

Art as Microcosm: The Real Meaning of the Objectivist Concept of Art

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In a book of fiction the purpose is to create, for myself, the kind of world I want and to live in it while I am creating it. (Rand 1997, 479)

The purpose of this essay is to clarify and apply Rand's concept of art as "*a selective re-creation of reality according to an artist's metaphysical value-judgments*" (Rand [1969] 1975, 19).¹

First, I focus on the concept and its definition. I have argued elsewhere (Bissell 1997) that Rand's view of art implies that an artwork, like language, is a *cognitive tool*, and that it functions as an imaginary world, which amounts to a special kind of *microcosm*. These arguments are readily available in print and on the Internet; rather than recapitulating them here, I will instead assume them and offer a number of scholarly and epistemological points that further support them.

Then, I touch on an area I have not dealt with previously in print: the status of architecture as a form of art. Especially since the publication of Torres and Kamhi's *What Art Is* (2000a) and the ensuing discussion,² there has been a great deal of controversy as to whether architecture is compatible in its nature with Rand's concept and definition of art and, in fact, whether she actually remained steadfast in asserting that architecture is one of the arts. I will argue here that, whether or not Rand eventually changed her position, architecture is an aesthetic microcosm and tool of cognition that re-creates reality and embodies fundamental abstractions and, thus, is art, by Rand's concept and definition.

Finally, I return to the topic I discussed at length in the first issue of this journal (Bissell 1999). Although no one associated with the

Objectivist movement has challenged the status of music as a form of art, some have questioned the validity of Rand's definition of "art" because of its apparent inapplicability to music.³ Because of this, I offer further epistemological and scholarly notes in support of my earlier arguments for music as a kind of microcosm and tool of cognition that fits my general interpretation of Rand's concept and definition of art.

A. Art as Microcosm: The General Argument

[A]rt is a re-creation of the universe from a personal perspective[;] it offers man, in effect, a new reality to contemplate. (Peikoff 1991, 446)

The term "art" has been used since antiquity to refer to human creation in general. It has also been used more narrowly, at least since the eighteenth century,⁴ to refer to a special sub-category of human creation, frequently called "fine art" and usually taken to include literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and dance. This is the usage Rand intends when she employs the term "art" in her Objectivist aesthetics writings. Numerous attempts have been made to justify this narrower application of the term "art," and the history of aesthetics is in part a graveyard for failed definitions.⁵

Because of the influx during the twentieth century of "junk pile" art and non-representational art, as well as attempts to elevate the aesthetic status of photography, various design arts, etc., it is no longer true that anything *called* "art" can automatically be assumed to *be* art in this narrower sense.⁶ There is no firm, objective criterion for differentiating *all* of the so-called "fine arts" from the rest of human creation.⁷

Fortunately, there *is* a criterion that provides a sound basis for differentiating *certain* "fine art" objects from all other man-made objects. This criterion, based on a nuanced understanding of Rand's definition of "art," interprets the phrase, "selective re-creation of reality," as referring to a certain kind of *microcosm* usually experienced as a kind of imaginary world. Rand does not use the word herself, but what she is clearly speaking of is the setting up within reality, using

materials from reality, of a *microcosm*, an artist's conception of reality.⁸ Peikoff (1991, 417) states this idea explicitly:

Guided by his own metaphysical value-judgments (explicit or otherwise), an artist selects, out of the bewildering chaos of human experience, those aspects he regards as indicative of the nature of the universe. Then he embodies them in a sensory-perceptual concrete. . . . The result is a universe in microcosm.

Among Rand's own associates, Blumenthal and Blumenthal (1974a) note in a lecture available only in audiotape form that the ancient Greeks regarded *music* as a microcosm. In a work praised by Rand shortly before her death, Peikoff (1982, 169) explains how the work of most artists in a culture "becomes a microcosm" that embodies the basic ideas of some consensus within the culture. As noted above, he later states in passing that art in general presents a "microcosm" (1991, 417). Both the timing of the remarks by Peikoff and the Blumenthals, and the closeness of their association to Rand, makes it reasonable to assume that they were representing Rand's own view of art as "microcosm," even though she never publicly used the term herself.

1. Scholarly Support for the Microcosm View

Aristotle is actually the historical source of the view of art as microcosm and as re-creation of reality, though he and numerous philosophers in the following two millennia used instead the phrase "imitation of nature." And while it is true that Aristotle distinguished a certain category of man-made objects as "imitative" works of art, he did not discuss them in terms of how they imitated *nature*, but of how they imitated *things from nature*. Specifically, as Butcher ([1894] 1951, 123) notes, Aristotle held (1952a; *On Poetics*, 1447a5) that the imitative ("fine," or aesthetic) arts imitate three kinds of things: moral qualities, feelings, and intentions, as reflected or embodied in actions, events, and situations.⁹

However, various aestheticians have teased out a view from

Aristotle's writings that is more congenial to the microcosm model. Nature, viewed from the perspective of human life and its requirements, is the sum total of processes that produce and sustain *the world*, with all of its imperfections and incompleteness. What the imitative arts do in this respect is to imitate this cosmic world-making process on a miniature scale by presenting an imaginary world that shows what the world *might* be like, as opposed to the way it necessarily is. Butcher ([1894] 1951), citing Aristotle's *On the Soul* (1952c; 3.428a5–16; 3.427b17–20; 10.433a10), notes that the human creative power spontaneously “fuses together the things of thought and sense and forms a *new world* of its own, recombining and transmuting the materials of experience” (126–27; emphasis added). The imitative artist, Butcher continues, “carries forward . . . the general movement of organic life . . . to a more perfect conclusion” by the use of a “*mimic world*” (152; emphasis added).

Although Aristotle presented this view explicitly (1952a; *On Poetics*, 1451a37–38) only in regard to poetry (a generic category, in which he included tragedy and comedy), Halliwell argues that Aristotle had a similar attitude to the other arts, such as music and painting:

[W]hatever his media, the maker aims, by the application of rational method, to bring something into being, and in the case of the mimetic arts this is, if successful, a unified construction which must be comprehended as embodying a representation of a *possible reality* . . . [as bringing] into being by rational art, an image of *possible human reality*, and an image capable of being understood, at its best, in universal rather than particular terms. (Halliwell [1986] 1998, 58; emphasis added)

In a wide-ranging analysis of the concept of “mimesis,” Halliwell (2002) expresses this interpretation of Aristotle's view of art even more unequivocally:

Artistic mimesis is conceived of as the representation of a world in relation to which the audience imaginatively occupies

the position of an absorbed or engrossed witness. That is one reason why concepts of mimesis . . . inescapably raise questions about the relationship between the world *inside* and the world *outside* the mimetic work. (22) [There is a] strong presumption that [Aristotle] is staking out a case . . . for treating artistic mimesis as equivalent to . . . the modeling of *a world whose status is that of an imaginary, constructed parallel to the real, spatiotemporal realm* of the artist's and audience's experience. (166; emphasis added) . . . We see one thing (the artistically shaped materials of the work of performance) *as* another (the representational field, the represented world). (191)

Gilbert and Kuhn (1972, 175) relate how painters of the Renaissance viewed their art in this Aristotelian fashion. They studied mathematics, anatomy, etc., in order to arrive at “a total philosophical treatment of nature” that would enable them “to *compose a second nature*, thus following after God's way and partaking in his perfection” (emphasis added). In setting forth the analogy between divine creation and the writing of poetry, the Aristotelian poet, Philip Sidney (1583/1595, as cited by Collins 1907, 8), wrote: “[O]nly the poet, disdain[ing] to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth *grow in effect another nature*, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature” (emphasis added). Kant (1790, 528), echoing this philosophy, said: “The imagination (as a productive faculty of cognition) is a powerful agent for *creating, as it were, a second nature* out of the material supplied to it by actual nature” (emphasis added).

In his article on Baumgarten, a German Rationalist and the founder of aesthetics, Tonelli (1967, 256) says: “The [fine] artist is not an imitator of nature in the sense that he copies it . . . *he imitates nature in the process of creating a world or a whole*” (emphasis added). In Baumgarten's (1742, 63) own words:

We observed a little while ago that the poet is like a maker or a creator. So the poem ought to be like a world. Hence by

analogy whatever is evident to the philosopher concerning the real world, the same ought to be thought of a poem.

These writers are touching on a crucial idea for the philosophy of art: the concept of a *microcosm*. This is the notion, dating back to the ancient Greeks, that “the structure of the universe can be reflected on a smaller scale in some particular phenomenon” (Gilbert and Kuhn 1972, 6). Baumgarten’s ([1735] 1954, 78) own term for this was “heterocosm,” a word not found in present-day dictionaries, but which means literally “another world,” and by which Halliwell (2002, 9) says Baumgarten meant “self-contained worlds produced by a human maker on analogy with the divine creator himself.” Writing a half-century later, Goethe ([1798] 1985–98), as cited by Halliwell (2002, 2–3), used the term “die kleine Kunstwelt” (literally: the little man-made world or world-in-miniature) to mean “the artistic microcosm,” and the term “eine kleine Welt für sich,” to mean a little “self-contained world.”¹⁰ More recently, Peikoff (1991, 417) echoes Sidney, in stating that the artist, as the maker of “a universe in microcosm[,] . . . is the closest man comes to being God.” As distinguished from the products of human creators in general, what an artist creates, in emulation of nature’s creative powers, is, specifically, an artificial “world or a whole,” i.e., a *microcosm*.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* says that the primary and earliest usage of the term “microcosm” refers to man as a microcosm of the world: “The ‘little world’ of human nature; man viewed as an epitome of the ‘great world’ or universe.” The *OED* also, however, includes an extended sense (definition 2): “applied to a community or other complex unity regarded as presenting an epitome of the world, or as constituting ‘a little world’ in itself.” This second, extended sense of “microcosm” agrees with Gilbert and Kuhn’s observation and seems entirely applicable to the view of art as microcosm, not only as referring to literature and painting and sculpture, but also to music and architecture. Each of these is a “complex unity” capable of standing in for the world and conveying something abstract about the world.

Rand was thus not the only thinker in history to arrive at this understanding of what it means to re-create reality. There were Kant,

Goethe, Baumgarten, and the Renaissance painters referred to above. More recently, Parker (1926, 48, 30) said, “a work of art is a *reconstruction of sensuous reality* into an image of desire . . . building up in the imagination *a little world* that shall satisfy his wishes . . .” (emphasis added). In an extended passage about the nature of art, French author Camus (1951/1956, 255) said: “In every rebellion is to be found . . . *the construction of a substitute universe. . . . This also defines art. . . . The artist reconstructs the world according to his plan*” (emphasis added). Even Langer (1953), who is generally understood to be a rather acerbic critic of the idea of art as “re-creation,” nonetheless clearly endorsed the *idea* (without the terminology) that art re-creates reality by creating an image of *reality*, i.e., of an imaginary world or universe. Her writing simply abounds with such references to “worlds” and “universes,” across *all* the various forms of art.¹¹

Most recently, Wolterstorff (1980), Halliwell ([1986] 1998; 2002, quoted above and discussed below in Part C), and Scruton (1997, discussed below in Part C) all characterize art in general as presenting or projecting an imaginary world. Kimball (1983, 304) says that Wolterstorff proposes that we “look at art not as a source of objects for aesthetic delectation but as an activity that projects a world of imaginative possibilities. As he points out [Wolterstorff 1980, 144–55], the ‘world’ enacted by art exists alongside the real world and is concerned not with individuals but with kinds, not with the particular but with the typical, not, in Aristotle’s words, with ‘the thing that has happened but the kind of thing that might happen.’”

Halliwell (2002, 23) notes the ongoing debate over thinking about representational art as “world-reflecting” vs. “world-simulating” or “world-creating.” In the latter interpretation, art seeks to create “an imaginary world-in-itself, which may resemble or remind us of the real world in certain respects . . . but is not to be judged primarily or directly by comparison with it.”

