

A Different Drummer

Even music can be intoxicating. Such apparently slight causes destroyed Greece and Rome, and will destroy England and America.

I. Over the course of his long teaching life, Allan Bloom looked out upon a revolution in the manners and morals of students, and in the latter part of his life, he surveyed it in his book, *The Closing of the American Mind*. Those who were once civil acted savage, those who were noble, or might be, acted bad, and the good just acted "nice." Many are the causes of this revolution that Bloom discerned, but none was more surprising to his readers than Rock music.

Bloom charged it with impoverishing the souls of American students. The pleasure Rock provides is selfish, coarse, masturbational, and addictive, he said, and he reported that even those who liberate themselves from it, seldom regain the capacity to feel anything deeply, to care for another human being, or to long for something great. Rock music awakens in the young no hero worship, except for the likes of Mick Jagger, no hero he. In truth, Rock music is very different from the music that might accompany a soldier marching, a woman praying, the young courting, or a philosopher teaching, for example teaching Mozart, as Bloom did. In it there is nothing that prepares a soul for leisure, for war, or for festivity. Yet Rock's corruption of the young had, Bloom observed, not been forbidden by parents, its enfeeblement of the mind had not been opposed by the no-longer in-locoparentis universities, and its weakening of the nation had been ignored by statesmen. Parents were proud to be tolerant of it, merchants made fortunes on it, and nihilists celebrated its power to dissolve the bonds of the West. In the *Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom very nearly says that rock music is evil.

No other charge in the book met with as such resistance. Of course, those reviewers who opposed Bloom's whole book, for being "anti-democratic," or "anti-feminist," or "anti-liberal," and "anti-teenager," were also indignant that he was anti-rock.¹ This was to be expected, and perhaps also their inarticulate hostility. They were upset, they were offended, they were hurt. They could

not give reasons. So they bellowed. What is noteworthy is that most of the reviewers who praised Bloom did not agree with his denunciation of rock 'n roll either. So they did not mention it, or they played it down. In conversation, one could sometimes see that an acquaintance or a student of Bloom felt hurt by his criticism of their music. A few were angry, and others might be, if they were not also ashamed. Only one man who shared Bloom's other views, William J. Bennett, indicated his disagreement publicly.² However, he never said why, and no other friend of Bloom did either. Allan Bloom had really touched a nerve.

What might those who want to defend their attachment to rock 'n roll say in its defense? Some might say that music does not much affect the soul, not that much, or not that specifically. Others, who do admit that music affects the soul, powerfully so, nevertheless maintain that it only encourages you to go on doing whatever you've already chosen to do. Some of these go a little further and admit that Rock does differ from all other music; they say it is more energetic and that it encourages energetic behavior, but they maintain that whether it's good or bad behavior depends on the purpose, which has nothing to do with the music; and thus they assert that rock music is as blameless as anything that gives abundant energy, like the sun or a good meal. It supports life, which is good, but they maintain that the meaning of life comes from elsewhere.

The defense of Rock by Bloom's critics differs. Their defense is aggressive.³ They say rock music is good in a determined way; it is not only youthful, energetic, and vital, but liberating and rebellious, and they hail Rock n' Roll as part of a revolution in manners, morals, and politics that all right-thinking revolutionaries will approve of and all right-thinking liberal persons will have the decency not to hinder with criticism. Their premise is that music does affect the soul, powerfully so. They think music is important, that it is part of the meaning of life, and they think changes in music affect politics decisively. In this important respect they agree with Bloom, and also with Bloom's teachers, Plato and Nietzsche.

Who is right? What view should we take of rock 'n roll? Does it affect the soul? Very generally or quite specifically? And if specifically, for better or for worse?

II. "Is it not strange that sheep's guts should hale souls out of men's bodies?" remarks Shakespeare's Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* (2.3.56-7). Strange but true. We human beings are moved by music as no other animal is. Stranger still, it moves us rational animals apart from whether we can play it, read it, or even much understand it. Music seems to reach the passions without passing through the mind. Although some music calls forth enormous, in truth life-long, diligence from those who play it, those who have devoted no study whatever even to listening to it are moved by it. As a consequence, music is unique among human pursuits in being able to overcome the vast gulf between rare virtue and common influence.⁴ It is the most mathematical of the fine arts, yet also the most moving. And thus by yoking reason and fun together, it is truly *the* most frolicsome science, which Nietzsche said life would unbearable without.

Some things might be impossible, or at least very difficult to do, without the accompaniment of music. "Nothing is so common as to see a number of persons dance together during a whole night, even with pleasure; but, deprive them of music and the most indefatigable will not be able to bear it for two hours, which sufficiently proves that sounds have a secret power over us, disposing our organs to bodily exercise, and deluding, as it were, the toil of them," observes Marshall De Saxe, perhaps the most musical of the great commanders.⁵

Certainly the human soul is powerfully touched by music. Human beings choose to play it, to practice it, to listen to it, to dance to it, to buy it, and now through technology to have it accompany their activities throughout the day, into the evening, and all through the night. No wonder the Pythagoreans thought the soul itself a kind of stringed instrument whose sweet harmony connects us to the cosmos itself. Catching up

Pythagoras' thought, Shakespeare's Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice* tells his beloved, Jessica:

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
 Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
 Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night
 Become the touches of sweet harmony.
 Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
 Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.
 There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
 But in his motion like an angel sings,
 Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
 Such harmony is in immortal souls,
 But while this muddy vesture of decay

Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it. (5. 1. 53-65)

During this speech, we hear no heavenly music. The sheer description of it is enough to lift us from the sweet sounds, indoors yet distant, to the angelic ones, above and inaudible. Rightly then did Thomas Aquinas say that music is “the exaltation of the soul derived from things eternal bursting forth in sound.” In truth, music is one of those things that once you have noticed it, you cannot imagine human life without it.

Different music also moves us differently. Think how the sound of a harp, a viola, or an accordion, of a cello, a hautboy, a krummhorn, a flute, and a cowbell all differ. Or, considering one instrument, recall how different the drum sounds in a Horace Silver piece, in a Tombeau by Lully, in Benny Goodman's “Sing, Sing, Sing,” in any thing by drummer Tirolo, in a Sousa March, in Hank Williams' “Poor Old Kaw-Liga,” or in Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, and how each makes you feel different. Or think how a bagpipe at a funeral, a lute in a Dowland catch, the cello in Bach's *Unaccompanied Cello Suites*, the violin in his *Double Violin Concerto*, the trumpets in Rossini's *William Tell*, and the chorus in Handel's *Messiah* sound different and, accordingly, move us, heart and soul, and yet differently. We think some music goes with weddings, some with funerals, some for church, some for

dances, and some with sports, and some with solitude. There seems to be a fittingness of music to time, place, and occasion.

People driving on the highway switch radio stations fretfully, others fix their dial on one, and many call in requests, all because they prefer one kind of music to another. You can tell much about how your roommate, your neighbor, your friend, is feeling by what he or she is listening to.⁶ And you can tell much about a person by finding out which stations his car radio is set to. (Girls, here good counsel: before you accept his proposal, check where the dial on his car radio is, and know this: that's the music you will spend the rest of your life, walking, jumping, skipping, marching, or suffering to.) In the course of our days, our years, and our lives, we also prefer now one kind of music, now another. Nietzsche said he could foretell a change in his spirit by a change in the music he liked, and the Preface to *The Case of Wagner*, he says that one cannot understand modernity without understanding Wagner.⁷

No wonder Plato suggested that a change in music effects a change in the regime. Imagine a city in which they played only funeral marches, or only the blues, or only the saxophone.⁸ Even a city with only capacious Bach, but no cascading Albinoni, no smooth Glenn Miller, and no twangy Jimmy Rodgers might be less pleasing than one with a 'mixed regime' of all four. Still, one wonders whether a city in which every speech was a song and every locomotion a dance might not be better than the ones we know, in which we plod and run, shout and drone, sit and brood. Wouldn't singing each morning as happens at the hacienda in the novel *Ramona*, which occurs in religious communities and used to happen in schools and colleges during morning chapel, wouldn't that brighten our songless days. As would singing the Acathist in evenings, thus in it hailing Mary, pitying the "mute fish," and reviling the Devil. Isn't heaven a place where we will sing Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" with angels and dance with friends and never become fatigued? *Da Capo* forever. Certainly imagining such music-governed cities

shows us how intimately music is connected to the soul, expressing it, teaching it, elevating it, or degrading it.

III. Rock 'n roll is no different from other music in these respects. That it affects the soul is shown by all the evidence. Why else would people listen to it, dance to it, and spend money on it, if they did not take pleasure in it? Why would many who do, especially the young, immerse themselves in it, keep it with them during the day, and give themselves over to it at night utterly, if their souls were not stirred by it? Why else would many of them, especially the girls, follow rock stars about, and why else would many of them, especially the boys, dream of becoming their favorite rock star, if their souls were not drawn out by it? And why else would some older people these days feel hurt by criticism of Rock music, if they were not still strongly attached to it? No, although some people say, in defense of Rock, that music is something indifferent, a matter of style, not worth disputing, and appeal to 'free choice,' they are wrong and the unashamed lovers of rock music right. They think that the music you choose is connected to the way of life you have chosen. They are right. And for many of them, Rock is a way of life.

