

Mirrors of Melancholy: Lourenço on Music and Musical Understanding

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Resumo

Nos seus escritos sobre música, Eduardo Lourenço levanta uma série de questões sobre o significado da música e a compreensão musical. Ao considerar a música ‘como a mais incompreensível das expressões humanas e ao mesmo tempo a mais sublime de todas, como mística em estado puro’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 5.4), Lourenço propõe diferentes abordagens para compreender a música a partir de perspectivas filosóficas, estéticas e poéticas. A sua compreensão orienta-se por uma escuta musical fundamentada numa consciência histórico-temporal da música e da obra de arte. Lourenço define a melancolia como um sentimento primordial que afeta a nossa relação com o tempo e a memória, e que tem a capacidade de ativar a percepção do infinito e indizível. A música tem uma relação particular com o tempo que capta a experiência da atemporalidade e nos faz mergulhar no universo de melancolia, o qual se apresenta como uma multiplicidade de espelhos refletindo a ambiguidade do mundo interior e exterior. Neste artigo, examinamos o pensamento de Lourenço sobre a música, com o intuito de trazer à tona a abundância de significados refletidos pelos espelhos de melancolia, e confrontando as suas ideias com interpretações filosóficas (Wittgenstein) e semióticas. Na superfície dos espelhos emergem figuras e temas que iluminam a obra de vários compositores – Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, Schubert, Brahms, Wagner, Mahler, Schoenberg, Bartók, etc. – e nos fazem refletir sobre a complexidade das formas da música e da experiência musical.

Palavras-chave

Lourenço; Compreensão musical; Melancolia; Temporalidade; Estética.

Abstract

In his writings on music, Eduardo Lourenço raises a number of questions concerning the meaning of music and musical understanding. By considering music ‘as the most incomprehensible of human expressions and at the same time the most sublime of all, as mysticism in a pure state’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 5.4), Lourenço develops different approaches to understanding music from philosophical, aesthetic and poetic perspectives. His understanding is guided by a musical listening anchored in a historical-temporal awareness of music and the work of art. Lourenço defines melancholy as a primordial feeling that affects our relationship with time and memory and has the ability to activate the perception of the infinite and unsayable. Music has a particular relationship with time that seizes the experience of atemporality and causes us to dive into the world of melancholy, which presents itself as a multitude of mirrors reflecting the ambiguity of the inner and outer world. In this paper, I examine Lourenço’s thinking on music, with the aim of bringing out the abundance of

meanings reflected by the mirrors of melancholy while confronting his ideas with philosophical (Wittgenstein) and semiotic interpretations. On the surface of the mirrors emerge figures and themes that illuminate the work of various composers—Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, Schubert, Brahms, Wagner, Mahler, Schoenberg, Bartok, etc.—and make us reflect on the complexity of the forms of music and musical experience.

Keywords

Lourenço; Musical understanding; Melancholy; Temporality; Aesthetics.

THROUGH THE DOORS OF MELANCHOLY WE ENTER the house of mirrors of Eduardo Lourenço's writings on music. We see different kinds of mirrors capturing the inner reality of the soul and reflecting it as infinitely repeated motifs. Triggered by music, the sense of melancholy seizes the experience of atemporality, which is a crucial theme underlying all Lourenço's thinking. He defines melancholy as a fundamental feeling that shapes our relation with time: 'it is not a modality, among others, of sensitivity and feeling, but a structural manifestation of the human being, affected by its relationship with time; [melancholy] cannot be confused with contingent expressions of our existence as sadness or nostalgia' (LOURENÇO 1999a, 100). Such a conception of melancholy generates a network of connotations that provides us with access to the broad scope of Lourenço's ideas on music, composers and specific works. Rather than a systematic attempt at music aesthetics or philosophy, his writings constitute a passionate body of fragments disclosing a polyphony of voices propelled by the richness and subtlety of his poetical language, which reveal multiple vectors of meaning.

The book *Tempo da música, música do tempo* [*Time of Music, Music of Time*] (2012), available only in Portuguese, is the primary source of Lourenço's thoughts on music. It consists of 212 individual reflections—short essays or aphorisms—written between 1948 and 2006, and organized in five chapters. The reflections are sequentially numbered, beginning with the chapter number followed by a dot and the number in the sequence.¹ In these texts we find a multiplicity of figures emerging from a melancholic background, an intricate game of recurring subjects as if the mirrors of melancholy were placed so as to reflect each other, and leave traces of infinite resonances. From another perspective, we could describe the recursive patterns of mirrored images of melancholy through the cybernetic metaphor of a feedback loop as if the mirrors were non-trivial machines undertaking an unusual,

¹ All citations from *Tempo da música, música do tempo* (LOURENÇO, 2012) refer to the text number rather than the page number. All translations into English are mine.

unpredictable processing of meaning.² I am also inclined to imagine the situation that gave birth to them—the author listening to music and recording his impressions on paper. This is certainly a subjective point of view, although one cannot exclude the possibility that it may have some impact on the way one interprets him. Let us begin our observation with this excerpt from 1953, in which the adjectives ‘heroic’ and ‘wild’ appear as meaningful nuances of melancholy.

Alone in my office I let the music envelop me and I offer myself to her disarmed. It’s one of those symphonies where the lacerating notes create a long and deep torrent of a heroic melancholy. Something like these encounters with historical time harvested in moments of a fabulously distant greatness. The incorruptible beholder of my destiny whispers to me that this music is in agreement with all that I am. This wild melancholy finds within me a pleasure that nothing else can awaken. In order not to betray myself I have to keep intact this inviolable and unshared loneliness.

And yet, how much I desired a loved face to share the joy that destroys this solitude necessary to my own demons (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.1).

Lourenço ponders solitude and unconditionally surrenders to music. I try to understand him by paraphrasing him and literarily taking his personal point of view. Music invades my solitude and takes me with her (music is here a feminine subject). I become music’s unconditional lover. Music’s ‘heroic melancholy’ has the form of a symphony, whose notes have the power to tear apart time, long and deeply. Why is music associated with melancholy and why is she heroic? Lourenço insinuates that music liberates time, rescues time past and, at the same time, makes it present by shaping a fabulous, mythical distance to what it reveals to us. Music recalls time and creates memory of time; it makes the past ‘now’ and, by doing so, reveals to us our most concealed selves.

How, according to Lourenço, does music achieve this organic, symbiotic relation to the deepest layers of one’s self? It is because music has a particular relation to time, which activates melancholy and melancholy reverses the internal face of ‘I’. In Lourenço’s view, melancholy is not only one, but rather, a multiplicity of mirrors showing simultaneous and different views of one’s self. The mirror of melancholy can produce the heroic feeling of greatness, as well as the wildness through which one finds peace with one’s self. Music also pushes one’s self into solitude in the sense that the self is immanent and cannot be shared with anybody. However, whatever movement music can cause, which reinforces

² The concept of the non-trivial machine was proposed by Foerster. In opposition to trivial machines, non-trivial machines are analytically unpredictable, because the uncertainties of its behaviour cannot be eliminated (see FOERSTER 1984, 13).

the relation to the self, for that solitude is not something sought, it is not the goal in and of itself. Music creates a joy that I would like to share with somebody else I love, a known face. This joy also eliminates the solitude that nourishes the oddest parts of myself. As we see in these restated passages, solitude has both multiple positive and negative meanings. In this case, solitude has the positive connotation of granting us access to our own self, as well as the negative connotation of reinforcing the obscure tendencies of the ego, which prevents us from realizing ourselves.

Lourenço's use of the word 'melancholy' differs significantly from its historical and traditional roots. In ancient and medieval medicine, we find the traditional condition of melancholy as the result of the excess of black bile, a secretion of the spleen and one of the body's 'four humors'. Melancholy causes gloominess and depression. A similar effect of gloominess, although not primarily related to the body but to the mind, characterizes the modern use of the term. It is almost impossible to find any positive connotation of melancholy in a modern dictionary. Common synonyms include 'depression', 'sadness', 'dejection', and moods and feelings such as 'pensive' and 'sad'. Lourenço, however, radically purifies these negative connotations by disassociating melancholy from particular sensations or emotional perceptions. The singularity of melancholy, in his account, is the fact that it clarifies our relationship with time that lies beyond our normal behavior and understanding. Melancholy operates as a game inside memory, bringing out things that are more alive than things in the present, yet still intangible. Melancholy addresses the *unsayable*, it speaks of things that are outside the empirical realm, making the 'insane' appear as 'normal' (LOURENÇO 1999a, 100). On account of its relation to time and memory, music has the capacity to make melancholy tangible, allowing us to travel through the lost eternity of ourselves, to capture and rescue what has been lost. Music is simultaneously an image of time and time itself. As Weil has described it, it is 'an image of eternity, but it is also a substitute for eternity' (WEIL 2002, 19).

