

Essay on  
“CREATIVITY”

An Introduction

The gist of my argument, if not the crux of it, is that academics (philosophers, social scientists, musicologists et al) have always tried to rationalise the motivations of creative people in the past, and sought to explain these writings in labelled terms of their own devising, based on historical, social or political analyses. I have argued that creative people have, on the contrary, usually sought to break out of this shell and create by using their imaginations, even though they might sometimes adopt the “methods” or styles of creating used by their former mentors. In other words they have sought to vary reality by creating something that is different or “magical”. That, I suppose, is the purpose of art: One definition of it could be “the appreciation of reality by imaginative variations of its substance”.

The spiritual element also has a bearing on all of this. Thus I have included the “religious element” in the essay: I am saying “Who is to say whether man’s imagination has not created the sense of “beyondness” and other-worldliness, and also the sense of being answerable to a Higher Authority?” All the great religious works of art and of music have this sense of worship and adoration.

Real events also play a part in creativity: This explains the advent of Programme Music: eg. The massacre before the Winter Palace in 1911 motivating Shostakovich in his 11<sup>th</sup> Symphony; likewise the “story” of Dukas’ “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” etc. Stories, real or imaginary, provide stimuli. There are many twists and turns before music is finally written or becomes generally known. Sometimes a composer is influenced by others, by events, by popular movements or religious rituals. Often, though influenced, they may wish to hide these influences, or cloak them in esoteric mysticism: Debussy wished to start an esoteric movement – indeed, in a sense, he did. All these motivations pass through the composer’s imagination before being transmuted into sound.

Now read on.

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On Motivations of Imagination and Reality  
(later applied to MUSIC)

It is said that more than a third of our lives is spent in sleeping; and how much of that fraction is spent in dreaming? Yet the free-wheeling and untrammelled moments when rapid eye movements are the only sign of the human mind being engaged in a compulsive way, give some indication of the powerful impulses which even in our dormant condition, motivate and control our creative imagination.

In some aboriginal cultures that “dream-time” and the overlap into reality fulfils a meaning to life in a powerful structure of belief. In this and many other ways which can be linked to religious motivation, there is a psychological connection between dreams and reality, between shadows and substance, between the imagined and what is seen to exist. Imaginative dreams can even be an explanation for the conjuring-up of ecstatic visions and breaking through the restrictions of education and physical experience. In such cases the things imagined are so strong as to take on the aura of reality.

In such cases definitions are not enough to explain the ‘condition’. A scientist, for example, in explaining “matter” would deal with it in a physical sense. Philosophers like Berkeley or Leibniz (as quoted by Bertrand Russell in “The Problems of Philosophy”) would regard matter as “ideas in the mind of God” (Berkeley) or “a colony of souls” (Leibniz). This divergence of opiated definition quite clearly is caused by difference in perspective and use of sense-data, as well as choice of degree of dimension. Russell provides a fitting example of this when defining the existence (or non-existence in the physical sense) of a table: He engages this sense of physical dimension when discussing the difference in the “appearance” of the table when examined (for example) under a microscope and compares this with its appearance in light or partial darkness. He then goes on to question whether it is there at all when it is out of the view of the observer, for then it “exists” for him only in his memory and imagination.<sup>1</sup>

Imagination and memory seem to be closely linked, particularly by the use of symbols. The “symbolic translation” of belief, for example, in a religion plays a major part in the cohesive effect of that symbol (such as the cross in Christianity) for the whole body of believers. One may even go so far as to say that the religion concerned with the use of such symbols proliferates hugely as a result of the use of such symbols.

Carrying this idea into more specific detail, one becomes aware of the tremendous upsurge of interest and increase in the number of “sacred souls” resulting from the acceptance of the Christian cross as the symbol of the sect’s chief icon following the demise of the ‘fish’ as a symbol. The early church, indeed, and by that I mean the church of the Apostles during the time they were still alive and preaching – found the use of any symbols, be they graven images or painted icons, as entirely “unscriptured” and therefore anathema. They used the words and deeds they had witnessed during the short life of Jesus Christ as their ecclesiastical motivation. Following the historic path of

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<sup>1</sup> This argument is variously resolved later in the book.

bibliography, prophesy, incarnation fulfillment, revelation and interpretation expressed in the active gamut of the bible, through both Greek and Hebrew scriptures, they taught their followers their revealed discipline as entirely factual and not “imagined”. Since those early days, with the fracturing of belief through the input of dogmas, religions concerned with the interpretation of Christian “truths” have more and more concerned themselves with interpretations of this or that scriptural “detail” and less and less with holistic truth as in the “apostolic” church.

A further proof of this lies in the “decoration” of the Christian cross by various sects. One has only to witness the difference between the Greek cross (say) and the Celtic cross to underline this point. “Artistic” decoration needs imagination and care to bring an air of distinction to the object (in this case, the cross) concerned. Indeed the very materials used in the creation of the cross are significant. Gold and silver crosses carried in processions of the faithful also produce an aura of wealth, distinction, power and security: The Catholic and Apostolic Church would not have it otherwise! Only very occasionally (if at all) a crudely constructed wooden cross (as in the original) is carried in the procession, and then only to remind the faithful of the ordeal of Jesus on that fateful day of His sacrifice. Imagine if Jesus had been put to death on a crude wooden table! Bertrand Russell’s table may have had a more mystic and important ethos till the end of time! Imagine what the significance of the Last Supper would have imposed on believers! The symbol of the table would even have outweighed its utilitarian usage....

The use of imagination by painters of religious scenes through the ages has also had a cohesive and mystic relevance to Christianity. Such imagined compositions serve both artistic and spiritual purpose. It is strange to think of Christ warning his disciples of the dangers of “graven images”, in keeping with the Hebrew scriptures. Not long after his death religious icons were being cherished by the faithful as part of the trappings of their religious belief. One wonders whether the practice of cave-paintings centuries before in the time when clan-ism was strong in the psyche of the human family, had a re-enactment and re-interpretation in the advent of the religious icon. It is as if the belief in the “magic” of the image has a potency which is very similar to the taking-over of the spirit and aura of the painted animal in the caves of yore. But perhaps I’m letting my “imagination” run away with me....!

