CULTURE, CULTURES, CULTURAL APPRENTICESHIP

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Abstract: This essay is proposing a brief overview on some significant features of the evolution of the Culture from its syncretic-mystical roots until the post-modern concept of "cultures", mirrored in the cultural apprenticeship, mainly centred on the musical education in the primitive cultures, passing through the Antique China and Greece, Medieval Japan and Europe until the Modern and Contemporary Epochs. It aims to arouse a discussion on the actual cultural and educational crisis, trying to emphasise possible causes and to highlight the communicational and energetic pattern of the musical apprenticeship as a possible vehicle to overpass the gap splitting the nowadays cultural consumers. The approach is focused mainly on the resemblances and common features revealing some systematized ways to transmit a cultural experience.

Keywords: Tradition, European vs. foreign imaginary, Master-apprentice, Shamans, Modern re-definition

Culture and cultures

The actual teaching-learning system is facing a contradiction between the need to cover an increasing amount of information and a prevalent educational politics oriented toward simplification and minimal resistance. The humanistic sciences and the art education must decide whether to adapt to, or to fight against the general trend wherein "Culture" is ceasing to be a consensual ideal and begins to be a levelled juxtaposition of "cultures". The broad-wide opening of modern Europe implies the re-settlement of a huge amount of data. Maybe we have not yet the right perspective to estimate the dimensions of this cultural ebb-tide we are going under. Since more than a century, we are interrogating about ourselves and try to reappraise both prospects and criteria in quest of a comprehensive overview of a global spirituality.

The modernity in Europe brought three essential phenomena in the social psychology: the laicization, (including the abandon of the transcendental pattern that traditionally was followed in the ethical and aesthetical criteria); the striving for scientific objectivity, (meaning the cult for exact sciences until fanaticism, tending to refill the godless altars) and a tremendous development of the communication, in all senses. Paradoxically, right in the climax of its global spreading Europe begins to foster an intriguing and peculiar self-denial and to open enthusiastically toward foreign cultural styles. The contacts with the others' spirituality act on our academic routine, leading to significant changes in our criteria and approaches. The opening to otherness, the tolerance for the foreigner seems to become the main request for nowadays cultural behaviour. Nevertheless, such qualities are often presuming disregard, when not despise of our own tradition, which are seemingly generated by a wide-spread confusion between discernment and prejudice.

The penetration of the foreign imaginary, firstly evident in the Arts, was not just an exotic ornament, but a vehicle for a real change as well in the value criteria as in the perception of the "cultural frontiers". The rejection of any European artistic tradition satisfied in the first place the imperative of renewal that began to be (and still is) the dominant ideal for any artistic creation. This iconoclastic renewal trend, bringing transformation of forms, languages or styles was the main characteristic of the last century. In 1911, at the opening of

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the "*Blaue Reiter*" exhibition in Paris, one of the promoters, the German painter Franz Marc affirmed: "We must be brave and turn away from everything that, so far, the Europeans felt good to be valuable and essential. The ideas and ideals must be dressed in fur coats; we must be fed with locusts and wild honey, not with history, if we want ever to get rid of the bad slain of our European taste"[1]. In the same way the established dogmatic edifice[2] built around the concept of Culture started to crack under the pressure of the new democratic tide that had begun to play an increasing role in the Western society.

These inwards and outwards openings of the cultural paradigm have been also developed by the technological outburst which has brought with it promotion of communication and infiltration of commercial criteria. The preservation of the "European Culture", as ideal to be reached was confined to the academic institutions until the final third of the 20th century. In May '68, on the walls of the revolutionary Paris one could read slogans as: „La plus belle sculpture, c'est le pavé qu'on jette sur la gueule des flics" ("The most beautiful sculpture is the pavement thrown on the cops' mug) or: "L'art est mort, ne consommez pas son cadavre" ("The Art is dead; don't eat its corpse"). This movement particularly held by students stand not just against the authority of the traditional culture but also against any authority. The nowadays Europhobic displays, which deserve to be more meticulously discussed are no more issued from some insurgent students, but are concerning also curricula and even the whole politics of some universities decided to reject "the exclusive authority of the white, dead males" , a triad which seems to symbolize the European cultural tradition.

