed interrogative preconceptions of conventional analysis make available (where an analyst interrogates the music as object), but also those aspects unconcealed temporally out of the music's "otherness" in a manner parallel to Heidegger's understanding of the disclosure of Being (which is not known as object, but disclosed in *Dasein*). Heidegger's understanding of temporality forms the basis for Ferrara's phenomenological analysis of music as it unfolds in time.

It has been implied in this Chapter that music may be Heidegger's unacknowledged point of access to his understandings both of poetry and temporality. Indeed, for Frings, 'the essence of 'original thinking' (Heidegger) and of 'original' listening are

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<sup>128</sup> Hammond, Howarth, Keat, *Understanding Phenomenology*, p. 1.

<sup>129</sup> See Irène Deliège, Marc Mélen, Dianna Stammers, Ian Cross, "Musical Schemata in Real-Time Listening to a Piece of Music." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 14, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 117-160; pp. 117-118.

<sup>130</sup> Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, p. ix.

<sup>131</sup> For a description of this methodology, see Ferrara, *Philosophy and the Analysis of Music*, pp. 181-186.

the same acts of specific time-consciousness'.<sup>132</sup> Thus, '[t]he art-form of music . . . represents the temporal nature of Being itself.'<sup>133</sup> If Heidegger's philosophy of Being opens up our understanding of reality more authentically than previous metaphysics - as he claimed - and if it is also inhabited by music at a deep level, as has been suggested, it will not be surprising if his ideas prove increasingly fruitful in application to musical analysis. As Avery Dulles has commented in a different context, 'every genuine discovery opens up a path that leads to a host of further discoveries'.<sup>134</sup> So if indeed Being is temporal, and if indeed music is the place where Being speaks in its temporality, this will confer renewed recognition on music's temporal dimension, a dimension which has been relatively neglected. Such a recognition will lead to a renewed philosophical undergirding of real-time, phenomenological analysis of music. Perhaps recent growth in real-time musical cognitive studies in some measure echoes the wider influence of Heidegger's temporal ontology within the intellectual world, and gives a first glimpse of how Heidegger's ideas and music analysis may increasingly interact. Heidegger's temporal thinking may also throw particular light on improvisation. Musical improvisation, which is an evanescent form of music with no residual document, may perhaps be linked to time even more fully than music in general, since, like time itself, it is lost in the past as it proceeds, nor, like time, is the content of the future of an improvisation laid down in advance in the way that sounds about to happen in a composed work are wholly laid down. In relation to music in general, improvisation stands as the most temporally-oriented aspect of a temporal art-

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<sup>132</sup> Frings, "Harmony and the Logos," p. 193.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, p. 208.

<sup>134</sup> Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992), p. 11.

form. A Heideggerian approach to music might tend to revive interest in this neglected medium.

## *Chapter 5*

### *Music as the Place where Being Speaks*

#### *I The Link Between Speech and Music*

In Chapter 4, a possible role played by music in Heidegger's philosophy was proposed and discussed in its implications for musical analysis, and a speculative connection was made between Heidegger's ideas and some ideas of Maritain. Whereas Chapter 4 involved a speculative interpretation of Heidegger, Chapter 5 will now present an original thesis based on Heidegger. It will propose the thesis that music, and especially improvised music, is the place where Being speaks. *If* Heidegger's thought already harbours an unrecognised musical dimension, the following argument acquires a maieutic function of bringing the unsaid to birth, though according to the terms of an original conceptualisation.

Heidegger proposes that language is the place where Being speaks. Wide evidence suggests that, in various respects, speech and music cannot ultimately be separated.<sup>1</sup> In the first place, twentieth-century brain research has, very generally, indicated that human speech functions are found in the left cerebral hemisphere, while musical information is processed mainly in the right. Recently Norbert Jaušovec has described this as belonging to the 'basic data' of brain hemispheric theory. However he qualifies this with the observation that it may be true only of right-handed people.<sup>2</sup> This division of language and music functions into two hemispheres seems in fact not to represent the most primordial condition of the human brain, either for the race or for the individual. Left-brain "dominance" has arisen slowly over history. Moreover, left-

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<sup>1</sup> For a thorough discussion of the historical and current controversies, and a survey of literature on the possibility and nature of linkages between music and spoken language see Bryan G. Levman, "The Genesis of Music and Language." *Ethnomusicology* 36, no. 2 (1992): 147-170. Levman himself is in favour of a linkage, in the sense of a joint historical evolution from 'a common 'proto-faculty' which was primarily musical in nature.' *Ibid*, p. 147. The present thesis will pursue the argument that music and language not merely have been, but still are integrally linked.

<sup>2</sup> See Norbert Jaušovec, "Brain Biology and Brain Functioning." In *Encyclopedia of Creativity*, vol 1, Runco and Pritzger (eds.), p. 205.



brain dominance does not emerge in individuals until they are about ten years old. This might suggest that infant speech and music are somehow unified.<sup>3</sup> Deacon agrees that left-brain dominance develops during an individual lifetime<sup>4</sup> and confirms that hemispheric lateralisation itself evolved in history.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, therefore, language and music seem not to issue from separate brain “compartments.” Indeed, even after the eventual lateralisation of music and language in late childhood, there is evidence from the normal brain that some more intonational and also emotional aspects of language continue to share the right hemisphere with music itself, suggesting an overlapping identity of the prosody of vocal usages with music usually so called. Thus, the right hemisphere, in addition to being associated with music, ‘also subserves another important language function . . . It is the processing of prosodic features of speech.’<sup>6</sup>

By way of total contrast, for other parts of the scientific literature, a right-hemispheric attribution for music is itself fundamentally contestable, and Carroll Izard, publishing in 1991, cites contradictory findings from the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>7</sup> However,

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<sup>3</sup> See Blaukopf, *Musical Life*, pp. 149-150. Blaukopf cites for this view Marcel Kinsbourne, “Minor Hemisphere Language and Cerebral Maturation.” In *Foundations of Language Development*, Eric H. Lenneberg and Elizabeth Lenneberg (eds.), (New York: Academic Press, 1975), p. 111. Also Thomas A. Regelski, “Who Knows Where Music Lurks in the Mind of Man: New Brain Research Has the Answer.” *Music Educators Journal* 69, no. 9 (1977): 38.

<sup>4</sup> See Deacon, *Symbolic Species*, p. 315. This position is not, however, held by Springer and Deutsch, who claim that ‘hemispheric specialization for language is present at birth and does not develop over time.’ Nevertheless they recognise a special inter-hemispheric flexibility in the infant brain as evidenced from ‘the ability of the right hemisphere to take over language functions after very early lesions of the left hemisphere.’ Sally P. Springer and Georg Deutsch, *Left Brain, Right Brain: Perspectives from Cognitive Neuroscience* (1981) (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1998), p. 253.

<sup>5</sup> See Deacon, *ibid*, p. 317.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 313. Arguably this is true chiefly of emotional rather than syntactic prosody: ‘Despite over 20 years of research, the hemispheric specialization for prosody has not been determined.’ Tracy L. Luks, Howard C. Nusbaum, Jerre Levy, “Hemispheric Involvement in the Perception of Syntactic Prosody is Dynamically Dependent on Task Demands.” *Brain and Language: A Journal of Clinical, Experimental and Theoretical Research* 65, no. 2 (November 1998): 313-332; p. 313. However, ‘studies of patients with unilateral brain damage and studies of dichotic listening in normal adults have consistently shown that the right hemisphere is superior to the left hemisphere in the perception of *emotions* conveyed by prosody patterns’. *Ibid*, p. 314.

<sup>7</sup> See Carroll E. Izard, *The Psychology of Emotions* (London: Plenum, 1991), pp. 74-76. In favour of a right-hemispheric association for music. Izard cites G. M. Schwartz, R. J. Davidson, F. Maer, E. Bromfield, “Patterns of Hemispheric Dominance in Musical, Emotional Verbal, and Spatial Tasks.” Paper presented at the meetings of the Society for Psychophysiological Research, Galveston, Texas.

in the present context, the point is not to seek to determine some kind of unambiguous left- and right-hemispheric associations for given brain functions, but to give a sense of the inconclusiveness of current research, and also of how hemispheric division between speech and music is widely presented as subtended by a deeper unity. Two recent techniques may be able in due course to map more effectively the brain's neural architecture for processing music. Functional magnetic resonance imaging, developed in the late 1980s, and most recently, the magnetoencephalogram, locate sources of cerebral activity through the latter's effect on the brain's magnetic fields. Positron emission tomography discovers the location of increased cerebral activity through identifying radioactivity arising from increased use of glucose by active sectors of the brain.<sup>8</sup> In some quarters, even the well-established idea of hemispheric specialisation itself is contested, as in a 1990 book by Robert Efron.<sup>9</sup> 'It will take more than his book, however, to turn the tide against localization. Efron is prematurely tolling the death knell for hemispheric specialization.'<sup>10</sup> Bolinger and Sears speculate on the 'possible connection between the lateralization of the brain and the persistent dualisms that have cropped up in human thinking over the centuries: body and mind, substance

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1973. Against a right-hemispheric association for music, Izard cites V. L. Deglin, "Clinical-Experimental Studies of Unilateral Electroconvulsive Block." *Journal of Neuropathology and Psychiatry* 11 (1973): 1609-1621.

<sup>8</sup> For an account of these techniques, see Jaušovec, "Brain Biology," p. 207. Also Springer and Deutsch, *Left Brain, Right Brain*, pp. 222-224, for their application to music. References to J. Sergent, E. Zuck, S. Terriah, B. MacDonald, "Distributed Neural Network Underlying Musical Sight-Reading and Keyboard Performance." *Science* 257 (1992): 106-109; T. Elbert, C. Pantev, C. Wienbruch, B. Rockstroh, E. Taub, "Increased Cortical Representation of the Fingers of the Left Hand in String Players." *Science* 270 (1995): 305-307; G. Schlaug, L. Jancke, Y. Huang, J. Staiger, H. Steinmetz, "Increased Corpus Callosum Size in Musicians." *Neuropsychologia* 33 (1995): 1047-1055. For an account of the use of magnetic resonance imaging in identifying brain sites relevant to dyslexia, see Sally E. Shaywitz, "Dyslexia." *Scientific American* (November 1996): 78-84.

<sup>9</sup> See Robert Efron, *The Decline and Fall of Hemispheric Specialization* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> Barbara A. Barresi, Review of *ibid.* *Applied Psycholinguistics* 15, no. 3 (1994): 397-408; p. 407. Barresi's review is also a short summary of the history of brain hemispheric theory. Briefly, it appears that the period c. 1860 to World War One emphasised hemispheres; the period from World War One until the 1960s emphasised holistic models (e.g., in works of Henry Head, Pierre Marie, von Monakow, Kurt Goldstein); since the 1960s (see work of Geschwind) the idea of hemispheres has again been foregrounded. See *ibid.*

and form, constancy and change'.<sup>11</sup> For Isaiah Berlin, '[o]ne of the deepest of human desires is to find a unitary pattern in which the whole of experience . . . is symmetrically ordered.'<sup>12</sup> Brown has concluded that binary thinking, as embodied in such binary distinctions as "male" and "female," "good" and "bad," and innumerable others, is one of the 'absolute universals'<sup>13</sup> of what he terms 'Universal People.'<sup>14</sup>

Another important recent attempt to demonstrate a connection between language and music is associated with the work of Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff. Basing their researches on Chomsky's generative-transformational grammar of language, they have sought to show how the internal structuring of music parallels the deep structures of language as the latter are common to all human beings. For example, Lerdahl and Jackendoff have instanced metrical rules in music which are 'reminiscent of the principles governing prosodic features of language.'<sup>15</sup> They add that this 'can hardly be a coincidence. Rather it seems that we are dealing with a more general cognitive organization that has manifestations in both musical and linguistic structure.'<sup>16</sup>

There is evidence arising from studies of patients with Williams syndrome of the possibility of a symbiosis between speech and musical aptitudes. These patients are of interest since the 'study of distinct, well-defined, and atypical populations affords a unique opportunity to investigate specific aspects of cognition.'<sup>17</sup> 'IQs of individuals with Williams syndrome range from 40 to 100 . . . accompanied by commensurate impairments in spacial, quantitative, and reasoning abilities.'<sup>18</sup> 'The disproportionately good language ability among individuals with Williams syndrome suggests that

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<sup>11</sup> Bolinger and Sears, *Aspects of Language*, p. 189.

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 106.

<sup>13</sup> Brown, *Human Universals*, p. 140.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup> Lerdahl and Jackendoff, *Generative Theory*, p. 85.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* See also pp. 314-329.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel J. Levitin and Ursula Bellugi, "Musical Abilities in Individuals with Williams Syndrome." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 15, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 357-389; p. 357.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359.

language may *not* ‘piggyback’ on general mental function and intelligence, but may truly represent an independent faculty.’<sup>19</sup> It also appeared ‘that the subjects with Williams syndrome had an unusually high degree of engagement with music. Music seemed to be not just a very deep and rich part of their lives, but one that was omnipresent; most of them spent a great proportion of the day singing to themselves or playing instruments’.<sup>20</sup> This too would suggest that musical and linguistic ability have a considerable overlap, for here, where language alone is retained at a normal level of functioning by a mind in other respects cognitively challenged, a facility for music seems to be heightened also.

Robin G. Collingwood perhaps argues that musicality is indispensable to speech acts, thereby identifying music with verbal prosody: ‘If you don’t know what tone to say [words] in, you can’t say them at all: they are not words’.<sup>21</sup> This use of tone is possibly what the human infant is learning about through its pre-speech intonational exploration, discussed in Chapter 1. The consequences of a speech-music symbiosis may be observed in the history of human speech practices. Bruno Nettl claimed that ‘an undifferentiated method of communication existed in remote times, one which was neither speech nor music but which possessed the three features that they hold in common: pitch, stress, and duration.’<sup>22</sup> For Ehrenzweig, ‘[l]ater this primeval language would have split into different branches; music would have retained the articulation mainly by pitch (scale) and duration (rhythm), while language chose the articulation mainly by tone colour (vowels and consonants).’<sup>23</sup> Joseph Ki-Zerbo writes that in African cultures ‘music is so much a part of tradition that certain messages can

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 364.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 375.

<sup>21</sup> Robin G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938), p. 266.

<sup>22</sup> Bruno Nettl, *Music in Primitive Culture* (1956) (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), p. 136.

<sup>23</sup> Anton Ehrenzweig, *The Psycho-analysis of Artistic Vision and Hearing: An Introduction to a Theory of Unconscious Perception* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 164.

only be passed on in sung form.’<sup>24</sup> ‘Most African languages have . . . a built-in tune . . . This makes ordinary speech musical, and greatly narrows the gap between speech and song.’<sup>25</sup> Moreover, for Anoop Chandola, ‘[t]o treat musical tones like linguistic tones is not a new thing. The Indic phoneticians, for example, had already discussed musical tones in connection with the accentual system of their Vedic or Sanskrit’.<sup>26</sup> The same writer also remarks: ‘[I]ntonation and rhythm are the basic elements of music. We cannot imagine any language either which does not have its own intonational and rhythmic patterns.’<sup>27</sup> Nattiez, referring to work of George List, shows how the West has, by comparison, lost a sense of the interpenetration of language and music, despite the ‘intermediary’ forms which arise from it in Western culture such as ‘the droning of the public auctioneer, proclamations, ritual chant, *Sprechgesang* . . . In western culture, these forms only appear ‘intermediary’ because we so polarize spoken language and singing voice (hence our perpetual astonishment at that alien entity, the half-sung half-spoken voice in *Pierrot Lunaire*).’<sup>28</sup>

## *II Music and Proto-Existence*

The interconnectedness of music and language will be seen in due course to be relevant to Heidegger’s view of language as the place where “Being speaks.” For Heidegger, “Being speaks” not in the content or detail of language in use (somewhat comparable to what Saussure would call *parole*) but in our sheer immersion in the

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<sup>24</sup> Joseph Ki-Zerbo, “Méthodologie et préhistoire africaine.” In *Histoire générale de l’Afrique*, vol 1, Joseph Ki-Zerbo (ed.), (Paris: UNESCO, 1980), p. 31. Cited in Blaukopf, *Musical Life*, p. 148.

<sup>25</sup> Peter van der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style: The Antecedents of Twentieth-Century Popular Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Anoop Chandola, *Music as Speech: An Ethnomusicolinguistic Study of India* (New Delhi: Navrang, 1988), p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, p. 58. Reference to George List, “The Boundaries of Speech and Song.” *Ethnomusicology* 7, no. 1 (1963): 1-16.

general fact of language (similar to what Saussure would call *langue*).<sup>29</sup> Being comes to us in the sheer holistic event of language in general. Mankind is not brought into a relationship with Being by discussing Being, saying things *about* Being: humans are brought into a kind of communion with Being simply as language-users. So for Heidegger, ontology is no longer a rational “knowing that.” (As Karl Jaspers would say, this would only be ‘allowing Being to disappear by absolutising it away into a self-enclosed object of cognition.’)<sup>30</sup> Ontology is instead a kind of instinctual participating consciousness in Being through language. For Heidegger, this consciousness rediscovers a primordial pre-Socratic ontology, overlain and obscured by the later Greek thinking, after the latter became engrained in the subsequent history of Western thought. Poetry represents for Heidegger the true pre-Socratic model of language, not an adjudication of Being by rational language, but a presencing of Being. For Heidegger, poetry makes possible a higher knowledge of Being than ideas and deductions. Poetry makes possible a knowledge that touches the reality of Being, rather than merely giving “information” about it. Chapter 4 suggested that the sonic value of poetry played a significant part in Heidegger’s estimate of poetry’s revelatory role, and it was suggested by Steiner that the pre-rational nature of Being’s disclosure might find its natural home in music (Chapter 4, Section III). Perhaps music engages with Being more deeply even than poetry, because music does not involve determinate reference in the manner of words.

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<sup>29</sup> This distinction was first outlined by Ferdinand de Saussure in *Course in General Linguistics* (1916) (London: Duckworth, 1983). ‘This distinction serves as the cornerstone of structuralist linguistics. Language or *langue* is defined as the systematic totality of all possible linguistic usages. Speech or *parole*, by contrast, refers to any particular act of language; it is the actual manner in which we realise the possibilities of the abstract language system in our everyday concrete utterances.’ Kearney, *Modern Movements*, p. 241. ‘Where *parole* is the realm of the individual moments of language use, of particular ‘utterances’ or ‘messages’, whether spoken or written, *langue* is the system or code . . . which allows the realization of the individual messages.’ Stephen Heath, “Translator’s Note.” In Roland Barthes, *Image, Music Text* (London: Harper Collins, 1977), p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 18.

Western thought has tended to operate by distancing itself from its object, that is, by using the mind to abstract from what it seeks to examine, in order to compile an objective account of it. As Susan Bowles observes: ‘In conceptual thinking, we impose a concept between the immediate experience and the phenomenon (thereby not experiencing the phenomenon immediately or directly) and in this way we hold a representational picture of how things are outside of us.’<sup>31</sup> Being, however, cannot be known in this way, because such an abstractive method seeks only to say things *about* Being: it does not bring the mind into communion with Being in a direct way. The paradox here is essentially that in trying to grasp conceptually the idea of existence, we try to abstract our minds from it, standing apart from the very Being we seek to understand, and assuming a radical subject-object relationship to it. Yet, as Morris Berman points out, the pre-Socratic tradition did indeed think Being more on a level of communion or original participation.<sup>32</sup> Here, the idea is that the deepest kind of understanding comes from placing oneself within the full being of an object and allowing it to speak. Before the time of the *Iliad* (c. 900-850 BCE) little distinction was made by the Greek mind between external phenomena and subjective thought processes. ‘The *Iliad* contains no words for internal states of mind.’<sup>33</sup> It has been argued that the middle voice in Greek verbal conjugation reflects a mentality in which the modern subject-object dichotomy has not yet developed for ‘the rhetorical stance of the middle voice asserts the disappearance of the writer [and] dissolution of any point of view outside the work’.<sup>34</sup> For Jean-Pierre Vernant, ‘in thought as expressed in

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<sup>31</sup> Bowles, “Rupture in the Temporality of Music,” p. 47. In a footnote Bowles observes, ‘for instance, ‘epistemology’ is the study of the reliability of knowledge. ‘*The theory of knowledge, especially the critical study of its validity, methods and scope.*’ (Collins English Dictionary, [n.p.: n.p.] 1991).’ Bowles, *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Berman attributes the term ‘original participation’ to Owen Barfield. See Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981), p. 71. Reference to Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965), esp. ch. 16.

<sup>33</sup> Berman, *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Hans Kellner, “‘Never Again’ is Now.” In *Postmodern History Reader*, Jenkins (ed.), p. 399. Reference to Hayden White, “Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth.” In *Probing the Limits*

Greek or ancient Indo-European there is no idea of the agent being the *source* of his action.<sup>35</sup> Between the time of Homer and Plato, however, a shift away from original participation took place in Greek thinking; indeed, ‘the poetic, or Homeric mentality, in which the individual is immersed in a sea of contradictory experiences and learns about the world through emotional identification with it (original participation) is precisely what Socrates and Plato intended to destroy.’<sup>36</sup> It will be suggested shortly that infantile musicality universally perpetuates for the human person the paradigm of ontological engagement through original participation.

The conceptual tradition of Western ontology against which Heidegger protested, because of its cognitive emphasis on clear and objective rationality and ‘fetishization of detachment’<sup>37</sup> harbours a bias in favour of masculine models of knowing. Because child-rearing is dominated by the mother, there is some indication that differing degrees of individuation are required by boys and girls in infancy, the former having greater need to establish their difference from the mother, and so developing a more radical general sense of division between themselves and what is other. Thus the male needs to set himself up over against reality, in a ‘transcendence of the body’<sup>38</sup> while the female blends with reality in communion, because of a greater early empathy with the body of the mother.<sup>39</sup> For the female, as a result of this early paradigm, conscious, objective relationship to the world is thereafter linked to a greater interior and pre-conceptual closeness to the world. This model from female development is useful in providing deeper insight into the empathetic, pre-rational basis of all experience of

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*of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution,”* Saul Friedlander (ed.), (Cambridge MA: n.p., 1992), p. 48.

<sup>35</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant. In “Discussion: Barthes-Todorov.” In Roland Barthes, “To Write: An Intransitive Verb?” In *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man: The Structuralist Controversy*, Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (eds.), (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1970), p. 152.

<sup>36</sup> Berman, *Reenchantment of the World*, p. 71.

<sup>37</sup> Bordo, *Flight to Objectivity*, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8

<sup>39</sup> See Nancy Chowderow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley: California Univ. Press, 1978).



existence: 'We do not coincide with ourselves. We exist before we are conscious of our existence: and this means that our reflective consciousness is always to some extent out of joint with the existential conditions that fostered it.'<sup>40</sup> '[R]eflection is inevitably shaped by and in some ways dependent on our more primordial participation in a world of meaning.'<sup>41</sup> This 'primordial participation' characterises the infant's musical participation in Being through song, as will be seen later. However, in seeking, following the masculine paradigm, a 'cleaner, purer, more objective and more disciplined epistemological relation to the world,'<sup>42</sup> the surface mind in later life may become dislocated from this more original kind of participatory knowledge of Being based on improvisatory music rooted in infant song. For Jaspers, knowledge by original participation is primordial and Edenesque: 'In the beginning was the manifestness of Being in a present without consciousness.'<sup>43</sup> In words also of Nicholas Berdyaev, '[p]hilosophic knowledge cannot have its source in books or in schools . . . The only true philosopher is he who has an intuition of being, whose philosophy has its source in life. Genuine philosophy has immediate connection with being.'<sup>44</sup> Heidegger contrasts the immediacy of such openness to reality with the abstract, secondary nature of the 'thing-concept':

[T]his thing-concept again leaves us at a loss. We never really first perceive a throng of sensations, e.g., tones and noises, in the appearance of things - as this thing-concept alleges; rather we hear the storm whistling in the chimney, we hear the three-motored plane, we hear the Mercedes in immediate distinction from the Volkswagen. Much closer to us than all sensations are the things themselves. We hear the door shut in the house and never hear acoustical sensations or even mere sounds. In order to hear a bare sound we have to listen away from things, divert our ear from them, i.e., listen abstractly.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Stanislaus Breton. In Richard Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 99-100.

<sup>41</sup> David J. Bryant, *Faith and the Play of Imagination: On the Role of the Imagination in Religion* (Macon GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1989), p. 170.

<sup>42</sup> Bordo, *Flight to Objectivity*, p. 105.

<sup>43</sup> Jaspers, *Origin and Goal*, p. xv.

<sup>44</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (1916) (London: Victor Gollancz. 1955), pp. 52-53.

<sup>45</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art." (*Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*. 1960) In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 26.

In this sense, the vocalising infant is not listening to his or her sounds: the infant is listening beyond them and through them to Being itself, though, of course, without forming any kind of “Being-concept.”

Heidegger regarded poetry as the revelatory and meditative medium which, in contrast to rational and technical language, had the power to announce Being fully in language. He speaks of the vocation of the poet to speak language ‘purely,’<sup>46</sup> for here language speaks Being prior to being put to work in lower, technical capacities. ‘Refusing to reduce language to an objectifiable concept - by standing *above* it or speaking *about* it - the poetic thinker experiences and thinks language from within. We do not ‘represent’ language to ourselves; language presents itself to us and speaks through us.’<sup>47</sup> Heidegger hints that the improvisatory dimension is important for his understanding of poetry. He speaks in one place approvingly of some improvised poetry by Rilke. Its ‘unforeseen character opens for us a perspective in which we are able to think Rilke’s poetry more clearly . . . [A]t this moment in the world’s history we have first to learn that the making of poetry, too, is a matter of thinking. Let us take the poem as an exercise in poetic self-reflection.’<sup>48</sup> Heidegger here links the improvised or ‘unforeseen character’ of the poem to ‘thinking’ itself, and to poetry’s adverting to its own inner nature in ‘self-reflection.’ Moreover, any understanding of poetry ‘more clearly’ is, on Heidegger’s premises, a clearer understanding of the way in which “Being speaks.” In this citation, it is therefore to improvised poetry that this clearer understanding of poetic utterance adverts. It is improvised poetry which shows more clearly how poetry speaks Being. Here Heidegger draws attention to the poem valued not chiefly as finished product, but under the aspect of the process by which it is created, ‘the making of poetry.’ Possibly Heidegger feels that the improvising of

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<sup>46</sup> Heidegger, “Language,” p. 194.

<sup>47</sup> Kearney, *Modern Movements*, p. 41.

<sup>48</sup> Heidegger, “What are Poets For?” In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. 99-100.

poetry, because it is where a poem first makes its appearance in time, is where the human poetic impulse opens up fully to temporality: thus, Being as temporality is more fully disclosed within the context of the poeticising process than in the finished poem, and poetic improvisation is where poetry opens up to temporality, hence Being, in a special degree. Also, presumably, because of Heidegger's emphasis on language as speech (Chapter 4, Section I), a poem must actually be delivered vocally as it is improvised, rather than simply improvised as thought in the poet's head, in order for this plenary ontological unveiling to arise. All this would suggest that Heidegger's ideal poem may not be a static finished object, whether recited or in writing, but an instance of speech-song or prosody sounding and being created in temporality, improvised verbal music. This insight concerning improvised poetry will be significant for understanding the application of Heidegger's ideas not merely to music in general, but increasingly to improvisatory music in particular. Moreover, infant babbling in human development may suggest itself as a prototype of improvised speech-song, the place where such speech-song has a universal basis in human experience, rather than being something only certain people, poets, produce.

It was seen in Chapter 4 how Heidegger's thought is conducive to, though does not actually make the claim that music, rather than simply poetry, is the place where Being speaks. It was arguably as speech-song that poetry possesses its special status for Heidegger. If Heidegger does not explicitly make the leap from poetry to music as ontologically disclosive, Steiner certainly does: 'The energy that is music puts us in felt relation to the energy which is life: it puts us in a relationship of experienced immediacy with the abstractly and verbally inexpressible but wholly palpable, primary fact of being.'<sup>49</sup> Parallel are the claims of Adorno: 'Signifying language would say the

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<sup>49</sup> George Steiner, *Real Presences* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 196.

absolute in a mediated way, yet the absolute escapes it in each of its intentions, which, in the end, are left behind, as finite. Music reaches the absolute immediately, but in the same instant it darkens, as when a strong light blinds the eye, which can no longer see things which are quite visible.’<sup>50</sup> Steiner laments what he sees as the ‘major tactical oversight’<sup>51</sup> which causes Heidegger to draw scarcely at all on the issues raised by music, a subject which ‘damagingly . . . Heidegger continually passes by.’<sup>52</sup> Insights concerning a possible role for music in Heideggerian ontology will now be extended especially to music which is improvised. This extension seems reasonable in view of Heidegger’s possible prioritisation of poetry which is improvised. Indeed, given that Heidegger’s is a search for primordially, it can hardly be overlooked that ‘[o]riginally, both music and poetry were free auditory activities without printed pages and solely for auditory consumption.’<sup>53</sup>

### *III Music and Pre-Natal Existence*

Evidence will now be advanced to indicate that what might at first appear to be mere compound speculation on Heidegger’s thought is undergirt by evidence from infantile development. Infantile development appears to involve a prototypical encounter with improvisatory music as speech-song, and in this sense it supports, though from a different angle, the idea already proposed of the primordially of improvisatory speech-song. The correlations made by Steiner, Adorno, and perhaps implicitly Heidegger, between music and deep human involvement in reality recall Gadamer’s theory that human immersion in language (where, as Heidegger says, “Being speaks”) is established and maintained by the quality of language chiefly as

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<sup>50</sup> Theodor Adorno, “Music, Language, and Composition.” (1965) *The Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (1993): 401-414; p. 404.

<sup>51</sup> Steiner, *Heidegger*, p. 30.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>53</sup> Frings, “Harmony and the Logos,” p. 201.

audible pleasure. For Gadamer, ‘the play of language itself . . . addresses us, proposes and withdraws, asks and fulfils itself in the answer.’<sup>54</sup> Perhaps this idea could be linked to the prosodic, “musical” nature of the earliest human contact with vocal sound, in the form of pre-natal experiences of the inflections of maternal speech. Jean-Pierre Lecanuet noted in 1996 that ‘[r]ecent acoustical recordings revealed that the maternal voice as well as external speech located near the mother clearly emerged from the uterine background noise . . . [T]he mother’s and others’ speech . . . was muffled . . . [and] had well preserved prosodic characteristics’.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, in experiments ‘newborns preferred an ‘intra-uterine’ form of their mother’s voice over an airborne version’<sup>56</sup> when the former was artificially reproduced for the attention of the newborn. ‘Other research has demonstrated infants’ sensitivity to melodic contour, octave equivalence, and auditory grouping on the basis of frequency similarity, amplitude similarity, and spectral similarity.’<sup>57</sup> Prosody, or the music of language, thus constitutes the first intra-uterine encounter with language for the human person.

These intra-uterine experiences of language, as pure sound being inflected, suggest how Being’s first disclosure in language for the human person is wholly assimilated to attractive linguistic sound. For the unborn baby, a proto-musical experience in the

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<sup>54</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 446.

<sup>55</sup> Jean-Pierre Lecanuet, “Prenatal Auditory Experience.” In *Musical Beginnings: Origins and Development of Musical Competence*, Irène Deliège and John Sloboda (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 22. References to experiments conducted by W. P. Fifer and C. Moon. W. P. Fifer and C. Moon, “Psychobiology of Newborn Auditory Preferences.” *Seminars in Perinatology* 13 (1989): 430-433; C. Moon and W. P. Fifer, “Newborns Prefer a Prenatal Version of Mother’s Voice.” *Infant Behavior and Development* 13 (1990): 530 (special ICIS issue).

<sup>57</sup> Christoph Fassbender, “Infants’ Auditory Sensitivity Towards Acoustic Parameters of Speech and Music.” In *Musical Beginnings*: Deliège and Sloboda (eds.), p. 79. References to S. E. Trehub, “Infant’s Perception of Musical Patterns.” *Perception and Psychophysics* 41 (1987): 635-641; L. Demany and F. Armand, “The Perceptual Reality of Tone Chroma in Early Infancy.” *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 76 (1984): 57-66; L. Demany, “Auditory Stream Segregation in Infancy.” *Infant Behavior and Development* 5 (1982): 261-276; L. A. Thorpe, S. E. Trehub, B. A. Morrongiello, D. Bull, “Perceptual Grouping by Infants and Preschool Children.” *Developmental Psychology* 24 (1988): 484-491; L. A. Thorpe and S. E. Trehub, “Duration Illusion and Auditory Grouping in Infancy.” *Developmental Psychology* 25 (1989): 122-127; C. Fassbender, *Auditory Grouping and Segregation Processes in Infancy* (Norderstedt: Kaste Verlag, 1993).

womb is the result, and, as was seen, the baby retains a preference for the intra-uterine “music” of language even once it has been born. For the baby in the womb, auditory experience of the prosodic is attractive, presumably because these prosodic impressions announce the presence of the mother. In addition, they announce the real in the only way that pre-natal consciousness can apprehend it. For the baby in the womb, the real outside itself, its first object of sensory awareness, is prosody, pure inflected, expressive sound. ‘[A]uditory perception prompts the baby’s first realization that there is something beyond itself to which it is nevertheless related.’<sup>58</sup> In other words, within the womb, it is prosodic vocal inflections in which Being speaks, for such is pre-natal apprehension of the real. Heidegger also hinted that it was chiefly as something attractive that language exercised its hold over human beings: ‘[S]trictly, it is language that speaks. Man first speaks when, and only when, he responds to language by listening to its appeal.’<sup>59</sup> In the womb, it is indeed language which first appealingly speaks to the human person, not the person who speaks.

Once born, an infant is coaxed toward speaking by the ‘appeal’ of the prosodic or musical characteristics of the voices she hears. For Gadamer, man is *played upon* by language. It is in the irresistible delight and desire of sound-play that the infant learns speech. For Morley, ‘the child produces sounds apparently for the pleasure and satisfaction of so doing.’<sup>60</sup> Language is thus arrived at through the dimension of prosodic sound, and, in the case of the pre-verbal response to maternal sound by babbling and singing of an infant, sound as spontaneously played with in an exploratory way. As heard by the infant, ‘sound is an experience of *invitation to engagement*, a fundamentally unitive act connecting . . . the sound perceiver with the

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<sup>58</sup> Storr, *Music and the Mind*, p. 9.

<sup>59</sup> Martin Heidegger, “. . . Poetically Man Dwells . . .” In *Poetry, Language Thought*, p. 216.

<sup>60</sup> Muriel E. Morley, *The Development and Disorders of Speech in Childhood* (London: Churchill Livingstone, 1972), p. 10.

sound, the sound producer with the sound receiver'.<sup>61</sup> As taken up by the infant, singing links 'the sound producer in a new way with him- or herself.'<sup>62</sup> This is a highly inclusive table of interactive relations with the world. It is as a consequence of the link between sound and early awareness of Being that '[t]he ear is a metaphor for human beings open to reality, to engagement with the sounds and the people and things which produce them.'<sup>63</sup> Babbling is the infant's pre-verbal response to her experience of reality presented to her first as attractive sound: it has an ontological significance in first actively connecting the infant to reality. Musical improvisation will continue to embody the same significance throughout the lifetime of the person, evoking a primordial memory, because musical improvisation is the activity in which unconscious memories of babbling are especially preserved into later life. Musical improvisation will continue to link the person with his or her world.

For Heidegger, "Being speaks" in language. Infant music is embryonic language. For Hanuš Papoušek, early musical activity is plainly linguistic, corroborating the link between speech and music: 'Musical elements participate in the process of communicative development very early; in fact, recent research has suggested that they pave the way to linguistic capacities earlier than phonetic elements can do so.'<sup>64</sup> Mechtilde Papoušek speaks of 'three closely interrelated facets of preverbal communication: emotional signalling; precursors to speech; and playful creative

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<sup>61</sup> Jan Michael Joncas, "Liturgy and Music." In *The Pontifical Liturgical Institute Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, vol 2 *Fundamental Liturgy*, Anscar J. Chupungco (ed.), (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), p. 313. References to Edward Foley, "Toward a Sound Theology." *SL* 23/2 (1993): 121-139 (documentation *sic*); P. W. Hoon, "The Relation of Theology and Music in Worship." *Union Theological Seminary Quarterly Review* 11, no. 2 (1956): 33-43; A. Pike, *A Theology of Music* (Toledo: n.p., 1953); E. Routley, *Church Music and Theology* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1965); M. T. Winter, *Why Sing? Toward a Theology of Catholic Church Music* (Washington D. C.: n.p., 1984).

<sup>62</sup> Joncas, *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Hanuš Papoušek, "Musicality in Infancy Research: Biological and Cultural Origins of Early Musicality." In *Musical Beginnings*, Deliège and Sloboda (eds.), p. 43. Reference to M. Papoušek. H. Papoušek, M. H. Bornstein, "The Naturalistic Vocal Environment of Young Infants: on the Significance of Homogeneity and Variability in Parental Speech." In *Social Perception in Infants*, T. Field and N. Fox (eds.), ("Ablex, Norwood, New Jersey"), pp. 269-297.

activity in spontaneous singing . . . The preverbal origins of musical skills cannot be differentiated from the prelinguistic stages of speech acquisition and from the basic alphabet of emotional communication.’<sup>65</sup> The same writer speaks later of:

six stages of vocal production: phonation (0-1 months); melodic modulation and primitive articulation in cooing (2-3 months); exploratory vocal play (4-6 months); repetitive babbling (7-11 months); variegated babbling and early words (9-13 months); and the one-word stage (12-18 months).

Precursors of spontaneous singing may be indiscriminable from precursors of early speech. Preverbal communication may represent a common ontogenic avenue along which two highly structured and exclusively human capacities develop: (1) speech, enabling verbal communication and thinking; and (2) singing, enabling creative activity in vocal music. Both capacities are also intimately related to functions of affective vocal signalling and communication.<sup>66</sup>

There appears here a view of the infant as developing by means of musical investigation on the way to discovering speech. Music is integral with the first encounter with language, where Being speaks.

The foetus heard the mother’s heartbeat dividing its sonic experience into regular units of duration, and thus began its discovery of time. Conceivably, the newborn infant brain continues learning about time sonically through music. Roger Sessions has speculated that time-consciousness is linked to rhythm, early breathing, vocalisation and music: ‘[T]he basic rhythmic fact is . . . a specific type of alternation with which we are familiar from the first movement of our existence as separate beings. We celebrate that event by drawing a breath, which is required of us if existence is to be realized. The drawing of the breath is an act of culmination, of

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<sup>65</sup> Mechthild Papoušek, “Intuitive Parenting: a Hidden Source of Musical Stimulation in Infancy.” In *ibid*, Deliège and Sloboda (eds.), pp. 91-92. Reference to Mechthild Papoušek, “Determinants of Responsiveness to Infant Vocal Expression of Emotional State.” *Infant Behavior and Development* 12 (1989): 505-522.

<sup>66</sup> M. Papoušek, “Intuitive Parenting,” pp. 103-104. References to D. K. Oller, “The Emergence of the Sounds of Speech in Infancy.” In *Child Phonology: Production*, vol 1, G. H. Yeni-Komshian, J. F. Kavanagh, C. A. Ferguson (eds.), (New York: Academic Press, 1980), pp. 93-112; R. E. Stark, “Stages of Speech Development in the First Year of Life.” In *ibid*, Yeni-Komshian, Kavanagh, Ferguson (eds.), pp. 73-92; K. Holmgren, B. Lindblom, G. Aurelius, B. Jalling, R. Zetterström, “On the Phonetics of Infant Vocalization.” In *Precursors of Early Speech*, Wenner-Gren International Symposium Series, vol 44, B. Lindblom and R. Zetterström (eds.), (New York: Stockton Press, 1986), pp. 51-63; F. J. Koopmans-van Beinum and F. J. van der Stelt, “Early Stages in the Development of Speech Movements.” In *Precursors of Early Speech*, Wenner-Gren International Symposium Series, vol 44, Lindblom and Zetterström (eds.), pp. 37-50; M Papoušek, *Vom ersten Schrei zum ersten Wort. Anfänge der Sprachentwicklung in der vorsprachlichen Kommunikation* (Berne: Huber, 1994).



tension which is then released by the alternative act of exhalation.’<sup>67</sup> ‘Here it is not a question of the alternation of tension and relaxation but of our experience of time itself. We gain our experience, our sensation of time, through movement, and it is movement, primarily, which gives it content for us.’<sup>68</sup> Early breathing and its time-disclosing rhythms flower into the early musical impulse: ‘[I]s it not clear that much of our melodic feeling derives . . . from a vocal impulse which first of all is connected with the vital act of breathing?’<sup>69</sup> A young child continues to learn about time by producing improvised musical sounds:

Of what use is music-knowledge? Here is one idea. Each child spends endless days in curious ways; we call it ‘play.’ He plays with blocks and boxes, stacking them and packing them; he lines them up and knocks them down. What is that all about? Clearly, he is learning Space! But how, on earth, does one learn Time? Can one Time fit inside another, can two of Them go side by side? In Music we find out!

Many adults retain that play-like fascination with making large structures out of smaller things - and one way to understand music involves building large mind-structures out of smaller music-things. So that drive to build music-structure might be the same one that makes us try to understand the world.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, exploratory music may be where understanding of time is developed in infancy. These ideas evoke the suggestion in Chapter 4, Section V (in connection with Heidegger’s attention to Mozart) that music may disclose the temporality of *Dasein* in a unique and even necessary way for the human person. Moreover, if the infant mind is indeed learning about time, and if exploratory music is thus integrating the infant with reality under the twin aspects of *time and language*, then Being, disclosed precisely in Heidegger’s terms as time and language, is “speaking” to the infant in improvisatory musical vocalising. A pre-conceptual, participatory knowledge of reality is the result.

The intra-uterine experience of reality as attractive maternal prosody, and the newborn experience of Being as mediated to the baby by its and the mother’s free

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<sup>67</sup> Roger Sessions, *The Musical Experience of Composer, Performer, Listener* (1950) (Princeton NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), p. 12.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>70</sup> Marvin Minsky, “Music, Mind, and Meaning.” In *Music, Mind and Brain*, Clynes (ed.), pp. 4-5. Cited in Jonathan Kramer, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies* (New York: Schirmer, 1988), p. 1.

vocalising will leave a permanent imprint in the human mind, so that no intellectual attempt by the mind in later life to contemplate the real as a totality, however persuasive it may seem to the conscious understanding, can ever usurp musical improvisation's greater power over the unconscious memory. Nor, for the same reasons, will any other art-form equal or surpass the primitive potency of music, and especially improvised music, as depth expressions of the real. In musical improvisation, to borrow Heidegger's famous title, the mind lays hold upon its whole "Being and Time." Because musical exploration is the medium in which the human baby first actively engages language as the place where Being speaks, and because this engagement arises from the draw of the beautiful and lovable maternal object who addresses the infant, it is, accordingly, also a prototype of all aesthetic responses. It is the prototypical response to the draw of the beautiful. Infant vocalising is the prototype not only of musical improvisation the art-form, but indeed of art and response to art in general.

Infant musical exploration is no less a basic aesthetic response from having as its object something other than an art-work, namely the mother, for aesthetic feeling can result from 'interactions with phenomena of nature or from interactions with non-art objects or events.'<sup>71</sup> Vocalising arises from aesthetic response to the mother: 'One or two weeks after he has begun to smile at his mother in response to her, he begins to vocalise as well as smile'.<sup>72</sup> The baby's vocal responses contain the elements of interaction, perception of beauty and feeling reaction associated with aesthetic experience.<sup>73</sup> There is also the aesthetic pleasure found in language itself. In words of one writer, babbling is 'a form of art . . . it represents the beginning of the art of

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<sup>71</sup> Rudolf E. Radocy and J. David Boyle, *Psychological Foundations of Musical Behavior* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1979), p. 184.

<sup>72</sup> R. S. Illingworth, *The Development of the Infant and Young Child: Normal and Abnormal* (London: Churchill Livingstone, 1987), p. 111.

<sup>73</sup> See Radocy and Boyle, *Psychological Foundations*, p. 216.

language in the life of the child.’<sup>74</sup> ‘[A]lmost from the very outset the practical and the aesthetic functions of language develop side by side. Thus there are twin impulses in the development of language in the child’s life: on the one hand, the satisfaction of his primary needs, and, on the other, the satisfaction of aesthetic tendencies’.<sup>75</sup> ‘[T]here is pleasure in the patterns of the sounds themselves, pleasure in their rhythms and their tunes.’<sup>76</sup> This pleasure is discriminating: ‘[I]nfants ‘prefer’ consonant, or pleasant sounding, combinations of tones over dissonant, or unpleasant sounding combinations.’<sup>77</sup> For Zentner and Kagen, ‘the human infant may possess a biological preparedness that makes consonance perceptually more attractive than dissonance.’<sup>78</sup> ‘[T]he child does not respond indiscriminately to any musical sound, but . . . responds by selecting the sensuously beautiful sound.’<sup>79</sup> Mursell claimed that, at three months, babies produce ‘comfort sounds. They do not belong definitely in the category of either speech or song, but are the matrix out of which both develop, and they have an appreciable tonal content. It has been argued that such experiences and reactions are the original sources of what later becomes aesthetic pleasure in music and in the sheer sound of language.’<sup>80</sup>

Exploration of sound is the common origin of art and language in the human person. Conversely, all human aesthetic responses are distant extrapolations of, and recall unconsciously, pre-natal sonic conditions and the later infant sonic exploration by which aesthetic pleasure developed. Not just the origins of music in the individual

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<sup>74</sup> M. M. Lewis, *Infant Speech: A Study of the Beginnings of Language* (1936) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 66.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>76</sup> M. M. Lewis, *How Children Learn to Speak* (London: George G. Harrap, 1957), p. 44.

<sup>77</sup> Sandra E. Trehub and Laurel Trainor, “Singing to Infants: Lullabies and Play Songs.” In *Advances in Infancy Research*, vol 12, Carolyn Rovee-Collier, Lewis Lipsitt, Harlene Hayne (eds.), (London: Ablex, 1998), p. 65. References to (no given names) Trainor and Heinmiller, in press; Marcel R. Zentner and Jerome Kagen, “Perception of Music by Infants.” Letter in *Nature* 383, no. 6595 (1996): 29.

<sup>78</sup> Zentner and Kagen, *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Helmut Moog, *The Musical Experience of the Pre-school Child* (1968) (London: Schott, 1976), p. 55.

<sup>80</sup> James L. Mursell, *Education for Musical Growth* (n.p.: Ginn, 1948), p. 30. Cited in *ibid.*

developed human person, but even the primeval origins of music in primitive *homo sapiens* may possibly be accounted for by these considerations. Lecanuet's recent work described above, on how humans in the womb experience awareness of maternal prosodic noises, implies that sensations prototypical of these might be included in the intra-uterine auditory sensations of the higher primates. If this is the case, the raw material of musicality is already present in experience from the earliest moment of the biological evolution of human beings from higher primates. Indeed, humanness might be distinguished from apeness and in part defined as a new kind of foetal hearkening to maternal vocalisations and heartbeat (which existed auditorily for foetal apes but were not listened to in the same way by them) leading to a new and opened-out existential engagement with time and language, along the lines which indeed characterise the human being for Heidegger. Is it possible to grasp more completely how awareness of Being enters consciousness through foetal sound-awareness, infant babbling and early song, and, ultimately, humanity's entire project of (especially improvisatory) music-making? Being is not somehow "in" the musical sound any more than human experiences of smell are coterminous with the inhaled molecules, nerve-receptors in the nose and electrical currents by which the cortex is stimulated. The smell is not these things, indeed, it is a total mystery what the final experience of smell actually is. The unveiling of the real in the music event might well be a comparable phenomenon to the presence of smell in physical phenomena.

#### *IV Music as Lived Engagement with Being*

It is necessary to consider now in more detail the nature of the human person's primordial relation to things. 'A child's first question is very often: 'What is it for?' The notion of a bare thing-in-itself, inert, indifferent, would seem to be a very

sophisticated idea and certainly one that is remote from everyday existing.’<sup>81</sup> Ong instances, from illiterate adult subjects, a similar ‘situational thinking’ to this. He writes: ‘Subjects were presented with drawings of four objects, three belonging to one category and the fourth to another, and were asked to group together those that were similar or could be placed in one group or designated by one word. One series consisted of drawings of the objects *hammer, saw, log, hatchet*. Illiterate subjects consistently thought of the group not in categorical terms (three tools, the log not a tool) but in terms of practical situations - “situational thinking”- without adverting at all to the classification “tool” as applying to all but the log. If you are a workman with tools and see a log, you think of applying the tool to it, not of keeping the tool away from what it was made for - in some weird intellectual game. A 25-year-old illiterate peasant: “They’re all alike. The saw will saw the log and the hatchet will chop it into small pieces. If one of these has to go, I’d throw out the hatchet. It doesn’t do as good a job as a saw.” Told the hammer, saw, and hatchet are all tools, he discounts the categorical class and persists in situational thinking: “Yes, but even if we have tools, we still need wood - otherwise we can’t build anything.” Asked why another person had rejected one item in another series of four that he felt all belonged together, he replied: “Probably that kind of thinking runs in his blood”.’<sup>82</sup> Even artistic works can be seen as conforming to this principle of situatedness in human thought. As Curt Ducasse puts it: ‘Slang paraphrases the assertion that an object is beautiful by saying that it is ‘easy to look at’ . . . To be ‘easy to look at,’ is to be *as if made for the purpose*’.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, p. 84.

<sup>82</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 51. Citations from Aleksandr Romanovich Luria, *Cognitive Development: Its Cultural and Social Foundations* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), p. 56.

<sup>83</sup> Curt John Ducasse, *The Philosophy of Art* (1929) (New York: Dover, 1966), p. 239.

Heidegger gives the example of a hammer, where ‘the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly it is encountered as that which it is . . . as equipment.’<sup>84</sup> Thus, for Heidegger, our involvement in the world is likewise as situated and coping beings, rather than beings who set out in the first instance to know the world objectively: to use a hammer is thus to know it better than to think about a hammer. Heidegger points out that if I use a hammer, I can do this successfully without even objectively thinking of my hammering,<sup>85</sup> but am nevertheless *involved* in the world in and through my hammering. A parallel which might be drawn here is that while hearing, without necessarily attending to music, humans are at an unconscious level specially involved with Being-in-the-world. An intuition of Being passes transparently through us in the medium of music simply because we are musico-linguistic creatures situated *in* Being. As in the womb and in infancy, so into adulthood, music is where Being continues to “speak” to us. Moreover, to return to Heidegger, it is only when the nail I am hammering slips, or I bang my finger that I become conscious of hammering *per se*, and must regasp the hammer with conscious attention. Suddenly I am back with a jolt to my objective consciousness of being-in-the-world, and back to consciousness of my hammering. Is there a parallel here with the way humans sometimes have conscious recourse to music by grasping at it when under stress and in need of harmonious reintegration with their world? In being so grasped, music is consciously reappropriated as what unconsciously it always is for situated humans. When the entirety of our Being-in-the-world is dislocated by a generalised sense of stress, we grasp consciously at the

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<sup>84</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 15, p. 98.

<sup>85</sup> See *ibid.*

normally unconscious medium of our world-integration, music, in the same way as we might stop to renew our grip on the hammer or bandage our finger.<sup>86</sup>

In this connection, improvised music is to a special degree available or (to use Heidegger's term) "ready to hand," for normal human persons have always been able to produce it from the resources of their own bodies, as in humming or whistling, without external artefacts or special training.<sup>87</sup> This use of music "ready to hand" when affected by stress would suggest an ontological interpretation of much casual humming, whistling and tapping which are of course often improvisatory.<sup>88</sup> In so using music, or reappropriating it under stress, we act *knowingly* in the sense described by Jean-François Lyotard: '[W]hat is meant by the term *knowledge* is not only a set of denotative statements . . . It includes notions of 'know-how,' 'knowing how to live,' 'how to listen' . . . etc. Knowledge, then, is a question of competence that goes beyond the simple determination and application of the criterion of truth'.<sup>89</sup> When reappropriating music in stress, we also perform an act of *philosophising* of the kind characterised by Karl Jaspers: 'Philosophy demands a *different thinking*, a thinking that, in knowing, reminds me, awakens me, brings me to myself, transforms me.'<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> There is also a link here between the state of stress which evokes the need for music, and the idea of the 'limit situation' as expounded by Jaspers. In limit situations, the experience of Transcendence is opened up to man through 'ciphers'. 'No cognition and no insight attests the truth of ciphers, only their illuminating power in the existential history of the individual.' Karl Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation* (1931) (London: Collins, 1967), p. 108. The implication here is that the 'limit situation' of stress calls forth the need for music as the 'cipher' of our existence in the world.

