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CHAPTER THREE

Beyond Aesthetic Appeal to Healing Sounds: An Existentialist Reflection On George Ehusani's Liturgical Music

Anthony Okeregbe

1. Introduction

During an interlude in one of his sessions on art therapy during a course on psycho-trauma healing, Fr. George Ehusani picked up his guitar, plucked the strings in accompaniment to Prince Nico Mbarga's 'Sweet mother', a familiar song of global acclaim that pays tribute to motherhood. The hall was charged to frenzied nostalgia as everyone – Christians and Muslims, male and female, young and old – sang and shuffled to the music. Before he started the song, Fr. Ehusani had told everyone to mindfully reflect on the lyrics, and allow every word to sink in. Some learnt the lyrics for the first time from hearing others sing them. On and on the music went, and then it shifted to Bob Dylan's 'Blowing in the wind' and rested on R. Kelly's 'The storm is over'. At the end of the interlude, there was silence. The faces of many beamed, even as their eyes glittered from the reflection of light on threatening tear drops. Amongst the sated participants was a young woman who sought the attention of Fr. Ehusani, the facilitator. "I want to speak," she said. As she was handed the microphone, her sobbing but clear voice echoed in the silence: "Never in my life have I thought that this burden will be lifted off my chest." She continued: "After listening to these songs, especially 'Sweet mother', something in me broke…" And on she went unburdening and unearthing memories of bitterness, sadness, guilt and shame that seemed to have formed some incrustation in her mind. She was not alone. Before long, other participants expressed some form of release due to the effects of the songs. But let us ask: What broke when the young woman immersed herself in the music? What happened to these participants whilst they listened to the relay of songs to such an extent that they had to speak out?

Throughout history, wise men and philosophers have been known to draw connections between music and deep existential concerns. They have found that music has a part to play in the psychic balance of the human person. The ancient philosopher and mathematician, Pythagoras of Samos, is reputed to have been the first scholar to teach that music could be utilised as medicine for diseases of the body, the emotions and the soul (Dobrzynska, Cesarz, Rymaszewska, & Kiejna, 2006). Church Fathers like St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas have taught on the intrinsic connection between music and divine encounter. Even metaphysical pessimists such as Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche had complementary submissions about music and human existence. For instance, Schopenhauer valued Baroque music as a means of taming the rapacious and whimsical nature of the will (Moges, 2006).

In religious experience, this invaluable dimension of music is further expressed as a vehicle for spiritual encounter and reconnection with the divine. Apart from the luminaries and maestros of great classical music, who have flourished in history, the contemporary period is also replete with outstanding composers of Christian liturgical music collections that are suitable for personal devotion and public worship. Amongst these are Joseph Gelineau, Carey Landry and the St Louis Jesuit group comprising Bob Dufford, Dan Schutte, John Foley, and others. Gelineau, who died in 2008, was a French Jesuit priest and composer of Christian liturgical music, who developed the globally acclaimed Gelineau psalmody – a method of chanting or singing the psalms in seminaries and churches worldwide. Like the Septuagarians that make up the St Louis Jesuits, Carey Landry, also a Septuagarian, is a former Catholic priest reputed as a foremost composer of Catholic liturgical music in the United States of America. In a less magisterial and nonprofessional manner, Ehusani follows the footsteps of these eminent composers of what has been dubbed Contemporary Catholic liturgical music. Although his songs, unlike those of the above composers, traverse certain genres, they have been characterised as vehicles of psycho-trauma healing.

With the foregoing as background, this paper seeks to re-establish the role liturgical music plays in fostering mindfulness, healing and spiritual wellness through a phenomenological analysis of selected songs in Ehusani's musical collection. Whilst this study does not deal with the musicology and discography of the songs, it employs media monitoring for selection and hermeneutically analyses the songs to unveil properties that make their melodies and lyrics instruments of healing, mindfulness

and wellness. To this end, the study relies on the postulations of music therapists and psychologists of music in analysing the existential properties. Because this paper is a qualitative study, the scientific treatment of the impact of the songs on listeners is beyond its scope. The paper argues that Ehusani's liturgical music rises from mere aesthetic appeal and plain didacticism to prophetic ministration that leads to self-discovery and rediscovery of the wholeness of human existence.

