The Metaphysics of Attunement

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Introduction

How does one attune oneself to the meaningful unfolding—the *music*—of our living cosmos? This question is a specific rendering of the central concern for aspirants of philosophy since at least the time of Pythagoras; put succinctly, it is the problem and paradox of effort and grace. Traditionally this problem has been met by a more complex understanding of human willing than has been recognized by the "freedom" of choice touted by modern, "secular" liberalism. The everyday cultivation of attention towards the end of living virtue was once recognized the world over as a necessity for moral action. Achieving the heights of attention was naturally construed in terms of a participatory vision, but after the rise of scientific materialism, metaphors of vision may easily be misinterpreted by late modern subjectivity, habituated as it is by an reifying gaze. In this essay I aim to redeem the philosophical vision of initiation by retrieving the more primordial metaphor of musical proportion and the metaphysical theology to which it was tuned. After reflecting on the evolution of consciousness through the mirror of *musica speculativa* I attempt to elucidate Owen Barfield's notion of *final participation* and its actualization through a metaphysics of attunement. I then address the socio-economic conditions that would be necessary for subjects to cultivate themselves for attunement and imagine a post-growth society in which the Romantic potentials of modernity come to full fruition.

I. In the Mirror of Music

In his introduction to the anthology *Cosmic Music*, musicologist and scholar Joscelyn Godwin opens with the obligatory acknowledgement of our ongoing world crises and makes a prescription: "What our difficult and threatening times need, more than anything else, is a revolution in cosmology: a complete revision of the way in which educated people have been

trained to regard their cosmic environment."[1] Such a revolution must be even more epochal than the Copernican, says Godwin, for rather than simply exchanging one *image* for another (the geocentric for the heliocentric), the birth of a new cosmology may require us to close our eyes and listen. "What is now demanded," writes Godwin, "is that the ear again be given precedence over the usurping eye: that tone, not diagrams or words, be acknowledged again as the truest reflection of reality, and hearing honored as the sense through which we can best learn of its nature."[2] As I will elaborate later on, the eye and the ear need not be held in antagonism—Owen Barfield has actually even argued for their integration—but as critiques of the metaphysics of presence, the illusion of simply located objects, and the objectification of livings beings attest, the eyes may benefit from a music lesson. Robert Lawlor attributes part of the problem to our language (English at least); because it language lacks a multi-leveled structure, we apparently do not have the capacity to

> describe a spatial experience apprehended non-visually… we do not know how to experience or communicate about a space generated solely by audition, or any other sensorial modality apart from sight. This means we cannot accurately conceive the subtle, non-visual resonance which occurs between our thoughts about things and the things themselves; and thus we create an imaginary space in which our webs of mental images exist, so we think, separately from the real world of material objects.[3]

[1] Joscelyn Godwin, *Cosmic Music*, (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions 1989), 4.
[2] Godwin, *Cosmic Music*, 4-5.
[3] Robert Lawlor, "Ancient Temple Architecture" in *Homage to Pythagoras*, ed. Christopher Bamford. Pp 35-132. (NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1994), 58.

That ancient languages bodied forth a resonant relationship between thinking and things is evident in the classical idea of an occult sympathy shared in by all beings and the particular correspondences it makes possible between them. The philosophical vision of initiation I aim to redeem in this essay sees correspondences by virtue of the participatory metaphysic such phenomena invite the seer to discover. For Godwin the ancient discipline of *musica speculativa* has the capacity to awaken the ears of the eyes and consists in holding music up to reality as a mirror; the history of this intrinsically human discipline is therefore sparkling with the particularities of different cultures while each partakes of the universal movement we call music. "Speculative music, like any science," explains Godwin,

> makes the same revelations to anyone who works in it sincerely, irrespective of his other persuasions. But whereas the consensus in a haptic science such as biology or chemistry is a superficial one, leaving its deeper assumptions untouched, in speculative music, as in any esoteric study, the case is reversed. All biologists agree as to the observed behavior of organic substances: but the ways in which they define Life, the subject of their science, will vary according to their philosophical or religious convictions. In our science, on the other hand, surface opinions and practices may differ as widely as Western music does from Chinese, yet the principles behind all of them are identical.[4]

That "sound (or tone, or music) is ontologically prior to material existence" is one such principle which unites practitioners of speculative music, a principle that expands the meaning of music far beyond its usual designation as artfully composed sound.[5] What justifies such an expansion?

[4] Godwin, *Cosmic Music*, 7.
[5] Ibid.

And, relatedly, does such an expansion not render the category of music meaningless? If not, what generality unites the range of musical phenomena? My responses to these questions are informed by the thousand year old echoes of Pythagoras, he who was the first to employ the term *philosophia* in its proper meaning as the love of God's Wisdom.[6] In his introduction to the *Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library,* David R. Fideler describes how Pythagoras' practice of *philosophia* was a continuation of Orphism, "an esoteric, private religion of Ancient Greece, named after the legendary musician Orpheus, 'founder of initiations.'"[7] Orphic initiates were induced to remember the divine origin of their reincarnating souls, a truth obscured by the "tomb-like" body, and to pursue "a series of purifications and rites" such that a process of divinization gradually freed the soul from the wheel of reincarnation.[8] According to Fideler, Pythagoras accepted the reality of reincarnation, but shifted the emphasis of his soteriology away from an overconcern with excarnation to the more cosmically affirmative practice of *philosophia*. Initiates of the latter assimilate to God by awakening to themselves as microcosms of the macrocosmic shrine. For the Pythagoreans, Fideler writes, "the problem is not so much of becoming divine as becoming aware of the divine, universal principles within."[9] Because the soul was understood to be harmonic in origin, the philosophical process of purification consisted in an apprenticeship to the Wisdom exhibited by the external world. Such Wisdom is the subject of mathematics as figured in the four branches of the traditional quadrivium: arithmetic, geometry, music/harmonics, and astronomy. Pythagorean thought unites quality and quantity in the primordial creativity of capital "N", Number, which, when set in motion (time), becomes

[6] David R. Fideler, "Introduction," in *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Phanes Press, 1987), 19.
[7] Fideler, "Introduction," in *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library,* 31.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

music or *harmonics.* Thus the generality which unites the range of musical phenomena, from cosmogony to concerto to the movements of emotion, is the qualitative connectivity of Number. Robert Lawlor puts it quite succinctly: "Pythagorean thought allows us to use the characteristic laws of audible sound as a metaphor for all other periodic or oscillatory phenomena."[10] Imaginatively, we may also extend this metaphor to what transcends space-time as the pure relationships of Number in arithmetic and to the spatial expression of Number's proportional relationships in ideal, geometric form. If Godwin's asserting the ontological priority of "sound (or tone or music)" summoned metaphysical protest in the reader (e.g. sound presupposes a material medium), I hope my extension of musicality to arithmetic and geometry grounds the rationale for music's expansion to what is anterior to space-time.

II. The Logos of Relation

Cultivation through the quadrivium disciplines induces anamnesis in the soul by reminding it of its participation in living Number. Fideler suggests we think of this capacity to remember as the soul's capacity for *resonance* or *harmonic attunement*. "If, as the Pythagoreans held," Fideler suggests,

> man is a microcosm, and the soul a harmony, perhaps it is through a form of resonance that we relate so intensely to the archetypal ratios of musical proportion. Moreover, by experientially investigating and employing the principles of harmony in the external world, one comes to understand and activate those same principles within.[11]

[10] Lawlor, "Ancient Temple Architecture," 47.
[11] "Introduction," in *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, 34.

