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Marks of Music Reception through Moral Dimension

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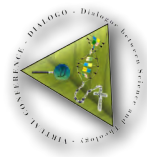
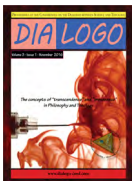
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Marks of Music Reception through Moral Dimension

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14, 6)

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ABSTRACT

Ethics is the science that comprises the complete rules of moral conduct. Ethics is the science, while moral is the instrument. Moral, whose etymology comes from the Latin word *mores-moralis*, meaning “custom,” represents a number of beliefs and attitudes reflected in principles and laws, historically and socially determined, that establishes human relationships and their social inclusion, being based on conscience. It is not law, but mass conscience what prevails in approaching the conflict between good and bad. The present study begins by presenting the psalmodic genre that belongs to the religious music and which is an initium of forms and genres, as its component, the Christian worship chant, did not receive social censure. It is a model of musical perfection through its peacefulness brought by the sacred verses.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Every society, regardless of the historical period, has its own set of values, according to its level of civilization and culture, to its ethnic and confessional traits, to its social and political commitments. Religious ethnic groups are also the keepers of social and political agreements. Their social involvement aims to create a loyal and solid relation and a cordial coexistence with their peers, so as not to harm anyone's personality. Related to these values, people and their creations can be appreciated, praised, criticized, or, on the contrary,

degraded and marginalized.

Music is both art and science that harmoniously builds a society. It includes methodology, rules, laws that govern it. Music is the field of theoretical, practical and, especially, spiritual component superimposition.

It is involved in the attainment of intellectual, cognitive, aesthetic, affective and moral objectives. Music is. But is it of high-quality or not? What is beautiful in music is also of a high standard, meaning, aesthetic and ethics are bound together. Beauty means harmony, and, therefore,

moral. By defining moral as being a set of rules every person must obey to in order to live in a society, one can deduce that music can bear the virtue of being moral as long as it reveals soul and spiritual faculties.

Musical aesthetics of every type has always had its own language through which genres and forms have been developed. Musical thinking has always been the cause of changes in every musical trend. They have, naturally, denoted an improvement over the previous period, but the musical, theoretical and practical expressions have not always been approved. Aesthetic feelings are one of the triggering elements in what concerns restructure of each epoch. As each human personality has different aesthetic taste, they socially build the tendencies and manners of a stylistic trend. Aesthetic ideals are, sometimes, a little more daring, transcending epoch's austerities. Each time, the aesthetic analysis of artists and art critics who have been appreciative of, or who have given a bad review to an event, expresses, even if, sometimes, only subjectively, the aesthetic and moral traits of the epoch.

Music is launched through the instrument of musical language, which is also subjected to human molding. Musical sounds target the soul with their emotional charge. Emotions can feed the soul and the body, with reference to those chemical reactions, neurotransmitters that arouse noble feelings or dramatic experiences. These emotions can be releasing, if positive, or negative, if the piece of work receives negative feedback. Being subjective, they can, at their most, arise a disharmonic state through anxious and depressing situations, both in society and human mind.

II. PRESENTATION

Ethics is the science that comprises the complete rules of moral conduct. Ethics is the science, while moral is the instrument.

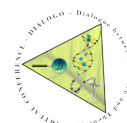
Moral, whose etymology comes from the Latin word *mores-moralis*, meaning "custom", represents the amount of beliefs and attitudes reflected in principles and laws, historically and socially determined, that establishes human relationships and their social inclusion, being based on conscience. It is not law, but mass conscience what prevails in approaching the conflict between good and bad.

There are two types of approaches: through Christian moral and through secular, conventional moral. Moral values that both categories promote are: goodness, moral truth, love for one's fellow man, justice, kindness, duty.

Religious moral is applied in highly spiritual environments that purvey divine teaching. Conventional moral is usually purveyed in secular environments such as institutions. Free-will is admitted in each case. "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love." (Galatians 5, 13).

Jesus Himself states that the most important command of the new law is "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12, 30-31).

A Christian approach of the moral attitude endows one with a sensitive approach towards the relationship between him and the Divinity and the constant spiritual advancement by being created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. A man's moral attitude is conditioned by this ascension. The rise after the fall is always animated by the relation with God, "who wants all people to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2, 4). This bond weakens and, thus, enfeebles the moral force when one is no longer living in the vibration of love and gratitude. Criticism



towards our own person and towards others can become destructive.

Holy Trinity in Itself is love, as Saint John, the Apostle stated that “God is love” (1 John 4, 8-16). Authentic vibration is continually and generously imparted to people. God’s love towards humanity is perceived as being the supreme Good. For instance, the supreme Good is a Christian moral value. “Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same” (Romans 13, 3). This moral value imbues every atom of one’s body, if allowed through free-will. In this manner, man has a vertical relation with God.

