

Organicism, as the ideal of unity in a work of art, was first advanced by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe through his study of morphology. This theory eventually became the principal aesthetic paradigm of the nineteenth century and occupies the heart of Romantic aesthetic philosophy. It crossed borders, both political and disciplinary, drew such diverse figures such as Moritz, Coleridge, Addison, Young, Herder, Novalis, Hanslick, and Busoni, and was the fundamental aesthetic paradigm articulated in practically all discourse on art in the German speaking cultural world at the turn of the twentieth century. Consequently, Romantic organicist theory became the foundation for the early Modernist aesthetic philosophies of Nietzsche, Lukas, the Second Viennese School, and Béla Bartók. It was adopted by Arnold Schoenberg to justify the necessity of twelve-tone music while also becoming central to Bartók's modernity. However, while the Second Viennese School's interpretation of organicism was inspired by German idealism and individualism, Bartók's modernism grew out of the Hungarian necessity for a communal aesthetic language - a synthesis of styles - which resulted in the development of Bartók's unique musical voice.

In *Béla Bartók and Turn of the Century Budapest*, Judit Frigyesi discusses how Goethe's aesthetic ideal of organicism was valued, above all, by the Second Viennese School. According to Frigyesi, for Schoenberg and Webern, unity was necessary for a work of art to have meaning. For the Viennese composers, the aim of all human artistic expression, including music, was to make as clear as possible the relationships between the parts of the unity; to demonstrate how one thing leads to another.¹ Frigyesi describes how the origin of this idea is to be found in Goethe's seminal work on plant morphology in his *Metamorphosis of Plants*. According to

¹ Judit Frigyesi, *Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the-Century Budapest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 20

Webern, the archetype of the ‘primeval plant’ or *Ur-Pflanze* embodies the aesthetic ideal of unity in the conception, creation, and realization of the artwork as an organism. For Goethe, who was largely inspired by Herder, the artwork does not follow a predetermined teleology according to imposed laws, but rather is guided by an innate and organic process in the mind of its creator.

The art work’s only necessity is unity or coherence where every part is related to the whole.

Goethe describes his idea in the following way:

Masterpieces of man brought forth in obedience to the same laws as the masterpieces of Nature. Before them, all that is arbitrary and imaginary collapses; there is only necessity, there is only God... Art is more than an *imitation* of nature; art *is* nature. This difference lies not between good or bad works of art but in defining what art is and what it is not. The artwork either produces in itself the perfection of creation, or it is not art at all.²

The Viennese modernists sought in Goethe’s organicism a relevant artistic paradigm to the Modern era by transforming the principal of doctrines of Romanticism into a theory of Modernism. It is only in the context of this philosophy of organicism that Schoenberg and Webern could justify twelve-tone composition as the logical and necessary next step in the development of Western art music. How is it possible that Bartók, drawing upon the same organicist tradition, could arrive at a completely different answer when he asserted that “modernity in music could be developed only from folk music in a natural and coherent manner?”³ This paper aims to answer this question. Through a discussion of the development of the aesthetic ideal of organicism as it evolved out of Goethe’s Romanticism and into Bartók’s modernity, this paper proposes a possible link between Goethe’s archetype of metamorphosis and Bartók’s arch form structure.

2 Ibid., 27

3 Ibid., 26

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Germany's celebrated poet and writer, devoted considerable energy to his scientific research on color theory, anatomy, and botany, some of which he presented in his *Metamorphosis of Plants*.⁴ In the introduction to a new edition of this work, Gordon L. Miller describes the poet-scientist's oeuvre in the following way: "To promote not only a greater but also a deeper knowledge of the natural world, Goethe hereby envisioned a fuller integration of the poetic and scientific sensibilities which would provide a way of experiencing nature both symbolically and scientifically - simultaneously."⁵ This integration of poetry and botany, or art and science, found expression in Goethe's theory of organicism as a synthesis of the romantic and the modern, and would eventually become the central aesthetic and philosophical paradigm connecting the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In 1775 Goethe was appointed advisor to the Duke of Weimar where he remained for the rest of his life, realizing his literary, philosophical, and scientific achievements, and establishing close and lasting friendships with Friedrich Schiller and Johann Gottfried von Herder. Their collaboration through the *Weimarer Klassik* synthesized elements of Romanticism, Classicism, and rationalism into what Schiller termed *Rational Empiricism*.⁶ Schiller believed that it was

4 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Metamorphosis of Plants/Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu Erklären* (Gotha, Ettinger, 1790). Also published in Goethe's complete scientific writings: *Zur Morphology*. Goethe essentially discovers the homologous nature of leaf organs in plants. Although the British vertebrate anatomist Sir Richard Owen is generally credited with first articulating a definition of the word "homology" in 1843, it is clear that Goethe had already arrived at a sophisticated view of homology in his theory of morphology and transformation more than fifty years earlier.

