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BEETHOVEN AND GREEK CLASSICISM

By Eleanor Selfridge-Field

In musical history it is sometimes difficult to find clear manifestations of the ideas presumed in other humanistic disciplines to have dominated a particular epoch. This is due in some degree to the abstractness of music, especially of instrumental music, for somehow we do not seem to be so well equipped to organize aural experiences as we are to organize verbal and visual ones. It seems, however, that this difficulty is sometimes accepted in musical history with such prompt resignation that our historical insight degenerates into a series of flabby generalizations that finally cannot be said altogether to correspond with the generalizations believed in other disciplines to be pertinent to a given age. This seems partly to be the case with the music historian's approach to the so-called classical period, whose leading figures were Haydn (1732–1809), Mozart (1756–91), and Beethoven (1770–1827). If the popular humanistic notion of a *Zeitgeist* is a valid one, then its effect should be discernible in non-verbal and non-visual kinds of expression. Yet what is discerned by musical historians as the essence of "classicism" does not precisely agree with what many other cultural and social historians regard as the essence of this particular intellectual fashion. Moreover, there are few commentaries in the literature of musical history that attempt to link specific musical works with specific intellectual values.

Musical history teaches that the classical period, which is roughly dated from 1750 to 1827, was a golden age of order, expressing itself in the employment of various set forms.[1] Especially because of the in-

[1]The chief forms in use during the classical period were the sonata-allegro, the theme with variations, the minuet, and the rondo. Sonata-allegro form was almost always used for the first movement of instrumental works and could be used for subsequent movements. It consisted of three general sections—exposition, development, and recapitulation. The "exposition" required coincident contrasts of theme and tonality. The "development" section emphasized thematic development in conjunction with harmonic modulation. The "recapitulation" served to return all the thematic material to the original tonality. The second form named involved a single melody or theme presented first in a simple state and then in several modified versions. It was commonly used in slow movements. The minuet was a relatively fast dance in triple meter. It survived from the Baroque era and was used as the third movement in works with four movements. Its precise thematic and harmonic scheme was quite intricate and, letting letters represent themes, it may be diagrammed: *aababa ccdcdc aba.* The principle employed in the rondo, often used in final movements, was the alternation of a recurring principal theme with a series of secondary themes. A common type of rondo could be diagrammed *abacaba.*

creasing importance of instrumental music, structure was indeed a pronounced concern at this time, for the absence of a text forced greater attention on such matters as form and harmony. The question that arises with regard to this understanding of the musical term "classicism" is not whether the music of this epoch stressed "form" but in what sense this emphasis was related to the revival of interest in classical antiquity. The accepted explanation is that the ancients cherished form and proportion and symmetry. Reference can then be made to Platonic views of universal order and the intellectual fashions of the Enlightenment. What remains in doubt after these arguments have been amply investigated is whether order was the only important gleaning from the eighteenth-century revival of the ancients, and whether indeed it was the paramount trait of "classicism" in the eighteenth-century mind. To what source of inspiration are we to attribute the growing emphasis on such qualities as "sublimity," "profound simplicity," and a "sense of denstiny?" Or, we may ask conversely, did the eighteenth-century German craze for Greek philosophy and mythology find any expression in German music?

It is the purpose of this essay to investigate Beethoven's relationship to the German revival of Greek culture. This inquiry chiefly concerns instrumental works from Beethoven's middle and third periods,[2] where the traditional view of classicism holds that elements of romanticism were beginning to emerge; a broadened view of "classicism" suggests that some of the same elements were of Greek inspiration. There are three kinds of musical practice that appear to have owed something to the ideas generated by the German interest in Greek classicism. They are related to (1) the notion of *Sturm und Drang*, (2) the notion of "noble simplicity and serene greatness," and (3) the non-verbal use of dialogue. The first is illustrated chiefly by rhythm, the second by texture, and the third by instrumental and thematic exchange. Because this study is intended to serve the interests of scholars whose specialty is not musical history, familiarity, simplicity, and brevity have been considered in selecting musical illustrations.

Any effort to detail an influence from the culture of antiquity upon a latter-day composer presupposes, of course, that the composer had some knowledge of the culture whose influence is alleged. Since

[2]Beethoven's middle period is usually dated from 1802 to 1815, the span of time during which the composer went deaf. This was Beethoven's most productive period and from it came many of his best-liked works. All the symphonies except the First and the Ninth, the opera *Fidelio*, all the concertos except the first two for piano, the "Rasumovsky" string quartets, the "Kreutzer" sonata for violin and piano, and the "Waldstein" and "Appassionata" piano sonatas are the best known works from this period. The Ninth Symphony, the Missa Solemnis, the "Hammerklavier" sonata, and the late quartets were the chief works of Beethoven's third period.

Beethoven is frequently portrayed as a gruff, clumsy lout possessing only the slightest social refinement and virtually no learning, we might profitably concern ourselves with a brief consideration of his intellectual development and interests.

