



DISASSOCIATIVE EGO FUNCTIONS
 OF THE CREATIVE MUSICIAN:
 THE "SCHIZOPHONIC REALM"
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The musician, or musical personality, is quite different from others of non-musical preference, and that difference is already apparent in early childhood. Ostwald (1973) researched musical behavior in early childhood and differentiated between musical and normal personalities. "Unlike the 'normal' child who by the age of five or six has learned to take sound pretty much for granted...the highly musical child tends to attach a high emotional value to acoustic experience" (p. 369). For example, the phenomena of absolute pitch is a sign of the "unique sense of consciousness with which certain youngsters invest [in] the different dimensions of [the] acoustic experience" (p. 369). Ostwald concludes that "to be successful, a musical child must have tremendous determination... [and that] the carrying of musical training from childhood into adult life is very significantly linked with self teaching..." (p. 374). However, other researchers (Saray, 1969) make mention that this musical gift also

modifies and shapes personality during adolescence and as a teenager. Having to spend many hours each day in solitary practice and becoming socially isolated may contribute to neurotic styles in the musical personality as well as to problems faced by musicians. Maladaptive behaviors described include sleeplessness and anxiety about poor performance quality, guilt, stagefright, sexual confusion (expressed as promiscuity, homosexuality, or inhibitions), as well as a depressive temperament resulting from constantly dealing with frustration and failure.

MUSICAL PERSONALITIES ARE AUDITORIALLY ORIENTED

For better or worse what seems unique about the musical personality is his orientation to the world through the auditory sphere. This mode is his primary vehicle of contact and general manner in which he experiences the external world (Nass, 1975). Mosonyi (in Coriat, 1945) feels that the special gift of the musician is the ability to unconsciously associate emotions and experiences with sound; musicians think in terms of musical sounds and have melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic fragments running through their minds. One question raised is does this prerequisite of musicianship, that is the development of this auditory sphere or mode, eventually become the sensory style used by the Ego as a means of adapting to and mastering reality? Nass offers a positive answer to this question and highlights Charcot, before him called personalities who adhere to this style consistently, such as musicians, as "Audittifs."

From birth, audittifs, much like other infants, are exposed to an environment with sounds that seem disorganized, displeasing, indecipherable, and thus threatening. At this early stage of cognitive abilities, sound seems to correlate to danger, while quiet correlates to security (Kohut & Levarie, 1950). It is this earliest perceived danger, that of chaotic sound, that is replaced by more organized and meaningful ones (Kohut, 1957; Sterba, 1965). If the infant's environment becomes a satisfying one, then most of the sounds heard by him take on an early symbolic association with pleasurable events. For example, mother's female voice becomes associated with pleasurable oral gratification, and the sung lullaby becomes associated with the pleasure of the calm, drowsy feeling after eating. Rosenbaum (1963) feels that non-verbal aspects of the Ego, expressing libidinal affect by means of melody in forms of grunting and cooing, create the first singing experiences. Further, the origin of pleasure in music and sound is viewed by Masonyi (in Kohut & Levarie, 1950; Kohut, 1957) as surfacing from the tension-relieving cry of the infant.

Music and musicians do have mysterious ways. There have been testimonials by composers relating to magic or God in connection to their inspirational processes. Musicians have described their performance

experiences as though from an external source. The creative process seems to be linked to an ambiguous state of consciousness (Nass, 1975). Regarding the passive musician, Kohut and Levarie (1950) underline the 'loss of Ego boundaries' concept, where "...the listener does not clearly differentiate between himself and the outside world; he experiences the sounds as being produced by himself, or even as being himself..." (p. 84). Further, Kohut and Levarie feel that it is this state of regression to an earlier Ego state which allows mastery over sounds and union with them at the same time. This they conclude is the prerequisite for musical enjoyment. This regression is called by Kohut and Levarie the "ecstatic state." Other authors have tried to explain this further. Sterba (1965) points out that the emotional surrender to the tones which abolish internal processes leads to a hallucinatory regression in the form of fantasies and memories. Silberer (in Sterba, 1946) called this "hypnagogic hallucinations." Sterba himself calls this "cosmic motility," (p. 41) and includes the transformation of musical experiences into hallucinatory pictures.