“Imagination” and “interpretation” – and even “imagination within interpretation” and “interpretation of what is imagined” – have even stronger links with reality in our own time. Bertrand Russell succinctly encapsulates this in his theories of “appearance” and “reality”. Yet most of his thinking concerns itself with “reality” as its mainspring with the association of “appearance” lending itself to interpretation.

The artist is more concerned with “appearance” as an interpretation of the working imagination. In this aspect one can frequently define the use of symbolism in this imagery, as in the work of Salvador Dali, as having a transcending significance. It is as if the symbol (as “icon”) stirs connecting feelings and memories, dreams and beliefs, which go far beyond the act of merely “looking” (as witnessed by the beholder) and enter into his own “reality” by the twin paths of “imagination” and “experience”. For, to be stirred

to the “depth of one’s soul” implies a depth of experience come to by not only the acts of living but by development of the entire human psyche, which of necessity takes in a spiritual dimension. This dimension is personal and is acquired by nature, nurture, culture, knowledge and a preserving (and persevering) self-discipline (even self-knowledge).

“Nature” and “nurture” concern each one, as at the accident of birth. To be born a human being is in itself fortuitous. To be born into a certain family, race, culture, economic and political “climate”, TIME and PLACE are also equally fortuitous. From birth (as expressed in the works of all past sociologists from Durkheim to Max Weber, from Talcott Parsons to Mead), the twin associations of family and community help frustrate and guide one’s path through nurture until adulthood. Deviance comes (in a personal way) when one “interprets” the significant balance of cultural ideology and self-assertive behaviour. Communal, restraining and personal “Laws” provide the framework for such behaviours, but often (as witnessed in the work of Freud) such deviance is critical and can become a neurosis. Artists are frequently held up as examples of such ‘deviance’ and yet their work is just as frequently ‘adopted’ into the fringe or even mainstream, of communal culture. Whether such “neurotic” work as (say) by Dali comes out of repressed sexuality (as expressed in the works of Freud) or by fragmentation of cultural and spiritual values seeking a personal and new “dimension” is a matter to ponder. And why the need for such self-imposed expression comes about at all should throw some light on the focus of human society in its wider functions.

Certainly, as we were “created” we were born “to create”. In a physical sense this is happening all the time as the human family increases in numbers. But the imaginative consciousness of the creative artist struggles to “give birth” in a different dimension, through the mind and via the imagination.

The wider aspects of the Imagination regarding Religion, society, politics and culture

Isn't it possible that various strong functions of the mass, communicable Imagination have created all our visions of fantasy, hope, culture, religion, belief and so on?

This morning I heard a programme which dealt with hallucination amongst the young, caused by solvent abuse and drugs, during which a psychologist held forth the view that young people today had recourse to these products (drugs and solvents) as a MEANS OF ESCAPE FROM REALITY.

This, after all, is the basic function of the creative imagination – something that is common to all human beings. Yet when fantasy, hope, culture, religion, belief all fail the individual members of society then other motivations are used to stimulate the flagging imagination from feelings of boredom.

Why and how does this come about? Surely, the key aspects of the human psyche, the main factors which set us apart from all the other members of the animal kingdom, are the twin functions Imagination and Memory. The combination of known Hard Facts and Memory have systematised our culture and religious beliefs since time immemorial. Belief is built on the assimilation of known Hard Facts stored in the Memory and applied to Real Life. If, for some reason, cultural or historical, these same Hard Facts are rendered dysfunctional, then the culminating fracturing of stored memory (previously aimed at positive cultural or religious “goals”) proves such a shock and disappointment to the human imagination that the recipient may go through a cathartic crisis of conscience so morally destructive that outside stimulations and comforts in the guise of drugs, sex and religious “cults” may prove magnetically charismatic to those so affected.

All the early sociologists wrote about the effects on society of the urbanisation of man brought about by the twin revolutions of the social actions of the proletariat (as in the case of the French revolution) and industrialisation (as per the industrial revolution in England). The effects of city-dwelling transformed the demographic population from the Community to the social-contract (from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft – Tonnies)).

This effect has also been described as “secularisation” – the implication here is of the ‘realities’ of Life taking on more importance than the daydreams of religious culture. It is this ‘starving’ of the mass-imagination, and the revealing of Durkheim’s ‘anomie’ which continue to dominate modern thinking even in our technological age. For without the man-made creation of HOPE (by any manner of cultural means) society must face the hard reality of the economic wilderness without the luxury of “outside help”.

This “outside help” is what all religions create: Is it based in Imagination or on fact? To begin with, all the major religions outline facts, as Happenings, which have produced REVELATIONS to or from their religious mainspring, to affect the lives of the converted. Often these ‘revelations’ go beyond comprehension in the everyday sense, to create an ‘illusion’ so powerful as to inject Belief through the ethos of a spiritual

dimension. One may imagine that in pagan times, when tribe and clan were held together by cemented beliefs resulting in communal motivation, all revelation was thought of as “magical”, there being no other rational explanation for such happenings. This would lead us to believe that the SPIRITUAL dimension came as a later development of the human psyche.

The first written disclosure of such a development is expressed in the Bible when concerned with the children of Israel. Where all other “gods” were revealing themselves in “magical” terms to their followers (and were often found wanting), the ‘true God’ of the Israelites gradually won them over by means of a ‘Spiritual’ dimension experienced by no other clan or tribe. It is this SPIRITUAL DIMENSION which has permeated the most profound human thinking and motivation ever since, so it is worth examining.

To begin with, I use the word ‘permeate’ advisedly, because the ‘spiritual dimension’ is severally absorbed into many other psychological and physical, social and cultural effects of the human existence.

Let me try to explain: The term “appreciation” is only a term until we attempt to give it credence. For example, when we look up in the sky and see, on a bright summer’s day, a swallow swoop low and snap at an insect, we marvel at its skill and grace of movement and by some quirk in our psyche we begin to ‘appreciate’ not only the living thing (the swallow) but the thing that motivates it and gives it life – by stages we may also ‘appreciate’ our joy at witnessing such an example of carefree existence, on such a beautiful day... and so on... until we realise that our mere act of ‘witnessing has gone beyond merely the act of an ‘observer’ and been absorbed into a wider dimension of “appreciator” and “interpreter”: In other words, our own lives have been affected by a simple act of beholding something outside of ourselves, to the degree that the ‘joy’ we feel at such a time almost emits ( if not in fact ‘enacts’) a prayer of thanks from our minds. If this is so, then I would choose to define such a moment as having a “spiritual significance”.