5 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, trans. Gordon Miller, *The Metamorphosis of Plants* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), xi.

6 *Weimarer Klassik* (1772-1805) was a German literary and cultural movement including Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Friedrich Schiller, who worked to establish a new humanism out of a synthesis of Romanticism, Classicism, and the Age of Enlightenment.

only through a genuine union of empiricism and rationalism that the phenomena of nature could be penetrated and not merely theorized. Through empirical experience, careful observation, and a methodological inquiry of the phenomena of nature, the *Weimarer Klassik* strove to develop a phenomenological conception and explanation of nature, as opposed to an abstract and transcendental explanation of reality. They believed this to be possible through the mutually supportive work of careful empirical observation and rigorous ontological reflection. Schiller argued that only the most finely tuned and free powers of thought with the purest and most expansive sensible perception, or *Wahrnehmungsvermögen*, could lead to ‘true scientific understanding.’⁷ For Goethe, the goal of Schiller’s scientific understanding was to be able to perceive the unity of phenomena – how the individual parts participate in the whole. He endeavored to understand what necessitates unity in an organism and how the unity of an organism could be cognized or re-cognized.

In ‘*The Experiment as Mediator between Subject and Object*’ Goethe describes his philosophy of science as the process in which "the human being himself, to the extent he makes use of his senses, is the most exact physical apparatus that exists."⁸ In this method of science as art, the experiment becomes the mediator between nature and the experimenter. Whereas Cartesian-Newtonian science defines ‘expansion of knowledge’ as a logical and linear evolution based on facts, Goethe’s science defines the ‘expansion of knowledge’ as “observing the transformation in natural phenomena over time and, through this observation, the resulting

7 Emil Carl Wilm, *The Philosophy of Schiller* (Boston: Luce and Company, 1912)

8 Frederick Amrine, Schmid, F. J. Zucker, H. Wheeler, *Goethe and the Sciences: A Reappraisal*. *Taxon* 38, no. 3 (1989): 445

transformation on the inner life of the experimenter.”⁹ Through this practice of observation, Goethe learned to discern a ‘hidden relationship’ between the various parts of an organism or *Geheime Verwandtschaft*. This invisible relationship determined how one form of an organism transforms into another form while still remaining part of the underlying phenomena which he calls *Ur-phänomen*. It is this organizing principle or *archetype* which, for Goethe, guides the relationship of the parts: a virtual image or *Bild* that emerges and re-emerges through the interaction between an experience and its idea.

A primary and early manifestation in Goethe’s work of organicism is found in his *Metamorphosis of Plants* which presents a vision of the human-nature relationship that places the human being neither in opposition to nor in unity with nature. It describes a process of detailed observation and imaginative reflection that creates a mutually dynamic relationship between the observing subject - the human - and the observed object, Nature. As the result of a trip to Italy during which he observed a multitude of plant species, Goethe first came upon his idea of the archetype of the ‘primeval plant’ or *Ur-Pflanze*. In 1787, he articulated this finding: “It has become apparent to me that in the plant organ we ordinarily call the leaf - a true Proteus is concealed, which can hide and reveal itself in all formations. From top to bottom, a plant is all leaf, united so inseparably with the future bud that one cannot be imagined without the other.”¹⁰ In this statement Goethe is not equating the whole plant with a single leaf. What unifies the plant is not its structure, but rather the principle of formation and development in each part of its structure. If the plant’s parts are perceived next to one another, then, according to Goethe, one

9 Ibid.: 446

10 Goethe, Miller, *The Metamorphosis of Plants*, xiv

can begin to recognize a morphological continuity between the parts in which each part assumes a form that is a modification or progression of the whole.¹¹

Goethe articulates two primary principles which govern this process of metamorphosis.¹² The first is the principle of polarity expressed in *expansion* and *contraction*. This process, developing throughout the life-cycle of a plant, follows seven stages:

- i. Seed – contraction
- ii. Seed leaves and stem leaves – expansion
- iii. Stem/calyx – contraction
- iv. Flower/petals – expansion
- v. Reproductive organ: stamen/pistil/ovaries – contraction
- vi. Fruit – expansion
- vii. Seed – contraction

The second principle which develops throughout these seven stages of expansion and contraction is the principal of intensification which Goethe calls *Steigerung*. With each alternating phase, the expansion or contraction intensifies towards the final goal of reproduction in the fruit and seed. In observing the development of plants, their morphological continuity along a triple axis of contraction, expansion, and progression, Goethe arrived at a principle or what he called the archetype of development of plants; the internal unity of coherence which defines the plant.¹³ Inherently connected to its growth and development, each part of the plant becomes an expression of a particular stage or phase of this developmental process. The unity which emerges over time and is realized in and throughout the plant's transformation or metamorphosis, from seed to seed - through its seven stages of development— is the essence of

¹¹ Ibid., 7

¹² Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, ed. R Steiner, *The Metamorphosis of Plants* (Spring Valley: Anthroposophic Press, 2008), 29

¹³ Ibid., 30-32

the archetype. This archetype of transformation of the life-cycle of the plant can be observed in the development of the plant's most visible part - the leaf (see figure 1).