Melancholy in the Mirror: Baudelaire's *The Swan* and Portuguese *Saudade*

Lourenço traces the origin of modern melancholy with reference to STAROBINSKI (2010), who, in his study of Baudelaire, introduces the idea of 'melancholy in the mirror'. Starobinski shows how Baudelaire transformed and reinvented the concept of melancholy to divest it from its associations with a self-pitying form of romanticism. He shaped a highly ambitious and speculative concept of melancholy, endowing it with new attributes particular to the crises and conditions of his epoch, such as the profound effects of the Industrial Revolution and the dramatic urbanization of the European centers

of London and Paris. Indeed, early French Modernism articulates melancholy as a feeling of existential fragmentation as CHAMBERS (1993) shows in his critical examination of Baudelaire's poem *Le Cygne* [*The Swan*]. The poem presents itself as a mimesis of the oscillations of the conscious mind, in which the swan serves as an allegory for the search for meaning in a changing environment. The movements of oscillation are caused by the feeling of lost temporality, a break in the dimension of time, the cut off from origins and endings, and the sense of exile that characterizes modern man.

Melancholy and memory thus present themselves as opposing forces. Confronted with the temporal break, we find ourselves in a universe of loss, in which we attempt resistance through the power of memory. As Chambers notes, 'memory presents itself in the first instance as "fertile"—it is a principle of fecundity in the face of the sterility of the new and a principle of identity and continuity in a world subject to change' (CHAMBERS 1993, 164). The fertile power of memory generates images that remain in opposition to the irremediable absence, the emptiness from which it is impossible to escape. The poem, according to Chambers, also suggests the boundless mechanisms of desire and the endless slippage of sense that later became the object of the modern psychoanalysis studies of Lacan and Derrida.³ However, since resistance to the undergoing change is in vain, memory turns itself into the source of an oppressive experience of heaviness and melancholy. In Baudelaire's poem, this feeling is expressed through the emblematic phrase: 'Une image m'opprime' [An image oppresses me]. According to Chambers, 'as signs of modernity, memory and melancholy are the psychic responses that correspond to the irony of the sign' (CHAMBERS 1993, 164). In other words, modernity takes possession of melancholy firstly as an insistent assertion of nothingness and the acceptance of artificiality; and secondly as the awareness of moments of blissful released from nothingness.

Another way to interpret the work of memory, already suggested in early French modernism but further developed in the twentieth century through information theory and cybernetics, is as a struggle against the state of *entropy*, the scattered distribution of elements subjected to the disordering force of time, a state of randomness in which information is unpredictable and therefore impossible. Post-World War II cybernetics assigned itself the task of reversing the natural process of entropy in a world where meaning is predominantly shaped by the interplay between humans and machines and becomes increasingly independent from human agency. In reference to Kierkegaard's philosophy, Wiener

³ Lacan uses the verb 'slip' and its corresponding noun, 'slippage' to describe the unstable relationship between the *signifier* and the *signified*. In the tradition of the semiotics developed by Saussure the sign consists of a stable, arbitrary and conventional relationship between the *signifier* and the *signified*. For Lacan this relationship is fluid, unstable and undergoes three registers: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real.

affirms that ‘we live in a chaotic moral universe’ (WIENER 1956, 324). On the one hand, there is a sense of tragedy in the world as we face the inevitable disappearance of differentiation. On the other hand, there is nature’s overwhelming tendency to disorder. He interprets cybernetics as an effort to build an enclave of organization as insolence against the gods. The cybernetic project, born as an attempt to predict the behavior of weapon machinery in order to achieve military advantage, seems to resonate strongly with the path of tragedy and glory announced by Wagner’s tetralogy, in Wiener’s conception. It conveys the existential belief that renouncing the fruits of action is the ethical principle of being in the world.

Along with melancholy, Lourenço evokes very often the concept of *saudade*. He points to the definition of *saudade* from the autobiographical study on melancholy that the Portuguese King D. Duarte drafted in the early fifteenth century. *Saudade* is a passion that reveals the mystery of the Portuguese soul. The word ‘saudade’ has no equivalent in Latin or any other language. *Saudade* is a complex feeling and the basis on which Portugal became the mystical land. However, it is not only a uniquely Portuguese word, but also a universal feeling related to our experience of time. Lourenço defines *saudade* as a modality to relate to time and memory, which is connected to both nostalgia and melancholy. Time is an endless, irreversible succession. But man creates a game of memory that allows the inversion, the fictional suspension of irreversible time, which is ‘human time’ that has become a powerful source of emotion.

Melancholy, nostalgia and *saudade* have different relationships to temporality. Melancholy situates the past as definitely past and, as such, is the first and most acute expression of temporality. Nostalgia is strongly focused on a given past or a given object out of our reach, which can be imaginary or real and recoverable. *Saudade* is a complex paradox, sharing some similarities with both melancholy and nostalgia. The origin of *saudade* is an excess of love in relationship to all that deserves to be loved: the departed friend, the absent lover, the timeless and intimate nature, a flower, a fragrance, and ocean waves. As Portugal is a country shaped by the sea, *saudade* seems to be modulated by the universal rhythm of the sea. Lourenço gives both a phenomenological and a musical account of *saudade*. On the one hand, it captures time as eternity; everything is there, both past and present. On the other hand, it seizes background music, which is outside, and transforms it into something interior, the music of the soul (LOURENÇO 1999a, 93). Melancholy and *saudade* are thus different concepts, but sometimes they melt into one another, as in the following statement that concludes Lourenço’s mythological account of *saudade*.

Perhaps only people constantly distracted from their existence as tragedy, or imbued with and inebriated by it to the point of forgetting, could take the figure of nostalgia as an insignia of their soul. [...] But perhaps only the music impregnated with the weight and memory of time—that of Bach or Beethoven, Schubert or Mahler—grant a feeling that we consider only its real and unsayable universality (LOURENÇO 1999a, 117).

On Music: The Unsayable and the Lost Paradise

In Lourenço's text 'Da Música' [On Music] from 2006 (LOURENÇO 2012, 5.4) we may observe some fundamental issues permeating his thoughts on music. The text can be read as a personal statement about the inability to achieve a comprehensive understanding of music. This inaptitude can be interpreted, on the one hand, as an individual limitation; Lourenço calls himself an 'authentic deaf' person who fell into the temptation to write a text, even though short, about music. On the other hand, the lack of understanding relies on the way music presents itself to us as well. Music awakens a kind of formless melancholy, because it is the 'most incomprehensible of human expression and at the same time the most sublime of all', because it is mystical in a 'pure state' (LOURENÇO 2012, 5.4). How can one say something about music without sounding ridiculous? Lourenço confesses that he can only talk about music as a passive receiver. He recognizes however, that this is a sort of paradoxical passivity, since music provokes an effect of commotion and excitement that does not leave us indifferent. Music therefore, has an ambivalent character: while it has no precise content, it simultaneously brings us to a kind of journey in which we find ourselves alone and lost in an unknown space that virtually contains all others. Although music has the power to create 'landscapes' that have no real existence, and that the most fantastic paintings cannot depict, music's main concern is not space but *time*. The relation to time is music's crucial issue. Lourenço evokes a water metaphor to explain the basic temporal quality of the musical journey:

[...] we are not ourselves as travelers in virtual spaces, but as time navigating through the sensitive miracle of music in the unnavigable river of ourselves. Not only in the temporality that constitutes us, but in the one we manufacture by burning in the time that destroys and invents us (LOURENÇO 2012, 5.4).

