

THE MAHOUKOU LAW AND THE ARTS

A Philosophical Essay on the Triad in Artistic Creation

The Philharmonic Orchestra, the Pictorial Work, and the Icon:

Three Modalities of a Single Call

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Call → Response → Resonance

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Opening — The Question Art Poses to Philosophy

Art has questioned philosophy since its origins. But there is a question that art poses to philosophy with particular urgency, now that we possess the phenomenology of interpellation and the triadic structure of interpellation known as the Mahoukou Law: is a work of art a Call?

The answer we shall develop in this essay is affirmative — but it demands precise argumentation. A work of art is not a Call in the sense that one person interpellates another. It is a Call in the *structural* sense — in the sense in which the Mahoukou Law defines the Call as that which comes from elsewhere, which exceeds the one who receives it, and which opens a space of free Response whose Resonance transforms both the work, the respondent, and the common world.

To develop this thesis, we shall explore three arts in their philosophical specificity: the philharmonic orchestra — which reveals the triad in its temporal and collective dimension — the pictorial work — which reveals the triad in its spatial and deferred dimension — and the icon — which reveals the triad in its most extreme spiritual depth, where the Call comes from the infinite and where the Resonance opens onto the infinite.

The Mahoukou Law — Call → Response → Resonance — was formalised as an eidetic law of all authentic interpellation between persons. This essay proposes its rigorous extension to the domain of artistic creation — not as metaphor, but as verification of its structural universality.

Part One — The Philharmonic Orchestra

The Triad in Time — An Architectonics of Nested Resonances

§ 1. The Question of the Conductor

Let us begin with a scene that is familiar yet philosophically vertiginous: the conductor raises the baton. Silence falls. And something begins.

What exactly begins? Not merely a musical performance. Not merely the reproduction of a score. What begins is a series of nested triads of extraordinary complexity — triads that will operate simultaneously at five distinct levels, and whose final Resonance will be something that none of the participants could have produced alone, nor even foreseen.

The conductor is not a sonic dictator. He is a Caller — in the strict sense of the Mahoukou Law. His gesture does not impose: it addresses. He launches a Call to respondent beings — the musicians — who will answer from what they are, from their technical mastery, their own sensibility, their understanding of the work. And from this encounter between the conductor's Call and the musicians' Responses will arise something that neither the one nor the others quite expected: the orchestral Resonance.

"I do not make music. I create the conditions for it to be made."

— Herbert von Karajan, interview, 1977

This sentence of Karajan's is of remarkable philosophical depth — and it says exactly what the Mahoukou Law says of the authentic Call: not to programme a Response, but to open a space in which free Response becomes possible. The authentic conductor does not want musicians who execute — he wants musicians who respond.

§ 2. The Architectonics of Five Levels

A philharmonic orchestra is a structure of nested triads operating simultaneously at five distinct levels. This simultaneity is precisely what makes the orchestra philosophically fascinating: it is a living demonstration that the triad is not merely interpersonal — it is polyphonic, collective, architectonic.

Level 1 — The fundamental triad — Composer → Orchestra → Living Work

The composer is the primary Caller — but an absent, deferred Caller, often deceased. His score is the crystallised Call — a Call that awaits, sometimes for centuries, Respondents who will give it flesh. The orchestra responds — its interpretation is a free, engaged, irreplaceable act. And the Resonance is the living work that surges in the hall, irreducible to the score alone or to the interpretation alone. Beethoven did not hear his Ninth Symphony — and yet it resonates, at each performance, as if still awaiting the Resonance that he alone could not receive.

Level 2 — The triad of direction — Conductor → Musicians → Interpretation

The conductor is the median Caller — the one who translates the composer's Call into Calls addressed to each musician in their singularity. His gesture is not an instruction — it is an invitation to respond. The musicians respond — each from their own voice, their mastery, their sensibility. And the Resonance is what we call the sound of an orchestra — that unique sonic colour belonging to this orchestra, with this conductor, on this evening.