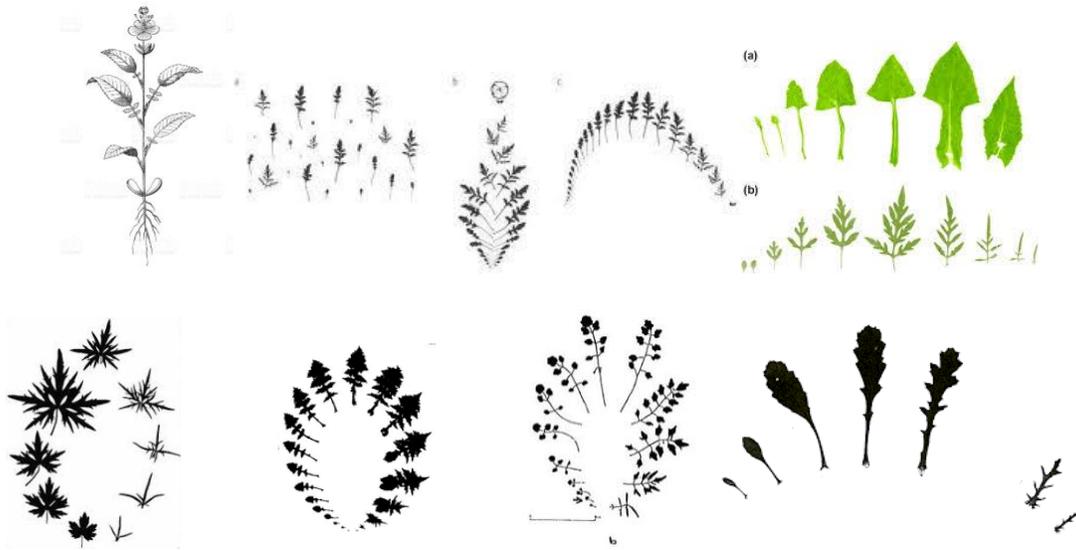


Figure 1: Illustration of Goethe's archetype in *The Metamorphosis of Plants* in the development: expansion, contraction, and intensification of the leaves.¹⁴

Through Goethe's method of observation, the process of knowing becomes implicitly transformative: "Man knows himself only insofar as he knows the world; perceiving himself only in the world, and the world only in himself. Every object well contemplated, opens up within us a new organ of perception."¹⁵ Goethe's organ of perception is the capacity for imagination - the language of the archetype. For Goethe, this archetype is not a dialectic with a teleological endpoint, but rather a continuous process of transformation which, through detailed observation and reflective imagination, Goethe learned to perceive in the life cycle of the plant.

¹⁴ Tom van Gelder, *Phenomenology*.

Available: <http://tomvangelder.antrovista.com/metamorphosis-113m34.html>.

Accessed: December 9th, 2018.

¹⁵ Goethe, *Metamorphosis*, 33

Goethe's organicism, as expressed in his *Metamorphosis of Plants* became the dominant aesthetic paradigm of the German speaking art-world in 19th century. In this discussion, we now turn to inquire how organicism worked itself out in music. In exploring the relationship between Goethe's organicism and Bartók's music, we must ask the question: did Bartók read Goethe? Did he know of Goethe's *Metamorphosis of Plants*? How did he become acquainted with Goethe's theory of organicism? While it is unclear whether Bartók ever read Goethe, we do know that he read Nietzsche. In a personal copy of Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human*, a text which would have been widely known in Hungary and was of great influence, Bartók has clearly marked several passages. According to Frigyesi, one such passage expresses the idea that true creation is only possible out of a direct search and rigorous observation of the basic phenomena of life: "It is the mark of a higher culture to value the little unpretentious truths which have been discovered by means of a rigorous method more highly than the errors handed down by metaphysical and artistic ages."¹⁶ It is possible that this idea of Nietzsche, inherited from Goethe, is also connected to the ideology of Schoenberg and Webern who sought their aesthetic truth in the natural laws of the overtone series through which they justified the inevitable creation of twelve-tone music. Bartók would therefore also have come into contact with Goethe's theory of organicism through his knowledge of the music and philosophy of Schoenberg. However, while both Schoenberg and Bartók looked to Goethe's imagination of nature for aesthetic inspiration, it was in their respective understanding of the relationship between nature and art, that their approaches stood in complete opposition to each other.

