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Author: Nicolae Brânduș

E-mail: n.brandus@yahoo.com

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Nicolae Brânduș
National University of Music Bucharest

Musicology – The Object of Music (and Not the Other Way Round)

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In my capacity as a practitioner of music in all its acknowledged forms, I tried to figure out a few things in a series of previous studies. Looking back, I am not in the least surprised that my first study, published in the *Muzica* journal in Bucharest years ago, was titled *On Singing* and started with Caragiale’s well-known question: “Popăscule, tell me what is music?” followed by the answers: “it is which sings” and “that which tickles our ears pleasantly” . . . (Brânduș 1969: 26). Leaving the anecdotal aside, I wonder how many have noticed what Caragiale’s genius *pointed* out with outstanding finesse, namely what resides in the syntagm “what is music”? That is, the relationship between singing¹ and anything else. I mean, no doubt, a vaster zone of defining music, which some people may see as an acoustical phenomenon with sounds and breaks, on which Popăscu enlightens us from the very beginning. The character in question knows exactly what this means, namely that not all that *sounds* is music. Moreover, he knows that not all that is performed with or without sound, whether on stage or in the street, actually *sings*! I understood what Popăscu meant after years of music practice, and I am deeply indebted to him!

As it appears in its live articulation, as personalized action, music is a complex phenomenon in which various kinds of orders intertwine holographically. We discover and account for some of them consciously, on different

¹ In Romanian, it is used the term *a cânta* for both verbs: “to sing” and “to play” [an instrument] (Ed.).

levels, but we are not aware of most of them. We give them life and meaning through performative action in the process of creating musical time, which I have often dealt with. Musical discourse unfolds an original time and space, a discursive universe whose complexity can expand as far as the fundamental mechanisms of Universe. The fact that many have noticed that in music one discovers whatever one wants to find out (!) can be one more argument in favour of its universal nature. In itself or as a phenomenon of language? Let us leave the answer to logicians. Suffice it to say that we know that the effort of (mental) comprehension of reality in our sphere of language presupposes detectable and transmissible elements anyway. Eventually, establishing an adequate logic will differentiate the musical phenomenon as a cultural product from any other random gesture. (At one point I had come to define total stupidity as a non-archetypal limit, but this is another discussion.) The teleological orientation of the process through which a musical enunciation comes into being does not obey simple, but rather complex rules, and it is a well-known mathematical truth that the total modelling of complexity is illusory (and that, not only from the point of view of the theorem of incompleteness). In the irreversible unfolding of the musical stream there are reiterations of detectable situations that may become a repertoire of functional data of this complex process, which can be studied and modelled.

Once Basarab Nicolescu's transdisciplinary methodology has been created, a fundamental research on music can be directed to define (or redefine) basic assumptions – according to the postulates of this doctrine – based on musical experience, so as to reposition it in a new light. In short, the postulates of the transdisciplinary doctrine are the following: Reality is defined as “all that resists the human spirit in its effort to discover, describe, symbolically model etc., with a view to knowing and understanding the laws that govern existence” (Nicolescu 2009). We are talking about a rational, logical, intellectual knowledge, a mental comprehension of the world. Unlike reality, the real, in the sense of [what is] and placed between brackets cannot be known. That is, all we can state about the real is what it is not, in a way that is similar to what an entire literature states about the void.² Eastern doctrines essentially rely on a conception similar to what is and what is born from the void. We permanently witness the appearance of all kinds of vacuum, void, emptiness, nothingness theories, from a literature of more or less aesthetically adorned ideas about what cannot be spoken of . . . If I am allowed a witticism, I will say

² In a recent online publication Basarab Nicolescu mentions “quantum breath”, not as a metaphor, but as a state of mind; and not only that.

that quantum logic is the extreme hypostasis of the scientific spirit's despair before the abyss of reality. Hence, Basarab Nicolescu's opinion that poetry contains more certainty than mathematical truth . . . One will wonder, however, where and in what is poetic rigour situated? We may find eventually the answer in the author's *Poetic Theorems*, which I warmly suggest you to read.