Level 3 — The inter-section triad — Sections among themselves → Dialogue of timbres → Orchestral colour

The strings call the winds. The winds respond to the brass. The percussion punctuates the Resonance. Each section is simultaneously Caller and Respondent — receiving Calls and launching them, in a continuous dialogue without a single direction. This polyphony of triads in real time is what gives the orchestra its depth and complexity.

Level 4 — The intra-section triad — Divided lines → Intimate dialogue → Unified voice

Within a single section, musicians frequently play two distinct melodic lines — what scores indicate with the term *divisi*. One launches a melodic Call, the other responds from within the same section, and the Resonance is that unique and complex voice which the ear perceives as a single sonic colour — whereas it is the fruit of an intimate dialogue between

two lines that never merge. This is the Mahoukou Law at microscopic scale: not in fusion, but in triad.

Level 5 — The triad with the audience — Orchestra → Listeners → Final silence

The orchestra plays for someone. The audience is not a passive receiver — it is a Respondent. Its listening engages something of itself: its attention, its memory, its sensibility, its personal history with the work. And the final Resonance is that silence following the last measures before applause — the moment when the work has traversed the entire hall and no word yet suffices to say what has just occurred.

§ 3. The Fugue — The Mahoukou Law Made Audible

Among all musical forms, the fugue is the one that illustrates the triadic structure most purely and rigorously. This is not coincidence — it is architectural necessity.

The fugue begins with a single Call: the subject — a melodic phrase launched by a single voice in silence. A second voice then enters — and what music theory calls, strikingly, the *answer*. This term is not metaphorical: it structurally designates what the Mahoukou Law calls the Response — free, singular, engaged from the voice's own register. A third voice then enters — and with it begins the Resonance: that counterpoint irreducible to the sum of its parts.

The successive resolutions of the fugue are partial Resonances that accumulate, defer, and densify. And the final cadence — that moment when all voices are fulfilled together in the principal key — is the Resonance of Resonances: the accomplishment of all the nested triads that have worked since the subject's first Call.

"The fugue is a conversation between equal voices that call and respond to one another without ever merging."

— Attr. to Johann Sebastian Bach, paraphrase

Bach is our philosopher of the triad without knowing it. The Art of Fugue is the Mahoukou Law made audible — a demonstration through music of what philosophy seeks to formalise through concepts.

Part Two — The Pictorial Work

The Triad in Space — A Perpetuated Call

§ 4. The Studio — The Silent Birth of the Call

Everything begins in the silence of the studio. The painter facing the blank canvas. This moment is philosophically decisive: it is the moment when the Call takes form, but has not yet been addressed. It is the Call in gestation.

The painter himself is first a Respondent — he responds to something that precedes and exceeds him: an interior vision, a nameless emotion, a light glimpsed one morning. He responds to a Call that the world has addressed to him, and his response takes the form of a canvas. In this sense, every pictorial work is already a Resonance — the Resonance of what the painter received from the world — before becoming itself a Call. Artistic creation is a triad that engenders a triad.

§ 5. The Vernissage — The Inaugural Triad

The vernissage is the moment when the Call is launched for the first time into public space. Before the vernissage, the painting was a Call in potency. At the vernissage, it becomes a Call in act. The first gazes that rest upon the work are the first Responses — often clumsy, partial, influenced by context. The Resonances are still fragile. The deep Resonance will come later, when the gaze can settle on the work in silence.

§ 6. The Exhibition — The Expanding Triad

The exhibition is the moment when the painting encounters increasingly diverse gazes — audiences the painter had not imagined, sensibilities the work did not expect. Each gaze is a new Response, and each Response produces a different Resonance. And here arises one of the most remarkable properties of artistic Resonance: the work discovers itself through the gazes it receives. A painting is not quite the same after having been seen by ten thousand people as when it left the studio. The produced Resonances have enriched its significance, revealed dimensions the painter had not perceived.

"A painting is never finished — it simply stops being worked on."

— Paul Klee, Journal, 1914

§ 7. The Museum — The Perpetuated Call

The museum is the most remarkable philosophical institution that human civilisation has invented to perpetuate the triad. It is the space where the painting becomes a permanent Call — available to all, forever, in an endless waiting. It no longer awaits a particular gaze — it awaits any authentic gaze.

