

Michael Stürmer

Mozart and the Pursuit of Happiness

I.

On 9 June 1781, Wolfgang Mozart was writing to "Mon très cher Père," Leopold Mozart, in Salzburg: ". . .and I, who have to get on with composing, need an untroubled head and peace of mind." His service to the Salzburg court had ended in discord and the quest for a new existence had begun.

An untroubled head and peace of mind was what he needed and what he never found. He was living in the last agonies of what people would begin to call the "ancien régime" even before Mozart died. He was living in the midst of wars that spanned the globe -- from little Silesia to continental North America and far-off India -- and earth-shaking revolutions whose beginnings lay well in the past. He was living on the divide between the feudal order (which was dancing to its close) and freelance artistic enterprise (which hardly knew how to proceed).

Fortune's bitter dregs -- for Mozart and his times.

II.

You can approach the subject by starting out with the epoch's essential ambiguity and the growing dissonances of its politics and economics, in order to look for refractions of history's larger course in the short life of Mozart. The standard sugar-coated commercial interpretation -- from phonograph record covers to Mozart bonbons -- conjures up a Mozart who never was in an age that never existed, a rococo Adonis with the looks of an angel (ignore those Bäsle letters!) pouring forth melody endlessly, a heavenly blue-and-pink collage of eroticism, theater, rococo verve, and la dolce vita. Rococo -- at first a term of ridicule, then the name given in all seriousness to the artistic style of the period. Meanwhile, in the realms of statecraft, politics, or economics, no such rococo age ever existed: instead there were at best shifting diplomatic alliances, monarchical absolutism, and export-obsessed mercantilism. And all of that superimposed and bearing down on a traditional agrarian society with its three-field system of farming (one field devoted to winter crops, one to summer crops, and one lying fallow each year) and its manorial system of land ownership and rural governance, on labor that was cheap and bread that was dear, and an ever-increasing number of people going hungry.

By the time Mozart was born, the arbiters of taste in Paris, Rome and London had long since condemned the artistic forms and impulse which the 19th century came to call Rococo as expressions of aristocratic caprice and wanton aesthetic affronts to nature and reason. The excavations in the ash-entombed cities of Pompei and Herculaneum at the foot of Mount Vesuvius that had taken

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place since the 1740s had brought to light forms and practices which, through the Ecole Française de Rome, as well as peripatetic Milords, art savants like Johann Joachim Winckelmann, and countless minor illustrators, painters, architects, and art dealers, had cast a spell over Europe.

Art forms had gradually changed: first in Italy, France, and England; then finally in the Catholic southern regions. Rococo's shellwork and rocaille retreated into the rural and small town edges of culture.

But behind all this were not just well-heeled merchants who wanted to have something new every year to offer their customers from the Empire du luxe of Paris. Instead, it had more to do with the decline and dissolution of a society which had been around a long time and could not persevere much longer. The old order was pregnant with new ideas, about politics and the well-being of mankind, about the greatness of God and the meaning of life on earth. In circumstances like this, the fine arts are not one of the causes, but they are also not merely effect. They have their own pulse and gravity, they fantasize and quote one another and reach out ahead. The artist is not so much prophet as medium for that which will emerge. If he sets himself up as prophet, he must inevitably and foolishly go wrong. Where he presumes to announce things to come, there he transcends his brief. Because intellectual creations are never solely the outward expression of contemporary society. They have their own intrinsic values and follow their own laws of motion. But it would also be anachronistic and impossible to think of them as independent from that which moves the history and culture of the people.

The rhythm of rural life was and remained the pulse of society and the economy in old Europe. The picture of the good old days of safety and security that the 19th century drew in retrospect had much to do with a literature of pastoral life as idyll from the time of Jean Jacques Rousseau on and precious little to do with the harshness of daily life in the 18th century. The center that holds is a myth of modern times. The well-established order that the music from Telemann to Bach and on to Haydn seems to reflect is not the expression of an imperturbable stability but rather one of a God-fearing search for certainty in a world threatened by chaos: a world whose apparently poised equilibrium was in fact constantly in danger -- from either too much sunshine or too much rain, from widespread poverty and threatening starvation.

