

HARMONY AS A STRATEGY FOR BENEFICIAL CHANGE

Richard A. Schultz, Ph.D.

Abstract

Harmony is often emphasized in esoteric circles as a goal of the seeker on the mystical path. By achieving harmony within, the mystic accomplishes a fusion with the divine essence and transcends the purely physical appetites, aspirations, and limitations of corporeal existence. In this paper, we examine what harmony is, using references to familiar forms of harmony from music, the arts, and the sciences. We then examine the effect harmony has on its surroundings to discern whether harmony is the actual goal or, more precisely, a tool for effecting beneficial change. Finally, by drawing parallels between musical and mystical harmony, we explore some of the direct and indirect uses of mystical harmony in today's society.

LA ARMONÍA COMO ESTRATEGIA HACIA UN CAMBIO BENÉFICO

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Extracto

En los círculos esotéricos la armonía es frecuentemente enfatizada como una meta de aquel que anda en la búsqueda en el sendero místico. Al atender la armonía interna, el místico logra la fusión con la esencia divina y trasciende los apetitos, las aspiraciones y las limitaciones puramente físicas de la existencia corpórea. En este artículo examinamos lo que es la armonía, usando referencias a formas familiares de la armonía en la música, las artes, y las ciencias. Después examinamos el efecto que la armonía tiene sobre su alrededor para discernir si la armonía es la meta actual o, más precisamente, es una herramienta para efectuar un cambio benéfico. Finalmente, exponiendo paralelos entre la armonía musical y la armonía mística, exploramos algunos de los usos directos e indirectos de la armonía mística en la sociedad de hoy día.

L'HARMONIE COMME STRATEGIE POUR CHANGEMENT BENEFIQUE

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Résumé

Dans les cercles ésotériques, l'emphase est souvent mise sur l'harmonie comme but du chercheur sur le sentier mystique. En obtenant l'harmonie intérieure, le mystique accomplit une fusion avec l'essence divine et transcende les appétits et aspirations purement physiques ainsi que les limitations de l'existence corporelle. Dans cet exposé, nous examinons ce qu'est l'harmonie, utilisant des références de formes familières de l'harmonie, de la musique jusqu'aux arts et aux sciences. Puis nous examinons l'effet que l'harmonie a sur son environnement pour distinguer si l'harmonie est le but réel ou, plus précisément si c'est un outil pour effectuer un changement bénéfique. Finalement, en tirant des parallèles entre l'harmonie musicale et

mystique, nous explorons certains des usages directs et indirects de l'harmonie mystique dans la société d'aujourd'hui.

HARMONIE ALS STRATEGIE FÜR POSITIVEN WECHSEL

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Zusammenfassung

Harmonie wird in esoterischen Kreisen oft betont als das Ziel des Suchenden auf dem mystischen Pfad. Indem er eine innere Harmonie erreicht, bewirkt der Mystiker eine Verschmelzung mit der Göttlichen Essenz und transzendiert die rein physischen Triebe, Aspirationen und Beschränkungen des körperlichen Seins. In der vorliegenden Schrift untersuchen wir die Bedeutung der Harmonie, indem wir Referenzen familiärer Formen von Harmonie aus der Musik, der Künste und der Wissenschaft benutzen. Dann untersuchen wir die Wirkung der Harmonie auf ihre Umgebung um zu erkunden ob sie das eigentliche Ziel ist, oder genauer, nur ein Gerät ist um positiven Wechsel zu erzielen. Zum Schluss erkunden wir einige der direkten und indirekten Anwendungen der mystischen Harmonie indem wir Parallelen zwischen musikalischer und mystischer Harmonie in der heutigen Gesellschaft ziehen..

HARMONIA COMO UMA ESTRATÉGIA PARA A MUDANÇA BENÉFICA

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Sumário

A harmonia é enfatizada frequentemente em círculos esotéricos como um objetivo do investigador no trajeto místico. Conseguindo a harmonia dentro de si mesmo, o místico realiza uma fusão com a essência divina e transcende os apetites, as aspirações, e as limitações meramente físicos da existência corporal. Neste artigo nós examinamos o que é harmonia, utilizando referências às formas familiares de harmonia da música, das artes, e das ciências. Examinamos então o efeito que a harmonia exerce em seus ambientes para distinguir se a harmonia é o objetivo real ou, mais precisamente, um instrumento para efetuar uma mudança benéfica. Em conclusão, ao extrair paralelos entre a harmonia musical e mística, exploramos alguns dos usos diretos e indiretos da harmonia mística na sociedade de hoje.

