

Beethoven and his nephew: The danger that is the other. Beethoven y su sobrino: El peligro que es el otro.

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ABSTRACT

Ludwig van Beethoven's life underwent an existential change when his brother died and left his son Karl in shared tutorship with his mother Johanna. 2. Almost without having had any relationship with his nephew, an intense and unexpected emotional need to become his sole guardian is triggered, an objective that he achieves by legally defeating his mother. 3. The Beethoven-Karl relationship develops plagued by disputes, surveillance, demands, control, as if the composer were experiencing for the first time what he had always denied himself, becoming a father. 4. The nephew's suicide attempt points out to Beethoven that becoming a father means allowing the son to become different from the arrogant and inordinate personal ambitions and expectations, but this extreme signal was insufficient to make him understand that the other is always a danger because it shows a hidden and painful truth of one's own self.

Keywords: *Beethoven's personality, interpersonal danger, suicide attempt, personality disorder, narcissistic personality.*

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Received: 09-20-2023

Approved: 04-01-2024

Declaration of authorship: Author approves this submission.

Conflicts of interest: The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest that could bias the content expressed in this article.

Funding: Self-funded article, did not receive funding from any project or agency

After the death of his brother Carl (1815), Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) established an intimate relationship with his son Karl, a nephew whose decisive bond would last until his death, passionately and expansively disrupting the composer's life. Ortega y Gasset points out that the relationship with another being is always with another and because it is an other, it is a "Strange Being", essentially foreign, "always relative, indirect and always problematic communication". But in the encounter an additional perspective is outlined, unsuspected and hidden from the composer's own gaze, a hidden intimacy: in the "struggle for existence" with the you "the thing that I am, my self, is modeled. I discover myself, then, as one of the many you, only different..., since the concrete ego [self] is born as an alter you, subsequence to the you"¹. The present work will investigate three dimensions of the artist's self to understand the encounter as danger, formally, constitutively perilous: own world, interpersonal and social, that is, Beethoven's "project-of-existence"; the unusual choice of Karl and the vicissitudes that shook us of the famous and exceptional uncle, that is, "the danger that is the other"; an outcome of the fateful dissenter, "being-referred-to-one's-death"², Beethoven's existence-project. Ortega y Gasset warns that "The self that you are does not consist of your body, but neither does it consist of your soul, conscience or character... Life means the inexorable necessity of realizing the project of existence that each person is"³.

1). Project of existence. A) Eldest son because his sister had died at birth, 3 of 7 siblings survived⁴. Ortega y Gasset notify that "The self that you are does not consist of your body, but neither does it consist of your soul, conscience or character... Life means the inexorable necessity of realizing the project of existence that each person is"³. Eldest son because his sister had died at birth, 3 of 7 siblings survived. His father Johann, a mediocre performer, keyboard and singing teacher, alcoholic, remains submissive alongside his brilliant father Kapellmeister and composer Ludwig. His mother Marie Magdalena must take on the household chores, imbued with a melancholic, pious, violent, and unaffected character, although governed by faithful compliance with unrestricted duty, she will soon succumb as a tubercular person (1787). His father sensed early on the possibility of turning his son into a child prodigy similar to the famous

