

I Become the Tones

(Transcription of the interview for the WDR television film *Ich werde die Töne – die Weltschau des Karlheinz Stockhausen* (I Become the Tones – Karlheinz Stockhausen's vision of the world), broadcasted on March 14th 1971.)

Of course, I am a musician. Alright, in God's name. It is my talent. And that is the best talent that I was given. I could just as well be a very good auto engineer or a surveyor. Or I could be a travel guide. Or I could be someone who sits around like a guru, concentrating on cosmic powers and trying to pass these cosmic powers on to other people. I could also be a do-nothing who wanders throughout the world in order to get to know it and just begs when he needs something.

I know about the conditions in Central America, say in Mexico. Where renewal is what gives life its meaning. And renewal is connected to consciousness, enhancement. In order to progress, human capabilities must be developed which are on a completely different level than that of simple logical thinking and functioning.

All the western systems – that is, the jurisprudence, the economy, politics – are based on this thinking. And that is the crux of why we are not making progress anymore. Because it is a closed system within itself, and we can no longer solve the decisive problems. Most people today are unable to exist on their own: More and more, they need a doctor for physical defects, they need a doctor for the defects of the soul, they need a lawyer to protect them and so forth...They become more and more amputated and incapacitated. And that shows that the human being has not developed any skills whatsoever to take care of himself.

I really believe that through regeneration and through involution personalities, individuals, continue to develop. Only the example of the individual can change society. Even one person can change a whole class at school. Just imagine that there were a boy in a class who was capable of telepathy, enabling him to understand humans and animals in a completely harmonious way. Who was not afraid. I know something for certain because there is a man who works for the Secret Service in America, and he visited me several times because he is a student of a bassoonist that I met in Los Angeles, who played a piece of mine: This young man told me that they are now systematically training people who have telepathic skills. They are carefully chosen for atomic submarines that go under polar ice and can no longer be reached by radar. That telepathically gifted people are sent there, one to the submarine and one to the central station in America in order to maintain contact with the submarine: That should give us something to think about.

The Russians now also have an institute for research on the future, after one has existed in Germany for a couple of months. In America, there are a few institutes like this and I believe that Holland also has one. These are completely new institutes, where leading minds are engaged in making predictions, prognoses about the developments of the next 100, 150 years – in the most diverse areas, in social areas, scientific areas, in technical areas, in all areas. You can also ask them what hairstyles will be like in 2020. Or how babies will be produced.

"HymnUnion" is just the name of what many people tried to do as world-citizens after the last war, who made sit-ins for the first time, with a sign on their chest saying that they were the first world-citizens and no longer wanted to be Belgian or French or German any more. Who saw themselves as members of humanity, and not just as someone who wanted to see national interests defended or discussed – primarily. With the unification, the union, of all anthems, I want to express that. Secondly, however, the human of *HymnUnion* is named "Pluramon". That is a name that I gave the human – like a self-chosen name – who is pluralist as well as, and above all, monistic, thus representing a perfect unity in himself: who wants to maintain the multitudinousness, but in a united way.

The youngest people should already be taught about getting to know their bodies, learning to meditate. That is, not just learn to drift away, but really how to meditate. That means to really connect with the electrical currents that enter into people, that have supra-personal origin and that can be used by humans like electricity that I plug myself into. The important thing is: that I know how to penetrate every limb of my body, how I can relax in every stressful situation. How I can communicate with another person without having to talk all the time. That is: without constantly causing

misunderstandings. How I can communicate with other people over long periods of time without being dependent upon such silly things as a telephone that doesn't work, and where one develops such a stupid telephone language that is no longer really a true language. Or without having to experience the artificiality in television, when one can picture the cameraman standing around the corner and the microphone man, who sets up his microphone. Where nothing is truly real, but rather everything takes place in the awareness that I am pretending. And so forth. The whole world would become a surrogate, illusory, a substitute. Substitute, just like everything became a substitute during the war.

In 1945 I was lucky enough to be able to survive the war and all I had left was myself. And what had been renewed was everything: my thinking, my whole self, and, in the course of time, my clothing, my nutrition, my housing, my work. Everything.