Upon activating the soul's capacity for resonance the occult web of sympathy described above is then disclosed as a *living* reality, one constituted by the Pythagorean principle of ***harmonia***: "The Universe is One," explains Fideler,

> but the phenomenal realm is a differentiated unity—the world is a unity in multiplicity. What maintains the unity of the whole, even though it consists of many parts, is the hierarchical principle of harmony, the ***logos*** of relation, which enables everything to have its place in the fabric of the all.[12]

Harmonia is the ***logos*** of relation that constitutes a metaphysics of participation; it describes the metaxic bond of Wisdom uniting the above with the below. ***Harmonic attunement*** consists in awakening the principles within after or as one discovers them without. Criticizing the abstract atomism of today's mere number, Lawlor conveys a cognitive feeling for the harmonic wholeness of capital "N," Number, as discovered in arithmetic:

> In systematizing number in this way [atomistically] we forget that number continuity really only progresses through a wave-like alternation (odd-even), that there are no discontinuous magnitudes nor discrete parts, that a unity can never exist outside a contiguous flow. This is why the Greek word ***arithmos*** denotes the definite and discrete, but also means rhythm and unbroken relatedness.[13]

The seer who can hear the ***harmonia*** of ***arithmos*** attunes to the unbroken relatedness singing between the intelligible realm of Forms and the manifest world of becoming. One can only coherently imagine this middle realm—what Plato called the ***metaxu***—if geometric form is

[12] Fideler, "Introduction," in ***The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library***, 43.
[13] Robert Lawlor, "Pythagorean Number," in ***Homage to Pythagoras***, ed. Christopher Bamford. Pp 187-212. (NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1994), 193.

understood to fan out from the qualitative, proportional character of Number.[14] Particulars may then be recognized as participating in universals, or transcendent Forms, which give shape to the becoming of these particular beings. The late architect and scholar of sacred geometry Keith Critchlow describes how the term ***logos*** enjoyed a broad semantic scope in classical Greece, ranging from the dynamic tension underlying the Heraclitean cosmos, as true knowledge in the apotheosis of Plato's dialectical journey, the categorizing force of Aristotelianism, and Empedocles' ***logos*** of cyclically transforming forces, ordered—in Pythagorean fashion—by ***harmonia*** as "the proportional blending of opposites."[15] For some of us today the word "proportion" might carry similar connotations as mere (lowercase "n") number does—abstract, impersonal, of instrumental value only. Situating proportion-as-***logos*** back in the Greek milieu of Number from which its ubiquity arose helps to expand and revivify its meaning. The generality of proportion as ***logos*** informs Plato's method of reasoning in the phenomenal world, a method called ***analogia***. "Geometric proportion or ***analogia***," writes Critchlow,

> is essentially demonstrated in number by a three-term set, in which the middle term is greater than the first by the same ratio or proportion as it is smaller than the third[, a set of relations that constitute a harmony between parts and wholes]… Reasoning by ***analogia*** was then the Greek way of reasoning [harmonically] by wholes rather than by parts… Underlying it is the fundamental unknowability of matter, and the consequent necessity of understanding it by analogy.[16]

[14] Lawlor, "Pythagorean Number," 191.
[15] Keith Critchlow, "The Platonic Tradition on the Nature of Proportion," in ***Homage to Pythagoras,*** ed. Christopher Bamford. Pp 133-168. (NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1994), 136-137.
[16] Critchlow, "The Platonic Tradition on the Nature of Proportion," 138.

Plato's ***Timaeus*** is one of the most sophisticated and self-conscious examples of reasoning by ***analogia*** because he has Timaeus make explicit that his marvelous cosmogony is in truth a "likely story," and yet one that should be taken seriously—judged in ***proportion*** to the unspeakable reality it seeks to imitate. Whether or not his tale is a "fit" is the only correct criterion for judgement. The ancient epistemic valuation of ***analogia*** may seem incomprehensible or even childish to contemporary thinkers conditioned by the pretensions of scientism. Critchlow's reference to the "fundamental unknowability of matter" is lost on proponents of the latter, mesmerized as they are by their hypostasized models. In contrast, the ***logos,*** or "proportionality," writes Lawlor,

> was to the ancient epistemologist the basic process underlying all creation, as well as the knowledge of creation. We only establish knowledge about something through its relation to something else. Language, image, symbols, formulae, measurement, observation are all products of ***analogos***, for the human mind has the tendency to register, understand, and recall events in terms of the similarities to, and differences from, other events. The mind is, from this point of view, an instrument for making analogical models; that is to say it is an instrument whereby one thing may see itself reflected in another—which is, in a certain sense, a way to describe love.[17]

Human beings may develop their capacity for harmonic attunement to the ordered cosmos through the loving exercise of ***analogia***, especially (for Plato at least) in the form of ***dianoia***, "the principle of proportional ratio… which relates sense (***aesthesis***) and opinion (***doxa***) to true

[17] Lawlor, "Ancient Temple Architecture," 88.

knowledge (*episteme*)."[18] The capacity for *dianoia* is partly cultivated through mathematics, a necessity in Plato's Academy that is one of the more obvious continuities between his philosophy and the Pythagorean purification by mathesis. The "fundamental unknowability of matter" referred to by Critchlow above only applies to *dianoia* as the mediator of sense perceptions and archetypal ideas, but for the initiated vision of the seer what shines through matter is the Wisdom of God. As Werner Jaeger relates in his multivolume work *Paideia,* the principle value of mathematical knowledge for Plato was its potential to effect the "awakening of the abilities asleep in the soul," culminating in time with the initiate's "'conversion'…to transcendental reality."[19] Once this has been achieved the cognitive power of *noesis* dawns in the soul wherethrough knowledge becomes a matter of assimilation to the Ideas of God which shape the object to be known. If, as Lawlor suggests above, the exercise of *analogia* is tantamount to love, noesis represents its ultimate climax in the simultaneity of knower and known.

III. Orpheus Induces

Jaeger describes Plato's soteriological reformation of paideia (education) as "epoch-making" for its emphasis on conversion as "the wheeling around of the 'whole soul' towards the light of the Idea of the Good, the divine origin of the universe."[20] Plato's innovative reform constitutes the founding of theology proper as "knowledge of God (= the Good)," or "the study of the highest problems in the universe by means of philosophical reason."[21] The continuity between Plato's theology and the Pythagoreans consists in the identification of the Good—

[18] Critchlow, "The Platonic Tradition on the Nature of Proportion," 140.
[19] Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture Volume II: In Search of the Divine Center*. Trans. Gilbert Highet. (NY: Oxford University Press, 1971) 303.
[20] Jaeger, *Paideia Volume II,* 294.
[21] Jaeger, *Paideia Volume II,* 298.