HARMONY AS A STRATEGY FOR BENEFICIAL CHANGE

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In music, harmony can be defined as a blending of sounds to produce a pleasing effect¹. There are many classes and shades of harmony. A set of musical notes of different pitches, when played simultaneously, creates a chord. When pleasing to the trained ear, the chord is considered to be harmonious; when unpleasing, it creates conditions of clashing discord known as cacophony (or “bad sound”).

While simple on the surface, the concept of a harmonious chord is complex. The same set of notes sounded in different octaves creates a suite of chords, which plays differently on the listener. A chord sounded in a low octave may be viewed as powerful; one in a middle octave as relaxing; and one in a high octave as annoying. Closely spaced pitches in a chord, referred to as “block voicing” and typified in the sounds of the barbershop quartet², elicit a different response than the widely spaced, open chords of Copland. The tonal makeup of a chord, called the key, within the same octave likewise promotes distinct responses. Based on the experience of musicians, composers, and conductors, some chords such as A_b are strong, rich, and vibrant³, while chords such as D are cold and brittle⁴. The composer’s choice of chord and key structure has a clear effect on the listener’s response to the piece, and this response can be controlled by the judicious choice of chord and key⁵.

The combination of voices that creates a chord significantly alters its effect on the listener. Consider the differences between a chord played at the same volume, and in the same octave, by a string quartet, a choir of male voices, a choir of female voices, a marching band, a symphony orchestra, an electronic synthesizer, and a brass ensemble. In each of these cases, the chord played is the same, even though the voices that have combined to create the chord are very different. The harmony created by each chord in this example has a decidedly different effect on the listener because of the choice of components that were used to assemble it.

Chords can elicit specific emotions and responses depending on their tonal makeup. For example, a major chord can be described as open, optimistic, and pleasing, whereas a small change in one note’s pitch changes the major chord into a minor chord, with a corresponding change in emotions to those such as melancholy and thoughtfulness. There are many varieties of chords even within the same basic key, such as D, with major and minor chords being just two examples. Some chords in D, for example, can become extremely elaborate, such as diminished sevenths and augmented ninths, with many more than three or five notes comprising the chord. Yet, all these chords are considered harmonious, with the degree of harmony varying from obvious (such as a major chord in A_b) to subtle (such as an augmented minor chord in G).

These examples all illustrate that there is a multiplicity of ways of generating a pleasing musical harmony. The musician strives to create the most perfect representation of harmony within a particular musical idiom; the master composer or master performer experiences a loss of individuality, a timelessness, a merging and sense of oneness with the music, when this pinnacle of harmony and ensemble is achieved. This has indeed been the goal of serious musicians throughout the ages, with numerous masters from Bach to Bernstein, as well as of contemporary students of music.

HARMONY IN ART

In the art world, harmony is achieved by a pleasing combination of color, light, and composition (that is, the spatial arrangement of the artist’s subjects). Here, harmony is a balance and a message, with different types of harmony depending, as in music, on the desires and capabilities of the artist. In painting, many different styles are considered masterfully harmonious, including the realism of Rembrandt (Figure 1), the surrealism of Dali (Figure 2), the

impressionistic style of Monet (Figure 3), the luminist style of Kinkade (Figure 4), and even the abstract cubism of Picasso (Figure 5). (Figures may be found on pages 7-8 below.) In art, as in music, the effect on the viewer depends as much on the training, sensibilities, and even the expectations of the audience as it does on the harmonious quality of the work being presented. Thus, one can expect very different reactions to the same work of art, from revulsion, through disinterest, to curiosity, and all the way to rapture, and all of these can be considered valid reactions. The artist may, in fact, have little or no control on the reaction of the viewers, despite having created what some would characterize as a masterpiece of harmony.