In this endeavor we must note first of all that while Beethoven lived as an adult in Vienna, he spent the first 22 years of his life in Bonn. At the time of his birth, Bonn was not a place of pronounced cultural or intellectual interests, but it moved in that direction during his youth. One evidence of this is the fact that in 1786 the local scientific academy was raised to the status of a university.[3] Moreover, Bonn was in northern Germany, where the Greek revival was largely in evidence: Berlin, Leipzig, Jena, and Weimar were the cities wherein the whole direction of German thought was reshaped during Beethoven's formative years. The writings of Plato, Plutarch, and others were on sale in Bonn bookshops already in the 1770's.[4] It seems likely, therefore, that many of Beethoven's literary tastes were formed in Bonn, for Vienna, despite its size and general importance, was not especially sensitive to the literary fashions followed by Beethoven. Also, Vienna was repeatedly troubled by censorship, which after 1815 became particularly restrictive.[5]

Beethoven's literary tastes are described easily but dated only with difficulty. In his early years he was interested mainly, it seems, in the leading German poets. We know, for instance, that as early as 1793 he was occupied with the idea of setting Schiller's "Ode to Joy" to music, though this was not accomplished until 30 years later, when it was used in the finale of the Ninth Symphony. The poets whom Beethoven admired were themselves immersed in Greek lore, and Beethoven thus would have had some knowledge of mythology from his reading of their works. His earliest substantial musical (as opposed to literary) involvement with Greek culture appears to have come in 1801 with his ballet music for Goethe's *Prometheus*. But as we approach the start of his middle period we do not yet find specific evidence of an interest in Greek culture unaided by the mediation of contemporary poets and dramatists.

Beethoven had, of course, little schooling. That he was touched at all by the cultural fashions of his day owed something to the market for translations provided by an emergent middle class. The ancient Greeks were not newly discovered by well-educated intellectuals of the eighteenth century; they were merely newly fashionable. Beethoven

[3]Martin Cooper, *Beethoven: The Last Decade, 1817–1827* (London, 1970), 87. [4]*Ibid.*

[5]*Ibid.*, 101. So much is Vienna associated with musical classicism that the period under discussion is sometimes called the "Viennese classical period." But the classical revival seems to have had relatively little impact there. Haydn and Mozart were well established when they moved to Vienna from the Habsburg provinces.

had some command of French and a writing knowledge of Italian; it is said, though, that his knowledge of Latin was so faltering that he could not set his first mass without a translation; of Greek he was totally ignorant. He was also ignorant of English, but like many of his contemporaries he stood much in awe of Shakespearean drama, which he read enthusiastically in August Wilhelm von Schlegel's translations (1798–1810).

Apart from the few references given above, it is nearly impossible to establish *when* Beethoven came into contact with any specific literary work. Our knowledge of *what* he read rests mostly on the references of his letters and his "commonplace" book, but it often seems likely that his reading of the works he mentions antedated his reference to them in writing. For example, we know that Beethoven was well acquainted with Goethe (1749–1832) and Schiller (1759–1805) in the 1790's, but we find few references to them before 1809. In that year Beethoven wrote to his Leipzig publishers, Breitkopf and Härtel, once to thank them for "the really beautifully translated tragedies of Euripides,"[6] and twice concerning an arrangement "for me to receive editions of Goethe's and Schiller's complete works."[7] The composer concluded a further letter of that year with the observation,

> One more thing: there is hardly any treatise which could be too learned *for me*. I have not the slightest pretension to what is properly called erudition. Yet from childhood I have striven to understand *what the better and wiser people* of every age were driving at in their works.[8]

From this date onward, evidence steadily accrues of Beethoven's knowledge of Greek history and mythology. When thought to be contemplating marriage to Therese Malfatti in 1810, he likened his situation to that of Hercules in relation to Queen Omphale.[9] Commenting on a rumor that one of his publishers was seeking a wife, Beethoven (presumably facetiously) wished him not simply a shrew but a Xanthippe.[10] Railing against what he imagined to be the persecution of art, he vowed to escape by finding "the wings of Daedalus."[11] He

[6] *The Letters of Beethoven*, ed. and trans. by Emily Anderson (3 vols., London, 1961), I, 235; letter of July 26, 1809. Miss Anderson suggests that Beethoven refers to the translations of Friedrich Heinrich Bothe (Berlin, 1800–03).

[7] *Ibid.*, I, 241–43; letters of Aug. 8 and Sept. 19. In the first of these letters, Beethoven went on to say that, "These two poets are my favourites, as are also Ossian and Homer. . . ."

[8] *Ibid.*, I, 246; letter of Nov. 2. Beethoven's italics.

[9] *Ibid.*, I, 274; letter of May 1810. According to legend, Hercules was sentenced for his murder of Iphitus to three years' servitude to Omphale, Queen of Lydia. She forced him to assume feminine dress (she wore his lion's skin meanwhile) and feminine occupations, such as the spinning of wool. "Omphale's Spinning Wheel" is the subject of a symphonic poem composed by Saint-Säens (1835–1921) in 1871.

[10] *Ibid.*, I, 355; letter written early in 1812.