I am sure that we are – also now – involved in a transition that will become very important: Breaking away from the process of “composing”. Until now it meant: writing it down. Then to have what was written printed. Or to give the manuscript to someone. He in turn had to read it: He has to decipher it by thinking. That causes causes him to give impulses to his limbs in connection with his instrument – and that leads to sound. He hears the sound as he plays. This way he corrects what he is doing.

And we will then arrive at strange intermediary forms – also in the way people dress. And already today people have the courage to dress however they want when they walk down the street in Cologne, without being embarrassed. And finally, that has landed at very short, condensed instructions – like in the texts of AUS DEN SIEBEN TAGEN (FROM THE SEVEN DAYS), that are then interpreted by musicians, requiring each individual musician to assume an extraordinary amount of responsibility.

We are actually experiencing the hour of birth of a completely new epoch of human development, that is not only proven by the first manned flights to the moon: The moon is really only the fulfilment of what Jules Verne – and many others, especially the artists – have already innerly experienced long ago. It is simply the ability to think in much greater periods of time – and in processes rather than in stationary situations.

It is extremely interesting that metaphysics is a truly new and useful perspective, also for science – I mean for the physical sciences. Innerly, we are already much further today, as the science fiction novels show, which in my opinion constitute very constructive and important literature, if not the most important literature, I think.

The thing about the magical: It is what surpasses the domain of thinking. And that is embarrassing for a lot of intellectuals who can't put me in a category or in a pigeonhole, because it is much easier to deal with such a human being. And therefore, it is also understandable that composers, actually colleagues – who should be fair to each other, as they are in the sciences, in order to help bring music as a whole forwards: music research, the exploration of what humans can experience within themselves by listening to music – are now beginning to become very polemic towards me and to make the most impertinent reproaches.

I used to be a very provincial being. Until 1956, 1957, 1958, I had no idea what else this globe comprises – with the exception of a couple of magazines and broadcasts and films that we saw – although I didn't see much of those either. I always studied and worked. I myself am searching for a supra-political, supra-religious (religious in an orthodox sense): supra-orthodox – position, because all people equally interest me. In very few moments of love, I have also experienced that I was completely the other: I myself no longer existed. Those are such moments, when the I becomes something else: it becomes the whole.

What I want to say is that the human possesses an unbelievable number of skills that are undeveloped. They are just dormant. And that he must urgently develop them, at least a few. That he has to show others how they can develop them, in order to be well prepared for the terrible, unpreventable, crises that are approaching.

What we call the subconscious, which we have to heal or organise or sort out, is nothing other than this unbelievably important world of gremlins and gnomes and precisely these cosmic poachers that

fly around and just find other beings to possess: If you consider them as the absolute humus of their own beings, that is, as something out of which something can grow, like a wonderful rose can grow out of shit, and that this excrement-like nature is something unbelievably significant that cannot be eliminated in human beings – that is what I wanted to explain. That the depths of the human being – the repulsive, the ugly, the destructive – belong to this whole person just as much as what strives up beyond his limits: that is, what is usually called the striving towards the saintly, the superhuman. And I will follow my path that is, if possible, above all political, established tendencies and which, like I said, is directed at all humans in the same way.

Surrealism is an unbelievably important experience of our century. And I mean: formulated surrealism that can be found in music by Varèse, to a certain extent in yet unrecognised ways in music by Stravinsky – not only in painting or sculpture. I have learned that when someone experiences something extraordinary, something musical, everything becomes alert. That has happened to me sometimes in life, but very seldom in such an intense way: that I have completely identified with a plant. That was here in front of the house. Or once, it happened to me with a goat, when I felt absolutely identical: I was the goat. Or I was this rose stem. That would really be the only free world, in which we aren't uniformed, but rather each of us has the possibility to choose what he wants from the entire world. However, that requires very awakened personalities. And that is what art says, particularly the extension of European art by what was first called "surrealism" – and today I would say "supra-realism", that which is over, above, the normal reality that surrounds us: That we strive towards that as a possible world, a free world of individual life. And that there, apparently the degrees of becoming conscious are what is decisive: from the unconscious (what we call unconscious), most unconscious material on the one hand, that also thinks (meaning the smallest capacity to think, the minimal thinking capacity), possessing consciousness, up to the human on the other hand, who has, as an individual on this Earth, reached the highest consciousness yet. And who has developed thinking in the past two and a half thousand years to an extent of virtuosity that most people even believe that it is the single aspect that characterises the human being and the highest that he can reach. Although the fact that today thinking can be reflected in machines should make us wonder about that.