‘Gratitude’ for our environment is a very powerful spiritual force: In the lives of artists and musicians it is frequently a powerful motivation for creation: Witness the work of Wordsworth and Shelley; of Beethoven and Schiller; of Constable and Turner. In all the work of these widely-respected men the thing they create goes well beyond the process of their utterance: There is always a wider, more “appreciative”, more generous and thoughtful dimension, which we (as their human “receptors”) can link into our own lives. It is this “wealth of the mind” which can make us more well-rounded human beings: It is, after all, the essence of humanity.

Thinkers and scientists have always tried to rationalise our day-to-day existence. Indeed, in certain spheres of our existence, there is an orderliness and an ordinariness which is both satisfying and supportive. On several levels of communal existence, our laws and social interaction provide further support for satisfying daily lives. We can even pick and choose our means of government in a political dimension. But the other dimension of which I speak – the ‘spiritual’ dimension – goes well beyond all this. It does, in fact,

have a bearing on everything else, and it can effect the way we think in matters of our daily lives. It is because we constantly link one thing with another that I say the spiritual dimension can permeate the rest of our lives: And in the work of the creative artist, the broadest and the deepest dimension of his or her thinking is what is called on for what can be termed the “utterance of the soul”.

Yet, if it were not for MEMORY none of this would be possible. For it is Memory which conjures up images; it is Memory that remembers things experienced in the past; it is Memory that learns and provides the link to enactment from the cradle to the grave. Memories even link our active conscious and our sleeping unconscious minds. Freud deals with this subject in great detail even to the point of suppression of thought and memory in the subconscious mind.

If one accepts all that Freud says one must also accept the well-spring of this evolution as the starting-point: namely the actions of the horde, totemism and the murder of the tribal-leader and guilty replacement by the son. But Freud is dealing mainly (in a general statement of his work) with explaining how sex works in the human psyche and he makes this the most significant motivation of the human mind, even to the point of deviance. I prefer to come to the matter for a wider viewpoint, and from today's society.

Freud would argue, perhaps, that today's horde – particularly in the sense of the under-twenties! – behave and react in much the same way as their primal forbears. They choose charismatic leaders, they enact and interact with tribal chants and they cement their tribal relationships with a form of totemism relevant to their life-styles. One would tend to agree with all this, were it not for the intervention of Wordsworth and Shelley; Beethoven and Schiller; Constable and Turner!

And the one thing above all that today's free society has got is CHOICE! It is true that perhaps there is something “gothic” in all of this; but if we accept Mary Shelley's “Frankenstein, should we deny Percy Shelley's<sup>1</sup> “blithe spirit”? Should we be mesmerised by the grotesque in order to deny the sublime? Cannot Frankenstein exist in our minds even though we relax in the sunshine and utter a grateful “thank you” to our deity for the creation of the skylark? Do our mothers not tell us, when we are still children, that “there is good and bad in all of us”? And isn't it up to each of us to decide which is which?

We all have “five little helpers” to guide us towards these choices. They are called our SENSES. And in the driving seat we have our REASON. By reason of our birth as humans we are endowed with our senses to contain and maintain us in our daily existence but it is society and the community which educates and prescribes our interpretation of those responses.<sup>2</sup> If we are to be socialised into the community, we are reassured in our acceptance by adopting and cultivating our sense-responses and behavioural patterns as members of that society, and in keeping with its prescribed laws and customs. What is acceptable is termed the ‘norm’: But in recent years these ‘norms’ have been altered and

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<sup>1</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley: “To a Skylark”

<sup>2</sup> All except TASTE (in the broadest sense!) which is developed more personally.

broadened by assimilation of wider influences from what we might term a “world culture”.

With the speed of travel, the development of mass communication over vast distances and the breaking down of political barriers, the influence of heretofore ‘foreign’ cultures have broadened the use of our senses into acceptance, and even adoption, of these ‘outside elements’ into our culture. Freud would call this a form of deviance and, as with many people in western society (as it was formerly known) may have considered a threat to existing ‘norms’. It is true that, by and large, the younger generation today has accepted this wider culture as the existing ‘norm’, and many of them avidly follow the variety of charismatic leaders thrown up by this mass-culture, each one proving to be ‘deviant’ in particular quirks of personality. It is these ‘deviances’ which are the consuming interest in this form of culture. Such deviance forms behavioural patterns which are adopted by their adherents to form ‘cults’. When the “charismatic leader’s” personality is overpoweringly strong (as, say, in the case of Elvis Presley) then his cult followers form a band or organisation that almost takes on a religious significance. Parallels are drawn (by his followers) between him and Jesus Christ, and one wonders whether there is a possibility today of his ‘cult’ spreading as far and as wide as Christianity has done.

The reason why Christianity did spread worldwide is because its concepts generally accepted by (almost) all of society in the West as a formulation for good social behavioural patterns; and then missionaries set about the task of “spreading the gospel”. If, in the same sense, Presleyism gains the same mass acceptance in Western society there is no knowing where its influences will end with today’s fast mass-communication and powers of advertising! Is there any danger of this happening?

‘Reason’ and ‘choice’ must support the reverse argument. Even though his supporters make Presley out to be some form of deity, the details of his life, work and death in no way bear comparison with those of Jesus Christ. ‘Reason’ will tell us this. Though Presley, with his concerts, raised millions of dollars, he never performed any miracle beyond super-funding! Neither was his message philosophical, though his supporters may interpret his music and style of performance as factors conducive to sublime ecstasy! His imagined status has outlined the reality of his passing and has created a legend which continues to grow and flourish. As many visitors visit his birthplace as do the White House, and comparison may be drawn to the pilgrims visiting the holy lands, Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Presley’s “mission”, therefore, was a cultural (or mass-cultural) mission, and not even then was it to everyone’s ‘taste’. This most judgmental of all our senses forever combines with the other senses to accept or reject. ‘Reason’ finally decrees the outcome. Music, after all, has never produced an all-embracing philosophical message in the same way as religious doctrine in order to stir men’s minds to a moral or behavioural code of ethics. No matter how fanatical the ‘fans’ of such artists are, from the time of Liszt, through to the Beatles and onto our present day, there have never been political or ideological revolutions caused by the cult followers of such charismatic ‘leaders’. Their

role has been to either uplift or entertain. And the measure for such fulfillment is controlled by the 'reason' and 'taste' of the listeners.

