

**MODERN AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE PROBLEM:
IN THE AGE OF GLOBALISATION,
CAN MUSIC ARTICULATE
AND CONSOLIDATE NATIONAL IDENTITY?***

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This article explores and discusses some questions of correlation between real aesthetic experience and possibilities of autonomous national cultural identity as well as the transnational (global) one. The representative examples of actual impact produced by musical works that have influenced upon how the problematic issue of identity's existence is understood in the contemporary multicultural world are taken as a starting point for the analysis. An attempt to avoid extremities, one of which is an excessive autonomisation of identity, the other is its unjustified globalization, is made in the article. The main outcome of the research gained through the comparative analysis of contrary approaches and opinions is a statement that the conservation of cultural openness is the principal guarantee of striking a balance between the positive and the negative while modifying self-development of contemporary culture and, as a result, acquisition of its significant identity.

Key words: Aesthetic experience, national and cultural identity, musical impact, globalization.

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СОВРЕМЕННЫЙ ЭСТЕТИЧЕСКИЙ ОПЫТ КАК ПРОБЛЕМА НАЦИОНАЛЬНО-КУЛЬТУРНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ В ЭПОХУ ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИИ

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В статье рассматриваются и обсуждаются вопросы корреляции реального эстетического опыта с возможностями интеграции автономной национально-культурной и транснациональной (глобальной) идентичности. В качестве отправной точки анализа берутся репрезентативные примеры конкретного воздействия музыкальных произведений, которые повлияли на понимание проблемной ситуации бытования идентичности в современном мультикультурном мире. Делается попытка уйти от крайностей как излишней автономизации идентичности, так и от ее неоправданной глобализации. Основным результатом исследования, полученный в ходе сравнительного анализа противоположных подходов и мнений, состоит в утверждении о том, что сохранение открытости культуры является основным гарантом достижения баланса позитивного и негативного в коррекции саморазвития современной культуры и, как следствие, достижения ее значимой идентичности.

Ключевые слова: Эстетический опыт, музыкальное воздействие, глобализация, национально-культурная идентичность.

Before attempting to answer the question posed in the title of this paper, it will be given a brief description of cultural identity as one of the most important forms of national identity.

The interest in the question of cultural identity and the role of art in articulating and shaping that identity, for more than long time, earlier was expressed in publications on the subject (including in English) (Dziemidok, 1999; Dziemidok, 2003; Dziemidok, 2017, 127-135). It mentioned this in order to justify, at least in part, some boldness – bordering on impudence – given the doubts that we harbour regarding the qualifications to speak about music. It have been taken an interest in music from the point of view of art philosophy, and so as one of the arts, but knowledge of the

philosophy of music is much poorer than in relation to the other arts (literature, theatre, film and the plastic arts). Neither do to be a refined, or competent, we are listeners to music only (what some music theorists call an “innocent listener” (Chęćka-Gotkowitz, 2012, 8-12). Not just innocent, perhaps, but also naïve – the kind of listener who admires music, regarding it as the most powerful of the arts, distinguished by magical powers of persuasion, but admires it not as a specialist, from within, but with delight, from afar.

It is on account of its persuasive force that music is so often used instrumentally not just in other artistic disciplines (particularly in film and theatre), but also in other areas of human life, both the collective (religion, politics) and the individual (family, social, erotic). Music has also played an important role, of course, in integrating people, in forming family, neighborhood, religious and ethnic communities, and much later also national communities. It is characterised on one hand by an extraordinary universality, but on the other by a remarkable diversity, although the latter feature does not diminish the former.

One can speak of the diversity of music in various aspects and contexts. There is generic diversity (instrumental, vocal, dance music, classical and popular music, and so on), historical diversity, and also, of most interest to us here, ethnic-national diversity. People’s contact with music and the way in which they use it can also be diverse. Listening to it can be an aim in itself. Yet that listening can also serve a purpose and be treated instrumentally as an effective means of intensifying desired experiences (emotions or moods), of forging a particular atmosphere or of increasing the effectiveness of specific activities (at work, in battle, during rest and repose), in various rites or rituals (e.g. political or religious) and in such forms of activeness as dance or erotic contacts.

Now Bohdan Dziemidok soul says: “I have experienced music’s almost magical powers of persuasion first hand on more than one occasion. I will allow myself to describe two such ‘autobiographic’ instances here for two fundamental and sufficient – as I see it – reasons. First and foremost, they are empirical facts. Furthermore, they confirm, in my opinion, that the ethnic peculiarity and otherness which is proper to music does not deprive it of universality and of the capacity to act persuasively on listeners who are representative of

other ethnic-national cultures.

