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Music and Conscience

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Music and Conscience: An Ontological Relation

"By music, someone can be converted to any error
and verity; who would be able to combat the tone?"
Friedrich Nietzsche

The interaction music and conscience belongs to the most profound and direct relations. The repercussions for each of them are those of a defining character. On the one hand, music is the emanation of the soul, on the other hand, the *psyche* owes its existence to a considerable degree to music. The daring character of this statement dies out after the problem is thoroughly examined, after the conclusion is made that if it had not been for music man's psychic evolution would have covered a different trajectory; his psychical constitution would have been different if it hadn't been for those 40.000 years of music. M. Gabai and J. Jost remark: "Music is a great power. It belongs to a world that influences our whole physical and psychic condition".[1] Also, E. T. Gaston emphasizes this determining influence of music on the process of constituting the *psyche*: "Music is closely related to feelings and it can effectively awaken what is in deep collapse….This awakening is essential and of vital importance."[2] The same author asserts that "the significance of the aesthetic influence of music on the individual lies in the fact that without it he will be less complete than a human being."[3]

The influence of music on the conscience is one of constitutive nature because it has a character that is complex (in details) and total (as

[1] M. Gabai, J. Jost, *Detente psicho-musicale en odontostomatologie*, Paris, 1972, p. 37
[2] E. T. Gaston, *Functional Music – Basic Concepts in Music Education*, Chicago, 1958, p. 299
[3] E. T. Gaston (ed.), *Music in Therapy*, 1968, p. 5

a whole), starting with the psychic-somatic level and finishing with the meta-psychological one; it puts into action the whole interior universe, from light affective states to deep meditative states.

Music strongly influences the *psyche* because it firstly influences (due to this, profoundly) the interior process of primary vital importance, both philosophical and psychical, derived and autonomous: blood pressure, pulse frequency, breath, digestive tract; it strongly affects some organs innervated by the vague nerve, etc.[4] The somatic influences the emotions, in a broader way the whole psychical system that is of dynamic nature, being in a constant vibration and oscillation. This dynamic (precisely, rhythmical-dynamic) principle constitutes the basis of the organic relation between music and *psyche*; it helps to produce their intimate homogenization and fusion.[5] Mental processes are mainly of a motor nature. The vibrating phenomenon of impulsive nature that is produced in the brain as a result of a re-action (action of response, action repeated in the brain) to an external stimulus, is called in psychology "sensation"; that is, the sensation is only a type of vibration. This is not used in the figurative meaning of "spiritual vibrations", but in the direct meaning: the brain is a vibrating system. Any thought spontaneously and obligatorily provokes a certain tension of the respective muscles demonstrating the tendency to be realized in a motor way. And, as a consequence, it remains only a thought, it is because the movement has not been completed, has not been exteriorized, remaining hidden but real and active.

The psychologist E. Glower puts forward serious arguments concerning the intimate and practically insoluble relation between the two phenomena, music and conscience. The presence of rhythmical excitants of any kind, registered in children, irrespective of the sensory channel they get through is a proof that the rhythm serves as a child's self-expression before other means such as speaking, drawing and writing. That is why the art of music, pantomime, or dance is more directly and profoundly related to the incipient forms of psychical self-expression. Whatever high level they reach, they are less subjected to an analysis than verbal and visual outcomes. These primary psychical forms constitute the angular stone of a child's psychical life and are subordinated

[4] Cf. A.Athanasiu, *Elemente de psihologie medicală*, Bucureşti, 1983

[5] Psychology deals with the notion of "potentiality", typical of the nerve impulse that can be registered as a short wave. Due to this, psychology gets to deal with the term "psycho-rhythm"

to the fundamental laws that guide the psychical activity.[6] Later, these fundamental psycho-rhythmical forms influence the appearance of thinking and other processes. What was stated by E. Glower constitutes a very important discovery and argument to understand the abyssal relation between man and music, the role of the musical phenomenon in the process of genesis and development of human conscience as well as that of its state throughout life.[7]

In this context, we mention that A. Thomatis has investigated the influence of high frequency sounds on the *psych*e. He has demonstrated that man not only hears them; the sonorous vibrations influence the nerves of the internal ear, where changing into electric impulses move towards the brain. Some of them reach the auditory zone and are perceived as sounds, others reach the small brain which is responsible for complicated movements and the sense of body balance. From there, they are transmitted to the lymphatic system which controls the emotions and secretion of biochemical substances including the hormones that influence the whole body. The electric potential created by sound penetrates into the cerebral cortex which regulates the superior psychical functions and which controls behaviour. According to A. Thomatis, the ear is an organ that forms human conscience and body. The sound is one of the brain energetic sources. They stated the direct relation between man's auditory perceptive diapason, the diapason of his voice and the health state.

