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## **Inspirational Value of Cooke's and Zarlino's Theories on Emotions in Music**

The two theories about emotions in music analyzed here shall be considered as potential sources of inspiration to the musician. One is Deryck Cooke's theory (*The Language of Music*, 1959) in which he defends that each kind of music interval and tonal progression has a specific emotional content, which can be grasped through its relation to words. The other is the theory of Gioseffo Zarlino (*L'istituzioni armoniché*, 1558) explaining emotional effects of tunes through a similarity between its proportions and those of the body's substances that regulate our humors.

My aim is to identify the chief aspects of these theories that can account for their 'inspirational value', a concept borrowed from Richard Rorty (*Achieving Our Country*, 1998), supposed to mean 'the capacity to encourage action'.

Keywords – Inspiration, Emotions, Music, Words, Body

### **1. Rorty's Concept**

Richard Rorty presents the concept of 'inspirational value' within the work *Achieving Our Country*, in a chapter called *The Inspirational Value of Great Works of Literature*. In his first attempt to define it, he says:

When I attribute inspirational value to works of literature, I mean that these works make people think there is more to this life than they ever imagined. This sort of effect is more often produced by Hegel or Marx than by Locke or Hume, Whitehead than Ayer, Wordsworth than Housman, Rilke than Brecht, Derrida than de Man, Bloom than Jameson.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 133.

Though we already can see that the author is talking about a quality in works that may create a certain effect, if the definition had stopped here, the concept would be hard to understand. It is still not clear, for instance, why does he consider Marx more inspiring than Hume. But the explanation goes on.<sup>2</sup> One of Rorty's next steps is to characterize a reading attitude that prevents the effects of inspirational value to be felt or recognized, even when the quality is potentially present. He thus distinguishes two ways of reading with contrasting effects: one that produces hope and self-transformation, and another that merely gives the reader understanding and knowledge.

The added effects of hope and self-transformation (with their contrasting pairs of understanding and knowledge) bring more light to the concept than the effect initially mentioned. They may be considered equally vague, but their mention shows that Rorty is still framing the idea of inspirational value within the premises of the previous political argument, entirely built on the opposition of hope to knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

It is the American leftist thinkers Rorty is addressing in *Achieving Our Country*, and what he means to tell them echoes the lyrics of a song Elvis recorded in 1968: "A little less conversation, a little more action." In his call for action or in his appeal for the achievement of America as a real democracy, hope plays a crucial role. Though not the goal, hope is nevertheless the main tool, or necessary condition to change the leftists' established attitude of resentful spectators to that of inspired actors. Leftists' action should then be dedicated to the promotion of gradual reforms that Rorty believes will eventually lead the country to become the kind of secular democracy Whitman and Dewey dreamed about.

Knowing that the author is appealing to action helps to understand why he thinks Marx's works have more inspirational value than

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<sup>2</sup> "Inspirational value is typically *not* produced by the operations of a method, a science, a discipline, or a profession. It is produced by the individual brush strokes of unprofessional prophets and demiurges. You cannot, for example, find inspirational value in a text at the same time that you are viewing it as the product of a mechanism of cultural production. To view a work in this way gives understanding but not hope, knowledge but not self-transformation." *Idem*.

<sup>3</sup> Since the chapter *The Inspirational Value of Great Works of Literature* is edited as an appendix at the end of the book, we could be led to understand it separately.

Hume's. From the comparison of the two authors, we can also see that this quality of literary works is not aesthetical. The potential to inspire does not lie in the beauty of words. It is rather a pragmatic or moral value to be found in the specific theories that the poets propose. In this sense, the value of a theory may rest directly on its appeal to action, or indirectly, on the capacity to foster hope in the beliefs conveyed. Accordingly, instead of calling the authors 'poets' we might as well call them 'philosophers,' or even 'social scientists.'<sup>4</sup>

When Rorty talks about the old reformist liberals that used to be connected to workers by supporting the unions, and how this relation was broken, he reminds me of the permanently widening abyss between the philosophers and the musicians.<sup>5</sup> Many of the latter get exasperated by the verbal technicalities that occupy the former. Nonetheless, I believe that before reading the philosophers, the musician is prone to see philosophy of music as a probable source of great inspiration. Yet his expectations may be part of the problem. As a man of action, he will approach these texts trying to get hope, when they are meant to convey only knowledge.