<sup>87</sup> See Jean Düring, "Le Point de vue du musicien: improvisation et communication." In *L'Improvisation*, Lortat-Jacob (ed.), pp. 43-44.

<sup>88</sup> If improvisatory music is the voice of Being, it is also by that token our guarantor against nothingness. Perhaps whistling in the dark is an attempt to affirm the Being of the self against an invasion of "nothing" closing in through the loss of our vision and concomitant reduction of self-confidence in the dark. 'Every moment I stand before nothingness, so every moment I must be dowered anew with being.' Edith Stein, *L'Être fini et l'être éternel* (Louvain: n.p., 1972), pp. 60-61. Cited in Brendan Purcell, "Understanding the Human Mystery: Human Origins in Palaeoanthropology and Philosophy." In *At the Heart of the Real: Philosophical Essays in Honour of Archbishop Desmond Connell*, Fran O'Rourke (ed.). (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992), p. 369.

<sup>89</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1984), p.18.

<sup>90</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence* (1937) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), p. 12.

Oliver Sacks speaks as a neurologist of the therapeutic power of music in general. Referring to one clinical instance where music was used, Sacks quotes a patient who experienced the ontological power of music as granting ‘not just movement, but existence itself.’<sup>91</sup> Sacks asserts that ‘music has been the profoundest non-chemical medication for our patients.’<sup>92</sup> As Jaspers says, ‘*being itself* comes out of all origins to meet me. I myself am given back to myself.’<sup>93</sup> As psychological studies have shown, music is effective for those in need of sanative, holistic reintegration with their world. Thus, in one case, an autistic boy finally learns to tie his shoe-laces when his therapist relates the process to singing: ‘*A song is a form in time*. David had a special relationship to this element and could comprehend the shoe-tying process when it was organized in time through a song.’<sup>94</sup> Within the context of wider music-therapeutic procedures, improvisatory music is sometimes central.<sup>95</sup> ‘[Nordoff and Robbins] . . . technique, Creative Music Therapy, emphasizes the creation of musical improvisations which serve as a nonverbal means of communication between the therapist and the child.’<sup>96</sup> Perhaps these improvisations succeed therapeutically because they re-implement the comforting mother-infant paradigm of musical communication. Mechtild Langenberg writes: ‘What is involved in the product of musical improvisation? The living process of encounter and relating provokes feelings, fantasies and images that are signs for the staging of subjectively experienced, internalized, interhuman relational experiences and conflicts from earlier

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<sup>91</sup> Oliver Sacks, *Awakenings* (1973) (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 282.

<sup>92</sup> Sacks, *ibid*, p. xiii.

<sup>93</sup> Jaspers, *Existence*, p. 28.

<sup>94</sup> Paul Nordoff and Clive Robbins, *Therapy in Music for Handicapped Children* (1971) (London: Gollancz, 1992), p. 105.

<sup>95</sup> See Juliet Alvin and Auriel Warwick, *Music Therapy for the Autistic Child* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 36-39.

<sup>96</sup> Cindy Lu Edgerton, “The Effect of Improvisational Music Therapy on the Communicative Behaviors of Autistic Children.” *The Journal of Music Therapy* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 31-62; p. 34. See also Mercedes Pavlicevic, Colwyn Trevarthen, Janice Duncan, “Improvisational Music Therapy and the Rehabilitation of Persons Suffering from Chronic Schizophrenia.” *The Journal of Music Therapy* 31, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 86-104.



developmental phases.’<sup>97</sup> In other words, musical improvisation recalls the babbling stage, a proposal which repeats claims made above.

### *V Improvised Music, Time and Mood*

The distinction between improvised and non-improvised music, as it applies in the present context, may be usefully clarified at this point. In the first place, all music is closely linked to temporality. The wider issue of music and time was raised above in Chapter 4, Section V, and in this Chapter, Section III. In recent musicological discussion, issues concerning the relationship of music and time enjoy continuing exposure. For Philip Bohlman, ‘[m]usic may be ontologically dependent on time, but time is ontologically dependent on music’.<sup>98</sup> He speaks of how musical performance serves as an act of remembering in Sufism, Aboriginal culture, Homeric and Hindu epics and Asian and Japanese musical practices.<sup>99</sup> Klaus P. Wachsmann ‘[c]oncludes that music is a special kind of time and the creation of musical time a universal occupation of man.’<sup>100</sup> For David Greene, the link between music and time may even be narrowed down to the way in which music mirrors the changing ways time is perceived within a given society, in this case, modern Europe: ‘Bach’s music is an aural image of Newtonian time.’<sup>101</sup> Thus Bach’s musical structures reflect the unfolding necessity implied by a consistently Newtonian world-view. Likewise, in sonata-allegro form the present calls the future into being, but in this context, the future

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<sup>97</sup> Mechtild Langenberg, “On Understanding Music Therapy: Free Musical Improvisation as a Method of Treatment.” *The World of Music* 39, no. 1 (1997): 97-110; p. 98.

<sup>98</sup> Philip V. Bohlman, “Ontologies of Music.” In *Rethinking Music*, Cook and Everist (eds.), p. 29.

<sup>99</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 29-30. Reference to Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (1980) (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1985).

<sup>100</sup> Schuursma, *Ethnomusicology Research*, p. 65. Reference to Klaus P. Wachsmann, “Universal Perspectives in Music.” *Ethnomusicology* 15, no. 3 (1971): 381-384.

<sup>101</sup> David B. Greene, *Temporal Processes in Beethoven’s Music* (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1982), p. 7. Greene refers extensively in a footnote (pp. 45-46) to Edward Lowinsky, “Taste, Style and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Music.” In *Aspects of the Eighteenth Century*, Earl A. Wasserman (ed.), (n.p.: n.p., 1965), pp. 179-181.

feels like a fresh occurrence not the result of mechanical necessity like the future in Newtonian temporality, because forward thrust characterises sonata structure. Thus Christopher Ballantine can propose similarities between Haydn's, Mozart's and Beethoven's sonata-allegro forms and the Hegelian idea of the dialectic which shapes the temporal process.<sup>102</sup> Gamelan music has been found to be expressive of Hindu-Buddhist time conceptions.<sup>103</sup>

Improvised music, however, embodies time still more fully than music in general. It not only announces time, but like time itself, also disappears into the past, evanescent. Also, the significance of specifically improvised music in the overall human experience of evocation of time in music may be all the more engrained in the human person, since improvised music was the preponderant music of primitive humanity whose instincts still haunt the depths of the modern psyche. Just as reference was made above to the infant's use of improvised music as a primary way of learning about time (Section III), it is possible that adult humans have a continuing impulse to explore their time especially through music which is improvised. Although the term "real-time music" for improvisation was severely criticised in Chapter 3 in connection with existing musicological agendas, against the horizon of these new insights it might arguably be readmissible.

Musical improvisation as an adult musical practice remains more pervasive in cultures removed from Western rationalism, and, *ipso facto*, from Western metaphysical constructions of Being of the type Heidegger repudiates. Is this because

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<sup>102</sup> See Greene, *ibid*, pp. 18-20. References to Christopher Ballantine, "Beethoven, Hegel and Marx." *The Music Review* 33 (1972): 34-46; Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style* (1971) (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 44. Rosen writes that the Classical style employs a 'dramatic effect [which seems] at once surprising and logically motivated'; for 'paired phrases' see Rosen's 'articulated periodic structure.' In Rosen, *ibid*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>103</sup> See J. Becker, "Hindu-Buddhist Time in Javanese Gamelan Music." In *The Study of Time IV: Papers from the Fourth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Time, Alpbach, Austria*, J. T. Fraser, N. Lawrence, D. Park (eds.), (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1981).

improvisation is archetypally intuited in these cultures as corresponding in a special degree to the ontological project humans unconsciously pursue in making music? Thus it is implied that the instinct to “tune in” to the temporality of Being through musical improvising in peoples outside the range of Western philosophical influence has never been impaired by that influence. The suggestion is that where static, Western-style ontologies which overlook Being’s temporality do not inform the prevailing cultural ethos and imply the superiority of an intellectual integration with reality based on rational thought, adults continue to integrate themselves with Being-and-time through musical improvisation, just as children do. As Westernisation increases, the cultural practice of improvisation recedes: ‘[I]n Iran’s classical music improvisations play a smaller role than they did some decades ago . . . The prestige of the notated piece as a Westernized phenomenon seems to have crowded improvisation into a position of diminished esteem and also to have made it more like a composition.’<sup>104</sup> A similar point is made by Hazel Smith and Roger Dean in relation to Japanese music.<sup>105</sup> It has also been argued that, even in the case of Western European listeners, there remains a deep response to music as if it were largely improvisatory, even though what is being heard is known to be a standard Western composed piece. Thus it has been suggested by Jerrold Levinson that most modern Western listeners do not try to attend to any overall architectonic structure in the music but, instead, like to listen from moment to moment. There is arguably an unconscious desire manifested by them to reconceive music as improvisatory even when it is not. The fundamental cognitive experience of the listener will always apprehend music chiefly in terms of temporal flow rather than overall design, and as such all listeners perceive as secondary

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<sup>104</sup> Bruno Nettl, *The Western Impact on World Music: Change, Adaptation and Survival* (New York: Schirmer, 1985), p. 67.

<sup>105</sup> See Smith and Dean, *Improvisation*, p. 21.

those structural attributes of music which non-improvisatory creative processes alone facilitate.<sup>106</sup>

For Paul Ricoeur, the temporal structure of Being finds expression in language, specifically in *narrative* forms. It will be suggested here that, as a complement to a necessary language narration as proposed by Ricoeur, there is also a necessary musical narration for the human person. For Ricoeur, narrative is actually required by human beings as a fundamental way of making sense of time,<sup>107</sup> since ‘speculation on time is an inconclusive rumination to which narrative activity alone can respond.’<sup>108</sup> If arguments in favour of a right-hemispheric association for music are preferred (see Section I), there would appear to be a physiological basis for the claim, to be pursued here, that music falls under the wider designation of narrative, because there is evidence that the right hemisphere processes narrative sequence as well as music. Thus, ‘[p]atients who have suffered extensive damage to their right but not left hemispheres are generally able to speak well, without any unusual increase in grammatical errors or mistakes in choice of words; but when required to follow and

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<sup>106</sup> See Jerrold Levinson, *Music in the Moment* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1997), pp. 13-14.

<sup>107</sup> See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol 3, (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 241-274. For a summation of Ricoeur’s understanding of narrative, see Hayden White, “The Metaphysics of Narrativity.” In *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, David Wood (ed.), (London: Routledge, 1991). White explains that for Ricoeur, ‘[to] ‘emplot’ a sequence of events and thereby transform what would otherwise be only a chronicle of events into a story is to effect a mediation between events and certain universally human ‘experiences of temporality’. And this goes for fictional stories no less than for historical stories.’ Ibid, p. 144. Ricoeur has said: ‘My basic hypothesis . . . is the following: the common feature of human experience, that which is marked, organized and clarified by the fact of storytelling in all its forms, is its *temporal character*. Everything that is recounted occurs in time, takes time, unfolds temporally; and what unfolds in time can be recounted. Perhaps, indeed, every temporal process is recognized as such only to the extent that it can, in one way or another, be recounted. This reciprocity which is assumed to exist between narrativity and temporality is the theme of my present research.’ Paul Ricoeur, “On Interpretation.” In *Philosophy in France Today*, Alan Montefiore (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), p. 176. ‘My work on narrativity, *Temps et récit* [Time and Narrative], develops this inquiry into the inventive power of language. Here, the analysis of narrative operations in a literary text, for instance, can teach us how we formulate a new structure of ‘time’ by creating new modes of plot and characterization. My chief concern in this analysis is to discover how the act of *raconter*, of telling a story, can transmute *natural* time into a specifically *human* time, irreducible to mathematical, chronological ‘clock time’. How is narrativity, as the construction or deconstruction of paradigms of story-telling, a perpetual search for new ways of expressing human time, a production or creation of meaning? That is my question.’ Paul Ricoeur. In Kearney, *Dialogues*, p. 17.

<sup>108</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol 1 (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1984), p. 6.

interpret a short narrative, they seem to fail to grasp the logic of the whole.’<sup>109</sup> This physiological claim might bring music within the ambit of Ricoeur’s understanding of a narrative practice, on the basis of shared cerebral location. It has also been speculated that improvisatory human behaviour is predominantly a right-hemispheric function.<sup>110</sup> This would relate physiologically narrative practice with music which is specifically improvisatory. The right hemisphere is the key to all these dimensions: narration, musicality and improvisation.

My narrative existence in the world is inseparable from the fact that I exist *now*: “now” is always a new experience requiring a new turn to my narrative story and must be included in it for any account of my existence in the world to be complete. Parallel with the way in which the events of my life “now” can be narrated only in improvised verbal narrative, music can narrate the “now” only through improvisation. Children’s behaviour suggests the primordial nature of improvised verbal and musical narration as ways of realising present experience, the experience of the “now,” more fully. Improvised verbal narrative about what is happening “now” is common in young children: ‘Here comes mummy with my tea. It’s baked beans tonight. How many beans are there? One, two, three, four [*etc.*].’<sup>111</sup> Also, as Kartomi notes, ‘[w]hile concentrating on their play activity, children often utter spontaneous musical phrases.’<sup>112</sup> ‘While at play children often produce musical improvisations, which are understood in the broad sense of the creation or rendering of an artistic idea in an

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<sup>109</sup> Deacon, *Symbolic Species*, p. 312. Deacon cites Howard Gardner, H. Brownell, W. Wapner, D. Michelow, “Missing the Point: The Role of the Right Hemisphere in Processing of Complex Linguistic Materials.” In *Cognitive Processes and the Right Hemisphere*, E. Perecman (ed.), (New York: Academic Press, 1983); B. Larsen, E. Skinhoj, N. A. Lassen, “Variations in Regional Cortical Blood Flow in the Right and Left Hemispheres during Automatic Speech.” *Brain* 101 (1978): 193-209; N. A. Lassen, B. Larsen, “Cortical Activity in the Left and Right Hemispheres during Language-Related Brain Functions.” *Phonetica* 37 (1980): 27-37.

<sup>110</sup> See Jaušovec, “Brain Biology,” p. 205.

<sup>111</sup> Michael Grey, personal communication, Edinburgh, 14th August, 2000.

<sup>112</sup> Margaret J. Kartomi, “Musical Improvisations by Children at Play.” *The World of Music* 33, no. 3 (1991): 53-65; p. 53.

unpremeditated, spontaneous manner.’<sup>113</sup> Play is a reverie focused on the “now” and its changing moods are reflected in the accompanying vocalisations; thus ‘[a] pleasant or painful experience . . . may be intense enough to result in an improvised [musical] comment about it while at play . . . New immediate experiences grasp the children’s attention and create a need for new musical doodlings and songs.’<sup>114</sup>

What musical improvisation relates in these cases is the child’s emotions and mood narrative in audible music *now*.<sup>115</sup> Our Being-in-the-world is inseparable from mood and must speak equally in mood, and therefore also in mood narration. Heidegger himself says: ‘Understanding always has its mood.’<sup>116</sup> Music is linked to the dimension of mood and emotion. For Hood, music is ‘directed primarily at the emotions.’<sup>117</sup> This is a ‘universal in music.’<sup>118</sup> The link between mood, emotion and music was also identified by M. Papoušek above: ‘The preverbal origins of musical skills cannot be differentiated from . . . the basic alphabet of emotional communication.’<sup>119</sup> For Flury, ‘singing mothers play a vital role in their babies’ development. The varying sound pattern of a mother’s voice in lullabies and nursery rhymes helps the child to understand and express its emotions.’<sup>120</sup> Since emotion is

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p. 63.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p. 61.

<sup>115</sup> The special relationship between improvisation and present-time experience has been argued also by Ed Sarath. ‘My central premise is that the improviser experiences time in an inner-directed, or ‘vertical’ manner, where the present is heightened’. Sarath, “New Look at Improvisation,” p. 1. Sarath acknowledges dependence (ibid, p. 32, endnote 1) on Jonathan Kramer for this use of “vertical,” as found in Kramer, *Time of Music*.

<sup>116</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 31, p. 182.

<sup>117</sup> Hood, “Universal Attributes of Music,” p. 65.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Papoušek, “Intuitive Parenting.” In *Musical Beginnings*, Deliège and Sloboda (eds.), pp. 91-92.

Reference to Papoušek, “Determinants of Responsiveness.”

<sup>120</sup> Annie Flury, “Singing Helps Emotional Development.” Article in *The Times* newspaper, 7th August, 2000, p. 3. Flury is describing current research by Helen Marwick and Colwyn Trevarthen at the University of Edinburgh. Marwick comments, linking music and emotion: ‘When we speak or sing, we are unaware of the intonation being used as it comes naturally to us. But babies do not know words and are only aware of the sounds expressed to them. As they start to pick up words, they learn the emotion attached to them. That is how babies learn the meaning of words . . . Song is the most emotionally expressive form of language, so it accelerates the process of recognising voice pitch and associating that with the correct emotion. If a child does not hear emotion expressed in this way, it may not learn how to express its own emotions.’ Helen Marwick. Cited in *ibid*.

widely regarded as linked with the right hemisphere,<sup>121</sup> the connections made by Papoušek, Hood and Marwick between emotion and music might reinforce an argument in favour of music's right-hemispheric association. This in turn would reinforce music's proposed link with narrative and improvisation, likewise seen above to be processed by the right hemisphere. This hemisphere now seems, in sum, to be responsible for: emotion, music, narrative, improvisation.

Verbal narrative is event narration and musical narrative is mood narration.<sup>122</sup> If '[u]nderstanding always has its mood' (Heidegger, *supra*) then from infancy upwards, musical narration thus seems no less necessary to humans than verbal narration as they humanise their time in narrative terms, as Ricoeur describes. For David Elliott: '[C]onsciousness is integrated. There is likely no such thing as thinking without feeling or feeling without thinking. Thinking and feeling are hybrids, neither completely emotive nor completely cognitive in content.'<sup>123</sup> Indeed, some languages, such as Javanese, reflect this mood/meaning link more obviously than English.<sup>124</sup> Humans are unavoidably embedded affectively in the world, in family, in culture. If language necessarily projects us intellectually into situations, mood projects us emotionally. Mood thus has an ontological bearing: in the words of Ricoeur,

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<sup>121</sup> Izard asserts that this is the 'most widely held opinion.' Izard, *Psychology of Emotions*, p. 74. However 'the scant evidence is divided.' Ibid, p. 75. See also *ibid*, pp. 74-76. Izard cites in favour of the view that emotions are processed by the right hemisphere D. Galin, "Two Modes of Consciousness and Two Halves of the Brain." In *Symposium on Consciousness* (AAAS 1974), P. R. Lee, R. E. Ornstein, D. Galin, A. Deikman, C. T. Tart (eds.), (New York: Viking, 1976), pp. 26-66; M. A. Safer and H. Leventhal, "Ear Differences in Evaluating Emotional Tones of Voice and Verbal Content." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance* 3 (1977): 75-82. Other studies have suggested that 'the right hemisphere is more likely to be involved in mediating negative emotion and the right [clearly a misprint for 'left'] hemisphere positive emotion.' Izard, *ibid*, p. 99. Reference to N. A. Fox and R. J. Davidson, "Hemispheric Substrates of Affect: A Developmental Model." In *The Psychobiology of Affective Development*, N. A. Fox and R. J. Davidson (eds.), (Hillsdale NJ: Erlbaum, 1984), pp. 353-381.

<sup>122</sup> 'The question of musical narrativity, while by no means new, is making a comeback as the order of the day in the field of musicological thought.' Jean-Jacques Nattiez, "Can One Speak of Narrativity in Music?" *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 115, no. 2 (1990): 240-257; p. 240.

<sup>123</sup> Elliott, *Music Matters*, p. 64.

<sup>124</sup> See Fernández-Armesto, *Truth*, p. 27.

‘[t]hrough feeling we find ourselves already located in the world.’<sup>125</sup> Thus feelings are not chiefly personal emotions, such as inner joy or grief, but an essential way of belonging to, and participating in the world.<sup>126</sup>

Being must inevitably speak in mood. For Ricoeur, it must also be humanised as temporal narrative. Yet mood is narrated only inadequately in words. Music is needed for Being to speak narratively in mood, and improvised music for Being to speak narratively in mood “now.” For Susanne Langer, ‘any exact concepts of feeling and emotion cannot be projected into the logical form of literal language . . . Crude designations like ‘joy’, ‘sorrow’, ‘fear’ tell us as little about vital experience as general words like ‘thing’, ‘being’, or ‘place’ tell us about the world of our perceptions.’<sup>127</sup> ‘Because the forms of human feeling are much more congruent with musical forms than with the forms of language, music can *reveal* the nature of feelings with a detail and truth that language cannot approach.’<sup>128</sup> ‘Indeed, the presence and importance of singing in most of the world’s cultures attest to the universal binding of music and speech.’<sup>129</sup> This is to be expected if there is ‘no such thing as thinking without feeling or feeling without thinking’ (Elliott, *supra*).

Chandola has shown how the three elements, music, language, and mood or emotion, form an integral triad:

Music cannot exist prior to speech evolution. I would even go so far as to say that music as a system is a secondary evolution of speech . . . In fact, in the Indian tradition instrumental music is considered to be secondary to vocal music . . . [S]peech is representative of language and language is situations . . . That is to say, natural language also contains emotions as integral constituents. Emotions, therefore, are linguistic in nature. And speech as a modality of language transmits emotions in every sentence produced by a human.

If we believe that natural speech is emotive, then it is also easy to see why a musical performance is considered to be emotive too. In fact, the Sanskrit word *raga* means ‘emotion’. When we say that a raga expresses an emotion, we are really supporting the argument that music is like speech. Music like

<sup>125</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “Creativity in Language: Word, Polysemy, Metaphor.” *Philosophy Today* 17, no. 2 (1973): 97-111; p. 111.

<sup>126</sup> See Bryant, *Faith and the Play of Imagination*, pp. 204-205.

<sup>127</sup> Susanne Langer, *Problems of Art: Ten Philosophical Lectures* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 91.

<sup>128</sup> Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, p. 235.

<sup>129</sup> Aiello, “Music and Language,” p. 43.



speech is also naturally emotive. We believe that this is due to the fact that music and speech evolved together.<sup>130</sup>

Chandola's suggestion here is that music is the phenomenon in which speech naturally extends its emotional range: the 'secondary evolution of speech' is '*raga*.' Music is the place where verbal expression transmutes fully into expression of emotion. This is especially true of expressing emotions in the form of mood, for mood is emotion which does not have an identifiable object. About these vague states of mood, words are even less well able to speak than when they describe specific objects which elicit emotion. 'Sometimes one feels sad without its being the case that there is anything about which one feels sad.'<sup>131</sup> 'Music as *emotional expression* provides a vehicle for expression of ideas and emotions which might not be revealed in ordinary discourse.'<sup>132</sup> This mood narration of music, including the mood narration of the present moment in musical improvisation, thus seems as central to human experience as the verbal narration which includes the improvisatory ability to narrate verbally what I am doing "now." Indeed, it is widely noted that improvisatory singing, humming or whistling may be a natural expression of a person's mood in circumstances where use of words neither suggests itself to that person, nor would be satisfying self-expression.<sup>133</sup>

## VI *Ontology Beyond Paradigms*

It has been seen that Being is unveiled in a plenary manner in improvised music, and in performing, or listening to improvised music, adult humanity becomes open to

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<sup>130</sup> Chandola, *Music as Speech*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>131</sup> Stephen Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1994), p. 213. Davies provides here a survey of current literature on issues of emotion and mood in music.

<sup>132</sup> Radocy and Boyle, *Psychological Foundations of Musical Behavior*, pp. 164-165 Reference to Merriam, *Anthropology of Music*, n.p.

<sup>133</sup> Consistency has been found in people's attachment of mood adjectives to particular types of musical expression. Surveys of this phenomenon take their origin substantially from the work of K. Hevner. See K. Hevner, "Expression in Music: A Discussion of Experimental Studies and Theories." *Psychological Review* 42 (1935): 186-204; K. Hevner, "Experimental Studies of the Elements of Expression in Music." *American Journal of Psychology* 48 (1936): 246-268.

the unveiling of Being through unconscious re-implementation of infantile paradigms of musicality in which exploratory vocalising likewise integrates the human person with the real. This position subsumes ideas of Heidegger that “Being speaks” in poetry, or improvised poetry. Trapped in verbal referentiality, the latter genres function as disclosures of Being though of lesser intensity. Likewise music in general, which is less congruent with temporality than the evanescent music of the kind babies produce, speaks Being, though less fully than improvised music.

Improvisation is the musical activity furthest from the possibility of notatability (it generally moves too fast for the scribe to notate) and furthest removed from being referred to as a finished musical object, for its form is being created in the present. Thus improvised music tends to resist objectifying acts of reference to itself of any kind.<sup>134</sup> Representational activities, or models, scores or analyses are, in improvisation, chiefly neutralised. In this respect again, improvisation evokes Being rather more closely than other musical activities, for Being itself is resistant to representation in rational models, as Heidegger showed. The proposal that improvisation is resistant to representation is not undermined by the fact that it may seem easy for improvisation to be modelled retrospectively with the aid of sound recording, perhaps by writing it down in notation while listening to the recording. Such a “model” based on repeated listening, however, does not model the improvisation as such, for one of musical improvisation’s constructive dimensions lies in the fact that its creative time seeks to be as nearly as possible correspondent with a single stretch of clock time. In this, it differs from other types of musical creativity which, from the moment of first intention are removed from a single stretch of time (i.e., into preparation time and performance time) and whose products may thus be

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<sup>134</sup> ‘[A]ny attempt to describe improvisation must be, in some respects, a misrepresentation, for there is something central to the spirit of voluntary improvisation which is opposed to the aims and contradicts the idea of documentation.’ Bailey, *Improvisation*, p. ix.

legitimately analysed outside the time of their auditory manifestation. In short, a model must take account of the cultural conventions attaching to the production of the musical genre it strives to model. Any true model of improvisation would have to be constructed while the improvisation is taking place, would have to be temporal, or it is not actually a model of the improvisation but instead of a finished composition achieved using an improvisatory event plus a sound recorder.<sup>135</sup> There is a clear parallel here between the way improvisation can only be modelled in real time, and Heidegger's view that Being is expressed only through historical process, and cannot be described in static formulations. This fact enhances the proposal that improvised rather than fixed musical forms most purely announce Being.

For George Steiner, like Heidegger, the human mind can never have a complete rational grasp of Being in its wholeness. Indeed, there seems inevitably to be a kind of hiatus between Being as a whole and the attempted human "knowledge" of it. Such "knowledge" of Being, as it has appeared in the history of philosophy, is thus always shown to contain some incompleteness. Steiner observes that, for example, an axiomatic system in mathematics 'can prove its own consistency only by including at least one postulate which cannot itself be proved from within that system.'<sup>136</sup> Moreover, both Descartes and Kant included unprovable postulates in their philosophical systems, the former in assuming without apparent justification that God could not have devised the universe in such a way as to deceive reason, the latter in assuming an inbuilt accord between human understanding and perception of things,

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<sup>135</sup> For a discussion of some further implications of seeking to analyse improvised music see Roger T. Dean, *New Structures in Jazz and Improvised Music since 1960* (Milton Keynes: Open Univ. Press, 1992), pp. 191-207. In connection with a general insight that the essence of improvisation cannot be captured through recording, Dean cites Cornelius Cardew: 'Documents such as tape recordings of improvisation are essentially empty, as they preserve chiefly the form that something took and give at best an indistinct hint as to the feeling and cannot convey any sense of time and place.' Cornelius Cardew, *Treatise Handbook* (London: Peters, 1971), p. xvii. Cited in *ibid*, p. 200. Also on analysis of improvisation, see John Rink, "Schenker and Improvisation." *Journal of Music Theory* 37, no. 1 (1993): 1-54.

<sup>136</sup> Steiner, *Real Presences*, p. 213.

despite asserting that “things in themselves” cannot be known. For Steiner every attempt rationally to describe the real as a whole has involved some unprovable assumption.<sup>137</sup>

The ambitious and failed project represented by such rational ontologies drew confidence from the historical rise of the natural sciences whose methodology it emulates, yet even here a similar problem is in fact also found. In constructing any scientific model of the real world, certain properties (such as mass, velocity) are chosen and isolated because they can be precisely measured. Yet there are many other properties to things which cannot be measured ( complexity, for example) and which are not included in the model. ‘To isolate some properties from others is already to construct an abstract model of the world, not to say what the world is *really* like.’<sup>138</sup> Such a model does not express *in toto* what the world *is*. All rational ontologies therefore fail. In words of Ricoeur: ‘What fails is not thinking . . . but the impulse - or to put it a better way, the *hubris* - that impels our thinking to posit itself as the master of meaning . . . [T]ime, escaping our will to mastery, surges forth on the side of what . . . is the true master of meaning.’<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, because of its strong hold over the Western metaphysical tradition, ‘the abandoning of this philosophy’ is felt ‘as a wound’.<sup>140</sup> If reality cannot be domesticated by the human intellect it is presumably kneaded back into itself, into its own absolute otherness, turning a *volte-face* to mock the totalising pretensions of the human mind. Man cannot speak Being: Being, as time and language, speaks man. Only the Cartesian pretensions of a “transcendental

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<sup>137</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 213-214.

<sup>138</sup> Keith Ward, *God, Chance and Necessity* (Oxford: One World, 1996), p. 54.

<sup>139</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol 3, p. 261.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, p. 206.

subject” rooted in the *cogito* could have conceived of the project of objectifying the whole of reality successfully in consciousness as a detached spectator.<sup>141</sup>

A further criticism of rational ontologies of the type which Heidegger repudiated is that they are intellectual paradigms, which, following Thomas Kuhn, arise as accidental products of social and cultural forces and in which ‘an apparently arbitrary element, compounded of personal and historical accident, is always a formative ingredient’.<sup>142</sup> Paradigms are related to contexts of social action which provide the categorial framework for certain kinds of human experience rather than others, and they can only be understood in the context of the history of human societies. Philosophies, including rational ontologies, may ultimately even be projections of what a particular social and intellectual community unconsciously needs to believe. In this light, a psychoanalytic interpretation of the mistaken philosophical quest to totalise the real in the intellect is suggestive, in the sense that rational ontologies invest the chaotic nature of experience with a reassuring semblance of intelligibility.<sup>143</sup>

In these critiques of rational ontologies, reality re-emerges as that which the mind never has fully grasped, and never will grasp, and, as such, reality is released from the illusory golden cage of conceptualisation, reverting to being one thing with historical process, as Heidegger indeed claimed. Through the pursuit of rational ontological mirages, the mind of *Dasein*, laced through and through with absence, since in no sense the master of its own existence, has nevertheless been constantly tempted by a kind of illusion to constitute for itself intellectually the meaning of Being as a whole. Yet a mind which is *prima facie* absent from itself twice (prior to birth and after death) and present to itself only once (in life) seems a wispy standpoint from which to seek a

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<sup>141</sup> See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979) for a discussion of the Cartesian roots of this position.

<sup>142</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1962), p. 4.

<sup>143</sup> See Madison, *Hermeneutics of Postmodernity*, pp. 125-126.

grasp of totality. This mind, borrowed from absence, never asked to be born, is never sure it will not die before it has said all it wants to say, will die either too soon or too late, either still asking questions, or too tired to ask questions any more. Once it is seen how thought must submit to ‘the wound of time’<sup>144</sup> it becomes clear how limited is the scope of human subjectivity.

It is now widely recognised in the philosophical community that the notion of rational ontology formulated in static concepts, a complete explanation of Being in general, in concepts and ideas, is severely problematical. It is suggested here that improvised music replaces rational ontology. A new ontology, Being arises for humans in improvised music as an experience not an intellectual construction: we think *in* Being, not *about* it, and in experiencing Being *in* improvised music we experience it, like infants (and following Heidegger) as time and language. This new ontology represents a growth, not a rupture in the Western discourse on Being. Heidegger already shifted the focus of philosophical analysis away from ideas and towards the language which expresses them. To the question ‘What permits meaningful thinking?’ he replied: language. The present thesis simply looks further in the same direction: ideas indeed presuppose language, but language presupposes prosodic sound. Prosodic sound thus permits meaningful thinking. It is not in the sphere of rational meaning that the word is constitutive of metaphysical meaning for man, but in the wider musical implications of language as auditory. Even as vigorous an opponent of Heidegger as Rudolf Carnap observed, ‘[m]etaphysicians are musicians without musical ability’.<sup>145</sup> This new musical ontology is also akin to the oldest metaphysical intuitions of

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<sup>144</sup> Mark Taylor, “Aparté.” In Ray Hart, *Unfinished Man and the Imagination: Toward an Ontology and a Rhetoric of Revelation* (1968) (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), p. xvi.

<sup>145</sup> See Rudolf Carnap, “The Overcoming of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language.” In *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy: Critical Essays*, Michael Murray (ed.), (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 33-34.

humanity: 'For most primitive peoples the origin of life is a sound: it was God's hum, croak, gibber, laugh or chuckle that stirred creation within the void.'<sup>146</sup>

The argument for resituating human understanding of the real within the musical domain is more than an attempt to respond to the fact that rational, verbal ontological projects are failing. This negative incentive to encounter reality in another medium than verbal rationality is complemented by a powerful positive recognition that, for many discourses outside ontology, parallel needs to establish non-verbal presentations of the real are increasingly felt. Indeed, much modern thought in genetics, physics, cosmology, and other scientific specialisms can only be expressed in mathematics.<sup>147</sup> Steiner describes common speech as 'Ptolemaic' and 'alchemical' in its attempts to describe the world presented by science.<sup>148</sup> There is surely a parallel between the idea that aspects of reality are accessible not to the literate but only to the numerate, and the idea that reality as a whole is known not through rational 'alchemical' verbal meaning but through musical sound.<sup>149</sup>

Music is a deep vein of concrete, existential "wild" knowing surging beneath the abstract, intellectual "tame" knowing of conscious reason. Rather than trying to master Being with concepts, we should listen to Being. It is of course the music *event* itself, not the *fact that* music is the unveiling of truth, that is the truth: the unveiling is not the same as referring to the unveiling. Nor is the inscribing of it in musical notation the unveiling, for this unveiling is the event of music heard. The light does not fall upon music from ourselves, but breaks forth from its interior just as music itself breaks forth

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<sup>146</sup> Wilfred Mellers, "The Meanings of Monody." *Choir and Organ* 8, no. 1 (January/February 2000): 15-18; p. 15.

<sup>147</sup> See Steiner, *Real Presences*, p. 114.

<sup>148</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> In the case of realities known only through mathematical formulae, independence of the linguistic dimension is only relative: the scope and function of the formulae still need to be explained. The formulae do not violate the principle that all meaning seeks a home in language. Music does not need to seek a home in language because it is already a dimension of language. Thus, as ontology, it communicates itself without verbal rationality, but nevertheless linguistically.

from the interior of language, in the form of prosody which grants meaning to the word. This idea of the breaking forth of the true already falls within our understanding, and is not in the least obscure where that breaking forth relates to more prosaic realisations. Thoughts and ideas often come to us, not as directly concluded to, but as a breaking forth from *within* our thinking. Conclusions often occur to us or strike us rather than being arrived at through a controlled process. Heidegger said: 'We never come to thoughts. They come to us.'<sup>150</sup> Thought is often something which happens *to* us before it is something we do. 'A close friend of Einstein's has told me that many of the physicist's greatest ideas came to him so suddenly while he was shaving that he had to move the blade of the straight razor very carefully each morning, lest he cut himself with surprise.'<sup>151</sup>

The musical disclosure of Being appears, moreover, to present a solution to another profound methodological problem inherent in the concept of the rational ontology. There is a hiatus between the knower and the knowable which rational ontologies fail to take account of, and still less bridge, namely that the rationality by which such ontologies seek to define the real cannot rationally demonstrate that there exists any "real" to define. The fact that existence and thought *are* is not rationally demonstrable without circularity. The fact that thought exists cannot be proven, without circularity: a man cannot say that he knows that he knows, without infinite regress. I cannot prove *ad infinitum* that 'I know that I know that I know.' I cannot reach behind the fact that I just do know. Nor can the fact that existence just *is* be demonstrated. The fact that existence "is" is a presupposition of reason because reason is included in things that are. Thus I cannot consciously get behind the fact that I just am. This means that the

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<sup>150</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens* (Pfullingen: n.p., 1954), p. 11. Cited in Fran O'Rourke, "The Gift of Being: Heidegger and Aquinas." In *Heart of the Real*. O' Rourke (ed.), p. 314.

<sup>151</sup> Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (1976) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 44.



horizon of reality cannot be restricted to what rational thinking is able to present to our minds. 'No matter what I think, my own being as a whole is not contained in any thinking or thought.'<sup>152</sup> Experience goes before all systems of thought. The resistance to 'antiseptic rationalism, and indeed all abstract thought which passes over the whole person'<sup>153</sup> was already strongly felt in the eighteenth century by 'Rousseau, Jakobi, Herder, Fichte, Schelling . . . in their efforts to get at the experiential fullness of human existence in the world.'<sup>154</sup> In the late nineteenth century, Nietzsche and Dilthey represent a similarly oriented school of "life philosophy," and, in addition, the following quotation from Newman is suggestive: 'If I may not assume that I exist, and in a particular way, that is, with a particular mental constitution, I have nothing to speculate about, and had better let speculation alone. Such as I am, it is my all; this is my essential stand-point, and must be taken for granted; otherwise, thought is but an idle amusement, not worth the trouble'.<sup>155</sup>

Being thus comes before rational thinking, which means that knowledge of Being will be found in experience somehow prior to the rationally meaning word. As William James said: 'The unreasoned and immediate assurance is the deep thing in us, the reasoned argument is but a surface exhibition.'<sup>156</sup> Following Kierkegaard, existence must be thought 'not dispassionately and objectively, but with the whole of our personality.'<sup>157</sup> 'The unshakeable belief that rational thought, guided by causality, can penetrate to the depths of beings . . . This sublime metaphysical illusion is an instinctual accompaniment to science'.<sup>158</sup> As Heidegger realised, because, by

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<sup>152</sup> Jaspers, *Existence*, p. 70.

<sup>153</sup> Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, p. 101.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> John Henry Newman, *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870) (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1979), p. 272.

<sup>156</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Longmans and Green, 1902), p. 74.

<sup>157</sup> Peter Rohde, *Søren Kierkegaard* (1959) (London: Allen and Unwin, 1963), p. 149.

<sup>158</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, no documentation. Cited in David West, *An Introduction to Continental Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 130.

definition, rational “ontologies” can never get to the heart of the real, they constantly contradict one another, and, because history is the matrix, it is not possible to say that a particular rational ontology will never be revised or replaced, which disqualifies it from the start from being a final expression of Being. Music, however, reaches out from a deeper place beneath the word, in much the same way as existence reaches out to man prior to man’s attempts to think existence. ‘[T]he musical work of art expressly sets to work that originary movement [Ur-Bewegung] of being’s address to us and our correspondence with it . . . For here the common origin of all human languages is set to work. That is why it has been possible to describe music as the ‘universal language’: man’s relation to that which truly sustains his essence . . . In an emphatic sense, therefore, music is the art of man’s ‘belonging and hearkening to the world’ [Weltzugehörigkeit], and thus the art of the very play of time and space.’<sup>159</sup> Unlike metaphysical philosophy, music never contradicts itself because its disclosure of Being is not in the partial representation associated with concepts, but a primary experience of time itself expressed in a medium which also belongs within the overall phenomenon of language.

In Ricoeur’s post-Cartesian concept of the subject, the individual is always already constituted by what is outside himself and ‘[c]onceptualization cannot reach meaning directly or create meaning out of itself *ex nihilo*; it cannot dispense with the detour of mediation through figurative structures.’<sup>160</sup> Likewise, for Heidegger, the subject is constituted by language. It is proposed now that, *via* such a hermeneutical detour, through music, *Dasein* is constituted. In this way, although we make music, we do not “speak” music: music “speaks” man. On the one hand, the power of music belongs to ourselves, since humans alone have the power to produce music. On the other hand, as

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<sup>159</sup> Pöltner, “Mozart and Heidegger.” p. 16.

<sup>160</sup> Ricoeur. In Kearney, *Dialogues*, p. 23.

an emotional power which overcomes us, music does not belong to us. The power of music grips and seizes a human being entirely and immediately in a way unparalleled by any other art. We cannot identify the ultimate source from which the power of music arises. It does not come from ourselves; indeed rather than being in control of music, music overwhelms us. Moreover, it is not the violin which seizes us but the violin music. And it is not the singer or composer who captivates us but the song. We are seized by the music itself, not its physical causes.<sup>161</sup> When music seizes the human person in this way it surely elicits that ‘primal experience of astonishment’<sup>162</sup> that anything exists at all, the attitude of wonder by which, for Heidegger, man is brought into the presence of Being, and which he calls “attunement” (*Stimmung*).<sup>163</sup> Music seizes us in an energising thrill which infuses wonder, because here Being is *speaking us*. Composer John Taverner has observed of music that ‘[w]e do not dissect it; it dissects us.’<sup>164</sup> Jean Düring also writes of a primordial human experience of the performer’s being swept up by music as by a force from outside himself, and speaks especially of improvisation in this connection.<sup>165</sup> For Gabriel Marcel, ‘existence is inseparable from a certain astonishment.’<sup>166</sup> For him likewise, ‘[t]he engaged musician . . . is possessed by the real in such a way that he no longer knows exactly whether it is he who is fashioning the music, or music which fashions him.’<sup>167</sup> Marcel has written that when he comes to love a piece of music slowly yet more deeply ‘it obliges me to invent new categories for it; it exercises its authority on me, it becomes a centre which

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<sup>161</sup> See Pöltner, “Mozart and Heidegger,” pp. 18-19.

<sup>162</sup> Safranski, *Heidegger*, p. 105.

<sup>163</sup> ‘The attuning which became the grounding attuning of the first beginning was that which the Greeks named as the origin of philosophy: *thaumazein* (wonder, *Erstaunen*.)’ Gail Stenstad, “Attuning and Transformation.” *Heidegger Studies* 7 (1991): 75-88; p. 77.

<sup>164</sup> John Taverner, “Notes from the Celestial City.” Interview with Jeremy Begbie. *Third Way* (December 1998): 18-21; p. 19.

<sup>165</sup> See Düring, “Point de vue,” pp. 43-44.

<sup>166</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity* (New York: Noonday, 1964), pp. 63-64.

<sup>167</sup> Elaine R. Schenk, “Musical Meaning in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel.” Ph. D dissertation, University of New York, 1994, p. 187. Reference to Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope* (1945) (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 145.

imposes on me a regrouping of myself.’<sup>168</sup> Music is disclosive of ‘the world in which I move when I am improvising on the piano, a world which is also, I am quite certain, the world in which the creative musician constructs his melodies. It is a world in which everything is in communication, in which everything is bound together.’<sup>169</sup> ‘How many times, when I felt cut off from myself, that is from my profound roots, and somehow absorbed by the everyday, as soon as I sat down at the piano and let my hands wander over the keys, have I not had a kind of physical feeling of sails being filled, of a heart that began to beat once more.’<sup>170</sup> ‘How music possesses us is a question to which we know no credible, let alone materially examinable answer, as might be expected of something which resists formulation in words. All we have are further images. And the defiant self-evidence of human experience.’<sup>171</sup> If it is music which possesses man rather than man who possesses music, then it is presumably only man who divides music into separate musical “pieces.” Where music is not divided into pieces, people pass in and out of it and music becomes a state of Being with a different significance from music as symbolic form. ‘The communal music of African peoples from the Shona to the Arabs, with its ties to both mystical trance and tribal conviviality, often goes on for hours without interruption; it does not comprise ‘pieces’.’<sup>172</sup> It may indeed often be protracted improvisation. Similarly, for John Cage: ‘[Q]uite a lot of people in India feel that music is continuous; it is only we who turn away. This is a cliché in Indian thinking and, surely, in Indian experience.’<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952), p. 233. Cited in Sam Keen, *Apology for Wonder* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 34.

<sup>169</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being II: Faith and Reality* (1949) (London: Harvill Press, 1951), p. 15.

<sup>170</sup> Gabriel Marcel, “La musique et le Règne de l’esprit.” In *L’esthétique musicale de Gabriel Marcel* (Paris: Aubier, 1980), p. 58. Cited in Schenk, “Musical Meaning,” p. 131.

<sup>171</sup> Steiner, *Real Presences*, p. 198.

<sup>172</sup> Lee Konitz, “All the Things ‘All the Things You Are’ Is.” In *Jazz Text: Voice and Improvisation in Poetry, Jazz, and Song*, Charles O. Hartman (ed.), (Princeton NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1991), p. 9.

<sup>173</sup> William Duckworth, “Anything I Say will be Misunderstood: An Interview with John Cage.” In *John Cage at Seventy-Five*, Richard Fleming and William Duckworth (eds.), (Lewisburg: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1989), p. 22.

The desire which prompts philosophers to the metaphysical quest has probably always been rooted in the search for beauty though generally in an unconscious way. There has always been an underlying assumption that the “truth” they hope to disclose will satisfy the mind with a consoling intellectual vision which is similar to satisfaction found in an aesthetic object. Truth is sought because it pleases. Music is where the desire which secretly drives metaphysics is finally emancipated. Music converts philosophy back to desire, mirroring philosophy’s roots in desire back upon itself. In words of Gabriel Marcel: ‘It is nearly impossible to express in conceptual language this secret action of music upon the heart of a thought that is passionately engaged in a metaphysical search.’<sup>174</sup> Heidegger’s belief was that philosophy was destined to find a second beginning, through a shift similar to the ancient transformation away from pre-Socratic participation in Being,<sup>175</sup> though in this case a positive shift. The event of music, as the new path for thinking, seems to provide the solution to Heidegger’s problematic to the effect that the question ‘What *is* Being?’ leads into a hermeneutical circle in which we are inevitably involved in a pre-comprehension of the answer, for we cannot even ask ‘What is Being?’ without using some part of the verb “to be.”<sup>176</sup> This paradox implies that Being cannot be formulated in response to the question ‘What is . . . ?’ Because Being is anterior to thinking, that is to say, already present in the *is* of the question, it can only be *pre*-understood.

This pre-understanding is music. For Heidegger’s thought, a distinction obtains between the ontic and the ontological. ‘The term ‘ontic’ designates everything that exists. The term ‘ontological’ designates the curious, astonished, alarmed thinking

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<sup>174</sup> Gabriel Marcel. “La musique dans ma vie et mon oeuvre.” Lecture given in Vienna, 19th September, 1959, and Brussels, 15th October, 1959. In Marcel, *L’esthétique musicale* (incomplete documentation), p. 95. Cited in Schenk, “Musical Meaning,” p. 32.

<sup>175</sup> See William Barrett, “Heidegger and Modern Existentialism.” In *Men of Ideas: Some Creators of Contemporary Philosophy. Dialogues with Brian Magee* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1978), p. 94.

<sup>176</sup> See O’ Rourke, “Gift of Being,” pp. 310-311.

about the fact that I exist and that anything exists at all.’<sup>177</sup> In connection with this distinction between Being as ontically pre-understood and Being as ontologically examined and questioned, Pattison makes the observation that:

because Heidegger’s own statement regarding what is involved in the second beginning of philosophy requires the postulating of a movement beyond all prevailing paradigms of knowledge (shaped as these are by the metaphysical presuppositions of philosophy’s first beginnings), the very distinction that Heidegger himself makes between the ontical and the ontological is rendered questionable - if, that is, the ‘merely ontical’ is no longer evaluated according to criteria derived from metaphysics. In other words, isn’t the division between the merely ontical and fundamental ontology itself all too redolent of such metaphysical dualities as the essential and the existential or the necessary and the contingent? If this question is taken seriously . . . then the ‘turning’ towards the second beginning of philosophy that Heidegger so eloquently invokes will itself demand an occurrence in the realm of the ontical or of experience *before* it can become an event in thought.<sup>178</sup>

This position would tend to enhance a claim that Being is disclosed in the music event, both the musical event as normally understood and the musical event which is present in all speech events, the musical event always remaining logically prior to any attempt to formulate it in words (it preconditions the words themselves), and situated in the realm of the ontical and the pre-thought. Music is Pattison’s ‘occurrence.’ Derrida speaks also of a certain kind of ‘second beginning,’ and music provides an answer to his question: ‘[F]rom what site or non-site can philosophy as such appear to itself as other than itself, so that it can interrogate and reflect upon itself in an original manner? Such a non-site or alterity would be radically irreducible to philosophy. But the problem is that such a non-site cannot be defined or situated by means of philosophical language.’<sup>179</sup> The sound which underlies the word cannot be ‘defined or situated by philosophical language’ because the latter presupposes sound, and, as has been argued here, music. Music is the ‘non-site or alterity’ and is ‘radically irreducible to philosophy’ because, being a hidden presupposition of language, it cannot be objectified *in* language, cannot be referred to without an implied circularity. It was no

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<sup>177</sup> Safranski, *Heidegger*, p. 150.

<sup>178</sup> Pattison, *Agnosis*, p. 169.

<sup>179</sup> Jacques Derrida. In Kearney, *Dialogues*, p. 108.

less a writer than Lyotard who observed that art ‘present[s] the fact that the unrepresentable exists.’<sup>180</sup>

The musical event is thus the ‘unrepresentable before’ (Levinas), the ‘dreadfully ancient’ (Blanchot),<sup>181</sup> the non-fundamental fundament which forever funds and refunds experience as the ‘non-reflexive, pre-theoretical, pre-thetic given,’<sup>182</sup> the primordial word of Being ‘left unthought,’<sup>183</sup> an ‘uncanny ‘fundament’ that neither is nor is not.’<sup>184</sup> It cannot be brought to verbal meaning without generating an infinite regress: to identify it, I would have to use more words, underlain by still more musical events, musical events which would in turn need to be explained in more words . . . etc. *ad infinitum*. Yet, as the voice of Being, the musical event announces everything. In words of Marcel, ‘existence . . . comes to us as something which contains and also goes beyond everything to which we might seek to reduce it.’<sup>185</sup> Moreover, existence is temporality as well as language, and only the primordial improvisatory expression of music, wedded to a single seamless stretch of time, can articulate this temporal dimension fully. Other spontaneous attempts to be expressive in musical performances (Chapter 1) and prosodically expressive speech, are improvisation’s cognates, for these too are expressive in virtue of improvisatory decisions taken in the temporal flow.

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<sup>180</sup> Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, p. 78.

<sup>181</sup> See Taylor, “Aparté.” In Hart, *Unfinished Man*, p. xv.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid*, p. xiv.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>185</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being II*, p. 33.

## PART THREE: MUSICAL IMPROVISATION AND HOPE

### Chapter 6

#### *Improvisation and the Fundamental Hope of 'Dasein'*

##### *1 Music and Projection in 'Dasein'*

For Heidegger, *Dasein* is characterised by a form of forward projection:

Understanding always presses forward towards possibilities of being which it is 'not yet' because, inherent in Understanding, is the existential structure of 'projection'. Projection does not mean that *Dasein* has some plan or design which it has thought out in advance and which it hopes to carry through in one way or another - though this may result from projection. Rather, projection means that *Dasein* has always already projected possibilities of being on the basis of its self and the kind of situation in which it finds itself . . . As thrown being-in-the-world *Dasein* always is already projecting possibilities of being whether or not it is ever aware of doing so.<sup>1</sup>

This sense of implicatedness with a future belongs to the very structure of *Dasein*, and to the essence of what it means to be alive, an *a priori* comparable with experiences of embodiment or of language. Humans feel their very existence as a future which comes along, which they meet, and into which they carry on. Thus they do not exist with the result that they have a future, as though they first existed in some static atemporal condition and only then carried on, as it were, into the future: humans exist because they have a future. Existence is a projection into the future.

The projective nature of *Dasein* which defines human existence is made possible by the human imagination. For Heidegger 'the imagination and the temporal nature of man are the fundamental conditions that make understanding possible; and, of course, temporality and imagination are precisely what we see in the activity of projecting possibilities and meanings and even the world itself.'<sup>2</sup> Kearney asks: 'Are we not [imagining] every day, every night, every time we dream, pretend, play, fantasize, invent, lapse into reverie, remember times past or project better times to come?'<sup>3</sup> For Bronowski, '[m]an is distinguished from other animals by his imaginative gifts.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Macann, *Four Phenomenological Philosophers: Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining from Husserl to Lyotard* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> J. Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man* (1973) (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1976), p. 20.