Certainly when it began, rock music was understood by all, by proponents and opponents alike, to be revolutionary, itself unprecedented, and able to usher in other things never before heard on earth. Although it was not the first new music to be greeted in the West with strong feelings of misgiving, of opposition, and even of revulsion, rock 'n roll was the first new music that divided the young from their parents, and in truth, setting them against their parents and against their parents' music. It did so deliberately; it sang not only "Hail, Hail, Rock 'n Roll," but "Roll Over Beethoven." The young in the 1950s went for it; cleaning up the words a little proved sop enough for their parents; and soon the battle was over. First Ed Sullivan said he would never welcome Elvis to his Saturday night TV Show and then a few months later paid him more to do so than anyone

previous (1955). Meanwhile the record companies licked their chops. No one seemed to know that music can corrupt the soul as profoundly as words and as fast as pictures. Few parents asked, "Where was my child's soul last night?" And no statesmen paid attention.⁹

Certainly Rock is something distinct. When you hear Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, you know it is not Rock.¹⁰ When you hear Bessie Smith singing, or Lightnin Hopkins playing the Blues, you know it is not Rock. When you hear Sarah Vaughan or Peggy Lee or Rosemary Clooney crooning with a big band, you know it isn't Rock. Likewise anything from *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Singing in the Rain*, *The Sound of Music*, or *Oklahoma*. When you hear Flatt and Scruggs pickin' cheerfully, you know it is not Rock. When you hear the Light Crust Doughboys start up the sweet strains of "San Antonio Rose," ---even if you do not live in Texas, the only state whose "eyes are upon you" -- you know it is not Rock. When you hear Mahalia Jackson call on the Lord in a gospel, you know it is not Rock. And when you hear Thomas Morley's "Now Is The Month of Maying," Bach's "Jesu, der du meine Seele" (Cantata 78), and Verdi's *Requiem*, you know you are not listening to Rock. Rock is not a version of opera, a type of Blues, a species of gospel, or a kind of swing. Rock is not bluegrass. It is not jazz. It is not mountain fiddle music.¹¹ Rock is Rock. In it there is neither joy, nor sorrow, nor death, nor life.

Although Rock can mix in a bit of other kinds of music, so that at the edges it seems to shade off into other kinds of music, the defining core of it is easy to recognize by its big, simple, loud, repetitious, dumb beat. All other previous musical innovations, such as the ones I just mentioned, grew by addition, mixture, and augmentation. Rock grew by subtraction, destruction, loss. By simplification and exaggeration, as one musicologist says.¹² "Dumbed down" we might say. Good music lives in tension and relaxation, point and counterpoint, theme, development, and resolution. It has melody, it can have harmony, and it's got rhythm. Rock 'n roll is beat, beat, beat, or, at most, the simple crescendo of "Midnight Rambler," (which is

not even as complicated as “Bolero”). This beat, beat, beat is as much to be felt as listened to. When the defenders of rock claim that the words are not important, the only truth in their statement is that the words, like everything else, *are* less important than the beat. (Though it cannot be accidental that the words are never sweet.) Hence, the loudness of it, the electrification of the instruments that carry it, the drum, the guitar, and the bass.

With the guitar, the beat can be further emphasized (“dumbed up” we might say) by a technique known as pulsation, achieved by strumming “with a pick on the lower string in a successive striking manner.” Syncopation is another way rock is said to achieve its effect. In most Western music, from Sousa Marches to Mozart Sonatas, the accent is on the first and third beats. In rock the accent is on the off-beat in 4/4 time, and in the Motown sound it is on all four beats. Without that beat, there is no rock ‘n roll.¹³ To it everything is subordinated. With it ruling, nothing that was pleasing in all the music that preceded rock can survive.

Here is how another musicologist describes “Rock Around the Clock,” by Bill Haley and the Comets, the song that accompanied the 1955 movie “Blackboard Jungle” and was one of the first rock songs to unite its almost entirely teen-aged audience:

Three chords are repeated over and over throughout the piece There are no sophisticated chords, no chromatics, no modulations — just three pounding, persistent, reiterated, basic chords. The vocal phrases are short, and also repeated over and over. There are no extended phrases building to an eventual climax but, rather, the same strophic, melodic patterns over and over, with no real end.¹⁴

One might say that “Rock Around the Clock” fulfilled Wagner's call for an unending melody, except there is no melody; there's no tension, nothing that needs resolution, and so no development, and no resolution. And the beat cannot end. It

can only fade away. Certainly its unending un-melody was the music of the “hot condition of the blood,” not the sweet power that should gentle it. Riots followed the movie when it was first shown. They followed not only the “song,” but the gang in the movie stamping on the teacher’s precious collection of records.

Someone coming upon this Rock ‘n’ Roll for the first time, would certainly have to acknowledge it makes sounds, but after looking for melody, harmony and rhythm, and finding none, or little, might they not wonder if it is music at all. As Roger Scruton observes:

Nobody who understands the experiences of melody, harmony, and rhythm will doubt their value. Not only are they the distillation of centuries of social life: they are also forms of knowledge, providing the competence to reach out of ourselves through music. Through melody, harmony, and rhythm, we enter a world where others exist beside the self, a world that is full of feeling but also ordered, disciplined but free. That is why music is a character-forming force, and the decline of musical taste a decline in morals.¹⁵

But what if one doesn’t know all that the lovers of music know about Rock? And if you, like me, don’t feel you know much about music, can we judge Rock? Let’s see.

IV. One sign that music does move the soul is that the soul then moves the body. We are ensouled bodies, or more exactly embodied souls, and it is natural for us to express ourselves through our flesh, through our eyes, our faces, our gestures, our limbs, our motions, and all the adornments, flourishes, and graces thereto added. We know each other and make ourselves known to each other by our ways of standing, walking, strolling, hiking, crawling, slouching, crouching, cringing, hopping, skipping, jumping, and running. If you saw a picture of a sixth-grader with a book bag moving slowly and another of the same

child skipping, couldn't you tell the first was taken in the morning on the way to school and the second in the afternoon, after school? Imagine a city in which everyone only trudged along, or one in which they only darted and shoved. Every once in a while, during a subway strike, some commuters to Manhattan find walking to work so exhilarating that even after service is restored, they continue to walk. Imagine then a day when everyone in New York skipped to work. Probably quite a few did on the morning of the eleventh hour of the eleventh month of the year of our Lord, 1918, when news of an armistice in a Great War across the sea first reached America.¹⁶

There is something mysterious about the music in our lives, but that there is music in our lives is undeniable. The drummer we hearken to is seldom secret to us. We choose our drummer, and we choose our partners accordingly. We think differently of a man who walks slowly, firmly, and heavily, than of the one who is a pin-stripped blur. What used to be called deportment still matters. We like or don't like someone at first sight because of his motions. Their way of walking, stooping, or standing tall. The same is true of dancing. Graceful motions attract us and graceless ones repel us. Isn't that why so many otherwise confident men are reluctant to dance? They know they will be judged, judged and found wanting. They suspect that their souls will be evident in some way. They are right. The way a man dances is a test of him. Can he lead? Can he conform to her capacities, so as to lead her, to the point where the music itself is leading both of them? As men and women know, it is a question of the soul. Worst, however, is not the man who dances poorly but the one who will not dance at all. A lady once told me that her husband's engagement present to her was to get himself some dancing lessons. "Then I really knew he loved me," she smiled. Nevertheless, there can be too much study, too much polish; as Marlene Dietrich once said, "Interesting men aren't good dancers."

If the manner of dancing is a test of a man, by the same token, the kind of dancing encouraged by a certain kind of music

is a test of that music. In the one case the soul of the dancer is measured by the music; one tries to be as graceful as the music being played; in the other case, the music is measured by the dance it encourages, graceless music encouraging graceless motions. As dancing makes visible the soul of the dancer, the dance makes visible the soul of the music. If rhythm is physics and melody ethics, then dance is politics.

V. Not all music in the West is danceable, was meant to be, or could be. To do with the feet all that a Bach harpsichord concerto or partita, or his Two-Part Invention No. 10 in G Major (BWV 781) makes your soul want to do would require a bounding body, with tiny, strong legs, and small feet, a combination that no animal on earth with its gravity has ever had. Only the lost miniature buffalo that some pioneers thought they'd heard on silent nights on the Great Plains are up to such dancing, but even in the old days they were hard to hear. Perhaps only hands, hands playing the harpsichord, can substitute. Some things are not meant for dancing at all, the Gregorian Chant for example, and some things are meant only for the dancing of those more feat than us humans. Handel's *Messiah*, to be danced would surely require the body of an angel, if angels had bodies. No wonder George III stood up.

Still, most of Western music is either danceable, related to dance, or, as with the Gregorian Chant, related to and regulative of bodily motion, slow bowing of the head for example. Indeed, through the time of Brahms perhaps, composers, musicians, and the listening public all understood there to be a relation between music, the soul, and the body. Certain rhythms were once even understood to go with different states of soul, which in turn found their best expression in different dances. Mozart's music, for example, especially his operas, presupposes a knowledge of dance and understands the ethical significance of each meter, from the exalted, stately, and steady (4/2, 2/4, 4/4) to the social, gay, and vigorous, and the dances that go with them, from the bourée and gavotte (starting at 4/4), to the sarabande and

minuet (3/4), to the siciliano, pastoral, and gigue (6/8), on to the passepied and allemande (3/8), with the contra-dances and the waltz being subverting anomalies.¹⁷ George Washington, the greatest dancer ever to ascend to the Presidency of our Republic, the only one truly drafted, and unanimously chosen, loved the minuet.