One of the philosophical themes more liable to turn on the musician's interest is the relation of music to emotions. On this topic, the philosophers are engaged on a debate between two positions, cognitivism and emotionalism. The terms, echoing those of 'knowledge' and 'hope,' stand for beliefs subtly opposed.<sup>6</sup> Yet, even those on the side of emotionalism make their theories lose the potential inspirational value when they try to defend them by complex argumentative retaliations towards the cognitivists. To inspire a musician, we need a theory that

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<sup>4</sup> I chose to call them 'poets' because I think Rorty is purposefully ignoring the distinction between philosophy and literature.

<sup>5</sup> The general term 'musicians' is used to refer 'performers of music through an external instrument,' thus excluding theorists and singers. The reason for which I exclude the singers will be clear at the end of page 6.

<sup>6</sup> While emotionalists defend that music has the power to arouse feelings in the listener, cognitivists contest this view, arguing that the listener does not really feel the emotions conveyed by music, but merely knows or recognizes that these emotions are being expressed. A survey of the going debate can be found in R. A. Sharp, *Philosophy of Music, An Introduction*, Chapter 3.

may move him either to play better or to feel better when playing, helping him achieve, not his country, but his full potential as an artist.

## **2. Words as a Ladder in Deryck Cooke's Work**

Deryck Cooke's purpose to defend (in his 1959 work, *The Language of Music*) the theory that music functions as a language entails the decision to fight against a rival theory, formalism, that denies the existence of any extra-musical content in music and considers it to be pure form. In fact, he targets this rival theory so openly, that it becomes clear that formalism must have been the prevailing theoretical view of his time within the philosophy of music.

Since formalists drew an analogy between music and architecture, Cooke uses Chapter One to examine the plausibility and value of this analogy, as voiced by Stravinsky and Hindemith, to conclude that it only stands in relation to a certain kind of music: "all music that is primarily contrapuntal (...) and for that limited amount of modern music in which non-expressive material is organized contrapuntally."<sup>7</sup> In this part of the argument, to refute the analogy between music and architecture, Cooke already applies the strategy developed in chapter three:

Turning away from Bach's polyphony to another type of work by him, the St. Matthews Passion, for example, we shall be hard put to it to discover any analogy with architecture construction at all. (...) Again, when we turn to the symphony (classical or romantic) we might just as well (more profitably, in fact) compare its structure to that of a drama, a succession of contrasted events in time following one another by a chain of cause and effect.<sup>8</sup>

He uses an example of vocal music, Bach's *Passion*, where the connection to words assures the dramatic quality, to claim that the same quality is present in the symphony.

Among painting, architecture and literature, the analogy favoured by the author is evidently that between music and literature, and he demonstrates its plausibility by closely analysing the poem of Tennyson

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<sup>7</sup> Cooke, *The Language of Music*, 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

*Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* together with the funeral march of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony. Here, he manages to recover the romantic idea that both music and poetry express the feelings of the composer/poet. In his defence of the analogy, Cooke also recurs to the theory of the common origin of language and music from "purely emotional cries of pleasure and pain,"<sup>9</sup> and claims that musical sounds, like words, also convey an external reference. To identify the external reference of musical sounds, he says that they "have clear but not rationally intelligible associations, rather inherent associations, with the basic emotions of mankind."<sup>10</sup>

It is these "inherent associations" that Cooke will be able to partially decode in chapter III, when he presents *Some Basic Terms of Musical Vocabulary*. Since, in my opinion, this is the most interesting part of the work, I shall try to explain how he does it.