Unbelievable catastrophes will occur that are the consequence of a lengthy development during which we failed to early enough develop other skills other than the ability to think. And where ninety percent of the world is a helpless baby that can hardly move: The air is polluted; traffic doesn't function any more; the telephone is busy after the first zero; interpersonal relations don't work any more; sexual relations don't work any more. Why? Because the human is simply not prepared to keep himself safe by himself – without using prepared, uniform pushy systems.

I know from my own experience as a youth, when I was supposed to be drilled to become a Hitler Youth. Then everything happened differently and became opposite, and I was to become a Christian Democrat, and after that I was to become a Social Democrat, and then I was to become if possible a specially biased, namely Cuban biased Marxist or perhaps even a Maoist. If a person were able to look through someone else to see what he or she is up to and to already change him by doing so, then he wouldn't have to be afraid or call a policeman or a lawyer. In light of the present tendency of having artists join a certain party and then to be proud that this artist speaks for this party, I myself am a nuisance for most people who have identified themselves ideologically and party-wise. The attacks against me always show that I seem to be a capitalist to those who consider the communist ideology to be the only correct one. In America, I was called a communist. In America a lady came up to me after a lecture and said: "Oh I am sure, he is also a communist!"

One must view humanity as a body that either functions or it doesn't; where some limbs become rotten or get broken or have tumours or rashes, and so on.

I can imagine that this will produce all kinds of variations in the course of my life, like here all of a sudden, due to the general fashion, the word "fascist" appears. And where more people will be able to bring themselves into balance, as a whole, altogether: I always say "cosmos". By that I mean not only what is outside of us, but a unity with everything, with the whole universe, with all thinking beings – also with what cannot be named. I believe that whoever has a consciousness that goes beyond this little planet Earth, that reaches everywhere, radiates something that touches others, even changes them. I am sure that a centre, a spiritual centre, is always necessary. That it not always just goes on

like it does now. If we do just anything – we try this often, before we begin to play a particular work, something that one can call a work, that is: something that evolves from certain agreements, even if they are only spoken – then just junk results, halves of scales or clichés or just what musicians play in disarray. Why are so many young composers unable to compose? Because they always think themselves to death. I always say: because they eat themselves up beginning at the tail and simply are no longer able to make decisions. For which there is no reason. But rather when they know, that must now happen. And not because they have logically developed it and say: That is the best solution. But because they know intuitively from the very beginning: now I must do that. Perhaps the composer of the future will play the role of a guru in a spiritual centre: That is a person who is completely internalized and concentrated on a particular way of producing music by mental preparation. And one can do very particular exercises in order to produce one kind of music in comparison to another kind of music.

MIKROPHONIE I is still a relatively pre-determined piece: It is read and what is read is implemented in sound and actions. The time is measured; the synchronicity of the musicians is regulated by counting, reciprocal signs, etc. The other extreme is interpreting texts from AUS DEN SIEBEN TAGEN (FROM THE SEVEN DAYS), where no special thinking processes whatsoever are suggested, but rather a general mental state is described or stimulated. The relinquishment of logical thought processes rather than their pursuit: not deductive, but derivative thought: Instead of saying I am supposed to do this or that because he did this or that, just acting directly on intuition. Sheer emptiness, with no intention: One wants absolutely nothing and functions like a living instrument that acts and reacts in a superior unity. That means for example: I play a vibration in the rhythm of your limbs. One piece. It has five different vibration categories, which the individual musician plays consecutively and then freely exchanges: of your body, of your limbs, of your heartbeat, of your breathing, of your molecules – it becomes more and more difficult – of your atom models, of your smallest particles, as far as your consciousness reaches. And one must now create all the prerequisites: That an event is really as unpredictable as possible. So that no one who comes, already knows what he will hear and then feels like a controller who considers wrong notes or the wrong tempi – or whatever – to be more important than the music itself.

