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Music and Art – *Levels of Communication*

While exploring the foundations of musical knowledge, and in particular the roles of the categories of time and space in their formation, I became convinced that the results of my research also shed some light on the problem of communication. I have already spoken on this subject previously, but with the focus on musical issues.¹ In the present paper, I shall express the subject in more general terms, prompted to do so by the questions posed by the organisers of the conference 'Music as a Medium of Communication',² in particular those relating to the problem of 'musical universals' and of music's relationship with other forms of art.

It is my belief that musical universals, similarly to cultural universals, as understood in their broadest extent, are conditioned by the culture of man and the way in which he exists. In relation to music, I would express the problem in general terms as the anthropology of music. And since the issue concerns other arts, as well, I shall also deal with the anthropology of art. From this general perspective, there are no essential differences between these disciplines, as they rest on common foundations. Thus I shall present a general schema of the anthropology of art and the place within it of the individual questions circulated by the conference organisers. I shall also give my brief replies to those questions. A general schema of art anthropology, as a starting point for discussion and at the same time the point of arrival of my reflections, is shown in Table 1.

I shall discuss in brief the distinguished levels of art anthropology, as well as their place in communication and in revealing the sense of music and art.

¹ Ludwik Bielawski, 'Musikalische Kommunikation in Zeitkategorien', *Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft* 4 (1990), 253–261.

² The conference 'Music as a Medium of Communication' organised by the Department of Musicology of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, 15–17 October 2007.

Table 1. General schema of the anthropology of art

Text The work, manifestation of art The world of the work of art	1. Integrity atemporality, simultaneity, nominal level, identity of the work, properties, values, code, meanings
	2. Order of time and space, composition, intentional level, message, artistic content and form
	3. Materiality dimensions of time and space, foundations of existence, contact, channel, graphic record, photograph and phonograph
Communication Participation in the manifesting of art The internal world of man	4. Action centralisation of time and space, here and now, milliseconds, seconds, short-term memory, speech, feelings, motion of mind and body
	5. Event time and space of activeness, participation, aesthetic event, minutes, hours, utterances, experiences
Context The external world of the participants in the manifesting of art	6. Environment natural and cultural, times of day, month, year, time and space of work, rest, celebration
	7. Life of the individual and society, changes, experienced history, personal identity, lifespan
	8. Cosmos time and space beyond direct experience, myth, tradition, faith, history, science, worldview, world of values

The schema of art anthropology rests on a synthesis of two hierarchies of time: temporal levels and time zones.

Table 2. Synthesis of temporal levels and time zones

Fraser's temporal levels	Bielawski's time zones
1. Atemporality	
2. Prototemporality	
3. Eotemporality	Zone of visible light
	Zone of audible sounds
Biotemporality Nootemporality	4. Zone of psychological present
	5. Zone of works and performance
	6. Zone of natural and cultural environment
	7. Zone of the life of the individual and society
	8. Zone of myths, traditions and history

The numbered items in this table also refer to the items in Table 1.

I would like to stress that my exposition will concentrate on musical universals, as that is how I understand musical anthropology, as the study of musical universals and their cultural modifications. Contrary to the principal current of research concentrated on cultural peculiarities, or even questioning the existence of universals, I shall insistently show that the foundations of culture are universals and that knowledge of these universals also conditions the success of research into cultural peculiarities.

I understand music contemporaneously, albeit aware that there exist cultures which do not have a conception of music as we understand it, and that there have also been cultures, as in the European Middle Ages, where the notion of music was very broad, encompassing three divisions: *musica universalis* (sometimes also called *musica mundana*), *musica humana*, as the music within the human organism, and *musica instrumentalis*, comprising the sounds performed by singers and instrumentalists, and therefore coinciding with what we today tend to term music. *Musica mundana* and *musica humana* are manifestations of a view of the world and of man within the context of music.

Music anthropology, similarly to art anthropology, can be approached in different ways. The predominant approach may be defined as historico-ethnographic. This differs from normal art history in its greater concentration on contexts and its willingness to turn to the manifestations of art among primitive, traditional cultures and to the beginnings of history, seeking there inspirations, archetypes, strands of thought and patterns which it subsequently observes in historical processes and in contemporary art.

The other model is different. It may be termed theoretical or philosophical, and it attempts to grasp the fixed ways in which art manifests itself in all cultures. The methods employed may differ: I will concentrate here on the way that art exists, on a general ontological model of art, compared with man and culture.

The simplest model of art anthropology will be that which is suggested by the term itself: the anthropology of art. This deals with man in the cultural, rather than physical, dimension, and also distinguishes art and all its manifestations in the cultural context. In this approach, man and culture form a whole. This is the most straightforward model, very widespread, useful and convenient, yet rather unsubstantial in its generality. It is contrary, of course, to those approaches which absolutise art, seeking to consider art in itself, without its cultural trappings.

The next model is more elaborate. It distinguishes an intermediate element, between the two elements referred to above, in the form of man's direct participation in the manifesting of art, in its performance, perception or creation. Of course, this kind of approach automatically al-

ters the meaning of the work of art, as it separates it from the performance and reception of art. For the same reason, it also alters the meaning and scope of our understanding of culture, as it excludes from culture man's active contact with art in a particular situation.

But let us return to the work of art. We can distinguish in the work of art three levels of existence, under the rubrics of integrity, internal order and materiality.

On the first level, which may also be called the nominal level, the work of art is an integral whole, an identity, distinguished from everything that it is not. On this level it may be named, qualitatively defined; it may be the expression of values. Here, temporality and spatiality are reduced to the utmost. Of the properties of time they contain only simultaneity, of spatial properties, only integrity. In philosophy, the discovery of atemporality is attributed to Plato, who in his theory of forms distinguished a timeless domain illumined by good from a domain illumined by the sun, subject to time and to change.³ In our times, Julius T. Fraser⁴ found in Plato the starting point for his temporal levels, distinguishing atemporality, prototemporality, eotemporality, biotemporality and nootemporality.⁵ Plato placed the highest values in atemporality, as did the Neoplatonists and the philosophers of religious worldviews. Fraser inverted the Platonic hierarchy of values, deeming atemporality to be the most primitive temporality and showing that in the evolution of the cosmos increasingly more excellent temporalities gradually developed from atemporality, the most excellent of which he saw as nootemporality.

On the second, orderly, intentional level, the work is an order, disposition, structure, composition; it is an internally organised entity. It is order in time or space, or else in both time and space. But neither time nor space is as yet a dimension here. Time is quasi-time, space is quasi-space, and dimensions are relative, lacking absolute magnitude. The order of time distinguished by Aristotle, before-after, early-late, can be located here. In relation to art, Roman Ingarden's phenomenology clearly distinguished this intentional level.

Not until the third level is the work of art a material creation, existing in the dimensions of time and space. We are speaking here, not only of the existential basis of the work, but of the complete work, which can be perceived, and can also manifest all the properties of the previous lev-

³ Philip Turetzky, *Time* (London and New York, 1998).

⁴ Julius Thomas Fraser, *Time as Conflict: A Scientific and Humanistic Study* (Basel, 1978); Julius Thomas Fraser, *The Genesis and Evolution of Time: A Critique of Interpretation in Physics* (Amherst, 1982).

⁵ John A. Michon, 'Fraser's "Levels of Temporality" as Cognitive Representations', *Heymans Bulletin Psychologische Instituten R.U.Groningen* No.: HE-83-668 EX (1983).

els. It seemed that Isaac Newton's four-dimensional timespace⁶ described this level best. Yet Alfred N. Whitehead pointed to a paradox of the physical sciences, which essentially transform matter into numbers, patterns, equations and graphs. In his opinion, not physics, but philosophy is apt to grasp the essence of matter in human experience. In European philosophy and music theory, the conception of music as a physical object subject to measurement derives from Pythagoras. In modern times, there emerged the knowledge relating to the physical foundations of music; in the nineteenth century this knowledge acquired the solid foundations of experimental science. In contrast to acoustics, psychoacoustics builds its subject on the boundaries of physics and philosophy, examining man and his understanding of musical matter.

The levels distinguished thus far have one thing in common: they conceive of the work of art as an independent entity. The situation changes diametrically on the subsequent levels, where the work is confronted with living man. This is manifest in the middle element – man's participation in the manifesting of art. From the point of view of time and space, two different levels are distinguished here: the fourth and the fifth.

The fourth level is the level of action, of the motion of mind and body, perception, sensing, perceiving, performing, creating. These activities are only possible in the immediate present and in the immediate spatial dimension of man. The biological organism centralises time and space. The centralisation of time enables the present to be distinguished and to be juxtaposed with the past and the future, to mark out the direction of time. The centralisation of space is the source of a perspectival view, it gives space a centrifugal character, leading from the living organism outwards; it juxtaposes the organism with the environment in which it is active. This activeness also emerges in the manifestation of every work of art; it expresses itself in the 'reading' of art, of all art, including fine art, in the discerning in art of elements and in the composition of those elements into complex wholes. It is the level of language, of the morphology of art. In European philosophy, this problem was considered more distinctly by Aristotle. It was also addressed by phenomenology, which substantiated 'now' through retention and protention. Martin Heidegger⁷

⁶ Michał Heller, *Filozofia świata. Wybrane zagadnienia i kierunki filozofii przyrody* [Philosophy of the world. Selected issues and trends in the philosophy of nature] (Kraków, 1992).

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Bycie i czas* [Being and Time], trans. and ed. Bogdan Baran (Warsaw, 1994) [Ger. orig. *Sein und Zeit* (Freiburg, 1927); Eng. trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London, 1962)]; Cezary Woźniak, *Martina Heideggera myślenie sztuki* [Martin Heidegger's thinking art] (Kraków, 1997).

made being here and now, *Dasein*, the cornerstone of his philosophy, expanding the notion in manifold ways. One example is the existential being-towards-death, clearly belonging to the zone of human life and worldview. Heidegger consistently avoided measurements, whereas experimental psychology considered measurement to be its main tool of operation. It defined the present either as the shortest discernible time or conversely as the longest time that could be encompassed within the present. In the zonal theory, the psychological present is the range of the sizes of time intervals or frequencies; it is comparable to the amplitude of the range of audible sounds. The centre of this zone is the human second (about two-thirds of a clock second), equivalent to the musical tempo *moderato*.

Natural language is fundamentally symbolic; musical language is generally only symbolic to a limited extent. Tonal symbolism was characteristic of music of the Baroque, and it was of an aesthetic nature. The symbolism of music can be distinguished from the symbolism of sound. Music takes on a symbolic character in cultural situations, and especially in ritual situations.

What can we say in answer to the question as to the importance of motoric activity in musical communication? Actually, something quite fundamental. Man is essentially capable of just two things: setting in motion his own thoughts and his own body. Music is the transformation of the motion of man, its transferral from somatic space to auditory space. Motion is transformed by the vocal organs or by special musical instruments.

The links between music and natural language are of a genetic nature. Contemporary cognitive research usually seeks in music similarities to language. In actual fact, they are essentially opposite systems. Music is the converse of language, its mirror-image. That which is primary in language, in music is secondary, and vice versa.

The fifth level, in turn, is the level of the aesthetic utterance, of the development over time of meanings and moods; it concerns aesthetic events, in which living people participate within a specific time and space. Here, the work of art gains its realisational and perceptual form; it reveals its aesthetical meaning. On this level, the work intensifies moods and emotions. The nature of emotions has a different rhythm to the rhythm of language. Emotions can be aroused suddenly, but it takes a long time to calm them down. The area of emotional expression and communication also belongs to this level.

In language (and not only in language), meanings are atemporal, but language as an event is temporal. Language was analysed as events by

Roman Jakobson,⁸ who presented his conclusions in a well-known model of linguistic communication, in which he distinguished emitter, receiver, message, code, contact and context, along with their relevant functions: expressive, conative (impressional), poetic, metalinguistic, fatic and referential. It turns out that these categories can be ordered according to temporal levels. The code is clearly atemporal, potential. The message is a prototemporal, intentional order and transmits intention; contact (as well as the channel, not mentioned here) is only possible when it is materialised, when it is eotemporal; the emitter and the receiver are living people attuned to the human present, to biotemporality, enabling the message to be emitted and received; and finally the context is a collective term for the common world of the emitter and the receiver. The context contains references to cultural function, clearly distinguished in the zonality of time.

To the question of the relationship that arises between musical notation and musical sonic phenomena, perception and performance, I shall say only that they were at the centre of the attention of music phenomenologists and that they concern four of the levels distinguished here (from the second to the fifth). Musical notation (level 2) is a tool for the physical, graphical, codified recording of an intentional musical order. Notation enables music to be read and performed. Sonic phenomena (level 3) are physical in nature, and in perception they obtain a musical meaning (if they have a musical form and are not just hum or noise). In performance (level 4), human movements are transformed and transferred, by means of the mobile apparatus of human vocal organs or special instruments, from somatic space to auditory space (organised according to musical principles).

The final element in the model of art anthropology, defined as the culture of man, man in culture, cultural context, or simply context in Jakobson's typology, understood as the common world of the emitter and the receiver and its corresponding cognitive function (connotative or denotative), also falls into three levels.

First and foremost is the sixth level – the level of the natural, geographical and temporal environment, delimited by the times of day, month and year, which man transforms in the cultural environment, with the places of work, rest and celebration distinguished in time and space. The arts are entrusted with a special role in sacral time and sacral space.

The seventh level is the life of man from birth to death, the life of the individual and society, history as experienced by living generations. This

⁸ Roman Jakobson, *Poetyka w świetle językoznawstwa* [Poetics in the light of linguistics], *Pamiętnik Literacki* 51/2 (1960), 431–473.

history exists in every culture, and in it art takes on a specific meaning. Music is here a subject of education, of the acquiring of competence.

In every culture, there also exists an awareness of time and space, which transcends the experience of even the oldest generations (level eight). Man fills it with imagination, myth, tradition and faith; in a time beyond time he finds support for the world of values expressed in art. In our culture, history attempts to take over the traditional realm of myth. With only partial success. In addition, history not infrequently reveals its own aspirations to generating myth.

Thus we have eight basic levels of the manifesting of art from an anthropological perspective. Each level is a system of possibilities, and the choice from among these possibilities defines the meaning of each form of art.

The question was posed as to whether a cognitive function can be ascribed to music. This is a natural feature of language, but less suited to music, although to a certain extent it may have fundamental significance. Music is a crucial source of the cognition of man and culture. And this cognition encompasses areas of experience and knowledge which it would be difficult to fill with anything else.

I shall end my text by invoking the Poznań scholar Maria Frankowska, who asked me how, in my opinion, dance signifies. I replied spontaneously: 'dance signifies through its existence' – and I was alarmed at these words myself, as I had never uttered them before. On reflection, I can state that this sentence is truthful: dance, music, the work of art signify through their existence in a specific cultural event in which living people participate; they signify through their existence in a given cultural environment; they signify through their existence in the life of the individual and of society; through their anchoring in a view of the world. Art can, and does, avail itself of conventional meanings. In art forms that employ natural language in their utterances, this is natural and obvious. The work of art, of every art, signifies above all through its being a work of art, through its way of existing in the life and culture of man.

Translated by John Comber