CHORON,

FÉTIS,

AND

François-Joseph Fétis was possibly the most influential music theorist of the first half of the nineteenth century and certainly one of the most important musical savants of all times. His work touched nearly every aspect of musical study and practice—theory, history, composition, performance, conducting, pedagogy, and criticism. Yet his influence is all the more remarkable because it was exerted so much through matters of scholarship. He was indeed a composer, but not a particularly important one. And his voluminous critical writings in the REVUE MUSICALE, REVUE ET GAZETTE MUSICALE, and elsewhere were addressed to a smaller audience than the more widely-circulated criticism of, say, Castil-Blaze. He was generally opposed to innovative techniques in music, and his

THE THEORY OF TONALITY

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writings are laced with a pedantic tone and rigid sense of academic propriety, without the literary pretensions in the criticism of Stendahl or Jules Janin and without the musical awareness that we find in the writings of Berlioz, Liszt, or Schumann.

But as a music historian he did much to introduce significant musicological research to French letters, including extensive archival and manuscript study and research in ethnomusicology. In these respects he carried on the type of scholarly methods and writings initiated by predecessors such as François Perne and Guillaume-André Villoteau. His work resulted in monuments of historical and biographical writings that are still useful today.

His treatises on harmony and counterpoint were a staple for French music students until the end of the century and influential on the course of later harmonic theory in the works of Hugo Riemann, Ernst Kurth, Paul Hindemith, and a number of other French theorists. The influence of his idea of an omnitonic order in music on Franz Liszt is a matter of record.

On the other hand, he could have the audacity to print corrections of "errors" from the works of Mozart and Beethoven, as if they were conservatory-student exercises. In retrospect, his conservatism and shortsightedness as a critic did little to help the best of the younger generation of French composers. And his constant self-aggrandizement in his writings, as I shall hope to show, obscures the fact that his contributions to both history and theory were part of a long and well-established tradition.

Fétis, in his own words, was a "harmonist by instinct." Born in 1784 near Mons, Belgium, he was raised in a musical environment and educated at the Paris Conservatory. His studies in harmony and composition there were distinguished, and it was then that he developed a lifelong interest in the history of music theory. His first important writing was a treatise on harmony completed by 1816, but not published, as he tells us, because he feared that the doctrine which it set forth there would have offended the influential Charles Catel, then the most important theorist of harmony in France.

In 1821 he was appointed Professor of Composition at the Paris Conservatory, and also about this time he taught harmony at the École royale et spéciale de chant—a state-supported school for singing and general studies run by his friend of some years, Alexandre Choron. *1 His first two publications appeared about 1824: the MÉTHODE ÉLÉMENTAIRE ET ABRÉGÉE D'HARMONIE ET D'ACCOMPAGNEMENT and the TRAITÉ DU CONTRE-POINT ET DE LA FUGUE. *2 Both present doctrines based on traditional Italian pedagogical methods in thorough bass and counterpoint of the eighteenth century, a type of doctrine very much supported by Luigi Cherubini, who was then director of the Conservatory, and which was first brought into nineteenth-century French letters by Alexandre Choron.

In the early 1830s, Fétis's writings on harmony and the history of harmony underwent a substantial change, for it was at this time that he claimed to have discovered a principle of music that he called "tonalité", which he considered the source of all harmonic rules and which indirectly delineated the major eras

of Western music history. He relates that his theory came to him while walking alone in the Bois de Boulogne in 1831. "Suddenly the truth appeared to my mind; questions were clearly stated, the darkness vanished; false doctrines fell one by one about me." And Fétis sat beneath a tree for hours pondering the importance of his discovery. *3

In the spring of 1832 he gave a series of eight lectures in Paris describing his theories, which were summarized in various issues of the REVUE MUSICALE for that year. He subsequently developed the theory of tonality in his "Préface et résumé philosophique de l'histoire de la musique" (1835), the "Esquisse de l'histoire de l'harmonie" (1840), the TRAITÉ COMPLET DE LA THÉORIE ET DE LA PRATIQUE DE L'HARMONIE (1844), the preface to the third edition of this TRAITÉ (1849), various articles in the REVUE MUSICALE and REVUE ET GAZETTE MUSICALE, and in a number of less important writings. *4

In this paper I should like to give a précis of this theory and some of its implications, with emphasis on the extent to which Fétis's ideas derive from earlier theorists. There is no adequate published critique of his theoretical writings, unfortunate considering their prominence in his time and afterwards. *5 Matthew Shirlaw's section on Fétis in THE THEORY OF HARMONY is rather sketchy, biased, and often erroneous, although Shirlaw does point out some of the contradictions that mark Fétis's work. *6

Fétis went to great pains to convince his readers that his theories were original, and frequently one feels that his writings on the history of music theory were intended primarily to show the shortcomings of his predecessors, rather than to enlighten the subject itself. He saw the best theorists of harmony as those who groped their way toward his own theory—Rameau, Georg Sorge, C.G. Schröter, Johann Philipp Kirnberger, and Charles Catel. It is clear, I think, that he also derived many details, terms, and concepts from Choron.

Alexandre-Étienne Choron (1771-1834) was an important and respected figure in French musical life in the early nineteenth century and a man whose works do not deserve their present obscurity. *7 His career is remarkably similar to that of his friend Fétis. Both were composers of some repute, pedagogues who enriched the repertory of instructional materials and methods, and men with enormous scholarly ambitions. Choron was a brilliant intellect, probably more so than Fétis, but without Fétis's background as a musician. Choron was educated at the

Collège de Juilly, the Oratorians' school near Paris that had produced some of the finest minds in French history. He had command of seven languages and an astounding knowledge of classical and Hebraic literature. He was an equally outstanding student of mathematics and engineering, and he turned to music with an inexhaustible curiosity about the subject in all of its dimensions. According to Fétis, he soon acquired "more knowledge relative to the theory and practice of music than any French musician had ever possessed to that time."