2. Music, Liturgical Music and Music Therapy

As an art form and cultural activity that deploys sound as a medium, music may be regarded as a symbolic activity by which humans communicate. It is a creation of human intelligence which reflects the varied dimensions of the creativity and complexity of existence. In his bid to express the creative human agency in music, Levinson proposes a definition of music as "sounds temporally organized by a person for the purpose of enriching or intensifying experience through active engagement (e.g., listening, dancing, performing) with the sounds regarded primarily, or in significant measure, as sounds" (Levinson, 1990, p. 273). Kania, on his part, submits as follows: "Music is (1) any event intentionally produced or organized (2) to be heard, and (3) either (a) to have some basic musical features, such as pitch or rhythm, or (b) to be listened to for such features" (Kania, 2011, p. 12). In exploring the character and nature of music from the functional, operational, structural, socio-historical and essentialist definitions, renowned philosopher of music Steve Davies proposes that a successful definition is an intricate ensemble of variegated factors: it must balance all the stories, defining traditions of music, the universal elements, musical and non-musical factors that affect the diversity of music and the understanding of music makers and listeners (Davies, 2012).

Guided by the above submissions, music may be viewed as a veritable medium of entertainment that stimulates the good feeling of jollification and dissipation of pleasant energy. It affects moods by transporting an individual from one emotional state to another. Music is also affected by moods in the sense that its composition reflects the composer's emotional state. In all this, it modifies behaviour. Music is also a means of self-expression and identity creation. In addition, not only does it educate, but it also showcases culture as well as social

history. While it does any of these, it sends various messages corresponding to the encoder's intentions and the decoder's desires. In short music is communication.

All over the world, singing has been recognised as a very powerful evocative dimension of the communicative function of music. This is especially true of liturgical worship, be it Christian, Islamic, Hindu, or any other. When songs are utilised in worship, they transport the singer to a realm outside of themselves and imbue them with some new reality and meaning. As an existential act of communication, liturgical singing entails a special transcendence that connects the human person with the source of their being. This transcendence symbolically takes the form of a vertical movement - from being a mere human act to that of the divine; it becomes the act of a lover attempting to connect with their source. Crichton explains this encounter lucidly when he highlights two points about singing. First, he speaks of singing as a profoundly human action that expresses not only our emotions but also the whole personality of the individual. He explains that in singing,

> …the human person is saying all he can at a given moment, and when the verse and the music are the sort of words and music that are strongly evocative, they say more than we could say by rational discourse and carry us beyond ourselves (Crichton, 1980, p. 11).

Second, relying on the poignant statement of St. Augustine, "*Cantare amantis est*" (It is the lover who sings), Crichton presents this Augustinian conception of music as purely an act of worship and singing as the act of the singer seeking some connection with their beloved, and in the process is engulfed and overwhelmed by thoughts of their beloved. Hence, Crichton states that "song in worship is a sign, or even a sacrament of our love of God, a delighting in his goodness and beauty, a sign of the movement of the self to the supreme other to whom we would give ourselves" (p. 12). Singing is thus extendable as a relentless search for the vacuum or hollowness of our lives to be filled by the immeasurable love of God. In the parlance of theologians of music or connoisseurs of sacred music, what St Augustine appears to be describing so eloquently is the liturgy. Although the etymology of the word 'liturgy' relates to public service, as a Christian religious category, it is the formalised ritual or script for various forms of public worship in churches. In this sense, it accommodates the whole complex of official

services, all the rites, ceremonies, prayers and sacraments of the Church, as opposed to private devotions. In this sense we speak of the arrangement of all these services in certain set forms (including the canonical hours, administration of sacraments, etc.), used officially by any local church (Fortescue, 1910: para. 5).

Thus, the liturgy is better understood as the official public worship of the church (para. 6). When music accompanies this form of worship, or music is composed around components of this form of worship, it is called liturgical music. It seems fitting, therefore, that the *New world encyclopedia*, (2018) defines liturgical music as "a form of music originating as a part of religious ceremony," which can be found in the "Catholic Mass, the Anglican Holy Communion service, the Lutheran mass, the Orthodox liturgy and other Christian services including the Divine Office" (para. 1).