Writing in a similar vein, Scruton says that imaginary worlds

are not mere likenesses or imitations: they come before us as equal contenders for our attention. They are on a par with the reality on which they comment. Indeed, [the appearance

of] the world in the picture . . . has ceased to be a sign of reality; it has *become* reality, into which the meaning of the world must be distilled. . . . Surely that is the approach that we should take to music too. (235)

And, with the help of Scruton, Halliwell, and others, that is precisely what we will do in the third part of this essay.

2. Epistemological Considerations: The Hierarchical Location of Rand’s Concept of “Art”

Rand (1966d, 20) stresses the crucial importance of verbal definitions in human knowledge. Rand (1966f, 40) says:

[Th]e definition of a concept . . . enables man, not only to identify and *retain* a concept, but also to establish the relationships, the hierarchy, the *integration* of all his concepts and thus the integration of his knowledge. Definitions preserve . . . the *logical* order of their hierarchical interdependence.

However, Rand has just *begun* the work that is necessary in order to integrate “art” into the overall structure of one’s conceptual hierarchy when she states:

The *genus* of art works is: man-made objects which present a selective re-creation of reality according to the artist’s metaphysical value-judgments, by means of a specific material medium. The *species* are the works of the various branches of art, defined by the particular media which they employ and which indicate their relation to the various elements of man’s cognitive faculty. (Rand 1971, 78)

The next step is to ask: what is the wider category or genus into which *all* artworks are included as one or another of the species? It will not do, if one desires a reasonably comprehensive understanding of how art relates to all other man-made objects, to simply say that art is a kind of man-made object that selectively re-creates reality, etc. That

is no more illuminating than to say that man is “the rational animal.”

Taken as a quick way of differentiating human beings from *all other* animals, the possession of the capacity for rationality is perfectly adequate. However, for a *biologist* who wants to situate the human species in the great evolutionary-biological pyramid structure of different kinds of animals, this will not do at all. It says, in effect, “human beings are rational, all other animals are not,” and it dismisses the others as of no relevance. In ethics, where rationality is an issue of paramount importance and the relevant factor determining that ethics applies only to humans and not to the other animals, this is permissible. In biology, where man and all other animals are related by greater and lesser degrees of similarity in structure and function, it is not permissible. Instead, a life scientist must carefully relate human beings to the most similar other creatures in the animal kingdom. Then he must group humans and those others together with the next most similar *other* group(s) of animals, and so on until humans and *all other* animals are grouped together as orders, phyla, classes, groups, genera, and species within the animal kingdom. This is the path of *integration*. The reverse process, *differentiation*, can be used, moving from the broadest grouping down to progressively smaller groupings of creatures, arriving ultimately at the species of human beings (or any other species of animals one may be interested in). In practice, especially when a partially complete section of one’s conceptual hierarchy is involved, both pathways may need to be used.¹²

I propose that the same general approach be used in aesthetics in regard to the nature of art. Rand’s definition of “art” is perfectly serviceable for aesthetic discussions, once properly understood. But part of that proper understanding includes the realization that if Rand’s project of fully integrating the various branches of philosophy is to be taken seriously, then in elucidating the concept of “art,” we must push beyond Rand’s preliminary efforts and proceed like the *biologist* who is guided by the goal of fully integrating the different classes of living beings. More precisely, this means we must proceed like an *anthropologist*, using Rand’s concept of “art” as our guide; we must trace the *full* hierarchy of concepts that *validly* link “selective re-creations of reality according to the artist’s metaphysical value-judg-

ments” into the overall category of “human instruments” or “tools.”

I suggest we begin, in other words, with the anthropological presumption that art and the concepts it implements are specific kinds of tools, namely, what Rand refers to as “tools of cognition.”¹³ The rationale for this presumption is twofold: (1) Rand (1965) noted some fundamental parallels between language and art;¹⁴ and (2) Rand (1966) refers to language and the concepts it implements as “tools of cognition.”¹⁵ It is reasonable to conclude, then, that art is, on Rand’s view, a tool of cognition in the same general manner as language. In particular, I will argue, art is what Peikoff and others have referred to as a kind of “microcosm,” specifically, an imaginary world-in-miniature in which the artist embodies and conveys basic abstractions about man and the world—and that the way in which it concretizes these abstractions is the way in which it functions as a cognitive tool. After defining the concept of “tool” and distinguishing tools of cognition from physical tools, I will then proceed, step by step, with progressively finer distinctions, and indicate exactly *what* kinds of tools of cognition they are. I am confident that, by this manner of exposition, the reader will readily see the plausibility of the view of art as microcosm.

Most broadly, in discussing art, we are talking about a certain kind of action and its attributes. Human action in general has two basic attributes: the purpose or *end* of that action, and the *means* of that action. In the case of art, as Rand (1965) explains, the action involved is holding one’s metaphysical abstractions in full focus (19), the end is being able to view “a concretized image of man’s existence and his place in the universe” (22), and the means is art.¹⁶

A tool, then, in the broadest sense of the term, is *anything that serves as a means or instrument for the performance of some action*, i.e., anything that serves similarly to, or in the manner of, a mechanical tool. In this latter respect, one’s feet and hands, for instance, can also be thought of as tools. As Aristotle said, in *On the Parts of Animals*, “the hand is not to be looked on as one organ but as many; for it is, as it were, an instrument for further instruments” (1952b; 687a). It is thus very Aristotelian of Rand to refer to concepts as “tools of cognition,” for a concept serves not only as a means for the cognitive processing of

information about the world (i.e., the material of cognition) but also, like one's hand, as a means for expanding the power and range of man's actions and as "an instrument for further instruments" (namely, language and art).

The next step in tracing the conceptual hierarchy of the concept of "art" is to note the distinction between primary cognitive tool and secondary tool. A primary tool is *a basic way of grasping and dealing with reality*, and a secondary tool is *an extension of a primary tool*. A secondary tool amplifies or refines what a primary tool does and extends the range of what is possible to us without it. Our primary physical tools include our hands and feet; and our secondary physical tools include hammers, foot pedals, etc., which serve to implement or facilitate the functioning of our hands and feet.

Our primary cognitive tool is a conceptual *abstraction* or concept (as well as integrations of concepts into propositions, arguments, theories, etc.), which provides us with our basic means of *cognitively grasping and dealing with reality*. Just as we grasp or apprehend reality in a physical manner with our hands, so too we cognitively apprehend reality with conceptual abstractions. (In this respect, both physical and cognitive primary tools are *intraorganismic* tools, tools that are inherent in the structure and function of an organism.) Our secondary cognitive tools, which include language and art, are *symbols*, i.e., physical objects, sounds, etc., external to our organisms, that stand for and thus physically implement or facilitate the functioning of our concepts.¹⁷ (In this respect, both physical and cognitive secondary tools are *extra-organismic* tools.) In each case, both physical and cognitive, secondary tools are man-made objects. (This last point is important in light of the common understanding, which Rand emphasizes, that artworks are man-made objects.)

There are two distinctively different kinds of secondary cognitive tools (symbols used to stand for concepts), and they are distinguished most fundamentally by the kind of relationship on which the respective cognitive tools are based. A "linguistic symbol" stands for a concept in virtue of a conventionally agreed upon and automatized relationship of association with the referents of those concepts. By contrast, an "imaginal symbol" (my term for this kind of symbol)

stands for a concept in virtue of an observed similarity relationship with the referents of that concept. The observable similarity between an imaginal symbol and its referents is the reason that the referents of the concept appear to be *embodied* in the symbol. Linguistic and imaginal symbols exist most commonly in the forms of language and art, respectively.

An *aesthetic* symbol is a special kind of imaginal symbol that represents a *fundamental* abstraction by means of *stylized* embodiment. (A fundamental abstraction, sometimes also referred to by the terms “metaphysical abstraction” or “metaphysical view,” is a concept of the basic nature of the world and man’s place in it.) Thus, in parallel with Rand’s remark about language, an aesthetic symbol, or artwork, is a visual or auditory (and/or tactile) symbol that serves the mental function of converting fundamental abstractions into the mental equivalent of concretes. That is, by virtue of the *fact of stylized embodiment*, which is automatically recognizable, the mind treats the fundamental abstractions symbolized by an artwork as though they were physical concretes “out there,” instead of locked up inside one’s head. Just as one can convey fundamental abstractions in linguistic form by formulating a philosophy, one can do so in aesthetic form by formulating an artwork. These are equivalent, albeit on a much higher level of abstraction, to the basic options of summoning up the awareness of a specific human being by speaking his name, as against doing so by pointing to a photograph of him.

Because an imaginal symbol involves something that already exists in one form (namely, in actual form) being created in another form (namely, a semblance), it is properly referred to as a “re-creation.” While the term “re-creation” most generally means “creating anew,” the more specific meaning pertinent to art is not “creating again,” but “creating in a new form.”¹⁸ Scruton (1997) in speaking of art in general terms says: “When we attend to an appearance for its own sake, the world that we have bracketed *comes back in another form, as a conceptual order in the thing perceived*” (229; emphasis added).

It is important to see that there are two basic kinds of re-creations. One is the re-creation of aspects of, or things from, reality. For lack of a better term, such a re-creation will be called a “re-creation of things

from reality” or a “figure” or a “figural re-creation.” The other kind of re-creation is of reality itself; such a re-creation will be referred to as a “re-creation of reality” or a “microcosm” or a “microcosmic re-creation.”

Among figures (i.e., figural re-creations), there are several relatively distinct types that lie along a continuum of greater or lesser literal similarity to reality. Some are more literal, being attempts at facsimile or “likeness” (such as a “realist” portrait), while some are metaphoric (such as a melody appearing to behave like a dramatic character). Among microcosms (i.e., microcosmic re-creations), there are also several distinct types, distinguished not along a continuum, but instead by the standard of selectivity used in making the microcosm. One may exercise selectivity according to one’s ideological value-judgments and create a diorama (which is an ideologically slanted re-enactment of a segment of history). Or one may exercise selectivity according to one’s physical value-judgments and create a scale model of the galaxy or of the Earth’s eco-system. Or one may exercise selectivity according to what Rand calls one’s “metaphysical value-judgments” and create an artwork. Each of these, in its own way, is a re-creation of reality¹⁹—a cognitive window into the cosmos, or a portion of it. Each of them is utterly dependent upon *some* kind of figural re-creation, though that re-creation need not be literal or obvious.

3. Further Clarifications

As a selective re-creation of reality, an artistic microcosm is, in Rand’s words, a *concretization of a metaphysical view* (1965, 20). Furthermore, in order to *represent* (by concretization) a metaphysical view, an aesthetic microcosm must necessarily *present* a metaphysical (existential) setting. That is, it must *appear* to be a world; it must, in some respect, present the image²⁰ or likeness of a world. And since a world, real or imaginary, cannot simply be a void, nor even mere patterns of attributes, such a setting must also present the image or likeness of an entity (such as a man, still life, or landscape)—or of some other discriminated existent (such as a musical tone or a shadow) that bears analogy to an entity, by virtue of its concrete existence, identity, and actions. For art to be “representational,” in this sense, there is a wide

range of possibilities for an image of an intelligible subject. An intelligible subject may range from things like a human figure or a landscape or a battle scene or a melody to things like chunks of wood or metal exerting force against one another in a building or groups of sounds clashing with one another in a musical composition. This fact is often overlooked by those who claim that architecture has no subject, and that music has no “external subject” (and thus is instead about the emotions).

The re-creation theory is often misunderstood as saying that the essence of art is merely the copying or reproducing of concrete things, people, and events from reality. Arguments for, and mainstream challenges to, the “re-creation” theory (and its earlier incarnation, the classical “imitation” theory) have been flawed and ultimately undercut by this misdirected exclusive focus on the more concrete level of an artwork’s nature. By “more concrete level,” I mean the *contents* of the microcosm presented in an artwork, i.e., the re-creation *within* the artistic microcosm of *things from* reality, such as human figures, still life, etc.—as opposed to the microcosm itself.

