

Francois Couperin's concept of universal harmony

Abstract

Article is offering new approach to Francois Couperin's harpsichord pieces, based on symbolic interpretation of his enigmatic titles. Starting point is ideological explanation of Couperin's form of suite 'order' (French *ordre*) suggested by Olivier Baumont. Louis's XIV idea of forming French national orders in architecture is comparable with Couperin's idea of coexistence of modes in chromatic scale. Symbolic interpretation of Couperin's pieces in same mode leads to assumptions on Couperin's view of modes energy. Further analysis leads to interpretation of each order key idea. Couperin's concept is recognised as demonstration of universal harmony idea. Couperin's integral harpsichord work is seen as 'universe of ethical values' and unity of used modes as 'way to perfection'. It is pointed out difference in adoption universal harmony idea in Couperin's and Rameau's work.

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Introduction

In work “*The truth and method*” Gadamer (Hans-Georg Gadamer, 1960) points out productivity of temporal distance in historical retrospective that separates true prejudices as a way to understanding from false ones as way to wrong understanding. He says that ‘individual’s prejudices are more his historical reality than his views’ (Gronden, 2010). In his hermeneutical philosophy Gadamer also speaks about importance of application in understanding: following Heidegger’s conception of intuition that comprises understanding as self-understanding, even self-meeting, he founds understanding is application of sense on our own situation, answering our own questions. In concordance with these ideas this article approach results from raising questions about Couperin’s intentions and assurances in power of music, as well as questions about modern ideas on art of music interpretation.

Roots of French baroque style reach back to Marin Mersenne’s idea of *L’harmonie univeselle*, from year 1636.¹ In this extensive theoretical work Mersenne is talking about vocal and instrumental technique, about musical modes and meaning of music. He says that meaning of music is echo of ideas and that music incorporates spirit: ‘*le sens est*

¹ Mersenne, Marin, *Harmonie vniverselle, contenant la theorie et la pratique de la Mvsique, Ou il est traite de la Nature des Sons, &des Mouuemens, des Consonances, des Dissonances, des Genres, des Modes, de la Composition, de la Voix, des Chants, &de toutes sortes d’Instrumens Harmoniques*, Paris, Sebastien Cramoisy Imprimeur ordinaire du Roy, MDCXXVI, Free public domain sheet music from IMSLP / Petrucci Music Library, download: 26.06.2011

[http://imslp.org/wiki/Harmonie_universelle_\(Mersenne,_Marin\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Harmonie_universelle_(Mersenne,_Marin))

toujours fils d'Echo; 'music corps l'esprit' (Magnard, 2011). French seventeenth century music inspired by classical tradition is developing on ancient Greek modes. Modes are going to be slowly transformed to tonalities. Transition period is marked by Charpentier's idea on modes energy ('energy des modes')² and his believe in expressivity as purpose of their use. As Charpentier's disciple Couperin is supposed to have adopted Charpentier's ideas of modes function.

At the beginning of eighteenth century Couperin modifies form of baroque suite into new one that he has named 'order' (French *ordre*). Couperin's order is arrangement of character pieces in same mode (comprising same name minor/major tonality). Conception of 'order' could be seen as sign of his classical inspiration and presence of antique idea of universality.

Understanding Couperin's intentions is necessary for modern interpreter's selection of adequate expressive devices. It related to Couperin's conviction that music has certain role in human personal and social life. Couperin's pieces have general character marks as instructions for interpreter, but also most of them have title significant for unique character of the piece. As many titles are names of historical personalities unknown to us today, without deeper understanding there is distress that title will stay just a name joined to music. If we lean on general character marks there will exist danger of mannerism in interpretation. So we come to the first theoretical problem in approach to Couperin's opus-problem of authenticity. As Kenyon says mannerism and authenticity are exclusive

² *'Pourquoi les transpositions de modes? La première et moindre raison c'est pour reindre la même pièce de musique chantable par tout sorte de voix. La seconde et principe raison c'est pour l'expression des différentes passions, à quoi la différente énergie des modes est très propre'.*

<http://www.charpentier.culture.fr/fr/html/compo/> , 15.05.2012

(Kenyon, 1988). Use of historical instruments and insight to correct editions, publications, ornamentation signs and even style characteristics is not enough to provide authenticity. As realization of music piece comprises performer as medium, authenticity is based on performer's understanding of context. Second problem is style: although great representative of French style Couperin is from his youth adorer of Italian style. He is one who is pursued to change, and enrich French style (characterized by rhetoric and modality) with certain elements of Italian (tonality, expressivity and chromatics). He is complaining to his French compatriot aptitude to equal conception of *measure* and *movement* (measure and rhythm seen as length of note values instead connected energy, dynamism). Couperin has intention to transform French style in direction of greater freedom and to transform interpretative art from controlled rationality in direction of individual expression.

Problems in domain of praxis that interpreter is confronted to are also several. Couperin's orders are uneven in length and in the sense of pieces quality inside orders. It is possible to pose questions is it necessary to perform all pieces in the same order, how strong is connection of pieces and also how important is their succession. Second problem is choice of proper instrument, as well as tuning practice, that is influenced with assimilation of Italian style. French instruments were specific: light mechanic, sonorous down and weak high register, they favoured more merged sound than articulation; Italian instruments are opposite, bright high register and clear sound were imperative. Unequal temperament was commonplace, but varied from composer to composer from style to style; there are indications that Italians were using *meantone* tuning till the end of eighteenth century. Third, Couperin gives many indications and examples on his own

style in his theoretical work *L'art de toucher Clavecin*, but very rare they are precisely indicated in single pieces, their implication is abandoned to interpreter's fantasy and choice of adequate atmosphere, that points again need to deep understanding of his titles.