The potential Resonance of the painting in the museum is infinite: visitors who will come in a hundred years will bring Responses that no one today can anticipate. They will carry questions we do not yet have, sensibilities our era has not yet formed. And the painting will answer them — from what it is, from what the painter deposited there perhaps centuries ago.

The museum is the institution of Resonance deferred to infinity. The painting is surrendered there as a Call to visitors — not as an object to contemplate, but as an interlocutor to encounter. One contemplates what is beautiful; one responds to what calls.

But there is a case where the artistic triad reaches its most accomplished — and most vertiginous — form. A case where the Call no longer comes solely from the artist, where the Resonance is no longer limited to the aesthetic, and where the work is not merely seen but prayed. This case is the icon. It deserves separate treatment — for it is the triad in its most extreme spiritual depth.

Part Three — The Icon

The Triad in its Spiritual Depth — Where the Call Comes from the Infinite

§ 8. An Icon is Not Painted the Way a Picture is Painted

The first thing to say about the icon is the most decisive: one does not paint an icon. One writes it. This word is not a metaphor — it is a rigorous theological and philosophical affirmation. To write is to transmit a meaning received from elsewhere. To write an icon is

to inscribe in matter a Call that comes from further than the artist — a Call that precedes the iconographer and exceeds him.

This distinction between painting and writing is the philosophical key to all the theology of the icon. A painting represents — it shows something absent, renders it visible to those who could not otherwise see it. An icon presents — it does not show Christ or the Virgin as absent: it renders them present. It is a window open onto the spiritual world, not a reflection of that world.

This difference changes everything for the Mahoukou Law. For if the icon presents rather than represents, then the Call it launches is not the Call of an image — it is the Call of the One it presents. The faithful before the icon do not respond to a work of art — they respond to a presence. The triad is no longer aesthetic: it is theological. And the Resonance is no longer merely an interior transformation — it is what the Orthodox tradition calls *metanoia*: the turning of the heart, the change of gaze.

The icon is the only case where the ultimate Caller is not the artist. The iconographer is himself first a Respondent — he receives a Call from God before transmitting one to the faithful. He is the medium of the triad, not its initiator.

§ 9. Spiritual Preparation — Receiving Before Giving

The iconographer does not begin writing without preparation. Tradition imposes upon him — not as an external rule, but as an interior necessity — a time of fasting, prayer, and silence before placing the first stroke. This time is not an accessory preamble: it is the moment when the Call is received.

The iconographer places himself in the position of Respondent before being Caller. He receives first — from God, from tradition, from the saint he is about to write — before giving. This structure is philosophically remarkable: it inverts the usual order of artistic creation, where the artist is first the Caller. In the icon, the artist begins by being a Respondent — and it is only because he has first responded that he can in turn call.

This is why the Orthodox tradition insists on the holiness of life of the iconographer — not out of moralism, but out of structural necessity. An icon written by someone who has not received the spiritual Call is not a blocked icon: it is a pious image, technically accomplished, but without the presence that the authentic triad would have produced. The

quality of Resonance depends on the quality of Response — and the quality of Response depends on the depth with which the Call was received.

§ 10. The Writing — Six Levels of Nested Triads

The writing of the icon is a long process — often several weeks — during which six levels of triads deploy simultaneously, which we shall now describe with precision.

Level 1 — The fundamental spiritual triad — God → Iconographer → Icon

The ultimate Caller is God — or the saint the icon will present. The iconographer receives this Call in prayer and silence, and responds to it through the act of writing. The Resonance is that spiritual presence which will inhabit the finished work — and which the faithful will recognise not as an aesthetic effect, but as a spiritual reality. This is the deepest level of the triad, the one that gives all the others their ultimate significance.