The worst problem created by this error of focus on the secondary level of things-from-reality is that when only the subtler kinds of things from reality are re-created (as in architecture), or when things from reality are re-created in subtler ways (as in music), they tend to be overlooked. As a consequence, it is frequently held that reality is not being re-created by certain artworks, or that they are “not really” artworks, or both. As a further consequence, Rand’s definition of “art” is thought to be invalid—or her views of music and/or architecture not to fit that definition—or both. The unfortunate fact of the matter is that the subtler kinds of re-creation are difficult enough to identify even if one does have a grasp of the primary re-creation involved in art. Without that perspective, it is all too likely that one won’t know what to look for on the secondary level.

Granted, art necessarily involves the re-creation of *aspects* of reality; but it also more basically involves the re-creation of *reality*. That is, while re-creation of *things from reality*—referred to by Torres and Kamhi (2002) as “mimesis”—is essential to art, it is re-creation of *reality* that is *fundamental* to, and *defining* of, art. Furthermore, what a picture (for

example) represents—i.e., the embodied abstraction conveyed by the artwork—is not the concept of the entity presented within the artwork’s image. It is, rather, the *abstract meaning* embodied in that entity’s image. Rand, for instance, does not say that a fiction writer chooses to present specific concrete “men and events,” but instead some “*kind of men and events*” (1963b, 166). In other words, a fiction writer presents not Andrew Carnegie and the events comprising the building of his business empire, but an imaginary world of virtuous men and heroic events vs. scoundrels and sinister events, etc.

An author may indeed draw upon concrete persons or events for inspiration, but a novel so inspired is not, or ought not to be, a portrayal of those concretes. It is the presentation, instead, of a world containing the kind of people or events that those concretes inspire or exemplify. And yes, an author has to concretize “the kind of men and events,” but that image of a concrete (concretization) is not the same concrete that inspired the making of the image. (Rand (1971, 47) makes similar comments about visual art.) Thus, whether a novel or painting re-creates a particular person or object from reality, or merely a certain kind of person or object, what is represented is *what that particular or kind embodies*, namely, a certain *fundamental abstraction about the nature of reality*.

This is the basic sense in which art is “representational.” A portrait of a sailor, for instance, does not stand for that sailor, nor even for the kind of sailor or man that that sailor is. Rather, it presents within an imaginary world a sailor or kind of sailor who embodies, and thus *in that way* stands for, a certain basic view of reality. It is the painting, the artwork, after all, which is the symbol, not the subject of the painting (the sailor). And this is true for all art, including much art in which there is no discernible entity (as is the case in music). What is required is not that the subject is an entity per se, but that it be *intelligible*, discernible by the alert viewer, and that it embody some abstract view of the world. The intelligible content of the artwork, whether entities or musical figures or landscapes or whatever, must be such that it contributes to the artwork’s functioning as a microcosm. There must be something “world-like” about the artwork’s content. Just as one is seeing the world outside the ship

even if all one views through a porthole is a seagull, one is also seeing a world inside the frame of a painting even if all one views on the canvas is an image of a bowl of fruit.

So, ultimately, it does not matter what specific figural “re-creations” are found in artworks. The essence of art is the *microcosm*, the primary re-creation of reality, the primary imitation of nature in building up a world or whole. Art is an imaginary world-in-miniature and, as such, it must contain *some* figural elements that play the role of things constituting the microcosm. The world-in-miniature is a projected image and, as Langer (1953, 77) notes, “everything pictured serves to define and organize it. Even representation of familiar objects, if it occurs, is a means to this end.” When the artist presents semblances of objects, people, landscapes, etc., it is for their perceptual value as portions of the imaginary world presented by the artwork.

The application of the re-creation theory to understanding the various forms of art is sometimes relatively easy and straightforward, as in the cases of painting and literature. In other cases, such as those of sculpture, music and architecture, it is more difficult. It seems a simple matter to point, for instance, to the frame of a painting or the proscenium arch of the stage on which a literary work is being performed. As Smith (1969, 11) notes:

. . . the proscenium arch is a physical statement of the metaphysical fact that drama is distinct from actual life experience, that it re-creates reality in a form to be contemplated for its own sake. The aesthetic distance—the actor’s self-containment in the world of the drama—is the psychological precondition of the actor’s function *qua* artist and of the audience’s role as a contemplator of the work of art.

A statue, however, has no frame or proscenium arch with which to physically mark itself off from its “actual life” surroundings. One must *bear in mind* that the statue is “not of this world,” but instead exists in an imaginary world *distinct from* “actual life.” Halliwell (2002, 191) refers to this as “the representational field, the represented world.” The absence of a “physical statement” notwithstanding,

however, it is still a “metaphysical fact” that the statue is “distinct from actual life experience,” and that the person portrayed by the statue is “self-contain[ed] in the world of” the statue. A similar perspective is necessary in order for a viewer to enter into the microcosm presented in music or architecture or dance. The following remarks by Kierkegaard serve very nicely to illustrate this point. In “The Musical Erotic,” an essay published in 1843, Kierkegaard explained how the visual aspect of opera interfered with what, for him, was the main determining and unifying feature of opera, the music. In order to best appreciate the music, he said, “I stand outside the corridor; I lean up against the partition which divides me from the auditorium, and then the impression is most powerful; *it is a world by itself, separated from me*” (Kierkegaard 1959, 199).

The main problem with music, however, is its apparently non-representational nature, musical tones not generally serving well to portray people and objects. Efforts have been made by Langer (1953) and many others to rescue music’s status as a representational art by claiming that it represents or re-creates man’s emotional experience. Properly understood, however, this power is neither unique to music nor fundamental to understanding its aesthetic power, as will be explained in the final part of this essay.

The sticking points for architecture are its seeming uniqueness among the arts in playing a utilitarian role in man’s life (art supposedly must be non-utilitarian) and, like music, its seemingly non-representational nature. The next portion of this essay will seek to show that these points are neither fatal to the inclusion of architecture among the arts, nor to Rand’s definition of “art.”

B. A Difficult Case: Architecture as Microcosm

Architecture is the first manifestation of man creating his own universe, creating it in the image of nature. (Le Corbusier 1923, 73)

... but is it art? (Kipling 1890)

There is a great deal of disagreement among Objectivists as to

whether architecture is, as Rand long held, a form of art.²¹ While the traditional view agrees with Rand's officially stated position as including architecture among the arts, there is some basis in Objectivist theory for arguing that architecture is in fact *not* a form of art.

In her last writing on the subject, Rand (1971) made two statements about art and architecture that expressed three distinct premises pertaining to architecture; these premises, however, are in conflict with one another. She stated that architecture "combines art with a utilitarian purpose and does not re-create reality" (46) and that "utilitarian objects cannot be classified as works of art" (74). Add to this Rand's definition (1965) of art as "re-creation of reality" (19) and her identification of "non-utilitarian" as a distinguishing characteristic of art (16), and there are a total of five premises that need to be sorted out and reconciled: (1) Architecture is a form of art; (2) Architecture does not re-create reality; (3) Architecture is utilitarian; (4) Art re-creates reality; (5) Art is non-utilitarian.

If architecture does not re-create reality (premise 2), then either Rand's inclusion of architecture among the arts (premise 1) must be rejected, or Rand's definition of art (premise 4) must be rejected. If both premise (1) and premise (4) are upheld, architecture must re-create reality, and premise (2) must be rejected. If architecture is utilitarian, then either premise (1) must be rejected, or Rand's distinguishing characteristic of art, premise (5), must be rejected or modified. If both premise (1) and premise (5) are upheld, architecture must be non-utilitarian (at least, in some significant respect).

It is true that the *simplest* resolution of this conflict would be to reject the first premise and affirm all the rest. If architecture is utilitarian and does not re-create reality, and if Rand's definition and characterization of art are correct, then perhaps bruising the egos or feelings of a few architects is unavoidable. Nevertheless, the primary concern should be that the *correct* resolution is made of Rand's conflicting statements. Whether or not that resolution is also in accord with traditional, Establishment views about architecture or with Rand's own presumed final opinion (not published or publicly stated, but strongly implied) on the matter should not be a matter of concern.

The remainder of this part of the essay will present a resolution of

Rand's conflicting premises that entails a rejection of both her second and fifth premises. The first step in the resolution is to acknowledge, contra Rand's second premise, that architecture in fact *does* re-create reality and is thus an exemplification of (not an exception to) Rand's definition of "art." The second step is to acknowledge, contra Rand's fifth premise, that while art necessarily has a *physically* non-utilitarian *aspect*—the contemplation of one's metaphysical abstractions—it is *spiritually utilitarian* in its function, and it may also, in some cases, be *physically* utilitarian in function. Architecture is, therefore, living proof that the "non-utilitarian" criterion of art needs to be re-conceived less stringently.

1. Architecture as a Re-creation of Reality

One reason that some theorists, including Rand, fail to realize that architecture re-creates reality may be that they are caught up in the narrower view of art as re-creating *things from reality*, rather than re-creating *reality*. What thing from reality does a house re-create? Why, it's just a house. It doesn't *re-create* a house. It *is* a house, and that is what architecture *creates!* The truth is that art, including architecture, re-creates *both* things from reality *and*, by that means, reality itself, in the form of the aesthetic microcosm, the world-in-miniature that is the artwork. The things from reality that are re-created in architecture (with rare exceptions, such as the sail design of the Sydney Opera House) are subtler than the person or bowl of fruit in a painting. Nevertheless, without *some* secondary re-creation (i.e., of things from reality), there can be no *primary* re-creation of reality, no aesthetic microcosm.

By now, my strategy for transcending the limited view of the narrower form of the re-creation theory should be clear. I intend to argue that architecture re-creates reality, on the primary level, by creating a special kind of microcosm or world-in-miniature. It creates the image of "human domain,"²² of *a world in which a certain kind of person lives in a certain kind of habitation*. (And, by extension, a world in which a certain kind of *people* gather in a certain kind of gathering place, a world in which a certain kind of *deity* lives and interacts with mortal human beings in a certain kind of divine habitation, a world in

which a certain kind of *deceased person* rests in a certain kind of “post-habitation,” etc.)

This image of architecture as “human domain” can be grasped most clearly when sculpture and architecture work together in providing the experience of a microcosm. Seeing such an image when only one or the other is present is more difficult and takes a special effort of abstraction and perspective. As Tracinski (1998, 11) notes:

A sculpture shows only a human figure, perhaps with a few other objects; one must infer, from the figure, the type of world he lives in. Architecture, by contrast, provides a world, from which one can infer the kind of man who is to live in it. This is the reason why historically there has been a close relationship between architecture and sculpture.

In other words, it may be difficult to get the idea of microcosm just looking at a statue; you have to back up and imagine the world (or habitation) in which such a person might live. And it may be difficult to get the idea of architecture, apart from its utilitarian role, as also being a microcosm, unless you at least imagine a certain kind of person living within that habitation, which is one thing that sculpture helps you to do. Imagine Roark’s Stoddard Temple without Mallory’s nude statue of Dominique—or the statue without the temple—and you can grasp concretely what I mean by this point.²³ Thus, I disagree with Torres and Kamhi (2000a, 197), who argue that the temple “depends for its meaning on the figurative sculpture at its center.” Instead, I concur with Enright (2001, 349) that “the textual evidence is to the contrary.” Rand, speaking through her characters, held that the statue and the temple synergistically enhanced each other’s meaning and worth, which would have nonetheless been considerable standing alone.

Langer (1953, 98) discusses the various worlds of which architecture can create a “semblance”—i.e., the various ways in which it can re-create reality in the primary sense. In all cases, the world created by architecture “is the counterpart of a Self. . . . Where the Self is collective, as in a tribe, its World is communal.” Architectural

products reflecting the collective or public aspect of human existence thus take the form of temples, tombs, fortresses, halls, theaters, etc. For an individual self (or, by extension, his family), the world created is the home. Because a human being's actual environment, Langer says, "is a system of functional relations, so a virtual 'environment,' the created space of architecture, is a symbol of functional existence."

Architecture and sculpture, Langer says, are exact complements of one another. "Each articulates one half of the life-symbol directly and the other by implication; whichever we start with, the other is its background" (101). While sculpture and architecture can and do stand alone, they also are able to supplement each other, to help each other articulate their clear meanings "that would otherwise be lost" (102), or might be less emphatically articulated, as in the *Fountainhead* example above.