A personal incident might be relevant for the strength of the non-European or even anti-European contemporary trend. In 2004, attending a vast international meeting, initiated by an important association of music teachers I tried to protest against an allegation claiming that the musical art of some ethnical small group from Middle East has to be considered equal with the European classical music. I realized immediately that my intervention was seen under some political-ideological lens hindering any argumentation; so I had the idea to oppose to that *grupusculus*, not the European music, but the Indian and the Chinese one. Only then could be heard the arguments I consider relevant for a qualitative difference between cultures, whatever they could be: temporal dimension, complexity, deepening of strata, cross-disciplinary sending and, last but not least, the surrounding subsequent constructions as instruments, techniques/manners to be taught, special spots and timings involving architecture, scenography, history etc.

The word "culture" is often abusively used nowadays; not only as a too large "umbrella", harbouring all kind of impostures, but also passing over some essential valences that can provide a clear definition. Culture is not a line, unifying or splitting horizontally only. The recent use of the term limits the average meaning to the totality of life forms and habits of any nation. That points out exclusively the local specific existing in the same time simultaneously. Thus, the term is degraded and simplified until a pure anthropological notion. Therefore an evaluation of the culture cannot be deprived of a vertical dimension[3], opening the temporal dimension of a phenomenon which can hardly be reduced to a horizontal stringing of events or objects however might be they different. The reduction of the meaning of the term culture to the customs of a group, implying the detriment of any other meanings which are presupposing elaboration, lead to a distort perspective and to an unfair levelling.

[1] Robert Goldwater: *Primitivism in the Modern Art*, Ed. Meridiane, 1974, p.183
[2] Abraham Moles: "Sociodynamics and Policy of Cultural Equipment in Urban Society" In: *Communication*, Vol. 14, No. 14, pp. 142-143
[3] Veronica Gaspar: „The Vertical Frontier and the Cultural Challenge of the Global Society" In: Volume of The Romanian-German Conference, Humboldt University, Berlin, March 2006

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We could realize the differences of mentalities in the last two centuries if we are comparing the definition of "culture" from 1805: "*The training, development, and refinement of mind, tastes, and manners*" (Oxford English Dictionary) to a recent definition from the American Heritage English Dictionary: „*The totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought.*" Regarding the latter definition, besides the keyword "totality", we could also be aware of the severe diminution of the connection with any educational process. Or, I believe that the relations connecting the factors involved in educational processes, be they concomitant (teacher-student) or temporal (ways to onward transmitting the heritage), could be significant for the cultural specificity of a human community. Even if it is not always a conscious action, the transmission of a cultural experience is involving a social ritual, especially visible in the temporal arts. In this regard, the musical education could be more illustrative for a general outlook. This domain is showing clearer as well the communication's differences in time, as the ratio of associated fields involved in the teaching-learning processes.

Culture and apprenticeship

A brief systematization of the main performance training styles is pointing out some significant aspects of the musical communication, in the hypostasis of direct performance or in its subsequent pedagogy. The temporal classification reveals three main levels: the relationship between master and student (apprentice), the ratio between preservation of a tradition and renewal and the importance of the above-mentioned associated fields together with, or even instead of the concrete technical guidance. Most of the arts, but notably music went throughout history from the status to be a part of a more complex spiritual activity, until becoming an autonomous discipline. Beyond evident differences, the both basic pedagogical styles, either based on oral tradition or on written text are sharing some common aspects, bound up to the aforesaid classification. Performing is a complex creative activity which always implies the belonging to a specific cultural context. As well the detection and selection of meaningful structures as the building, disclosure and transmission of integrated entities, involve both emergence (Adorno's *Bewegung*) and social or psychological expectation. We cannot refer to an activity designated for public emotional communion separate from its cultural context. Education is a matter of study and practice (to know and to do). The difference regarding the "to know" part is discerning the type of a society, disposed toward an ideal or toward a pragmatic pattern.

The oldest educational layer involving music is a syncretic discipline related to magic and healing rituals. In its pure form it can be found in the Andean area or in the South-Eastern Asia. We pass over the communitarian contamination which can be found in almost all the primitive tribes. In this educational system, music was a part of a complex magic-artistic ensemble. It can be seen as a miscellany of medicine, mysticism, fortune telling, popular astronomy, songs, dances, significant stories … The artist-sorcerers and their occult training play the role of link in the vertical transmission of the eternal world of God/Gods to the temporal world of men, and in the horizontal transmission from hand to hand, within the temporal world of men. When and if the ritual became more sophisticated requiring special skills or, at least, a special training, the rule was (and still is, in the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries for instance) rather simple: the apprentices sung or recited together following a model: the teacher himself or a more advanced "student". The "method" was very simple and, it seems, either efficient: when a mistake occurred, the guilty was stroked, mostly without to be informed about his/her awkwardness. It was the apprentice's duty to find out the reason and to correct alone his route toward the Guide's wisdom...