[11] *Ibid.*, I, 359; letter of Feb. 1812.

discussed his own and others' health in veiled references to Aesculapius and Hygeia,[12] and shared the imputation of Goethe and Schiller that the carefree Viennese were "Phaeacians."[13]

Beethoven's respect for the study of the classics did not recede in later years. In 1817 he noted in his diary that his ward and nephew, Karl, was to receive each day two hours' tuition in Latin and one hour each in geography, history, natural history, and religion.[14] Beethoven's acquaintance Heinrich Doring wrote that upon being introduced to Karl, he was asked by Beethoven to "give him a puzzle in Greek" in order to judge for himself the young man's proficiency in that language.[15] In 1825 Beethoven wrote sketches for a canon on Homer's text, "The blessed gods have no love for a pitiless action, but they reward justice and the lawful deeds of men," (*The Odyssey*, XIV, 83).[16]

"Storm and Stress."—The reawakening of German interest in Greek classicism may be said to have begun in 1755 with the publication of Winckelmann's *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture.*[17] Being especially partial to these "arts of rest," Winckelmann (1717–68) praised the placid qualities of visual representation. On the basis of this predisposition, he developed his aesthetic ideal of "noble simplicity and serene greatness" (which we shall consider shortly). Starting similarly from an interest in the arts of antiquity but substituting poetry for painting in his comparison, Lessing (1729–81), in his essay *Laocöon* (1766), arrived at a distinctly different position. In comparing the situation of sculptor and poet, Lessing was struck less by the sculptor's *inability* than by the writer's *unused ability* to represent action. Beauty, Lessing believed, was the end of the visual arts, while truth was the end of the verbal arts. He urged his literary peers to abandon their "mania for description" and develop a poetry and drama of action. The trait that developed in response to this plea was called *"Sturm und Drang."*

[12] *Ibid.*, I, 387 (1812) and 420 (1813). [13] *Ibid.*, I, 457; letter of July 1814.

[14] *Beethovens personliche Aufzeichnungen*, ed. Albert Leitzmann (Leipzig, n.d.), 34. This curriculum coincides fairly closely with the standard boarding-school fare of mid-eighteenth-century Germany. The chief innovations in Beethoven's time were French (or sometimes Greek) in place of Latin and an emphasis on such "modern" subjects as mathematics and rhetoric. W. H. Bruford, *Germany in the Eighteenth Century: The Social Background of the Literary Revival* (Cambridge, 1968), 67f. and 243–46.

[15] Translator's supplement to *The Life of Beethoven, Including Beethoven's Correspondence with his Friends, Numerous Characteristic Traits, and Remarks on his Musical Works*, ed. Ignace Moscheles, trans. Heinrich Doring (Boston, n.d.; a reprint of the edition published at London, 1841), 373.

[16] The sketches appear in the British Museum (London), Egerton MS. 2795, fo. 10. The same quotation from Homer was entered in Beethoven's "commonplace" book in 1820, as we see in *Beethovens personliche Aufzeichnungen*, 43.

[17] Eliza Marian Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany* (New York and Cambridge, 1935), Ch. 2.

Musical impressions of "storm and stress" were widely employed throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century and even, without benefit of the label, prior to Lessing's formulation. "Storm" in the pictorial sense, for example, was a persistent subject in such programmatic concertos as "The Four Seasons" and "The Tempest" by Vivaldi (1678–1741). "Storm" in the more abstract emotional sense was suggested in many symphonies of the mid-eighteenth-century Mannheim school of composers. But with Beethoven, such suggestions departed from an otherwise circumscribed tradition and became expressions of something approaching fury.

Musical depictions of "storm" seek to generate a sense of excitement or agitation usually by means of a regular, sometimes monotonous, rhythm heard at a moderately fast tempo. "Stress," which is not likely to be as emphatically represented, may be suggested by such harmonic means as the use of dissonance and the minor mode. An early example of Beethoven's treatment of "storm and stress" may be seen in the following passage from the Sonata Pathétique (Ex. 1). "Storm" is suggested by the rapid octave alternations of the left hand, while "stress" is felt in the melodic pull of dissonances (here B♭ and D) and leading tones (here E♮ and B♮) of the right.

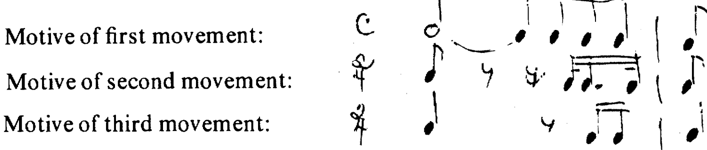
Ex. 1. Beethoven: Piano Sonata in C Minor ("Pathétique"), Op. 13 (1799). First movement, first principal theme.

Beethoven's representation of "storm and stress" changes markedly, but by degrees, in the first years of the nineteenth century. First, representations of "stress" tend to be eliminated, and therewith dissonance is greatly reduced. Then, with dissonance largely removed, the pitch becomes so repetitious that our attention is drawn mainly to the rhythm. One example of this stage of change occurs in the opening bars of the somewhat later "Waldstein" Sonata (Ex. 2). Here we find that variation in pitch, use of dissonance, and rhythmic variety are all at a minimum, while, however, a sense of dramatic tension is built up.

