

In his cycle FROM THE SEVEN DAYS Stockhausen attempts to find *musical* answers to such fundamental questions regarding the conditions of a harmonious interplay of spirit and matter, which correspond to his serial process thinking and to the maxims of the experimental production of the sound material by composing temporally ordered pulses. To do this, he takes up Satprem's suggestions about the character of "auditory vibrations" on the "ladder of consciousness" but takes them much further. Satprem writes: "The more one descends the ladder of consciousness, the more do the auditory vibrations [...] get broken up. On the vital plane, for example, can be heard the disordered vibrations of Life, jarring, syncopated, like certain types of music which come from this plane [...]. The higher one rises, the more do the vibrations harmonise, unite, spin out like certain great notes of Beethoven's String Quartets, which seem to draw us vertiginously, with held breath, to the resplendent heights of pure light."⁶³ What is crucial for Stockhausen, however, is beyond such simplistic analogies: As a composer he wants to mediate between the extremes rather than to just follow the preconception of a linear development from the fragmentary and dissonant to the whole and harmonious.

For the order of the texts in the musical process of the SEVEN DAYS, this means: The text AUFWÄRTS / UPWARDS builds on the experiences gained until ABWÄRTS / DOWNWARDS, in that the players now are to first confront the rhythms of the sub-atomic particles with those of the universe and then gradually mediate these extremes through all accessible degrees. In INTENSITÄT / INTENSITY, physical energy – through the impact of the "acoustic-visual rhythms" of the "conductor" Stockhausen "playing" with file, hammer and nails – changes into "spiritual or rhythmic polyphony". "Rhythmic cadences with all kinds of syncopations and resolutions, distinct *differences of tempo* with *pulses* changing continuously and by leaps" create – as a whole – the "*most vertical music*" of the cycle.⁶⁴ Then, KOMMUNION / COMMUNION shifts the playing from introspection to trans-subjectivity: The musicians are to communicate with one another, not by playing their own rhythms, but instead by grasping the rhythms of their fellow players and musically shaping them. This, according to Stockhausen, led to moments of enormous aggression, "as if in mutual destruction, even extermination, the unifying spirit becomes free."⁶⁵

In the progression of FROM THE SEVEN DAYS, Satprem's discussion of Aurobindo's philosophy continues to play a vital role. Following the previously cited passage from Aurobindo's "The Hour of God", which appears again in the text DOWNWARDS, Satprem

63 Satprem, *Sri Aurobindo or The Adventure of Consciousness*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1968, p. 219. – The passage which Stockhausen cites in the programme booklet for the first performance of MANTRA immediately follows this one.

64 K. Stockhausen, "INTENSITÄT (INTENSITY). Text for the DGG record, May 1972", in *Texte zur Musik* Vol. 4, p. 124f. (English booklet of CD 14, pp. 58–60).

65 K. Stockhausen, "KOMMUNION (COMMUNION). Text for the DGG record, May 1972", in *Texte zur Musik* Vol. 4, p. 128. (English booklet of CD 14, pp. 68–70). See also: "Fragen und Antworten zur Intuitiven Musik (1973)", in *Texte zur Musik* Vol. 4, pp. 130–144, especially: p. 132 ("Questions and answers on *Intuitive Music*", in: English booklet of CD 14, pp. 75–102, especially: p. 79).

writes: “The involution above is completed by a new involution below wherein everything is contained, latent in the Night, as all was contained latent in the Light above. *Agni* is there ‘like a warm golden dust’, ‘*Agni* has entered earth and heaven as if they were one’, according to the Rig Veda (III.7.4).” And now Satprem again quotes Aurobindo: “In a sense, the whole of creation may be said to be a movement between two involutions, Spirit in which all is involved and out of which all evolves downward (or devolves) to the other pole of Matter, Matter in which also all is involved and out of which all evolves upwards to the other pole of Spirit.”⁶⁶