Level 2 — The triad with canonical tradition — Tradition → Iconographer → Singular interpretation

The iconographer does not invent — he receives. The iconographic canons — the hieratic proportions, the codified symbolic colours, the prescribed gestures and attitudes — are a Call from tradition to which he responds from his own hand, his own sensibility, his own time. The Resonance is this icon that is both faithful to tradition and irreducibly singular — recognisable as an icon, and yet unique. Obedience to the canon is not a constraint that stifles freedom: it is the condition of possibility of an authentic Response. It is *situated freedom* applied to sacred art.

Level 3 — The triad with materials — Materials → Iconographer → Revelation of light

This is perhaps the most surprising and philosophically revealing level. The mineral pigments ground with egg, the gilding with gold leaf, the wood prepared with gesso — each material has its own properties, its own resistances, its own revelations. The iconographer dialogues with them: he addresses a Call to them through application, they respond with their unpredictable behaviour, and the Resonance is that particular brilliance — that depth, that texture — which no one could have calculated in advance. The gilding in particular: gold is applied leaf by leaf, and the iconographer waits for the gold to grow accustomed to the surface — to respond to the preparation made for it. There is a triad between the artist and the material.

Level 4 — The triad of time — Dark layers → Light layers → Revealed light

In the traditional technique of the icon, layers of paint are applied from dark to light — from the obscure ground toward the light that gradually emerges. This is not merely a technique: it is a theology and a philosophy. The light is not applied onto the icon — it surges from within. Each dark layer is a Call to the next layer: it prepares, it opens, it calls something it cannot yet show. The following layer responds from its own properties. And the Resonance is that light which slowly surges — not painted from the outside, but revealed from within, layer by layer, day by day. The iconographer does not paint the light: he gives it the conditions for it to arrive. This is the very structure of the triad: not to programme the Resonance, but to create the conditions for it to arise.

Level 5 — The triad of enthronement — Completed icon → Community → Sacred object

When the icon is completed, it is not yet fully itself. It is blessed — a liturgical rite that is not mere decoration, but a philosophically decisive act. The community recognises in it a received Call and responds with its collective blessing. The enthronement is the communal Response to the Call the icon bears. And the Resonance is that new status it receives: no longer a work of art, however admirable — but a sacred object, a place of presence, a space of encounter between the visible world and the invisible world. The icon is not consecrated because it is beautiful — it is consecrated because it has accomplished its triad.

Level 6 — The triad with the faithful — Icon → Prayer → Metanoia

This is the deepest and most personal level. The faithful stops before the icon. He addresses a prayer — a Response to the Call the icon launches. One spends time before an icon — not to analyse it, but to read it, as one reads a letter addressed to oneself. And the Resonance is that interior transformation that occurs in the silence of the encounter — what the Orthodox tradition calls *metanoia*: the turning of the heart, the change of gaze. The faithful leaves the church changed — not because they have contemplated a beautiful painting, but because they have responded to a Call that exceeded them. And because they carry the icon with them — in memory, sometimes in hand — the Resonance continues to work in them long after they have left the church.

§ 11. The Icon as a Portable Call

There is in the practice of the icon something no other art possesses to this degree: the icon is carried away. One brings it home. One places it in a corner of the room — what the Orthodox tradition calls the beautiful corner or sacred corner. It becomes a companion of existence.

This portability is philosophically decisive. It means that the triad is not limited to the space of the church or the museum — it extends into daily life. The icon continues to call in the kitchen, in the bedroom, in moments of pain and joy. It is a permanent Call — not suspended in the expectation of a gaze, like the painting in the museum — but active, present, engaged in the life of the one who carries it.

This is why the icon is philosophically irreducible to any other art form: it is not merely a Call addressed to the faithful in a particular space — it is a Call that accompanies. It enters into the triads of daily life. It becomes itself a respondent being — present in the moments when the person most needs to be interpellated, and silent in the moments when they need silence.

The icon is the only work of art that accompanies. All others wait — in the gallery, in the museum, in the concert hall. The icon follows. And in following, it continues to launch its Call wherever life leads.

