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Evidence of Innate Inclination for Predilection of Western Harmony

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Abstract: Although music exists in every observed culture, ethnomusicologists suggest that music is not the “universal language,” because of the tremendous variation between music of different cultures. However, evidences from mathematics, psychoacoustics, neurobiology, cognitive science, and anthropology suggest an innate inclination of human beings toward Western harmony. The present study reviews literature from many disciplines to synthesize a theory of innate inclination for predilection of Western harmony. The mathematical structure of Western harmony corresponds directly the physical phenomenon of the harmonic series. The subjective discernment of the consonance and dissonance of Western music corresponds to the simplicity of the mathematical ratios of intervals. Deliberate patterns of consonance and dissonance produce expectancy generation and, in turn, emotional response. Therefore, if discernment of consonance and dissonance in Western music is innately present in humans, then the emotional response to Western music and, subsequently, its value is inherent to all humans regardless of culture.