

# When Nothing is Called Music:



**Towards  
Ecological  
Composition**

PESSI  
PARVIAINEN





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**When Nothing is  
Called Music:  
Towards Ecological Composition**

PESSI PARVIAINEN



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# Tiivistelmä

When Nothing is Called Music: Ecological Composition

Pessi Parviainen, Taideyliopiston Teatterikorkeakoulu, Esittävien taiteiden tutkimuskeskus

Esitarkastettu taiteellinen osa:

*Töölönlahti: a Parable in Landscape* (essee-elokuva, 54'17", 2019)

Ensiesitys 3.5.2019, Kino Regina, Keskustakirjasto Oodi, Helsinki

Sellainen taiteellinen toiminta, jota voidaan nimittää sekä musiikiksi että ei-musiikiksi, osoittaa ongelman kielenkäytössä. Emme saata kunnolla puhua tällaisista tapauksista, koska 'musiikki' ei ole siihen sopiva sana.

Väitöskirja esittelee joukon esimerkkitaupauksia, epätavallisista soittimista ja esittämistavoista sävellettyyn teatteriin, sisältäen esimerkkejä Parviaisen omasta toiminnasta.

Ongelman tarkastelu lähtee liikkeelle musiikki-sanankuperästä. Tästä edetään käsitehistorialliseen tarkasteluun, joka tapahtuu poikkeuksellisesti keskittyen musiikki-sanaan ja edeten menneisyydestä kohti nykyaikaa, eikä päinvastoin niin kuin yleensä on tehty. Tällä tavoin tulee ilmi musiikki-sanankäsitteen dogmaattisuus, joka on yllättävän vakava eettinen ongelma – ongelma, joka näkyy kautta historian, jopa nykyäänkin.

Luciano Berio ja Jean-Jacques Nattiez ovat huomauttaneet että musiikki on vain sitä, mitä kutsumme musiikiksi. Tämä huomio on linjassa musiikki-sanankäsitteellisten ja dogmaattisten juurten kanssa.

Mutta entäpä jos emme nimittäisikään mitään musiikiksi? Miten sellainen muutos vaikuttaisi käsityksiimme ja toimintaamme?

Lera Boroditsky ja eräät muut ovat tuoneet esille päivitettyjä todisteita lingvistisen relativismin puolesta: kieli vaikuttaa kognitioon, joskus yllättävin tavoin. Osin näihin tukeutuen, käsillä oleva tutkimus esittää että taiteellista toimintaa koskeva diskurssi hyötyisi suuresti jos siinä vältettäisiin tyystin dogmaattisten käsitteiden, kuten musiikin, käyttö. Ei-dogmaattinen kielenkäyttö olisi paremmin linjassa käytännön kanssa. Erilaiset luovuuden alueet toimisivat paremmin yhteen, kun keinotekoiset esteet olisivat poissa.

Tällöin avautuu myös mahdollisuuksia ennennäkemättömään yhteispeliin kulttuurin ja yhteiskunnan osa-alueiden välillä laajemminkin.

Väitöstyön taiteellinen osio on essee-elokuva, joka esittää Töölönlahden vertauskuvallisena maisemana. Kaikki aluetta varten tehdyt kokonaissuunnitelmat ovat epäonnistuneet. Elokuva esittää neljä soittajaa suhtautumassa tähän maisemaan omilla tavoillaan, pienessä mittakaavassa. Elokuva on tarkoitettu ilmaisemaan kirjallisen osion teemoja omasta näkökulmastaan käsin.

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# Abstrakt

When Nothing is Called Music: Ecological Composition

Pessi Parviainen, Konstuniversitetens Teaterhögskolan, Forskningscentrum för teater, dans och performance

Förhandsgranskade konstnärlig del:

*Töölönlahti: a Parable in Landscape* (essä film, 54'17", 2019)

Premiär 3.5.2019, Kino Regina, Helsingfors centrumbibliotek Ode

Det finns konstnärlig praktik som kan kallas både musik och icke-musik. Sådana fall är bevis på bristande diskurs: vi kan inte prata ordentligt om dem eftersom "musik" inte är ett lämpligt ord för att adressera dem.