In his day, Liszt, following the example of Paganini, exacted an immense emotional reaction from his audience. Yet his uniqueness created in other performers such a desire to emulate him that the "virtuoso performer" became a genre peculiar to 'serious music' to the present day. Where Presley's uniqueness was a one-off original, Liszt's disciples taught others his flamboyant style which served the gamut of Romantic music for generations to come.

Such 'ideas', 'styles' and 'fashions' in music take panache and imagination. Fashions, as we know, can come and go very quickly, or may last (as in the Romantic 'idiom') for an entire era. The deciding factor here must surely be the quality of the music, its emotional impact and its power of expression.

In the case of popular music (including Elvis Presley's) the music has to be spontaneous and 'catchy'. Normally its life-span is very short, though with today's nostalgia market many such pieces of music are enjoying a revival! Such revival may come jointly with the style or mode of performance, creating a CULT which is more holistic even transcending mere folk-culture and exuding a type of aura which is near, or pseudo, religious – hence the remark regarding Presley's 'Godlike image' by one of his followers. Psychologists have also stressed the similarities between sexual and spiritual imagery – an intrinsic aspect of "popular" music.

It is clear therefore that seemingly all forms of music reach out to stimulate those parts of the human mind and psyche which are there inbuilt on our common 'frame'. Also, clearly, not all such sounds have the same effect on everybody. Perhaps the nervous system of some people, when stimulated, creates a negative response whilst in others it has the opposite effect. I have also suggested elsewhere that one's upbringing ('nurture') or 'education' also plays a part in this physical and psychological 'choice'. Clearly, then, CHOICE is an important aspect of that inner well-being we call 'culture'.

An important part of this 'culture' is how we ourselves 'view' it. Perhaps at this point it would be worthwhile to refer again to Bertrand Russell's "sense data" – 'appearance' and 'reality' – and to apply them to 'music culture' in particular.

Firstly, for the practicing musician, the "appearance of the score is his (or her) only 'reality': To make sense of that score requires much hard work and physical application, true, but also it requires those twin mental aspirations "IMAGINATION" AND "MEMORY". I have mentioned these two aspects before in a general way, but let us now look specifically at their employment in regard to musical performance.

'Imagination' both guides and motivates the creative musical impulse. It evokes a strong bond between the participators in both perceived and received sounds. If the executant is improvising the musical material, then what is evoked in his creation must stimulate the imagination of the 'receiver' (ie the audience) in as similar a way as the music has been

conceived by the originator of the sounds for the whole bonding to be successful. This must vary in its particulars depending on the situation, the expertise of the performer and the 'knowledge' or 'memory' aspect, of the audience. Also 'expectation' must be 'rewarded' by the performers' output.

Yet I can conceive of a time when the strength of utterance of the performer is so imbued with hidden criteria (imparting an aura of 'magic' to the performance) as to create in the listener a rapt enjoyment transcending the aural reception. In such cases the SYMBOL (of the performer and performance) takes on the significance of the THING ITSELF. The mass 'expectation' is often of legendary proportions – the 'icon' has only to strike a chord to "strike a chord" in the audience.

What I am suggesting is that personality and charisma are (in a vast proportion of "performances") the key motive for evoking a huge response in the beholders. I put this to the test recently.

I am writing these words a few weeks after the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales, on the streets of Paris. The whole nation (no, the whole world) has been in shocked mourning ever since. At the funeral ceremony recently, the pop singer, and friend of Diana, sang his song "Candle in the Wind" in dedication to the princess, and it has (inevitably) become a huge success, toppling the sales market and bringing millions to Diana's charities in the record sales. Elton John the supercomposer of this music was already a legend in his lifetime to vast numbers of the public – his connection with Diana was well known and often reported (as to when, for example, she held his hand in sympathy, at the funeral a few months ago of the well-known Italian fashion designer who was a close friend of the singer). After the death of the princess thousands of mourners brought millions of blooming bouquets to lay in dedication to her in various places – the flowers taking on the aura of a connection with the princess and even serving as a symbol of the dead princess. I was interested to see the cover of the Elton John cassette also carried the picture of a white English rose (as referred to in the words of the song). Here is another example of the symbol (the rose) becoming the thing itself (ie the princess). This was the subconscious link which was further reinforced by the music and the singer's voice.

The simple test I carried out was this: In asking several people whether they liked the music and the performance (and, this question receiving a positive response), I innocently asked them to sing me a few strains of the melody. Of the dozen or so people I questioned, not one sang, in a coherent way, even one phrase of the song correctly – though a few muttered a few of the words.

Clearly, the important aspect of all this has been the HOMAGE paid to Diana (the "icon") by the SYMBOLIC RITUAL of gifts of FLOWERS and the SYMBOLIC PURCHASING of the flower-decorated cassette of the music which has become "the ICON" itself. For the majority of people the "paying of respects" in this symbolic way has combined duty with an overpowering emotional response to her sudden and tragic death. Millions thought it fitting that Elton John (another popular icon) should deliver his

“eulogy” in symbolic musical terms they could all understand – she being a people’s princess and he being a people’s singer, and the song being a near to FOLK song.

It has interested me to note that the composer John Tavener’s music, which was solemnly performed as Diana’s coffin was being borne to the waiting car after the ceremony to be transported to Althorpe – yes, Tavener’s music which was noble in its grief with its hollow pedal-notes beneath the flowing lines of its music which finally rose upwards in the final strains, full of spiritual “hope” and dedication – Tavener’s music has been (for the most part) seldom played. It was not even mentioned once in all the reports I have read and all the TV programmes I have seen concerning that sad day. Yet it contained, for me, the essence of “whole mourning”<sup>1</sup>, the germ of spiritual hope, the flow of great music, the treat to the graveside of noble and deeply-mourned princess.

Here the people made their CHOICE. This is what existence in today’s human society has become. Tavener, possibly, never expected to become, an icon (except in the sense of general acceptance and recognition of his ART).<sup>2</sup> So his music was received (and yes, even ‘respected’) on a different level of acceptance. In today’s society the established religious and state figureheads have tumbled in people’s minds. They no longer connect with what is important in people’s ordinary lives. Ritualised state music (of the Tavener kind) was therefore accepted in the same way as the other rituals of the machines of state. Whereas the flesh-and-blood response to Elton John’s music paid respect to Diana’s flesh-and-blood as her link with the people. This was the music of the proletariat, if you like.