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human; A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 13-14

According to Maria Anna Harley, this opposition is articulated clearly in Benedict Spinoza's famous phrase *Natura Naturans - Natura Naturata* (Nature as creative force or *Word* - and Nature as created *World*).¹⁷ The arts, and specifically music, have often been identified as a manifestation of the cosmic harmonies that govern the laws of the universe. In his *Philosophie der Kunst*, Fredrich Schelling argues that Nature's "Absolute" cannot be grasped by rational concepts.¹⁸ According to Berbeli Wannig, art for Schelling, as a means of non-conceptual thought, can communicate the Absolute in a language which reason can understand.¹⁹ For Schelling, music is privileged in this communication as the ideal language because its sonic form is closest to nature. This thought was also held by Goethe. His most famous reference to this idea is that "music is liquid architecture, architecture is frozen music."²⁰ For Goethe, music incorporates within itself a high degree of order and formal lawfulness similar to the laws of mathematics and geometry. Throughout musical scholarship, attempts have been made to analyze the work of certain composers using formal natural and mathematical laws.

In 1953 the Hungarian music theorist Ernő Lendvai first published his historic study of Bartók's music entitled *Bartók's Style and An Introduction to the Analysis of Bartók's works*.²¹ Lendvai analyzed Bartók's music based on two opposing systems, that of the Golden Mean ratio and Fibonacci series on the one hand and that of the acoustic scale or overtone series on the

16 Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. E. Curley, (London: Penguin, 1996)

18 Fredrich Wilhelm Josef von Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst* (Stuttgart: Cota, 1859), 205

19 Berbeli Wannig, Stefan Lorenz Sorgner and Oliver Fürbeth, *Music in German Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 56

20 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann* (New York: De Capo Press, 1998), 282.

21 Ernő Lendvai, *Béla Bartók: An Analysis of His Music*, (London, Kahn & Averill, 1971)

other. In this research, Lendvai introduced his theory of the tonal axis system and used the celebrated Bartók work *Music for String Instruments, Percussion and Celeste* Sz. 106, BB 114 (1936) as the central example of his analysis. With this analysis Lendvai intended to validate the modernity of Bartók's music, a modernity that was comparable to Western Europe's twelve-tone system. According to Anna Dalos, Bartók's modal scales, harmonic formulas, and the use of Golden Section were, in this context, understood as tools of modernity that linked Bartók's method with the emerging second Viennese School's tools of atonality and serialism.²² While Lendvai had hoped, through his research, to demonstrate an inherent connection between the laws of nature, human nature, and art in Bartók's music, his attempt, however, failed. A closer examination by scholars such as Roy Howat and Janos Karpati among others have proven Lendvai's analysis to be incomplete and somewhat inconsistent with the music.²³ Many of his calculations are not particularly accurate. For instance, in *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celeste*, Roy Howat corrects Lendvai over three displacements of a bar each, not mentioned by Lendvai.²⁴ Thus Lendvai's attempt to analyze the formal structure of Bartók's music through mathematical principals is unsuccessful. Theodor Adorno relates this kind of analysis "with the idea of all that is dead, sterile and farthest removed from the living work of art."²⁵ He warns that music's loss of the humane results in an affirmation of the modern life in mathematical order and dehumanized calculation and argues that what is needed is for artistic and musical expression to

22 Anna Dalos, "Bartók, Lendvai Und Die Lage Der Ungarischen Komposition Um 1955." *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 47 (2006): 428

23 Janos Karpati, *Bartók String Quartets* (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1975), 13-15

24 Roy Howat, "Debussy, Ravel and Bartók: Towards some New Concepts of Form." *Music & Letters* 58 (1977): 285-6

25 Theodore Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Bibliothek, Hooper, 1969), 311

re-connect itself with the density of experience.²⁶ This search for artistic expression to regain a direct relationship with true life-experience can be seen as the defining quality of Goethe's method of science, or what Schiller called *Rational Empiricism*, out of which Goethe evolved his ideas on organicism. Rooted in Romanticism, Goethe's theory of organicism eventually evolved in the early twentieth century into one of the central ideologies and aesthetic principals of Modernism.