In the preface, when justifying his choice of narrowing the material under investigation within the bounds of European tonal music, Cook adds that:

It has also been confined almost entirely to art-music (including modern popular music): although the roots of musical language must certainly lie in folk-music, this approach has been completely rejected, for the simple reason that it is impossible to verify the original emotional impulse of a folk-tune.<sup>11</sup>

The problem that folk-tunes pose for Cook has nothing to do with the mere difficulty to identify its composers. He has another reason to discard them, one that is crucial to his method. In folk-tunes it is impossible to verify if the words with which we sing them in the present are the original lyrics for which the composer chose to fit the notes. What Cooke means here by the expression 'original emotional impulse' could be conveyed with another expression: "the emotional content of the original words the composer meant to set

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

to music.”<sup>12</sup> Without access to the original words (that he imagines to have affected the subconscious drive of the composer), Cooke’s scheme would simply collapse, for the emotional content of words is the ladder he uses to glean emotional meaning from musical vocabulary.

The beauty of Chapter Three is that the author is no longer using arguments, but simply presenting evidence, a huge collection of musical examples spanning six centuries (from 1400 to 1950), organized to illustrated descriptions of emotions conveyed in fifteen different tonal progressions (shapes of melodies analysed by the position of each note in relation to the key):<sup>13</sup> *Ascending I-(2)-3-(4)-5 (Major)*; *Ascending -5-I-(2)-3 (Major)*; *Ascending I-(2)-3-(4)-5 (Minor)*; *Ascending 5-I-(2)-3 (Minor)*; *Descending 5-(4)-3-(2)-I (Major)*; *Descending 5-(4)-3-(2)-I (Minor)*; *Arched 5-3-(2)-I (Minor)*; *I-(2)-3-(2)-I (Minor)*; *(5)-6-5 (Major)*; *(5)-6-5 (Minor)*; *I-(2)-(3)-(4)-5-6-5 (Major)*; *I-(2)-(3)-(4)-5-6-5 (Minor)*; *8-7-6-5 (Major)*; *8-7-6-5 (Minor)*; *The Descending Chromatic Scale*.

These are the titles of the fifteen sections of the chapter. Each is treated with the same routine: first, the author describes the general meaning of the progression, like, for example, at the beginning of *Arched 5-3-(2)-I (Minor)*:

To rise from the lower dominant over the tonic to the minor third and fall back to the tonic with or without the intervening second, conveys the feeling of a passionate outburst of painful emotion, which does not protest further, but falls back into acceptance – a flow and ebb of grief. Being neither complete protest nor complete acceptance, it has an effect of restless sorrow.<sup>14</sup>

After the general description, the musical examples are presented in chronological order, and the main part comes from vocal music.

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<sup>12</sup> The author reveals here one perspective of song making that ignores the claim of some lyricists. Ira Gershwin, for instance, says he usually wrote the words of a song to fit his brother’s pre-existent melodies.

<sup>13</sup> In the key of C Major, ascending I-2-3-4-5 is C-d-e-f-g, in the key of D Major is D-e-f sharp-g-a, in the key of E Major is E, f sharp, g sharp, a, b. Etc.

<sup>14</sup> Cooke, *The Language of Music*, 138.

In this section, the examples (all showing, of course, the same tonal progression) have the following lyrics:

- Dowland, 1612 – (Slow, *p*) “When the poor cripple by the pool did lie...”  
Bach, 1722 – (Moderate tempo, *p*) “Zerfließe, mein Herze...”  
Bach, 1729 – (Moderate tempo, *p*) “Erbarme dich...”  
Bach, 1731 – (Moderate tempo, *f*) “Ich habe genug...”  
Mozart, 1791 – (Larghetto, *p*) “Lacrymosa...”  
Verdi, 1873 – (Largo, *p*) “Lacrymosa dies illa...”  
Schubert, 1823 – (Fairly quick, *pp*) “Ach, es entschwindet mit thauigem Flügel...”  
Schubert, 1827 – (Moderate tempo, *p*) “Ich hab’ an dich gedacht...”  
Schubert, 1827 – (Very lively) “Ich such’ im Schnee vergebens...”  
Verdi, 1852 – (Andante mosso, *dolce e pp*) “Addio del passato dei sogni ridenti...”  
Wagner, 1853 – (Slow, *p*) “Nur wer der Minne Macht versagt...”  
Mahler, c.1883 – (Andante, *p*) “Hab’ ich meinen traurigen Tag!...”  
Mahler, c. 1884 – (Alla marcia, *pp*) “Vom aller schönsten Platz!...”  
Britten, 1944 – (Semplice ma marcato, *p*) “We planned that their lives should have a good start...”<sup>15</sup>