God—with the One, or Unity, that which is antecedent to creation. "In other words," explains Fideler, "the Pythagoreans did not see One as a number at all, but as underlying number, which is to say [that] numbers… may be seen as manifestations of diversity in a unified continuum."[22] The human soul's assimilation to that which underlies all manifestation—Good, God—is a logic of salvation informed by the widely influential Orphic movement which permeated Greek thought during the lives of Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle. "Without it," says Jaeger, "Plato and Aristotle could never have developed the theory that the human spirit is divine, and that man's sensual nature can be dissociated from his real self, which it is his true function to bring to perfection."[23] Jaeger dismisses the idea that the soteriological element was present in Orphism as such and instead points to its doctrine of the soul's divine origin as the precipitating factor in the evolution heralded by the first theology. "It had, unlike the Homeric conception of the soul," writes Jaeger, "a frankly moral significance. Any creed which lays down that the soul comes from God and does not perish, naturally teaches that it must be kept pure during its earthly existence; and a believer in such a creed feels himself responsible for all his conduct during this life."[24] Jaeger goes on to insist that this doctrine necessarily leads to a conception of the body as "essentially bad." In contrast, Christopher Bamford has suggested the we consider Orphism as an expression of what Owen Barfield called "original participation," a mode of human consciousness which experiences itself united with the life communicating itself through the phenomena of perception. Unlike the mode of consciousness which has achieved the ability to objectify its own bodily organization (the precondition for intended bodily dissociation), variants

[22] Fideler, "Introduction," in *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, 21.
[23] Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture Archaic Volume I: Archaic Greece*. The Mind of Athens. 2d Ed. Trans. Gilbert Highet (NY: Oxford University Press, 1967), 168-169.
[24] Jaeger, *Paideia Volume I*, 166.

of original participation are more typically defined by a lack of such strong demarcation between the soul and the body, self and world. "Of this vision," writes Bamford,

> music is the privileged model, both as cosmology and as to communication… In other words, behind every phenomenon, there lies a reality of an animistic, super-sensible order, and just as one can make an open string vibrate by sounding its own note on a nearby instrument, so one may conjure up and communicate with a spirit by providing it with a song or a tone. The universe, which is body, is song from this point of view, and Orpheus is the child of what he teaches.[25]

For the Greeks music included "the spoken word, the ***logos***," a fact which finds expression in the picture of Orpheus as the son of she who presides over eloquence, epic poetry, and whose voice is a harmony—the chief of the Muses, Calliope.[26] Orpheus teaches his mother-tongue, reminding us that his is ours too, for his music is informed by the very web of cosmic sympathy I have referred to above as ***harmonia***. This "original Orphism," as Bamford calls it, is even more primordial than what Pythagoras and Plato set forth because through it "meaning and experience are still one in the sense-object. Through sense-images, which are names, words, songs, the Gods are spoken. So knowledge is concrete, something seen, witnessed, lived."[27] What becomes a soteriological process of divinization in the philosophy of Pythagoras and Plato was in Orphism the shamanic mediation between the god Dionysus, or the image of the soul's descent into bodily existence and forgetfulness, and the sun god Apollo, or the image of the soul's reascent through daemonic remembrance. Echoing Jaeger's claims regarding the moral development catalyzed by

[25] Christopher Bamford, "Introduction: Homage to Pythagoras," in ***Homage to Pythagoras***, ed. Christopher Bamford. Pp 11-34. (NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1994), 20.
[26] Jaeger, ***Paideia Volume II***, 211.
[27] Bamford, "Introduction: Homage to Pythagoras," 29.

Orphism, Bamford describes the movement in Greece as a revolution: "For what Orphism seemed to have proclaimed," writes Bamford

> was the Orphic way of life, the possibility of any individual attaining by his own *effort*, together with the action of *grace*, a transcendent purity synonymous with divinity. The revolutionary aspect lay both in the fact that the Orphic way was open to all and so universalized the Mystery and the hieratic initiations of the past epoch, releasing the one from determination by sacred geography and the other from determination by caste and Temple, and also in that, as far as one can gather, Orphism taught the possibility or promise of resurrection: the idea of a transcendent, unfallen aspect of the soul, which we may call the Daimon.[28]

Readers take note: I've italicized effort and grace in the quotation above as a premonition of the central paradox animating the metaphysics of attunement I will soon turn to articulate. Implicit in Bamford's description of the historical development called Orphism is his particular take on the evolution of consciousness. Following Barfield and Rudolf Steiner, Bamford discerns formal causation at work in the evolutionary morphology of consciousness. Thus, the redemptive promise of Orphism and the increasing sense of self-conscious responsibility that is its correlate are not mere effects of a history of ideas. The latter is of course a factor in the evolution of consciousness, but more primary for the thinkers above is an assumed entelechy or unfolding of a teleological process marked by changes in the mode of participation exhibited by human consciousness. That said, perhaps it might be more accurate to say that Orphism catalyzed Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle to articulate—and by doing so ***further***—the evolutionary achievement of self-consciousness that was already underway. The need for redemption reflects

[28] Bamford, "Introduction: Homage to Pythagoras," 17-18, my italics.

what Barfield describes in his masterful work, ***Saving the Appearances,*** as the gradual ***withdrawal*** of participation whereby the world is progressively emptied of meaning (***logos***) as the human subject is increasingly filled with it, resulting eventually—as is evident today in industrialized civilizations across the world—in the belief that the human being is the exclusive locus of meaning. Yet, as Bamford writes, "we are at the turning [point], really at the same turning [point] still that Pythagoras was on and situated," for his philosophy, and Plato's as well, were articulated with the intention to lift the human being back into communion with the cosmic symphony of meaning—a state of being embodied by the musician-god Orpheus.[29] The Pythagorean translation of Orphism pictured the pupil's aspiring "by means of various disciplines to become one—A-pollo, not many—and by becoming one enter into relation with the all—Dionysus."[30] As a Pythagorean himself, Plato carried on the translation and in the articulation of his unique philosophical vision reveals, says Bamford, early signs of the withdrawal of participation described above. "For by Plato," writes Bamford,

> […] the Numbers, which he calls forms or ideas, are already in some sense separated from the sense world: they are no longer things; nor are things, as they were for Thales, hieroglyphs of God. They are and they aren't, and Plato is suspicious both of the senses and the sense world. Consequently ***epistime*** / knowledge / the world of ideas becomes separated from the sense-perceptible world—not that the senses do not mislead, but the idea that the senses can be transformed begins to be doubted. Also the ethical/moral nature of the sense-perceptible world begins to be lost.[31]

[29] Bamford, "Introduction: Homage to Pythagoras," 31.
[30] Bamford, "Introduction: Homage to Pythagoras," 28.
[31] Bamford, "Introduction: Homage to Pythagoras," 29.

As Jacob Sherman notes in his "Genealogy of Participation," Plato's philosophy arose in response to the great cultural changes of his time as the rise of rational thinking conflicted with the former "anthropomorphic religious visions" in which things were still "hieroglyphs of God."[32] The Formal mode of participation elucidated by Plato's metaphysic was a ***rational*** "attempt to think the world as divinely saturated."[33] If we refuse to consider the evolutionary morphology of Western thought as a mere history of ideas, opening ourselves instead to the entelechy of its movement, the fact that Plato's Formal mode of participation portrayed ambivalence regarding the illumination of sense-perception should not lead us to lazily blame him for the abstract, "disembodied" consciousness dominant today. Supposing that the "ingathering withdrawal…[, the] concentration or centripetal ***deepening*** of participation" exhibited by the last 2000 years in the morphology of Western thought represents one phase of an ***informed*** evolution, Plato's philosophy becomes a valuable bridge to the past ***and*** to the future.[34] The possibility of redemption defines that future as one in which the light of true perception is restored, the cosmos transfigured—brought back to life and meaning. A kind of mirrored reversal occurs as the achievement of self-consciousness "out of the cosmic process" leads human beings to "return to it, to give back what we have received."[35] "This is a new birth of the Orphic word," declares Bamford, "a return of Pythagoreanism into Orphism, a new directive from Apollo."[36] What might this entail? In Iamblichus' ***Life of Pythagoras,*** the author is clear: Pythagoras was "a super-man," an initiate of the divinizing soteriology he set forth. As

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[32] Jacob H. Sherman, "A Genealogy of Participation," in ***The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies***, ed. Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 82.
[33] Sherman, "A Genealogy of Participation," 83.
[34] Owen Barfield, ***Saving the Appearances*** (CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 114.
[35] Bamford, "Introduction: Homage to Pythagoras," 31.
[36] Ibid.

such, he resembles Orpheus and together they both present the "possibility of any individual attaining by his [or her!] own *effort,* together with the action of *grace,* a transcendent purity synonymous with divinity."[37] In what follows I turn toward the questions that surround realizing this Orphic possibility in the twilight of late modernity, the early morning of the Anthropocene.