The Second Viennese School's adoption of Goethe's organicism was realized through its integration of the ideals of coherence, unity, and individuality. For Schoenberg the ideal of organic unity became the synthesizing function between competing tensions in a work. "Every tone which is added to a beginning tone makes the meaning of that tone doubtful... The method by which balance is restored is the real *idea* of the composition."²⁷ For Schoenberg and Berg the model of this ideal was always Nature. Just as everything in Nature developed out of a primeval cell, large works of music also evolved out of a single motive which contained the seed for everything. Schoenberg describes this ideology in the following way:

A real composer does not compose mere themes, but a whole piece. In an apple tree's blossoms, even in the bud, the whole future apple is present in all its details – they have only to mature, to grow, to become apple, the apple tree, and its power of reproduction. Similarly, a real composer's musical conception, like the physical, is one single act, compromising the totality of the product. The form in its outline, characteristics of tempo, dynamics, moods of the main and subordinate ideas, their relation, derivation, ...all these are there at once, through in embryonic state.... Thus, a real composition is not composed but conceived, and its details need not be added.²⁸

26 Theodore Adorno, *The Aging of New Music* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Bibliothek, 1955. Hooper, 1969)

27 Ibid., 31

28 Frigyesi, *Béla Bartók*, 31

This organicist paradigm in German art, however, referred only to individual works and individual artists rather than to collective styles or genres. Artistic development and growth were defined through the process in which a particular work evolved into existence through an individual artist rather than through the development or emergence of a social or historical style. For Schoenberg, “an artwork is born when its original idea first presents itself, and that first idea already contains the entire piece.”²⁹ For the Romantics an artwork was thought to be a fully realized whole in itself because true artistic experience meant transcendence – whose power was equal to, or greater than, the power of religious experience. This concept can be related back to Spinoza and Schelling. This German romantic ideal however ultimately resulted, in the realization of twelve-tone music, in a separation of art music from the rest of cultural life. With the acceptance of this isolation as the only possible context for artistic expression, the Second Viennese School composers had completely separated music from the possibility of having meaning in a social broader context. While they recognized this contradiction, they were unable to overcome it. To resolve this situation required the voice of a new perspective from outside.

The Hungarian Modernists, including Zoltan Kodály, Béla Bartók, and the poet Endre Ady, emerged with such a voice. They faced a similar contradictory and idealistic set of demands as their Viennese counterparts who sought to revolutionize art while maintaining its tradition. Modernity imposed these demands on both of them: to create original art that was relevant to the current time of contemporary life. However, the Hungarian Modernists faced a second and unique problem. They sought to create art that had an identity independent and separate from the dominant German and Western European aesthetic. Their art had the ambitious task of becoming both Hungarian and European. In a sense, Schoenberg, Webern, and Bartok all faced the same

²⁹ Ibid., 27

essential problem: after having internalized the inherited musical tradition, how should a composer progress in renewing musical language? The answer was clear: he had to return to the original source of art, to nature. But nature was something very different for Schoenberg and Webern than it was for Bartók. While Schoenberg and Webern believed to have found their answer in the organic nature of music, Bartók and Kodály looked beyond the scope of western art. For the Viennese, nature meant a return to the individual's own self, reaching down to the innermost sphere of the mind and soul. In contrast, for the Hungarian Modernist, nature meant a return to the phenomena that are to be found outside the western aesthetic tradition most clearly present in the folk art of Eastern Europe.³⁰ Bartok saw this return to the phenomena of nature as a return to the original facts of music – and life. His study and search for original phenomena through folk music gave a new dimension to the concept of modernity and the organicist aesthetic. While this aspiration was true for most of the Hungarian Modernists, according to Frigyesi, Bartók was the only Hungarian artist to successfully integrate folk culture into his own work as an expression of the original phenomena and synthesize it entirely into a personal style within the framework of organicism.

In 1908, with his life-long friend Zoltan Kodály, Bartók first traveled to the countryside to research Magyar folk music. Their interest in researching this peasant music also happened to coincide with a rise in nationalism in Hungary and a corresponding social interest in traditional culture in general.³¹ Both composers believed that peasant music was a remnant of the traditional cultural values not only of the peasant class but of the entire Hungarian nation. “A German

30 Ibid., 105

31 Mark Nelson, "Folk Music and the 'Free and Equal Treatment of the Twelve Tones': Aspects of Béla Bartók's Synthetic Methods." *College Music Symposium* 27 (1987): 57

musician will be able to find in Bach and Beethoven what we had to search for in our villages: the continuity of a national musical tradition.”³² Bartók assigned the most fundamental significance to this discovery of peasant music which was indigenous to his native land. Such a discovery entailed the “unearthing of a national treasure-store of surpassing abundance.”³³ For him, this body of music, distinguished by an absolute aesthetic perfection, stimulated a renaissance of Hungarian musical art, founded on the “unknown, un-faded, and unspoiled treasures of folk music.”³⁴ He believed, like many other composers and artists of the time all across Europe, that peasant music was the ideal starting point for a musical renaissance and that a composer in search of new ways could not be led by a better master.³⁵