Pontwick, the founder of the Swedish school of melo-therapy, shares the concept of psycho-resonance according to which the abyssal substrata of conscience are in resonance with sonorous harmonious forms and thus become accessible to comprehension. On the basis of C. G. Jung's theory about the collective subconscious, the author developed the methods of access to the deep substrata of the *psyche* through sonorous combinations with the effect of particular sounds.[8] It was stated (in the electro-encephalogram) that when the music one listens to causes pleasure the alpha rhythm increases. It is also known that there is a non-pharmacological method of treatment called "brain music" (I. Levin).

Music addresses different aspects of conscience. "From the point of view of rhythm, intonation, etc., music can provoke sleep or nervous

[6] Jean Piaget considers that the first level of a child's intelligent development before the language's appearance is that of a motor sensory intelligence

[7] E. Glower, *Freud or Jung*, Sankt-Petersburg, 1999, pp. 174-175

[8] Cf. С. Шушарджан, *Музыкотерапия и резервы человеческого организма*, Москва, 1998

excitement, joy or sadness, stimulation or inhibition, optimism or pessimism; it may reveal the truth or ask profound questions about existence; it may give answers; it may fructify abstract thinking; it may produce theoretical elucidation, etc."[9].

Rhythmical music (dancing folk music, rock and roll, etc.) is easily perceived by man as it moves the lower part of the body (starting with the neck and lower) causing light psycho-physiological movements. The music with a deep character (classical or other genres, like "doina", for example) is different as it causes movement in the upper part of the body (up the neck). Maybe, it deserves to remember the "chakras" of the human body, both lower and upper.

The state of conscience generates states of corresponding energy; the energy goes where thought goes, but only if it is an intensely directed thought.

One can observe a correlation between the affective tonality of certain musical stimulations and the affective contents of a sleeping person's dreams. Everybody knows the effect of the lullaby on the child: the rhythm and intonation of the song produces rhythm and through it calmness for the body, comforting, balancing, harmonising him. It is well known that the rhythmic movements are successfully used in cases of various forms of stress.

As Fr. Nietzsche observes, the rhythm is a restraint, it gives birth to an irresistible call to obey, to participate.[10] The musical rhythm efficiently influences the brain, the rhythm of its functioning, generating billows of waves.

The rhythmic irregularity of brain's functioning produces psychical discomfort. If we remember that the human body functions on the basis of 300 rhythms, then it is easy to understand why the rhythm is in the foreground in the modification of inner states. This was stated in the ancient times, by Pythagora and his followers, by Aristotle, for example. Over centuries, Friedrich Nietzsche remarks that the appearance of poetry as well as its magic effect is due to rhythm.[11] Due to the specific magic features of rhythm, the prayer, as well as other forms of addressing God, was made rhythmic so as to be better heard by God.

Music and dances were widely used in different spiritual, magic activities, first of all, due to the power of rhythm to change the states of

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[9] A. Athanasiu, *op. cit.*, p. 302

[10] Cf. Fr. Nietzsche, *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*

[11] *Ibidem*

conscience. That is why Nietzsche asked: 'did exist anything more useful for the superstitious primitive people than rhythm?' With its help, one could achieve everything.

As a result of getting rhythm and musicality, the word acquired superior expressive qualities; consequently, increasing its psychological influence. This technique is used not only in ancient mystic activities, but also in sacred forms of address in the Christian ritual. The Bishop of Alexandria, Athanasios (295-373), meditating upon the way of pronouncing the psalms, has emphasized the special importance of the rhythmic melodic element which gives them a special intonational character that sets the soul in a calm and meditative state. Asking himself why psalms are sung, that is, which is the use of turning them to songs, Athanasios reached to answer: intoned psalms make the singers and listeners' souls to vibrate, moving them to a state of beauty, peace and love through their melodic character and harmony. Whoever sings psalms harmonizes his soul moving it from a state of dissonance to a state of consonance. The soul attuned "melodically" forgets about passion, directing its thoughts towards Heaven[12]. The singing of psalms does not aim at pleasing the ear; it aims at rendering the inner state of the singing person, his entering the spiritual worlds through singing.[13]

According to the "psychological" theory, a work of art is not something given (that has come from somewhere); it springs from our inner depth, it is a produce of our soul. The artist creates because he cannot help doing it. It is a state of being, an attitude towards life, a way of existing. According to L. Rusu, the artistic creation is a general, global attitude of the soul[14]. "Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Debussy… It was not their ambition of being original, but the great necessity of lightening to what they felt was the most precious in the innermost depths of their being – the way of searching and discovering the Ego"[15].