Rock 'n roll being danceable, if only in a loose, nay a wild, sense of the word, the question naturally arises: what kind of dancing fits it and what effect does such dancing have on the soul? In all dancing, the dancers move to the same music; mere individuals are formed into a community. But there are so many ways of arranging a community – or not. In all dancing in the West, at least since the Renaissance, the couple exists between the music and the individual; in all this dancing you have to coordinate yourself to your partner and, often enough, you and your partner have to coordinate yourselves to other couples (think of square dancing). The first points toward marriage, the second toward a village.

In traditional Western dancing, you see both separate couples and these couples in a relation. Square dancing is but one instance of the traditional pattern that survived. In contra-dancing, such as the Virginia Reel, the couples are arranged in a long line, and every couple makes its way down the line, not just dancing with three other couples, as in square dancing, but with all the couples that make up the line, the length of the music being stretched to fit it. In this dancing the proportion between attention to the couple and to the set of couples is weighted toward the set, at least in comparison to square dancing. Also, there is less slapping and stamping; it's more nearly elegant, and less coupled, but the pattern is roughly the same: couples in relation to each other making up a visible whole, with the individual couples pointing to marriage, and the whole pattern pointing to a village or the parish.

It is instructive to consider the Waltz, how it rebelled against older patterns, and yet how it carried them on.¹⁸ I

understand that in Washington D. C. there is a Society to Save the West that "saves the West" each year by putting on a Waltz party. The Society might be surprised to learn that the part of the West they are saving is only as old as the nineteenth century; that the Waltz came in as an innovation with the French Revolution; and that it was opposed by polite society. Beethoven composed for those who loved the Waltz, and we think it identical with ballroom dancing, yet *The Times* of London called it "indecent" and on July 16th of 1816 editorialized:

National morals depend on national habits; and it is quite sufficient to cast one's eyes on the voluptuous inter-twining of limbs, and close compression of the bodies, in this dance, to see that it is far indeed removed from the modest reserve which has hitherto been considered distinctive of English females.

In the Waltz, we recall, the man puts his hand round the woman's waist, and he keeps it there for the whole dance; and he whirls and whirls her, till she breathes hard, and her eyes shine and shine. According to Tolstoy, Natasha at her first ball is so happy she could not sin. Yet as my old student Kyle Wendeborn once observed, "At a ball in Tolstoy, nothing good ever happens." Yes, would that Natasha had never, never danced with Anatole.

Certainly the Waltz is different not only from the dances of Mozart's time but from the contra-dances that preceded the Waltz, for in them you don't "go steady" with your partner. Yet the editorialist of *The Times* must be thinking of the Regency Waltz that we find in the novels of the only author ever to be known to her admirers as Miss, the thoroughly decorous, decent and commonsensical, and one might almost say, profoundly superficial Miss Jane Austen. Can we err if we share her taste? Wouldn't we be as churlish as Mr. Darcy to refrain from approving it? These Waltzes with their figures are gentle and elegant compared to the next innovation: the Viennese Waltz, with its dips, swoops, and tip-toe steps, and with all those flourishes that allow the couple to shine so in the eyes of others,

that they clear the floor, and the craze for which fitted with the taste of the late Romantic composers. The difference is the difference between Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. Still, even if the Viennese Waltz risked making couples vain, it did keep them a couple. Vanity á deux is better than vanity á solitaire. And if the Waltz in all its forms was revolutionary in regard to the *ancien régime*, still that may only mean it is suitable to democracy, especially democracy in America, the first nation to institute marriage primarily by mutual choice.¹⁹

VI. Now what kind of dancing fits rock 'n roll music? As in all dancing, everyone is governed by the music, but in this music there are no couples, none coordinating really, and no coordination of couples. There is nothing but the individual shaking, shimmying, vibrating. More exactly, this music makes you into a vibrating individual; in so far as you are a member of a community, it is the community of the crowd or the horde, something with the simplest of orders and no parts. Just the band and the horde. The leader and all the followers.

At first rock 'n roll did not have a dance step to suit it. Kids did the Jitterbug and the Lindy to it. With the Twist, rock 'n roll found its own step, if that's the right word, for there is no stepping in it; you just twist. To Twist you don't need a partner. You are not doing something with another human being. You are either oblivious of others, or displaying yourself to all others. There is nothing to learn, as there was in all dancing before. Never before in civilized society had the feet been fixed.²⁰ (Try this test: looking at a film of people Twisting and turn off the music: what could be more frantic, graceless, and in a way solitary?²¹)

One thing that has succeeded the Twist is a kind of worship. The crowds at a Rock concert, now held in stadiums, are moved by the music, but you wouldn't call their motions dancing. They are all looking in one direction. Truly a lonely crowd, more exactly a crowd of lonelies. It can hardly be accidental that there are many more male Rock bands than female ones. The boys in the audience try to identify with the lead singer, but it is

hard, because the voice has been treated to make it unique and yet inimitable. You cannot sing it. So just identify with the singer, and aspire in your garage to ascend to a stage, to replace your hero and acquire a similar following of girls. And for the girls there's just the wish, with screams, to unite with that leader with the long electric thing he's playing in public.

"When you pluck a string on an acoustic guitar, the note dies in three seconds. Electricity lets you sustain it. The instrument's . . . relation to the body changes. 'A man playing an acoustic thinks of being with a woman You feel the vibrations through your ribcage. It's like having another heart.' A solid-body electric is quite different. 'You hold it in your hands. What you are aware of is the long neck, not the body. You identify with it. It's like jacking off.' Playing a riff on an electric guitar is 'spanking the plank.'" ²²

Except for Rock, all other music that encourages men and women to dance also allows them to exchange words. One might even think of such dancing as the continuation of conversation by other means — or, conversely, one might think of conversation at such dances as the carrying on of dancing by other means. In other words, with all other dancing except rock 'n roll, the possibility of courtship exists. Rock 'n roll excludes it. Solitary vibrators are not meant to speak to each other, and the noise is so loud they cannot. Keep listening and you'll lose your hearing. You already have no need of your tongue to speak.

One reason this difference exists is that all dancing music, except rock music, has some melody that you can sing to. Rock music sacrifices melody, as it sacrifices everything, to beat. The words sung are either quite secondary, even lapsing into nonsense — "shaaboom" — or an expression of the beat, often by shouting. No singer with a good voice would find much to attract or challenge it in rock, and much to ruin it. If Schopenhauer is right, when he says melody is ethics and rhythm, physics, then rock 'n roll is physics without ethics. But while physics is subhuman, rock 'n roll is dehuman. There is nothing wrong with particles moving in waves, or in pulses, but something sad about human beings trying to. In Rock 'n roll humanity degrades itself to matter.

However, although the words are sacrificed to the beat in rock music, they are not insignificant. It can hardly be accidental that many of the lyrics are seductive, raunchy, obscene, druggy, criminal, murderous, seditious, revolutionary, impious, and blasphemous, while almost none of them are merry, witty, sweet, noble, reverent, gracious, or joyful. Listen to the words in the Rolling Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil" and "Midnight Rambler," Dylan's "Lay, Lady, Lay," and the show album "Hair." Nor can it be accidental that most rock is revolutionary, and none of it patriotic. One would have to stretch to call any of the lyrics poetic. With a ballad, such as Joan Baez first sang, you can read the words apart from the music with pleasure; think of "The Three Ravens," or "Utah Corral," or "The Wreck of Old '97"; even soft rock lyrics that might be bearable with better music cannot survive alone.

VII. Good, intelligent, musical people seem to differ on rock 'n roll. Some think the main thing about it is how dumb it is; others think that the main thing is how evil it is; and still others think it is just cacophonous. Some think it is dumb because it is evil; some think it is evil, or rather bad, because it is dumb. Perhaps the dumb, the ugly, and the evil are aspects of the same thing. The Idea of the Bad, as Plato did not say. Perhaps one might clarify the matter by speculating on the sounds one might hear in hell; would the absence of joyful sounds be the most painful thing, or would it be the noises, of idiot sticks, jet engines, and loud cocktail parties, near speech but never intelligible, or would it be the organized noise of rock urging the denizens to continue the sins that got them there? The music of hell might be defined as: "the misery of the soul derived from things ephemeral bursting forth in sound." However, one need not settle the long question of the relation of the good, the true, and the beautiful in order to judge rock 'n roll adequately, for it is neither good, nor true, nor beautiful. The intelligent will shun it as dumb, the good as evil, the beautiful as ugly. All will oppose it. None will want to share it with others or pass it on to their posterity.