In the secular moral, the accent is placed on the relationship between man and the community to which he belongs. The values governing this moral are the same: goodness, moral truth, love for one’s fellow man, kindness and duty. However, the meaning is altered, the man relates to his community and not to God. In this position, man has a parallel relation with the other members of the community.

The supreme Good continues to remain a Christian and secular moral high ideal, as long as it is apprehended and creates social harmony. The author of “Professional Code of Ethics” divides the norms of ethics in four categories: authoritarian doctrine, libertarian doctrine, liberal doctrine and social responsibility doctrine.”[2]

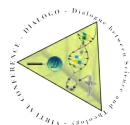
As this study mentions the periods previous to the contemporary one, one has to say that the cited works are subjected to the libertarian doctrine, which “encourages a speech free of any social constraints.”[3] This type of speech immersed itself in anachronistic patterns and rigid customs of a society in which emotions were fully suppressed, and when they were revealed, they generated unexpected conflicts. This antagonism actually reveals the discordance of socio-cultural thinking and education inflexibility in the past centuries,

reality being too hard to be accepted. As a consequence, it all results in suffering, disappointment, decline and even collapse of revolutionary ideas, as the joy of creation (referring to undervalued musical works) could not be honored.

The following pages mention some of the works that are present in several music genres, genuine masterpieces from each aesthetic orientation, but which have received a different feedback. Dating back to ancient times, the aesthetic needs promoted, through their music genres, humor, human behavior and moral attitude. Thus, some different-oriented musical compositions are considered to have a real ethical value, while others, contrary to the code of ethics, are considered in dissonance with a certain type of morality that governs a culture, an epoch.

The present study begins by presenting the psalmodic genre that belongs to the religious music and which is an initium of forms and genres, as its component, the Christian worship chant, did not receive social censure. It is a model of musical perfection through its peacefulness brought by the sacred verses.

Psalmody is placed on top of music ethics, as it is one of the primary chanting text modalities. The sacrality of the artistic gesture issued by the Davidic psalms’ piety can be considered a musical model. “Beauty in itself needs the Divine... Art requires the divine condition in which the organic form and sensitivity reach maximum value”[4]. Seeking to communicate with God and to redirect his prayers towards the sacred art, man used word symbols blended with the vibration of sound. In the Hebraic Culture, the 150 Old Testament Psalms are ascribed to King David (9th century. B.C.), his name being related to the establishment of the Judaic divine cult, within which music and poetry underwent a spectacular development. The psalms used in the



divine cult are worship chants brought to the Divinity, osmosis between prayers (word) and chant (chanted sound). In the Hebrew language, the title of the book is *Sepher Tehilim*, the term of psalms coming from Codex Vaticanus, *Psalmoi*, or *Biblos Psalmon*.”[5] The Greek word *psalto* (to pinch, to pull) generated the word *psalma*, having the meaning of “a song played at a string instrument”[6], so that the derived word “*psalmos*” means “a song played at harp or lyre.”[7]

Psalms were performed with musical instruments, as one can see from their own content: “Praise the LORD with the harp / make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre” (ps.32, 2)[8], or “Begin the music, strike the timbrel, /play the melodious harp and lyre.”(ps.80, 3)[9]. It appears that King David in person recited the psalm with the help of a string instrument, *bineghinot* (heb.) or of a panflute-similar one, *el-hanechilot* (heb.)

In the Middle Ages, when Gregorian chants were sung in gothic cathedrals, special types of intervals were allowed, the perfect fifth and the perfect fourth. They were intervals that could create a moral type of music. The other ones, such as the tritone, or *diabolus in musica* were forbidden, as they were not consonant and aroused the senses, thus, pulling the human thoughts away from the liturgical act. Major and minor third now gain the status of consonant, exhilarating intervals.

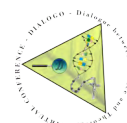
During Baroque and Classical period in music, due to the oppressive and restrictive social conditions that the artists found themselves in, there was no place for the development of music morality, all the more that sacral music was placed on a pedestal from which it was usually performed.

The Romantic period made redundant the platitudes of the sensitive symmetry, of the harmonious tone as a symbol of perfection, of stability in music genre and of coherence in musical form. Victor Hugo claimed the

state of liberty that animated the romantic artist. Romantic enthusiasm is translated as ardor, change, passion, revolution. These traits have brought important changes in what concerns a cultural person’s mind and the musical language. The musician’s social position changes, he becomes a freelancer, aspires and sweats for his creation, and this is the reason why many opera compositions have received negative feedback, have been condemned and banned. The introduction of intense emotional feelings generated unusual intonations for the music lover accustomed with classical sounds, who dismissed the music as lacking morality.