IV. Visionary Listening

Owen Barfield opens *Saving the Appearances* by discussing the inconsistency of historical thought in his day. I think it's safe to say the same inconsistency is still prevalent in 2021, namely, the abstraction of human consciousness from all considerations of world evolution. "It is invariably assumed," writes Barfield, "whatever the truth may be about the psychological nexus between man and nature, it is an unchanging one and is the same now as it was when men first appeared on the earth."[38] He then proceeds to challenge this assumption, to even abandon it, and traces the evolutionary morphology of consciousness that becomes apparent. The major development discernible in Western thought and its dispersal across the globe is described epistemologically by Bamford as the transition from original participation, or "mythological symbolic, connotative, concrete and synthetic" ways of knowing, to the "rising analytic denotative and abstract self-conscious mentality."[39] In an essay titled "The Harp and the Camera," Barfield analogizes the two instruments respectively with the epistemic approaches formerly described by Bamford. It is an aeolian or wind-harp in particular that Barfield ties to original participation whereby "the sounding harp in fact may be taken as an emblem for

[37] Bamford, "Introduction: Homage to Pythagoras," 17.
[38] Barfield, *Saving the Appearances,* 12.
[39] Bamford, "Introduction: Homage to Pythagoras," 17.

inspiration."[40] Elucidating his analogy further, Barfield reveals the truth "that it was not man who made the myths but the myths, or the archetypal substance they reveal, which made man. We shall have to come, I am sure, to think of the archetypal element in myth in terms of the wind that breathed through the harp-strings of individual brains and nerves and fluids, rather as the blood still today pervades and sustains them."[41] In contrast, the camera and its attendant metaphor of perspectival projection are expressive of what the "ingathering withdrawal" of participation has achieved—"the existence of separate, autonomous human spirits."[42] Unlike the wind-harp, the camera has an "inside" which receives light from without and records on film or digital censors a flattened image of the three dimensional world. Thus, for Barfield, the camera is an emblem of perspectival vision "projecting its own point of view, its punctiliar nothingness," and only a caricature of ***imagination,*** or true vision.[43] Reversing the well-known adage, "a camera never lies," Barfield insists that "in fact it always does lie. Just because it looks only in that immediate way, the camera looks always ***at*** never ***into*** what it sees. I suspect that Medusa did very much the same."[44] Camera, or Medusa consciousness, ultimately cashes out in the familiar dyad of post-Kantian philosophy: the subject and the tableau of objects (stones) it projects as its world. Following Coleridge, Barfield gestures toward a future for the camera by recalling its original form: the camera obscura, a contraption which projects images with ***sunlight***: "The mind," writes Barfield, "is at least not wholly an aeolian harp. For us there must be projection, and the question for the twentieth century is whether it is to be a projection of

[40] Owen Barfield, "The Harp and the Camera" in ***The Rediscovery of Meaning and Other Essays***, edited by Dr. Jane Hipolito. pp. 93-114. (Oxford, England: Barfield Press UK, 2013), 104.
[41] Barfield, "The Harp and the Camera," 110.
[42] Barfield, "The Harp and the Camera," 111.
[43] Barfield, "The Harp and the Camera," 106.
[44] Ibid.

nothingness or a projection of the sun-spirit."[45] The projection by individual minds of the sun-spirit can only arise through conversion—the soul's wheeling around to the light of God. Recollection of the Good as the source, the primordial unity, of all individuated being is the precondition for true vision—the vision of initiation. What is beheld through such eyes does not become a reified object—a stone—but is recognized as partaking of the same Life which grants the seer the capacity to behold. Uniting the metaphors, Barfield pictures the marriage of harp and camera: "Is it fanciful, I wonder, to think of a sort of mini-harp stretched across the window of the eye — an Apollo's harp if you will — as perhaps not a bad image for the joy of looking with imagination?"[46] A new relationship to the world arises through this marriage, one which makes individual vision a participant in the cosmic inspirations that come strumming through our wind-harp. Barfield's synthesis is an answer to a riddle posed to him by Percy Shelley's "A Defense of Poetry": how does one harmonize one's will with the cosmic winds of inspiration? In an essay titled, "Speech, Reason and Imagination," Barfield offers another picture of this development:

> We may very well compare the self of man to a seed. Formerly, what is now the seed was a member of the old plant, and, as such, was wholly informed with a life not wholly its own. But now the pod or capsule has split open, and the dry seed has been ejected. It has attained to a separate existence. Henceforth one of two things may happen to it: either it may abide alone, isolated from the rest of the earth, growing dryer and dryer, until it withers up altogether; or, by uniting with the earth, it may blossom into a fresh life of its own.[47]

[45] Barfield, "The Harp and the Camera," 112.
[46] Barfield, "The Harp and the Camera," 113.
[47] Owen Barfield, ***Romanticism Comes of Age***, (San Rafael, CA: The Barfield Press, 1966), 79-80.

The human being as seed of the "old plant" conveys the consciousness of original participation for which meaning is freely given by the divinely-saturated world; the isolated, individuated seed resembles present, perspectival consciousness and its vacuum of meaning; the flowering plant of its future pictures what Barfield called ***final participation***, or the actualization of the final cause lying in wait as the formal evolution of human consciousness unfolds. What is that telos? It manifests in the individual human being's conversion and subsequent divinization, remembering the "I AM"—becoming a child of God. I will henceforth refer to this state as the ***harmonic attunement*** of the will. But how and under what conditions might this be achieved? That the camera is overlaid by the wind-harp, the seed reunited with the earth, implies that becoming receptive is key: the resting eyes need a music lesson.

V. Health and Harmonia

In the third part of his multivolume *Paideia*, Jaeger reveals that much of Plato's inspiration derived from the practice of medicine during his time. The preservation of health as an ideal arose for the Greeks during the fourth and fifth centuries and with it the "concept of universal Nature" which informed Hippocratic medicine.[48] "Throughout it all," writes Jaeger of this time period, "the true doctor is presented as the man who never thinks of the part without thinking of the whole, who always see it as it affects and is affected by everything else."[49] Unsurprisingly, the centrality of proportion in Greek thought is evident in medicine too, perhaps most concretely in medicine. "The doctor's duty," writes Jaeger,

[48] Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture III: The Conflict of Cultural Ideals in the Age of Plato*. Trans. Gilbert Highet. (NY: Oxford University Press, 1986)
[49] Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture III,* 26.