HARMONY IN SCIENCE

In science, harmony is consistently sought, and frequently created, by the collection, interpretation, and integration of “cold hard facts” and empirical observations⁶. Confusion and discord during early and diligent study of a scientific problem are eventually swept away by an overarching logical and systematic conceptual framework that unifies the data and creates a pleasing context. Frequently, the larger the problem, the simpler is the solution⁷. These clear solutions, referred to somewhat reverently by the scientist as “elegant,” arise not simply from disciplined analytical reasoning and hard work, but with the aid of creative intuition and insight that are the lifeblood of first-rate scientists and scholars⁸. Here again, discovery and discernment of the elegant harmony of basic (or fundamental) rules that govern complexly physical phenomena are the goal of the scientist, even when this neo-mystical quest goes unappreciated by the public at large.

EFFECTS OF HARMONY ON ITS SURROUNDINGS

We can see that the creation of harmony is central to endeavors as seemingly diverse as music, art, and science. Practitioners in these fields train themselves over years, and often decades, to perceive and produce elegant harmonies. In parallel with the vigorous pursuit of harmony in these and other fields, however, those persons outside these fields who may lack the training, disposition, resources, or contextual basis for participating in the work, may not fully appreciate or apprehend the harmony being created and directed toward them. They may, therefore, be affected by this harmony either directly or indirectly.

It has often been said that something cannot exist without its opposite. We can identify what harmony *is* because we can also discern what is disharmonious. Thus, harmony requires the existence of cacophony to function. In our inner struggle to sense and unite with the divine, we labor to overcome the jumbled, undisciplined cacophony of thoughts, sounds, images, and other distractions in our minds, willing the mind to be silent. Religions work by identifying a set of principles or behaviors that need to be changed, and then by instituting a framework of laws, texts, rituals, and symbols that would foster the change from disharmony to harmony. Governments similarly can be said to impose smoothness or regularity onto their respective societies. In each of these examples, distinct types of chords may create the harmony involved: some subtle, some vibrant, some harmonious, and some unpleasant. The issue here is to identify the chord structure that is most effective, and most beneficial, in promoting what mystics would consider to be fundamental harmony within our society.

Harmony is not static—it is instead a dynamic phenomenon. As emphasized by Ralph Lewis⁹ and others¹⁰, a complete state of balance, equilibrium, and hence harmony cannot exist in nature. All of the universe is in motion, from the tiniest subatomic string, through the processes of living beings, through the evolution of galaxies. The universe is thus in a state of constant change. If we accept a definition of harmony as the condition of total consistency and compatibility, then in this sense the universe as a whole, and the myriad systems of which it is composed, is in a state of harmony. Yet looking closer, harmony requires disharmony to be perceived. Put another way, harmony becomes recognized and important when viewed as part of its larger context; that is, the environment on which it acts. Harmony is an expression of the Law of the Triangle, in which harmony acts on its surroundings to promote change.

As Rosicrucians, we train ourselves to become receptive to the divine voice within. Through the acceptance of, and eventually the fusion with, this inner voice of conscience, the Rosicrucian mystical student gains mastery over the pressures of the physical world, including ourselves. Through knowing ourselves¹¹, we achieve inner balance and harmony, and express this sensitivity outwardly in service to others with no thought of reward. By combining with other Rosicrucians, this inner harmony is reinforced in a manner analogous to constructive interference of light or sound waves, creating an aura or chord that is transmitted outward by the group as a whole¹².

HARMONY AS A DUAL EFFECT

While harmony within oneself and within our Order is clearly a goal of the Rosicrucian mystical student, our collective chord rings out within the amphitheater of our culture and civilization. The question arises, then, as to what type of response we want to elicit, and how might we facilitate this desired response?