His goal as a theorist was to enrich French letters with monumental, eclectic treatises, which would collect and reconcile the best writings in other languages and from other historical eras, and to create new doctrines where necessary. To this end he published the earliest French translations of works by Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, Nicolo Sala, Carlo Gervasoni, Heinrich Koch, and others; he reedited earlier French treatises; and he wrote important original documents on harmony and related matters. These were compiled into massive, encyclopedic works intended to cover the entire theoretical gamut of music. The most notable of these was the PRINCIPES DE COMPOSITION DES ÉCOLES D'ITALIE (1808), which included an original treatise on harmony, a new edition of Marpurg's TRAITÉ DE LA FUGUE ET DU CONTREPOINT (1756), examples of fugues in Italian style from Nicolo Sala's REGOLE DEL CONTRAPPUNTO PRATICO (1794), and examples of early vocal polyphony from Giambattista Martini's ESEMPLARE O SIA SAGGIO FONDAMENTALE PRATICO DI CONTRAPPUNTO (1774-75).

Choron's career began primarily as a theorist and composer; later, he was an administrator of important musical institutions in Paris, and, finally, a teacher who would devote all of his time and money to his school and toward his goal of improving the lives of his fellowmen through music. He was remembered by Fétis, Rossini, Berlioz, Liszt, and his many students (including Adrien de La Fage, Paul Scudo, and Gilbert Duprez) as a man of total dedication to music.

Beginning in 1817, he ran a music school in the Latin Quarter of Paris, which had various names and official purposes until its demise in 1834. With the chorus from his school, Choron presented the first important series of public concerts in France which regularly scheduled early music. These concerts, together with his editions of early music, mark the beginning of substantial historical awareness of music in France, the beginning of a general knowledge there of the music of

Handel and Palestrina, and they lead directly to the series of historical concerts directed by Fétis beginning in 1832.*8 Choron demonstrated to Fétis and to others that early music could be performed with popular acclaim and financial success, and that it was not a gothic curiosity necessarily inferior to the more "progressive" art of modern times.

Choron and Fétis were among the earliest voices in France calling for a restoration of authentic versions of Gregorian chant in French churches, they both sought to publish editions of early music, and they both were thoroughly knowledgeable of the available documents of earlier music theory. Choron (in collaboration with François Fayolle) wrote the first biographical dictionary of musicians in the French language, which was preceded by a substantial general history of music (the "Sommaire de l'histoire de la musique" [1810]).*9 This form and a good deal of the content were models for Fétis when he compiled his BIOGRAPHIE UNIVERSELLE DES MUSICIENS. There are also certain similarities between the historical period schemes of the two, as well as similarities of historical concepts involving harmonic practice of early music, which I should like to investigate further.

Choron's principal theoretic writings are the previously mentioned PRINCIPES DE COMPOSITION, the PRINCIPES D'ACCOMPAGNEMENT DES ÉCOLES D'ITALIE (1804), the MANUEL COMPLET DE MUSIQUE VOCALE ET INSTRUMENTALE (completed by Adrien de La Fage, 1836-39), and his annotated theory translations. The remarks that I shall make here relate primarily to the PRINCIPES DE COMPOSITION and to the "Sommaire de l'histoire de la musique."

In dealing with the writings of Fétis, it is important to keep in mind that he was never one to underestimate his own contributions to the history of musical scholarship, even to the point of stretching the truth. His habit of making up dates or facts to fill out articles in the BIOGRAPHIE UNIVERSELLE DES MUSICIENS, when no such facts were known, has created substantial confusion in musicological research even to this day. His critiques of the history of harmony are documents of unwarranted egotism, even though they still serve as useful surveys of the subject. He saw himself as the discoverer of the ultimate and absolute truths behind the principles of harmony, as the man, indeed, who said the last word on the subject. He gave little support to earlier theorists and saw his ideas, in essence, as entirely original.

There is in fact very little in the history of music that is entirely original. Fétis was a perceptive theorist, but one who was very much a part of the tradition established by Rameau and continued by Sorge, Kirnberger, Türk, and Catel. In matters of detail he borrowed a great deal from Choron, with never a word about his source. In fact, the really original aspects of his theory are generally those that are of the least significance and those that can be most easily refuted. The best parts are the refinements that he makes in the ideas of Kirnberger and Catel.

In spite of his claim that he had developed most aspects of his theory by 1816, there is little that is original in his published writings prior to the 1830s. The TRAITÉ DU CONTRE-POINT presents a traditional doctrine of tonal counterpoint, which is understandable since the work was commissioned by Cherubini to offer an alternative to the "heretical" doctrine of Anton Reicha's TRAITÉ DE HAUTE COMPOSITION MUSICALE (1824-26).

Prior to 1824 there were few treatises on counterpoint available to students in the French language. Fétis complained that this lack was partly due to the emphasis in French pedagogy on the study of harmony as a basis for composition rather than the more desirable and traditional counterpoint. The Choron version of Marpurg's TRAITÉ DE LA FUGUE was probably the best known and most readily available study of counterpoint and fugue in France at that time.

One innovation that Fétis claims in his TRAITÉ is a more logical order of subjects, where invertible counterpoint would be discussed before fugue. The reverse order was customary in German eighteenth-century treatises.

> One can appreciate the faulty logic and order in ideas which led Berardi, Tevo, Fux, Marpurg, and Albrechtsberger to deal with double counterpoint only after fugue, even though the latter cannot exist without the former. I have restored the reasonable order of these studies in my TRAITÉ DU CONTRE-POINT ET DE LA FUGUE; several works published since then on the same subject have followed this order. *10

Choron—not Fétis—was the one who restored this more logical order. It was an idea upon which he insisted many times and which he observed when he reedited the Marpurg TRAITÉ for inclusion in his PRINCIPES DE COMPOSITION. Choron later

used this new order in his editions of counterpoint treatises by Albrechtsberger, Francesco Azopardi, and a later edition of Marpurg's TRAITÉ.