In the second hypostasis – music as part of magic: the apprenticing was secret, not open to everyone, after long periods of more or less unpredictable tests. The main salient

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feature of this relationship was the emphasis on the irrational. Knowledge comes through a special state which obscures the average sensorial perception (trance, drugs). Music and sometimes language are different from those used in public rituals. In the Eastern Europe there exists still a genre half verse - half music, a peculiar kind of a rhythmical *parlando* used for healing, good fortune or for chasing the evil.

A particular connection of these two hypostases is still kept in shamanist practices, wherein the initiation is not severely restricted and the secret formulas coexists with public renditions in connection either to private conjuring or to social events. Another level refers to the shamanic apprenticeship which assumes a narrower zone of associated fields and a superior systematization. Because of the modern times (especially migration and industrialization) many traditional ways of communitarian life are decreasing. Nevertheless, in the Eastern Europe, in Romania, numerous communitarian traditions strained by archaic significations remain miraculously unaltered. Customs and habits are still practiced in important moments of the social or private existence. If the day-light music (used in public ceremonies, feasts etc.) underwent the modern time's changes, the hidden spells did not suffer important alterations.

The Shaman plays a main role in the preservation of ancient traditions[4]. The name refers currently to the healer-artist-sorcerer in the North-Eastern Asia, but his attributes can be found to the popular healers in other regions, as, for instance, in Romania. These archaic layers are maintaining their specific old musical traditions, untouched by any kind of neighbour influences, or official pressures. Such old stable strata are intriguingly similar to each other, no matter the geographical distance that separates them, thus pleading for an ancestral cultural unity.

By artistic means, the Shamans perform masterful manipulation and presentation of mental images in the audience, aiming at achieving the expected spiritual, psychological, and physiological responses. The salient feature of the Korean shamans is the emphasis on the artistic part of his mission and hence the elaboration of his/her artistic renditions. In order to keep alive all the features of their complex Kraft, the great Illuminated become guides in a thorough process of initiation. The disciple is living for a long lasting period near the Master, starting with domestic servitudes and, eventually, getting to earn the privilege to gradually learn some of the secrets of the art. This pattern of apprenticeship is similar to that found in the painting workshops in the Medieval and Renaissance Europe. If for the modern anthologists the knowledge about shamanism is the result of an interdisciplinary study drawing from comparative mythology, history of religions, cultural and psychological anthropology, history etc. for the Shamans themselves, knowledge comes from intuitive compatibility, added to the above-mentioned long lasting initiation. The follower was selected through a specific grill, mostly from the Master's relatives, according to some mysterious signs and after a slavery-like initiation stage.

The evolution of the science and the conquests of the 20th Century had a price to pay: the loss of the ancient artistic-medical-mystic tradition. The mystery, the complicated rituals for access and poor written information increased the vulnerability of the Art. But, in the last decades, the opening to the exotic world resurrected the ancient concern for the shaded zones of the spirit. In fact, the striving for scientific objectivity – emblem of the Modernity – was the first to decline, probably under the influence of the non-European thinking style. That is why, in the present, we are crossing a period, which seems overweighed by the invasion of the

[4] The references concerning the Shamans's music are part from a more extended research-study: *"Guides and Initiates in Quest of Illumination": Non-European Traditions in Musical Teaching-learning*" presented at the International Conference "The Reflective Conservatoire: Apprentices and Sorcerers? "Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London, 16 -19 February 2006

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primitive layers of humanity. Nevertheless, this renewed cultural fashion, which puts its mark everywhere – from the average preoccupation of ordinary people until the highest research-study – facilitates a fantastic trip backward to the human roots. It reveals astonishing coincidences connecting remote cultures but also the survival of old epochs in our present habits and art forms.

A "musical school" in a more proper way was created in the antique Greece. It had a paradoxical resemblance with the traditional musical apprenticeship in Japan. The educational level represented by these schools is supposing the transmission of the knowledge through writings and public schools. The apprentice is no more part of the Master's life; he becomes a student. He has no other obligations, except to learn and to venerate his Master, whether the lessons take place outdoor, as for the peripatetic style, or in a confined room. As in the archaic societies, the mastering of the knowledge was not taught, but was the indirect result from the proximity of the Master.

