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### PHILOSOPHY OF THE BLUES

In Merriam-Webster dictionary, the Blues is defined as "a feeling of sadness or depression." The 2<sup>nd</sup> more precise definition is "a style of music that was created by African-Americans in the southern U.S. and that often expresses feelings of sadness." To truly define the Blues, one couldn't put it into words. Even if you would read an entire book on the subject, one still couldn't understand it. To understand the Blues, you'd have to live it. The Blues is history, music, life, spirit, and much more.

The history of the Blues dates back to the days that African-Americans were taken from their land against their will to be slaves to the New World in America. There, they sang out in the fields to bear the awful circumstances they were in. They would sing to each other by call and response using sad melodies with special attention to the "blue" note.

The "blue" note is a minor interval where a major would be expected. Instead of Do-Re-Mi, it'd be sung Do-Re-Me, a half step lower in the 3<sup>rd</sup> interval of the major scale. This is a major foundation that the Blues is sung on, reflecting the melancholic nature of the person singing it. The Blues is the basic foundation for a plethora of genres today. These include Rock-n-Roll, Jazz, Gospel, R & B, and Hip Hop to name a few. The first instrument to explore the Blues was the vocals of the slaves out in the fields. Then the guitar and harmonica brought new life into the spirit of the Blues, both with timbres

that suited the Blues perfectly. The harmonica especially was essential, which was easier to access during these times.

To comment on the lifestyle and spirit of the Blues is more difficult to do, as it is less fact-based as exploring the history and music. One would have to have experienced the hardships similar to those of the slaves out in the fields, a father trying to raise his child in a segregated community to name a couple, or the low spirits of a man in sadness using music to pour his heart out. This isn't to limit the feeling of the Blues, but to give examples of a good place to start to understand what it is.

The Blues is still very prevalent today and lives in the veins of modern music. Whether it is a guitar soloing during a 12-bar phrase in a popular Rock band, or a Pop singer with a top 5 hit emulating the vocals and spirit of a Gospel singer. The Blues is the future, past, and present. The Blues is something to reckon with. The Blues is experience and perspective. The Blues is that and much much more.

Israel  
Very observant.  
Thank you for the  
counsel to the  
course. J