Gaston Bachelard writes of the way in which this imagination which defines the human person is precisely the faculty which opens up the future in human experience: '[T]he imagination separates us from the past as well as from reality; it faces the future. To the *function of reality*, wise in experience of the past, as it is defined by traditional psychology, should be added a *function of unreality*, which is equally positive . . . If we cannot imagine, we cannot foresee.'<sup>5</sup> In a similar vein, Ray Hart has written: 'The 'ontological reach' of the imagination refers to the order upon which it opens and in which it participates. Imagination intends, and extends, the realm of the 'coming to be.' Stated abstractly, the domain upon which imagination opens is ontological incompleteness, being aborning, unfinished dominions whose finishing is not a matter of rightly reading a blueprint of formality'.<sup>6</sup>

The reason why imagination is oriented towards the future is that it always begets an image which has not been formed before. Humans can never imagine the same way twice. Even to attempt to imagine the same way twice will entail that more or less inchoate impressions which will have been registered by the mind between the first and second attempted imaginings of the same object will affect the way in which that object is imagined the second time, for the whole of a person's consciously or unconsciously remembered experience contributes somehow to the way in which that person imagines at any given moment. This unrepeatability of the imaginative act is in contrast to acts of reason. A reason-based activity (like an act of arithmetic) may be repeated unchanged, indeed arithmetic would not be possible if this were not the case. It is of course true that if an identical arithmetical act is performed a second time a different imaginative ambience may attend the act from the first time the arithmetical act was performed (for example, a mood of boredom may arise from having to check a

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<sup>5</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994). p. xxxiv.

<sup>6</sup> Hart, *Unfinished Man*, p. 135.

calculation), and in this sense the second act will differ from the first. However, the rational aspect of the arithmetical calculation is absolutely repeatable in a way which makes for a clear contrast with the unrepeatable nature of imagination. So laced with newness is every imaginative event, because imagination always somehow draws from the well of the imaginer's entire experience up to the instant when the imagination acts, that even acts of imagination related to the past, such as memory, will never arise in exactly the same form. Such an attempt to employ imagination in a purely reproductive capacity, for instance, an attempt to remember something very simple exactly as it was, will produce a modified image at each attempt, even if modified only by mood, context or association, thus realising imagination's invariably productive dimension however slightly or elusively: '[R]emembering is not the re-excitation of innumerable fixed, lifeless and fragmentary traces. It is an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organised past reactions or experience'.<sup>7</sup>

This evocation of the future is indeed one of the essential functions of the imagination in human understanding. A human "mind" consisting entirely of rational processes could not conceive of a future at all. Avery Dulles has remarked that '[r]adically new meanings cannot be grasped by formal reasoning, for the mind in such reasoning remains fixed in the mental categories with which it began,'<sup>8</sup> and acceptance of the possibility of radically new meanings is undoubtedly integral to any recognition that a future can arise for us. '[F]resh and unforeseen meanings arise'<sup>9</sup> he adds, only when 'clues work on the imagination with symbolic power.'<sup>10</sup> For Michael Polanyi,

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<sup>7</sup> Frederic C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1932), p. 213.

<sup>8</sup> Dulles, *Craft of Theology*, p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* References to Polanyi, "Creative Imagination"; Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1975).

imagination means ‘all thoughts of things that are not present, or not yet present - or perhaps never to be present’<sup>11</sup> and this brings us back to the earlier point that imagination and futurity are mutually implicated.

Where, though, is the imagination, this future-directed power, at its most concentrated? Following some strong hints in Jean-Paul Sartre, for whom ‘imaginative consciousness . . . presents itself to itself . . . as a spontaneity which produces and holds on to the object as an image,’<sup>12</sup> it seems that it might be claimed that spontaneity is the intensest activity of the imagination. For example, in largely relinquishing rational deliberation, the spontaneous act comes nearest to achieving the total emancipation of the imagination from reason and approaches a reason-free imagining or a kind of ecstasy of the imagination. Of course, some train of ideas has always hatched the spontaneous act. It is not an isolated phenomenon in consciousness however much it may appear to be. But this qualification does not affect the fact that, in the spontaneous moment, the human person has chosen to dissolve the now into the future, to lean upon the future, to face the future with a unique exclusiveness. Conscious reason is cumbrous, for it often acts more effectively the longer it has for deliberation, and even though it operates in the present like spontaneity, it feels rooted in the past, for reasoning, unlike spontaneity, quite consciously depends on what the mind already knows. The will to spontaneity, by contrast, is a place of looking forward, because it does not look to the past as the ground of its action, and even though spontaneous choices are informed by unconscious reasoning processes and past experiences, yet it remains the case that, in spontaneity, the acting subject *feels* that his or her reason is obviated in favour of an impulse rooted in the present moment and that the umbilical cord with the past has

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<sup>11</sup> Polanyi, “Creative Imagination,” p. 89.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination* (1940) (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 14. See also pp. 18; 144; 153; 172; 181; 183; 185. See also, Kearney, *Wake*, p. 227.

been cut. There is a subjective disappropriation of the past. Bergson said: 'Every human work in which there is invention, every voluntary act in which there is freedom, every movement of an organism that manifests spontaneity, brings something new into the world.'<sup>13</sup> In the core of spontaneous action, it is the future-oriented imagination which is felt to determine the nature of the action, rather than experience of the past, and in spontaneous acts humans existentially experience the uprising of the future in a unique way.

What spontaneity especially brings to prominent awareness is the primordial, perpetual imaginative projection of the self into the future as described by Heidegger. All this would tend to confirm a special link between spontaneity and the projection of the self towards the future. If projection towards the future is at the heart of human being-in-the-world, and if in turn spontaneity is the place where this futurity is most fully laid hold upon, then spontaneity will be at the heart of mankind's ongoing experience of being-in-the-world too. This suggests an important role for spontaneity in artistic creation since, for Heidegger as was seen (Chapter 4, Section II) artistic creation is an unveiling of Being, and '[a]rt is regarded . . . neither as a realm of cultural achievement, nor as a manifestation of spirit, but belongs rather to the appropriative event . . . from out of which the 'meaning of being' . . . is first determined.'<sup>14</sup> Art products which prominently feature spontaneous creativity will be primordial appropriations in art of *Dasein's* structure of projection and an essential expression of man's being-in-the-world. This throws further light on the claim made in Chapter 5 that musical improvisation is the privileged place where Being speaks. It was seen that, to a lesser extent, Being also speaks in musical expressiveness in general which, because it is applied to already existing music, is inhabited by a lower

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<sup>13</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (1907) (London: Macmillan, 1928), p. 252.

<sup>14</sup> Pöltner, "Mozart and Heidegger," p. 6. Reference to Heidegger. *Ursprung*, p. 99.

degree of spontaneity. The definition of music in Chapter 5 was extended to embrace speech prosody. This suggests that to speak spontaneous words with prosodical alacrity is also musical improvisation, while spontaneous prosodical alacrity applied to already existing words entails, like expressive performance of already existing music, a slightly lower degree of musical spontaneity. It is now inferred in this Chapter, additionally, that the practice of musical improvisation, either in the commonly received sense of the term, or when inhabiting prosodic speech, is where the nature of *Dasein* is most clearly expressed in its aspect of futural projection.

All music, whether improvised or not, opens up the future in a way which is special among the arts. This attribution to music of a capacity to direct the mind towards the future has roots in the fact that sound, like the present moment, only exists when it is going out of existence. Ong speaks of ‘one characteristic of sound’ as ‘its evanescence, its relationship to time.’<sup>15</sup> He writes:

There is no way to stop sound and have sound. I can stop a moving picture camera and hold one frame fixed on the screen. If I stop the movement of sound, I have nothing - only silence, no sound at all. All sensation takes place in time, but no other sensory field totally resists a holding action, stabilization, in quite this way. Vision can register motion, but it can also register immobility. Indeed it favors immobility, for to examine something closely by vision, we prefer to have it quiet. We often reduce motion to a series of still shots the better to see what motion is. There is no equivalent of a still shot for sound.<sup>16</sup>

In this sense the whole of the sound world is disclosive of the future, and insofar as this sonic disclosure of the future comes to artistic expression in *Dasein*, it does so in the form of music, because music is sound expressed artistically. Nevertheless, improvisatory music plays a special role in evoking projection in *Dasein* because ‘improvisation embraces, even celebrates, music’s essentially ephemeral nature. For many people involved in it, one of the enduring attractions of improvisation is its momentary existence: the absence of a residual document.’<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 71.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Bailey, *Improvisation*, p. 35.

## *II Improvisatory Music and the Fundamental Hope*

For Heidegger's philosophy: '[Care (*Sorge*)] is one of the broadest characteristics of human life . . . It involves the forward thrust of the existent into his possibilities in tension with the factual conditions and limitations that he already brings with him'.<sup>18</sup> 'Heidegger uses ['care'] in the meaning of providing, planning, looking after, calculating, foreseeing . . . We are caring and providing creatures because we expressly experience a time horizon open ahead.'<sup>19</sup> Care is thus closely related to futural projection. Heidegger writes that *Dasein* 'reveals itself as *care*. If we are to work out this basic existential phenomenon, we must distinguish it from phenomena which might be proximally identified with care, such as will, wish, addiction, and urge (*Wille, Wunsch, Hang und Drang*). Care cannot be derived from these, since they themselves are founded upon it.'<sup>20</sup> Hope is thus founded on care: 'Willing and wishing are rooted with ontological necessity in *Dasein* as care'.<sup>21</sup>

There appears from psychological case studies to be a fundamental human hoping rooted in the projection and care of *Dasein*. Hope appears to be integral to futural projection. Joseph Pieper speaks of work carried out at the University Hospital of Heidelberg by Professor Herbert Plügge with people whose life hopes had been severely dashed, such as those suffering from incurable illnesses, or who had tried to commit suicide. Plügge identified a special kind of hope, different from ordinary everyday hoping. This hope was not directed to success, good news or physical health, or other definable objects, and Plügge described it as "fundamental" or "genuine" hoping. This type of hoping has its object, not in something which can be *had*, but in a self-realisation or personal wholeness. For Plügge, a person's existence is founded

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<sup>18</sup> Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, p. 169.

<sup>19</sup> Safranski, *Heidegger*, p. 157.

<sup>20</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 39, p. 227.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, section 41, p. 238.

upon this mysterious hope.<sup>22</sup> Pieper makes a close correlation, even perhaps an identification between hope and projection in *Dasein*: '[M]an's existence itself has the structure of 'not yet'; I could say also: it has the structure of hope.'<sup>23</sup> Here hope is presented implicitly as the central core of projecting *Dasein*. Also speaking of an unthematized fundamental hope, 'Gabriel Marcel several times formulates the profound insight that *the* hope always reaches beyond the objects which originally kindled it; and that *the* hope loses its finest quality as soon as man makes conditions, and even as soon as he tries to imagine concretely what he is hoping for.'<sup>24</sup> For Marcel also, unthematized hope is a founding necessity of human experience so that 'the soul which despairs shuts itself up against the central and mysterious assurance in which we believe we have found the principle of all positivity.'<sup>25</sup> Clearly for Marcel too, in this passage, it is hope by which projection in *Dasein* is most fully expressed. For Macquarrie, hope is 'coextensive with human life itself.'<sup>26</sup> He speaks of a 'pre-reflective hope . . . the basis or condition of hope already there in the constitution of human existence as the fundamental tendency of the human being toward hoping . . . [T]his root of hoping is an undeniable fact in human nature as we know it in ourselves or observe it in others.'<sup>27</sup> It gives rise to a 'diffused hopefulness in all human action.'<sup>28</sup> Andrew Greeley has noted that '[h]uman nature has a built-in propensity to hope . . . Death research, resuscitation research, game analysis all demonstrate this powerful and persistent tendency of humans to hope even when the situation seems hopeless, even when they can find no specific content to their hope.'<sup>29</sup> Thus, someone with a terminal

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<sup>22</sup> See Joseph Pieper, "Hope and History." In *Heart of the Real*, O'Rourke (ed.), pp. 409-411.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 411.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 419.

<sup>25</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having: An Existentialist Diary* (1935) (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 119.

<sup>26</sup> John Macquarrie, *Christian Hope* (London: Mowbrays, 1978), p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Andrew M. Greeley, *The Religious Imagination* (Los Angeles: Sadlier, 1981), p. 7.

illness may persist in hoping where there seems to be nothing consciously hoped for.<sup>30</sup> In Heidegger's analysis, by contrast, *Dasein* who faces death is in fact marked largely by anxiety. '[Heidegger] contends that an awareness of one's death and the resultant anxiety are equally natural to man. We can no more escape the anxiety of death than we can escape the human condition.'<sup>31</sup> However, '[t]he French writers . . . are generally inclined to modify Heidegger's pessimism. They think that man, despite the odds, can do something other and better than stoically accepting his sad fate.'<sup>32</sup> Marcel is one such French writer, as has just been seen, and the clinical data above also suggest that a modification of Heidegger's emphasis, towards a view of *Dasein* which emphasises projection as hope rather than as anxiety, is indicated as appropriate. Even confronted with death, humans largely continue to hope, because hope is to be identified with projecting *Dasein*. It is the fundamental mood of projection.

Ernst Bloch has analysed extensively in *The Principle of Hope* 'the surplus of utopian thought from early Greek philosophers to the present day.'<sup>33</sup> This inbuilt human tendency for constant hoping is, for Bloch, profoundly implicated with the experience of music: 'Both the existence and the concept of music are only attained in conjunction with the new object-theory, with the *metaphysics of divination and utopia*.'<sup>34</sup> Bloch alludes to '[music's] power of nostalgia, a nostalgia not for an old country we have left behind but for a virgin one, not for a past but for a future'.<sup>35</sup> '*It is that which does not yet exist, which is lost and dimly sensed, our encounters with the self and the 'we' concealed in the dark and in the latency of every lived instant, our*

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<sup>30</sup> See Marcel, *Being and Having*, p. 79; Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope* (Chicago: Regnery, 1951), pp. 46-49; Kenneth T. Gallagher, *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (1962) (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1975), p. 73.

<sup>31</sup> Lepp, *Death and Its Mysteries*, p. 62. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 40, pp. 228-235.

<sup>32</sup> Lepp, *ibid*, p. 132.

<sup>33</sup> Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, Paul Knight, "Translator's Introduction." In Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol 1 (1959) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. xxviii.

<sup>34</sup> Ernst Bloch, "The Philosophy of Music." In *Essays on the Philosophy of Music* (1974) (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), p. 131.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 132.



*utopia calling to itself through charity, music and metaphysics, but not to be realised on earth.*'<sup>36</sup> 'Musical expression as a whole is thus ultimately *vice-regent for an articulation which goes much further than anything so far known.*'<sup>37</sup> The psychological fact that music generates an unthematized hope within the human person is a motif of such ubiquity in recorded human experience as to need no exemplification here. Once again, this psychological fact was to be expected in advance of the evidence, given the truth of the present proposal that music, as the place where Being speaks, must in virtue of this also be the primordial generator of the fundamental hoping which characterises human projection in *Dasein*. Most of the music produced by human beings over their entire history has, of course, been improvised, and it was shown in Section I how improvised music, including prosody, projects a future with primordial intensity. It has now been indicated in this Section that this future is fundamentally hopeful, and it is inferred that musical improvisation articulates even more fully than music in general this fundamental hope of *Dasein*. Thus improvised music and prosody are where humans project in hope.

If improvisatory music directs the mind to future fundamental hope in a special way, its marked presence in societies which are animated by other powerful hopes and aspirations is perhaps to be expected, and if its presence were discovered markedly in these societies, this would tend to support the ontological claim for music so far made, by showing its concrete expression in human life. A social conjunction of improvisation in music and preoccupation with hope for futurity is indeed exemplified in the music of slave communities in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America. 'From the midst of their very enslavement [the slaves] looked *forward* to the time of deliverance when they would leave the unbearable oppression of the world around

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 133.

<sup>37</sup> Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, vol 3, p. 1069. Chapter entitled, "Venturing Beyond and Most Intense World of man in Music [*sic*]."

them.’<sup>38</sup> Their perspective ‘enabled oppressed blacks to realize that their existence transcended historical limitations. This emphasis is, perhaps, the most important contribution of black religion as reflected in the spirituals.’<sup>39</sup> ‘The Divine *liberation* of the oppressed from slavery is the central theological concept in the black spirituals.’<sup>40</sup>

Prior even to any consideration of the improvisatory music to which they were sung, it is clear that the words themselves of the spirituals were often explicitly oriented towards a hoped-for future, or at least deplored the circumstances in which the singer now found herself, in a way which might be regarded as implicitly rather than explicitly ordered hopefully toward a future:

Soon-a-will be done with the trouble of the world;  
 Soon-a-will be done with the trouble of the world;  
 Going home to live with God.<sup>41</sup>

When dat ar ole chariot comes,  
 I’m gwine to lebe you,  
 I’m boun’ for de promised land,  
 Frien’s, I’m gwine to lebe you.

I’m sorry, frien’s, to lebe you,  
 Farewell! oh, farewell!  
 But I’ll meet you in de mornin’,  
 Farewell! oh, farewell!

I’ll meet you in de mornin’,  
 When you reach de promised land;  
 On de oder side of Jordan,  
 For i’m boun’ for de promised land.<sup>42</sup>

No more hard trial in de kingdom; no more tribulation,  
 no more parting, no more quarreling, back-biting in  
 de kingdom,  
 No more sunshine fer to bu’n you; no more rain fer to  
 wet you.  
 Every day will be Sunday in heaven.<sup>43</sup>

I must walk my lonesome valley  
 I got to walk it for myself,  
 Nobody else can walk it for me,

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<sup>38</sup> James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (New York: Seabury, 1972), p. 102.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 106.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in *ibid*, p. 64.

<sup>42</sup> Cited in *ibid*, p. 89.

<sup>43</sup> Cited in *ibid*, p. 99.

I got to walk it for myself.

I must go and stand my trial,  
I got to stand it for myself,  
Nobody else can stand it for me,  
I got to stand it for myself.

Jesus walked his lonesome valley,  
He had to walk it for himself,  
Nobody else could walk it for him,  
He had to walk it for himself.<sup>44</sup>

O wretched man that I am  
O wretched man that I am  
O wretched man that I am  
O who will deliver po' me.

I'm bowed down with a burden of woe  
I'm bowed down with a burden of woe  
I'm bowed down with a burden of woe  
O who will deliver po' me.<sup>45</sup>

I'm a poor pilgrim of sorrow.  
I'm in this world alone.  
No hope in this world for tomorrow.  
I'm trying to make heaven my home.

Sometimes I am tossed and driven.  
Sometimes I don't know where to roam.  
I've heard of a city called heaven.  
I've started to make it my home.

My mother's gone on the pure glory.  
My father's still walking in sin.  
My sisters and brothers won't own me  
Because I'm tryin' to get in.<sup>46</sup>

Cone suggests that not only the explicit verbal meaning but also the prosodic style of the words expressed a hoping: '[B]lack slaves were affirming their freedom through the rhythm, the passion, and the motion of their language. If the words did not sound right, feel right, and move smoothly from the lips, then how could they be an expression of the soul's yearning for freedom?'<sup>47</sup> For Cone, the spoken verbal style of the spirituals suggests an animated prosody, a spontaneous "musical" delivery. In common with the present thesis, he links this prosodic animation with hope.

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<sup>44</sup> Cited in *ibid*, p. 67.

<sup>45</sup> Cited in *ibid*, p. 68.

<sup>46</sup> Cited in *ibid*, p. 91.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 48.

This is a convincing proposal since a general link between intensified tonal and rhythmic characteristics of vocal delivery, and intensified hope, is indeed known well from ordinary life. The pleading voice which hopes for what it begs, the angry voice which hopes that its demands will be met, the fearful voice which hopes that its fears will not be realised, or simply the voice which hopes especially to be listened to, are all often characterised by intensified prosodic attributes which are spontaneous. Phenomenologically, the conspicuous factor in intensified prosody, presented here as a fundamental form of music, is a greater employment of higher vocal pitches, for '[o]ur voice goes up when we are aroused by fear, anger, excitement, or intense interest.'<sup>48</sup> Indeed, it is hard to imagine anybody *lowering* the pitch of their intonation when reciting the preceding slave spirituals emphatically; or, at least, if it can be imagined, such delivery could hardly have been the usual form. Dwight Bolinger's theories root speech intonation in the universal, prelinguistic infant use of pitch to signal emotion, as when the infant's rising cry indicates hope for some wish to be fulfilled. He writes: 'The infant cry is the earliest form of vocalization and it seems to be the same around the world.'<sup>49</sup> Typical are the vocalisations of a certain infant of one year old, who used higher voice pitches when he 'wanted something or was eager to have something, or if he was having difficulty in doing something and needed someone else's help . . . Falling pitches . . . were used to accompany an action that [he] had just performed, also if he had found or discovered something, or if he was simply content.'<sup>50</sup> Bolinger's theories imply 'a universal common core for intonation,'<sup>51</sup> and parallel the present thesis in the way they interpret raised pitch. Bolinger suggests that 'high or rising pitch

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<sup>48</sup> Dwight Bolinger, *Intonation and its Uses: Melody in Grammar and Discourse* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1989), p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Harold Clumeck, "Topics in the Acquisition of Mandarin Phonology: a Case Study." *Papers and Reports on Child Language Development* (Stanford University) 14 (1977): 37-73; p. 46. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> D. Robert Ladd, *Intonational Phonology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), p. 113.

signals interest, arousal, and incompleteness'.<sup>52</sup> The present thesis would understand these three dimensions, interest, arousal and incompleteness, as sub-categories of hope. They are expressed by higher pitches in this way, because music is where humans project in hope. This is why the voice shifts into a more musical gear in interest, arousal and incompleteness. It is emphasised by Bolinger that his analysis of vocal behaviour is not confined to particular cultures.<sup>53</sup>

In slave spirituals, hoping for freedom, as expressed through intensified spoken language sounds, extends itself into the musical improvisations with which the words were often clothed. This is because there is a natural concomitance between animated prosody and spontaneous music. Animated prosody is already a movement in the direction of spontaneous song. The slaves' resulting musical improvisation in song is exemplified by this anecdote:

When asked where black people got their songs, one slave responded: 'Dey make 'em, sah.' He paused and was requested to continue:

'I'll tell you; it's dis way. My master call me up and order me a short peck of corn and a hundred lash. My friends see it and is sorry for me. When dey come to de praise meetin' dat night dey sing about it. Some's very good singers and know how; and dey work it in, work it in, you know; till dey get it right; and dat's de way.'<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> 'This fundamental opposition between high and low (or up and down) is clearly seen in the use of pitch range for obviously emotional expression - raised voice for active emotions such as anger or surprise and lowered voice for boredom, sadness, and the like.' Ibid, p. 114. What are referred to here as 'active emotions' expressed in a raised pitch seem also to be more *hopeful* emotions. The link between high pitch and expectation or non-finality (associated in the present thesis with hope) is exemplified, according to Bolinger, by 'the tendency of pitch to drop at the end of an utterance, and to rise (or at least not to drop) at major breaks where the utterance remains incomplete; [also by] the use of higher pitch in questions, since in questions the speaker expresses interest, and since the exchange is incomplete until the addressee answers.' Ibid. (As this thesis would say: the questioner *hopes* for an answer, and this is reflected in the rising or *musical* intonation of his question.) Bolinger understands these uses of intonation to be independent of cultural differences, and therefore universal. He writes: 'Of late there has been growing support for the sort of universal code that we have been more or less taking for granted in the realm of prosody, particularly intonation.' Bolinger, *Intonation and its Uses*, p. 1. '[I]ntonation is the same, in spite of superficial differences, no matter where we find it, because of its ties to human physiology'. Ibid, p. 26. Tone languages do not affect the truth of this generalisation. See *ibid*, pp. 12-13; 26f, 49. 'The tonal use of pitch might be thought of as 'unnatural.' It does not correspond to the child's initial genetic program'. Ibid, p. 13. As another writer notes: 'The physiologic mechanisms that structure intonation are determined in part by vegetative constraints. They thus are clearly not 'language-specific' in the restricted sense that many linguists, psychologists, and philosophers view the structure of the hypothetical innately determined linguistic 'competence' of *Homo sapiens*.' Philip Lieberman, "The Innate, Central Aspect of Intonation." In *The Melody of Language*, Linda R. Waugh and C. H. van Schooneveld (eds.), (Baltimore: University Park, 1980), p. 188.

<sup>54</sup> Cone, *Spirituals and the Blues*, p. 42. Citation from James Miller McKim, "Negro Songs." In Bernard Katz, *The Social Implications of Early Negro Music in the United States* (1939) (New York: Arno, 1969), p. 2.

The use of clearly improvisatory music in this context operates as a trope of aspirations to freedom. Such improvisation extended beyond the context of religious worship into the world of daily work: '[I]mprovisation . . . is certainly one of the strongest survivals in American Negro music. The very character of the first work songs suggests that they were largely improvised.'<sup>55</sup> As one slave remarked, 'Once we boys . . . went for tote some rice and de nigger-driver he keep a-callin' on us; and I say, 'O, de ole nigger-driver!' Den anudder said, 'Fust ting my mammy tole me was, notin' so bad as nigger-driver.' Den I made a sing, just puttin' a word, and then anudder word.'<sup>56</sup> In this quotation, reflection on an oppressive relationship elicits a verbal and musical improvisatory act, a song which consists of the spontaneous fitting of one word to the next. Here 'imagination itself - through its utopian function - has a *constitutive* role in helping us *rethink* the nature of our social life . . . Does not the fantasy of an alternative society . . . work as one of the most formidable contestations of what is?'<sup>57</sup> Irrespective of what may have been the verbal content of the song improvised in this instance, it is through the imaginative improvisatory verbal and musical activity itself, reaching out futurally, that a healing field of hoping is opened up and the possibility of a desired future is evoked. Moreover, blues, too is a style which 'permits extempore verse-making'<sup>58</sup> and essentially 'a music of protest'<sup>59</sup> against a prevailing order. 'The blues texts were also bulwarks of cultural resistance, providing a composite view of American society from the bottom . . . Blues texts, sung in the vernacular of the black

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<sup>55</sup> LeRoi Jones, *Blues People: The Negro Experience in White America and the Music that Developed from It* (New York: Morrow Quill, 1963), p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (1871) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), p. 219. Cited in Cone, *Spirituals and the Blues*, p. 42.

<sup>57</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1986), p. 16.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Oliver, "Blues and the Binary Principle." In *Popular Music Perspectives: Papers from The First International Conference On Popular Music Research, Amsterdam, June 1981*, David Horn and Philip Tagg (eds.), (Göteborg, Sweden and Exeter, England: International Association for the Study of Popular Music, 1982), p. 163.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

masses, were the 'true songs' or 'reals' of hope, despair, humor and struggle . . . Improvisation was the centerpiece of the blues performers' aesthetic approach to their medium.'<sup>60</sup> In this improvised music there may be heard an '[e]xaltation of creativity . . . as the longing of peoples for transcendence and for the transformation of dehumanising social forms.'<sup>61</sup>

It would not be critically adequate to explain this use of improvisation solely as the perpetuation of musical practices from Africa without regard to the present situation of the singers' American enslavement, for even though improvisation had roots in 'traditional African-American reverence for spontaneity'<sup>62</sup> it is also the case that improvisation was a flexible community response to the constraints of social reality for black people in America.<sup>63</sup> 'This improvisational tendency was historically connected to African Americans' understanding of freedom as social mobility and cultural autonomy. To improvise, then, was an individual affirmation of freedom in a group setting - a lyrical response to the vicissitudes of life that linked artist and audience in a communication process at the center of the African-American cultural experience.'<sup>64</sup> Musical improvisation by American slaves is thus neither subsumed under the category of African musical practices, nor opposed to them, for there was an existing connotation of freedom affirmation already inhabiting the African practice of musical improvisation, which is now re-engaged on behalf of hoping within the American situation.

This spontaneous ethos within black music has spread and been appropriated by aspirations for a better world as expressed within subsequent white popular music, for

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<sup>60</sup> William Barlow, *"Looking Up at Down": The Emergence of Blues Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 325-326.

<sup>61</sup> Mary Collins, "Obstacles to Liturgical Creativity." In *Concilium: "Liturgy: A Creative Tradition"* (1983) no. 2: 19-26; p. 20.

<sup>62</sup> Barlow, *"Looking Up at Down."* p. 326.

<sup>63</sup> See *ibid*, p. 327.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*.

there has been 'a continual, cyclical co-optation of black musical forms by the white industry and audiences.'<sup>65</sup> Without African culture in America, 'there would have been no blues . . . Without the blues, there would have been no jazz, no reggae, no soul, no funk/rap'.<sup>66</sup> 'The existence of the African diaspora functions throughout the world as a crucial force for opening up cultural, social, and political space for struggles over identity, autonomy, and power.'<sup>67</sup> In this diaspora, improvisation retains its role as a trope of hoping, as in jazz. '[M]ore than any other music this century, jazz has functioned as a vehicle towards the rebirth and development of an ancient, ecstatic sense of existence.'<sup>68</sup> For Martin Luther King, 'God has wrought many things out of oppression . . . Jazz speaks of life . . . When life itself offers no order and meaning, the musician creates an order and meaning from the sounds of earth which flow through his instrument.'<sup>69</sup> Music influenced by the African tradition such as hip-hop, Afro-beat, and jazz 'provides a powerful illustration of the potential for contemporary commercialized leisure to carry images, ideas, and icons of enormous political importance between cultures . . . [T]hese expressions . . . serve as exemplars of post-colonial culture with direct relevance to the rise of new social movements emerging in response to the imperatives of global capital and its attendant austerity and oppression.'<sup>70</sup> Lipsitz writes of how hip-hop and other forms of diasporic African music serve to construct 'locally based and territorially defined'<sup>71</sup> identities for new

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<sup>65</sup> Keith Negus, *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), p. 101.

<sup>66</sup> Michael Tucker, "The Body Electric: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth-Century Music." *Contemporary Music Review* 14, parts 1-2 (1996): 67-97; p. 83.

<sup>67</sup> George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Politics of Place* (1994) (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 27-28.

<sup>68</sup> Tucker, "Body Electric," p. 83.

<sup>69</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., Opening address to the 1964 Berlin Jazz Festival. Cited in Joachim-Ernst Berendt, *Jazz: A Photo History* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1979), p. 221.

<sup>70</sup> Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads*, p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, p. 33.



social movements, bringing them to global consciousness,<sup>72</sup> and of how the world-wide popularity of hip-hop, rap, graffiti, and other musical forms from the African diaspora expresses post-colonial aspirations. This does not merely reflect a compensation for current lack of power and resources among African people; rather the music creates a social nexus: ‘It brings community into being through performance, and it maps out real and imagined relations between people that speak to the realities of displacement, disillusion and despair created by the austerity economy of post-industrial capitalism.’<sup>73</sup> Writing in a parallel way of certain Indian Temple music, Groesbeck has noted that ‘performers *use* improvisation as a symbolic cultural category to construct and negotiate their identities through performance and discourse, and ultimately to create an imagined sense of place with their audiences in the moment of performance’.<sup>74</sup> Improvised music is ‘employed in performance and discourse for the purposes of establishing community, creating an imagined and shared sense of place, and constructing and negotiating identity.’<sup>75</sup>

The futural hoping in the rock music of the 1960s and early 1970s (a style with much improvisatory drumming and guitar-playing) was evident in the lyrics of the period which ‘actually showed an awareness of the spiritual quest’.<sup>76</sup> Rock music is an artistic construction of a fantasised “other place,” a preferred locus of the imaginatively idealised self. ‘Rock is, for its suburban listeners, a way into working-class adolescence; it provides the terms of a fantasy community of danger. And there is, simultaneously, a rebellious segment of working-class, street youth that finds in rock a

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<sup>72</sup> See *ibid.* References to Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grass Roots* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983); Alain Touraine, *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981).

<sup>73</sup> Lipsitz, *ibid.*, p. 36. Reference to Paul Gilroy, “*There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*”: *The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 223-250.

<sup>74</sup> Groesbeck, “Cultural Constructions,” p. 24.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>76</sup> Joscelyn Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth: The Spiritual Dimension of Music from Antiquity to the Avant-Garde* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p. 115. Reference to Joscelyn Godwin, “Protest and Quest in Popular Songs.” *The Golden Blade* 26 (1974): 96-105.

romantic ideal of bohemian culture, the terms (most obviously articulated in the history of British youth culture by David Bowie) of a fantasy of self-expression, sexual freedom, art and *angst*'.<sup>77</sup> In short, the music constructs an imaginary order of social fulfilment. As one commentator has written: '[O]ne role of popular music in socializing the young may be to create, in combination with the other mass media, a picture of childhood and adolescence in America as a happy-go-lucky time of haphazard clothes and haphazard behavior, jitterbug parlance, coke-bar sprees, and 'blues' that are not really blue'.<sup>78</sup>

For Smith and Dean, the link between improvisation and re-creation of social structures is in fact exemplified in a wide range of artistic areas, such as the use of improvisation after the Second World War and into the 1960s to articulate the goals of socialism.<sup>79</sup> 'The counter movements, sometimes known as the 'beat generation' or 'flower power', severely questioned social conventions relating to sex, drugs, education and western religion, and the economic self-preservation of the privileged.'<sup>80</sup> Improvisatory drama exhibits these socially recreative connotations. As Frost and Yarrow note, improvisatory drama is one with the beginnings of theatre itself, as in Dionysiac rites, which integrated the community and the environment. Yet, as a kind of "double" of society, and as an activity which frees feelings and instincts, improvised drama has often been suppressed.<sup>81</sup> '[M]any social orders have seen the need either to repress or to marginalise (by licensing in a strictly limited way) anything to do with the spirit of creative play. Individual creativity, from the point of view of order, is a

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<sup>77</sup> Simon Frith, "The Sociology of Rock: Notes from Britain." In *Popular Music Perspectives*, Horn and Tagg (eds.), p. 151.

<sup>78</sup> David Riesman, "Listening to Popular Music." (1950) In *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (eds.), (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> See Smith and Dean, *Improvisation*, p. 19.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>81</sup> See Anthony Frost and Ralph Yarrow, *Improvisation in Drama* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 177.

dangerous and disruptive thing . . . and even more dangerous if it issues in communal ceremony and performance.’<sup>82</sup> ‘[A]s a challenge to the dominant cultural assumptions about what is ‘the basis of the actor’s art’ . . . the adoption of impro as a method of play creation becomes a political act itself. It de-emphasises the individual writer, and privileges the creative ensemble - the workshop, with all its connotations of crafts and working-class skills.’<sup>83</sup> In connection with jazz, John Szwed writes: ‘[J]azz requires that musicians be able to merge their unique voices in the totalizing, collective improvisations of polyphony and heterophony. The implications of this esthetic are profound and more than vaguely threatening, for no political system has yet been devised with social principles which reward maximal individualism within the framework of spontaneous egalitarian interaction.’<sup>84</sup> ‘In the most successful improvisational art, the give-and-take of conversation functions as a model of democratic interaction.’<sup>85</sup> In short, as Roger Frampton remarks, improvisation is a ‘utopian state’.<sup>86</sup> Clearly, just as individual improvisation opens up a future, collective improvisation can do so eloquently for the group.

It was seen above how *Dasein’s* futural projection in hope was expressed primordially in musical improvisation. This is reflected in the fact that the use of musical improvisation as an expression of hope, or to gain access to states of consciousness which enter or at least contact the desired “other place” appears from historical and cultural evidence to be a human universal. Such desire always has a futural character since hoping is always in some way directed to something which is

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 148.

<sup>84</sup> John Szwed, “Josef Škvorecký and the Tradition of Jazz Literature.” *World Literature Today* 54, no. 4 (Autumn 1980): 586-590; p. 588.

<sup>85</sup> Belgrad, *Culture of Spontaneity*, p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> Roger Frampton, “Teletopa, AZ Music, Free Kata and Free Improvised Music in Australia: An Autobiographical Approach.” *Sounds Australian: Journal of Australian Music* 32 (Summer 1991-1992): 21-24; p. 22.

“not yet.” ‘Musical improvisation has . . . been considered as a vehicle for consciousness expansion and the tapping of deep intuitions. A full history . . . would go back thousands of years to the sacred texts of many religions.’<sup>87</sup> Musical improvisation is a central feature of shamanism. ‘The central idea of shamanism is to establish means of contact with the supernatural world by the ecstatic experience of a professional and inspired intermediary, the shaman.’<sup>88</sup> Mircea Eliade has ‘discerned in the shamanic experience a ‘nostalgia for paradise’<sup>89</sup> and he regards the ecstatic experience to which the shaman seeks access as a ‘‘primary phenomenon’ because we see no reason whatever for regarding it as the result of a particular historical moment, that is, as produced by a certain form of civilisation. Rather, we would consider it fundamental to the human condition, and hence known to the whole of archaic humanity’.<sup>90</sup> The prophetic anticipation of earthly futurity, and understanding the ‘causes and effects of life’s experiences’<sup>91</sup> are also the object of the shaman’s special insight and ‘[h]e may be able to predict how one lives and how one needs to live.’<sup>92</sup> Eliade writes of the use of specifically improvisatory songs used to produce ecstasy by North American shamans,<sup>93</sup> and sung during trance states by Eskimo shamans.<sup>94</sup> The shaman believes he ‘re-establishes . . . a situation that was once general . . . [a] recovery of the primordial human condition . . . he can abolish time and re-establish the primordial condition of which the myths tell.’<sup>95</sup> Peg Weiss has observed that ‘[i]n the

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<sup>87</sup> Pressing, “Improvisation: Methods and Models.” In *Generative Processes in Music*, Sloboda (ed.), p. 142.

<sup>88</sup> Å. Hultkrantz, “Ecological and Phenomenological Aspects of Shamanism.” In *Shamanism in Siberia*, V. Diószegi and M. Hoppál (eds.), (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978), p. 30.

<sup>89</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1951) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 508.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, p. 504.

<sup>91</sup> Luh Ketut Suryani and Gordon D. Jensen, *Trance and Possession in Bali: A Window on Western Multiple Personality, Possession Disorder, and Suicide* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford Univ. Press. 1993), p. 84. Reference to J. Halifax, “The Psychotherapist as Shaman: Methods for Madness,” n.p. Workshop at Esalon Institute, Big Sur, California, 4th-16th February, 1992.

<sup>92</sup> Suryani and Jensen, *ibid.* Reference to Halifax *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> See Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 303.

<sup>94</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 290.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

Chukchee rites . . . the shaman's ritual vocabulary consisted of a vast medley of sounds . . . cleverly improvised to suit the situation.'<sup>96</sup> For Tim Hodgkinson, 'shamanic performances, despite following a loose sequence of identifiable phrases, [are] largely improvised.'<sup>97</sup> 'Several practitioners told us that shamanising involves *following your feelings*. We also heard a great deal of visual description of the psychological phases. That is, shamanising seems almost invariably to involve *seeing*.'<sup>98</sup> The conjunction between improvisation and imaginative access to a hoped-for alterity is here exemplified. '[T]he shaman's hypnotic drumming, chanting and singing combine to propel consciousness far beyond the limits of everyday feeling and perception . . . Beating the drum . . . shamans fly to the upper Paradisal realms'.<sup>99</sup>

The use of improvisation in the context of healing, another shamanic practice, has been appropriated by Don Cherry (1936-1995) and Nana Vasconcelos who 'sought and developed the healing potentialities of improvised music'.<sup>100</sup> Again, this is clearly a project based on hope, in which the hoped-for state is the state of wholeness and health. Jazz has been compared to shamanic music. It has been claimed that 'in jazz . . . one finds the most fruitful and inspiring musical response to the problem which haunted such key nineteenth-century poets and thinkers as Thoreau and Whitman, and which continues to haunt us today: the problem of the alienation of consciousness from its own roots . . . [T]he variously improvised, circular play of melody, harmony and (above all) rhythm through which jazz musicians have sought to exalt life has unearthed and made new what is essentially a shamanic source of

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<sup>96</sup> Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky and Old Russia: The Artist as Ethnographer and Shaman* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), p. 108.

<sup>97</sup> Tim Hodgkinson, "Siberian Shamanism and Improvised Music." *Contemporary Music Review* 14, parts 1-2 (1996): 59-66; p. 60.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63.

<sup>99</sup> Tucker, "Body Electric," p. 74.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, p. 82.

potentially healing, transformative energy.’<sup>101</sup> ‘[I]mprovisers as musically different as Armstrong and Ellington, or Hawkins and Young . . . speak . . . of the bringing into being of an ecstatic state of consciousness in their work.’<sup>102</sup> Moreover ‘various so-called pop groups and artists can be seen to reveal (whether consciously so or not) certain degrees of shamanic musicality . . . In 1990 Mickey Hart, long-time drummer of The Grateful Dead, published a well-researched, beautifully illustrated book entitled *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*, where he traced his life-long fascination with the power of drumming back to the ancient archetype of the shaman.’<sup>103</sup> How such popular music looks forward in hope has already been described.

All spontaneity, as a concentrated forward projection of the imagination out of the present, invites an intuition of the “other place.” Spontaneity is a liminal form of activity, activity pursued in the real world but at the imaginative threshold (*limen*) of an aspirational state. Victor Turner has explicitly identified an important linkage of the state of liminality with spontaneity. Turner distinguishes the social ‘structure’ of daily life as ordinarily led, from what he calls the ‘*communitas*’ of liminal (“threshold”) situations<sup>104</sup> and refers to a ‘spontaneous, immediate, concrete nature of *communitas*, as opposed to the norm-governed, institutionalized, abstract nature of social structure.’<sup>105</sup> He observes that:

*Communitas* breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality . . . Liminality . . . [is a condition] in which are frequently generated myths, symbols . . . and works of art. These cultural forms provide men with a set of templates or models which are, at one level, periodical classifications of reality and man’s relationship to society, nature and culture. But they are more than classifications, since they incite men to action as well as to thought.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p. 86.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, p. 88.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p. 85. References to Micheal Tucker, *Dreaming with Open Eyes: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth-Century Art and Culture* (London: Aquarian/Harper, 1992), pp. 210-214; Mickey Hart with Jay Stevens, *Drumming at the Edge of Magic: A Journey into the Spirit of Percussion* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990).

<sup>104</sup> See Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 96.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p. 127. Reference to Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (1958) (Edinburgh: Clark, 1961). p. 51.

<sup>106</sup> Turner, *ibid*, pp. 128-129.

Spontaneity in art, it may be inferred, is a natural expression of this liminal sensibility of the ‘*existential* or *spontaneous* communitas.’<sup>107</sup> Such art sustains for the imagination an idealised separation from immediate reality into the liminal state of expectancy of the aspirational state. Following Turner, it may perhaps incite ‘to action as well as to thought.’ This instinctive acknowledgement of the power of spontaneous art to bring about action related to the engendering of aspirational states is connected to points made above concerning the frequent fear of, and consequent suppression of improvisatory art-forms, especially, it would seem, in drama, which clearly depicts social relationships, and their possible mutation, more unequivocally than other improvised art-forms.

### *III Improvisatoriness and Hope in some Twentieth-Century Western Composers*

In certain cases musical improvisations may be so constructed as to give the architectural impression of a written work. It is possible to improvise, for example, a simple binary or ternary piece, and sometimes improvisations successfully imitate more complex traditional written styles. However, improvisation nevertheless often proceeds without the degree of regard for overarching form available to a “conventional” composer, who, unlike the improviser, can stand back and survey his work outside its concrete manifestation in time.<sup>108</sup> ‘[W]hile the improviser can recall past ideas, this must be done while creating the present, whereas the composer can practically ‘freeze’ time and contemplate the past at length.’<sup>109</sup> Within his improvisation, at any given instant, an improviser must often organise his musical product mainly on the basis of the sounds he has just produced, rather than on the basis of any longer memory of what he did further back in the improvisation.

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p. 132.

<sup>108</sup> See Sarath, “New Look At Improvisation,” p. 3.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

Correspondingly, it is hard for him to organise what he does on the basis of any anticipation of what, within the same improvisation, he may do in the middle or longer term, for the same reason that he must concentrate on the present and what he is just about to do, or run the risk of failure. Ed Sarath describes how, in a composition and in an improvisation respectively, a given musical moment, *E*, is differently generated subsequently to its predecessors *A, B, C, D*. In a composition, 'the prime determinant for selection of event *E* is the aggregate of its predecessors, *ABCD*. That is to say, when the creating artist completes *D*, he or she infers an implication field shaped by the cumulative conception of materials *ABCD*.'<sup>110</sup> In improvisation, 'the artist proceeds in a more moment-to-moment manner, generating an implication field at each time point, not based in an aggregate conception, but one in which each moment is perceived as self-contained and autonomous. Therefore event *E* . . . is not a result of *ABCD*, but only of its most recent predecessor *D*.'<sup>111</sup> When compared with a composed piece, this predisposes a given improvisation towards the generation of musical occurrences which, within the context of what has preceded, are unpredictable, since they are not precipitated by an accumulation of antecedents which have impressed themselves upon the memory and form the basis for the improviser's anticipation as the music proceeds. However, the degree of unpredictability will vary greatly from one improvisation to another.

This characteristic unpredictability of improvisation may be imitated deliberately by those composers who consciously wish their compositions to sound improvisatory, or it may arise unconsciously in composed music as a result of a partiality for improvisatory effects. Thus any music, whether it is an improvisation or a worked-out composition, which feels to the listener as though it may be proceeding according to

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.



Sarath's model, exhibits fundamental improvisatory attributes. Charles Ives, Arnold Schoenberg, John Cage, Cornelius Cardew, Frederic Rzewski and Olivier Messiaen are instructive in the present context, for their pieces, as will be shown, are often either worked-out compositions with marked structural affinities with improvisatoriness as just described, or are actually improvisations. In addition, all these composers have a declared interest in music as a project which expresses the hoped-for future. In Ives's and Cage's cases this future is the ideal and harmonious humanity proposed by the nineteenth-century American ideology of Transcendentalism; for Schoenberg, the music represents an attempt to arrive at an ideal transformation and perfecting of Western musical style; in the case of Cardew and Rzewski, the "other place" is the socialist society of Marxism, while in Messiaen's case this future is the Christian Kingdom of God and the heavenly reward of the Christian life. Music of Ives, Schoenberg, Cage, Cardew, Rzewski and Messiaen further exemplifies in the context of contemporary Western composition the claim being made here for a profound link between improvisation, and hope for the future as the desired "other place."

'[Ives] has always been a highly articulate man, and he found compatible bedrock for his thinking and writing about music in the New England Transcendentalists, whose attitude toward life placed so indelible an imprint on the developing American character after the middle of the nineteenth century.'<sup>112</sup> Ives, indeed, venerated the Transcendentalist philosopher Emerson, claimed to enjoy new ideas and experiences every time he read Emerson, and regarded the "Emerson" movement of his *Concord Sonata* as 'as far as I know the only piece which every time I play it or turn to it seems unfinished . . . It is a peculiar experience and I must admit a stimulating and agreeable one that I have had with this Emerson music.'<sup>113</sup> Ives set out not merely to produce

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<sup>112</sup> Henry Cowell and Sidney Cowell, *Charles Ives and His Music* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1955), p. 7.

<sup>113</sup> Charles Ives, no documentation. Cited in *ibid*, p. 13.

music, but, like Emerson, to explore reality. For Ives, the ultimate hope of humanity is to share in the Emersonian “over-soul,” a pantheistic consummation of everything there is. ‘Emerson suggested that the fundamental purpose of human life is an ultimate union with the ‘over-soul’ - an amorphous entity somewhat akin to Spinoza’s monist substance or Hegel’s ‘Spirit’.’<sup>114</sup> Music’s task is to promote this apotheosis of man. Indeed, for Ives, ‘the time is coming, but not in our lifetime, when music will develop possibilities inconceivable now - a language, so transcendent, that its heights and depths will be common to all mankind.’<sup>115</sup> Ives’s attitude to truth will find expression in his attitude to musical composition, for ‘to the Transcendentalist, music is not separate from the rest of the universe but permeates and is in turn permeated by all else that exists. For Ives, music is no more an expression of the universe than the universe is an expression of music.’<sup>116</sup>

It has been remarked in connection with the spontaneous, improvisatory dimension in Ives’s music that ‘when we hear the beginning of an Ives piece, we *don’t* necessarily know what kinds of things will and will not follow. And the more Ives we hear, the *less* comfortable we may feel making predictions.’<sup>117</sup> The ‘mechanics and semantics of improvisation’<sup>118</sup> in Ives’s music ‘embrace not only ‘musical’ sounds but also random acoustic phenomena (bands passing one another on the march, music heard over water, and so on); parody, game-playing and problem solving’.<sup>119</sup> Ives’s music explores the process to truth, and is in this sense an expression of hope. Writing of *Ann Street*, Star observes that here existence is depicted as a progression of rapid and

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<sup>114</sup> Dave Robinson and Judy Groves, *Philosophy for Beginners* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 1998), p. 106.

<sup>115</sup> Charles Ives, no documentation. Cited in Cowell and Cowell, *Charles Ives and His Music*, p. 10.

<sup>116</sup> Cowell and Cowell, *ibid*, p. 148.

<sup>117</sup> Larry Star, *A Union of Diversities: Style in the Music of Charles Ives* (New York: Macmillan, 1992). p. 8.

<sup>118</sup> Wilfred Mellers, “Music, the Modern World, and the Burden of History.” In *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, vol 1, Paynter, Howell, Orton, Seymour (eds.), p. 14.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*.

variegated experiences, disjointed on the surface, yet with a large-scale ordering. ‘However, the orderings and patterns that may be discovered in existence are, of necessity, tentative, unfinished, and ‘imperfect,’ due to the nature of existence as *process*, rather than as product.’<sup>120</sup> Here again the idea of hope is seen, for the underlying nature of existence reveals an open-ended, proleptic movement towards order, below the disjointed nature of surface appearances. Also, this emphasis on existence as process rather than product is clearly another point of contact with the idea of improvisation from a slightly different angle. This is because, where, as for Ives, music conjoins with a metaphysical world-view, improvisation readily suggests itself as an artistic counterpart to a view of reality as process. In improvisation it is the creative musical process which is highlighted, while the final product is constantly variable and uncertain and, indeed, may well be for ever lost.

Schoenberg was affected, in a profound and sustained way, by the work of the painter Kandinsky. Schoenberg’s *Theory of Harmony* and Kandinsky’s *On the Spiritual in Art* ‘appeared shortly after one another in 1911.’<sup>121</sup> In the latter, ‘one of the seminal formulations of the principles of abstraction’,<sup>122</sup> Kandinsky actually quoted Schoenberg. In the same year Schoenberg wrote to Kandinsky in these words: ‘You are such a full man that the least vibration always causes you to overflow . . . I am very proud to have found your respect, and tremendously glad of your friendship.’<sup>123</sup> Kandinsky was profoundly influenced by the idea of the improvisatory in his paintings. Imbued with a rich variety of cultural factors, and ‘born in Moscow, [Kandinsky’s] family comprised an eclectic mix of ethnic nationalities. Relatives on

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<sup>120</sup> Star, *Union of Diversities*, p. 27.

<sup>121</sup> Jelena Hahl-Koch, “Kandinsky and Schoenberg.” In *Arnold Schoenberg, Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures, Documents*, Jelena Hahl-Koch (ed.), (1980) (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p. 144.

<sup>122</sup> Joan Allen Smith, *Schoenberg and His Circle: A Viennese Portrait* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1986), p. 276.

<sup>123</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, letter to Wassily Kandinsky, 8th March, 1912. In *Schoenberg, Kandinsky*, Hahl-Koch (ed.), p. 10.

his mother's side came from the German Baltic region, but his father had been born in Kyakhta, on the border between Russia and Mongolia'.<sup>124</sup> For Peg Weiss, the shamanism of primitive Russian societies may have provided Kandinsky with a paradigm for his artistic philosophy. Siberian life is intimately bound up with shamanism, and Weiss claims that Kandinsky identified with the shamanic ideas of divine mediation and the mission to heal. It was claimed by others and by Kandinsky himself that his personality exhibited shamanic characteristics. It is particularly notable that he claimed to have been inspired to paint *Composition II* while in a hallucinatory state.<sup>125</sup> Weiss speaks of the motif of the 'artist-shaman' as being intended by Kandinsky's depiction of St George, *Improvisation 13*. In this painting the artist is presented as a mystical shaman figure who watches over humanity in the heroic role St George: '[T]he saint even rides the shaman's piebald horse, and in *Improvisation 13* Kandinsky also monumentalized the figure, conflating the image of St George and World-Watching-Man'.<sup>126</sup> 'World-Watching-Man . . . was thought to ride or soar about the world at night, watching over the affairs of humankind.'<sup>127</sup> Through this fourfold conflation (shaman/artist/St George/World-Watching Man) it seems that the artist watches over the whole world and, being a shaman, "translates" the world's mysteries to humanity. Through identification with the figure of Saint George, the artist is also conferred with heroic status, and the whole artistic conception is then linked to the idea of improvisation through its title *Improvisation 13*. Improvisation becomes by implication symbolically associated with the artist-shaman's prophetic voice, and it was indeed seen in Section II how shamanism speaks typically of a hoped-for "other place." Moreover, '[i]n speaking of the creative experience

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<sup>124</sup> Weiss, *Kandinsky and Old Russia*, p. 6.