In consonance with the *Vatican II document*, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, liturgists have identified the goal of liturgical music as the glorification of God and the sanctification of the faithful (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7, p. 112). However, the manner of interpreting the music that accomplishes this goal is a matter of contention, especially when in a loose sense, what may be termed Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) has been identified as liturgical.

Whilst some experts have identified this sanctification of the faithful as an instance of spiritual therapy, or healing, there is a positive sense in which music functions therapeutically outside worship. Music as an instrument of therapy is rooted in the assumption that it may be efficacious in the care and management of the human psyche. Despite the controversy around music as a veritable tool for clinical treatments and healing, some scholars strongly argue that music plays some vital therapeutic roles. Citing Ogunyemi (2002), Adeniyi (2018) avers that listening to certain music in a controlled fashion promotes health and wellbeing. In explaining the remedial potential of this controlled use of music, she defines music therapy as "the use of musical sound to help clinical patients to support and develop physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing" (Adeniyi, 2018, p. 138). In a specific sense, Maratos, Gold, Wang and Crawford (2008), building on the definition of Bruscia (1991), explain music therapy as "an interpersonal process in which the therapist uses music and all of its facets to help patients to improve, restore or maintain health" (p. 1). Bruscia's later

definition, which has been further amplified by the work of Geretsegger, Elefant, Mössler and Gold (2014) describes music therapy as a "systematic process of intervention wherein the therapist helps the client to promote health using music experiences and the relationship that develop through them as dynamic forces of change" (Bruscia, 1998, p. 20).

The efficiency of this therapeutic medium lies in its touted ability to deploy the different levels of structure, namely, sound, harmony, melody, instrumentation, rhythms, form, etc., of different musical styles and idioms, to provide the variability and flexibility needed to counteract the more rigid characteristics of a pathology (Adeniyi, 2018). It is argued, therefore, that masterful control of these structures would bring about somatic registration that would reduce worry and control blood pressure, and so on.

Beyond the supposed somatic effect, music therapy is also posited as having an ethical goal, one that caters to the proper moral cultivation of the individual and corporate sanity of the society. This conception of music use elevates structured sound and musical arrangement from neutral amusement to moral education. Proponents of this position, among whom is Anthony Mereni, maintain that there is a correspondence between the moral health of an individual or society and the music that is generally accepted by them (Mesz, Rodriguez Zivic, Cecchi, Sigman & Trevisan, 2015; Mereni, 2014). Explaining the philosophical thrust of the Mereni music school, Olaleye states that the "Merenian music school is of the opinion that to build a civilized society good music disposes man to virtue whereas bad music disposes man to vice" (Olaleye, 2018, p. 15). It is on the basis of this submission that this school further posits that music "could express and encourage virtues, nobility, dignity, temperance, chastity" (p. 15), in the same manner it could also express and encourage vice – sensuality, belligerence, and indiscipline.

Whichever way the therapy goes, Koelsche (2009) tells us that music therapy works through the effect of the following: modulation of attention, modulation of emotion, modulation of cognition, modulation of behaviour and modulation of communication. In all, music-based therapy relies on receptive listening and the active method that involves playing of musical instruments and deploys highly sophisticated qualitative and quantitative scientific protocols to analyse clients or patients (Craig, 2020).

3. Ehusani's Liturgical Music

A multi-instrumentalist, Ehusani has had a flourishing hobby in music. Apart from personal satisfaction derivable from music, Ehusani has also extended this love to a level of quasi-musicianship; he now uses music as an instrument to complement his pastoral duties. So entrenched is the inevitable presence of musical activities in his personal life and pastoral cum administrative duties that one wonders what it would be like to dissociate music from his existence (G. Ehusani, Personal communication, April 8, 2011).

In line with the Jungian thesis, which posits that "every psychological problem is ultimately a matter of religion" (Moore, 1994, p. xii), Ehusani believes that music as art therapy could nurture the soul in such a manner that it generates positive energy for wholesome living and mindfulness. As suggested above, the music, fitting enough to bring this to fruition, should be rich in vital forces and positive vibes and be spiritually appealing so as to penetrate the core of our being. In other words, it should be able to connect psychological health and spirituality. Moore amplifies the necessity of this connection when he surmises: "A spiritual life of some kind is absolutely necessary for psychological 'health'; at the same time, excessive or ungrounded spirituality can also be dangerous, leading to all kinds of compulsive and even violent behavior" (Moore, 1994, pp. xii-xiii).