To quote the French historian Fernand Braudel, the period of the so-called "little ice age" around 1700 was a more bitter tyrant than the Sun King, Louis XIV, himself. In cool summers when the grain did not ripen, when there was too little rain before the end of June and afterwards too much, when mice devoured all in sight and locusts invaded the land, and the harvest was hardly more than the seeds that had been planted (a six- to seven-fold yield was good, a ten-fold return a benediction from heaven), when penalties were heaped on top of export prohibitions and one depended on barks and roots for survival, then the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse thundered across the land, taking their toll. "This famine is one of the most terrible. Nothing can kill more people and devastate more countries than hunger," wrote the devout Prussian magistrate and statistician Johann Peter Süssmilch in the middle of the 18th century.

The armies of the night were inexorably growing. The gleaming bastion of aristocratic opulence and political power may have been able to repulse their onslaught time and again. But when bad times arrived, then worker and beggar, apprentice and master, court artist and artisan alike were all exposed to an economy of bare survival, of high prices and debts and making do. Such recurring crises always began as a crisis of scarcity on the farms which then spreads to the general supply of provisions and services in both rural and urban

trades. Where it was still only a matter of simply surviving, there were many things one could do without: a dress, a piece of furniture, a bit less paint and a bit less music. But the "extremely depressed times," as the famine years of the 1770s were termed by the Nürnberg council, had even the pious talking about a visitation sent from God. And for Europe's ancien régime, it was the beginning of the end.

III.

For the pious, the affliction was proof of God's wrath; for the not-so-pious, it was the result of conspiracy and speculation by the aristocracy; for the agricultural reformer, it was proof positive that the three-field agricultural system must be overturned in favor of intensive farming with crop rotation, with a concomitant fundamental change in the nature of the old agrarian society. At the time, Mozart stood in the middle of his short life. These were the things that he experienced every day. They were in fact so much a part of his daily existence that they go unmentioned in his letters. And yet they worked remorselessly to determine life for the peasants and the middle classes. This feeling of constantly recurring crisis put its stamp on the pattern of material well-being and attitudes in town and country then, in much the same way that inflation, depression, and state intervention mark politics in the 20th century. A sense of scarcity dominated people's daily being. Wealth and plenty were a dream world in which but few participated. As long as times were good, this included the artists and artisans of the court, such as Mozart was once and wanted to be no longer. But things could easily crash, and when they did there was nothing -- no foothold, no guild, no pension -- to cushion the fall. The way of the world was still as Thomas Hobbes, a hundred years before, had described life in a state of nature: "lonesome and poor, brutish, nasty, and short."

Forebodings of disaster and sudden death pervaded everyday life and thought. Conception, birth, and dying were not spread evenly throughout the months and years, but followed the rhythm of the seasons and the price of bread. Vivaldi's and Telemann's celebration of abundant summers and plentiful autumns came out of the experiences of a society to which the blessings of life were unequally given. The season when the almond breaks into bloom was a time of hope and revival, but it was also a time of want and high prices, of revolt and hunger riots and anxiety, a time to be born and a time to die. When the price of bread went up, the number of weddings and births went down. The intervals between a married couple's children grew longer. And people died sooner. Yet, despite all the contrary factors, all the fears and restraints, the population went on expanding. It did happen twice in Germany, however, that the growth fell back: in the 14th century during the black plague, and in the 17th century during the Thirty Years War (from 1618 to 1648).