There is a lesson here for all of us – particularly all of us who practise the arts. No matter that some ‘performers’ and ‘creators’ take part in the arts without recognition: No matter that some (of equal merit and sometimes with only adequate talent) make fortunes by their efforts. This is just the “luck of the draw” – the chance opportunity either works for us or makes us falter. No matter: The lesson to be learnt here is that we all have a part to play. We have created a system of “labelling”(well-known to sociologists) whereby we recognize some particular aspect of human activity as more widely “binding” (in a social sense) and we give this aspect more credence. In some cases this ‘aspect (or ‘aspects’, since there may be a number of facets which combine to create a total charismatic ideology as in the case of Diana) may be widely “binding” – on a national or even international scale: at other times the “binding aspects” may only bind together a small group of “believers” or like-minded supporters.

With the increase of technology in today’s post-industrial society, there has emerged an amalgam of cultures in a pluralist society. It is hardly possible to expect everything to

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<sup>1</sup> The music is modal and contains long pedal notes well-written in the style and mood intended in funereal music. This is religious music and consequently ritualistic.

<sup>2</sup> More recently Classic FM took the music up and it reached No 1 in their “hit parade”! (“Song for Athene” from CD “Innocence”).

Further note: 21.8.1998: It is good to know that now the piece is ever more popular and is played at every ‘state’ or ‘public’ funeral!! The response to Elton John’s music was immediate but short-lived.

please everybody. Yet labelling and categorisation keeps on happening. And the pervading influence has come from the lower-classes upwards.

The class system, for all its hiding behind the veneer of “modernism” (where everyone is seen to be “equal”), is still with us in full measure. But whereas the middle class (until the mid twentieth century) maintained a reticent and mild disposition to all the vicissitudes of life, we now have an huge influx of opinion which demands every situation should have an over-expressed “human” appeal. The culture of the pop music scene has taken over middle class thinking and permeated into every strata of life, so that now a footballer who cries, a politician who confesses everything in his private life, a queen who smiles perpetually and talks incessantly to everyone, are things expected (no – demanded) by a population that watches every sign of idols and icons being “human” and expressing themselves as such. This malaise of over-indulged “human interest” is the thing that sells newspapers and eventually caused the untimely death of an otherwise charming and (one feels) sincerely decent and hard-working young princess. The all-engulfing reaction to her death was as such a “sign of the times” as a genuine outpouring of the nation’s grief. But it could only have happened in a society at first engulfed by pop culture and ‘idols’.

It is our totally-combined HUMAN IMAGINATION that creates the ethos of culture, human principles – yes, even civilisation and living standards. For we see how things are, and say: “Yes – but it should be better – it should be changed... it should be improved...” And we imagine how it should be and work towards that end. It is imagination that dictates our perspectives and approaches to every human problem: It is imagination that sets the standard. It is imagination that helped Einstein to create an equation that enveloped space: It is imagination that created our theatre, literature, music and painting: It is imagination that has created HOPE in daily existence and enabled us to use Natural Laws.

Yet it is this same imagination that can make us vulnerable: It is possible for others to influence us by grabbing our imaginative powers and twisting them to their own ends – sometimes for good and sometimes not. Witness the effect Hitler had on his audience, and with what devastating results.

Music has the same influence. Because of the mass-culture situation, before mentioned, at Princess Diana’s funeral, the song Elton John sang seemed appropriate at the ceremony and moved millions to tears. It caught their imagination. Mass culture made for mass mourning. Perhaps, in a sense, people who indulge in the mass-culture become programmed to respond.

Yet, when we think of this process of “influence” we may well be wary of the effect that media hype has on us today. This is a modern phenomenon brought on by the use (some may say overuse) of the television screen. This has culminated in the creation of IMAGE – a personality craze. Many who were asked about her influence over them after the princess’s death and who had never met her personally made the comment that they felt they “knew her personally”. This was clearly because a flesh-and-blood “image” had

been created for them, and the close camera shots on television had literally brought the princess into their personal lives. When human imagination is excessively hyped in this way it may create dangerous withdrawal symptoms when the object of such passionate adoration is removed: Witness the case of the young man found wandering around Kensington palace with a rose after the princess's death, wanting to pay his last respects. The strange psychological malfunctioning here was caused by the belief the young man had that somehow the rose he carried would create the link with the dead princess that almost (in the dream situation) she had not died, just passed away into a region where (as in a dream) she would be aware of his ministrations to her and would accept his symbol of love and respect (the rose). This significant model is the one the world accepted magnified a million times, and applied to the functioning lives of all the mourners, a link between life and death, between a dream and reality: The "mass imagination" and media hype are here working as one.

Yet all we have to recognize these 'events' is our collective senses and our reason. Outside of that which occurs has frequently been described by religionists as "a mystery". Life after death is one of these "mysteries". Life, as we experience it, is how we continue to imagine it and it is comforting to reflect that this situation can or should last for an infinity of time: Our senses and our reason are so strong within us that we imagine their existence (in the same way) for ever. Religions grasp hold of this myth and make use of it, using further imaginary motives and colourations to perpetuate hope and loyalty from the disciples. Yet life as we know it on earth is bound to this earth: Human senses, feelings, knowledge, reason and time are dimensions experienced and enjoyed on this planet. All these dimensions (if they wish to continue, and there are laws which govern whether they should do so) must clearly be changed "in the twinkling of an eye" at the last trumpet of death. We may or may not believe that this can happen. For some it is a fantasy, for others a cause for hope and joy. It is human imagination that must forge this link.

Facts and reality decree that after we, as humans, breathe our last breath on earth, LIFE, as we know it, ceases. From here on the traditions of Elders, the mysticism, the incantations of Holy Men, the dogmas of Religion, the beliefs of the pure in heart, the teachings and writings of the foundation of the Great Faiths, the Bible, the words and example of Jesus Christ, of Buddha, of Confucius, of Krishna and many many others, have taught them to live in hope and emulate the blameless lives of the saintly ones. It is a good tradition. It is the bulwark of civilisation. It is, after all, a positive goal – Nirvana.