One question often raised in the literature is, can this state be called upon in service of the Ego? Weiss Mau (in Nass, 1971) feels that there is a "disassociative function in the Ego which is subject to the Ego's synthetic function and operates in the service of creativity" (p. 311). These two functions exist side-by-side. Coltrera (in Nass, 1975) implies that the "shift to a more loosely organized state of consciousness is characteristic of the act of musical composition" (p. 436). As a consequence, there is the experience of ambiguity and confusion over internal and external worlds. Coltrera (in Nass, 1971) points out that the shift in the Ego states is "most common among the creative, and [as such becomes] part of [their] normal functioning" (p. 312). These shifts in the Ego state among musical personalities involve sound. Audition seems to facilitate the shift to from an earlier mode, because of its correlation to sound and movement experiences from the earliest years of human development (Nass, 1975).

In addition to the creative act, and those states leading to musical enjoyment, music also seems to act as a defensive maneuver. Nass (1975) brings out that for musicians the whole auditory mode provides companionship to ward off loneliness, as well as against the feeling of isolation. Payn (1974) brings to light that there are some experiences that can not be expressed in words, but can, however, be expressed through music. In this latter case, musical activity may be used as a defense against, or to bind anxiety. For example, whistling in the dark, a common phenomena, is an exercise in substitute mastery. Kohut and Levarie (1950) and Kohut (1957) points out that whistling in the dark is an attempt to dispel the anxiety of loneliness by creating an illusion of group support. The musical activity offers itself to the Ego as an enjoyable form of mastery; the enjoyable overcoming the threat of the traumatic state.

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SONGS USED AS A DEFENSE

In general, the most common musical activity and form used as a defense in traumatic states is the song. Hannett (1964) illustrates how children use lyrics to express their deep-rooted feelings. Some lyrics are nonsensical and may be repetitive. Like other obsessional rituals, these obsessional tunes persist and occupy the mind, and thus give brief respite from thoughts of the conflict (Berg, 1953). But why song?? According to Hannett, Freud himself could not explain this phenomenon and questioned whether it is the music itself or the extra-musical factors that account for a specific song which emerges and occupies the mind. Yet Berg feels that songs which appear in the mind during traumatic states are in effect re-appearing as they were heard in earlier times of life on happier occasions. They can be remembered relative to the place and circumstances of the first encounter with them. Berg feels that the appearance of a tune represents a form of partial regression; pleasure is experienced when psychological tension is released or when such relief is shortly anticipated. Further, Kohut and Levarie (1950) state that energies bound for certain tasks (such as binding anxiety) become free and can be employed in pleasurable discharge (the song); thus, if the regression is successful, it is pleasurable.

To summarize thus far, it is clear that certain personality traits can be seen in early childhood. Those who have a highly developed auditory sensory style, also referred to as auditis, learn to orient themselves to the external world and reality through sound. Their Ego learns to master preverbal sound experiences which are chaotic and represent the most primitive fear of destruction. This mastery is felt as pleasurable relief from tension, through a more meaningful organized preoccupation with song. As musicianship is developed from childhood to adulthood, specific idiosyncracies can be seen in the behavior of musicians. However, most outstanding is the ability to call upon an ambiguous state of consciousness, a disassociative function subject to the Ego's synthetic function which operates in the service of creativity. This shift in Ego states is so common among the creative composer and musician that it may become part of their normal functioning. More specifically, the preoccupation with music-sound seems to be a common unconscious defensive maneuver, functioning to bind anxiety.

