

Art and Affections: Correcting Categories

Dr. Scott Aniol

“Emotion”

- ◇ *splankna* – “chest” (affections)
- ◇ *koilia* – “belly” (passions)

“Emotion”

The affections and passions are frequently spoken of as the same, and yet in the more common use of speech, there is in some respect a difference. Affection is a word that in the ordinary signification, seems to be something more extensive than passion, being used for all vigorous lively actings of the will or inclination, but passion for those that are more sudden, and whose effects on the animal spirits are more violent, and the mind more overpowered, and less in its own command.

Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2001), 26-27.

Affects of Music

- ◇ Dionysian
- ◇ Apollonian

Affects of Music

Music that communicates emotions with a Dionysian force is that kind which excites us to enjoy our emotions by being thoroughly involved or engrossed in them with our entire person. Our enjoyment of the emotion then becomes ego-directed, driven by the desire for self-gratification. This direction often shows itself in keen physical involvement; people become emotionally involved through stomping of the feet, swaying of the body, clapping of the hands, and waving of the arms. Music that solicits from us this kind of emotional response allows us to enjoy our emotions from the inside and very experientially. This kind of music is clearly anthropocentric in nature, because it turns man to himself, rather than away from himself, with the result that he becomes the appreciating center of his own emotions and experiences. Herein lies the goal of all entertainment and popular music, which must please or gratify the self if it is going to sell.

Daniel Reuning, "Luther and Music," *Concordia Theological Journal* 48:1 (January, 1984), 18.

Affects of Music

His music and that of the Lutheran heritage communicates a message with an Apollonian force, which allows our emotions to be enjoyed, while at the same time retaining control and mental freedom. We are relieved of the urgent requirements of our inner drives. Under Apollonian influence our emotions are viewed empathically or contemplatively in a more detached fashion, so that they might always be subject to our discretion and judgment. Since the major point of the Reformation, as of Scripture itself, was to turn man away from everything within himself as the source of hope and assurance of salvation — to the grace of God alone, earned for us by Christ Himself — it was logical for Lutherans to use Apollonian music. Man-directed Dionysian music would only confuse or contradict the message through its anthropocentric emotional forces. Just as hymns and spiritual songs with words full of Dionysian content, doting upon human experience and feelings, are incongruent with the biblical proclamation of the Gospel, so also is music that revels in Dionysian emotionalism. Thus, because music has so much influence on one's understanding of the Gospel, Apollonian reinforcement was the obvious choice. Furthermore, this choice is just as relevant to us today, since the emotional forces in music keep on conveying their unique messages, remaining unaffected by changes in time or environment — a truly universal expression!

Reuning, 18–19.

Affects of Music

Another mark of growth in grace is increased spirituality of taste and mind. The man whose soul is growing takes more interest in spiritual things every year. He does not neglect his duty in the world. He discharges faithfully, diligently and conscientiously every relation of life, whether at home or abroad. But the things he loves best are spiritual things. The ways and fashions and amusements and recreations of the world have a continually decreasing place in his heart. He does not condemn them as downright sinful, nor say that those who have anything to do with them are going to hell. He only feels that they have a constantly diminishing hold on his own affections, and gradually seem smaller and more trifling in his eyes. Spiritual companions, spiritual occupations, spiritual conversation appear of ever-increasing value to him. Would anyone know if he is growing in grace? Then let him look within for increasing spirituality of taste.

J. C. Ryle, Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots (Cambridge: J. Clarke, 1952), 89.

Affects of Music

Ecstatic worship is completely different [than true, biblical worship]. This aims at stirring the emotions to produce a simulated, exalted emotional state. Ecstatic worship takes place when the object of the exercise is to achieve a warm, happy feeling, perhaps great excitement, and even a sense of God presence *through the earthly, physical aspects of worship* such as music and movement. Among charismatics this is eagerly pursued, the programme [sic] being carefully engineered to bring worshippers to a high emotional pitch, and often to a mildly hypnotic state. In non-charismatic circles the objective is a little more modest, but essentially the same — to make an emotional impact. Worship leaders want to bypass rationality and get the feelings going by other means. They want to stir up “sensations” in order to produce euphoria.

Peter Masters, *Worship in the Melting Pot* (Wakeman Trust, 2002), 23-24. Emphasis Original

Popular Culture

Focuses on the new

Discourages reflection

Pursued casually to “kill time”

Gives us what we want, tells us what we already know

Relies on instant accessibility; encourages impatience

Emphasizes information and trivia

Encourages quantitative concerns

Celebrates fame

Appeals to sentimentality

Context and form governed by requirements of the market

Formulas are the substance

Relies on spectacle, tending to violence and prurience

Aesthetic power in reminding of something else

Individualistic

Leaves us where it found us

Incapable of deep or sustained attention

Lacks ambiguity

No discontinuity between life and art

Reflects the desires of the self

Tends toward relativism

Used

Traditional and High Culture

Focuses on the timeless

Encourages reflections

Pursued with deliberation

Offers us what we could not have imagined

Requires training; encourages patience

Emphasizes knowledge and wisdom

Encourages qualitative concerns

Celebrates ability

Appeals to appropriate, proportioned emotions

Content and form governed by requirements of created order

Formulas are the tools

Relies on formal dynamics and the power of symbols (including language)

Aesthetic power in intrinsic attributes

Communal

Transforms sensibilities

Capable of repeated, careful attention

Allusive, suggests the transcendent

Relies on “Secondary World” conventions

Encourages understanding of others

Tends toward submission to standards

Received

Music and Emotion in the Church

If conversion was the result of the sinner's decision, and if the inducing of that decision was the responsibility of a preacher, assisted by the Holy Spirit, then any measure that would bring the unconverted 'right up to the point of instant and absolute submission' had to be good.

Ian Murray, Revival and Revivalism, 246.

Music and Emotion in the Church

If we step back a minute and really look at the character of contemporary music, what we will find is that it is just a new stage in the evolution of revivalist hymnody. Revivalist hymnody, that came to be more and more prevalent in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, was music that was more upbeat, more lively, and more enthusiastic. It also often had a declining level of theological content in the texts of the hymns.

W. Robert Godfrey, “The Psalms and Contemporary Worship” in *The Worship of God* (Taylors, SC: Mentor, 2005), 104.

Music and Emotion in the Church

If there is a somewhat dramatic shift that took place in music leading to contemporary Christian music, that shift probably took place with the rise of Pentecostalism. The Pentecostal movement in its drive for religious experience and religious energy and religious excitement did indeed think in new ways about music and sought to take the revivalist tradition of hymnody and make it even more exciting, even more engaging.

Godfrey, "Psalms," 104.

Music and Emotion in the Church

The more likely mindset is that worship leaders will select and sequence music that will wake people up, then get them fired up, then settle them down for the Sermon, and send them home afterward feeling good. Perhaps this is a crass way of explaining it, but such an approach is instinctive and understandable if one has little sense for the history and purposes of the church's worship.

Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 70.

Music and Emotion in the Church

- ◇ Spiritual response of the affections is fundamentally distinct from and may exist apart from physical feeling.
- ◇ Dionysian forms of art target the physical feelings through emotional manipulation, while Appolonian forms communicate true spiritual affection.
- ◇ The conclusion, then, for someone wanting to rightly express and teach pure, religious affections in worship should be the following:
- ◇ Refuse to define spiritual experience in terms of physical response.
- ◇ Strive to discern between music that modestly supports biblical truth with noble Christian affections and music that artificially stimulates physical feelings, and reject the manipulative music.
- ◇ Encourage true spiritual worship through the use of simple, rich hymns with strong texts and modest music.