In the times when Mozart was born, the cradles were full once again and the workshops were busy. From that time on, however, an inexorable rise in prices began: because the reform of agriculture was mired down in a thousand ancient claims and disputes, the production of food stood still while the number of people relentlessly increased. Those with property profited, those without, suffered. Inflation in the price of food and decline in the value of labor ran on ahead of the growth in population. We have no fully reliable estimates of the gross national product or its distribution in these times. And yet all sources from the times are agreed that the exchange relationship between food on the one hand and labor on the other dramatically and inexorably shifted to the detriment of those who had nothing to sell but the work of their hands. From the middle of the 18th century on, in France and the Netherlands as in England and Germany, the boat was full and getting fuller. Urban rents and the price of real estate doubled and tripled.

In the days when Mozart married, he still believed that he could live properly on a yearly income of 120 Gulden: an apartment, domestic help, some travel, meat on the table occasionally, and the usual bottle of wine. By the time he died, inflation had long since shattered all that. Whatever the reasons were for his despairing letters to Michael Puchberg in his last years, they lay not only in the life Wolfgang and Constanze Mozart chose to live. They were the common fate of the times, and most of all for those who lived between the times, no longer nourished by the ancien régime and -- Mozart's lot -- not yet landed safely on the shore of personal artistic enterprise. Even the most successful of the German suppliers to aristocratic circles, David Roentgen in Neuwied, gave up his furniture store in Paris in 1786, made his last delivery to the Russian court in 1790, and in 1792, "broken and unhappy," went out of business. The manufacturer of Meissener porcelain was in dire straits, along with most other manufacturers, guilds, and brotherhoods of workers. The aristocracy had worn itself out just as had the society that used to carry it.

We occasionally find masks on buildings or silverware or furniture from the 18th century, masks like those from antiquity that leave the beholder wondering if the figures laugh or weep: the symbol of an epoch that united farewell and departure as never before, that aspired to a firm rule of reason and, at the same time, dreamed once more of Arcadia. The classic age was the beginning of modernism and of an unprecedented awareness that one stood at a turning point in time. It is no accident that, out of the then disappearing ways of life of the Middle Ages, virtually all those concepts were given form and substance which since have shaped man's view of himself and the world: progress and the force of history; society, equality, and a middle class; reason, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness. It was the last of these that contained both the promise of democracy and the hope of prosperity.

Many of the ideas and concepts that emerged from the processes accompanying the decline of the 18th century still carry a message for today, even if much has been lost along the way. Voltaire's scepticism and rationalism, Rousseau's critical analysis of contemporary issues; the social contract of David Hume, the practical ethics of Immanuel Kant; Gibbon's "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"; Beccaria on crimes, punishments, and penal reform; Edmund Burke's "Reflexions on the Revolution in France." After the Encyclopedists had made a final summation of all of the world's knowledge from antiquity, from the Renaissance and from the scientific revolution of the preceding centuries, then along came the great discoveries of physics and chemistry, from James Watt to Benjamin Franklin and Antoine Laurent Lavoisier, and opened a new industrial world.

In its literature, however, the age of reason would turn out to be an age of sensibility and of the heartfelt letters of Mozart, including those to his father. The Vicar of Wakefield stands side by side with "Les Liaisons Dangereuses," Goethe's Werther with Schiller's "Kabale und Liebe," Lessing's bourgeois sobstory "Emilia Galotti" with the tragedies of Vittorio Alfieri.

IV.

The horror of the Seven Years War which began the year Mozart was born slashed a deep cut across the course of the 18th century. With it, the nonchalance of the first fifty years was over, and premonitions of disaster rose out of the crisis in the supply of money and credit that hit all of Europe's financial centers in its wake, that struck luxury goods manufacturing and brought it to a halt for ten years. Then came the Great Famine of 1768 to 1773. And at the same time, the unstable situation of the French regime's finances and the imposition of taxes -- begun in the middle of the century and headed for a crash because of the American war of independence -- became

more and more critical. There the France of Louis XVI, wanting to settle old scores with England, had only succeeded in placing itself in great danger by helping the rebelling Americans to win. The dark shadow of crisis in the land began slowly to eclipse the optimism of the apostles of Enlightenment and their belief in progress and reason. To the concept of "perfectibilité" were joined visions of downfall, visions that found their expression in Baron Turgot's pessimistic law that investment in land brings decreasing returns, which promised famine; in David Ricardo's earlier formulation of an "iron law of wages," which foresaw mass unemployment; and finally in Thomas Robert Malthus' dictum that population increases geometrically but the means of subsistence only arithmetically: the stage was set for civil war.