The one point that Langer, Rand, and Tracinski all stress is that what is essential to architecture is not the re-creation of *things from reality*, but the creation of a microcosm. Langer writes: "A universe created by man and for man . . .—not, indeed, by simulating natural objects . . .—is the spatial *semblance* of a world, because it is made in actual space, yet is not systematically continuous with the rest of nature in a complete democracy of places" (97). (This, by the way, is the architectural equivalent of the proscenium in theater, and the frame in painting. Like these other art forms, architecture stands apart from the world, even while it may be harmonizing with portions of it.) Tracinski (1998, 10–11) notes:

As Ayn Rand points out, [architecture] does not produce a re[-]creation of reality. It does not show us, for example, a building in the shape of a human figure. Nor does it attempt to directly imitate man's natural environment. . . . Architecture does what no other art can do. All other art forms re[-] create some portion of the world—a single human figure, or a two-dimensional scene on a canvas. . . . Architecture creates a man-made, *idealized world*—an environment created by the architect.

Note that although Tracinski—mistakenly, we will see—following Rand, rejects the idea that architecture re-creates reality on what we have identified as the *secondary* level (things from reality), she appears quite amenable to the idea that architecture presents a microcosm (“idealized world”). Part of their error concerning architecture, then, is the failure to realize that a microcosm (“man-made, idealized world”) *is* the re-creation of reality, in the fullest sense. This is a telling example of the grip still held by the narrower, more limited re-creation model.

Furthermore, it’s clear that Langer, Rand, and Tracinski are wrong about the presence of the secondary level of re-creation in architecture, as well. It is subtler than a portrait of a person or a still-life, for instance—which no doubt feeds into the tendency not to see it—but it is there, just as surely as it is there in a landscape painting, for example. Tracinski herself observes that such a painting “may not portray any actual human figure, but . . . still conveys a view of the world in which man lives” (11). The landscape may convey a view of the world as being dangerous and hostile, or peaceful and benign, or dynamic and exciting, etc., but it cannot do so without *some* use of entities and their attributes and (at least implied) actions. Sharply thrusting mountains, decaying trees, a surging ocean tide, etc. are all *things from reality* that can be re-created in a painting, even if no garden-variety “representational” entities (such as human beings) are in evidence.

What is important is that in *some* kinds of painting, the view of man’s relationship to the world is conveyed only *indirectly* (i.e., without explicitly including a human being in the artwork)—and that this does not disqualify such kinds of painting from being artworks, by Rand’s definition. What matters is that, in the aesthetic microcosm that is a landscape painting, parts of the natural world are also re-created. And the same is true in architecture—an aesthetic microcosm in which parts of the natural world are also re-created—as Tracinski’s wonderfully detailed examples of Wright’s Fallingwater and Gehry’s Weisman Art Museum clearly illustrate.

Fallingwater has cantilevered terraces that jut out at right angles to one another and are supported by central stone masses. As Tracinski

observes, it is “Wright’s choice of these particular stone masses and these exact right-angle cantilevers [that] creates a balancing of forces that produces a sense of dynamic harmony” (14). The structurally stable appearance of Fallingwater results from those “active, counteracting forces” (15). It is the creation, in a new form, of stability through counteracting forces between parts of Fallingwater that re-creates the kind of entities that relate to one another in this manner in the natural world. The result is, on the level of the microcosm, the impression of a world that is “rationally ordered, harmoniously integrated, and seamlessly joined with nature. It tells us that the world makes sense. . . . The theme of Fallingwater is rational order and its consequence: man’s harmony with this world” (22). In other words, Tracinski suggests, Fallingwater presents the image of a world in which a certain kind of man seeks to command nature by obeying it. Gehry’s museum, on the other hand, presents instead the image of a world in which a certain kind of man seeks to command nature by asserting whim.

Another philosophic theme, more ancient than the Baconian one just alluded to, is that portrayed by Atlas, the giant who held the world on his shoulders. As Rand’s fiction readers well know, part of the heroic image she conveys in her writing is that of the kind of man who is willing to bear great burdens (and, of course, to shrug them when necessary), and the principal natural force against which man contends in shouldering such burdens is gravity. Schopenhauer noted ([1818] 1969, I: 276–82) that the chief theme in a Greek temple was the relation of burden and carrier and that Greek architecture, better than any other style, excelled at clearly highlighting the relationship between gravity and rigidity. The heavy matter in the roof, for instance, “wills” it to fall toward the earth, while the rigidity of the column (or buttress or arch, in other styles) “wills” it to oppose the roof’s tendency to fall.

While the clash between the force of gravity and the countervailing force of rigid upright objects might appear to be an abstract, impersonal aspect of reality to re-create and emphasize in architecture, the implications about human existence are hard to escape. In this light, the quote from Le Corbusier included at the beginning of this section takes on new meaning. Architecture does create a microcosm, and it

does so by using entities that exemplify the laws of physics *in ways fundamentally significant to human beings*.

Thus, in visual art, there is not the stark dichotomy portrayed by Torres and Kamhi (2000a, 420n) between the personally relevant simulation of natural objects by painting and sculpture and the impersonal, “remote” exemplification of physical principles by architecture. They all create a microcosm that speaks to man’s basic, survival-relevant concerns about human life and the nature of the universe. And on the secondary level of re-creation of reality, in a manner parallel to the way that some music presents an auditory metaphor of entities in action, architecture presents a visual metaphor of entities in nature exerting force against one another.

A different kind of marriage of the secondary and primary levels of re-creation of reality can be seen in the Japanese gardens characteristic of Zen Buddhist practice. Frazee (1997) notes that such gardens were made of “rocks, sand, and water ponds with plants such as mosses, chrysanthemums, and azaleas placed in just the right spot. *The garden became the universe* with mountains, rivers, forests, and oceans, *all in miniature. To the viewer the garden opened a door to his or her own universe within*” (291; emphasis added).

These remarks point to two salient aspects of *all* art qua re-creation of reality: the overall artwork functions for the viewer as a universe in miniature, and the artwork facilitates the viewer’s contemplation by serving as the entryway to an imaginary world. The level on which architecture fulfills this function is usually more abstract, as the above examples illustrate, but the principle is the same.

To Langer, there is no question as to the metaphysical significance and aesthetic meaning of architecture. Although her terminology differs from that adopted in this essay, it is clear that she viewed architecture as the creation of a microcosm and thus would have agreed that it is also, in this sense, a “re-creation of reality.” Presented with examples such as Tracinski’s and the others offered above, it is also clear that Langer (and Tracinski and Rand) would have conceded that there is also a subtle form of *secondary* re-creation of reality in architecture. These considerations invalidate the second of Rand’s five premises that resulted in her erroneously abandoning her view that

architecture is a form of art.

2. Art as *Not Exclusively* Non-Utilitarian

It now remains to be considered how serious an obstacle the utilitarian function of architectural works presents for Rand's view that a restriction to a certain kind of *non*-utilitarian function is a distinguishing feature of artworks. There is no question that a great many works of architecture are intended to have a practical physical function. But is practicality *all* there is to architecture? And even if it is true of some architecture, is it true for *all* architecture? Also, there is no question that artworks are intended to have a physically non-utilitarian, contemplative function. But must artworks be *exclusively* non-utilitarian in their essence?

These rhetorical questions are intended to suggest that the standard utilitarian-contemplative distinction is a false dichotomy. Indeed, in a broad sense, this is a necessary consequence of the idea developed earlier in this essay that art, like language, is a "tool of cognition." The word "utilitarian," after all, means simply: that which is useful or practical, rather than attractive, and art, like language, while never necessarily attractive per se, *is* necessarily useful in serving a *practical* human need, the need to contemplate concretizations of one's metaphysical abstractions.

The "utilitarian" thus subdivides into the physically utilitarian and the spiritually utilitarian. And while it follows, then, that the physically utilitarian and the spiritually utilitarian are not *identical*, it does not follow that they are not *compatible*. The more reasonable approach is thus to consider art as being able, in some instances, to serve both a "utilitarian" (i.e., physically utilitarian) purpose and a "non-utilitarian" or contemplative (i.e., spiritually utilitarian) purpose—and to adjust one's classification scheme to reflect this reality.

It might be thought that the best way to do so is to adopt a scheme that recognizes architecture as a hybrid form incorporating both utility and re-creation of reality. A historical example of this kind of approach, cited by Torres and Kamhi (2000a, 191–92), is the tripartite classification scheme proposed by eighteenth-century French theorist, Charles Batteux (1746). He divided the arts in general into

the “mechanical arts” (serving physical purposes), the “fine arts” (serving the purpose of pleasure), and a third category that included rhetoric and architecture (serving both purposes).

Unfortunately neither Batteux nor Rand nor Torres and Kamhi recognized the fact that architecture is not just limited to “polishing” and “adorning” (Batteux’s words) nature for man’s utility and pleasure, but instead also (as explained in the previous section) uses “imitation” or re-creation of reality on the secondary level, as do the “fine arts.” Thus, Batteux’s three-way classification scheme suffers from lack of fundamentality: two of the three categories include things that are re-creations of reality, while all three include things that are capable of serving physically utilitarian functions.

Fortunately Batteux’s flawed proposal was superseded by that of his contemporary, French philosopher Jean Le Rond d’Alembert (1751), who proposed that architecture be considered one of the “imitative” arts. While his rationale disregarded the fact that architecture served *two* purposes and, worse, provided only the thinnest possible support for his claim that architecture, too, was an “imitative” art (referring to the use of symmetry observed in nature),²⁴ it was still essentially correct.

Rand’s own view, with its exclusively non-utilitarian criterion for art, is probably what led her to her conflicted view of architecture, and may be the reason why, shortly before her death, she apparently abandoned her life-long view that architecture is art.²⁵ Unfortunately, Rand chose to reject the view required by her definition of “art,” that architecture is a re-creation of reality, rather than to abandon the traditional premise that art is exclusively non-utilitarian. What she failed to address is the fact that utility and contemplation—or, more broadly, physical and spiritual functions—are not mutually exclusive, but lie along a continuum. Along this continuum, there are clear-cut cases of exclusively utilitarian function, equally definitive instances of exclusively contemplative or other spiritual function, and still other obvious examples where both functions are fulfilled.

Architecture is not the only art form that fits this pattern, as the issue of “functional music” vs. “concert music” illustrates. Purists may object to the American adaptation, dating from 1905, of Elgar’s

“Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1” as a processional piece for commencement ceremonies as being a perversion or negation of its artistic status. The simple fact, however, is that it is a very effective utilitarian piece of music and has been performed almost entirely in that fashion since shortly after its creation.²⁶ (And there are others, such as Wagner’s “Bridal March” from *Lobengrin*.) Yet, its *use* as a processional does not thereby make it non-art. What is essential is not whether it fails to be usable *only* for contemplation of a world-in-miniature, but whether it fails to be usable *at all* for such contemplation.

The litmus test is this: *if one can mentally filter out the physically utilitarian aspects of a given human creation’s use, so that one can discern a microcosm conveying metaphysical value judgments, then that human creation is a re-creation of reality.*

Similarly, a visitor to one of Frank Lloyd Wright’s masterfully designed buildings, is perfectly capable of an act of selective attention, by which he abstracts away (visually tunes out) all the people living or working in it (in much the same fashion as a concert-goer can visually tune out all the people in the orchestra and the audience). He can then focus on it as an image of a world in which a certain kind of person lives in a certain kind of habitation, and on what it implies about the basic nature of the world and of human life. This is completely parallel to what he can do in regard to a statue (as an image of a certain kind of human, and what it implies about the basic nature of the world and of human life)—apart from its accepted, if not intended use as a pigeon roost!

If it were objected that processional music does not, after all, serve a physically utilitarian function but instead a spiritual, ceremonial function, the same point could be made about temples and public monuments. Langer’s comment on this is telling: “. . . if architecture is utilitarian *except* in the case of monuments, then utility is not its essence” (1953, 93). What *is* architecture’s essence? She says it is always the creation of a visual impression of a people’s or a person’s *domain* or *place*. This place or domain is the principal figural re-creation in the “universe” created in a work of architecture.