As stated by many including Paul Case in his treatise on Rosicrucian principles¹³, and by Stephan Hoeller in his analysis of Karl Jung's interpretation of Gnostic concepts¹⁴, the *context* of mystical transcendence, or illumination, should be of equal importance with the experience of illumination itself. The context of illumination, as implemented in the teachings of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, provides a uniform framework that assures the responsible and beneficial application of the illumination received by the mystical student. In other words, the chord emitted by Rosicrucian mystics as a group is beneficial, constructive, and harmonious. However, its physical effect on the society in which we are embedded depends to a large extent on the receptivity of the population. Here, the importance of context becomes key. If a person in the public at large is mystically inclined by nature¹⁵, or if they are not so inclined but the environment in which they live and function is tolerant and supportive of mystical impulses, then the Rosicrucian chord will have a direct and positive effect on this person. If however the person is not mystically inclined and/or if the environment and culture are hostile to mystical impulses, then the chord may be rendered much less effective. The thought naturally arises as to how we can be effective with this latter group.

The concepts of pitch and key suggest one possible strategy. Just as some chords are perceived to be ethereal, subtle, and appreciated principally by a trained minority, other, more powerful chords are effective with a larger segment of the population. For this latter group of

individuals in our society, the effective chord must drown out, or at least be perceptible within, the omnipresent loudspeakers of consumption to excess of all things, such as food, television, consumer products, sports, entertainment, gossip, hobbies, and work. A fundamental mystical principle states that moderation in all things leads to internal balance and, potentially, to the conditions that favor inner spiritual communication¹⁶. As humans, our brains enjoy novelty and excitement, but without an internal or external check on our behavior, we can easily become addicted to the drug of excess. Because contemporary American culture promotes, rather than hinders, excess of all kinds, the limiting agent must consequently come from within ourselves. It is here that our Rosicrucian chord composed, instead, of different voices; pitched in more direct keys; crafted using simpler, less subtle chord structure; and involving a lower and more universally appreciated fundamental frequency; may be an effective agent in facilitating the external conditions and context needed to support the detection, development, and eventual reliance on the internal compass that points to physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual balance¹⁷.

CONCLUSIONS

How then can we use harmony as a strategy for beneficial change in human society? A dual or nested approach may be surmised from the content and flow of this paper. As Rosicrucians, the harmonious chord we generate that is subtle, high in frequency, and of most significant impact on a subset of persons in our society for the reasons already stated¹⁸ may be leveraged or increased in effectiveness when paired with chords of different, more resonant character. This creates a dual or complementary harmony. By specifying the result we wish to achieve in our surroundings¹⁹, we can compose the appropriate music. The ultimate measure of our composition and its performance rests with the appreciation and lasting impact made on the audience. As Rosicrucian mystics, we have the opportunity and obligation to take the first steps toward this masterful performance series by transforming ourselves into the finest chord that we can imagine²⁰.



FIGURE 1

Rembrandt's *Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer* (1653); Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Bredius 478, from www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/rembrandt/1650/aristotle-homer.jpg (accessed 5/24/06).



FIGURE 2

Dali's *The Persistence of Memory* (1931) from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:The_Persistence_of_Memory.jpg (accessed 5/24/06).



FIGURE 3

Monet's *The Artist's Garden at Giverny* (1900), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, from <http://sunsite.sut.ac.jp/wm/paint/auth/monet/last/vetheuil/vetheuil.jpg> (accessed 5/24/06).



FIGURE 4

Kinkadee's *The Hour of Prayer* (2002), from www.kinkadecentral.com/paintings/tk2y2-02.htm (accessed 5/24/06).



FIGURE 5

Picasso's *Musical Instruments* (1912), from [www.hermitagemuseum.org/cgi-bin/db2www/fullSize.mac/fullSize?selLang=English&dlViewId=L9T59\\$QMOYJZP1RE&size=small&selCateg=picture&dlCategId=GZVABMMWTAN3TUP5&comeFrom=quick](http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/cgi-bin/db2www/fullSize.mac/fullSize?selLang=English&dlViewId=L9T59$QMOYJZP1RE&size=small&selCateg=picture&dlCategId=GZVABMMWTAN3TUP5&comeFrom=quick) (accessed 5/24/06).