Mozart when he noticed that he plays the piano and composes his own music while skillfully interpreting the lessons he taught him. He tries to falsify the date of birth by lowering his age and forces him to give public concerts in 1778 as if he were 6 years old⁴. This deception consolidates the ancestral fantasy of a "family novel", replacing his father with another of sovereign hierarchy because he knew he was of a higher caste⁵⁻⁷, who, years later, would be Kaiser Josef Benedikt II or Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm III and which materialized in The Funeral Cantata on the death of Josef II⁸ and in a mythical meeting idealized in his imagination with the Kaiser and Mozart. B) Emotionally neglected by his parents, he left his native Bonn in 1787 without being able to say goodbye to each of them before their deaths: decades later he would write an emotional letter to his mother and promise to visit his degraded father at his grave without ever doing so, expression of an inability to experience grief⁹⁻¹⁰, that will persist throughout adult life with all of his or her intimates, protectors and patrons. C) He assumes as a personal and non-transferable mission to be the "breadwinner-mother" after the death of his mother: he financially and emotionally supports his father and siblings thanks to his music and teaching, although his first composition at the age of 12 "To an infant" (An einem Säugling)¹¹ shows his overwhelmed emotional interiority. D) Upon his definitive return to Vienna in 1792, he quickly achieved success by protesting abiding by the teachings of Haydn, Salieri, and Albrechtberger, but he became involved in confrontations with rival pianists to occupy first place in society. E) He begins his "Classic Period"²² as a composer with singular brilliance, touring; arrogant, arrogant he contemptuously rejects his protectors, but receives substantial fees that allow him to live comfortably, although always haunted by the specter of poverty. F) In 1802 he told his doctor that progressive deafness had begun 6 years ago that did not respond to treatments, accompanied by digestive and emotional disorders, so he wrote the "Heiligenstadt Testament" addressed to his two brothers expressing suicidal ideas¹³; hearing loss will become an insurmountable impediment to hearing even one's own creations, reducing it to written communications with friends, protectors, musicians¹⁴⁻¹⁶. G) Love for women oscillates¹⁴⁻¹⁶. G) Love for women oscillates in three marriage requests that are rejected and numerous unsatisfactory relationships of short duration with breakups never lasting^{17,18}. H) The only passion overflows in concise letters never

sent and addressed to his anonymous “Immortal Beloved” (Unsterbliche Geliebte), misses that he kept secret away from all⁽¹⁹⁻²¹⁾. I) The marriages of his brothers Carl and Johann are repudiated because he judges both wives to be unworthy, of low birth, deceitful pregnancies and dishonorable conduct⁽²²⁾.

2). The danger that is the other. A) Before dying, Carl emphasized in his will that the guardianship of his son Karl must be exercised jointly by his wife Johanna and Beethoven, realizing Ludwig’s emphatic demands to exclude her completely. Almost without being acquainted with the 9-year-old boy, Beethoven’s existence undergoes a radical transformation, a transformation that shows a breakdown in the development of the meaning of his own life in the interpersonal sphere⁽²³⁾. On the one hand, he files successive lawsuits against Johanna to obtain full guardianship, imputing her as “Queen of the Night” for her unseemly behavior, slandering her for spying on him while she visits Karl, defaming her for poisoning her son against him, condemning her for having neglected her husband’s tuberculosis to monopolize Karl exclusively for herself, censuring her for publicly denigrating him with repugnant intentions, not giving money as a guardian. On the other hand, as he told Goethe in their only meeting⁽²⁴⁾, his person, recognized as the genius of European music, represents the paradigm and as such the young Karl needs him to achieve the artistic greatness of a Beethoven⁽²⁵⁾. In short, claiming inalienable rights that date back to his sublime grandfather Ludwig, he arrogantly arrogates to himself the rank of family patriarch. On the other hand, as he told Goethe in their only meeting⁽²⁴⁾, his person, recognized as the genius of European music, represents the paradigm and as such the young Karl needs him to achieve the artistic greatness of a Beethoven⁽²⁵⁾. In short, claiming inalienable rights that date back to his sublime grandfather Ludwig, he arrogantly abrogates to himself the class of family patriarch. B) In their correspondence there is a change in Ludwig’s connection to Karl. From “I don’t need my nephew, and instead he needs me” he goes to “poor orphan”, then “my brother’s son”, then “my little nephew”, then “beloved little nephew”, then “dear son Karl”, he comments to a friend “you are a husband and father. Me too, but without a wife”, finally “now I am the authentic physical father” (leiblicher Vater)⁽¹⁴⁾. C) The caustic fierceness of his fight against Johanna