<sup>125</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 72-73. Reference to Odd Nordland, "Shamanism as an Experiencing of the 'Unreal'." In Carl-Martin Edsman, *Studies in Shamanism* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1967), pp. 167-185.

<sup>126</sup> Weiss, *ibid*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 54-55

Kandinsky echoed the sense of ‘transport,’ the image of ‘riding’ and ‘reining in’ or ‘bridling’ his inner resources in much the same language ethnographers have used to describe shamanic experience.’<sup>128</sup> In another painting *Improvisation (Ravine)*, the idea of the improvisatory seems explicitly juxtaposed with the idea of futurity. ‘The rider apparently represents the Apocalyptic rider with his scales of justice . . . The work seems to speak of final things, of guilt and innocence, death and resurrection, aspiration and despair, the contradictions between day and night, indeed, of [the] ‘thundering collision of worlds’.’<sup>129</sup> In *Improvisation (Gorge)* the Höllental gorge is linked to images of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, doom and destruction, once again associating improvisation with the idea of the future. Something similar may be said of *Improvisation (Deluge)*, representing Noah’s Ark and the Flood, where an angel blowing the Last Trumpet adds to the sense of Apocalypse and Last Judgement which ‘occur frequently in Kandinsky’s pictures from 1911 onward.’<sup>130</sup> All the end-time events described above, despite their sometimes cataclysmic character, are figured within Christian tradition as presaging the final triumph of God and His coming Reign, and are thus proper objects of hope. There is thus a strong suggestion that Kandinsky associated an improvisatory style with issues of the future consummation of humanity, once again implying the link between spontaneity, and hoped-for futurity.

Schoenberg’s own writing, influenced by Kandinsky, hints strongly at a view of improvisation seen as the primordial exercise of the artistic impulse. He writes:

When Karl Kraus calls language the mother of thought, and Wassily Kandinsky and Oskar Kokoschka paint pictures the objective theme of which is hardly more than an excuse to improvise in colours and forms and to express themselves as only the musician expressed himself until now, these are symptoms of a gradually expanding knowledge of the true nature of art.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid, p. 79.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, p. 125.

<sup>130</sup> Annegret Hoberg, Commentary on figure 45. Wassily Kandinsky, *Improvisation (Deluge)*. In Armin Zweite, *The Blue Rider in the Lenbachhaus, Munich* (Munich: Prestel, 1989), no page numbers.

<sup>131</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, “The Relationship to the Text.” (1912) In *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, Leonard Stein (ed.), (1975) (Berkeley: California Univ. Press, 1984). pp. 144-145.

The clear implication here is that the ‘true nature of art’ inheres in the improvising activity rather than the artistic product in the form of any ‘objective theme’, and that ‘gradually expanding knowledge’ means acknowledging this priority. Schoenberg furnishes a parallel critique in relation to musical composition: ‘Real music by a real composer might produce every kind of impression without aiming to. Simple and beautiful melodies, salty rhythms, interesting harmony, sophisticated form, complicated counterpoint - the real composer writes them with the ease with which one writes a letter.’<sup>132</sup> Here, too the emphasis in the creative process is taken off the finished product - which, to borrow Schoenberg’s phrase, is not aimed at. The process described here is to be unhampered by struggle (pursued ‘with . . . ease’), similar to a free-flowing improvisation and not at all like composition in which effort and perhaps revision have been dominant in the creative process. He says elsewhere, associating improvisatory spontaneity with divine creativity:

[T]he concept of creator and creation should be formed in harmony with the Divine Model; inspiration and perfection, wish and fulfilment, will and accomplishment coincide spontaneously and simultaneously. In Divine Creation there were no details to be carried out later; ‘There was Light’ at once and in its ultimate perfection.

Alas, human creators, if they be granted a vision, must travel the long path between vision and accomplishment; a hard road where, driven out of Paradise, even geniuses must reap their harvest in the sweat of their brows.

Alas, it is one thing to envision in a creative instant of inspiration and it is another thing to materialize one’s vision by painstakingly connecting details until they fuse into a kind of organism.<sup>133</sup>

Schoenberg claims to be heavily, even painfully dependent on such inspiration.<sup>134</sup>

Improvisation seems therefore to be his paradigm of composition for ‘composing is a slowed-down improvisation.’<sup>135</sup> Schoenberg also makes a link between improvisation and music in its primordial form, for ‘nature’s musicians’ are compared with improvisers at the keyboard: ‘Continuo playing is . . . basically very similar to the

<sup>132</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, “Heart and Brain in Music.” (1946) In *ibid.*, Stein (ed.), p. 55.

<sup>133</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, “Composition with Twelve Tones (1).” (1941) In *ibid.*, Stein (ed.), p. 215.

<sup>134</sup> See Schoenberg, “Heart and Brain.” p. 67.

<sup>135</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, “Brahms the Progressive.” (1947) In *Style and Idea*, Stein (ed.), p. 439.

method practised by nature's musicians'.<sup>136</sup> And '[r]eal folk music could not exist, or survive, were it not produced . . . spontaneously, as an inspired improvisation.'<sup>137</sup> The power of Schoenberg's predilection for the improvisatory is a hidden presence in his compositional techniques. For Godwin, atonal music, 'liberated from the gravitational pull of tonality',<sup>138</sup> is able to move freely in any direction and it is possible that, if such musical teleology is a function of tonality, music which avoids tonality will 'be experienced as generating random movement'<sup>139</sup> in a manner which may be said to resemble to the ears of listeners music produced according to Sarath's improvisatory model. For Ernst Bloch, indeed, this openness 'created through the absence of set keys and prescribed paths of musical development',<sup>140</sup> in serial composition functions as a kind of aspirational rebellion against late capitalism, of which serial music is one of the 'most fragmented, alienated aesthetic forms'.<sup>141</sup> '[S]erial music . . . constructs the hope for an alternative working against this same alienation.'<sup>142</sup> Thus, Schoenberg's music may be figured in relation to certain sociological/political discourses as at once improvisatory, and directed to a hoped-for future. In the wider sense of representing an attempt to transform the nature of musical language, it is clearly futural and aspirational.<sup>143</sup>

Cage has been glad to acknowledge the influence of Charles Ives upon him.<sup>144</sup>

However, he was also strongly influenced by the emphasis on the improvisatory found

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<sup>136</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, "About Ornaments, Primitive Rhythms etc. and Bird Song." (1922) In *ibid*, Stein (ed.), p. 306.

<sup>137</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, "Folkloristic Symphonies." (1947) In *ibid*, Stein (ed.), p. 166.

<sup>138</sup> Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth*, p. 118.

<sup>139</sup> Davies, *Musical Meaning*, p. 238. Reference to Zofia Lissa, "On the Evolution of Musical Perception." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 24 (1965): 273-286.

<sup>140</sup> Caryl Flynn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1992), p. 92.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*. Reference to Edward Said, *Musical Elaborations* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1991).

<sup>143</sup> See Malcolm MacDonald, *Schoenberg* (London: J. M. Dent, 1976), p. 29.

<sup>144</sup> See Marjorie Perloff and Charles Junkerman, "Introduction." In *John Cage: Composed in America*, Perloff and Junkerman (eds.), p. 1.

in the painting of Kandinsky and the ideas of Schoenberg. Indeed, '[o]f his various composition teachers, Arnold Schoenberg looms largest as a figure of lasting importance for Cage. In 1980, when Cage was nearing his seventieth birthday, Schoenberg still figured in his list of the fifteen men who were most important to his work.'<sup>145</sup> This relationship to Schoenberg was something in which Cage took a personal pride: '[I] think I am actually an elitist. I didn't study music with just anybody; I studied with Schoenberg.'<sup>146</sup> In addition to being affected by Kandinsky's ideas through Schoenberg, Cage was introduced to the work of Kandinsky more directly through his early relationship with Galka Scheyer.<sup>147</sup> However, although Cage's music is forged in this multi-faceted improvisatory tradition, reaching back to Ives, Schoenberg and Kandinsky, it seems in other ways at first sight antithetical to such previous forms of improvisation, since in previous improvisation, the intuitions and spontaneous intentions of the self are paramount, whereas for Cage they are to be suppressed. One of the most important concepts in Cage's music is *nonintentionality*.<sup>148</sup> 'A concept borrowed from Buddhism, and usually considered a

<sup>145</sup> James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), p. 9.

<sup>146</sup> Duckworth, "Anything I Say will be Misunderstood," p. 27.

<sup>147</sup> See Thomas S. Hines, "'Then Not Yet 'Cage': The Los Angeles Years, 1912-1938." In *John Cage: Composed in America*, Perloff and Junkerman (eds.), pp. 86-88.

<sup>148</sup> There are not only similarities between Cage's music and shamanic ritual, but a personal link between them, *via* Kandinsky. Kandinsky in his contact with shamanism seems to have anticipated, and may have inspired indirectly some of the musical objectives of Cage, including his nonintentionality. The description of shamanic music below, as ideologically appropriated by Kandinsky, conveys a sense both of its ontological connotations and its nonintentionality, two dimensions which are characteristic of Cage's musical philosophy also: 'Kandinsky drew from shamanist tradition in the creation of [a] synthetic rift-healing Gesamtkunstwerk, for the shaman's drum offered not only a visual paradigm to inspire Kandinsky's imagination, but an aural one as well. For an artist whose works were so often entitled 'Improvisation' or 'Composition,' 'Sonority' or 'Resonance,' the shamanic ritual in its entirety was a mixed-media 'performance piece' par excellence. The drum was at once the shaman's 'map of the universe,' the canvas upon which he drew the hieroglyphic tale of his magic journey, and his vehicle of transport, a musical instrument empowered to induce his ecstatic trance.

By 'tuning' the drum over the fire and by the adroit manipulation of his drumstick, the shaman was able to coax from his instrument a wide variety of eerie and hypnotic tones. The drum was often hung besides with numerous metallic ornaments, sometimes miniature bells, that clanged together as the drum was beaten.' Weiss, *Kandinsky and Old Russia*, p. 106. References to Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky in Munich: The Formative Jugendstil Years* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979), esp. pp. 81-91; Peg Weiss, "Evolving Perceptions of Kandinsky and Schoenberg in the Twentieth Century: Toward the Ethnic Roots of the 'Outsider'." Paper presented at the Arnold Schoenberg Institute, University of Southern California, November 1991. In *Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and*



philosophical matter, Cage saw that it had musical applications as well. For him, it was not only a question of freeing himself from his own intentions and ego, as prescribed by Zen masters, but also of creating a music that itself would be without intentions.<sup>149</sup> In the words of Zen Buddhist scholar Dr D. T. Suzuki who influenced Cage: 'Man is a thinking reed but his great works are done when he is not calculating and thinking. 'Childlikeness' has to be restored with long years of training in the art of self-forgetfulness. When this is attained, man thinks yet he does not think.'<sup>150</sup>

Yet if Cage is seeking to reduce human intention in his music, he is nevertheless inviting the effect of improvisatory music, by producing compositions which either (like those written prior to about 1952) follow a score which is fixed but randomly generated, or (as with later works) one in which the musical instructions the score comprises are deliberately unpredictable as regards the way they are to be carried out. Thus, the earlier works, such as *Music of Changes* were based on the random selection of musical events by automatic means, analogous to throwing dice, to produce a fixed score. His later work, such as 'the *Fontana Mix* score [1958] is so open that quite different realizations are possible, and the sequence of events or even the events themselves can differ considerably from one realization to the next.'<sup>151</sup> As one commentator says:

All [the] works written between 1952 and 1956 show an evolution from the rigid performance strictures of the early . . . 'determinate' works (e.g., *Music of Changes*, *Imaginary Landscape No. 4*) to a new freedom involving varying degrees of indeterminacy in performance. Cage explains the essential difference between chance operations and indeterminacy: 'In the case of chance operations, one knows more or less the elements of the universe with which one is dealing, whereas in indeterminacy, I like to think . . . that I'm outside the circle of a known universe and dealing with things I literally don't know anything about.'<sup>152</sup>

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*Transformations of Twentieth-Century Culture: Vienna, Berlin, Los Angeles*, Julie Brand, Christopher Hailey, Leonard Stein (eds.), (Los Angeles: California Univ. Press, n.d.).

<sup>149</sup> Tom Johnson, "Intentionality and Nonintentionality in the Performance of Music by John Cage." In *Cage at Seventy-Five*, Fleming and Duckworth (eds.), p. 262.

<sup>150</sup> D. T. Suzuki, no documentation. Cited in Preface to Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery* (New York: Random House, 1971), n.p. Cited in Margaret Leng Tan, "'Taking a Nap. I Pound the Rice': Eastern Influences on John Cage." In *ibid*, Fleming and Duckworth (eds.), p. 37.

<sup>151</sup> Kramer, *Time of Music*, p. 59.

<sup>152</sup> Tan, "Taking a Nap," p. 52. Citation from John Cage, no documentation. In *John Cage*, Richard Kostelanetz (ed.), (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 141.

Cage also observes that ‘the thing I think that is consistent in my work, where otherwise inconsistency appears - like the difference between indeterminacy and the *Music of Changes* which is not indeterminate at all - the thing that is in common between them is non-intention.’<sup>153</sup> Cage seems to recognise the paradox that his non-intention has produced, at various stages in his career, both law and freedom.

However, in both Cage’s early and later methods, the composition is, in one way or another, “unprepared” (“*improvisus*”) by the composer. It is simply that the lack of preparation for what is to come about in the music takes different forms from the lack of preparation characteristic of more traditional improvisation rooted in intention. The important point is that Cage is not abandoning the idea of improvisatoriness as handed down from Ives, Kandinsky’s painting and Schoenberg, but expanding and exploring it. Cage indeed appears to have taken an interest in James Joyce’s novel *Finnegan’s Wake*, a novel written in a “stream of consciousness” technique which is intended to suggest the free flow of human thought, and is suggestive of spontaneous, intentional, improvisatory writing.<sup>154</sup> Likewise, for Cage’s listeners, even though they may understand the nonintentional nature of the music, there is an immediate point of reference to improvisation which Cage’s music so much resembles, if not chiefly in compositional method, at least very much in sound. The music sounds random or unpredictable: event *E* does not seem to flow from *ABCD*. When they ask themselves, confronted with the strangeness of Cage, ‘What kind of music is this like?’ the answer will be: ‘improvisation.’ As a result, the music will be received by them as a new permutation of Western improvisatory tradition.

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<sup>153</sup> John Cage, Interview with Deborah Campana. New York, 12th February, 1985. Cited in Deborah Campana, “A Chance Encounter: The Correspondence between John Cage and Pierre Boulez, 1949-1954.” In *Cage at Seventy-Five*, Fleming and Duckworth (eds.), p. 236.

<sup>154</sup> See Pierre Boulez, letter to John Cage, January 1950. In *The Boulez-Cage Correspondence*, Jean-Jacques Nattiez (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), p. 46.

An additional consideration is Cage's idea of the nowmoment. Cage writes:

Many composers no longer make musical structures. Instead they set processes going. A structure is like a piece of furniture, whereas a process is like the weather. In the case of a table, the beginning and end of the whole and each of its parts are known. In the case of weather, though we notice changes in it, we have no clear knowledge of its beginning or ending. At a given moment, we are when we are. The nowmoment.<sup>155</sup>

In improvisation, the idea of the present moment is likewise important, as the music is being created in the present to a degree not the case with conventional scored composition where creative evolution is revisable. The present moment is highlighted in improvisation. Thus, in the first place, Cage's nowmoment ideology may be said to draw, musically speaking, on the ideas of artistic improvisation and spontaneity, transmitted, as has been seen, by Kandinsky, Schoenberg and Ives. Moreover, in keeping with the present argument, Cage's improvisation is, despite his nowmoment philosophy, also geared to a future hope. John Cage sees, as the future purpose of musical activity, an expression of humanity socially harmonised. Through music's improvisatoriness, society is directed explicitly towards a hoped-for future. Cage has indeed expressly linked his musical aesthetic to the Transcendentalism of Henry Thoreau:

At the beginning of the *Essay on Civil Disobedience*, Thoreau has this quotation: 'That government is best which governs not at all.' He adds: 'And when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have.' Many musicians are ready. We now have many musical examples of the practicality of anarchy. Music with indeterminate parts, no fixed relation of them (no score). Music without notation. Our rehearsals are not conducted . . . Musicians can do without government. Like ripe fruit (I refer to the metaphor at the end of Thoreau's *Essay*), they have dropped away from the tree . . .

The masterpieces of Western music exemplify monarchies and dictatorships. Composer and conductor: king and prime minister. By making musical situations which are analogies to desirable social circumstances which we do not yet have, we make music suggestive and relevant to the serious questions which face Mankind.<sup>156</sup>

Thus Cage regards his improvisatory music as a vehicle for the future integration of humanity. Cage has also written of another major influence on his nowmoment conception which tends to root it still more deeply in the idea of a penetration to the sought-after heart of the real as "other place," this time by equating it with mystical

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<sup>155</sup> John Cage, "The Future of Music." In *Empty Words: Writings '73-'78 by John Cage* (London: Marion Boyars, 1980), p. 178.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

experience. It is on Meister Eckhart that he draws, in order to propose his view that the experience of the “now” may, in music, be divorced from acts of relation or memory.<sup>157</sup>

The nowmoment conception in Cage’s music claims to remove the experience of the present from the linear sequence of past and future experience. This idea needs to be examined in some detail, since it might at first sight appear to conflict with the argument being pursued here, that Cage’s music is future-directed in the manner being ascribed to improvisation. Expounding the nowmoment conception, or ‘vertical music,’ Jonathan Kramer explains that ‘vertical music . . . is a holistic music that offers a timeless, temporal continuum, in which the linear interrelationships between past, present, and future are suspended’.<sup>158</sup> The alleged suspension of linear temporality produces ‘[a] composition in which each sound exists for itself, rather than as participant in a progression’.<sup>159</sup> This proposal leads to an even larger generalisation that ‘[i]n giving up goal-oriented listening, we eventually forsake all expectation of meaningful change, of realized implication of progression.’<sup>160</sup>

On one hand, there seems little question, that, by reducing perceptible connections between given musical sounds in a work and those which follow them (for example by following them with harmonic surprises or using unpredictable melodic shapes), a relative obviation of the sense of that music’s structural continuity will be achieved. This is because, for the listener, structural continuity is what the mind expects, and expectation in the listener has been thwarted in this case. However this is not opposed to the forward projection of the music. On the contrary, it will suggest the presence of

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<sup>157</sup> See Paul Griffiths, *Cage* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), p. 22. In Cage’s period as a Fellow of Wesleyan’s Center for Advanced Studies, he compiled a list of ten books having the greatest influence on his thought. One of them was the Works of Meister Eckhart. See *Cage*, Kostelanetz (ed.), p. 139.

<sup>158</sup> Kramer, *Time of Music*, p. 387.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, p. 385.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, p. 56.

constant spontaneous decisions underlying the creation of that music as though an improviser were at work. Such music becomes an icon of the musical improviser in action, for the improviser is also dependent on spontaneous decisions. Thus the lack of continuity characteristic of nowmoment composition interrupts the forward flow of the music in one sense, but the analogical/iconic spontaneity which “intervenes” to keep the music moving forward reasserts forward flow in another sense by foregrounding a sense of imagination constantly and spontaneously intervening to renew the music. In music of the nowmoment, the music, thus impeded from forward motion in the sense of predictable structure being realised, nevertheless assumes a different kind of forward projection by suggesting the spontaneous, decision-making process of the improvising imagination.

Undoubtedly, as a poetic evocation of timelessness, vertical music such as that of the nowmoment seems to come as close as music can come to suggesting an absence of temporality, but such music nevertheless takes place over time, is perceived in time and identified in time. There is no such thing as atemporal thinking. However, there is a human poetic capacity to frame an idea of atemporality within the context of ordinary temporal thinking, and this is what is happening in nowmoment composition. Such poetic framing of the idea of the absence of time is not itself outside the temporal process. By way of comparison, a poet might write a poem about “Timelessness” using poetic means for suggesting a state of timelessness, but the poem itself would not be timeless. Insofar as vertical compositions might seek to convey a novel suspension of the temporal process, they are in the same category as such a poem, not timeless, but suggestive of timelessness. Kramer notes that vertical music reached its apogee in the third quarter of the twentieth century. He refers to composers La Monte Young and Philip Corner; early minimalist music like Steve Reich’s *Violin Phase* (1967), Philip

Glass's *Music in Fifths* (1969), and Frederic Rzewski's *Les Moutons de Panurge* (1969); as well as the numerous works of Cage, including the *Variations* pieces, *Cartridge Music* (1960), and *Atlas Epicticalis* (1962).<sup>161</sup>

Vertical music's ideology is well represented by Morton Feldman. 'While Cage has remained concerned with the compositional process, which can be linear even when the resulting music is not, Feldman simply put down one beautiful sound after another. Feldman's esthetic had nothing to do with teleology: 'I make one sound and then I move on to the next'.<sup>162</sup> Feldman's bizarre ideology gives itself away in its contradictory claim to put down "non teleological" sounds and then 'move on to the next.' Contradictory, because a moment can only be "next" in relation to a previous moment. Because of the temporal nature of experience, it is impossible to remove memory and expectation in some form from musical experience, including that of the composer. In Husserl's words: 'The pieces and phases of perception are not externally glued together; rather, they are unitary in the precise sense that one awareness is one with another awareness, that is to say, they are one because they are awareness of the same thing . . . This identity always resides in consciousness proper and is apprehended through synthesis.'<sup>163</sup> Frings writes in a Heideggerian vein: 'The nows of time-consciousness are not points between past and future . . . the nows are 'stretched' paradoxically, overlapping each others' emergent and fading meanings. In short, time-consciousness is 'nowing' consciousness'.<sup>164</sup> 'Sounds, for instance, that have just been heard are still 'retained' in passive memory, while sounds that have not yet been heard

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<sup>161</sup> See *ibid*, p. 386.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*. Reference to Young's *Dream House* 'literally an everlasting piece, without beginning or end.' See Wim Mertens, *American Minimal Music* (New York: Alexander Broude, 1983), p. 89. Citation from Morton Feldman, in Mertens, *ibid*, p. 106.

<sup>163</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Paris Lectures* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), pp.17-18. Cited in Thomas Clifton, *Music as Heard: A Study in Applied Phenomenology* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983), p. 98.

<sup>164</sup> Frings, "Harmony and the Logos," p. 195.

are already ‘anticipated’ and already being subsumed into a ‘now’.<sup>165</sup> Bowles refers to Jonathan Kramer: ‘We cannot escape, he says, from the temporal linearity in music, and insufficient attention has been given to the phenomenon of ‘cumulative listening’. There is an (unavoidable) process which involves taking previous moments into account and which mitigates against the possibility of achieving static time in music.’<sup>166</sup> Kramer writes elsewhere:

There are as many different Nows as there are different people.  
 Each Now has its own individual length.  
 Hence Nows overlap.  
 Several events become past by human choice.  
 All recalled past comes through the filter of the present.<sup>167</sup>

Even though Cage’s explicit association between his music and mysticism tends to reinforce the link between improvisation and the “other place,” his comparison between claims to atemporal musical experience and various spiritual or mystical traditions is ultimately unconvincing. In the case of mystical out-of-time experiences such as those of Eckhart, whom Cage uses as an exemplar, these experiences are identified as such after they are over, by a subject who has returned to normal consciousness and who makes his or her judgement about the nature of the mystical experience in and from the retrospective standpoint of time. Nowmoments are not experienced as nowmoments while they are taking place in the mystic’s experience: they are remembered only subsequently as nowmoments. Adverting to “now” as “now” is a temporal act. There is thus something unconvincing about the claim to a “conscious nowmoment,” whether musical or mystical, because all conscious knowing is in fact locked in temporality, taking previous moments into account. Nevertheless, despite the unsustainable claims made by the nowmoment philosophy as practised by

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Bowles, *Rupture in the Temporality of Music*, pp. 125-126. Reference to Kramer, *Time of Music*, n.p. See also Kramer, *ibid*, pp. 408-409.

<sup>167</sup> Jonathan Kramer, letter to Barney Childs, 1st April, 1976, p. 3. Cited in Barney Childs, “Time and Music: A Composer’s View.” *Perspectives of New Music* 15, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 1977): 194-219; p. 200.

Cage, it remains the case that one implication of all chance or indeterminate musical events, while not actually ensconcing the present in a discontinuous nowmoment, is to place a new poetic focus on the present. Such a relative focusing on the present musical “now” and an unpredictable musical future serves only to intensify the suggestion of spontaneous decision-making needed to drive the music forward, with its connotations of improvisation taking place “now.” Cage’s nowmoment philosophy does not conflict with the idea that his improvisatoriness is future-oriented, but rather supports it.

Insofar as his work is interpreted as belonging to an improvisatory musical tradition coming down from Schoenberg and Ives, Cage nevertheless seems largely to reject the idea of intentional improvisation by a human creator: indeed as the following quotation would suggest, for Cage, it is not a person who improvises. Rather, music is somehow allowed to improvise itself or speak through the medium of the person. Cage remarks:

Though the doors will always remain open for the musical expression of personal feelings, what will more and more come through is the expression of the pleasures of conviviality (as in the music of Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass). And beyond that a nonintentional expressivity, a being together of sound and people (where sounds are sounds and people are people). A walk, so to speak, in the woods of music, or in the world itself.<sup>168</sup>

Consequent upon this reduction of the role of the self, it is in fact by setting the self *back* into the world, rather than by engagement in the world *by* the self, that ontological consciousness, this ‘walk . . . in the world’ arises:

Art and music, when anthropocentric (involved in self-expression) seem trivial and lacking in urgency to me. We live in a world where there are things as well as people. Trees, stones, water, everything is expressive. I see this situation in which I impermanently live as a complex interpenetration of centers moving out in all directions without impasse. This is in accord with contemporary awareness of the operations of nature. I attempt to let sounds be themselves in a space of time.<sup>169</sup>

Thus, in Cage’s world, man is not the centre: there are many centres which interpenetrate. Transcendentalist influence is evident here, in the idea of a merger of the human person with the wider reality of all else that is. This is the immersion of the

<sup>168</sup> Cage, “Future of Music,” p. 179.

<sup>169</sup> John Cage, letter to the *New York Herald Tribune* newspaper, 22nd May, 1956. Cited in Johnson, “Intentionality and Nonintentionality,” p. 262.



human subject in the pantheistic over-soul, entailing ‘the unity of the world in God and the immanence of God in the world [so that] . . . [t]he soul of each individual is identical with the soul of the world, and contains, latently, all which it contains.’<sup>170</sup> Moreover, the walk ‘in the woods of music’ which Cage clearly equates with man’s experience of being-in-the-world, and which for him largely replaces the experience of music as subjectively intentional or an ‘expression of personal feelings,’ seems to imply that for him music has an ontological status as the announcement *to* man, rather than *from* man, of the experience of being-in-the-world. Cage’s music might thus be seen as a place where Being is disclosed to man. Clearly, for Cage, man’s world arises for him musically in something not unlike *Dasein*, and there is a sense in which for Cage music is the place where “Being speaks.”

What remains of the present discussion on Cage will digress briefly from this Section’s central trajectory of improvisation and hope, in order to investigate similarities between Cage and Heidegger, and therefore perhaps between Cage’s ideas and the present thesis which has a Heideggerian basis. An inversion in Cage’s musical aesthetics parallels Heidegger’s inversion of the traditional conception of language - the idea in Heidegger that man does not first speak language, but that language first speaks or grounds man. Both thinkers accord priority to a passivity to, rather than to an active use of a medium of ontological disclosure, language in Heidegger’s case, music in Cage’s. Of this passivity Cage has observed: ‘I wished when I first used chance operations, to make music in which I would not express my feelings or my ideas, but in which the sounds themselves would change me.’<sup>171</sup> While Heidegger

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<sup>170</sup> Harold Clarke Goddard, *Studies in New England Transcendentalism* (1908) (New York: Hillary House, 1960), p. 4.

<sup>171</sup> John Cage, Interview with Hans C. Helms. In “Conversations with John Cage, Christian Wolff, and Moreton Feldman.” On E. M. I. disc: 1C165-28954/57Y (1972). Cited in Solomon, “Improvisation (1),” p. 77.

said: 'We never come to thoughts. They come to us.'<sup>172</sup> Such an outlook has complex ramifications for music: 'Now, the music wants to tell the composer what to do. Now the performer must become the composer'.<sup>173</sup>

It has already been seen that Cage's music is also in a certain sense improvisatory. Cage's ideas therefore exhibit a certain *prima facie* convergence with the proposals of the present thesis that Being speaks in improvised music. However, there is also a divergence. The difference between the present thesis and Cage's theories lies in the difference between their respective emphases on intentional and nonintentional improvisation, or, stated another way, on the perceived significance of the human subject in relation to the musical process. In Transcendentalism, and therefore in Cage, the human subject seems to be no more significant than other entities in the world: anthropocentricity is trivial for '[w]e live in a world where there are things as well as people.' Such a subject cohabits with the rest of the world, but does not in any way stand out. This is why Cage seeks to make his music nonintentional, to bring the person down to the level of the world. However for Heidegger, and thus for the present thesis, the self is crucially needed for a world to arise. In words of Kisiel: 'Speech speaks in order to summon the world and things to their essence'.<sup>174</sup> Or as Heidegger says: '*Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being. Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological.*'<sup>175</sup> Heidegger dismantled the Cartesian subject, but not - as does Transcendentalism - the subject as an existent, an "I," who in some unique degree stands out. Indeed, Heidegger's earlier

<sup>172</sup> Heidegger, *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, p. 11. Cited in O' Rourke, "Gift of Being," p. 314.

<sup>173</sup> Davey Williams, "Concerning the Music that Will Be." In Austin, AMM (Prevost and Rowe), Bailey, Budd, Golea and Kaplan, Schwartz, Solomon, Goldstein, Silber, Williams, Oliveros. "Forum: Improvisation," Childs and Hobbs (eds.), p. 101.

<sup>174</sup> Kisiel, "Language of the Event," p. 98.

<sup>175</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 4, p. 32.

descriptions for *Dasein* were the ‘historical ego’ or the ‘ego of the situation.’<sup>176</sup> This Heideggerian egological emphasis is preserved in the present thesis where, following Heidegger, *Dasein* is held to project futurally and actively, and also by means of musical improvisation of an intentional kind. Therefore on one hand, Cage’s philosophy coincides with Heidegger and the present thesis insofar as Cage reduces the ontological distinctiveness of the subject in the form handed down by the Cartesian tradition. Viewed from this standpoint of shared divergence from the Cartesian *ego*, Transcendentalists and Heidegger are alike in teaching a degree of melding of the human person with the world as a whole. On the other hand, Cage, following a Transcendentalist paradigm, ultimately reduces the distinctiveness of the human subject more than Heidegger reduces it, and therefore more than the present thesis reduces it. Unlike Heidegger’s *Dasein*, Cage’s Transcendentalist human subject is not set apart from other things in the world in any special way at all.

The wider similarities between Cage and Heidegger have been noted by commentators. For Perloff and Junkerman, Cage is in debt ‘to Emerson and Thoreau, to the notion that Heidegger explored most fully, of ‘thinking as the receiving or letting be of something, as opposed to the positing or putting together of something’.<sup>177</sup> Cage himself, quoted above, attempts to ‘let sounds be themselves in a space of time.’ In this connection, Gerald Bruns has remarked, ‘[c]hance operations are the Cagean . . . equivalent of Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit* [letting be]; chance brings openness to mystery down to earth in the form of acceptance (acknowledging the *es gibt* of things).’<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> See Martin Heidegger, “The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview.” In *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie* (1919 Freiburg lectures). In *Gesamtausgabe*, vols 56/57, Bernd Heimbüchel (ed.), (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1987), pp. 205-206. Cited in Thomas Sheehan, “Reading a Life: Heidegger and Hard Times.” In *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Guignon (ed.), p. 78. A discussion of *Dasein* in relation to its subjective or egological aspect is provided in Harrison Hall, “Intentionality and the World.” In *ibid*, Guignon (ed.), p. 124.

<sup>177</sup> Perloff and Junkerman, “Introduction,” p. 10. Citation from Stanley Cavell, “An Emerson Mood.” In *The Senses of Walden* (San Francisco: North Point Press, Expanded Edition, 1981), p. 132.

<sup>178</sup> Gerald L. Bruns, “Poethics: John Cage and Stanley Cavell at the Crossroads of Ethical Theory.” In *John Cage: Composed in America*, Perloff and Junkerman (eds.), p. 215.

Rather than any direct influence of Heidegger on Cage, shared interests in Eastern philosophy, as well as in Eckhart, may constitute the link between Cage and Heidegger. 'During the 1950s it became apparent that, under the influence of Eastern philosophy, in particular Zen Buddhism with its anti-rationalist teaching, Cage's desire to turn away from the Western concept of artistic tradition, individual taste and even memory, was an increasingly powerful force in his thinking.'<sup>179</sup> And as one interviewer has asked:

MAGEE: [O]ne of the main ideas of Heidegger is . . . this notion that if we really want to understand our situation - or, to put it another way, if we really want to understand reality - we must try not to impose ourselves on it but, rather, submit ourselves to it. Do you think this links up in any serious way with Eastern ideas - with notions one is used to associating with Buddhism and Hinduism, or with oriental philosophy generally?

BARRETT: I think it does. There are indications of this in some of Heidegger's later writings, with its passing references to Taoism and, at one point, Zen Buddhism.<sup>180</sup>

Cage's explicit involvement with the thought of Meister Eckhart has already been touched on above, while, on the subject of Heidegger's relationship to Eckhart, John D. Caputo points out that: 'Heidegger himself tells us that the mystical rose in [Angelus] Silesius's poem ['Rose is Without Why'], which is as we have seen a poetic expression of Eckhart's teaching on the soul, is also a model in terms of which we can understand man and thinking.'<sup>181</sup>

However, as well as sharing ideological traits and philosophical antecedents, Heidegger may actually have affected Cage more directly through Germanic influences in America. 'American musical life has . . . been shaped and enriched by the influx of refugee musicians from the 1930s onwards . . . There can be little doubt . . . that American musicology . . . was founded on works of the largely Austro-German émigré musicologists who settled there for good. Such names as Gustave Reese, Paul Henry

<sup>179</sup> Otto Karolyi, *Modern American Music: From Charles Ives to the Minimalists* (London: Cygnus Arts, 1996), p. 71.

<sup>180</sup> Barrett, "Heidegger and Modern Existentialism," p. 87.

<sup>181</sup> John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (n.p.: Villanova Univ. Press, 1978), p. 140.

Lang, Alfred Einstein and Curt Sachs come immediately to mind.’<sup>182</sup> Although any speculation is highly generalised concerning Cage’s possible contact with Heideggerian philosophy as a result of Germanic influences in America, it is neither idle nor arbitrary. Cage’s post-war work coincided chronologically with a rise in Heidegger’s philosophical influence in the Anglo-American intellectual world: indeed, ‘[t]he period after the war saw the spread of Heidegger’s writings throughout the intellectual world in an explosion of interest that crossed lines of language, culture and academic disciplines.’<sup>183</sup> Cage would no doubt have been temperamentally drawn to the newest ideas. In connection with possible Heideggerian influence, Cage’s phrase ‘[a] walk . . . in the woods of music’ in his *Writings* from the 1970s, quoted above, leaps off the page. Heidegger published *The Origin of the Work of Art* in 1950, in Frankfurt, in a volume entitled *Holzwege*, which means “a walk in the woods.” Moreover, Cage’s new trend towards performance indeterminacy is dated by Tan above as having begun just after this, around 1952, which is also the composition date of Cage’s perhaps most extreme example of performance indeterminacy, the piece *4’ 33’’*. This piece bears more than passing resemblance to some conceptions in Heidegger’s *The Origin of the Work of Art*.

In *4’ 33’’* the performer (in fact there may be more than one) sits in silence at her instrument without doing anything, for four minutes and thirty-three seconds, while her audience listen to the ordinary sounds made by the environment. Although Cage must have seen the funny side, the piece is not frivolous. In the first place, to situate ordinary environmental noise within the context of an art-work is to make a statement about the worldedness of the self who is the art-producer: the statement, in other words, that if I can produce a work of art, I must already be in the world, not some kind

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<sup>182</sup> Karolyi, *Modern American*, p. 129. Alfred Einstein was a cousin of Albert Einstein the scientist.

<sup>183</sup> Sheehan, “Reading a Life,” p. 89.

of disembodied subjectivity aloof from it. Such disembodiedness had been the implication of the “worldless subject” which formed the cornerstone of the Cartesian scheme,<sup>184</sup> and ‘[i]t is this ‘interpretation of the being of consciousness’ that *Being and Time* criticised and replaced with a radically different conception of the subject - the ‘existing subject,’ as Heidegger puts it - as Dasein.’<sup>185</sup> Cage’s re-worlding of the subject here in *4’ 33’’* can, of course, be accounted for in terms of either a Transcendentalist or a Heideggerian paradigm. However, a more plainly Heideggerian connotation awaits, since *4’ 33’’* is also about a musical instrument which is not played and, as Heidegger commentator Günther Pöltner observed, ‘[t]he quiet which precedes the sounding of . . . music, is the gathered and collected presence [versammelte Anwesenheit] of the entire piece of music.’<sup>186</sup> Musical performances, though understandably thought of chiefly in terms of sound, are nevertheless often deeply implicated in and interactive with the experience of silence in this sense. People often fall silent in order to begin listening, and according to a Heideggerian understanding, in such instinctive silence before a piece, the listeners might consciously or, more likely, unconsciously be understood to gather the art-work, which will in turn shortly gather world and earth. In making an art-work out of the silent expectation which precedes a performance, Cage’s *4’ 33’’* renders into artistic symbolisation the tacit expectation which listeners, waiting for a performance to begin, have of art as the place where “Being speaks,” their theoretical or pre-theoretical recognition of art as ontological disclosure (Chapter 4, Section II). Moreover, the silence here clearly is anticipatory, since the audience do not necessarily *know*, and ideally should not, that this piece will remain silent, and the point of the presence of a musical instrument is to suggest that

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<sup>184</sup> See Frederick A. Olafson, “The Unity of Heidegger’s Thought.” In *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Guignon (ed.), pp. 110-111.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, p. 111.

<sup>186</sup> Pöltner, “Mozart and Heidegger,” p. 15.

the silence is to be broken. This anticipatory silence, which, in 4' 33'' may for the first time be seen as extrapolated to form an entire art-work, possesses here a significance rather like the emptiness of Heidegger's Greek temple in *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1950), which embodies both world and earth through a gathering emptiness. The temple's colonnaded space is both open to the outside and enclosed.<sup>187</sup> Its emptiness speaks of a primordial worlding of earth lying at the basis of all works of art, anterior to whatever a given art-work might additionally be in terms of depiction, content or medium. John Cage's silent piece is similarly open to the world-sounds outside it, which are brought to light and enclosed by the cultural context of the art-work. 4' 33'' reminds us, like the temple, that every art-work, prior to the details which define it as this or that art-work, is a gathering of what is already available, a worlding of earth. Thus, in 4' 33'' musical performance reflects on itself in the light of an arguably Heideggerian approach to the work of art, and sets out to remember its rootedness in sounds available in the world.

The piece also highlights a paradox in Cage's supposedly nonintentional methodology, namely that all musical art requires some kind of intentional human activity, and this implies, notwithstanding Cage's philosophy, the residual presence of the intentional human subject. Even 4' 33'' has a performer who takes the intentional decision as to when the piece commences, for example, and possibly which instrument to "play" it on, or even, indeed, whether to "play" it rather than simply walk away. For Cage in his nonintentional 4' 33'', a world arises through music, but only, perhaps following Heidegger, at the summons of man. This piece fails to place man on an equal level with the other things in the world in the manner favoured by Transcendentalism. There is no 'complex interpenetration of centers' for it is the

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<sup>187</sup> See Steiner, *Heidegger*, pp. 134-135.

human person's intentions which determine the existence of the performance, and some aspects of the performance. In 4' 33' the human person remains centre and summoner, essentially *Dasein*. In a 1989 interview, Cage comments on the significant aporias in his nonintentional procedures:

DUCKWORTH: So . . . even in indeterminate, nonintentional music value judgements play a part?  
CAGE: Oh, certainly.<sup>188</sup>

As has been observed:

Cage's music has become much more widely and deeply understood, and today Cage interpreters sometimes produce truly exquisite musical objects, perhaps exquisite in ways that Cage himself never imagined.

Do they do so intentionally?

If so, doesn't that go against the basic intentions, or nonintentions, of the music?

What are the real intentions of a composer of nonintentional music?

What does nonintentional music intend to convey to the listener, and how can the interpreter help the message come across?

If a performer plays with great control, achieving exactly what he or she intends, does this contradict the nonintentions of the music?

The contradictions fold over one another endlessly, like one of those ever-confusing Zen koans, and we will never untangle all these ironies.<sup>189</sup>

Cage both views his music ontologically as an expression of reality, and, also, his nonintentional procedures remain intentional by default. Thus his work seems to encompass, though in an inexplicit and unformulated way, the idea of *intentional* improvisation as an ontological unveiling. Even 4' 33' is laced through with a residual intentionality, the presence of the summoner. An ontological claim for intentional improvising is, of course, made by the present thesis, a claim which thus has pre-echoes in Cage's musical practices, though not his theories. This suggests that one of the twentieth century's most original composers was reaching unconsciously towards the ideas being here proposed.

For another composer Cornelius Cardew, seeking to articulate a political radicalism and hope in the early 1970s, 'the experience of improvisation was a politically

<sup>188</sup> Duckworth, "Anything I Say will be Misunderstood," p. 22.

<sup>189</sup> Johnson, "Intentionality and Nonintentionality," p. 264. 'Koans are nonsensical riddles which Zen masters pose for novice monks who come to their elders expecting to be *told* what is real.' Charles Junkerman, "'nEw/forMs of living together': The Model of the Musicircus." In *John Cage: Composed in America*, Perloff and Junkerman (eds.), p. 51.



radicalizing influence, for its lessons of fruitful co-operation and productive freedom seemed ready for application to the wider world.’<sup>190</sup> Cardew’s *Scratch Orchestra* which sought to ‘break down barriers between professional and amateur,’<sup>191</sup> included works by La Monte Young, Terry Riley, and Frederic Rzewski, and included ‘improvisation rites’<sup>192</sup> which sought to ‘establish a community of feeling, or a communal starting-point, through ritual.’<sup>193</sup> For this school of composers, ‘musical issues were political issues in microcosm’<sup>194</sup> and ‘temporariness was an invitation to deal with issues of the moment, be they musical or political.’<sup>195</sup> Cardew sought to move beyond the musical methods of the existing avant-garde in the pursuit of his political goals:

I have discontinued composing music in an avantgarde idiom for a number of reasons: the exclusiveness of the avantgarde, its fragmentation, its indifference to the real situation of the world today, its individualistic outlook and not least its class character (the other characteristics are virtually products of this). I have rejected the bourgeois idealistic conception which sees art as the production of unique, divinely inspired geniuses, and developed a dialectical materialist conception which sees art as the reflection of society . . . At a time when the ruling class has become blatantly vicious and corrupt, as it must in its final decay, it becomes urgent for conscious artists to develop ways of opposing the ideas of the ruling class and reflecting in their art the vital struggles of the oppressed classes and peoples in their upsurge to seize political power.<sup>196</sup>

In a similar manner Frederic Rzewski seeks ‘to model socio-political phenomena and to teach specific lessons about these phenomena on both intuitive and intellectual levels to both performers and listeners.’<sup>197</sup> ‘Rzewski has been a committed Marxist since the early 1960s and has openly consecrated his art to bringing about a consciousness that will aid world revolution.’<sup>198</sup> ‘Rzewski is clear about how music

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<sup>190</sup> Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music and After* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 185-186.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>192</sup> Cornelius Cardew, “A Scratch Orchestra: Draft Constitution.” *The Musical Times* 110, no. 1516 (June 1969): 617-619; p. 619.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> Griffiths, *Modern Music and After*, p. 188.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> Cornelius Cardew, Programme notes to *Piano Album* (London: n.p., 1973). Cited in Timothy D. Taylor, “Moving in Decency: The Music and Radical Politics of Cornelius Cardew.” *Music and Letters* 79, no. 4 (November 1998): 555-576; p. 563.

<sup>197</sup> Christian Asplund, “Frederic Rzewski and Spontaneous Political Music.” *Perspectives of New Music* 33, nos. 1-2 (Winter 1995/ Summer 1995): 418-441; p. 418.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 428.

should be used as a revolutionary tool. It must . . . foreground the participants' dissatisfaction with existing power structures, convey the possibility and hope of something better, model this alternative, and suggest a way of obtaining it.'<sup>199</sup> He aspires to a 'situation of spontaneous concerted action . . . whether it be a musical performance or a revolution'.<sup>200</sup> In *Les Moutons de Panurge*, the improvisatory method of performance 'can model the experience of oppressed individuals engaged in tedious and pointless drudgery, halfway believing that what they are doing will somehow advance them to a state of freedom and happiness in the vague future.'<sup>201</sup>

Messiaen's first contacts with musical improvisation probably came from his early association with the French Catholic tradition of liturgical organ improvisation. He studied organ improvisation as a young man with Marcel Dupré<sup>202</sup> and continued to improvise regularly as a liturgical organist long into his performing career.<sup>203</sup> Messiaen's understanding of rhythm is highly distinctive: 'Now most people think that rhythm and the steady beat of a military march are one and the same. Whereas rhythm is in fact an unequal element given to fluctuations, like the waves in the sea, the sound of the wind, or the shape of tree branches.'<sup>204</sup> 'Schematically, rhythmic music is music that scorns repetition, squareness, and equal divisions, and that is inspired by the movements of nature, movements of free and unequal durations.'<sup>205</sup> Clearly Messiaen's unusual view of rhythm has the effect of minimising the predictability of his music, introducing a spontaneous feel which moves in the direction of an improvisatory ethos. He favours a 'rhythmic restlessness.'<sup>206</sup> As he says: 'My

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid, p. 430.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, p. 433.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, p. 426.

<sup>202</sup> See Claude Samuel and Olivier Messiaen, *Olivier Messiaen: Music and Color. Conversations with Claude Samuel* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus, 1994), p. 22.

<sup>203</sup> See *ibid*, p. 25.

<sup>204</sup> Messiaen, in *ibid*, p. 249.

<sup>205</sup> Messiaen, in *ibid*, p. 67.

<sup>206</sup> Messiaen, in *ibid*, p. 182.

rhythmic language is precisely a combination of all these elements: note-values distributed in irregular numbers, the absence of equal times . . . and the action of rhythmic characters'.<sup>207</sup> For Messiaen, this approach is, indeed, consciously spontaneous.<sup>208</sup>

Messiaen's ideas of spontaneity in rhythm have futural connotations. He asserts that his first rhythmically important works were *La Nativité du Seigneur* and *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*.<sup>209</sup> The first is clearly a religious work rooted in Christian hope, and the second is quite explicitly related to the end of time, a future hope, being based on a text from the Book of Revelation (10:1-7). The latter musical work was moreover written in a prison camp in 1941,<sup>210</sup> suggesting a refusal of a painful present which complements the hope which inhabits the work. Matheson suggests that this choice of text from Revelation may have been prompted by Messiaen's situation in the prison camp, 'in which time might indeed have seemed literally endless, and the Apocalypse close at hand.'<sup>211</sup> It may even be helpful to suggest a parallel between Messiaen's spontaneous, improvisatory style of religious musical composition while in the prison camp, and the recourse to improvisatory singing in a religious context by black slaves in America, as discussed above.

Tim Hodgkinson finds a parallel between Messiaen's music and shamanism in the sense that both seek to evoke a mystical dimension<sup>212</sup> a parallel also found by Tucker.<sup>213</sup> Indeed, specifically rhythmic irregularity as a way of making contact with a hoped-for future has been identified in some shamanism for it has been noticed that

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<sup>207</sup> Messiaen, in *ibid*, p. 79.

<sup>208</sup> See Messiaen, in *ibid*, p. 79.

<sup>209</sup> See Messiaen in *ibid*, p. 80.

<sup>210</sup> See Iain G. Matheson, "The End of Time: A Biblical Theme in Messiaen's *Quatuor*." In *The Messiaen Companion*, Peter Hill (ed.), (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 235.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>212</sup> See Hodgkinson, "Siberian Shamanism," p. 64.

<sup>213</sup> See Tucker, "Body Electric," p. 84.

‘the healing songs of the North American Indians [studied by F. Densmore] are characterized by changes of stress and rhythmical irregularities that distinguish them quite clearly from the tribes’ other songs.’<sup>214</sup> Messiaen also has his own version of the nowmoment philosophy. Messiaen compares his music to that of Stockhausen’s *Momente* which ‘evolves moment by moment, minute by minute, fragment of time by fragment of time.’<sup>215</sup> He has associated his religious concerns with a ‘static’ element in his music: ‘I myself am a static composer because I believe in the invisible and in the beyond; I believe in eternity.’<sup>216</sup> In a similar way, he ‘sought to do away with time, to destroy the notion of duration, and to present music as impressions with neither beginnings nor endings. This musical environment, freed from time, evokes sensations of deep contemplation and religious ecstasy.’<sup>217</sup> This musical emphasis on the present does not, however, obviate the claim that his music is future-directed, and the considerations and paradoxes here essentially correspond to those which applied to, and put in question, Cage’s idea of the nowmoment as a radical breach with past and future.

#### *IV Schelling as Resonator for the Primordial*

Chapter 2, Section III described the effects of the German philosophical ideas of spontaneity on Liszt. It was seen how the impact of Schelling’s thought on Liszt fostered an improvisatory tendency in the latter’s artistic work, musical improvisation being seen there, by implication of Schelling’s philosophy, as a power which penetrates to the depths of reality. It might be conjectured in this case that humanity’s

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<sup>214</sup> Rouget, *Music and Trance*, p. 81. Reference to Frances Densmore. “The Use of Music in the Treatment of the Sick by American Indians.” In *Music and Medicine*, D. M. Schullian and M. Schoen (eds.), (New York: Henry Schuman, 1948), pp. 36-37.

<sup>215</sup> Messiaen, in Samuel and Messiaen, *Conversations*, p. 187.

<sup>216</sup> Messiaen, in *ibid*, p. 103.

<sup>217</sup> Madeleine Hsu, *Olivier Messiaen, The Musical Mediator: A Study of the Influence of Liszt, Debussy, and Bartók* (London: Associated Univ. Presses, 1996), p. 25.

primordial shamanic instinct concerning improvised music as the unveiling of the desired “other place” somehow found an indirect outlet in this German philosophy. Schelling was noted for his respect for and interest in mythology, which entails a familiarity with primitive cultures and their artistic and religious practices of which shamanism is clearly one. Along with Goethe and Hölderlin, Schelling was responsible for a growth of interest in myth at the end of the eighteenth century<sup>218</sup> and along with A. and F. Schlegel he was a founding figure in the German mythological school of the nineteenth century. For Schelling, mythology was ‘the necessary condition and primary material for all art.’<sup>219</sup> He believed that ‘a renaissance in national art is possible only if artists turn to mythology.’<sup>220</sup> Given that art is at the heart of Schelling’s philosophy, these statements imply a large claim for the significance of mythology, and, by implication primitive culture. It would not be unreasonable, given this immersion in archaic human ideas and practices, to speculate that primitive practices in the area of the search for truth, such as shamanism, impressed themselves favourably on Schelling’s imagination so as to find a subtle echo in his philosophical work. Indeed, Schelling’s marked emphasis on the idea of art as access to truth already echoes a characteristic primitive human belief for ‘[t]he religions of humanity and the art of humanity have always been intertwined.’<sup>221</sup> Schelling would certainly have been made familiar with the idea of the shaman, even from an early and impressionable age, as his father was a professor of oriental languages,<sup>222</sup> an occupation that would clearly bring him into contact with folk cultures of the east where shamanism survived. Schelling was also influenced by the prevalent

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<sup>218</sup> See S. S. Averintsev, “Myth.” In *The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* (1974), vol 16, Jean Paradise (group editorial director), (New York: Macmillan, 1977), p. 616.