Talking about this fact, E. Cioran notes: "All I have written, without any exception, has a therapeutical value for me. I wrote to get rid of a

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12 В. Бычков, *Малая история Византийской эстетики*, Киев, 1991, p. 129

13 We draw the readers' attention to the notion of "vocation", that means "calling". "To invoke" means "to ask for help, particularly a divinity. "To invoke" may be also treated as "entering the voice". Another term with the same root "invocation" means "a poet's appeal to his Muse to help him in his creation". One more, we remark that if music creates the state of enthusiasm, this word - coming from the Greek en-theos - means "to be possessed by Gods"

14 L. Rusu, *Eseu despre creaţia artistică. Contribuţie la o estetică dinamică*, Bucureşti, 1989

15 D. Scurtulescu, *Pseudojurnalul unui muzician*, Bucureşti, 1995, pp.92-93

spiritual burden or to make it easier for me to bear it. I have noticed that whenever I write about my states I feel much better. If I had been able to express what I feel, I would have devoted myself to all kinds of excesses. I know people who would not have collapsed if they had been able to write. My feelings have become books. A book is a postponed suicide".[16]

Music is efficiently used in psychoanalysis. Jung thinks that hidden inner conflicts may be externalized through arts, through artistic activity; art helps patients to neutralize their repressive tendencies, adjusting in their psychical individual activity and discovering in themselves unexpressed abilities.

In our opinion, music is one of the royal ways of subliming negative feelings through creation. In *Sonnet VIII*, W. Shakespeare says:

Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy,
Why Lov'st though that which thou receiv'st not gladly?
Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy?

Multiple scientific data show that music is superior to other excitants as far as its influence on our interior is concerned. Very concrete results may be obtained through directed listening to some particular music. Some psycho-therapists, for example, recommend to listening to Haendel, Haydn, Vivaldi in the morning because their music has a very positive influence upon our general psychical state. Listening to our favorite music when we wake up, that creates a corresponding mood for the whole day. Music helps a lot to overcome the daily stresses. Due to the transposition of conscience into the symbol language of arts and religion, one can arrange the development of inner feelings. Otherwise they can get chaotic. The appeal to symbols stimulates the development of psychological processes in the corresponding direction. It was stated that when one is involved in an artistic activity the brain is working more intensely for the sake of the general state than during an ordinary activity.[17]

Thus, the art appears from inner tendencies and needs that are of vital importance. At the same time, it becomes due to this an active and irreplaceable explorer and user of the depths of conscience. "The aesthetic state thrusts roots in the abyss of our nature".[18] Art feeds the

[16] *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, Bucureşti, 1993, pp. 111; 120
[17] Cf. В. Петрушин, *Музыкальная психотерапия*, Москва, 1999
[18] M. Florian, *Metafizică şi artă*, Cluj-Napoca, 1992, p. 159

psyche, and also reveals it. The contact of the *psyche* with a piece of art makes it stronger, more mature, gives it conscience. Here we meet the term of "psychical nutrition", valuated by R. Huyghe.[19] He raises the "psychical nutrition" from the level of the optional act of artistic consumption to that of the obligatory one. As morphological regeneration needs food contribution, the necessary quantity of proteins, minerals, in the same way re-equilibrations and the stimulation of psychism need sculptures, paintings, symphonies and poems. Those who are not sure of this remain poor. When there is deficiency of specific spiritual energy the *psyche* risks to become underestimated. Thus, music is not a mere supplement to living, but it performs a determined homeostatic function. Music does not only attend the *psyche*, but it turns out to be an important principle for its existence. Art offers us an interior experience, which is new, original, not living yet; it establishes connections with unknown interior zones.

An exeget of Enescianism, M. Marian - who is interested by priority not in "Enescu- the work", but in "Enescu- the man / the creator behind the work" (to understand the work itself) - defines the great musician using the term "interior man". The genius is not engaged in making an exterior biography, he can make only an interior biography which gives birth to his brilliant music. Enescu's interior life, his way of being strictly respected the principles of musical harmony. "What is amazing in Enescu's character is the features of a perfect interior balance which did not exclude antinomies, the features of good temperance, of a particular self-possession, of a profound serenity and of a very special sense of measure.[20]