But the curious thing about this definitive presence of music in Ehusani's vocational life is that he was never trained in music. By his own admission, he was never in any choir neither did he express any passion for singing or music until he became a parish priest. In an interview granted Tony Okeregbe, Ehusani (2011) tells the story of the unexpected circumstances that threw him into singing and music.

> I wasn't trained in the seminary to sing. I wasn't particularly passionate about it in the seminary, and I didn't really play any musical instrument in the seminary. But when I came out and became a parish priest, I saw the usefulness of music. It was in those days when people were translating English songs into Ebira, many of which did not make much sense to my people. So, I decided to champion the cause using our indigenous melody to do the Commons of the Mass liturgically (Ehusani, 2011, p. 96).

Also, by his own attestation, Ehusani states that music has added vitality to his ministry.

> It is a good source of distraction in the sense that you are able to entertain yourself and yet be productive. When I think of the tons of songs that I have put into over twenty CDs, I ask myself, 'What would I have been doing with that time that I used to do this if I hadn't engaged in it?' How do I compose my songs? It is this: if I am driving and a song occurs to me, I pull off the road and write the song down and then continue the driving. And you see, whenever I see a song that I composed twenty years ago, I know the melody since I didn't learn to read the solfa notation. It has worked very much for me and has brought a lot of young people to me, some of whom I have mentored. (Ehusani, 2011, p. 98)

A pleasant consequence of Ehusani's resolute self-help at music composition is the number and quality of songs he has successfully recorded. So far Ehusani has about 26 CDs of song collections, some of which have been uploaded on YouTube. Explored either professionally or simply for one's listening pleasure, the songs may be uplifting to the amateur listener as they may also be to a critic.

4. An amateur's analysis of Ehusani's songs

In an article celebrating the silver jubilee ordination anniversary of Fr. George Ehusani, Okeregbe reviewed 15 CDs comprising a jazz ensemble, psalms and canticles, devotional songs and poems (Okeregbe, 2006). A random selection from these collections is 'Jazz the gospel' (Ehusani, 2006), a 15-track danceable instrumental that combines keyboard, guitar and conga drums to create a jazzy fusion that is midway between Dave Koz and Majek Fashek.[1] This musical style has attained a dominant reggae rhythm in the devotional songs rendered in 'Fill me up' and 'Jesus loves me'.

True to its title in the CD 'Sing and Shout for Joy' (Ehusani, 2006), there is a drift from chanting to loud singing in one of the psalms and

[1] Dave Koz (David Stephen Kox) is an American smooth jazz saxophonist and Grammy Award nominee with a flourishing music career in his homeland and abroad. Majek Fashek (Majekodunmi Fasheke) was a Nigerian singer, multi-instrumentalist and songwriter of the reggae genre.

canticles. Contrary to the practice in traditional liturgical offices (periodic church prayers) where psalms and canticles are accompanied by the organ to provide the sacred ambience of worship, Ehusani's psalms and canticles follow a slow reggae rhythm dominated by the guitar. While this proves successful in some of the tracks, it becomes too hard for Track 4, 'You opened wide'- a solemn psalter rendered in minor key. One of the beauties of the musical collection is the crisp fluidity of former Miss Ifeoma Nnorom's soprano. Her sweet soft sonorous voice provides the much-needed harmony required by Ehusani's sharp grating voice. Nowhere is this vocal virtuosity demonstrated as in the selection of the poems- 'Love is beautiful' and 'Images of love', where the musical accompaniment attains its utmost melodic finesse and evocative ministration.