<sup>219</sup> Friedrich von Schelling, no documentation. Cited in V. E. Gusev, “Mythological School.” In *ibid*, Paradise (group editorial director). p. 614.

<sup>220</sup> Gusev, *ibid*.

<sup>221</sup> Olivier Christin, “Religion and Aesthetics.” In *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, vol 4. Micheal Kelly (ed.-in-chief), (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), p. 124.

Orientalism.<sup>223</sup> Moreover, ‘Schelling believed that philosophy was the substitute for, or the equivalent of, a mystical experience - a jump into Being . . . a grasp of (or for) the Absolute, with neither a demonstrative nor a psychological basis, but rather an experience of transcendent wholeness.’<sup>224</sup> This affinity with mysticism runs even deeper than his ideas, and embeds itself in his written style. Kearney has written of Schelling’s ‘deep determination to reconcile mystical and scientific thought [which] was also manifest in the very style and form of his presentation.’<sup>225</sup> Schelling often wrote in ‘incantatory formulations’<sup>226</sup> and favoured ‘visionary rumination.’<sup>227</sup>

The influence of Schelling, and sometimes additionally Liszt, also appears to have figured significantly in the compositional/improvisational and hope-oriented outlook of Ives, Kandinsky, Schoenberg, and through them, Cage. The Transcendentalism, associated with Emerson, which influenced Ives was rooted in fact in this German philosophy. In the definition of one commentator: ‘Let us say, then, simply, that New England Transcendentalism was produced by the deliberate importing of certain imperfectly understood elements of German idealism into American Unitarianism; that it became a creative force in American life and letters; but that as a philosophy it was merely a sort of mystical idealism built upon pragmatic premises.’<sup>228</sup> Schelling’s ideas having been taken up in England by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, there appears to have been a ‘striking similarity between Emerson’s thought and Coleridge’s, and consequently between Emerson’s and Schelling’s’.<sup>229</sup> Schelling’s ideas are likely to

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<sup>222</sup> See Philip W. Goetz (ed-in-chief), *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol 10, (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1990), unattributed article “Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von,” p. 512.

<sup>223</sup> See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 150.

<sup>224</sup> Nemoianu, *Taming of Romanticism*, p. 28.

<sup>225</sup> Kearney, *Wake*, p. 179.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> Henry David Gray, *Emerson: A Statement of New England Transcendentalism as Expressed in the Philosophy of its Chief Exponent* (New York: Frederick Ungar, n.d. [1917?]), pp. 14-15.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31. References to (no given name) Lockwood, *Emerson as a Philosopher* (incomplete documentation), pp. 6, 7; H[arold] C[larke] Goddard, “Studies in New England Transcendentalism.” Ph. D dissertation, Columbia University, 1908, pp. 80-81.

have been transmitted to Emerson in some degree also from France by the writings of Victor Cousin, to whom reference was made above in connection with his pro-Schellingian articles in the 1830s in the *Paris Revue musicale*: 'In one of his earliest addresses [Emerson] speaks as if acquainted with Cousin's system . . . In *English Traits* he speaks of him again - 'whose lectures we had all been reading in Boston'.<sup>230</sup>

Schelling's conception of freedom as a necessity arising from within the human person echoes also in Kandinsky. For commentator Paul Overy: 'A phrase that occurs again and again in *Concerning The Spiritual in Art* and in other writings of Kandinsky is *inner necessity* or *inner need*. The phrase is not original but is used by many writers, musicians and artists towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of the twentieth.'<sup>231</sup> Overy continues: 'In the work of art the external expression is the form of the work, the internal necessity the inner tensions within the artist's mind or soul which demand to be formulated in external terms: 'The artist wishes to express himself and chooses only forms which are sympathetic to his inner self.' 'The artist may use any form which his expression demands; his inner impulses must find suitable external form'.<sup>232</sup> The ideas here of 'the external expression [of] . . . internal necessity', and 'inner impulses [which] must find suitable external form' echo Schelling's conception of the artist. As representative imager and prophet, he is

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<sup>230</sup> Goddard, *Studies in New England Transcendentalism* [(1960)], p. 77. Reference to Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Works*, vol 1 (Boston: Riverside, 1883-1894), p. 165. Cousin appears to have influenced the Transcendentalists quite extensively. Goddard refers to his influence on Henry Channing (see Goddard, *ibid*, pp. 50-51) and Theodore Parker (see *ibid*, p. 84). 'The works of Cousin . . . also became familiar to the Americans, - reviews and translations going where the eloquent original was not heard - and helped to free the young mind from the gross sensationalism of the academic Philosophy on one side, and the grosser supernaturalism of the ecclesiastical Theology on the other.' *Ibid*, p. 106. 'Of French writers who helped to carry German thought, the most important were probably Mme. De Staël, Cousin and Jouffroy, and of these the second seems to have been the most widely read.' *Ibid*, p. 111. Goddard cites an article in the *North American Review* (July 1841) in which was written: 'The writings of Cousin form the popular philosophy of the day. Their success in this country is attested by the appearance of the three translations, of which the titles are given above, one of which has already passed to a second edition and has been introduced as a text book in some of our principal colleges.' *Ibid*, p. 111, note 2.

<sup>231</sup> Paul Overy, *Kandinsky: The Language of the Eye* (London: Elek, 1969), p. 77.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid*, p. 78. Citations from Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911) (New York: Wittenborn, 1947), p. 53.

compelled to create by, in the words of Herbert Read ‘an unconscious power which . . . possesses him.’<sup>233</sup> Will Grohman, who enjoyed personal contact with Kandinsky,<sup>234</sup> has also spoken of Kandinsky’s cultural connections with Schelling, particularly in the context of contemporary revivals of German idealist thinking: ‘Several of his ideas were derived from the German Romantic philosophers, from Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* . . . and Schelling. Schelling’s theories were familiar in Russia, and we find echoes of them among Kandinsky’s friends, particularly Franz Marc (*Aphorisms*).’<sup>235</sup> Grohmann remarks that both *On the Spiritual in Art*, and even more the preface to the catalogue of the second *Blaue Reiter* exhibition of February 1912 contain pages that ‘remind us of Schelling.’<sup>236</sup> Moreover, whether Kandinsky’s youthful fascination with a certain painting of Liszt, and especially the depiction in it of Liszt’s hand, may have fuelled his interest in the improvisatory is worthy of conjecture. Kandinsky reports that he often used to gaze as a youth on Repin’s painting of Liszt in order to study the hand with prolonged attention.<sup>237</sup>

In the case of Schoenberg, there is evidence from the contents of his library of the direct literary influence of Kant and of the post-Schellingian philosophical tradition on him, as represented especially by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, who had taken up the

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<sup>233</sup> Read, *True Voice of Feeling*, p. 17.

<sup>234</sup> See Clark V. Poling, *Kandinsky’s Teaching at the Bauhaus: Color Theory and Analytical Drawing* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), p. 19.

<sup>235</sup> Will Grohmann, *Wassily Kandinsky: Life and Work* (1958) (London: Thames and Hudson, 1959), p. 84. Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, or *The Science of Knowledge* (1794) has been referred to above (Chapter 2, Section III).

<sup>236</sup> Grohmann, *ibid*, p. 86. The catalogue passage to which Grohmann refers in connection with resemblance to Schelling (see *ibid*, p. 67) is as follows: ‘Nature creates form for its purpose. Art creates form for its purpose . . . It is our warm desire to arouse joy by showing examples of the inexhaustible wealth of forms that, unceasingly, the world of art creates by the operation of law.’ From the catalogue of the *Second Exhibition of the Editors of the “Blaue Reiter”* (Munich, 1912). In *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, vol 1, Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (eds.), (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), p. 228.

<sup>237</sup> See Wassily Kandinsky, “Rückblicke.” In *Kandinsky: Die Gesammelten Schriften*, vol 1, Hans K. Roethel and Jelena Hahl-Koch (eds.), (Bern: Benteli, 1980), p. 32; Wassily Kandinsky, “Anmerkungen zu ‘Rückblicke’.” In *ibid*, Roethel and Hahl-Koch (eds.), p. 152.



central points of Schelling's metaphysic of art.<sup>238</sup> William Thomson places Schopenhauer and Kant in the forefront of Schoenberg's interests.<sup>239</sup> The improvisatory connotations of Schoenberg's understanding of creativity may also be in some way connected with an admiration for Liszt. It is in the 1911 essay on Liszt that Schoenberg observes that 'the perfected work of the great artist, is produced, above all, by his instincts; and the sharper ear he has for what they say, the more immediate the expression he can give them, the greater his work is.'<sup>240</sup> Since improvisation may be defined as the ability to give immediate expression to musical instinct, as Liszt did pre-eminently in his piano improvisation, it is the Lisztian practice of improvisation which goes furthest towards satisfying Schoenberg's definition of ideal musical creativity here. Nor was Messiaen untouched by the influence of Liszt, since Marcel Dupré's outstanding keyboard technique, and his improvisatory pedagogy had deep roots in the Lisztian inheritance. Messiaen described Dupré as 'the Liszt of the organ.'<sup>241</sup>

It would seem thus that Ives, Kandinsky, Schoenberg and Messiaen were responding in their music or painting not just to a primordial human tendency to link improvisatoriness with the "other place" of aspiration, as exemplified in shamanism, but also to the influence of a European cultural and philosophical tradition associated especially with Schelling. Their linking of improvisatoriness and the "other place" might thus be interpreted as overdetermined by more than one cultural cause. However, if what has been said above about Schelling's interest in primitive human culture is also taken into account, a division between these two cultural influences should not be too firmly drawn. It might be possible to interpret the influence of

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<sup>238</sup> See Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music and Painting in Europe 1900-1916* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 83, note 81.

<sup>239</sup> See William Thomson, *Schoenberg's Error* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Univ. Press, 1991), p. 18.

<sup>240</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, "Franz Liszt's Work and Being." (1911) In *Style and Idea*, Stein (ed.), p. 442.

<sup>241</sup> Olivier Messiaen, "Hommage à Marcel Dupré." *Le Courrier Musical de France* 35 (1971): 113. Cited in Murray, *Marcel Dupré*, p. 4.

Schelling as a further cultural effect of the original, primordial link made by humans between improvised music and hope, a link now refracted conceptually through the German philosophical tradition newly stimulated by mythological and Oriental themes.

## Chapter 7

### *Improvisation and Christian Hope*

#### *I Liturgy and Hope*

The idea of musical improvisation's primordial expressive affinity with human hope and aspiration has now been examined here in the context of a range of specific objects of hope. These were the freedom of American slaves, the supernatural aspirations of shamanism, union with the over-soul in American Transcendentalist philosophy, the Schoenbergian transformation of Western music, the perfected socialist society proposed by Marxism, and the heavenly goal proposed by Christianity. A cultural expression of the fundamental relationship between improvised music and hope seems also to be found in the history of Christian ritual, and this suggestion will now be considered in some detail, both historical and theological.

An important aim of Christian ritual, or liturgy, is the elicitation and expression of various interrelated hopes: hope for a perfect heavenly existence following upon earthly life; hope for a present earthly existence significantly enhanced by justice and the implementation of God's will; hope for a finally transformed earthly existence (the 'new earth,' Revelation 21:1) lived in total harmony with God's will. These three dimensions of hope may be heard expressed, for example, in the following prayer from the Order of Holy Communion of the Church of England (emphases added):

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body *live his risen life*; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights *give light to the world*. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so we and all your children shall be free, and *the whole earth live to praise your name*; through Christ our Lord.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Alternative Service Book 1980: Services Authorized for use in the Church of England in conjunction with the Book of Common Prayer together with the Liturgical Psalter* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press and A. R. Mowbray, 1980), p. 144.

Liturgical activity is not concerned exclusively with this future orientation, for the remembrance, or *anamnesis* of Christ's earthly work is also a central component:

Eat and drink *in remembrance that he died for you*, and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.<sup>2</sup>

However, the liturgical trajectory of futural hoping has a certain priority over this other, historical trajectory. In words of Leonide Ouspensky: 'Christian life is based on two essential realities. One is the redeeming sacrifice of Christ, the need to participate in this sacrifice, to partake of communion in it in order to be saved. The other essential truth is the goal and the result of this sacrifice: the transfiguration of man, and with him, of the whole visible world, resulting in peace between God and the world. This second truth is the main subject of Church symbolism: the forthcoming universal Kingdom of God. It is precisely this orientation towards the future, this building up of the future, which distinguished Christian worship from all others.'<sup>3</sup>

This due priority accorded to hoping arises from the fact that the future heavenly existence, and the final transformation of the earth at the end of time, may be correctly described as the 'definitive state of human existence.'<sup>4</sup> Then, the work of Christ on behalf of the human race, which liturgy celebrates, will achieve fulfilment. In Christian theology, the world and mankind were first created, then also subsequently renewed in their relationship to God through the earthly activity of Christ, in order to be drawn into an ever closer relationship with God over a historical process. 'The universe was created 'in a state of journeying' (*in statu viae*)'.<sup>5</sup> The future, not the past will exhibit the greater completion of God's purposes, for God guides his creation

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 143. Emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> Leonide Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon* (Crestwood NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Neil Ormerod, *Introducing Contemporary Theologies: The What and the Who of Theology Today* (Newtown NSW Australia: Dwyer, 1990), p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), section 302, p. 71.

‘toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained,’<sup>6</sup> and all creation awaits a final consummation, when it will be transformed, made perfect by God in a mysterious way fully understood by God alone. It is to the final goal of this process that the Christian liturgy looks forward in hope.

Christianity is approximately two thousand years old. For the entirety of Christian tradition during its first millennium, and for the preponderance of Christians since that time, though the latter have become divided in due course into three main theological groupings, there is a notable consensus on how Christian truth is most fully set forth. It is chiefly the ritual liturgical proclamation and activity, what is said and done in liturgy, which have been regarded as the primary expression of Christian truth. Geoffrey Wainwright observes: ‘This communion with God, symbolically focused in liturgy, is the primary locus of religious language for the Christian. *Theological* language belongs to the second order: it is the language of reflection upon the primary experience. The language of worship mediates the substance on which theologians reflect; without that substance, theological talk would have no referent.’<sup>7</sup> This relationship of liturgy and theology is as old as Christianity itself. The earliest understanding of Christian belief was as something found in the Church’s day-to-day preaching and living liturgical practice.<sup>8</sup> For example, ‘[t]he Church was assured of the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit because, or at least partly because, divine functions were attributed to them in prayer and sacramental worship . . . It knew that even infants needed to be redeemed by Christ because it had from the beginning practised infant baptism.’<sup>9</sup> Liturgical practice formed the cornerstone of Christian

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: A Systematic Theology. The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (London: Epworth, 1980), pp. 20-21.

<sup>8</sup> See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1958), p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> Dulles, *Craft of Theology*, p. 8.

belief at a primitive stage before the canon of Scripture was fixed, and indeed before the New Testament documents had even been written.

The Roman Catholic Church has reasserted the continuing centrality of liturgy in its recent official teaching. For the encyclical *Mediator Dei* of pope Pius XII, liturgy is the climax of God's activity on earth: 'The Church . . . faithful to the mandate of her Founder, continues the priestly office of Jesus Christ, and does this primarily through the Sacred Liturgy.'<sup>10</sup> In the subsequent words of the Second Vatican Council: '[E]very liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the Priest and of His Body, which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.'<sup>11</sup> '[T]he liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows.'<sup>12</sup> Liturgical rites thus constitute a primary ontological announcement of the Christian mystery, and, by the same token, the primordial place where Christian hope is expressed symbolically. Moreover, in the liturgy, much of the essential meaning is spoken, and this entails that, historically, and in principle, Christian hope in its highest expression has been and is inseparable from the word as spoken. It is in consequence of this permanent embodiment of Christian hope in the vocal and auditory that the relevance to Christian liturgy of earlier Chapters, which concerned music and prosody as unveilings of Being in projection and hope, will begin to emerge.

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<sup>10</sup> Pius XII, "Mediator Dei," (1947) para 3. In *Four Great Encyclicals of Pius XII* (New York: Paulist Press, 1961), p. 98.

<sup>11</sup> Second Vatican Council, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, section 7. In *Vatican Council 2: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery (ed.), (Leominster: Fowler Wright, 1975), p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, section 10, p. 6.

*II Music in the Liturgy: Roots in Christian Anthropology*

Despite the corporate dimension of liturgy, reflecting the importance of Christian community, Christian belief cannot arise in a human person without some individual intervention of God on that person's behalf. He or she must receive from God personally the supernatural capacity for subjective assent to the content of the Christian message. In granting a person the supernatural capacity for this assent, or free response, known as faith, God does not alter the existing natural constitution of the person, but builds up the same human nature to a new level. God builds upon existing nature, since nature was created good by God, indeed created in His image as an 'echo of the divine being'.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the theological concept of human nature goes beyond that of philosophy or anthropology, for it implies that nature is already radically open to, and expectant of, this initial communication by God: it possesses *potentia obedientialis*.<sup>14</sup> Human nature inherently waits for God to prompt it towards a free response in faith. Once faith is born, Eastern theology has tended to speak of God's "deification" of the human person,<sup>15</sup> 'a direct encounter of man with the Holy Spirit'<sup>16</sup> where 'the divine energies by which God shapes creation are trinitarianly personal.'<sup>17</sup> Western theology has tended to speak of "justification" of the human person by a divinely created supernatural power, and tended 'to subordinate the work of the Holy Spirit to the concept of grace, which is interposed between God and man.'<sup>18</sup> The main point here, however, is that human nature does not need to be fundamentally modified when God comes to prompt it to faith and towards a full relationship with Himself.

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<sup>13</sup> Kevin Vanhoozer, "Human Being, Individual and Social." In *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, Colin E. Gunton (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), p. 177.

<sup>14</sup> See Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism* (1981) (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984), p. 158.

<sup>15</sup> See Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, vol 1 *The Beginnings to the Reformation*, (1986) (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, "The Holy Spirit." In *Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, Gunton (ed.), p. 290.

<sup>18</sup> McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, vol 1, p. 3.

‘Theologically, nature includes the radical capacity for grace.’<sup>19</sup> What God does seek to alter in the person, rather than the essential nature, are certain contingent defects which have come to affect all humans since the first creation of the race. These are a defective or absent knowledge of God, and a defective or absent co-operation with the will of God, that is, sin. Humans have universally “missed the mark”<sup>20</sup> in terms of their understanding of God and obedience to His will. Through deification, or grace, God also supernaturally empowers the natural human capacity for hope, in view of the fact that henceforward hope’s highest function in the human person will be to have as its object the end-time promises of the gospel and the consummation of creation. However, by implication of grace’s relation to nature, grace builds on the hope which is already characteristic of human nature. Grace does not here create a wholly new kind of hope, nor obliterate what hope formerly was.

‘It is impossible to carry through the project of systematic theology without explicit commitment to particular philosophical options.’<sup>21</sup> Thus, starting from a Heideggerian interpretation of the individual person as futurally-projecting *Dasein*, Christian *Dasein*, that is, *Dasein* which has come to embrace a state of Christian faith, is now - in the Heideggerian sense - projected futurally, but in a specifically *supernatural* hope. This newly graced or deified<sup>22</sup> hope of Christian *Dasein* must inevitably be founded upon *Dasein*’s existing, natural futural projectedness in hope, since God builds on human

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<sup>19</sup> McBrian, *Catholicism*, p. 160.

<sup>20</sup> The Greek word for sin, *hamartia* (in English letters) means “missing the mark.”

<sup>21</sup> Dulles, *Craft of Theology*, p. 119. Christian theologians who have drawn on Heidegger include Karl Rahner, Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, Gotthold Hasenhüttl, Schubert Ogden, John Macquarrie, Gerhard Ebeling, Ernst Fuchs and James Robinson. See *ibid*, pp. 124-125.

<sup>22</sup> The distinction between grace and deification, mentioned here for the sake of historical comprehensiveness, is not required for the following argument, which might in any case be prosecuted with reference to either culturally-conditioned conceptualisation of God’s activity. The Western term, grace, will be employed from now on. It might also be mentioned that the opposition to be discussed below between nature and grace is not absolute: nature is God’s good creation, created with an emptiness only God can fill, and is, as thus oriented to completion in God, already graced. There is no state of “pure nature” without grace. In what follows, “grace” will be contrasted with “nature” in the sense of *the grace which flows from the incarnation of Christ*. For a discussion of the God-oriented expectancy of nature see Karl Rahner, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (1976) (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978), p. 123.



nature, His good image. In Chapter 6, Sections I and II, it was seen how *Dasein's* natural futural projectedness in hope was linked to the experiences of spontaneous imagination and improvised music. Here, the Heideggerian analytic of *Dasein* was, in effect, extended so as to portray humanity as consisting of intrinsically musical hoppers.

Against the assertion made here that the new graced, Christian hope builds upon the salient characteristics of natural hope in *Dasein*, some theologians would claim that 'Christian hope is in fact so peculiar, so distinct and unique, that it cannot be understood as a special case of some general phenomenon of hope.'<sup>23</sup> Such theologians might claim, adopting a reverse perspective to that adopted here, that only from an understanding of Christian hope can any understanding of the natural phenomenon of hope be attained.<sup>24</sup> Undoubtedly, for believers of all traditions, Christian hope is different in important respects from any natural hope. Rather than a vain hope, or one whose outcome, like the outcomes of natural hopes, cannot be predicted, Christian hope in God's promises is hope for what will certainly happen (Hebrews: 11:1). It might even be argued that it is thus not hope at all, but expectation: 'Something desired and longed for may be expected with joy and confidence - and yet possibly no one would call such expectation 'hope''.<sup>25</sup> Thus, it might be argued, Christian hope, assured of its objects, is not, in fact, like natural hope. Macquarrie concedes that 'there are new dimensions in Christian hope that cannot be derived from considerations of the general human experience of hope,'<sup>26</sup> which results in a need to let Christian hope 'confront us in its own integrity.'<sup>27</sup> Thus he recognises that it is desirable not to 'assimilate it to a prior understanding of what all hope must be . . .

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<sup>23</sup> Macquarrie, *Christian Hope*, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Pieper, *Hope and History* (1967) (London: Burns and Oates, 1969), p. 20. [Note: this is a different item from Joseph Pieper "Hope and History," in *Heart of the Real*, O'Rourke (ed.), cited above.]

<sup>26</sup> Macquarrie, *Christian Hope*, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

because we have already decided what the scope and limits of hope are.’<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, he points out that ‘if Christian hope is not related at the outset to the perspective of human hope in general, then we run that greater danger of falling into the all too common misunderstanding of Christian hope as something quite otherworldly in character and thus unrelated to the ordinary hopes of the mass of mankind.’<sup>29</sup>

This last assertion provides additional theological grounds for regarding the salient characteristics of graced Christian hope as being one with those of ordinary natural hope, at the risk of otherwise dehumanising Christian hope and, despite its points of uniqueness, consigning it to some imaginary independent sphere in other respects. Whatever points of difference may be found between natural and Christian hope, future projection towards a desired alterity is undoubtedly common to both. The similarity of natural and Christian hope, in this particular respect at least, suggests the conclusion that spontaneous imagination and improvised music will play the same part in the expression of supernatural Christian hope as they do in natural hope. It will indeed be claimed here that there is a relationship between the universal human ability to improvise in music (where music is understood to include speech prosody), and the ability to experience the graced hope for the end-of-time goals disclosed by Christian revelation. Thus, it is implied, God first created man as *Dasein* where Being speaks in music, in order that, chiefly through music (where music includes speech prosody), man might project futurally in hope, in a fundamental musical hope inherent in the natural human person (Chapter 6, Section II). This existential analysis of human nature remains intact subsequently to the work of Christ: thus, in the light of Christian revelation also, man’s graced hope is expressed chiefly in music. This does not imply,

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

of course, that Christian hope is experienced only at those times when a person is actually improvising music, or listening to improvised music. It is the *capacity* for and overall experience of this dimension which is linked to hope. It is also extremely important that the reader should grasp that speech prosody is included in the understanding of music to be prosecuted here, not least because the argument will necessarily be developed with little explicit reference to this dimension, on grounds of space. The anthropological complementarity between hope, and spontaneous speech and music, finds historical expression in the Christian liturgy as will be shown below.

Spontaneity, as was seen earlier (Chapter 6, Section I) is in all its manifestations the quintessential point of *Dasein's* projection towards the future, and at the heart of all such projection there was seen also to be an unthematized fundamental hope of a natural kind, a point illustrated above with reference to Plügge and Marcel (Chapter 6, Section II). From the time of the New Testament, spontaneous activity was readily accepted as appropriate within the context of liturgical rites, as will be shown in Section IV, and, it will be implied, functioned for the Christian community as an implicit expression of Christian projection towards the future. Particularly when implementing the unique prosodic or musical capabilities of the human person, spontaneity in liturgy expresses the natural human fundamental hope, in a new supernaturally enriched form, of people who have now assented to Christian belief. Their natural fundamental hope is now supernaturally reconfigured, since there can never be a more fundamental hope than Christian hope, which is cosmic, total and all-inclusive. 'I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End' (Revelation 21:6). There can be no hope beyond the End which is Christ. Christian hope automatically fills the unthematized space which opens out within natural fundamental hope, a space which was always waiting to receive supernatural hope as human nature's completion

in grace. Thus, for Christians, the natural fundamental hope identified by Plügge has become replete with hopes held out by the Christian promises: this formerly unthematized fundamental hope has been graced with a wholly fulfilling content. ‘A whole new content is injected into the idea of hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ . . . If Christ has risen from the dead, then the content of hope has been radically transformed and enriched.’<sup>30</sup>

A theologian would be descending into rationalism and reducing the mystery to within the limitations of human categories, if he did not understand that, in describing the object of Christian hope, he uses analogical terms. ‘[E]xpressions of Christian hope must always be understood as *images* of what we hope for rather than as descriptions of what we know’.<sup>31</sup> ‘We hope for what we do not see’ (Romans 8:25) and for ‘what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived’ (1 Corinthians 2:9). If the Christian is to attempt to hold the heavenly goal and its mysteries in imagination, the analogical verbal imagery in which they are clothed must be acknowledged in its limits, recognised as analogical. This principle of analogy represents a recognition that eschatological hope cannot be thematised and transcends ordinary possibilities of description: the angelic “harps” are not *real* harps, for analogical discourse is being used. Yet despite this, even analogical language about heaven is still thematised in terms of specific imagery, for an analogical harp is still an image of a harp, and herein lies the weakness of analogical language. Analogical language seeks to respond to a human need to articulate mystery which it cannot fully meet, precisely because it is bound to referential words. Its hamstrung nature has constantly to be excused by pointing out that it does not really mean what it says: ‘[t]he most one can do is borrow metaphors and fling them, mixed with denials, in the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>31</sup> Brian E. Daley, “Eschatology.” In *Commentary on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Michael J. Walsh (ed.), (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), p. 206.

direction of the ineffable.’<sup>32</sup> A link was made above (Chapter 6, Section II) between natural unthematized hope in *Dasein*, and music, with reference to Bloch. Bloch also observes that ‘[m]usic . . . historically and objectively, proves itself to be essentially Christian art’.<sup>33</sup> Since music is already the primordial natural expression of unthematized fundamental hope in *Dasein*, it might be hypothesized that music can reach further than analogical words also into the unthematized dimension opened out by graced fundamental hope, and express this new supernatural hope beyond words in a unique, and above all, unthematized way. As a vehicle of unthematized hope already ready and present in the constitution of human nature, music is thus waiting to be enlisted by graced unthematized hope. This proposal elucidates certain traditional insights. Christian hope and music already interact symbolically in Scripture, as in the imagery of the “music” and “songs” of angels who inhabit the heavenly realms to which humans aspire in hope (Revelation 5). Heaven is here represented as an attractive object of hope, by being depicted as containing “music.” Perhaps by identifying their disposition of hope with music, Christians can pass beyond the residual referentiality which ties down even analogical language and contaminates it as a potential expression of hope directed towards ultimate mystery, while they continue to recognise the relative value of analogical language as first circumscribing for the mind the conceptual space within which musical hoping subsequently moves. Music manoeuvres apophatically within the space analogical language first encloses.

Some hints from the mystical tradition suggest how music may sometimes penetrate further than words in the disclosure of the Christian mystery. Wolfgang Riehle refers to ‘the famous experience which Rolle relates in the fifteenth chapter of his *Incendium Amoris*. Whilst reading the evening psalms he felt a ‘suauitatem

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<sup>32</sup> L. William Countryman, *The Poetic Imagination: An Anglican Spiritual Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999), p. 70.

<sup>33</sup> Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, vol 3, p. 1080.

inuisibilis melodie' come over him, whereupon his thoughts turned to music, his meditation into a poem, and even the psalms changed into a supernatural music . . . In the mystical *unio* the divine word and the human answer to it became transformed for him, in keeping with the tradition, into a *jubilus* which transcends human language . . . Man's attempt to form concepts of God and the world beyond gives way to intuition. Thinking of God and about God is transformed into supernatural music, 'thought turns intil sang and intil melodie.'<sup>34</sup> Here Rolle's meditation transcends the words, and he communes more deeply with the mystery in music. Moreover, if the proposals in Chapter 5 are accepted, whereby music and language are seen as reciprocal, Rolle's musical experience remains in a wider sense within language: he has not left language behind. The philosophical tenet that all meaning seeks a home in language has not been violated in his case, for language is already musical, and music has its fundamental roots in language.

The overall anthropological perspective which conjoins natural hope with spoken language and music is also reflected at the level of liturgy, where graced Christian hope enters into its fullness symbolically. 'The tendency towards the combining of language and music is already present in the early Christian liturgy.'<sup>35</sup> For Vatican II, there is indeed a stated interaction between liturgical words and music: 'The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as a combination of sacred

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<sup>34</sup> Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics* (1977) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 120. References to Richard Rolle, *Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole: Historical Series*, 26. M. Deanesly (ed.), (London: Publications of the University of Manchester, 1915); F. Schulte, *Das musikalische Element in der Mystik Richard Rolles von Hampole*. Dissertation, University of Bonn, 1951 (documentation *sic*); S. J. Womack, *The Jubilus Theme in the Later Writings of Richard Rolle of Hampole*. Dissertation, Durham, N. C., 1961 (documentation *sic*); Richard Rolle, "Form of Living." In *English Writings of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole*, H. E. Allen (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon, 1931), pp. 106, 46. See Riehle, *ibid*, pp. 119-122, for an Excursus on the significance of metaphors of music in English mysticism.

<sup>35</sup> Thrasybulos Georgiades, *Music and Language: The Rise of Western Music as Exemplified in Settings of the Mass* (1974) (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), p. 7.

music and words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.<sup>36</sup> In this analysis, liturgical music complements and completes the word. It is at first sight arguable whether in referring to a ‘combination of sacred music and words,’ this statement refers solely to, or at least highlights, the idea of words set to music. The first alternative is eliminated on the basis of a wider reading of the documents of Vatican II, from which it is clear that music without sung words is in fact admissible:<sup>37</sup> in the case of such unsung music, words and music presumably ‘combine’ liturgically in the sense of both being present in a given liturgy, though not at the same time. Nevertheless, Vatican II appears to favour music sung with words.<sup>38</sup> In this it reflects long-standing emphases in the tradition. For Hayburn, this tradition’s liturgical music ‘is to emphasize the words of the liturgical text. It should give these words a dramatic force and power.’<sup>39</sup>

In the ideological weighting favoured by Vatican II’s liturgical norms, whereby sung words predominate and music from which sung words are absent does not predominate, the Roman Catholic tradition effectively mirrors the use to which music has been put by *homo sapiens*. In infancy, music begins in the voice, and is intimately connected with first speech in babbling and spontaneous singing. Since the human person’s original infant tendency in music is towards sung words, it is not improbable that world-wide adult music is also predominantly sung words.<sup>40</sup> Throughout life, of

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<sup>36</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, section 112, p. 31. ‘[M]usic is not merely an adornment and embellishment of the liturgy, it is liturgy itself, an integral part which, to be sure, does not belong to the essence of the liturgy but does form part of its complete frame, just as hands and feet belong to the complete figure of man.’ Josef Andreas Jungmann, “[Commentary on] Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.” In *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol 1, Herbert Vorgrimler (general ed.), (1966) (London: Burns and Oates, 1967), p. 77.

<sup>37</sup> See Second Vatican Council, *Instruction on Music in the Sacred Liturgy*, sections 4, 62, 67. In *Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Flannery (ed.), pp. 80-81, 95-97.

<sup>38</sup> See *ibid*, section 5, p. 81.

<sup>39</sup> R. F. Hayburn, *Papal Legislation on Sacred Music: 95 A. D., to 1977 A. D.* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1979), p. 388.

<sup>40</sup> There are convincing arguments for this from empirical investigation of culture. Thus, African music would seem to be predominantly sung. See Kofi Agawu, *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), p. 2. References to J. H. Kwabena Nketia, *The Music of Africa* (New York: Norton, 1974); J. H. Kwabena Nketia, *Folk Songs of Ghana* (Legon: Ghana Univ.

all the ways in which music may be produced by the unassisted human body, the voice is the most versatile medium, being capable of extensive melodic expression, and not merely the rhythmic expression already associated with other parts of the body, as in hand-clapping or foot-stamping. In addition, by singing words, the voice uniquely can also bring music into direct association with the daily horizons opened out by ordinary verbal meaning. Thus, in emphasising sung words, liturgical musical practice, as prescribed by Vatican II, mirrors human musical practice in general, as it must, since liturgy is where human nature is completed by the action of God's grace - grace which must answer to the characteristics of that nature. It is human nature as expressed in culture which liturgy must seek to mirror. 'The harmony of signs (song, music, words and actions) is all the more expressive and fruitful when expressed in the *cultural richness* of the People of God who celebrate.'<sup>41</sup> Some aspects of human culture are local, some universal. In the general musical liturgical norms of Vatican II, insofar as they balance the sung with the not sung, it is indeed the fundamental cultural richness of the whole of humanity as music-makers, considered as singers mainly but not always, which is reflected. In this context, it is appropriate to draw attention to the considerations advanced in Chapter 1, where the special role played for humans by improvised music was demonstrated. An anthropological argument for improvisatory music in liturgy is thereby implied, on the basis that improvised music is a dominant expression of music for the human person.

As investigative knowledge of human musical behaviour becomes more complete, the more clearly the true norms for liturgical musical practice emerge. For example, in

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Press, 1963); Klaus P. Wachsmann, "Music." *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, Indiana University, 6 (1969): 164-191; p. 187; John Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1979). p. 75; David Locke, "Improvisation in West African Musics." *Music Educators Journal* 66, no. 5 (1980): 125-132; p. 128; Francis Bebey, *African Music: A People's Art* (1969) (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1975), p. 115.

<sup>41</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, section 1158, p. 265. Reference to Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, section 119.



the periods of the New Testament and of the Fathers, purely instrumental music (or, more generally, music without words attached) was rejected in the liturgy for various reasons.<sup>42</sup> However, it is now apparent that purely instrumental music widely accompanies religious rituals for the human species. 'The history of comparative religions proves that the use of musical instruments is almost universally allied with the phenomenon of religion. By their power of charming, by their strange timbres - which are sought after as signs of the sacred by reason of their superhuman character - . . . musical instruments have always filled an important ritual function of a mythical or magical kind.'<sup>43</sup> Consequently, it is now clear, as it was not in earlier times, that such instrumental music has its proper place in Christian liturgy. In short, one question which must be asked when establishing norms for liturgical music is: What forms do mankind's musical activities, especially in religious, ritual contexts, widely exhibit? When the phenomena of human music are considered as widely as possible, Vatican II's proposals for the uses of music in liturgy are seen to possess an authentic anthropological base which lends those proposals credibility as answering to the nature and culture of the human person. The same holds good of similar emphases expressed by an authoritative body of the Church of England: 'To stress overmuch the importance of words is to forget that music is an effective form of communication in its own right . . . Nevertheless, words will continue to have priority in our worship. Music will be used primarily for their enhancement.'<sup>44</sup>

As was seen in Chapter 5, ultimately at a deeper level all words are somehow musical already. All liturgical spoken communication will therefore possess a musical

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<sup>42</sup> See Joseph Gelineau, *Voices and Instruments in Christian Worship: Principles, Laws, Applications* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1964), pp. 149-152.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 148. References to G. Van der Leew, *La religion dans son essence et ses manifestations* (Paris: n.p., 1955), p. 369; A. Schaeffner, *Origine des instruments de musique* (Paris: n.p., 1936).

<sup>44</sup> The Archbishop's Commission on Church Music. *In Tune with Heaven: The Report of the Archbishop's Commission on Church Music* (London: Church House Publishing with Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), p. 57.

character. Any absolute division between music and word in liturgy is finally unconvincing, although words retain the role of communication by rational meaning in a way not possible for music. The presence of music in liturgy, in the first instance, is actually found in all its spoken words, because liturgy always contains some speech and ‘speech sounds differ in their tone colour like musical instruments . . . Human speech . . . resembles a progression of changing tone colours following each other with unbelievable rapidity.’<sup>45</sup> In addition to this inevitable primary presence of music in all human speech, in whatever manner it is uttered, music enters the liturgy in further senses. The celebrant’s special cultural and personal situation in proclaiming the Christian gospel gives rise to joy and enthusiasm through heightening of speech prosody. There will also be the introduction of music sung to words, because humans widely produce this, and music without sung words, because humans widely produce this too. These last three are fundamental expressions of hope through music for humans in both the natural and supernatural contexts. In the *Instruction on Music in the Sacred Liturgy*, Vatican II implicitly makes the link between music and eschatological hope.<sup>46</sup> For Joncas, this document ‘provides a new fivefold taxonomy of the functions exercised by worship music: alluring or decorative, differentiating, unifying, transcendental, eschatological.’<sup>47</sup> It is significant that the only word in this quotation which refers music to a specifically temporal trajectory refers music to futural hoping: the word ‘eschatological.’ Music, it might seem, takes up the expression of hope where verbal meanings fall short. It is a highway to a dimension of hope lying beyond intelligible meaning. It both complements and transcends expressions of hope in spoken words. Thus, analogical language about heaven is

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<sup>45</sup> Ehrenzweig, *Psycho-analysis of Artistic Vision and Hearing*, p. 164.

<sup>46</sup> ‘Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when it is celebrated in song . . . Indeed, through this form . . . the whole celebration more clearly prefigures that heavenly liturgy which is enacted in the holy city of Jerusalem.’ Second Vatican Council, *Instruction on Music*, section 5, p. 81.

<sup>47</sup> Joncas, “Liturgy and Music,” p. 315.

needed, but humans also need to pass beyond it to something wholly unthematized. Music, whether inhabiting heightened speech prosody, or sung to words, or on its own, is the many-faceted liturgical voice of Christian hope.

### *III Musical Spontaneity in the Liturgy: A Theological Interpretation*

Some considerations will now be brought forward to show how, at the heart of the tradition of music in liturgy which, in the words of Vatican II just quoted, is both placed above the other liturgical arts and linked with hope, there lies musical improvisation. The considerations will be presented first in their theological and then their more historical aspects. It would have been possible to consider the historical dimension first. However, it seemed that the interest of considering the history of liturgical spontaneity in music might not be apparent unless its theological significance had previously been elucidated. Musical improvisation will here be presented as the artistic vehicle by which the sense of the Christian futural trajectory of these rites, their opening onto hope, is most eminently expressed, and also shown to possess this role through an intrinsic complementarity with its existing role in the constitution of the natural human person as *Dasein*, who always projects futurally in hope through musical improvisation. Ouspensky's critique of the liturgical use of the icon in Eastern Orthodox liturgy is illuminating here, and it might be possible to appropriate aspects of it on behalf of such music. For Ouspensky 'the icon is not merely provoked or inspired by the liturgy: Together they form a homogeneous whole. The icon completes the liturgy and explains it, adding its influence on the souls of the faithful.'<sup>48</sup> Because of the significance of improvisatory music for humans, liturgy needs improvisatory music in order to be expressive of hope. It must be recalled again that musical improvisation

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<sup>48</sup> Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, p. 11.

is here considered as a wide-ranging phenomenon present also in the spontaneous expressive qualities of all musical performance (Chapter 1), and in the spontaneous expressive use of speech prosody (Chapters 5 and 6).

The Christian liturgy is the expression of a journey back to God. It might well be fitting that a characteristically liturgical form of music should be evanescent, not like permanent composition, and should share in the liturgical movement back to God, by being wholly wedded to the liturgical moment which produces it, so that liturgy and music both slip into the past together as the liturgy journeys on. For humans, music is primordially linked to consciousness of time (Chapter 5, Section V) and this entails that any perceived possessibility of music, in the sense of an event which can be repeated, may suggest the “possession” of time. The musical fixed composition appears here as a metaphor for time “controlled” or “possessed.” Yet, humans do not own their time. *‘[T]he whole course of history, from its initiation in God’s creative activity to its consummation when God ultimately achieves his purposes . . . should be conceived as God’s act’.*<sup>49</sup> In the liturgy, if humans always use possessible music, they may forget that it is God who possesses mankind in history, the God who created and owns all time, not man who somehow “possesses” time in the liturgy. Such forgetfulness is obviated in the case of musical improvisation. Humans cannot cling to improvisation, since improvisation is ephemeral and cannot be possessed.

Musical improvisation, considered as evanescent, mirrors the non-possessibility of time. It also mirrors its goal-directedness. The improviser, operating purposively out of the open-endedness of imagination, is particularly close to the idea of reality considered as goal-directed emergence, for he or she brings a musical future into being, and in this sense has a proper role in interpreting the inner future-directed

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<sup>49</sup> Gordon D. Kaufman, *God the Problem* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), p. 137.

movement of liturgy more fully to others. The consciousness of the liturgical assembly, grafted imaginatively to the activity of an improviser in their midst, opens out more deeply to future possibility, for 'people recognize an improvised event as an interactive totality where all the participants embrace the unknown.'<sup>50</sup> Imagination expressed in musical improvisation is thus an ontological communication showing the liturgical community how it passes beyond itself to what is other. A normative mode of symbolic human knowing is elicited for the worshippers, whereby poetic imagination enables them to arrive at a greater self-understanding. 'The human subject can only come to know itself through the hermeneutic detour of interpreting signs - that is, by deciphering the meanings contained in myths, symbols and dreams produced by the human imagination. The shortest route from the self to itself is through the images of others.'<sup>51</sup> Here the 'other' is the musical improviser who furnishes the futurally-oriented expressive medium by which the liturgical community lays hold imaginatively upon its own journeyhood. Spontaneous imagining in music captures artistically the idea of Christian futurity, giving rise here to a sapiential liturgical *gnosis* of the future. In short, improvisation and liturgy both look forward, and improvisation's looking forward complements the liturgy's looking forward. An act of musical leaving behind and of looking forward at one and the same time, improvisation intensifies music's innate transience and motion into the future, which already arise in music from the nature of sound itself: '[S]ound is an experience of *impermanence*; it makes time audible and renders its form and continuity sensible.'

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<sup>50</sup> Jim Denley, "Improvisation: The Entanglement of Awareness and Physicality." *Sounds Australian: Journal of Australian Music* 32 (Summer 1991-1992): 25-28; p. 26. In many cultures '[t]he improvisationality of a genre is generally proportional to the degree of audience involvement. In more improvised genres, the performers are more aware of themselves as responding to the audience; in some genres, the performers believe that they are not creating as agentive individuals, but are acting as 'vehicles' for the spiritual state of the audience (e.g., Sufi devotionals).' Sawyer, "Semiotics of Improvisation," pp. 285-286. Reference to B. Brenneis, "Musical Imaginations: Comparative Perspectives on Musical Creativity." In *Theories of Creativity*, M. A. Runco and R. S. Albert (eds.). (Newbury Park CA: Sage, 1990), n.p.

<sup>51</sup> Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining*, p. 141.

The same writer immediately adds: ‘This aspect of the experience of sound appropriately reveals the nature of God as profoundly involved in human history’.<sup>52</sup> Thus, in improvised music, ‘[a]rt sees into things and brings forth a sign of the spirituality they contain.’<sup>53</sup>

Improvisation also exhibits the relativity of the earthly liturgy by reducing its formality, undermining its form as fixed, hence reducing its appearance of being a finished and self-contained event rather than the provisional prefigurement of a future fullness. Jean Düring has spoken of improvisation’s association with release from social constraints<sup>54</sup> and its failure to accommodate itself well to formal settings.<sup>55</sup> Improvisation is a calculated ‘transgression of the established order.’<sup>56</sup> By a calculated compromising of liturgy’s structural self-containment in this way, improvisation announces liturgy’s subordination to eschatology, throwing into relief the fact that earthly liturgy is fractile, a provisional pointer, not a goal. It was seen above (Chapter 5, Section V) how improvisation also places a focus on the present. It may seem paradoxical to speak of improvisation’s simultaneous emphases on future and present. However liturgy shares this tension. The insight into the future given in improvisation is an insight into the future entwined with the present, and parallels the realised eschatology of liturgy itself. Salvation is both *now* as a foretaste, and *yet to come*: the “already” and the “not yet” present themselves side by side in Christian eschatology.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Joncas, “Liturgy and Music,” p. 312. References to Foley, “Toward a Sound Theology”; Hoon, “The Relation of Theology and Music in Worship”; Pike, *Theology of Music*; Routley, *Church Music and Theology*; Winter, *Why Sing?*

<sup>53</sup> Charles M. Murphy, “The Church and Culture since Vatican II: On the Analogy of Faith and Art.” *Theological Studies* 48, no. 2 (1987): 317-331; p. 323.

<sup>54</sup> See Düring, “Jeu des relations sociales,” p. 19.

<sup>55</sup> See *ibid*, p. 18.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>57</sup> There is no space to discuss the similarities between the futural “now” of Christian realised eschatology, and the futurally projecting “now” of *Dasein*. If the former graced, Christian “now” is futural, then, on theological principles, must not any natural “now” already have been inherently futural? If not, on what does realised eschatology build, since grace builds on nature? Perhaps this constitutes an argument, from within the Christian camp, for this aspect of Heidegger’s philosophy. On this argument, the graced “now,” unlike the natural “now” of *Dasein*, would be enabled to project *eschatologically* because, in Christ, the ultimate goal of human futural projection has finally been revealed.

‘In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle.’<sup>58</sup> Thus liturgical time is liminal time, expectant time on the threshold of the elsewhere, both present and future. Writing of improvisation, Lawrence Archbold notes: ‘For those who see liturgy itself as a liminal space, at the borders between secular and sacred, earth and heaven, this music of the borderlines between composition and ambient sound, consciousness and unconsciousness, may seem the ideal complement.’<sup>59</sup> As Turner notes: ‘Since liminal time is not controlled by the clock it is a time of enchantment when anything *might*, even should, happen.’<sup>60</sup> He adds that ‘[l]iminality is full of potency and potentiality. It may also be full of experiment and play.’<sup>61</sup>

By contrast with musical improvisation, it has been noted, one possible implication in the liturgy of a written-down, composed piece is that of possession of the music to be preserved and repeated, hence possession of time. Of course, ‘if everything is in time, everything changes inwardly, and the same concrete reality never recurs . . . Repetition is therefore possible only in the abstract’.<sup>62</sup> However, though no two performances of Byrd’s *Ave Verum Corpus* are ever quite the same, a cultural judgement of identity is passed upon their repetition. When such music is performed in the liturgy, the time in which such a piece is performed is poetically represented as recoverable by repeating the same piece, with the consequent possible implication that

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<sup>58</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, section 8, p. 5. References to Apoc. 21:2; Col. 3:1; Heb. 8:2.

<sup>59</sup> Lawrence Archbold, Review of Jan Overduin, *Making Music: Improvisation for Organists* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999). *Music and Letters* 81, no. 3 (August 2000): 476-479; p. 478.

<sup>60</sup> Victor Turner, *Process, Performance and Pilgrimage: A Study in Comparative Symbolology* (New Delhi: Concept, 1979), p. 94.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95. As Archbold notes, speaking of liturgy, ‘organ improvisation . . . can be usefully understood as the exploration of a kind of liminal space.’ Archbold, Review of Overduin, p. 477. ‘It is neither ‘‘holy noodling’’ nor a sham of a repertoire piece.’ *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 48.

the liturgical community can possess a moment of time. This subliminal impression arises because music is a widely established cultural vehicle by which time is disclosed to the human person (Chapter 5, Section V). Clearly liturgy does have its essential core of repeatability. Liturgy recalls a fixed past through its yearly cycle of repetition, and the New Testament documents understand liturgy as a dialogue between what is fixed and what is spontaneous, as will be seen. The fixed dimension of worship prevents disproportion and disjointedness, and provides familiar points of reference for participants who experience the rite a common ritual property which unites them.<sup>63</sup> Yet, to the extent that the liturgical community unduly emphasise liturgical activity as repeatable, they remove it from the flux of time which sweeps the present away, and may forget that, in the liturgy, it is God who possesses the liturgical community in time, not the liturgical community which possesses God in its own present. A certain irrecoverability inherent in all liturgy must be given a voice if the liturgy is to speak truly of the eschatological goal of Christian life, and that voice is the voice of spontaneity, whose privileged musical voice is the voice of improvisation.

In a musical context, the correlations made here between “work/past” and “improvisation/future” should not of course be simplistically pressed. It may be argued that, in regard to its *internal* stylistic character a musical work may look to the future in various ways or degrees (see David Greene, Chapter 5, Section V). Conversely (as Philip Bohlman suggests, *loc. cit.*) improvised music may fund remembering. Yet, taking the work at the level of its *being*, which is repeatable, considering it, that is, from the standpoint of its very existence rather than its internal characteristics, it can never look forward with the intensity of improvisation. The occurrence in liturgy of fixed, repeatable works of music speaks symbolically of what the Christian community

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<sup>63</sup> See D. E. W. Harrison and Michael C. Sansom, *Worship in the Church of England* (1946) (London: SPCK, 1982), pp. 10-11.



already has in possession and memory, and needs to be counterbalanced by a degree of improvisatory performance, which speaks of what the community hopes for. Thus ‘[t]he liturgy can emerge both as something remembered and as something new.’<sup>64</sup> Likewise for Mary Collins ‘a peculiar creativity, that of the Christian believer, is required to maintain evangelical tension within liturgical assemblies so that they are . . . a manifestation of what more the reign of God promises.’<sup>65</sup> A spontaneous dimension is especially apposite where the liturgy is celebrated by Christians in abject circumstances. Writing of the poor in Latin America, Collins notes that ‘[i]n order for these poor to be empowered to collaborate with Christian hope to overcome the political, economic, and social forces that oppress them, their bishops say that the worshipping assembly must itself be open to the liturgically unprecedented.’<sup>66</sup>

The link between improvisation and liturgical hope may be held to explain the welcome accorded to improvisatory practices in the normative early periods of the Church’s liturgy, as will be seen in more detail in Section IV. In the West, such a link explains something otherwise hard to account for, namely why an improvisatory tradition of organ playing remained a welcome feature of liturgy, even at a time when musical improvisation in other social contexts became less valued in consequence of the cultural impact of Cartesian philosophy and the rise of the work (Chapter 2).

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<sup>64</sup> Joseph Gelineau, “Tradition - Invention - Culture.” In *Concilium: “Liturgy: A Creative Tradition”* (1983) no. 2: 10-18; p. 16.

<sup>65</sup> Collins, “Obstacles to Liturgical Creativity,” p. 23.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 20. By implicitly inviting an enhanced imaginative awareness of futurity in liturgy, this episcopal recommendation corresponds with insights found in sociological studies. The poorer people are, the more they appear to live mentally in the present, and by implication, might need to be stimulated imaginatively towards a sense of futurity. Lawrence Leshan notes that ‘[i]n the lower-lower class, the orientation is one of quick sequences of tension and relief. One does not frustrate oneself for long periods or plan action with goals far in the future . . . In the . . . middle . . . classes, the orientation is one of much longer tension-relief sequences.’ Lawrence L. Leshan, “Time Orientation and Social Class.” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 47, no. 3 (1952): 589-592; p. 589. Middle class children, asked to make up stories, tell stories that cover a longer timespan than those made up by working class children. See *ibid*, p. 591. Bernstein showed how the timespan of anticipation of working class children differs from that of a middle class children. See Basil Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control*, vol 1 *Theoretical Studies Towards a Sociology of Language* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 29-30.