Key assumptions for interpretation of Couperin's harpsichord opus

Many authorities for Couperin's harpsichord opus³ have offered interpretation of his titles searching for historical personalities, events or their connection with literature, theatre and visual arts. In some cases their visions differ and leave titles or their mutual connection unexplained. These problems initiate proposal of unique Couperin's work key based on three main assumptions:

1. Ideological interpretation of order;
2. Symbolic interpretation of Couperin's titles;
3. Educational role of music.

Ad1.

Wilfrid Mellers, one of the first modern authorities for Francois Couperin's opus defines *ordre* as "succession of character pieces joined with ideological associative method and music atmosphere" (Mellers, 1968). Couperin's orders leading ideas are hidden in his titles. Music atmosphere depends on different musical elements (rhythm, facture, ornamentation) but as well on Couperin's view on energy of the modes. Ideological interpretation of order is initiated by Olivier Baumont (Baumont, *L'ordre chez Francois*

³ Mellers, 1968; Beusant, 1980; Baumont, 1989; Clark&Connon, 2002; Tunley, 2004.

Couperin, Francois Couperin: nouveaux regards, Villecroze, 1995). Compared to Mellers, Baumont is closer to specify order. Couperin's idea he sees as parallel to Louis's XIV idea to form national architectural orders instead Ionic, Doric. Louis's intentions are reflecting his nation-builder ideas similar to Plato's Ideal state conception as unity of ancient Greek city-states. As each Greek city-state had specific ethnical (and ethical) properties joined with typical music mode, unity of city-states could be symbolically represented in unity of all musical modes. Unity of modes was represented in chromatic scale. From Pythagora's research it is known that pure intervals can not fit octave. Music temperament is approximation that makes coexistence of modes possible. Pure fifths and pure thirds have opposite tendencies. Pythagorean temperament dominated Renaissance music as pure fifths were priority, but baroque style favoured pure thirds and adopted meantone temperament. Couperin's orders are set of pieces in the same mode. His modal thinking can be approved with his reduced number of flats (one less than modern standard, that can be understood as using Doric mode) and his horizontal and linear development of melodies.

Ad2.

Symbolic interpretation of titles is initiated by presence of many ancient mythological personalities. Some Couperin's titles have clear indications like *Terpsichore*, *Diana*, *Minerva*; some hidden like *Gondoles des Delos* (indication of Apollo, as his homeland was Delos) or *Letiville* (as domain of his mother goddess Lethe). It is possible to spread symbolic interpretation on the other titles: *Les Abeilles* are symbol of Charles V (symbol of justice- because of sting, and wealth-because of honey); genre titles like *Les*

Tricoteuses (knitters are symbol of artist); or *Les petits Moulins a Vent* (little windmills, as symbol of fresh breeze). Personal names also can be appreciated symbolic, as a root of many names really was symbol.

Ad3.

As modern philosopher Werner Jager points out (Jager, 1991) idea of upbringing ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ that derives from ancient Greek culture is crucial for separating western from oriental world. Greek confidence in possibility of improving human is transformed in eighteenth century to concept of education. It is connected with ancient idea of music as activity of Muses, as symbols of knowledge disciplines. Position of arts at Couperin's time reflects problem of sensory cognition *aesthesis* that is going to be developed as notion of aesthetic at the end of century. English philosopher Shaftesbury Couperin's contemporary, forms idea of "sense of taste", as well as "aesthetical education" that dominates 18th century and reaches climax in Schiller's ideas.

Couperin's view of 'energy of modes' and its connection with ethical values is demonstration of unity of reason and senses in world of ideas. Couperin has probably leaned on Charpentier's view on '*energy des modes*'. Symbolic interpretation of Couperin's titles comprises that titles are metaphors and allegories. Comparison of all Couperin's titles that belong to same mode will unveil his 'feeling of modes'. Opposite, habitual vision on energy of used mode is helpful to unveil hidden meanings of unclear titles. Connection of ethical values with modes energy exposes Couperin's Platonic concept of universal harmony. Breakdown totality of sound to different music modes

could be seen as analogue to decomposition of light into rainbow spectrum (phenomenon that Decartes has explained).

Foundation in classical ideas is present in Couperin's work not just as a great musician of the time, but as court musician, one who is devoted to *artes liberalis*, teacher and himself member of aristocracy. His aim is not just creation of music as a piece of art, he is conscious of music's purpose. His inspiration is Platonic. Plato's concept of ranging ethical values is exposed in dialog *Fileb*, (Platon, 1979). Measure is posed as supreme good and harmony is established as order of different goods: beauty (perfection, completeness), mind (sanity), spirit (knowledge, artistry, views) and pure enjoyments of soul. Pointing out ethical values in his pieces as symbols Couperin demonstrates humanistic approach to idea of harmony, his classical faith in mystical power of music to balance confronted impulses in man. By connecting ethical values with modes energy he demonstrates his Platonic view on music and Platonic concept of universal harmony. Couperin's ideas differ from ideas of his contemporary Rameau.

Couperin's concept

Couperin has idea to demonstrate different characters with his music. From the time of Renaissance character is seen as a man's microcosm, composed by tempering four confronted basic elements: ground, water, fire and air. Classical symbol of elements are appearing in Couperin's books: Terpsichore, Dian, bacchants in the first; Muse of birth (*Muse naissante*), Atalanta, corybants in second; Muse of plants (*Muse Plantine*), Minerva, vestal virgins in third; and Muse of Victory, cherubs, Apolon and Dionis, in

fourth. Four elements are symbols of: tradition, sensibility, social life and world of ideas and Couperin's books could be comprised as analogue to new forming humanistic science disciplines: history, psychology, sociology and philosophy.