Fétis's other important early work, the MÉTHODE ÉLÉMENTAIRE ET ABRÉGÉE D'HARMONIE ET D'ACCOMPAGNEMENT, was essentially an accompaniment treatise based on eighteenth-century Italian thorough-bass methods, and it is similar in doctrine to Choron's PRINCIPES D'ACCOMPAGNEMENT DES ÉCOLES D'ITALIE (1804, in collaboration with Vincenzo Fiocchi). This was a work which Fétis admired, and he reprints many of the exercises and examples of figured-bass realizations from it in his MÉTHODE. *11

Fétis uses the term tonality in these early treatises, but there is nothing especially unusual about the meaning that he attaches to it. The word "tonalité" was not, as has often been written, invented by Fétis. It is found in French literature at least as early as 1810, and appears in French lexicons, such as that of Castil-Blaze (DICTIONNAIRE DE MUSIQUE MODERNE, 1821) and in other languages as cognates such as "tonalität," "tonalita," and "tonality" somewhat later in the century. The term had a clear and handy meaning when first used, referring to the scale-type basis of music of some era, that is, whether the music was based on the church modes or major and minor keys. Renaissance counterpoint, for example, was written in "tonalité ancienne," or, as we would say, in the modes; later music was written in "tonalité moderne," or major and minor keys. The term is usually encountered with these qualifiers "ancienne" and "moderne."

Choron used the word "tonalité" in this way in his "Sommaire de l'histoire de la musique" of 1810:

> I shall limit myself to say that it was in the course of the sixteenth century that this modern tonality made itself more strongly felt, that it exerted its influence on composition, and that it is in the Neapolitan School—particularly that of Durante—that it was established in all its relationships, at least in those concerning practice. *12

Fétis used the term exclusively in this way prior to the 1830s, and later with clear reference to the established idea that tonalities were types of scales. Non-Western music that was based on scales other than the modes or major and minor keys could logically be said to involve other "types de tonalités."

His later, more specialized meaning of the term was similar. If the main principle of harmony and melody originated, as he thought, in the type of scale involved—in its tonality—it was not illogical to name this principle itself tonality. There was more to tonality, Fétis was saying, than just notes of a scale; there were "mysterious" relationships between the scale degrees which served to generate the scale in the first place, and then act through the scale as the ultimate source of chord structure, classification, and succession.

In his early writings Fétis also mentioned a number of ideas that he would later incorporate into the theory of tonality. There is his system of classifying intervals (and chords) as consonant and dissonant; the idea that certain scale degrees, intervals, and chords are imbued with the sensation of repose while others lack repose; and his definition of certain chords as fundamental, from which all other chords are derived by processes of modification. All of these points may be related to earlier theory and, in matters of detail and terminology, to the ideas of Choron.

Fétis's definition of consonance is the standard one that intervals which are pleasing to the ear are consonant and those that are displeasing are dissonant. But he also says that intervals which are used as consonances, that is, those which may be introduced in some chords without preparation, are also consonances regardless of their euphonic quality. Thus, he claims that only intervals of a second or their inversions (sevenths) or compounds (ninths) are, by these criteria, dissonant. The augmented fourth and diminished fifth are consonant: "This obviously results from the principle that I have laid down, that there is dissonance only in the clash of two neighboring pitches."*13

Classifying only seconds, sevenths, and ninths as dissonant was by no means a principle first postulated by Fétis. Several earlier theorists had seen augmented fourths and diminished fifths as "weak," "pseudo," or otherwise special types of consonances. Charles Catel, for example, in his TRAITÉ D'HARMONIE (1801/02), considered these intervals to be consonant since they could be used without preparation in certain chords such as a dominant seventh.*14 Choron, likewise, stated that only "conjunct" intervals (seconds, sevenths, and ninths) are properly to be considered dissonant and that to consider a tritone dissonant is to confuse that interval's "harmonic nature" with its essentially euphonious quality.*15

Choron elaborated this distinction in several published and unpublished works. Consonance and dissonance is a matter of euphony, which is a quality of all intervals. If the interval has a pleasing quality, it is consonant; if not, it is dissonant. Yet all intervals have another, independent "harmonic" or "dynamic" quality, which is the relative stability of the interval or its tendency to progress to another interval.

Speculation about the dynamic nature of intervals in the study of harmony began in Rameau's TRAITÉ DE L'HARMONIE, with his stipulations for resolution of the "major dissonance" (the augmented fourth) and the "minor dissonance" (minor seventh) which occur in a dominant seventh chord. The idea was elaborated in Kirnberger's GRUNDSAETZE DES GENERALBASSES (Vienna, n.d.), where the fourth and seventh scale degrees are discussed as leading tones, especially when heard simultaneously in a dominant seventh, thereby giving the interval and chord an innate tendency for movement. *16

Fétis expands upon these notions in the MÉTHODE ÉLÉMENTAIRE and later works. Not only do intervals and chords have innate dynamic or stable qualities, he says, but scale degrees do as well. The perfect intervals of a fifth and octave have complete repose, the others some degree of non-repose. Yet the major and minor triads still somehow have repose, though they are made up of thirds. The reposeful intervals and chords pertain to reposeful scale degrees (1, 4, 5, and sometimes 6) in harmonizing a bass.

Fétis's idea of reposeful or non-reposeful scale degrees in the MÉTHODE ÉLÉMENTAIRE was advanced because he needed some way of explaining the "règle d'octave," or standard ascending and descending scale harmonizations, which had been a feature of nearly every harmony and thorough-bass manual to that time. The concept of reposeful scale degrees for Fétis at this time, in other words, was his means of justifying why a root-position triad should harmonize some scale degrees, while inverted triads or seventh chords should be appropriate elsewhere. He would have done well to have left the idea at that, but later makes it an important "law" of tonality, even though the idea is often used in a contradictory way, without any real usefulness or factual basis to begin with.

The intervals of an augmented fourth and diminished fifth are of particular importance to Fétis, because their "mysterious" dynamic quality is the basic relationship determining our modern tonality.