In the poem, 'The cross', the solemn mystery of the crucifixion is presented as 'School of love' in a mellow, meditative rendition that could finally penetrate any stubborn heart:

Ah at Calvary
Ah at Calvary
I see love petrified
And mercy exemplified
In the twisted image
And broken body
Of God's direction

The same sonorous pungency is replicated in the poem 'Disarm our heart', where words and instrumentation employ contrasting imagery to transport an invitation to love. Consider the following:

Disarm our hearts mighty God
And teach us
That we cannot shake hands
With clenched fists
Disarm our hearts wonderful counsellor
And teach us
That we cannot get a rose
From a noxious weed

In the musical tribute to the Holy Spirit titled 'Come Holy Spirit', Ehusani's voice is at its best as a narrative and prophetic oracle. This seems to be the best song music in the entire collection. Here, there is a melodic balance and tonic harmony of pitch, sound quality and mood. In this collection, the subtle musical terror which jazzy-reggae melodies create is virtually absent. In tone, music and words, a prophetic voice, accompanied by the singing assembly, truly pays tribute to the Holy Spirit in worship.

Apart from the songs analysed above, Ehusani also used the ample time made available by the lock-down of the Coronavirus pandemic to compose and disseminate musical messages through some soulful songs. As may be observed in some samples of the 69 songs uploaded on YouTube, although the songs represent different genres of music, they express messages of comfort, hope, divine consolation and thanksgiving. It is for this reason that the following songs are selected for brief review: 'Slow me down, Lord', 'It's gonna be alright', 'Mysterious lover', 'As for me and my house', 'Darkness will pass away,' 'Love is beauty', and 'Fall afresh on me'.

4.1 *Slow me down, Lord*

Slow Me Down Lord
Ease the pounding of my heart
Slow Me Down Lord
By the quieting of my mind
Slow Me Down Lord
Amidst the turbulence of my day
Give me the calmness of the hills
Slow Me Down Lord

'Slow me down, Lord' is a mellow rendition interspersed with poem recital. It is a plea for divine solicitude amidst the drudgery of quotidian existence, and a call on God to arrest the seeming irrationality that characterises everyday living. In this appeal, the individual recognises the turbulence occasioned by their Sisyphian existence and invites some divine arrest. By this invitation, the individual also recognises the power of the Lord to bring about that arrest.

4.2 *It's gonna be alright/Darkness will pass away*

This is another consoling reminder of the faithfulness of God. Modelled after the act of solicitude of Julian of Norwich when the grave pestilence of Black Death afflicted England in the 14th century, this short two sentence song is a mantra of affirmation. Its lyric is simple: "It's gonna be well, for Jesus never fails." Another song in this mold is 'Darkness will pass away'.

> This darkness will pass away
> Better days are coming
> We shall see the sunshine
> The clouds shall clear

In this seemingly hopeless state of the COVID-19 pandemic and its uncertainties, these songs are harbingers of hope. They implore the believer to be joyfully expectant of God's power.

4.3 *Mysterious lover*

In 'Mysterious lover' Ehusani, in his characteristic reggae melody, presents a message of Christ the lover. In his simple narrative preluding the song, he attempts to convince his listeners that the same love that caused God to send His son to die for humankind while we were yet sinners, and that inspired Christ's work of mercy and compassion is still operative in all who abide in God.

> Mysterious Lover
> O Jesus Christ
> You died to save me
> I'll live to praise you

The mystery inherent in this love is aptly captured by the paradox in the song: Christ died to save. How can one die to save another?

4.4 *Love is beauty*

This song is suffused with powerful rhymes, and, like many of Ehusani's songs, it is rendered with Ifeoma Nwaoduah in simple reggae melody.

Notwithstanding its simple poetic form, it is loaded with strong philosophical themes. Whilst the song presents humanity as a fragile, weak, ephemeral existence that contrasts ultimately with the incomparable immensity of the divine, it posits that love can connect these two contradistinctive realms. The wordings of the lyrics are as metaphysically provoking as the mystery which love is. Follow the lyrics:

Amid the fragile reality
Of mortal humanity
Love is the beauty
That binds boundless divinity
With finite humanity

4.5 *Fall afresh on me*

This is a poetic tribute to the Holy Spirit. It is a song chronicling the ubiquitous primordial powers of the Holy Spirit from Creation to Pentecost and to our time. It is a story-telling prayer also rendered in the characteristic jerky reggae tradition, with guitar progression interspersed by readings. The frequent interludes with some scripture recitals make this song a worthy dramatic solo performance:

Spirit of the Living God
Fall on me
Spirit of the Living God
Fall afresh on me.