Ex. 2. Beethoven: Piano Sonata in C Major ("Waldstein"), Op. 53 (1804). First movement, first theme.

From this stage, we move to a distillation of the original idea that liberally exceeds the customary understanding of "storm and stress." This distillation occurs in the use of a single rhythmic motive (on a fixed pitch) to unify large quantities of musical material. For example, the entire first movement of the Fifth Symphony (1807) is unified by what is commonly known as the "fate" motive,

while in the Fourth Piano Concerto (1805–06) each movement is internally unified by a rhythmic motive that is itself related to the other two:



In some cases these vestiges of "storm and stress" take on what seems to be a military bearing. A noteworthy example of this effect is found in the first movement of the Violin Concerto (1806), where the importance of the unifying four-stroke figure

is emphasized by the use of timpani. So important is this seemingly pedestrian rhythmic motive that when the timpani are excluded, as they are from Bar 10 onward (Ex. 3), the strings abandon their melody in order to preserve this rhythm.

Ex. 3. Beethoven: Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 61 (1806). First movement, bars 10–13.

It might be noted here that although it is convenient to apply the adjective "military" to this kind of march-like meter and rhythm, it is not altogether appropriate. The somewhat doleful first theme (Ex. 4) with its syncopation (Bar 3) seems to give clear proof that this was not to be heard as a march.

Ex. 4. Beethoven: Violin concerto. First movement, first theme.

But perhaps it was meant to suggest the cadence of the "firm step" with which the "noble" man was to meet his fate. We have, in short, shifted ground from "fate" (if indeed this was ever precisely what Beethoven intended) to man's response to it.

In sum, we see that the musical extension of a "poetry of action and truth" adopted various guises—those of simple agitation, passionate fury, and steadfast determination. If there was a single generative principle behind these, there were also substantial differences between them. The progression from portrayals of an emotional quality to portrayals of a moral one underscores the importance of these differences.

"*Noble Simplicity and Serene Greatness*"—Winckelmann's plea, in contrast to Lessing's, was for restoration as opposed to uncharted change. Winckelmann longed for the return of artistic representations emphasizing "greatness of soul . . . seen in the condition of rest."[18] At the time Winckelmann offered this prescription, the condition of rest was distinctly alien to instrumental music. The polyphonic outlook of previous centuries was eroding, but a sense of frenetic activity prevailed just as much in rococo graces and runs as it had in Baroque fugues and ornaments.

Beethoven pretended to the musical condition of repose by the use of slow, *chordal* (as opposed to *contrapuntal*) passages with few

[18] *Ibid.*, 46.

dissonances and no ornaments. An example of such usage may be seen in the first movement of the "Waldstein" Sonata (Ex. 5).

Ex. 5. Beethoven: "Waldstein" Sonata. First movement, second theme.

It is significant that Beethoven's portrayals of "noble simplicity" always follow expressions of "storm and stress"—in connection either with second themes in opening sonata-allegro movements or with the principal theme of slow second movements—because this arrangement recalls the duality on which Winckelmann also focused when he remarked,

> The universal, dominant characteristic of Greek masterpieces, finally is *noble simplicity and serene greatness* in the pose as well as in the expression. The depths of the sea are always calm, however wild and stormy the surface; and in the same way the expression in Greek figures reveals greatness and composure of soul in the throes of whatever passions.[19]

By allying first themes with "storm and stress" and second themes with "noble simplicity" Beethoven seems to be juxtaposing the ostensibly superficial "throes of passion" with the "calm depths" of the noble soul. Sonata form is no longer as ordinary and perfunctory as a draftsman's blueprint. It has become a mediator between the poet's truth and the artist's beauty.

Beethoven's "simple second theme" style had musical antecedents, but they came mostly from the north German *empfindsamer Stil*. The theory of a "sensitive" style of music that would portray the commoner emotions was formulated mainly by Johann Joachim Quantz (1697–1773) and Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel (1714–88). They—as well as Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (1710–84), Georg Benda (1722–95), and Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752–1814)—were among its chief practitioners. Temperamental and thematic contrasts often coincided in the instrumental works of these composers, but the same works were sometimes, by "classical" standards, primitive in matters of form and inconsequential in length.

[19] *Ibid.*

We can perhaps appreciate the simplicity of the means used to effect the pose of rest and the departure this marked from Viennese "classical" understandings of sonata form by reference to the works of other composers. Mozart, the dramatist *par excellence*, did not dramatize the difference between themes of sonata-form movements to nearly the same extent as Beethoven. A Mozartean first theme typically consisted of a melody harmonized by broken-chord patterns and thus gave a sense of mild activity instead of the restless agitation marking "storm and stress" passages in Beethoven. Characteristic of Mozart's setting of a first theme is the following example (Ex. 6).

Ex. 6. Mozart: Piano sonata in F Major, K. 332 (1778). First movement, first theme.

We find with Mozart that the second theme in sonata form is usually simpler than the first, but Mozart's simplicity is sometimes of a naïve rather than a profound sort. Witness, for instance, the second theme from the same movement (Ex. 7):

Ex. 7. Mozart: Piano sonata, K. 332. First movement, second theme.

We might expect a comic-opera figure to enter with such a melody as the one quoted above, but it makes no pretense of speaking to us of higher realities. Thus, though we may find the same sense of characterization in Mozart's treatment of sonata form as in his operas, with the different themes suggesting different personalities, we find a more intense and no less dramatic tendency in Beethoven's treatment of sonata form.[20] In place of a galaxy of human personality types, we

[20]The changes that occur with regard to the nature of thematic contrast in Mozart's later works do not seem to bring Mozart's music any closer to Beethoven's. We find a

find the universe of the human soul. Beethoven's conception of it is frequently grander, though no less great, than Winckelmann's.

Dialogue.—There is a suggestion of dialogue in most instrumental music. In symphonic music we often notice orchestration that has the aura of the aimless conversation of casual acquaintances. Beethoven's orchestration was sometimes of this type, but there are some few instances in his works when a much more defined and personal relationship among instruments exists. In these cases there appears to be a mimicry of human dialogue because there are just two participants whose parts rarely overlap (though in simple "orchestration" they frequently would), and because there is something about the shape of the melodies employed that suggests the inflections of human speech. The writing of such passages may have resulted from Beethoven's frustrations as an opera composer. It may, on the other hand, have resulted from a consciousness of the importance that was newly attached to dialogue as a pedagogical method, an historical process, and a literary mannerism. We might briefly consider each possibility.

Beethoven's relationship to opera was quite different from that of his predecessors and many of his contemporaries. Opera had been, on balance, the most popular type of music through the end of the eighteenth century[21] and drama was immensely popular in Germany in Beethoven's time. Molded by an environment that held opera and drama in such high esteem, Beethoven displayed an understandable desire to succeed as an opera composer. He cultivated the friendship (sometimes unsuccessfully) of numerous dramatists and librettists, and much the largest part of his "serious" reading was motivated at least partly by the desire to find plots suitable for opera. His taste in opera plots ran afoul of contemporary Viennese standards, to say the least. He proposed to librettists such possible central figures as Attila and

simplicity more profound than in early works: the second movement of the Clarinet Concerto in A Major, K. 622 (1791), for example, is what many would consider to be an unsurpassed combination of poise and pathos. With regard to sonata form, however, we find in many later works by Mozart that the second theme contrasts with the first more in intellectual than in emotional intensity, usually effected by means of various contrapuntal devices. Examples include the counterpoint to the first theme that constitutes the second theme of the first movement of the Piano Sonata in B♭ Major, K. 570 (1789) and the canon on the first theme that constitutes the second theme of the first movement of the clarinet concerto.

[21]The era of Haydn and Mozart brought instrumental music into greater prominence than it had ever enjoyed before. Yet telling contradictions exist between opinions of its importance then and now. We remember Haydn as, among other things, "the father of the symphony," for example. But when Haydn, who wrote more than 50 operas, was asked in his later years what *he* regarded as his outstanding contribution, he is said to have replied, "My operas, of course!" Haydn's diligence as an opera composer pales beside the record of some of his contemporaries. Jommelli (1714–74) composed more than 70, Cimarosa (1749–1801) more than 80, and Gluck (1714–87), Piccini (1728–1800), and Paisiello (1740–1816) each wrote more than 100 operas.

Ulysses,[22] but he never wrote another opera after *Fidelio* (1805), which achieved only faltering success after extensive revision. In the light of this perpetual frustration, we should not be surprised to see the dramatic impulse rerouted through instrumental music, where Beethoven could reasonably expect a favorable public reception.

What interests us here is not the numerous instances in which Beethoven created an aura of drama but the few instances in which he did this by imitating stage procedures and letting instruments "speak." It happens, interestingly enough, that one of Beethoven's finest instrumental dialogues—the one that constitutes the second movement of the Fourth Piano Concerto (1805–06)—coincides in date of completion with the earliest translations into German of Plato's dialogues. We may consequently wonder whether there was not something more than coincidence involved in the shaping of this musical idiom. The details of this coincidence are as follows. Extracts from Plato's *Republic* appear in Beethoven's "commonplace" book, with an indication that they come from the translation by Schleiermacher (1768–1834). Schleiermacher's translations of Plato's works were the first into German and were published at Berlin in five volumes (1804–10).[23] The *Republic* was included in the third of these volumes; it was published in 1805. Schleiernaacher wrote prefaces to each of the dialogues and these laid emphasis not only on the content but also on Plato's use of the Socratic method of "progressive reciprocation" over and against the earlier Sophistic method of "long and continuous discourse."[24] Beethoven probably read Plato more for content than for method, but he can scarcely have failed to observe the Socratic approach, for it exerted a pervasive influence in all the humanistic disciplines in the first years that these translations were available. Beethoven's contemporary, Hegel (1770–1831), explored the related concept of "development through conflict"[25] in his *Phenomenology* (1806) and slightly earlier Fichte (1762–1814) had coined the terms "thesis, antithesis, synthesis" by means of which much of Hegel's thinking is commonly, though only approximately, described. Dialogue, meanwhile, found favor at a somewhat later date as a liter-

[22]Beethoven suggested "a grand subject . . . from the time of Attila" to the dramatist August Friedrich Ferdinand von Kotzebue (1761–1819) in Jan. 1812. At roughly the same time he proposed the subject of "The Return of Ulysses" to the poet Karl Theodor Körner (1791–1813). See Anderson, *op. cit.*, I, 353, 367.

[23]A reprint of these translations was published in Berlin between 1817 and 1828. Any number of factors indicate that Beethoven was familiar with a Schleiermacher translation antedating the start of the second printing.

[24]*Schleiermacher's Introductions to the Dialogues of Plato*, trans. William Dobson (Cambridge and London, 1836), 16.

[25]Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation* (New York, 1966), 161.

ary device: it was used in some of the novellas of E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822) and much of the musical criticism of Robert Schumann (1810–56).[26]

In the Fourth Piano Concerto, the usual concerto idea of representing two impersonal agents—orchestra and soloist—is humanized by limiting the otherwise overpowering orchestra to the strings and by having them play throughout in unison (or octave doublings). There is scarcely any overlap between the "orchestra" and the soloist. The contrast that is achieved between these two personalities is immense. This contrast might be characterized as one of war and peace, masculinity and femininity, truth and beauty, or whatever, but it seems to be conveyed entirely by human agents. Whatever higher ideas Beethoven may have intended to express here, they are evoked by what appears to be a question-and-answer session. Does one only *imagine* that the orchestra's entrance (Ex. 8) concludes with the words, "Nicht wahr?"

Ex. 8. Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58 (1805–06). Second movement, orchestra entrance.

The piano replies to this stern overture humbly but firmly (Ex. 9). Its precise words are not readily perceptible to an ear unaccustomed to the German language.

Ex. 9. Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 4. Second movement, piano entrance.

[26]Several works by Hoffmann, including *Der Dichter und der Komponist* and *Seltsame Leiden eines Theater-Direktors*, were cast as dialogues. Robert Schumann frequently conveyed his views through the fictitious characters Florestan, Eusebius, and their arbiter, Master Raro.

If there is an element of Socratic "learning through questioning" here, there is also an element of Hegelian "development through conflict." The exchange proceeds with the orchestra restating its case and then the piano responding much in the manner of its first entrance, but the statements become gradually shorter and the exchange more rapid. The tension that is built up explodes in a short cadenza. After this, we seem to see a modification of both personalities. The orchestra has lost its pugnacious quality and the piano has shed some of its innocent virtue for an understanding pathos. Hence both personalities seem to emerge altered from this encounter. In many respects, this movement seems as representative of the *Zeitgeist* of 1806 as can be imagined in music.

In the general category of musical dialogues, there is another instance of great interest. This is the final movement of Beethoven's last string quartet, Op. 135 (1827). Here we have a dialogue effected not by different instruments and timbres but simply by thematic means. A three-note motive is the basis for the *grave* opening of the movement, while an inversion of this motive is the basis for the concluding lengthy *allegro*. A few recollections of the *grave* version of the motive are inserted in later sections of the movement. Beethoven has indicated that this motive and its inversion represent a question and answer of the most serious nature. Above the beginning of the movement, he indicated his intentions in this manner:

Innumerable words have been written on the subject of Beethoven's sense of his own destiny, but he himself gave it no finer or more timely expression than in this striking instance of dialogue.

From Greek Classicism to German Romanticism.—We should not abandon the consideration of possible Platonic influences upon Beethoven without some reference to the substance of the passages that the composer copied from Plato. In all, Beethoven transcribed six passages into his "commonplace" book. The first is an injunction against such poetic descriptions of the underworld as would discourage boys and men from desiring to become brave warriors (Book III, 387). Next we find three passages relating to musical topics: (1) a description of the behavioral effects of the various modes (III, 399); (2) the belief that flautists should be excluded from the State (III, 399);

and (3) a discussion of the effects of the three principal rhythms (III, 400).[27] The fifth excerpt is a discourse recommending that the State should cultivate among its artists a devotion to "the beauty of reason" (III, 401). The final excerpt concerns various matters including the "danger" of "friendly audiences" (V, 449–51).[28]

The broad subject of the doctrine of musical ethos lies well outside our sphere of immediate concern and almost certainly of Beethoven's understanding, but we might consider briefly how Socrates, according to Plato, distinguished between the four principal modes. He first of all dispensed with any consideration of the Ionian and Lydian modes on the basis of their being "the soft and drinking harmonies" that served no purpose in a well organized State. On the subjects of the Dorian and Phrygian, however, he was fairly verbose. Of the Dorian he said that he wanted it "to sound the note . . . which a brave man utters in the hour of danger . . . or when his cause is failing . . . and at every such crisis meets the blows of fortune with firm step and a determination to endure." The Phrygian mode, he continued, should be used "in times of peace and freedom of action, when there is no pressure of necessity, and he is seeking to persuade God by prayer . . . or on the other hand, when he is expressing his willingness to yield to persuasion or entreaty. . . ."[29] This differentiation, then, requires one musical mode to represent physical action and mental determination and another to represent physical passivity and mental reconciliation. The ethos of Periclean Greece finds a parallel in the eighteenth-century aesthetics of "stormy surface" and "noble depth." We may therefore wonder, since Beethoven was sufficiently struck by Plato's description to copy it, to what extent Beethoven's manner of thematic contrast received its impetus from German reinterpretation of Greek thought and to what extent from Greek thought directly.