> is to restore the secret proportion when it is disturbed by disease. In health, nature herself produces that proportion, or else she herself *is* the right proportion.
>
> Closely connected with the conception of proportion and symmetry is that of mixture, which really means a sort of equal balance between the various forces ruling the organism.[50]

I suggest that this "mixture" or "equal balance between forces" is equivalent to ***harmonia*** as the logos of relation, of which universal Nature is the paragon. Because the doctor knew Nature intimately he could guide those who came to him with sickness towards the natural, or normative condition of ***harmonia***—wherethrough parts are rightly related to their wholes. This organic understanding of health presupposes that, like Nature, living organisms are predisposed for wholeness and have the capacity to self-heal if supported in the right way. Much like Socrates, medical doctors are, at most, midwives for the immanent intelligence (telos) motivating the healing process. The preservation of health as an ideal led doctors to realize that they must educate their patients in the medical art of ***hygiene*** which included an expanded notion of diet, or the regulation of an individual's "whole routine of living."[51] As Jaeger has it, Plato's philosophy consists much in the formerly described aspects of medical science applied to the education of the ***soul***, a healing process which encompasses ethics, politics, and even metaphysics. Just as the patient of a Hippocratic doctor is facilitated in awakening their own self-healing capacity, so is the pupil of Plato's Academy facilitated in ***recollecting*** (anamnesis) his soul's origin in the source of all being—the Good, God. What is common to both is a normative principle, an ***intelligible*** standard (i.e. health, ***harmonia***), which universal Nature is seen as striving to attain.

[50] Jaeger, ***Paideia Volume III***, 27
[51] Jaeger, ***Paideia Volume III***, 30.

Human health thus consists in the creative imitation of universal Nature, or the ***harmonic attunement*** to the intelligible principle for which it strives. Plato exemplifies this in the ***Timaeus*** when he prescribes the philosopher the imitation of the cosmos for the preservation of health:

> if he models himself after what we have called the foster-mother and nurse of the universe and persistently refuses to allow his body any degree of rest but exercises and continually agitates it through its whole extent, he will keep in a state of natural equilibrium the internal and external motions. And if the agitation is a measured one, he will succeed in bringing order and regularity to those disturbances.[52]

I take this foster-mother, or wet nurse as he also refers to her, to be none other than the universal Nature referred to above. The continuous agitation Plato advocates comes just after he recommends a regimen of gymnastics that is equal to the amount of time a philosopher spends on intellectual disciplines—the two must harmonize. "They are forces," writes Jaeger, "which mould the spirited and rational sides of human nature. Anyone who can blend them in the proper harmony will be a greater darling of the Muses than the legendary hero who first put together all the strings of the lyre."[53] Plato's paideia, with its harmonizing layers of discipline, resembles a symphony in its formation of the soul. And indeed, instrumental music itself was held by Plato as an indispensable precursor to the philosophical life, for certain songs unconsciously imbue the budding pupil with an aesthetic understanding of virtues like grace and nobility. "Music trains us," writes Jaeger, "more precisely than any other subject, in recognizing what is right and what

[52] Plato, ***Timaeus***, in ***Plato: Complete Works***, ed. John M. Cooper and John D. S. Hutchinson; trans. Donald J. Zeyl, 1224–1291, (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 88d-e.
[53] Jaeger, ***Paideia Volume II,*** 234.

is wrong in a beautiful work and its performance."[54] Thanks to music, our souls are contoured to recognize, attune to, and so *become* the virtues we admire shining in the light of Good:

> Knowledge of good *grows* within us as Good itself becomes a reality taking shape in our souls. Therefore Plato holds that the best way to sharpen the eye of the mind is to train the character—a process in which the pupil unconsciously has his nature so changed by the highest spiritual forces, poetry, harmony, and rhythm, that he can finally grasp the nature of the supreme principle by being educated into it.[55]

The educative experience of Plato's paideia thus begins with a kind of enchantment, an in-singing of virtues which works to form the basis of initiatory vision. The initiated vision of universal Nature—the cosmos, "a thing that had come to be as a shrine for the everlasting gods," as Plato describes it in the *Timaeus*, is the prime embodiment of Good and the highest model for our imitative education.[56] Insofar as human consciousness today shares the same predicament as Pythagoras, is "really at the same turning point," as Bamford suggests, then—contrary to what many believe—Plato's philosophy still has much to offer us 2000 years later! The seed must reunite with the earth, remember the way of health—*recognize* the intelligible standard that Nature exemplifies. I now turn to the work of Hartmut Rosa, a contemporary sociologist whose work seeks to do just that, reintroducing a normative framework for attaining the good life in today's wildly relativist milieu. And it just so happens that the regulative ideal for Rosa's framework derives from the province of music—namely, the capacity to *resonate*.

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[54] Jaeger, *Paideia Volume II,* 229.
[55] Jaeger, *Paideia Volume II,* 230.
[56] Plato, "Timaeus," 37 c-d.

VI. Renewing the Normative

In *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*, Rosa challenges what he calls the "privatization of the question of the good life" in contemporary discourse, rejecting the relativistic charade of secularity.[57] The quality of one's relationship to the world is his measure for the good life, the ideal of which is ***dispositional resonance***, or an individual's capacity for sustained openness to the world. Rosa emphasizes that this openness is always a risk because it leaves one vulnerable to the potential of experiencing alienation; yet it is necessary, for resonance cannot be controlled or manufactured—the pole other than the subject must in some sense always remain free and mysterious for a true relationship to consist between them. "Capacity for resonance," writes Rosa, "is grounded in prior experience of what is foreign, irritating, unappropriated, and especially what is inaccessible, eluding one's grasp and expectations."[58] Through a contrapuntal dynamic, through friction, through ***touch***, early experiences of the world's inaccessibility facilitate the emergence of subjectivity itself. Following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Rosa posits that it is through a primordial relatedness that resonance precedes and begets the dyad of self and world, subject and object. An individual who enjoys dispositional resonance is privy to experiences that Rosa describes as affording ***adaptive transformation*** which "involves relationships and relations to the world becoming not fixed, but fluid; it involves the possibility of self and world becoming new and different and thus also the possibility of genuine encounter with what is foreign or 'other.'"[59] The emergence of subjectivity Rosa describes mirrors Barfield's evolutionary morphology of consciousness: the experience of

[57] Hartmut Rosa, Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World of the Self (Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019) 4.
[58] Rosa, ***Resonance***, 185.
[59] Rosa, ***Resonance***, 190-191.

self-consciousness is an achievement, a coagulation, a determination—a *crest* on the waves of the primordial, undifferentiated ocean of Life. Dispositional resonance may then be understood as the precondition for *harmonic attunement* of the will with the music of the world. It's crucial to point out that this harmonization does not spare us from alienation; it may be that a period of darkness is what the world tides have in store for our growth. A totalizing obsession for simple, happy harmony mows over the necessary freedom and mystery that constitute actual relationships. "Without a phase of alienation," writes Rosa, "we must presume the process of adaptive transformation, of *making resonant* or *making speak* cannot succeed… the depth of alienation also determines the potential fluidity of one's relation to the world and thus the depth of one's ability to be affected."[60] Rosa refers to adolescence as an archetypal event of alienation that all human beings mostly share; we might with justification describe the evolutionary transition from the predominance of original participation to the perspectival, camera consciousness characteristic of modernity as one bearing resemblance to the transition from childhood to adolescence.[61] During the latter phase human beings find themselves questioning authority and may even reject the traditions on offer which promise to grant one's life orientation. The challenge during this time is to come to an individual embrace of what Rosa, following Charles Taylor, refers to as *strong evaluation*, or the measure which organizes moral

[60] Rosa, *Resonance*, 189.