But whether "Nirvana" is a sensuous knowing, breathing, growing, loving, being, seeing, joyful existence or merely a state of suspended animation, I couldn't say. The Christian's view of Heaven is no better – it is vague at best: Nobody KNOWS because nobody has returned to tell us. At best we have the confessions of the near-to-death experiences – of those who have experienced a glowing tunnel and beckoning relatives: I would dismiss these as fantasies of the still-functioning brain of the ones going through the experiences; the brain retains and regurgitates material fed to it in a fully-functioning life, and this storehouse of memories and beliefs is powerful enough to be presented to the

subconscious mind in times of extreme trauma – such as it is, this is proof of the fact that the person is still ALIVE, the mind and the body intact. Death, I fear, brings a cessation of all such bodily functions. The bible tells us, after all, “there is no knowledge in the grave”.

So is there any HOPE? Is the lack of hope the reason the young choose to find a fantasy life in the use of drugs? Is this the reason for climbing rates of suicide amongst certain portions of our society? Possibly: But also our “Materialistic” society is to blame. People are prone to feelings of failure if they run short of money: To be poor is to be bereft of self-indulgent importance. The media encourage this belief: If we have everything and still crave for more, then we are functioning properly: To want a new car, a new house, new furnishings, new job – even a new wife or a new family – it is all part of the same thing; it is the perspective of the new ME, the successful, popular image of the fully functioning modern person. Without these “things”, the ego and the “physical being” feel impoverished and the spectacle of failure is viewed questioningly by the rest of society. Business prospers as the indulgent individual slots into the cycle of production; the post-industrial “boom” is the clutter of commerce rewarding (so the myth goes) the hard-working and industrious beneficiary. This “belief” is the real religion of modern man; it is growing daily and is ever encouraging newer regions of the world where beneficent social and community-minded theorists of the past have seen their governments fail and turn to new laws of the new economically-controlled societies. But the new hedonists are not restricted and constricted by the selfless virtues of the Utilitarians; far more, they are increasingly indulging in the super-competitiveness of the marketplace, where the commodity and the price rule. The human aspect concerns itself more about success and the big take-over and less about the defeat of one’s neighbour or the beggaring of a community or nation. The advance of monetarism is evidence of this in the west, and the take-over of forms of the mafia and black-market are further evidence in the newly-capitalised regions of the developing nations.

“Materialism” has even infected the world’s need for the protection of the eco-systems. Evidence of this is apparent in recent developments in Malaysia and Indonesia, with the smog choking the streets as a direct result of materialistic greed guiding the destruction of the rainforests. Western money has been, for years, aiding this false thinking into changing forest areas into farmland. Both personal and society-wide greed has created a “care-less” socially-acceptable motivation in all stratas of human existence: It has widened the gap between the “haves” and “have-nots” and encourages a new breed of entrepreneur – one that says “market what is popular; give the people what they think they want: “Milk” what is already here for all your worth and hang tomorrow”. Coupled with this we have, today, the steady march of technology, a new and developing way of pressing buttons to stop the thinking process; but at what a price! As ‘things’ get more expensive new ways have to be found to pay the increasing bills of modern life, with the inevitable increase in crime.

Far from motivating a happier and healthier lifestyle, all that is happening in society today seems to prey on the weak and needy and escalate social injustice. The God of Wealth needs payment all the time, and ways have to be found to oil the wheels of

commerce. Man has always needed inter-dependence, but the independence created by increased wealth has brought the added slavery to the government and the tax-man. If there is any wealth left over, then that small sum is granted to charities and the arts.

It is no wonder that the creative artist and musician feels hard-done-by. Where ancient patronage by aristocratic and noble families encouraged the classical model of good taste and benevolent form and structure – in association with a belief in The Almighty and the Hereafter – today's patronage is by the friendly Society, the Bank, the high-street store or the government-controlled Arts Council: All of which require a return in kind – their coffers re-filled with wealth created by a large attendance by a like-minded audience. The ambience is no longer en rêve but réalité. One thing is certain: How a composer thinks – so he writes. And composers need to think like “the people” – or fail to communicate.

Dreams fill our imaginations: Imaginings create realities: Yet who said realities were all good? With the demise of the old-fashioned Christian way of life has come the boredom of self-seeking and an emptiness that millions want desperately to fill with a greater reality of purpose. More and more things, more and more realities clutter up our lives and create the ambience of wealth in our materialistic journey, yet the very things that make us Human are neglected. The symbols of our past and the dreams of our future conspire to motivate us into the creation of more material wealth, more security in luxury, more pandering to a softer and more comfortable way of life. Yet there are things that move us from way down within us, where quiet moments rapt in thought come nearest to our dreams. Those deepest thoughts are the well-spring of our creative selves; they are the waters of spirituality.

From such a source springs all that is warm and friendly in our nature. The dual concept of spirituality and imagination creates the essence of humanity. And through this essence great works come: the deeper are the waters, the purer are the utterances that come.

One has only to think of the images created by Michelangelo and William Blake to realise this concept. Both were creating god-like images from their deepest imaginings, yet there is a unity there between God and man. From the Great Creator Himself, God, the Eternal Father is, to Michelangelo a graceful, benign, wise, colossal human being who creates man in His own image. A similar mystic, wise, ancient and beneficent image of God the creator is painted by Blake. Man is at peace with God; at one with God.

Knowledge and reality give us a different view of our Earth, our galaxy, the universe, its creation and man's place in that creation. Reality can be frightening because our minds today can visualise the vast concepts of Time and Space. We can argue that if God exists in any form other than the physical (as in Michelangelo and Blake) then He (or IT, if impersonal) must be the Grand Creator outside of the universe. Yet how can this be since all the forces that guide the universe are within the universe? So God must be the FORCE WITHIN THE UNIVERSE. This could be, as expressed here, a totally impersonal concept; but it does not deny 'God's' existence. Whether this statement is

true or not, I only give it here as an example of the use of the human mind in creating an imaginary concept. In this form, if proven by scientific argument, it could be called a scientific concept.

So science is motivated by imagination as much as are the arts. For all theories, before proven facts are available, must be imagined first. In the same way, no bridge, road or house would be built before the concept of each had been imagined by the human mind concerned with its creation. Symphonies are created in the same way: They have to be IMAGINED before they become realities.