In the Vedic religion, “Agni”, etymologically related to the Latin word “ignis” (fire), is the divine mediator who carries the burned sacrifices to the Gods. According to the myth, he is born both out of the heavens, from sun or lightning, as well as from the earth, the rock, but also from the water, in which the extinguished fire rests. In that he is male fire entering the female water and impregnating it, Agni symbolises the cosmic process.⁶⁷ That is why Stockhausen placed the name “Agni” at the beginning of the scene IN HOFFNUNG / EXPECTING of MONDAY from LIGHT. Aurobindo developed a theory of “Agni” from two basic premises of nuclear physics: Atoms are (1) rotating systems similar to the solar system, and the atoms of all the elements comprise (2) the same constituents arranged differently. Thus, in addition to the “jada Agni” of ordinary fire and the “vaidyuta Agni” of electricity, a third Agni, the “saura Agni” of solar energy exists, which, through nuclear fusion, constitutes all matter.⁶⁸ For Stockhausen, this means that via (1) the mechanical warmth of, for example, spraying sparks while hammering and (2) the current of electronic music, it should be possible to closely approach the *Agni* (3) of the atomic energies which connect the innermost centre of our bodies to the sun. The title LICHT / LIGHT of the opera cycle of the “seven days of the week” was preconceived here. To be able to sense the essence of material existence in the “rhythm of the smallest particles”, from whose vibrations atoms are formed, would mean to be able to rise to the highest awareness: that of the unity of spirit and matter. The sun, source of light, also shines within us. To Aurobindo LIGHT, “the highest speed-immobility”, is a central symbol of this highest awareness, or the “Supreme consciousness”.⁶⁹ Stockhausen’s definition of the formula and especially his conception of the super formula for LIGHT is, therefore, directly linked with Sri Aurobindo’s category of the “supramental”: The formula is “matrix and plan of micro- and macro-form, as well as psychic shape and vibratory image of a supramental manifestation.”⁷⁰

66 Sri Aurobindo, “The Life Divine”, in *Works* (1972), Vol. 18, p. 129, as cited in Satprem, *Sri Aurobindo or The Adventure of Consciousness*, p. 301 (see footnote 45).

67 Cf. Manfred Lurker, *Lexikon der Götter und Dämonen*. Stuttgart: Kröner, 1989, p. 9f. – As the bearer of fire and god of sacrifices, Agni has a certain similarity to Prometheus and Loki.

68 Cf. the section on “The Fundamental Agni”, in Satprem, *Sri Aurobindo or The Adventure of Consciousness*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1968, pp. 322–327.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 325.

70 K. Stockhausen, “Multiformale Musik” (March / August 1978) in *Texte zur Musik* Vol. 5, p. 667; see also: Hermann Sabbe, “Der psycho-biologische Transzendenz-Begriff bei Stockhausen”, in *Entgrenzungen in der Musik*. Ed. by Otto Kolleritsch. Vienna, Graz: Universal Edition, 1987 (Studien zur Wertungsforschung, Vol. 18), pp. 71–82.

Consistently following the theories of Sri Aurobindo and the mythology of Agni, the god of fire, the composer names the penultimate piece of the cycle – in which the process of the work-group FROM THE SEVEN DAYS can culminate – GOLDSTAUB / GOLD DUST. It is reached via the stages of the “warmth” in INTENSITÄT / INTENSITY and the harmony of superimposed rhythms in SETZ DIE SEGEL ZUR SONNE / SET SAIL FOR THE SUN, where “sound turns to gold, / to pure, gently shimmering fire”.⁷¹

If the aim of this process is achieved, then *Agni* is sensed, the energy that – in rhythmic movement – mediates the unity of matter and spirit, earth and heaven. Here is the text of GOLD DUST:

Live completely alone for four days
without food
in complete silence, without much movement
Sleep as little as necessary
Think as little as possible
After four days, late at night, without conversation beforehand
play single sounds
WITHOUT THINKING which you are playing
Close your eyes
Just listen

The text is an invitation to let cosmic consciousness take its rise. The silence of thoughts universalises mental awareness; to live in deepest stillness without eating, universalises the vital awareness; the immobility of the body universalises the physical awareness. Then, in the tranquillity of single sounds the “hot supramental gold dust [...] could precipitate itself in our cells”, without the body reacting with its habitual induration. “Immobility, receptivity, cellular wideness would seem to be among the basic conditions for the body-substance to be able to support *Agni* and last out.”⁷²