The 'fabric web' is another metaphor that Lourenço proposes to explain the relation of music to time. He poetically compares music to a web of sounds through which we accomplish a crossing and

uncrossing of time threads that weave and unweave our sense of temporality. By navigating through this fabric web, we experience at the same time our ontological fragility—our sense of *nothingness*—and our *eternity* that redeems it. We can interpret this metaphor as a process of transcendence, a dynamic shift between two *Dasein*, which appear as transference of signs. We can draw here a parallel to Tarasti's theory of existential semiotics, according to which the transcendental transfer is a process oscillating between affirmation and negation. It starts with the negation of the original *Dasein* and concludes with a new affirmation that possibly creates a new *Dasein* (TARASTI 1990, 31). Lourenço suggests that by listening to music, we are constantly shifting between different dimensions of time that are embodied in our *Dasein*. Time as finite experience becomes a sign of negation; time as infinite horizon leads us towards affirmation.

The shift of temporality that occurs at the level of individual works is subjected to a historical-musical consciousness. According to Lourenço, we listen to the works of music in dialogue with the past from which they emerged, the present in which they are born, and the future that they are carrying (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.10). The idea that music allows us to navigate in a temporal dimension between past, present, future and eternity, can be illustrated through a web of metaphors that complement and translate each other. For example, he uses a water metaphor to explain our ability to achieve historical-musical consciousness at the level of individual composers and works. By comparing the music of the great composers to water landscapes, he affirms that navigating through time is such 'as great a miracle as the invention itself of these lakes, rivers, and seas of opaque transparency that we call Bach, Mozart, Beethoven or Richard Strauss' (LOURENÇO 2012, 5.4).

Lourenço assigns a privileged status to music among other arts. Only music is an 'expression' that does not articulate anything in the sense that we cannot reduce it to a non-expression [*nada de expressão*] or to a form of noise whose origin lies in nature (LOURENÇO 2012, 5.4). Musical expression, he claims, is neither related to any physical phenomenon of nature—such as the wind or the song of birds—nor has it any kind of ontological essence. Music is something we cannot talk about; it is an expression of the *unsayable*—both the unsayable of itself and the unsayable of the world. Perhaps at its origins, music emerged as an intuitive form of communication: by emulating the sounds of nature, man constructed a virtual space to express his mythical interiority. As musical constructions became more and more complex and demanding, they imposed their own world and opened the space to express the unconscious spheres of human beings such as feelings of enthusiasm, suffering, passion and dreams. Music became a kind of representation that is purposive in and of itself, partially because it is

inseparable from a religious faith. It became a tool for inventing ‘paradises’, especially the original paradise from which we have been chased.

By combining both musical and philosophical interests, Lourenço’s ideas on music can be interpreted in the tradition of Schopenhauer, who believes that music embodies feelings in an abstracted manner and allows us to apprehend the nature of the world in a mode of aesthetic awareness that is similar to philosophical contemplation. Music presents a kind of tranquillity that leads us to a sort of mystical, ascetic consciousness of humanity, which transcends spatial and temporal constraints and abolishes the fundamental forms of subject and object. This is why in Schopenhauer’s aesthetics, which is linked to his moral theory, music is assigned the status of the highest art. Ascetic consciousness is a form of expanding the knowledge of our innate individuality that leads to self-realization. By transcending human nature, it offers a solution for overcoming the problem of evil, which occurs in a spatio-temporal situation. In a way, ascetic consciousness represents a symbolic return to the Paradise, a path to access what has been lost, namely the quest of knowledge and the overcoming of human desire. As Lourenço states:

Through music we not only retake possession of the supposed delights of Paradise lost, but we invent paths to it that its perfection did not need and that our imagination uses to ascend again to these skies that would not even remember us if Bach and his emulators did not build for us with their notes that only ladder of Jacob planted in our hearts to illuminate life (LOURENÇO 2012, 5.4).

Another way to approach Lourenço’s ideas on music in a philosophical tradition that can also be traced back to Schopenhauer, is through Wittgenstein’s philosophy. As Wittgenstein suggested in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, there are two ways of accessing reality: the *saying* and the *showing*. The form of the showing is a transcendental observation, which has the world as its backdrop. It is the domain of ethics and aesthetics. Art is an expression and the artwork is the complete expression. The artwork both speaks about itself and shows itself: ‘The work of art does not seek to convey *something* else, just itself’ (WITTGENSTEIN 1998, 67e; emphasis in the original).⁴ Art has a ‘mystical’ mission, especially music. It has to express what ordinary language cannot express, i.e., the unsayable, according to the last paragraph of the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein formulated with intensity and precision a close

⁴ The citations from WITTGENSTEIN 1998 use page number; the citations from WITTGENSTEIN 1974, 1979, and 2009 use the paragraph number instead of the page number.

relationship between ethics and aesthetics, writing, ‘Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same’ (WITTGENSTEIN 1974, 6.421). Both are part of the ineffable; the ethical and aesthetical attitude towards the world is the one that shows the ‘good life’. The artist’s attitudes and decisions are a matter of both ethics and aesthetics. It does not matter how the world is or how much misery exists, the work of art has to show the possibility of seeing the world as it is, as something transcendental. The idea that we are not able to explain the world in a logical sense, together with the attitude of acceptance, leads to a ‘mystical’ view: ‘There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical’ (WITTGENSTEIN 1974, 6.522; emphasis in the original).⁵

Aesthetic Judgment and Musical Understanding

Musical understanding is a recurrent subject in Lourenço’s writings on music. Music is a fertile case for investigating what he characterizes as the gulf between *feeling* and *understanding* in aesthetic perception and judgment. He claims that most of Bach’s listeners obviously do not understand his music, they only feel it and create a whole with it in the moment they hear it. And that is all. This kind of attitude happens not only with Bach’s music, supposedly because of the complexity of its polyphonic structure, but with any kind of music. The emotional reaction that a piece of music can provoke in us, according to Lourenço, is the slightest degree of appropriation of some musical content: ‘it is only a listening with the possible feelings of pleasure, displeasure, delight or boredom, in short, liking or not liking while listening’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 1.16).

What is the difference then between *pure pleasure* and *aesthetic judgment*? Lourenço approaches this question by asking what the impact is of the singularity of a work of art in our aesthetic perception. In his words, ‘By enjoying a work of art—poetry, music, painting—what part is concerned with the feeling or knowledge of its singularity?’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.24) He suggests that beyond purely aesthetic enjoyment, we experience an additional pleasure when we recognize the *difference* between the works by different composers. For instance, when we listen to a Chopin prelude and compare it to a sonata by Beethoven we have access to a number of features (*nuances*) that enhance our aesthetic joy. However, if instead of Beethoven, our object of comparison were the Sonata no. 2 for piano by Carl Maria von Weber, we would have a different kind of enjoyment of Chopin’s uniqueness. Lourenço asks if, by listening to music, we can only have feelings within the horizon of values that are limited to our

⁵ For a comprehensive study of Wittgenstein’s ideas on music see CHAGAS (2014a), especially Chapter 1, ‘Musical Understanding: Wittgenstein, Ethics, and Aesthetics’, pp. 13-41.

knowledge, especially the music of the great masters. He does not however, provide an assertive answer. He says only that ‘we must distinguish two things: the *pure pleasure* and the *aesthetic judgment* that accompanies it or not. But one can interfere with each other’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.24; emphasis in the original).

The notes on the String Quartet by the French twentieth-century composer Henry Barraud provide more specific insight on Lourenço’s ideas on musical understanding (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.10). How might a listener devoid of historical-musical consciousness—someone incapable of distinguishing between Josquin des Prés and Rameau, or between Monteverdi and Beethoven, or between Beethoven and Schoenberg—react to Barraud’s string quartet? According to Lourenço,

[...] he will be invaded by a sound architecture that will seem confusing and above all will be subjected to a chaotic impression, anguished, lacerating and lacerated that, by comparison with his own background of classical melody, may appear as a *complete novelty* of a powerful originality. It will be said that this auditor did not *understand* the music (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.10; emphasis in the original).

The understanding of music, however, is not exhausted by the kind of absorption that occurs when we listen to a piece of music for the first time, but includes the set feelings and thoughts that music gives birth to in us, Lourenço argues. In the same way, the understanding of a painting is not limited to seeing it. According to him, when we look to a picture for the first time or listen to a new piece of music, we focus only on its *appearance*. Vision is blind and hearing is deaf because what counts is the fact that works of art tell *stories*, they are the place where a non-verbal dialogue takes place, through which the work of art is put into a historical and temporal perspective. Artistic understanding is a contextual situation that entails the understanding of the past, present and future dimensions that the work of art conveys.