But alongside such visions of decay and decline also stood the promise of happiness. It was formulated in the Virginia Bill of Rights in 1776 and reappeared in the Declaration of Independence with the statement "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, (and) that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It appeared in the ethical economic concepts of Adam Smith, writing in 1776, who placed his confidence in the "invisible hand" of free markets and expected growth and an economy in equilibrium as a result; and finally, it appeared in the bold legal formulations of Baron Turgot who, as comptroller general of finances in France in this same epoch-making year of 1776, handed down his "six edicts," freeing the trade in grain, eliminating compulsory, unpaid labor by the peasantry, and in particular abolishing the guilds and restrictions on work and occupation, so that each person was assured a "right to work."

Given these omens, European classicism turns out to be a last bright and shining farewell gesture from the splendor and misery of old Europe. Its life-span was the same as Mozart's. Not even thirty years did the yearning for Arcadia and the hope for Sparta exist side by side: Louis XVI was still sitting on his throne when David painted "The Oath of the Horatii" and "Paris and Helena." The charm of the ancien régime had already met its destroyer. It was into these tensions that Mozart was thrust. And in them and against them he had to make his way. What he wanted was "an untroubled head and peace of mind," freedom from the rude world's disruptions and the leisure to compose, and he was never to get either. If he had, he would have composed like his predecessors, like Händel, the Bach sons, or Haydn, all of whom he knew, esteemed, and readily admired. But the continuum that still existed when Johann Sebastian Bach composed, setting the universe and its order to music *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, this continuum had disintegrated. Instead, Mozart was driven to create in his own way, with enduring, aspiring humanity at the center (to invoke Jacob Burckhardt), a humanity of middle-class individuals. The age of classicism was a leave-taking from the weary and overburdened ways of life of the Middle Ages and an awakening to a world which would no longer let itself be supervised by a God or an emperor, by a prince or an archbishop.

The ballet of life at court was dancing to a close. The dancers would make one more turn and repeat their parts, then bow to the audience and -- those in Germany, at least -- devote themselves to life in the country, whether in Wörlitz an der Elbe, Weimar an der Ilm, or Paretz im Havelland. In France at the same time, they were taking the road to Brussels -- or climbing into the tumbrels.

Hadn't there been sufficient warning in Turgot's frustrated reforms, in what the reformers of agriculture and the guilds, of rights and civil liberties had written? Warning enough indeed, but all much too late. The downtrodden are banding together and the common people are rehearsing for rebellion. In "The

Marriage of Figaro," it is the eponymous hero who provocatively puts the question (itself an act of arrogance) to his master: "Will my lord risk a dance with me?" As though from now on either the count or Figaro could address the other in just this way. Of course, on the surface it appears to be nothing but a matter of dancing and caprioles. But in fact, it is the threat of strikes and riots, things that had gone hand in hand throughout the 18th century.

In "Don Giovanni", it is the country lads armed with scythes and muskets who aim to hunt down the adulterous nobleman because he is making free with their women, as though they were just chattels and not human beings in their own right. Even Leporello is sick and tired of the old régime and sings: "Want for once to play the lord, be a lackey no longer, no, no, no, no, no, no, no." But all that remains only allusion and nothing comes of it. By contrast, then, comes the message of "Die Zauberflöte," with its pathos of human reconciliation and its post-revolutionary promise. Anyone who thinks that Mozart just happened to run across a libretto and gave it no particular thought must have missed all the dark and threatening sounds intermingled in this magical music.