> It is remarkable that these intervals characterize modern tonality by the energetic tendencies of their two constituent notes, the leading tone summoning after it the tonic and the fourth degree followed in general by the third. Now this phenomenon, eminently tonal, cannot involve a state of dissonance. In fact, the augmented fourth and diminished fifth are used as consonances in several harmonic progressions. The augmented fourth and diminished fifth are hence consonances, but consonances of a special kind that I call by the name "appellative consonances."*17

This statement from the TRAITÉ . . . DE L'HARMONIE, even to the term "appellative," is taken directly from Choron and Catel. Like Catel, Mattheson, and Sorge, Fétis sees the tritone as consonant since it is often used as a consonance. He was too good a musician to see the tritone as consonant because it was pleasant sounding, as did Choron. But the idea that this interval has a "special" or "dynamic" quality, in the way Fétis describes it, is definitely taken from Choron. The notes of the tritone, wrote Choron, "seem in effect to summon [appeler] the notes toward which they tend to resolve. This is why they are called 'appellative' notes."*18 Hence the real source and meaning of the term appellative, which he also applied to intervals and to chords containing these intèrvals. Choron, furthermore, stated that the progression of any appellative chord (any dissonant chord—augmented sixth, dominant seventh, and so forth) is dictated by the notes that are "summoned" by the appellative intervals—precisely what Fétis later meant when he said that the "laws of tonality" dictate harmonic progression.*19

In the MÉTHODE ÉLÉMENTAIRE Fétis also advances the theory that all the chords in harmony derive from "perfect chords" (major and minor triads) and the dominant seventh by some manner of modification, usually a linear, melodic event. This is one of the clearest and most reasonable parts of his entire work, which he elaborates later in the TRAITÉ . . . DE L'HARMONIE. It is especially reasonable when we read it in light of systems of chord generation and classification in earlier theory—systems which are all too frequently distinguished by their confusion and remoteness from musical practice.

The idea of deriving many chords from a few fundamental ones was introduced into the theory of harmony by Rameau and continued in some form by most of the leading theorists later in the eighteenth century. (Even Fétis does not claim to have invented it.) Rameau's fundamental chords were the same as

those of Fétis: the "perfect" (major and minor) triads and the dissonant seventh chords. Rameau derived other chords from these through procedures such as adding thirds, "sub-posing" notes below fundamental chords, or "borrowing" the form of the dominant seventh. Fétis, on the other hand, emphasizes modifications which are melodic in origin: prolongation, chromatic alteration, passing motion, pedals, and appoggiaturas. His ideas in this way are a refinement of those of Kirnberger and Catel.

Kirnberger, like Fétis, did not attempt to derive fundamental chords from acoustical or mathematical reasoning; rather, he accepted them by reason of their very nature. All other chords arise through the melodic action of retarding one or more of the proper or "essential" notes of a fundamental chord in a harmonic succession.*20 Catel derived eight fundamental chords by string divisions up to the twenty-third partial; these eight form what he calls "natural" harmony. All other chords are said to be "artificial," since they arise by prolongation, passing motion, and chromatic alterations relative to natural chords. Fétis makes frequent use of the terms "natural" and "artificial" in the way that Catel intended, and he also used the term natural (as did Catel) to mean that such a chord needs no preparation.

Fétis derives ninth chords and fully- and half-diminished seventh chords by what he calls "substitution," which is a process almost identical to Rameau's "accords par emprunt." In this process, one note of the dominant seventh is exchanged or another note is added, the resulting chord having a function comparable to the parent dominant.

In dealing with chord generation, Choron's PRINCIPES DE COMPOSITION is rather muddled. He considers hypothetical "root-position" forms of augmented sixth chords as fundamental, along with diminished and ninth chords. He also states that augmented sixth chords may function as substitutes for a dominant seventh, again showing that he lacked the musical understanding of theorists like Fétis or Kirnberger.

In his writings after 1832, Fétis develops many of the same points that he advanced in his earlier treatises, but now explains them as consequences of the special theory of tonality. As Matthew Shirlaw has pointed out, there is no difficulty in finding ambiguities and contradictions in this theory or in his writings on the origins of scales and their influence upon the formation of chords and principles of harmonic succession.

Here I shall try to summarize the basis of the theory of tonality as it is explained in his writings after 1832. The preface to the third edition of the TRAITÉ . . . DE L'HARMONIE is probably his most complete statement on this matter, though there is much that is vague and to some extent in contradiction to earlier writings.

Tonalities are essentially scales, in line with the accepted meaning of the term. Fétis's special meaning of tonality comes from his idea that the structure of these scales implies definite rules of harmony and linear movement. Shirlaw is not correct, however, in saying that Fétis considers the scales, or tonalities per se, to be the ultimate origin of harmony and other laws of music. What Fétis does say is that scales are the manifestation in a particular music of certain more fundamental relationships (rapports), which create the scales and give them their particular structure. A tonality, then, is a scale, but also a collection of more basic relationships between pitches. The relationships might be harmonic in nature, as in our modern tonality, or some other (presumably melodic) type.

The origin of these relationships is to Fétis unfathomable. They do not result from acoustical considerations or the physiology of the human ear, but are part of human nature and as such are "secret," "mysterious," "metaphysical," or "philosophical" postulates. Different cultures seize upon different relationships, and hence different tonalities, because of the different emotions, sentiments, and ideas indigenous to that culture. Somehow Fétis sees this process of selection as an expression of man's free artistic prerogative—a process of intellect and emotion responding "to the necessities of certain forms of art."*21

The relationships, tonalities, and resulting works of music all correspond to the intellect and emotion of the particular race or culture. Music based on the church modes, for example, is necessarily solemn and unemotional because of the nature of the modes, the underlying relationships of the scale degrees, and, presumably, the solemn, unemotional sentiments of the people who composed them. Modern major and minor tonalities superseded the modes because composers such as Monteverdi needed a more passionate and dramatic form of expression.

Shirlaw credits Fétis with the statement that scales created harmony. Fétis, in fact, says just the opposite. The fundamental relationship which generated modern tonality, he says, is the harmonic nature of the tritone. This and other appellative

intervals dictated the intervallic structure of the major scale in the sense that the interval from degree seven to the tonic would be a semitone (the "natural" resolution of the upper term of an augmented fourth), the interval from degree four to seven would be an augmented fourth, and so on, until our modern tonality (the major scale) was established in an invariant intervallic order regardless of the pitch level of the tonic. This is what Fétis means when he says that modern tonality possesses an inherent harmonic principle, since it was the harmonic nature of the augmented fourth and its proper resolution which shaped the scale in the first place.

But nowhere does he take the formation of the minor scale into consideration, only mentioning that the inflection of the minor scale into its "melodic" form is a result of the nature of the tritone. He likewise ignores acceptable resolutions of the tritone other than movement to a minor sixth. The theory has many other such contradictions, some of which Shirlaw points out.