For the Europeans, the Ancient Greece is the cradle of the collective pedagogy, meaning a public school, pending on the Citadel and not on the Monastery. The culture was unified with the religion through the *Ethos*. Contrary to all other teaching systems, in Athens the relation teacher-student was based on dialectics. The student was encouraged to ask questions until to the freedom to gainsay or to express doubts. In Greek schools, music was an important cultural mark, together with literature and gymnastics. The instrumental music was compulsory in *gymnasia* and *palestrae* and sometimes a student was trained by a special teacher. Young Athenians learnt to play both the lyre and the *aulos* (wind instrument). The musical theory was learnt only at a superior level. According to some pictures on vases, the pupil was steering to his master and tried to imitate him. It seems that the free dialogue has not a similar extent in the instrumental education. Beginning with Pythagoras, music was integrated in the mathematics sciences corpus. The culture and its pedagogical corollary were different in Sparta. Sparta before 6th century b. C. was a musical capital – comparable to Vienna in the 18th century. Afterwards, the cultural life decreased together with the strengthening of the militarization.

The education system in the Greek antiquity encountered avatars and raised discussion rather similar to the actual ones. Writings have been preserved, as, for instance, the 7th book of Aristotle's *Politics*, which treats on some „eternal" dilemmas referring to art education, strategies to follow in order to keep a large access to education, resistance against the decay of the public taste etc. etc.

Until the 5th century, it was a perfect balance between education, culture, and a non-sophisticated musical art. In the Hellenistic epoch, the musical education in schools became increasingly restricted: only for the two last years and only few hours a week for learning lyre and "music" (probably music theory, that meant a mathematic subject-matter or, perhaps, vocal singing). The teachers were fewer than their colleagues and better paid. When great composers as Melanippides, Kinesias, Phrynis and Timotheos refined the structure of harmony, the complexity of the form and instruments, music became the appanage of specialists requiring not only gift but also a special complementary education. In the 4th century, the *technitai* (profesionals) drove away amateurs and dilettanti from the renditions to the non-participative auditory.

The restraining of the musical education reflects also on the *Ethos*, indissolubly connected to music. Consequently, an entire parallel universe of myths raised by music turned to simple anecdotes. The free dialogue linking the Master to disciple has decreased during the centuries. However, in spite of a millennium and half of the Christian Church's dominance, the dialectic esprit emerged whenever the circumstances allowed it. The growth and diminution of music in the Hellenistic social space mark the main distinction between the ways to preserve tradition in Asia comparing with Europe: in Asia the society allows the

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simultaneous cohabitation of diverse cultural types unaltered, while the European culture is ceaselessly changing. Each epoch or major influence clears up and replace the former style or ideology in opposition with the Asiatic concern for unaltered preservation.

In Japan, a "school" (either for soloists or for ensemble) refers more specifically to a style of playing. The organization is comparable to the old European guild system. The manner to teach is mostly imitative, as in the shamanic training. The *Sensei* (先生) (the Foregoing Master or the Guide) plays and the student try to do the same, without many words or theoretical explanation. The students become Master's followers, keeping strictly the technical secrets and the imperatives of absolute obedience, aiming at acquiring the professor's personal touch. For the slightest change, the initiator had to leave the school. Afterwards, the dissident was free to create another school, if he had enough force or talent to do this. Only in his own school he was free to practice according to his style. The school system was, and still is, extremely strong in Japan and the competition can be fierce. This mentality works also for the learning of the Western music and it might be the principal reason for the omnipresence of Japanese performers in the international musical life.

The Chinese musical culture offers a first example of a "classical" (cultured) music entirely forged by specialists. Alain Daniélou is convincingly demonstrating that the musical system, including the pentatonic system assumed a school and not an adaptation of popular forms[5]. Moreover, the Chinese musicology is offering not just a system of analogies like any other antique culture, but also pedagogical indication related to musical performance. A manuscript from the 13th century, *The Fisherman's song* is showing pictures and instructions for performance. A special mention on musical playing can also be seen in a Chinese encyclopaedia from the beginning of the 17th century (1607-1612) with regard to an instrument from the zither class: the *qin* (*ch'in*), considered as the most characteristic instrument for the Chinese music[6].

All these schools kept something from the archaic mystical relationship between master and disciple. A good apprentice did not try to extort any information "before its time" and that proper time was established by the Master, in accordance to some mysterious reasons, never explained. Besides, the apprentice has to emphasise in the first place with the spiritual essence of his/her teaching and not to get after an immediate "technical" result. We recognize this type in Borges's story about Paracelsus. A young apprentice-candidate in this story makes a decisive mistake when he challenges the Master to demonstrate his magic powers. The young pretended to see him reviving a rose burnt in the fire. Paracelsus admits his powerlessness, but, after the young left, alone, he made the miracle for himself … The apprehension against the parade of skills and the priority of obedience and modesty over any achievement continued a long tradition asserted by almost all the important spiritual leaders.

Conclusions; to be discussed

The early modernity switches the sense of music as spiritual gesture to the art of musical gestures. The relation with the transcendental world becomes more and more reduced to particular analogies and correspondences. The former gods were replaced by astrology, then by intellectual games as numerology, somehow recalling the liaison between sounds and digits in China, but in a much lower extend. Nevertheless, numbers played an important role for several scholars as Victorin de Pettau, Saint Augustine and Saint Ambrosias in the early Christianity. So, the musical apprentice was aware that, before learning the *gestures for music* he had to learn *music as gesture* leading into a spiritual state.

[5] Alain Daniélou: *Treaty of comparative musicology* pp. 69-70
[6] Chou, Wen-Chung "Towards a Re-Merger in Music" p. 311

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Progressively, the technical complication as well as the damping of the mystic links led to that, that the image part of the ritual gesture prevails on the signification part. The musical education in the early modern Europe became more and more specialized and centred on technical and aesthetical acquisitions under the increasing dominance of the written score. In the 18th century the pure instrumental music becomes structured. Step by step the soloist takes over the main role in the musical process. This new star appears in a de-sacred world and replaces the empty space of the messenger of the transcendental. In this conjuncture, music is no more an intermediary between the human and the divine but its substitute. Consequently the public apparitions and the audience's feedback become more and more ritualized. The new intermediary (performer of other people's music) is now the hermeneutist of a human message.

The passage to modernity brought in the cultural history some transformations: change of temporal rituals in myths or symbols (eventually literature or aesthetical marks), interference of numerology, specialization, aesthetical and ideological autonomy etc. All these avatars determined important mutations in communication.

However the ancestral relations Master-disciple were still persistent, even if the first is no more the messenger of a transcendental world, but an audience star. Even if the teaching is far from being rigorous or systematized, the modern apprentice seems to believe that he can be contaminated just by the proximity of the celebrity. Often, as in ancient times, the student from Romanticism and even nowadays must observe and intuitively feel what the teacher wants him to learn. So, such wordless communication is provoking a sort of natural selection reminding the secret tests in archaic initiation. For instance an assertion like: "you are not of my world!" as unique information left behind by a famous Chamber music professor in Cluj could be considered to be inadmissible in a Mathematics or Literature class; though in the musical field it has generated a feverish search to guess the way toward the Master's "world".

No matter how it could be defined, the culture of a community implies the specific way to keep and transmit its traditional heritage. Therefore the collocation "cultural building" cannot elude a temporal dimension and the imperative to forge followers able to understand this heritage in all its complexity. In the same time, the culture has also another dimension, designing the level differences in the same society. The global era, through mass-media, Internet etc. favoured links between any of these internal layers and consequently increasing the internal gap in within the strata of a same society. The main danger for the culture is no more the horizontal acculturation (where a stronger culture swallows the other) but this disproportionate separation between a thin layer of cultured people and a mass that the actual educational system not only does not educate, but, on the contrary, it encourages the blocking within its own limits. Most of the nowadays schools, especially the Higher Education could illustrate such tendency by creating arbitrary or limited value systems, often added to a mechanical and stupid implementation of the political correctness. And, as a proved sensitive social barometer, the Performing Arts keep a privileged place in this regard. Nevertheless these fields, especially Music could facilitate the unification of the diachronic route to the actual need for communication.

Some of the features defining communication in the exotic music are general human. The ground layer was not always replaced, only covered. The specific cultural mentality predisposed to keep traditions, as China, Japan and partly the profound Romania, might offer an interesting survey, not as foreigners but as mechanisms to preserve our spiritual roots. The immaterial patrimony, keeping the gestural dowry might provide more suppleness in our cross-cultural relations and, maybe, it could be useful to re-create the missing link in the vertical structure of the society. Some traditional training practices are subsisting under the actual scientific pedagogy because of the human tendency to replace and not just to disclose an ideology, a custom or a myth. The inner altars if empty tend to recreate new "gods", which

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could become cultural preservers or the forgers of what J.-J. Wunenburger calls "utopia". The actual trend in Europa to explore the ancestral spirituality could help toward the recovering of our forgotten spiritual identity and to generate appropriate messengers for this special communication, linking the contemporary receivers to the cultural dowry. In this regard the musical experience of the humanity could provide useful energetic and communicational patterns, which are not totally lost in the collective memory.

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