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- ¹ For example, see <http://dict.die.net/harmony/> (accessed 5/24/06).
- ² See <http://www.harmonize.com/6foot4/SoundClips.html> for audio examples of classic barbershop quartet voicing (accessed 5/24/06).
- ³ You can hear the chords discussed in this paper by going to <http://www.chordfind.com> (accessed 5/24/06) and selecting the ones you want to play.
- ⁴ The richness or brittleness of a chord depends on the emotional response generated within the listener by the fundamental frequency and related harmonics of the chord.
- ⁵ Rosicrucian vowel sounds used in Affiliated Bodies define the chord of G major (G–A–B–C–D–E–F[#]–G) or E minor, depending on whether G or E is chosen as the starting note of the chord (www.jmdl.com/howard/music/keys_scales.html#relative; accessed 5/24/06).
- ⁶ A nice illustration of scientific thinking is given by Robert J. Marzano et al., *Dimensions of Thinking: A Framework for Curriculum and Instruction*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, Virginia, 1988. The critical thinking approach advocated by the authors and by Dr. Richard Paul (<http://www.criticalthinking.org/about/presenters.shtml>; accessed 5/24/06) shares many similarities with Socratic questioning (<http://okra.deltastate.edu/~bhayes/socratic.html>; accessed 5/24/06), an effective if time-intensive method of instruction.
- ⁷ A wonderful example is the speech given by Albert Einstein in 1950 to the International Congress of Surgeons in Cleveland, Ohio, entitled, “Physics, philosophy, and scientific progress” and reprinted by permission in *Physics Today*, June 2005, pp. 46–48. Reading the actual thoughts and words of this scintillating mind is a treat to the scientist and non-scientist alike.
- ⁸ E. Philip Krider, “Benjamin Franklin and lightning rods,” *Physics Today*, January 2006, pp. 42–48. Many examples are given in this straightforward article, written for the layperson, that reveal the broad and lasting scientific impact that Franklin made in this country and in Europe. It is a testament to an innovative and creative “out-of-the-box” thinker.
- ⁹ Ralph M. Lewis (1990) *The Sanctuary of Self*, AMORC, p. 113.
- ¹⁰ *TMO Pantacle*, No. 1, pp. 17–18 (2001).
- ¹¹ Raymund Andrea (1981) *The Technique of the Master*, AMORC, pp. 61–82.
- ¹² Raymund Andrea (1996) *The Way of the Heart*, AMORC, pp. 75–85.
- ¹³ Paul F. Case (1981) *The True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order*, Weiser Books, Boston, pp. 199–201.
- ¹⁴ Stephen A. Hoeller (1989) *Jung and the Lost Gospels: Insights into the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Library*, Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Illinois, p. 224.
- ¹⁵ Jeffrey Kluger, “Is God in our genes?” *Time*, November 29, 2004, pp. 50–60.
- ¹⁶ For example, see the dialogs on “The Middle Way” in *The Teaching of Buddha*, Society for the Promotion of Buddhism, Tokyo, Japan, 1106th revised edition (2003), pp. 112, 328–330.
- ¹⁷ Examples of successful programs that are directed to the non-Rosicrucian public include those developed as a result of the annual IMAGINE AMORC workshops, such as Rosicrucian Learning Center activities, Seekers Campaigns, book distribution programs to libraries and used bookstores, podcasts, and the e-zine peaceconsciousness.org.
- ¹⁸ Liber 777, *Celestial Sanctum Meditation*, Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 1994.
- ¹⁹ The process of Appreciative Inquiry (<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/default.cfm>; accessed 5/24/06), now being used both in AMORC and in other public and private organizations, relies on imagining and visualizing the desired end product, which then becomes

a reality. The process was developed by David Cooperrider, then a doctoral student (in 1980) at Case Western Reserve University, and his advisor, Dr. Suresh Srivastva, in the mid 1980s. It bears a striking resemblance to the thinking of Dr. Steven Covey (Habit #2, Begin with the End in Mind; *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People*, Simon & Schuster, 1989). Dr. H. Spencer Lewis, former Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, employed this principle in creating Rosicrucian Park in San Jose, California (see description in Ralph M. Lewis, *Cosmic Mission Fulfilled*, AMORC, 1978, pp. 242–243).

²⁰ This paper was originally presented as a discourse and meditation in the Grand Temple in San Jose, California, on June 18, 2005. I am grateful to my friends in my local affiliated body, Sierra Nevada Pronaos, and especially to several Grand Lodge officers in San Jose, who supported and encouraged the development of the ideas contained here.