This concept is totally in keeping with Berkeley's theory that matter existed as 'ideas in the mind of God', quoted earlier in this essay. From here it is easy to infer that such an 'idea' may develop in the mind of God (being the Creator) as a person – and a number of persons into a "colony of souls" (Leibniz).

Ideas are the key to our interested and interesting life on this earth. In truth, they should be given more credence and support in our society. Where they are, society benefits. But materialism and its doctrines have often driven out generative ideas in men's minds as they concentrate their attention on money-making and little else. True; many good ideas have made money and supported industry – everything that now comes into our hands for our use has been made by someone or by a manufacturing process that was someone's brilliant idea. But 'ideas' should not be harnessed only to mass production and wealth. They should also please man's aesthetic sense as outlined in John Ruskin's theses. Culture, after all, is the ornamentation of life and should not be seen as seeking after a "life of ease". Too often, in our class-ridden society, people are apt to think that a certain art-form or thought-process is purely for the advantage of a certain class of society. It is time for us to take a more holistic view of all our resources, ideas and products, untrammelled by vague thoughts of pseudo-culture, money-spinning and idle luxury. Ideas may become warped when perspectives become influenced by notions introduced either under stress or conflict or by powerful forces (either personal or aesthetic) put about by those seeking to control the outcome. Political processes may come into this category: Religious or sectarian control may be the other.

In both these processes powerful imagery supports the use of Rule, Dogma, Uniqueness, Correctness and Goodness: And both processes control the minds of the masses.<sup>1</sup>

All religions and political dogma, whether imagined or very real, once assimilated by those under its control, create a habit-forming attitude which may have devastating effects on others: Evidence of this may be found in the workings of various religious sects (such as the 'Moonies') and terrorist organisations such as those in Palestine and Ireland. True, not every religious or political group is so militant in control, but the extreme examples may prove the rule.

It seems that – human nature being what it is – as soon as we consider MAN as a social animal we come to this aspect of CONTROL. Individuals may be masters of their own

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<sup>1</sup> See Inclusion A

lives, but the more a person lives “in the public eye” the more that person must be either an ‘example to’ or an ‘example of’ that sector of society. Examples of this criterion are the famous people mentioned earlier in this essay. The lower one is in the pyramid of social cohesion the more ‘put-upon’ are the personal aspects of social behaviour. The hard-line periphery is bounded by social LAWS which, to infringe, mean social castigation or even death. This having been said, there is much freedom allowed to the individual in matters of self-expression in the arts and in aspects of life which we seem to benefit the whole of society.

Yet it is mainly in the arts that we find ‘classification’ and the ‘herd instinct’. Scholars have put stress on the arts in the matter of classification and labelling, in a constant search for IDENTITY. It is this codification that has led to stratification of ‘classical’ and ‘modern’ models, particularly today. It is as if scholars are saying, “We don’t want to hear the music of Mr so-and-so because he is impossible to categorise, and therefore he has nothing to offer”. It is this judgmental attitude which has caused so much pain and trauma to the artist today. The successful composer, as we have said elsewhere in these essays, is the one who is ‘with the herd’, though, as likely as not, possessing some personal characteristics which make him seem ‘unique’.

In this respect I heard very recently that EMI Records (with the entrepreneur Richard Branson as their major shareholder) have commissioned a ‘symphony’ from Sir Paul McCartney (of Beatle fame). That such an elaborate work has been required from so brief a pen is surprising enough: That the commission has been completed with the collaboration (or complete use) of a music computer comes as less of a shock. But the real measure of where this ‘symphony’ is coming from (‘Imagination’ not being the issue) becomes clear when Pundit McCartney says openly: “It is not necessary for me to know anything of classical music to write my symphony. In fact, it could be a disadvantage to have such knowledge”. He goes on to elaborate that, though he has no knowledge of the written notes his computer (being the real receptacle and work-horse of his imagination) will cope with composing (and, it would seem, structuring) the finished work. He professes, however, to know some of the music of Monteverdi – whom he compares favourably with the Beatles... “he [Monteverdi] had very few chords, like the Beatles”. With such quaint ideas (which make no allowances for history, musical chronology or, indeed, the development of ancient modes into the modern scalic and tonal system at the time of Monteverdi and beyond) we have a model of modern innovation, so crass and banal, held up by TV presenters and even some critics as fit food for the intelligent listener today.

For it is clear, since the establishment welcomed in Sir Paul to their ranks with honours and fellowship (FRCM), they have thought of him as a mere maverick in their midst. Beware that he may be a viper at their bosom: When they are most at their beneficent he is likely, by word, work or deed, to deliver the coup de grace: for at heart he possibly has no time for them, and may even show them his contempt. IN FACT the coup de grace has been blunted by general acceptance of the POP IDIOM as the ‘music for the masses’ ie the Establishment et al; so Sir Paul has no axe to grind.

Can we forget that the Beatles were the very epitome of the rebel element in the arts two decades ago? They set the pattern for what followed in the music of the younger generation. The Establishment meanwhile played its own game: It was called "Make a friend of your enemy": By throwing open its doors to the "rebel cause" it set a new standard; spontaneous ideas were treated as the work of genius. It is no wonder Sir Paul now wishes to vanquish the Establishment by assailing the walls of the Classical Symphony with the help of technology. It is the natural sequence of events; yet let him receive one word of criticism and the worm may turn: The Establishment elevated him in the first place. They must accept the consequences of their "open door" policy.

[10 March 2005

Further to this analysis: So far I have considered only the work of "the composer" in relation to "the public". But the case of "the performer" (ie, someone who is at the forefront of musical production and "delivering the goods" as it were) is important in the way of consideration. This morning I happened to hear a programme about the career of the singer RUSSELL WATSON, who has recently hit the headlines. He has a raw talent and has learnt such items as *Nessun Dorma*, (Puccini) parrot-fashion (as he himself confesses) and a certain proportion of the population – the majority, I might add, who follow football and frequent night-clubs and working men's clubs, pubs and supermarkets, where Watson's voice is heard – are avid listeners to this singer and idolise him.

So far Watson's success, though unique, has been somewhat limited. For one cannot yet imagine him taking part in a full-scale opera and establishing a character in such an absorbing and scholarly way – for he would have to "study" one (or several) roles. So far I am not aware that he has ever "studied" music but is "an overnight success". This fulfils the need of the limited British market for such an artist and is an example of the quick success of raw talent in our musical market-place. One cannot deny his commitment, self-belief and resultant well-deserved success. But that is because such radio stations as Classic FM and the very limited commercial market require singularly isolated talent repeating the same repertoire incessantly.)