Ett urval av sådana fall presenteras, från ovanliga instrument och performancestrategier till komponerad teater, inklusive exempel från Parviainens egen konstnärliga praxis.

För att undersöka problemets rötter studeras ordet "musik". En ovanlig version av musikens konceptuella historia, som följer själva ordets väg genom tiden, presenteras. Normalt görs detta omvänt. Men om vi börjar från rötterna, avslöjas dogmatismen i ordet och begreppet "musik" som ett förvånansvärt allvarligt etiskt problem, som manifesteras genom historien såväl som i nuet.

Luciano Berio och Jean-Jacques Nattiez har påpekat att musik är det som vi kallar musik. Denna uppfattning överensstämmer med det aktuella ordets religiösa och dogmatiska rötter.

Ett radikalt förslag presenteras: tänk om vi inte kallade någonting musik? Hur skulle förändringen påverka vår förståelse och vår praxis?

---

Lera Boroditsky och andra har presenterat uppdaterade bevis för språklig relativism: språk påverkar kognition, ibland på överraskande sätt. Baserat på dessa åsikter föreslår den nuvarande studien att diskursen om konstnärlig praktik skulle förbättras kraftigt om dogmatiska begrepp som ”musik” helt undviks. En icke-dogmatisk diskurs skulle anpassas bättre till praxis. Olika områden med kreativitet skulle förbindas bättre när konstgjorda hinder har tagits bort. Detta skulle också öppna oöverträffade möjligheter för synergi mellan kultur- och samhällsområden.

Den konstnärliga delen av den här avhandlingen är en uppsatsfilm som presenterar Töölönlahti (ett centralt distrikt i Helsingfors) som ett paraboliskt landskap. Det har gjorts många försök att omstrukturera området helt, men de har alla misslyckats. I detta landskap av misslyckade planer presenterar filmen småskaliga interventioner från fyra instrumentalisterna, anpassning till deras situation. Filmen är avsedd som parabolisk kommunikation som från sin egen vinkel tar upp de frågor som diskuteras i den skriftliga komponenten.

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# Abstract

When Nothing is Called Music: Ecological Composition

Pessi Parviainen, Theatre Academy of the University of Arts Helsinki, Performing Arts Research Centre

Pre-examined artistic component:

*Töölönlahti: a Parable in Landscape* (an essay film, 54'17", 2019)

Premiere May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, Kino Regina, the Central Library Oodi, Helsinki

There is artistic practice that could be called both music and non-music. Such cases are evidence of an insufficiency in discourse: we cannot properly talk about them because 'music' isn't a suitable word to address them.

A selection of such cases is presented, from unusual instruments and performance strategies to composed theatre, including examples from Parviainen's own artistic practice.

To investigate the roots of the problem, the origin of the word 'music' is studied. An unusual version of the conceptual history of music, following the path of the word itself throughout time, is presented. Normally, this is done in the reverse. But starting from the roots, the dogmatism of the word and concept 'music' is revealed as a surprisingly severe ethical problem, manifesting throughout history as well as in the present.

Luciano Berio and Jean-Jacques Nattiez have pointed out that music is that which we call music. This notion is in line with the religious and dogmatic roots of the word in question.

A radical proposition is presented: what if we called nothing music? How would the change affect our understanding and our practices?

Lera Boroditsky and others have presented updated evidence for linguistic relativism: language affects cognition, sometimes in surprising ways. Based on these views, the present study proposes that discourse concerning artistic practice would be greatly improved if dogmatic concepts like 'music' were avoided entirely. A non-dogmatic discourse would align better with practice. Different areas of creativity would connect better, once artificial hindrances are removed. This would also open up unprecedented possibilities for synergy between areas of culture and society.

The artistic component of the present dissertation is an essay film, presenting Töölönlahti (a central district in Helsinki) as a parabolic landscape. There have been many attempts to completely redesign the area, but they have all failed. In this landscape of failed plans, the film presents small-scale interventions by four instrumentalists, adapting to their situation. The film is intended as parabolic communication that, from its own angle, addresses the issues discussed in the written component.