Is there no use rock music can be put to? Invading U. S. soldiers in Panama found one; the top five hits blared at Manuel Noriega were: "Beat It" by Michael Jackson; "You're No Good," by Linda Ronstadt; "Nowhere to Run," by the Marvelettes; "Voodoo Child," by Jimi Hendrix; and "I Fought the Law" by the Bobby Fuller Four. (*Washington Times*, 29 December 1989) This was certainly punishment for someone; I understand the local commander will be awarded the Distinguished Music Cross, the soldier's ringing the residence will all receive purple hearts for combat ear damage, and Veterans Affairs is preparing to hear about Agent Rock Syndrome. Still though the soldiers clearly deserve medals for their courage under Rock fire, I am not sure their Rock barrage accomplished much. Maybe Noriega liked such music. Bad men not only dislike good music, they also like bad music. If you want to get hoodlums to leave your grocery store, play Bach. The trouble is that great music may be torture to the mediocre as well as the evil. If you play Bach in your grocery store, you may drive the "easy listening" Muzak crowd away too, who you want to keep as customers. So maybe it would have been better to pipe great music to Noriega. The worse his soul, the more punishment it would have been, and yet the more he grew to like great music, the better he would have become. That's why the terms in Purgatory are so long, so you can change your tastes. And why getting to like what you first experienced as punishment is a sign you are improving.

Allan Bloom says rock music is erotic and he's careful to specify that he means rutting, not the rest of what Plato means in the *Symposium*.²³ I doubt whether it is entirely true. It is true that Elvis was suggestive; when he appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, his lower motions were not shown; and it is true that some of the lyrics were raunchy. But, whereas some rhythm and blues and lots of blues were bawdy (the word is a variation on 'body') and yet metaphoric, rock was witless, and often simply raunchy. Compare Bessie Smith on a "deep sea diver" to the Stones on "satisfaction." The degradation of popular music to rock 'n roll was something like the ascent from Old Comedy to the New,

only in reverse, a descent, from the witty to the crude. However, a great deal of rock has more to do with the spirited part of the soul (thymos in Plato) than the erotic, stirring you up for a fight, appealing to the warrior spirit, setting you marching (but not as an army in a order, only as a mob in tumult). Listen to the Rolling Stones sing “Under my Thumb” and ask yourself what they are encouraging you to think, and feel, and *do* to someone you know. And then consider the bodyguards they chose, the Hell's Angels, and what they accomplished at their concert in Altamont, California.

Nor is it impertinent to note that so many rock stars lead a life of drugs: taking drugs, during concerts and otherwise, and encouraging others to, in their songs and by their example. Read over their obituaries –so many die young– and you will see how often they die of overdoses, of suicide, either deliberate or the consequence of not deliberating well. Contrariwise, seldom or never do we hear of a rock star working extra hours to support a family, leading a Scout Troop, diving into a river to save a drowning child, or saving money for old age. Has any rock star ever been known to have an interesting idea? (Go ahead, let me hear it, just one.) And if you heard of one who gave blood, would you trust its purity? There seems to be something in the spirit of this music that is against nature, against any limit, that sees everything with form as an obstacle, and that finally knows only one pleasure, the spirited (or in Plato's language, thymetic) pleasure of overcoming, always seeking victories, and incapable of enjoying either peace or the erotic pursuits it supports, love of wisdom, sight of the beautiful, or delectation of the sweet. Rock music is a dose you have to keep upping. No wonder the Stones sing, “I can't get no satisfaction.” Lost violent souls, rebels without a cause, a purpose, or a pleasure, and quite dangerous to those who have a cause, a purpose, and savor good pleasures.

Perhaps at this point, some defender of rock ‘n roll, one who does not much like the Stones lyrics, their way of life, and some of their consequences, such as murder, might object that

precisely because the Stones' rock music is spirited (thymetic), it is also innocent, as innocent as a buffalo thundering on the plains, a Percheron drawing a weight at a State fair, or the mighty whale moving on the whale's path (as the Anglo-Saxons called the ocean). There are reasons to believe that such music is no such neutral thing. Let such an objector consider honestly just when he is inclined to listen to the Stones. Is it not when you feel low, ill, drained, bored, purposeless, exhausted, and depressed, that you reach for your Stones tape? Isn't it when you feel hateful, that is hated and hating, and also despairing that you turn to their "Hot Rocks"? And after listening a while, do you not feel energetic, strong, powerful, confident again, indeed swaggering, indestructible, invincible, careless, a bit reckless, a little malicious, and even vengeful too? If so, then is it not precisely when you are weak that you prefer such music? Isn't rock music the music of the weak? Isn't rock music for those without strong thymos or strong eros, without guts and without longing? In short, are you not a soul without strength? A weakling. A violent whimp.

In a late letter, Nietzsche observed that whereas the ancients required music to order their strong souls, the moderns seek in it a substitute for such souls. The ancients were spirited and erotic, they sought measure; the moderns are not, they need drugs, such as Wagner or, nowadays, perhaps his long consequence, rock 'n roll, to live. Nietzsche knew from Plato and other ancient sources that in music the ancients sought moderation and order, not energy; the Spartans advanced to battle with pipes not drums; facing numberless Persians and one death at Thermopylae, they combed their hair. In Homer the barbarians advance to battle shouting, the Achaeans advance in silence. In rock music Nietzsche would have seen the taste of slaves and the spirit of revenge, just the opposite of the ancients, of any thing noble.²⁴ Among the ancients, only Hiero, Xenophon's empty-souled tyrant, might have gone for it, much as Hitler went for Wagner.²⁵ Alas, almost none of the ancient music survives, only report of it. Nor do we have the music that

went with David's psalms. If we want, then, to hear the music that strong souls enjoy, we would have to go to the strongest we know of, Mozart, Bach, Handel, and the like.²⁶ Indeed, the difference between Bach and Beatle, Mozart and Motown, or Beethoven and Berry, might seem to Nietzsche like the difference between the living and the dead, surely the difference between the strong and the weak, the noble and the base.

VIII. It must be admitted that some good songs have turned up in rock 'n roll. The Beach Boys sang "Be True To Your School." The Beatles sang "Getting Better" and "Good Day, Sunshine." Chuck Berry sang "Back in the USA." Buddy Holly sang "Oh, Boy" and said as much to life in his other songs. Buddy also wrote one song, "You're So Square," in praise of the kind of shy, modest, "good" girls who were often ridiculed as "square." Although none is as serious as a ballad, as robust as an Irish gig, as sweet as a Morley catch, as witty as a Gilbert and Sullivan number, as melancholy as a Dowland song, as mighty as a Luther hymn, as gentle as a cowboy lullaby, or as passionate as a Bach Cantata, all these exceptions are better than the general run of rock 'n roll. The lyrics are good and the melodies are not overwhelmed by the beat. However, not much follows from recognizing this. It makes sense to spare a city for the sake of the ten good men in it, but would it make sense to go live in a city with a million-minus-a-mere-ten bad instance of humanity there?

Upon reading this essay my mother said "You certainly know a lot about this" and smiled. There is truth in that smile. I once listened to some Rock, and I still like some of the songs, the ones I just mentioned. But perhaps I am merely soft on these instances and perhaps that is because I am still infected, like an army veteran who cannot shake the malaria he acquired in a far off war. What attitude should I, or anyone, take to such attachment? Perhaps this: "Oppose what you know is bad, be forgiving towards your own lingering servitude, and be charitable to others in the same condition."²⁷ After all, what you listen to when young, what was mixed with youth and its

pleasures, what dwells in your memory, of that time and that place, is hard to extinguish. Every renaissance requires reformation. The best are those who need no reformation, but those who need to reform and have reformed themselves provide the extra benefit of showing others it can be done. Moreover, opinion is important as well as practice. An opinion that gains a majority has more influence with neutrals and provides more protection for innocents. Every new majority in its infancy includes members of the old majority who are not totally reformed.

At one point rock 'n roll might have taken a turn in a better direction. As Garrison Kiellor intimated in a *Prairie Home Companion* monologue one winter (21 February 1987), it would have made a difference if Elvis had crashed in that Iowa field, not mild-mannered, bespectacled Buddy Holly, who was pleased to write and sing music that parents could enjoy along with their children. The *News from Lake Woebegone* that Saturday told about how having a musical crush on Buddy might be in tension with remaining in the Luther League Choir; but if you had a crush on Elvis, you knew you ought to turn in your Luther League card. If Buddy knocked on your door, you could introduce him to your parents. If Elvis did, you'd better hurry away with him. From Buddy Holly there is a line to what is good in the Beatles; from Elvis there is a line, a plunging one, to the all-bad, all-evil, all Rolling Stones. Early on, the Beatles sang "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "All the Lonely People" and later "Eleanor Rigby." Unfortunately, the musical sophistication of the later Beatles was mixed with drugs, strange gods, and atheistical sarcasm. Buddy Holly never pushed such stuff. Meanwhile, picking up from Elvis, the Rolling Stones sneered at good things, pushed bad ones, stomped "Paint It Black," and have never stopped stomping. "Rock and Roll will never die," claims the song. If so, we already know one of the headlines in 2030: "Stones Celebrate Last Concert Once Again."

IX. Would that Rock had never been born! How was it born? How could it be? Did Rock music spring up so suddenly that nobody could have foreseen it? Both its proponents and opponents at the time agreed it was a new thing. Was it an utterly new thing? Or did it have antecedents, gradual steps leading to it, steps with some of its badness in them, the acceptance of which softened up opposition to Rock even before it arrived? Does Rock have a genealogy or not? Out of the Blues, out of Jazz, out of gospel music even, or out of atonal music, or Wagnerian opera?²⁸ Perhaps one of these, or a combination? Does it have parents, which it resembles and sprang from, or is it a mutant?