One cannot underestimate the profound influence exerted upon Bartók’s compositional process by his discovery and study of peasant music. For him, folk music was the creation of Nature as much as it was a creation of human culture. This discovery amounted to what he called an “unexpected, delightful, and inspirational exposure to the unadulterated outpourings of Nature in musical form.”³⁶ Nature was for him the fundamental basis of folk music and peasantry – which were as much a natural phenomenon as the various manifestations of Nature herself. As Maria Anna Harley has shown, Bartók’s creative relationship with Nature can be understood as an expression of Spinoza’s manifestation of Nature in peasant music. In the following quote,

32 Ibid., 59

33 Béla Bartók, edited: Benjamin Suchoff, *Essays* “Relation of Folk Song to the Development of the Art of our Time” Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press (1993), 325

34 Ibid.: 323

35 Béla Bartók, edited: Benjamin Suchoff, *Essays* “On the Significance of Folk Music” (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 346

36 Bartók, “The Relation of Folk Song” 329

taken from a letter to his son, Bartok describes how the universal laws that govern Nature, and which are present in the music of peasant people, are also the same principles which govern the highest artistic and aesthetic ideals of humanity:

Peasant music is the outcome of changes wrought by a natural force whose operation is unconscious; it is impulsively created by a community of men who have had no schooling; it is as much a natural product as are the various forms of animal and vegetable life. For this reason, the individuals of which it consists - the single tunes - are so many examples of high artistic perfection. In their small way, they are as perfect as the grandest masterpieces of musical art. They are, indeed, classical models of the way in which a musical idea can be expressed in all its freshness and shapeliness – in short, in the very best possible way, in the briefest possible form and with the simplest of means.³⁷

Frigyesi discusses this famous quote by Bartók. For Bartók, folk music is created as a coherent, organic whole, and thus is on the same artistic or aesthetic level as the greatest compositions of western music. However, it is superior to art music in one respect in that it was not composed by an individual but created communally as a social art. “Peasant music, in the strict sense of the word, must be regarded as a natural phenomenon; the forms in which it manifests itself are due to the instinctive *transforming power* of the community.”³⁸ For Bartók, the means through which peasant music expresses this force of nature is through an unconscious collective - it is impulsively created by a community of men who have had no schooling. In peasant music therefore, the creative relationship with Nature is collective and unconscious process. On the other hand, Bartók’s own compositional process can be seen as an expression of an individual and conscious process: “through self-refinement and endless effort we will be able to transform

37 László Somfai, *Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts, and Autograph Sources* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), 107

38 Ibid., 106

our experience.”³⁹ In Bartók’s music, the collective-unconscious process of peasant music is internalized and transformed into a conscious and individual process. Through his work, Bartók evolved a musical form which would allow him the possibility of developing this organicist process of integration and transformation to its fullest.

Over the course of his career, Bartók evolved a palindromic musical formal structure that reflects itself symmetrically through a central axis which he called bridge-form or arch-form structure.⁴⁰ The maturation of Bartók’s arch-form structure developed between his five pieces for solo piano - *Out of Doors* Sz. 81 written in 1926, and the *Concerto for Orchestra* Sz. 116 written in 1943. It reached its fullest expression between the *String Quartet No. 4* Sz. 95 written in 1928 and the *String Quartet No. 5* Sz. 102 written in 1934-35. Other significant works written in this form are the *Piano Concerto No. 2*, and, to a lesser extent, the *Violin Concerto No. 2* Sz. 117 (1938). The most worked out expression of the form is found in the *String Quartets* in which the outer movements (i.e. first and fifth and second and fourth movements) reflect each other respectively through a central movement which acts as a fulcrum or turning point of the entire form. While Bartók’s final works after World War II do not exhibit outward signs of this arch-form structure, it is possible to perceive the six string quartets together as a single oeuvre, evolving over the course of 31 years (from 1908 – 1939), as a kind of meta arch-form of Bartók’s entire creative output.⁴¹

In a 1949 issue of *The Musical Quarterly*, Milton Babbitt, in his review of the Juilliard String Quartet’s first performances of Bartók’s complete quartet cycle, writes the following:

39 Ibid., 107

40 Janos Kârpâti, *Bartók’s Chamber Music* (Pendragon Press, NY, 1994), p. 87

41 Ibid.,

... above all, the homogeneity and consistent single-mindedness of Bartók's achievement in his works for this medium...the basic unity of purpose that invested all with the character of a single, self-contained creative act. For all that these works span an entire creative career, there is, throughout, a single conceptual attitude...Most importantly, this unity of purpose emerges in all its significance as the identification of a personal exigency with the fundamental musical exigency of the epoch, emphasizing the impossibility of divorcing the qualitative aspect of the musical achievement from its strategic aspect. For it is in this respect that Bartók's music is so completely of its time, and achieves a contemporaneity far transcending mere considerations of style or idiom. It is non-provincial music that reveals a thorough awareness of the crucial problems confronting contemporary musical composition and attempts to achieve a total and personally unique solution to these problems.⁴²

Babbitt demonstrates how through the six quartets, possibly more than any other of his compositions, Bartók developed a musical language using harmonic functionality and tonal regions that is unique to himself. His functional tonic-dominant relationships are without triadic sonorities, as opposed to Stravinsky, who uses tonal triadic sonorities without their tonal functions. Furthermore, Bartók develops a method of modal duality or *Bi-Polytonality*. According to Karpati, Bartók himself claimed that, contrary to the belief of many, two different modes (major/minor), can exist simultaneously as dual/alternative structures. In his analysis of the quartets, Babbitt argued that because of Bartók's concern for the singular totality of the compositional process, it is ultimately irrelevant whether one initiates the examination of his music from the detail or the entirety. Babbitt's observation confirms the essence of Bartók's writing in the six String Quartets as an ideal expression of Goethe's aesthetic principal of organicism.

42 Milton Babbitt, "The String Quartets of Bartók" *The Musical Quarterly* 25 (July 1949): 337-8

This paper has explored the aesthetic ideal of organicism as it evolved out of Goethe's Romanticism and into Bartók's Modernity. It has discussed the relationship or differences between the Hungarian Modernist's interpretation of Goethe's organicism with that of the Second Viennese School's interpretation. While both approaches look to Goethe's concept of nature as their inspiration for a Modern philosophy of aesthetic, their relationship to, and understanding of Nature is very different. While Schoenberg looked to his individual human nature and the metaphysical laws of music, Bartók sought out the Natural source of the phenomena of music – which he discovered in peasant folklore. Because the Second Viennese School's interpretation of organicism was inspired by German idealism and individualism, it ultimately separated Art music from society. Bartók's organicism, on the other hand, grew out of the Hungarian modernist necessity for a synthesis of style and a communal aesthetic language which resulted in the evolution of his uniquely synthetic language.

According to Janos Karpati Bartók's work was not a separation but a complete and original synthesis of all that came before him: "a striving towards synthesis is the most important and most firmly fixed feature of Bartók's creative activity."⁴³ In Bartók's music, there is a wish to assimilate. His ability to merge centuries of European art music with the experiments of his modernist contemporaries and integrate materials of folk music with ancient art music are all unique capacities unto him alone. Karpati goes on to say that it was only possible for Bartók's work to achieve the large-scale recognition it has received today because his work is the source of a large-scale synthesis. "Bartók thoroughly transformed every element into his own; he took

43 Janos Kârpâti, *Bartók's Chamber Music* (NY: Pendragon Press, 1994), 85

nothing over and used nothing in its original form, in its original capacity.”⁴⁴ Bartók’s whole creative art is characterized by this capacity of transformation and the merging of different factors into one. Its special quality and its greatness come from how it exists on so many levels, the roots of which are “nourished by the whole of human culture.”⁴⁵ Karpati claims that Bartók’s art is pioneering and individualistic in the way he ‘moved invincibly’ with the company of his contemporaries, but that it is also “summarizing and collective;” because his music, replaced the increasingly outdated romantic ideal of individualism with a new ideal in art as synthesis.⁴⁶ In this regard, similar to Goethe, Bartók is the supreme modernist – or futurist. He anticipated, through his music, the growing trend not only in music, but in all the arts. Goethe described this as the ‘social art’ – the art for which all the other arts are simply a preparation. According to Dorothea von Müke, “Goethe, in characterizing the phenomena of change and transformation as an area in which nature and the imagination are competing with each other, turned the study of change in nature into a field which will transcend the recent divisions between science and art.”⁴⁷ Through his theory of organicism, Goethe created the possibility for a new art form - the social art of transformation or what he called *Metamorphosis*. The aim of this paper has been to imagine, through a discussion on organicism, Bartók’s arch form as a musical archetype of Goethe’s metamorphosis.