The soul dominated by lack of balance feels the need to organize his chaotic impulses so he appeals to arts which is also a problem of balance. Then, art - a concrete piece of work - balances or on the contrary stimulates the lack of balance. That is why some pieces of work (styles, genres) harmonize and calm the soul, some disturb it, some help to elevate it, others bring it back to the state of instincts. According to the experimental investigations of states of conscience, rock music and classical music influence our interior very differently provoking different movements (that are even contradictory) in the functional structures of the nervous system, in the activity of cerebral hemispheres. Different kinds of music have access to different zones of the interior. One type of music will

[19] R. Huyghe, J. Rudel, *L'art et le monde modern*, Paris, 1970
[20] M. Marian, *Chipul geniului*, Bucureşti, 1991, pp. 150, 152

feed the body, another kind of music will actively influence the emotions and, finally, another type will be received only by supreme, spiritual zones. Listening to and practicing music transposes conscience into a great variety of states, each with a different character-from simple physiological energizing to super-sensible and super-rational transcendental feelings, up to catching certain meanings with the help of specific intuition, meanings that none of the sciences is able to reveal or describe.

Music sets the soul in a state of chanting.[21] By "state of chanting" (or "state of music") we do not mean man's immediate emotional state at the moment of interpretation, listening to or composing some music. It may be present out of these activities too. "The state of chanting" is something more, it is larger, more profound and more specific; it is a state of general enchanting (in Romanian, the word "enchant" means "to enter chanting") of harmony, of special interior vibration. The Romanian words "to cast a spell over", "invocation", "incantation" are based on a state of "spell song". To be in the "state of chanting", that means to be in the "state of the supreme feeling of being, in the state of peace, love and light". Chant, chanting, enchanted (bewitched), enchanting… "To be enchanted" means to get out of the ordinary state and to enter a superior, elevating, enlightening state. When in the state of chanting (that is when its sonorous, vibrating, energetic and ethereal substance that is imperceptible but felt in a hidden way, somehow deviated from the normal-normative has seized the whole being) the whole conscience acquires a different "mentality", it changes its character, course, content. Thus the state of chanting (of music) may be considered a modified state of conscience (with a plus when the music is beneficent and with a minus when the influence of music is harmful). Due to its ability to enchant, music poetizes. "The state of music means getting the interior in a state of musicality: conferring a certain rhythm, harmony, movements to the interior processes, the fusion with that music in itself, with its specific qualities-components, taking over its harmonious qualities. To do music out of this state means to do "exterior", "acoustical" music.

Due to its profound, unlimited, direct and seducing action on the *psyche*, music is used in the negative meaning, too - as a mood elevating

[21] We use the term "state of chanting" (or "state of music") because it very clearly defines a reality - an absolute specific interior feeling, fairly real and concrete that can be produced only during a profound communication between man and music (chanting)

weapon: distance affectation (modelling and manipulation) of the *psyche* by broadcasting a certain type of music.

Music is one of the most efficient ways of learning the human nature. "Some may think that we can live without music. Sure. Nobody feels the lack of an unknown necessity. But to live without tasting the authentic beauty, without learning the message of arts that represents a source of enchanting and joy for a whole life, without benefiting from its contribution to the development not only of sensibility but also of the character and elevated human conscience, that is equal to a decayed, infirm existence!... Poetry, arts, music are real forces to model the human conscience".[22]

From the point of view of the essential and modelling influence of music, the aesthetician and musician D. Cuclin distinguishes three human stages: *the animal-man*. At this stage, man is hardly developed psychologically, he is unharmonized, that is why bad at transmitting harmony, insensible to the sound of music, an inhabitant of a chaotic universe of noise - a monstrous mixture of vibrations (man is not yet able to master and order the sound, the sonorous world.); *the human-man* is the man in whom the powers of perfecting the spirit begin to wake, the man who broadens his mental outlook on life, on living and thinking, getting able to intercept the harmony of the musical sounds as a "miraculous revelation". However music does not reach yet the superior limits of a sovereign liberty; it is subordinate to literature, dance, ritual; finally, *the spiritual-man*, which illustrates the supreme stage. Music is a specific substance, bearer of specific meanings, that are superior to those perceived at the previous stages. Cuclin determines the historic role of music in the process of humanizing the man in the spirit of his functional theory.[23]

Music has considerably contributed to the constitution of the human interior universe. This makes musicality not only an individual quality of a certain person; it is a general faculty of human conscience, generally.

[22] M. Eiosikovits, *Introducere în polifonia vocală a sec. al XX-lea*, Bucureşti, 1976, p. 94
[23] E. Istraty, D. Smântânescu, *Convorbiri cu Dimitrie Cuclin*, Bucureşti, 1985, p. 25