

Lots to ponder here and thanks to David, Rich, Michael and others for offering their insights and suggesting “areas of focus”.

I started out with a recitation of the emergence of the Western European music we now call the “Romantic” genre from the works of the creative geniuses of the pre-Baroque (Bach), through Baroque, Rococo and “neo-classical” eras fueled by the writings of W A Mozart and Ludwig Beethoven and finding expression in the works captured in the the Piano Box video. I laid these changes in musical expression alongside the written word and visual art examples of the same time periods, then laid them across the timeline of the continued emergence of the political and economic changes (again revolving around quests for wealth and power) we now study as the history of Western Europe. Interesting but a bit off track - or a repeat of Lani Spahr’s remarks at LPL on 3/6.

So - Michael Redmond asks, “in your own life, are you more a child of the Enlightenment or of Romanticism- and what might it mean to live well between the two?”

I have great appreciation for the “storm and stress” that characterizes the period of Romanticism. As Pere Teilhard said 150 years later, these were “ideas whose time had come” - Philosophers, musicians, visual artists and even creators of written word aspired to (and succeeded) in freeing human artistic spirit from the regulated order.

What is this “regulated order” from which the ideas and arts of the Enlightenment emerged? - At least in Western Europe of 1650 - 1820, it was the order created by the Bishops, Dukes, Emperors, and Kings and Queens of the small city-states and emerging colonial powers. While limiting many freedoms it also brought about music, poems, drama, and visual arts that are still considered human masterpieces and taught to young people all over the world. Within this order came the notion that human beings might be able to live more amicably together. Guilds and

town halls, the era of the burghers (yes bourgeois) seeking an improvement in life and living conditions to honor a social contract or seek a common good.

So how do we keep the best of individual freedoms, liberty, and opportunities to express these values, while also preserving and valuing universal benefits of providing certain rights and privileges to all?

As long ago as early-mid 18th century writers during the Enlightenment warned about liberty without limits on certain behaviors. Western thought and culture seems to end up in the groove of either/or - with zero sum outcomes valued higher than additive outcomes.

Eastern philosophies favored - "both/and" - yin and yang - the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Why can't we support and favor innovation, creativity and individual achievements without succumbing to the need to control and order the universe to meet only those needs of the wealthiest and most powerful?

Respectfully,
Pat Newcomb