[61] In making this comparison I am by no means suggesting that the two developments are equivalent, i.e. that groups bearing original participation are somehow childishly inferior to those bearing modern, perspectival consciousness. Given their simultaneity it seems rather that the evolution of consciousness is a complex unfolding, one that involves all of humanity in mutual influence, much as an adult human being is a whole made up of parts that belong to prior phases of growth as well as those that are more ancestral, shared with the rest of the living Kingdoms of earth and beyond into the inorganic Kingdoms of the cosmos, and, finally, to the archetypal-spiritual. The comparative morphology demonstrated above is itself a form of analogical thinking.

life in accordance with what is deemed highest. All worthy traditions include strong evaluations and are founded by what Taylor has called "constitutive goods," goods which inform the inner compass we as human beings rely on to guide our moral action through life. Such a good might be Plato's Good—God. As Taylor writes, "the constitutive good does more than just define the content of the moral theory. Love of it is what empowers us to be good. And hence also loving it is part of what it is to be a good human being."[62] Barfield's characterization of modern consciousness as camera-like conveys the still-dominant idea that morality is something human beings bring into and *project* onto the world. In contrast, traditional peoples who bore (or bear still today) a variant of original participation do not conceive themselves as the exclusive locus of morality, but maintained (or maintain) an unproblematic fidelity to their constitutive goods. If Plato's contributions are recognized as an attempt to reconcile rationality with the *traditional* experience of a divinely saturated world, the relevance of his vision for modernity's predicament of (adolescent?) alienation becomes more apparent. "Resonant experiences may only be possible," Rosa surmises, "where strong evaluations are involved, as they (along with the constitutive goods behind them) first give form to segments of a world that are capable of 'speaking with their own voice,' that can *respond* or *appeal* to us (or *contradict* us)."[63] The segments Rosa refers to are what he calls *vertical axes of resonance* wherethrough the subject's counterpart is "perceived and experienced as a totality that exceeds the individual. In experiences of vertical resonance, *the world itself* in a way obtains its own voice."[64] Such segments include nature, art, and history as well as modern forms of religiosity and/or spirituality. These enter in

[62] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) 93.
[63] Rosa, *Resonance*, 134.
[64] Rosa, *Resonance*, 40.

lieu of the "loss of ***metaphysical axes of resonance***," traditions of theory and practice which the adolescent character of modernity either dismisses as naive, outmoded, or unknowable. And yet, it may be argued that the vertical axes which speak loudest to modernity (nature, art, history) have their origin in, at least in part, Neoplatonic metaphysical axes that have fallen silent, awaiting to be heard once again. I will return to this prospect at the end of the essay.

After reviewing studies emerging from a number of scientific disciplines focused on phenomena such as empathy research, mirror neuron activity, and the neurology of perception, Rosa concludes that resonance theory provides a justifiably descriptive account of the human organism. Rather than information exchange, scientists discern that the formerly mentioned processes largely involve entrainment, oscillatory synchronization, and of course—***resonance***. For example, mirror neurons are not so aptly named says Rosa, because what they support is not an exact neurological mirroring of what is perceived by the subject, but instead brain scans depict that the mirror neurons act as receivers for a "responsive excitation."[65] Thus, what is observed is rather like a wave rolling from the activity perceived ***through*** the perceiver's neurology, uniting the two in sympathetic ***resonance***. This process of resonance is not a materialistically determined mechanism, nor is it universally the same, but is one that may be blocked at will and is always individuated according to the particular person's neurologically reflected socio-cultural formation. Against any "neuro-reductionism," Rosa explains that "mirror neurons, as I understand them, rather constitute a possible neural basis for resonant phenomena that can be observed in — but do not ***produce*** or ***determine*** — the social world."[66] In an article introducing ***rhythm studies***, the late scientist Gunther Hildebrandt offers us further evidence for

[65] Rosa, ***Resonance***, 150.
[66] Ibid.

the descriptive reality of resonance by showing how resonant processes may be discerned between the human organism and the cosmos at large in "empirically-recorded frequency distributions between different circulatory and respiratory rhythms" throughout the 24-hour diurnal cycle.[67] Hildebrandt and his colleagues inaugurated their rhythm studies group to look into statements made by Rudolf Steiner regarding the evolution of consciousness and the concomitant emancipation of human beings from cosmic rhythms. According to Steiner, the rupture was one of thought—an emancipating (Promethean) epistemic rupture—one that might be overcome through a return to Orphism, a reacquaintance with the qualitative connectivity of living Number displayed in cosmic rhythms—***arithmos***. We might recognize Rosa as assisting in that reunion when he insists that "our various relationships to the world (cognitive, affective, and even physical) are able to be developed only through resonant processes."[68] Rosa deepens his legitimization of resonance theory by not only grounding the development of individual human experience and culture on resonant processes, but by extending it to encompass a transcultural orientation to the world: "Human beings long to experience the world as sustaining, nourishing, warming, and accommodating, and to experience themselves as effective within it, and they fear being exposed to a silent, merciless world in which they are powerless."[69] The normative dimension of resonance theory reflects the universal human longing Rosa articulates above and "aims at a ***critique of relations of resonance***, meaning a critical analysis of culturally institutionally established relationships to the world with a view to their resonant quality."[70] In

[67] Gunther Hildebrandt, "The Need for Rhythm Studies in Anthroposophic and Goethean Science" in ***When Healing Becomes Educating: Journal of Anthroposophical Medicine***, Volume I: Archetypal Themes in Anthroposophical Medicine (The Research Institute for Waldorf Education, 1986): 89–102), 96.
[68] Rosa, ***Resonance***, 151.
[69] Rosa, ***Resonance***, 450.
[70] Ibid.

many scenarios of our lives a reifying approach to the world—our bodies included—is necessary and unavoidable; the need for vaccines to combat the global COVID-19 pandemic is a case in point. Rosa acknowledges such realities and levels his critique more pointedly at the contemporary phenomenon of social acceleration, or "growth in quantity per unit of time," as a feature of late modern capitalism and its escalatory logic.[71] Much like the adolescent's alienated rejection of inherited values, subjects of modernity found themselves unmoored from any pregiven livelihood; instead one's position in the world was

> determined in the context of dynamic and often contingent competition. In late modernity, this means that this position is always subject to performative change; it is no longer simply found in adolescence and then cemented and developed over the course of one's life, but rather is marked by dynamic uncertainty and must repeatedly be fought for, defended, or exchanged. This means that subjects must necessarily experience themselves as relatively ***closed off*** from the world. They cannot be ***porously*** connected to, interwoven with or entangled in the world when they must constantly and dynamically ***reposition*** themselves.[72]

Instead of supporting the cultivation of dispositional resonance, the dynamics of late modernity encourage subjects to strategically close off from and live out a reifying relationship to the world—one which facilitates productivity and job security, while leaving little time for meaningful encounters with the world and its many others. This is why Rosa describes modernity as heralding the "catastrophe of resonance;" paradoxically, argues Rosa, the catastrophe has coincided with an increasing ***sensitivity*** to resonance. Resonant experiences (e.g.