Rock 'n' roll is sometimes said to have grown out of the Blues. Jimmy Rodgers, in the old song, says the Blues are "a good man feeling bad." What then is Rock music? What, if not "a bad man feeling good"? But if so, then isn't Rock not a growth out of the Blues, but an opposite of it, as a bad man is opposite to a good? Maybe so. But are they truly opposite? What is the true opposite of a bad man feeling good? Wouldn't it be a good man feeling good? If so, then the Blues cannot be the antithesis of Rock. Perhaps then, the Blues *are* a step towards Rock? But Jimmy Rodgers says the Blues are a good man feeling bad. Is that really true? More often than not, aren't the Blues a weak man feeling bad, meaning feeling weak? Or a depressed man feeling depressed? Or an oppressed man feeling oppressed? (Or might one conclude that there are no truly sad songs, because the song and the singing of it lift all sadness from the soul? In which case, the Blues would be "a sad man feeling better.") Sometimes the Blues are said to spring from slavery. Or from the long net of indignities and exclusions that followed the end of slavery. What does 'spring from' mean? That the Blues express slavery or that they overcome it?

Early in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas: An American Slave, Written by Himself*, Frederick Douglas says that listening to the sad songs of the slaves would be enough to make a Northern freeman abhor slavery. Were these sad songs like the

Blues? Or different in some important way? If they were like the Blues, one can say that it is understandable why, if you are a slave, you might wail so sadly, and one must also say that it would be more than understandable, it might be noble, to lament like the Psalms, beside the rivers of Babylon, so as to preserve your dignity and your strength, but one must say that it is hard to understand why someone not enslaved would want to wail like a slave. When free men took up this music, did they ignore the noble parts, rendering it mere depression, from which only sheer rage might extricate them? In other words, did they start with the misery in the Blues, make it active in rhythm 'n blues, and turn that into the anger of rock 'n roll, lately become the sheer hatred of grunge, heavy metal, and rap? A possible genealogy? Maybe so. It seems to me that the noblest part of the music of the enslaved is the gospel part. There to be sure, we hear of "bad men," but a worthy type of bad men, namely sinners, human beings who know themselves to have erred, and who take responsibility for their deeds, however hemmed in by slavery and oppression, who can respect themselves for doing so and thus can now feel hope. "Blues are the songs of despair, but gospel songs are the songs of hope," says Mahalia Jackson (*Movin On Up*).²⁹ But perhaps someone might trace the genealogy of Rock to the gospel music itself but with its enthusiasm for God turned to other gods. Or trace it to turgid, turbulent Wagner?³⁰ Or even to mighty Beethoven?³¹

The question of the genealogy of Rock seems to me a long one, a very difficult one, and one that may not yield an answer. Perhaps the difficulty lies in genealogy itself. Culture seems so much harder to study geneticly or genealogically than nature. Different as an acorn and a oak are, to know the one is to know a lot about the other, but something cultural being the result of countless choices and re-choices along the way to itself seems much harder to know through its origins. How much do you know when you know the origins, the genealogy of a thing? Surely you know less than when you know what the thing is, its formal cause, and its final cause, its purpose, and its effects. To

know your ancestors back to the Sixteenth Century, as the Amish do, or back farther as the Icelanders do, is to know something about yourself, your genetic propensities, but such knowledge tells you nothing about the course of your life, its purpose, or its marvels, what you will think in a year, what you will write in a month, and even what you will say today. To know the ingredients that go into a bomb is to know something; to know the steps to put them together is to know more, but to really know a bomb, you must know how much damage it can do. And, anyway, how easy is it to discover a genealogy? As there are a multitude of things that might have gone into a single new song, are there not a greater multitude of things that might have gone into a new kind of music? Perhaps Rock, since it was so unprecedented, such a creature of radical simplification and exaggeration, had no parents. If you simplify Dad with an ax and exaggerate Mom with a plague, perhaps the result will be a truly parentless monster.

It is better, then, to turn to the thing itself and consider the effects and consequences of what it is.

Before we do so, one negative "cause" of Rock might be noted. One thing that surely eased the way for Rock was the decline in all kinds of popular music in the preceding decades. Listen to the songs our ancestors sang in our Civil War, sometimes to each other over the lines at night, listen to the "Battle Cry of Freedom," to the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," and to "Dixie," and compare them to the songs our fathers and mothers sang during the Second World War, if you can think of any. Listen to the popular tunes of the 19th century, to the songs of Stephen Foster, to what Pa sings in the *Little House* books, and compare them to the popular hits of the late forties and early fifties. Listen to Perry Como, Nat King Cole, and Frank Sinatra. Pretty smooth stuff, but pretty feeble, sometimes insipid, and sometimes mindless. Against their background, Rock might seem lively.

Yet Rock made the general decline nearly complete. Soon its lyrics made the insipid sound thoughtful, its beat made the

feeble seem melodious, and its anger made everything before seem sweet. Worse, it nearly swept all other kinds away. American popular music of all kinds had been going down hill, but in all other tributaries but Rock there had been compensatory eddies.

Cowboy music, which used to be sung at work, through the night to the cattle, or around the campfire, and country music which used to be sung in families or at gatherings of families that knew each other, became tainted with sensation, seediness, and self-pity, when the scene shifted to the honky-tonks,³² and dance-halls, but it was compensated by the rise of Western Swing, the rise and persistence of Bluegrass, and the persistence of Folk.³³ Even with the introductions of the radio, the rise of Nashville, and the dominance of commerce, with its interests in novelty, hits, and stars, still the vocabulary and the human scene country music portrays remains richer than the Muzaked main stream or the stupidity of Rock.

Similarly, although most sixties "folk" music is inferior to real folk music: the ballads, patriotic anthems, and popular songs Americans used to sing, at work, in school, on the range, and at home, it never drove its betters entirely from the scene; the rise of Bob Dylan did not mean Cisco Houston and Ed McCurdy were no longer heard, or that Gordon Bok, Bill Staines, Sally Rogers, Iris DeMent, Duane Dickerson and Dick Datloff could not find an audience later, or that contemporary singers of national music couldn't flourish, such as the Clancy Brothers and later the Chieftains. Or that Dylan could get Joan Baez to stop singing Child ballads.

Something that degraded both Folk and Country music and found its perfection in Rock is the electrification of the instruments and the amplification of the sound. The electrification of the traditional folk and country instruments, especially the guitar, ousted folk and country music from the home and similar small settings and led it into halls, clubs, and honky-tonks. Instead of people who know each other playing for each other, now a few strangers could entertain a crowd they

did not know, and most of whom did not know each other. This was a big loss in community. Who hears America singing today? Probably a lesser percentage of people sight-read today than ever before. When is the last time you and your friends finished an evening singing? How many communities hold an occasional "talent show" with good music?

With an electrified instrument, a singer can mount a stage and reach a whole hall of people and, with enough amplification, a whole stadium. What celebrity! What influence! What power! Command in the singer and worship in the audience. The relation smacks of worship and might prepare the way for tyranny, as Thomas Mann divined in "Mario and the Magician." With his light and sound and megaphone, Hitler turned the folks listening to him into one Volk, with one aggressive Reich, and with only one Führer. The wonder of his tyranny (which was not shared with the Communists whose speeches did not stir the Russian Volk) was that it generated enormous enthusiasm. Likewise anybody with an electrified instrument, however "folky." The singer enjoys being a leader (that is what Führer means) and the audience enjoys being led.

Nevertheless, despite such electrification, people still went on playing for each other without electrification, and they still do. True, folk music survives and I suppose no one will ever be able to electrify a dulcimer, that fine companion of solitude, support of amity, and invitation to friendship. Nothing can prevent grandma Carter singing old ballads that tell a story worth passing down to posterity.

However, with Rock music there is no true Rock, no pre-electrification Rock that preceded it. Sometimes you meet people who agree with all you say against Rock, but want to make an exception for this or that group, but no one ever speaks of a distinction between true or genuine rock and Rock. Only a solitary wit would ask at a Rock concert "well, it is stupid and brutal, but is it truly Rock?" Or observe "really it's much better than it sounds."

In any case, the degradation from whatever preceded Rock to Rock was accompanied by the rise of nothing compensatory, and the result was more thoroughly commercial. So, when rock 'n roll swept all else off the airwaves, it was a greater impoverishment of the souls of the young than the other degradations. Rock has now ruled for fifty years. That is long enough.