Lourenço criticizes the purely phenomenological perspective that aims to identify the essential elements that distinguish an experience and discard everything else. Husserl’s phenomenology is informed by the idea of eidetic reduction, focusing on the essential structures that allow an object to be taken for granted. The phenomenological method brackets the world in order to concentrate on the essences that are immanent to phenomena. Lourenço claims, it is only fruitful when consciousness is already in accordance with the object to reduce. No understanding is possible without the context that offers the terms of comparison for the work of art. He gives the example of Picasso’s *Guernica*. How would a man who has never heard of the Spanish war and is unaware of the cubism-expressionism see

this picture? Lourenço invokes the metaphor of a mirror to explain this kind of situation, where timeless consciousness (the observer) is placed in the pure presence of the work of art: the meeting of two mirrors sending each other a void image that creates an endless feedback loop of misunderstanding. He concludes with a bold statement: ‘History without phenomenology is blind, phenomenology without history is empty’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.10).

One could argue that Lourenço accounts for a simplistic view of the phenomenological method. In fact, Husserl’s eidetic phenomenology is concerned with the dynamic interplay of different levels of consciousness that makes possible the apprehension of time as a livingpresent. His investigation of internal time consciousness is particularly interesting from a musical point of view since he compares internal time consciousness to listening to a melody (HUSSLERL 1966; 1990). Husserl reflects on consciousness of tone and melody as a paradigm of time consciousness. By listening to a melody we establish links between the present, the immediate past, and the immediate future in the constitution of time consciousness. The same can be said of the perception of any sound. The unity of time consciousness emerges from the articulation of temporal processes occurring simultaneously at different levels.

Moreover, it seems that Lourenço’s criticism is more in line with Wittgenstein’s philosophical method of observing music from the point of view of its practical use. Wittgenstein suggests that sound is only the surface of music and that the musical work conceals something more profound that can hardly be described by philosophical models or scientific theories.⁶ The infinite complexity of music can only be understood in the context of its use, which includes the understanding of the cultural and social references that create meaning beyond what is expressed by sound. Wittgenstein emphasizes the autonomy of music: music does not say anything but itself. On the other hand, he recognizes that aesthetic understanding is only possible within a culture through the contextual references to the ‘forms of life’ that are embedded in a network of ‘language games’ that connect music with culture and life. Understanding is not possible outside a musical environment, music is part of our very particular form of life. The aesthetic rules that allow us to recognize a new musical work from the background of a chaotic noise can only be described in the context of a specific culture. Musical understanding cannot be reduced to the mechanical application of explicit rules; the expressive game of musical rules obeys a

⁶ Wittgenstein expresses this point of view in many different contexts. For instance: ‘Music, with its few notes and rhythms, seems to some people a primitive art. But only its surface is simple, while the body which makes possible the interpretation of this manifest content has all the infinite complexity that is suggested in the external forms of other arts and which music conceals. In a certain sense it is the most sophisticated art of all’ (WITTGENSTEIN 1998, 11e).

tradition that is mostly implicit, which determines the choices. The rules allow us to recognize the full expression of music.⁷

Melancholic Images and Ambiguity

The drooping head, sometimes with the head supported by the hand, is an emblematic motif in the visual representation of melancholy. It is a very old gesture, which appeared in reliefs found on Egyptian sarcophagi and shaped a long pictorial tradition in the Middle ages, the renaissance and the baroque. Albrecht Dürer's engraving *Melencolia I* (1514) is a very famous example of the drooping head motif. This work has been the subject of modern studies such as Panofsky's influential Dürer monograph (1948) and the long discussion by Erwin PANOFSKY, Raymond KLIBANSKY and Fritz SAXL (1964). The primary meaning of the drooping head is grief, but it may also be interpreted as creative thought (PANOFSKY – KLIBANSKY – SAXL 1964, 287). Indeed, the attitude of having the head bent supported by the hand represents the ambiguity of the melancholic character oscillating between the extreme states of exaltation and dejection. Both attitudes belong to the melancholic temperament. As Starobinski claims, there are missing clues in the images delivered by painters, engravers and sculptors that do not allow us to distinguish between sterile sadness and fruitful meditation, between the overwhelming depression of emptiness and the fulfilling feeling of knowledge (STAROBINSKI 1989, 48). Is the gaze of the melancholic character with the drooping head directed toward the void or the infinite? Toward the reality or the fiction? Does it look into the ephemeral and perishable or seek its own reflected image?

Another fascinating image of melancholy is Francisco Goya's etching *Caprice 43; El sueño de la razón produce monstruos* [*The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*]. It depicts the artist himself in a state of slumber surrounded by bedeviled creatures such as flying bats. Goya provides the following epigraph for his picture: 'Fantasy abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters: united with her, she is the mother of the arts and the origin of their marvels'. Préaud interprets Goya's work as a 'noise particularly silent; a time particularly immobile. The noise and the movement of the melancholy' (PRÉAUD 1982, 9).

Lourenço's writings on music offer myriad mirrors to present the ambiguous nature of melancholy. At times he speaks as a melancholic character, the man with the bent head supported by the hand,

⁷ Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* provides a significant number of reflections on 'rules' and 'forms of life'. For an account of these subjects in relation to music see CHAGAS (2014, 32-5).

listening to music and maybe taking notes. Sometimes we hear other voices dissipating and spreading out the images—the noise and movement of the melancholy. Lourenço's thought wanders through this the abundance of meanings reflected by the mirrors. By observing this intention, we can see a triadic figure connecting mirror, melancholy, and meaning. Figures with drooping heads, gazes in the mirror, and melancholic reflections. His texts capture echoes of a pluralistic listening that is prolonged in time and seeks both the particular and the universal. The critical approach shows both secret and objective paths, opaque and transparent mirrors to interpret the aesthetic of the composers and their works.

Mirrors of Death, Sea, and Memory: Tristan and Wagner

The motif of the drooping head in a musical context can be seen as the melancholic character listens to the *Death Love* song [*Liebestod*] from Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. As Isolde sings over Tristan's dead body, the aria reaches the climatic end of the opera and the consummation of love in death or after death. Lourenço claims that the melody draws the contours of the territory of art: we face the mirror of death, we realize how art takes possession of us and what it means to us. '[Art] invades us as the sea of ourselves: we are transported, transfigured, torn from a less real earth to the eternal heavenly land of our endless birth' (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.4).

Melancholy also emerges on the surface of the mirror of the sea: the mirror reflects the endless and simultaneously projects the melancholic character into an imaginary space. How does this mysterious mirror work? Our image is immersed in the deepness of the sea and projected in the infinite of heaven. Tristan's death is not an ordinary death: 'it is a sea of sorrow and tears indiscriminately real and unreal that involves our heart suddenly identified with a bitterness, a longing [*saudade*], a pain, becoming deeper as they become less real'. The mirror of *saudade* operates in combination with death, sorrow and pain. They create a conjugation of mirrors redoubling the subject; melancholy emerges as interplay of streams flowing through the *Liebestod* melody. Music put us in a state similar to a dream while creating a feeling of reality. By listen to Tristan's Death Love song 'I do not know if we are made of the fabric of dreams, but I know that we are made of material similar to this song' (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.4).

The melancholic character finds a *voice* in this fascinating song. It would be wrong, according to Lourenço, to explain it by means of empirical reality, which is full of contradictions and poorer than the rich reality of art. As a mirror of melancholy, art accomplishes a sophisticated game of reality. It develops the magic of a huge moving mirror, which is composed itself of infinite mirroring surfaces. These mirrors bring light into our souls and push our shadows to the surface; the mirrors reveal us,

awake us through the interplay of reality and fiction. Lourenço's pungent and poetic words describe what art can do with us:

Art is an uninterrupted song of the fabulous mixture of reality and unreality that constitutes us: it is the solution, paradise, and at the same [time] our delicious hell. There we feel the endless pain that life steals from us, making us less than real pain; there we receive an endless joy in order to remember the precarious ecstasy of our real and fleeting joys. As in love, in an anonymous and absolute love, reality turns into fiction and fiction turns into reality. What we do not see in ourselves this unreal mirror shows us within it: Art is the undeserved kiss of our resurrection, the strange kiss that man's sleeping soul gives to itself in order to awaken from the deadly spell of the forest of life (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.4).