‘Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries improvisation continued to play a major part in the development of church organ music . . . Even in the mid and late 19th century, which otherwise seems to have been a depressing time for European improvisation, there continued to be many organists who were known as improvising virtuosi.’<sup>67</sup> Pressing concurs: ‘The organ has . . . among all nonjazz keyboard traditions, best kept alive the traditions of solo improvisation, most notably in France.’<sup>68</sup> The French Catholic liturgy always valued the contribution made by improvising organists and a strong artistic tradition of improvisation, embodied in men like François Couperin, César Franck, down to twentieth-century figures like Louis Vierne and Charles Tournemire, was preserved.

This preservation may be explained in terms of collective spirituality. For Christian theology, there is understood to be a deep intuition in the liturgical community at prayer which tends to discern and nurture spiritually authentic liturgical activity, through ‘a sort of instinct, or *phronema*, deep in the mystical body of Christ.’<sup>69</sup> It is arguably in response to an intuition of the futural illumination inhabiting musical improvisation in liturgy that improvisation was never allowed to suffer there the demise it largely experienced in the secular context during this period. ‘[T]he consciousness of the [artist is] the high voice in a polyphony whose lower voice, the collective unconscious, does not merely accompany but actually determines the theme . . . [T]he group [is] an integral psychic field, in which the reality of the individual is embedded, so that he is organ and instrument of the collective.’<sup>70</sup> In this way, these organists were implicitly endorsed in their improvisatory practice by the liturgical

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<sup>67</sup> Bailey, *Improvisation*, p. 29.

<sup>68</sup> Pressing, *Synthesizer Performance*, p. 126.

<sup>69</sup> John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1985), p. 73. Cited in Dulles, *Craft of Theology*, p. 9. There would seem to be no objection to re-applying Newman’s description of doctrinal discernment to the area of liturgy.

<sup>70</sup> Erich Neumann, *Art and the Creative Unconscious: Four Essays* (New York: Pantheon, 1959), p. 88.

community, as it listened to its inner collective wisdom. Moreover, an organ improviser does not explain the future verbally, but alludes to it symbolically. The allusive nature of his enhanced unveiling of the future effected through musical improvisation then returns to reinforce the communal dimension of liturgical knowing itself, raising consciousness of the very communal identity which first nurtured this particular form of artistic expression:

To explain is to alienate: it is to show something as 'outside', observed but not internalized, as in an historical narrative or a scientific textbook. It is to prefer conception to experience. Allusions, unlike explanations, automatically import a social context - common knowledge, common references, common symbols - which are embodied together in a common experience. In understanding an allusion we become maximally aware of the community which the experience of meaning implies.<sup>71</sup>

In liturgy, '[t]he distinctive and alternative world set up during the rite is not made meaningful by the intellect or encaptured by the mind; its ability to transform rests only on the performance itself . . . as it becomes imbibed, embodied, and felt by the participants.'<sup>72</sup> The organ improviser interacts with the collective nature of this felt and imbibed liturgical knowing, receiving a commission from the community, then enacting a symbolisation of eschatological destiny which enhances the community's intuitive sense of eschatology's communal element. Compare Victor Turner's observation:

[A]n anthropologist tends to think in terms not of solitary but of plural reflection, or, much better, plural reflexivity, the ways in which a group or community seeks to portray, understand, and then act on itself . . . The languages through which a group communicates itself to itself . . . include gestures, music, dancing, graphic representation, painting, sculpture, and fashioning of symbolic objects.<sup>73</sup>

A figure who valuably exemplifies the ideas discussed so far is Charles Tournemire. He belonged to a celebrated succession of organists at some of the larger churches in France in the twentieth century who contributed to a national culture of organ improvisation. Tournemire's own prodigious ability in the area of improvisation finds

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<sup>71</sup> Scruton, *Aesthetics*, p. 463.

<sup>72</sup> David Torevill, "Forgetting How to Remember: Performance, Narrative, and Embodiment as a Result of the Liturgical Reforms." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2000): 33-42: p. 34.

<sup>73</sup> Turner, *Process, Performance and Pilgrimage*, p. 94.

confirmation in the recordings made by him for Polydor between 1930 and 1932, and reproduced on L. P. by E. M. I.<sup>74</sup> It is possible for organists to perform these improvisations, which were transcribed by Maurice Duruflé, a pupil of Tournemire. Tournemire needs to be considered in both a musical and a liturgical light. Liturgical spontaneity belongs equally to ordinary and exceptional people. Tournemire upheld liturgical spontaneity to a level of genius. He himself declared his art to be ‘very narrowly bound with the liturgy.’<sup>75</sup> Improvisation was for him the creation of a ‘special ambience, thoroughly fitted to the blossoming of the art of meditation.’<sup>76</sup> Reflecting his commitment to liturgy, his improvisation was often based on Gregorian chant seen by him as a bridge between organ and liturgy. This Gregorian foundation was present equally in Tournemire’s output of written compositions, pre-eminently *L’Orgue Mystique*. An awakening interest in this chant had been underway at the time of his birth. The monks of Solesmes had been exhaustively researching the origins of chant, and the Schola Cantorum was founded in 1894 for the study of early music. Composers were making increasing use of Gregorian themes in their works. In 1904, Pius X sanctioned the preparation of an official edition of chants, the *Editio Vaticana*.<sup>77</sup>

Tournemire’s heightened use of chant is significant since organists, including the greatest, such as César Franck, had long been content to include, in their usual performances in church, solo pieces which, while they might make a magnificent and emotional contribution to the liturgy, and even possess a mystical feel, were not, in any

<sup>74</sup> On one of five L. P. records: *Orgues et Organistes Français en 1930* (E. M. I., catalogue no. 2: C 153-16411/5).

<sup>75</sup> Norbert Dufourcq, “Visites diffusées des églises Saint-Sulpice, Saint-Eustache, Sainte-Clotilde et Notre Dame de Paris.” In *Les Amis de l’Orgue*, numero special (1936): 21. Cited in Joël-Marie Fauquet, “Charles Tournemire and the Organ.” In accompanying booklet to L. P. records, *ibid.* p. 8.

<sup>76</sup> Charles Tournemire, *César Franck* (Paris: Delagrave, 1931), p. 54.

<sup>77</sup> See Andrew Thomson, *The Life and Times of Charles-Marie Widor, 1844-1937* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 66-68.

exclusive sense, liturgical music, and were not at all out of place in the concert hall. Such music might come to be seen chiefly as liturgical, partly by association, and because it was for the organ. While it might be religious emotion, it was not liturgical, nor was it usually linked to the chant thematically. This is a factual observation rather than a negative evaluation of such music. So far from meriting negative appraisal, in fact such music can well be seen as announcing a certain interaction between liturgical and secular reality, a kind of poeticising of the meeting-point of Church and world, in the entirely constructive sense of unifying the two domains.<sup>78</sup> This is especially true when it is played before or after the liturgical celebration, as was often the case, functioning less as liturgical music than as an interstice marking liturgy's boundaries. Moreover, some of Franck's greatest organ pieces are, in fact, built upon apparently fictitious Chorales, or hymn-tunes,<sup>79</sup> in a kind of imaginative gesture in the direction of the idea of objective liturgical reference, a tribute to the idea that liturgical organ music may fittingly ground itself in existing liturgical themes. Similarly, Charles-Marie Widor's later organ *Symphonies* are based on the Easter and Christmas chants, *Haec Dies* and *Puer Natus*.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, most of their music, and that of comparable composers, is not thematically grounded in real or imagined musical liturgical texts and does double duty in church and concert hall. By contrast, for Tournemire, as his pupil Maurice Duruflé expressed it, in the Preface to his own transcriptions of Tournemire's improvising:

The soaring of his imagination was at once poetic, picturesque, capricious, then at a turn impassioned, tumultuous, abandoned, then suddenly again, blandishing, mystical, ecstatic. The Gregorian chant book was ever before his eyes on the organ desk, and he sought his inspiration exclusively in liturgical themes impregnated with the most spiritual sentiments. The fortunate hearers who saw or heard this prodigious man will never forget the emotions they owed to him.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> The frequent placement of organs over the main West door effectively reinforced this symbolism.

<sup>79</sup> César Franck, *Trois Chorales*.

<sup>80</sup> Charles-Marie Widor, *Symphonie romane*, op. 73; *Symphonie gothique*, op. 70.

<sup>81</sup> Maurice Duruflé, "Preface." In Charles Tournemire, *Cinq Improvisations pour Orgue reconstituées par Maurice Duruflé* (Paris: Durand, 1958).

Tournemire explicitly links organ improvisation in liturgy with Christian hope for the eschatological goal. In his book on Franck, concluding Chapter 7, “César Franck the Improviser,” Tournemire asks: ‘Did he not receive from heaven the rich gift to believers, that blaze which does not consume the soul but prepares it for the true life?’<sup>82</sup> Franck, he adds, was ‘penetrated by the dazzling ray of the second last Chapter of the Apocalypse.’<sup>83</sup> Tournemire proceeds to quote, as a postscript to his Chapter, several verses from the Apocalypse, covering nearly an entire page of the 1931 edition. Tournemire thus seems to sense that improvisation is the numinous voice of that which is to come.

Other writers have concurred with the idea that, in liturgy, hope and spontaneity are linked. Hugo Rahner has examined some of the implications of liturgical spontaneity, as mirroring the divine freedom, and as a construction of hope. He writes of Maximus the Confessor’s ‘entire mystical theology of [the] playing of God’<sup>84</sup> in the *Ambigua*, a God whose love ‘though full of meaning and purpose, is a love that works in creative freedom wholly ungoverned by necessity or constraint.’<sup>85</sup> Rahner refers to the ‘Creator, who performs his work with the divine seriousness which its meaning and purpose demand, and yet with the spontaneity and effortless skill of the great artist’.<sup>86</sup> Human participants in the liturgy are made in the image of this Creator and they ‘[answer] the game of grace with . . . counter-play of liturgy and sacrament, so that Church, grace and liturgical action become . . . no more than a prelude to that final carefree gaiety of heart which [humans] will experience one day in the everlasting game of the Beatific Vision.’<sup>87</sup> Rahner asserts the eschatological trajectory of such

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<sup>82</sup> Tournemire, *Franck*, p. 56.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>84</sup> Hugo Rahner, *Man at Play or Did You Ever Practise Eutrapelia?* (1963) (London: Burns and Oates, 1964), p. 24. Reference to Maximus, *Ambigua* 261a (PG 91, 1408ff).

<sup>85</sup> Rahner, *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

spontaneity, or play. Thus, earthly realities are rendered transient and are left behind in a kind of past, as the mind enters an unfettered realm where anxieties are shed and a lightness and freedom take over.<sup>88</sup>

For Sam Keen, Christianity had from its beginnings proclaimed a view of the universe at variance with the Greek idea that history was dominated by fate, and also at variance with the perceived Jewish idea that life was circumscribed by religious and ceremonial legalism. Thus for the gospel, law is not all powerful; the new can break into history; love is greater than law and therefore the man set free by the gospel is no longer bound by cosmic or moral legalism. Divine power can grant an invasion of ecstasy and freedom. As Christian culture developed in the West it soon produced a new legalism, traditionalism, and orthodoxy which restricted novelty.<sup>89</sup> Such a restriction of the spontaneous in the development of the Western liturgy will shortly be exemplified with historical examples. Because Christ was the definitive invasion of the divine into history, it seemed to some theologians that nothing radically new could occur. Yet liturgical life becomes pathological when, again borrowing words of Sam Keen, 'the vision of the necessary destroys the vision of the possible - when law denies novelty, when reason eclipses enthusiasm, when compulsion prevents spontaneity, or when the regular ceases to be wonderful.'<sup>90</sup>

#### *IV Musical Spontaneity in Liturgy: A Historical Study*

In the West, the recognition of both order and spontaneity, musical and non-musical, as complementary aspects of liturgy seems to have been widely taken for granted until the period of the Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent (1545-1563), after which, within the Roman Catholic Church at least, for reasons to be

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<sup>88</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>89</sup> See Keen, *Apology for Wonder*, pp. 158-159.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, p. 164.

explained, spontaneous liturgical expressions became suspect. This suspicion remained intact until the Second Vatican Council which tended to restore spontaneity to the liturgy. Indeed, Roman Catholic theologians since the Second Vatican Council typically regard the absence of spontaneity in the Counter-Reformation liturgy as decadent and unsatisfactory. Joseph Gelineau speaks of ‘the dissatisfaction felt with the paralysing rigidity the Roman liturgy had reached on the eve of Vatican II’.<sup>91</sup> ‘After the long, too long stagnation of liturgical forms, the reform decided on by the Second Vatican Council was the signal to start moving.’<sup>92</sup> ‘Vatican II returned to the idea that liturgy is not a set of rubrics, but the essential activity of the Church at prayer.’<sup>93</sup> Gelineau notes the power of the unprecedented: ‘Liturgical symbols very often derive their greatest impact - both inherent and extrinsically induced - from the *kairos* of the actual celebration, not the way it is programmed. A word, a tune, a silence, an inflexion, a beam of light catching the wall suddenly ‘speak’. The assembly feels an ‘atmosphere’, or individuals a ‘grace’.<sup>94</sup> This recent recovery of spontaneity is not confined to the Roman Catholic Church. Michael J. Thompson has distinguished between ‘explicit’ and ‘implicit’ liturgy across a range of traditions: ‘Explicit liturgy is liturgy in the narrower sense of explicit acts such as a confession of the Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed, making the sign of the cross and a number of ritual acts associated with the Eucharist. Implicit liturgy will ‘carry’ elements of the creeds in the sacraments and in less formal modes of worship: readings from the Scriptures, the singing of hymns and songs, prayers and sermons.’<sup>95</sup> Significantly, for

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<sup>91</sup> Joseph Gelineau, *The Liturgy Today and Tomorrow* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978), p. 104.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>93</sup> Gelineau, “Tradition - Invention - Culture,” p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>95</sup> Michael J. Thompson, “Worship as an Ecclesial Paradigm.” *Theology* 102. no. 805 (January/February 1999): 10-19; p. 13.



Thompson, 'Churches with both explicit and implicit liturgies have moved towards more spontaneity in worship during the last twenty-five years'.<sup>96</sup>

The New Testament speaks of a delicate balance to be maintained between the predictable aspect of a given liturgy, and spontaneous interpolations within it. 'When you assemble,' St Paul admonishes in his First Letter to the Corinthians, 'each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification,' (14:26) for, as he later continues, 'God is not a God of confusion, but a God of peace' (14:33). 'Earnestly desire to prophesy . . .' he urges further on, 'but all things should be done decently and in order' (14:39-40). Here, the individual contributions of worshippers had to be coaxed into a harmonious relationship with the external order required by corporate worship. Thus, establishing a creative relationship between these twin considerations, order and spontaneity, seems to have been one of the earliest and fundamental issues in the Christian liturgical experience. Spontaneity was considered to possess a value in itself: '[P]rayers were at first improvised freely on the basis of traditional patterns by the bishop, the normal leader of the liturgical assembly. As the early Christians conceived it, the ability to do this was one of the signs of a person being endowed with the charismatic gifts necessary for holding the office of a bishop.'<sup>97</sup> In Justin's *Eucharistia*, there is found the prescription of 'an untrammelled extempore style'<sup>98</sup> of prayer. Although the practice of improvisatory prayer had roots in the Jewish synagogue,<sup>99</sup> such emphasis on the improvisatory also seems consistent with the intensified dimension of hope in the earliest liturgical communities where 'Christians were counting on an early return of

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>97</sup> Theodore Klauser, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy: An Account and Some Reflections* (1965) (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), p. 8.

<sup>98</sup> Josef A. Jungmann, *The Early Church to the Time of Gregory the Great* (1959) (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1960), p. 43.

<sup>99</sup> See Joncas, "Liturgy and Music," p. 288.

the Risen Christ and indeed were with some impatience awaiting the day of His Second Coming.<sup>100</sup>

It also seems probable that, perhaps as late as the third or fourth centuries, those Prayers which form the most solemn of the Christian liturgy, because they are associated with a climactic and mysterious making present of Christ spiritually to the gathered assembly, the Eucharistic Prayers, were widely improvised. The first surviving fixed formula for these prayers dates only from the *Traditio Apostolica* of Hippolytus (c. 215), and even here Hippolytus asserts that the Eucharistic Prayer formula he is providing is not wholly prescriptive, but may be adapted freely by the celebrant, provided that the Prayer's meaning remains in accordance with correct Christian belief. The formula of Hippolytus anticipates other formulae which appear likewise to have been designed to serve as prompts for a widely improvisatory approach to this Prayer.<sup>101</sup> Implicitly such spontaneity seems connected with a theology of hope. Because spontaneity is linked to the futural projection of *Dasein* in hope, a Eucharistic Prayer improvised to some degree has greater power to speak to the imagination of the hopes of the gospel than one which is not improvised. In cases where the improvised Eucharistic Prayer was perhaps also enunciated with special prosodical alacrity, or swept up into improvised sung melody, the evocation of the future in hope would have been still more pronounced, since improvised music is the primordial source of hoping in *Dasein*.

A recommendation by Hippolytus concerning the use of his Prayer formula reads as follows:

In no way is it necessary for the bishop to give thanks repeating the same words, as though he were trying to say them from memory, but each should pray according to his capacity. If one is capable of

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<sup>100</sup> Klauser, *Short History*. p. 10.

<sup>101</sup> See Burkhard Neunheuser, "Lebendige Liturgiefeyer und schöpferische Freiheit des einzelnen Liturgen. Geschichtliche Tatsachen und ihre Bedeutung für heute." *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 89, no. 1 (1975): 40-53; p. 42. Reference to Hippolytus *Traditio Apostolica*, Chapters 4 and 9, B. Botte (ed.), (Münster i. W. [sic]: n.p., 1963) 5. 10-17 und 28 (sic).

praying at length and saying a solemn prayer let him do so. But if another in his prayers uses only a moderate length prayer he should not be prevented, provided his prayer is orthodox.<sup>102</sup>

Although Hippolytus' formula, on which the bishop may improvise, is fixed, and could be spoken as it stands, Hippolytus 'is careful to indicate that he is giving a pattern, not insisting on the exact words to be followed.'<sup>103</sup> It is perhaps inclusive to advert here briefly to the existence of a distinction between improvising which seeks to be based upon, restrained within, some existing self-sufficient liturgical formula as here, and free improvising not deliberately founded upon a model.<sup>104</sup> As one commentator notes: 'The freedom to which Hippolytus alludes fits well with what we have called 'adaptation', less well with what is generally understood by 'creative improvisation.'<sup>105</sup> However, whatever may be the usefulness of this distinction in other contexts, the connection between spontaneity and hope, which forms the basis of the discussion at present, is independent of this distinction: both types of improvising, the freely creative and the adaptive improvising "on" a fixed formula, exhibit spontaneity as an expression of hope.

Musical improvisation is found prominently in the liturgies of the New Testament period, and seems often to have taken the form of "singing in the Spirit," "when the worshippers sing . . . spontaneously in unrehearsed melodious harmony with telling numinous effect."<sup>106</sup> As improvisatory music, singing in the Spirit is noted in Ephesians 5:18-20, Colossians 3:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 14:15, 'not songs that have been written according to the rules of composition but those that rise up while the

<sup>102</sup> Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*. Cited in Botte, *La tradition apostolique* (Münster: n.p., 1963), p. 29, no. 9. Cited in Pedro Farnes Scherer, "Creative Improvisation, Oral and Written, in the First Centuries of the Church." *Concilium: "Liturgy: A Creative Tradition"* (1983) no. 2: 29-37; p. 35.

<sup>103</sup> Cyril C. Richardson, "Introduction to Early Christian Literature and its Setting." In *Early Christian Fathers*, Cyril C. Richardson (ed.), (1953) (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 23. Reference to Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*, Chapters 4; 10:4 (*sic*).

<sup>104</sup> There is, of course, a third possibility: that of improvising on a model which is not self-sufficient, but designed as insufficient in itself, and usable solely if fleshed out by improvisation.

<sup>105</sup> Scherer, "Creative Improvisation," p. 36.

<sup>106</sup> C. G. Williams, "Speaking in Tongues." In *Strange Gifts? A Guide to the Charismatic Renewal*, David Martin and Peter Mullen (eds.), (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 74.

service is being conducted from a full heart, from the fullness of the Spirit.’<sup>107</sup> Christian tradition understands this singing in the Spirit as something more than an example of unaided human inspiration; rather it is understood to be an instance of God (more specifically God the Holy Spirit) indwelling the singer and, with the singer’s active co-operation, supernaturally generating mysterious musical sounds of praise through the singer’s voice. It is connected with speaking in tongues, the latter being supernaturally inspired adoration of God in quasi-verbal utterance not intelligible to the speaker, where the speaker is likewise aided directly by the Holy Spirit. ‘One who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit’ (1 Corinthians 14:2). His or her meaning may, however, be interpreted to the assembly by others inspired to understand it (1 Corinthians 12:10).

In the New Testament, as in subsequent Christian understanding, the gift of tongues and singing in the Spirit are connected, because the latter incorporates the gift of tongues: ‘Someone strikes a note, all gather round him, each singing his own melody . . . and praying at the same time in tongues.’<sup>108</sup> Indeed, singing in the Spirit is sometimes called “singing in tongues.” Within the liturgical culture of the New Testament, this supernaturalised singing is central and prominent, precisely because it is linked to the gift of speaking in tongues, which is itself considered important enough to be spoken of as one of the gifts of the Spirit, along with gifts of apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle-workers, healers, helpers, and administrators (1 Corinthians 12:28). The presence of speaking in tongues in this list of plainly crucial or important roles bears witness to its perceived importance. This is true despite the fact that its position as last in the list, and low down on a similar list in 1 Corinthians

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<sup>107</sup> Heribert Mühlen, *A Charismatic Theology: Initiation in the Spirit* (1975-1976) (London: Burns and Oates, 1978), p. 322.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, p. 155.

12:7-10, has sometimes been taken as an indication that Paul does not want speaking in tongues unduly emphasised in relation to the other gifts.<sup>109</sup> Singing in the Spirit or singing in tongues is thus presented in New Testament theology as dependent upon the same immediate activity of the Holy Spirit as gives rise to speaking in tongues, and the other named gifts of the Spirit. It is emphasised crucially that no other musical or artistic activity possesses this specially inspired, or charismatic status in the New Testament. This suggests that, for the New Testament liturgical communities, a privileged significance obtains for improvised music in the liturgy, with its underlying emphasis on hope.

Musical improvisation, as well as being directly inspired by God in this way, was sometimes also made up with more conscious human art by the liturgical participants. Rembert Weakland notes of primitive Christian celebrations that '[f]or the fore-Mass and the morning and evening gathering that developed into the Divine Office the synagogue practice served as the model. Readings from Scripture were followed by Psalm singing . . . The cantor was also permitted a kind of improvised charismatic song of joy.'<sup>110</sup> 'The improvised charismatic song - associated especially with the Alleluia - continued in Christian worship'.<sup>111</sup> Improvisation was thus extensively influential in the early development of liturgical music.<sup>112</sup>

Jeffery has referred to the 'music in medieval sermons, at least from the time of the mendicant orders (the thirteenth century and later), whose wandering friars incorporated popular singing and dancing into their preaching.'<sup>113</sup> '[T]here is evidence that musicians such as the 14th-century blind organist Francesco Landini

<sup>109</sup> See Paul Avis, *Christians in Communion* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Mowbray, 1990), pp. 136-137.

<sup>110</sup> R. G. Weakland, "Early Christian Music." In "History of Sacred Music." In *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol 10, William J. McDonald (ed.-in-chief), (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 105.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p. 106.

<sup>112</sup> See Bailey, *Improvisation*, p. 29

<sup>113</sup> Jeffrey, *Re-Envisioning Past Musical Cultures*, p. 74.

became well known for their improvising abilities.’<sup>114</sup> In the Middle Ages, examples of spontaneous lay participation in the liturgy are ready to hand, for ‘the popular devotional spirit expressed itself with freedom and liberty in the strictly liturgical services of the various local churches.’<sup>115</sup> Eamon Duffy refers to a practice whereby the spontaneity of personal lay devotion in the liturgy might be safeguarded even at one of the liturgy’s most solemn moments of priestly mediation: ‘[T]he canon of the Mass was recited by the priest in silence ‘ne impediatur populus orare’, so that the people might not be hindered from praying.’<sup>116</sup> These illiterate people almost certainly prayed aloud, since, as Walter Ong has pointed out, a sense of interiorised subjectivity is closely dependent on being able to read or write.<sup>117</sup> However, still more extrovert manifestations of spontaneity abound prior to the reforms initiated by the Council of Trent. As Duffy observes, participation in a parish eucharist could be zestful and dynamic as exemplified by this fifteenth-century carol:

And by a chapell as y Came,  
 Met y whyhte Ih[es]u to chyrcheward gone  
 Petur and Pawle, Thomas & Ihon,  
 And hys desyplys Euery-chone.  
 Mery hyt ys in may mornyng  
 Mery wayys for to gonne.

Sente Thomas the Bellys gane ryng,  
 And sent Collas the mas gane syng,  
 Sente Ihon toke that swete offeryng,  
 And By a chapell as y Came.  
 Mery hyt ys.

Owre lorde offeryd whate he wolde,  
 A challes alle of ryche rede gollde;  
 Owre lady, the crowne off hyr mowlde,  
 The sone owte off hyr Bosome schone.  
 Mery hyt ys.

<sup>114</sup> Bailey, *Improvisation*, p. 29.

<sup>115</sup> Edmund Bishop, *Liturgica Historica: Papers on the Liturgy and Religious Life of the Western Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1918), p. 18.

<sup>116</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1992), p. 117. Citation from T. F. Simmons (ed.), *The Lay Folk’s Mass Book* (n.p.: Early English Text Society, 1879), p. xx.

<sup>117</sup> See Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 178-179.

Sent Iorge that ys owre lady knyghte,  
 He tende the taperys fayre & Bryte -  
 To myn yghe a semley syghte,  
 And By a chapell as y Came.  
 Mery hyt is.<sup>118</sup>

Such was the acceptance accorded to merry freedoms, that '[i]n the middle ages that effusive, affective, and devotional spirit continually made itself felt in modifications in the liturgical books themselves, and in the mode of carrying out the strictly official or liturgical public services.'<sup>119</sup> Thus Chichele's reforms in the reign of Henry V encouraged 'a liturgy in which personal devotions could be incorporated and the call of private conscience could be harmonized.'<sup>120</sup> It appears, however, that assessment of these liturgical freedoms was already becoming ambiguous by the late Middle Ages, and, in the words of one writer, 'the arguments about the eucharist in the late Middle Ages hinge very much around the issue of so-called 'popular piety,' or as its detractors called it, 'lay superstition.'<sup>121</sup> This ambiguity might be regarded as the working out of a profound ambivalence towards the sphere of the imaginative in medieval culture. Orthodox medieval philosophy and theology, exhibited by the official ecclesiastical intelligentsia, displayed an antipathy to the imagination, while ignoring the vibrant imaginative life found in popular folk and vernacular culture.<sup>122</sup>

Despite these preceding Medieval tensions, it was nevertheless undoubtedly the impact of the Council of Trent and Counter Reformation which finally dictated a new liturgical ethos. In this new ethos, the spontaneous impulse which, in various degrees

<sup>118</sup> See Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 129-130. For carol citation, references to Greene, *Early English Carols* (incomplete documentation), no. 323 and notes on p. 428; Carleton Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century* (incomplete documentation), no. 116; D. Gray, *Themes and Imagery in the Medieval English Religious Lyric* (n.p.: n.p., 1972), p. 163.

<sup>119</sup> Bishop, *Liturgica Historica*, p. 18.

<sup>120</sup> Jeremy Catto, "Religious Change under Henry V." In *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship*, G. L. Harriss (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), p. 115.

<sup>121</sup> Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 37.

<sup>122</sup> See Kearney, *Wake*, pp. 131-132. References to J. Le Goff, *L'Imagination Médiévale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986); E. Gombrich, *Ideal and Idols: Essays on Values in History and in Art* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1979).

had enjoyed a welcome in the liturgy since earliest times, was revalued far more negatively. The new liturgical order which dated from the Council of Trent was devised to counter social and religious disorder which the Catholic authorities perceived as arising from the Protestant Reformation. Thus, 'it was the heretic who determined both the subjects treated by the Council and the point of view from which they were treated.'<sup>123</sup> The aims of the Council of Trent may be figured as having their roots in some form of anxiety in the face of disorder and the need to prevent further defections to Protestantism and also win back apostates. The liturgical order promulgated at Trent stressed order and the imposition of regularity. With reference to the celebration of Mass, the Council warned:

[M]any practices foreign to the dignity of so great a sacrifice appear to have crept in, either by the wear and tear of time or through human negligence or depravity. And so, to restore due honour and worship for the glory of God and the spiritual support of the faithful people, the holy council decrees that bishops in charge of dioceses should be greatly concerned and under obligation to forbid and root out anything that has been brought in, either by greed which is the service of idols, or by irreverence which can hardly be distinguished from impiety, or by superstition which is the counterfeit mimic of true devotion.<sup>124</sup>

The picture of 'rigid unification and rubricism'<sup>125</sup> at this period which comes down largely from historical commentators such as Theodor Klauser, Josef Jungmann, and Louis Bouyer,<sup>126</sup> may in fact be oversimplified. For Simon Ditchfield, in a more nuanced critique of the Counter-Reformation Church, 'these centuries witnessed a living liturgy - with universalizing pretensions certainly, yet a liturgy which never ceased its dialogue with, or to take account of, the particular devotions practised in dioceses the length and breadth of the Catholic world.'<sup>127</sup> '[I]t is inaccurate to see

<sup>123</sup> Bonaventure Kloppenburg, *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II* (1971) (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), p. 2.

<sup>124</sup> Council of Trent, Session 22: "Decree on Things to be Observed and Avoided in Celebrating Mass." *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol 2, Norman P. Tanner (ed.), (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), p. 736.

<sup>125</sup> Simon Ditchfield, "Giving Tridentine Worship Back its History." In *Continuity and Change in Christian Worship: Papers read at the 1997 Summer Meeting and the 1998 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1999), p. 201.

<sup>126</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*



Tridentine liturgical reform simply in terms of the imposition of universal norms on local churches by Rome'.<sup>128</sup>

Nevertheless, liturgical spontaneity came to be seen in the Counter-Reformation Church not merely as a relic of its own disorganised past, but also as associated with the new Protestant piety and thus, by implication, doctrinal error. Protestant traditions of worship varied considerably in the relationship they exhibited between order and spontaneity. Lutheran worship, for example, was more fixed than that of Anabaptists in the sixteenth century.<sup>129</sup> Even so, 'Spirit-inspired extempore prayer [was] the order of the day'<sup>130</sup> within much of the Protestant community. Although liturgical activity was maintained by Protestant communities, private forms of spiritual experience now sometimes took the place of dependence on liturgy. For example, in many Protestant theologies, for a person's initiation into Christian identity, very often 'not Baptism, as demanded by tradition . . . [was] decisive, but Conversion.'<sup>131</sup> Baptism, the traditional moment of Christian initiation, is intrinsically a corporate and liturgical act: conversion is a private experience. Reductive Protestant conceptions of the role of the fixed liturgy in Christian life also implied a negative reappraisal of the priesthood which was required to perform the liturgical rites. For the Reformers, '[t]he ministerial priesthood . . . was a mere invention of power-seeking men.'<sup>132</sup> This in turn implied an attack on the hierarchical organisation of the Catholic Church itself, with the threat of a certain subversion of the laity's subordinate position as then perceived. There was a connection between the Protestant idea of increased active,

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid, p. 224.

<sup>129</sup> See James White, "Creativity: The Free Church Tradition." In *Concilium: "Liturgy: A Creative Tradition"* (1983) no. 2: 47-52; p. 47.

<sup>130</sup> Dieter Voll, *Catholic Evangelicalism: The Acceptance of Evangelical Traditions by the Oxford Movement During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century* (1960) (London: Faith Press, 1963), p. 22.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Clifford Howell, "From Trent to Vatican II." In *The Study of Liturgy*, Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, Paul Bradshaw (eds.), (1978) (London: SPCK, 1992), p. 288.

and by implication possibly extempore, liturgical participation by the laity, and the rise of the Protestant claim that the priesthood of the laity was the only true priesthood.<sup>133</sup> Protestant forms of spontaneity were perceived by Roman authorities to be the accompaniment to a spiritual individualism which contrasted with the traditional corporate conformity of liturgy, and were consequently viewed as anti-liturgical and dangerous.

In the throes of a polemical distortion of perspective, the Catholic Church acted upon the assumption, that because a culture of spontaneity was raised up arguably to excess within Protestant liturgies, it followed that spontaneity, even when regulated in the manner commended by the Pauline writings, must be largely suspect. Consequently, '[i]n the domain of the liturgy, [the Church] devoted itself to a stubborn maintenance of what was then under attack from Protestantism . . . But the way in which it held to and exalted that legacy was to allow it to become fossilized . . . And, in the end, the liturgy was embalmed in productions which treated it as reverently and as indifferently as the King's corpse at a royal funeral.'<sup>134</sup> This state of affairs endured, with the result that, by the nineteenth century, there had arisen a 'two-centuries old process of fossilization and stultification of the rites and formulae of the liturgy itself.'<sup>135</sup> Bouyer refers here to the absence of freedom and flexibility in liturgical celebration. All this came about despite the fact that the Tridentine revisers believed they had the authority of the earliest liturgical traditions, accepted by them as normative and prescriptive, for their reforms: 'Their scholarly limitations, however, have long been evident.'<sup>136</sup> Flexibility regarding liturgical rubrics was not ended entirely, and from its foundation in 1588, until 1887, the Sacred Congregation of Rites

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<sup>133</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Louis Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy* (1956) (London: Sheed and Ward, 1978), pp. 6-7.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>136</sup> Frederick R. McManus, "Back to the Future: The Early Christian Roots of Liturgical Renewal." *Worship* 72, no. 5 (September 1998): 386-403; p. 391.

and Ceremonies answered over eight thousand queries from clergy regarding the status of customs in the liturgy.<sup>137</sup> Roman Catholic liturgical life was not ‘a one-way, top-down . . . static papal hegemony.’<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, the main emphasis was on rubrics laid down in books produced by the Congregation.<sup>139</sup>

The central authority of the Catholic Church had perhaps never inveighed against musical practices with such scope as at the Council of Trent, even though interest in music at the Council was not extensive<sup>140</sup> in comparison with other issues. The Council treated four issues relating to music in worship: ‘musical settings that truncated liturgical texts, compositions that made the sacred words unintelligible, inappropriate secular vocal music during worship, and lengthy secular organ pieces played during liturgy.’<sup>141</sup> ‘All students of Renaissance music are familiar with the debates about sacred music during the last sessions of the Council of Trent, and with the eventual decision that ‘the whole plan of singing in musical modes should be constituted not to give pleasure to the ear, but in such a way that the words be clearly understood by all’.<sup>142</sup> Although verbal intelligibility was indeed a major point of contention, the polyphonic musical styles against which Trent inveighed were also steeped in connotations of the improvisatory and spontaneous. Ferand identifies a ‘rich improvisation practice’<sup>143</sup> of which the vocal counterpoint of the period was a ‘direct result,’<sup>144</sup> and instances ‘the polyphonic Introits in the collection by Ippolito Chamaterò di Negri (maestro di cappella at the cathedral in Udine) published in

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<sup>137</sup> See Ditchfield, “Tridentine Worship,” p. 219.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> See Bishop, *Liturgica Historica*, p. 18.

<sup>140</sup> See Joncas, “Liturgy and Music,” p. 304.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Richard Sherr, “A Letter from Paolo Animuccia: A Composer’s Response to the Council of Trent.” *Early Music* 12, no. 1 (February 1984): 74-78; p. 75. Citation taken from the final Decree. References to L. Lockwood (ed), *Palestrina: Pope Marcellus Mass* (New York: n.p., 1975), p. 19; K. Weinmann, *Das Konzil von Trient und die Kirchenmusik* (Leipzig: n.p., 1919).

<sup>143</sup> Ferand, *Improvisation in Nine Centuries*, p. 9.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

Venice in 1574.’<sup>145</sup> He writes: ‘The improvisatory origin of these settings for the Proper of the Mass is emphasised in the composer’s preface to his collection; he points out the novelty of such a procedure (namely, the writing down of a polyphony ordinarily left to improvisation) and proudly reports . . . the improvisations of his choirboys ‘nel far contraponti all’improviso’.’<sup>146</sup> It is in this stylistic context that the ecclesiastical suspicion now attaching to polyphonic music, which was supposedly liable to ‘excite the faithful to lascivious rather than to religious thoughts’<sup>147</sup> needs to be viewed, since the condemnations of polyphonic styles appear to contain also an implied attack on improvisation. Sherr notes that ‘the overall effect of the council’s decree on music was perhaps not great.’<sup>148</sup> Thus, polyphony survived, but, even so, in these censures of polyphony, the seeds of a suspicion of liturgical music, especially insofar as improvisatory, had been sown.

In the seventeenth century, the rising influence of the Cartesian *cogito* with its stigmatisation of those powers of the mind not evidently linked with ‘clear and distinct ideas’ would help to consolidate this trend in the Catholic liturgy. Descartes’s *Discourse on Method* appeared in 1637, and *Meditations on First Philosophy* in 1641. Imagination came under attack. As Benedetto Croce observed: ‘The French philosopher abhorred imagination, the outcome, according to him, of the agitation of the animal spirits . . . The mathematical spirit fostered in France by Descartes forbade all possibility of a serious consideration of poetry and art.’<sup>149</sup> For Cote, ‘[p]ost-Cartesian philosophers and psychologists belittled the imaginative quality of human life, at best relegating it to assorted groups like artists and poets, at worst regarding it

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> See A. Theiner (ed.), *Acta Concilii Tridentini* (Leipzig: n.p., 1853), part 5, p. 918. Cited in Hayburn, *Papal Legislation on Sacred Music*, p. 27.

<sup>148</sup> Sherr, “Letter from Animuccia,” p. 75.

<sup>149</sup> Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic* (1909) (London: Vision Press and Peter Owen, 1962), p. 204.

as a deceptive and dangerous power. The church, too has distrusted imagination and excluded imaginal experience (creativity, theopoiesis, playfulness) from much of its sanctioned vision of reality.’<sup>150</sup>

Musical improvisation relies more heavily on imagination than does fixed, written composition for, in the latter process, rational calculation may play a greater part. In musical improvisation, calculative rationality in the creation of the music is reduced to a minimum and spontaneous imagination takes over. There is indeed hardly any time for the musician to dwell with reasoned thought on the creative musical process here as she produces the music, for the priority will be to keep the music flowing. If intense imagining stops, the music stops, and this exigency will occupy the musician in finding spontaneous musical events to perform at each and every instant, in such a way that imagination is stretched and rational calculation largely silenced in that instant. Improvisation in its most extreme form is ‘an arbitrary stringing together of one’s own ideas, without special development, a capricious, quick jumping from one motif to another without any connection other than that supplied by accident or without purpose by the unconscious musical sense of the player.’<sup>151</sup> Compare a description of spontaneous imagination. The following definition of ‘[s]pontaneous mental acts’ provides insight into the way in which a musical improvisation, in its most extreme form, proceeds:

Spontaneous mental acts [are] any or all of the following: not subject to external coercion or control . . . arising from an apparent lack of cause, motive or reason; appearing in a way that is unsolicited and unpremeditated by the imaginer and emerging without any express effort on his part, appearing in such a way as to surprise; operating by means of its own self-propelling forces, being wholly self-determinative in this respect; and generating itself all at once, *totum simul*, without any significant prolongation or sense of steady development.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Richard G. Cote, “Christology and the Pascal Imagination.” *Concilium*: “Who Do You Say that I Am?” (1997) no. 1: 80-88; p. 80.

<sup>151</sup> Karl Czerny, *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Piano forte*, op. 200 (Vienna: n.p., 1836), Chapter 9, n.p. Cited in Ferand, *Improvisation in Nine Centuries*, p. 21.

<sup>152</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 71-72.

Correlating some aspects of this philosophical passage more closely with music, musical improvisation may be ‘unpremeditated’ and ‘surprise’ the performer as in the case of a keyboard improviser suddenly surprised but pleased by the sound of his own harmony. (This experience was famously captured in Arthur Sullivan’s popular song *The Lost Chord*.) An example of ‘self-propelling’ and ‘self-determinative’ forces in musical improvisation might be where an improviser for a few moments instinctively repeats the same passage, “treading water,” as it were, but not in fact concentrating at all on what he is doing, because he is actually trying hard to receive into the imagination some new spontaneous idea to which to move. Here, a musical motif which originally arose as improvisation upholds or propels itself by repetition, rather than flowing from any renewed inspiration. The improviser has not actually *decided* to keep the improvisation afloat with these repetitions: they are a strategy of his spontaneous imagination. Because the improviser’s conscious mind is on an inspiration he hopes to think of shortly, not on the repetitions he is actually playing, the improvisation becomes for a while self-propelling. He enters a ‘liminal space, one perhaps known better to the fingers than to the mind.’<sup>153</sup> Much more will be said of these “flow experiences” at the very end of the thesis. (Of course, if the improviser produces the repetitions deliberately, he acts rationally, and the phenomenon is not the same.)

Humans can deliberately lay themselves open to their spontaneous imaginings, and can guide them, nor are these points opposed to the spontaneous nature of such imaginings. A musician must decide to improvise, nor is a subsequent element of conscious guidance in the execution of the imaginative impulses into sounding performance opposed to the fact of their spontaneous origin, for ‘[n]ot only are we

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<sup>153</sup> Archbold, Review of Overduin, p. 478.

capable of initiating our own imaginative experiences, we are also able to direct these experiences in whatever manner we wish once they have been initiated by us. Such ‘guidability’ is found even in instances of imagining that we have *not* ourselves initiated.’<sup>154</sup> Thus the mind in musical improvisation works at several levels, initiating, receiving and guiding spontaneous imaginings, and can plan and recall the improvisatory performance within which it has situated itself, to the degree the performer should so wish. Consequently, improvisation may sometimes be more structurally cohesive than the previous quotation from Czerny would suggest, for the improvised performance, as a total phenomenon, is the effect of both spontaneous and deliberate causes and the balance achievable between these two dimensions is highly flexible.

Nevertheless, because of improvisation’s high dependence upon imagination, any reductionist philosophy of the imagination, such as the Cartesian, has the power to devalue the cultural status of improvisation if such a philosophy comes to prevail as an intellectual fashion in a culture where improvisation is present. Moreover, in later Western philosophical writing issuing from the Enlightenment, appraisal of the role of imagination continued to be negative. In the words of commentator Edward Casey, ‘the claims of imagination have been rebuffed or ignored at almost every critical juncture. Far from being the ‘Queen of the faculties’ . . . imagining has been regarded, with rare exceptions, as the impoverished chimneysweep of mind, performing tasks . . . that are considered beneath the dignity of other psychical powers.’<sup>155</sup> The Enlightenment regarded imagination as a secondary or tertiary phenomenon in relation

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<sup>154</sup> Casey, *Imagining*, p. 74.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x. Notable among the ‘rare exceptions’ was Giambattista Vico who, in 1725, considered that ‘among the gravest faults of the Cartesians was their inability to appreciate the world of imagination and poetry. Of his own times [Vico] complained they were ‘benumbed by analytical methods and by a philosophy which sought to deaden every faculty of soul which reached it through the body, especially that of imagination, now held to be the mother of all human error’’. Croce, *Aesthetic*, p. 228. Citation from a letter of Giambattista Vico to (no given name) De Angelis, 25th December, 1725.

to other mental powers, and its uniqueness was not acknowledged.<sup>156</sup> This led to a devaluation of musical improvisation in the eighteenth century, as described in Chapter 2, Section I.

The Cartesian exaltation of reason naturally resulted in an unconscious stigmatisation of whatever could be credibly represented as the “other” of rational thought and behaviour. Thomas Docherty writes: ‘Enlightenment reason is . . . a potent weapon in the production of social normativity, driving people towards a conformity with a dominant and centred ‘norm’ of behaviour. Reason, in short, has to produce the ‘scandal’ of the Other to keep itself going.’<sup>157</sup> For Michel Foucault, of whose theorising the latter quotation is a critique, the ‘Other’ is the irrationality of madness which, he would maintain, was a concept actually created at this period unconsciously to validate the dominance of Enlightenment rationality at the level of human behaviour.<sup>158</sup> Prior to the Enlightenment, ‘madness was not considered to be a disease or illness and the mad were not excluded from the rest of society. Rather they were considered to be under the influence of ‘folly’ - a benign, or even wise and revelatory, mode of thought.’<sup>159</sup> However, it seems that, in a social world which increasingly regarded Cartesian clear and distinct reasoning as the norm of knowledge and social behaviour, those who reasoned and behaved in an unorthodox way had to be rendered unacceptable and removed from participation through their confinement

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<sup>156</sup> See Casey, *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>157</sup> Thomas Docherty, “Postmodernism: An Introduction.” In *Postmodernism: A Reader*, Thomas Docherty (ed.), (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 14.

<sup>158</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1961) (London: Tavistock, 1967). ‘Foucault endeavours to show how Descartes, in the ‘First Meditation’, excludes madness from hyperbolic doubt: Descartes can doubt everything except his own sanity. Foucault wants to find out what madness and unreason [presumably a misprint for ‘reason’] could be in the age of Descartes, and why the difference between them was such an issue. Or, as a much later formulation would have it, he wanted to study the way the division between madness and reason is established. Reason and madness are thus presented as the outcome of historical processes: they do not exist as universally objective categories.’ John Lechte, *Fifty Contemporary Thinkers: From Structuralism to Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 112.

<sup>159</sup> Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject* (1993) (London: UCL Press, 1995), p. 15.



in asylums. '[S]ocial normativity,' as referred to by Docherty, is likewise what Counter-Reformation legislation sought to produce increasingly within the Catholic liturgy. Thus, similarly within a Catholic liturgy seeking to reform or purify itself, the 'Other' became any liturgical unpredictability. Liturgical spontaneity constituted a form of "madness," or at least an unwanted disorder precipitated by the dangerous sphere of the imaginative, which the Tridentine ethos of hyper-surveillance sought to minimise.

In the analysis of Karl Gustav Fellerer, during the Counter-Reformation era, 'a music *of* worship was replaced by music *at* worship'.<sup>160</sup> Properly speaking, '[l]iturgical music is *of* the liturgy, rather than simply *in* or occurring *during* the liturgy.'<sup>161</sup> Liturgical music is that music which 'weds itself to the liturgical action, serves to reveal the full significance of the rite and, in turn, derives its full meaning from the liturgy.'<sup>162</sup> Musical improvisation in liturgy is in two respects especially able to be truly *of* the liturgy rather than simply *in* the liturgy. Improvised music invented *in situ* is closely wedded to the liturgy here and now being celebrated, because it is unique to the liturgical moment which produces it. Gelineau seems, however, to favour the additional approach whereby liturgical improvisation is closely related to some part of the same liturgy's existing musical text, an adaptive improvising. Gelineau writes that '[b]etween improvisation pure and simple, with its attendant risks of failure or superficiality, and total regulation [sc. of liturgy], with its attendant dangers of boredom and lack of warmth, there is a third way, the re-play, which can draw on a wealth of memory but is open again to the grace of the moment, which has a stable basic pattern but is performed with freedom.'<sup>163</sup> A similar view is found in 'the

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<sup>160</sup> Karl Gustav Fellerer, *The History of Catholic Church Music* (Baltimore: Helican, 1961), p. 134.

<sup>161</sup> Joncas, "Liturgy and Music," p. 282.

<sup>162</sup> Edward Foley, "Liturgical Music." In *A New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, P. Fink (ed.), (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), p. 855.

<sup>163</sup> Gelineau, "Tradition - Invention - Culture," p. 15.

Constitution on the Liturgy [sc. of Vatican II] [which] gives ample space to the idea of adaptation, while not mentioning the concept of ‘creativity’ . . . Such an adaptation, far from ‘making something out of nothing’, consists in modifying existing liturgical expressions’.<sup>164</sup> Scherer asserts that ‘beyond doubt . . . from the very foundation of the Church, we are dealing with *adaptation* rather than *creativity*’.<sup>165</sup> It is impossible to know in detail what liturgies from ‘the very foundation of the Church’ were like. Nevertheless, this generalisation may validly suggest a circumspect guiding principle for the practice of liturgical improvisation: unless powerful and authentic charisms of the moment invite a transgression of this limitation, liturgical improvisers should lean towards an adaptive approach. This point concerning adaptation should not, however, be promoted to the point of excluding non-adaptive creativity, or pure spontaneity. Spontaneity such as speaking and singing in tongues is not by any means necessarily adaptive of existing liturgical elements, and New Testament theology indicates that these are liturgical freedoms in which God is powerfully operative. Anselme Sanon has commented that ‘it is not enough to start from the principle of adaptation: this would be to stifle the creativity which so marked the communities of the primitive Church.’<sup>166</sup>

Even under Tridentine rubrics there were small things a celebrant might decide to do, and be seen to decide to do, on the spur of the moment which would proclaim his identity as an imagining creature, and there were also comparable non-rubrical actions by other participants which might be imaginatively spontaneous, and which might bear directly upon the liturgical action, as any properly liturgical spontaneity obviously must. Moreover, even highly involuntary forms of spontaneity, like the choice of hand

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<sup>164</sup> Scherer, “Creative Improvisation, Oral and Written,” pp. 31-32.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, p. 33.

<sup>166</sup> Anselme Sanon, “Cultural Rooting of the Liturgy in Africa Since Vatican II.” *Concilium: “Liturgy: A Creative Tradition”* (1983) no. 2: 61-70; p. 66.

used to turn a page while reading Scripture, or which foot a person starts to walk with when moving around the nave or sanctuary, though perhaps unmotivated by conscious will, are nevertheless not devoid of imaginative intention.<sup>167</sup> In short, imagination cannot be expunged from the liturgy, any more than from the human person. In the musical domain of the Tridentine liturgy, there might also be liturgical improvisers like Tournemire. In Tournemire, '[t]he artistic imagination is the human organ of transcendence which by its symbols and techniques . . . [is] sometimes better able than discursive thought to capture and communicate our tacit knowledge of religious mysteries.'<sup>168</sup> Tournemire's improvisation was instinctively activated in the pre-Vatican II liturgical community in a way analogous to what Jungian psychology would call a surfacing archetype: 'When conscious life is characterized by one-sidedness and by a false attitude, [archetypes] are activated . . . and come to light in the . . . visions of artists and seers, thus restoring the psychic equilibrium of the epoch.'<sup>169</sup> Such archetypes 'often contain a superior analysis or insight or knowledge which consciousness has not been able to produce.'<sup>170</sup> Tournemire's musical freedoms, and those of organists of the same French school, anticipated the recovery of the New Testament eschatological spontaneity in worship which would occur in the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II.

In the Tridentine liturgy, despite general restraints on overt musical improvisation, the spontaneous expressive inflections of speech, as well as the expressive spontaneity which remained in the performance of fixed musical works, would also have embodied an element of musical improvisation. Human beings can never cease to be spontaneous, and cannot cease to project themselves towards a future in hope. This

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<sup>167</sup> For a discussion of voluntary and involuntary spontaneity see Sartre, *Psychology*, p. 18.

<sup>168</sup> Murphy, "Church and Culture since Vatican II," p. 328.

<sup>169</sup> Carl Jung, "Psychology and Literature." In *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1933), p. 197.

<sup>170</sup> Carl Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (1938) (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970), p. 49.

hope seeks a musical dimension even where the latter is forcibly restrained, for Being speaks as projection and hope in music. Thus the eschatological-prophetic dimension which musical spontaneity safeguards in liturgy was never, nor could it have been, eliminated by the Counter-Reformation prescriptions. Bishop notes how spontaneous liturgical impulses restrained by the Counter-Reformation ethos became partly redirected to feed a growth of extra-liturgical devotions.<sup>171</sup> In repressing the spontaneous aspect of liturgy, however, a ritual imbalance was created. Victor Turner indicates, that from the perspective of religious anthropology, solemn and ludic are simply complementary elements in one ritual field.<sup>172</sup> '[F]ew rituals are so completely stereotyped that every word, every gesture, every scene is authoritatively prescribed. Most often, invariant phrases and episodes are interdigitated with variable passages, in which, both at the verbal and nonverbal levels, improvisation may not be merely permitted but required.'<sup>173</sup> As Turner adds, '[t]he 'flat' view of ritual must go.'<sup>174</sup> Turner, as was noted earlier, identifies the spontaneous dimension with states of liminality, the experience of being at the threshold of the "elsewhere." Thus liminal spontaneity in ritual 'is . . . a transformative self-immolation of order as presently constituted, even sometimes a voluntary *sparagmos* or self-dismemberment of order, in the subjunctive depths of liminality.'<sup>175</sup> Turner suggests the comparison of the shaman initiand, who is 'broken into pieces then put together again as a being bridging visible and invisible worlds.'<sup>176</sup> He suggests that it is the improvisatory dimension of

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<sup>171</sup> See Bishop, *Liturgica Historica*, p. 18.