The first of those instances concerns my contact with African music that occurred in Berkeley (California) in 1967. Thirty-four years old at the time, on a Ford Foundation scholarship, I was walking through the student village of Berkeley University when I heard the sounds of African percussion instruments. I then noticed a quite large group of people, at the centre of which were my black brothers, tapping out exotic rhythms on various drums and tam-tams. The listeners around them were jiggling to the beat. With an indulgent smile, I stopped – just for a moment, because I was in a hurry. I ‘came to’ after several minutes and realised with surprise that I had forgotten about my urgent business and was standing there jiggling to the beat of the tam-tams. The other incident is linked to my stay on a research grant in Moscow during the nineties (I was about fifty at the time). As an aesthete, although I had travelled to Moscow for research purposes, also incredibly important to me was direct contact with Russian art, so I went to museums, theatres, cinemas and concerts. One day, quite by chance, I entered one of the Orthodox churches. A service was underway and the congregation was singing. As I was not of the Orthodox faith, I wanted to quickly withdraw, so as not to disturb the Mass with my aesthetic curiosity. Yet fate decreed otherwise. Captivated by the beauty of the singing, I spent around an hour in the church in a state of aesthetic-mystical intoxication. God, how beautifully they sang! I have never heard such beautiful singing in a Catholic church. It was all I could do to refrain from falling down with my arms outstretched in a cross and kissing the floor, as some of the congregation were doing”.

In both instances, it was bewitched by the music of a different culture – different to that which had been accustomed to since childhood. Yet that otherness did not weaken its power of persuasion. Quite clearly, it had a universal charm not only for Africans and Orthodox Russians. Although the experiences were of a different sort in the two cases (in the former, sensory-emotional, acting not just on my psyche, but also on my body; in the latter, atmospheric-mystical), they were both sufficiently intense that it have remembered them later.

Now it will be given a brief description of national identity. For every nation, the sense of collective national identity is of huge

importance, integrating the members of that community, favouring the forming of bonds of solidarity and mutual assistance. It enables people to survive in a situation of national or social peril (extermination, discrimination or attempts at depriving people of national identity). National identity is forged by both a sense of belonging to that community and also a sense of its difference from other communities. One of the most important factors shaping a community and ensuring it of continuity is national culture, which comprises language, myths, collective memory, customs and artistic creation, in the form of both folklore (present rather in popular art) and also official 'high' art. The Polish national community, deprived of independent statehood for more than one hundred years, survived to a large extent thanks to the vitality of Polish national art, not just literature and painting, but also music, both folk and patriotic music, as well as the music of Chopin, Szymanowski and Moniuszko – to name but the most widely recognised figures.

No one is surprised at the role of literature in shaping, articulating and perpetuating national culture and identity, since literature employs the native language and can eulogise both the heroic past of a nation and the beauty of native landscapes.

Music, meanwhile, which is not a representative art, may look rather odd in this context. It turns out, however, that music can also be inspired by national mythology and history, by the beauty of native landscapes and motifs from folk songs and dances. The determinants and influences have been and still are mutual. On one hand, music expresses national sentiment and strengthens national identity; on the other, those phenomena lend it originality and strong emotional impact, which have made it interesting not just for the national public, but also for representatives of other – at times very different – cultures. That is clearly evidenced by the music of Chopin and Szymanowski, Liszt and Bartok, Glinka and Tchaikovsky, Dvorjak and Smetana, Grieg, Sibelius, Wagner and many other composers. Yet is it present now as it once was, or has not the age of globalisation and conscious economic, political and cultural integration, not just in Europe, but also in the Pacific region, brought about a radical change in that regard? After all, an important element in those processes is also cultural globalisation and universalisation, visible above all in global and commercialised mass

culture (mass media, show business, fashion and tourism). Some contemporary authors writing about national identity and culture consider that globalising tendencies and the liberalisation of social life, increasing the mobility of people to an unprecedented extent, diminish the significance of inherited national identity, which can now be the subject of conscious choice. They invoke examples of individuals with a cosmopolitan outlook who are happy, among other things, because they function between different cultures, while at the same time benefitting from their different values. Those individuals feel no need for roots and can even alter their national and cultural identity many times.

Some authors also proclaim the current or imminent end to national art, which is supposedly of no need to anyone and cannot compete on. The strongest, most visually and most spectacularly, this view is expressed by the Slovenian aesthetics philosopher Lev Kreft. He contends that "art as a national institution is the dead authors of living works and living authors of dead works" (Kreft, 2001, 58). This, in our opinion, is equally impressive as it is arguable. 'Artistry' is a fact, but whether to sell well, art must get rid of national character? We think this is a risky generalization. Chopin's music is still very Polish and still works well on the international art market. Mikołaj Górecki created distinctive national music, gaining international success. The most famous artists in Poland are Emir Kusturic, Gregor Bregovich etc. Although the creativity of each of them, not only for the Poles, is very 'Balkan' or 'Yugoslavian'. It is difficult, of course, to predict the future of identity and national culture, but nowadays cosmopolitan individuals are a significant minority.