Thus, Rand’s fifth premise, too, must be abandoned—or, rather,

modified to reflect the hybrid status of utilitarian-and-aesthetic (i.e., physically and spiritually utilitarian) artworks such as architecture. That premise should be re-conceived: Whatever its other functions, a thing can only be art if it *also* is capable of fulfilling the “non-utilitarian” (i.e., physically non-utilitarian) function of conveying basic abstractions by embodiment in a world-in-miniature. Architecture is capable of doing this, so it is art. It fulfills *both* the practical, “utilitarian” purpose of serving a *material* human need *and* the practical, “non-utilitarian” (i.e., physically non-utilitarian, but spiritually utilitarian) purpose of serving a *spiritual* human need. Architecture is tied to man’s survival in both the physical respect *and* with respect to “that on which his physical survival depends: to the preservation and survival of his consciousness” (Rand, 1965, 16).

Architecture is *dual-purpose* in nature, which is why it seems to be (setting aside things like processional music), as Rand (1971, 46) states, “in a class by itself.” To “combine art with a utilitarian purpose” (46) does not render something non-art but, rather, a utilitarian (i.e., physically utilitarian) sub-category of art. Architecture, like processional music, is art that is also (physically) utilitarian. Architecture balances the (physically) utilitarian purpose of human habitation with the (spiritually) utilitarian purpose of contemplation of one’s basic abstractions by means of *an aesthetic microcosm in which one is able to live*. Most importantly for Rand’s aesthetics and philosophy of art, architecture is one of “the valid forms of art,” a “selective re-creation of reality” that “fulfills the function of bringing man’s concepts to the perceptual level of his consciousness and allowing him to grasp them directly, as if they were percepts” (73).

As the earlier examples above were intended to illustrate, there is much that architecture can do to imitate things from nature or re-create things from reality, in the secondary sense. Architecture truly does imitate nature and re-create reality, so long as those actions are not construed so stringently as to require attempts to portray persons or things and their actions, as in paintings and literature. These secondary re-creations are the necessary means to the building up of an artwork, an aesthetic microcosm that presents an imaginary world. As we will see in the next and final part of this essay, there is much of

this sort of thing happening in music, too.

C. Another Difficult Case: Music as Microcosm

It was a symphony of triumph. The notes *flowed up*, they spoke of *rising* and they were the rising itself, they were the essence and the form of *upward motion*, they seemed to embody every human act and thought that had ascent as its motive. It was a sunburst of sound, breaking out of hiding and spreading open. It had the freedom of release and the tension of *purpose*. It swept *space* clean, and left nothing but the joy of an unobstructed effort. Only a faint echo within the sounds spoke of that from which the music had escaped, but spoke in laughing astonishment at the discovery that there was no ugliness or pain, and there never had to be. It was the song of an immense deliverance. (Rand [1957] 1992, 20; emphasis added).

When Rand's definition of "art" as "re-creation of reality" is understood as the creation of a world-in-miniature, a *microcosm*, the question of what reality *music* re-creates takes on a whole new meaning. The above quote from *Atlas Shrugged* indicates that Rand thought of music—or at least *some* music—as creating an imaginary world (whose space the listener hears as being "swept . . . clean"), in which musical notes appear to behave like physical entities that are "rising"—more, like agents that appear to be engaged in action characterized by "purpose." This one quote alone makes up for all the mistaken and misleading things Rand says about music elsewhere (1971, 50–61).²⁷

What is unique about music is *not*, as Rand claims (58–61), the fact that it affords different levels of complexity and ease of integration. This is something that *all* the dramatic forms of the temporal arts do, including, most notably, literature. Instead, the unique value of dramatic music²⁸ lies in the fact that it is able to do this, and all of the other emotionally evocative things that it does, exclusively in the field of non-verbal *auditory perception*, rather than by means of concepts and language, as does written poetry, descriptive prose, or dramatic literature.

Nor does the uniqueness of music lie in the fact that it is, as is perennially claimed, “the language of the emotions.” In *spoken* poetry and dramatic literature, which Rand says (46–47) are essentially conceptual in nature, there is *much* reliance on the *non-conceptual* aspects of human speech; such spoken literature, in fact, falls flat without such reliance. The essential difference between music and spoken literature is instead the fact that the former uses musical tones, while the latter uses speech. *Both* of them, however, can employ various means of expressiveness—e.g., tone color, rhythmic and dynamic emphasis, as well as dramatic spoken and musical gestures and goal-directed literary and musical progressions, all of which are strongly linked in one way or another with the emotions.

Even as we note the extensive parallels between literature and music, however, we must also acknowledge the fact that an explication of dramatic music is no more comprehensive a theory of music than is Rand’s explication of the novel and related literary forms a comprehensive theory of literature. Just as Rand (1968, 81) notes that there is valuable literature (e.g., poetry) that does not contain characterization and plot, we note here that there is also valuable music (e.g., some of the music of Bach and Debussy) that does not contain the musical equivalent of characterization and plot. Neither descriptive prose nor poetry need contain characterization and plot, so it is no mystery that their analogues in music (viz., tone poems and popular songs and dance forms) often do not contain them either.²⁹

This part of the essay thus does not attempt to present a philosophy of *all* music, any more than Rand attempted to present a philosophy of all *literature* in *The Romantic Manifesto*. Instead, just as Rand chooses to focus on literature with characterization and plot in order to clarify the philosophical meaning and value of such literature, this essay will for the same reason dwell mostly on the vast body of music with similar attributes. Like Rand in her writings on literature, what we aim to do here is to show how the dramatic forms of one of the temporal arts provide a striking illustration of Rand’s more general aesthetic principles—and, in so doing, to reveal the unmistakable parallels between dramatic literature and dramatic music that Rand overlooked in her own writings on music.

1. Epistemological Considerations: Characterization, Plot, and Microcosm in Music

In discussing the nature of art in general, Rand (1966a, 40) identified *subject* and *style* as “two distinct, but interrelated elements of a work of art,” and she said that the *theme* of the artwork “is the link uniting its subject and its style.” She also said that the subject is the *fundamental* attribute of art, “the end to which the others are means” (Rand 1963, 166). In this respect, it is thus very odd that Rand (1968, 81) apparently viewed poetry as having no subject (“its basic attributes are theme and style”) and never attempted to identify what subject, if any, she thought music might have. One is left to surmise that if, as Rand (1971) claimed, emotions are the *theme* of music, then the *subject* of music (whose emotions? and in response to what?) “is for each individual listener to supply” (52).

Is this another case (like her treatment of architecture) where Rand’s concept of “art” appears to be defective by virtue of its inapplicability to a certain key type of art? Or, instead, has Rand merely failed to “connect the dots” in her own brilliantly insightful and suggestive, but often only sketchily developed thoughts? I suspect the latter, and I think we can see exactly where Rand’s thinking went awry, if we consider a curious apparent inconsistency between her views of art in general and literature in particular.

In regard to the latter, Rand (1968, 80) said: “The four essential attributes of [all forms of literature except poetry] are: Theme—Plot—Characterization—Style.” In comparing this to Rand’s view of the elements of art in general, we note two interesting apparent discrepancies: the presence here of plot and characterization and the apparent *absence* here of *subject*. Except . . . subject is *not* absent in literature; nor is it completely absent from Rand’s list of its fundamental attributes. Instead, as Rand points out elsewhere (1963, 166), the subject of literature is “the story, which means: the plot and the characters.”

Further, it should be clear that style in literature has two corresponding aspects, as well. One, mentioned by Rand (1968, 80) is characterization, which is the manner in which the characters are portrayed. The other, in parallel, would have to be the manner in which the plot is constructed and might be called “plotization” or,

more felicitously, “plot-construction.”³⁰ This dual-aspect nature of both subject and style is just as it should be, for in literature, the subject that the artist is presenting is not just, for instance, an image of a man, but an image of a man “striving to achieve a purpose” (83). In other words, literature belongs to the subcategory of art that is dynamic or *temporal* in nature.

The microcosm presented in dramatic literature is the re-creation of reality as a world of *entities and their actions*. The characters thus are the aspect of the dramatic literary subject that pertains to the nature and motivation of the subject entity (man), and plot is the aspect of the dramatic literary subject that pertains to the actions of the subject entity (man).

Music, too, belongs to the temporal arts. Like literature, music has patterns that “exist in time and require duration for their development and completion. Although painting and architecture and sculpture make statements about relationships between space, objects, and colours, these relationships are static” (Storr 1992, 79).

As in literature, the microcosm presented in dramatic music is the re-creation of reality as a world of entities and their actions. In this case, however, the entities, *melodies* and *chords*, appear not as images of human beings, but as “virtual entities”³¹—more, as “virtual characters”—and their actions, *musical phrases* and *harmonic-rhythmic progressions*, appear on the more concrete level as “virtual gestures” and on the broader level as “virtual plot.”

Specifically in regard to plot, there is a further parallel between dramatic literature and dramatic music. The feature of plot known as the *climax*³² operates on two levels, which may or may not coincide in a given literary or musical work. On the primary level of values and goals in dramatic literature, a logical literary climax occurs when the ambiguities and uncertainties are worked through and the value-conflicts resolved; while on the secondary level of concrete actions, a more visceral or emotional literary climax occurs at the point of maximum physical conflict, confrontation, or tension.

Similarly, in dramatic music, the primary level of melodic-harmonic-rhythmic syntax has a logical musical climax when there is a “reversal” from relative ambiguity and instability to relative clarity

and stability; and the secondary level of dynamics, pitch, timbre, tempo, etc. has an emotional musical climax when the high point of musical tension is reached, followed by a rapid falloff in activity to a state of quiet and closure. In music, as in literature, when these two levels of progression and climax occur simultaneously, the result can be explosive; but they need not do so in order for the piece to be worthwhile.

As in dramatic literature, the primary metaphysical value-judgment represented by the microcosm in dramatic music is that of man's power to choose goals and achieve them—or not, as tragic literature and music represent. (The metaphysical value-judgments conveyed by the microcosms in non-dramatic literature and music include such abstract views as man's ability to exist harmoniously with the universe, or not; and the intelligibility, to man, of the universe, or not. These abstract views can also be represented by dramatic literature and music, of course.)

Rand gave no sign in her theoretical writings that she grasped the significance of melody as a musical analog to a dramatic literary character, and she completely omitted any consideration of the dramatic musical progressions that so vividly resemble dramatic literary plot. Numerous other people, however—both music theorists and aestheticians, including two of Rand's associates³³—*have* noticed the parallels.

2. Scholarly Support for the Microcosm View of Music

The attentive listener will note a similarity between dramatic music and dramatic literature on two levels. On the more concrete level, the parallel is between melodic movement and actions of literary characters. On the more abstract level, the parallel is between melodic-harmonic progression and literary plot. These analogies have long been acknowledged by music theorists and others, and the various aspects of the musical-literary analogy are thoroughly interwoven, in theoretical discussion and in fact.

In regard to the issue of the microcosm in music, it is helpful to compare music with other arts. Scruton (1997, 123) writes:

The point of representation in art is that it presents a *fictional world* for my attention, by compelling one to think in imaginative ways. It can do this in the manner of literature by drawing on my semantic understanding; or it can do it in the manner of painting and sculpture, by causing me to see a fictional world before my eyes. (emphasis added)

In music, however, Scruton says:

We obtain a first person awareness of a *world* that is neither ours nor anyone's. It is a creation of the imagination, prompted by sympathy. (363–64; emphasis added) Understanding music involves the active creation of an intentional *world*, in which sounds are transfigured into tones—into *metaphorical movements in a metaphorical space*. (363; emphasis added)

Music, that is, creates not an imaginary *fictional* world, that refers to or depicts *fictional* people, but an imaginary *tonal* world³⁴ of melody and harmony that functions as the “subject” of music, as a “musical individual,” a *virtual* person that the music is about, that engages in certain kinds of *virtual* motion and action, and to which we sympathetically respond, as if it were a real or fictional person.