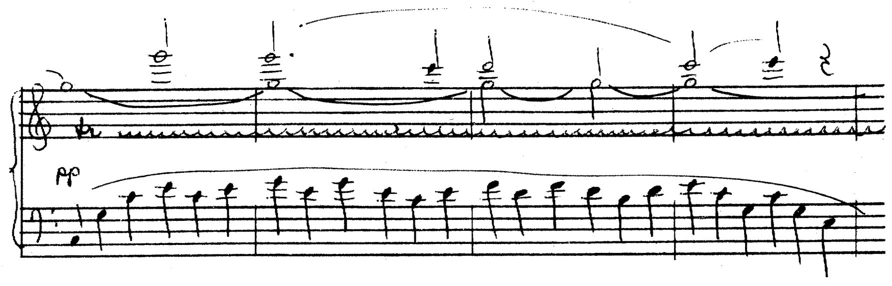
[27]No effect has been made to trace effects of this consideration on Beethoven's use of rhythm because Plato's own description is too vague to help us and was probably, therefore, too vague to affect Beethoven's thoughts on the subject.

[28]Anton Schindler, *Biographie von Ludwig van Beethoven* (Münster, 1860^3), 103–06. Corresponding excerpts in English may be found as indicated in the text. As quoted, the translations used in this study are by Jowett (New York, 1945). One reason why so little reference to Plato occurs in current commentaries on Beethoven appears to be that a famous nineteenth-century reference was somewhat erroneous. Beethoven's reading of Plato's *Republic* was introduced by Schindler in the third edition of the biography to buttress the disputed claims Schindler had made in the first two editions of his biography (Münster, 1840, 1845) about Beethoven's political convictions. Schindler was eager to prove that Plato had in effect dissuaded Beethoven from dedicating his Third ("Eroica") Symphony to Napoleon. Later biographers disputed Schindler's claim on the grounds that (1) the content of Beethoven's transcriptions had little relevance to political matters and (2) the "Eroica" was composed mainly in 1803, a year before the earliest translations were available.

[29]*Plato's Republic*, III, 399.

Though Beethoven continued for a long time to pay lip-service to ideals of Apollonian moderation, he increasingly came to express himself through opposed extremes. This may first be seen in the tendency of portrayals of "storm" and "noble depth" to move further apart from the first to later movements of a work. The supreme expressions of "noble simplicity and serene greatness" are to be found in slow second movements, while the rewards of "the determination to endure" are withheld until final fast movements. Progressively, the gap between these attitudes widens. "Greatness of soul" is placed in relief by suggesting tragedies of ever greater magnitude. The sense of emotional relief expressed in final movements is not one simply of good humor but usually of irrepressible exuberance. Characteristic of this gaiety are the concluding movements of such works as the Violin Concerto (1806), the Fifth ("Emperor") Piano Concerto (1809–10), and the Seventh Symphony (1812). In spirit, these movements all seem to have returned to the discarded "drinking harmonies," and, in fact, the last movement of the Seventh Symphony has often been described as a bacchanale. What should be especially noted is that this centrifugal tendency towards extremes is no less a derivative of Greek antiquity for being Dionysian.

Evidence in support of the view that Beethoven abandoned Apollonian ideals of moderation is nowhere more abundant than in his increasing tendency to exhibit important thematic material at pitches that were by contemporary standards extreme. Expressions of gaiety and exuberance are, by and large, associated with very high pitch. The Greeks believed that high pitch was conducive to passion and recklessness. As if to emphasize that very point, Beethoven frequently chooses to associate extremely high pitch with exceedingly rapid tempos and with melodies whose shape dissolves into lengthy trills. We might return to the final movement of the "Waldstein" Sonata for an example (Ex. 10). The tempo in this last portion of the movement is marked *prestissimo:*



Ex. 10. Beethoven: "Waldstein" Sonata. Third movement, final statement of principal theme.

Low pitch, the Greeks thought, was conducive to self-indulgence, and Beethoven's explorations of the lower registers are very capable of confirming the Greek view. As if to balance his dedication to optimistic endings, he frequently leads us in slow second movements to subterranean recesses that are Stygian in the depth of their gloom. One example of such a venture occurs in the second movement of the "Appassionata" Sonata (Ex. 11).

Ex. 11. Beethoven: Piano Sonata in F Minor ("Appassionata"), Op. 57 (1804). Second movement, principal theme.