Niccolo Paganini was an Italian composer and violin player (1782-1840) who amazed, but also aroused the public’s indignation through his unusual appearance, being tall, skinny and asymmetric, but mostly through his original work, 24 *Caprices for Solo Violin* and his concerts for violin and orchestra. His innovative techniques (quick string crossing, *scordatura* and left-hand *pizzicato*) that generated his outstanding virtuosity created his diabolic, or, in other words, immoral image.

Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) shocks the Parisian public with his *Fantastical Symphony: An Episode in the Life of an Artist, in Five Parts* (1830) (an unconventional aspect at the beginning of the Romantic period). The symphony has an autobiographical program, as it mentions his psychedelic state after taking a lethal dose of opium. The flexibility of the musical language, the sensitivity of its first two parts and in the *Scene in the Fields* and the somber sound of *March to the Scaffold*, would create and direct in the last part, *Dream of the Night of the Sabbath*, the trivial vision of some demonic forces in battle, through the usage of a large and diverse orchestra. The immoral and unorthodox actions revealed through a more than chromatic musical language, long rests, unusual timbre combinations,



trepidant rhythm and dilated agogic accent lead to a critical attitude of the public, despite the long-lasting programmatic genre. Romanticism's morality was much more altered than the one of Classicism's.

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) was a composer that listened both to his and his people's hearts by ingraining elements of folklore in his operas. These elements generate emotional feelings, as they come from sunny Italy, being influenced by its history, the fruitful orange trees and clear Mediterranean Sea. Even if its original personality shifted the lyric music on a new dimension, full of drama, misery, revolutionary fight, of love themes set on alert historic events, *La Traviata* did not received the positive review the composer wished for. The display of the powerful love and sufferings of a woman of easy virtue disillusioned the audience present in the ostentatious room of the Venetian Teatro La Fenice (1853). "I have suffered a fiasco-the composer would write to the conductor Emanuele Muzio in a letter dated 7 March 1853, the second day after the premiere. Only time will show if the fault was mine or the performers'." [10] Today, it is the most performed opera in a lyric theater. In those times, although the composition would acquire positive review from specialized critics, Francesco Maria Piave's libretto based on *La Dame aux camellias* by Al. Dumas fils was considered scandalous. Although the Brindisi Aria enables the soloist to exult, due to the degraded relationships of a conventional society, the music fell into disgrace, attention being placed on heroine's psychological portrait that shattered the fragile morality of a society on the verge of change.

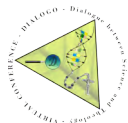
George Bizet (1838-1875) was a French composer whose name became famous through his composition dedicated to lyric music theater and music drama. *Carmen* opera (1875) scandalized the audience

of Opéra-Comique, in Paris, who harshly criticized the presence of the cigarette fabric workers, the gypsy female character *Carmen*, with her immoral and sensual attitude and the showy brutality and virility of the soldier Don José. Music also played a role in shaping the degraded image that realistically expressed the nature of characters and circumstances and through the trepidant rhythms of *seguidilla* and *habanera*, which often alters ration. Staged on the third of March, 1875, the composition generated critical opprobrium, leading the composer to despair and, thus, to his death after a few months.

Igor Stravinski (1882-1971), one of the most prolific names of the Russian culture and universal music, shocked the Parisian audience of Théâtre de Champs Élysées with his composition *Le sacre du printemps* (1913). The originality of his works is given by his libretto, which reveals atavic pagan customs by the usage of virgin sacrifice in order to celebrate the advent of spring. This theme is mainly evinced through the famous ballet dancer Nijinsky's choreography. The pagan rituals, musically assisted by much too strong dissonances, barbaric and explosive rhythms, lead to negative reviews, drawing the attention on the relativity and mobility of aesthetic convictions, through the immorality displayed in the composition.

CONCLUSIONS

Ancient pagan populations, having either a polytheistic or a monotheistic religion (Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Hebrews etc.) believed that the moral virtues could be acquired through the fulfillment of law. Moses would write that "That the man which doeth those things shall live by them." (Romans 10:5). St. Paul the Apostle wrote in The Epistle to the Galatians that "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ... for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.



”(Galatians 2, 16-21).

The history of the 20th and 21st century music witnesses the rise of popular music, of immoral genres that eliminates the crave for beauty, goodness and morality. Rock, hard-rock, and heavy metal are prone to reverse the purpose of music, which is to develop evolutionary aesthetic and ethical characteristics.

It is worth and, at the same time, beneficial to embrace George Enescu's affirmations, in order to develop a moral attitude: “Music is endowed with the divine purpose to cease hate, to soothe passions and to unite the hearts into a warm fusion, as Ancient's Orphic myth did. Music should flow from heart to heart... one must not forget that the purpose of art is evolution.”

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