This is the basis for the commonplace that dramatic music seems to “tell a story.” In respect of the musical events that surround the “virtual person” in a piece of dramatic music, there really *is* a story being told: a *musical* story. Regarding Beethoven's “Egmont Overture,” Oster (1949) writes:

The determining factor in the greatness of Beethoven's overtures lies in how, from a purely musical standpoint, he wrote compositions of a dramatic nature. (209) [T]his drama takes place in a different sphere from that of everyday reality—it is a drama in the world of tone. (222)

Citing Schoenberg (1922) and McClary (1991), Scruton notes that

“the ‘*narrative*’ character of tonal music has been frequently remarked on” (271; emphasis added).³⁵ Quoting Rosen (1988, 8), Storr (1992) notes that the sonata form of the Classical and Romantic eras

provided “an equivalent for dramatic action”: *a story in sound* which had a definable beginning, middle and end comparable with the form of a saga, novel, or short story. (81; emphasis added) [A pattern similar to that of t]he pattern of contrast, conflict, and final resolution [of themes] so characteristic of sonata form . . . underlies many novels. (83) It is surely no coincidence that when music finally emancipated itself from words composers increasingly used *forms which can be related to human stories* . . . (84; emphasis added)

Meyer (1989) concurs, writing in regard to Romanticism that:

Even in the absence of an explicit program, motivic continuity created a kind of *narrative* coherence. Like the chief character in a novel, the “fortunes” of the main motive—its development, variation, and encounters with other “protagonists”—served as a source of constancy throughout the unfolding of the musical process. (201; emphasis added)

In a passage dealing with Aristotle’s view of the power of poetry (i.e., literature) and music, compared with that of the visual arts, Halliwell (2002) relates a similar perspective:

Aristotle takes (some) music to trace patterns of “character,” which . . . in purely instrumental music will . . . constitute processes of emotion and feeling that focus on a kind of *implicit narrative*, a meaningful structure of mimetic expression, *carried by the rhythms, tunings, and melodies* employed. (247; emphasis added on all words but “implicit”)

Musical tones in their roles as melodies and chords present a striking metaphor to entities having location and engaging in motion.

As Scruton (1997, 49) notes:

[W]hat we hear in melody is not just change but *movement*: a distinction to which Bergson, like many of the “process philosophers” whom he inspired, was never as alert as he should have been.

This musical analogy to spatial motion is experienced in connection with the tonal attribute known as “pitch.” In a passage headed “*The Imagined World of Tones*,” Scruton describes this phenomenon further:

In hearing sounds, we may attend to them in the way that we attend to pictures, on the look-out, or listen-out, for imaginative perceptions. . . . [O]ne and the same experience takes sound as its object, and also something that is not and cannot be sound—the life and movement that is music. We hear this life and movement *in* the sound, and situate it in an imagined space, organized, as is the phenomenal space of our own experience, in terms of ‘up’ and ‘down’, ‘rising’ and ‘falling’, ‘high’ and ‘low’. (96)

I have previously (Bissell 1999) written at length about this semblance of motion in music. At that time, I relied heavily on *Sound and Space*, Lippman’s (1952) unpublished doctoral dissertation. Long before Lippman, however, Helmholtz (1950) noted:

The incorporeal material of tones is much more adapted for following the musician’s intention in the most delicate and pliant manner for every species of motion, than any corporeal material however light. Graceful rapidity, grave procession, quiet advance, wild leaping, all these different characters of motion and a thousand others in the most varied combinations and degrees, can be represented by successions of tones. (250)

Helmholtz further suggested that the “characteristic resemblance between the relations of the musical scale and of space [is] of vital importance for the peculiar effects of music” (370). He went on to say that:

Such a close analogy consequently exists in all essential relations between the musical scale and space, that even alternation of pitch has a readily recognized and unmistakable resemblance to motion in space, and is often metaphorically termed the ascending or descending *motion* or *progression* of a part. Hence, again, it becomes possible for motion in music to imitate the peculiar characteristics of motive forces in space, that is, to form an image of the various impulses and forces which lie at the root of motion. *And on this, as I believe, essentially depends the power of music to picture emotion.*³⁶ (370; emphasis added in last sentence)

Helmholtz is saying something very important here: he is recognizing the dependence of depicting emotion upon depicting motion.³⁷ In turn, however, since there are no disembodied motions, any more than there are disembodied emotions, the depiction of emotion must ultimately rest upon the depiction of some kind of entity in whom the motion and emotion appear to inhere. That entity, of course, is melody, which functions as a sort of virtual entity, or *apparent entity*, as does a chord.

Rand’s associate, Allan Blumenthal (1974b) described melodic themes in music thusly:

[A] musical theme serves the same function as a leading character or protagonist in a novel. Both are the subjects of the work, and both are necessary for the action. Just as most novels feature many characters—the hero, the heroine, the villain, and other secondary figures—so a musical composition usually contains many themes: the principal theme, the secondary theme, and often additional minor themes.

Citing Levinson 1990 (336–75) and Levinson 1996 (90–125), Scruton (1997) writes: “We hear a piece of music as though it were the voice of an imaginary subject.” He elaborates on this point:

Melodic organization enables a composer to treat a melody or a motif as a *‘subject’*; it becomes a *musical individual* with a history. Phrases can be varied, inverted, set in counterpoint; motifs can be extracted from their context and augmented or diminished; the melody itself can be broken up or prolonged—and always the listener will recognize these unities as musical individuals, journeying though the *tonal space* which is their element. (63; emphasis added)

Harmonies in the tonal tradition are also chords—*complex individuals*, with their own autonomous relations to one another, which sound right or wrong in sequence. We hear in tonal harmonies the very same drive towards rest and resolution that we hear in melody. (339; emphasis added)

This view of music’s metaphor to individuals in action toward goals is, as Halliwell (2002, 238–39) says, a view that dates back to Aristotle:

There is less distance than one might have expected . . . between Aristotle’s approach to music and a modern psychological theory of musical experience which speaks in terms of the hearer’s imagining a “virtual person” within a piece of music. . . . The idea of a “virtual person” as the imaginary subject of a piece of music has recently been advanced in experimental psychology by Watt & Ash 1998. . . . [Plato and Aristotle and others argued] as though the experience of music were cognate to exposing oneself to the influence, or “keeping the company,” of another human being. On this model, responding to music means entering and becoming part of a world of musical feeling . . .

Over four decades earlier, the more general psychological mechanism, of which the “virtual person” or “musical character” phenomenon in dramatic music is a special case, was discovered by social psychologists Heider and Simmel. They made an experimental film, the plot of which consisted of the striving of a protagonist to achieve a goal, the interference by an antagonist, and the final success of the protagonist with the aid of a helper. Nothing unusual in that. . . except, the “stars” of the movie were three dots. Pinker (1997) says it is impossible *not* to see the dots as “*trying* to get up [a] hill . . . *hindering* [the first dot] . . . and *helping* it reach its goal” (322). The point, Pinker says, is that people, even toddlers, “interpret certain motions . . . as animate agents [that] propel themselves, usually in service of a goal” (322).

Commenting on the Heider and Simmel’s experiment, Wegner (2002, 17) writes:

People did not report any of the physical forces or interactions one might expect if these items were apprehended as physical objects. . . . Apparently, the perception of causal agency can displace the usual way we have of perceiving physical objects, given the right circumstances.

Heider later (1958) explained, Wegner says, that “people perceive persons as causal agents—origins of events—and that this is the primary way in which persons are understood in a manner that physical objects and events are not” (Wegner 2002, 16). Human beings, in other words, have a natural propensity to interpret and respond to even the bare *semblance* of physical motion in anthropomorphic terms. The behavior of musical tones in dramatic music is completely analogous to that of these dots and is naturally, unavoidably experienced in the same way. This feature of melody constitutes a major part of the explanation of why we respond to an unfolding musical progression similarly to the way we respond to the actions of people in literature, drama, and real life. Melody is able to provide a convincing and engaging analogy to a human being located in space and engaged in physical movements and gestures and goal-directed

activities.

Citing Rosen (1972; 1988), Scruton (1997) elaborates on this musical analogy to space and motion:

[T]he sense of a *tonal space* . . . is present in almost all works in the classical tradition. (254; emphasis added) . . . [T]he classical style achieves its effects through the creation of successive tonal-*regions*, regardless of the overall pattern of the movement. These regions are like fields of force, changing the character of the music as it moves among them, they create the contours of the musical journey, and the sense of being *taken* somewhere, through a *soundscape of tones*. (271; emphasis added)

The acousmatic experience offers a world of objects which are ordered in space only *apparently*, and not in fact. (14) The acousmatic realm is structured by *virtual* action and *virtual* intention. (115) The phenomenal space and phenomenal time of music are matched by the phenomenal causality that orders the musical work. . . . The notes in music follow one another like bodily movements—with a causality that makes immediate sense to us, even though the *bow* of it lies deep in the nature of things and hidden from view. . . . A tone is heard as the *response* to its predecessor, as tending towards its successor, as continuing an action which makes sense as a whole. (76)

This is the phenomenon experienced as the basis of the analogy between purposefulness or goal-directedness conveyed by progressions of musical events and plot in literature long acknowledged by music theorists and laymen alike.³⁸ This resemblance between such progressions of musical events and *plot* in literature is unmistakable and not at all accidental. Allan Blumenthal (1974b) describes this analogy thusly:

Purposeful progression is essential to *all* the arts that have a temporal element. A musical composition must have the

equivalent of *plot*, i.e., a logical development of musical ideas or themes. This development must hold the listener's attention, create anticipation, lead to climaxes, and end in a resolution. . . . The plot structure of the composition leads the various themes through a variety of adventures, during the course of which they are altered. In musical terms, these adventures constitute the *development*. By the end, a given theme may gain power or be weakened, it may dominate or become subservient, it may triumph or be vanquished.

A most lucid exposition of the nature of goal-directedness in music is offered by Meyer (1967, 71–72):

What characterizes the music with which most of us are most familiar—the music of Bach or Haydn, Wagner or Bartok? Their compositions differ in many important ways: in melodic style, rhythmic organization, harmonic idiom, texture, and instrumental timbre. But they are alike in one fundamental respect. In their music, tones are related to and imply one another. . . . Such music is perceived as having a purposeful direction and goal. As we listen, we make predictions—albeit unconscious ones—about where the music is going and how it will get there. [M]usical events are felt to be normal and regular, surprising, amusing, or even shocking, as they conform to, or deviate from, our predictions.

Nearly all music in our culture is experienced as being goal-directed and not merely as “tone in motion,” because the melodic motion takes place within a context of harmonic and rhythmic relationships between tones. For any given musical style system, and for any given musical piece at any given time, certain relationships are experienced as being more probable or less probable than other relationships. That is, it will seem more likely that a tone or group of tones will be succeeded by one particular tone or group of tones, rather than some other tone or group of tones.

The broad stylistic system that has predominated between the

Renaissance and the present day—and which consists of tonal harmony based upon the diatonic scale—allows for probably the most precise, striking sense of relationship between successions of tones and chords (harmonies) that is possible within any style system. There is a firm mathematical-physiological basis for this experience, too: the connections between the partials of the various harmony tones and the fundamentals (or roots) of the harmonies involved.³⁹ Since some of these relationships are felt physiologically as being more direct than others, they are more highly expected to occur in a piece than other, less-direct-feeling ones. So, we subconsciously expect, or regard as probable, that the tones existing in these relationships will follow one another, as opposed to the tones existing in less direct relationships. This gives rise to the anticipation of definite projected melodic and harmonic goals—even if only on a subconscious and sub-verbal level.

Thus, there is a natural basis in tonal harmonic music—and to a more limited extent in other types of music, as well—for experiencing in musical events a logically connected progression, which is perceived as such. And that logically connected progression seems purposeful or goal-directed, because certain melodic-harmonic-rhythmic goals are most strongly implied and expected in a given piece of music. Such a progression or sequence could not be constructed or experienced in music unless the main “character” of the music (the main melodic phrase, motif, theme, etc.) were engaged in the “pursuit” of some purpose—unless, that is, the melody appeared to be motivated by some goal(s) that direct its action. Meyer (1967, 7) explains how:

The “character” . . . of a piece of music will, when well-defined, influence our expectations about subsequent musical events . . . just as our estimate of the character of an individual will influence our expectations about his behavior in a given set of circumstances. Conversely, the way in which expectations are satisfied, delayed, or blocked plays an important part in the characterization of [a melody], in the same way that we make inferences about an individual’s character on the basis of his behavior in a particular . . . situation.