Recital of scripture narrative

Spirit of the Living God
Fall on me
Spirit of the Living God
Fall afresh on me.

4.6 *Just like a river*

'Just like a river' is a refreshing pop rendition of a lover's admission of the overwhelming power of love. Like a true prayer of supplication and thanksgiving, the song seeks refuge in divine love. It expresses a plea to be transported to a plane where love, peace and forgiveness reign, one

devoid of pain and violence and destruction. Infused with danceable and lively guitar rhythm, fantastically accentuated by Ifeoma's smooth vocal delivery, this song seems to express an eschatological feeling when taken literally. However, it is the serenity which comes from God's great love that this song presents to listeners.

4.7 *As for me and my house/The cross of Jesus has set me free*

´As for me and my house', an adaptation of the bible verse of Joshua 24: 15, is a declaration of self-affirmation rendered in 4/4 time signature. In a music composition or written song, a 4/4 time signature is one whose pulse or beat is counted 1, 2, 3, 4 and then repeated as necessary. This means that all the notes in each bar must add up to 4 quarter notes. This slow swingy beat, which synchronises with the bold narrative of the lyrics, invokes a powerful ambience of total submission to divine protection. The song '*The cross of Jesus has set me free'* is a reflective rendition set for the Passion. However, surprisingly it is rendered in an Afro-Juju melody and in danceable rhythm.

5. An Existentialist Evaluation

Given the above analysis, it is clear Ehusani's use of music and songs in his leadership trainings and psycho-trauma healing sessions may not be music therapy in the technical sense. This is because, as stated above, music therapy in the proper sense is a scientific and systematic study that deploys qualitative and quantitative research approaches in a controlled setting to attain wellness. It is this controlled setting and the possibility of repeatability that make the techniques of wellness scientific. Nonetheless, Ehusani's use of songs and music is therapeutic in a loose sense, owing to its goal of achieving wellness or good feeling. Thus, Ehusani's use of music is music therapy of a special kind, one in which the spoken word, the sung utterance, rather than the effect of sound, are construed to have healing powers, that is, powers for positive feeling of self and positive behaviour modification. In this sense, the pragmatic quality of Ehusani's songs may be appreciated within the Self-Affirmation theory of Steele. According to Steele (1988), individuals have the perceived ability to activate self-affirmation processes as a reaction to information that threatens the integrity of the self. In reaction to this threatening

information about the integrity of the self, individuals are likely to maintain an experience of the self as positive, moral, adequate, good, competent, stable, through constant explanation and rationalisation (p. 262f.). Cohen and Sherman (2014) analyse this further by asserting that self-affirmation enables individuals to express and maintain flexible identities, by being competent in different areas of personal value to them. It also enables individuals to maintain self-integrity by acting in ways that genuinely merit acknowledgement and praise (p. 360). In the light of the Self-Affirmation theory, Ehusani's songs tend to promote healing through the effectuation of positive affirmation inherent in the songs. Positive affirmations are positive phrases or statements of self-motivation used to challenge negative and unhelpful perception about self and to boost self-esteem.

Whilst Ehusani's songs may not be deliberate mechanisms for music therapy in the strict technical sense, they provide therapeutic first aids that identify candidates for technical clinical music therapies. This, however, is not to say that they do not usher individuals into mindfulness. Because Ehusani's songs tend to boost a positive self-image and encourage an optimistic mind-set, they naturally lead to healing affirmation, that is, a positive statement about our physical and mental wellbeing. Thus, Ehusani's songs retain their ultimate value not necessarily in their sonic quality but rather in their word therapy. In the deployment of the therapy of the word, the patient or client is led or re-orientated towards an appreciable understanding of the meaning of their existence.

This is the psychotherapy philosophy which Frankl expatiated on when he explored the concept of logotherapy. Arising from his experiences as an Auswitz Concentration Camp survivor and as a practising psychiatrist, Frankl came to identify certain neuroses (noogenic neuroses) as those attributed to the failure of the sufferer to find meaning and a sense of responsibility in their existence (Frankl, 1989, p. 10). On the strength of his extreme experiences and professional observation, Frankl introduces logotherapy as a meaning-centred psychotherapy – that is to say a therapy "on the meanings to be fulfilled by the patient in his future" (p. 120). In his terse explanation of this therapy, Frankl tells us that "logotherapy…focuses on the meaning of human existence as well as on man's search for such meaning. According to logotherapy, this striving to find meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man" (1989, p. 121).