In some of the examples, the words are too scarce to be able to communicate a definite emotional content, probably because if the author had extended the excerpts, he would not have been able to isolate the tonal progression. Yet, he comments on each one, either giving us the rest of the poem, or describing the dramatic situation of the song in the plot (in passions or operas), and often calling attention to the particularization of the general feeling contained in the progression by variations of what he calls the ‘vitalizing agents’ (time, volume and pitch).

All fifteen sections of Chapter Three end in the same way: after proving an undeniable link of the emotions in the vocal works to the general emotion attributed to the tonal progression, the author then transfers his findings to symphonic music: “We are led from the above to suppose that the second theme in the first movement of Mozart’s

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<sup>15</sup> *Idem.*

G minor String Quintet must be expressive of restless grief, as has frequently been stated (...)"<sup>16</sup>

How are we led to suppose this? Because, if, as the examples show, composers have chosen the same tonal progression to accompany words expressing similar feelings, they must have sensed that these progressions had an emotional content akin to that of the words.

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To emphasize my answer to the question ‘What can *The Language of Music* do to inspire the musician?’, I begin with a line from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*: “[Life:] It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

The commas divide the line into three expressive parts. They relate to each other in a dramatic *crescendo*, not of volume (that may even be decreasing) but of gravity, weight or impact. ‘A tale told by an idiot’ could still be fun. It could even fit an ascending I-(2)-3-(4)-5 in Major if we gave it the proper vitalizing agents.<sup>17</sup> Yet, ‘full of sound and fury’ ceases to be amusing; it brings us to an inner turbulence, it is the sordid sound of a raging fury – existence - eating us up. Still, the impact of this expression can’t be compared to that of ‘signifying nothing’. When preceded by the other two, this one should be uttered with the same breath energy we apply in the act of spitting, for it’s the final stroke, the bitter spitting of nasty black bile on life.

Signifying nothing must be the most dreaded of horrors for a poet. But, like poets, don’t we all take ‘signifying nothing’ to be the worst condition in life? And, isn’t this condition part of the grief, verging the limits of the bearable, that strikes us when someone close to us dies or lies in bed in the final stage of Alzheimer’s disease? If this is true, Deryck Cooke’s attribution of specific meaning to each interval and to some tonal progressions can be a great inspiration to the performer of instrumental music (who, unlike the singer, cannot cling to the meaning

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>17</sup> It might be interesting to analyse the emotional content of poetic stanzas by trying to see what kind of tonal progressions could suit them.

of words). It helps him to free himself from this burden of emptiness, by fostering his belief that what he is doing signifies something. Besides, since the author classifies the precise elements with which the musician deals in his practice, bearing each classification in mind may enhance the intensity of the work. Thus, a tedious routine is transformed into an interesting inquiry about the validity of Cooke's intuitions. This inquiry will invite him to study deeper his own emotional reactions to the music he is playing. From this perspective, the reading of *The Language of Music* may make the musician think **there is more to his music than he ever imagined**.