[71] Rosa, ***Resonance***, 1.
[72] Rosa, ***Resonance***, 309.

a good times with friends, the sublimity of a cliffside, a romantic date, spiritual awakening etc.) are mostly what advertisements depict, selling products by manipulating consumers' deepest wishes and drives. For many people, working overtime, saving money, and accumulating resources garner toward a future of retirement, a future promise of time for resonance that only few realize. Apart from these exploitative examples is the lasting impact of Romanticism. Thanks to the latter, "modernity," writes Rosa, "dreams of a relationship to the world that is resonant through and through, in which body and psyche, spirit and nature, individual and collective history, the individual and society overcome their divisions, relate to each other as counterparts, and enter into vibrant responsive relationships to each other."[73] Following Taylor, Rosa describes how Romanticism, flowing from Pietism and sentimentalism, contributed to the deepening, or interiorizing of consciousness that is characteristic of modern subjectivity. The latter accords with Barfield's evolutionary morphology of consciousness and suggests the prospect of achieving a ***consciously differentiated,*** yet harmonized, experience of subject and world. Like an estranged adolescent, or seed separated from its old plant, modern consciousness must reunite with the Life shining behind phenomena. Indeed, as Rosa writes, "the resonant world is the promise of modernity, but the latter has yet to ever realize the former."[74] How can we make good on that promise? In the last portion of this essay I aim to show how the prioritization of leisure and the recuperation of metaphysics through spiritual exercise might help build toward a future in which society places the actualization of human nature as its highest goal.

[73] Rosa, ***Resonance,*** 358.
[74] Rosa, ***Resonance,*** 360.

VII. "We are Unleisurely in Order to Have Leisure"

In "Contours of a Post-Growth Society," the last section of Rosa's book, he suggests that certain conditions might support the reprioritization of social organization around resonance. Such conditions might include something like a universal basic income (UBI), not as an absolute fix, but as, perhaps, a temporary salve to offset the insecurity and alienation many experience in confrontation with social acceleration and increased competition. Economic security might then free up some much needed ***time*** for individuals to begin to develop a more resonant relationship with the world, to begin to trust it, for trust typically takes time to grow and trust in the world—faith that it will go on speaking—is a prerequisite for dispositional resonance. Despite making suggestions, Rosa admits that there "can be no master plan for this, no recipe of reform"—modernity has been full of such attempts, often ending in violence—instead what modernity truly needs is a "perceptible, palpable vision of a different kind of relationship to the world, a concept for its now nameless longing."[75] We can begin to glimpse such a vision by noticing that Rosa's normative account of resonance is at the same time a transcultural, or ***universal***, statement about the destiny of the human being: the latter can best be realized when life is not subsumed by work, but directed instead at the expansion of time for resonance, what we might also call ***leisure*** time. To make such statements is to beg a metaphysics. Almost 80 years ago Rosa's fellow German Josef Pieper published "Leisure: The Basis of Culture" as a plea for his contemporaries to remember the wise, metaphysical foundations of Western culture in their flurry to rebuild after WWII. The Greeks, Pieper explains, had no word for work itself but instead referred to it as the negative (***a-scolia***) of leisure (***scolia***): "Literally, the Greek says, 'we are unleisurely in order to

[75] Rosa, Resonance, 442-443.

have leisure."[76] A remark by Jaeger about the historically unprecedented allowance of leisure (for, it should be said, aristocratic men only) in Greek culture during the 4th century BCE conveys its centrality and makes evident why subsequent cultures have looked to them for inspiration:

> perhaps the life led by a citizen of a Greek city-state in the fourth century allowed him more time to spend on the ***culture of his spirit*** and the care of his body than any other life ever lived by man. The example of the medical system of bodily care shows that, even in its democratic form, the Greek polis was a social aristocracy; and that fact was responsible for the high average level of general culture which it attained. Not one of the main types produced by our own professionalized existence—business man, politician, scholar, labourer, or farmer —would fit into the framework of Greek life. So far as those types had been developed in Greece, they stood out of the pattern even then.[77]

I italicize the Greek citizen's allowance of time for the ***culture of his spirit*** in the quote above because, unlike the utilitarian "care" (objectification) of the body all but required by capitalist ideology today, leisure time for the cultivation of one's ***spirit*** is not generally of value to, or even recognized as valid by, the dominant culture—and this is true even for the wealthy. Pieper was concerned with the then and now widespread ideal of "total work," or the ungrateful delusion that all fruits of life—the highest knowledge included—fall under the purview of individual, instrumental effort, or ***work.*** In contrast, the philosophical tradition running from Pythagoras to Aquinas and beyond recognizes that the most important knowledge flows from leisure as way of

[76] Josef Pieper, ***Leisure: The Basis of Culture***, (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 2009), 20.
[77] Jaeger, ***Paideia Volume III***, my italics, 44.

life and an "attitude which presupposes silence, a contemplative attention to things, in which man begins to see how worthy of veneration they really are."[78] Pieper's recollection of antiquity's leisure makes plain how pathological contemporary culture's conception of it is—its antithesis perhaps: distraction. The root of culture, says Pieper, is in ***cultus***, or divine worship through sacrifice—"the primary source of man's freedom, independence and immunity within society."[79] The time and space set apart for such worship, among other things, creates a space beyond the world of toil and is itself the sacrifice. True leisure is therefore celebration—festival—a theological gesture of gratitude to Good, God as the source of all being. Contemplation is the active, yet receptive attitude leisure makes possible, is self-affirmation and the actualization of human potential at once——a festival in miniature—what I have been referring to as divinization through ***harmonic attunement***. In contemplation, says Pieper following Aquinas,

> man participates in the angelic faculty of non-discursive vision, which is the capacity to apprehend the spiritual in the same manner that our eye apprehends light or our ear sound. Our knowledge in fact includes an element of non-activity, of purely receptive vision—though it is certainly not essentially human; it is, rather, the fulfillment of the highest promise in man, and thus, again, truly human.[80]

The non-activity of this angelic faculty brings us back to the Orphic paradox of effort and grace, for in order to be illuminated with angelic vision one must have cultivated one's capacity to receive. Because the camera consciousness of modernity is conditioned to believe that apotheosis

[78] Josef Pieper, ***Leisure: The Basis of Culture***, (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 2009), 16.
[79] Pieper, ***Leisure***, 15.
[80] Pieper, ***Leisure***, 29.

can only be won through hard work, through effort, the Orphic reprisal of aural metaphors is necessary—listening *is* the paragon of receptivity after all. "It is no coincidence that resonance is a musical metaphor," Rosa confesses, for

> music appears to be the very medium capable of giving *direct* expression — i.e. without cognitive projection or mediation — to the various modes, transformations, and intensities of our relationship to the world. It also allows human beings "to be entirely with themselves in the other" and thus to enter into a "pure" resonant relationship.[81]

The coincidence of self and other in Rosa's "pure resonant relationship" is an apt way to convey what knowledge becomes when one reaches the contemplative heights of Plato's *noesis*—the angelic faculty. In Pieper's view the restless and compulsive activity of a culture bewitched by the ideal of "total work" is an expression of *acedia*, or the metaphysical and theological unwillingness of the human being to "be as God wants him to be, and that ultimately means that he does not wish to be what he really, fundamentally, is."[82] The ravenous pace and ungrateful ideology of late modernity leaves few people time or confidence to overcome such idleness, what the medievals understood as renunciation of one's human dignity rather than mere laziness.