betrays an inversion: it is Ludwig who identifies with her just as he had done in his youth during the illness and death of his own mother. He had cared for her with love and passion during the last weeks of her agony, living with the poison of her illness; being the son of a contaminated (tuberculous) mother transfigured him, establishing himself as a “primal-mother” (Urmutter) defending his sick mother-daughter, although now Karl is the son but he himself still does not perceive the hidden background: the attacks of Johanna are infected by a lethal poisonous internal evil D) The fear that Karl will be poisoned by his mother means Ludwig identifies with his nephew; the personal hostile aggressiveness towards his own dying mother during his youth, a rabid hostility that he did not then perceive or even suspect in the depth of his interiority, is now projected onto the persecutor Johanna just as it had happened to him; That is to say, the hostility and rage that corroded him was never consciously recognized in himself and now he tolerates it only as it resides in the substitute figure of Johanna. E) In 1821 two events occur that revolutionize the meaning of the situation⁽²⁶⁾: Johanna becomes pregnant by the well-to-do Johann von Hofbauer and baptizes her daughter Ludovica—female form of Ludwig—and the Court of Appeals finally rules exclusive guardianship of Beethoven. The war is over, Ludwig is legally the exclusive guardian, symbolically, the authentic “primal-mother” (echt) of his son Karl. F) By baptizing his daughter Ludovica, Ludwig resents Johanna’s action as an attempt to invalidate Ludwig’s “original-motherhood” of Karl. But the doubt is reversed in his internal wishful fantasy: his brother Carl did not beget Karl, but rather the unconscious Johanna-Ludwig marriage and the violent struggle sustained for years between them was a distorted sample of Beethoven’s repressed, unfaithful, adulterous love for Johanna.

3). Being-referred-to-death. Heidegger indicates that “the ending to which death refers does not mean having-arrived-at-the-end of man (Dasein) but rather a being-turned-towards-the-end on the part of this man”⁽²⁾; the not-yet (noch-nicht) is a possibility, the most appropriate, “the true possibility of being of death... is certainty of my being, it is certainty that has the character of the indeterminate and certainty of being that is mine”⁽²⁷⁾. Pindar’s maxim resonates: “Become who you are”⁽²⁸⁾. A) From the beginning, the relationship with Karl assumes increasing traits

of control, surveillance, criticism, domination, submission, which lead to permanent and repeated discussions, disputes, altercations, controversies, fights, stubbornness, provoking fear or panic that could lead to carry out their threats, blows or injuries even to the genitals, as indeed happens occasionally. The superiority inherent to his person, a lordship accredited ad nauseam since from his early childhood.

B) Realizing that the meeting with Karl has taught him more about who he is than all the relationships that have filled his existence and finally saying goodbye to the desire to turn him into the new genius of European music as an exorbitant alter ego, they take him to say on the night of March 26, 1827, according to his secretary⁽²⁸⁾: “Plaudite, amici, comoedia finita est.”

CONCLUSIONS

1. Beethoven and his relationship with his nephew unequivocally point out that human life is always co-living and co-responding, it is ab initio interaction with a reciprocator, openness to the alter as such, although at its deepest foundation it is radical loneliness⁽³⁷⁾.

2. From their first meeting, the presence of the nephew calls into question whether Beethoven's Self is another³⁸, different from the one he thought he knew, boasted about, and prided himself on his achievements, successes and triumphs since his earliest childhood.

3. Beethoven's authentic self emerges thanks to struggles, disputes and quarrels with his nephew, the danger that he was like an other consisted of discovering, revealing and enabling the appearance of a face that was hidden behind from the mask of haughtiness, arrogance, insolence and vanity that had accompanied him without ever doubting his existence⁽³⁹⁾.

4. The contestation, the rethinking and the internal conflict lead him from the not-yet to a now-if of his death, although always fighting, struggling and not lowering his neck.

5. The life of a genius of the stature of Ludwig van Beethoven is never understood in its entirety based on certain traits, impulses and actions, much less in its essence, and thus each approach barely manages to glimpse some sparks from a distance. of the multiple rays it emits⁽⁴⁰⁾.

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