<sup>172</sup> See Turner, *Process, Performance and Pilgrimage*, pp. 94-98; 102.

<sup>173</sup> Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York City: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), pp. 81-82.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, p. 82.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, p. 83. *Sparagmos* (in English letters) is classical Greek for tearing, rending, mangling, convulsions, spasm, agony. See Henry Liddell and Robert Scott (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1869 edition), p. 1479. The 'subjunctive' dimension, Turner explains, is the domain of what is wished for, or possible, as against the 'indicative' dimension of what is. See Turner *ibid*, pp. 82-84.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, p. 84.

ritual which signifies infinite depth: 'Ritual . . . is not only complex and many-layered; it has an *abyss* in it'.<sup>177</sup>

Eastern Orthodoxy never had occasion to inveigh, in the extreme manner of the Counter Reformation, against the spontaneous. 'Orthodox worship . . . combines form with freedom. The service goes its way according to the book, but how freely the clergy and their assistants move in comparison with the stiffer ways of Rome or England! Meanwhile the congregation, free from the constraints imposed by pews or chairs, play their part also with a certain liberty, bowing and crossing themselves at such petitions in the litanies as move them specially, going forward to put a candle by an ikon, intense or relaxed by turns.'<sup>178</sup> From Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas a parallel wisdom comes, that in contemporary liturgical practice, it is eschatological awareness which is in need of special emphasis in the wider Church. This theological insight complements the spontaneous, eschatological orientation of Orthodox worship as just described. Zizioulas stresses paradoxically that eschatology is not, in fact the *end* of the Church's pilgrimage: '[W]e must think of the *eschata* as the *beginning* of the Church's life, the *arche*, that which brings forth the Church, gives her identity, sustains and inspires her in her existence. The Church exists not because Christ died on the cross but because he has risen from the dead, which means, because the kingdom has come.'<sup>179</sup> For Zizioulas, 'the only way to preserve the eschatological identity is the celebration of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, and the encounter of the Word, not as a message coming to [the Church] as passed through the channels of historical experience, but as an echo of the future state of things.'<sup>180</sup> The freedom of Orthodox worship symbolically pre-echoes this future.

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid, p. 82.

<sup>178</sup> Oliver Fielding Clarke, *Introduction to Berdyaev* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950), p. 23.

<sup>179</sup> John Zizioulas, "The Mystery of the Church in Orthodox Tradition." *One in Christ* 24, no. 4 (1988): 294-303; p. 296.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p. 300.

*V Résumé*

From the earliest auditory experiences in the womb, and explorations of the human infant in babbling, improvised music is the locus of Being's unveiling in *Dasein* through language, time and art (Chapter 5). It is also the fullest expression of *Dasein's* projection towards the future in hope (Chapter 6). Musical improvisation is thus where Being speaks in the natural order, and it is to be expected that liturgy, where Being speaks supernaturally in the light of Christian revelation, would enlist this fundamental, ontic role which musical improvisation has for the human person. This is because grace builds on nature. Liturgy is where Christians imagine the graced future as held out to them by God's revelation. It was seen in Chapter 6, Section I how all spontaneity intensifies the future orientation of imagination. As a corollary, where imaginative activity in the liturgy is spontaneous, a symbolic, liturgical disclosure of the graced future is more intense. Where such spontaneous liturgical imagination is musical, the element of future orientation is intensified yet further, since music is already linked in a special way to projecting hope in *Dasein* (Chapter 6, Sections I and II). These points converge towards a conclusion that musical spontaneity is central to liturgical hoping. Musical improvisation is, more than any other form of liturgical imaginative spontaneity, an opening up, a clearing, or a breathing-space for eschatological awareness. This applies chiefly to pure improvisatoriness. Spontaneous expressiveness in the performance of existing music is almost as potent. However spontaneous imagination is less fully operative when adding expression to existing music in this way, than when inventing music wholly in performance, and this is why the future is less potently evoked by music outside the specific context of improvisation in the fullest sense.

It has been seen also that speech prosody is musical, and linked to hope in proportion to its intensity and animation (Chapter 6, Section II). Conversely, the voice when hope is reduced is often marked by minimal intonation and rhythmic flaccidness: '[g]rief has a low pitch, narrow range, soft sounds, and slow tempo.'<sup>181</sup> In sadness generally '[s]peech may be slower and less frequent'<sup>182</sup> and spontaneity or 'impulsiveness . . . is lower for this emotion than any other emotion.'<sup>183</sup> '[S]adness is accompanied by a slowing of both mental and bodily functioning'.<sup>184</sup> In depressive patients, mutism sometimes occurs.<sup>185</sup> Their hopes have been reduced to a minimum. Yet all human speech retains some spontaneous inflection, because fundamental human projection in *Dasein* is inherently linked to hope and to music, and the primary point of access to music for the human person is his or her speaking voice. (Modern science-fiction drama understands well this link between inflection and projection, for it uses the uninflected voice for the robot: the robot does not act by projecting a future but by carrying out a pre-existent program of instructions. That is probably why the flattened voice suggested itself as appropriate for robotic speech. Because it has no autonomous future, hope, or projection, the robot has no inflected speech.) In the liturgy, any special spontaneous tonal expressiveness or alacrity in spoken language will correspond with musical spontaneity as eschatologically significant evocation. Such utterance might or might not additionally involve making up the words themselves, but where it does, the eschatological evocation will be enhanced because imagination is being used more intensively. In other words, the same principle is at

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<sup>181</sup> Robert Plutchik, *The Psychology and Biology of Emotion* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 166.

<sup>182</sup> Izard, *Psychology of Emotions*, p. 187.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, p. 188. Izard refers to any other emotion 'in the Bartlett-Izard experiment.' See E. S. Bartlett and C. E. Izard, "A Dimensional and Discrete Emotions Investigation of the Subjective Experience of Emotion." In *Patterns of Emotions: A New Analysis of Anxiety and Depression*, C. E. Izard (ed.), (New York: Academic Press, 1972), pp. 129-173.

<sup>184</sup> Izard, *Psychology of Emotions*, p. 190.

<sup>185</sup> See *ibid*, p. 75.

work here as with music when improvised, or non-improvised but expressive. Thus, reciting pre-existing words expressively is like an expressive musical performance of pre-existing music, and speaking improvised words with alacrity is like improvising music. The greater the degree of improvisatoriness embodied by the form, the greater the eschatological evocation.

The cultural recognition of an eschatological connotation attaching to alacrity in spontaneous liturgical speech is already reflected in the fact that, within the received wisdom and handing-on of the liturgical tradition, ‘pre-articulate vocables - *Alleluya*, *Selah*, *Hosanna* - . . . persist along with the language of consciousness. The 17th-century theologian Jacob Boehme called them ‘the sensual speech’: a music of the vowels in which, at the Second Coming, all creatures would speak with one accord.’<sup>186</sup> Such spontaneous exclamations presuppose expressive declamation, and for Boehme, as for the present thesis, this spontaneous, verbal music has connotations of hope and the Second Coming, the end-time. Such ‘pre-articulate vocables’ have spontaneity engrained in them, both in the vibrant prosody in which they seek to be uttered and in the spontaneous way in which liturgical participants sometimes interject them. Even when written into a fixed liturgical text, they represent a reaching out towards the ideal of spontaneous, prosodic speech in the liturgy.

A priority of tonal expression over rational content in spontaneous liturgical utterance is found also in speaking in tongues. A special form of worship undergirt by divine assistance in a most immediate way, speaking in tongues is, in the first instance, expressive utterance, ‘a question of a sequence of vowels and consonants with a certain speech melody and rhythm’.<sup>187</sup> As spontaneity, it is pure prosodic sound. Only in the second instance, subsequently to its delivery, may it be interpreted in its rational

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<sup>186</sup> Mellers, “Meanings of Monody,” p. 15.

<sup>187</sup> Mühlen, *Charismatic Theology*, p. 153.



meaning (1 Corinthians 12:10). Moreover, the interactive relationship, recorded from New Testament times, between speaking in tongues and singing in the Spirit supports the integral link made (Chapter 5, Section I) between music and spoken language in general, for the interactive complementarity of speaking in tongues and singing in the Spirit implies a graced elevation of some existing natural relationship between speech and music. Indeed, '[a]mong primitive peoples inflection of spoken words and melody are closely connected . . . In the earliest music, speaking and singing were in fact the same thing.'<sup>188</sup> 'The voice is the oldest musical instrument and speech-melody (tiny fragments of song growing from the natural inflection of spoken words) the oldest music.'<sup>189</sup>

Speaking and singing in tongues are always the paradigmatic expression of liturgical musical improvisation because of New Testament precedents and immediate divine inspiration. Apart from these, however, the present thesis does not seek to claim a superior liturgical significance for any other species of musical improvisation, and particularly not for highly accomplished or skilful forms of musical improvisation, which occupy no higher liturgical place than other forms, within the terms of the present discussion. Liturgical musical improvisation, with voice or instrument, individual or collective, may well be highly skilled and specialised. Yet far from being dependent on special skills, it may well take the form of the musical improvisation which every human person is capable of producing with voice and body, singing or speaking. Whatever outward form it takes, its theological significance is the same. If specialised improvisational skills (perhaps those of a highly trained musician) may sometimes attract more admiration than the spontaneous sung improvisation of a prayer by a member of the congregation, or the improvised singing of an existing

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<sup>188</sup> John Paynter and Peter Aston, *Sound and Silence: Classroom Projects in Creative Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), p. 39.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, p. 157.

prayer text by the celebrant, or an improvised singing of the Gospel, or the animated reading, or invention, of spoken prayers, or a sermon delivered with special prosodic alacrity, this will be for reasons unconnected with the underlying theological rationale which unites all such liturgical improvisatory manifestations in respect of their theological significance. However this is with the proviso that eschatological disclosure inhabits each manifestation in proportion to the degree in which it deploys the improvising imagination. This thesis seeks to appropriate universally for musical and prosodic improvisers within the liturgy a role comparable to that assigned to poets by Heidegger, for whom ‘poetry is equivalent to primordial dwelling; man dwells only when poets exist in the world.’<sup>190</sup> In this way, the activity of the musical or prosodic improviser in liturgy is an essential expression of Christian hope in *Dasein*, of Christian dwelling, and is always in principle desirable in Christian liturgy.

Valuing the prosodic expressiveness of verbal usage does not entail any conflict with the liturgical role of rational meaning. While the expression of the eschatological hope beyond words is, in liturgy, ultimately a musical matter, for rational verbal meaning only attains the foothills in the expression of this hope of hopes, elicitation of hope is not the sole aim of liturgical expression, and doubtless ‘texts sung in Catholic worship have traditionally been rationally communicative rather than ecstatic vocalisations.’<sup>191</sup> If rationally meaning texts are expressively said or sung, there is in fact only complementarity with the expressive and sonic liturgical values proposed here. If they are not, then, for a moment at least in the liturgy, what is said has not situated itself within the hopeful horizon characteristic of liturgical experience. Neither does the connection between improvisation and hope imply any general insistence upon a greater presence of improvisatory than more fixed styles in all

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<sup>190</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “Religion, Atheism and Faith.” In *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, Don Ihde (ed.), (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1974), p. 467.

<sup>191</sup> Joncas, “Liturgy and Music,” p. 318.

liturgies. Each liturgy will have its own natural chemistry in this respect arising from its cultural context. However any liturgy where spontaneity is only minimally represented will take place against the horizon that there is known to be more liturgical spontaneity happening somewhere else, and that spontaneity is a normal aspect of the liturgical tradition.

It is hoped that there has been provided here a belated theoretical basis for the proliferation and emancipation of a range of spontaneous (not necessarily sonic) freedoms over a wide spread of Christian liturgical tradition, as seen in recent years. This development is well established, but has been less extensively theorised. While ‘[t]he attempt to describe the role of music in worship can be neither tidy nor precise’<sup>192</sup> nevertheless, it is always ultimately to musical improvisation, taken in the widest sense of music/prosody, that the liturgy, no less than the black American slaves, or the shamans of primitive society, looks for its expressions of hope. At the least, this entails that the celebrant must always speak at least some of his or her liturgical words with alacrity and vibrancy. Deep down, liturgical participants have always intuited that hope needs music. The idea that a celebrant could utter the words ‘Let us rejoice in the hope of our salvation’ in a flat and inexpressive voice entails a grating and intolerable combination of sound and meaning. Words spoken with minimal music might be tolerated for some other liturgical utterances, but are never enough for hope.

### *VI Christian Faith as Creative Imagination*

It was seen in Section II that, because grace builds upon nature, supernatural hope builds on natural hope. Likewise, supernatural faith builds on the natural imagination. ‘[F]aith must take account of its own imaginative nature.’<sup>193</sup> However, the negative

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<sup>192</sup> Archbishop’s Commission on Church Music, *In Tune with Heaven*, p. 51.

<sup>193</sup> Bryant, *Faith and the Play of Imagination*, p. 129.

nature of the Western philosophical understanding of imagination long delayed a proper establishment of this theological perspective. 'Christian thinkers like Augustine, Aquinas and Bonaventure all warned against [imagination's] susceptibility to irrational passion (even demonic possession), while granting that in certain pedagogical circumstances it could be used, under the strict supervision of reason and revelation, to instruct the faithful.'<sup>194</sup> For Thomas Aquinas: 'Demons are known to work on men's imagination until everything is other than it is.'<sup>195</sup> For such Christian thinkers, imagination was assumed to be largely *imaginatio profana*.<sup>196</sup> Efforts from within philosophical discourse to examine imagination systematically seem in fact to date only from the late Renaissance<sup>197</sup> and not until the mid-1700s was imagination 'recognised as a part of the general human process of dealing with information.'<sup>198</sup> As recently as 1960, a writer could note: 'It seems that little attempt has been made in philosophy or psychology to define imagination.'<sup>199</sup> Moreover, little attention has yet been paid by religious leaders to the imagination<sup>200</sup> through which the 'raw, elementary power of religion comes'.<sup>201</sup> Yet, '[t]he experience of grace . . . is filtered through the imagination where it has an enormous and sometimes overwhelming effect.'<sup>202</sup>

Faith is, in fact, a supernatural mental state which both assents to supernatural events which are understood to have taken place historically, and also imagines a human heavenly destiny which, in the case of a given imaginer, is not yet realised.

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<sup>194</sup> Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining*, p. 3.

<sup>195</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (London: n.p., 1925), 5, 147 (documentation *sic*). Cited in Kearney, *Wake*, p. 130.

<sup>196</sup> See Kearney, *ibid*, p. 117.

<sup>197</sup> See Jerome Singer, "Imagination." In *Encyclopedia of Creativity*, vol 2, Runco and Pritzker (eds.), p. 15.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>199</sup> Kenneth C. Barnes, *Creative Imagination: The Swarthmore Lectures, 1960* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 5.

<sup>200</sup> See Greeley, *Religious Imagination*, p. 3.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.

More widely, humanity's heavenly destiny is something not realised apart from, but is actually created by, humanity's faith in it. In this sense, Christian imagination, or faith, is a power not only of envisagement, but of creation. The heavenly goal of Christian life exists as a direct consequence of the human ability to imagine it. Heaven exists *in potentia* as a divinely revealed offer for humans to imagine, in order that, by being so imagined, it may come about. If no human beings had ever imagined the heavenly goal of Christian life, this is equivalent to saying that Christian revelation had never been embraced by any human person, and, if this hypothesis were considered in its implications, the latter would include the absence of a heavenly goal for mankind. Heaven is actually mediated into existence by the imaginative faculty. Faith is consequently to be understood not just as a supernatural disposition which cleaves imaginatively to the hope of a heavenly future. Rather, it is also the causal and creative power which, under God and mediately, creates such a future, and without which a human heavenly destiny does not arise. Christian eschatological destiny is both true and imagined, salvation created because imagined, for God has created human beings to share with Him in the creation of their own ultimate destiny, by imagination.

Like the idea of faith as imaginative, the idea of faith as creative may, in a parallel way, have been historically overshadowed by a failure to understand the nature of creativity itself. 'Creativity is one of those subjects for which we have . . . no consensus definition. The definition of creativity seems to depend on the worldview . . . to which the proponent subscribes.'<sup>203</sup> Dutton and Krausz write:

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<sup>203</sup> Amit Goswami, "Quantum Theory of Creativity." In *Encyclopedia of Creativity*, vol 2, Runco and Pritzker (eds.), p. 491. '[T]he only constant factor in virtually all discussions of creativity is *novelty* . . . creativity is nowadays widely defined as *the production of relevant and effective novelty*.' Arthur J. Cropley, "Definitions of Creativity." In Runco and Pritzker (eds.), *ibid*, vol 1, p. 512. Cropley writes of accepted distinctions between creativity as different applications of the already known, development of new principles, "minor creativity" in extending the known and "major creativity" in going beyond the

‘While the literature on the psychology of creativity is substantial, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the subject by philosophers in recent years.’<sup>204</sup> The imagination which is Christian faith is clearly somehow creative, an ontic, not simply a cognitive power.<sup>205</sup> In supernatural faith, graced imagination generates the possibilities it opens up, with the result that it creates salvation for human beings. Traces of recognition of the creativity of the imagination may in fact be found from an early stage in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In the cognate nature of the Hebrew words *yetser* (imagination), *yetsirah* (creation), *yatsar* (create), there is found a correspondence between imagination and creativity. Kearney has noted Saint Augustine’s ‘frequent references to a positive eschatological role for the faithful in the order of creation.’<sup>206</sup> ‘One could cite here Augustine’s extraordinary claim that ‘we ourselves will be the Seventh Day of Creation’ (*Dies Septimus nos ipsi erimus*).’<sup>207</sup> The idea of the self-creativity in grace of the eschatological human person resonates in the Middle Ages in Meister Eckhart: ‘For in the same being of God where God is above being and above distinction, there I myself was, there I willed myself and committed myself to create this man. Therefore I am the cause of myself in the order of my being, which is eternal’.<sup>208</sup> The interest of this extract lies in the way in which human imagination is here portrayed as creative of the human person, for ‘I am the

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known. See Cropley, *ibid.*, p. 514. ‘The highest form of creativity, which may lead to a ‘revolution’ in an area, requires introducing a new ‘paradigm’.’ *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> Denis Dutton and Michael Krausz, “Editors’ Preface.” In *The Concept of Creativity in Science and Art*, Denis Dutton and Michael Krausz (eds.), (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), p. xi [no page number marked on page].

<sup>205</sup> See Hart, *Unfinished Man*, p. 136.

<sup>206</sup> Kearney, *Wake*, p. 73.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.* No documentation of this citation from Augustine. However, Kearney provides the following references in connection with further reading on Augustine’s understanding of imagination. T. Van Bavel, *Répertoire Bibliographique de St Augustin* ([The Hague]: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), pp. 346-350; 4414-4428; 4431; 3298; 3311. Olivier du Roy, *L’intelligence de la Foi selon St Augustin*, *Études Augustiniennes* (Paris: n.p., 1966), pp. 45-46; 204-205; 264-266; 434-435; 437. Étienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Augustine* (London: Gollancz, 1961), pp. 211-212; 276-277; 151-152; 217-224.

<sup>208</sup> Meister Eckhart, “Sermon 52.” In *Meister Eckhart, The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defence* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 202.

cause of myself.’ In the sense of creating the eschatologically realised human being of faith, Eckhart echoes a fundamental Christian idea that imagination, raised by grace into faith, does indeed ultimately create the human person as an eternal creature.

For this graced creativity of Christian faith, Marcel perhaps implicitly identifies an imaginative creative foundation in the natural order, when he writes that ‘when I commit myself . . . it is clear that this active volition not to question something again . . . intervenes as an essential element in the determination of what in fact will be the case . . . [I]t bids me invent a certain *modus vivendi* which I would otherwise be precluded from envisaging. Here there appears in a rudimentary form what I call *creative fidelity*.’<sup>209</sup> Here, natural imagination has created what I will be. The graced creative imagination of faith characteristically builds on an imaginative and creative basis in the natural order also in the form of the ‘originality of everyday life’<sup>210</sup> for ‘without the flexible adaptiveness and daily improvisations we all have, we could not even shape a new sentence, never mind survive.’<sup>211</sup> ‘It is a distinguishing characteristic of human beings that they can think what has never been thought before and create what has never been made before, so that their experience is ever-expanding.’<sup>212</sup> Indeed, humans proceed in this way constantly, unlike animals who are largely circumscribed by a life cycle of fixed possibilities. Thus the natural human person already brings things into being by imagining them, and this propensity acts as a foundation for the graced eschatological creativity of Christian faith. However, ‘[t]heologians have been slow to recognize the creative imagination as a central

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<sup>209</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, p. 162.

<sup>210</sup> Ruth Richards, “The Four Ps of Creativity.” In *Encyclopedia of Creativity*, vol 1, Runco and Pritzker (eds.), p. 734. Widely accepted in the study of creativity are the “Four Ps of Creativity” identified by Ross L. Mooney: creative person, press of environment favouring creativity, creative process, creative product. See *ibid*, p. 733.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*, p. 734.

<sup>212</sup> Barnes, *Creative Imagination*, p. 5.

component not merely in the ‘human response’ of faith but also in the very structure which evokes faith.’<sup>213</sup>

It was the writing of Immanuel Kant which, at the end of the eighteenth century, chiefly broke the philosophical silence concerning natural imagination’s creative powers implied by the Cartesian and similar prior critiques. For Kant, imagination creatively synthesises our sensory experience, while intuition, as an *a priori* category of the mind, creates our time.<sup>214</sup> When considering the way in which imagination has been understood in Western philosophy, it is thus necessary, since Kant, to be aware of the existence of two paradigms: ‘The human ability to ‘image’ or ‘imagine’ something has been understood in two main ways throughout the history of Western thought - 1) as a *representational* faculty which reproduces images of some pre-existing reality, or 2) as a *creative* faculty which produces images which often lay claim to an original status in their own right.’<sup>215</sup> The first paradigm may well be described as Cartesian, the second essentially Kantian. The second paradigm arises when ‘to cite the canonical metaphor, the imagination ceases to function as a mirror reflecting some external reality and becomes a lamp which projects its own internally generated light onto things.’<sup>216</sup> Thus Kant ‘distinguishes the transcendental *productive* imagination from the empirical *reproductive* imagination.’<sup>217</sup> The latter idea honours the true insight retained in the narrower Cartesian theory, that imagination does indeed include a reproductive aspect, while the productive function is referred to by Kant as the ‘transcendental function of the imagination.’<sup>218</sup> Whereas reproductive imagination ‘operates by *associating* fragments of previous experiences

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<sup>213</sup> Cote, “Christology and the Paschal Imagination,” p. 80.

<sup>214</sup> See Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 397.

<sup>215</sup> Kearney, *Wake*, p. 15.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, p. 155.

<sup>217</sup> Crawford, *Kant’s Aesthetic Theory*, p. 87.

<sup>218</sup> Kant, *CPR* A 123.



with one another, productive imagination works by *synthesizing* discrete spatio-temporal manifolds into genuinely new organic wholes.<sup>219</sup> It is largely to Kant that the existence of a contemporary philosophical presentation of the idea of a creative imagination is to be attributed in the West.<sup>220</sup>

At the same period, 'when a deep and general change was occurring in man's conceptions of himself and of his world,'<sup>221</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge 'is generally credited with bringing the ideas of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling to England'.<sup>222</sup> Coleridge distinguishes primary imagination, fancy, and secondary imagination: 'The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.'<sup>223</sup> Fancy 'simply produces patterns in the mind drawn from past sense experience through an associative rather than a living or creative process . . . Fancy's

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<sup>219</sup> Casey, *Imagining*, p. 184. Elliott makes a similar point: 'The original meaning of *imagination* . . . refers to envisaging sights and sounds like those we already experience in reality . . . Another sense of imagination refers to the ability to formulate possible things or events that do not yet exist in any concrete form.' Elliott, *Music Matters*, pp. 227-228. References to Sparshott, *Theory of the Arts*, pp. 138-139.

<sup>220</sup> Vico's important work on imagination, counter-Cartesian and revolutionary for its time, may have influenced Kant's treatment: '[I]t has been argued that Vico anticipated ideas developed by Kant . . . without, apparently influencing them directly.' H. P. Rickman, "Vico and Dilthey's Methodology of the Human Studies." In *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, Giorgio Tagliacozzo (ed.), Hayden V. White (co-ed.), (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1969), p. 448. 'In its philosophical aspect, the New Science might, owing to . . . prominence given to . . . the imagination (since the doctrine that primitive man is a poet and thinks in poetic images is in Vico's words the 'master key' of the work) be called, without undue paradox, a philosophy of Mind with special attention to the Philosophy of Imagination'. Benedetto Croce, *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico* (1913) (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 46. 'New Science' refers to Giambattista Vico, *Scienza Nuova* (Naples: Mosca, 1725). One of Vico's most important contributions to the philosophy of imagination is his 'doctrine of imaginary forms.' Croce, *ibid*, p. 52. 'As examples, Vico quotes traditional anecdotes; for instance, the five 'real words' (the frog, the mouse, the bird, the ploughshare and the bow) sent by Idanturas king of the Scythians to Darius when the latter had declared war on him: and the parable of the tall poppies which King Tarquin enacted before the eyes of his son Sextus's ambassador, concerning the means of ruling Gabii - methods of expression parallel to practices still found among savages . . . - and in addition to these, heraldry, flags, and the emblems upon medals and coins . . . [I]n the Middle Ages heraldry was a serious thing. It was, so to speak, the hieroglyphic script of the period: a wordless language to eke out the poverty of ordinary speech and alphabetic writing . . . [P]rimitive and natural heraldry was dumb, or rather spoke without needing an interpreter.' *Ibid*, p. 51.

<sup>221</sup> I. A. Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1934), p. 2.

<sup>222</sup> Leonard Orr, "Introduction." In *Critical Essays on Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Leonard Orr (ed.), (New York: G. K. Hall, 1994), p. 6. On Coleridge's considerable familiarity with Vico, see George Whalley, "Coleridge and Vico." In *Vico: An International Symposium*. Tagliacozzo (ed.), White (co-ed.).

<sup>223</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (1817) (London: J. M. Dent, 1975), Chapter 13, "On the Imagination or Esemplastic Power," p. 167.

materials are dead sense-impressions.’<sup>224</sup> Secondary imagination ‘dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create . . . it struggles to idealize and to unify.’<sup>225</sup> Leonard Orr writes:

[Coleridge] draws an important distinction between fancy and imagination (in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, *fancy* was casually used as synonymous with *imagination*) . . . Coleridge emphasizes that the imagination is a fusing, unifying, reconciling power, productive and generative, rather than merely reproductive and imitative.<sup>226</sup>

A further instance in England of the philosophical presentation of a creative or productive imagination is found in the nineteenth-century thinker John Henry Newman, especially in *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*.<sup>227</sup> For Dunne, Newman appears as a major source for ideas which were to become central in the work of Heidegger and Gadamer.<sup>228</sup> Imagination plays a decisive role in Newman’s epistemology. For example, taking the assertion that ‘Great Britain is an island,’<sup>229</sup> we find that we are quite certain of this assertion at a psychological level; yet, if we try to formulate this proposition in an irrefutable way, we cannot do so. This, claims Newman, is true in all concrete matters. I cannot prove absolutely that I am not deluded with respect to the grounds on which I hold Great Britain to be an island. There is, in Newman’s words, always a ‘margin . . . intervening between verbal argumentation and conclusions in the concrete.’<sup>230</sup> Yet in daily life this gap is truly and habitually closed. I am not only *fairly* sure that Great Britain is an island. The leap we make here from probable data to psychological certainty is achieved by what Newman calls the “illative sense.” The consequent implication is that, in all ordinary mental processes, our certainty is attained by something more than reason, attained,

<sup>224</sup> Reginald Watters, *Coleridge* (London: Evans Brothers, 1971), p. 122. See Coleridge, *ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, p. 167.

<sup>226</sup> Orr, “Introduction,” p. 8.

<sup>227</sup> It has been claimed that Newman’s thought in this work was influenced by Coleridge. See René Wellek, *Immanuel Kant in England 1793-1838* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1931), p. 276, note 1. Reference to Ch. Broicher (*sic*), “Anglikanische Kirche und deutsche Philosophie.” *Preussische Jahrbücher* 142 (1910): esp. pp. 205, 457, 469ff.

<sup>228</sup> See Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground*. Chapter on “Newman.”

<sup>229</sup> Newman, *Grammar*, p. 158. See also the ensuing argument.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282.

that is, by a kind of leap of imaginative inference. Newman's metaphor for the operation of the illative sense here relates to a regular polygon inscribed within a circle.<sup>231</sup> If we gradually increase the number of sides which the polygon has, the sides become smaller and smaller, until the mind accepts that the polygon has become one with the circle in such a way that its sides are dissolved into the circle. This conversion of polygon into circle, contrary to the facts of geometry, is made by the imagining mind. The perceptual leap from polygon to circle is in fact analogous to the leap made by the illative sense when arriving at certainty on the basis of data. It is, for Newman, in this way that the mind must leap from data to conclusions all the time. It is the creative imagination in the form of the illative sense which functions as the leap needed to convert factual data into a conclusion. This philosophical position clearly accords to imagination a very high status in the process of knowing. Essentially, for Newman, it is imagination, not reason, which finally creates all certainty and thus creates our world. Newman has come a long way here from any understanding of the imaginary which restricts it to being Casey's 'chimneysweep of mind.'<sup>232</sup> For Newman, imagination has been put back firmly at the heart of our knowledge of the real world; indeed, in referring to imagination in the form of the illative sense he says: 'This is the mode in which we ordinarily reason . . . and it is especially exemplified both in uneducated men, and in men of genius, - in those who know nothing of intellectual aids and rules, and in those who care nothing for them, - in those who are either without or above mental discipline.'<sup>233</sup> An extended account of the operation of the illative sense in such extreme cases as genius is to be found in the *Grammar* in his discussion of "natural inference."<sup>234</sup> Natural inference, an extreme manifestation of

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<sup>231</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 253-254.

<sup>232</sup> Casey, *Imagining*, p. x.

<sup>233</sup> Newman, *Grammar*, p. 261.

<sup>234</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 260-269.

the illative sense, occurs when the hidden yet decisive role played by imagination in all knowing is exposed to full view by being manifested in an exceptional way. He writes:

Sometimes . . . this illative faculty is nothing short of genius. Such seems to have been Newton's perception of truths mathematical and physical, though proof was absent . . . 'Professor Sylvester,' it was said, 'has just discovered the proof of Sir Isaac Newton's rule for ascertaining the imaginary roots of equations . . . This rule has been a Gordian-knot among algebraists for the last century and a half . . . The proof being wanting, authors became ashamed at length of advancing a proposition, the evidence for which rested on no other foundation than belief in Newton's sagacity.'<sup>235</sup>

In the twentieth century, a feature of the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz is the idea that imaginative activity, in the form of symbolism, creatively structures and brings about entire societies. For Geertz, 'our central nervous system . . . is incapable of directing our behavior or organising our experience without the guidance provided by systems of significant symbols.'<sup>236</sup> Geertz provides the example of cockerel fights in Bali. '[T]he cockfight . . . is fundamentally a dramatization of status concerns'.<sup>237</sup>

Like any art form . . . the cockfight renders ordinary, everyday experience comprehensible by presenting it in terms of acts and objects which have had their practical consequences removed and been reduced . . . to the level of sheer appearances, where their meaning can be more powerfully articulated and more exactly perceived . . . it catches up these themes - death, masculinity, rage, pride, loss, beneficence, chance - and, ordering them into an encompassing structure, presents them in such a way as to throw into relief a particular view of their essential nature.<sup>238</sup>

The ritual of the fight 'brings to imaginative realisation a dimension of Balinese experience normally well-obscured from view.'<sup>239</sup> 'A peculiar fusion of Polynesian title ranks and Hindu castes, the hierarchy of pride is the moral backbone of the society. But only in the cockfight are the sentiments upon which that hierarchy rests revealed in their natural colors.'<sup>240</sup> Moreover, although social structures, for Geertz, necessarily precipitate such imaginative, symbolic activities as a means of articulating the social structure's essential aspects, for 'societies, like lives, contain their own

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid, p. 262. Citation from *The Guardian* newspaper, 28th June, 1865. Similar examples of discovery by sheer imagining in scientific thinkers are cited in Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (1964) (London: Penguin Arkana, 1989), pp. 112-120.

<sup>236</sup> Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 49.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid, p. 437.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid, p. 443.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, p. 444.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid, p. 447.

interpretations,<sup>241</sup> it is clear that such imaginative activity also reciprocally recreates the society: '[B]ecause . . . subjectivity does not properly exist until it is . . . organized, art forms generate and regenerate the very subjectivity they pretend only to display. Quartets, still lifes, and cockfights are not merely reflections of a pre-existing sensibility analogically represented; they are positive agents in the creation and maintenance of such a sensibility.'<sup>242</sup> In other words, imaginative forms play their part in the creation, not merely the reflection, of human society.

Gary Madison proposes from Einstein a case for imagination's productive creativity: 'The creative imagination in philosophy or science consists in nothing more than combining elementary sense impressions into new patterns. What could be more absurd? How could the General Theory of Relativity ever be derived from sense data?'<sup>243</sup> Einstein's Theory could not possibly have been inferred with conscious logic from known facts. As William Beveridge observes: 'Occasionally . . . there flashes into the mind some strikingly original idea, not based on past associations or at any rate on associations that are at first apparent.'<sup>244</sup> He refers to these sudden imaginative enlightenments as "intuitions" (this usage should be distinguished from that of Kant: as Beveridge notes, the word has been used in several varied ways)<sup>245</sup> and he quotes Einstein: 'The really valuable factor is intuition.'<sup>246</sup> 'Most but not all scientists are familiar with the phenomenon of intuition.'<sup>247</sup> Intuitions appear to arise when the subconscious mind acts imaginatively on existing knowledge perhaps by some unconscious logic, and then delivers its productions to the conscious mind for

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid, p. 453.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid, p. 451.

<sup>243</sup> Madison, *Hermeneutics of Postmodernity*, p. 180.

<sup>244</sup> William Beveridge, *The Art of Scientific Investigation* (1950) (London: Heinemann, 1957), p. 53.

<sup>245</sup> See *ibid*, p. 68.

<sup>246</sup> Albert Einstein, no documentation. Cited in *ibid*.

<sup>247</sup> Beveridge, *ibid*, p. 72.

appraisal.<sup>248</sup> For Arthur Koestler, Einstein's unification of matter and energy in a single equation conforms to a familiar pattern: 'The Latin word *cogito* comes from *cogitare*, 'to shake together.' The creative act does not create something out of nothing, like God of the Old Testament; it combines, reshuffles, and relates already existing but hitherto separate ideas, facts, frames of perception, associative contexts. This act of cross-fertilization - or self-fertilization within a single brain - seems to be the essence of creativity. I have proposed for it the term *bisociation*.<sup>249</sup> In this way, although new ideas are generated, 'novelty must be tempered by connection with the known'.<sup>250</sup> On the other hand, '[w]hen Einstein bisociated energy and matter, both acquired a new look in the process.'<sup>251</sup> All imagining is in fact both productive and reproductive. All productive imagining must be connected to at least something the mind already contains, while reproductive imagination always produces something (however elusively) novel (Chapter 6, Section I).

The post-Kantian paradigm, felt here in Coleridge, Newman, Geertz and Einstein reveals different ways in which imagination brings about or creates something new, rather than simply rearranging existing mental data. The graced imagination which is Christian faith shows a broad resemblance to this type of natural creative imagination. For example, Christian faith creates a society, though eschatological, with the result that some parallel with Geertz's ideas on the social creativity of imagination might be conceivable. A person's conversion to Christianity, where graced imagination reveals to him or her a new paradigm for reality itself, is the graced counterpart of such

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<sup>248</sup> See *ibid*, p. 73.

<sup>249</sup> Arthur Koestler, "Three Domains of Creativity." In *Concept of Creativity*, Dutton and Krausz (eds.), p. 2. Being tickled may have helped in the development of Einstein's creativity: '[T]he tickler impersonates an aggressor, but is simultaneously known not to be one. It is probably the first situation encountered in life which makes the infant live on two planes at once, the first delectable experience in bisociation'. Koestler, *Act of Creation*, p. 81.

<sup>250</sup> R. Harré, "Creativity in Science." In Dutton and Krausz (eds.), *ibid*, p. 19. 'Kepler *already* had the ellipse, as a form, both geometrical and analytical, before he could creatively apply it to the problem of making sense of the orbit of Mars.' *Ibid*, p. 21.

<sup>251</sup> Koestler, *Act of Creation*, p. 233.

reason-transcending imaginative illuminations in the order of nature as that of Einstein, which introduced a new paradigm for physical reality. Such a Christian conversion might perhaps be described, following Koestler's model, as a new graced bisociation of the ideas of life and death, such that life may be seen not only to precede chronologically but also be subsequent to death for a given subject, Christ first, and believers also. Thus faith validates a revolutionary new conception of life and death, as Einstein created a new conception of matter and energy. Moreover the mental leap, from Christianity as something merely understood, to Christianity as additionally believed is not unlike Newman's leap from polygon to circle, though in the former case the leap is of imagination assisted by grace. Supernatural faith is both imaginative and creative.

As has been shown, an idea of imagination as somehow creative had deep roots in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and the Christian understanding of faith (though not necessarily its official expositions) long before it surfaced as prominent in Kant. It is possible that Kant's philosophy of the natural productive imagination is acting as an unconscious resonator for his intense Christian pietist background which emphasised faith in a particularly powerful and experiential way. Thus his idea of the productive imagination could probably not have arisen apart from his understanding of Christian faith.<sup>252</sup> Moreover, for Kant, the productive imagination which produces the synthesis of sense data is spontaneous.<sup>253</sup> It might therefore be possible to argue for a subconscious refraction, in this idea of spontaneity, of the idea of instantaneous "born again" conversion experiences which characteristically initiate faith in the pietist spirituality in which Kant was brought up. For Friedrich Lampe (1683-1729)

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<sup>252</sup> 'Kant is a profoundly Christian thinker, more so than Thomas Aquinas, and he could have lived and thought only in a Christian era.' Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950), p. 104.

<sup>253</sup> See Kant, *CPR* A 97.

Christian rebirth was ‘that gracious work of God and of His Spirit, through which the elect sinner is effectively, wholly and instantaneously changed toward the good’.<sup>254</sup> Thus for Kant, spontaneity/productive imagination becomes an unconscious analogy of conversion/faith, for clearly, each of these dyads suggests the idea of an essential form of human understanding as being rooted in instantaneity, a characteristic associated both with Kantian spontaneity<sup>255</sup> and this particular brand of Christian spirituality. Kant’s philosophy of imagination appears in this interpretation as a turn to natural anthropology of some of his religious impressions, a secular repristination of Protestant mysticism. It has been suggested that, in the pietism which influenced Kant’s schooldays, the emphasis on violent, sudden religious conversion had become excessive.<sup>256</sup> ‘[I]t came too readily to be assumed that every believer, as evidence of his vocation, should have undergone a certain type of conversion-experience, following a specific pattern.’<sup>257</sup>

Königsberg, where he grew up, was a centre of pietism.<sup>258</sup> This spiritual culture caused Kant ‘a lasting abhorrence of all religious emotion’<sup>259</sup> and to distance himself from his Christian roots. From these beginnings, possible psychoanalytic dimensions which may have been formative influences upon Kant’s philosophy of the imagination could have arisen. For example, his philosophy could be a sublimation, in the Freudian sense, of repressed and resented religious ideas into the grander form of a “nobler” new secular philosophy of the person, conversion/faith being sublimated into spontaneity/productive imagination. Reardon has put forward additional possible

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<sup>254</sup> Friedrich Lampe, *Secret Covenant of Grace* (1712-1719) (incomplete documentation), p. 360. Cited in F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), p. 230.

<sup>255</sup> See Casey, *Imagining*, pp. 67-72.

<sup>256</sup> See Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson, “Introduction.” In Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793) (Chicago: Open Court, 1934), p. xiii.

<sup>257</sup> Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Kant as Philosophical Theologian* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 7.

<sup>258</sup> See *ibid*, p. 16.

<sup>259</sup> Greene and Hudson, “Introduction,” p. xxviii.



unconscious influences of the pietist “new birth” culture on the conceptual framework of Kant’s thinking.<sup>260</sup> In general, it is clear that Kant’s idea of the productive imagination was formed in the crucible of the Christian faith tradition. A further influence on his theory of imaginative productivity may have been the Christian doctrine of God’s *creatio ex nihilo*. The idea of creation from nothing presses the notion of creativity to its extreme limit, and not all cultures have had in their intellectual possession such a conception of extreme creativity. (For example, Plato’s Demiurge created from pre-existent matter,<sup>261</sup> while in Neoplatonism the world is an emanation from God.) Although, in orthodox Christianity, this mode of creativity out of nothing was only ever predicated of God, it could be that the Kantian idea of productive imagination is a distant precipitate within anthropology of the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*, suggesting further Christian antecedents for Kant’s view of the imaginary. Even though Kant’s productive imagination could not strictly be said to create from nothing, for it synthesises sense-data, perhaps only familiarity with the idea of so extremely creative a God could have suggested to Kant so creative a man. Moreover, Kantian man in a certain sense creates time itself, through intuition. Thus a high doctrine of creativity links Kantian man with the Christian God. When considering Kant’s work, it is helpful to speak of Christian ideas refracted through Kant, as much as of original philosophy invented by Kant.

In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*<sup>262</sup> Heidegger contributes a further inflection to the idea that imagination creates a continuing existence for man, an idea with roots in Judaeo-Christianity and Kant. Heidegger observes in the conclusion of the *History of the Concept of Time* that ‘Dasein . . . temporalizes.’<sup>263</sup> Here,

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<sup>260</sup> See Reardon, *Kant as Philosophical Theologian*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>261</sup> See Plato, *Timaeus*.

<sup>262</sup> See Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>263</sup> Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (1925) (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1985), p. 319.

‘Dasein . . . originates time.’<sup>264</sup> Around the same time, Heidegger writes: ‘*Dasein* [Being-in-the-World], conceived in its most extreme possibility of Being, *is time itself*, not *in* time. Being futural as we have characterized it is, as the authentic ‘how’ of being temporal, that way of Being of *Dasein* in which and out of which it gives itself its time.’<sup>265</sup> Heidegger also observed, since Einstein, ‘[t]ime is nothing. It persists merely as a consequence of the events taking place in it.’<sup>266</sup> In words of commentator Thomas Langan: ‘The Dasein who finds himself in the world . . . has the basis for the true act of interpretation . . . which, in bringing new light to the things-that-are, is truly creative, i.e., creative of a future.’<sup>267</sup> Thus it seems that for parts of Heidegger’s thought, at least,<sup>268</sup> ‘the self is not merely ‘in time’ or temporal. Rightly understood, the self is in itself temporalizing. To exist as an authentic self is less to suffer time as a fate than to effect time as a work . . . [I]t seems to me that we must penetrate the sense of this Heideggerian reversal.’<sup>269</sup> Once again, however, this mental creation of the future is a distant precipitate of the idea of Christian faith as creative of the eschatological goal. Heidegger’s interest in Eckhart is generally known.<sup>270</sup> Both Kant and Heidegger are products of Christian culture in its mystical/experiential

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<sup>264</sup> Robert J. Dostal, “Time and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger.” In *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Guignon (ed.), p. 164.

<sup>265</sup> Heidegger, *Concept of Time* [(1924) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992)], pp. 13E-14E.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3E.

<sup>267</sup> Thomas Langan, *The Meaning of Heidegger: A Critical Study of an Existentialist Phenomenology* (1959) (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1966), p. 48.

<sup>268</sup> Heidegger’s stance on the creativity of the imagination is in fact ambiguous. See Dorothea Frede, “The Question of Being: Heidegger’s Project.” In *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Guignon (ed.), p. 65. This is apparent from the fact that ‘[t]he published portion of *Being and Time* breaks off after the repetition of the analysis of everydayness in terms of temporality, the explanation of our concern with history, and the accounts of our ‘historicality’ and of the everyday conception of time.’ *Ibid*. Heidegger writes at one point in *Being and Time* that ‘temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) temporalizes.’ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 65, p. 377. Cited in Dostal, “Time and Phenomenology,” p. 164. Heidegger also observes: ‘Time is primordial as the temporalizing of temporality’. Heidegger, *ibid*, section 65, p. 380. Cited in Dostal. *ibid*, pp. 164-165. This implies that ‘[t]ime is somehow prior to Dasein.’ Dostal, *ibid*, pp. 164-165. Thus elsewhere for Heidegger in *Being and Time*, human understanding does not, in fact, create time.

<sup>269</sup> Mary A. Schaldenbrand, “Time, the Self, and Hope: An Intersubjective Interpretation.” In *The Future as the Presence of Shared Hope*, Maryellen Muckenhirn (ed.), (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), p. 397.

<sup>270</sup> See Caputo, *Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought*, esp. pp. 140-217.

dimensions. Thus Caputo has confirmed ‘most interesting, even startling, likenesses between Eckhart and the subsequent German tradition.’<sup>271</sup>

### *VII Musical Improvisation as Theurgy*

Some discussion of the link made in human culture between time and music was broached above (Chapter 5, Section V), and discussed in relation to liturgy (this Chapter, Section III). Human time is closely wedded to sound. ‘[O]f all the five senses, the sense of hearing is the only one inexorably associated with our sense of time. The gestures which music embodies are . . . movement . . . which gives time its meaning and its significance for us. If this is true, then sound is its predestined vehicle . . . By its very nature it embodies for us movement in time’.<sup>272</sup> More forcefully, for Victor Zuckerkandl, it is impossible to separate ‘a thing ‘time’ from the forces that produce rhythm; time [is] nothing but the activity of these forces . . . In so far as we accept the testimony of music as basic, the existence of time is the same as its activity. We observe an oscillation, an accumulation - and this oscillation, this accumulation, *is* time.’<sup>273</sup> ‘Actually we have *not* two data, first the metric wave, or the forces active in the wave, and then a neutral medium ‘time’ or ‘duration’ *in* which the forces work, *in* which the wave pulses; on the contrary, the pulsing of the wave is itself already time, is itself already duration.’<sup>274</sup> Moreover, ‘[i]t is conceivable . . . that tone, in and for itself, quite apart from rhythm, as a result of its basic independence from any relation to the world of objects, clears our sight for the perception of time as such, time as event.’<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid, p. 102.

<sup>272</sup> Sessions, *Musical Experience*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>273</sup> Victor Zuckerkandl, *Sound and Symbol: Music and the External World* (New York: Pantheon, 1956), p. 207.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid, pp. 209-210.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, p. 220.

Here, it is music which makes the experience of temporality available to the human person, or creates man's time.<sup>276</sup>

Music as the creation of human time is a familiar commonplace from its use for parties, restaurants and discotheques, where it is intended to 'provide a setting, a society, which seems to be defined only by the time-scale of the music (the beats per minute), which escapes the real time passing outside.'<sup>277</sup> Perhaps the idea of the musical disclosure of time underlies Messiaen's *Chronochromie*, which is a "colouring" of time.<sup>278</sup> If indeed sound and music create human time, then this ontological sonic creativity of music may underlie the metaphorical attribution of sound to God's creativity, which has all created time as its object. Thus, humans have found sonic creativity a fitting metaphor for God's creativity, because they primordially intuit that sound is how they themselves create their own time. The *dabar* or word of God, 'a thing of dynamic power, an event creating and manifesting

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<sup>276</sup> For the profoundly deaf, access to music consists of contact feeling of music through vibrations in the tips of the fingers touching a sound source, and through the soles of the feet on a resonant floor; there is also an experience of amplified sound perceived with the whole body. Different parts of the body may register different kinds of sound, low sounds in the lower part of the body and high sounds in the higher part. It may even be that the latter physiological fact is the origin of the conventional terminology of "low" and "high" pitches for music, for such reception of music by the whole body-frame is not confined to the deaf, though it is an experience understood particularly well by them. Paul Whittaker, personal communication, Huddersfield, 5th June, 2000. Whittaker is Artistic Director of "Music and the Deaf," registered charity no. 1000025, 7 Northumberland Street, Huddersfield, England. 'Deaf children are astonished that they are able to 'feel' the beat by experiencing the vibrations of various musical instruments.' "Music and the Deaf: Sensational Sounds," pamphlet produced by the organisation "Music and the Deaf," p. 3. 'There seems to be an innate inner response and capacity for music that transcends even severe deafness.' Paul Whittaker, "Musical Potential in the Profoundly Deaf." B. A. dissertation, University of Oxford, 1986, p. ii. Whittaker refers to two standard works (see *ibid*, pp. 1-2): E. M. Edwards, *Music Education for the Deaf* (Maine, USA: n.p., 1974); Clive Robbins and Carol Robbins, *Music for the Hearing-Impaired: A Resource Manual and Curriculum Guide* (St Louis: n.p., 1980). See also Joan Dahms Fahey and Lois Birkenshaw, "Bypassing the Ear: The Perception of Music by Feeling and Touch." *Music Educators Journal* 58, no. 8 (1972): 44-49 and 127-128; Paul Gouge, "Music and Profoundly Deaf Students." *British Journal of Music Education* 7, no. 3 (1990): 279-281; Helen Williams, "The Value of Music to the Deaf." *British Journal of Music Education* 6, no. 1 (1989): 81-98. Williams's article is an in-depth analysis of the way in which deaf people perceive music. See also J. D. Hood, "Deafness and Musical Appreciation." In *Music and the Brain: Studies in the Neurology of Music*, Macdonald Critchley and R. A. Hansen (eds.), (London: William Heinemann Medical Books, 1977); Peter Salt, "Feel the Rhythm." Article in *The Guardian* newspaper, 27th April, 1982, p. 13.

<sup>277</sup> Simon Frith, "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music." In *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (eds.), (1987) (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), p. 142.

<sup>278</sup> See Paul Griffiths, *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), p. 191.

reality'<sup>279</sup> is presented in the Old Testament chiefly in auditory terms. 'Biblical writings emphasize the linguistic sound event as a root metaphor for God's self-revelation and human response to that revelation. Narratives of divine manifestations in the Old Testament privilege auditory over visual, tactile, oral, or olfactory imagery'.<sup>280</sup> Thus, for the inspired writers, through the sound of His *dabar* 'God brings the created order into being (Gen 1: 3; 6, 9, 11, 20, 24, 26)'.<sup>281</sup>

It was shown in Chapter 6, Section I that imagination is the human power which opens up a future. Spontaneity was there demonstrated also to be the intensest expression of the imagination. Combining these principles, it seems that the power to imagine that a future will arise is vested ultimately in our capacity for spontaneous imaginary. Here imagination is most purely and intensively itself in ecstatic forward projection; here and only here, imagination moves to break free of its past, and envelop itself in futurity. In spontaneity, the human person comes closest to engaging pure futurity at the level of experience, the rush of the future sweeping through him or her.<sup>282</sup> Only through the capacity for deploying imagination spontaneously could humans ever have first known future as future in a distinctive sense, and in the practice of spontaneous imagination the human person continues to engage futurity with a unique intensity. It might be said that if imagination is in some sense also a creative act, as has been suggested earlier, spontaneity, as a concentration of the

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<sup>279</sup> Joncas, "Liturgy and Music," p. 316.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid, p. 317.

<sup>282</sup> Is it possible that the unique exhilaration and euphoria which can accompany spontaneous behaviour represent a heightened appropriation in existential, pre-reflective awareness of the futurally projective nature of the self? Thus, in the excitement of spontaneity, I am in some sense *brought back to myself* as one fundamentally defined by futural projection. Slang paraphrases this intuition by means of the idea that it sometimes benefits people to "have a fling." This phrase usually implies some sort of interior spontaneous abandonment to a possibility, and then its exterior implementation in action. The result of a "fling" is perceived to be a certain release of spirit and lifting of inhibitions, resulting, it may be surmised, from an intensified projection of the self into futurity and reinforcement at the level of subliminal consciousness of a fundamental aspect of human authenticity, futural projection. In such spontaneity, a person re-authenticates himself as a futural projector, and this is felt.

imagination, also correspondingly creates with a privileged intensity. Spontaneity in this sense may be said not only ultimately to disclose the future in a special way, but also to create it. (Kant of course happens to concur more or less with this position, since, for him, it is spontaneity at an unconscious level, which synthesises the manifold of sense and creates the world into which human life futurally opens out.)

Grace builds on nature, including this natural imagination whose apogee is spontaneity. It may therefore be presumed that the eschatological future (heaven) created by graced imagination or faith, towards which the human person is supernaturally projected, is created with special intensity by graced imaginative spontaneity in particular, the spiritually-oriented spontaneity of the believer.<sup>283</sup> Given, first, that spontaneity creates a natural future for man, and given, secondly, that musical and temporal experience are essentially connected, it must be the musical spontaneous imaginary which creates the natural future of man. This of course implies a reference to improvisation. In musical improvisation, performers ‘are spontaneously creating their material as it is performed.’<sup>284</sup> Where such musicians are Christian musicians, people with faith operating out of the enlarged horizon of graced

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<sup>283</sup> Given that constant spontaneous graced futural projection is essentially the same thing as conscientious Christian life taken *in toto*, the latter might be said to be a concatenation of spontaneous, eschatologically-oriented decisions large and small. Spontaneous, eschatologically-oriented Christian decisions are indeed sensed by certain mainstream spiritual writers to possess a special spiritual potency in the creative realisation of the Christian eschatological economy, in a manner which parallels and helps to substantiate the present thesis that Christian spontaneity creates the future. Such self-abandonment teaching may be found in Bossuet, A. Piny, J. P. de Caussade, J. N. Grou, H. Ramière, C. L. Gay, V. Lehodey and St Thérèse of Lisieux. See K. Kavanaugh, “Self-Abandonment, Spiritual.” In *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol 8, McDonald (ed.-in-chief), p. 60. Caussade writes: ‘Ah, would that you knew the gift of God, the reward and the merit and the power and the peace, the blessed assurances of salvation that are hidden in this abandonment . . . [T]here is no more certain path to salvation than that which leads through complete and perfect self-abandonment.’ P. J. de Caussade, “Letter IV. To Sister Charlotte-Elizabeth Bourcier de Monthueux.” (1755) In *Spiritual Letters on the Practice of Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence*, Book 3 *Obstacles to Self-Abandonment* (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1948), p. 122. Caussade’s statement seems compatible with the idea that, when a person responds, by virtuous living, to graced spontaneous imagination from moment to moment, the Christian eschatological goal is more intensively created by that person. Such a goal is brought into existence for that person especially in view of his or her graced imaginative spontaneity, for ‘there is no more certain path to salvation’. This parallels the present thesis. [Note: there seems to be inconsistency in sources regarding Caussade’s initials, whether P. J. or J. P.]

<sup>284</sup> Sawyer, “Improvisation,” p. 31.

spontaneous imagination, they correspondingly create the future of the Christian community including the enlarged future defined by the heavenly goal. The creation of a Christian future by musical improvisation should not, of course, be confused with that future's creation through graced spontaneous projection in good works and moral living. Musical improvisation is the form of futural projection with which natural humans already find themselves endowed as linguistico-musical creatures, and it becomes in this capacity the inevitable "always-already" temporal foundation of graced existence, graced temporality and graced futurity also. It belongs to a founding order of existential projection, and although the practice of Christian musical improvisation creates the future, it is not yet a morally virtuous form of spontaneity as such. It is simply a graced expression of the musical spontaneity by which natural imagination projects all human existence futurally in the first instance (Chapter 6, Section I). Morality is practised by creatures who *already* exist: musical improvisation is existence itself. Musical improvisation is only the prerequisite of subsequent aspects of graced, futurally projected existence, just as of subsequent aspects of natural existence, though clearly an improviser has the additional possibility of bringing virtuous intentions into the activity of improvising.

To express more concretely this idea of the musical nature of all human time, whether of nature or grace: since the time of the creation of mankind, the possibility of the music of spontaneous speech, of babbling, of singing or other forms of musical production, such as humming and whistling, has been continuous, in the sense that somewhere on earth such sounds are able to be, and indeed are made. It is likely that at no moment is music in one at least of these senses ever absent from the human scene nor has ever been absent. If this state of affairs ever ceased to be the case, man's future would cease to arise. This is what is implied by the claim being made

here that music creates the future. It might be reasonable to reply that, if there were no music in the world, that is to say, no singing, humming, infantile babbling, nor indeed speaking, then this could only be because there were no people, since people universally, defined as musico-linguistic creatures, employ at least some of these sounds. This reply is not an effective objection, however, but is rather responsive to precisely the point being proposed, for this point is that music is the place where Being speaks in *Dasein*. As musico-linguistic creatures, where there are humans there is music, and where there is no music, the logical antecedent is that there are no humans. Humans, *qua* existing, project and sustain their own futurity in virtue of being musical creatures. ‘For Heidegger . . . Dasein is neither in time nor timeless but, as thrown-projection, human Being is fundamentally temporal.’<sup>285</sup> Such human ‘thrown-projection’ into a future seems inseparable from human spontaneity. Music is inseparable from human temporality. Therefore musical spontaneity/improvisation in some form creates all forms of the future: it is where every human gives himself his time. For humans, temporality is conjoint with improvisatory musicality, including prosodic musicality.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus, “Human Temporality.” In *The Study of Time II: Proceedings of the Second Conference of the International Society for the Study of Time, Lake Yamanaka, Japan*, J. T. Fraser and N. Lawrence (eds.), (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1975), p. 157.

<sup>286</sup> Benjamin Lee Whorf claimed erroneously to have identified a race of people, the Hopi, who had no word for, or even experience of time as generally understood. He wrote: ‘I find it gratuitous to assume that a Hopi who knows only the Hopi language and the cultural ideas of his own society has the same notions . . . of time and space that we have, and that are generally assumed to be universal. In particular, he has no general notion or intuition of TIME as a smooth flowing continuum in which everything in the universe proceeds at an equal rate, out of a past, through a present, into a future.’ Benjamin Lee Whorf, posthumously publ. (no documentation). Cited in *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, John B. Carroll (ed.), (Boston: Technology Press of M. I. T., 1956), p. 57. Cited in Brown, *Human Universals*, pp. 27-28. ‘[I]n other places Whorf took a different position: not that the Hopi had no sense of time as we . . . might understand it but that the Hopi conception of time was very different from ours.’ Brown, *ibid*, p. 28. However in 1970, Ekkehart Malotki studied the Hopi again and provides over six hundred pages of Hopi temporal metaphors. See *ibid*, p. 29. Reference to Ekkehart Malotki, *Hopi Time: A Linguistic Analysis of the Temporal Concepts in the Hopi Language* (Berlin: Mouton, 1983), esp. p. 529. For a discussion of Whorf’s errors, line of intellectual descent and scholarly motives, see Brown, *ibid*, pp. 30-31. Linguists have ‘given Whorf’s analysis of Hopi a ‘decent burial’.’ *Ibid*, p. 31. Reference to Einar Haugen, “Linguistic Relativity: Myths and Methods.” In *Language and Thought: Anthropological Issues*, William C. McCormack and Stephen A. Wurm (eds.), (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), p. 12.



This idea that musical improvisation furnishes man with his time may be expressed in another way. Futurity in the form experienced by humans exists in this way solely for humans. Thus, ‘man exists in the . . . sense that among all the beings that may be observed on earth he ‘stands out’ as the only one that not only *is* but takes over its being in awareness of who or what it is and of who or what it may become’.<sup>287</sup> This experience of futurity is unique to humans. Defining our futurity as the ability to ‘take over’ our being in awareness of ‘who or what we may become’ is a way of identifying this futurity with freedom. Spontaneity is how freedom is fully expressed. Thus awareness of a futurity, and awareness of a capacity for spontaneity, are co-inherent awarenesses for the human person. Through musical improvisation, including prosody, humans construct the future in the form of specifically human freedom. The primordial association widely made by *homo sapiens* between music and time (Chapter 5, Section V) in primitive culture where music is, of course, improvisatory, may be evidence of preconceptual human awareness of improvisatory music’s role in humanising the future as freedom, that is, in terms of choice and possibility.<sup>288</sup>

If this primordial association exists for humans, then clearly musical improvisation in liturgy will be very important. Liturgy has been understood in Christian tradition as the privileged site of the temporal coming-into-being of the human person, in all his or her powers of choice, through grace, as he or she imagines and creates his or her heavenly destiny through the creative imagination which is faith. Christian eschatology, the most expansive and comprehensive mode of futurity of all, appears, no less than the natural future, to depend first on the production of human music and prosody. This is why music occupies an important role in liturgy, the pre-eminent site

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<sup>287</sup> Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, p. 69.

<sup>288</sup> Music’s production of the future may account for Beveridge’s conviction that ‘music is rather similar, emotionally, to the enjoyment of creative mental activity, and suitable music induces the right mood for productive thought.’ Beveridge, *Scientific Investigation*, p. 76.

where faith makes a Christian future arise. The fact that music has always been known as the pre-eminent liturgical art-form assumes a new significance once it is seen that music first creates the future into which Christian life decisions are subsequently poured. The significance of liturgical singing in tongues also emerges more fully in this existential analysis of improvised music. Singing in tongues sets forth graced futurity as an arena of choice. Assuming human speculation on the subject is even fitting, this may be why improvisatory music has been raised in the wisdom of God to the status of a charism of singing in tongues. It was seen above (Chapter 6, Section II) that, on the natural level, musical spontaneous imagination is already where projection-as-hope most intensively arises in *Dasein*. Consequently, the liturgical hoper is fundamentally a musical spontaneous imaginer or improviser. In liturgy, where hope is by definition the pre-eminent disposition, musical improvisation not merely expresses, but - it would appear now - actually first opens up the possibility of the graced destiny for which Christians hope, as a graced corollary of the fact that it already opens up the natural future for humans. This is not somehow to put forward the curious proposals that Christians have nothing more to do than produce sounds, or that the Christian heavenly destiny would fail of realisation if humans “stopped” improvising music. It is to assert rather that humans *qua* human, whether in prosody or music more widely, *cannot* stop improvising, and that it is in this capacity as musical improvisers at the level of their fundamental being and identity that, at a primary existential level, humans first bring about the possibility of their heavenly future, as of their natural future. All other aspects of graced futural projection, whether in moral acts or other creativeness, implicitly extrapolate from this primary stratum of musical human identity.

Current theories from the natural sciences may be advanced in support of a version of the view proposed here that spontaneity, coupled with sound, creates the future. The history of Western physics has been dominated by the mechanics of Newton, Einstein and quantum theory, which all exhibit time-symmetry, that is, the property that time could theoretically move both forward and backward. ‘One of the deep questions in contemporary science is why time moves only forward. Ilya Prigogine, 1977 Nobel Prize winner in chemistry, and co-author Isabelle Stengers have argued that intersecting causal chains, in addition to creating chance, give time its arrow.’<sup>289</sup> The same writer continues: ‘[W]hen time runs forward chance overwhelms operation . . . if time were to run backward, operation would have to overwhelm chance. Time’s one way directionality thus affirms the predominance of chance over operation.’<sup>290</sup> As Alvin Toffler notes, ‘time makes its appearance with randomness.’<sup>291</sup> In words of another commentator on this theory, ‘[i]t is perhaps not too far-fetched to say that the universe improvises.’<sup>292</sup> Here is a theory from the natural sciences according to which the arising of a future in the physical world is closely linked to chance activity. This theory can be extended upward to humans. When chance activity takes human form, this form is spontaneous imaginative activity and, for humans also, by implication, ‘intersecting causal chains . . . create chance,’ in the sense that people’s free spontaneous decisions always consist of possibilities nested within and prompted by circumstances, and thus partially created by them. If the creation of a Christian eschatological future is by means of graced imaginative spontaneity, as has been advanced, such spontaneity appears, from the foregoing

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<sup>289</sup> N. Catherine Hayles, “Chance Operations: Cagean Paradox and Contemporary Science.” In *John Cage: Composed in America*, Perloff and Junkerman (eds.), p. 232.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233. For an exposition of this theory see Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos: Man’s New Dialogue with Nature* (London: Bantam, 1984).

<sup>291</sup> Alvin Toffler, “Foreword: Science and Change.” In Prigogine and Stengers, *ibid.* p. xx.

<sup>292</sup> Frost and Yarrow, *Improvisation in Drama*, p. 180.

scientific theories, to be founded not merely upon a spontaneous imaginative creativity of the future already rooted in human nature but, more deeply still, on a link between chance and the arising of futurity exhibited by the whole physical order below man. A vision of God's creation emerges from these proposals in which at every level - physical nature, human nature and supernature - chance and spontaneity urge it into the future. Echoing Bergson's thinking: 'The creative freedom of the cosmos finds its self-awareness in the experience of human freedom.'<sup>293</sup>

In a recent scientific proposal, this cosmic creativity of chance has additionally been associated with sound. It is suggested that 'the material world could be created out of nothing but noise.'<sup>294</sup> For Reginald Cahill and Christopher Klinger, recalling what has already been said, 'space and time and all the objects around us are no more than the froth on a deep sea of randomness,'<sup>295</sup> and for Gregory Chaitin, 'randomness is at the very heart of pure mathematics.'<sup>296</sup> The further link between chance, creativity and, now, sound is then presented as follows:

Leibniz believed that reality was built from things he called monads, which owed their existence solely to their relations with each other. This picture languished in the backwaters of science because it was hugely difficult to turn into a recipe for calculating things, unlike Newton's mechanics. But Cahill and Klinger have found a way to do it. Like Leibniz's monads, their 'pseudo-objects' have no intrinsic existence - they are defined only by how strongly they connect with each other, and ultimately they disappear from the model. They are mere scaffolding.

The recipe is simple: take some pseudo-objects, add a little randomness and let the whole mix evolve inside a computer. With pseudo-objects numbered 1, 2, 3, and so on, you can define some numbers to represent the strength of the connection between each pair of pseudo-objects:  $B_{12}$  is the strength of the connection between 1 and 2;  $B_{13}$  the connection between 1 and 3; and so on. They form a two-dimensional grid of numbers - a matrix.

The physicists start by filling their matrix with numbers that are very close to zero. Then they run it repeatedly through a matrix equation which adds random noise and a second, non-linear term involving the inverse of the original matrix. The randomness means that most truths or predictions of this model have no cause - the physical version of Chaitin's mathematical result. This matrix equation is largely the child of educated guesswork, but there are good precedents for that. In 1932, for example, Paul Dirac guessed at a matrix equation for how electrons behave, and ended up predicting the existence of antimatter.

When the matrix goes through the wringer again and again, most of the elements remain close to zero, but some numbers suddenly become large. 'Structures start forming,' says Cahill . . . So something like our space assembles itself out of complete randomness.<sup>297</sup>

<sup>293</sup> Safranski, *Heidegger*, p. 53.

<sup>294</sup> Marcus Chown, "Random Reality." *New Scientist* 2227 (26th February, 2000): 24-28; p. 24.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid*, p. 26.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 26-27.

If, as this extract suggests, sonic chance in nature below man is creative in its own order of being, then perhaps human sonic spontaneity is creative in *its* own order of being also.

It may be noticed by way of general interest (it is not central to the argument though it sheds light on it from a different angle) that a link between randomness, improvisation and creativity is found also at the level of human social creativity. It is through improvisation that the forward movement of social change often comes about. For Turner, society is a ‘process punctuated by performances of various kinds . . . [S]uch genres as ritual, ceremony, carnival, festival, game, spectacle, parade, and sports event may constitute . . . a set of intersecting metalanguages . . . [T]he group tries to understand itself in order to change itself.’<sup>298</sup> Ritual generally accompanies transitions from one cosmic or social situation to another<sup>299</sup> and for Turner, as was seen, ritual nearly always includes a spontaneous dimension. Likewise in the liminal “rites of passage” which effect an individual’s change from one social status to another, there may often be ‘subversive and ludic (or playful) events.’<sup>300</sup> ‘[W]hat frequently typifies the liminality of initiation ritual in societies [is that] . . . the bizarre becomes the normal . . . elements customarily bound together in certain combinations [are subject to] . . . scrambling and recombining in monstrous, fantastic and unnatural shapes’.<sup>301</sup> It is because these spontaneous aspects of ritual are unrepeatable, so rendering the rite irreversible, that ‘their sequence is no illusion - the unidirectional movement is transformative.’<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Turner, *Ritual to Theatre*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>299</sup> See Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (1908) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960).

<sup>300</sup> Turner, *Ritual to Theatre*, p. 27.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid*, p. 42.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid*, p. 80.

Just as the argument presented so far has sought to grant a constitutive role to spontaneity of imagining, and especially of musical imagining, in giving rise to the future, for Berdyaev, the highest imaginative creativity is that which is spontaneous, ‘the first flight of inspiration.’ Perhaps Berdyaev is echoing a Kantian understanding of spontaneity. For Berdyaev, it is ‘precisely Kant who makes existential metaphysics a possibility.’<sup>303</sup> Whether or not a Kantian dependency is emphasised, this highlighting of spontaneous aspects of the imaginative parallels the perspectives of the present thesis. Berdyaev writes:

It may be said, paradoxical as it seems at first sight, that development and unfolding is the deadly enemy of creativeness and leads to its cooling down and drying up at the source. The highest point reached by creativeness is not the unfolding of results but the first flight of inspiration, its birth and virginal youth and not its final achievement. Development, unfolding, improvement, completion mean deterioration of creativeness, the cooling down of the creative fire, decay and old age . . . The essence of development and evolution is that it conceals first-hand intuitions and first origins of human feelings and ideas . . . This happens to every human feeling and idea. Development destroys creative youth, virginity and originality. That which was born in the free creative act is unrecognizable in its developed form.<sup>304</sup>

Berdyaev’s personal creativity followed such a pattern: ‘The thoughts to which I attach greatest importance came to me like flashes of lightning, like instantaneous illuminations. When I begin to write I am sometimes carried away to the point of dizziness. My thought flows so fast that I hardly have time to write it down.’<sup>305</sup> From the field of psychology, in a twofold analysis not unlike Berdyaev’s, Abraham Maslow has made a distinction between primary and secondary creativeness. The primary, improvisational phase, is characterised by high interest or excitement, the secondary by discipline and hard work and a moderately high level of interest.<sup>306</sup> Additionally, according to Maslow, for human nature, primary creativeness seems central because more prevalent: ‘Many more people are capable of primary creativeness . . . than of

<sup>303</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1952), p. 9.

<sup>304</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man* (1931) (London: Geoffrey Bles, The Centenary Press, 1937), pp. 181-182.

<sup>305</sup> Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, p. 219.

<sup>306</sup> See Izard, *Psychology of Emotions*, pp. 121-122. Reference to Abraham H. Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1971) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), n.p. See, for example, Maslow: *ibid*, p. 61.

primary plus secondary creativeness.’<sup>307</sup> It may be concluded from this that the priority of the spontaneous in the sphere of human creativity has two aspects. Spontaneous imagination appears not only as the pinnacle of imaginative activity (Berdyaev), but, since anybody can be spontaneous, as creative imagination’s most widespread manifestation (Maslow).

For Berdyaev, ‘[t]rue creativeness is theurgy, God-activity, activity together with God.’<sup>308</sup> ‘Creativity will continue creation; it will reveal the resemblance of human nature to the Creator.’<sup>309</sup> Berdyaev’s ideas develop here the general Christian motif already discussed above, of graced imagination as a creative activity and a bringing about of man’s eschatological destiny. Berdyaev seems to claim this creative power especially on behalf of spontaneity. In the long citation from Berdyaev above, the fuller creativity is spontaneous imagination, ‘virginal,’ consisting of ‘first-hand intuitions and first origins of human feelings.’ Elsewhere he writes: ‘*Through Christ, man becomes a participant in the nature of the Holy Trinity, for the second hypostasis of the Holy Trinity is Absolute Man . . . [man becomes] a mediator between God and the cosmos.*’<sup>310</sup> ‘*The world is being created not only in God the Father but in God the Son.* Christology is the doctrine of continuing creation. And creation may be completed only in the Spirit, only in man’s creativity in the Spirit.’<sup>311</sup> Berdyaev speaks of a ‘relationship between the mystery of creativeness and the mystery of redemption.’<sup>312</sup> As was seen, the emphasis here seems to be on creativeness which is spontaneous.

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<sup>307</sup> Izard, *ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> Berdyaev, *Creative Act*, p. 126.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

Berdyaev also implies that man's eschatological goal comes about through artistic creativity: 'Theurgy is art creating another world, another being, another life'.<sup>313</sup> 'The theurge, working together with God, creates the cosmos; creates beauty as being.'<sup>314</sup> For Berdyaev, therefore, artistic imagination, and especially, it would seem from the longer citation above, spontaneous, 'virginal' imagination, actually creates futurity as co-agent with God. Such an argument as this leads further in the direction of the thought being proposed here concerning musical creativity, especially in spontaneous music, which clearly corresponds in music to the "virginal" dimension of art highlighted by Berdyaev. Of music Berdyaev indeed wrote: 'The supreme moments of my life are connected with an interest in music.'<sup>315</sup> 'It is not so much that I plunge into the given music, as that I experience a creative upsurge of my being.'<sup>316</sup> Berdyaev's lack of theoretical musical expertise may explain why he does not discuss his profound experience of music at length, as these accolades suggest he might otherwise have done: 'I know little if anything about music. I have a bad ear and a poor musical memory, and the shades and subtleties of musical performance escape me.'<sup>317</sup> However, although Berdyaev nowhere specifically identifies musical spontaneous imagination in particular among the arts, or attributes to it any explicit significance, it might appear in consequence of his thought to be man's primordial creative act.

For Berdyaev, the spontaneous artist actually contributes to the transformation of the world and to the realisation of the Kingdom of God. In addition, Berdyaev is known to have preferred Romanticism to Classicism in art, since for him, Classicism

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid, p. 247.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid, p. 249.

<sup>315</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev, no documentation. Cited in Donald A. Lowrie, *Rebellious Prophet: A Life of Nicholai Berdyaev* (London: Gollancz, 1960), p. 194.

<sup>316</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev, *Self-Knowledge: An Essay in Philosophical Autobiography* (n.p.: n.p., 1949), p. 350. Cited in Lowrie, *ibid*.

<sup>317</sup> Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, p. 313. [*Dream and Reality* is a translation of *Self-Knowledge*, *ibid*.]



seeks the earthly perfection of the work of art as form,<sup>318</sup> while Romanticism suggests a longing for the transfinite. Berdyaev speaks approvingly of Romanticism's 'pervading sense of the insufficiency of all achievement within the finite'.<sup>319</sup> Berdyaev's preference for 'insufficiency' over Classicism may in fact be figured as paralleling the distinction between the open-ended process of improvisation with its uncertain closure, and the 'perfection' of the 'classical' autonomous work, whose limits are predetermined and hence, he might claim, speak of a spurious perfection in this limited world.

For Berdyaev, the (implicitly virginal and spontaneous) artistic creation of Being is a product of creative freedom ('Creativity will continue creation'), and this leads him to the more searching question of whether '[from] the thoroughgoing ontological point of view freedom is regarded as subordinate to being,<sup>320</sup> and, he asks, '[d]oes precedence belong to being over freedom or to freedom over being? Does not the final mystery of being lie in the fact that freedom is more primary than it and precedes it?'<sup>321</sup> For freedom arises from the human personality and thus '*[p]ersonality is more primary than being . . . Being is a product of abstract thought.*'<sup>322</sup> Freedom 'proceeds from the abyss which preceded being . . . the act of freedom is primordial and completely irrational.'<sup>323</sup> For Berdyaev, this freedom is linked to creativity, for '[c]reativity is the mystery of freedom'.<sup>324</sup> This freedom is found for Berdyaev in spontaneous artistic creativity, as was seen, and '[c]reativity . . . is not an 'insertion' in the finite, not a mastery over the medium, or the creative product itself: rather it is a

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<sup>318</sup> See Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, pp. 30; 214.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>320</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev, *Truth and Revelation* (London: Geoffrey Bles, The Centenary Press, 1953), p. 68.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>322</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom* (1939) (London: Geoffrey Bles, The Centenary Press, 1943), p. 81.

<sup>323</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev, no documentation. Cited in Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, p. 179.

<sup>324</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev, no documentation. Cited in Macquarrie, *ibid.*, p. 180.

flight into the infinite; not an activity which objectifies in the finite but one which transcends the finite towards the infinite. The creative act signifies an *ek-stasis*, a breaking through to eternity.<sup>325</sup> It is indeed where man co-creates eschatologically with God. This has parallels with the present thesis, which presents ‘virginal’ and spontaneous improvisatory music as the place at which the future rises up for musico-linguistic human creatures, improvisatory music, produced by man, actually *creating* Being. Following these hints in Berdyaev, musical exploration might appear as the kernel of the freedom which creates and is prior to Being, freedom in this musical form being demonstrated from very infancy in babbling and spontaneous song, identified in Chapter 5, Section III as the progenitors of language, artistic sensibility and the discovery of time.

Additional perspectives on the priority of freedom over Being may be found in the thought of Paul Ricoeur. For Ricoeur, through a historical process of action and interaction, the self is continuously being transformed. We grasp the self in connection with its activity. Consequently action is no longer said to follow from the being of the self (*agere sequitur esse*), but the constitution of the being of the self is said to arise out of action (*esse sequitur agere*).<sup>326</sup> Because action is central in the constitution of the self, and because action is brought to full view only in narrative, ultimately the self comes into view only through the narratives which are needed to describe its actions. It is thus mediated through narrativity. ‘[T]he meaning of human existence is itself narrative.’<sup>327</sup> Ricoeur’s thought was linked above (Chapter 5, Section V) to musical improvisation *via* his understanding of narrativity which, it was suggested, made of musical improvisation a form of “mood narration” indispensable

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<sup>325</sup> Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, p. 209.

<sup>326</sup> See Dermot A. Lane, “The Self under Pressure: Theological Reflections.” *Doctrine and Life* 49, no. 5 (May/June 1999): 267-275; pp. 270-271. References to Paul Ricoeur, *One Self as Another* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1992).

<sup>327</sup> Ricoeur. In Kearney, *Dialogues*, p. 17.

to the human person who is always constituted by narrative, and for whom, additionally, in Heidegger's words above, 'understanding always has its mood.'<sup>328</sup> As well as verbal narrative, therefore, the mood narrative of improvised music-making mediates the existence of the self, musical freedom prior to Being.

A further perspective on this priority of freedom and action may be found in Kenneth Barnes. Barnes notices that thinking presupposes continuity of experience, that is, action:

[C]ontrary to the general tendency of intellectual assumption since Plato, *action* is our primary experience. Thought is secondary; it is the negative or reflective aspect of action; it is the result of the difficulty or frustration of action. This philosophical dictum is implied in the common statement 'I stop to think.' It is when we think, or describe an event, that we fill in the gaps between a series of otherwise disconnected sense-impressions with an imagined continuity.<sup>329</sup>

Barnes gives the example of looking at a matchbox, turning away, and then looking back and noticing it again. How do we know the matchbox is the same one? Rationally, we cannot: the sense impressions are disconnected. 'It seems to me that we fill in the interval with *imagined* or assumed continuity in time'.<sup>330</sup> The person seeing the "second" matchbox infers its identity with the "first" matchbox because he or she intuits that the continuing existence of the one matchbox is dependent on continuing time, not on the matchbox's being perceived by him or her continuously. However, time is experienced by humans only through their experience of action. (Barnes perhaps follows Einstein here: time exists because events take place. A similar point was made above in Chapter 5, Section III, in connection with the baby's discovery of time through the action of breathing.)<sup>331</sup> The "knowledge" that the "two" matchboxes are really one is thus effectively dependent on the underlying fact of human action, the primordial place where time is disclosed. It is the overall

<sup>328</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 31, p. 182.

<sup>329</sup> Barnes, *Creative Imagination*, p. 9.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> 'We gain our experience, our sensation of time, through movement'. Sessions, *Musical Experience*, p. 15.

propensity of humans for action that ultimately uncovers the fact that the “two” matchboxes are really one. Being (here, the fact that the “two” matchboxes are really one) has been disclosed through action rather than thought. Perhaps Barnes echoes Gilbert Ryle, and the idea that actions are ‘*nonverbal forms of thinking and knowing in and of themselves*’<sup>332</sup> (Chapter 2, Section I).

Underlying Berdyaev’s theurgic view of art as a creative act, there lies a particular theology of the Holy Spirit. Indeed as he said above: ‘*The world is being created not only in God the Father but in God the Son*. Christology is the doctrine of continuing creation. And creation may be completed only in the Spirit, only in man’s creativity in the Spirit.’<sup>333</sup> Patrick Sherry identifies a recognised link in theology between the Holy Spirit and aesthetics<sup>334</sup> but he adds that, despite a burgeoning of books on the Holy Spirit since around 1970, not much attention has been given to this link. Both the theology of the Holy Spirit, and the theology of beauty are underdeveloped areas, he notes, and any interaction between these areas is even less explored by Western theology, except insofar as the Spirit is acknowledged to be linked to Creation in Genesis.<sup>335</sup> Sherry points out that creativity is precisely the link between the Holy Spirit and aesthetics, God’s creativity in the Holy Spirit, and man’s creativity in art.<sup>336</sup> He argues that a ‘Trinitarian theology of Creation’<sup>337</sup> (one which looks at the roles of each Person in Creation) is relatively undeveloped, and that this lack underpins the failure to develop theologically the link between the Holy Spirit and beauty, with its possible corollary, the creative or theurgic nature of artistic beauty where the latter

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<sup>332</sup> Elliott, *Music Matters*, p. 55.

<sup>333</sup> Berdyaev, *Creative Act*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>334</sup> See Patrick Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 20.

<sup>335</sup> See *ibid.* References to Wolfhart Pannenberg, for instance in “The Doctrine of the Spirit and the Task of a Theology of Nature.” *Theology* 75 (1972): 8-21; Kilian McDonnell, “The Determinative Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.” *Theology Today* 39 (1982): 142-161.

<sup>336</sup> See Sherry, *ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

shares in and continues the Spirit's creative work. Some theologians undoubtedly do recognise the creativity of the human person, including artistic creativity, as a sharing in God's creativity. Conceivably, although God does not supplant the human spirit by the divine, God uses human creativity as a secondary cause in His own creativity, gives some of His creativity to man, and acts in and through human creativity.<sup>338</sup>

Leonide Ouspensky links the creation of beauty with the creativity of the Holy Spirit, and says that 'true beauty is the radiance of the Holy Spirit, the holiness of and the participation in the life of the world to come.'<sup>339</sup> For Faricy: 'The Spirit that inspires art is the eschatological Spirit, the Holy Spirit who breaks through into the present from God's promised future. The Kingdom of God is to come, and yet it is here already, breaking in on us through the Holy Spirit as the pledge of future glory, and making all things new now. The Holy Spirit renews us toward the future. Partly, the Spirit renews through inspired art.'<sup>340</sup> It is people who produce art. Thus, it is implied, the Holy Spirit renews man toward the future partly by raising up the artist as co-creator and theurge, to share His work.

'We can have no proper account of art until we know how art fits into some fuller picture of the mind, into an account of its powers of imagination, thought and expression and of their origins and developments.'<sup>341</sup> Any such 'fuller picture' must presumably be based in artistic experience at its fundamental root in the development of the person. It was suggested in Chapter 5 that musical exploration is the earliest infant aesthetic impulse, and thus the fountainhead of all artistic consciousness. Ever

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<sup>338</sup> See *ibid*, p. 113. References to Roger Hazelton, *Ascending Flame, Descending Dove: An Essay on Creative Transcendence* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1975), pp. 117f; Peter D. Ashton, "The Holy Spirit and the Gifts of Art." *Theological Renewal* 21 (July 1982): 12-13; Second Vatican Council, *The Church in the Modern World*, section 50; Victor Hugo, *Philosophie* 1, 265, cited in Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present: A Short History* (Alabama: n.p., 1966). p. 262; also Hegel, no documentation.

<sup>339</sup> Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, p. 190.

<sup>340</sup> Robert Faricy, "Art as a Charism in the Church." *Thought* 57, no. 224 "Faith and Imagination Issue" (March 1982): 94-99; p. 98.

<sup>341</sup> Lyas, *Aesthetics*, p. 221.

after through the life of the person, the pattern has now been laid down: the primordial and universal human art is inescapably that of musical exploration. If a theology of theurgic art is valid at all, it is especially valid here, for this is the art most deeply embedded in, and closest to the human person. Rooted ultimately in sonic memories of the womb with its musical ambience, and begun at the mother's breast, music of the improvisatory kind is linked to personal memories more primordial than any expressions of visual, tactile or plastic arts. Musical exploration in infancy is also the aesthetic impulse which enables the development of the power of speech itself, which in turn defines the human person (Chapter 5, Section III). This perspective confirms the supreme importance of musical and prosodic improvisation of all kinds for the human person, including in the liturgy, the place where art and the person are most fully consecrated to their missions.

#### *VIII Charles Tournemire: Improviser and Theurge?*

If musical improvisation, as the quintessential artistic self-expression of man, possesses such significance in liturgy, perhaps divine assistance will sometimes be granted to musical improvisers in the accomplishment of their awesome liturgical vocation. There may be some evidence for this in the case of Tournemire, in his capacity as organist of Ste Clotilde in Paris. Speaking of his improvisatory experience in liturgy, he wrote:

Any 'preparation' is contrary to this special art-form . . . In the man endowed with this faculty, as soon as the sensibility is awakened . . . the ordering mechanism is stated, the constructive element is developed, *as the piece proceeds*, smoothly, in a manner at once logical and whimsical, to the point that it *sounds like a written work*, with, furthermore, in the sublime moments, 'flashes' . . . One feels remarkably that one is listening to somebody else. The subconscious takes over. It seems that one has been visited by an angel of inspiration. These are remarkable and rare moments. Could one ask more from heavenly providence? . . . [E]xcept at times when *the unconscious substitutes itself into the conscious*, it is almost impossible to sustain the same purity of counterpoint as in works which have taken a long time to mature and come to life.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Tournemire, *Franck*, pp. 49-50.

Writing in another place he speaks of the improviser being ‘upheld by a mysterious force which *makes him discover* beautiful phrases, and points of emphasis’.<sup>343</sup> Tournemire thus sees, in his “flashes” of vision, the way the improvisation is to proceed. He speaks of ‘an illumination which suddenly enlightens the soul.’<sup>344</sup> Moreover, he is claiming for his highest momentary experiences of inspiration, not merely an enhancement of the aesthetic, imaginative aspect of what he is creating, but an enhanced facility in what falls firmly within the sphere of music considered as a rigorous craft, namely the improvisatory construction of counterpoint at the keyboard. It might have been expected that the achievement of contrapuntal structures would be all the harder during the imaginative elation of improvising, and Tournemire’s heightened capacity for counterpoint here would suggest a remarkable and unusual capacity for attending to logical detail in the midst of creative excitement. Just as when humans are animated they are more likely to bump into other people and knock things over, so for the improviser, the more excitement takes over, the more difficult it will normally be to re-impose the rigorous craftsmanship of contrapuntal structure, since an enraptured human mind does not readily adapt itself to the analytical dimension of thinking. Yet Tournemire is claiming that precisely when his imagination *is* most excited, in his “flashes,” when he feels he is ‘listening to somebody else’ - at this point his more rational functions of musicianship are neither lost, nor even held onto with difficulty, but actually seem to perform themselves, as though they too, in some mysterious way, were ultimately under the rule of imagination. It is as though imagination gave from unconscious resources what is normally given by conscious reason, and supplied not simply wider aesthetic possibilities, but also basic contrapuntal structure, in an instantaneous manner.

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<sup>343</sup> Charles Tournemire, *Précis d'exécution, de registration et d'improvisation à l'orgue* (Paris: Max Eschig, 1936), p. 102.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has written of “flow experiences,” in which creative individuals can experience altered states of consciousness where talents and skills are pushed to the limit. ‘Their disciplined, highly trained, carefully-polished skills react quickly, automatically, smoothly, responding with casual decisiveness to every slight movement in the situation. It is as though the skills themselves take over and direct the person involved.’<sup>345</sup> Thus, ‘Tournemire confided that when he improvised he could bring off technical feats which would have demanded a lot of work in a written piece.’<sup>346</sup> In words of Csikszentmihalyi: ‘In the flow state, action follows upon action according to an internal logic that seems to need no conscious intervention by the actor.’<sup>347</sup> Csikszentmihalyi also calls these experiences “optimal.”<sup>348</sup> ‘[O]ptimal experiences frequently include a loss of self-consciousness’,<sup>349</sup> which perhaps accounts for Tournemire’s sensation of ‘listening to somebody else.’ Csikszentmihalyi has himself connected such flow experiences with the process of conventional musical composition. As one ‘outstanding composer’<sup>350</sup> said: ‘You yourself are in an ecstatic state to such a point that you feel as though you almost don’t exist. I’ve experienced this time and time again. My hand seems devoid of myself, and I have nothing to do with what is happening.’<sup>351</sup> In connection with keyboard improvisation, Charles Rosen has noted: ‘It may not be completely true to say that the fingers of the pianist have a reason of their own that reason knows not of, because improvisation is not exactly unconscious, but it is clear that the fingers develop a partially independent logic which

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<sup>345</sup> Greeley, *Religious Imagination*, pp. 11-12. Reference to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, no documentation.

<sup>346</sup> Fauquet, “Charles Tournemire and the Organ,” p. 8.

<sup>347</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety: The Experience of Play in Work and Games* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1975), p. 36.

<sup>348</sup> See Elliott, *Music Matters*, p. 126. References to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990); Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi (eds.), *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988).

<sup>349</sup> Elliott, *ibid*, p. 117.

<sup>350</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*, p. 44.

<sup>351</sup> Unidentified composer. Cited in *ibid*.



is only afterward ratified by the mind.’<sup>352</sup> When Rosen says that ‘improvisation is not exactly unconscious’ he is referring to the overall process, whereas Tournemire’s claim to experience inspiration from the unconscious relates to particular instants within that process, or “flashes.” There is no disagreement between them; indeed, Rosen’s idea of partially autonomous fingers clearly has some parallel with Tournemire’s unconscious, which momentarily substitutes for the conscious. Tournemire’s special contrapuntal facility may also be compared with flow experiences of a chess player:

Many instances of apparently complex problem solving which seem to implement a long-range strategy, as, for example, making a move in chess, may be best understood as direct responses to familiar perceptual gestalts. After years of seeing chess games unfold, a chess grandmaster can, simply by responding to the patterns on the chess board, play master level chess while his deliberate, analytic mind is absorbed in something else.<sup>353</sup>

The chess player makes his moves on the basis of the promptings of a liminal consciousness, and similarly for Tournemire, borrowing words of Archbold, ‘one might well speak of the opening of another sort of liminal space, one perhaps known better to the fingers than to the mind.’<sup>354</sup>

Tournemire’s reference above to angelic inspiration, together with the fact that he is improvising in a liturgical setting, suggest that he discerns his sudden flashes of inspired creativity as not merely on the level of natural phenomena, but as capacities realised in him by a spiritual power. His might appear to be a *graced* flow experience of improvising in the liturgy. Tournemire’s phrase ‘angel of inspiration’ may not simply be effusive usage, or a figure of speech but an attempt to convey his sense of the felt action of God upon him as he improvises. While generally God’s action on humans escapes their experience, nevertheless ‘the whole tradition of Christian

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<sup>352</sup> Rosen, “On Playing the Piano,” p. 52.

<sup>353</sup> Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 93. Racing driver Ayrton Senna said: ‘I suddenly realised I was no longer driving the car consciously. I was kind of driving it by instinct, only I was in a different dimension . . . I was going and going, more and more and more and more . . . It frightened me because I was well beyond my conscious understanding.’ Cited in R. Williams, “Tearing up the Track.” Article in *The Independent on Sunday* newspaper, *Sport* section, 15th November, 1992, p. 27. Cited in Aidan P. Moran, *The Psychology of Concentration in Sport Performers: A Cognitive Analysis* (Hove: Psychology Press, 1996), p. 74.

<sup>354</sup> Archbold, Review of Overduin, p. 478.

discernment presupposes that our experience *can* be recognised as being coloured by the promptings of God's Spirit.'<sup>355</sup> It is suggested here that Tournemire experiences this discernment of divine prompting in his "flashes." This possibly supernatural musical empowerment which arises for Tournemire may have a precedent in the empowerment experienced by groups of worshippers singing in the Spirit, where counterpoints are often produced supernaturally out of the individual vocalisations of the group's members. In singing in the Spirit, harmony and counterpoint are created by the power of the Spirit in raising up the powers of the collective musical imagination. Perhaps it is the same Spirit who raises up Tournemire's mysterious experiences of contrapuntal empowerment while improvising at the organ. Thus, it is implied from Tournemire's experiences, supernatural, musical improvisatory empowerment in liturgy may not be limited to singing in tongues.

The overall implication of this thesis would be that singing in tongues is raised by God to the level of an inspired charism partly in view of the role played by improvised music in creating and sustaining a human futurity. No doubt it is correct to point out that the New Testament nowhere explicitly asserts that this future-creating role is a reason for the existence of an inspired charism of singing in tongues. Yet as Berdyaev says: 'In Holy Scripture we find no revelation concerning man's creativity - not on account of its implied denial of human creativity, but because creativity is a matter for man to reveal. God is silent on this matter and expects man to speak.'<sup>356</sup> Thus, God has not revealed that improvised music creates our future, because, were He to do so, the creation of a future through such music would not be fully humanity's creative act. Berdyaev comments: 'The notion that God has need of man and of man's response to him is, admittedly, an extraordinarily daring notion; yet in its absence the Christian

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<sup>355</sup> Gerard J. Hughes, "Our Human Vocation." In *Commentary on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Walsh (ed.), p. 339.

<sup>356</sup> Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, p. 208.

revelation of God-manhood loses all meaning.<sup>357</sup> If the essential liturgical role of musical improvisation is thus as an opening up, indeed a creation of eschatology, then not only singing in tongues, but every form of musical improvisation in liturgy is presumably worthy to receive some special, supernatural empowerment. This would amount to - one might dare to say, nothing more remarkable than - a supernatural empowerment of the basic liturgical disposition, futural projection in hope itself. Since, in the form of singing in tongues, musical improvisation has already been spiritually empowered by God as a charism, arguably, for humans to co-create the future, why not other forms of musical improvisation, and why not Tournemire's? Both singing in tongues, and Tournemire's improvising, are improvisatory, liturgical music of a kind which bears directly on the opening out of an eschatological dimension. Thus singing in tongues and Tournemire's experience are perhaps in some respects connected, as differing expressions of one form of mystical musicality ordered toward the future.

There is a further similarity to mystical experience found in Tournemire's flashes of inspiration, for in mystical knowing, reason, with its differentiating and analytical properties, is generally pre-empted and the object seized by the understanding, in its varied aspects, in joy, admiration and exhilaration, by the operation of higher spiritual gifts, precisely as a *unity*. W. T. Stace identifies this experience of the oneness of its object as the essence of a wide range of mysticism,<sup>358</sup> and for much Christian mysticism, 'the whole world of ultimate reality is seen as a single whole'.<sup>359</sup> In a similar sense (though a restricted one, for it is not a divine mystery which is being apprehended, but a musical process), it is as an undifferentiated unity of art and craft.

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<sup>357</sup> Ibid, p. 209.

<sup>358</sup> See W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1960), p. 87.

<sup>359</sup> Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), p. 194.

unrestrained musical creativity and the orderly contrapuntal techniques in which that creativity is to be clothed, that Tournemire experiences, in his flashes of vision, the way his improvisation is to proceed. He writes (note his own italics) that the art of musical improvisation is ‘the result of a burning imagination which is creative and spontaneous, which synthesises, in its conceptualisation, the music *in its entirety*’.<sup>360</sup>

Since grace builds on nature, this unifying synthesis, not unpredictably, has its proper natural basis. Thus John Masefield writes of his poetic flow experience (emphasis added): ‘This illumination is an intense experience, and so wonderful that it cannot be described. While it lasts, the momentary problem is merged into a dazzlingly clear perception of the *entire work in all its detail*.’<sup>361</sup> In Tournemire’s case supernatural grace, ‘angelic’ inspiration within the liturgy has now mystically embraced his natural human capacity for flow experience, so that he is enabled to experience his whole improvised musical conception unically and without effort during his “flashes” of illumination, and thus fulfil, with divine assistance, his theurgic vocation as musical improviser. As well as a musical improviser, a preacher suddenly

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<sup>360</sup> Tournemire, *Franck*, p. 51.

<sup>361</sup> Masefield, *So Long to Learn*, p. 240. Masefield’s remark needs to be seen not only as that of a poet but also against the background of his special concern for the cultural revival of the improvisatory dimension of artistic creativity in language. This concern dates from his childhood and deep fears for a decline in his innocent powers as an improviser. Of his early youth he writes: ‘The old faculty of story-telling, that had once filled my mind with happiness, seemed dead within me: it was dark there, where once there had been light. In earlier years, stories had floated up into my mind as from an unfailing spring, and had flowed from it in streams . . . the thing had proceeded joyously, as from a source of joy, there was no trouble, no hesitancy . . . [But now,] [w]hen [my friends] asked me for a yarn, I found my inner fear confirmed; the old faculty was gone. What made the loss worse to me was the feeling that something dark and sinister had come between myself and the old faculty . . . The effect upon myself is hard to describe. In part, it was a sense of loss; in part, a sense of exile; but in part also a sense of having died and gone to hell’. Ibid, pp. 74-75. In later life, ‘deep within me, my seekings after perfection were limited to story-telling . . . What was Flaubert, with his labour and richness of language; what was Pater, with his learning and instinct for felicity, to the tellers of the Laxdale or Njala sagas?’ Ibid, p. 121. ‘Man will re-create the arts, or die . . . Then, or some day perhaps, men will think more of those who have striven to bring delight into the world . . . Story-tellers, then, may be heard, by those who wish, in every city of the land, in rooms built and appointed for the art’. Ibid, p. 237. Against this especially *improvisatory* background in Masefield, parallels between his experience of inspiration as a synthesising or unifying of the artistic elements being employed, and Tournemire’s “flashes” where art and craft similarly coalesce, become particularly apposite, for in both cases reference is to inspiration while improvising. Masefield refers to ‘the important thing in all the arts, the breaking of the tomb, the resurrection of the dead, known as the coming of inspiration.’ Ibid, p. 239.

inspired with improvisatory fluency can have this type of experience, “flashes” of spiritual empowerment, an empowerment or seizure by God of improvising language and the speaking voice, where any prepared text is abandoned in a self-sustaining, or divinely sustained, exhilaration. Thought is linguistic, and here, the preacher’s dawning and possible ideas are already seeking a home in language, unconsciously and inchoately forming into internal words in the head and only a step away from being voiced. God here empowers the preacher’s creativity, in respect of his or her ideas, with an enhanced unification of prelinguistic dawnings, internal and external words, rather as he empowers Tournemire in his “flashes” with enhanced unification of preliminary musical ideas, their creative development in the mind, and final execution as integral art and craft. For Tournemire, ‘*the unconscious substitutes itself into the conscious,*’ (*supra*) and likewise the halting steps of the preacher’s conscious planning are swept away as thought becomes immediate expression, in flow. Of course, the whole thrust of this thesis implies that the preacher is a musical improviser, and thus these two phenomena - in preacher and Tournemire - are essentially the same.<sup>362</sup>

Theurgic creativity does not necessarily take place only in liturgy. However, in Tournemire’s case, liturgy, the place where Christ acts among men transformatively in a unique degree, becomes the site of the fuller realisation of Tournemire’s vocation as musical improviser and theurge. It might therefore be possible to speak of a liturgical perfecting of Tournemire’s gifts. Liturgy is a ritually contextualised perfecting of self, and so liturgical involvement is the earthly climax and goal of the identity of the human person. This idea of the very identity of the human person as found ultimately in ritual involvement resonates with the thought of Ricoeur. Ricoeur observes that,

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<sup>362</sup> The inspiration of both improvising preacher and musician, though here described in the special form they assume in flow experience, share an original threefold character: the mute striving to express inwardly, the expression inwardly, and the expression outwardly. Compare this with Maritain’s threefold analysis of poetic inspiration in Chapter 4, Section IV. The striving to express inwardly resembles Maritain’s ‘music of intuitive pulsions.’

already for human nature, ‘there is no self-understanding which is not *mediated* by signs, symbols and texts’.<sup>363</sup> ‘The presence of the subject to itself, which is the very definition of subjectivity and self-consciousness, is an indirect, *mediated* presence. And thus were it not for its participation in the realm of culture, the subject would not exist as such.’<sup>364</sup> Liturgy expresses this condition in the order of grace. Such plenary expressions of human capacities as those Tournemire exhibits in his inspired improvisations are perhaps to be expected in the liturgical context, for, in the graced ritual involvement, a human person is more fully constituted by God in his or her identity *in via*, which includes finding access to his or her fuller self together with its fuller earthly capacities of imagination and artistic power. Borrowing Masfield’s words on inspiration, Tournemire may be approaching ‘a rare yet perfect functioning of the being.’<sup>365</sup> It is impossible to place limits on what this might imply for a given individual in the liturgy. Moreover, in liturgy, the self finds this fuller identity precisely as embodied. While musical mysticism is sometimes thought of as a passive mysticism of music interiorly perceived, as in Rolle, Tournemire’s is an embodied liturgical mysticism of musical *performance* rather than simply of musical *perception*. It shares this attribute with singing in tongues. Tournemire’s mysticism of creative musical “flashes” is not confined within the mind. It engages with his own performing body, with a musical instrument and, through them, with the exterior manifestation of the liturgy itself. Berdyaev speaks of a ‘white heat of creative ecstasy’<sup>366</sup> which is prior to ‘divisions and differentiations into subject and object’.<sup>367</sup> Here, in

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<sup>363</sup> Ricoeur, “On Interpretation,” p. 191.

<sup>364</sup> Madison, *Hermeneutics of Postmodernity*, p. 93.

<sup>365</sup> Masfield, *So Long to Learn*, p. 240.

<sup>366</sup> Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, p. 220.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*

Tournemire, '[c]ontemplation must not be understood as a state of sheer passivity or receptiveness: it comprises a distinctly active and creative element.'<sup>368</sup>

Relating this finally to the earlier discussion of how improvised music is the place where Being speaks in projection and hope (Chapter 6), it seems that, through the mediation of Tournemire's improvisatory "flashes" in liturgy, God empowers created Being to project itself futurally at the climactic site of liturgy, with a sudden surge of fluency, in its own native tongue, that of musical improvisation. God first raises up the musical, improvisatory presence of Tournemire within the liturgy to mediate the voice of Being in the order of grace. This is because '[o]riginal reality is creative act and freedom, and the bearer of original reality is the person, the subject, spirit, rather than Being, nature or object.'<sup>369</sup> God then grants to Tournemire a mysterious facility and creative capacity. As has been seen, God upholds human beings in existence only insofar as musical improvisers are co-agents with Him in the upholding, and here in the liturgy, the musical improviser's co-creative, theurgic vocation is brought to particular emergence. In his "flashes," Tournemire becomes the seized yet active co-operator with God, and God's creative partner in a most immediate way, as befits the climactic site of liturgy, for 'creative ecstasy, vision, prophecy and inspiration are a pledge of the living reality of God in man.'<sup>370</sup>

Czikszenmihalyi has linked flow experiences with play: play 'fulfils the function of maintaining stimulation at an optimal level.'<sup>371</sup> The optimal awakening of the human person takes place in the play of flow experience. In the words of Ricoeur: 'Play is not determined by the consciousness which plays; play has its own way of being. Play is

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid, p. 286.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid, p. 290.

<sup>371</sup> Czikszenmihalyi, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*, p. 167. References to D. O. Hebb, "Drives and the CNS." *Psychological Review* 62 (1955): 243-254; D. E. Berlyne, *Conflict, Arousal, and Curiosity* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960).

an experience which transforms those who participate in it. It seems that the subject of aesthetic experience is not the player himself, but rather what ‘takes place’ in play . . . Play is . . . close to dance, which is a movement that carries away the dancer . . . In play, subjectivity forgets itself.<sup>372</sup> In Tournemire’s case, in the case of the inspired preacher too, the improvisatory “flashes” indeed take over the improviser, who becomes ‘the catcher of a ball’:<sup>373</sup>

Catch only what you’ve thrown yourself, all is  
 mere skill and little gain;  
 but when you’re suddenly the catcher of a ball  
 thrown by an eternal partner  
 with accurate and measured swing  
 towards you, to your centre, in an arch  
 from the great bridgebuilding of God:  
 why catching then becomes a power -  
 not yours, a world’s.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “Appropriation.” In *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, John B. Thompson (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), p. 186.

<sup>373</sup> From a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke. Cited in Gadamer *Truth and Method*, p. v. [No page number marked on page.]

<sup>374</sup> Rilke, *ibid.*



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