Fétis goes on to state that the phenomenon of modern tonality somehow explains the principle that he stated in the MÉTHODE ÉLÉMENTAIRE and TRAITÉ DU CONTRE-POINT, that scale degrees 1, 4, 5, and 6 are appropriate to the reposeful major and minor triads and are thus the proper goals for cadences and modulations. Modern tonality also indicates proper chord progressions by dictating the resolutions of appellative chords. It creates a passionate, expressive medium appropriate to the new operatic genre of the seventeenth century, and it allows for the possibility of modulation. But nowhere is he at all convincing that any of these matters relate to his description of tonality, neither that there is any factual principle to be found here at all, nor that the implications which he draws from it in any way enlighten our knowledge of music history or the principles of harmony.

Probably the best known part of his theory, one that indirectly involves the idea of tonality, is his four-fold division of Western music history into unitonic, transitonic, pluritonic, and omnitonic eras or "orders." His explanation of the last two of these, relating to music of his own time and to the future, is remarkable. It is one of the most perceptive conceptualizations of the century. The first two orders, however, are based on an essentially incorrect understanding of early music, and one that was to an extent borrowed from the writings of Choron and earlier historians.

Like Fétis, Choron mentions the relationship of tonalities with harmony, and also the idea that composers of the sixteenth century had exhausted the harmonic resources of their tonality. "The consciousness of modern tonality," he writes, "did not influence only melody, but also harmony and counterpoint. If tonality had undergone no change, the science [of composition] would have reached its limit three centuries ago."*22 He continues to say that early harmonic practice consisted of a fairly random placement of root-position and first-inversion triads, figured from the lowest voice upward, where the only consideration guiding the composer in his choice of chords was the necessity of avoiding parallel fifths and octaves and avoiding false relations. It was this unstructured relationship between scale degrees and harmonies that was improved by modern tonality—precisely the point elaborated later by Fétis when he considered as a "law" of tonality the admissibility of reposeful triads on scale degrees 1, 4, 5, and 6, and the necessity of appellative chords or inverted triads elsewhere. Choron writes:

> The old contrapuntists' only concept was to give the fifth and third to all notes of the scale, except the one which takes a diminished fifth, which was given the sixth; and they considered the harmony valid as long as it was free from parallel fifths and octaves. But the consciousness of the new modes made them realize that this harmony was false, that it produced an infinity of bad relations. They extended the sixth to the third and often to other scale degrees. And it is on this principle that Palestrina and his entire school wrote.*23

Dissonance was strictly "artificial" (in Catel's sense of the term), in that it arose from prolongation and suspension from an earlier consonant triad.

Choron's theory is historically and conceptually incorrect. Renaissance musicians did not compose by harmonizing a bass line, and the "consciousness of modern tonality" had nothing to do with harmonic practice. Yet in spite of how clearly Choron's ideas on early music are contradicted by available counterpoint treatises, Fétis makes these notions the essence of his unitonic order of music history.

Unitonic music was music written on the modes; it cannot modulate, in our sense of the term, so it is "uni-tonic." He paraphrases Choron on the harmonic practice of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries:

> Chords composed of a third and fifth or of a third and sixth, with some rare prolongations which produce dissonances of the seventh or second by retard of sixths and thirds, made up the entire science of harmony. . . . All the compositions of Giovanni Animuccia, Porta, Soriano, Palestrina prove what I say. *24

He makes the equally absurd statements that Renaissance polyphony contains no leading-tone movement, no harmonic cadences, and that it was, hence, necessarily solemn and dispassionate.

The transitonic order in music was ushered in by the transition from old to new tonality—from the modes to major and minor keys. Music could now modulate and establish various tonics, hence the name of the era. The new tonality did not evolve over a long period of time, but was established in essence by Monteverdi, who discovered the "phenomenon" of natural dissonance. When the expressive qualities of unprepared seconds, sevenths, and tritones were unleashed in music, Fétis speculates, these harmonic relationships and their obligatory resolutions quickly established a new scale—our major scale—which maintained an invariant interval structure at all pitch levels.

Monteverdi's "discovery" was that a root-position triad could be embellished by an unprepared seventh (and ninth), as long as the resolution of the chord was what nature prescribed: the seventh descending by step, the third ascending by step, and, optionally, the root descending by fifth. Thus, Monteverdi discovered the "natural harmony of the dominant," the acceptance of which established modern tonality.

It is Fétis's idea that no composer prior to Monteverdi resolved a dissonant seventh at the same time that there was movement in other parts. *25 In other words, all dissonant sevenths were resolved to what he would call a $\frac{6}{3}$ chord as shown in Example 1. The dissonant seventh here is what Kirnberger would have called "zufällig" ("accidental") or what Catel would have called "artificial."

Such a resolution is supposedly different from that of the "natural harmony of the dominant" as used by Monteverdi, where the third had to resolve upward at the same time that the dissonant seventh resolved downward (Example 2). The dissonant combination in Example 1 created no "feeling for a cadence" since it resolved to a sixth chord, which was inappropriate to the dominant scale degree. The second example somehow does,

since the tritone B-F is compelled to resolve to C-E. This "acte de cadence" establishes a key, even though the bass does not move.

These remarks about Monteverdi and his "innovations" show Fétis at his worst. The examples prove nothing, the consequences that he draws are absurd, and the historical facts and concepts are erroneous. He insists upon conceptualizing contrapuntal music as if it were a thorough-bass exercise, seeing all vertical simultaneities as chords built from a bass note. His statement on the necessary resolutions of pre-Monteverdian dissonance ignores the teaching of sixteenth-century theorists such as Vincenzo Galilei and Giovanni Artusi, who allowed movement of the tenor at the same time as resolution of a dissonance in the counterpoint, and who admitted unprepared tritones and sevenths providing that proper resolution followed. Fétis also ignores musical sources utilizing innovative treatment of dissonance that go back to the time of Cipriano de Rore; in other words, he ignores all theoretical and practical documents of the "second practice," of which Monteverdi was only a part.