Despite the orientation of the texts to Hindu mythology and religiosity, FROM THE SEVEN DAYS is free from any folkloristic imitations of Indian music – apart from a few isolated moments (as in UNLIMITED, where colour and rhythm of Indian tablas are sparingly and selectively used by one of the players, but which Stockhausen never really liked). Nevertheless, the rhythmic features of the music from the Far East must have had an inspiring influence on Stockhausen’s concept of rhythm. Due to the erotic, dancing and elementally aggressive agitation of the mythology which impels it, Indian music – as compared with the music of all other traditional world cultures – had developed not only the most complex rhythms, but also

71 K. Stockhausen, “SETZ DIE SEGEL ZUR SONNE / SET SAIL FOR THE SUN. Text for the DGG record, January 1973” and “Second Text, December 1974”, in *Texte zur Musik* Vol. 4, p. 125ff. (English booklet of CD 14, pp. 61–66).

72 Satprem, *Sri Aurobindo or The Adventure of Consciousness*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1968, p. 337f.

rhythms which were ordered the least according to even-numbered symmetrical proportions; in fact were the most aperiodic. And in works such as *KONTAKTE*, Stockhausen's aperiodicity transcends by far such traditional rhythmic modes. In Chinese philosophy, rhythm also plays a central role: yin and yang are to be understood as a rhythmic process of relational oppositions.⁷³ According to Chinese wisdom, the world moves in the *rhythmic* alternation between yin and yang, heaven and earth, light and darkness, day and night, male and female, sun and moon, birth and death – plus and minus. Also the hexagrams of the *i ching*, in which the play of earth, man and heaven finds its oracle-like expression, are connected with each other in a process of rhythmic, but quite aperiodic, fluent transitions. Although Stockhausen never uses such methods in composing (as Cage did), it would be interesting to examine to what extent his processual thinking, his poetics of process planning, of “plus” and “minus” (*SPIRAL*), coincides with the cosmic movement games of the *i ching*-hexagrams and the weak or strong charge of their unbroken or broken lines. Could the three-layered super formula of *LIGHT* have something to do with the division (into three) of the hexagrams in the fluctuating planes of earth, man and heaven? When Aurobindo claims that the entire universe consists of a movement between two involutions, this can only mean for Stockhausen – translated into the terminology of musical forms – that everything in the cosmos is rhythmically organised. In turn, however, if the fibre of music is nothing other than rhythmically organised time, it follows that the entire universe is one single musical composition. However, one would need to have completely different ears and a different body than the material one which humans possess in order to be able to hear this composition. Since we do not have it (yet?), we make our own music.

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In his book, *Formel-Komposition* (Formula Composition), Hermann Conen aptly asserts that “the history of Stockhausen's musical conceptions [...] can also be read as a history of the search for the preconditions of the musical”.⁷⁴ In the cycle *FROM THE SEVEN DAYS*, this search appears in the form of a radical “retreat to the psycho-physical preconditions of musical creation”.⁷⁵ The texts make clear that these “preconditions” are most likely to be found in the process of becoming aware of temporal measurements and spatial magnitudes and through uncovering a rhythmic principle which permeates all dimensions of matter and spirit. Thus, the “retreat” of the *SEVEN DAYS* concurrently leads, as Conen writes, “to the freedom of a play solely controlled by the awareness of the abundance of time and space”.⁷⁶

73 It is well known that Hermann Hesse's novel *Das Glasperlenspiel* (1943) deeply impressed the young Stockhausen. Through this book, the composer became acquainted with basic motifs of Far Eastern philosophy and music aesthetics. Cf. Hermann Sabbe's collection of quotations from the novel, in *Karlheinz Stockhausen ...wie die Zeit verging...* Musik-Konzepte 19. Munich: text + kritik, 1981, pp. 64–68; Christoph von Blumröder, *Die Grundlegung der Musik Karlheinz Stockhausens*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1993. Cf. the fourth essay in the present volume.

74 Hermann Conen, *Formel-Komposition. Zu Karlheinz Stockhausens Musik der siebziger Jahre* (Formula Composition. About Karlheinz Stockhausen's Music of the Seventies). Mainz: Schott, 1991, p. 49.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

76 *Ibid.*