We may thus be said to *understand* a melody, in the same sense that we use with regard to persons or literary characters, whenever we understand *why it acts as it does*—i.e., when we understand a melody's actions and know what to expect of it. We understand the “musical motivation” of the melody. We have grasped the stylistic premises or principles, if only subconsciously, which form the melody's character and “move” it to action.

To paraphrase Rand in carrying this analogy further: to re-create the reality of his melody, to make both its nature and its actions intelligible, it is their musical motivation that a composer has to reveal. He may do it gradually, revealing it bit by bit, building up the evidence as the music progresses, but at the end of the musical work, the listener must know *why* the melody did the things it did—even if this is only realized subconsciously by the listener.⁴⁰ This is the basic outline of a compositional approach often used in “serious” or “classical” music. It accounts for the common observation, noted above, that such music seems to “tell a story.” Composers have often used one or more melodic ideas in order to unify their multi-movement works. The melodic material appears within varying harmonic and rhythmic settings, thus lending each movement a different mood or outlook.⁴¹

3. Further Clarifications

It is certainly possible to pursue a more detailed comparison of tonal attributes such as texture, rhythm, and harmony with the physical attributes of human beings and the temporal and spatial attributes of their actions. The analogy, however, would become more and more tenuous, as we attempted to integrate less well-defined correlations into the whole. While a pair of counter melodies, for instance, might plausibly be compared to a pair of lovers or combatants,⁴² at some point the attempted one-to-one matching of nuances becomes simply pointless. There will be other musical details and aspects of one's emotional response that relate more to the felt qualities of tone than to the semblance of motion per se.

Thus, despite the extensive and fundamental parallels between dramatic music and dramatic literature discussed in the previous

section, the analogy is necessarily an incomplete one. This is the basis of the oft-stated caveat that, in the final analysis, music is to a large degree, *sui generis*. Despite its significant commonalities with the other temporal arts, especially literature, it is *also* a realm of human expression with a considerable amount of autonomy.

Notwithstanding this important point, however, the deep commonalities between music and the other temporal arts must be acknowledged if the nature and power of music *as an art form* is to be fully understood. To put it simply: it must be realized that music is only *relatively* *sui generis*. It is most accurately regarded not as being in “a category by itself,” but instead as being in a *subcategory of the temporal arts*. This can best be seen by a further consideration of emotion in music and the other temporal arts.

Emotions, which in a real sense *are* things from reality, are often held to be the subject matter of music, music supposedly being (unlike the other arts) a kind of “language of the emotions.” The microcosm view of music, however, does *not* amount to a claim, as Torres and Kamhi (2000b) allege, that an *emotional* or *feeling state* (or even a long succession of them) is a world-in-miniature.⁴³ Emotional and feeling states are *things from reality* that in representational form, become “furniture” (i.e., more specific content within) the new, idealized reality, the imaginary world that arises within a work of music, just as they are present in other temporal art forms such as poetry, novels, and stage presentations. Whether in dramatic literature, theatrical drama, or dramatic music, a panoramic vista must be presented or implied, and within that vista must be presented perceivable figures that serve to embody the basic view of the world that the vista represents—and dramatic music does this no more and no less than the other dramatic arts.

Thus, if it seems that music “more aptly represents human emotional processes,” it is because, unlike the visual arts, music, “like life [and literature], appears to be in constant motion” (Scruton 1997, 79). However, this is only relative. The truth behind the long-standing myth that music is *the* “language of the emotions” is the fact that *each* of the temporal arts is *a* language of the emotions, i.e., of one’s sense of life. Rand’s comment (1971, 46) that music “evokes

man's sense-of-life emotions" is no less true for any of the other temporal arts. As Jourdain (1997, 312) puts it: "[I]t's easy to see how music generates emotion. Music sets up anticipations and then satisfies them." This, in general, is the same way that emotions are generated in life and literature.

The world-in-miniature in music is thus *not* the emotional or feeling states "re-created" in aural form. Instead, the musical microcosm is the whole aural *vista*⁴⁴ the listener is presented, *within which* secondary re-creations of feeling states and other phenomena can be and often are presented as more specific elements within that vista. Furthermore, every emotional state has an object (what the emotion is about) and a subject (the person experiencing the emotion). As Scruton (1997, 167) notes: "[E]motions are not identified only through their objects, but also through their subjects, and the behavior whereby a subject expresses them." Davies (1994, 239) elaborates:

Our experience of musical works and, in particular, of motion in music is like our experience of the kinds of behavior which, in human beings, gives rise to emotion characteristics in appearances. . . . Emotions are heard in music as belonging to it, just as appearances of emotions are present in the bearing, gait, or deportment of our fellow humans and other creatures.

Since no emotional state exists in disembodiment from a *person who experiences* that emotional state, there can be no re-creation of an emotion—neither in literature nor in music—that does not rest more basically upon a re-creation of a person, or something that *resembles* a person in the key respects pertaining to emotion (such as auditory tonal intensity and volume, musical gesture, progressions of musical tension and release, etc.). In other words, dramatic art in general, and dramatic music in particular, functions as a "language of the emotions" by means of *characterization*, which conveys physical accompaniments of emotions, and by *plot-construction*, which conveys progressions of actions and their associated emotions.

Jourdain (1997, 323–24) is getting at something very similar when

he writes:

[W]hat this theme generates is not a statement produced by a “language” of emotions, but rather by a “language” of physical movement, a language that sounds “emotional” when anticipations are consistently violated, and merely “intellectual” when they are not. . . . From this perspective, we see emotion as *overlaying* music’s fundamental representations of motion, of modulating musical shapes just as it modulates physical movements.

Musical characterization is the composer’s means for inducing listeners to experience a melody as if it were a single dynamic musical *entity* behaving in a certain way and/or having things happen to it. Musical plot-construction is the composer’s means for inducing listeners to experience a musical form as if it were a single dynamic musical *process*, an intricate system of means and ends (or causes and effects) aiming at a certain musical goal(s).

It is interesting to note in passing the inter-relationship between musical plot and musical characterization. To paraphrase Rand again: the musical events (of the plot) depend on the characterization of the musical entities (melodies) which enact them—and the portrayal of the musical characters (melodies) cannot be achieved except through the construction of the musical plot. But although these attributes are inseparable in a good piece of dramatic music, it is still the case that the crucial attribute (as in dramatic literature) is *plot*: “a *purposeful* progression of logically connected events leading to the resolution of a climax” (Rand 1968, 47). Implicit in musical plot structure is the metaphysical premise “final causation—i.e., the process of choosing a goal, then taking steps to achieve it” (47). That is, a fundamental view of man’s nature and the nature of the world in which he lives—viz., that *life is value-oriented*—is implicit in the attribute of plot in dramatic music.⁴⁵ Thus, we see that the same meaning that Rand attaches to Romanticism in literature applies wholesale to dramatic music. Most music of the past 400 years or so is “Romantic” to a degree, in being goal-directed in character, because of its deep reliance on the progres-

sions of tonal harmony. However, the music that most strongly emphasizes the plot attribute of the climax was written right in the heart of the era commonly referred to as the Romantic Period (approximately 1820–1900).

A case might be made that goal-directedness (i.e., “plotfulness”) is the highest rational aesthetic value that can be obtained from a piece of music—higher, for instance, than the sensuous aspect of music, as embodied in the various timbres and textures the composer uses. Whether or not goal-directedness is the rationally *best* musical value, however, it is not the *only* rationally proper value to seek and obtain from music. There are indeed many other, rationally proper values to be found in music—rhythm and tone color (along with texture), to name but two. Some of the world’s most exciting, beautiful music *emphasizes* these aspects, as opposed to harmonic-melodic goal-directedness—Stravinsky’s “Firebird” and Ravel’s “Bolero,” for instance. It is also possible, of course, to achieve great success and creative inventiveness with these aspects, and yet keep them subordinate to goal-directedness, as a means to that end. A composer can use them to help articulate the various levels of complexity to be perceptually integrated by the listener.⁴⁶ And these are but three of the aspects of music to which one may respond favorably or unfavorably (and justifiably so), depending upon the context of one’s values, experience, mood, etc. Music and the other arts—like life in general—are best experienced as a cornucopia, not a straitjacket.

This insight allows us to see, again, the subtlety and depth of insight in Rand’s approach to the aesthetic and philosophical evaluation of art (as against her scantily informed views about music). From a cognitive and aesthetic standpoint, it is the *complexity* of an artistic microcosm that determines the kind of artwork one will prefer (and, necessarily, value). From a motivational and metaphysical standpoint, it is the *emotionality* of the microcosm that determines which of a group of similarly complex artworks that one will enjoy (and, necessarily, value). As Rand (1971, 61) clearly indicates, although the degree of complexity and ease of integration is the basic factor in determining musical preference, the re-creation of reality as a *microcosm* plays a crucial role in determining what one will enjoy (and, necessarily, value):

The epistemological factor of music is the fundamental, but not the exclusive, factor in determining one's musical preferences. Within the general category of music of equal complexity, it is the emotional element that represents the *metaphysical* aspect controlling one's enjoyment. . . . The nature of the music represents the concretized abstraction of existence—i.e., *a world* in which one feels joyous or sad or triumphant or resigned . . . (second emphasis added)

Although Rand did not recognize it or explicitly connect it to her comments on music, the same aspects function in one's preferences in literature and drama. There *is* a deeply important element of complexity and ease of integration that determines whether one will prefer light fiction or heavy literature. But within either category and for any gradations in between, it is the *kind* of world, the kind of microcosm, the kind of re-creation of reality presented that reflects one's metaphysical values and thus determines which literature one will prefer *within* that category or those gradations. It is a simple inductive conclusion from empirical observation that this is one important way that value operates in *all* the dramatic variants of the temporal arts including, most significantly for this discussion, dramatic music.

There is much that dramatic music can do to imitate things from nature or re-create things from reality, in the secondary sense. Such music truly does imitate nature and re-create reality, so long as those actions are not construed so stringently as to require attempts to portray literal persons or things and their actions, as in paintings and literature. Instead, the secondary re-creations of *virtual* persons and actions in dramatic music are the necessary means to the building up of an artwork, an aesthetic microcosm that presents an imaginary world characterized by *musical* characters and plot.

Thus, like architecture, music contains valuable types of secondary re-creations of reality more subtle than the traditional stereotype of portraiture—and it employs these images (more precisely, metaphors) in order to create a primary re-creation of reality, the musical microcosm. Musical characters (melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic themes), including the sense of melodic motion; musical plot, including the

sense of melodic-harmonic-rhythmic goal-directedness—these and other factors work together to create the sense of a musical *world*.

As a composer and performer, I find that my own experience of music very much parallels that of Ayn Rand in regard to story writing—paraphrasing her: in a work of music, the purpose is to create, for myself, the kind of world I want and to live in it while I am creating it—and I know that I am far from alone.⁴⁷

Conclusion

Architecture and music have strong similarities to one another, despite their considerable differences. And they both have deep commonalities with the other forms of art, despite the very significant ways in which they are unique. In specifying *how* architecture and music re-create reality on the primary and secondary levels, we have also shown that they are more generally like the other arts in the fact *that* they do so. All art, including music and architecture, *must* re-create reality in *some* form, but *may* do so in *any* form, consistent with the nature of the physical medium employed and the cognitive mode addressed by a particular type of art. This is as we would expect, if aesthetics is to have one fundamental explanation for all of the arts that also amounts to a “Grand Unified Theory of the *Arts*.” In order to be separate species of art, they must have their own distinguishing characteristics; but in order to all be members of the genus of art, they must also all possess the common denominator for works of art. Differentiation and integration must work together—in art, as in nature.