Couperin's orders are unity of pieces in the same mode, or same name major/minor tonality. Instead terms Ionic, Doric, Couperin is using Latin letters for mode's names as origins of French culture sign A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H. In didactical work *L'Art de toucher Clavecin* he gives as example 8 preludes in modes C, D, G, F, A, H, B, E respectively, but in his last book he will introduce two modes more: E flat (just one piece in XXV order *La Visionnaire*) and F sharp in XXVI order. Some of modes are appearing in both minor/major modality but some not: B and E flat are just major and H minor.

Couperin's 27 orders are well thought out organized in four books:

Mode / Book	Tradition	Sensibility	Social life	Ideas
A	V	IX	XV	XXIV
B		VI		
C	III	XI		XXV
D	II	X	XIV,XIX	XXII
E flat				XXV
E		XII	XVII	XXI
F	IV		XVIII	XXIII
F sharp				XXVI
G	I	VII	XVI	XX
H		VIII	XIII	XXVII

A mode as first mode is mode of spirit and imagination as in it in XV order appears Minerva, classical symbol of mind, joined with noble Regent, Philippe II d'Orleans leader of artistic circle Utopia.⁴

V order starts with allemande *La Logivière*. Although this title is possibly name, its origin (French *logis*) hides symbol of ancient "Logos" that Heraclitus has comprised as objective law of nature, thought of unity of all. In human minds Logos is changing like in false mirrors, it is imagination *la folle du logis* as beliefs shape, that is why it is dangerous, blinding, beautifying and unstable.⁵

IX order as a part of 2nd book of psychology, defines imagination as fantasy that is charming, seductive, feminine and flattering.⁶

⁴ XV order starts with Allemande *La Régente, ou la Minerve*, homage to Regent, patron of art and artist himself. By accepting Italian style and opera he was opposing to Louis XIV, he has left Pallas of Versailles and became protector of new architectural style of rustic houses. He and his followers, members of ideal social circle Utopia, were enjoining sound of musettes *Muséte de Taverni, Muséte de Choisi*, escaping *L'Evaporée* from dark Versailles to sweet *La Douce, et Piquante* atmosphere of orchards *Les Vergers fleüris* and loving lullaby *Le Dodo, ou L'Amour au Berceau*.

⁵ Imagination is dangerous *La Dangereuse*, it can make people blind (*bandeau* is veil) *La Bandoline*, or disoriented like in popular game blind-man's-buff (*La Tendre Fanchon*), they can feel that they are victims of banterer *La Badine*. Opposite, imagination has power of beautifying reality *Les Agréments, La Flore, L'Angélique*. Imagination is different in minds of villagers *La Villers* or grape pickers *Les Vendangeuses*. It is a sign of instability and a potential for metamorphoses *Les Ondes*.

⁶ Couperin defines fantasy as refreshing *La Rafrachissante* and charming *Les Charmes*, triumphal *L'Olimpique*, and seductive *La Séduisante*, but also as inconstant *Le Petit-deuil ou les trois Veuves*, vacillate *Le Bavolet Flotant*, feminine *La Princesse de Sens* and flattering *L'Insinüante*.

XXIV order in 4th book represents mind as cause of transformations of society, that is sometimes painful but unavoidable, as it is suggested by alchemical symbol of metamorphoses – amphibian.⁷

B mode appears only once in Couperin's opus and only in major, it is mode of nature that raise mysterious barricade to man. Charpentier sees it as dark, obscure, horrible, because in Pythagorean tradition it was lowest and thus reserved for demons, goblins, mysterious water nymphs. Couperin uses it for opening of 2nd book, a book of mysterious world of sensibility. For Couperin this order is a picture of a magic of sensual world that brings the sweetest fruits and sometimes vanishes in a moment. In the case of individuality, personal nature is one that has to be subdued and controlled.⁸

⁷ This order starts with dignified old nobleman *Les Vieux Seigneurs*, confronted to young who are paying attention to trifles *Les Jeunes Seigneurs*, *Cy-devant les petits Maitres*; their coexistence is poisoned by pernicious arrows *Les Dars-Homicides*; in that society ladies are with preciosity ("*les précieuses*") dictating artificial poetry *Les Guirlandes*, conversation is not more than empty chat *Les Brinborions*. The oldest and most dangerous god Eros is governing there (known as fuzzy) *La Divine-Babiche, ou les Amours-badins* and chaste portrait of Infant seems lost in whirlpool of alchemical symbol of metamorphoses amphibian *L'Amphibie*.

⁸ At first sight it seems that VI order is pastoral, it is, but more symbolic in meaning: reapers *Les Moissonneurs* are symbol of life and death and shepherdesses *Les Bergeries*, belong to ideal world of Arcadia, that human soul is longing for *Les Langueurs Tendres*. What are *Les Baricades Mistérieuses* if not obstacles that Nature is appointing in front of man. This piece can be associated with mechanism of Marly, technical miracle of time, with purpose to transfer water from long distance to Versailles fountains, invention that symbolize Louis's XIV success in conquering demonic forces of nature. In Marly Louis could find a comfort and calm in purling *La Bersan* and twittering *Le Gazouillemen*, but a babble *La Commère* or vivacious fate *La Moucheron* could make everything disappear in a moment, like if someone throws a spark of flame on a field of ripe grain.

Mode C is mode of light and darkness, mode of ideals and knowledge.

III order is opening allemande *La Ténébreuse*, as “it was darkness at the beginning” and it was gloomy *La Lugubre*. According to Plato’s ideas darkness is sign of ignorance and disorder and knowledge brings Light and order. Secret source of light is Love.⁹

In 2nd book idea of light is transformed to Ideal.¹⁰ Couperin set up question of role of art in ‘Ideal State’ using as example breakdown of old musicians guild.