Re-echoing the inherent existentialist trait that resonate in all his works, Frankl goes further to explain that "this meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him (the individual) alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own will to meaning" (1989, p. 121). By this explanation, meanings become much more than defence mechanisms, mere rationalisations or reaction formations. They rather become ultimate values or ideals which the individual can live and die for. If this is the case, then meaning or finding ultimate meaning for one's existential situation tends to bring about hope.

Ehusani's use of music and songs appropriates instances of this logotherapy philosophy to ascribe meaning to human predicaments and conditions in order to attain mindfulness and wellness. Like Frankl's logotherapy, Ehusani uses rhythms as a vehicle to re-orientate the individual, be they clients or patients, to be mindful of the core of their existence, and how the healing powers of words connect them to mindfulness. In the parlance of one professional counsellor, Ehusani's songs and use of music may be described as "sermons with rhythm."[2]

Although the songs in Ehusani's liturgical music fundamentally express the communicative action between God the lover and the human person who is the loved, they highlight a truism emphasised by psychotherapists and care-giving professionals, namely, the freedom to take individual and personal action. Irrespective of their melodies, instrumentation, sonic quality and lyrics, Ehusani's songs affect people in different ways depending on the personal idiosyncrasies of the individuals; and in these different appeals, the individuals are the managers of the effects some songs have on them. The song is not the actor in the drama of the individual's existence, rather it is the individual who, through a conscious and deliberate exercise of freedom and will, creates, out of this morass of meaninglessness, a shareable field of interaction and spiritual connection between themselves and the divine for their own design. The capacity for openness and reaching out depends on their willingness to let go. Take for instance the lyrics of the song:

[2] I am indebted to Rose Okeregbe, who so described Fr. Ehusani's use of songs and music in his psycho-trauma healing sessions.

This darkness will pass away
Better days are coming
We shall see the sunshine
The clouds shall clear

The individual, be they a client or the ordinary listener, may choose to shroud themselves from the distressing importunities of life and allow the lyrics minister to them and the soporific melody of their desired song to transport them to another realm. They may choose to let loose from the chains of worries, depression and disillusionment and wallow in the reverie created by Ehusani's music. It may even lead the individual to console themselves and assuage their powerlessness by reaching to the source of their being or creating an imaginary all-powerful paternalistic being in order to give meaning to their life. In all this, it is the existential trait of freedom that is being expressed by the individual. The song shows the consciousness of the individual.

As existentialist thinkers would assert, consciousness is characterised by dignity and active intentions. Being conscious or aware or free entails that the individual must affirm or deny; hence, freedom involves the inevitability of choice. In this inevitability of choice, a responsibility is attached. Sartre expresses this inevitability of responsibility in freedom when he asserts that "freedom is the freedom to choose but not the freedom of not choosing. Not to choose is, in fact, to choose not to choose" (Sartre, 1969, p. 481). Moore, on his part, tersely captures this inevitable requirement of authentic existence when he stated: "No one can tell you how to live your life. No one knows the secrets of the heart sufficiently to tell others about them authoritatively" (Moore, 2002, p. xiii). Therefore, far from being talismanic, Ehusani's songs are solicitous in their auxiliary function of helping the individual to exercise their freedom.

In being open to the beauty and burden of freedom, the individual outlines what he or she wants to embrace: an attitude she wants to cultivate, a doctrine he seeks to understand, or a cause of action she desires to pursue. Thereafter, the typical probing that perplexes the individual comes to mind. What is at their disposal in the furtherance of this embrace with their existence? Are they being thrown into existence in a circumstance that is not of their making? Are they abandoned to the vagaries of both the factors of their constitution and experiences they

must encounter? A proper response to these questions would be instrumental to an understanding of the individual's nature in existence. Heidegger uses the term facticity to refer to man's non-negotiated thrownness into the drama of existence. Man is thrown into something they have never bargained for, only to be left alone to sort out things for themselves. They are thrown into a world where they will not live forever, but have to struggle and eventually die. And, so, the moment an individual is born into this world, he/she is old enough to die (Heidegger, 1967, p. 160f.).