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Notes

1. Rand first publicly presented this definition of “art” in 1961 in a lecture on aesthetics at the Creative Arts Festival at the University of Michigan. It first appeared in print as quoted in Branden and Branden 1964, 74.

2. See especially *The Aesthetics Symposium* (2001).

3. Hospers (1967) wrote: “‘Art is a re-creation of reality’—but is all art a re-creation of something, even music? (One would have thought that it was the creation of something, that is, a series of tonal relationships that never existed in that order before the composer created them.) And in what sense does music deal with reality?” (52; emphasis added). He later wrote: “Music is not the re[-] creation of anything—music is an act of pure creation, of combinations of sound that are unlike anything that existed in the world before those sounds were created by the composer” (Hospers 1982, 177). Merrill (1991, 125) wrote: “[I]f one accepts Rand’s definition of art, it is not clear how music can qualify. It scarcely seems to be a ‘representation of reality’ in the sense that the definition is used for literature or the visual arts.” Enright (2001) wrote: “. . . Rand makes no attempt to account for music in terms of ‘re-creation of reality,’ but neither does she explicitly declare that music is not re-creative. . . . Whatever music is, it is not representation in a literal sense” (345–47).

4. See Adler 1961, 229–30 and Bissell 1997, 33–34.

5. See Bissell 1997, 54–60 and Torres and Kamhi 2001a, 94–101.

6. See Rand 1971, 74–79 and Torres and Kamhi 2001a, chapters 8, 9, 11, 12, 14.

7. See Bissell 1997, 58–60.

8. My own use of this term in reference to Rand’s concept of “art” dates back to 1972 and is drawn from other sources, noted in the text. An earlier version of this essay was rejected for journal publication in 1974, when an anonymous pre-publication reviewer claimed that the concept of a “microcosm” did not provide significant clarification of Rand’s view of art.

9. It is interesting to speculate that Aristotle might well have included architecture in the “imitative arts,” had he realized the ways in which Greek temples “imitated” moral qualities, such as moral responsibility and rationality. A full discussion of secondary re-creation of reality in regard to architecture is, regrettably, outside the scope of this essay; however, a few steps in that direction are undertaken in Part B.

10. See Ust 1995a for speculation regarding Goethe’s influence on Rand.

11. For instance, see Langer (1953): “Creation of virtual space is common to all works of plastic art, but that is only the making of the universe in which the symbolic form exists” (79), and “Space, in music, is a secondary illusion . . . a universe of pure sound, an audible world” (117, 104). See also Bissell (forthcoming).

12. This complex kind of conceptual process is discussed under the heading of “abstraction from abstractions” in Rand 1966d, 19–26.

13. It appears that this particular form of the expression originated with Rand (1961, 55) in her statement, “Emotions are not tools of cognition.” However, it should be noted that Veatch (1953, 8) had preceded her in referring

to concepts, propositions, etc. as “cognitive instruments,” as did Parker and Veatch (1959, 5) in calling them “cognitive tools.”

14. Perhaps the most important of these is Rand’s observation that “Just as language converts abstractions into the psycho-epistemological equivalent of concretes, into a manageable number of specific units—so art converts man’s metaphysical abstractions into the equivalent of concretes, into specific entities open to man’s direct perception. The claim that ‘art is a universal language’ is not an empty metaphor; it is literally true—in the sense of the psycho-epistemological function performed by art” (Rand 1965, 20). As an additional suggestion to those interested in linguistics, it should be noted that Rand says this function of art is “the crux of the Objectivist esthetics” (20). It is not unreasonable to assume that the parallel function in language would be the crux of an Objectivist philosophy of language.

15. See Rand 1967: “Concepts and, therefore, language are primarily a tool of cognition . . .” (69), and Rand 1966c: “Language is the exclusive domain and tool of concepts” (10).

16. Jourdain (1997, 330–31) offers a similar explanation of the fundamental function of art: “[A]rt, in general, provides the mind with carefully ordered experience. . . . [A] brain doesn’t often encounter immaculate deep relations in the world around it for the simple reason that there are few that are readily perceived. . . . When [art is created] with genius, every [aspect] is carefully selected to build the substructure for exceptionally deep relations. In this perfect world, our brains are able to piece together larger understandings than they can in the workaday external world, perceiving all-encompassing relations that go much deeper than those we find in ordinary experience. Thus, however briefly, we attain a greater grasp of the world (or at least a small part of it). . . .”

17. See Rand 1967, 69: “Language is the physical (visual-audible) implementation” of our concepts. I hereby extend this usage to both kinds of symbols considered in this section.

18. See Bissell 1997, 50–52.

19. It might be thought that history, too, is as Childs (1994, 18) suggested a form of selective re-creation of reality, specifically: “History is a selective re[-] creation of the events of the past, according to a historian’s premises regarding what is important and his judgment concerning the nature of causality in human action.” However, this is no more the case than is *philosophy* a “selective re-creation” of the *fundamental facts of existence*. Neither history nor philosophy presents or invokes an *image* of reality—i.e., a microcosm containing one or more figures. Instead, unlike historical fiction or fiction in general, which uses language to construct an *aesthetic* object (microcosm), history and philosophy operate strictly by *linguistic* means. Any images elicited by the words and descriptions used in history and philosophy are incidental to the verbal whole that refers to facts of existence.

20. Please bear in mind that I am using the term “image” in an extended sense, not limited to the literal sense of a *visible* image that resembles something else that is visible, but also allowing for a metaphoric sense pertaining to auditory perceptual contents that resemble something else by analogy. As Halliwell (2002, 156) says: “Aristotle does not restrict likeness to a sensory or perceptual match”; nor, I think, should we.

21. Two of the principal advocates of the idea that architecture is not a form of art, according to Rand’s definition of “art,” are Torres and Kamhi (Torres and Kamhi, 2000). Probably the most vigorous critique of their position is to be found in Cresswell 2003. While Cresswell makes a number of good points and seems to

be in essential agreement with the thesis of this essay, his discussion suffers from confusion due to apparently contradictory statements about whether architecture is a re-creation of reality and whether architecture is representational. He also seems more concerned to defend Rand against Torres and Kamhi and thus fails to properly acknowledge that his own expressed position is in direct conflict with Rand's statement that architecture does not re-create reality. Ust (1995), on the other hand, acknowledges the contradiction between Rand's view of architecture and her definition of "art," and he points out evidence of the sort adduced in this essay to support the view that architecture does re-create reality.

22. Langer (1953, 95) uses the term "ethnic domain."

23. See Rand [1943] 1968, 451.

24. Torres and Kamhi (2000, 193) state that d'Alembert "so attenuated the concept of imitation as to empty it of descriptive or explanatory value." While I agree, I also think I have provided ample grounds to think that this shortcoming is not fatal to his classification scheme.

25. On their web site at <<http://aristos.org/whatart/ch10.htm>>, Torres and Kamhi provide evidence indicating that Rand may have suggested to Binswanger that he forego having an entry for architecture in *The Ayn Rand Lexicon*, on the grounds that architecture's being utilitarian conflicted with her premise that art is essentially non-utilitarian. This interpretation of Rand's and Binswanger's conversation cannot be considered conclusive, however, since Binswanger *included* an entry for "Visual Art," in which architecture was listed as a visual art, along with sculpture and painting. If Rand's wishes were important enough to justify omitting the "Architecture" entry, why wouldn't they also have justified omitting the "Visual Art" entry or, at least, deleting "architecture" from that entry? For that matter, why didn't Rand or her followers ever give a public acknowledgment and explanation that there was *something* wrong with her definition of "art" and/or her characterization of architecture as an art?

26. Elgar himself recast the piece, after successful symphony concert performances, as part of a piece to be performed for King Edward VII's 1902 coronation ceremony. See <<http://www.elgar.org/3pomp-a.htm>> and <<http://www.elgar.org/3pomp-b.htm>>.

27. See also Bissell 1999, 62–71.

28. By "dramatic music," I am referring here not to musical drama, such as opera or musical plays, but to any music that in and of itself has characteristics strongly parallel to those of dramatic literature—especially characterization and plot (including climax and resolution).

29. "Often," however, does not mean "always." Poetry and popular songs *can* employ dramatic development, or *not*. For instance, Cole Porter's "In the Still of the Night," which is over twice the length of the standard 32-bar popular song, has a very climactic "bridge" section, while Duke Ellington's "Take the A Train" is relatively climax-free, more resembling lyric poetry than dramatic poetry. Even the latter kind of song, however, given an effective setting by a skilled musical arranger, can be transformed into high drama—e.g., Frank Sinatra's recording on *Concert Sinatra* of "My Heart Stood Still."

30. The confusion in Rand's listing (1968, 80) of literature's attributes thus lies in the fact that she has only listed one each of the two basic aspects of subject and style: plot (a "what" attribute) and characterization (a "how" attribute)—and omitted the other two: characters (a "what" attribute) and plot-construction (a "how" attribute). A full and accurate listing of the basic attributes of literature, then, should have included these five: Theme—Plot—Characters—Plot-Construction—Characterization. Style need not have been included, any more

than Subject, since they are the more general terms and are each represented by their two basic aspects.

31. Rand (1971, 57) calls them “auditory entities,” although she recognizes only melodies and not chords as functioning in this way. Jourdain (1997, 124) uses the term “sonic objects.”

32. A thorough discussion of the attribute of “musical climax” can be found in Meyer 1989, 204–5, 267–68, 304–8 and Meyer 2000, 215–24. Also see Muns 1955.

33. See Blumenthal and Blumenthal 1974. I am grateful to Michelle Marder Kamhi for encouraging me to acquire and peruse this taped lecture series, an examination that was long overdue. The amount of parallel between their views and mine in regard to the musical-literary analogy is substantial and gratifying.

34. Jourdain (1997, 302) puts it most succinctly: “[M]usic creates the very world it travels through . . .”

35. See also Aronson 1980, 66–67.

36. See also Jourdain 1997, 323–24.

37. See also Davies 1994, 229–40.

38. Lippman (1992, 353) refers to Meyer (1956) as “elaborat[ing] the *commonplace* of tension and release” (emphasis added); Davies (1994, 236) says that “[u]sually musical movement is heard as teleological, as organized around a target that exercises a ‘gravitational pull’ on other notes. . . . *Most writers on the topic* emphasize the importance of tonality in giving musical motion its teleological character” (emphasis added); and Scruton (1997, 45) points out that Meyer and “certain followers of Heinrich Schenker” popularized the principle of closure from Gestalt psychology “in order to describe the *goal-directed* character of music” (emphasis added).

39. See Helmholtz 1950, 350–62, 364.

40. The details of this analogy derive from Rand 1968, 52–53.

41. For a more theoretical discussion of musical motifs and melodic contour, based upon insights of Gestalt psychology, see Pike 1971, 79–81 and Rosner and Meyer 1986, 1–40.

42. For a plausible example of the former, consider the middle section of Rachmaninoff’s Prelude in G Minor.

43. The passage in question: “To characterize the emotional or feeling states re-created by music as ‘a world in miniature’ serves only to perpetuate the sort of mistaken notions Roger is objecting to” (Torres and Kamhi 2000b, 11).

44. By “aural vista,” I am not referring to any visual image of the physical world and objects and actions in it that might be evoked by music, but instead the aural *array* of sounds occurring through time, which serves as the rich, multi-dimensional *setting* that the listener perceives. This setting is the re-creation of reality, within which the melodies, harmonies, rhythms, dynamics, etc. function to re-create things from reality, whether or not any subsequent visual and other imagery is evoked. I am thus using the term in the sense of an abstract scene, sometimes also called, for instance, a “sonic landscape” (Jourdain 1997, 132) or “acoustic space” (Scruton 1997, 161).

45. See Rand 1969, 99–105 for a discussion of the relation between Romanticism and values.

46. A good example of this is Rachmaninoff’s Variations on a Theme of Paganini.

47. See, for instance, Igor Stravinsky, for whom the important thing about a composition was that it was something new, something “*beyond* what can be called the composer’s feelings. . . . A new piece of music *is* a new reality”

(Stravinsky and Craft 1962, 101–3).

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