In XXIV order Couperin is recalling Plato’s ‘allegory of a cave’.¹¹ Piece *La Misterieuse* in C major, sounds not very mystical, as secrets of nature man should watch with curiosity of explorer and not with fear. Positioning piece *Les Ombres Errantes*, at the end of order, Couperin gives his answer on Plato’s question should artists be exiled from ideal

⁹ The darkness is close to sorrow and penitence *Les Regrets*, her home is Spain *L’Espagnolète*, but pilgrims *Les Pèlerines* and laurels *Les Laurentines* have brought a light from overseas. A secret that they brought is that Love has the greatest power to join two persons *La Favorite*, *Chaconne à deux tems*, but a god of love is rogue *La Lutine*.

¹⁰ Couperin in XI order defines Ideal as natural grace *Les Graces-Naturéles*, and nobility *La Castelane*, that scintillates and radiates *L’Etincelante ou La Bontems*. Ideal is represented in notion of ideal state *La Zénobie*. Second part of order is devoted to breakdown of ancient musician’s guild. Couperin is using antique method of irony when he implements naïve description in these pieces, as a way of questioning what musician should be.

¹¹ He reminds us that people are like slaves who, being tied by chains looking on the wall of a cave, and turned back to the flame *La Monflambert* do not see a light nor a way out, just wandering shades *Les Ombres Errantes*. A man *La Visionnaire* who could solve that mystery *La Misterieuse* and bring victory *La Muse Victorieuse* is poet, artist, rare and strange personality, prophet, why Couperin uses very harsh and strange E flat major.

state-as an artist Couperin is ready to understand human nature and to enter deep in its shades.

Mode D is real classical Greek mode, developed from Dorian mode. According to Charpentier it is serious and pious in minor and joyous and bellicose in major. Couperin sees in this mode reflection of antique spirit, triumph of prudence and reason.¹²

In X order Couperin is recalling energy of a struggle, by hum of the battle *Bruit de guerre* and promoting courage and fighting spirit.¹³

XIV order is also a review of battle, although it doesn't seem at first sight. Main idea is similar to Watteau's famous painting *L'embarquement en Cithère* as both evoke island of

¹² Couperin's ideas are explicit in II order: prominent are labor with allemande *La Laborieuse* and prudence, sarabande *La Prude*. Presence of dance's muse Terpsichore *La Terpsicore*, points out dance as French baroque symbol of reign of measure. Dian, *La Diane* represents reason as her name's origin is *dianoia* - ability of thinking, this virgin, usually represented as hunter punishes with cruelty those who do not respect her, transforming them into the animals, but rewards her followers with infinite life. Dian's followers, as followers of renaissance Florentine ideas *La Florentine*, are also members of Couperin's friends circle: organist Garnier *La Garnier*, harpsichordist Elisabeth Jacquettes de la Guerre *La Babet*, and painter Antoine Watteau *L'Antonine*. They are as well followers of Hellenistic ideas of happiness *Les Idées Heureuses*, as they know that man should better be devoted to diligence *La Diligente*, and grace *La Mimi*, not to exaggerate in flattering to the others *La Flateuse* nor herself *La Voluptueuse*, because human nature is to rush to fail like butterflies are rushing to flame *Les Papillons*.

¹³ D major he uses to evoke joy of victory *Allegresse des Vainqueurs*, sound of trumpets *Fanfare*, and patter of horse's hoof *La Fringante*. D minor is more for those who are waiting for news from battlefield *La Mézangère* with patience and piety *La Gabriële*, for those who, far from their home and country do fatiguing diplomacy duties *La Nointéle*, (it is known that cont Nointele was a diplomat). He is thinking on courage of women *L'Amazône*, but with irony he comments their inclination to pay attention to unimportant things *Les Bagatelles*.

Cither *La Carillon de Cithère*, homeland of goddess of love Aphrodite, symbol of unattainable desires. Couperin is using birds for metaphorical analysing conflict of sensuality and reason.¹⁴

XIX order, another in mode D in 3rd book, is again devoted to Couperin's generation and society, false moralists and their mendacious faith¹⁵. Couperin has no mercy for them, he is dreaming on revolution of that false society, that will be possible by opposite Jacobins club *Les Culbutes.Jxcxbnxs*.¹⁶

In 4th philosophic book, XXII order set up again question of triumph as a part of social life. Melancholy peculiar to whole book, is consequence of the atmosphere of 'courtly intrigues' that Couperin has suffered his entire life.¹⁷ This order shows that mode D is

¹⁴ The birds are chosen carefully and with irony: there is nightingale as symbol of love *Le Rossignol en amour*, 'hollow headed' linnet *La Linote éfarouchée*, and 'weeping' titmouse *Les Fauvêtes Plaintives*.

Harpsichord duo *La Juillet*, is probably connected to world of literature: in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, lovers listen to morning sounds of birds unsure is it nightingale or lark: if they listen to lark they are going to be separate but will stay alive, if they follow nightingale they'll stay together but will have to die. Watteau and Couperin share same vision on their generation: in Watteau's painting Aphrodite's pilgrims disappear in fog as symbol of uncertainty, in Couperin's music followers of conquering nightingale vanish in emptiness of *Le Petit-Rien*.

¹⁵ They are in the moment triumphant *Les Calotins et Les Calotines ou la Pièce à tretous*, and *Les Calotines*. They are subject to laugh on the theater planks, but Couperin is using them to talk about those who are pretending and acting in real life: some are naïve *L'Ingénue*, some very skillful *L'Artiste*.

¹⁶ Couperin was close to them, as many philosophers and artists of the time, their ideas were spread like plants *La Muse Plantine*. Order has started with irony, but finishes with joy of calm conscience and hope in victory *L'Enjouée*.