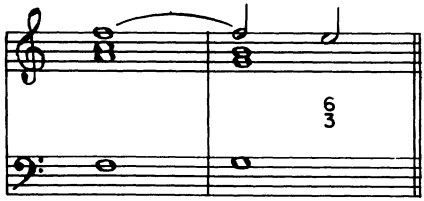
The illustration that he selects from Monteverdi's madrigals (Example 2) is poor, considering what he is trying to demonstrate. He could very easily have found an example of a "dominant seventh" where the seventh is not prepared as a suspension from an earlier chord and where it resolves over a change of bass. The example that he gives (from a madrigal, by the way, that was a favorite of Choron's and one that he performed with his chorus and reprinted in the PRINCIPES DE COMPOSITION) shows no essential difference in the treatment of dissonance from Example 1. And even if Monteverdi had originated the use of the unprepared dissonance, this was not the decisive step in the transition from modes to major and minor keys, which was a gradual process accomplished over the course of several centuries.

In spite of all of this, Fétis is extraordinarily proud of his insight into the work of Monteverdi:

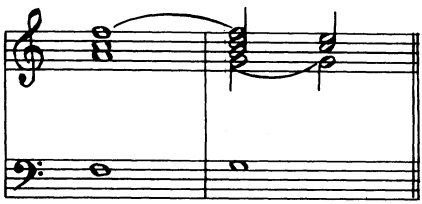
> Who would believe that there is not a single word on what we have seen concerning this important epoch of the change of tonality and all its consequences in general and specialized histories of music? These voluminous compilations abound in trifling details; but in fact there is not to be found in any of these compilations enough practical knowledge, enough attentiveness, nor enough philosophy to carry light

EXAMPLE

1



2



> into this obscurity. All that is seen in Burney and Martini (copied by Forkel and routine people) is that Monteverdi added new chords to those in use before him. As for the results of these new harmonies, no one suspected them. *26

As usual when Fétis claims his complete originality in something, the source of his idea is not far away. Several eighteenth-century historians (especially Charles Burney) had mentioned the importance of Monteverdi's use of dissonance, usually describing contrapuntal harmony, as does Fétis, in figured-bass terms. It was Choron's idea, though, that Monteverdi took the decisive step in establishing a new tonality by bringing the "sentiment of modern tonality" to bear upon harmony:

> The most important step [in this transition] had not yet been made [during the era of Palestrina]. A master of the Lombardian school (Cl. Monteverdi), who flourished around 1590, created the harmony of the dominant; he was the first who dared to use the dominant seventh and even ninth overtly and without preparation; the first who dared to use as consonant the diminished fifth, considered until then as dissonant. And tonal harmony was known. *27

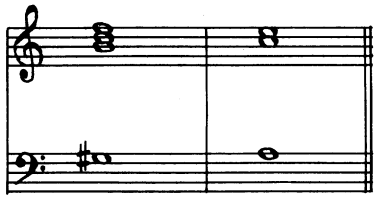
For Fétis the history of music from the time of the establishment of major and minor keys is one of ever increasing expression derived from more direct modulations to remote key areas. The pluritonic order did not involve a change in tonality, only the freer use of modulation by enharmonic spellings of a single note in a chord. Modulation in transitonic music was always accomplished by establishing a dominant seventh chord in a new key, and the customary goals of modulation were the relative major or minor key, the subdominant, or the dominant. In the transitonic order, one key was related to one other key by use of the dominant seventh. But when composers such as Mozart began to modulate to more distant keys by enharmonic spelling of a single note, usually in a diminished seventh chord in minor, the pluritonic order was created.

An illustration that he provides is found in Example 3. *28 Example 3a shows the proper use of the diminished seventh chord in the transitonic order in A minor. The diminished chord arises by "substituting" the sixth scale degree F for the root of a dominant seventh. Any such chord by substitution maintains the dominant function of the parent chord, so the resolution is a cadence to an A minor triad. But in the pluritonic order (Example 3b) the composer might spell the F as E♯, allowing it to resolve into F♯ minor. This places the

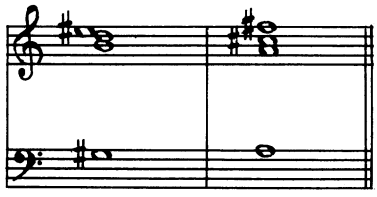
EXAMPLE

3

a



b



previously "unrelated" keys of A minor and F♯ minor into direct contact.

The omnitonic order arises when several notes of a chord (again, ordinarily, a diminished seventh in minor) are spelled enharmonically, allowing that chord to function as a pivot into potentially any other key. In the transitonic order any dominant seventh establishes a single tonic. But in the pluritonic and omnitonic orders, when the enharmonic pivot chord is reached, the goal of modulation is still uncertain and remains so until the resolution of that chord occurs.

Fétis sees the omnitonic order as the ultimate stage in deriving more and more expression from major/minor tonality, and an era which composers such as Beethoven, Rossini, Meyerbeer, and Cherubini had already begun to open. He sees the era as a degradation of music, allowing too great a resource for unbridled emotion and passion, and one that could itself be superseded only by a new tonality.

His vision of an omnitonic order in music was a remarkable innovation to historic and theoretic concepts of the nineteenth century. Many of his contemporary critics viewed the course of music of their own time vaguely as a process of increasing complexity; others, such as Choron and Castil-Blaze, saw contemporary music as some sort of interaction of the various national "schools." It was to Fétis's credit, then, that he rightly saw the history of nineteenth-century music as essentially a matter of changing harmonic styles and techniques. His theory of enharmonic modulations to remote key areas, even though he did not approve of such techniques, was very much in touch with the musical practice of his day. Most of his contemporary theorists (such as Choron) still insisted that modulation to a remote key be done through a number of modulations around the circle of fifths, though a few earlier theorists mention in passing the process of enharmonic alterations in a diminished chord.

The main failing of the theory, perhaps, is that it does not distinguish temporary, localized tonicization of a scale degree from large-scale modulation. Any time a dominant seventh or diminished seventh chord is heard, according to this theory, a new key is established, even if it is only a secondary dominant. Fétis does not see any sort of harmonic layering, where local harmonic events might still be controlled by a larger-scale progression.