The age of Mozart: that means grief and the fleetingness of time, pessimism as history's keynote and hope as the driving force of human existence, the pain-wracked face of the ancien régime in tandem with the promise of better days. But Mozart does not look for deliverance in this world. As he writes his father in regard to dying, at once consolingly and giving himself courage too: "Because death -- to call it by its name -- is the ultimate purpose of our lives, I have made myself so familiar with this truly best friend of mankind over the last couple years that its prospect not only holds nothing for me to dread, but indeed much that is reassuring and comforting! and I thank my God that He has granted me the good luck to have the opportunity -- I'm sure you understand -- to come to know it as the key to our true happiness" (4 April 1787). However concerned he may have been with comforting his father and playing the good son, the fact is that the urn of ashes is one of the leading symbols of classical art.

V.

In 1781, when Mozart took his second and final leave of Salzburg and the detested Prince-Archbishop, with freedom and the pursuit of happiness in prospect, he wrote (on 16 May): "my intent and my hope is to earn honor, fame, and money." Honors had come early to him: he was only fourteen when the Pope awarded him the Order of the Golden Spur; he was accepted into the Accademia filarmonica in Bologna after brilliantly passing an examination; he was considered for commissions by Empress Maria Theresa. Fame came along by itself. And even money deigned to come his way occasionally: the hundred *Friedrichdor* that he received from the King of Prussia, Frederick William II, in Berlin in the spring of 1789 (although he would only partially fulfil the commissions for compositions) amounted to a small fortune from which a middle-class couple could live well for two or three years without running up debts. Why then was Mozart always moving but never arriving? Always willing to be accommodating, to the point of writing humiliating letters to this courtier or that begging for money or, for example, to the "Most Praiseworthy Most Learned City Councillors of Vienna, Gracious Gentlemen" -- and still, in the last analysis, always an outsider?

Norbert Elias has depicted Mozart as the artist who rebels against the aristocracy all the while remaining dependent on it. Perhaps -- so Elias, who offers Beethoven's greater fortune in this regard by way of contrast -- perhaps it was that Mozart just did not live long enough. For a composer like Mozart, there was indeed only the path leading to service in the church or for an

aristocratic patron, or to turning freelance. Like his father, he lived outside society's established classes. That was the price he paid for living an artist's life. At the same time, he did not belong to a social system in which such an exposed position could suddenly turn precarious: and yet how could one who in his middle and later works not only politically criticized the world order but artistically transcended it reconcile himself to the status of court lackey? And therein lay an irrevocable contradiction between Wolfgang Mozart's material needs and his artistic existence.

His father, Leopold Mozart, was a court musician for the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg. That carried with it the civil status of a member of the court, in other words, he was not subject to the guilds or to the municipality, but only to the court. This guaranteed his livelihood and permitted him, from time to time, to take a trip, give a concert, or undertake some moneymaking activity on the side. Such double roles were prized as much by hand workers as by scholars, and not a few of them had built on the foundation of a court position to become entrepreneurs in their own right.

From early on, the son was destined to go the same route. The great trips about Europe, composing and concertizing, were supposed to make him known, despite the unimaginable strains and exertions and resultant sicknesses that went with them. In 1769, the young Mozart was appointed Konzertmeister. But he found that constricting, not so much because of the musical obligations as because of his status at the bottom of the court's hierarchy, while he had already developed the self-assurance consonant with his creative talents. He looked straight through the toadyism of court life in Salzburg and came to suspect that there was indeed an end in sight for all that. In Emperor Joseph II, who had been making revolution from the top since 1780, Mozart recognized not only a princely patron and sponsor but also a kindred spirit and -- despite the social gap between them -- a secret ally. He felt himself to be on the side of right, reason, and history when he refused to be hassled at the court of the Prince-Archbishop (as he wrote in May 1781), particularly by people whose only accomplishment had been to be born with a silver spoon in their mouth.