Thus, just as it is for Heidegger and Frankl, so it is for Ehusani. The facts of life are meaningful only to the individual who has thought them through personally, genuinely, but not through the prism of any publicly objectified position. They are meaningful also to the individual who has freely accepted the meaning they can genuinely make out of their reflection and are ready to accept the consequences as well as actively commit their existence to the cause necessitated by this facticity.

Although Ehusani's songs and use of music are meant to appeal to the general human community, the depth of meaningfulness they invoke have special appeal to the faith-based community, that is, a community of believers rather than of people with conflicting philosophical orientations. Philosophically speaking, faith is a trusting openness and response to the Unknown. But we can elevate this meaning of faith by asserting that this trusting openness to the Unknown is guided by the conviction that He who is greater than us all has a purpose for our being. Faith may then be a trusting openness to the divine will regardless of the human predicament. It is this virtue that John Paul II speaks of in his encyclical *Fides et ratio* (Faith and reason) (1998) as that gift of God which complements reason in the face of absurdities. When reason fails, as it often does, it is faith that justifies man's quest for the Unknown in the face of daunting absurdities (John Paul II, 1998, p. 48).

The Danish Protestant theologian and existentialist philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, had argued from an existentialist perspective that living in faith is the authentic way to live in a world of absurdities and contradictions. Kierkegaard distinguished three stages in the exercise of freedom and the making of moral choices. These stages are the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. Having criticised the aesthetic stage for seeking validation of freedom in man's capricious nature, and likewise the ethical stage for its dependence on fallible human reason,

Kierkegaard invites the individual to embrace the religious stage, which entails a response to a new awareness – of his finitude and estrangement from God to whom he belongs and from whom he must derive strength. However, the transition from this level to the religious stage is not achieved through an act of rationalisation, but by an act of commitment through a leap of faith. At this level, one is brought before the presence of God in a way that transcends any objective conceptualisation. It is a relationship that is both profound and fleeting, as if one is whirling in a vortex of immeasurable depth. Little wonder, then, that Johnson asserts:
The religious awakening is an Infinite and terrible experience; terrible because it has no recourse to the normal conventions that usually govern one's life: reason, rational inquiry, and objective analysis. None of these faculties that work so well in the first two stages has any meaning in the final stage (Johnson, 2002, para. 19).

Besides, one of the hallmarks of this relationship is its paradoxical nature because it cannot be discussed rationally or logically analysed. Here, as Stumpf (1991) interprets, "there is available no rational or conceptual or objective knowledge about this relationship. This relationship between God and each individual is a unique and subjective experience" (p. 482). Yet, it is owing to this profundity of meaning and logical cum communicative paradox, experienced in the religious stage, that the individual finds himself/herself in the realm of subjective truth – that highly personal mode of existence where one genuinely becomes an individual.

It is to the realisation of this stage, the spiritual realm or the supernatural world of faith, that Ehusani's 'music therapy' draws us. Ehusani's songs are better appreciated for drawing the individual to the consciousness of the religious state or, to use a more appropriate phrase, 'spiritual state'.

6. Conclusion

In the light of the conceptual clarification on music, liturgical music and music therapy, Ehusani's use of music may not be said to be music therapy in the strict scientific and technical sense. However, it may be construed as therapeutic in a special sense of being a Jungian-logotherapy influenced technique that uses positive affirmations through music or songs to nurture the soul, mind, and emotions. What one may discern from the analysis of Ehusani's songs is a theological anthropology which

assumes that a person's action is the medium and the message of the gospel of love. According to Okeregbe (2006), in this theology of action, which finds credence in the 'humanist' crusades of Martin Luther King Jr., St Teresa of Calcutta and St John Paul II, man's ontological status as an image of God becomes the metaphysics on which their relationship with God and their fellow man is founded (p. B3). Ehusani follows the trail of this personalist spirituality by also using music as a vehicle for expressing the loving connection between the individual and God in whom they get their intrinsic worth and inviolable dignity.

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