¹⁷ At Court a main success *Le Trophée*, was (ironically) to attend mourning wake up *Le point du jour* of The Sun King. To attain this privilege some rascal courtiers were pulling one's leg *Le Croc-en-jambe*, some

ambivalent for Couperin, he points out that reason directed wrongly, could turn to self negation, without ideals reason is leading nowhere and triumph is not more than magician's trick, empty virtuosity.

Mode E flat is mode of inspiration, mode of poetical frenzy that makes poet prophet, visionary.

Mode E is mode of Love as titles *La Reine des Coeurs*, and *Galante* suggest. For Charpentier, this mode is feminine and weeping in minor, but clamorous and quarrelsome in major, not surprising, as it was a key with the biggest number of sharps. Couperin understands this mode more subtle, it is obvious that he loves it more, especially E minor. His titles are rediscovering its "celestial" character that can go in direction of proudness and haughtiness.

In 2nd book the last XII order is symbolically connected to celestial twins *Les Jumées* Apollo and Artemis as symbol of divided inside world.¹⁸ For Couperin, as other Platonists, a way to unity is way of Love.

were passing by skillfully as eel *L'Anguille*. In short, court atmosphere was fraud and delusion *Les Tours de passé-passe*.

¹⁸ As a symbol of division of inside world, a man crucified between powers of reason and hearth, twins were awaking fear, they were a sign of intimacy *L'Intime*, *Mouvement de Courant* (rhythm of courante as superposition of 2 and 3 bits is used to stress this opposition in musical language). Plato in dialogue *Symposion* explains Love as myth of 'searching for one's second half', that is symbolic of eternal lover *La Galante*. Twins are also symbol of ambivalence, coexistence of male-female attributes, why in this order appear dancers from island Crete *La Coribante* who were, disguised in female dresses, followers of prophetess, Cibela (moaning of water (*vau-l'eau*) *La Vauvré*, spinning of fate's threads *La Fileuse* and screw (*boulon*) *La Boulonoise* are evoking Delphic prophesy). Last piece is devoted to symbol of perfection and cruelty virgin Atalant *L'Atalante*, who was killing partners as she has wined in war skills.

In 3rd book Couperin is using mode E to point out his contemporary Forqueray as a supreme artist *La Superbe ou la Forqueray*, but who was known as proud and haughty.

As contrast he is opposing simplicity of milkmaids.¹⁹

In 4th book Couperin finally defines mode E as a mode of Love. Who is a mysterious queen of his hearth *La Reine des Cœur* if not Platonic idea of Love, who was certainly his Muse as his self portrait suggest *La Couperin* ²⁰. Love is essential for art creation but haughty should be surpassed to attain perfection.

F mode Charpentier has determined as furious in major and dark in minor. The rage Couperin sees as deliberation of instincts, and recalling experience of antiquity, he points that periods of temporary deliberation of instincts is the best cure for society.

In 1st book IV order in mode F is discovering a deep connection between antique ceremonies and theatre. ²¹

¹⁹ This order is evoking pastoral scenes with windmills *Les petits Moulins à Vent*. When atmosphere at court in Versailles became dark and tiring Couperin and circle around him, were searching for stream of a fresh air associated by windmills nad simplicity of milkmaids *Les Petites Chrémieres de Bagnolet*, was dearer to them than artificiality of court ladies. What was a symbol of good taste for them is clear ‘a good voice is heard far a way’, that is symbol of the bells *Les Timbres*.

²⁰ Love makes his hearth skipping one, as she is loquacious *La Bondissante*, she has given him harp like instrument, and helped him to pour out heavenly harmonies, but not easily, sometimes she was drilling and mocking him *La Petite Pince-Sans-rire*.

²¹ Bacchanals devoted to god of wine Bacchus in antiquity were leading to arise of theatre that still nowadays is a place of freely declare of instincts. Ceremony is starting with defile of consecrated *La Marche des Gris-vétus*. Then follow its, secret, mystical and furious moments *Les Baccanales*, *Enjouemens Bachiques*, *Tendresses Bachiques*, *Fureurs Bachiques*. Couperin’s time is time of gallant carnival fetes, connected with Italian comedy. Typical French figure in these festivities was *La Pateline*, flatterer that fawns, who maybe

XVIII order is again devoted to instincts and their deliberation with wine. Wine firmly connected to French culture, is a symbol of truth '*in vino veritas*'. So, this order is devoted to truth and lie.²²

XXIII order in 4th book has complex meaning: instincts are important because they are hiding a creative power- talent. We should not neglect them, nor passions and will, because without them reason is sterile.²³ For Couperin deliberation of instincts, passions and impudence when cultivated is manifestation of talent.

carry message that, even when Italian comedy is forbidden (historical event in Couperin's time) Patelin is rooted in Frenchman nature. Morning wake up bell *Le Réveil-Matin* is warning that it is no use to forbid something that belongs to deep and dark world of instincts.

²² Name of a part of Bourbon family *La Verneville* evokes a picture of nice city famous for wine production. But in the root of this name is laquer (*vernir*) as association to *vernissage* (false beautifying of reality). Truth and a lie are subjects of this order, deceit and delusion. *La Verneüil*, *La Verneüillette* and affection *L'Attendrissant* make hellish trio, as they are only 3 pieces completely in 'hellish' f minor. In major there is no more lies and embellishment nor underhand, everything is opened, impudent and agitate *Le Turbulent* as well loud and intruding like sound of blacksmiths making barrels hoop *Le Tic-Toc-Choc, ou Les Maillotins*. Although *Soeur Monique* is present (whose name has root idea admonition), everything ends with grotesque limp (probably of a drunkard) *Le Gaillard-Boiteux, Dans le goût burlesque*.