These are very exact indications. But in each text, they surpass normal possibilities: As a musician, one is completely consternated at first and thinks one cannot do it. It is just impossible. You are either one with the music or not. If you are not one with the music, you are lost. You have lost the time of your life during which you were listening.

In ecstasy, you are suddenly one with everything. Not only is one not egocentric, but one no longer considers oneself as separate from the whole. And profoundly listening to music, above all, in my experience, also that of other people, with closed eyes, can lead to this highly aware identification with that which tones can experience. Those who live on intuition constantly receive something that is more than one was before. The fully unexpected. So it one can speak of property at all, it can only be his own as long as he is occupied with it. Then he gives it back to the whole. Thus the problem with the authors' rights society posed itself immediately, which wrote to me: There was a work performed, are you the author or are you not the author? And finally a correspondence developed on the subject of who the author actually was. And then I said: If you really have these kinds of problems and think that they are that important, then handle it like a marriage: The people come up and say: We want to get married. And if anyone has anything against that or wants to submit a complaint that speaks against the credibility of these two partners, they can do so within six weeks time. Then do it that way: publish a book every year with the registrations of new works: And whoever has something against it has to register that objection within one year. Whoever thinks he can live on his own and create, should do so. Whoever needs to adapt himself, who needs an inspirer, a spiritus rector, some kind of guru, if one can call it that, should find himself a guru. He will play in a group. And when he does not like that anymore, he will leave it.

That is what I feel and have experienced deeply in certain moments of my life: That there are erratic possibilities. That a new kind of being is growing out of humanity, and that perhaps already some are among us who are in the middle of mutation – whereby also physical mutation, the control over the body and so forth, also plays a major role – who will become more spiritual beings than the human race has ever been. It is the huge misunderstanding of democracy when one says: Everyone is the same. That is completely wrong. Everyone is not the same. Or: everyone has the same rights. That is

completely wrong. Not everyone has the same rights, but everyone has the possibility to obtain their own rights or to create them.

That has not only emerged out of my own experiences, that have sometimes shown breakthroughs into a very much more enlightened existence. But rather, we have seen that in people who have come much further: for example Sri Aurobindo, whose writings I encountered last year and in whom I have discovered an absolute brother in spirit after I had experiences myself that seemed very unusual to me. Or altogether when I listen to music and am not disturbed, it is the deepest meditation that I know, namely the perfect identification of my being with what I hear: **I become the tones**. As fast as possible. And that usually happens only when I close my eyes. Or sometimes it works if one looks somewhere and then no longer knows what one sees. That one becomes just like the tones. And when the tones go upwards, I go upwards too. If they become fat, I become fat. If they become thin, I become thin. If they become noisy, I become noisy. If a tone divides into two, I divide into two. A real experience: That I divide up and somewhere else I come back together with myself and experience a truly polyphonic relationship: I don't even know when it is over, when I have listened to music in such an intense-meditative way. Or what I thought about... I haven't thought at all. **I was the tones**. During the day and at night, during car trips, travelling. In unexpected moments. Where one has isolated ideas that one collects. Some of which one forgets. Sometimes I write them down in words, and so forth. And then the moment comes when one has planned to start composing and has reserved the time. And if this process gradually calms down and arrives at a state in which one's inner voice no longer says: You have to check this and that place or continue to work. So when you are in balance with this work yourself, then it has left you. Then it leaves you. Then it is finished. And then you have the consciousness: Now I have done everything that I could. Sometimes that takes years, I must say.

It is so unbelievable: You perform the world première, for example. And during the rehearsal you notice again that there are some things you haven't done right, because it sounds different than you wanted it to...

Child: Papa, we're leaving now...

Stockhausen: What did you say?

Child: ... we're leaving now!

Stockhausen: Oh! Go ahead then, bye-bye.

Child: Come along!

Stockhausen: No, I'll stay here.

Child: Why?

Stockhausen: Because these people want to ask me some more questions...