In 1777, Mozart asked to be dismissed from the service of the Prince-Archbishop with words he might have taken right out of the Virginia Bill of Rights. His dismissal followed hard upon, to the shock of his father who saw his son plummeting into sheer nothingness. But the son wrote (26 September 1777): "My heart is light as a feather now that I have left all that skulduggery behind." Then came times full of hope as he sought an appointment first in Munich, then travelled to the court in Mannheim, again in vain. Then on to Paris in 1778, either to succeed in establishing himself there or to bring such renown with him out of the great metropolis of art that the world would be astounded. For as the success of thousands of German artisans had attested, in Paris, if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere.

But not for Mozart. And so, with much bowing and scraping and making of petitions, his father managed to get his son taken back into the social security of a court position in Salzburg once again. In 1779, Mozart became court organist. It was not destined to last. To know why we must turn anew to Mozart's letters to "Mon très cher Père" and read them closely. On the surface they seem merely to concern leave to give concerts. In reality, it was the clash of two worlds -- the world that was and the world the heart desired. On 9 May 1781, Mozart made a blow-by-blow report to his father on the final, decisive run-in with the Prince-Archbishop:

"Arch: Well now, when is the young man going to leave? --Me: I planned to go last night but the seat was already taken. Then out it came in a rush.--I am the most undependable fellow he knows--no one serves him

worse than I do--he advises me to get going today, otherwise he'll write home to withhold my pay--I couldn't get a word in edgewise, he was running on like a fire--I listened calmly to all that--he lied to my face saying I got 500 fl.--called me a clod, a rogue, an imbecile--O I wouldn't like to write you everything--Finally, because my blood was starting to boil, I spoke up--I take it your Grace is not satisfied with me?--what's this, he [meaning Mozart] talks back to me, imbecile, O imbecile!--there is the door, look out, I don't want to have anything more to do with such a miserable lad--at that I said--and I don't want to have anything more to do with you either--so get out--and me: I'm on my way--and that's the way it stays; tomorrow you will get it in writing. -- well, tell me, dear father, if I didn't say that rather too late than too soon? -- Now listen; -- my honor is more important to me than anything else, and I know it is to you too.--"

"My honor": by the standards of the times, a strong demand. The Prince-Archbishop of most ancient lineage and the young court organist should share the same sense of honor? That was something the world had not heard of before, and it would take a while for the world to get used to it, roughly until the time that Wolfgang Mozart died in 1791. Still, he was convinced that "now my good luck begins." He knew that living conditions were going to be tough. That was not what he meant. What he meant was his right to the pursuit of happiness or, to use the language of the basic law, to the free development of his personality. He had emancipated himself from the world in which his father still lived and from which he had come. He wanted to be a person in his own right, an artist and a middle-class individual. It helped that he felt he had done the right thing. To his still aghast father, he wrote (also in that letter of 9 May 1781): "I hate the Archbishop to the point of frenzy". But the old man continued to bewail what had happened until, finally, his son made it clear that, with all due respect, such letters did not help.

The scene in Salzburg was simply too much for Wolfgang Mozart. How Leopold Mozart must have flinched when he got a letter (written 13 June 1781) from his son saying, in blunt language, just what he thought of Finance Officer, Court Military Advisor, and Senior Commissary Official Count Arco:

"instead of Count Arco taking my letter of petition, or arranging an audience for me, or advising me to send it later, or urging me to drop the matter for now and give it more thought, in short--doing whatever he wanted--No--he throws me out the door and gives me a kick in the behind.--Now that means in plaintext, I'll have nothing more to do with Salzburg ; except if a good opportunity comes along to return the favor and boot the Count in the ass, even if it's on the street in broad daylight. --I don't seek any satisfaction in this regard from the Archbishop because he wouldn't be able to give it to me the way I intend take it myself."