This attribution of specific meaning to tonal progressions is not Cooke's final purpose. The establishment of *Some Basic Elements of Musical Expression* (Chapter Three) is meant to serve as a basis for the explanation of *The Process of Musical Communication* (Chapter Four). If, to defend that music functions as a language, the author begins by stating the proximity between music and words, when he tries to explain how the musical language works or functions, he is forced to concentrate on the differences between these two means of communication.<sup>18</sup> Since he considers the fundamental musical experience to be "the transformation of sound into emotion,"<sup>19</sup> he warns the listener that "during a performance, the unconscious process of conversion should be allowed to go unhindered by intellectual preoccupations," because, concepts arising in our minds might "get in the way of our emotional experience of music."<sup>20</sup> Thus, the connection to words, that played a crucial role on the early stages of the argument, is gradually weakened until it collapses, in the middle of Chapter Five. After analyzing Mozart's Fortieth Symphony (still tagging the musical

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<sup>18</sup> About the content in music, in Chapter Four, Cooke ends up saying: "In the work of any composer, 'form' and 'content' are not separate, not even fused, but ultimately two aspects of a single entity: 'form' is, in fact, as the word implies, the form-into-which-the-composer's-emotions-has-been-converted, and 'content' is a word to indicate the fact that this form can be converted 'back' into some kind of equivalent of that emotion. In fact, the 'pure music' theorists are right up to a point: there is only one thing and that is the form – only they will not admit that the form can be regarded in two lights." *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

terms with words referring to emotions) he decisively throws away the hindering ladder:

As we turn to that other controversial work – The Sixth Symphony of Vaughan Williams – the use of emotional words will be discontinued, and the musical terms will be allowed to speak for themselves, relying on the reader’s memory.<sup>21</sup>

What seems to beg interpretation here is the extent or mode of Cooke’s reliance. He is not expecting that the reader may remember the word tags previously exhausted. The kind of memory he is appealing to is a deeper one. According to his theory of musical communication, the transformation of sound into emotion is possible because of the musical vocabulary stocked in the listener’s unconscious. This process mirrors the transformation of emotion into sound that the composer achieves by recurring to the same mental reservoir of hidden musical experiences from his past. What the author expects from the reader is that, while being able to evoke the sounds from the musical terms, his memory will help him to transform them directly into emotions.

In the title of this section I’ve used the metaphor of the ladder because (to explain it with another metaphor) Cooke really climbs high on his work, making very interesting points on an extremely delicate matter. Nevertheless, the way he handles what he calls “some mysterious process” (the process of musical communication) leaves it as mysterious as it was before, without giving any satisfactory account of how music can move us. If we are moved due to an unconscious memory of the basic vocabulary, it is not clear, for instance, how this vocabulary could have been stocked there without moving us in the first place.

The weakest spot in Cooke’s inspirational value may be the following: he recognizes that the musical experience is not intellectual, but, when he considers unconscious memory to be the agent that transforms sound into emotions, he reduces this experience to a mental one. He thus disregards almost entirely the centrality of the body in the musical phenomenon.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>22</sup> It would not be fair to say that he disregards it entirely. When he considers the rhythm as a vitalizing agent, within the elements of musical expression, he says that

With the use of the expression 'written music', we suppose that music can be something other than sound, but this is not an unquestionable supposition. What is written, the score, may be considered a mere set of instructions to make the music, and it can be argued that the instructions are not the music, in the same way a recipe of chocolate cake is not a chocolate cake.<sup>23</sup> Unless we tend to see a Beethoven's sonata as an abstract entity existing eternally in the realm of ideas, we can agree that the sonata is something that sounds. Accordingly, the mind of the performer, that understands the instructions, is just an intermediary between those instructions and the body. Only when he manages to translate them into corporeal movements can we say that music is being made.

Considering the body's importance to the musician, it is reasonable to suspect that he will be more inspired by a theory that confers it a central role.

### 3. Zarlino's Universal Harmony in the Body

I can't think of a better source of inspiration for the musician than *L'istituzioni armoniché* for it was exactly for him – the *musicico pratico* – that Zarlino wrote this treatise. Before his time, the name of 'musician'

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"The reason why even and dotted rhythms function as they do is clearly connected with the human activities of walking and running." (*Ibid.*, 101) Later, he points out that the "rhythmic impulse can be nothing other than *a form of physical energy* into which the 'current' of the composer's emotions is converted by the act of the creative imagination." (*Ibid.*, 181) The role of the body in the creative process, even if it is merely hinted, can be deduced by the importance Cooke attributes to rhythm as the vitalizing agent through which the composer personalizes tonal progressions that belong to common use. One reason the author is not emphasizing the role of the body in the process of musical reception is that he is presenting it as an inversion of the creative process, one that he considers to be "somewhat analogous to that which gives birth to poetic inspiration." (*Ibid.*, 183) Knowing that Cooke is describing this process based on ideas that "arose out of a study of" *The Road to Xanadu* by John Livingstone Lowes, may help us understand his apparent confinement of musical experience to mental states.

<sup>23</sup> Cooke shares this vision of the score when he says about the opening bars of Beethoven's Gloria: "The 'score' is simply Beethoven's message down the years: 'pick up a D trumpet and play these notes at this dynamic level, in this rhythm, at this speed, and everyone within hearing will know how I felt.'" (*Ibid.*, 210)

was only conferred on those who speculated on the science of music, studied in universities as part of the *quadrivium*, among the seven liberal arts. Since ancient Greece, the liberal arts of the free man were opposed to the mechanical arts fit for slaves and still held in contempt in the Middle Ages. But Zarlino is a Renaissance man, claiming that the true finality of science will not be achieved if it remains within the bounds of abstract speculation.<sup>24</sup> He has the vision of a global musician – the *musico perfetto* – that can link theoretical knowledge with practical experience. So, his *Istituzioni*, written in a vernacular language, has an exciting touch of social revolution, since he pretends to dignify the ‘slaves’, giving them access to a knowledge that was once meant only for the masters.

Ma non dico però che ‘l compositore, e alcuno che esserciti i natural o artificiali istrumenti, sia o debba esser privo di questo nome purch’egli sappia e intenda quello che operi, e del tutto renda convenevoli ragione, perché a simil persona non solo di compositore, di cantore, o di sonatore ma di musico ancora il nome si conviene. Anzi si com un sol nome lo doveremo chiamare, lo chiameremo musico perfetto; perchioché dando opera é essercitandosi nell’una e l’altra delle nominate, ei possederá perfettamente la musica, della quale desidero é spero che faranno acquisto coloro i quali vorranno osservare i nostri precetti.<sup>25</sup>

With this goal, the book covers all the theoretical disciplines of music (from philosophy and mathematics, to the rules of counterpoint) where, according to the Aristotelian method, each subject is first approached with a historical presentation of the development of ideas, before the author dares to step forward with his own point of view. To conciliate the theoretical with the practical musician, Zarlino needs to adapt the old Pythagorean theory of perfect consonances (that accepted only three intervals as such: the octave, the fifth and the fourth) to the music played in his time, where two more intervals had been in use for a while. Stuart Isacoff, in his work *Temperament*, resumes this extraordinary achievement:

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<sup>24</sup> Zarlino, *L’istituzioni armoniché*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

To accommodate these now popular harmonies, Zarlino cleverly expanded the series. Harmony, he explained, could still be divined from the mystical properties of simple numbers. All that was needed was a slight corrective: Musical concords, he asserted, may be formed not only by combinations of the first four integers, but by the first six – a series he called the *scenario*, or *sonorous number*.<sup>26</sup>

This accommodation was crucial to Zarlino because it allowed him to maintain that music intervals were natural entities made of the same numerical proportions that ruled the entire universe. Thus, he could preserve the idea of *musica mundana*, according to which the celestial spheres make a harmonious sound because their distance from each other, and their different speeds in motion, is regulated by the same proportions between different lengths of strings that produce the consonant intervals. Venus and the earth, for instance, form a perfect fifth, and the Sun and the Moon a perfect fourth. In a way, he stayed close to Pythagorean mysticism, defending that “Everything created by God was organized by him through the number, and the number was the main model in his mind.”<sup>27</sup> But he also echoes Empedocles when he defines music as harmony, meaning by it the conjunction between opposites from which everything was generated. Accepting as well from Empedocles the doctrine of the four elements (earth, water, air and fire), he links the human being to the planets, since man is, in body, spirit and soul, regulated by the same proportions that regulate the heavens. What he calls *musica humana* is the balance between the four qualities possessed by the elements (humid, dry, hot, cold) within the four body substances (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile) that, in connection to the spirit, determine the humours (sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, melancholic) according to the way these bodily substances are proportioned in each individual.

Like Cooke, Zarlino earnestly defends the power of music to arouse emotions and in *L'istituzioni* he dedicates three chapters to the subject.<sup>28</sup> In Chapter VII, besides quoting several legends narrated by the great classic poets to support his view, he considers four separate aspects that

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<sup>26</sup> Isacoff, *Temperament*, 137.

<sup>27</sup> Zarlino, *L'istituzioni armoniché*, 58.

<sup>28</sup> Chapters VII, VIII and IX of the second half of the first part of the treatise.

contribute to the way music can affect our passions: melody; rhythm; the moral content of the words sung and the disposition of the listener.<sup>29</sup> Of these four aspects, the moral content of the words is the most powerful, because words have the capacity to move us even without music. Yet, he also thinks that the greater potential to arouse emotions lies in the combination of the first three aspects, for music can strongly enhance the moving power of words. In Chapter VIII, he gives us a physical explanation of how music can affect our passions and what it means to have the right disposition to be affected by it. At this point, he no longer speaks about the effect of words, but only of the pure musical elements:

Essendo le passioni dell'animo poste nell'apetito sensitivo corporeo e organico, come nel suo vero soggetto, ciascuna di essi consiste in una certa proporzione di caldo e freddo e di umido e secco, secondo una certa disposizione materiale, quasi di numero a numero; di maniera che quando queste passioni sono fatte, sempre soprabonda una delle nominate qualità in qualunque di esse. Onde si come nell'ira predomina il caldo umido, cagione dell'incitamento di essa, così predomina nel timore il freddo secco, il quale induce il ristregimento dei spiriti. (...) Questa istessa natura hanno eziandio le armonie, onde si dice che l'armonia frigida ha natura di concitar l'ira e ha dell'affettuoso, che la mistalidia fa star l'uomo più ramarichevole e più raccolto in se stesso, e che la doria è più stabile e molto appropriata ai costumi de' forti e temperati, essendo che è mezzana tra le due nominate; e questo si comprende nella diversa mutazione dell'animo che si fa quando si ode coteste armonie. (...) Essendo adunque le passioni che predominano nei corpi per virtù delle nominate qualità, simili (dirò così) alle complessione che si ritrovano nelle armonie, facilmente potiamo conoscere in qual modo l'armonie possino mover l'animo e disporlo a varie passioni.<sup>30</sup>

Here we have what was missing in Cooke's explanation: an account of the nature of emotions. They are a reflex of the way the four qualities (humid, dry, hot, cold) are proportioned in our body in a given moment. He also tells us what they have in common with musical

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<sup>29</sup> When Zarlino tells us that, according to Basilio de Cesarea, Alexander the Great was moved to war by the music of Timoteo (159), he finds an inspirational value in music that is close to the inspirational value I'm searching in theories.

<sup>30</sup> Zarlino, *L'istituzioni armoniché*, 166-167.

sound, establishing a rational basis for their possible interaction: The determined proportions of the four qualities that characterize each emotion are like the proportions between intervals that characterize each musical mode. Consequently, the reason why a tune can enhance a certain emotion lies in the similarity of proportions between them.

To understand the development of his argument, the subtle distinction between 'passions' (or emotions) and 'humour' (or temperament), may be useful. While 'passion' can designate a 'passing mood', 'humour' refers to a 'persistent inclination to be in a certain mood'. Thus, whether we have the right disposition to be affected by a certain music depends on our passion of the moment. But, as a similar proportion in a mode can enhance a passion, so can a contrary proportion help to annihilate it. Accordingly, we can even expect to mould our humour through the habit of listening to music in certain modes. In addition, since passions arise in relation to physical proportions between elements in the body, music influences our physical health.

As Zarlino keeps using the word 'similarity' to characterize the proportions connecting body and music, I suspect he is applying to modes and moods his experience of the acoustic phenomenon called 'sympathy'. Just like the mere vibration of a string can set in motion a second string (or any other object) possessing the same vibration frequency, so can an elaborate tune set in motion a complex mood. This shows that Zarlino's theory of how music creates emotions is not a blind repetition of the old philosophers. He only gathers from them what serves him best and strives to harmonize tradition with a lifetime of testing and reason, in order to form a coherent vision of his own.

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Leaving Cooke behind, focussing on Zarlino is like entering an enchanted garden. He has a broader mind, trying to give a global explanation of musical facts that may fit not only music played in his time, but also imagined music of two thousand years ago (or more) as described by the poets. The relation of *musica mundana* to *musica humana* - suggesting that what gives harmony to our bodies is also what maintains the harmony of the universe, a similarity shaped by the

proportions of musical intervals, can be a real inspirational treasure for those engaged in music therapy, for listeners and for critics. To these last two, the theory recommends the use of the body for enjoying and judging the quality of any piece of music. Being aware of it, they can inspect the reactions of their bodies to search for a sincere verdict, without being afraid to sound silly when they say: “this sonata gave me a terrible pain in the shoulders.” Furthermore, their experience will be richer because, as they concentrate on their physical sensations, they will be practicing the exercise advised in many self-help books of today to establish contact with our essential being and free ourselves from the turbulence of constant thought. In this way, it will also be easier to attain the full musical experience unhindered by concepts that Cooke would like us to have.

Compared to Cooke’s, Zarlino’s theory lacks an important point that could inspire the musician: it is the idea that making music involves the transmission of genuine feelings originated in the composer’s heart; feelings that can be reconstructed in the audience if the interpreter has the capacity to share them. This idea is as strange to Zarlino as it is to emotionalists of today and was to the baroque proponents of the theory of affections. But there is something about this author’s theory that can surpass the idea of transmission: instead of suggesting he is resurrecting Beethoven’s unconscious feelings it invites the musician to believe that he is handling the universal elements of an eternal order.

In some respects, the theories of the two authors complement each other. On the one hand, the mystery of the process of musical communication, that Cooke leaves unsolved, is clarified by Zarlino. This establishes a ground for the valuable intuitions of the former to be accepted. On the other hand, Zarlino’s lack of commitment towards ascertaining specific emotional contents to each mode<sup>31</sup> is compensated

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<sup>31</sup> Zarlino introduces the characteristic emotional content of each mode with scientific scruples towards its certainty, as if he was merely gathering information based on gossip. In fact, the expressions he uses before presenting these contents could form a list of rhetorical devices meant to evade commitment: **Primo modo** – “alcuni lo chiamano modo lascivo” (675) **Secondo modo** – “È detto modo lamentevole perchioqué contiene in sé una modulazione (secondo ‘l parere dei musici) alquanto mesta e languida” (678) **Terzo modo** – “Per sua natura è riputato dolce e alquanto

by the boldness Cooke displays in the identification of the basic elements of musical vocabulary. This boldness can be extended to both theories, enhancing their persuasiveness.

In the end, *The Language of Music* helps the most extraordinary theory of music and emotions to shine out – Zarlino's. Through it, hope can be achieved. Above all, the theory fosters the musician's belief that if he chooses the right music to play, he has the power to create peace and harmony for himself and others.

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mesto" (682) **Quarto modo** – “Volevano alcuni che ‘l quarto modo contenesse in sé una certa gravità severa, non adulatoria, e che la sua natura fusse lagrimevole e umile, di maniera che mossi da questo parere lo chiamarono modo lagrimevole, umile e deprecativo” (683). The attitude can be contrasted to that of Cooke through the quote on page 5, where he assuredly affirms the general expressive content of *Arched 5-3-(2)-I (Minor)*.