X. The later expressions of Rock issue from "Paint It Black"; to its despair and its destruction, it adds the pleasure in the beat itself of inflicting pain—and the "pleasure" of being inflicted with it; look at the studded leather and black attire, shabby or slick, on the later rock videos and count the beat; it is the beat of the whip: one, TWO; one, TWO. This is the music of sadism and of sadomasochism. The old rock music divided the young from their parents, taught rebellion, and encouraged the divorce of sex from courtship and the family. This music teaches the young to hate life and to destroy it wherever they find it, in others and in themselves.³⁴ It says, "I hate, I hate, I hate you. I hate, I hate, I hate me. I hate, I hate, I hate everything." Look sometime at MTV and observe the combination of numbness, disfigurement, discontinuity, black leather sadism, and power, it presents to the young. These images fit this strain of Rock. And it often expresses nihilism, which Nietzsche, who knew what he was fighting, characterized as the conviction that "the world as it is, it better were not, and the world as it should be, it does not and cannot exist."³⁵

This strain, like the others, is very dangerous to civilization. It is as Shakespeare has his Lorenzo say: "The man that . . . is not moved with [the] concord of sweet sounds,/ Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils." (5.1.83 ff.) Do not mistake the meaning of this music; Rock is the music of the violent will. It is not accidental that rock music makes its audiences stomp, its performers destroy things, and its audience join in, in identification always and sometimes in deed. We should not be surprised if this vicarious pleasure goes looking for the real thing. What

audiences regularly do after rock concerts is not accidental. Pleasures that the soul has tasted in imagination, in dreams, and in music, it then goes hunting for. Rock simulates the triumphs of the will, and even more the futility of will-to-power, ever redoing, ever re-willing, and never able to reach satisfaction.

Do not underestimate the power of this music. In the 1930s it frequently happened that liberals from the great democracies visited Hitler's mammoth rallies in Nuremberg. Of course they disapproved of Hitler and despised his NAZIs, and yet when Hitler spoke many of them found their arms rising in the Fürher salute along with the NAZI crowds around them. Being liberals they exaggerated the appetites in human life and ignored the passions. Hitler did not. His rallies spoke to the passions, especially envy, revenge, and hatred, and they provided the pleasures of the victorious will in a vicarious form; by providing them, these rallies prepared the German nation for the real thrills of Blitzkrieg war, though not for the reversals, defeats, and long sufferings. Despite their experience of these rallies, the liberals took comfort from the science of the appetites, economics, which told them Hitler could not make war because he was bankrupt.³⁶ But the men and women at those rallies did not come for butter. The willfulness of those who celebrate the will, should not be underestimated, and Hitler's ten-day lightning victory over France erased ten years of German debt and penury; the best butter of France was transported to Germany; Hitler's stunning victories bound the German nation to Hitler's will as surely as the first fruits of Faust's contract with the Devil bound him, and at the same time, shackled the military, which later sniffing defeat, or later still, expecting total collapse, might have sought a separate peace.

Nor should one now underestimate those revolutionaries who today step to the will's drummer. True, they do not march at Rock rallies. The light and sound in their stadiums is not ordered as to Panzer war, as it was in Leni Rieffenthal's *Triumph of the Will*. And Rock has not provided the sound track to sports as Leni Rieffenthal's *Olympia* made sports a

preparation for war. No, the light and sound of a Rock concert is disordered as to war; it is a war on all things ordered. True, the crowd is stoned, hippie, soft. But there can be no assurance that the nihilism that begins in softness will not end in hardness. The hardness of Rock itself is already here. It has been here with us, here among us, perhaps in us, for decades now.

The human beings who write and play this “music” know its revolutionary purpose. They proclaim it shamelessly. Here is Jim Morrison of the Doors: “Think of us as erotic politicians. I'm interested in anything about revolt, disorder, chaos, especially activity that has no meaning.” (*Newsweek*, 6 Nov. '67) Or Keith Richard of the Rolling Stones: “Our real followers ... are the hippies All of them think like us and are questioning some of the basic immoralities tolerated in present-day society—the War in Vietnam, illegality of abortion, persecution of homosexuals.” (*Hit Parade Yearbook #6*, 1967) Or John Lennon of the Beatles: “Christianity will go. We're more popular than Jesus now.” (*Newsweek*, 21 March '66) Finally, Jerry Rubin: “Rock music must give birth to orgasm and revolution.” (*Do It!*1970).

XI. This revolution has already happened. The greatest moral change in America since the Second World War was the “creation” of the teenager, and Rock was one of the things that did it. The Teenager is a new kind of human being, never before seen on the face of the earth. There were no teenagers before the Second World War—the word did not exist; it only appears in Webster Three—instead, there were youths.³⁷ Look at old *Life* magazines or, better, ask your grandparents. A youth was a young human being who wanted to grow up, to become somebody, to become a man he could respect, a woman she could respect, with worthy responsibilities, adult pleasures, and a mature mind, to become like their parents, or like their grandparents, or like some adult they knew of or had read about; the Teenager is someone who wants none of this, who does not want to grow up, and whose highest aspiration is to be a more perfect Teenager. The former had presidents, inventors,

explorers, warriors, saints, authors, and spiritual leaders as their heroes; the latter have celebrities. The difference is the difference between Abraham Lincoln and Mick Jagger. So far as I know, there has never been such a human being on earth before.

The Teenager was “created” by the inclinations of the children, the temptations of the merchants, and the negligence of the parents. The children had desires that will always animate, disturb, and vex themselves. However, for some reason the parents of the 1950s said, “The kids have to work things out on their own,” then felt guilty, and gave them discretionary money. The fashion, junk, music, porn, and dope merchants said, “Let us at 'em.” In other words, the most vulnerable were exposed to the most predatory by those most naturally interested in their welfare, their own parents. Now sixty years later, “teenagers” are no longer limited to the young. Their taste is everywhere, their music, their fast food, their fast pleasures, and their long addictions. The Teenagers of the late fifties became the parents of the sixties, yet they remained Teenagers; their children have become yuppies. What is a yuppie? But a kind of Teenager, one who works, but only for the “teeny” pleasures their parents once indulged them in. We are now into the fourth generation of the Teenager. Or, saying the same thing, we are now into the fourth generation of the dominion of rock music over the souls of the young of the West.

The day may not be too far off when the United States and therewith the West, will be ruled by the Teenagers and its way of life. Then the purpose of public life will be, even more than it is now, to secure for everyone the freedoms and appliances dear to the Teenager (stereo, personal auto, and latterly computer, iPod, and iPhone). Imagine for a moment the political consequences. Once the majority of citizens consider themselves Teenagers, or wish they were, will it not be easy to change the Constitution itself? Public opinion is all in a democracy (as Lincoln said). Change it, hold it for six years, and you will have changed all. It will be easy, then, first to lower the voting age to twelve (the age at which the pleasures once bound with procreation are, after all,

possible) and, second, to lower the age to serve as President to eighteen. It is easy to foresee the next step; running on a platform of Five Freedoms: freedom from family, freedom from study, freedom from work, freedom from children, and freedom from suffering, an aging Teenage rock star, call him Mick Caligula, will capture the Presidency, members of his party, the Horde, will take the House of Representatives at the midterm election, and complete the revolution by taking the Senate by the time of Caligula's reelection; that accomplished, the Court will give up all its resistance. And that done, our Republic will have been rededicated so that everywhere government of, by and for the Teenager prevails.

XII. The remedy? Certainly the good would be helped a bit if all parents who are interested in the welfare of their children exposed them to no music that tends to corrupt the soul. Of course, given the present hold Rock has achieved, this means having the courage to say "no" to it, either together with other parents or alone if need be. Parents who find that hard to do might reflect upon the truth that one never knows when a child will hear a strong "no," perhaps years hence, and then thank their parent or teacher for telling them what they needed to hear, not what they wanted to. Revolutions in manners and morals often start with just one or two or a few persons saying "no" to something. Human things are often like an army in flight that will never turn until one soldier stands and fights. It is sometimes said "you can't bring back the past", but you can, and strong ages, such as the Renaissance and the Reformation, do precisely that, revive and renew something lost, forgotten, and good.

However, I am far from thinking that it will suffice for parents to say "no" to rock music and all that follows from it. Those who are enslaved by this Rock and Whip music need more. The "pubescent child" Allan Bloom describes watching MTV, which incensed so many of his negative reviewers, is not only impoverished but wretched, as Bloom perceives. He or she

needs a very immediate taste of the good or they will never be able to chew on the great, benefit from sweet inquiries an Allan Bloom and a great book can initiate them into, or even the Mozart he might introduce them to. Avoiding evil is not the same as enjoying the good. Nor is evil avoided for long without tasting the good in its place. The soul has its hungers and it will be fed.

To succeed then, such a revolution in music and morals will also need to say “Yes,” – “Yes” to good music, to such music as is good for the soul, that soothes the sad heart, invigorates limp limbs, and rejoices in all good things. The young must be introduced to such music. Fortunately, there is a lot of much better music around, country, folk, bluegrass, romantic, classical, baroque, Renaissance and medieval, and a good portion of it encourages the kind of happy, vigorous, courting, festive, friendly dancing the soul is enriched by. Who can do this more easily and more effectually than parents? Since in education, good examples often teach better than exhortations, we parents must first reeducate our own taste. We can start by playing good music. Yet that will hardly suffice. We must go further and give music a place in our home, not just a phonograph to listen to, but a place where music is made and can be made by the whole family, so that the young grow into it.