In fact he never discusses longer harmonic progressions at all, but this is typical of theory of his time. Early nineteenth-century French theorists who did not utilize the concept of fundamental bass (e.g., Catel, Choron, and Fétis) almost never discussed progressions of more than two chords; the only exception being their formulas for the so-called "règle d'octave" or "marche de basse," which were stock harmonizations of scales or sequential bass patterns.

In summary, Fétis's theory of tonality is certainly not the advance in the study of harmony which he thought that it was. But tonality was still essential to his manner of thought; it was an aspect of theory which he as a rationalist considered absolutely necessary as a means of explanation of the rules which he advanced.

Tonality for Fétis was what multiple resonance was for Rameau or what numerical cosmology was for the Pythagorean theorists —a source of authority. In this respect, however, he was out of touch with his times. The trend in theory of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was away from rationalism and toward an empirical approach to theoretical matters, where musicians were willing to accept and describe without the need to explain or to prove. This insistence on proof is the first failing of his entire work, because it led him to create something that was not there. Another shortcoming of Fétis, Choron, and other scholars of their time was their readiness to apply theoretic constructs appropriate to their own era to music of all eras—figured-bass concepts to contrapuntal music, tonal thinking to modal music, and so forth.

One positive result of the theory of tonality, which is still with us today, was a first step toward the redefinition of the term itself, from a notion of scales to one of harmonic order. Fétis's theory of tonality, furthermore, is important today as an aspect of the history of music theory, important because many people in the nineteenth century thought that it was important.

The TRAITÉ . . . DE L'HARMONIE is in fact an excellent harmony treatise for its time, and it is unfortunate that the values of the book itself are so often overlooked in favor of the much less substantial theory behind it. The book presents a simple, reasonable, and useful system of chord derivation, practical techniques for realizing figured bass, and techniques for enharmonic modulation. Its value is not, as Fétis so often claimed, its differences from other theory, but, rather, its similarities and the way in which it develops trends in theory

from the works of Rameau, Sorge, Kirnberger, Catel, Choron, and others.

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1 Robert Wangermée, FRANÇOIS-JOSEPH FÉTIS: MUSICOLOGUE ET COMPOSITEUR (Brussels: Palais des académies, 1951), p. 23.

2 MÉTHODE ÉLÉMENTAIRE (Paris: Chez Petit); TRAITÉ DU CONTRE-POINT (Paris: Charles Michel Ozi and Au magasin de musique du conservatoire). The first editions of both are undated, but Fétis in his autobiographical article in the BIOGRAPHIE UNIVERSELLE DES MUSICIENS states that the MÉTHODE appeared in March, 1824, and he elsewhere implies that the TRAITÉ DU CONTRE-POINT appeared later in 1824 or possibly early in 1825.

3 Fétis, TRAITÉ COMPLET DE LA THÉORIE ET DE LA PRATIQUE DE L'HARMONIE, preface to the third edition (Paris: Braudus, 1849), pp. xi f.

4 The "Résumé philosophique" was an introduction to vol. 1 of the first edition of the BIOGRAPHIE UNIVERSELLE DES MUSICIENS (Brussels: Leroux, 1835); it was printed separately by Leroux in that year. The "Esquisse de l'histoire de l'harmonie" was serialized in the REVUE ET GAZETTE MUSICALE in 1840 (and also printed separately); the TRAITÉ . . . DE L'HARMONIE was printed concurrently by the Royal Conservatory in Brussels and the firm of Maurice Schlesinger in Paris in 1844. It went through no less than twenty-one French editions by 1906.

5 There is a doctoral dissertation on this subject, which was unavailable to me for this paper: Robert Nichols, "François-Joseph Fétis and the Theory of Tonalité" (University of Michigan, 1971).

6 Matthew Shirlaw, THE THEORY OF HARMONY (London: Novello, 1917), pp. 335-51. Shirlaw has no mercy on any theorist who departs too radically from the doctrines of Rameau or similar natural-based systems, and, for this reason, he does not adequately represent the work of many later eighteenth- or nineteenth-century writers, such as Johann Kirnberger, Luigi Sabbatini, Gottfried Weber, or Fétis, who document the more empirical trends in theory of their time.

7 There were no less than six monographs on Choron published in France in the nineteenth century, and many more lexicographic and journalistic articles. The best of these is Jules Carles's CHORON: SA VIE ET SES TRAVAUX (Caen: Blanc-Hardel, 1882). There are only two substantial twentieth-century studies: Willi Kahl, "Zur musikalischen Renaissancebewegung in Frankreich während der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts," FESTSCHRIFT JOSEPH SCHMIDT-GOERG ZUM 60. GEBURTSTAG, ed. Dagmar Weise (Bonn: Beethovenhaus, 1957), pp. 156-74; and Gabriel Vauthier, excerpts from an unpublished biography of Choron in the REVUE MUSICALE (Jules Combarieu, ed.), 8 (1908): 376-89, 436-42, 613-24, 664-70; 9 (1909): 54-58, 195-201, 223-29, 275-79; and Vauthier's CHORON SOUS L'EMPIRE (Poitiers: Société francaise d'imprimeries, n.d.). See also Bryan Simms, ALEXANDRE CHORON (1771-1834) AS A HISTORIAN AND THEORIST OF MUSIC (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1972). Of the published studies of Choron, Vauthier's writings are far and away the best biographies, but there is no adequate published study of Choron's significance to nineteenth-century French scholarship nor is there any adequate published bibliography of his works.

8 See Kahl, "Zur musikalischen Renaissancebewegung" and Robert Wangermée, "Les Premiers concerts historiques à Paris," MÉLANGES ERNEST CLOSSON (Brussels: Société belge de musicologie, 1948), pp. 185-96. For Fétis's opinions of these concerts, see his enthusiastic reviews in the REVUE MUSICALE, 1 (1827): 88, 188, and passim.

9 DICTIONNAIRE HISTORIQUE DES MUSICIENS, 2 vols. (Paris: Valade and Lenormant, 1810-11).

10 L'on peut apprécier le défaut de critique et d'ordre dans les idées qui a conduit Bérardi, Tero` [i.e., Tevo], Fux, Marpurg, et Albrechtsberger à ne traiter des contre-points doubles qu'après la fugue, quoique celle-ci ne puisse exister sans eux. J'ai rétabli l'ordre rationnel de ces études dans mon TRAITÉ DU CONTRE-POINT ET DE LA FUGUE; plusieurs ouvrages, publiés depuis lors sur le même sujet, ont suivi cet ordre.