With this as a background, the question now is: over a period of time, can this unconscious defense maneuver turn into the most readily available behavior employed by the musician when conflict with his external reality is perceived? More specifically, does the musician withdraw into a state where he does not differentiate between inside and outside through his preoccupation with song, which blurs even more, the me/not me experience. This author suggests that if so, the questioned

withdrawal is to an area of the psyche which is characterized by a cleavage from reality relating to sound; the "schizophrenic realm." If so, the ability to enter the schizophrenic realm, to master anxiety by preoccupying himself with narcissistic musical activity, is an Ego function different from and not existing in the Egos of non-musical and non-creative personalities.

On the subject of distortion between the internal and the external reality, Nass (1975) states that "it is my belief that the musician is primed for these experiences by an auditory sensory style which builds upon his hypersensitivity to sound" (p. 999). Sterba (1965) feels that movement in music abolishes the boundary between Ego and object and this movement causes a regression to the kinesthetic pleasure experienced in early infancy, as well as the pleasure in experiencing the dissolution of boundaries between the Ego and the external world. Thus, Sterba brings up that pleasure is found both in the regression itself, as well as in the involvement with the music. In agreement with Sterba, Coriat (1945) also feels that regarding music, the reality principal is replaced by the pleasure principal. When a musician or composer withdraws into the schizophrenic realm, his use of music (song) in a repetitive fashion is for the purpose of and to overcome anxiety-laden reality and thus over-emphasize the pleasure gained. In other words, the musical sounds (whether heard internally or externally) produce Ego changes which neutralize anxiety and tension, thus leading to a sense of pleasure. Coriat feels that the compulsion to repeat musical motifs and idioms, is for the purpose of prolonging narcissistic pleasure.

Instances of hearing disorders and ear disease in the history of famous composers and musicians are rather common. Nass (1975) tends to explain this phenomenon as "hypercathexing the ear" (p. 792). However, this author offers yet another explanation for these ailments: an overindulgence in the act of withdrawing into the schizophrenic realm. According to Nass, composers, including Beethoven, Schumann, Faure, and Smetana, had serious auditory symptoms accompanied by related confusion between inside and outside differentiation. Lehtonen (1988) correlates psychotic symptoms to creative processes. "Psychotic symptoms, which in many ways resemble art, are, when their meaning is investigated, interpreted like art, as symbols that reveal the individual, self-creating self." (p. 84). Further, Lehtonen feels that "the only difference between psychosis and artistic creativity lies in the fact that artists are able to crystallize [their]... transformed and concentrated streams of ideas into artistic objects. This kind of binding releases the underlying tension..." (p. 86).

More specifically, this author now raises the following question: Is it possible that the more a composer or musician uses his acquired ability for withdrawal into the schizophrenic realm, away from reality, whether in the service of creativity or as a defensive maneuver to bind anxiety or tension,

the more he increases his chances of no return? Nass (1975) describes Schumann's auditory hallucinations and suicidal attempts; also Smetana, who felt vibrations in his head referring to them as "a great torture." Kohut (1957) boldly states that the schizoid individual is a potential schizophrenic who employs a chronic defense; he distances himself from reality in order not to be hurt. Musical activity is relatively frequent among schizoids; and schizoids are relatively frequent among musicians" (p. 403).

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the developmental gains that musicians make in mastery may serve as a pre-conscious regression in time of perceived anxiety. This author feels that the type of regression most commonly employed may be a withdrawal into an area of the psyche referred to as the "schizophrenic realm." In this realm, a break with reality and preoccupation with rhythmic/obsessional music/song activity which is pleasurable is assured. This pleasure is reminiscent of the early infantile memories of "mommy," and thus, in actuality is a searching for and mastery over the "lost voice." One question raised by this author regards the possibility that musicians who attune themselves to this ambiguous Ego state and disassociative function with great regularity - to the extent that they receive more pleasure from hallucinatory fantasies involving music than from their daily reality - may be in danger regarding mental health and develop maladaptive behaviors, as well as serious psychic problems.

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