XIII. I shall believe that Allan Bloom's book is being taken seriously by the American parents who bought so many copies of it only when I hear that sales of family pianos and the hiring of music teachers have gone up proportionately. The replacement of the family T. V., which has destroyed the family dinner in America, renders viewers incapable of serious or vivacious conversation, and around which no family could ever gather as a family, with a piano would go a long way to restoring a hearth to the American family home.³⁸ The addition of story-telling and the reading together of worthy books – only worthy books will bear reading aloud – would be another step. The inclusion of one or two great books among the many good

ones read together by the family would be a third step. I doubt we shall get to the third and the second without the first however, for music is fundamental as well as high. It reaches down to the child, gives it a taste of joy, at once fitted to its young powers and yet stirring a desire for splendid things beyond them. How many adults now living know something of nobility because they had the good fortune to hear a bit of Rossini's "William Tell" at the beginning of the "Lone Ranger" on radio? It is as Shakespeare in the *Merchant* has his Lorenzo say:

For do but note a wild and wanton herd
 Or race of youthful and unhandled colts
 Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,
 Which is the hot condition of their blood:
 If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,
 Or any air of music touch their ears,
 You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,
 Their savage eyes turned to a modest gaze
 By the sweet power of music. (5.1.71-79)

Having said and urged as I have, it behooves me, I think, to close by offering an example of the sweet music that not only charms the bad, but soothes sad hearts, invigorates eager limbs, and rejoices in all good things. Happily, I could choose many examples, from Bach to Jimmy Rodgers, in baroque and in bluegrass, on the harpsichord and on the dulcimer, but let me settle for one song, which does soothe, invigorate, and rejoice and does most emphatically set people who hear it dancing. Hear then in your mind's ear the "Lord of the Dance":

"I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
 And I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,
 And I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,
 At Bethlehem I had my birth.

Chorus "Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance," said He,
"And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the dance," said He.

"I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee,
But they would not dance and they wouldn't follow me.
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John,
They came with me and the dance went on.

Chorus:

I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame;
The holy people said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me on high;
They left me there on a Cross to die.

Chorus:

"I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black;
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back;
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone;
But I am the dance and I still go on.

Chorus:

"They cut me down and I leapt up high;
I am the life that'll never, never die.
I'll live in you if you live in me;
I am the Lord of the Dance," said He.

Chorus:

In the version I know, by the Revels, the singers and their leader, Jack Langstaff, descend to the audience, gather them into the dance, and pass out of the hall. The thought of what a whole

country of citizens linked by such a dance would be like is as staggering as the Milky Way above it on a clear winter night.³⁹

Michael Platt
Friends of the Republic

A version of this essay appeared in *Fidelity* ed. E. Michael Jones, with the title changed to “Physics Without Ethics: the Brutality of Rock n’ Roll,” footnotes dropped, errors introduced, and a sensational cover on the magazine—all without my permission, or prior knowledge. Never would I have approved any of this. Later Jones turned over my essay to EWTN's website, again without my permission. They apologized, having not known what Jones was doing, and I gave them my permission to post it there. What you have just read includes revisions and augmentations through December 2009.

ENDNOTES:

¹ Louis Menand, "Mr. Bloom's Planet," *The New Republic* (25 May 1987); David Rieff, "The Colonel and the Professor," *Times Literary Supplement* (4 September 1987), pp. 950 & 960 and William Greider, "Bloom and Doom," *Rolling Stone* (8 October 1987) pp. 39-40; all three reviewers fix upon Bloom's criticism of rock 'n roll, zero in on the same passage in his book, offer as their only argument the assertion, "I'm o. k., it must be o. k." and attack Bloom personally, as lacking in love (of youth, of America). These and others can be found in *Essays on The Closing of the American Mind*, ed. Robert L. Stone (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1989) pp. 235-261. For my parallel thoughts on the things Bloom covers and a few he doesn't, see, "Souls Without Longing," *Interpretation: Journal of Political Philosophy*, XVIII, 3, (1991) pp. 415-465.

² It is said that Bennett regrets selling his guitar in college, to buy Heidegger, and that while he was Secretary of Education, he would answer rock trivia questions in his limousine on the way to work

³ How angry people can get about criticism of Rock erupted at a conference at Brigham Young University in 1991, at the panel on music and the soul, at which I delivered this address and was called, a new experience for me, an "elitist," "paternalist," and "Eurocentrist," by BYU faculty; was this because Bloom was on the platform too? I doubt it. However, part of me might like to think that it was because my remarks on Rock made Bloom seem moderate by comparison, not that Bloom was agitated, but since he was always agitated, I can't claim the honor. Certainly Bloom was right at how far the corruption of America has proceeded—conservative presidents speaking of "values," faculty on a wholesome campus heckling speakers, and slandering Bloom by spreading word that, over dessert the first night, "Bloom admitted being a NAZI. In the question period, a BYU student asked the head of the BYU music department why she and her fellow Mormon students were treated to this music in their stakes (parishes). Tip-toeing to the

microphone, he whispered, “Oh, I wouldn’t want to answer that question.” This, from a faculty member on a campus where coffee is forbidden (the only place I have ever felt like an addict). See my “ ‘Elitist!’ “Paternalist!’ “Eurocentrist!’ ” *Measure* (Bulletin of the Univ. Centers for Rational Alternatives) No. 100 (November 1991), pp. 6-8.

⁴ Envy being the secret emotion of democrats, it is seldom discussed in democracies, but music escapes it. Witness the movie *Amadeus*. When I ask students what talent, gift, or quality do you most lack and most wish for, the most often given answer is “a good singing voice.” That some people are so much better than others, that we are so unequal in music, we democrats can admit. This is either because the evidence is so undeniable, or that we don’t really think music matters much, but I think it shows our better nature above our regime.

⁵ Quoted in Liddell Hart, *Great Captains Unveiled* (Books for Libraries Press: Freeport, N. Y. 1967; orig. 1928), p. 71. You may see the Marshall’s truly genial visage in the Dresden Museum.

⁶ As a student at Ambassador College (Big Sandy, Texas) observed to me, when I delivered this essay there (March 1988); I am grateful to that student, to my hosts, and especially to my former student, Dr. Danny Smith, for this happy occasion. And as well to students at the International Theological Institute (Gaming, Austria) who shepherded me in the darkness caused by other students, addicted to electrified Rock, who cut the lights towards the end of my lecture. May they emerge from their dark bondage.

⁷ And yet Nietzsche’s best passage on Wagner is the letter to Fuchs, quoted below, on the difference between ancient souls and moderns. On Wagner, Bryan Magee’s *Aspects of Wagner* Revised ed. (Oxford: Univ. Press, 1988) is good. On his most revolutionary work, *Tristan und Isolde*, I have found the following instructive: Elliot Zuckerman, *The First Hundred Years of Wagner’s Tristan* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1967); Roger Scruton’s *Death-Devoted Heart* (Oxford: Univ. Press, 1994) and Bryan Magee’s *The Tristan Chord: Wagner and Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001). Magee is not

good on Nietzsche. Not all hostility is gifted with insight, as Nietzsche's was on Wagner. I am grateful to Franz Werfel for introducing me to Verdi as the worthy melodious opposite of anti-melodious Wagner, in his remarkable novel, with both judiciously in it: *Verdi: A Novel of the Opera*.

⁸ In a Thomas Aquinas College lecture, Marcus Berquist suggests that the saxophone, by being too close to the human voice, is odious, as an ape's face is to a human.

⁹ In "Elements of Ancient and Modern Harmony," published in *Natural Right and Political Right: Essays in Honor of Harry V. Jaffa*, eds. Thomas B. Silver and Peter W. Schramm (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1984), pp. 45-61, John Wettergreen asserts that President Eisenhower said in effect "Let the kids have their fun" and that ended all adult opposition to rock 'n roll. Although I have checked several histories of rock 'n roll, the index to *The New York Times*, several biographies of Eisenhower, and his papers, and looked in the Library of Congress, I have not yet been able to find any evidence for this (unfootnoted) assertion. Tell me if you find it. I did find out that Eisenhower whistled the theme from "High Noon" so much that his aides nominated one of their number to plead "Stop it."

¹⁰ For the opportunity to hear and see Wagner performed at Bayreuth, with Nina Stemme as Isolde, I wish to thank my friend Dean Cassella, the Dallas Wagner Society, and its head, Virginia Abdo. Many thanks also to the Humboldt Foundation, whose renewal of my fellowship brought me to Germany for the Sommer Semester of 2006.

¹¹ For mountain fiddle music, go to the website of my luthier friend, Ahmed Baycu: <http://www.1001tunes.com>.

¹² See Ronald Byrnside, "The Formation of a Musical Style: Early Rock," in *Contemporary Music and Music Culture* by Charles Hamm, Bruno Nettl, and Ronald Byrnside (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1975), pp. 159-192.

¹³ My musical description of rock 'n roll is importantly derived from Bob Larson's very fine *Rock 'n Roll; the Devil's Diversion* (McCook, Nebraska: 1970); a former rock musician, Larson gives not

only the best description of what rock 'n roll is but the best, most detailed, well-researched description of its consequences.

¹⁴ Charles Hamm, "The Acculturation of Musical Styles: Popular Music, U. S. A." in *Contemporary Music and Music Culture*, cited above, p. 147.

¹⁵ Recently I discovered in Roger Scruton someone truly learned in music (as far as ignorant I can see) and capable of describing the musical, as well as moral differences, between music and Rock; for the latter, see especially the last chapter of his *Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1999); my quotation comes from this chapter, page 502. In his recent *Culture Counts* (New York: Encounter Books, 2007), in the course of discussing how to pass on our Western heritage, including our music, to our children, Scruton observes that pop music is deliberately made so as to make it hard for anyone to sing (p. 62 ff.).