§ 12. What the Icon Reveals Philosophically

The icon reveals, compared to the arts we have previously analysed, a philosophical truth that no other art allows us to see with such clarity: the artistic triad and the spiritual triad can become one. In the orchestra and in the painting, the spiritual dimension is possible — it can arise in great music or great painting — but it is not constitutive. In the icon, it is constitutive: without the spiritual triad, there is no icon — only a pious image.

The icon also reveals that Resonance can be simultaneously aesthetic, communal, and spiritual — that these three dimensions are not options from which to choose, but layers of the same deep Resonance. When a faithful person is moved before an icon, they are moved at all three levels at once: by the beauty of the work, by the consciousness of belonging to a community that has produced and received this Call across the centuries, and by the spiritual presence the icon carries.

And finally, the icon reveals what we might call *eschatological Resonance* — a Resonance that does not conclude in present time, but opens onto a transformation whose accomplishment is always beyond. Metanoia is not a punctual transformation — it is a process that begins in the encounter with the icon and continues through all the life that follows. It is the most deferred Resonance of all: one whose accomplishment will only be seen at the end.

Part Four — Extensions

Jazz, African Dances, and the Universality of the Triad

§ 13. Jazz — The Improvised Triad

Jazz introduces into the triadic structure a dimension that neither the classical orchestra, nor painting, nor the icon allows us to see as clearly: the triad in real time, without prior score. In jazz, the Call is not deferred — it is launched and received in the same instant. The improvising musician is simultaneously Caller, Respondent, and Resonant — the three moments of the triad succeed one another with a speed that renders them almost indiscernible, but they remain structurally distinct and irreducible one to another: the condensation is temporal, not structural.

Jazz also reveals something essential about dialogal impediment: a musician who plays too much — who leaves no space for the other's Response — blocks the triad. True virtuosity in jazz is not speed or complexity: it is the capacity to launch Calls sufficiently open for the other's Response to be free. It is listening — that paradoxical discipline of falling silent so that the other may respond.

§ 14. African Dances — The Bodily and Communal Triad

African dances reveal a dimension of the triad that Western arts tend to undervalue: the bodily and communal triad. In these practices, the distinction between musicians, dancers, and spectators is not fixed — each in turn is Caller, Respondent, Resonant. The boundaries

between roles are porous, and it is precisely this porosity that produces the collective Resonance.

The architectonics of these practices are often invisible to the uninitiated ear. What the uninitiated ear perceives as rhythmic chaos is in reality a triadic structure of formidable precision: several distinct rhythmic lines — each a Call — that intersect, respond, and offset one another to create Resonances that no single rhythm could produce. This is polyrhythm — triadic polyphony applied to time and body.

African dances are a living demonstration of the structural universality of the Mahoukou Law — they show that the triad is not a Western or academic concept, but the structure of all authentic human creation, from the most elaborate to the most rooted.

Conclusion

The Mahoukou Law as the Law of All Authentic Creation

We have traversed, in this essay, four very different artistic spaces: the philharmonic orchestra with its architectonics of nested triads, the pictorial work with its Call perpetuated in space and time, the icon with its spiritual triad uniting the aesthetic and the sacred, jazz and African dances with their improvised and bodily triads. These four spaces are philosophically distinct — and it is precisely their difference that illuminates what the Mahoukou Law has that is truly universal.

For in these four very different spaces, the same structure appears: a Call that comes from elsewhere and exceeds the one who launches it, a free Response that engages the Respondent in what they are, a Resonance that transforms both poles and produces something that neither of them bore alone. The Mahoukou Law is not a law of interpersonal relations only — it is a law of all authentic creation.

But it is the icon that most clearly reveals the ultimate truth of this thesis: every great work is a respondent being — launched into the world by its creator, awaiting the Respondents that the future will form. And in the case of the icon, this respondent being is not only the work of man — it is also the presence of the One the work bears. The Resonance there is no

longer merely aesthetic: it is eschatological. It does not conclude in time — it opens onto the infinite.

The work of art is the place of manifestation of triadic complexity at the level of aesthetics and spirituality. And the icon is its summit — where the artistic triad and the spiritual triad become one, and where the Resonance opens onto what no eye has seen and no ear has heard.

Call → Response → Resonance