

Whose Music?

A Sociology of Musical Languages

JOHN SHEPHERD
PHIL VIRDEN
GRAHAM VULLIAMY
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to

Bunny & Rosamond Vulliamy
Irene Wishart
and the memory of
Ted Shepherd

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If it is art, it is not for all, and if it is for all, it is not art.

Arnold Schoenberg

The blues is the truth.

Lightnin' Hopkins

Something's happening, and you don't know what it is, do you
Mr. Jones?

Bob Dylan



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Foreword

To say that art or music is a social product, or that they are affected by social forces, or that they reflect the structure of a society — to use any of these common platitudinous formulae is simply to claim the domain of the arts for sociology in return for a promissory note for an analysis to be delivered, if all goes well, on some later occasion. Sociologists have left so many of these obligations unredeemed that artists and humanistic scholars have become justifiably wary of their pretensions. Add to this that sociologists like to theorise about these matters without acquiring a first-hand working acquaintance with the materials or characteristic social situations in which artists work and audiences absorb what they do (Trevor Wishart criticises the results of this in Adorno's writings in the last chapter of the present book), and you find still further reason for readers to avoid any further sociological treatment of the subject.

Shepherd, Virden, Vulliamy and Wishart have not left us another promissory note. They have paid in cash. They combine historical, musicological and sociological materials and styles of analysis in ways that really connect. Analyses of social class systems speak in translatable ways to analyses of musical forms. Not only that, both are connected to an understanding of the organisations through which art works get distributed to their ultimate audiences. And, further, we see how people learn, in school, what kinds of music are to be taken in what ways, what is “serious” and worthy of our attention, and what is “mere” popular music to be treated as cultural trash. Finally, and very importantly, we see that theorising

about all these matters is an integral part of the process by which dominant class groups justify their domination, cultural and otherwise.

To have done all this is a sizable achievement, and I do not mean to undervalue it when I say that there is still more to be done. There is always more to be done. My vote for the next focus of concentration would be the more professionalised areas of contemporary music worlds, those interconnected networks of composers, performers, publishers, recording companies, critics, aficionados, producers of hardware and software — in short, all those people and organisations whose joint efforts, coordinated through a more-or-less shared system of conventions, produce the works which audiences hear and respond to, and which work in the society in the ways the authors analyse here. Some work along these lines, far from enough, has been done in the United States and France, though seldom with the ample musicological and sociological context displayed here.

The book is provocative. I often found myself disagreeing, or wondering whether an assertion was true, or thinking of what seemed to be contradictory cases. That speaks to the book's fundamental interest, for it is clearly (at least to me) more important to get people thinking along new lines than to achieve the final word on a subject (as though that could be done), and I don't see how anyone can finish this book without being forced to think a little differently, at least, than they had thought before.

Howard S. Becker
April 1977
Chicago, Illinois

Introduction

In relating musical ‘languages’ to wider social structures and media of communication, this book argues that any particular kind of music can only be understood in terms of the criteria of the group or society which makes and appreciates that music. This theme is in sharp contrast to established attitudes to music, which utilise an ‘objectively’ conceived aesthetic. These attitudes are revealed in the assumptions underlying most musicology and musical aesthetics including, perhaps paradoxically, the work of a number of cultural radicals, such as Lukacs and Adorno. On a more practical level, these prevalent attitudes to music manifest themselves both in music education policies and in the policies of arts and broadcasting administrators, who have the power to promote some kinds of music above others.

Whilst the contributors to this book share a common critical stance to their subject matter, the central theme of the book, that music is an aspect of a wider social reality, is approached from diverse perspectives — musical, aesthetic, sociological, and educational. The cooperation of a number of authors has thus overcome one of the limiting tendencies of most previous work in this area, in that musicians have traditionally been sceptical of sociological approaches to their ‘art-form’, whilst sociologists have tended to shy away from study of such an ‘abstract’ mode of communication. Thus practically all sociological studies of music have been concerned with the sociology of musical life (that is the conditions surrounding the production and ‘consumption’ of music), rather than with giving a sociological analysis of the music itself.

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The opening three chapters by John Shepherd are based on a consideration of what might be seen as the central methodological problem facing musicology. This problem may be indicated by asking in what way music can be said to have significance or meaning. It is the word 'meaning' which is problematic in this context, since music does not *obviously* have any relation to the world of objects and ideas. Basing his argument on lines of thought drawn from the sociology of knowledge and media philosophers (such as Marshall McLuhan), the author demonstrates that this central difficulty of the aesthetics of music may ultimately be attributed to the underlying epistemology of the modern Western world. In particular, he argues that the essentially a-social approaches adopted by Langer and Meyer towards this problem, whilst seemingly transcending it, are in fact ultimately compromised because they depend on categories of understanding drawn from that same epistemology. The second half of Chapter One seeks to illustrate — by considering prevalent modes of social organisation and intellectual activity — why institutionalised musicians and aestheticians find it difficult to recognise the inherently social nature of music.

Drawing on concepts basic to structural anthropology, and stressing the role of symbols, Chapter Two then puts forward a view of the social process which transcends the epistemological problems raised in Chapter One, thus leading to a valid social theory of music. Chapter Two concludes by relating the inherent difficulties of writing about *music* to many of the topics already indicated. Specifically, it is shown how concern with analysis on the one hand, and with philosophical, psychological and biographical considerations on the other, directly reflects the categories of understanding responsible for the central aesthetic difficulty.

Chapter Three seeks to substantiate the mainly aesthetic and sociological arguments of the first two chapters by analysing the 'deep structure' of three kinds of music — pre-literate, sacred Medieval and tonal — and then relating these deep structures to the social milieux of their creation. In this way it can be shown, both from a general theoretical viewpoint and from specific analysis of music, that the meaning of music is indeed inherently social.

Trevor Wishart, in Chapter Four, by considering the effect of writing on verbal communications, seeks to illuminate the impact of notation on the way music is both perceived and conceived of in the

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West. Notation is seen as focussing musical perception on a specific and limited set of notatable parameters and their permutations. Despite its evident advantages it also has important drawbacks. Furthermore, in permitting the music which flows from it to be more easily controlled by a class of 'scribes', it has led to a devaluation of music as an alternative, and yet equally valid, mode of communication to the written word. It has also led to a rejection of coexisting oral-aural musical traditions. In addition, the dominance of notation has encouraged the conception of music as being essentially abstract, leading to a puritanical culture-specific notion of musical value. At the same time the equation of musical form with the visual forms of its notations has led to a sterile rational formalism in compositional practice which reflects the current ascendancy of rationalistic positivistic ideology. The invention of sound-recording has, however, shattered the hegemony of this dominant visual-rational viewpoint.

Against the theoretical approach developed in Part One, the majority of Part Two is taken up with a consideration of the relationships between social stratification and twentieth-century music. Chapter Five, by Phil Virden and Trevor Wishart argues that the stratification of music is an expression of general social class structures within modern industrial societies. Differences in musical production and appreciation are both symptomatic of, and reinforcements for, the class-structuring of what people find relevant and how they relate to their world. The authors first establish that a division of labour has systematic consequences for the ways people orientate their lives and hence how and why they communicate in general. This wide theory of the stratification of symbols, derived from the socio-linguistic work of Basil Bernstein, is then applied to music itself. It is suggested that musics can be analysed in relation to a continuum, the poles of which embody at one extreme high mediation, explicitness and lineal structure and at the other more immediacy, implicitness and circularity. The latter we might expect to find originating amongst dispossessed groups of people and therefore, in order to illustrate more fully this sociological approach, the second half of the chapter examines the blues as an ideal-typical example of such music.

It is argued that the blues has an underlying pentatonic structure. A distinction is drawn between 'the blues scale as used in jazz' and the authentic blues tradition. Various analyses proposed by

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musicians trained in the 'classical' or jazz traditions are considered and rejected in favour of this alternative theory, which views the 'bending' of notes and chords as intrinsic to the musical language. The blues is elaborated 'intensionally' within a rigid cyclical structure and this is interpreted as supporting our ideas concerning the world sense articulated by such music.

Graham Vulliamy's chapters are related to current debates in the sociology of education and reflect a growing interest in applying a phenomenological sociology of knowledge perspective to education. Michael F. D. Young in his introduction to *Knowledge and Control* (1971) notes that unfortunately we have few studies of how 'contemporary definitions of culture have consequences for the organisation of knowledge in the school system'. Chapters Six and Seven attempt to do this for one particular area of the curriculum by focussing first on wider cultural definitions of music and then on definitions of music in the school system.

In Chapter Six the musical establishment's conception of 'serious' music is questioned by reference to its reaction to a new tradition of music during the course of this century — the Afro-American tradition, springing from the negro blues and now covering such diverse fields as jazz, rock music, soul and Tamla Motown and so on. By focussing particularly on jazz and rock music it is argued that the establishment's interpretation of these new styles of music is fundamentally misguided and serves to perpetuate false dichotomies between 'serious' and 'popular' music. This artificial distinction is then maintained by dominant groups by means of selective financial subsidies, particular types of mass media policy and in what counts as valid knowledge in the curricula of schools and universities. In the process, questionable assumptions concerning aesthetics, the production of 'art-works' and the 'seriousness' of artists are perpetuated, together with misleading interpretations of cultural forms other than those associated with high culture. The particular case of music exemplifies the problems associated with more general distinctions between so-called high culture, folk culture and mass (or popular) culture, which are often made by sociologists, educators and various guardians of high culture. The chapter ends with an alternative interpretation of these distinctions — an interpretation influenced by the work of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu.

In Chapter Seven the focus is narrowed from definitions of music and culture in society to their definitions within the school system.

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Recent theoretical debates in the sociology of education have centred around the phenomenological critique of much of the positivist empirical work in the traditional sociology of education. As a consequence, a plea has been made for more ethnographic studies of classroom interaction, which examine the social assumptions underlying teachers' definitions of knowledge and ability and their influence on the success and failure of pupils. A major section of the chapter is a report of such a participant observation study in a particularly interesting and unusual music department of a large mixed comprehensive school. Data from the case study suggest both the possibilities for and the constraints on changing traditional definitions of music teaching. In comparing this case study material both with other schools and with other possible definitions of music teaching, it is suggested that the various ways in which 'what counts as music' is defined are associated with differing criteria of success, differing relationships between teacher and taught, and different assumptions made by teachers concerning the relations between pupils' intelligence, family background and musical ability.

The argument to date in Part Two highlights the problem of the relationship of the committed artist to his audience in a highly stratified society. In the light of the previous discussion, Chapter Eight attempts a reassessment of the notion of radical or 'progressive' cultural action, seeking to avoid the group-centred, culture-specific assumptions which have been criticised earlier in this book. The views of two prominent left-wing critics (Adorno and Lukacs) are rejected on the grounds of their implicit elitism. It is then proposed that 'radicalness' be judged by practical results in changing the consciousness of specific groups, and not by the comparative intellectual analysis of the forms of works *in abstracto* with its implicit assumption of the universal validity of the cultural values assumed by the critic. Case studies of the work of Shelley and Cage are used to illustrate the real practical problems and difficulties facing any artist who attempts to put his radical conception into practice.

The major concerns of this book are central to practising musicians, musicologists and sociologists. However, one of the problems in writing a book of this type is the difficulty experienced by both sociologists and musicians in approaching each other's disciplines. This is particularly the case when one considers the complexity of musical vocabulary. We have therefore included an

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appendix on musical terminology which, we hope, will give the interested non-musician enough of an insight into the workings of different musical 'languages' to understand our main points of argument. For the interested musician, who may find the *sociological* perspective of this book somewhat unusual, we would suggest that the fresh insights that it gives into the processes of musical creation are well worth any difficulties he may encounter.

Needless to say, any book of this kind, which seeks to break new ground, more easily lays itself open to criticism. However, it is not our aim to be definitive, but rather to stimulate a re-examination of traditional assumptions about music and in the process to open up new avenues for both research and activity.

PART ONE

Chapter One

Media, Social Process and Music

JOHN SHEPHERD

The central assumption of this book is that any significance assigned to music must be ultimately and *necessarily* located in the commonly agreed meanings of the group or society in which the particular music is created. This assumption can neither be proved or disproved. However, it will be the principal purpose of this chapter to argue that prevalent, 'a-social', views of music are inherently problematic, and that these views form an integral aspect not only of industrial man's outlook on the world, but of the political structures within which he lives, and which he largely takes for granted. Chapter Two will then put forward a view of the social process which eliminates the problems referred to, and allows for a vital and acceptable social theory of music.

Implicit in the central assumption of this book is the view that the meaning of music is somehow located in its function as a social symbol. It is the word 'meaning' which creates the greatest problem in this context. For most people a symbol has meaning because it refers to something outside itself. Pictures have meaning because they refer to something in physical reality, and words have meaning because they refer to concepts and ideas. But to suggest that a piece of music has meaning because of extra-musical references is, at the least, highly contentious. The logical alternative has thus been to look for the meaning of music within the structure of individual pieces, an alternative whose strictest formulation, as Leonard B. Meyer indicates (1956, p.33), is to be found in the attitude of the absolutists:

The absolutists have contended that the meaning of music lies specifically, and some would assert exclusively, in the musical processes themselves. For them musical meaning is non-designative. But in what sense these processes are meaningful . . . they have been unable to state with either clarity or precision . . . This failure has led some critics to assert that musical meaning is a thing apart, different in some unexplained way from all other kinds of meaning. This is simply an evasion of the real issue.

The real issue can be stated in terms of the following comparison. Because their meaning is 'located outside them', words and pictures may be thought of as 'carrying' their meaning and 'giving' it to the recipient. The symbol, in other words, survives the divulgence of its message. If, on the other hand, musical meaning is acknowledged to lie within the musical process itself, then in 'giving away' that meaning, a piece seemingly compromises the very being or essence responsible for the meaning in the first place. As Susanne Langer (1960, p.236) has put it, the absolutists 'seem to feel that if musical structures should really be found to have significance, to relate to anything beyond themselves, those structures would forthwith cease to be musical'.

This difficulty results from confusing a symbol which has no referent in the world of objects and ideas with one which is informationally a closed system. Music certainly falls within the former but not, as the absolutists imply, the latter category. It is this distinction which facilitates the theories of Meyer and Langer. Broadly, both authors locate musical significance in 'psychological constants' (Meyer, 1973, p.14) or 'psychological laws of "rightness"' (Langer, 1960, p.240). That is, since all music originates in the minds of individual people, and since all minds are assumed to possess similar psychological characteristics, it is taken that there will be a certain conformity of patterning or structure between all music and all minds. Consequently, all minds are presumed to be suitably predisposed for the superimposition of the particular structure that constitutes a piece, and there is no longer any need to have recourse to the notion of symbols which divest themselves of externally referential meanings. 'Information' is conveyed by another method.

On the surface, this might seem to be a suitable and adequate explanation of musical process. It is ultimately compromised, however, by resulting from exactly the same mode of thought responsible for the original difficulty. In order to understand this

anomaly, it is necessary firstly to argue that the collective reality of any society is mutually constructed by its members, rather than being externally given, and secondly to indicate the role played by varying media in the construction of that reality.

The Social Construction of Reality¹.

An approach to the understanding of the social construction of reality may best be made through a consideration of the role played in that process by symbols. A symbol may be thought of as any occurrence in the world, whether or not produced by man, which carries a *generally agreed* meaning for the members of a particular group or society.

Societies can only arise and continue to exist through communication, that is, the creation and exchange of symbols². Symbols are not self-contained phenomena. They are not God-given, but created by people to cope with the many varied situations in which they find themselves. The meanings of symbols and sets of symbols are originally derived from *specific* and *real* situations. But there is another side to the coin. Once a symbol or set of symbols have been created in response to a new situation these symbols, in retrospect, colour that situation. When people look back at a series of events they do so by means of and *through* the symbols created to define it. Furthermore, the new symbols may be used in other situations. Since the symbols are not specifically created for these other situations they bring to them meanings which although not necessarily irrelevant or wrong, are obviously coloured by previous usage. The reverse, of course, is equally true, for new situations modify the meanings of the already existing symbols used to denote such situations. In other words, situations and symbols have a mutually interdependent, but not determinant³, relationship crucial to the constantly changing dynamics of the social process.

This relationship is most easily understood with regard to words, which constitute man's most important symbolic mode. Not only do the meanings which arise in social situations give rise to words and continually modify the meanings of pre-existing words, but words and complete symbolic languages bring pre-conceived meanings to bear on our everyday sense of the world. Indeed, any new situation and/or symbol is mediated to an extent by pre-existing adjacent meanings. The world we live in has meaning for us only because we

symbolically mediate the events that take place in it with other people, and we do this primarily with words. Reality — often conceived as an objective fact which cannot be changed, but only misconstrued — is thus *constructed* by people through the mutual *agreement by words and other symbols* on experiences undergone by individual people:

'World-view' is an elusive term, but when we speak of someone's world view in any sense, we do not mean simply the world impressing itself upon his passive receptors, sensory or intellectual. A person does not receive a world view, but rather takes or adopts one. A world view is not a datum, a *donné*, but something the individual himself, and the culture he shares partly constructs; it is the person's way of organising from within himself the data of actuality coming from without and within. (Ong, 1969, p.634).

For the purpose of clear understanding, a theoretical distinction may be drawn between environment and everyday reality: environment is the unqualified situation (reality as we might *imagine* it to be as objective fact) in which a person finds himself; everyday reality is the result of that person's interaction with the environment and the interaction of this subjectivity with other subjects. In practice, the distinction is invalid for two related reasons: firstly, no person finds himself without society and therefore pre-existing cultural support; and secondly, subjectivities and ensuing inter-subjectivities become legitimised or integrated into a world sense⁴ through which the environment is mediated to people. Society is quintessentially symbolic. That is to say, world senses and the legitimating structures that integrate inter-subjectivities into a world sense — the meanings of society — are created and maintained in and through people's collective externalisations. Every perception made and every symbol externalised is done so as a contribution to and in the context of the symbolically mediated and, since new situations are constantly arising, dialectic field of meaning peculiar to any group or society.

Any culture-specific field of meaning is predicated upon assumptions which evolve as a result of the inter-subjective legitimations of perceptions, events and situations that articulate that field. These assumptions may be regarded as the paradigmatic framework or structure upon which all sensory or intellectual interaction is unconsciously grounded. The realisation of the existence of such assumptions does not negate the dialectic concept of society (one

might conclude that it encouraged people to perceive the nature of all perceptions, thoughts and externalisations as mechanically determined). Assumptions serve, on the contrary, to mediate, process and in some cases repress socially efficacious information in one way rather than in any other. Society is not a one-level mono-linear cause and effect sequence, but a mosaic of simultaneously interacting and complementary fields of action and influence. It must be further emphasised that assumptions are implicitly agreed upon inter-subjectively, and as such are themselves, at times of great stress and rapid or fundamental change, subject to the dialectic processes of society.

The Oral-Visual Split

The principal line of argument in this chapter is that the assumptions underlying the world sense of industrial man are ultimately responsible for current difficulties in music aesthetics. The form the assumptions or world sense of a particular society takes would perhaps seem largely to depend on the way the symbols of that society depict, denote and categorise what might be *imagined* as a previously undifferentiated world. But as well as being influenced by the content-categories of symbols, the world sense or reality developed depends even more pervasively on the medium of mediation (for example, the spoken word, writing, typography or electronic communication) prevalent in any society. Once again, this assertion cannot be proved one way or another, and there is insufficient space to make out a supporting case for it. The following descriptions of pre-literate and industrial world senses do, however, seem to provide considerable substantiation.

Before proceeding to a description of the way in which writing and typography have engendered certain fundamental categories of analysis in the industrial world sense, it is necessary to briefly indicate why the comparison with what may be taken as a pre-literate world sense is made. Sociology is concerned with the study of human relatedness in society — in practice mostly modern industrial society. It is apparent that if a sociologist wishes to understand the relationships people enter into in an area of society in which he is interested then, to produce a description or explanation that is as *meaningful* as possible, he must attempt to lay bare the assumptions upon which the structure of the relation-

ships is grounded. If the sociologist does not attempt this, he may well fall prey to two related dangers. Firstly, if the society is other than his own, he may see the workings of the other society in terms of the unspoken assumptions prevalent in his own. This would serve to render his description or analysis useless. The avoidance of this danger not only involves the sociologist in the process of exposing the assumptions of the other society, but also in making clear the underlying implications of his own position, which are part and parcel of his own existence. Secondly, if the society under examination is his own, the sociologist, by explaining human relationships in terms of the unspoken assumptions common to himself and his society, achieves little else but a reinforcement of those assumptions and, consequently, of the *status quo*. The workings of his own society, in other words, remain a mystery towards which he has contributed, a process which hardly adds to the understanding of that society. Whether the society is his own or not, therefore, the sociologist must constantly question his own position. In this particular case, the questioning will be achieved by making the comparison with a vastly different world sense, that of pre-literate man.

Practically all communication in pre-literate societies takes place in face-to-face situations. And it is because sound thus takes on a great importance in pre-literate man's world⁵ that, in order to understand the way this world is structured, it is necessary to understand the inherent qualities of sound *as a perceived phenomenon*. For sound has certain qualities not generally associated with the other phenomena that impinge on our senses. Sound is evanescent. It can only exist as it is going out of existence. It is never static and can only be considered sequential by the application of discontinuous analytic thought to its existence. A sight, on the other hand, can generally be more easily isolated in its ongoing effect and examined without destroying the inherent quality of the experience to anything like the same extent. The only way a sound can be so examined is by repeating it in its entirety if, indeed, the circumstances of its creation allow this.

Sound is thus more symptomatic of the flow of time than any other phenomena that impinge on our senses. Although all other phenomena occur within a stream of time, the fact that they may be generally isolated and examined at leisure demonstrates that, *as far as the influence on the arrangement of man's sensorium is*

concerned, they are not so inexorably tied to that stream as sound is.

Sound evokes a sense of space very different from that evoked by other phenomena. A person can only look in one direction at a time, and can easily rid himself of an unpleasant sight by closing his eyes or turning away. Taste is very much a sense of acceptance and rejection, and the power to escape a tactile stimulus is obvious. Smell, although it has something of sound's all-encompassing quality, may still be avoided by holding one's nose or moving away. In all these cases avoidance involves the parameter of visual space. The sound of the world, on the other hand, impinges on our ears from all directions and all distances at once, and the ability to totally cut out or ignore sound is severely limited:

Auditory space has no point of favoured focus. It's a sphere without fixed boundaries, space made by the thing itself, not space containing the thing. It is not pictorial space, boxed in, but dynamic, always in flux, creating its own dimensions moment by moment. It has no fixed boundaries; it is indifferent to background. The eye focuses, pinpoints, abstracts, locating each object in physical space, against a background; the ear however, favours sound from any direction. We hear equally well from right or left, front or back, above or below. If we lie down, it makes no difference, whereas in visual space the entire spectacle is altered. We can shut out the visual field by simply closing our eyes, but we are always triggered to respond to sound. (Carpenter and McLuhan, 1970, p.67).

Sound is symptomatic of energy. Something has to be going on for sound to be generated, and with sound that is not electronically conveyed (if we treat the loudspeaker as a translation device), the source usually occurs within a geographical range that means it can have an immediate effect upon the listener. Total staticity and the generation of sound is very rare. An example of this aspect of sound is given by Ong (1967, p.112) when he points out that 'a primitive hunter can see, feel, smell and taste an elephant when the animal is quite dead'. When, however, 'he hears an elephant trumpeting or merely shuffling its feet, he had better watch out. Something is going on. Force is operating'.

Sound is therefore dynamic. It requires a more immediate response, and does not allow so much time or the space necessary for initial avoidance, subsequent, cooler exposure, and considered rationalisation.

Pre-literate man thus sees himself as being at the centre of a

sound universe, which is dynamic and bounding with energy. Furthermore, since the paradigm of sound for people is the human voice, he imputes power and influence to the physical phenomena that surround his existence as he would impute it to the human voice. This orientation of pre-literate man to his world is noted by Mary Douglas (1970, pp.103-104):

In all the cosmologies mentioned so far, the lot of individual humans is thought to be affected by power inhering in themselves or in other humans. The cosmos is turned in, as it were, on man. Its transforming energy is threaded on to the lives of individuals so that nothing happens in the way of storms, sickness, blights or droughts except in virtue of these personal links. So the universe is man-centred in the sense that it must be interpreted by reference to humans.

The world of pre-literate man is a revelatory and relatively unpredictable world over which he exercises *comparatively* little conceptual control. This lack of control over environment is reflected in, and partly caused by, a lack of control over knowledge, which again relates back to pre-literate man's orality. There is thus much impetus for the creation of a firm and comparatively unyielding legitimating structure:

Man knows what he can recall — all else is so ephemeral as to be negligible. In an oral culture this means he knows what is cast in fixed thematic formulatory patterns. Anything else will seem unreal, nonknowledge, reprehensible and dangerous. This is the noetic foundation for the traditionalism stemming from oral cultures. What is non-traditional . . . is dangerous because it is slippery and unmanageable. Oral-aural man does not like the non-traditional because, beyond his limited means of control, it advertises the tenuousness of his hold on rationality. (Ong, 1969, p.640).

The hermetic and revelatory world of oral-aural man, with its tight grip on the supporting mythological structures, militates against the easy acceptance of change in pre-literate societies. Freshly perceived phenomena tend to be contained by and mediated through the rock certainty of orally accretive legitimations. This does not mean that the legitimating structures in pre-literate societies do not change in a manner that would prove historically contradictory, but merely that pre-literate man, because of his orality, is unlikely to realise the contradictory nature of successive legitimations, a fact illustrated by Goody and Watt (1963, p.309):

Early British administrators among the Tiv of Nigeria were aware of the great importance attached to . . . genealogies which were continually discussed in court cases where the rights and duties of one man towards another were in dispute. Consequently they took the trouble to write down the long list of names and preserve them for posterity, so that future administrators might refer to them in giving judgment. Forty years later, when the Bohannans carried out anthropological field work in the area, their successors were still using the same genealogies.... However, these written pedigrees now gave rise to many disagreements, the Tiv maintained that they were incorrect, while the officials regarded them as statements of fact, a record of what had actually happened, and could not agree that the unlettered indigines could be better informed about the past than their literate predecessors. What neither party recognised was that in any society of this kind changes take place which require a constant readjustment in the genealogies if they are to continue to carry out their functions as mnemonics of social relationships.

Neither does the orality of pre-literate man's noetic foundation mean that relatively sudden breaks in the legitimating structures that are quick enough to impinge on his consciousness do not occur. But unless the break was occasioned by a literate society, it would seem more than likely that the new world sense would quickly assume the features already described. Change in pre-literate societies, then, tends to be continual and gradual rather than infrequent and radical, and something of which pre-literate man is not obviously conscious.

Pre-literate man's attitude and relationship to change is symptomatic of his sense of time. Just as he exists in a man-centred world where events in space are threaded onto the lives of himself and significant others, so events in the past and potential occurrences in the future are mediated by him in terms of the present. This is evidenced by Goody and Watt's story concerning the Tiv of Nigeria. In this sense pre-literate man lives within time. And against the background of industrial man's spatialised and objective concept of time, with its sense of the pastness of the past, and the futurity of the future, it is not being merely redundant to say that, for pre-literate man, all past and potential events are irrevocably tied to the present.

Living within time and therefore having little consciousness of time as we conceive it, pre-literate man may not be said to have any abstract temporal sense. Time unfolds and is revealed to him

through specific events which recur and which are of great importance for the ordering of his existence⁶. Such events, as Edmund Leach has pointed out⁷, are most likely to be seasonal changes of some sort. It must be emphasised, however, that these recurring events are *not* used as a means of dividing up abstract continuous time into a mechanical succession of separate segments or instants⁸. As A. I. Hallowell put it (1937, p.660) in discussing the time concept of the Saulteaux Indians, 'the "moon" is not a division of continuous time, it is a recurrent event'.

Experiencing time in a concrete and cyclical fashion, therefore, pre-literate man does not conceive of time as regressing or progressing into the vanishing points of past or future infinity. Although pre-literate man undoubtedly has a sense of the past, it is seldom lineal and quickly melts into the contemporary simultaneity of mythology:

On the whole, then, events that are believed to have taken place 'long ago' are not systematically correlated with each other in any well-defined temporal schemata. There are discrete happenings, often unconnected and sometimes contradictory. Yet the past and present are part of a whole because they are bound together by the persistence and contemporary reality of mythological characters not even grown old. (Hallowell, 1937, p.668).

Corroboration for this feature of pre-literate time is to be found in Dorothy Lee's (1970) description of Trobriand time concepts.

All these aspects of pre-literate time are, of course, closely inter-related, and are best summarised by Edmund Leach (1954, p.114):

Primitive time can be regarded as a recurring cycle. Certain events repeat themselves in definite sequence. This sequence is a continuity without beginning or end, and thus without any clear distinction between past and present. The most important time-sequences are seasonal activities and the passage of human life. Both these cycles are conceived as of the same kind. For such thinking there is no chronology, and time is not measurable.

For pre-literate man, then, time is a revolutionary circumjacence of concretely recurring events, which is constantly in flux, and over which, in Western terms, he exercises relatively little control.

This 'lack of control' is also evidenced in pre-literate man's concept of space. His ordering of space results from the particular

and immediate configuration of objects and not from a preconceived abstract framework. With Western man space is an empty hopper made up of horizontal and vertical dimensions into which objects are placed with direct relevance to the visual relationship that an observer has with these objects. This is reflected in art during and after the Renaissance. In this art, 'everything is dominated by the eye of the beholder'. There is 'a space conception that is graphically depicted by the perspective projection of long level vistas upon a plane surface' (Giedion, 1970, p.74). And within this unified and centrally-oriented perspective there is a *lineal* ordering of objects which presupposes and reinforces sequentially segmented time. Pre-literate art completely denies any such abstraction however:

It is this manner of seeing things without any 'relation to myself' that distinguishes primeval art from all later art. It is not disorder but a different order that is being followed — an order to which we, in our sophistication, have lost the key. (Giedion, 1970, p.78).

Not surprisingly, perhaps, a vital characteristic of this different order is a total lack of emphasis on a vertical-horizontal framework or background:

The distinguishing mark of the space conception of primeval art is the complete independence and freedom of its vision, which has never again been attained in later periods. In our sense there is no above and no below, no clear distinction of separateness from an intermingling, and also, certainly, no rules of proportional size . . .

Primeval art never places objects in an immediate surrounding. Primeval art has no background. . . . This is inherent in the prehistoric conception of space: all linear directions have equal right and likewise all surfaces, whether they be regular or irregular. They can be tilted at any angle with the horizontal throughout the entire 360 degree range. To the eye of primeval man, animals that to us appear to be standing on their heads, do not appear inverted to him because they exist, as it were, in space free from the forces of gravity. Primeval art has no background. (Giedion, 1970, pp.85-87).

With its concrete situation in specific objects, its lack of concern with fixed boundaries and backgrounds, its easy acceptance of intermingling and consequent lack of concern with separateness, pre-literate space is essentially auditory in nature⁹. And just as the visual bias of industrial man links his temporal and spatial

orientations, so are those of pre-literate man linked through his oral-aural bias. This is most easily demonstrated with regard to the lack of concern for spatial separateness:

All is within the continual present, the perpetual flow of today, yesterday and tomorrow Whenever possible previous lines are not destroyed, but the lines of both earlier and later works intermingle till they sometimes — but only to our eyes — appear inextricable. It was recognised quite early that this superimposition was not due to idle chance but to a deliberate reluctance to destroy the past. (Giedion, 1970, pp.85-86).

The juxtaposition of past and imminent events in the ongoing present, in other words, requires a spatial sense that transcends the mutual separation of all objects in visual space. As industrial man has tended to spatialise time, it could equally well be said that pre-literate man temporalises space.

From whichever angle it is approached, therefore, the world of pre-literate man displays an instance and immediacy which industrial man, given his rational control over the events of the world, finds it difficult to empathise with. It is dynamic, in a constant state of flux, and at all times pregnant with happenings. It is a world whose encroaching massivity is constantly requiring response.

* * * *

Literate man possesses the ability of storing the information of his socially constructed reality, which then attains a permanency and safety not before possible. Within this innovation lies the potential for preserving inviolate discrepancies between succeeding legitimatisations, and so for the emergence of an historically based dialectic and the concomitant growth of a comparatively based rather than mythologically mediated critical method. The keeping of records therefore makes possible a sense of the pastness of the past, of historical perspective, and so lays the foundation for the separation of history from myth.

As well as encouraging an historical and analytic perspective, literacy also emphasised the visual at the expense of the auditory. And whereas sound underlines *the dynamic immediacy of the environment*, visual stimuli underline *the distancing and separateness of events and objects both from each other and individual people*. As sound underlines immediacy in time, so vision underlines distancing

in space. Further, since literacy facilitates the safe and permanent storage of information *apart from people's consciousness*, it also induces a psychic spatiality. This psychic spatiality is, as we shall see, closely inter-related with the physical distancing just indicated.

Literacy may be broadly divided into two categories: ideogrammatic and phonetic. Whereas phonetic literacy encodes the sounds people make in speaking, ideograms directly encode the objects and concepts about which people speak. Ideograms therefore require a knowledge/acceptance of the ideas they ideally represent, because, in terms of the already existing set of ideograms, there is no way in which the ideas may be critically discussed. This aspect of ideogrammatic literacy has considerable political consequences, as a later section of this chapter will make clear¹⁰. The point at issue here, however, is that the world sense of an ideogrammatic culture cannot be transcended, because the ideograms are only capable of encoding that world sense, and not what people say in it, or about it. And since orally mediated knowledge is, as we have seen, slippery and evasive, its power to avoid assimilation of important aspects of ideas encoded ideogrammatically (which are more manageable, permanent, and therefore influential) is very limited. The power of literacy to radically alter orally mediated knowledge is so all-embracing and massive compared with the ability of oral people to influence literately encoded knowledge that, when a literate and oral society come into contact, the thought patterns of the former always tend to be superimposed on those of the latter. Any meaningful or consequential questioning of ideogrammatic intellectation is thus severely circumscribed.

When the sounds of words are encoded in written words, however, oral questioning of visually encoded ideas may itself be encoded visually *in terms of already existing symbols*. Criticism which was originally oral may more easily influence knowledge which was literately encoded at the time the original criticism was made. In this way sound and sight provide mutual yardsticks of comparison and criticism. Not only may the written word be questioned in terms of the spoken word, therefore, but the efficacy of the spoken word becomes such that questioning it in terms of the written word is deemed to be a continuing necessity. As well as questioning what people meant in contradistinction to what they 'actually' wrote, then, one may also question what people meant in contradistinction to what they 'actually' said. The word is no longer restricted to

face-to-face communication, and the idea may be prised out of its pictorial prison.

In thus facilitating a divorce between meaning and symbol, phonetic literacy creates an epistemological dichotomy, that between content and form, which has been extremely pervasive in the thinking of modern Western man, and which is clearly of the greatest importance to any discussion of music aesthetics. Of more importance to the present line of thought, however, is the manner in which the divorce between meaning and symbol encourages a comparative and analytic, rather than mythological dialectic, and so aids the growth of historical dialecticism implicit in any literate society. One concomitant of this growing historical/analytic approach is the ability a *phonetically* literate person may develop to put a *great deal* of temporal/spatial distance between himself and the phenomena or knowledge he is examining. Initially, of course, this ability derives from the permanent storage of information in a place entirely removed from human consciousness. Gradually, however, the possibility of critically examining the spoken word in a manner similar to the written word *leads to the distancing principle being applied to face-to-face communication*. The distinction between meaning and symbol, content and form, and the distancing involved have become so pervasive in industrial man's cognitive and intellectual orientation, that it is extremely difficult for him to understand the immediate power words possess for pre-literate man. Indeed, without a conscious realisation of how this distinction and distancing arose, any meaningful insight into the role played by language in pre-literate societies is almost impossible.

Because the spoken word in pre-literate societies cannot be divorced from its everyday use in face-to-face communication, and because of the indissoluble links that exist in those societies between man, the universe and sound, words come to have an immediacy and power unknown in industrial society. And because of the imposing massivity of pre-literate man's world, there is no way in which this immediacy and power can be diluted or questioned. Words and referents are inextricably intertwined, a phenomenon illustrated by J. C. Carothers (1959, p.309) through reference to his non-literate son:

Some years ago my little son said: 'Is there a word "pirates", Daddy?' When I replied in the affirmative, he asked 'Are there pirates?' I said, 'No, not now, there used to be'. He asked, 'Is

there a word “pirates” *now?* When I said, ‘Yes’, he replied, ‘Then there must be pirates now’. This conversation, which might have come straight from Parmenides’ doctrine of twenty-four centuries earlier, is a reminder that, for a child, a thing exists by virtue of its name; that the spoken or even imagined word must connote something in the outer world¹¹.

As J. W. Carey has put it (1967, p.10), words in pre-literate societies ‘become icons, they do not represent things, they are themselves things’. They are instrumental in *all* their aspects, and certainly efficacious over and above any hard information that we, industrial men, might distill from them. There is no attempt on the part of pre-literate man to separate meaning from symbol, content from form, and then to relegate symbol or form to a position of neutral insignificance. As *sound* the word is dynamic and pregnant with consequence.



In view of this comparison of the different kinds of significance assigned to words in pre-literate and industrial societies it may be concluded that, firstly, the distinction between content and form that we take so much for granted is in fact specific to phonetically literate societies and that, secondly, the conundrum the absolutists find themselves in is inextricably linked to that distinction. That is, if the form of music is its content, how can it have any content (or significance) at all?¹²

What is not so clear is that there is a second distinction, interdependent with that just indicated, on which the theories of Langer and Meyer are predicated. Because this second distinction *is* interdependent with the first, the significance assigned to music by Langer and Meyer is largely spurious, and the positions they adopt are not very far removed from that of the absolutists. This distinction, its interdependency, and the consequences that interdependency have for the theories of Langer and Meyer will now be described.

The distancing inherent in the meaning/symbol dichotomy of phonetic literacy greatly reinforces the emphasis on visual space that results with any form of literacy. This reinforcement has important consequences for man’s relationship to himself, to others, and to the physical environment. The inter-subjective designation of self no longer exclusively requires the presence of the ‘significant other’,

since socially efficacious information may be received in writing. If one thinks of consciousness, which is socially mediated through communication with others, as communication with self, then it follows that the reception of written information, which originates with others, but whose perusal (silent or oral) is essentially communication with self, induces a shift of emphasis to self. Literate man can put others at a distance and in so doing becomes self-conscious to a degree not possible with pre-literate man.

In the same way that literate man may put others at a distance he may also put the environment at a distance. The analytic method inherent in phonetic literacy serves to reduce pre-literate man's lack of conceptual control over his man-centred universe¹³. Not only does literacy enable comparisons through time of environmental events, but, in enabling man to be increasingly conscious and analytic of self and others, also permits the energy and events of the environment to be unravelled from the lives of people. In other words, as phonetically literate man distinguished symbol from meaning, so he began to draw a line between himself (the words *he* uttered) and the external world, (the *things* to which the words referred). *A vital distinction between the physical and the mental thus grew up*, in marked contrast to oral societies, where the difference between physical and mental, non-human and human, 'outer' and 'inner' is of relatively little significance.

The spatiality and distancing of literacy provides the essential link between increased self-consciousness and 'objectivity'. Through the provision of a surrogate other, literate man possesses the capability of becoming conscious of his consciousness, and of his position in the universe — of partially stepping outside himself and, in a move formalised by Copernicus, of vacating his central, orally-enveloped position in the cosmos. This, as we have seen, is simply an impossibility for pre-literate man: 'for early man, the world was something he only participated in, not an object to be manipulated in his consciousness'. (Ong 1969, p.635).

This objectivity is closely linked with industrial man's sense of time. The historical perspective (distancing) possible with literacy leads to a straight-line or linearly sequential sense of time:

In our culture, the line is so basic that we take it for granted, as given in reality. We see it in visible nature, between material points, and we see it between metaphorical points such as days or acts. It underlies not only our thinking, but also our aesthetic

apprehension of the given; it is basic to the emotional climax, which has so much value for us, and, in fact to the meaning of life itself. In our thinking about personality and character, we have assumed the line as axiomatic. (Lee, 1970, p.142).

Furthermore, through his ability to record events and through his sense of the pastness of the past, literate man can halt the events of time in their ongoing flow and so, in effect, halt time. Coupled with the development of his analytic ability, therefore, literate man also developed a tendency to examine time, as it were, from the outside, a tendency which reached full fruition with the Renaissance:

With the end of the Renaissance the feeling of spontaneous inter-communication in all individual activity within the cosmic *becoming* has also disappeared. Human thought no longer feels itself a part of things. It distinguishes itself from them in order to reflect upon them, and is thus no longer upheld by their own power of enduring. From the motion of bodies which inexplicably and incessantly modified it, human thought feels itself to be disengaged by the very act of thinking, for in this act it places itself outside the motion which is its object. (Poulet, 1956, p.13).

Literate man therefore exists outside time in the same way as he can partially exist apart from himself and his society, and in the same way as his self-consciousness and objectivity allow him to unravel the events of the environment from a human-like volition. But in becoming conscious of his consciousness literate man also becomes as conscious of his own temporal flow from which he cannot *totally* escape, as he does of the events of the environment which he can now fix in a sequential linear order. There thus rises up in Western thought a distinction between time concepts as relating to the physical world and to the mental:

When Hermann Weyl claims that the objective world *is* and does not become, he has to admit that at least our 'blindfolded consciousness' *creeps* along the world line of its own body into the area of the universe called 'future', or when it is said that we meet the pre-existing future events *on our way to the future*, we concede that even if the future is completed, our way to the future is still going on Thus arises an absurd dualism of the timeless physical world and temporal consciousness, that is, a dualism of two altogether disparate realms whose correlation becomes completely unintelligible. (Capek, 1961, p.165).

This 'absurd dualism' clearly underpins the human/non-human,

mental/physical, inner/outer, subjective/objective epistemological split already noted.

* * * *

It is now possible to understand why neither Meyer nor Langer transcend the limitations of their own intellectual tradition. For by restricting musical significance to the inner, emotional and subjective side of this split, they have in reality failed to transcend the first, *interdependent* form-and-content dichotomy. By restricting music to the inner and mental worlds, in other words, they are in fact still denying music any *substantial* significance beyond its 'mere existence' as form. Indeed, a *purely* psychological significance can only be assigned to music — and the difficulty of the absolutists' position thereby overcome — by unjustifiably *denying the interdependency of the two dichotomies*.

This criticism implies that the significance attached to music by these two authors is largely spurious. Symptomatically, Langer claims music to express '*the Unspeakable*' (1960, p.235)¹⁴, and goes on to assign such significance a low rational priority:

Music is a limited idiom, like an artificial language, only even less successful; *for music at its highest, though clearly a symbolic form, is an unconsummated symbol*. Articulation is its life, but not assertion; expressiveness, not expression. The actual function of meaning, which calls for permanent contents, is not fulfilled; . . . (1960, p.240).

Because she assigns such a low rational priority to musical significance, Langer's stance seems to come perilously close to that of the absolutists. Meyer, on the other hand, allows for a much more explicit significance through his emphasis on rigorous analysis. Yet it is again symptomatic that this analysis, by Meyer's own admission, ultimately fails as a method of elucidating that significance. He tells us that ethetic relationships — which constitute the 'kinesthetic sensing of the ethos and character of a musical event' (1973, p.242) — 'are unquestionably important . . . but . . . hard to analyse with rigor and precision' (1973, pp.245-246), that 'there is an absence of an adequate theory of ethetic change and transformation' (1973, p.246), and finally, that 'the rigorous analysis of ethetic relationships is beyond my knowledge and skill' (1973, p.267).

At this stage in the argument, the reader may think that Meyer's

difficulties can be traced to the fact that music does indeed encode that which is genuinely 'unspeakable' or unutterable. It might be thought, for example, that because music refers outside itself to psychological constants, the inner-outer distinction has been truly transcended. But as a symbol may only have meaning in relation to something outside itself, so a thought or feeling might only exist because it too relates to something in the outside world. More specifically, there exists an equivalence between the inner-outer distinction as it applies to both symbols and consciousness: a symbol may only refer outside itself to something because a thought (itself having the same external referent) gave that symbol its meaning; conversely, a thought may only exist because it possesses an external referent implanted by a symbol (itself having the same external referent). This point will become clearer in the light of arguments presented in Chapter Two.

Now although there is little doubt that people possess deep-seated desires which are genetically programmed, there is equally little doubt that a high proportion of the way we relate to the world results (as already argued) from symbolic interaction with other people. As far as each of us is concerned, these other people exist 'out there' in 'objective reality'. If, therefore, it is maintained that there is no need to transcend the inner-outer distinction as it applies to the mind (because all psychological constants or psychological laws of rightness are genetically programmed, thereby making reference to the outside world unnecessary), then that is something the aesthete or music theorist needs to argue in some detail. Symptomatically neither Langer nor Meyer undertake this argument.

Meyer does, however, paradoxically indicate the possible solution to his difficulties by concluding that it is impossible to distinguish between psychological constants and the conventions of a particular musical language:

In theory it is possible to distinguish between archetypal patterns and schemata. The former would be those patterns which arise as the result of physiological constants presumed innate in human behaviour. The latter would be those norms which were the result of learning. But the distinction breaks down in practice. For most traditionally established norms have some basis in innate constants, and on the other hand, patterns derived from innate constants become part of tradition. (1973, p.214).

If this is the case, why does Meyer not seek the basis of ethetic

relationships in these different and identifiable norms? To pose a parallel question, if Langer can reach the conclusion that '*what music . . . actually reflects is only the morphology of feeling*' (1960, p.238) why does she not further enquire into the origins of that morphology? Why does she implicitly doubt, with Meyer, 'that the explanation of musical practice needs to be pushed back this far' (Meyer, 1973, p.8), and thereby effectively ignore the entire sociological tradition?¹⁵



One reason for this 'psychological' barrier may be located in the one aspect of industrial man's world sense which has primarily resulted from the advent of movable type printing.

Literate man's ability to view time as a lineal sequence of discrete instants¹⁶ gradually fed back upon his understanding of language until all language, whether spoken or written, was conceived in terms of the sequential and segmented nature of the *written* word. One discrete word, in other words, was thought of as following another in set order to give a specific meaning. Pre-literate man, by contrast, did not think in terms of the discrete homogeneous word, but rather in terms of utterances relevant to the face-to-face situation in which meaning was to be conveyed:

Man without writing thinks in terms of sound groups and not in words, and the two do not necessarily coincide. When asked what a word is, he will reply that he does not know, or he will give a sound group which may vary in length from what we call a word to an entire line of poetry, or even an entire song. The word for 'word' means an 'utterance'. When a singer is pressed to say what a line is, he whose chief claim to fame is that he traffics in lines of poetry, will be entirely baffled by the question; . . . (Lord, 1964, p.25).¹⁷

It was the concepts of linear segmented sequentiality and arrested time that made possible the invention of movable type printing; the visuality of handwriting acted back upon itself and created the potential for mentally arresting and splitting up the action of scribing. Furthermore, the difference inherent in phonetic literacy between word and meaning, form and content, enabled man to conceive of the blank page as a container into which could be poured meaning in the shape of interchangeable bits of type, linearly and sequentially arranged. Finally, consciousness of linearly segmented

processes itself facilitated the invention of the actual process of movable type printing, which involves a number of different steps, sequentially arranged.¹⁸

It was undoubtedly the invention of movable type printing which both facilitated and actively encouraged the formulation of Western man's epistemology in its most extreme and crystalline form. Although manuscript literacy permitted the rise of all the visual concepts so far mentioned, it could not allow for the rise of uniformity (homogeneity) and repeatability to the extent possible in post-Renaissance society. Manuscripts of the same 'article' or 'book' were copied at different times by different people with different handwriting. Quite clearly, a copy made by one person would, in all probability, look quite different to a copy made by another, and there was no guarantee that the wording of one copy would be identical with the next¹⁹. Furthermore, the number of copies that could be made by this method was obviously limited. Movable type printing, on the other hand, made possible the production of hundreds of copies all of which were identical.

This development of uniform outlook may be said to have two aspects, one physical, the other mental. Firstly, the extreme visuality and segmentation encouraged by printing, together with the regularity and repeatability of the printed page, instigated the concept of a unified pictorial space. The encroaching immediacy and tangibility of pre-literate man's environment, his disunified, multidimensional but 'uniquely structured spaces and times' (McLuhan, 1962, p.178) were eventually syncretised into the depth of a single three dimensional space. The visual stress of printing thus gave a focal point to the distancing and spatiality of phonetic literacy.

But this development of a single physical point of view has an intellectual analogue, as Goldschmidt indicates (1943, p.113):

It cannot be doubted that for many medieval writers the exact point at which they ceased to be 'scribes' and became 'authors' is not at all clear We are guilty of an anachronism if we imagine that the medieval student regarded the contents of the books he read as the expression of another man's personality and opinion. He looked upon them as part of that great and total body of knowledge, the *scientia de omnia scibili*, which had once been the property of the ancient sages.

The organic wholeness of knowledge is split into *segmented* and

individual points of view, a development that Marshall McLuhan links to the advent of silent reading²⁰ (1962, p.125): 'The reader of print . . . stands in an utterly different relation to the writer from the reader of manuscript. Print gradually made reading aloud pointless and accelerated the act of reading till the reader could feel "in the hands of" his author.' But it was not only the reader who reacted to this desire for uniformity of feeling:

Individual writers throughout the sixteenth century varied tone sentence by sentence, even phrase by phrase, with all the oral freedom and flexibility of pre-print days. Not until the seventeenth century did it become apparent that print called for a stylistic revolution. The speeding eye of the new reader favoured not shifting tones but steadily maintained tone, page by page, throughout the volume. . . . By the eighteenth century the reader could depend on a writer controlling the purr of his sentences and giving him a swift smooth ride. Prose became urbane, macadamised. The plunging, rearing horses of sixteenth-century journalese were more like a rodeo. (McLuhan, 1970, p.129).

Instead of partaking of the dialectically ongoing *scientia de omnia scibili* therefore, typographic man internalised a segmented, permanent, finished and individually propagated piece of knowledge²¹.

In the same way that historical dialecticism inculcated a lineal sense of the past, so the predictable repeatability of the printed page reinforced the lineality of the future. This reinforced sense of lineal futurity found its clearest expression in the concept of applied knowledge: 'The Medieval Book of Nature was for *contemplatio* like the Bible. The Renaissance Book of Nature was for *applicatio* and use like movable type'. (McLuhan, 1962, p.185). The analytic method inherent in phonetic literacy and historical dialecticism coupled with the concept of repeatability gave typographical man the idea of projecting the analytically examined causes and effects of past events into the future. Science as we have understood it since the Renaissance grew out of this one level (the *single* point of view), lineal, mono-causal epistemology. And the acid test of the accuracy of scientific prediction lies in the *visual* observance of repeatability, an approach unknown before the Renaissance. As McLuhan (1962, p.184) points out in referring to the work of Nef (1958, p.27):

Observation and experiment were not new. What was new was insistence on tangible, repeatable visible proof. Nef writes . . . 'Such insistence on tangible proof hardly goes back beyond the

times of William Gilbert of Colchester, who was born in 1544. In his *De Magnete*, published in 1600, Gilbert wrote that there was no description or explanation in the book that he had not verified "with his own eyes". But before printing had had a century and more to build up the assumptions of uniformity, continuity and repeatability, such an impulse as Gilbert felt or such a proof as he offers would have attracted little interest.

Indeed, nowhere is the epistemology of modern industrial man so clearly evidenced as in the Newtonian/Laplacian view of the universe. As words are locked into the homogeneous printed page, so the universe is viewed as homogeneous empty space peopled by discrete and ultimately immutable units of matter. The indestructability of matter is itself a concept analogous to the idea of permanence engendered by the keeping of written records, and the juxtaposition and motion of matter in space may be predicted by invoking laws derived from the past observation of matter in space. Future events may thus be *determined* and ultimately *controlled*, and the increased control of knowledge resulting from the distancing and objectivity of phonetic literacy may be said to have reached its highest pitch.

The Newtonian/Laplacian view of the universe, in being induced by an epistemology generated by phonetic literacy and typography, in turn reinforced that epistemology to the extent that modern Western man failed to differentiate between what was legitimately predictable and controllable in terms of Newtonian mechanics and what lay outside the field of those laws. The crucial step in formulating this all-inclusive cosmology is the unfounded assumption that all reality consists in the material. This assumption derives from conceiving matter, which is not maintained by people, in the image of eternal unchanging type which is maintained as such by people. In this way matter was assigned a spurious eternity and immutability which encouraged people to think of it as somehow basic or fundamental to the operations of the universe. As a result the concept of matter tended to obscure all else: 'For psychological reasons²², the concept of matter sometimes obscured the concept of void or both concepts obscured that of motion; and nearly always the concepts of space, matter and motion tended to obscure that of time'. (Capek, 1961, p.135). It was this assumption that all reality was ultimately grounded in the material that both facilitated and encouraged the hegemony of scientific thought in modern Western culture:

Science is, of course, the unquestioned source of authoritative knowledge in the modern world. Scientific myths enjoy the claim of being factually true even if they are in no way demonstrable, even if they must be taken on faith, even if they attempt to answer what are, after all, unanswerable questions. Scientific myths have the great advantage in this self-conscious society of not appearing as myths at all but as truths, verified or capable of being verified by the inscrutable methods of the scientist. (Carey, 1967, p.38).

This hegemony was in many ways inevitable, because not to support it would have necessarily resulted in a questioning of the single unified pictorial space upon which Newtonian physics is predicated, a questioning hardly likely to be undertaken in view of the enormous practical 'benefits' derived therefrom. In this way the seduction became complete, and typographical man assumed that the behaviour of all phenomena could ultimately be explained and predicted in mechanical terms. As Helmholtz put it, 'To understand a phenomenon means nothing else than to reduce it to the Newtonian laws'. (Quoted, Hanson, 1965, p.91).

A similar, if paradoxical²³, process occurred with the more metaphysical aspects of industrial man's world sense. As people gradually filtered out experiences which did not conform to the order of matter in space, so they began to filter out the inflectionally coded information of spoken discourse:

Inflectional complexity, in written form, is not only burdensome for the ear; it is also in conflict with the spatial order that the scanning eye finds natural. To the eye, inflections are not part of the simultaneous order of linguistic variations, which they are for the ear. The reader's eye not only prefers one sound, one tone, in isolation; it prefers one meaning at a time. Simultaneities like puns and ambiguities — the life of spoken discourse — became, in writing, affronts to taste, floutings of efficacy. (McLuhan, 1970, p.125).

Because of this inherently paradoxical parallel with industrial man's approach to the material world, it is important to make perfectly clear the relationship between the Newtonian/Laplacian view of the universe and the more general 'material-factual' mode of thought intimated by McLuhan. For, *from the point of view of the analysis of industrial ideology*, the Newtonian/Laplacian world view is no more than a particularly lucid expression of that ideology. The ideology also finds expression in the analysis of other spheres of activity which, on the face of it, have little to do with classical

physics. But so seductive is the Newtonian/Laplacian world view, and so strong is scientific mythology that some people, such as Helmholtz, believe that, at least in theory, every phenomenon can be reduced to its constituent material parts and satisfactorily explained through classical physical theories. All that such people will usually admit is that in many cases this procedure is prohibitively complex and detailed. This constitutes the strictest formulation of the industrial world sense. A further, less strict, formulation remains possible without however resurrecting those aspects of experience filtered out through the approach under discussion. That is, that although all phenomena may theoretically be reducible to their constituent material parts, a completely adequate explanation of these phenomena according to material-factual modes of thought does not require this. This latter position is the one that has been *unconsciously* adopted by many people in European civilisations since the Renaissance. For them everything is rationally explicable when *reduced* to the appropriate analytic constituents. Anything which cannot be so reduced and which therefore cannot be made *visually explicit*, immediately becomes non-knowledge:

The inflectional suggests, rather than expresses or spells out, relations. Technology is explicitness. Writing was a huge technological advance in this respect. It expressed, it made explicit, many relations that were implicit, suggested in inflectional language structures. And what writing couldn't make explicit quickly got lost. Far more than writing, printing was a technological means of explicitness and explanation. But those auditory inflections and relations which could not be made visually explicit by print were soon lost to the language . . . (McLuhan, 1970, p.132).

This is not to say that the power of this mode of thought has not varied considerably over the last five hundred years²⁴. At no time, however, was it as pervasive as during the Enlightenment:

Seeing the beautiful demonstrations of Descartes and Newton as they explained the heavens with their co-ordinates, the great classical minds sought to rival this perfection and simplicity on earth. Philosophers used the geometric method to arrive at moral and religious truth; social scientists reduced government to mechanics; the tragic muse imitated the tight deductive gate of Euclid; and I am not merely playing with words when I say that poetry itself adopted one common meter as if scientific accuracy depended on it. In all the imponderables of life, conduct, and art, the test was no longer the flexible, 'Is it good,

true or beautiful for such and such a purpose?' but 'Is it correct?' (Barzun, 1943, p.40).

The paradox indicated at the beginning of the previous paragraph occurs because the epistemological dichotomy of industrial man is capable of acting back on itself at more than one level. In other words, the tendency described in the previous two paragraphs for industrial man to suppress the inner, mental, subjective and emotional side of the dichotomy and emphasise the outer, physical, objective and intellectual, operates in *both* the physical *and* metaphysical (oral) aspects of his world sense. This paradox thus points up the central ambiguity of the world sense, an ambiguity already indicated in respect of industrial man's temporal sense²⁵. For although industrial man tends to think that all phenomena are susceptible to material-factual modes of thought, he cannot, if pressed, deny the temporal flow of his own consciousness. Unfortunately, because world senses are processual phenomena to be lived in rather than examined, industrial man is seldom pressed. His consequent inability to differentiate between what is genuinely material-factual in the universe and what isn't has thus led to an unfounded assumption of *total* objectivity. He has, in other words, *unconsciously* slid into the position of thinking himself to be *totally* outside time and ultimately *totally* capable of knowing about everything, including himself (a proposition which is inherently schizophrenic). Industrial man *tends* to see existence projected before him on one long, flat vista²⁶.



In view of this exposition of the industrial world sense, it is useful to briefly indicate why Marshall McLuhan's theories have met with such a tentative and negative response in many quarters. It will be remembered that one of the corollaries of the meaning/symbol split was a concentration on what somebody 'actually' meant, in contradistinction to what they may have spoken or written. The result of this process is a desire to fix the hard information from the uncertain flux of the original utterance. In this sense content may be thought of as the significant *matter* which may be poured into the empty *form* provided by the spoken, written or printed word. As McLuhan has so succinctly put it (1962, p.252): 'The effects of the phonetic alphabet in translating the audible-tactile world into the

visual world was both in physics and literature to create the fallacy of "content".' Since content has been equated with the side of the epistemological dichotomy traditionally assigned the higher reality, it is not surprising that, for typographical man, media, the forms into which meaningful content is poured, are inconsequential, neutral and certainly not, in themselves, constitutive of knowledge.

As already suggested, this 'view' of media is fallacious. Media influence the balance of the very sensory processes that people use to filter the information coming to them from the environment. In the words of the crowning McLuhanism: 'The medium *is* the message' [Italics mine].

* * * *

One reason for the 'psychological' barrier which prevents Langer and Meyer from adopting a sociological stance towards the question of significance in music may now be briefly given. Because a higher rational priority is traditionally assigned to the material than the metaphysical, there has been a tendency to think of the 'materials' of society, the people and the environment on which they depend, as somehow more important to the social process than the symbols those people emit. The symbolic superstructure is taken to depend for its significance on the organisation of people and goods that constitutes the kinship/political/economic infrastructure. This view once again depends on a multi-level interpretation or transformation of the epistemological dichotomy described above. In the first place, as we have seen, the *matter* or content of a message is given a higher rational priority than the medium of its conveyance. But precisely because the matter of a message is divorced from the *materiality* of its inconsequential conveyancing medium (*all* symbolic transfer involves *some* articulation of the material universe), it appears as thoroughly metaphysical in comparison with the materiality of people and the goods they manufacture. Symbolic utterances thus come to be given a lower rational priority than people and goods, and to be seen to depend for their significance on the social infrastructure. Were the materiality of symbolic transfer not discounted in this fashion, such division of the social process (itself interdependent with the epistemological dichotomy of industrial man) would be impossible. This understanding of the social process is, of course²⁷, entirely consistent with the view that a symbol has

meaning because it refers to something outside itself, in this instance some process in the infrastructure. This being the case, the significance of music cannot be socially situated because such situation would again invoke the notion of extra-musical concepts:

Yet the explanations furnished by reference to political, social and cultural history tell only part of the story. For stylistic changes and developments are continually taking place which appear to be largely independent of such extramusical events. Although an important interaction takes place between the political, social and intellectual forces at work in a given epoch, on the one hand, and stylistic developments, on the other, there is also a strong tendency for a style to develop in its own way. If this is the case, then the causes of these changes must be looked for in the nature of aesthetic experience, since for composer and listener style is simply the vehicle for such an experience (Meyer, 1956, p.65).

Once again, the music theorist is caught on the horns of Western man's epistemological dichotomy.

Media and Social-Intellectual Structures

The reason given above for the lack of a sociological approach to the question of musical significance is not the only one. Before going on to put forward a theory for musical significance which transcends the epistemological dichotomy of industrial man, therefore, it is necessary to briefly discuss two other *interdependent* reasons. These two reasons form aspects of the social-intellectual structure prevalent in industrial society, a structure which, in being predicated on the industrial world sense, is again *interdependent* with that world sense.

This section thus seeks to situate the social-intellectual structure of modern industrial man both historically and across the boundaries of the class stratifications which are symptomatic of it. The historical perspective serves to emphasise the necessarily culture-specific nature of any structuring, while the concern with anti-classical movements within the structure serves to demonstrate that, despite shifts in power between social classes, and despite an increasing degree of democracy, the overall structure remains essentially the same. Anti-classical movements, in other words, *tend to be articulated in terms of classical structures*.

Social-intellectual structures are primarily the result of the inter-subjective legitimations of political-economic power groups *dialecti-*

cally mediated through the influence exerted by media on man's sensory and cognitive faculties. The process of legitimation — whether achieved by all the members of a society turning their attention to the process at one time, or by specific members appointed by society who do little else — involves encompassing the entirety or a part of everyday reality, and putting its imposing massivity, within which everyday tasks are carried out, at a distance. The automatic acceptability of everyday reality is potentially suspended, and the legitimators voluntarily place themselves in a position where they are more exposed to the impact and implications of fresh phenomena and events. The recession from everyday reality that is inherent to legitimation thus results in an intensification of individual awareness, the degree to which this awareness may progress being determined ultimately by the means of communication and media available to a society.

So, for reasons already discussed²⁸, increased awareness in a pre-literate society cannot help but be re-integrated or sublimated into the collective ego during the ritual that symbolises legitimation. The potential for divergent opinions which impinge closely on the assumptional framework of these societies is low, as the political-economic power group is, to a large extent, constituted by the entire society.

Ideogrammatic literacy, however, encourages the formation of a distinct group of legitimators who align themselves with the ruling elite in a society. Ideogrammatic languages usually entail a vast number of signs (some 50,000 in Chinese, of which 3,000 are necessary for a reasonable degree of literacy²⁹) which can thus only be learnt and manipulated by a small group of specialists, a phenomenon which in itself brings about an emergent division of labour. Because of the vast potential contained in any form of literacy for the improvement of the administrative and commercial activities of a society, these specialists were of great importance to rulers. There thus existed a natural propensity for the scribe and the ruler to act together in common purpose. As a result of this propensity, and the fact that ideograms do not code sounds³⁰, the only information coded is that relevant to the ruling elite; to become literate is to unavoidably acquire both the outlook and the ideas of the ruling class, ideas which are of little use or relevance to the ruled oral classes. Goody and Watt have noted the emergence of these characteristics in ancient Oriental civilisations (1963, p.314):

... it is a striking fact that ... in Egypt and Mesopotamia, as in China, a literate elite of religious, administrative and commercial experts emerged and maintained itself as a centralised governing bureaucracy.... Their various social and intellectual achievements were, of course, enormous, but as regards the participation of the society as a whole in the written culture, a wide gap existed between the esoteric literate culture and the exoteric oral one, a gap which the literate were interested in maintaining. Among the Sumerians and Akkadians, writing was the pursuit of scribes and preserved as a 'mystery', a 'secret treasure'.

Unlike the various forms of hieroglyphic literacy, phonetic literacy is relatively easy to learn, the number of symbols involved usually varying between twenty and forty. Also, as it is possible for phonetic literacy to encode the spoken language of the *entire* society, it does not inherently militate against the interests of any particular group in that society. Phonetic literacy could thus be viewed as a potential democratising influence on a previously autocratic regime. Whether or not this influence held sway in any particular society depended on other factors which there is insufficient space to discuss here³¹.

There can be little doubt, however, that phonetic literacy also aided the incipient division of labour facilitated by ideogrammatic literacy (that is, a basic split between mental and physical tasks). As the concepts of spatialism, segmentation, sequentiality and control developed from the influence of phonetic literacy, so the literate elite were more and more exposed to the conceptual parameters within which it was possible to conceive the idea of fragmenting the individual processes of a physical task, and assigning them to different persons. Once this stage had been reached, it was then possible to conceive of tasks which could not be completed by one man, or by a very few men working according to the principles of a relatively unsophisticated division of labour, but which, for reasons of time or skill, would necessarily require the efforts of several men working in succession. This principle, as will be shortly indicated, can then be applied to the whole existence of a society, so that its different activities can be achieved with the maximum of skill and efficiency. Consequently, not only is the role of the legitimator entrenched by the division of labour, but the division itself, facilitated by the legitimator's intellectual orientation, allows for the growth of class and enables the ruling classes to utilise the services of the legitimator in preserving the *status quo*. As instigator and as

part of the division of labour, the legitimator tends to have a vested interest in its preservation. Until at least the end of the eighteenth century, therefore, a literate élite governed the 'civilised' world in autocratic fashion.

Typography is as equally a double-edged weapon for encouraging democracy as phonetic literacy. On the one hand, the typographical process, in which individual bits of type can be changed around to form the desired page, engendered the projection of organised mechanisation and regimentation right throughout society. As uniform printing gave rise to the mechanistic view of space and matter, so it gave rise to the idea of using men like the mechanically interacting parts of a machine. Man has become, in the industrial process, the inter-changeable atomistic parts of a mono-causal lineal process, and, as the interchangeable cog in the nation's machinery, he became necessarily homogeneous. The division of labour reached a new peak in efficiency.

The homogeneity of industrial society was achieved through the destruction of the 'mutuality' of feudal society. No longer did a person play a universally understood and specific role in his local society. Through increasing urbanisation he became a depersonalised source of labour to be slotted into a huge centralised scheme. McLuhan describes the transformation in the following way (1962, p.162): 'The feudal system was based on oral culture, and a self-contained system of centres without margins . . . This structure was translated by visual, quantitative means into great centre-margin systems of a nationalist mercantile kind . . .' As the simultaneously divergent viewpoints³² and time-spaces³³ of medieval man were snapped into three-dimensional focus, so the disparate functioning of feudal units were unified into a single national point of view. But as society changed from one of centres without margins to one of a centre with margins, so did man. Formerly a 'centre' whose activities were mediated by the oral immediacy of other 'centres', industrial man floats comparatively rootless in a constantly changing social milieu. No longer is the rationale of social existence to be located in an immediate self-contained society, but in a remote centre — that of nationalism:

. . . the development of writing and print ultimately fostered the breakup of feudal societies and the rise of individualism. Writing and print created the isolated thinker, the man with the book, and downgraded the network of personal loyalties which

oral cultures favour as matrices of communication and as principles of social unity. (Ong, 1967, p.54).

Industrial man, in other words, must provide his own margins, a process increasingly enabled through the advent of literacy, that surrogate other. The alienation of homogeneous atomistic individuality essentially constitutes the agony of post-Renaissance objective self-consciousness.

Besides being encouraged by the uniformity of function induced through the homogeneity and repeatability of print, the growth of nationalism was also aided by the improved control at a distance made possible by the easier production and propagation of knowledge. Clearly, this control yet again helped to entrench a high division of labour. Moreover, since the market potential for printed books was greater than could be satisfied by a clerical elite reading in Latin, an increasing number of books were published in the vernacular. Ethnic groups thus became more conscious of their own national identity because they could, in a very literal sense, see themselves.

But, as suggested earlier, typography may also act as a force for democracy. This possibility — and hence the double-edged nature of both phonetic literacy and typography — ultimately exists because of the central ambiguity inherent in the industrial world sense. The nationalism just described, for example, both contains and is predicated upon the suppressed distinction of physical and mental time indicated above. For while homogeneous individuality is a necessary adjunct of nationalism, in that men with self-contained margins are required to act interdependently for the centrally dictated aims of the nation, those same men, increasingly more literate and critical, came to be more conscious of the self and its relationship to others, and so gained an increased possibility for formulating and voicing anti-classical opinions: ‘individualism, whether in the passive atomistic sense of drilled uniformed soldiery or in the active aggressive sense of private initiative and self-expression, alike assumes a prior technology of homogeneous citizens.’ (McLuhan, 1962, p.209). The growth of self-expressive individuality fostered and was in turn reinforced by the emergence of the concept of authorship in post-Renaissance Europe, a concept, as noted, that is uncommon in the Middle Ages.

The possibility inherent in phonetic literacy for an analytic approach towards the discrepant bodies of knowledge that may be

stored in a society thus approached something like full fruition during the Renaissance, and the phenomenon of cultural lag consequently becomes of importance in examining the *entire* body of knowledge in modern society. The vast dissemination of books and knowledge that has resulted from printing has encouraged divergent opinions simply because the actual body of knowledge a person may be exposed to could well be, and probably is, different in every case. No one man can now know everything. As Goody and Watt have pointed out (1963, p.324): 'the content of the cultural tradition grows continually, and in so far as it affects any particular individual he becomes a palimpsest composed of layers of beliefs and attitudes belonging to different stages in historical time'. In literate societies, therefore, where the legitimator, as assignor of values, constitutes the class of person most intimately exposed to discrepancies and contradictions, there exists the potential for the legitimator's high degree of self-consciousness to be at variance with his role as maintainer of the established social symbology. Which direction he takes will largely depend on whether he has a vested interest in a *status quo* or is indifferent or hostile to it. Those legitimators who choose to erect new symbolic structures act as catalysts and initiators in the process of change or 'progress', a process which figures prominently in the consciousness of modern Western man.

The role played by printing in creating the intellectual fervour of the Renaissance need not be recounted. However, it was not until the late eighteenth century that anti-classical movements took on a strong *class* orientation. Raymond Williams (1961, p.50) tells us that 'from the third and fourth decades of the eighteenth century there had been growing up a large new middle-class reading public, the rise in which corresponds very closely with the rise to power and influence of the same class'. Because of this increased market, the author no longer needed to work for a patron but could make his money in the open market-place. As Dr Johnson indicates (writing in 1750), a change of subject matter results:

The task of our present writers is very different; it requires, together with that learning which is to be gained from books, that experience which can never be attained by solitary diligence, but must arise from general converse and accurate observation of the living world. Their performances have, as Horace expresses it, *plus oneris quantum veniae minus*, little indulgence, and therefore much difficulty. They are engaged in portraits of which everyone knows the original, and can detect

any deviation from exactness of resemblance. Other writings are safe, except from the malice of learning, but these are in danger from every common reader . . . (Quoted, McLuhan, 1962, pp.273-274).

The result was that, in reading material produced for them and about them, the middle classes began to gain a consciousness of their political position and of its desirability. This consciousness gradually spread to the working classes during the nineteenth century³⁴.

Increasing class consciousness was aided by other developments, such as the mechanisation of transport systems and the close proximity of the working classes in the emerging urban areas, both of which can be related to the growth of industrial nationalism. Consciousness led to and went hand in hand with a demand for increased education, until the foundations were laid for an ongoing critical, political and economic dialectic. The legitimator in society, instead of exclusively aligning himself with a ruling elite who have a vested interest in class stratification, may now be found as the representative of practically any class or group.

Phonetic literacy and typography have thus been heavily instrumental in generating a class dialectic, but *within* the framework of political and economic nationalism. From the situation where individual feudal units *were* very much the people that constituted them, industrial society has moved to a situation where the nation state has become a big hopper in which occupants can be placed and shifted in a highly mobile fashion. Nationalism is founded upon the fallacy of form and content; it is not of the people because it contains them. It is permanent while people are mortal. And as the nation is not constituted of specific individuals it has appeared as a pre-existing and generally unquestioned fact of life: 'Because the national state does not belong to the citizens of any particular generation, it must not be revolutionised' (McLuhan, 1962, p.221).

Class dialogue has thus been overwhelmingly concerned in practice, if not in theory, with who shall wield the centralised power of nationalism and to what effect. Only very recently have there been signs of a general awareness of the inherent paradoxes of industrial man's social and intellectual organisation, and a general realisation that perhaps only a fundamental restructuring of that organisation will remove some of its major problems³⁵. In a parallel fashion anti-classical legitimating *structures* have generally been conceived

within the intellectual, political and economic frameworks outlined in this chapter³⁶, and so grounded very much on the noetic structures induced through phonetic literacy and typography. Literate legitimators, in other words, in self-reflexively receding from the immediacy of everyday reality, have had great difficulty in recognising the consequences of their own literacy.

The intellectual analogue of this social structure is easy to identify. Due to the high division of labour, hierarchical class structure and centralism of nationalism, the legitimator, in all spheres of society, remains very much in the position of producing and defining knowledge for other people³⁷. At the national level academics and artists have generally been associated with those who govern, as this statement by Adam Smith strongly suggests:

In opulent and commercial societies to think or to reason comes to be, like any other employment, a particular business, which is carried on by a very few people, who furnish the public with all the thought and reason possessed by the vast multitudes that labour. (Quoted, Williams, 1961, p.52).

For the central dissemination of knowledge to remain unchallenged, it is necessary that knowledge is arbitrarily conceived. This arbitrariness is closely inter-related with the notions of objectivity, and form and content — form and content because the *matter* of a message is removed from the social location of its communication, and objectivity because reality is thought of as given rather than socially constructed. The supremacy of this independent and objective knowledge over that resulting from social mediation was symbolically asserted through Plato's expulsion of the poets:

Plato's banishment of the poets and his doctrine of ideas are two sides of the same coin. In banishing the poets from his *Republic*, Plato was telling his compatriots that it was foolish to imagine that the intellectual needs of life in Greek society could still be met by memorising Homer. Rather than deal in this verbalisation, so much of a piece with the non-verbal life-world, one needed to ask more truly abstract questions. (Ong, 1967, pp.33-34).

Thought and action, mind and body, self and physical environment were separated to such a degree that a considerable amount of importance was able to be given to the 'cerebrally derived' at the expense of the socially experienced:

In classic Hegelian thesis-antithesis fashion Plato's ideas, the 'really real' were polarised at the maximum distance from

the old oral-aural human life-world. Spoken words are events engaged in time and indeed in the present. Plato's ideas were the polar opposite: *not events at all but motionless 'objective' existence, impersonal and out of time.* (Ong, 1967, p.34).

Meaning is thus isolated from its social context and comes to be grounded in a scheme of *absolutes*:

In oral culture words — and especially words like 'God', 'Justice', 'Soul', 'Good', — may hardly be conceived of as separate entities, divorced both from the rest of the sentence and its social context. But once given the physical reality of writing, they take on a life of their own; and much Greek thought was concerned with attempting to explain their meanings satisfactorily, and to relate these meanings to some ultimate principle of rational order in the universe, to the *logos*. (Goody and Watt, 1963, p.330).

Quite clearly, any assertion that the reality or knowledge of a society is *socially constructed*³⁸ not only brings into question the notion of absolute objective knowledge, but also implicitly *questions the right of one group of people to define that knowledge for everyone else.* Ultimately, the entire centralised structure of nationalism comes under scrutiny.

Music and the Structure of Industrial Society

At the beginning of the previous section it was stated that there were two inter-related reasons why Langer and Meyer could not assign a social significance to music. It was also suggested that these reasons formed integral aspects of the social-intellectual structure prevalent in industrial society. It is now possible to briefly argue and illustrate the reasons.

Firstly, if the significance of music is taken to be socially located, then it must be understood to form an aspect of the socially constructed reality of the group or society responsible for producing the music in question. In other words the music can only legitimately be understood in terms of the categories of analysis which themselves form an aspect of the reality of that particular group or society. The tendency of the musician or aesthetician in industrial society to approach *all* music in terms of certain *arbitrarily* defined categories thus comes seriously into question.

Secondly this questioning would in turn question the propensity of institutionalised musicians³⁹ to impose centrally a certain kind of

'musical knowledge' on the rest of society. In particular, it would question the propensity of those musicians to decide what 'counts as music' and, furthermore, to decide what counts as 'good' music for the remainder of society⁴⁰. Such centralised decisions of course necessitate arbitrary categories of analysis and understanding.

Examples of such arbitrary categories are not difficult to find. The notion that musical significance is ultimately located in 'psychological constants' or 'psychological laws of "rightness"' is itself arbitrarily derived. But perhaps the best example is provided by Victor Zuckerkandl (1956, pp.222-223), when he asserts that musical significance is located in *laws* which may only be discovered by the composer in *objective reality*:

It is not that the mind of the creative artist expresses itself in tones, words, colours, and forms as its medium; on the contrary, *tone, word, colour, form express themselves through the medium of the creative mind*. The finer that medium the better tone, word, colour, form can express themselves. The greater the genius, the less it speaks *itself*, the more it lends its voice to the tones, the words, the colours, the forms. In this sense, then, music *does* write itself — neither more nor less, by the way, than physics does. The law of falling bodies is no invention of the genius of Galileo. The work of the genius consists in bringing the mind, through years of practice, so into harmony with things, that things can express their laws through him⁴¹.

The above passage from Zuckerkandl well illustrates the way in which arbitrarily derived categories of understanding are not surprisingly grounded in the world sense of industrial man. This phenomenon finds explicit musical expression in the work of Meyer, when he attempts to extrapolate a universally applicable theory of music from albeit insightful analyses of tonality⁴². Again not surprisingly, pre-literate music does not fair very well:

The differentia between art music and primitive music lies in speed of tendency gratification. The primitive seeks almost immediate gratification for his tendencies whether these be biological or musical. Nor can he tolerate uncertainty. And it is because distant departures from the certainty and repose of the tonic note and lengthy delays in gratification are insufferable to him that the tonal repertory of the primitive is limited, not because he cannot think of the other tones. It is not his mentality that is limited, it is his maturity. (Meyer, 1967, p.32).

This statement of Meyer's represents a classic case of ethnocentrism.

cism. He refuses to consider that pre-literate man's world sense is so greatly different from industrial man's that criteria derived from tonality *are simply inappropriate* to pre-literate music⁴³. The search for objective standards of value must be maintained:

At this point some of our social scientist friends, whose blood pressure has been steadily mounting, will throw up their hands in relativistic horror and cry: 'You can't do this! You can't compare baked alaska with roast beef. Each work is good of its kind and there's an end of it'. Now granted both that we can enjoy a particular work for a variety of reasons and also that the enjoyment of one kind of music does not preclude the enjoyment of others . . . this does not mean that they are equally good. Nor does it mean that all modes of musical enjoyment are equally valuable. In fact, when you come right down to it, the statement that 'each is good of its kind', is an evasion of the problem, not a solution of it. And so we are driven to ask: are all kinds equally good. (Meyer, 1967, pp.34-35).

It should now be abundantly clear why Meyer and other music aestheticians cannot possibly locate musical significance as an aspect of socially constructed reality. For not only does such location raise the all-pervasive problem of form and content⁴⁴, but it also ultimately brings under scrutiny the entire centralised social-intellectual structure of industrial society. No music aesthetician is likely to begin such a scrutiny even *implicitly*, for as an institutionalised academic he has an *unconscious* vested interest in that structure. In other words, if a musician or aesthetician questions not only what he says about music, but, in so doing, his right to speak exclusively to and on behalf of other people, he *potentially* puts himself in the unenviable position of questioning the legitimacy of his own socially designated role. The workings of the musical process tend to be conceived as absolute, permanent and ultimately discoverable beyond the vagaries of human thought and perception because such an approach aids mystification and so role-security. To ignore the social nature of music is thus to articulate the social-intellectual structure of industrial society.

The tendencies described in the previous paragraph do not arise from any *conscious* political motive. There can be no question of an 'autocratic conspiracy'. They result rather from the *unconsciously-seated* inability of musicians and aestheticians to follow through the logical implications arising from the *related aesthetic and political* problems surrounding the 'meaning' of music. And given the

particular characteristics of the industrial world sense and the inter-related social-intellectual structure of industrial society, there can be little doubt that these problems have been extremely intransigent. Because of its inherent nature, music, perhaps more than any other phenomenon to impinge on our sensory and cognitive faculties, has highlighted the assumptions and deficiencies both of our social organisation, and of our traditional outlook on the world.

In this respect, one final point can be made. At the beginning of the chapter it was stated that the question of meaning in the representational arts is not necessarily problematic. Meaning in these arts can be 'adequately' located in content. Consequently, analysis in social terms becomes easier and, moreover, of little danger to the traditional social-intellectual structure, because it is carried out in terms of the categories mutually interdependent with that structure (that is, the categories of form and content). What is said within a structure is of little consequence to the structure unless it actively questions the assumptions upon which the structure is grounded. *It is precisely the very great difficulty of coming to grips with the meaning of music in terms of form and content that has paradoxically made arbitrary and central definition with regard to music extremely easy.*

To put it another way, there can be two possible responses to the difficulty of the 'meaning' of music. One is to avoid the difficulty. In this case, because traditional ways of looking at the world are totally unsuited for an adequate understanding of music, it becomes extremely difficult to use the categories of that world sense to question any central and arbitrary theories⁴⁵. The other response is to confront the difficulty, and construct a sense of the world which allows for an adequate understanding of the musical process. This is the purpose of the following chapter.