Reality is built on levels and, between them, there are zones of non-resistance that do not allow any type of formalization or intellectual comprehension. There appears to be a zone of intervention (occurrence) of the sacred in the process of constituting a transdisciplinary object. The sacred can be rational, but not rationalizable. More precisely, there is an existential breach in the process of knowledge, a zone of absolute freedom. Every level of reality is a field governed by a system with its own rules that do not apply to any other level. The author gives as an example the dichotomy between the macroscopic world and the quantum one in physics, where irreducibly different logics are at work. A certain state of facts exists only due to all the others existing at the same time (the complexity law). The passage from one level of reality to another takes place through an *existential* cut and not through a logical operation. In the light of the epistemological thinking of Romanian-born philosopher Ștefan Lupașcu, reality appears as a rigorous balance between the poles of a contradiction, between semi-actualization and semi-potentiality, between system and anti-system. Antagonistic dynamism in various dimensions engenders the systems representing the structuring of energy. The image of the world through our organs of perception appears as an illusion, "an impression of a consistent and opaque physical reality that we call matter. This is the substance-energy-space-time-information complex, and reality represents cuttings of a constant fluctuation, extracting rules, processes, phenomena, groups of relations" . . . (Ștefan Lupașcu, quoted in Nicolescu 2009: 36). Basarab Nicolescu continues by arguing that the ensemble of reality levels of the object and of the non-resistance zone is constituted as a transdisciplinary object. A permanent flux of information, a two-way correspondence is established between the transdisciplinary object and the transdisciplinary subject. The sacred ensures the harmony between subject and object and is part of a rationality zone in which the experience of the real, the essential element in the structure of consciousness, translates into a feeling. According to Heisenberg, there are different reality zones and levels of organization of systemic thinking: a classical mechanics, quantum mechanics (inseparable from the process of knowledge) and states of things in connection with the process of knowledge, such as philosophy, arts, religious experience, the experience of inspiration etc. The experience of crossing different

levels of reality through the non-resistance zone surpasses cultures and religions and reveals the poetic dimension of existence, the integration of reason and mystery, the revolution of intelligence, turning our individual and social lives into both aesthetic and ethical acts. Reality is a microphysical and psychological experience, in an isomorphic relationship. Every level of reality is connected to a certain level of reason. Ștefan Lupașcu maintains that ontology seems to be the exclusive terrain of artists, who do not search it, but make it! Hence everything that is connected to the ontological mystery of affectivity, which will always elude the grasp of philosophy! With reference to the logic of the included third, Basarab Nicolescu mentions that this is not a question of abandoning the identity axiom, but abandoning the excluded third in favour of the included one. The new contradiction is amplified, not abandoned; the interpretation does not become infinite (according to Umberto Eco), but precise and rigorous. Science is limited by its own methodology, which excludes non-resistance. The transdisciplinary level of reality theory proposes a unification of the spiritual, psychic, biological and physical levels of the multiple object through a multiple subject, which is attained through knowledge and understanding. It is a question of a multidimensional reality structured on different trans-connected and inseparable levels. The global movement of reality is expressed through a logic of events that corresponds to our reason. Reality depends on us, as the human being is the interface between the world and our inner lives, and the circulation of information takes place, through the non-resistance zone, on all levels of reality. Ștefan Lupașcu stated: “The only transcendence of energy we have is ontological affectivity. . . . A philosophy of affectivity can only exist as unity of contraries, and the key is provided by the included third. Affectivity is a mystery: we do not know where it comes from, and sometimes it does not even appear. Without the included third, it is an empty word” (Nicolescu 2009: 192). Basarab Nicolescu continues by stating that reality is plastic (Nicolescu 2009: 127), at the same time exterior and interior. It is rational, but its rationality is multiple and structured on levels. The hidden third – another notion introduced by the author – between the subject and the object resists rationalization and determines the flow of information, across all levels of reality, between the (transdisciplinary) object and subject.

The discontinuity between different levels of reality is counterbalanced by the continuity of information carried by the hidden third. The world is at the same time knowable and unknowable. . . . Without the known, the unknown would be an empty word. (Nicolescu 2009: 233-234)

From all of the above one may draw the conclusion that transdisciplinarity proposes a coherent model of reality and of knowledge, and the methods adopted can be extensively applied in any field. As regards the musical phenomenon, we have noticed from the very beginning that it can become a relevant object of study based on the foundations of the doctrine of transdisciplinarity. In this sense I have reversed terms from the very beginning, starting from the conviction that music, through its fundamental, even existential data, is able to generate its own knowledge, that is its own philosophy. It becomes a question of transdisciplinary research following adequate principles and requirements for reconsidering some fundamental language data in a new light, and repositioning them in terms of levels of reality, of the logic of antagonistic dynamism structured in various configurations of equilibrium, of subject-object isomorphism; in terms of defining the non-resistance zones (sacred) and applying the logic of the included third. The list remains open. By approaching the issues in question following principles of transdisciplinarity, a clear distinction will be established between any “literature of ideas”, as work of pure imagination, and a methodical research, conforming to the adequate logic creatively applied to the subject under discussion. Applications basically seem to be an open field, able to be revealed in full poetic freedom. To establish the contradictory and fluctuating patterns of equilibrium that generate systems would be an important direction in modelling processes in their holographic unfolding, since the musical phenomenon is – according to physicist David Bohm – the global perception of an implicate order from which subsidiary systems (explicate orders) can be extracted. How? Heuristically, artisanally, intuitively . . . poetically, of course. Creatively. At any rate, this particular approach to the orders involved in shaping a transdisciplinary musical object is a highly productive direction. As regards affectivity, this is not an aesthetic-imaginary digression (which may well ensue from it!), but a rigorous modelling of axiologic behaviours that result from following musical sequences with their semantic characteristics and studying the subjects’ adjectival answers. And singing is the most important step in this transdisciplinary approach to music beyond correctly establishing existential cuts between levels of reality, as well as revealing the contradictions in various patterns of equilibrium, and always keeping in the foreground the (transdisciplinary) relation subject-object.