Lourenço interprets the driven character of Wagner's music as an affirmation of memory: 'With Wagner, music became memory'. Wagner's leitmotiv embodies the 'presence of a soul that does not allow, and cannot, lose itself at any moment of its search without losing itself' (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.16). The leitmotiv pursues itself, as a mysterious God who is never found. Lourenço compares the continuity of Wagner's music to the continuous action of the sea flowing in the same place, a sea that rises and torments, a sea without shores of human memory looking for a center in the German forest of the universe. Here again, the sea is a mirror of melancholy. Wagner's music is metaphysical not because of its mythical ambitions, which Lourenço considers naive, but rather, because of the melancholic interplay between flux and memory. It unleashes:

[...] this oceanic dialogue of musical memory with itself, this ecstasy that delights in itself, this prayer of prayers, this liquid towel of inseparable silence and harmony, this melancholy of lava of a world without matter, harmony of a spirit that seeks everywhere this matter to build a world or to tell itself impossible stories to revive the deserted and uninhabited universe where it moves (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.16).

Bach and Beethoven: Mirror of Affliction, Astral Melancholy

It is Good Friday. Lourenço listens to Bach's St Matthew Passion on the radio. He describes how the music affects his soul (LOURENÇO 2012, 1.9). To paraphrase his description of this experience: the music plunges him into a timeless abyss. The dull light of the lamp vanishes; the sharpness of the nighttime disappears along with Lourenço's own earthly and deadly weight. The human magic of

Johann Sebastian Bach pulls him away from the arid and desolate plain of meaninglessness on which he is a relentless walker. Tears roll without shame from his face—the face of a man who has surrendered and is humble—and the immortal song tears his flesh to the point where he imagines the deepest layer is, the place that sustains him. Like a fabulous stream, the music transmutes into hallucinatory landscapes of insidious temptations, a bitter mixture where he cannot distinguish God’s face from Satan’s face or from Nothingness⁸ and slowly, time collects the leaves of the St Matthew Passion as veils that will never return again.

What Lourenço’s experience illustrates is the way in which Bach’s music triggers a narrative that presents a mirror of internal melancholy related to the symbol of Christ on the Cross. It throws us into the abysmal landscape that abolishes the dimension of time and blurs the external appearance of forms and objects. We must cross the infinite thickness of time and space to meet God. The music pierces the body and reaches into the soul. It reinforces the force of gravity while installing a sense of abandonment. Longing for human consolation, man feels abandoned by God at the supreme moment of the Crucifixion. Love of God may be as great as possible, but there is always a distance that evil can extend to the maximum. The internal mirror reflects the transcendental image of redemptive suffering, an idea that resonates with Simone Weil’s account of affliction [*mallheur*]. Affliction corresponds to the destruction of the ‘I’, through grace. But affliction produces the absence of God. By redemptive suffering, Weil claims, God is present in extreme evil, because love of God is for us a passion: ‘How could that which is good love that which is evil without suffering? And that which is evil suffers too in loving that which is good. The mutual love of God and man is suffering’ (WEIL 2002, 89).

A mirror of divine purification illuminates Lourenço’s account of Bach’s music: ‘The musical adventure of Bach reminds me of an infinite expression of infinite moments of life’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.2). He considers the Toccata and Fugue [in D minor BWV565] the most beautiful beginnings ever written, the deepest dive into the ocean of music. ‘Even Beethoven’s overtures pale next to this judgment, this tumultuous and divine coming of the archangel of the resurrection’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.13). In the St John Passion, Bach took hold of an infinitely positive sadness, a sadness that is continuously turned almost epically to the Light⁹ that has never been given, but fervently held in reserve. He considered that Bach achieved a state closer to angelic melancholy, which he defines as ‘an ecstatic gloss, wonderfully trampling on all the sadness that runs through man to whom the peaks are

⁸ Capital letter in the original.

⁹ Capital letter in the original.

always present and distant' (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.20). In another note, he states that Bach wrote 'music of purity', the most portentous music that man dared to create. Bach rendered the world as the high heavens in a river of miraculous transparency. Purity, according to Lourenço, is the image of a heart immersed in the affliction of the world, but able to be delivered from it by a single call. In other words, purity does not abolish suffering; on the contrary, it deepens it to infinity while giving it meaning. That is the greatness of the music created by Bach.

Emerging from the foundation of Bach's music, Beethoven embodies the figure of a 'fallen angel' (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.2). Beethoven's music is a revolt against tradition, convention, and established order: 'The voices chase each other in a powerful crescendo, they repent, return, rise, insist, the cry becomes even more a cry, lengthens, repeats, ultra-repeats, cries even more, as a cry that does not seek God, but contemplates itself and pursues itself as a cry' (LOURENÇO 2012, 2.6). For Lourenço, true religiosity is absent in Beethoven. There is no sign of surrender as in Bach. Where Bach pleads with God with an infinitely humble cry, Beethoven expresses 'pure titanism', even in the sacred works. The figure of the 'fallen angel' remains a symbolic mirror of the whole humanity. In Beethoven, as with all the great composers, music is the sound form of the astral melancholy of the fallen angel (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.1). Beethoven's music emerges from him in a whirlpool of melancholy. It is rational melancholy, a melancholy in a world of forms that are struggling with him, respond to him, and create oppositions to make him intelligible and evident. Beethoven's melancholy, however, is different from contemporary melancholy, which is not attached to its object.

Melancholic characters, allegories of melancholy, and mirrors of melancholy in Beethoven's symphonies comprise the second movement of Beethoven's Third Symphony: 'a frightening tender melancholy, a journey into the labyrinth of the solitude of a burning heart' (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.28). The Fourth Symphony unfolds a paradox as it begins with an irredeemable note of melancholy that later gives birth to a song of joy (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.23). The opening of the Fifth Symphony, as with Beethoven's entire oeuvre, reveals the 'struggle between the Will and a History-Destiny that is still not transfigured but awaits transfiguration' (LOURENÇO 2012, A.18; capital letters in the original). The gods came down to earth, became aware of their finitude but also of their old alienation. For Lourenço, 'Romanticism is the widespread awareness of Western man of himself as a *man of time* because it is the irruption of the *Time of Man*. It is the end of ordinary experience; Eternity henceforth will be pure longing or desolating fiction' (LOURENÇO 2012, A.18). It is not only the Fifth Symphony, but all music by Beethoven that is driven by his *musical and human will* (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.21). Composers before Beethoven focused on subjective issues, as did Mozart when he dealt with the myth of Don Juan, for

which he composed the most eternal and ideal music. Beethoven, however, focused only on himself. The great and only concern of Beethoven's music—his sole affliction—was himself. With Beethoven, it was the first time music was not written for the entertainment of kings, for the religion of kings, or for the melancholy of others. Beethoven wrote music for its own entertainment, for his own melancholy; he wrote music 'as a tumultuous and ardent prayer of his oceanic soul, calm or desperate' (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.21). Lourenço underlines the significance of Beethoven as an artist struggling with a society that gives the artist a new kind of freedom while simultaneously abandoning him. Abandonment and freedom are the driving forces of Beethoven's soul. A spirit of genius and fierceness is required to give these two forces a meaningful musical expression (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.21).

Lourenço's sympathy for Beethoven's role as individual and composer seems in line with Wittgenstein's account of Beethoven as an ideal artist who teaches the world something through his work and life. For Wittgenstein, Beethoven 'talked and wrestled' with problems that 'no philosopher has ever confronted', and 'perhaps they are lost'. Beethoven experienced and described the development of Western culture as an 'epic', and he did it with precision (WITTGENSTEIN 1998, 12e; emphasis in the original). What is the epic of a culture? For Wittgenstein, the epic of a whole culture is to be sought in the works of its greatest figures, and in a time when these works foresee the end of this culture, 'for later there is no one there any more to describe it' (WITTGENSTEIN 1998, 12e; emphasis in the original). As pointed out by GMÜR (2001, 203), Beethoven embodies the qualities of passion, willpower, dedication, and persistence in a time of adversity, which impressed both Wittgenstein and Lourenço. Beethoven showed through his art that one can overcome suffering and adversity; he shaped his artistic creativity and production in the perspective of the eternal and transcendental, which allows for the unity of work and life.