²³ Talent is often mentioned in antiquity, as impudence *L'Audacieuse* of stealing properties or overcoming abilities of Gods by ordinary people. It often provokes punishment. Piece *Les Tricoteuses* is not just a scene with knitters, although it is descriptive (there are broken threads), but it is allegory on talented woman Arachne and goddess Athene. As they were competing, and Arachne was more successful, revengeful Athene has destroyed her weaving, and transformed her to spider (symbol of unmerciful fate, that ties even the best). Couperin to this old symbol of artists adds another, clown *L'Arlequine*. Clown who is delighting others but who is himself very unhappy is represented by Wateau's comedian Gilles. In Couperin's vision of talent's destiny comforting is appearance of Apolo, celestial protector of creative gifts *Les Gondoles de*

Mode F sharp is mode of pain and ecstasy as pieces *La Convalescente* and *L'Epineuse* evoke Couperin's last years heavy experience of sickness and thorny. But for him pain is a way to the wisdom, personified with Greek goddess *La Sophie* and painful personal experience is provoking authentic artistic impulses recognized in antiquity as mimesis *La Pantomime*.

Mode G for Charpentier brings a sweet joy '*doucement joyeux*' in major and majestic and serious feelings in minor. Opposition of majesty and grace in art is the eldest aesthetical idea and base of Kant's philosophical aesthetics, thus mode G is devoted to arts.

Couperin starts his opus with dedication to King Louis XIV, with allemande *L'Auguste*, as he was his court musician from year 1682 until King's death 1715.²⁴

In VII order portrait of young girl Mlle Mentu *La Ménetou*, who has played at court at the age of 9 years, is chosen as a personification of artistic values, symbol of art as 'joyous child that is amusing itself'.²⁵

Délos, as Delos was his homeland. As well appears Dionysius in piece *Les Satires Chevre-pieds*, god who was once upon a time one with Apollo, before they have been separated to light and dark side.

²⁴ More modest but as well important place in this order is given to the Court of Stuart's in exile, that is obvious with pieces *La Milordine*, *Gigue*, and *Les plaisirs de Saint Germain en Lay*. These pieces are in majestic g minor as well as 'bees' *Les Abeilles*, symbol of wealth and charity (because of honey) and justice (because of sting), emblem of Charlemagne. Magical power of grace is evoked by forest spirits *Les Silvains*, and witch *L'Enchanteresse*, as well as enchanting beauty of young ladies, his pupils, *Les Nonêtes*, *Les Blondes*, *Les Brunes*, bourbon princesses *La Bourbonnoise*, whose tender bloom is symbol of purity *La Fleurie ou la tendre Nanette*, *La Pastorelle*, and of refined feelings *Les Sentimens*.

²⁵ Education of soul, was purpose of Music from antiquity, it has to start early, thus in this order inside cycle is implemented (like mirror in the painting) about nursing child: *Les Petits Âges: La Muse Naissante*;

In 3rd book Couperin is talking about position of art in his surrounding. Artistic talent is “gift of God” and blessing.²⁶

Couperin is opening 4th book with portrait of Princess Marie *La Princesse Marie* who is historical personality, who became Queen on 15th of August 1725. Couperin is using her portrait to represent new taste and artistic style of eighteenth century.²⁷

Mode H is for Charpentier lonely and melancholic, as well for the other baroque composers, as final, mode of death. As Fsharp is his dominant it is mode of “purification through pain”. Couperin loves this mode, for him it is his personal symbol of life, symbol of difficulties man has to overcome, path to own wisdom and faith, mode of perfection.

L'Enfantine; L'Adolescente; Les Délices. It is possible that next pieces are continuing this musical portrait, as further explanation of her character *La Basque, La Chazé, Les Amusemens*.

²⁶ Couperin recognize God's gift in Mme Conti *Les Graces incomparables ou La Conti*. Platonic idea of Love, as a cause of ecstasy ‘artistic madness’ as Marsilio Ficino and Picco della Mirandola have defined it in Renaissance, is represented in piece *L'Himen Amour*, that flame should be kept, that's why artists are like vestals *Les Vestales*, they are also “those who are watching” as antique Greek Terej, why there is present his feminine appearance *L'Aimable Thérèse*. Art is a “strange pair” *Le Drôle de Corps*, of tragedy and comedy, it is leading to atmosphere of dreamland, homeland of goddess of night (and hidden) Lethe, mother of Apollo and Artemis.

²⁷ That style is recognizable as witty and light in theatre *La Bouffonne, Gaillardement* ; with azure sky ceilings decorated with angels in architecture *Les Chérubins ou L'aimable Lazure* and popular songs in artistic music *La Fine Madelon*, and *La douce Janneton*. These two pieces show how in this period majesty and grace are mixed. This style Couperin has accepted and his property in Cruilly *La Crouilly* is symbol of his personal change of a taste. Bbeing impressed by Correlli's sonatas, he has already in his youth printed his own trio sonatas under pseudo name Sicilian *La Sezile*.

In 2nd book mode H is used for VIII order. Who is magnificent foreigner *L'Ausoniène*, who has inspired Couperin, his model of perfection, under whose influence he has built his art? It was Italian painter Raphael Santi *La Raphaële*, whose paintings were already set in Parisian Museum Louvre as confirmation of Renaissance ideals.²⁸

The 3rd book devoted to society is opening with XIII order and French symbol of perfection flower of lily *Les Lis naissans*, symbol of Kingdom.²⁹ This order is speaking about French spirit: dominant part of this order variations *Les Folies francaises ou les Dominos* is recalling carnival festivities. Based on Portuguese dance folia (meaning folly) Couperin's *Folies* are not so passionate and can not provoke trance, but according to French spirit they are rational. Couperin's folies as analogue to Decartes's theory of decomposition of light in rainbow are scientific analysis, 'anatomy' of feelings.