Fétis, "Esquisse de l'histoire," REVUE ET GAZETTE MUSICALE, 7 (1840): 191.

11 "In France," wrote Fétis, "Rameau's system of fundamental bass was for a long time an obstacle to these worthy studies of practical harmony. But the work published by Fiocchi and Choron under the title PRINCIPES D'ACCOMPAGNEMENT DES ÉCOLES D'ITALIE began a necessary reform in this subject in the early years of this century." REVUE ET GAZETTE MUSICALE, 22 (1855): 108.

12 Je me bornerai à dire que c'est dans le courant du seizième siècle que cette tonalité moderne s'est fait sentir plus fortement, qu'elle a exercé son influence sur la composition, et que c'est dans l'école de Naples, et particulièrement dans celle du DURANTE, qu'elle a été fixée sous tous les rapports, du moins en ce qui concerne la pratique.

Choron, "Sommaire," p. xxxviii.

13 REVUE MUSICALE, 1 (1827): 332.

14 Catel, TRAITÉ D'HARMONIE (Paris: imprimerie du conservatoire, An X), p. 9. A dissonance to Catel by definition had one specific resolution. Since the tritone had several possible resolutions, it had to be ranked among the consonances.

15 PRINCIPES DE COMPOSITION, pp. 5, 47, and passim. Choron elaborates this theory of the "euphonie" and "dynamie" of intervals and chords in the following later works: MÉTHODE PRATIQUE D'HARMONIE ET D'ACCOMPAGNEMENT, unpublished treatise of 166pp. in proof sheets, Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, nouv. acq. fr. 296, c. 1830; untitled and anonymous article (definitely by Choron) in the REVUE MUSICALE, 12 (1832): 313-16; Choron and Adrien de la Fage, MANUEL COMPLET DE MUSIQUE (Paris: Roret, 1836-39), livre III, 121ff.

16 Zweiter Abschnitt, p. 42 f.

17 Il est remarquable que ces intervalles caractérisent la tonalité moderne par les tendances énergiques de leurs deux notes constitutives, la note sensible, appelant après elle la tonique, et le quatrième degré, suivi en general du troisième. Or, ce caractère, éminemment tonal, ne peut constituer un état de dissonance: en réalité, la quarte majeure et la quinte mineure sont employées comme des consonnances dans plusieurs successions harmoniques. La quarte majeure et la quinte mineure sont donc des consonnances, mais des consonnances d'une espèce particulière, que je désigne sous le nom de "consonnances appellatives."

Fétis, TRAITÉ . . . DE L'HARMONIE, pp. 8-9.

18 . . . semblent en effet appeler les notes sur lesquelles elles tendent à se reposer; c'est pourquoi on les nomme notes "Appellatives."

Choron, PRINCIPES DE COMPOSITION, p.47.

19 Fétis: "The obligatory resolution of attractive [i.e., appellative] notes of [the dominant seventh chord] and the position of these in the scale provide the laws of succession of five notes of this scale, the position of the other two notes being determined by themselves." TRAITÉ . . . DE L'HARMONIE, p.iii.

20 See David Beach, "The Origins of Harmonic Analysis," JOURNAL OF MUSIC THEORY, 18 (1974): 282 ff.

21 TRAITÉ . . . DE L'HARMONIE, preface to the third edition, p.xxvi.

22 Choron, "Sommaire," p.xxxviii.

23 Les anciens contrapuntistes avaient pour précepts presqu'unique de donner à toutes les notes de l'échelle la tierce et la quinte, à l'exception de celle qui porte quinte mineure, à laquelle on donnait la sixte; et ils regardaient l'harmonie comme valable toutes les fois qu'elle était exempte de suites de quintes et d'octaves; mais le sentiment des nouveaux modes fit reconnaître que cette harmonie était fausse: qu'elle produisait une infinité de mauvaises relations; on étendit la sixte au troisième et souvent à plusieurs autres degrés de l'échelle, et c'est sur ce principe qui écrivit Palestrina et toute son école.

Choron, "Sommaire," pp.xxxviii-xxxix.

24 Des accords composés de tierce et de quinte, ou de tierce et de sixte, avec quelques prolongations rares qui produisaient des dissonances de septième ou de seconde, par le retard des sixtes ou de tierces, composaient toute la science de l'harmonie. . . . Toutes les compositions de Jean Animuccia, de Porta, de Soriano, de Palestrina, prouve ce que j'avance.

Fétis, "Questions sur la diversité d'opinions et des doctrines des auteurs didactiques en musique," REVUE MUSICALE, 1 (1827): 248-49.

25 Fétis, "Esquisse de l'histoire de l'harmonie," p.190.

26 Qui croirait qu'il n'y a pas un mot de tout ce qu'on vient de voir concernant cette époque importante du changement de tonalité, et toutes ses conséquences, dans les histoires générales et particulières de la musique? Ces volumineuses compilations abondent en détails oiseux; mais pour un tel fait il ne s'est trouvé chez aucun des compilations ni assez de savoir pratique, ni assez d'attention, ni assez de philosophie, pour porter la lumière dans cette obscurité. Tout ce qu'ont vu Burney et Martini, copiés par Forkel et le peuple routinier, c'est que Monteverde a ajouté de nouveaux accords à ceux dont on faisait usage avant lui; quant aux résultats de ces harmonies nouvelles, personne ne s'en est douté.

Fétis, "Esquisse de l'histoire de l'harmonie," p.191.

27 Le pas le plus important n'était pas fait encore. Un maître de l'école de Lombardie (Cl. Monteverde), qui florissait vers 1590, créa l'harmonie de la dominante; le premier, il osa pratiquer la septième de dominante, et même la neuvième à découvert et sans préparation; le premier, il osa employer comme consonnance la quinte mineure, réputée jusqu'alors comme dissonance: et l'harmonie tonale fut connue.

28 TRAITÉ . . . DE L'HARMONIE, preface to the third edition.