¹⁶ "What the end of the four years of carnage meant those who remember it will never forget and those who do not can never be told," wrote Calvin Coolidge, *Autobiography* (1929; Academy Books: Rutland, Vermont, 1984), p. 124.

¹⁷ See Wye Jamison Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart; Le nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni* (Chicago: University Press, 1983) for the evidence that all Western music up through Mozart was connected to dance; an excellent review of this book, by Martin Yaffe, appeared in *The Claremont Review of Books* (Fall, 1984).

Only recently has atonal music severed music utterly from bodily motion, or tried to, at suicidal expense, it seems to me from its small audience. While philosophy is always right to provoke the question: What is philosophy? should music provoke the question: What is music? Certainly, the music that does, such as atonal music, is about as far as it can get from the dance, as far as Rodin's "Thinker" (really "Brooder") is from Matisse's "Dancers." Though flaccid atonal music would seem to be the rock 'n roll of the intelligentsia. Whereas music from Monteverdi to Mozart is written to celebrate the flourishing of the world, both atonal and rock music seem to be written for the end of the world, the one to lament it, the other to celebrate it, or bring it on, but in both cases not to oppose it. One day some composer will combine them into something entitled "The End,"

with video by Godard, “dance” by Darth Vader, and words by Jacques Derrida. On the decline to atonal music, read Molly Gustin, *Tonality* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1969).

¹⁸ The Waltz developed out of the Austrian and middle-European Allemande dance. See Allanbrook, above, p. 59.

¹⁹ I am thankful to my friend Martin Yaffe for this quotation from *The Times*, for discussion of these musical and dancing matters, and for other discussions as well, ranging from the Torah to Thomas, Willa to Alexis, and in Vermont and in Texas. On why the music of the Waltz was revolutionary see Allanbrook, above, pp. 55-66.

²⁰ Bob Larson, *Rock ‘n Roll; the Devil’s Diversion* (McCook, Nebraska: 1970).

²¹ The life this music would usher in may seem tribal; tribal music also lacks couples. Consider the dance of the giant Watusi in the old movie “King Solomon’s Mines,” wonderful in its way, energetic and graceful, but remember what goes with it—tribal life and all its miseries, strife, war, slavery, wife as chattel, polygamy, no chairs, no conversation, no mind. But rock ‘n roll is simpler than tribal music; in the latter, your individual movements are not idiosyncratic, they are prescribed by convention; though alone, each dancer dances the same steps and makes the same motions; and these same steps and motions are ones the dancers learned from their elders. Trendy the tribe is not. The primitive and the decadent differ far more than the decadent think.

²² Ruth Padel, *I’m A Man: Sex, Gods and Rock ‘n’ Roll* (London: Faber & Faber, 2000), p. 41. Though in prose, the book is a rapturous celebration of Rock and Teen culture, filled with quotations and specimens that repel any one with a taste for music and virtue. In seeing all manner of resemblances between Teen Rock culture and ancient Dionysian tragic and epic art, the author follows in the path of Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*, but in seeing no differences, as he would, she calls for a study by Oliver Sacks of a mental condition, accompanied by rapture, in which the victim is incapable of

discerning differences, like those who hack up a goat only to find it is their beloved.

²³ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (N. Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp. 68-81.

²⁴ See Nietzsche's letter to Carl Fuchs (end of August, 1888), *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. by Christopher Middleton (Chicago: University Press, 1969), pp. 308-310; this letter discusses the relation of the principle of modern verse, the beat, to the principle of ancient verse, quantity, and thus opens up the question of the relation of this modern principle to the exaggeration of the beat in rock 'n roll; throughout, Nietzsche knows it is at bottom a matter of soul. One might sum up the point: ancient music was for strong men feeling strong, while modern music helps weak men feel strong for a bit.

²⁵ According to Frederic Spotts' *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1994), Hitler commanded party officials to attend the Festival, when they would have preferred a beer hall, and "treated" severely wounded soldiers on leave with free trips to the Festival, when they would have surely preferred more time with their families.

²⁶ It is interesting to compare what Plato teaches in the *Republic* about music, eros, and tyranny to what Mozart teaches about the same in *Don Giovanni*. For the chance to, I am grateful to my Honors students at North Texas and my co-teacher and friend Martin Yaffe.

²⁷ I am grateful to Warren Murray (Laval, Quebec) for this comforting counsel.

²⁸ I am aware of cases for the Devil (Bob Larson), Wagnerian opera and its progeny (E. Michael Jones), atonal music (Molly Gustin), and Blues (a St. John's graduate I once knew), all interesting. As to the latter, if the Blues are "a good man feeling sad" then what is Rock but "a bad man feeling good" and thus something significantly different? I don't write "utterly different" because I wonder if the Blues is not often "a weak man feeling weak."

²⁹ Such an antithesis, between Blues and Gospel music, informs Alan Keyes treatment of the matter, in his *Masters of the Dream* (Morrow: New York, 1995), p. 134-136.

³⁰ I have just been reading in such an interesting genealogy by E. Michael Jones, *Dionysus Rising* (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 1994).

³¹ I believe that such a view is implicit in the difficult and profound *Tonality*, by Molly Gustin.

³² Judging from James Ward Lee's savoring appreciation, "The Glamour of the Gay Night Life': The Classic Honky Tonk," *T for Texas*, Vol. XLIV of the Publications of the Texas Folklore Society (Dallas: E-Heart Press, 1982), the change meant that children brought along to the Honky Tonk got to see unmarried or adulterous couples dance together before slipping off to the cabins for rent, nearby yet placed where cars and license plates could not be identified from the road.

³³ Recent examples of folk songs written in gratitude, appreciation, or admiration are: "A Grandmother's Love" (Bearclaws); "When Fall Comes to New England" (Cheryl Wheeler); and Tom Paxton's patriotic "The Bravest" about the NYC Firemen heading up the Twin Towers.

³⁴ I received this point, through Richard Ferrier, from Molly Gustin; on music I have found the latter's classes at Thomas Aquinas College very instructive, as well as her *Tonality*; in both she argues for the superiority of classic music, the music of Bach and above all of Mozart, as opposed to the innovations of almost everybody since; also helpful to me, aside from Plato, has been John Adams Wettergreen's essay listed above, in which he argues for the superior understanding of music among the ancients, as opposed even to Bach and all that has followed. For the contrary view, in a judicious appreciation of both ancient and modern music, see Peter Pesic's "Children of Orpheus: Dialogue between Ancient and Modern Music" available at the St. John's bookstore, along with his other remarkable essays, on music, and much else. On the place and the meaning of music in ancient

education, as opposed to modern, see the second book of Plato's *Laws*, his *Republic* (especially 376e-403c), and the final chapters of Aristotle's *Politics*. See also Carnes Lord, *Education and Culture in the Political Thought of Aristotle* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1982), especially for his researches into ancient music. On the place it might have in our republic right now, see the proposals of Eva Brann, *Paradoxes of Education in a Republic* (Chicago: Univ. Press, 1979).

³⁵ *Musarion Ausgabe*, XIX 79; also to be found in ~~Will to Power~~, No. 585a.

³⁶ For a discerning, eye-witness account of the place of the passions in Hitler's revolution, see Helmut Kuhn, *Freedom: Forgotten and Remembered* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943), esp. section III.

³⁷ The word "teenager," as we now use it, was not in the second edition of *Webster's* (1934). The phenomenon is now hardly limited by age; fast food is now eaten by almost everyone; everywhere people wear sweat shirts from colleges they did not attend or seek the feeling of simu-belonging by wearing a fashion designer's insignia; one comes across adults reading comic books, grandfathers riding motorcycles, and business women shunning solitude with Walkmans. See my "A Teenager – I'm So Sorry," *Practical Home-Schooling* ed. Mary Pride Vol. I, No. 2 (Summer, 1993), pp. 19-21; the article appeared under the title "The Myth of the Teenager" (with my permission) and has been regularly reprinted in the editor Mary Pride's *Big Book of Home Learning*.

³⁸ See John Senior's *The Restoration of Christian Culture* (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 1983) on the piano and much more. Those who claim to be tone-deaf can make up for their deficiency, or at least sense what they are missing, by reading Heinrich von Kleist's "St. Cecilia, or the Power of Music," Gottfried Keller's "A Little Legend of the Dance" and Franz Kafka's "Josephine, the Mouse Singer." On T. V. consider what John Senior has to say above and George Anastaplo's rule for his

children, during times when well meaning relatives had sent a TV. : You may watch any show, so long as you write a little report on it; see his "Self-Government and the Mass Media: A Practical Man's Guide," in *Mass Media and Modern Democracy* ed. Harry M. Clor (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1974).

³⁹ Recently, in Anson, Texas, while the world noted, courtesy of the BBC, the town voted to allow dancing, other than the renown Cowboy's Christmas Ball; although I can understand the concerns of the opposers, about alcohol, passion and trouble, although I am aware what the author of the *Letter to d'Alembert* (Rousseau) might object, and although I appreciate the sharp observation of my former student, Kyle Wendeborn, "Nothing good ever happens at a ball in Tolstoy," still I rejoice in the vote. True, some bad things begin at dances, but Tolstoy also tells us that at here first ball Natasha is so happy she could not sin. We may rejoice then that there's now "dancin' in Anson," since 1987, and lament that the Cowboy's Christmas Ball was not given in 1995 (the then-last year when I penned this note).