NOTES

1. The discussion in this section owes much to the work of Berger and Luckmann (1971), and Cicourel (1973).
2. This proposition is argued by Duncan (1968, pp 44-46).
3. The necessity for this indeterminacy or creativity is argued below in Chapter Two.
4. The term 'world sense' is used in preference to the term 'world view', since 'world view' betrays the strong visual orientation of modern industrial man and so encourages the same culture-specific concepts that Chapter Two attempts to transcend. 'World sense', on the other hand, continually underlines a social construction of knowledge which is mediated by the effect of all media on the balance of the senses. The distinction will become clear during the course of the chapter.
5. The reader may have difficulty in gaining an insight to this importance. It may help, therefore, to draw a comparison with typographical civilisations where the printed word tends to take on an authority and importance that is not always warranted. In a different way, messages conveyed in and through sound have an equal kind of authority and importance for pre-literate man.
6. cf. Hallowell (1937, p 669).
7. cf. Leach (1954, pp 115-120).
8. The contrast between industrial man's spatialised concept of time, and pre-literate man's intuitive processual understanding is reinforced through the structure of their respective languages. cf. Whorf (1971, pp 142-143).
9. cf. p 13 above.
10. cf. *Media and Social-Intellectual Structures*, p 34 below.
11. Further substantiation of this 'sense' of the word for non-literates is given by Riesman (1970, pp 109-110).
12. cf. pp 7-8 above.
13. cf. Ong (1967, p 45).
14. Langer is here referring to a statement by Wagner in *Opera and Drama* that 'orchestral language expresses just what is unspeakable in verbal language, and what, viewed from our rationalistic standpoint, may therefore be called simply *the Unspeakable*'.
15. For a more detailed application of this line of thought to Meyer's most recent (1973) publication, see Shepherd (1976, pp 42-43).
16. This view results both from industrial man's ability to 'halt' time in its continual flow and from the importance the line plays in his mode of thought.

17. The transition indicated in this paragraph was, of course, extremely slow, and one which went through many stages. One such stage is represented by the way in which 'words' were frequently 'joined up' in the writing of antiquity. Oral flow, in other words, still permeated some chirographic literacy. cf. Goody and Watt (1963, p 319) and Kenyon (1937, p 35).
18. cf. Ong (1967, p 48).
19. cf. Chaytor (1970, p 123). This difference in look meant that recognition of a particular 'article' or 'book' was as much aural as visual, a fact which again underlines the gradual nature of the shift from oral-aural to visual culture (cf. n. 17 above). Further evidence of this gradual change is provided by the comparative difficulty that medieval and ancient civilisations experienced in reading (cf. Chaytor, 1970, p 117 and p 122) and by the way in which reading aloud persisted as the norm until well into the Renaissance (cf. Ong 1967, p 21, p 55 and p 58).
20. cf. n. 19 above, especially Ong (1967, p 58).
21. This move towards uniformity and the single point of view is reflected in the standardisation of spelling and of the meaning of words. In this latter regard McLuhan (1970, p 129) comments that 'even nowadays a medieval dictionary would be impossible, since individual writers assumed that they were free to define and develop any given term as their thought proceeded'.
22. Capek (1961, p 135) makes a direct connection between these psychological reasons (which correspond very closely to the arrangement of industrial man's sensorium) and the repression of certain aspects of experience he is indicating: 'In the classical model physical reality was constituted by four fundamental entities: space, time, matter and motion. All other concepts, including that of energy and momentum, were derived ones; similarly, attempts to reduce the number of basic entities to fewer than four were not successful . . . Tactile sensations disclosed the reality of matter, visual sensations the reality of space. Since visual and kinesthetic sensations disclosed the reality of motion, motion, too, was a sensory datum. But to what sensory datum did the reality of time correspond? It can neither be touched nor seen; it manifests itself most conspicuously in the auditory sensations which since the time of the ancient atomists have been excluded from physical reality; or in the emotional introspective qualities which by definition do not belong to the physical world. It is true that in the sensory perception of motion we concretely experience succession and that the concept of motion presupposes the concept of time; but it is psychologically understandable that this logical order was forgotten and, as motion in the form of spatial displacement was more accessible to perception and imagination, it was made the very basis of the concept of time in the relational theory'.
23. This paradox is explained in the subsequent paragraph.
24. Generally speaking, it may be thought of as gradually increasing until the Enlightenment, and then decreasing until the beginning of the

present century, when changes of a rather different nature began to take place. Although pervasive, the mode of thought never went unchallenged, even at its height. One can think, for example, of the eighteenth-century satire of the book, or Blake's opposition to Newtonian thought.

25. cf. p 23 above.

26. It is in fact possible to derive two contrasting epistemologies from the industrial world sense. For convenience these epistemologies may be labelled the 'universal' and the 'dichotomous'. The dichotomous asserts that any particular phenomenon may be understood *either* in terms of the physical, outer, objective world, *or* in terms of the inner, mental, subjective world. This is the epistemology that, for obvious reasons, musicians implicitly support. The universal, in repressing this latter side of the dichotomous, accepts that *all* phenomena are explicable in terms of the physical, outer, objective world. This rigorous formulation of the industrial world sense is only possible in the light of the knowledge of how that world sense came into being. For people who do not question the assumptions upon which their sense of the world is founded and who consequently live largely *unconsciously* within the industrial world sense, the categories of understanding derived therefrom do not appear nearly so clearly formulated. Rather, there is an uneasy and nebulous vacillation 'around' and 'between' the two epistemologies that passes for one homogeneous epistemology appropriate to the common understanding of the world. This uncertainty is, of course, further aggravated by the way in which the categories of understanding may act back on one another at different levels. Precise analyses of the way in which the categories interact in any situation thus tend to be lengthy and tedious. The purpose in this chapter has been to convey a general impression of the principal features of the industrial world sense.

27. That is, because it is interdependent with the epistemological dichotomy of 'form' and 'content'.

28. cf. pp 13-18 above. More specifically (cf. Carothers, 1959, p 308), pre-literate man is relatively unable to partially step outside himself, and be reflexive or 'intellectual' where his own reactions to events are concerned. The facility for discussing a problem internally with 'self' is severely restricted, and so the problem is acted out externally with others. Ong (1967, pp 132-133) relates an incident which supports this analysis: 'The riots in the Republic of the Congo at the achievement of independence a few years ago perhaps provided more recent evidence of oral-aural anxiety syndromes. I recall in particular the press report of a Congolese officer whose comment when he was asked about the riots was quite simply, "What did you expect?" That is to say, "Don't armies everywhere riot this way from time to time when the pressure builds up?"'

29. cf. Goody and Watt (1963, p 313).

30. cf. p 19 above. The ossifying influence of hieroglyphic literacy is referred to by Goody and Watt (1963, p 313): 'Any system of writing which makes the sign stand directly for the object must be extremely complex. It

can extend its vocabulary by generalisation or association of ideas, that is, by making the sign stand either for a more general class of objects, or for other referents connected with the original picture by an association of meanings which may be related to another either in a continuous or discontinuous manner. Either process of semantic extension is to some extent arbitrary or esoteric, and as a result the interpretation of these signs is neither easy nor explicit'. Again (p 315): 'the conservative and antiquarian bias of hieroglyphic societies can perhaps be best appreciated by contrasting it with fully phonetic writing; for phonetic writing, by imitating human discourse, is in fact symbolising not the objects of the social and natural order, but the very process of human interaction in speech: the verb is as easy to express as the noun; and the written vocabulary can be easily and unambiguously expanded. Phonetic systems are therefore adapted to expressing every nuance of *individual* thought, to recording *personal* reactions as well as items of major importance'. [Italics mine].

31. The different degree to which phonetic literacy aided or hindered the growth of democracy in Ancient Greek and Roman civilisations, for example, is discussed by Fisher (1936, p 44) Goody and Watt (1963, p 318 and p 322), Kitto (1951, p 66), McLuhan (1962, p 61), and Ong (1967, p 34).

32. Marshall McLuhan, for example (1962, p 136) has pointed out that: 'it was disturbing to scholars to discover in recent years that Chaucer's personal pronoun or his "poetic self" as narrator was not a consistent *persona*. The "I" of medieval narrative did not provide a point of view so much as immediacy of effect. In the same way grammatical tenses and syntax were managed by medieval writers, not with an idea to sequence in time or space, but to indicate importance of stress'.

33. Georges Poulet (1956, p 7) tells us that: 'For the man of the Middle Ages . . . there was not one duration only. There were *durations*, ranked one above another, and not only in the universality of the exterior world but within himself, in his own nature, in his own human existence'. Further, medieval man's concept of matter has clear implications for his concept of space (since space is ultimately articulated or 'marked out' by matter): 'To change was to pass from potentiality to actuality. But this transition had nothing about it necessarily temporal. By virtue of the Christian doctrine of omnipotence, it could have a temporal quality only if there were some cause which did not allow the immediate transformation by divine action of the potentiality into the act. And this cause which required that *time be involved in the change* was a certain defect of matter . . . From this point of view, matter was nothing other than a resistance which, manifesting itself in the substance of a thing, hindered that thing from assuming instantly the fullness of being which its form would confer upon it; a resistance which introduced distance and tardiness, multiplicity and delay, where everything, it seemed, should have happened simultaneously and at once'. (Poulet, 1956, pp 4-5). This high degree of interdependency between matter and *different 'times'* or durations necessarily involves a diversity of *different 'spaces'* or extensions.

34. This growing consciousness is evidenced in the change of meaning with words such as 'class' and 'democracy'. cf. Williams (1961, pp 14-15).
35. This awareness has become possible because the media of our communication are again in the process of altering the arrangement of our sensorium and the orientation of our noetic foundations. Electrical forms of communication are restoring the immediacy and simultaneity of our awareness of world events. cf. McLuhan (1964).
36. Marx is probably the first thinker to have broken from these frameworks and dispensed with the fallacy that knowledge is somehow absolute, permanent and ultimately 'discoverable'. In 'turning Hegel on his head', he and Engels provided a theory of historical and economic processes that saw these processes as manifestations of human constructs acting back upon themselves. And there is little doubt that media philosophers, in extending such an approach to the very language that mediates our existence, have vastly expanded the scope of the critical sociological tradition that began with Marx.
37. Dissension among and between members and groups in nation states is not evidence of conflicting and different social-intellectual structures, because the dissension generally arises from the essential structural paradox of nationalism and so pervasively articulates that very structure. Legitimizers still centrally define knowledge for their group, even if that knowledge conflicts with the knowledge of other groups, whether at the same or a lower or higher level in the overall hierarchic structure.
38. cf. *The Social Construction of Reality*, pp 9-11 above.
39. By 'institutionalised musicians' is meant those musicians who belong to institutions (such as conservatories, university music departments, orchestras and so on) dedicated to the 'serious' tradition of European music.
40. This question of the social control of 'what counts as music' is considered in detail by Graham Vulliamy. cf. Chapters Six and Seven below.
41. The outlooks of Langer and Meyer are not, of course, far removed from this view of Zuckerkandl's. Although Langer and Meyer allow the human mind a greater role in the compositional process, they still think of musical significance in terms of 'internal' (cf. Zuckerkandl, 1956, p 68) 'objective' 'laws', whether or not they are ultimately discoverable.
42. This trend is particularly noticeable in Meyer (1956) and Meyer (1973). With regard to this latter book cf. Shepherd (1976). It is assumed here that tonality encodes and creatively articulates the industrial world sense (cf. Chapter Three below).
43. Meyer's attitude (cf. Meyer, 1967, p 32 — also Meyer, 1956 and Meyer, 1973) is that all music should conform to a straight line sequence aimed at an emotional climax or culmination. Lee (1970, p 142) has already indicated (cf. also above pp 22-23) that this outlook on life is *specific* to modern Western man. Since music encodes and creatively articulates the structure of life and meaning for all men (cf. below Chapter Three), it is hardly surprising that, viewed through the criteria appropriate to tonality,

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pre-literate music appears somehow inferior. For it is tonality, and *only* tonality, that encodes Western man's spatialised notion of time.

44. cf. pp 33-34 above.

45. The situation is aggravated of course by the fact that the 'central' and 'arbitrary' theories are themselves grounded in the categories of the industrial world sense. If they are questioned in terms of these same categories, they will *necessarily* be confirmed, cf. pp 11-12 above, the brief discussion of sociological method.



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