Earlier I wrote of 'Choice': In a world so full of opportunity and discovery, openness and understanding variety and plurality, there is every chance given by society to young and old alike to choose a path through life. Yet it is also evident that the great depths of wisdom that often get portrayed on the screen, in books, or radio shows – depths which move human beings to the core of their natures – are not the same 'depths' which solicit a response in the workings of many rather superficial lifestyles. "Success" and its trappings of gaudy prodigality, of rapacious duplicity, of arrogant debauchery, are much more the reasons for "selling papers", for the subjects of novels and biographies, for the chosen example for the young.

We seem to spend our lives saying one thing and believing another. We advise our young people to embrace high moral standards and virtues, to be generous and kind, and then we show them (often by example, but more often via the media or entertainment) that we were not serious, after all, and that we would far rather they were successful in being rich, famous (or notorious, it seems no different), and the envy of as many people as possible.

The same minds that make these choices in Life make the same standards of choice in the Arts. The 'media' – purveying or conveying the 'needs' of the arts – are apt to 'make light' of a variety of subjects which convey the aura of levity even in the most deeply-felt areas of human endeavour and achievement.

That is the problem today. Not that we know no better, but we have to put everything 'on show'. Even the deepest things in our lives must be part of the 'glitz' formula. Show music is given the same space as the symphony, so it is no wonder that nobody turns a hair when a showbiz personality like McCartney is asked to produce a symphony. Intellectual circles (such as Universities), media boffins, producers, entrepreneurs and critics would conceive of no margin between two artistic worlds (requiring different skills previously) in our existing pluralist society.

Make no mistake: I am not making comparison of the different worlds of the arts. They exist – and they should co-exist. It is the communal imagination and cerebral attitude to the purpose of the two existing worlds of entertainment and serious-or-fine art that I find disturbing. Both in education and media-programming the two are intermingled in a very mind-bending way – a way in which the purposes of both are cheapened in a search for common purpose.

Perhaps, after all, we make light of the word 'knowledge'. We assume today that everybody 'knows' when what we mean is that everybody is 'aware'. Knowledge, in fact, is near to 'wisdom', since wisdom makes use of knowledge for the common good. If we were all wiser, the prisons would be less full, the streets would be safer, the old would be respected and listened to, the young would be headed in the right direction and crime and wars would be a thing of the past. What would make this happen? Well – perhaps it all lies with the INDIVIDUAL ... as Voltaire put it... "we must take sides". It is all to do with our own choice... we have the chance to develop our awareness into knowledge and wisdom.

In the era before the eighteenth century the carefully-preserved patronage of the Church and aristocracy made art a living thing: They created a world of which they were proud where music, literature, painting, sculpture, architecture and philosophy were all couched in the same terms – it sought divine inspiration and elegant form to please both the mind and the other sense. Elegance and understatement betrayed a deeper knowledge and understanding which came out of skilled technique learnt frequently in the school of hard knocks. Today we have an easy-come-easy-go attitude to the arts which betrays our frequent poverty of ideas, too-easily-acquired skills, and lack of a deeper sense of purpose. We make light of the most profound philosophical ideas to our own detriment;

we reward what is banal and garish and teach our young to be seekers after quick rewards and superficial utterance.

We have mistaken the icon for the 'real thing' – the cross for the Son of Christ. We make obeisance to one and hope to please the other. Far better, perhaps, to make moral and ethical judgments out of our sense of community and not via imagined values. We live in the real world with real people and real problems; we should surely solve our problems in a real way with real solutions. Yet motivations are not only justified by today's society; we should learn from history and the experience of our forebears. When Mother Theresa did her good deeds on the streets of Calcutta she said it was "God's work"; she learnt her theology from the Church and both history and her own experience had taught her a proper respect for the deeper spiritual things. Yet she solved her problems in a very real way. Her motivations were spiritual but her solutions were born of reality.

If only we could all learn the same lesson and have the same motivation for the general good! The State, the business world, the Church and the Establishment all hold the power and the purse-strings to control most of what happens in our lives – true; but the individual still has the power and freedom to dream, to imagine, to plan and to play out an important role in society. The creative outpouring within the Arts contributes a vast proportion of what makes life worthwhile for a great number of people: And within that proportion of 'Creators' must lie the small and select number of those who value the deepest and most profound reasons for our existence. Did not Handel, as he wrote 'Messiah', see the 'Great God Himself' whilst he explored that hidden region where Creator and the created become one? At this meditative level there is a beauty that transcends mawkish sentimentality. There is a Knowledge that transcends 'knowing'. Handel did not merely wish to please his audience: He confessed to wanting to 'make them better'.

18 October 1997  
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## SOME CRYPTIC DEFINITIONS

MINIMALISM: Voluminous notes for postage-stamp ideas: This is ideal music for the pianola.

SERIALISM: Aerobic music.

ABSTRACT: 'Expression' without 'feeling'.

POP: Effervescent music for the fast-food generation.

CACOPHONY: This is how many modern composers interpret the word SYMPHONY. (One reason I do not write symphonies – I paint sound-pictures somewhat akin to HOWARD HODGKIN's work – though he would probably disavow my harmonies).

Inclusion A

<b>Religion</b>	<b>Politics</b>
Charismatic leader(s)	Charismatic leader(s)
Paintings by great artists of the past of religious scenes, Christ on the cross, the pieta, etc.	Photographs or images (paintings, sculptors, etc) of the LEADER
The icon – the cross/holy pictures/statues	The icon – the Party Emblem
Rules and commandments – moral doctrines	The outline of party manifesto – moral and party-supportive doctrines
Social message – to go out and preach/convert – missionaries	Social message – to go out and discuss policy with people on the doorstep/during election, etc.
To help the poor and support the weak – social work	To create fellow feeling
To meet together weekly or daily for “spiritual sustenance” and to be cohesive	To meet together in local party groups and to recruit. Cohesiveness.
Singing together – hymns, chorales, dirges, songs of faith and triumph – uplifting, etc	Singing together the “party song”, songs similar to religious songs and intended to have a similar effect to uplift the masses.
<p>Once indoctrinated difficult to change one's “life-style”</p>	