It turns out that neither international trade nor the flowering of communication systems give people a sense of community, nor of the feeling of identity and rooting, and these needs have not ceased to exist. As a result, people find themselves again or form a new community and collective identity, because they feel separated from the cowherd. Prophecies of the end of the era or peoples did not come to fruition. "The strength of national feelings", wrote sociologist Jerzy Szacki, "is actually variable in time and vastly different in space, but there is no indication that we are dealing with a clear downward tendency. Only (and not everywhere) are the

forms of manifestation of these feelings...; The era of nations continues and nothing predicts its end" (Szacki, 1997, 5).

Of course, there are doubts: do your need to belong to a larger group than your family is a universal need? If so, why should membership in the national community be optimal for this need?

It is not just scholars studying the nation, national identity and nationalism who consider that the *need to belong* to some enduring community is a very important need of man, since satisfying that need enables people to eliminate or minimise the need for solitude; that opinion is shared by other writers, as well (e.g. Erich Fromm, Peter Drucker (Drucker, 1993, 140) and Leszek Kołakowski). Simone Weil, speaking of the need to belong to some group, uses the notion of rootedness.

"To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define. A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future" (Weil, 2002, 43).

Likewise, Leszek Kołakowski attaches great importance to joining the community. "Undoubtedly, belonging to a particular cultural, historical and linguistic community is a natural human need. We want to be together with ourselves, we want to feel at home; There is no harm or pity on the fact that we are in solidarity with our cultic community in the first place, that we perceive it as intrinsic value, and that we are striving for its survival and vitality. The aspirations for full cosmopolitanism may be in relation to the individual, but not to the overwhelming majority of people" (Kołakowski, 2015, 35).

One may query, of course, whether the need to belong to a larger group than a family is a universal need. Yet if that is the case, then why should belonging to a national community be the optimal solution for satisfying that need? Can it not be satisfied by belonging to some other, smaller (e.g. ethnic group) or larger (e.g. humanity), social group?

The need to belong can also be satisfied to a large extent by belonging to a regional ethnic group or a religious community, which by no means precludes the need to belong to a national

community. Some contemporary authors writing about national identity consider that the ineluctable processes of modernisation, the globalising and liberalising tendencies in the life of societies, are diminishing the significance of inherited national identity, which can now be the object of free choice. Individuals who do not feel the need for rootedness and who change their national identity (or actually strive to change it, because that is a difficult and lengthy process) are in a clear minority (Buruma, 2008, 18-19). In other words, although cosmopolitanism may appeal to some people, it is the privilege of a minority.

There is no doubt that this is a genuine problem, one which cannot be ignored. However, we agree with those who defend the conviction of the value and durability of national identity, which, save for a few exceptions concerning representatives of an elite, by no means has to be, at least at the present time, the object of free choice. Neither do think that the modernisation of the world, the globalisation of culture and the liberalisation of social life always represent a threat to national identity. Will Kymlicka rightly points out that in some western countries (e.g. Canada, Belgium and the United Kingdom) liberalisation actually favours a growth in the sense of national belonging. That is attested by the autonomous aspirations of the Flemish, Scots, Welsh and Quebequois. The fact that culture has become tolerant and pluralistic has in no way diminished the pervasiveness or intensity of people's desire to live and work in their own culture (Kymlicka, 1989, 89). Even a strong sense of ethnic or national identity need not lead to isolationism, ethnocentrism, radical nationalism and xenophobia, since ethnocentrism means concentrating on one's own ethnic group and enclosing oneself within its bounds. This is often linked to a conviction of the special importance and value of one's own group and culture. Sociological research conducted by Antonina Kloskowska and her collaborators has shown that in many individual cases there is no necessary link between strong assertive national identification and ethnocentric nationalism. A radical ethnocentrism, glorifying one's own culture and contrasting it with others, is usually accompanied by xenophobia, and so fear, distrust and even hatred towards strangers (Kloskowska, 1991, 58). A care for one's (ethnic and national) cultural identity, meanwhile, is justified

and necessary, including in the age of globalisation, as long as it does not lead to a diminishing of openness to other cultures or even a complete closure towards them. Openness is essential to the development of one's own cultural identity, since in isolation, as the authors of the Mexico Declaration rightly assert, culture withers and dies.¹

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¹ The Mexico Declaration on Cultural Policy was adopted at a UNESCO conference held in Mexico from 26 July to 6 August 1982 by representatives of 130 States.

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