²⁸ Dances gavotte and rondeau are in this order representing light French style but, Italian passionate expressivity and dark chromatics are defining unique sarabande *L'Unique, Sarabande*, and foreign, quasi Maori sound (realized with extreme legato) *La Morinète*. Idea of perfection is adopted from Renaissance where it was presented with stairs in architecture (Leonardo de Vinci has built for Francois's I palace) in music this idea appears in Couperin's magnificent *Passacaille*.

²⁹ This flower, mentioned in Bible as a symbol of salvation and infinite life in French culture becomes flower of glory. Couperin was a musician of three kings, as supreme musician he has earned title of noblemen and lily was for him symbol of national pride. As he was a teacher of music to members of royal family, his orders had educational purpose: bending reeds symbolize youth *Les Rozeaux* and attractiveness *L'Engageante* as strongest influence power. Although *Les Folies franoïçoises ou les Dominos* seem as 'love story', comedy, carnival festivity, masks are introduced to discuss a problem of choice. Key of comedy lies in piece devoted to cuckoos *Les Coucoux Benevoles*, as symbol of resigning from one's own ideals that can lead only to pain in the hearth *L'Âme-en peine*.

Couperin's last XVII order, his artistic testimony, reveals shortly, in only four pieces his comprehension of mode H. It is definitely mode of perfection as allemande 'Exquisite' *L'Exquise* is suggesting. What was perfection, ideal that Couperin as artist and a man of his era was aiming for? Is that chimerical possibility of immortality as he has said '*immortalite chimerique ou presque tous les Hommes aspirant*'? Or it is fantasy provoked by poppies *Les Pavots*? Than whole life is like dream.³⁰

Mode H, for Couperin was mode of perfection, the aim that he had as artist, and that he had pointed to his pupils and followers, does not matter how painful its achievement is.

Mode / Book	Tradition	Sensibility	Social life	Ideas
A mode of mind and imagination	V order: imagination as a veil that is blinding or beautifying life	IX order: freshness, charm and seductiveness as properties of fantasy	XV order: imagination as guide to Utopia world, land of art and idealised nature	XXIV order: mind as ability and potential for metamorphoses
B mode of nature		VI order: mysterious and		

³⁰ Chinese *Les Chinois* poet Cuang Cu has said that he does not know is he dreaming to be a butterfly or butterfly has dreamed of him. Pascal had a doubt if beggar would dream to be a king every night, will that be the same as if king will have a dream of being beggar. Musician in baroque has always in mind Orpheus, his talent and lost. At the end life seems like dream. Discovering one by one life secrets is like whirlpool, oriental 'mandala' pictorial review of universe. Life of man seems a folly, *Saillie* as man are actors in performance on the stage conducted by God, participants in order that they can not comprehend.

Mode / Book	Tradition	Sensibility	Social life	Ideas
		idealized nature as symbols of soul		
C mode of light and knowledge	III order: ancestry and pilgrimage as origins of darkness and light	XI order: aristocratic education as cultivating nobility and forming ideals		XXV order: Plato's cave allegory, question of poet's role in society
D mode of reason and measure	II order: dance as traditional way of moderation, temperance and search for happiness	X order: fighting spirit, courage, and adventurous mind as aim of upbringing	XIV order :conflict of sense and reason; consignment to sensuality leads nonentity XIX order: false moralists and opposing Jacobins whose ideas are spreading	XXII order: reason confronted to society as scene of courtly intrigues; without ideals it leads to empty virtuosity
E mode of love		XII order: duality of inside world and need for Love	XVII order: Love as middle way between opposition of pride	XXI order: Platonic idea of Love as

Mode / Book	Tradition	Sensibility	Social life	Ideas
		to attain wholeness	and simplicity	Couperin's personal Muse
F mode of talent (instincts and boldness)	IV order: ancient bacchanals and modern theatre as a way of deliberation of life energy		XVIII order: opposition of truth and lie as base of talent is expression of truth	XXIII order: symbols of talent and its protectors
F sharp mode of pain and ecstasy				XXVI order: pain as personal way to wisdom, and artistic creation
G mode of art	I order: majestic and enchanting world of artistic heritage	VII order: joyous child as symbol of art	XVI order: world of art as dreamland where power of observation and love are kept	XX order: new art style, marked by lightness, witticism, and sweetness
H mode of perfection		VIII order: Italian art as a symbol of attained perfection	XIII order: lily flower as symbol of personal and national pride	XXVII order: idea of perfection and oriental inspiration

Couperin's 'way to perfection'

Ideological explanation of Couperin's form and symbolic interpretation of his titles provide interpreter of his work with coherent approach indispensable for reconstruction of each piece atmosphere.³¹ Couperin's concept is based on Platonic idea of Harmony.³² It is demonstration of ideas inherited from period of Renaissance.³³ Renaissance scientists and humanists differ in concepts of Harmony: while scientist see Harmony as a rule of existence or potential for transformation, humanists look inside subject, searching for possibility of human being to understand and appreciate Harmony.³⁴ Couperin's concept is also demonstration of adoption of French classical tradition. French baroque is deeply

³¹ To explain baroque as a style usually we start with rhetoric, and very often neglect its second characteristic: existence of concept (Toman, 2010). Rhetoric is conducted with ideas of enchanting and moving (ital. *delectare e movere*); concept (ital. *concetti*), as Herman Bauer has explained is 'transformation of thought in several stages', and 'a way from the object to the meaning as metaphor'.

³² Plato has inherited two basic principles of Harmony from pre Socratic period: Pythagorean (mathematical) exposed in Plato's dialog *Timaeus*) and Heraclitus's (ethical, dialog *Fileb*). In *Timaeus* tetrad (mathematical proportion of 4 elements as reproduction of heavenly harmony) makes natural world consonant with conceptual. Dialog *Fileb* is pointing out ethical values and defines harmony as diapason between reason and sensibility.