VIII. Living the Second "Yes"

Fortunately, the dreaming logos of universal Nature remains to remind the human being of her highest potential as the conscious completer of God's Wisdom through *culture* as divine cultus. But to actualize that potential one must first await the grace of inspiration; "the ultimate

[81] Rosa, *Resonance*, 156.
[82] Pieper, *Leisure*, 44.

root of leisure," Pieper insists, "is not susceptible to the human will."[83] That the highest wisdom eludes the efforts of willing, yet is itself the epitome of freedom, is counterintuitive to contemporary consciousness. The 20th century philosopher Iris Murdoch confronted this issue in the heyday of existentialism and its celebratory agonizing over the so-called freedom of the "empty choosing will."[84] Per Murdoch, existentialists truncate moral character to encompass only these supposedly "free," spontaneous selections of the will. In fidelity to the Western tradition of virtue ethics, Murdoch critiques the existentialist view as unrealistic and mutilating of one's whole person; instead, she asks, "are there any techniques for the purification and reorientation of an energy which is naturally selfish, in such a way that when moments of choice arrive we shall be sure of acting rightly?"[85] Following Simone Weil, Murdoch says yes and considers prayerful comportment to Good (for Murdoch, without God) as the technique, or spiritual exercise, which forms the human capacity of ***attention*** for right willing. Contemplation of the impersonal beauty—the ***harmonia***—shining through universal Nature and art are two additional forms of spiritual exercise Murdoch discusses for training attention to be receptive to truth. In a work titled by the paradox running through this essay, ***Effort and Grace: On the Spiritual Exercise of Philosophy***, Simone Kotva elaborates the logic of passivity so central for modern advocates of spiritual exercise like Murdoch, Weil, and their predecessors:

> it was thought that the aims of spiritual and philosophical meditation were analogous, if not identical: that the object of attention — God, truth —receded endlessly from comprehension and so necessitated something like repose or

[83] Pieper, ***Leisure***, 72.
[84] Iris Murdoch, ***The Sovereignty of Good***, (NY: Routledge, 2001), 34.
[85] Murdoch, ***The Sovereignty of Good***, 54.

> passivity on the part of the meditator: effort comporting with passivity, facilitating the mind's reception rather than possession of truth.[86]

The necessity for repose in relation to the transcendence of Good, God refers to what William Desmond, following Plato, would describe as the human condition of being in the middle, the ***metaxu***. As beings of the between we are ***gifted*** ourselves through a surplus that radiates from divine heights. All our effort is derivative from this primordial giving; per Desmond, our receiving is our ***patience*** on the divine Giver. Kotva expresses this reality beautifully: "When I acknowledge that the limits to my power are also what give them their actuality, then I am not powerless but at home in the world."[87] To live from such self-knowledge is to overcome acedia and open to leisure's promise.

"Leisure," writes Pieper, "is possible only on the premise that man consents to his own true nature and abides in concord with the meaning of the universe (whereas idleness [*acedia*], as we have said is the refusal of such consent). Leisure draws its vitality from affirmation."[88] In ***The Intimate Universal*** Desmond refers to this very affirmation as the "second yes," a conscious acceding to the fact that we "find ourselves as already given to be in an original 'yes' to being that is received and not produced through ourselves alone."[89] In the terms of this essay, to live out the second "yes" is to strive for harmonic attunement. As Desmond writes, "our second 'yes' can be in living communication with the first 'yes,' for instance, if we live with respect for the integrity of the body, with finesse for its subtle rhythms, even seeking to embody an ontological reverence intimate

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[86] Simone Kotva, ***Effort and Grace: On the Spiritual Exercise of Philosophy***, (NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020) 173.
[87] Kotva, ***Effort and Grace***, 137.
[88] Pieper, ***Leisure***, 48.
[89] William Desmond, ***The Intimate Universal***, (NY: Columbia University Press, 2016), 136.

to the flesh itself."[90] Opening to the primordial "yes" as the elemental endeavor "to be" is for Desmond an opening unto the *idiotic* in its etymological meaning as that which is *reserved*, or in this case, *recessed* in consciousness. The idiotic "seems to verge on being incommunicable," for it concerns an "event of intimate participation, flowing between one being and another, and singularly stressed in a process of selving that is both determinatively enacted and yet escapes fixed determination."[91] It may therefore be described as preobjective and presubjective, an *overdetermined* Dionysian flowing of forming which precedes and begets (like resonance) all forms of determination that we enjoy in our conscious life of thought. Because "the idiocy of the elemental 'to be'… opens a given ethos of being, a primal ethos that is a charged field of ontological worth," it also precedes the "disjunction of fact and value" making it the province of true religion.[92] The "spiritual" in spiritual exercise derives from this idiotic dimension of our being, that which gifts the preconditions for the conscious efforts of exercise in the first place. This is why metaphysics, when informed by spiritual exercise, cannot be merely dismissed as abstract or power-driven. Kotva makes this point when she counters Pierre Hadot's suggestion that ancient spiritual exercises can be undertaken in modernity without their metaphysical trappings—individual effort encompasses metaphysics as ethics, says Hadot—individual effort is enough.[93] Pushing back, Kotva points out that if we are consistent and gratefully acknowledge that—in Augustinian fashion—our efforts and our very being are derivative, we are already doing metaphysics.[94] When in gratitude

[90] Desmond, *The Intimate Universal*, 136.
[91] Desmond, *The Intimate Universal*, 203.
[92] Desmond, *The Intimate Universal*, 204.
[93] Kotva, *Effort and Grace*, 3.
[94] Kotva, *Effort and Grace*, 21.

we make our second "yes," strive for harmonic attunement, and look upon the things of this world with idiotic wonder, "we find ourselves," says Jacob Sherman, "confronted with a world that not only invites but even demands speculative and metaphysical supplement, a world that is already, as world, generating theory."[95] Such is the actualization of human nature, the seed reunited with the earth, adolescent angst overcome in the adult's dedication to renew tradition. In a similar vein as Rosa's claim that modernity was witness to an increasing sensitivity to resonance, Desmond sees the process of secularization as the purgatory of true religion. If we recognize the latter as partaking especially in the idiocy of being then a historical look at all projects of the will to power bearing the name of religion—attempts to determine the overdetermined—are revealed as counterfeit, especially those which involve violence. Between servility and sovereignty is the agapeic service of true religion, mediating the divine surplus through love of one's neighbor as oneself. "One of the religious lessons of secularization," writes Desmond, "is that the distinction of politics and religion can enable us to the see ***the difference of this purer service*** that must wander in the midst of the political powers and their deserts."[96] The "perceptible, palpable vision of a different kind of relationship to the world" Rosa calls for, with its agapeic focus on the good of the commonwealth, is a theological one—that second "yes," spreading the kingdom of heaven out and over the earth. But it all depends upon individuals making that second "yes," remembering themselves as children of Calliope, like Orpheus. When we remember the music that is

[95] Jacob H. Sherman. ***Partakers of the Divine: Contemplation and the Practice of Philosophy*** (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2014), 232.
[96] Desmond, ***The Intimate Universal***, 59.

ontologically prior to material existence—to any form of determination—we "drop down below the form," writes Desmond,

> beyond fixed form to an emerging energy that voices itself, that sings itself; if one does not dip down, or allow oneself to enter again these flowing waters, one will not be ready for what against expectation communicates itself ; the daring of entering the flow means the risk of dissolution. Music as form that is forming and formless, as intimate and yet more than itself, as universal speaking to all, even those who resist. It reminds one of the graced porosity of true prayer—one is taken by the music. It is not a matter of rational self-determination. The ***passio essendi*** [patience of being] overtakes the ***conatus essendi*** [the endeavor to be-with] that otherwise takes over, and returns the ***conatus*** to the nativity at its center—a being "born with," again and again.[97]

If the likeness of Orpheus seems too unattainable, too remote from the present, or perhaps too mythical—historically circumspect— it is fortunate that between then and now grace has brought us another figure to instruct our attunement. The return to Orphism might take its leave from this most intimate of persons, encouraging aspirants to yield to the idiotic music flowing from above with reassurance from a protective mantra of his gifting: "Not I," they all might say, "but Christ in me."

[97] Desmond, ***The Intimate Universal***, 91.

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