What appears as music in the social-cultural space either sings or does not; it *sounds*, in the sense of producing – deliberately or not – auditory impulses of various timbre compositions. This dichotomy is certainly worth some reflection. The issue can be extended over the whole phenomenology of sound, whether taken as a symbol of inter-human communication or not.

But not only that: sometimes both the nightingale and the sea wave sing, and the wind “talks” to us . . . It is obvious that, in inter-human communication, what is essential is the intention. But a certain succession of sound impulses performed here and now sings, while others do not. Where does the mystery reside? Why doesn’t everything that sounds sing? It would be easier to identify singing with affectivity, according to the above. However, it is not so: affectivity emerges unpredictably (or does not at all) in performance, but singing regards other areas of the musical enunciation, of the creation of musical time (and space). Does it depend on the configuration given to the musical work (a score, whether written or not) that pre-exists the performance? I think so, but not at the semiographic level of the language-object (symbols written on paper!) but in an existential relationship with the “quantum breath”: let’s call it the real, vacuum, the incommensurable . . . This regards the ontology, created by practicing artists, in a direct relationship with the immeasurable. The question to be raised in the study of the musical work is to establish the zones in which the latter is favoured by the given configuration. This is about creative intuition, a perpetual dialogue with the infinite. The relationship between singing and the music-object is not of the reality level type, but an unmediated positioning in another existential zone, the same fundamental zone of creativity with access to any other aspect of the human endeavour to configure reality. In German, the most appropriate term for *singing* in this sense might be *Urgesang* (in a rather approximate translation, “fundamental singing”). Special aesthetic virtues could be attributed to it, such as a certain ontological category of beauty, a quality either existing *a priori* or having been acquired, and noticeable in any other field of knowledge. Many speak about the beauty of a mathematical demonstration or the splendour of the theory of relativity: all of them *sing!* . . .

As regards the musical work, analysis will help establish a clear dichotomy between the musical fragments that sing and those that do not. All of them sound, but not in the same way. In the old series of the *Muzica* journal (Brânduș 1987: 4-6) in Bucharest I published a study titled *A Dialectic of Formativity*, in which I was looking into this issue with reference to the classical repertoire, particularly Beethoven’s music, where this dichotomy appears clearly. In the unfolding of this music I could notice an extremely elaborate dialectic between zones of absolute beauty (let us call them musical ideas) alongside crossing, formulaic, “filler” fragments (scales, arpeggios, forms of accompaniment etc.). Their obvious function is to relax the reception of the musical work, to prepare the emergence of the idea in a controlled way. One sings, the others sound. It is important to establish that the musical idea (in

the sense described above) does not regard the style or technique of composition, but the composer's formative strategic capacity. As such, musical analysis should go in a different direction, towards a different order of musical reality that should be taken into account. Is it level of reality or ontological influx? With access to the real or to reality? We can see that the problem becomes more ample and goes beyond the current repertoire of musicology. A logic (even if merely presumptive) of singing refers to a different reality than the one approached by traditional musicology, which may lead us to the following conclusion: a musicology that considers the musical phenomenon an object of theoretical research of a philological nature (a philological approach possibly including all the techniques of formalization applicable in musical research) gets stuck when it comes to singing. Why? Because we are confronted with the egg and hen paradox! . . . It is only Music that can "speak" of singing or its absence: as a transdisciplinary object, of course, which accounts, non-verbally, for the presence or absence of singing in the universal maze of actual and virtual sound. It is strictly for those who sing to impose it in the general civilizing effort. Hence the idea of an aural civilization, still as a remote perspective! Sight (the eye) has brought us where we are, but hearing (the ear) is the only one capable of sounding – in an unmediated way – the potential of the void (quantum, abyss), which created all there is. Thus, musicology will become the object of music and not the other way round.

English translation by Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru

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