Schumann, Chopin, Brahms, and Schubert: Suffering, Emptiness, Piercing Melancholy, and Sadness

In a short comment on Schumann's Sonata for Violin and Piano in A minor, opus 105,¹⁰ Lourenço notes a debt to Beethoven's compositional technique. He affirms that Schumann's music unfolds a 'sound labyrinth of a sadness that continuously flows back to itself' (LOURENÇO 2012, 1.2). He calls it

¹⁰ The text refers only to a Sonata in A minor, without precisely indicating the work. The reference to the date and the time Schumann spent on the composition lead to the logical conclusion that Lourenço was referring to the Sonata in A minor for violin and piano.

a ‘song of the soul’ and compares it to a lullaby, a song that lulls and reiterates itself as an unfinished and burning phase of silence. A compassionate image emerges from the mirror of melancholy when he says that sadness ‘takes itself by the hand and rests a little more as it holds a severely wounded child in its arms’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 1.2). What kind of images are here suggested? Melancholic love? Melancholic death? Or perhaps the melancholic grief of a mother facing the inevitable death of her child? There is a sort of angelic atmosphere in this description, which makes us think of the representations of the Virgin Mary carrying the young Jesus in the presence of the angels.

Indeed, Lourenço evokes the ‘Angel of Melancholy’ in another short comment on Schumann’s Concerto for Cello and Orchestra in A minor, opus 129 (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.6). The account begins with one of his favorite metaphors, the mirror of the sea. Most people swim in two waters; others are born in the middle of the sea, he says. Beethoven and Debussy are men of two waters; Schumann is a man of a vast and unique sea, which precedes him. The ‘sea’ remains a symbol of romanticism. Schumann says everything that cannot be said with the ‘romantic word’ as if he was born inside it and can travel along it; he transforms the romantic word into a vast labyrinth. Every sentence closes a door that was just opened, each movement curls in his soul, and in our soul, creating the thread of feeling inside the labyrinth. However, there is no way out of the labyrinth because, as Lourenço suggests, the feeling is converted into its own Minotaur. Sea and labyrinth are exchangeable mirrors reflecting Schumann’s great ability to express feelings with music while struggling with mental disorders. In his biography of Schumann, psychiatrist Peter OSTWALD (1985) investigates the link between Schumann’s musical world and his madness, while aiming to deconstruct the clichés and prejudices against Schumann’s music. Lourenço’s descriptions are far from judgment; rather, he shows empathy and courage for what seems to be inexplicable in Schumann’s music, that the mirror of ocean reveals. ‘Love opens the wide door of this ocean, madness will close it and, with it in his hands as a crystal, Schumann will compose his face of the Angel of Melancholy comparable to no other’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.6).

The comparison between Schumann’s Cello Concerto in A minor and Beethoven’s Eighth Symphony illuminates some features of musical romanticism. Both pieces are romantic, ‘but the relationship between the *will* and the *feeling* is inverted in each of them’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.22). The Beethoven symphony clearly reveals the consciousness of a sentimental subjectivity. As the music progresses, melancholy becomes even more profoundly melancholic and turns into the ‘cry of the human soul abandoned to the pleasure of a stellar sadness’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.22). Beethoven thinks with feeling while Schumann sentimentalizes even thought. Schumann’s music is an absolute sea of feeling, an oceanic mirror of melancholy, and the embodiment of an imperishable *saudade*; it is the

most romantic music, comparable only to Chopin. Both Schumann and Chopin are romanticism in a pure state, a wave of sadness that goes beyond all romantic poetry.

No music is more romantic than that of Schumann, as Lourenço reiterates in another text on Schumann's Symphony no. 4 in D minor, opus 120. He accounts for a vision of romanticism that exposes the quality of suffering. The Fourth Symphony, which is one of Schumann's most popular pieces, reflects a mirror of suffering; it gives expression to a sense of suffering that precedes any manifestation of suffering, as it is inherent to the ignorance of our human condition: 'If we suffer from not knowing where we come from and where our steps lead us, few pieces of music can tell us this like Schumann' (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.15). Lourenço interprets this symphony as an immortal prayer bathed in a light of sadness. In contrast to the old prayers of Bach's music, this one addresses the most deeply lost spheres of ourselves. It is a memory without object:

[...] the song of a blank memory and however one is suffering from a suffering without a name, which will soon have the name of dereliction, abandonment, reminding of old joys without return, which however are returning step by step, from where no one knows, in order to remind us that we are definitely outside of paradise (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.15).

What is this melancholy that presents itself as a sign of emptiness? Where are we to place the mirror of melancholy when even the most hidden corners of our souls are lost? Lourenço's account seems to show that Schumann's music teaches us to accept the void in ourselves, a void for which there is no reward and no compensation. As he states in a comment on Schumann's *Carnival*, it is music of nostalgia that, although it does not keep turning over and over as Wagner music would later do, unfolds a 'piercing [*lancinante*] and narcissistic escape backwards in the search for what cannot be found' (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.29).

The mirror of piercing melancholy [*melancholia lancinante*] is a recurrent image. It applies to any music from Gregorian chant to Messiaen that devours and conceals the reality of the visible world. In a text triggered by the listening of Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Lourenço mentions the 'roads of a piercing melancholy'. They constitute the bridge by which one might connect with God by renouncing time and contemplating his perpetuity with acceptance and love. This vision of God, Lourenço affirmed, had also haunted him since childhood and is something that even the most sacred words cannot express. However, the wonderful architecture of Brahms's *Requiem* catches it mysteriously: 'the most tender image of my God' (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.9). He compares himself to a dry expunger of God,

which is soaked without mercy by the tears of fire of the clear night of this music. Music is the image of God's grace, the image of an eternal, supernatural reality: 'If nothing else survived from the civilization of the past but the music of Bach, Mozart, and Brahms, this would be enough for the idea of God to be everlasting in human memory' (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.9).

In a note on Brahms's Symphony no. 2, Lourenço refers to him as the 'wonderful and distressed builder of musical spaces of an unmistakable, rough and infinitely lonely melancholy' (LOURENÇO 2012, 2.9). The internal polyphony is considered a remarkable aspect of Brahms aesthetics. His symphonies achieve a compelling narrative by cultivating a deep, lyrical, fiery and somber 'inward' texture of polyphonic voices. In Lourenço's words, the layered aspects of Brahms's internal polyphony are reflections of mirrors of water and light: 'Towels of beaten sea of light and night overlap in his writing and make this kind of twilight crystallization that is his music' (LOURENÇO 2012, 2.9).

Lourenço's observations on Chopin emerge through a mirror of sadness. In a very short remark on the Waltz no. 10, he states: 'The notes of Chopin look like infinitely sad people. These dead people have only dreams' (LOURENÇO 2012, 2.7). By comparing Chopin to the poetical diversity of Fernando Pessoa's heteronyms, he illuminates the intriguing play of diversity that characterizes Chopin's compositional style. What is the difference between Ricardo Reis and Alberto de Campos? For Lourenço it is similar to the difference between the *Scherzo Molto Vivace* (second movement) and the *Largo* (third movement) of Chopin Sonata no. 3 in B minor, opus 58: 'It is a matter of form' (LOURENÇO 2012, 2.12). Is Chopin's sadness a comforting melancholy or it is a sign of disquieted melancholy? Both comfort and disquiet are qualities found in the realm of Pessoa's melancholy. In the *Largo* of Chopin's Sonata, Lourenço observes: 'the notes live like universes of a suffocating sadness and dig spaces between them that are suddenly impossible to travel (Pessoa)' (LOURENÇO 2012, 2.12). The link to the Portuguese poet is obvious.

Schubert is also a 'composer of deep sadness'. His music leads Lourenço to the following remark: 'An incomprehensible and perpetual melancholy invades me' (LOURENÇO 2012, 2.4). In songs [*Lieder*] by Schubert and Schumann, one can hear the intimate breathing of a certain time that lives in them with the naturally romantic (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.7). Wittgenstein considered Schubert 'irreligious and melancholy' (WITTGENSTEIN 1998, 53e). He admired Schubert's capacity for transforming conventions into deeper expressions. He briefly analyzes the last two bars of Schubert's song *Der Tod und das Mädchen* [*Death and the Maiden*]: you first listen to a figure that seems 'conventional, ordinary, until you understand its deeper expression. I.e. until you understand that here the ordinary is filled with significance' (WITTGENSTEIN 1998, 60e).