44 Ibid., 85

46 Ibid., 78-79

47 Dorothea E. von Müke, *The Practices of the Enlightenment: Aesthetics, Authorship, and the Public* (New York Columbia University Press, 2015), 39-40

Bibliography

Print:

- Adorno, Theodore. *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Bibliothek, 1951.
- Negative Dialectics*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Bibliothek, 1966
- Philosophie der Neuen Musik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985
- Albright, Daniel. *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2004
- Babbit, Milton. "The String Quartets of Bartók" *The Musical Quarterly*. 25 (1949): 337- 51
- Benjamin, Walter. *On the Concept of History: Gesammelten Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag., 1974.
- Bartók, Béla. Essays. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993
 "Folk Song Research in Eastern Europe"
 "On the Significance of Folk Music" (The Harvard Lectures 1943).
 "Relation of Folk Song to the Development of the Art of our Time" (1921)
- *Hungarian Folk Music*. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.
- Buhner, Stephen Harrod. *The Secret Life of Plants: The intelligence of the heart in direct perception of nature*. Rochester, VT: Bear and Company, 2004.
- Brodsky, Seth. *From 1989 or European Music and the Modernist Unconscious*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2017
- Cook, Theodor *The Curves of Life* (London, 1979).
- Dalos, Anna. "Bartók, Lendvai Und Die Lage Der Ungarischen Komposition Um 1955." *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 47, no. 3/4 (2006): 427-39.
- Frigyesi, Judit. *Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the-Century Budapest*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1998.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. Trans: Edwin, Curley. *Conversations with Eckermann* (1829). New York: De Capo Press, 2008.
- Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu Erklären*. Gotha, C. W. Ettinger, 1790.
- and Gordon Miller. *The Metamorphosis of Plants*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009.

- Harley, Maria Anna. "Natura naturans, Natura naturata and Bartók's Nature Music Idiom." *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 36 (1995): 329-49.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried *New World of Knowledge*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Howat, Roy. "Debussy, Ravel and Bartók: Towards some New Concepts of Form." *Music & Letters* 58 (1977): 285-93.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement* (1790). Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Kârpâti, Janos. *Bartók's Chamber Music*. New York: Pendragon Press, 1994.
- Bartók String Quartets*. Budapest: Corvina Press, 1975.
- Lampert, Vera. "Bartók at Harvard University as Witnessed in Unpublished Documents." *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 35 (1993): 113-54.
- Levine, Caroline. *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Lendvai, Ernő. *Béla Bartók: An Analysis of His Music*. London: Kahn & Averill, 1971.
- Lindberg, Susanna. *The Legacy of Schelling's Philosophy of Nature in Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty*. Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann GmbH, 2008.
- Locke, Derek. "Numerical Aspects of Bartók's String Quartets." *The Musical Times* 128 (1978): 322-333.
- Marx, Adolf Bernhard, Scott Burnham. *Musical Form in the Age of Beethoven, A Practical and Theoretical Method of Musical Composition*. Boston: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Meyer, Leonard B. "Syntax, Form, and Unity." *Style and Music: Theory, History and Ideology*. N.p.: University of Chicago (1996): 272-84.
- Müke, Dorothea E. von. *The Practices of the Enlightenment: Aesthetics, Authorship, and the Public*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015
- Nassar, Dalia. *Romantic Empiricism after the End of Nature*. Oxford University Press Scholarship Online, 2014.
- The Relevance of Romanticism: Essays on German Romantic Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Nelson, Mark. "Folk Music and the 'Free and Equal Treatment of the Twelve Tones': Aspects of Béla Bartók's Synthetic Methods." *College Music Symposium* 27 (1987): 59-116.
- Pound, Ezra. *Make it New/Essays by Ezra Pound*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1935.

- Schlegel, Friedrich trans. Peter Firchow. *Philosophical Fragments*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- Somfai, László. "Invention, Form, Narrative in Béla Bartók's Music." *Studia Musicologica* 44 (2003): 291-33
- Spinoza, Benedict, Trans: Curley, Edwin. *Ethics* (1677: Scholium Part I, Prop. 29). London: Penguin, 1996.
- Stevens, Halsey. Introduction. *The Life and Music of Béla Bartók*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- Straus, Joseph Nathan. *Introduction to Post-tonal Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990.
- Webster, J. H. Douglas. "Golden Mean form in Music." *Music & Letters* 31 (1950): 238-248
- Weiss, Piero, and Richard Taruskin. *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*. New York: Schirmer, 1984.
- Wheat, Leonard F. *Hegel's Undiscovered Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis Dialectics*, London: Prometheus Books, 2012.
- Wilm, Emil Carl. *The Philosophy of Schiller*. Boston: Luce and Company, 1912.

Scores:

- Bartók, Béla. *Sonata for Solo Violin* (London: Hawkes, 1947)
- *4th String Quartet* (London: Hawkes, 1928)

Images:

Metamorphosis of Plants:
<http://tomvangelder.antrovista.com/metamorphosis-113m34.html>:

Video:

Yehudi Menuhin, *The Music of Man*, CBC Documentary, 1987: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDy>