

TRANSCULTURAL DIALOGUES

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FINE
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INTELLECTUAL
DIALOGUE

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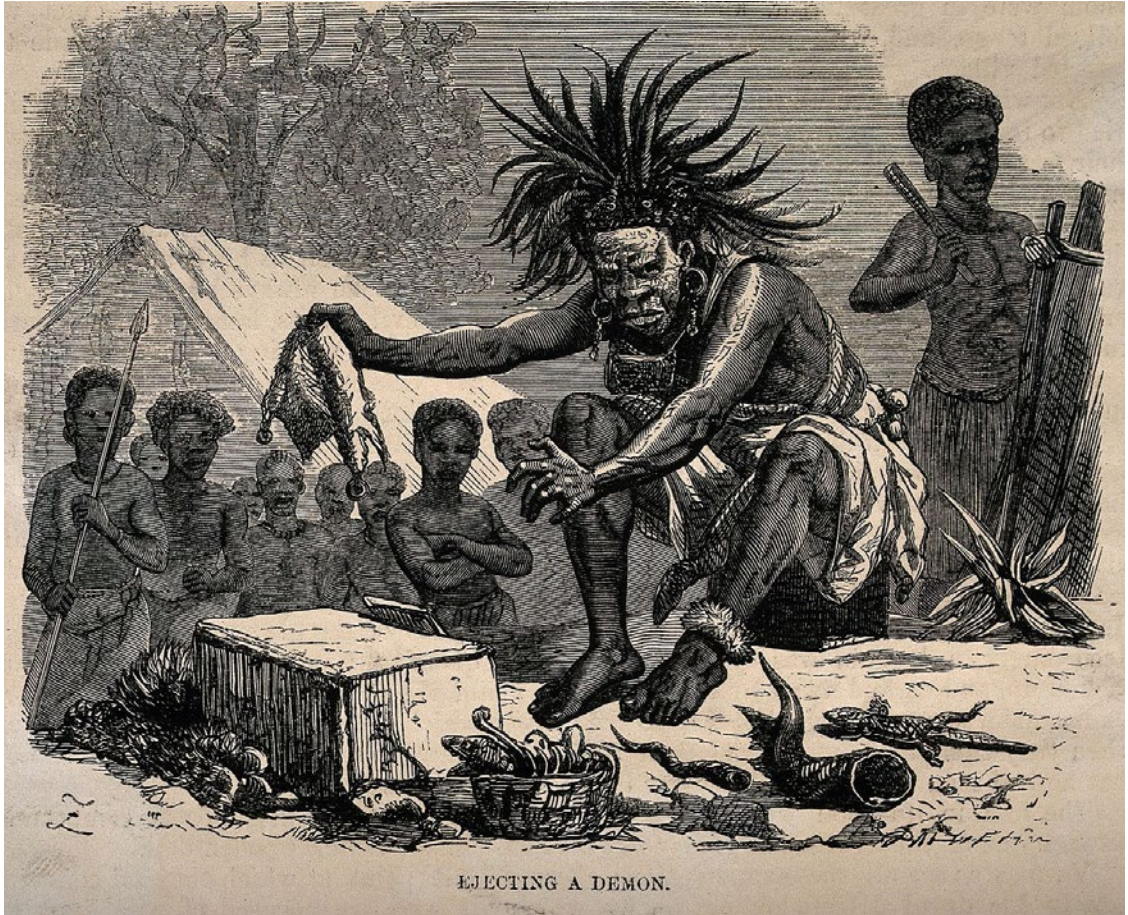


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FROM “INDIAN- EUROPEAN” TO “TRANSCULTURAL”: RECONSIDERING ALAIN DANIÉLOU’S INTELLECTUAL LEGACY

In view of the Foundation’s recent change of name from *India-Europe Foundation for New Dialogues* to *Alain Daniélou Foundation: Center for Transcultural Studies*, Adrián Navigante reflects on the contextual significance of this broader field and shows that the name-change is not merely formal. On the contrary, it relates intrinsically to Alain Daniélou’s work and presents an enormous task. The essay analyzes, among other things, the intellectual and practical scope of the idea of “transculturality”, as well as its relevance for an interpretation of Alain Daniélou in the XXI century devoid of certain prejudices that have characterized his reception till now.



African medicine man exorcism. Wood engraving by Dalziel after J. Leech.

What's in a name?

It is difficult to contradict Shakespeare. Thomas Carlyle spoke of his superior intellect (equating him with a sort of divine elite); Samuel Johnson elevated him to the heights of Homer (as archetypal poet of the West); T. S. Eliot condemned critics to being inevitably wrong about him (with the hope of a 'decent failure' in a few cases); Harold Bloom explains to us that he invented 'the human' because he inaugurates the personality, he created the self as moral agent, and he colored the Western character with a universal tinge¹. All these critics and authors seem to translate the very stuff by

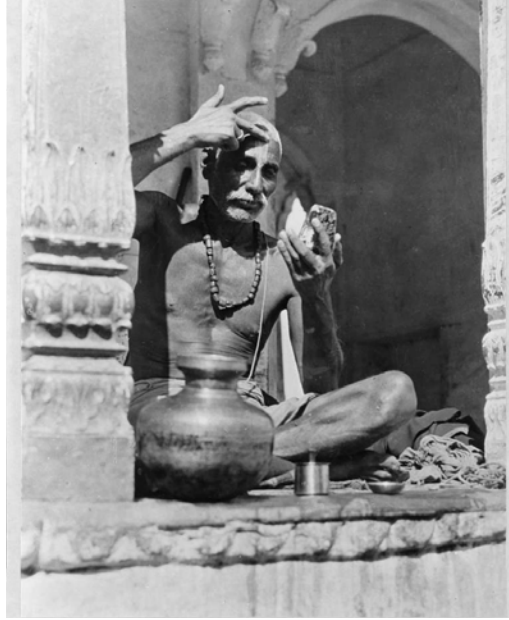
which the reader is impregnated in dealing with the English bard – the effect of his poetry and prose, his stylistic magnificence, his musicality, his *genius*. A specific kind of genius. His main quality is not vision, but lucidity; his writings are not peculiar or even singular, but institutional. Shakespeare's work declares that the Spirit (that is, the Western idea) can be larger than life – and the reader (Western or Westernized) is enticed to believe it. In his best-known play, *Hamlet*, Shakespeare shows (by means of his style) that the richness of language surpasses our very idea(l) of it, but at the same time he deprives language (in his own workings of the plot) from any access to the substrate

of Life – what we wrongly call ‘things’. The Prince of Denmark exhausts modern Western skepticism when he tells his friend Polonius that he reads merely ‘words, words, words’ (Act II, Scene II) – that is, he sees no book, no author, no world of referents, no meaningful transcendence. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the female heroine asks herself (rhetorically) ‘What’s in a name?’ (Act II, Scene II), anticipating modern linguistic theories about the arbitrariness of the sign. She seems to critically separate semantic content from world reality, while she laments the paradox that the reality of the world is nevertheless permeated by language to the point of artificially identifying the referent with the sign – ultimately her lover could have been re-named for the occasion and he would still be the same person (and object of desire) for her. What is the philosophical lesson behind that fit of adolescent passion? The person, beloved or not, is *not* in his/her name, because the world is severed from language. Humans live in a parallel sphere where meaning is permanently being evacuated, as if the resulting emptiness were the condition of our lucid participation in reality – what no other species than human-kind can do.

I dare to pick up the challenge of contradicting this verdict – much as I admire Shakespeare’s work – mainly because geniuses are not independent of their contexts, and the workings of the spirit(s), as we shall see, are not (only) what the West solemnly declared. If we follow the modern trend inaugurated by the English bard in our observation of language and the world, we may say that ‘naming things’ is ultimately irrelevant, and ‘re-naming’ (those ‘already-named’ things) utterly impossible. In other words, we are never in possession of anything but the illusory solidity of ‘language-creation’: *word-consistency* instead of *world-consistency*. This may have been a lucid verdict in Shakespeare’s time, since it broke with power-illusions related to the organization of social life

and changed the focus from institutionally accepted truths (at that time already weakened) to the individual exercise of doubt. It was the birth certificate of what is called ‘critique’ and the key to the expansion of a conquering spirit – the task of putting life at the mercy of the Western Intellect. More than four hundred years after the bard’s death, the verdict is not only questionable. It is the symptom of an outdated (and even harmful) idea of Culture. The conquering zeal of the Western spirit has shown that the power of language does not run parallel to reality: it creates and re-creates itself together with the actions led by its normative ideals.

If there is nothing in a name, we lose the whole dimension of ancestry mythology, inherited patterns of collective intricacy, non-human factors of socialization and transpersonal ties. If ‘words’ cannot reach the ‘real world’, there is an irretrievable separation of the subjective (human) agent from the network of (non-human) relations emanating from Life. The result is not the loss of Life, but a transformation of its texture according to new parameters of thought and action. These new parameters, in the case of the West, have enabled the rapid expansion of a simplified and reductive idea of reality. Science takes care of the objective dimension (which is the main territory of conquest), and literature covers the subjective need of the lost souls yearning for another (expansive, not reductive) world-view. The politics of expansion surreptitiously translates an increasing exercise of reduction. From a historical point of view, a pragmatics of concrete relations has been progressively replaced by two apparently contradictory (but in fact solidary) poles: scientific speculation on a mechanic universe (Nicolaus Copernicus) and anthropological interest in ego-centered individuals (John Locke). The modern invention of the ‘human’ is that of a subject fully severed from the texture of the world and –



Brahman priest in India. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

only as a result of that – at the same time able to conquer it. It is ‘severed’ because of a deep-rooted conviction of superiority, and its exercise of conquest translates the wish to regain the former network of relations – only to transform it into a field of governance.

Not to contradict Shakespeare on that level would mean declaring that the use of designations like ‘India-Europe’ and ‘transcultural’ to approach and deal with Alain Daniélou’s work and heritage are ultimately irrelevant. Perhaps even more: illogical and somewhat confusing. The reason seems at first sight quite convincing and appears to reconstitute something of a life-content within the wasteland of semantic referents: Daniélou spent so many years in India that one tends to associate him *automatically and exclusively* with that culture. The main question, however, is not that of associations, but that of world-configurations and their pragmatic consequences – since *on that level* lies the real content. How did Daniélou live and what does his work say to us today? This is a question

that deserves consideration far beyond some aspects of his life that ended up becoming commonplaces (partially nurtured by some of Daniélou’s provocative declarations), such as his re-education in a traditional Hindu milieu, his initiation in Shaivism and his rejection of the modern (or universal) West in the name of ancient (and local) wisdom. One can repeat those aspects *ad nauseam*, but what is really contained in Daniélou’s work and what speaks to us today with a promise for the future is something else, and it demands another type of approach. In this sense, one cannot avoid contradicting Shakespeare’s verdict, which in this case means taking Alain Daniélou’s work in its whole dynamic scope.

My exercise in contradicting and challenging the Shakespearean operation of emptying language from its rapport to reality (despite the magnificent stylistic compensation of the ontological *vacuum*) is a way of underlining the relevance of the term ‘transcultural’ in the domain ‘Research and Intellectual Dialogue’

at the *Alain Daniélou Foundation*. It is a way of saying that the change of the Foundation's name, from *India-Europe Foundation for New Dialogues* to *Alain Daniélou Foundation: Center for Transcultural Studies*, is not arbitrary. It is rather the adoption of a broader – and perhaps qualitatively different – horizon that becomes visible owing to the very substance of Daniélou's own thought and work. From that perspective, words cannot be regarded as detached from reality, because reality is larger and more complex than what the Western project of modernity understood by it. In fact, the problem of language is not that of adequation of words to objects, but rather that of the living network of relations and world-articulation between those abstract poles. If mystical terms in Hindu cosmology are the key to gaining access to and getting hold of divine forces, if proper names in West-African traditions are a door to the ancestors and their influence on the name-carriers, if magical phrases in Amerindian tribes can reveal the spirit of non-humans forest agents (like animals or plants), it is useless to dismiss such world-configurations as 'language mistakes' and purify them with the reductive parameters of universality that the modern idea of 'science' offers to mortal beings endowed with reason. In the same way, there are traditions for which immortality is not a literary exercise in metaphor (as in modern Western literature), but a serious ritual task (as in the corpus of the *Brāhmaṇas*) or a matter of subtle-body architecture (as in some refined Tantric treatises). The category of 'superstition', when applied to such collective endeavors

for the sake of their confinement in the basement of 'primitive cultures', might have been an effective device to perpetrate reductive knowledge standards, but it no longer suffices for the challenges of our times. It is no longer a convincing answer to the increasing interpenetration of cultures taking place in the XXI century. The answer can be convincing if it is *transcultural*, that is, if we pass from a vertical axis to a spiral prism, from a tree to a labyrinth, in order to properly rethink and rework terms, contents and contexts – which is precisely the contrary of what many an 'enlightened Westerner' fears, namely a fall into the pit of obscurantist regression.

Passage of Darkness: Towards the (real?) Other

If there is 'something' (and more than that) in a name and words are not simply (empty) words, it means that the modern project of the West has forgotten – or has decided to forgo – an essential step in self-reflection: coming back to itself and observing its historical movements in sufficient detail to extract hidden dimensions behind its main (economic, social and cultural) motivations. The expansionist movement of Western culture has been accompanied by an increasing curiosity in the face of *the other* – incarnated in and by cultural formations different from recognizable and desirable codes. In the case of the India-Europe axis, the asymmetry was symptomatic. "Traditional Hinduism", writes Wilhelm Halbfass, "has not reached out for the West. [...] It has

If self-reflection and expansion of the cultural horizon in terms of an increasing reception of *the other* are taken seriously, the task is to work on the arduous process of identity formation and affirmation in the West without making a fictionally homogeneous counterpart out of the (colonized) 'other'.

neither recognized the foreign, the other as a possible alternative, nor as a potential source of its own identity. [...] India has discovered the West and begun to respond to it in being sought out, explored, overrun and objectified by it”². Modern Indology as the scientific exploration of India’s past was nurtured by the establishment of European power in the Indian subcontinent; in this sense, “the situation of the encounter and ‘dialogue’ between India and Europe is an uneven, asymmetrical one”³.

Asymmetrical relations have more than one level – and identity. Although the early study of Hindu religion (mainly in its Vedic and Brahmanical expressions) consisted in measuring and modelling of religious experience according to the prototype of world religion that was Christianity⁴, there was a solidary counterpart to that assimilation project in the so-called Hinduization of autochthonous groups within the Indian subcontinent – all of which received the paradoxical status of ‘foreign’ or ‘outsiders’. In the conceptual pair ‘India-Europe’, the asymmetry does not only lie in the status of European colonial expansion regarding its conquered territories, but also within local groups across the subcontinent as well as its intrinsic power formations – the institutional and cultural phenomena of ‘Indianized empires’.

The reception of Brahmanism took place according to an assimilation strategy to Christianity, but it should not be overlooked that local traditions and cults of the Indian subcontinent had been in their turn Brahmanized, that is, selectively incorporated in the cultic body of a mainstream form and philosophy of ritual.

If self-reflection and expansion of the cultural horizon in terms of an increasing reception of *the other* are taken seriously, the task is to work on the arduous process of identity formation and affirmation in the West (from Jewish monotheism and Christian ethics

to secular humanism, liberalism and the ideology of Enlightenment) without making a fictionally homogeneous counterpart out of the colonized ‘other’ – which means treating other world-configurations in their intrinsic complexity. Post-modern Western scholarship affirms that it is doing this task, and there are many steps forward being taken in that direction. The ‘non-Western other’ (whose faces are manifold) has been submitted to a critical inquiry going in both directions: that of the researched object and that of the assumptions of the researchers. This means that scholarship does not – or at least *should not* – believe any longer that its standpoint and tools of analysis are ‘neutral’, since neutrality is in the context of its intellectual operation a synonym of ‘pure or universal truth’ (as opposed to ‘local opinions’). In fact, they shape the very object they seek to explain⁵. This awareness of the *impurity of the scientific object* is a big step towards a better reception of the ‘non-Western other’. Still, a dimension of it (affecting the method and tools of inquiry) has not been taken seriously until very recently⁶, namely the paradox that even if the method is not – strictly speaking – objective, the wager of objectivity is preserved to delimit such inquiries from wild associations, arbitrary reports and shallow self-narratives about life-changing experiences in the field of *the other*⁷. Participation in the ‘other culture’ should remain external, that is, free from the long-feared passage of darkness summarized in the expression ‘going native’. Scholarship sets this limit not only for the sake of science, but (inevitably) also for the sake of domination. Transcultural reflection is mainly focused on the consequences of such ‘impurity’ and the way in which it inevitably affects the identity construction of the dominant side.

If one clings to Alain Daniélou’s anecdotal and provocative declarations (as if they were devoid of contextual factors and specific motivations), there is little to be done in the direc-

tion of transculturality. He praised the rigid Brahmanical caste organization of pre-Independence India⁸, whose xenology scheme (inscribed in the semantic value of the word *mleccha*) “identifies the foreigner, the other as violation of fundamental norms, as deficiency, deviation and lack of value”⁹. He rejected ethnic and cultural mixture and conceived diversity from a rather ethno-differential point of view¹⁰. He considered himself a Hindu¹¹ and laconically declared Europe a land of exile and Western culture to be suffering from an incurable illness¹². He did not avoid discussions on the role of violence in the order of creation as well as the function of blood (including human) sacrifices and tribal warfare as cohesive factors of social life¹³. In today’s vocabulary, one would say that he was – to say the

least – ‘politically incorrect’. Considering the complexity and the potential of his thought and work, I think that such a reading of Daniélou is not only objectively poor (compared to the richness of contents his work displays), but also subjectively unfair (in the light of his personal career). I shall summarize those aspects in what follows.

Daniélou’s engagement in dealing with the ‘non-Western other’ was remarkable for his time, and it demands serious consideration before confining it to the straitjacket of portmanteau expressions (especially when related to political opportunism). His defense of the caste-system in traditional India was a means of counterbalancing the universalist claims of the West translated into a normative and decontextualized exportation of democracy



Missionaries with Bhil people. Source: Wikimedia Commons

and individual rights¹⁴. Even if he didn't overlook the intrinsic problems of the caste-system (especially due to the complexification of the social structure)¹⁵, he attempted to show that its aim was not the exploitation of the lower strata by the privileged, but rather a harmonious coexistence of different groups (including migratory ones) according to a balanced distribution of social functions. His main question was not whether that system was good or bad. He aimed on the contrary at a profound understanding of it – which inevitably led him to ask what entitles non-Indians to judge such a complex institution according to prejudices emanating mainly from the projection of alien cultural standards deterring *a priori* any careful analysis based on experience and study. This leads us to Daniélou's rejection of progressive cross-cultural breeding and its significance in our present context. One may wonder how he could reject a phenomenon he was himself part of¹⁶. In India he openly accepted his status of *mleccha*, that is, foreigner or stranger, which nonetheless did not prevent him from receiving a type of education closely related to that of Brahmins. He openly acknowledged being the product of conflicting civilizations and never attempted to reduce the highly complex reality of Hindu traditions to the emaciated image perpetrated by modern Orientalists or Western seekers of spiritual realization¹⁷. In the light of his work, it becomes clear that what he actually rejected was the radical critique of traditional structures and their strong solidarity ties, mainly because the aim of such critique was to dissolve local identity construction and preservation – as if it were the 'source of all evil' – in the name of 'progress' coming from the outside. His *Tales of the Ganges* articulate this aspect with a strong anticolonial bent, for example in the tale "The Cattle of the Gods", where the rejection and progressive destruction of the local wisdom incarnated by rural priests and their tribal cults goes hand in

hand with the British and modern Brahmins' increasing domination in the traditional area of the Indian subcontinent¹⁸.

Daniélou's defense of local traditions and certain deep-rooted canonical standards of knowledge may be one-sided (to counterbalance the dominant trends of dissolution), but it is not idealistic. It accepts and even embraces an inextricable coexistence of beauty and cruelty, light and darkness, pleasure and pain at all levels of manifested existence. If 'pagan religion' (for Daniélou a "religion of Nature"¹⁹) and tribal organization (as the archaic core of traditional societies) are privileged over the forms of complex societies typical of modern Western culture, it is not because they are the ultimate panacea to all problems, but rather because they are restricted frames in the exercise of human misery and much more authentic attempts to decenter the human and include the environmental milieu in the logic of fundamental interactions (on which life itself depends). His critique of urban structures and their alienation from Nature is not only applied to Western progress, but even to local standards or urbanization in ancient India, for example the passage from the pre-Vedic civilization of the Indus Valley to the classical Brahmanical system that emerged out of the so-called 'second urbanization'. But Daniélou knew that pre-urban societies were too complex to make elementary forms of religion and collective life out of them. His effort was to delve into the 'difference(s)' and extract a lesson to face the challenges of present crises. The difference is not only incarnated in India with regard to Europe, but also within India (tribal and local cults vs. mainstream religious movements) and within Europe (in the difference between pagan and Christian, ancient and modern, etc.) and also *elsewhere* (wherever Daniélou was able to retrieve what he called 'Shaivite-Dionysian aspects' in non-Western socio-religious formations: African, Amerindian, and others)²⁰.

Transculturality as a Global Challenge

Considered with the necessary attention and thoroughness, Daniélou's artistic and intellectual production can be seen as an attempt to conceive humanity no longer as the 'crown of creation' (that is, a middle *and perfective* stratum between the lower sphere of nature – instinctual bonds devoid of spirit – and God – pure Spirit free from the limitations of nature)²¹, but rather as part of a complex ontological scaffolding where the distinctions between humans, spirits/gods, animals, plants, microorganisms etc. are fluid and not at all dependent on an exclusively discrete scale of existence (matter-spirit duality) and cognition (knowledge vs. faith, science vs. superstition, insight vs. imagination, etc.). The 'animistic attitude' to which Daniélou refers in his book *Shiva and Dionysus*²² is no sentimental wish in the face of an alienated (technocratic and ethnocentric) society but something much deeper and more complex: the possibility of conceiving 'non-human subjectivities' – which in the Western reflection on *the other* took shape only towards the end of the XX century in the field of ethnology²³. The main difference between his conception and post-modern and/or post-colonialist attempts at Western self-critique lies in the fact that for Daniélou such transformation of consciousness is no merely theoretical exercise; it begins with a re-education of perception and a modified attention towards the 'environment' before it becomes a theory and a generalized world-view. He developed this aspect mainly in his

Tales of the Ganges and *Tales of the Labyrinth*, but it was also an attitude he integrated into his own life – which became quite clear after his return to Europe in the 1960s. In this context, Daniélou refers to societies of the past (Minoan, Etruscan, Assyrian, etc.) which managed to integrate the powers of Nature within the specificity of the human adventure, pointing that the past seems closed and irretrievable mainly because we remain on the level of a consciousness focused on severing levels of existence and denying the fundamental interconnectedness of manifested reality. His Dravidian hypothesis attempting to bridge certain aspects of the Indus Valley civilization with some traditions of Sub-Saharan Africa²⁴ as well as his comparison between Hindu yogic techniques and shamanic practices of the Amerindian tribes of South America²⁵ are also signs of his tendency to go beyond already fixed limits of understanding (imposed by a specific cultural influence) by means of deeper questioning and renewed observation – and *vision*.

I regard the afore-mentioned aspect of Daniélou's thought as 'transcultural' *avant la lettre*, not only because it shows an openness of mind to learn from other cultures other than the Western without interfering prejudices, but also because the prefix *trans-* in the term 'trans-cultural' intends to question even the deep-rooted presuppositions of the very operation that founded the 'universality' and 'superiority' of Western thought, among others the *idea of the human* and the *image of the non-human* that results from it. In de-cen-

The prefix *trans-* in the term 'trans-cultural' intends to question the deep-rooted presuppositions of the very operation that founded the 'universality' and 'superiority' of Western thought, including the *idea of the human* and the *image of the non-human* that results from it.



Zulu medicine man. Source: Welcomecollection.org.

tering mankind from the core of creation, Daniélou allows further reflection on taken-for-granted ideas and concepts that are in no way fixed once and for all, but rather the result of a process, for example the conviction that ‘culture’ has to do exclusively with ‘human activity’ – for the Western mind the only evidence of what is called ‘subjectivity’ or ‘spirit’ – and ‘nature’ with a neutral, objective and quantifiable ‘reality’ (of matter) external and alien to the ‘(human) life of the spirit’. Daniélou challenges such convictions by

means of his own experience in India and the philosophy he extracts from it (which he called ‘Shaivite-Dionysian’ to link the divine element directly with the forces of Nature). This is the main intellectual challenge to be picked up in the reception of Daniélou’s work, since ‘transculturality’ and the idea of ‘humanism’ have been hitherto defined out of two main parameters: 1. ‘Culture’ as human practice and only instance of subjectivity or spiritual activity (as opposed to ‘dead nature’). 2. *Transculturality* as an understanding of *other cultures* (*than the one*

from which the observation is made) on the basis of the same idea of culture²⁶ and according to a vertical scheme of values: from archaic and regressive (and lower) to modern and progressive (and higher)²⁷. Within those parameters, transculturality in the strong sense of the term could not even be born.

When can 'transculturality' be said to have been born? One could summarize the conditions of its birth by resorting to some key aspects set forth by German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch. 1. Transculturality breaks with the notion of 'culture' as a self-contained sphere delimiting itself from others (as paradigmatically conceived by Johann Gottfried von Herder²⁸). 2. Transculturality distinguishes itself from *interculturality* and *multiculturalism*, since the last two notions remained attached to the idea of a self-contained sphere (with a pluralized extension in the notion of *interculturality* and a multipole unity in the notion of *multiculturalism*). 3. Transculturality implies an inner plurality preceding the constitution of each delimited cultural unit, as well as the fluid borders and identities of the latter in a process of permanent (self-)reshaping. 4. What characterizes the exercise of 'reason' in the context of transculturality is not a conceptual superordination of phenomena, but rather a transversal dispositive bridging over two or more heterogeneous instances – and being influenced by such instances in its own (open-ended) synthetic process²⁹.

Wolfgang Welsch speaks of the self-evident character of transculturality in the history of humankind³⁰, which means that collective human experience is essentially transcultural. This amplification of the concept seems to me questionable, since it sacrifices its historical specificity. An unprecedented interpenetration of cultures took place with the 'European age of discovery' (from the XV to the XIX century), which for many theoreticians coincides in

a certain way with the term 'globalization' – even if the latter was thematized strictly speaking after the fall of the Soviet Union, that is, in the 1990s. In fact, colonial expeditions and the resulting expansion of cultural horizons resulted in the ambition of integrating *the other* by erasing its features of exteriority, but this considerable step in expansion also changed the internal structure of the identity pole of travelers and colonizers. One is never the same after an encounter with the other, not only because that other is (externally) different, but also because of the retroactive discovery that 'sameness' is a blurred perception of internal differences already existing in each identity-pole. Transculturality is in this sense strictly related to the globalization process of modern times, but only inasmuch as one considers that the very movement of that cultural expansion is not linear or one-sided. Quite the contrary: the key to deepen the notion is to not to think so much about the expansion movement but about the process that takes place when *the other* becomes impregnated in the identity-field of the conquering force – which is the inevitable consequence of a real 'encounter'.

The last point is of utmost importance, since ultimately transculturality does not consist in recognizing or understanding or even manipulating the other. It is rather about reaching the subtractive gap of alterity where the whole process is turned upside down, that is, *not only reconceiving but also reshaping the world from the perspective of the other* – without fully neutralizing one's own traces in that process. When Daniélou says that life in traditional India took him to the limits of his mental faculties³¹, or that Hindu reality escaped all divagations that could fit into the quest of an orientalist public³², or that anglicized Indians and colonial civil servants considered him "a European turned native"³³, he seems to incarnate the type of transversal thought that constitutes the global challenge of transculturality in our time, since

he was not somebody who merely went abroad and learned from a foreign culture. He changed his own structure of feeling and thinking, and afterwards he recaptured his own (temporarily sublated) identity in order to reshape it and renew it according to that transformation.

In view of all this, one can venture the following judgment: there are many levels of reality in a name. The passage from 'Indian-European' to 'transcultural' is an expansion of horizon from the seeds Daniélou planted along his path, which are invisible – because they have been buried by the weight of history (human projects usually resist or avoid the path of 'wisdom'). The task is to extract those seeds and relocate them according to the needs – or rather the demands – of the new context: 1. No clear delimitation between nature and culture, but rather a socio-cosmic field of relations in which predicates like 'subjectivity' and 'personhood' can be extended to non-humans³⁴. 2. A valid recognition of the admixture of subjects and objects in a dynamic interaction that is no longer dominated by the human (ego-)factor, but only partially channeled and filtered by it³⁵. 3. A type of research and approach to the different levels of reality (human and non-human) that Alain Daniélou defined as "knowledge of the goose [*haṃsa*]"³⁶, consisting in the ability to extract the essential values in each research process. In his own words: "If one studies a system to retrieve its truth, it is one thing. If one studies it as a bizarre curiosity [...], it leads to nothing"³⁷. By 'system' Daniélou understands a specific world-configuration, the 'truth' of which can only be grasped by giving up the superior standpoint of the observer and delving into the field of *the other*. At that point, a real participation begins to take place, and the process gains transcultural significance, since the participant is confronted with new contents and automatically forced to reshape those he had carried so far as utter convictions.

In the light of the former considerations, one can say that 'transcultural studies' in the context of the *Alain Daniélou Foundation* do not only have to do with a critical revision of Western narratives and their asymmetric presentation of cultural exchange processes (in terms of 'civilization and barbarism', 'religion and superstition' or 'science and belief')³⁸. It means opening the horizon of reflection and exchange towards local non-European traditions in different parts of the world (following the traces of Alain Daniélou: India, Africa, America, Australia, as well as remnants of local traditions in Europe³⁹), but not merely as 'objects of study'. Such traditions are living world-configurations with their own concepts, modes of behavior and socialization and distribution of beings in a specific setting. What can we learn from them by stepping out of our comfort zone? What can we learn from them keeping nonetheless that part of 'scholarly knowledge' accumulated in the West that still today – through arduous and constructive self-critique – opens doors towards a dialogue devoid of major prejudices? Such questions are the challenge of a *Center for Transcultural Studies* like the one the *Alain Daniélou Foundation* proposes from now on. •

1 Bloom goes as far as saying that Shakespeare is our “secular Scripture”, that is, “the fixed center of the Western canon” (Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare. The Invention of the Human*, New York 1998, p. 3).

2 Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe. An Essay in Understanding*, New York 1988, p. 172.

3 Wilhelm Halbfass, *Ibidem*, p. 173.

4 In this respect, cf. Timothy Fitzgerald, “Hinduism and the ‘World Religion’ Fallacy”, in: *Religion* 20, N°2 (1990), pp. 101-118.

5 Cf. Richard King, „The Copernican Turn in the Study of Religion”, in: *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 25, N° 2 (2013), pp. 145-153, especially p. 138.

6 I mean the changes in the field of anthropology after the so-called ‘ontological turn’, which ended up questioning universal parameters of description as ethno-centric strategies of ‘othering’ and deconstructing their asymmetrical results (cf. among others Eduardo Viveiro de Castro, *A Inconstância da Alma Selvagem*, São Paulo, 2002; Philippe Descola, *Par-delà nature et culture*, Paris 2005; Marshall Sahlins, *What Kingship is – and is Not*, Chicago 2014).

7 Such attempts abound, and most of them are an exacerbation of individual or private experiences nonchalantly declared as universally valid – something which can be seen as a main feature of the New-Age movement.

8 Alain Daniélou, *La civilisation des différences*, Paris 2003, pp. 64-66. A much broader expression of his views can be found in Alain Daniélou *Les quatre sens de la vie et la structure de l’Inde traditionnelle*, Monaco 1992 [first edition Paris 1963] Chapitre 2 : Les bases de l’ordre social, pp. 24-66.

9 Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europa. An Essay in Understanding*, p. 176.

10 One clear example in Alain Daniélou, *La civilisation des différences*, pp. 73-75. Cf. also Alain Daniélou, *Le chemin du labyrinthe*, Lausanne 2015, p. 310.

11 It suffices to consider the title of his autobiography’s last chapter: “Le monde occidental vu par un hindou [the Western world seen by a Hindu]”, in: *Le chemin du labyrinthe*, pp. 299-320.

12 Concerning his perception of Europe after his return from India in the 1960s, Daniélou declares the following: “Europe was for me a land of exile. It could be nice and interesting, but it was not my homeland, a land I felt solidary with” (*Le chemin du labyrinthe*, p. 217). In the last reflections of his autobiography, he is even more severe: “Equipped with this background [in traditional Hindu knowledge], I began to reestablish a connection with Europe, and the latter appeared to me as a sick world region suffering from a kind of cancer, out of which certain cells expand themselves uncontrollably and little by little contaminate all the others” (*Ibidem*, p. 301).

13 In this respect, see among others Alain Daniélou, *Shiva et Dionysos*, pp. XX.

14 As Ingeborg Maus clearly shows, human rights are subjective rights, and as such they cannot be imposed by outer instances – in the objective sphere of politics – coming from beyond the social configuration of the ones who ‘receive’ them (cf. Ingeborg Maus, *Menschenrechte, Demokratie und Frieden*, Frankfurt 2015, pp. 11-12). This question is intrinsically related to the inherent amalgamation of the notion of freedom with the spectrum of action of the human individual purported by modern liberalism.

15 “The Indian system [here: the caste system], like any other, has its faults, but it deserves to be examined in depth instead of being portrayed as an abomination by people who have never been in contact with its happy victims” (Alain Daniélou, *Le chemin du labyrinthe*, p. 319; cf. Alain Daniélou, *La civilisation des différences*, pp. 47-49).

16 “Like the modern Indians I criticize so severely, I too am a product of conflicting civilizations” (Alain Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, New York 1987, p. 218. This passage does not exist in the French original).

17 Cf. *Le chemin du labyrinthe*, p. 231.

18 Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Le bétail des dieux et autres contes gangétiques*, Monaco 1994 [first edition Paris 1962], especially pp. 166-168, where the history of the colonial ‘modernization’ of the village of Koshi is retold as an outrage towards the divine presences and autochthonous forces of the place.

¹⁹ Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Shiva et Dionysos*, Paris 2008 [first edition 1979], p. 20.

²⁰ If Shaivism is for Daniélou a religion of Nature and transcends the Indian territory and Dionysian religion is the Western counterpart of it, this means that the conceptual pair “Shaivite-Dionysian” can be applied to other traditional cultural complexes outside the India-Europe axis. Essays like “Relation entre les cultures dravidiennes et négro-africaines” (in: Alain Daniélou, *La civilisation des différences*, pp. 145-165) and “Les divinités hallucinogènes” (in: Alain Daniélou, *Yoga, Kâma : le corps est un temple*, pp. 121-125) provide sound evidence of this point – not to speak of his endeavors for the UNESCO Collection in the field of music.

²¹ There is an undeniable continuity between this monotheistic scheme and the secular idea of progress, since in the latter the human *ratio* (and therefore the workings of the spirit beyond the realm of matter) is considered the very organ of development and inner growth against the regressive power of natural instincts. This is why modern conceptions of history, even with atheist and materialist traits (like that of Marxism), can be seen as parallels to Christian eschatology, while the role of epistemic knowledge with the ‘enlightenment’ it brings to humans – on both an empirical and speculative level – remains a secular version of the ‘divine intellect’ in monotheistic religions.

²² Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Shiva et Dionysos*, Paris 1979, p. 34.

²³ The forerunners of this epistemological and ontological turn date back to the 1960s, and the shining example is Irving Hallowell’s essay on Ojibwa ontology (Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior and World View, in: Stanley Diamond (ed.), *Culture and History. Essays in Honor of Paul Radin*, New York 1960, pp. 19-52), in which the latter shows that the category of ‘person’ for this North American Indian people extends beyond the human realm. Such intuitions became a remarkably articulated corpus of research work with a strong theoretical basis with authors like Philippe Descola, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Roy Wagner and Tim Ingold. – among others.

²⁴ Cf. Alain Daniélou, Relations entre les cultures dravidiennes et négro-africaines, in: *La civilisation des différences*, Paris 2003, pp.

151-165.

²⁵ Cf. Alain Daniélou, Les divinités hallucinogènes, in: *Yoga, Kâma. Le corps est un temple*, Paris 2005, pp. 121-125.

²⁶ The uniformity of the idea of culture is essentially linked with the notion of humanism and therefore attained by means of postulating an ‘essence of the human’ as common ground to judge the productions of meaning of *any* social group independently of its context. This is a guiding thread not only in the humanism of the Renaissance (Pico della Mirandola, Marsilio Ficino) and the XIX century (August Böckh, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf), but also in the ‘new humanism’ of the post- World-War II period (cf. Karl Jaspers, *Über Bedingungen und Möglichkeiten eines neuen Humanismus*, Stuttgart 1978 [first edition 1951]) and even in the ‘intercultural humanism’ of Jörg Rüsen at the beginning of the XXI century (cf. Jörg Rüsen, *Humanismus interkulturell denken: Theorie und Methodenprobleme*, in: Kerstin Andermann - Andreas Jürgens (ed.), *Mythos, Geist, Kultur*, Paderborn 2013, pp. 267-284).

²⁷ The presupposed value judgement in such a conception implies among others the conviction that the more archaic humans are, the closest they are to ‘nature’ (and farthest from ‘culture’). For a convincing scholarly refutation of that prejudice in the field of anthropology (still present in many human sciences), see Philippe Descola, *Par-delà nature et culture*, Paris 2005, pp. 18-19.

²⁸ Cf. Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, Frankfurt 1967 [first published in 1774].

²⁹ For the first three aspects cf. Wolfgang Welsch, *Transkulturalität: Realität, Geschichte, Aufgabe*, Wien 2017, pp. 10-11 and 22-24. For the fourth aspect cf. Wolfgang Welsch, *Unsere Postmoderne Moderne*, Berlin 2008, Chapter XI: *Transversale Vernunft*, pp. 295-318.

³⁰ Cf. Wolfgang Welsch, *Transkulturalität*, p. 31.

³¹ Alain Daniélou, *Le chemin du labyrinthe*, p. 139.

³² Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 231.

³³ Alain Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*,

p. 218. This passage is missing in the French original.

34 Cf. Kaj Århem, Ecosofía Makuna, in: François Correa (ed.), *La Selva Humanizada: Ecología Alternativa en el Trópico Húmedo Colombiano*, Colombia 1990, pp. 109-126.

35 Cf. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Relative Native. Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds*, Chicago 2016, p. 241.

36 Alain Daniélou, *Essayer de comprendre*, in: *Yoga, Kâma. Le corps est un temple*, p. 47.

37 Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, pp. 44-45.

38 A revision of such concepts can be very illuminating to historically understand Western prejudices, but it still preserves the politics of objectification that constitutes the main tool of ideological domination. In other words, the prescriptive amalgamation of the universal-

ization process with an objective truth valid for each cultural group is the very thing that prevents such observers from really grasping the realities they intend to describe.

39 This historical axis concerning Europe should not be taken in a strictly archeological sense, but rather as an anthropological initiative with focus on what is still embedded in certain practices and modes of socialization characterizing Western post-modernity from archaic, ancient or non-urban world-configurations in which an alternative to the increasing homogenization of the neoliberal world-project can take shape. The revival of paganism in its manifold references as well as new forms of ecological awareness related with a reconsideration of the expression 'religion of Nature' are two good examples of such differential phenomena, which are never fully European but always transversally impregnated by non-European references.



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REFLECTIONS ON DIONYSIAN AND ORPHIC TRADITIONS IN SOURCES POSTERIOR TO ALAIN DANIÉLOU'S *SHIVA AND DIONYSOS*

In this article, Alfred Dunshirn deals with the Derveni papyrus, one of the most recent archaeological findings concerning religious sources of the Mediterranean region. The papyrus contains the interpretation of a theogony and gold tablets addressing persons on their way to the afterlife. Such sources, partly related to Near Eastern creation myths, confirm some observations that Alain Daniélou puts forward in *Shiva and Dionysus* as well as the importance of the Dionysian element in religious practices.

Introduction

When did Dionysus die and who killed him? In this paper I should like to address the suppression or dismemberment of the Dionysian, as it appears from sources that scholars have intensively discussed since Alain Daniélou's death. This can be of interest for thinking further about his book *Shiva and Dionysus*.¹ There Daniélou talks about the fact that the Dionysian was suppressed by religions of urban cultures, even though a place had to be "left" for Shiva-Dionysus.² In Greek myth, there are several stories about Dionysus (nearly) dying, be it his dismemberment as Zagreus or the unborn Dionysus almost perishing when Zeus appears to his mother Semele in the form of the lightning bolt.³ In the intellectual realm, according to Friedrich Nietzsche's well-known remarks,⁴ the dramatist Euripides, in conjunction with the questioner Socrates, put an end to the lively tradition of an important Dionysian event in Athens, namely tragedy. However, this is not the subject of the present paper, which is concerned with a testimony of an intellectual current that takes us to the time between the fifth and fourth century BCE. By 'testimony', I mean the Papyrus of Derveni, and by 'current', I mean Orphism.

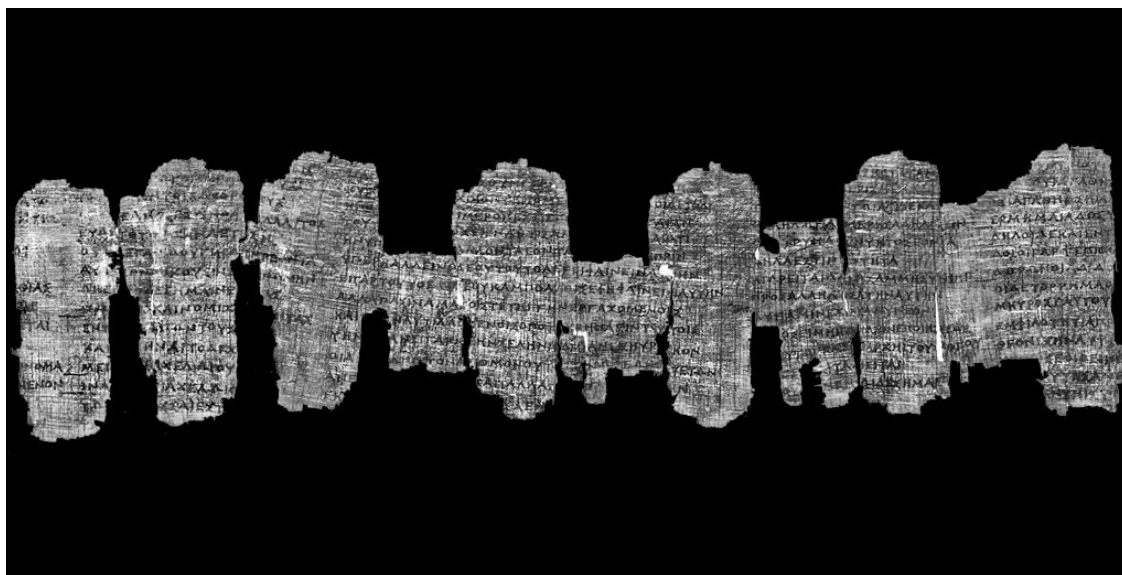
We may consider Orphism or the Orphic religion a phenomenon within the religion of Dionysus, namely as a "male and speculative tendency" in this religious movement, which was primarily a female one.⁵ Essential figures of the Dionysus cults are the women who figure both as protectors and wet nurses of the boy Dionysus and as rippers of the living, the wild animals. A great expert of the Dionysus religion, Karl Kerényi, shows how rationalising authors of mythological texts such as Onomacritus attributed the primordial guilt of killing Dionysus to the male persons of the myth.⁶ Those originally said to have rent Dionysus apart were the Curetes, the "boys" (Greek *koúroi* – who

killed the *koúros*, the "boy" *par excellence*, i.e. Dionysus/Zeus⁷). They were in turn killed and burnt by Zeus' lightning. From the soot of the vapor of the burnt Titans sprang humans.⁸ It is believed that this story established a tendency in mystical ceremonies to address or represent the purification and deification of the individual.⁹ So we can say that the Orphism with which we are concerned here is a phenomenon of isolation and at the same time a prospect of transcendence. On the other hand, we encounter the phenomenon of universalisation and rationalisation in the testimonies considered here.

The Derveni papyrus

The Derveni papyrus, which is considered Europe's oldest surviving manuscript, bears witness to this. This papyrus was found in 1962 during road construction work near a grave in a pass named Derveni, close to Thessaloniki, in Greece. The official publication of the text it contains was delayed, however, until 2006. Nevertheless, a "pirate edition" of the text was published earlier, in 1982,¹⁰ and scholars circulated private copies, which led to an intensive discussion in classical studies.¹¹ This text points not only to what lies beneath the earth, but to the underworld in the proper sense, as we encounter it in a funerary context.

The papyrus was to be burnt at a cremation and probably given to the cremated person on his way to the afterlife. But the writing did not burn completely, and some parts of the text (to which perhaps too much attention is paid in philology) were preserved. The papyrus fragments offer an interesting testimony of interpretations of Orphic poems in their popular form around 400 BC. Indeed, researchers assume that the text on the papyrus dates from this period. It provides the interpretation of an 'Orphic' theogony that may have been written around 500 BC.¹² In any case, the text provides us with information about 'Orphic' poetry, as



The Derveni Papyrus, Thessaloniki, Archaeological Museum. Source: amth.gr

problematic as the attribution is,¹³ from the classical period.

Until the discovery of the papyrus, there was much speculation about the age of the religious and mystical beliefs labelled as ‘Orphic’, which had previously been mainly known through Neoplatonism and its preoccupation with the *Hieroi logoi* (“Sacred Tales”), the *Rhapsodic Theogony*.¹⁴ Among other things, the Derveni author emphasizes that people do not inquire enough about the meaning of texts or of oracles (column 45, paragraph 14 Janko¹⁵); these people need his help to arrive at the true meaning of what is implied or hidden in myths.

Roughly speaking, this interpretative text traces all divine and cosmic events back to the *noûs*, “reason” or “spirit”. Above all, the Derveni author interprets tales of Zeus as allegories that make the actual meaning of the Orphic theogony accessible. In allegories of this kind, gods such as Demeter and Dionysus are stripped of their divine form and explained e. g. as liver and spleen, as was done by Metrodorus of

Lampsacus.¹⁶ Dionysus generally plays an important role in the Orphic theogonies: He is the son Zeus begets on Persephone, the goddess of the underworld, and the designated successor of Zeus; the young Dionysus is however dismembered.

Our author subjects all this to an allegorical interpretation in the direction of reason or the spirit (Martin West rather harshly: “The consequence is that his interpretations are uniformly false”¹⁷). Reason controls everything and brings everything forth; we can thus say that the force of life, which for the Greeks and their myths is inherent in the divine and in Dionysus, is sublimated and universalised into a force of reason. Incidentally, Euthyphron, among others, is brought into play as author of the papyrus text.¹⁸ Who is Euthyphron? We know him from Plato’s dialogue of the same name, in which he appears as an expert in matters of the divine, but who has a tough time with Socrates’ questions. This Euthyphron appears as the adequate author of the text in question – it is not



Birth of Dionysus, Apulian Red Figure Volute Krater (ca. 400 BC), Taranto, National Archaeological Museum. Source: archeotaranto.altervista.org

a philosophical dialogue or treatise, but it advertises itself and its author. The allegorical interpretation of the Orphic poem and its author could help one to fathom the myth and grasp its truth.

In parenthesis, it should be mentioned that the Dionysian was not, as Nietzsche's remarks might suggest, completely suppressed in Athens around 400 BC, which the Apollonian religion of moderation would have overridden.¹⁹ Even at this time (when philosophy was at its best in Athens), a large part of the Athenian festive calendar was dominated by festivals in honour of Dionysus. I mention only the three days of the Anthesteria, the "Flower Festival".²⁰ On the first day of the festival,²¹ the Pithoigia, the "opening of the wine jars", Dionysus was freed, as it were, from his confinement, having been sewn into the wineskins or into the thigh of his father, Zeus.

On the day of the Choes, the focus was on the wife of the archon Basileus, the highest priestess of Dionysus. She was married to Di-

onysus and the unspeakable mysteries were incumbent upon her. The Chytroi on the third day were a commemoration of the dead. The *phálloi* were also materially present at this festival during processions, another topic which Daniélou treats in-depth.²²

There was obviously a tendency towards an individualisation of these festivals, mysteries, and processes in the direction of a rationalising religion of redemption for the individual. Significant for this is a statement from the beginning of the preserved part of the Derveni papyrus. There, after quoting on column 39 the first verse of Parmenides' great poem on nature, the author states on column 41, paragraph 6 Janko²³ that the individual things in the cosmos are "signs" for human beings. This indicates, I think, that the world and its contents are de-potentialised – they are no longer expressions of life or divine power, they are signs, *semeía* – they point to something "behind".

Then we hear in the papyrus of *daímones*, of divine powers (col. 43, § 9 Janko). The inter-

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preting text obviously does not regard them as supernatural mediators between humans and gods, as it is the case with the *daímon* Eros in Plato's *Symposium* (202d–e), but they are considered – at least according to the explanations of *mágoi*, of experts in the rites²⁴ – as “great oaths”, col. 43, § 9 Janko:

οἱ δὲ [δ]αίμονες, οἱ κατὰ [τοὺς μ]άγους
τιμὰς [ἀ]έξουσιν [τῶν] θεῶν ὑπηρέται δ[ίκης,
πα]ρ' ἐκάστῳ ἱεὶ ὄν[τ]ι [κοι] μέγα[λο]ι εἰσὶν,
ὅπως περ ἀ[λοίτης] θ[ε]ός, τοῖς τὸ [φοβ]ερὸν
[ἀρωμ]ένοι[ε].

[But the] *daímones*, who, according to [the] *mágoi*, increase the honours of [the] gods as servants of justice, are great oaths, like a [god of vengeance,] to all those who [pray for the fearful].

This conception of *daímones* thus already points in the direction of the later common meaning of demons as avenging underworld creatures.²⁵ As such, demons are known to be the subject of psychoanalytical reflections on the taboo, as we can read in Freud.²⁶ According to the papyrus, this applies at least to those who “pray for”, imprecate the terrible. The *daímones* are cited in the following paragraph as the cause of wine-less sacrifices being offered (col. 43, § 10 Janko), i.e. sacrifices that renounce the gift of Dionysus *per se*, as was customary for sacrifices to subterranean deities.

The author of this text presents himself as one who intercedes in the interest of those who do not inquire into the deeper meaning of oracles. He is the one inquiring, regarding what

is prophesied, whether the “great and terrible”, the horror of Hades, is “willed by gods and right” (*thémit'*, col. 45, § 14 Janko). Then we read again of the souls of the departed, who can be obstructive demons. To these demons the *mágoi*, the rite experts, offer sacrifices. The *mýstai*, the initiates, bring such sacrifices, too – we thus enter the realm of the Mysteries, which have to do with preparations for the hereafter (col. 46, § 18 Janko: μύσται Εὐμενίσι προθύουσι ..., “initiates sacrifice to the Eumenids ...”).

In the extant text follow remarks on the assumption of rule by Zeus (col. 48, § 24 ff. Janko), who will prove to be *noús*, divine “Reason” who directs everything. This sovereignty of Zeus is demonstrated, among other things, by the fact that he, Zeus, has recognised the problem of the superiority of fire (col 49, § 27 Janko). Zeus took away a portion of fire so that something could form in the cosmos. In all this, the *daímon* is involved, whom Zeus “accepts” or “devours” (if we follow West's textual transposition²⁷).

Of significant importance for this cosmogony – at least in the interpretation of our author – is also Helios, the sun god.²⁸ Zeus “swallows” this god, the “venerable” one, *aidoíon* (col. 53, § 39–40 Janko; as a neuter *aidoíon* also denotes the male sexual organ). In this context, the Derveni author mentions the stations of the sequence of the gods. Kronos succeeds Uranos – here we see one of many linguistic considerations of the Derveni author at work. He often equates words (e. g. “speak” means the same as “teach”, col. 50, § 30 Janko). Here the Derveni author ventures an etymology of the name Kronos:

he as *noús* (reason) is the one who “pushes things”, cf. *krouésthai*; we are again confronted with the orientation of everything towards the divine *noús*, which ultimately does not leave room for the Dionysian (col. 54, § 43 Janko):

“Οὐρανὸν Εὐφρονίδην, ὃς πρόωτις
βασιλευσεν”.

“κρούοντα” τὸν “Νοῦν” πρὸς ἀλλήλ[α]
“Κρόνον” ὀνομάσας, “μέγα ῥέξαι” φησὶ τὸν
“Οὐρανόν”

ἀφαιρεθῆναι γὰρ τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτόν.
“Κρόνον” δὲ ὠνόμασεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ξ[ρ]γου
αὐτόν, καὶ τᾶλλα κατὰ τ[ὸ]ν αὐ[τὸν] λόγον.

“Uranos, son of the night, who became king
as the very first.”

Because the “Nous” “pushes (things) against each other” (*krouónta*), he called him “Kronos” (*Kro-Nous*) and he says that he “did great things to Uranos”. For he (Uranos) had been deprived of his dominion. He called him “Kronos” after his deed and everything else after the same principle.

This all-involving and all-emerging *noús* is the “counsellor Zeus”, *metiéta Zeús* (col. 55, § 46 Janko). The “venerable king” is also called *protógonos*, “firstborn”, a title that is also understood as a proper name. By means of this “firstborn”, we can connect the Derveni theogony in a broad arc with eastern cosmogonies such as the Prajāpati story or the Egyptian Remyth.²⁹ Protogonos, the firstborn, is conceived as the “only one” (§ 50): everything depends on him, all the gods and goddesses, the rivers and springs, everything altogether. We are witnessing the development of a religion of reason with a claim to universality and uniqueness for reason.

Zeus, as this divine reason is called by name, is further called “breath” (*pnoié, pneúma*) and *moíra*, “fate” or “destiny”, of everything (col. 57, § 57 Janko). Regarding this conception of fate “spinning” man’s destiny (col. 58, § 58 Janko),

widespread among men, the Derveni author claims to put forward the correct interpretation of Orphic thought. By *moíra* Orpheus had meant *phrónesis*, “prudence” or “practical thinking” (col. 58, § 59 Janko). Zeus not only swallows Metis, but he is also identified in this text with various other of the known divine instances, namely with the Celestial Aphrodite, with Peitho, personified persuasion, as well as with Harmonia (col. 61, § 72 Janko).

In Zeus the most diverse deities coincide; we experience a unifying movement. The Derveni author underlines the originality and power of *noús*, alias Zeus, by having Zeus “conceive” Gaia and Uranos, “Earth” and “Sky” (col. 61, § 75 Janko). The goddess Ge, the Earth, is in turn likened to Demeter, Rhea (Zeus’ mother) and Hera (Zeus’ sister and wife). This brings us to the potential mothers of Dionysus, namely Demeter and Rhea, who conceived Dionysus incestuously with Zeus. The Derveni author also addresses Zeus’ desire to be united with “his mother” (col. 65, § 93 Janko). He interprets the expression “mother” as *noús* and the pronoun “his” as “good” – the divine Reason wants to connect with itself. One may be reminded of speculative philosophy of mind.

This brings us to the end of the extant text on the Derveni Papyrus. It should be clear that it is an allegorical interpretation of an ‘Orphic’ text that emphasises reason and destroys the dialectic of life and death, a dialectic that characterises the cult of Dionysus and for which – to quote the subtitle of Kerényi’s above-mentioned book – it expresses “indestructible life”.

‘Orphic’ gold tablets

Now let us turn to the positive side of a Dionysian concept in connection with the otherworldly, also attested by artefacts found under the earth. I am referring to the gold tablets found in the Greek world that provide us with information on individual religious beliefs.³⁰



Gold tablet from Hipponium (ca. 400 BC), Vibo Valentia, National Archaeological Museum. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Recent discoveries about these golden leaves have enriched our knowledge on this topic.

A classic collection of the *Orphicorum fragmenta* was edited by Otto Kern.³¹ We owe the current, extensively annotated edition to Alberto Bernabé, who as the second fascicle of his *Poetae Epici Graeci. Testimonia et fragmenta* published the *Orphicorum et Orphicis similium testimonia et fragmenta*.³² This edition includes the texts of gold tablets found in the tomb of a woman at Pelinna, in Thessaly, Greece, dating to the fourth century BC.³³ The corpse wore the tablet on its chest. The marble burial chamber also contained an image of a maenad, the classical companion of Bacchus.³⁴

Such plates were found in various places in the 1970s and 1980s. They were – like the theogony of the Derveni Papyrus – assigned to an Orphic religion³⁵ and gave rise to extensive scholarly discussion.³⁶

With Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, however, one can distinguish a “mnemosynic-pythagoric” group, comparable with the Buddha’s teachings,³⁷ from a second group that speaks of painful experiences or atonements leading to a new state of mind.³⁸ It is this second group that we will deal with here. Significant finds were made, for example, in the ancient Hipponium (Vibo Valentia in Calabria), edited by Pugliese Carratelli.³⁹ The plates can be seen as talismans for the deceased on their way to the underworld, reminding them of what they heard in their initiations into the Mysteries.

The text of one of the two gold tablets found in Thessaly reads as follows (fragment 486 E Bernabé):⁴⁰

νῦν ἔθανες καὶ νῦν ἐγένου, τρισόλβιε,
ἅματι τῷιδε.
εἰπ[ε]ῖν Φερσεφό·ναι ὃ ὅτι
Β·άκ·χιος·αὐτὸς·ἔλυσε·
ταῦρος·εἰς γάλ·α· ἔθορ·ε·ς·

αἵψα·εἰς γάλα· ἔθορ·ες·
 κ·ριός·ές γάλα ἔπεσ·ες·.
 οἶνον ἔχεις εὐδαίμον·α· τιμήν
 καὶ σὺ μὲν εἷς ὑπὸ γῆν τελέσας ἄπερ ὄλβιοι
 ἄλλοι.⁴¹

Now you have died and now you have
 come into being, thrice
 blessed, on this day.
 Tell Persephona that Bakchios himself
 freed you.

As a bull you plunged into the milk:
 Suddenly you fell into the milk:
 As a little goat you fell into the milk.
 Wine you have to blissful honour,
 And you are going underground, initiated
 like other blessed ones.

We encounter central elements of the Dionysian in connection with a belief in the afterlife. In the first line, the dialectic of passing and becoming is addressed, presumably by a priest speaking to the deceased. We read something similar in well-known tablets about a *páthos*, a “suffering” or “experience”, experienced for the first time and that leads to new dimensions.⁴² There, too, it is said that a little goat, this time called *ériphe*, fell into the milk. In this we may see the suffering of Bakchos, of Dionysus himself. The expression *ériphe* alludes to the story that Dionysus was “sewn in” (cf. Greek *ereípho* “sew”), namely into the thigh of his father, Zeus, who bore him.⁴³ Similarly, the juice of the grapes that becomes wine is sewn into wine skins from which it is then extracted.

As the god of wine, Dionysus bears the epithet

“solver”, which is also shown on the tablet: he is addressed with the epithet “Bakchios”, who has “solved” or “redeemed”, freed the deceased. This is what the bearer of the plate is supposed to say to Persephone, the goddess of the underworld. The verses are followed by formulas that were typical closings of the Mysteries.⁴⁴ However, before wine is explicitly mentioned, we hear three times about the milk into which someone fell or tumbled. The fall into the milk refers, as it seems, to the fate of the dismembered Dionysus Zagreus, which was remembered for example on Crete. According to one version of the myth, the Titans cut up this Cretan Dionysus.⁴⁵ Zeus burnt them to ashes with his lightning, as mentioned above. From the soot of the vapor resulting from the burnt Titans, in turn, mankind was born.⁴⁶ The dismemberment and cooking of the infant Dionysus in a cauldron were reproduced in the Mysteries by the cutting up of young animals (or the myth reflects shamanic rites in the Mysteries⁴⁷); the cooking of a goat recalls the reassembly of the dismembered Dionysus, just as Osiris was reassembled by Isis. And this cooking took place, as the gold tablets suggest, in milk, the medium of rebirth. This is also documented in the Phoenician area, and the biblical prohibition against seething a kid in its mother’s milk probably reflects such processes.⁴⁸

In any case, addressing the milk and falling into it expresses that the *mýstes*, the initiate, may expect a resurrection, in the sense of leaving the human realm.

**As the god of wine, Dionysus bears the epithet
 “solver”, which is also shown on the tablet: he is
 addressed with the epithet “Bakchios”, who has
 “solved” or “redeemed”, freed the deceased.**



Gold tablet from Thurii, tomb of Timpone Grande (4th century BC), Naples, National Archaeological Museum. Source: miti3000.it

Tablets from Thurii

Such statements about falling into the milk are not limited to the new finds in Thessaly from the 20th century. Already in the 19th century, texts of tablets from Thurii were published, among them the above-mentioned text about the *páthema*, the “experience”, 487 F Bernabé, 32f. Kern:

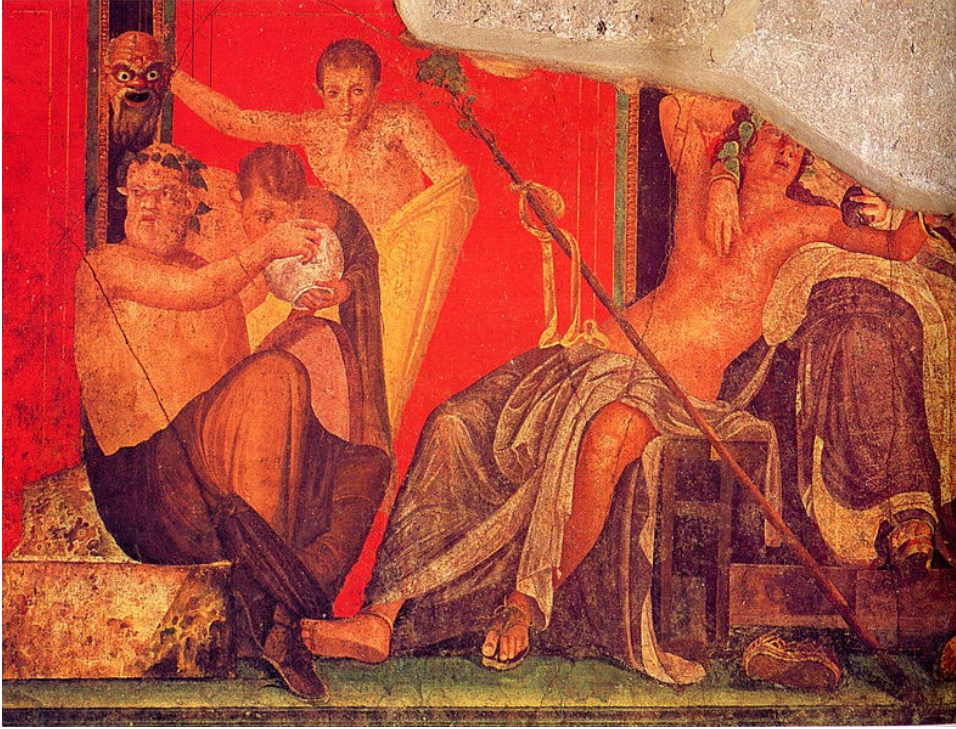
χαῖρε παθὼν τὸ πάθημα
τὸ δ' οὐπὼ πρόσθ' ἐπεπόνθεις·
θεὸς ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου·
ἔριφος ἐς γάλα ἔπετες.

Welcome you, who've experienced the
experience
that you've not experienced before:
You became God from a human being:
As a little goat you fell into the milk.

Here the apotheosis is explicitly mentioned. A hitherto “unsuffered suffering”, a special experience, namely death, leads to being God. Again, we read that the person addressed has fallen into milk. This time he is called *ériphe*, with the suggestive word for “little goat”, which evokes the “sewing in” of Dionysus/the wine.

Conclusions

What do we see in the recent finds from under the earth which point to the underworld? They testify to a confrontation with the Orphic, in turn pointing to the Dionysian. The allegorical interpretation, however, shows a spiritualisation. All mythical contents are interpreted in such a way that they refer to the *noús*, “reason” or “spirit”. We can therefore speak of a rationalisation that destroys the tension between life and death as lived out in the cults of Dio-



Gold tablet from Thurii, tomb of Timpone Grande (4th century BC), Naples, National Archaeological Museum. Source: miti3000.it

nysus.

The gold tablets we have been looking at, on the other hand, testify to an individualisation. Although the initiate has to do with Dionysus, he or she does not experience an integration into the general vitality (*zoé*), but expects to reach a new horizon, a departure from the previous life (*bíos*),⁴⁹ through an “unexperienced” experience.

But who knows what information the earth still holds about Dionysus and Orphism that will change our views? – The tradition of the Dionysian cults in antiquity is long attested. Suffice it to think of the Villa dei misteri at Pompei, whose wonderful frescoes bear witness to the cult of Dionysus up to the first century CE.⁵⁰

Most recently, archaeologists have discovered a stone slab from the second century with the re-

cord of a Dionysus cult association in Carinthia, Austria,⁵¹ which shows the active participation in Dionysian activities (whatever they were) at Virunum during the Roman occupation of that region.

In any case, the new finds considered here clearly confirm some of Daniélou’s observations. The Derveni papyrus, however, does not testify to a suppression of the Dionysian, but to a reinterpretation in the direction of emphasising the “superiority of reason”.⁵² The gold tablets, on the other hand, which led us into the world of the Mysteries, confirm with their references to Dionysus Daniélou’s statement that all mystery cults are Shivaistic or Dionysian in character.⁵³ •

- 1 First published in French under the title *Shiva et Dionysos. La religion de la nature et de l'eros; de la préhistoire à l'avenir*, Paris 1979.
- 2 Alain Daniélou: *Shiva und Dionysos. Die Religion der Natur und des Eros*. Aus dem Französischen übersetzt von Rolf Kühn, überarbeitet von Sarah Eichner und hrsg. von Adrián Navigante, Dresden 2020, p. 61 (cf. id.: *Gods of Love and Ecstasy. The Traditions of Shiva and Dionysus*, Rochester 1992, p. 15).
- 3 For an overview of the various myths associated with Dionysus and their reception in art and literature cf. Christine Harrauer and Herbert Hunger: *Lexikon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie*. 9., vollständig neu bearbeitete Aufl., Purkersdorf 2006, 141–148.
- 4 Cf. e.g. Friedrich Nietzsche: *Die Geburt der Tragödie. Kritische Studienausgabe*. Bd. 1. Hrsg. von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari, Neuausgabe, München 1999, p. 83.
- 5 A “männliche und spekulative Tendenz,” Karl Kerényi: *Dionysos. Urbild des unzerstörbaren Lebens*, Stuttgart 1994, p. 164.
- 6 Kerényi, *Dionysos*, pp. 150–155.
- 7 Cf. Daniélou's reference to the cult of Murugan/Kumara, in: Daniélou, *Shiva und Dionysos* ed. Navigante, p. 75 (cf. Daniélou, *Gods of Love and Ecstasy*, p. 26).
- 8 Olympiodorus, In *Platonis Phaedonem commentarii* 1, 3 (Orph. fragm. 220 Kern); cf. Kerényi, *Dionysos*, pp. 152.
- 9 In the studies on the gold tablets, in particular Domenico Comparetti emphasized the importance of the Titan story (Domenico Comparetti: *Lamine orfiche*, Firenze 1910).
- 10 [Anonymus]: “Der orphische Papyrus von Derveni”, in: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 1982, 47, pp. 1–12.
- 11 The most substantial study published so far is by Gábor Betegh: *The Derveni Papyrus. Cosmology, Theology and Interpretation*, Cambridge 2004.
- 12 Cf. Martin L. West: *The Orphic Poems*, Oxford 1983, pp. 108–110: the theogony on which the Derveni papyrus is based was “composed for what may fairly be called a Bacchic society” (p. 110).
- 13 On the problematic label ‘Orphic’, cf. West, *The Orphic Poems*, 1–38.
- 14 Cf. West, *The Orphic Poems*, p. 69.
- 15 Numbers following *Der Papyrus von Derveni*. Griechisch-deutsch. Eingeleitet, übersetzt und kommentiert von Mirjam E. Kotwick basierend auf einem griechischen Text von Richard Janko, Berlin/Boston 2017.
- 16 Cf. *Der Papyrus von Derveni*, ed. Kotwick p. 21.
- 17 West, *The Orphic Poems*, p. 79.
- 18 Charles H. Kahn: “Was Euthyphro the Author of the Derveni Papyrus?”, in: Laks, André and Glenn W. Most (eds.): *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus*, Oxford 1997, pp. 55–63. For an overview of further considerations on the authorship of the Derveni Papyrus cf. *Der Papyrus von Derveni*, ed. Kotwick pp. 19–23.
- 19 Cf. note 4.
- 20 Kerényi, *Dionysos*, pp. 186–193.
- 21 For a concise overview of the three days of the festival cf. Christoph Auffahrt: “Anthesteria”, in: Cancik, Hubert and Helmuth Schneider (eds.): *Der neue Pauly*. Bd. 1, Stuttgart and Weimar 1996, pp. 732 f.
- 22 Alain Daniélou: *The Phallus. Sacred Symbol of Male Creative Power*, Rochester 1995.
- 23 [καὶ γὰρ ἔστ]ιν ἑκαστα σημεῖα ἀνθρώποις text following *Der Papyrus von Derveni*, ed. Kotwick.
- 24 Cf. *Der Papyrus von Derveni*, ed. Kotwick, p. 142.
- 25 The major stages of this development are outlined by David L. Bradnick: *Evil, Spirits and Possession. An Emergentist Theology of the demonic*, Leiden and Boston 2017, pp. 20–29.
- 26 Sigmund Freud: “Totem und Tabu. II: Das Tabu und die Ambivalenz der Gefühlsregungen”, in: id.: *Studienausgabe*. Band IX: *Fragen der Gesellschaft. Ursprünge der Religion*. Hrsg. von Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards and James Strachey, Frankfurt/Main 1982, pp. 311–363, especially pp. 349–356.
- 27 West, *The Orphic Poems*, p. 85.
- 28 For the identification of the sun with Zeus and Dionysus in Hellenistic times cf. West, *The Orphic*

Poems, p. 206.

29 Cf. West, *The Orphic Poems*, pp. 103–105.

30 Cf. Alberto Bernabé and Ana Isabel Jiménez San Christóbal: *Instructions for the Netherworld. The Orphic Gold Tablets*, Leiden and Boston 2008.

31 Berlin 1922.

32 München and Leipzig 2005.

33 For a contextualization of these tablets in the Thessalian stories about the underworld and the positive emotions towards the afterlife cf. Sofia Kravaritou and Maria Stamatopoulou: “From Alkestis to Archidike. Thessalian Attitudes to Death and the Afterlife”, in: Ekroth, Gunnel and Ingela Nilsson (eds.): *Round Trip to Hades in the Eastern Mediterranean Tradition*, Leiden 2018, pp. 124–162; on the tomb itself pp. 149 f.

34 Cf. the literary survey in Bernabé, *Orphicorum et Orphicis similia testimonia et fragmenta*, pp. 43–51.

35 Bernabé, *Orphicorum et Orphicis similia testimonia et fragmenta*, p. 11.

36 For a succinct history of this discussion cf. Radcliffe G. Edmonds III: “Who Are You? A Brief History of the Scholarship”, in: id. (ed.): *The “Orphic” Gold Tablets and Greek Religion. Further along the Path*, Cambridge 2011, 3–14.

37 Cf. Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli: *Le lamine d'oro orfiche. Istruzioni per il viaggio oltremondano degli iniziati greci*, Milano 2001, p. 55.

38 Cf. Pugliese Carratelli, *Le lamine d'oro orfiche*, pp. 18–19.

39 Giuseppe Foti and Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli: “Un sepolcro di Hipponion e un nuovo testo orfico”, in: *La parola del passato*, 1974, 29, pp. 91–126.

40 Cf. text and translation in Pugliese Carratelli, *Le lamine d'oro orfiche*, pp. 114–115; Radcliffe G. Edmonds III: “The ‘Orphic’ Gold Tablets. Texts and Translations, with Critical Apparatus and Tables”, in: id., *The “Orphic” Gold Tablets*, pp. 15–50, here p. 36 (fragment 485 Bernabé).

41 Alternative text: $\kappa\alpha\pi\iota\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu\epsilon\iota\ \delta\ \upsilon\pi\omicron\ \gamma\eta\nu\ \tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\alpha\ \alpha\sigma\sigma\alpha\pi\epsilon\rho\ \delta\lambda\beta\iota\omicron\iota\ \alpha\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota\ \langle\tau\epsilon\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\nu\tau\alpha\rangle$ – “and there await you beneath the earth the rites into which other blessed ones are initiated”.

42 Orph. fragm. 32 Kern, cited by Kerényi, *Dionysos*, p. 158.

43 Cf. note 6.

44 Bernabé, *Orphicorum et Orphicis similia testimonia et fragmenta*, pp. 46–47.

45 Most recently, Giulia Rossetto published a significant find in a palimpsest manuscript: several dozen hexameters, possibly belonging to the Orphic Rhapsodies, tell of the toys with which the Titans seduced the boy Dionysus, cf. Giulia Rossetto: “Fragments from the Orphic Rhapsodies? Hitherto Unknown Hexameters in the Palimpsest Sin. ar. NF 66”, in: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 2021, 219, pp. 34–60.

46 Cf. Kerényi, *Dionysos*, pp. 152–158; Pugliese Carratelli, *Le lamine d'oro orfiche*, pp. 20–21.

47 Cf. West, *The Orphic Poems*, pp. 147–148.

48 Cf. Kerényi, *Dionysos*, pp. 159–160. For other interpretations of falling into milk, see Bernabé, *Orphicorum et Orphicis similia testimonia et fragmenta*, pp. 47–49.

49 On the distinction between *zoé* and *bíos* cf. Kerényi, *Dionysos*, pp. 11–15.

50 For a new examination of the pictorial representations of the mysteries cf. Nicole Belayche and Francesco Massa (eds.): *Mystery Cults in Visual Representation in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, Leiden and Boston 2020; for the complex visual representation of Dionysus/Liber Pater in Rome cf. Stéphanie Wyler: “Images of Dionysus in Rome. The Archaic and Augustan Periods”, in: Mac Góráin, Fiachra: *Dionysus and Rome. Religion and Literature*, Berlin and Boston 2020, 85–110.

51 *Kronen Zeitung*, 18.08.2021, <https://www.krone.at/2487428>.

52 Cf. Daniélou, *Shiva und Dionysos* ed. Navigante, p. 61 (cf. Daniélou, *Gods of Love and Ecstasy*, p. 16).

53 Cf. Daniélou, *Shiva und Dionysos* ed. Navigante, p. 64 (cf. Daniélou, *Gods of Love and Ecstasy*, p. 16).



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ALAIN DANIÉLOU'S MUSICAL DIALOGUE

In this essay, Celso Cintra, author of the book *Alain Daniélou's Musical Dialogue* [*Alain Daniélou e seu laberinto musical*, 2020] presents four dialogues that can be extracted from Alain Daniélou's musicological work: between the collective and the individual, between the West and the East, between civilizations beyond the India-Europe axis, and between knowledge disciplines. He also delves into the problem of the correspondence between sound combination and feelings, the metaphysical basis for the understanding of sound and psychological phenomena, and Daniélou's critique of Western music, its distortion of sound and its theoretical simplification.



Ravi Shankar, Maurice Fleuret and Alain Daniélou in 1985.

Introduction

Many consider Alain Daniélou an ethnomusicologist, but while his studies can be useful for ethnomusicology - and in fact they are - his persistence seems to occur in a field in which his work is not so much a research object: that of musical theory and cognition, extending into the field of aesthetics and philosophy of music.

As Alan P. Merriam¹ rightly points out, we can find in ethnomusicology many anthropological and musicological trends. Daniélou fits the latter if we understand him within ethnomusicology. Nevertheless, Joseph Kerman tells us: “musicology, theory and ethnomusicology should not be defined [...] in terms of their object of

study, but in terms of their philosophies and ideologies”².

In *The Way to the Labyrinth* Daniélou comments on the publication of his works stating: “[Pierre] Bérès brought out some of my more difficult works, such as the *Traité de musicologie comparée* and especially *Sémantique Musicale*, which challenges the basic principles of all the musical systems”³. These two works are the basis of Daniélou’s understanding of music.

The following four dialogues can be extracted from the work of Alain Daniélou: 1) Dialogue between the collective and the individual (Musicology vs. Semantics); 2) Dialogue between West and East; 3) Dialogue Between Civiliza-

tions: China, India, Ancient Greece and Today's West and 4) Interdisciplinary Dialogue: Philosophy of Music and Music Theory.

1. Dialogue between the collective and the individual (Musicology vs. Semantics)

It is no coincidence that the most recent version of *Traité de Musicologie Comparée*⁴ (eng. *Music and the Power of Sound*) bears the subtitle *the influence of tuning and interval on consciousness*⁵. Intervals and their numerical symbolism is a theme very dear to Alain Daniélou and it is from this focus that he initially discusses issues of musical language, such as the nature of musical sounds, harmonic series, construction of scales and musical relationships, the measurement of intervals and their notation.

Rather than understanding how human beings acquired knowledge of intervals, it is important to discover how the phenomenon occurs that allows certain sound combinations to evoke different feelings, emotions or images. According to Daniélou, it is by studying traditional metaphysics, with its internal logic and coherence, despite apparent external changes, that we can understand the possible links between sound phenomena and their psychological effects⁶.

Daniélou recalls that several elements of our musical system are symbolic, as are spatial and temporal measurement patterns, and that such elements are used and considered as natural only because of the correspondences between these symbols and the real world.

The Sanskrit word for universe is *jagat* ("that which moves"), and every movement generates a vibration, which in turn can be associated with a sound, which thus becomes a common principle throughout the universe. In this sense, this statement would be "in tune" with the descriptions of matter made after the advent of quantum mechanics. Since all matter can be understood in terms of vibration and consequently of sound, even if inaudible, the relationships between the various elements existing in the world can be understood as sound relationships. Consequently, music can be an audible manifestation of these relationships in the world, providing the power to recreate the things of the world themselves, as described in the Vedas and in Genesis.

However, if these relationships cannot be reproduced perfectly to provide the power of creation, they can at least evoke such creations, certain feelings, emotions or even realities of a spiritual nature⁷.

*Evocation through sound, like creation itself, takes place not because of the material fact of physical vibration but on account of the existence of metaphysical correspondences. Therefore all psychological explanation of musical experience has to be discarded. In reality, the personality of the hearer counts for nothing in the phenomenon of musical evocation because evocation takes place even if there is no hearer; and if the existence of this evocation is ephemeral it is only because of the imperfection of the relation of sounds.*⁸

In turn, *Sémantique Musicale*⁹ was originally

As all matter can be understood in terms of vibration and consequently of sounds, even if inaudible, the relationship between the various elements existing in the world can be understood as sound relationships.

published in 1967. The second edition, which appeared in 1978, contained an introduction written by Françoise Escal, and an Annex of a project for the construction of a keyboard instrument. In this book, Daniélou also grounds the development of his theme on the question of intervals and their numerical symbolism. However, whereas in *Music and the Power of Sound* he uses intervals to deal with ethnic and historical issues, here he takes them as a basis for an analysis of how musical meaning arises in our audio-mental apparatus. Daniélou intends thereby to investigate the possibility of the occurrence of an objective musical phenomenon that would cause a certain effect or have the same meaning for all people, also analyzing the reason for the occurrence of different and even contradictory effects in listeners by the same song. His references here were the following: *Elementary thinking and the classification of behavior*¹⁰ by the pediatrician and otolaryngologist Henry J. Mark, *Cybernetics*¹¹ by the American mathematician and founder of cybernetics Norbert Wiener, and *Vues nouvelles sur le monde des sons*¹² by the Austro-German acoustic engineer and pioneer of electronic music Fritz Winckel.

2. Dialogue between West and East

For a time, Daniélou undertook the discipline of reading books, newspapers or magazines only in Hindi or Sanskrit, in order to learn both languages. In this way, he became fluent in Hindi and could study ancient Indian music treatises in Sanskrit. By studying these treatises, as well as playing the *vīṇā* instrument, he reached another conception of both Eastern and Western music. As he reports:

Little by little I was initiated into an astonishing new world – the music of India. But although it was very different from Western music, the two styles remained separate and distinct in my mind and I never tried to min-

*gle them. Musical systems, like languages, do not mix; but one gradually becomes aware of the resemblances between them, not in form but in evocative power.*¹³

Through his works, mostly published on his return to Europe, Daniélou seeks to show the Hindu world in its many different aspects - philosophical, religious, ethical and artistic - since he understands that this civilization has very little to do with the usual pseudo-mystical picture people have made of it. For him, Indian civilization is the only one of the ancient great civilizations still alive and a better acquaintance with their possible contributions could lead modern thought to a new Renaissance.

During his stay in Benares, Daniélou recorded both the best representatives of Indian classical music as well as Vedic chants and popular Indian songs. Thanks to the interest of Serge Moreux and his assistant Roland de Candé, of the French label *Ducretet-Thomson*, the first *Anthologie de la musique classique de l'Inde* was published, which includes recordings by the young Ravi Shankar.

Jack Bornoff, who was Executive Secretary of the *International Music Council*, persuaded UNESCO to launch a record series of great Eastern and African music and hired Alain Daniélou to be his consultant. He made recordings in several countries: Afghanistan, Cambodia, Laos, Iran, Japan, Tibet, Tunisia and Morocco.

With the release in the West of this record series of traditional music promoted by UNESCO, the musicians included in it became internationally prestigious. Owing to this prestige, they are no longer neglected, ignored and despised in their countries of origin; their music is broadcast, and their financial situation has improved. Daniélou claimed that he was “far less interested in attracting the attention of Westerners to Oriental music than in helping musicians maintain their traditions.”¹⁴

Unsurprisingly, we find statements by sitarist Ravi Shankar and violinist Yehudi Menuhin praising Alain Daniélou. Shankar claims that it was due to Alain Daniélou that Indian music is no longer considered mere folklore, but classical music, on an equal footing with the greatest Western music and composers. Menuhin also praises Daniélou's work for having made this dialogue between Western and Eastern music possible.

3. Dialogue between civilizations: China, India, ancient Greece and today's West

According to Daniélou, the Chinese, the Indians and the ancient Greeks all believed in the evocative power of music and regarded knowledge of the connections between sounds and other aspects of reality as a science, even if that is today deemed to be magic or superstition.

Numerical symbolisms linked to music are present in all three of these civilizations. Regarding China, Daniélou refers to René Guénon's quotation from the *Tao Te King*: "One has given birth to two, two has given birth to three, three has given birth to all numbers."¹⁵ In musical terms, this means from the first partials of a harmonic series, or the first divisions of a string. The one is the fundamental, the two its octave, and the three the fifth interval which, when repeated, would give rise to all other possible sounds. These sounds, selected in groups of 5 – forming a pentatonic scale – represented, for the Chinese, a correspondence with "the material world, the five directions (four cardinal points and center), the five elements and so on".¹⁶

Adding two sounds to these 5, we reach the number 7, which in Plato's *Timaeus* dialogue already represents the divisions of the world's soul¹⁷, but which also represents the image of the celestial world and the seven visible planets. We find the number 7 in the number of strings of the lyre, in the seven pipes of Pan's

flute, in Dante's seven steps to reach paradise and in the seven horses that pull the chariot of Sūrya, the Hindu god of the Sun¹⁸.

The number seven can also be understood as the sum of three plus four ($3 + 4 = 7$) which, when multiplied, generate the number twelve ($3 \times 4 = 12$). For the Pythagorean tradition, the dodecahedron represents the symbol of the universe. The seven planets move in the twelve regions of the zodiac, just as the seven notes of our diatonic scale move in the 12 regions of the octave¹⁹.

The number 12, rather than a series or sequence within numerical symbolism, may be considered an area, a plane, by virtue of being the product of three and four. Thus, in relation to music, the twelve notes of our musical system relate to regions within which different pitches would be possible according to the tuning used, not to be confused with 12 notes of absolute pitch, as they came to be considered within of the Western Equal Temperament system²⁰. In this way, music for the ancients was more than mere enjoyment for the ears; it represented a kind of "algebra of metaphysical abstractions"²¹.

The cycle of fifths, which in passing through twelve fifths does not take us back to the octave, is explained by Daniélou as one of the signs of the imperfection necessary for the world to avoid being reabsorbed by infinite perfection, just as the earth's axis is tilted, the heart is not in the center of the chest and the solar cycle does not coincide with the lunar cycle.

This small difference that exists in the cycle of fifths is called a comma, the difference that the cultures with their diverse musical systems need to deal with: the difference between what is finite and what is infinite.

The fifths form a spiral whose sound coiled in itself, can never meet. For us, this limitless spiral can be the joint in the structure of the

*world, the narrow gate that will allow us to escape from the appearance of a closed universe, to travel in other worlds and explore their secrets.*²²

Daniélou considers that the difference existing between Eastern and Western musical systems is not fundamental but is established by virtue of a contradiction between practice and theory. The acoustic principles that govern music in the two systems are the same, it is only in their exteriorization, in their actualization as a sound event that such differences present themselves. He understands that, rather than different systems, they are complementary systems²³.

In his investigation, Daniélou shows that intervals are presented in two aspects: in their mathematical and logical proportions and in their expressive, symbolic and psychological aspect, which arouses feelings, ideas and visions based on their harmony. These two aspects have nourished compilations on music theory according to various circumstances, such as time, people and place. Emphasis placed on the expressive aspect heralds the birth of modal music in its aspect of relating the various notes to a tonic, based on the octave interval. When emphasis is placed on the numerical aspect, the basis for the construction of such a theory is the cycle of fifths in its modulatory and harmonic aspect. However, in this apparent duality, the metaphysical aspects are still preserved²⁴.

According to Daniélou, Western tonal music lacks a rational theory. It was developed using aspects of these two different theories. Although a combination of both harmonic and melodic expressions is considered possible, harmonic development makes melodic subtleties practically impossible.

The Western musical system is the result of a chaotic mixture of various theoretical definitions. While the system is cyclic, with constant changes of keynote resulting from modulatory processes, each keynote, and even each note of each scale, is accompanied by a chord that depends, for its formation, on characteristics of the modal system it is based on, on the relationships with a tonic provided by the phenomenon of resonance and by the harmonic series. The problem with this combination is that the notes needed for a consonant chord are different from those needed for modulation²⁵.

In an attempt to solve this problem, the West gradually adopted equal temperament. Equal temperament, by distorting the intervals, makes their meaning vague and imprecise. Daniélou agrees with the claim that the ear recognizes the true range, which would temper the range's auditory representation, but he notes that each listener makes individual adaptations according to personal tendencies. Each interval or chord would have different meanings, for different people, according to their mood. The result is that Westerners increasingly lose any conception of music capable of

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Alain Daniélou with Yehudi Menuhin in Berlin, 1967.

expressing emotions, feelings or the highest ideas²⁶.

The progressive theoretical simplification adopted by the West to implement harmonic and polyphonic characteristics distances its music from acoustic principles and from the laws on which the metaphysical correspondences are based, thus losing its evocative appeal²⁷.

According to Daniélou, Western music starts in a disorderly manner. Pope Gregory I, in bringing the eight modes of plainsong from the East, when he was ambassador at Constantinople, transcribed them from the eight Byzantine modes used by the Patriarch Severus of Antioch. However, what was lost proved to be fundamental for the definition of each tone

and the expression of each note: the *ison*, the drone tone that serves as support for modal musical expression. This absence makes plainchant vague and ethereal, without any clarity of meaning²⁸.

The Zarlino scale, also known as just intonation, has the problem of being a joining of two systems, an ascending, cyclical characteristic, responsible for the notes C, G, D and a descending, modal characteristic, responsible for the E, A, B and F notes. The problem with this scale arises when it is modulated because, according to the new tonic, several notes would need to have their pitch unevenly raised or lowered

By making all semitones equal, equal temperament makes the ratios between frequencies

quite different from the simpler ratios that, according to Daniélou, are responsible for symbolic, emotional and idea evocations, possibly because of their metaphysical correspondences.

4. Interdisciplinary Dialogue: Philosophy of Music and Music Theory

With regard to the Philosophy of Music, let us take as a guiding principle the heteronomous aspect that Daniélou attributes to music. Not just because he considers music as a language, and as such a vehicle for transmitting information, but also because this transmitted information is something beyond music, be it feelings, ideas or emotions. Such conceptions are noted when he refers to Indian music, which he studied not only in theory but also in instrumental practice:

the purport of this music is not to sound beautiful, but rather to suggest beauty, to shape and to create it. It evokes the splendor [sic] of the seasons and of the hours of day and night, the depth of man's feelings, and the power of his emotions. It opens for us the door to the heavenly worlds, but remains like truth, that is niranjana, 'the unadorned'. It is not beautiful in itself. [...] The harmonies of forms, colours, and sounds seem beautiful to us only because they call up a higher reality.²⁹

Daniélou considers music from the Hindu point of view, that is, as a bridge between the physical and metaphysical aspects of reality. Therefore, not only music but the arts in general were “considered in ancient India as the vehicle or instrument of popular education” conveying “in the form of illustrations and parables, the principles of philosophy, ethics and religion, which dialectical exposition would have brought within the reach of only a cultural minority”.³⁰

Although it may give the impression that,

should the population have access to and an understanding of a dialectical exposition of the principles of philosophy, ethics and religion, art, and in this case music, would become useless, we can recall that Daniélou considers no language capable of transmitting the whole truth, and in this case there would always be something to be transmitted, whether for quantitative reasons, i.e. the lack of elements and or vocabulary of transmission, or for qualitative reasons, i.e. the impossibility of expressing an idea as a whole. Based on these observations, Daniélou's work allows us to understand three musical approaches that we consider to be of a philosophical nature.

The first refers to the epistemological change in the conception of music in the West, in which music is no longer a *Quadrivium* discipline, together with Arithmetic, Geometry and Astrology/Astronomy, and has become an art supported by Rhetoric, which belonged to the *Trivium* with Grammar and Dialectics. We identify two terms for this change: *Speculative Music* in the first case, in which music serves to interpret and study the universe, and *Musical Speculation*, in which music becomes an object of study. This change took place with the *Scientific Revolution* in which physics became the most adopted and appropriate metaphor model for the interpretation of reality, to the point that M. H. Abrams creates a metaphor in which he states that “art [in our case, music] changed from mirror to lamp, no longer reflecting the external natural world, but shining inside the mind and heart of the creator”³¹.

The second approach refers to the differences between what we define as *Sacred Music* - based on the work *Sacred Art in the East and the West* by Titus Burckhardt, in which music is a means to an end, or a representation of a truth that originates outside it, in which “it is not enough that its themes derive from a spiritual truth. It is also necessary that its formal

language bears witness to and manifests this origin”³² - and what we observe as the *Sacralization of Music*, a phenomenon that occurs mainly from Romanticism onwards, in which music itself becomes sacred and an object of worship, and which influences musical thinking to this day.

The third approach would be to identify the subtle differences between the Greek *Doctrine of Ethos*, the *Theory of Affects* in the Baroque period and the *Expression of Feelings* in Romanticism. These three conceptions of musical heteronomy are all of them in some way linked to the issue of feelings aroused, provoked or expressed by music. I feel that Daniélou’s work would relate his musical definition more closely to the Greek *Doctrine of Ethos* than to other formulations.

In turn, Music Theory is a very important field in Daniélou’s work, as he uses the musical theory of three great civilizations, and compares them on a common basis, thus managing to establish parallels to help us understand the path of Western music from this context.

We can understand Alain Daniélou’s meaning of Musical Theory as being closer to the Philosophy of Music than to musical practice, since, as shown by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his text *Praise of Theory*, the word theory, among other interpretative possibilities, has to do with observation, contemplation and speculation, which leads to its being the very definition of philosophy, and that this, in fact, would be “the old name for theory”³³.

In turn, both Carl Dahlhaus and Joscelyn Godwin affirm the existence of what can be called the *Speculative Theory of Music*. Dahlhaus understands it as the “ontological contemplation of tone systems”³⁴ while Godwin understands that “[t]he speculative musician discovers universal principles as the mathematician or the philosopher”³⁵. We may say that these are the

main characteristics present in the musical work of Alain Daniélou, who also considers that

*[t]he connection between physical reality and metaphysical principles can be felt in music as nowhere else. Music was therefore justly considered by the ancients as the key to all sciences and arts – the link between metaphysics and physics through which the universal laws and their multiple applications could be understood.*³⁶

and that,

*[t]herefore, in judging the possibilities and the value of musical systems, we should not trust the prejudiced judgement of our ears, but consider in their most abstract form their theoretical possibilities. We may then discover the equivalence of systems that at first seem to have nothing in common. We may also discover a profound difference between systems whose forms are outwardly very similar. By so doing we shall, in any case, judge the musical systems soundly and on safe grounds. To be able to realize their beauty or directly perceive their meaning is another matter and generally requires very long practice.*³⁷

Daniélou defines four methods of forming a scale: by proportional relations; by cycle (scale of fifths); by roots (tempered scale) and by multiples (scale by harmonics). From here, he interprets the musical systems mentioned as model cases, classifying Chinese music as a cyclical system and Indian music as a modal system tuned by harmonics. As for Greek music, he interprets it as a “confusion of systems”³⁸, in which descriptions by various theorists such as Pythagoras, Aristotle, Boethius, Aristides Quintiliano, among others, make it difficult to generalize a single and homogeneous system.

Daniélou then created the *Universal Sound Scale* by cycles and multiples of 2, 3 and 5. He



Alain Daniélou at the Labyrinth, 1990. Photo by Jacques Cloarec.

justifies the need for this scale by stating the following:

For the comparative study of different musical systems, as well as for correct execution of each one, it is necessary to establish a scale of sounds that will allow both a clear and accurate notation of all the usual intervals and an immediate appreciation of their nature and relative value.³⁹

The philosopher Giovanni Piana suggests that this scale would serve as a kind of “graded ruler” – as it divides the octave into 53 parts, with natural and untempered intervals – so that “a

scale will be considered ‘natural’ if all its intervals coincide with some of the 53 parts of the ‘harmonic scale’”⁴⁰. Thus, Daniélou’s scale allows us to analyze the characteristics common to the scales of different musical cultures.

The scale of sounds elaborated by Daniélou addresses two aspects: theoretical and perceptive. He states more precisely:

For our investigation, musical intervals appear under two aspects: one mathematical, involving numbers and logical ratios; the other symbolic and psychological, in which the relations of sounds (their harmony) awaken

*in us feelings, ideas, and precise visions. Their two aspects obviously have their origin in the same principles, but this unity is beyond the scope of experiment and consequently beyond the understanding of modern Westerners. This deficiency naturally brings them to the illogical situation of leaving aside one aspect of experience whenever they study the other, as if the laws of acoustics and those of musical expression did not refer to the same sounds.*⁴¹

Daniélou is an advocate not only of modal music, but also of natural tunings, considering that temperament, especially Equal Temperament, is not capable of providing all relevant and possible effects to the interval relations present in music, because

[i]t is generally said that the ear can recognize the true interval represented by the tempered interval. This is a fact; but each ear makes a different adaptation according to individual tendencies, and the same chord may have a different significance for different people according to their mood. The meaning

*of an accurate chord, on the other hand, is determined absolutely and perceived by all.*⁴²

Alain Daniélou also justifies the use of natural intervals. For him, just as the brain works like a kind of computer operating in three languages simultaneously, binary, ternary and quinary, any interval that does not correspond to one of these languages is as it were corrected by the brain so that it can interpret it, causing fatigue in our audio-mental apparatus. This is why his scale divides the octave into 53 parts and, even though there are other theories that work with this same division using the equal temperament, Daniélou's option is for natural intervals derived from 2, 3 and 5, an option related to musical cognition.

Final Remark

Here we have seen four possible dialogues raised by Daniélou's work, in the hope of contributing to a better understanding of his musical work as well as possible relationships that may be established between the latter and other areas of knowledge. •

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Alain Daniélou

INDIAN AND WESTERN MUSIC (PART II)

This is the second part of Alain Daniélou's article on Indian and Western music published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1949. Daniélou deals with the language and the systems of music, Greek and Indian music history, as well as some important questions of musical technique. Considered from Daniélou's standpoint, the distinction between "India" and "the West" in matters of musical theory is mainly expressed in the conceptual opposition between "modal" and "harmonic" music. The text has been edited from Daniélou's notes in the Zagarolo archives and contains some minor modifications.



Alain Daniélou playing the piano at Zagarolo. Photo by Jacques Cloarec.

Indian History

No cyclic or melodic literature – Among the earlier works on music, we find - as could be expected - no literature regarding the Mongolian pentatonic which had always its centre outside India. It should be remembered that this Mongolian cyclic pentatonic has nothing to do with the pentatonic forms of the basic rāgas in the Śaiva system. Further the melodic system has left to my knowledge no important theoretical literature. A scrutiny of Tantric documents might, however, reveal some valuable elements.

Dravidian and Aryan texts – As regards the Dravidian and Aryan modal systems we possess many documents of the greatest value and antiquity. Generally speaking, we can observe that the earliest theory of Dravidian music, as found in Sanskrit texts, is represented by the Śaiva school whose main expounder is, after Śiva himself, Nandikeśvara. Besides these, other important names are those of Śārdūla, Pārvaṭī, Jamadagni, Bhṛṅgī, Vighneśa, Kirtidhara, Rāvana, etc., and probably the musical theory found in the earlier Purāṇas, the Vāyu Purāṇa, the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, as well as such works as the Gītālamkara which is attributed to

Bharata but is the work of a Bharata distinct from the presumed author of the Nāṭya Sastra. The Nāṭya Śāstra itself is a compilation probably dating from the beginning of the Christian era and expounding mainly the theory derived from the Gāndharva Veda. The Gītālamkāra, on the other hand, is a purely Śaiva work and all its classifications are of a different and very original kind.

It is very difficult to date the earliest Śaiva texts on music. It is also difficult to ascertain their original language. But the musical theory they expound and especially the use of certain technical terms or instruments can help us to be quite affirmative about their antiquity independently of all linguistic considerations.

Tamil and Greek sources – The Tamil epic, the Śilappadikāram, which belongs to the second century, has important passages referring to the theory of music and musical instruments, and is thus a precious help in dating contemporary works.

Vedic music – I have neither authority nor sufficient knowledge to enter into the question of the origin of the so-called Aryan civilization. So far as music is concerned, we find from the earliest Vedic period a constant use of music and instruments. The Ṛg Veda mentions some wind and string instruments as well as drums. The Sāma Veda was chanted, and there were theoretical treatises and Śikṣās explaining all the technical peculiarities of this chant. Later, under the name of Gāndharva Veda, appeared a vast literature on music, its philosophy and its technique. The number of early theorists of

Aryan music whose names are known is considerable, but very few works have survived although a certain number of quotations from these in later works are sufficient to determine with confidence the nature of the system.

Among the names of the early writers of music some are quite celebrated – Agastya, Kāśyapa, Aṅgīrasa, Vasiṣṭha, Yājñavalkya, Yaṣṭika, Añjaneya and many others.

Nārada – A strange figure creates a sort of link between the two schools - Dravidian and Aryan, or Śaiva and Vedic -, and that is Nārada. There are fragments of his work belonging to either school. It is true that all the available works attributed to Nārada are of different periods. But there must have been an original Nārada and he is claimed by both sides.

Bharata – Similarly Bharata appears as an indefinite entity. But this is a different case. The word 'Bharata' simply meant a performing artist and the treatises referring to dance and music naturally came to be known by that word. We know of at least four Bharatas who are called Ādi Bharata or Bharata Muni, author of the original Nāṭya Śāstra. But there are also Nandi Bharata, Arjuna Bharata, Mataṅga Bharata and others. The existing Nāṭya Śāstra is probably a compilation of extracts from several of these original sources made during the Buddhist age.

Sanskrit literature on music – The vast Sanskrit literature on the theory, the philosophy and the technique of music, which lies so sadly neglected and unpublished in the libraries of

The earliest theory of Dravidian music, as found in Sanskrit texts, is represented by the Śaiva school whose main expounder is, after Śiva himself, Nandikeśvara.

India, represents a system which has no rival in the world so far, and from which modern Western theory would have much to learn. It is not easy, however, to know how far this rich Sanskrit literature is indebted to earlier literature. There is little doubt that in the process of the Aryanization of India much earlier literature was translated or adapted in Sanskrit while the originals were lost. This is certainly true of parts of Purāṇic literature. And this explains why we often find very ancient books written in late Sanskrit, a fact that has led unwary scholars to discard them without due consideration.

Nandikeśvara's surviving works – A careful research would, however, allow us to identify and recover many ancient works. For example, I was fortunate enough to be able to identify a valuable fragment of Nandikeśvara's work which lay anonymously in the Bikaner library. This short fragment explains the theory of music on the basis of the Maheśvara sutra in terms very similar to the explanation of the theory of language by Nandikeśvara on the same basis in a work known as Nandikeśvara Kāśikā, which is sometimes incorporated in the Mahābhāṣya.

Western History

Origins of Western music – The early musical theory of Europe appears, so far, rather cloudy. This may be due to the lack of comprehensible documents, but also to the fact that most Western research on history was done at a time when historians were genuinely unaware of the importance and antiquity of Indian civilization. This led them usually to interpret as a spontaneous and natural growth cultural developments that were in fact built with remains of older elements with their roots in the East.

Western modal music – Seen in the light of what we know now of the early cultures in Europe and India, we are bound to come to very par-

allel developments: first a musical culture spreading to Egypt, Crete, Italy and probably further north. Then came a succession of invasions by more barbarous people who gradually adopted the ways, manners and instruments of the conquered countries. This assimilation was, however, less complete in Europe than it was in India and therefore it is again from the East that, periodically, came new influences and developments to shape the culture of ancient Europe. Whatever we know of the musical system and instruments of the Greeks leaves little doubt in this respect and so too is the case for the instruments still found in those countries where druidical culture lasted longer. The survival of the binioù of Brittany and the bagpipe of Scotland is particularly interesting since the presence of the drone pipe proves, without a doubt, that the music of these people was at one time often played on melodic lines where the drone serves no essential purpose. It could surely not have evolved out of a melodic form of music. Harmonically it is monstrous.

The stability of the mode absolutely requires a drone, a permanent sounding of the tonic: this is neither essential nor desirable in any other system.

Survival of ancient systems in Europe – In England, today, there are very few people, even among music students, who are aware that Scottish bagpipe music belongs to a system entirely different from Western harmony. It is a system akin to Arab and Indian music, quite unsuited for Western orchestra and instruments. Similar is the case of Hungarian and some branches of Norwegian popular music. Further, there are definite traces of pentatonic music of the Chinese family all along the Atlantic coast from Spain to the north of Scotland. But what is really amusing is that Scottish or Hungarian music lovers may well get infuriated if told that their music is still different from what is now in fashion in Europe, and in fact



Juan Moreno Moya: Portrait of the Sarod player Kalyan Mukherjea, an undisputed authority on Indian classical music.

belongs to an Eastern system.

I remember a celebrated Hungarian violinist, to whom I had spoken of the great interest I took in modal forms surviving in Hungarian folk music, who, with undisguised anger, answered me sharply that 'there is nothing in Hungarian music which does not belong to the Western diatonic system'.

Greek theory – In Europe the earliest writings on the theory of music that have come down to us are those of the Greeks. These refer basically to a modal system of the Indian family. But certain elements of cyclic music had found their way into musical theory, probably through Turco-Mongol channels giving rise to the Pythagorean scale which so strangely perverted and confused the writings of the Greek authors.

Mediaeval music – After the Greeks we know very little about the state of music in the West except a little church music, the modes of which were imported from Byzantium in the sixth century by Pope Gregory. The picture of Europe at the end of the Middle Ages shows us

a mixture of modal and melodic systems. Arab music exerted a profound influence on the southern countries, an influence that still predominates in Spain and south-eastern Europe. On the other hand, the earlier modal systems remained well preserved in northern countries and the traveling minstrels used instruments which show that modal music was at a rather high level of technical development.

Beginnings of Polyphony – It is in this context that polyphonic music began to develop. How it first started is not quite certain, but it probably owes its origin to some Mongolian influence through eastern Christendom, for the superposition of voices is a natural development in cyclic music, not so in modal music.

At first, polyphony was limited to adding to the main melody a second voice, making slight variations. This had a rather interesting effect and, although it weakens the modal expression, it became quite popular as a novelty in congregational singing.

Gradually this new fashion developed, and a more complex counterpoint was evolved, first

with two voices and drone, then with 3 and 4 voices.

Now, the modal expression, the Raga, cannot exist where there are several voices at different pitches. The mutual relation between these different notes, which form themselves in chords, creates new expressions that annihilate the concentrated expression of the modal note. To the modal musician, polyphony is extremely distressing, rather like several people speaking together so that you cannot follow any one of them. In fact the new polyphonic system must have been at first a fashion, a game of amateurs against which all the classical musicians fought desperately. But musicians were poor and of low standing. They could do nothing against the whims of society. Meanwhile the new fashion found great favour among the aristocracy. It was easy, new, amusing and finally it completely defeated the old music. Thus Europe found itself in the fifteenth century with a new musical toy still primitive and undeveloped, while the old musical culture was quickly dying out.

Parallel with modern India – We can easily understand what happened by comparisons with Indian music today. Through the desire of fashion we see the development of an orchestral form of music that corresponds to no musical necessity whatever, which is ruinous for the music native to the land and utterly distressing to all sensitive ears. But this is a unique opportunity for unmusical and ignorant youngsters to declare themselves the geniuses of a new art, and take the bread out of the mouth of India's great *ustads*. It is merely a fashion. It has, we may hope, no future. But it may well ruin entirely the music of India, leaving this country with but a vulgar copy of the cheapest Western music, such as what we can find in Egypt, Malaya, the Philippines, etc., today.

In Europe the tragedy was great. But it was final, and out of the ruin of mediaeval music a

new art had to develop.

Development of Harmonic music – Due to their ingenuity and patience the musicians finally managed to produce out of the harmonic system very remarkable works of art. It should, however, be remembered that, from the point of view of the theory of music, the possibilities of harmonic music are considerably lower than those of other systems – that is, the range of emotions and ideas that harmonic music can express is far less than what modal music can account for. Westerners, however, supplemented the limited possibilities of the music itself through endless research in the field of instrumental colouring, and also through contrasts and oddities of sound relations. It led to the creation of the modern orchestra – a marvellous achievement of exquisite workmanship and infinite labour in which the total quality of wonderfully built instruments is perfectly balanced in a most melodious whole. Yet we find this great sound producing machine strangely inadequate to express certain kinds of emotions.

Western music is essentially sensuous. It aims at creating a pleasurable atmosphere where vague visions and sentiments gently blend into one another. There it profoundly differs from modal music which on the contrary tends to create a one-pointed concentration where the tonal value of voices and instruments becomes insignificant since the mind is entirely taken away into an abstract world of ideas and visions.

The particular tendencies of both systems are well shown by the fact that the themes of Western music are mostly themes of passion, while Indian music, though depicting all types of emotions, always ultimately leads to some form of contemplation.

I have no intention of belittling the great work of Western music. The man of genius can ex-



Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, epitome of European classical music. Source: Wikidata.org.

press himself through any medium, and each medium has its own possibilities. The advantage of writing music further enables us to preserve the inspired moments of great musicians. But we should keep in mind that an Indian *ustad* on his single instrument can transport us into a diversity of visions, into a depth of emotion very much subtler than that produced by the thunder or murmur of the orchestra with its elaborate instruments.

Statistical possibilities – This is not a question of talent: I do not mean to say that the Indian musician is necessarily more subtle than the Western. It is purely a question of statistical possibilities. Contrary to common belief, the variety of sound relations possible in modal music is very much greater than those possible in harmonic music. Perceptible sound-relations in a system where the tonic changes are far less numerous than in a system where the tonic is fixed. And differences of intervals which are not appreciable in a harmonic system become wonderfully intense in an oblique movement by relation to a fixed tonic.

Relative number of chords and ragas – The poverty of possible combinations in the harmonic

form of music has finally led Western music to a sort of dead-end, and to a decline from which it may not easily emerge unless it deeply alters its basis. This is because the whole of Western music is built around 12 or 15 different chords which have been now used and re-used in every conceivable way.

On the other hand, although each raga corresponds to a definitely distinct mood, the number of theoretically possible ragas is immense. Should a man try to play each of the possible ragas once for five minutes, even playing without rest or food for a hundred years, he would not see the end of his attempt.

Decay in Indian music – There is no doubt that a certain degree of paralysis has arrived in Indian Music. It cannot be said that it has degenerated because the great *ustads* of today still have a remarkable level of technique and expression. But progress has stopped through the loss of theoretical knowledge, since the musicians no longer know Sanskrit in which all the theoretical works were written.

Remedy – The revival and development of Indian music will depend on a return to classical

In Europe the earliest writings on the theory of music that have come down to us are those of the Greeks. These refer basically to a modal system of the Indian family.

forms and a study of classical musical literature whether directly in Sanskrit or through adequate modern translations.

It is in this field that irresponsible improvisations should be discouraged if we wish to avoid in India the musical tragedy that has overtaken modern Egypt, Malaysia and the South Sea islands. It is to be hoped that learned societies may take an interest in encouraging a sane study of the country's priceless heritage and may encourage true learning to protect the nation's cultural assets against attacks by irresponsible reformers and unqualified amateurs, always ready to start risky experiments without due regard for classical values.

Technique

Musical translation – We have seen that music, like language, is a means of expressing ideas and emotions through the medium of coordinated sounds. Just as different families of languages offer different possibilities of expression and rarely have exact equivalents, so too the different systems of music offer different possibilities and cover different fields of expression.

In comparing the two musical systems now prevailing in India and Europe, we will discover that practically not one of their features can be transferred from one to the other. It might seem easy enough to take a simple Indian song, a Tagore song for example, note it down and harmonize it as if it were a Western melody. This is a simple process. But we find that this melody, although it may sound quite lovely,

will not convey to the Western hearer anything resembling the feeling conveyed by the Bengali song. In the context of a new system *the melody has completely changed its meaning.*

Equivalent sounds may convey distinct ideas – I once saw a cartoon representing an American soldier looking sentimentally at a French girl and saying 'May we' and she answers 'Mais oui'. The only difference is that, in French, 'Mais oui' means 'of course yes'. By changing language, the very same sounds have acquired a completely different meaning. If we want to convey the same idea in different musical systems we shall be faced with a very similar phenomenon. We cannot make use of common features.

We have to translate, that is, first analyse the meaning clearly, then try to express it through another medium. To harmonize Indian songs according to Western harmonic rules will usually not make good Western songs and will convey to the Western hearers no idea whatever of what the songs means to Indian ears. This does not mean that it is not possible to write certain Indian melodies in Western notation. It is moreover possible to write accompaniments for modal music which can be played on Western instruments. But for this one has to follow the rules of modal polyphony which is very different from harmony. Even then the song so arranged will convey only part of its expression to the Western hearer. He will require some training to become familiar with hearing this new form of music, which has been only slightly adapted so as not to shock his outward conception of what music should sound like. We



Alain Daniélou at his office of the Institute for Comparative Musicology in Berlin, Photo Jacques Cloarec.

should not forget that, according to the perfect definition of Sanskrit grammarians, ideas are conveyed through sounds by a process of ‘recognition’, not by a direct perception, and we cannot understand a language or a word we do not already know.

Difference in ways of hearing – As we have seen, the main difference between modal and harmonic music lies in how it is heard. We believe that we hear music with our ears and that we instinctively find the sounds pleasant or unpleasant. But it is not so. We do not hear music *with* our ears although we hear it *through* our ears. We hear music with our memory. When we hear a sentence we have to remember all its successive sounds so that the last sound may reveal to us the idea. This is a commonplace saying of Sanskrit grammar.

Training of memory – In music a similar rule applies, and we may not be surprised to find that by training our memory to record a particular succession of sounds rather than another we may come to hear, that is to get from the music, a meaning, an expression, that is completely different. We shall thus see that modal and harmonic music are in fact based on two different ways of hearing, so that to understand both one has to be musically bilingual.

Musical bi-lingualism – We can easily see that an Indian listens to Western music with his own mental habit, following the shape of the melody as if it were a horizontal development independent of chords, and he is sure to find it meaningless, disorderly and discordant.

On the other hand, when the Westerner listens to Indian music, he is unable to grasp its con-

tinuity, and he finds it bodiless and insignificant.

The mixing of systems – It is not particularly difficult to train oneself to hear both systems, but one must study both forms of music quite independently. Raga and harmony are quite incompatible and cannot co-exist. Those who pretend to mix both systems are, from the point of view of music, irresponsible illiterates. Although one may have one's own preferences, it would be wrong to believe that both these musical systems cannot offer great possibilities of expression. One may choose either. But there is no compromise, no appeasement possible between them. Harmony has entirely ruined the modal music of ancient Europe and will destroy any modal music on which it is superimposed. Official and other encouragements given nowadays to modern Indian orchestras amount to nothing but an attempt at cultural suicide. There is no valuable contribution to world music that India could make by trying to blend her own with Western music. The possibilities of harmonic music are comparatively limited and have been exploited to their utmost, so much so that Western musicians are now desperately looking for new musical forms to revitalize their music.

Potentials of Modal Music – We have seen that modal music, on the other hand, offers almost infinite possibilities of which only a small fragment is utilized in present-day Indian music. It is to be hoped that the effort of Indian performers and technicians may be turned towards research in this field, in which they already have realized such magnificent achievements, rather than wasting their energies in the no-man's-land of hybrid music.

Music and National Spirit – A question comes naturally to our mind. The development of Indian music is linked to a particular conception

of life, to a particular culture and civilization. The Indian listener comes to hear music with a mind different from that of the Westerner. The idea of an underlying Divinity pervades all activities of Indian life and all the arts are conceived as processes of identification with some higher state of being. Religion, philosophy, music are all here based on common principles and cannot be separated from one another.

The Western hearer is very different. His attitude is that of a moralist. He does right actions and is then entitled to a place in paradise. He stands on his right. Knowledge to him has little to do with religion. He delights in man's mastery over nature, and music is to him his mastery over sounds. And he wonders at his own genius. Western music expresses that attitude and the harmonic system, as developed in the West, is quite suited to that purpose.

The question is: Will the Indians of the future have the same outlook as the Westerners of today? I cannot think so. Therefore the Western system will ever remain unsuited to express the Indian genius. All the efforts made to impose on India a musical system that is inadequate to bring out the finer emotions and deeper inclinations of the people cannot lead to any great achievements in the field of music.

Each country must develop its own genius, or it ceases to exist as a country. It is only when a nation's culture is flourishing and powerful that it can borrow from other lands and assimilate what it gets. To borrow in time of poverty puts you in the clutches of the money-lender from whom you will not emerge unscathed. Indian music is at the present moment going through a difficult period and it is only by uniting efforts to restore its classical greatness that it may be preserved for future developments. •

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