Liszt, Schoenberg, Bartok, Hindemith, and Xenakis: Absence of God, Mirrors of Solitude and Nothingness

Liszt opened the door to modernity, affirms LOURENÇO (2012, 4.11). His music is not far from Richard Strauss and Debussy. Under the appearance of ‘disorder’, Liszt’s music creates superabundance and luxury, which requires a new kind of order to be expressed. Liszt shows us that music is an art without essence that is born and creates itself through its own adventures. What does musical adventure look like for different composers? How does music create a new order? How does musical evolution occur? For Lourenço, the musical adventure of Bach, as previously mentioned, is reminiscent of an infinite expression of infinite moments of life. Chopin’s musical adventure exposes finite moments of a vague sadness by an absence of love. In between these is the dialectic of Beethoven who fights for the great harmony of a less theological and more human paradise. The music of Bach, Beethoven and Chopin conveys the old order, as they belong to a universe where there is a place for God and transcendence. This changed with Schoenberg. With him emerged the music of the universe without God or with a dead God; a music seeking the rhythms of its immanent possibilities, the only rule of a game that is simultaneously a game of victim, worshiper and God (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.2).

Lourenço examines the way in which modern music approaches the idea of an impossible God in a text on Schoenberg’s *Transfigured Night* [*Verklärte Nacht*] for string sextet, a work composed in 1899, which is considered Schoenberg’s first instrumental masterpiece. The work was inspired by a mystical poem by Richard Dehmel. In cold, moonlit woods, a woman confesses to her lover that she carries the child of another man she never loved but to whom she yielded for fulfillment. Lourenço considers this piece a ‘prelude to all future agonies and astral solitude of aseptic cities, as beautiful as stars, where we will be this torn song of a night without transfiguration’. The universe of non-God is reflected in an immense mirror of melancholic despair: ‘This music seems to hit a wall that is shadow and crystal and behind which only a face without eyes and ears had been the not-God for whom we have waited for millennia’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.18). In *Transfigured Night*, Schoenberg uses the technique of *developing variation* that combines the expanded chromatic harmony of Wagner with the formal structure of Brahms (SCHOENBERG 1975, 129). The sextet, according to FRISCH (1993, 139), ‘reveals something of Schoenberg’s struggle to achieve adequate formal, thematic, and harmonic closure’ in a freer, extended instrumental form. Lourenço interprets *Transfigured Night* as a kind of ‘Tristan and Isolde *without* any Passion except the Death of this Myth’; it is a supra-Wagnerian nocturnal navigation through archipelagoes of enlightened solitude as if we were moving ourselves toward the vivid

Nothingness. We address the idea of an absent God in a prayer of devastating sweetness and oceanic sadness; we experience constantly the useless desire to be raised from Nothingness (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.18).

A similar mirror of melancholy shaped by sadness, solitude and nothingness illuminates Lourenço's account of the music of Béla Bartók. In a text on *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* he states that in Bartók's world there remains only the 'idea of a frozen speed, a cry, a crystalline architecture of unsuspected purities, a perpetual invention of sounds linked by a supremely consistent inconsistency' (LOURENÇO 2012, 2.11). He compares Bartók's music to the paintings by Giorgio de Chirico, suggesting that the pure and solitary homogeneity of Bartók's musical space assimilate the great spaces of the Italian painter. Here again, Lourenço draws a musical landscape that conveys the absence of God:

A stellar purity, an icy red of the confines of the sad galactic universe. There is nothing there but an ecstatic matching of purified forms, thoughts of God at the dawn of a world where feeling waits for the time of its birth. Form only. Form without color, without light. Pure forms of silence make up a scenario where God is absent (LOURENÇO 2012, 2.11).

How are we best to understand a music that develops a pure form? Should the absence of God be correlated to the lack of a musical narrative? In other words, are purified forms to be seen as disconnected musical figures turned inward, excluding the possibility of any musical narrative, like narcissistic mirrors reflecting their own image indefinitely and creating a sort of an abundance of sense that absorbs itself leaving nothing but silence? How are we best to understand a work such as Bartók's *Rhapsody* for Piano, opus 1 that develops a 'sound architecture of cold despair of everything and everyone?' (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.14). Or a piece like Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* that suggests 'a pure, syncopated and ecstatic search that will give us the unlikely future where death and life will be only a dream?' (LOURENÇO 2012, 1.21). Solitude is a recurrent term in Lourenço's account of Bartók's music. Individual sounds such as stars and sound structures such as constellations, floating in the sky of solitude: these images emerge when Lourenço refers to the last movement—*Allegro molto*—of Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*. The stellar universes chase each other, come close without touching, even seem to pass each other, but there is only solitude, 'the most amazing, magical and pure musical solitude that is possible to conceive. Only a sadness such as has never existed could extract from itself such music of silence that devours itself' (LOURENÇO 2012, 2.11).

The assumption that twentieth-century music invents new forms of representation by disconnecting and separating the ‘old’ forms of narrative correlates both to the idea of superabundance and to the dissipation of meaning. Instead of ideas flowing into a narrative, twentieth-century music unfolds mirrors of solitude that filter and condense meaning. For example, Alban Berg’s Violin Concerto—a piece inspired by the death of the eighteen-year-old daughter of Alma Mahler, which he dedicated ‘to the memory of an angel’—Lourenço affirms that death is invoked here ‘by what it *is not*’. Instead of the ‘old’ meaning of death, Berg celebrates death as a ‘bridge between glacial and solitary tears, as deserts separated by other deserts’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 1.10; emphasis in the original). Commenting on the overture of Paul Hindemith’s comic opera *Neues vom Tage* [*News of the Day*], he remarks how our soul is reflected in the mirrors of sadness of Hindemith, Bartók, and Berg (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.17). How terribly solitary is the life that this music has discovered in the objects on which it works. These rare sounds are more and more distant from our musical ear; they are not just poignant, but tearing, and materially painful before causing pain to the soul. Lourenço concludes that twentieth-century music, while developing the aspiration to be only music (or pure form), became more poignant and melancholic than in the time when music wanted to be and was poignant and melancholic (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.17).

Should we interpret these observations through the metamorphosis of musical meaning positively or negatively? Should we conclude that, by shifting the focus from musical narrativity to composition of sound structure, music has exacerbated the feeling of solitude of contemporary man? In any case, a surplus of melancholy seems to flourish under the eyes of the melancholic character with the drooping head when listening to these sounds that seem to consume themselves, melodies that seem to avoid any discourse, musical structures that seem to plunge us into glacial or desert landscapes of infinite loneliness. Nevertheless, new sounds seem not to have eliminated the ambiguity of the melancholic character oscillating between the extreme states of exaltation and dejection. For instance, when listening to Paul Hindemith’s *Theme and Variations ‘Die Vier Temperamente’*, music originally written for ballet, Lourenço proclaims that this piece conveys a pure state of ‘musical fascination’. The musical miracle is born, dies, and rises from these continuous metamorphoses a ‘continuous fascination take hold of us’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.3).

In a text on Xenakis, Lourenço advances some thoughts on the future of music. Xenakis’ music, he claims, ‘give us the ear with which we must approach new worlds’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 1.13). He draws attention to the fact that our artistic creativity is being shaped more and more by the use of technology. As I discuss in my book *Unsayable Music* (CHAGAS 2014a), the emergence of technology as a reflexive

medium reconstructed the concept of self-programming as a function of technology, which creates an automated reality that becomes emancipated from man—and thus self-referential. Ambivalent feelings concerning the relation between art and technology have been the object of critical studies at least since Benjamin. However, such critical approaches still have a limited impact on fields of music studies such as musicology, music theory, and analysis (CHAGAS 2014a, 156).