Such expressions as these were to have heirs in the Romantic period and had antecedents in Homer and Euripides. It is difficult, however, to think of any analogously pathetic utterings in the works of Haydn or Mozart.

It may be that the Ninth Symphony (1824) was intended as a summing up of various "Greek" views of life. Before writing the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven had conceived a Tenth Symphony that would have included an apparently choral "*adagio cantique*" that would be "a pious song in the ancient modes" with a text from Greek mythology. This was to be followed by an allegro movement representing a feast of Bacchus. But in course of time Beethoven's plans for the Tenth were incorporated with his plans for the Ninth.[30] In its final form, the Ninth came to have a third movement, *Adagio molto e cantabile*, without text and a choral fourth, which is simply labelled *Finale*, with Schiller's "Ode to Joy" as a text. The substitution of a German text for a Greek one is not necessarily a refutation of Greek mythology; Beethoven may have intended it to serve the dual purposes of accommodating, at long last, Schiller's verses and of catering to the emerging German desire for a *Mittelpunkt*[31] in imitation

[30]Cooper, *op. cit.*, 277.

[31]The idea of substituting for Greek mythology a native German mythology was advanced formally in 1800 by Friedrick von Schlegel in his "Rede über die Mythologie," although there had been less formal expressions of the same desire in the late eighteenth century. The composer who was to be preeminently influenced by this desire was, of course, Richard Wagner (1813–83). It was A. W. von Schlegel (1767–1845) who first

of Greek mythology. In all events, Greek mythology was still present in the imagery of Elysium, and Greek drama in the use of the chorus. Though the original subject of the ode was "freedom," Dionysian Greece also seemed to prevail over modern-day Germany in the change of the subject to "joy."

Concluding Observations.—We began this study with an enquiry into the musical meaning of the word "classicism" and offered a reason for returning to that enquiry. We saw that the term was hardly ever used with the intention of denoting a revival of any aspect of Hellenic culture. Similarly we saw that, judged by the prevailing view of "classicism" as an emphasis on form, Beethoven was considered to be at times an oblivious heir to this tradition and rarely a champion of it.

In the light of our considerations here, it seems appropriate to suggest that Beethoven is reckoned as a transgressor of "classical" musical ideals only with justification in relation to a definition of classicism that is itself somewhat unjust. When the term is used in the sense in which it must originally have been meant, Beethoven's eccentricities wither before our very eyes. For what distinguishes the music of Beethoven from that of his predecessors if not such traits as furious openings, serene second themes, "fate" motives, brooding slow movements, ebullient dance-like conclusions, extremes of pitch, and such innovations as choral symphonic movements? And which of these can be said not to have any relation to the Dionysiac aspects of antiquity cherished in Beethoven's day? Thus it seems that in these respects, music was not nearly so "classical" in the largest part of the practice of Haydn and Mozart as it was in the practice of Beethoven.

Contingent upon this view, two other speculations might be noted. First, if Beethoven was more "classical" than Haydn and Mozart, then Vienna was less the innovator than the inheritor of a genuinely "classical" style. Further, if Beethoven's "classicism" owed as much to Greek antiquity as is here suggested, then the long and sometimes fervently-held view that he "Germanicized" music is somewhat undermined, although there is no basis for suggesting that his orientation

championed the *Nibelungenlied.* Beethoven responded to the desire for "Germanicization" by degrees. In 1817 he began to insist that each "*sonata*" (Italian) for the "*pianoforte*" be entitled a "*Sonate*" for the "*Hammerklavier*" (the modern repertory reserves this designation as a nickname for Op. 106) and that these words be written in German script (see Anderson, *op. cit.*, II, 654, 659). By 1820, he had become interested in native German folk-song. "I am inclined to think that a hunt for folk-songs is better than a man-hunt for the heroes who are so highly extolled," he wrote (Anderson, *op. cit.*, II, 883).

was any less "Germanic" than that of his Greek-inspired German contemporaries in other arts.

As for the popular reckoning that the relationship between classicism and romanticism was an antithetical one, we cannot fail to note the extent to which the very consciousness of Greek antiquity itself provides a sense of continuity. What was valued in Greek culture indeed was different in the nineteenth century, and interest in Greek antiquity receded in the sense that it was no longer taken as a source of inspiration but only as a model of the way in which "inspiration" was supposed to pervade all the arts from a primeval *Urquell.* Can we truthfully imagine the monumental romanticism of Richard Wagner and his contemporaries, however, without these refractory stages of German Hellenism?

The immediate musical link from classicism to romanticism was quite simply the development of an intensely personal style, in contrast to the sometimes slick and frequently impersonal regularities of the music of the late eighteenth century. Beethoven provided that link. Undoubtedly he owed a substantial debt to the North German composers who cultivated the *empfindsamer Stil* in the earlier part of the "classical" period. But we may reasonably doubt that, without the continuous example of Greek authors and German writers dazzled by what they regarded as the splendors of Greek antiquity, Beethoven would have arrived at his particular species of classicism—at once so devoted to the poet's truth and so sensitive to the artist's beauty.

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