Notice his use of the word "satisfaction." By convention, it was one that came into play between members of the nobility and determined their recourse to sabres and duels. After Salzburg, everything having morally to do with aristocrats and the aristocracy may have been over for Mozart, but not materially. For he cannot shake loose from his need for the noble establishments and aristocratic society, he seeks a position with the Emperor, there is talk that he does not know himself where he stands, hopes for a salary of a thousand Gulden, but ultimately there is only the empty title of a k.k.Hofkompositor, one that strikes him as such a ridiculous consolation prize he hardly ever uses it. He takes on first one "lady scholar," then several others, for if worse comes to worse, he can live on eighteen golden ducats year. He tries one thing, then another. What Mozart lacked was the initiative himself to carry

out the publication of his own music. And his concerts were often given more for an invited than for a paying audience.

In 1782, Mozart gave some thought to moving to Paris or London. Before him was the unforgotten example of Georg Friederich Händel who had made London yield him honor, fame, and fortune: "the honorable Viennese (among whom I mean primarily the Emperor) shouldn't think I exist only for Vienna.--there's no monarch in the world I would rather serve than the Emperor--but I'm not about to beg for work" (17 August 1782). A few years later, in 1786, it was not the Emperor's favor he sought but that of the prince from Donaueschingen. To his valet, Mozart wrote a flattering letter (on 8 August) hoping to secure commissions: "because H[is] H[ighness] maintains an orchestra, he could own pieces composed by me for his court alone, which in my humble opinion would be very pleasant indeed. --if H:H: wished to do me the favor of ordering a certain number of symphonies, quartets, concertos for various instruments, or other pieces as he wished throughout the year and would pronounce a fixed annual payment for them, then H:H: would be quicker and better served, and I :because it would be a steady job: could compose with less worry."

But here too nothing came of it. Mozart was constantly looking for "a steady job" and never finding it. For the way things were, it could only have been found with courts of the nobility -- but Mozart and aristocratic society, those were and remained two different worlds: absolute art versus absolute power. Mozart came out of the southern Germanic world formed and shaped by Catholicism and the proximity to Italy. In Italy, as he wrote on 11 October 1777, "you can come by more renown and acclaim than if you gave 100 concerts in Germany." And earlier (from a letter of 29 September) the prince elector of Bavaria had advised that "I should go to Italy and make a name for myself. I didn't contradict him. But to go now is still too soon." First it was much too soon, and then it was always too late.

VI.

Mozart was not the kind of Enlightenment follower who went around revolting against the aristocratic establishment and hurling a "down with tyrants" at it. He was also not at odds with the Church. He believed in God, sin, and salvation and the religious criticism of the Enlightenment remained foreign to him. As with Bach, his masses too were still composed *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*. In common with most God-fearing people of his times, Death was his constant companion, one admonishing him to make something of his life. Composing, "which is my one and only joy and passion," was his desire -- in this regard, he was the ultimate artist. Whoever helped him to this end, that person Mozart was prepared to serve, at least up to a point, as became apparent in Berlin and elsewhere: for his readiness to compromise where music was concerned did not go very far, he would rather withdraw altogether. Mozart was no rebel, no philosopher of the Enlightenment, no voice crying in the wilderness of things to come. And still, in the last analysis: uncompromising and independent in the sense that it did not matter a damn to him what people thought of his music or if they wanted it and paid for it. In his music he had freed himself from the demands and tastes of the nobles' courts and the Viennese public; in his way of life, he could not do that.

In 1803, Beethoven wrote in a letter: "People no longer bargain with me; I ask and they pay." But that was the boast of another era. The artist had won his freedom, and the relationship between public and artist had fundamentally changed.

Meanwhile, being the artist he was, Wolfgang Mozart had discerned the tectonic strains and tensions of his times and creatively set them to music as though dictated to him from within. And thus it happens that, if we choose, we can hear in his music nothing but the joy and poetic fancy that moved him. But it also happens that -- as with the masks of the 18th century -- we can sense both the smile of his pursuit of happiness and the anguish, as the lamps of his epoch flickered and died, one by one, and, with them, his own life as well.

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