³³ In Renaissance thought we can distinguish two ideas of Harmony: Alberti sees congruence between parts and unity both in the nature and mind, so he is opening a way from aesthetical experience to the ideas ('beauty as a way to knowledge'); Leonardo da Vinci, inspired by Ovidie's *Metamorphoses*, is introducing artistic idea of creativity as developing mental progression of ideas.

³⁴ Ideas of Florentines, Renaissance humanists Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, turn a way from Aristoteles's physics to Plato's mathematical metaphysics. Ficino's ideas were a key inspiration for baroque ideas of transforming world by art. In '*Liber de Sole*' and his comments on Plato's *Timaeus*, Ficino is pointing out power of music to influence human spirit.

rooted in classical antiquity, and differs from Italian baroque turned more to expressivity. French style and interpretation own more to rhetoric, and Italian is dealing with affects and effects. Couperin stands on the crossover of the centuries and styles. He imposes to his followers a lesson of searching for secrets (as suggested by *Je- ne- scay- quoi?* title of one movement from his violin sonata *Ritrato del amore*) of individual expression. His enigmatic titles are not objects of description, but reminder of values that can be source of inspiration. His titles are there to mark world of ideas, to provoke poetical lift up, they are sign of his believe in power of music and possibility of attainment perfection by art. Couperin joins French classical inspiration with need for modernity that he comprehends as need for individuation. He has developed a complex system of characters, as his way of improvement of interpretative art. Analogue to universal mind of scientist able to understand complex problems, and resolve new ones, Couperin presumes that universality in experience of artists leads to perfection and discovering individuality. Symbolic interpretation of Couperin's titles does not deny other possible interpretations, of his work, as any great art work it is just one of many possibilities that his work offers. Couperin's order is carefully ranging of values and his titles can be seen (instead of representing personalities and social events) as set of ideas that have dominated French spirit of the period. Unity of these ideas is recognizable as idealistic Platonic world, and single pieces as reflections of idealized universe.

Each of Couperin's order is development of some idea as well his total concept is progression. Range of Couperin's modes discovers his aim as 'a way to perfection'. In it we can recognise Orphic symbol of 10 as well as Hermes Trismegistos's rules of alchemical transformation. It is also possible to compare Couperin's ideas with

Leonardo's conception of creativity: like drawing creation is starting from a point, than ideas accumulate, artist is competing with nature and God; leading idea is presumption of harmony, analogy between parts and whole. Couerin is building his concept of creation and way to perfection on 10 steps, connected to 10 modes:

- A, mode of imagination, as starting point of any creation
- B, mode of nature, as overcoming obstacles that nature is pointing
- C, mode of knowledge, as use of traditional results and values
- D, mode of reason, as moderation and organization
- E flat, mode of inspiration, as use of intuition
- E, mode of love, as aim for attaining unity
- F, mode of talent, as deliberation of instincts and search for truth
- F sharp, mode of ecstasy, as step into new experience
- G, mode of art, as final creation
- H, mode of perfection, as attained ideal

Couperin's concept shows that creation of artwork is model for any creation. As teacher of aristocratic values he uses his music as symbol of creativeness education and attaining creative potential. As teacher of interpretative art he points out that it is creation of individual expression. Perfection of someone's own nature and possibilities is ideal that he emphasize. He leans on ideals of French 'golden age' culture what is clear as symbol of perfection, mode H is also on top of Mersenne's pyramid (Mersenne, 2011, First book, p 26). At the same time he is modern representative of enlightenment. Couperin's idea of perfection is also his personal path: perfection of his own creative, interpretative and pedagogical abilities he crowns with system of modes.

Conclusion

Music has a power of imitating human nature and experience, power of searching for the truth and its purpose is human perfection. Rediscovered Platonic ideas in 18th century, presented by Couperin's opus, are reuniting already separate scientific and artistic way of learn. Combination of French rationality with Italian expressivity, Renaissance ideas of harmony with eighteenth century's search for unity, defines Couperin's spiritual position. As idealist he differs from Rameau's ³⁵positivistic conception of musical harmony.³⁶ Couperin is humanistic oriented, his Platonic concept of universal harmony results from deep analysis of human characters and contemporary society. Couperin is also mystic as he establishes connection of characters with physical nature of musical modes. His idea of perfection revokes ancient mysticism cultivated with Platonic ideas. Couperin is representative of enlightenment as spokesman of aristocratic values. He demonstrates fidelity to seventeenth century French music style and at the same time he is modern. His modernity is present in his faith in harmonizing power of music, idea that will develop during eighteenth century and reach climax in Schiller's idea of '*schone Seele*'.

Understanding Couperin's concept is crucial for interpreter to choose proper atmosphere and expressive devices. Couperin's 'universe' leads to perfection of interpretative art, as

³⁵ Rameau, *Traite de l'harmonie*, 1722, *Demonstration du principe de l'harmonie*, 1750, *Nouvelles reflexions sur le principe sonore*, 1760

³⁶. For Rameau harmony is rising from nature and its laws: '*Tout est dit quand (la nature) a une fois prononce*' (Lettre aux philosophes, *Memoires de Trevoux*, aout 1762, p. 2049) and '*L'harmonie qui cause cet effet n'est point jetee au hazard; elle est fondee en raisons, et autorisee par la nature meme*' (Notice bibliographique par Philippe Lescat, Jean-Philippe Rameau, Fac-simile Jean-Marc Fuzeau, Courlay, France, C 1987).

he asks and provides artist with reach palette of characters. Couperin's idea of French style modernization is analogue to idea of transforming society in direction of individuation as it is idea of transforming interpretative art from rhetoric to individual expression.

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