

THE TEMENOS ACADEMY

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Source: Temenos Academy Review 8 (2005)

pp. 140-2

Published by The Temenos Academy

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www.temenosacademy.org

Mozart – A Celebration of an Unconscious Mystic*

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A lifelong love of Mozart began when I was 12 years old. My romantic and aristocratically beautiful godmother took me to see *The Magic Flute* at Glyndebourne. I was overwhelmed by the magic of this work and it has continued to overwhelm me with its beauty all through my life. It has only been recently, however, that I have tried to understand why I love Mozart beyond any other composer, and why I have always talked to him in the bath for as long as I can remember! It is the eternal child that I love in his music—perhaps that explains to some extent the bath conversations.

Mozart belongs to an historical age that does not attract me in the least—an age of superficiality, powdered wigs and the Enlightenment. It seems unlikely that the most ‘sacred’ composer of the West should emerge in that dilapidated era. My using the term ‘sacred’ about Mozart may elicit some surprise, but I truly believe that Mozart’s *Magic Flute* connects to Krishna’s flute, just as his music in general can be compared to that particular kind of sacredness that one finds in Persian and Hindu miniature paintings. I am not of course saying that Mozart himself was fully spiritually developed. God used this frail man to communicate to the world the eternal vision of childhood, and the divine world of *Līlā*, a Sanskrit term meaning ‘divine play’.

In Bach we have Christian piety *par excellence*, and probably the greatest Christian composer who has ever lived. In Beethoven we have a volcanic genius, if ever there was one, and a composer who was a believer but on the plane of humanism. As Frithjof Schuon has noted, although there is nothing morbid about him, one must note the disproportion between Beethoven’s artistic output and his inner spiritual personality. So it seems to me that, in a sense, Beethoven was a decline from Mozart, because in his late works, particularly the last Quartets, he not only takes humanism ‘to the heights that it could bear’, but also shows signs of a personal ‘angst’ that is not entirely

* A revised text of a talk first broadcast by BBC Radio 3 in May, 2004.

transcended. This is a decline, not only because it points forward to modernism and post-modernism, but also because it is a falling away from the divine, paradisaical and celestial world of Mozart. One can explain Bach and Beethoven, but Mozart's music is inexplicable in human terms.

I believe that Mozart's soul apprehended the theophany that came to him from God. Unconsciously, no doubt, Mozart's soul became aware of the ecstatic vision bestowed upon him. It was a vision that he could never have explained or understood in words, but a vision none the less that his soul would continuously pour forth in music.

Mozart was faultlessly crystalline, and he was also the most natural composer that ever lived. His melodies, rhythms and harmonies seem as natural as virgin nature itself. Mozart's music, one might say, pre-existed. It simply required *him* to pluck it out from the spheres. Are not the piano concertos a sublime example of this? *The Marriage of Figaro* poses as a ridiculous comedy, but it is none other than a constant outpouring of divine ecstasy. His music is more feminine and more ecstatic than that of any composer I know. He makes the commonplace divine and everything he touches becomes sacred. Lust, for instance, in the song of Monastatos bubbles like champagne—an accelerating pulse allows it to be understood by a four year old as well as a ninety year old. Mozart sees the divine in everything. He hears God everywhere and he sings His ecstasy in every single one of his operatic characters, from Sarastro to Papageno, to the Countess in *Figaro* and to Don Giovanni himself. He cannot help himself for, like the eternal child that he is, he never ceases to celebrate the ecstatic act of being. This is so not just in the remarkable, final String Quintet, or in the last movement of the G major Piano Concerto, or the whole of *The Magic Flute*, but it is so in almost everything that Mozart wrote—everything, perhaps, except the so-called profundity of his D minor mode. Pundits love to dwell on the Requiem, or the doubtless remarkable entrance of the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*, probably because these people love the innovatory. But paradoxically, it is not in these moments that I perceive the divine in Mozart, but in the far less obviously remarkable major modes in *Così fan tutte*, or in Zerlina's unbearably beautiful 'Vedrai, carino' in *Don Giovanni*. This evokes in me all the longing and all the beauty and all the truth that I know: Zerlina by offering her beating heart to Masetto becomes the heartbeat of God seen through the eyes of a child. I so often play this music, and if you change one single note of it, it falls to pieces. The

spacing of every simple and divine chord is so perfect that, once again, it seems to belong to a celestial harmony. Listen to any contemporary of Mozart and you will not find this perfection, not even in the more masculine and cerebral Haydn.

Mozart is for me what the Sufis call a manifestation of the Essence of God. The fact that one can speak in such exalted terms about Mozart puts him in a unique category and apart from the whole canon of western music. In his essence he has revealed paradise to me. All his operatic characters are paradisial because, like Shakespeare, Mozart has forgiven all, even Don Giovanni. They belong to the imaginal world, the world in between Heaven and Earth.

From time to time God allows inhabitants of paradise to enter into every beautiful form. This is the case with the music of Mozart. He alone among western composers has most perfectly shown that true imagination is mystical experience: the creative power of the heart.

I realize that many people who are modernists or humanists will have difficulty in accepting this view of Mozart. The humanists and modernists see him purely as part of the historical development of western music, which leads first to the stupid prejudice of 'art for art's sake', and eventually to the rotting corpse of modernism and post-modernism. By placing Mozart within the perspective of the Sacred, one sees that his music, like the poetry of Dante Alighieri, is without decay, paradisial, and permeated with a divine and innocent beauty. The modernist must reject this too, for he is in Hell, a popular place to be at the moment, and Hell is stimulating and all too easy to understand. As the painter Cecil Collins observed, Paradise is very difficult to understand, and with it there comes a rebuke, for it reveals our own impurity. To say that Mozart is a paradisial composer is, in today's climate, a radical thing indeed. It forces us to understand that Mozart's reason for being does not lie within himself, nor do his qualities and genius represent an end in themselves. Indeed, we have to conclude that Mozart was the medium for the expression of an archetype of beauty. For, as Ibn 'Arabī says, God reveals Himself through His theophanies, whether it be through Christ, Krishna, the Buddha, Virgin Nature or the Koran. Here we are speaking specifically of the Logos. God shows himself in everything, and this includes the sublime language of music. One can only know God through his theophanies. The soul of Mozart, through God, saw in God and with God. This is all we know, and all we need to know.