In one of his seminal texts, LOURENÇO (1999b) acknowledges the fact that, in the contemporary world, historical consciousness is being more and more replaced by fiction. The excess of digital images makes reality appear more and more like a fiction inside a fiction. There are now many ways to live in the present, and our contemporary culture emerges like a combat between chaos and its mirror, splendor. Lourenço's concerns are not very distant from the philosopher Vilém Flusser, who affirms that the technical images that dominate our contemporary world disengage criticism as they fix attention on the surface of things and literally expose consciousness to superficiality. He raises the concern about the ambivalent relation between man and technology. While technology can make us creative, it can also take control of us. Flusser elaborated the utopia of a 'telematic dialog', a society structured as a network where man and machine engage in a playful game for the purpose of generating information. He suggests that chamber music is a paradigm for the form of this dialog, as the universe of music is just as calculated and computed as the technical apparatuses, and music emancipates us from the semantic dimension toward self-referential 'pure' art. Flusser's utopian vision of the telematic dialogue points to the need to shape creatively the relationship between man and machine by exercising reflexive criticism and promoting freedom. His reflection can be seen as an attempt to restore the authenticity of human experience in a changing world.¹¹

Lourenço's account of Xenakis draws attention to the end of human subjectivity upon which we build our artistic creativity: 'Yes, the *interiority* is finished, the expression of man as we find in the first pages of the Holy Book. Finally we are on the outside of any Paradise and we all know that' (LOURENÇO 2012, 1.13). He affirms that there is no place for us any more in the world of subjectivity: we are now *pure outsiders*. We see our soul no longer looking to the interior mirror but turning our gaze outwards, to a universe dominated by science. As we saw before, Lourenço associates musical creativity with the idea of searching for a paradise, especially the original Paradise from which we have been chased. Music invents paradises to nourish our melancholy—it creates timeless mirrors of

¹¹ For an application of Flusser's ideas to music see my article 'Creativity with Apparatuses: from Chamber Music to Telematic Dialog' (CHAGAS 2014b). For an account of Flusser media theory see *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (FLUSSER 2000) and *Into the Universe of Technical Images* (FLUSSER 2001).

melancholy. And here, in the context of Xenakis's music, Lourenço suggests that we became slaves in the search for the Lost Paradise but we have found nowhere the face of the Lord. We are resigned to the idea that we are forever lost and there is nobody to find us. 'It took a long time, but in the end we made God cease to exist' (LOURENÇO 2012, 1.13).

Mirrors of Mirrors: Music, Language, Autonomy, and Love

As Starobinski notes, the iconological tradition of melancholy is associated with the mirror and the perspective of the reflected image (STAROBINSKI 1989, 21). The mirror is placed under the eyes of the melancholic and this relationship creates its own reality. Melancholy is an intimate companion of Eduardo Lourenço in his account of music. He recalls numerous metaphors, adjectives and synonyms to convey a multilayered universe of melancholic images in which a double function is accomplished; on the one hand, it focuses the association between melancholy and mirror. On the other hand, music is a mirror itself and an object reflecting the image of the melancholic. How are we to best understand this dual behavior? Lourenço admits that music 'enjoys the obscure and radical opacity of natural objects' (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.19), a statement that seems to contradict the shining attribute of music. How can a non-transparent object reflect anything, since it does not allow light to pass through? Lourenço illuminates this apparent contradiction stating that musical architecture is human, intelligible music, which is a luminous network, a clear network of dark beams constituted by the sounds themselves. Music is therefore a sound architecture with aesthetic properties that are defined, for example, as opposed to noise (LOURENÇO 2012, 3.19).

Indeed, music as a language shares the objectivity consistent with logical systems. What makes sound a musical sound is its logical space, i.e., the possibility of establishing a 'state of affairs', which depends of the internal properties of its elements. As Wittgenstein explains in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, anything that exists in the world can only exist in a space that determines the possibilities of all its internal properties. The form of a musical object is the possibility of its occurring in states of affairs. In this sense, what music shows is primarily a logical construction resulting from the internal relationship of its elements.¹² A melody or chord is a complex state of affairs, which can be resolved (analysed) into a statement about their constituents. However, the melody is not a meaningful proposition; it says nothing: 'A melody is a kind of tautology, it is complete in itself; it satisfies itself'

¹² See CHAGAS (2014a) for a more consistent elaboration of music under the point of view of Wittgenstein's philosophy.

(WITTGENSTEIN 1979, 4.3.15). The only thing one can perceive in the melody is its logical structure. A melody is just a melody as music is just music. The melody—and thus the music—shows what cannot be said. That is why the melody is a privileged instrument to capture reality in its structure. Different melodies point to the diversity of what cannot be said. As Wittgenstein observes, ‘The work of art does not seek to convey *something else*, but just itself’ (WITTGENSTEIN 1998, 67e; emphasis in the original).

In such a view of music, how does individual perception and subjectivity come into play? How can we best make aesthetic judgments? As stressed earlier, musical understanding is embedded in a network of language games that imply not only understanding what music is in general—the variety of its uses—but also imply knowledge of other aspects of culture. Understanding music, as Wittgenstein says, is ‘a manifestation of human life’ (WITTGENSTEIN 1998, 80e). Music is part of our very particular form of life, which is why we can consider it a language. In other words, there is no paradigm for defining what music is; we can have different understandings of music. As the tradition of European ‘classical’ music is the primary focus of Lourenço’s reflections, we can say that he is describing a particular form of life that is attached to its cultural values. In an article from 1966, he formulates a couple of critical remarks on popular music, especially French *Chanson* (Montand, Aznavour) and American Jazz (Coltrane, Miles Davis) (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.17). He refers to these styles of music as a ‘continuous stream of sadness’, in opposition to what he calls the ‘great’ music, in which melancholy remains in a nascent, superficial state. They sound like a tired complaint about the absence of meaning of all our existence surrounded by the flames of tenderness and time: ‘Everything that the great music redeems to a higher level’, and to the extent that it ‘saves us from darkness’, here the music ‘drags us to the lowest mystery of our sadness’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.17). Should we accept this kind of melancholy as a celebration of what is forever lost in our lives? Should we be ashamed of this sadness?

There is a great contrast between these words and the poetic imagery Lourenço articulates in the commentary of Schumann’s Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in A minor, opus 54. Schumann’s music, he says, has something else, ‘the perfume without the return of romanticism, opening a space of vertigo, a labyrinth of melancholy as though swallowing the walls of a night exalted and wounded by death’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.22). It creates a state of great commotion, turmoil of pure feeling oscillating between the most intense ecstasy and the darkest sadness. It is a road of liquid *rêverie* where dream, chimera, joy, sweetness and indestructible sadness see themselves among them as *mirrors of mirrors* and as ‘dancing daughters of time’ (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.22). In other words, music unfolds multiple layers of meaning, or using a typical Lourenço allegory, a house of mirrors providing different and simultaneous images of reality reflecting each other and giving form to the infinite melancholy that

allows us to overcome the limits of time. This is the kind of music that, in Lourenço's words, 'the most unnameable within myself sings, mutedly, against the night intact to my soul, which is not open to other *stigmata* than art' (LOURENÇO 2012, 4.22; emphasis in the original).

To conclude this investigation, I would refer to the concept of musical understanding as proposed by Wittgenstein.¹³ Music is autonomous in the sense that it does not express anything external. Music is complete in and of itself. Everything that can be said is said through the music. In this sense, music is not an abstract system of signs conveying some kind of meaning, but a particular form of life that displays structures that are constituted by the activity of making music. Musical understanding is not a process of going inwards, but of looking at the complexity of patterns that characterize our form of life. For Wittgenstein, art, and especially music, is capable of expressing what ordinary language cannot. Art places us outside of the world and gives us the opportunity to observe the world from the outside, the experience of transcendence. This idea of musical autonomy seems to resonate with Lourenço's ideas on music and musical understanding. He says that for millions of men immersed in daily life, music became a 'second life' or parallel universe, full of resonance of the other universe in which life is mandatory (LOURENÇO 2012, A.22).

Yet if there is one thing above all others to take away from a study of Lourenço, one may argue that it is *Love*. We could say, paraphrasing Simone Weil, that love is a sign of our melancholy.¹⁴ Lourenço expresses love in many ways: love of music, love of God, and love of himself. Love of music provides a sense of life and connects us to God: 'I was born to do nothing! If I could, I would spend my life listening to music [...]. The great music is the one that gives the feeling of what God is' (LOURENÇO 2012, A.35). Music is a mirror of grace, a double movement of descent, out of love; this is the essence of all music according to WEIL (2002, 150). But music is above all, a human activity grounded in the body and interfused with human life. Therefore, music is not eternal. As the Italian-French pianist Aldo Ciccolini (1925-2015) once said, a phrase which Lourenço used as the epigraph for his book *Tempo e História*: 'One day, perhaps music will end. Nothing is eternal; it is perhaps painful to admit it, but that is the way it is' (LOURENÇO 2012, A.35).

¹³ See 'Musical Understanding: Wittgenstein, Ethics, and Aesthetics' in CHAGAS (2014, 43-63).

¹⁴ 'Love is a sign of our wretchedness' (WEIL 2002, 62).

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