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# Acknowledgements

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The work I undertook would have been impossible without the pioneers and plowers of intellectual ground, scholars too numerous to list here, whose work made it possible for me to trace the conceptual history of music the way I did it. Obviously, they can be found in the bibliography – but I wish to make mention of them here because I feel particularly grateful for this groundwork. I was traversing a lot of terrain quite unfamiliar to me.

My warmest thanks to everybody at Tutke – and I do mean everybody, including the student cohort, among whom I had so many wonderful and constructive moments and conversations! Thank you all. I wish to specially mention current and former faculty, professor Leena Rouhiainen, professor Tuija Kokkonen, docent Esa Kirkkopelto, DA Annette Arlander, DA Pilvi Porkola; and coordinator, planning manager Annika Fredriksson.

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# Introduction

This dissertation has two parts: *When Nothing is Called Music: Towards Ecological Composition* (the written component), and *Töölonlahti: a Parable in Landscape*, an essay film (the artistic component)<sup>1</sup>.

The spearhead of this dissertation is this text, the written component. It contains the primary elements of this research. This is somewhat different from what seems to be common within artistic research, where the importance of artistic practice as means for knowledge-production is emphasized.

I do not question the importance of practice-based knowledge, quite the contrary. In the following pages, I hope to present a strong argument on its behalf. I have come to believe that this is primarily a language issue, not something that can be clarified through looking at artistic practice itself. It is in how we discuss (and therefore think about) practice that the real question lies.

In the case of my artistic practice, it didn't really contain a problem. When I began this research, I wanted to look further into an aspect of my artistic practice: transcending the border of music and non-music. At first, the working title for this research was "The Live Musician: More than just Sound!".

Some examples of the simultaneity of music and non-music are:

- playing together with "non-musical" aspects of the environment (a hybrid *situation* or *place*)
- a performer who plays instruments and sings, but also does other things (a hybrid *performer*)
- sculpture that can be used as an instrument (a hybrid *instrument* or *device*)

1 The film can be viewed at [https://youtu.be/gKafo\\_OCBD0](https://youtu.be/gKafo_OCBD0).

Such hybridity is not a problem in *practice*, one simply does it. Practical challenges take practical solutions. But when I tried to find efficient terminology to address such hybridity, I located a serious problem in language instead. The concept of music turned out to be the obstacle. Theory could not grasp practice.

In this text, the written component of the dissertation, I describe this problem and what led me to it. Then I conduct a survey into the conceptual history of music. It may be the first of its kind in literature, at least in English. Many histories of music have been written, of course; but what I found to be utterly lacking is a *Begriffsgeschichte*, a true conceptual history that would trace the genealogy of the concept itself, not the history of the things we now call music. Schueller's *The Idea of Music* comes close, but it is so blind to its Hellenism it doesn't really qualify as a conceptual history.

In Finnish, the problem of the definition of music has recently been addressed by Alfonso Padilla<sup>2</sup>, Juha Torvinen and Markus Mantere<sup>3</sup>, Tanja Tiekso (in the context of experimental approaches and avant garde manifestos)<sup>4</sup>, and by myself (in the context of sound design)<sup>5</sup>. Jukka Sarjala has pointed out the importance of conceptual history when the concept of music is the object of study<sup>6</sup>.

My approach to the conceptual history of music may seem wrong to those who adhere to a strictly Structuralist theory of language (like Sarjala). I'm sticking with the word and following its course. One reason for this is that "music" is not like most words. Music is that which we call music (more on this in chapter two). It is a *fiat*, a dogma. It *is* a definition. Therefore, a conceptual history of music should at least include the history of calling things "music".

2 Alfonso Padilla, "Musiikin määritelmää etsimässä," *Musiikki* 25, no. 4 (1995), 311 – 337.

3 Juha Torvinen and Markus Mantere, *Musiikki? Johdatus musiikin filosofiaan ja estetiikkaan* (Helsinki: Suomen Musiikkioppilaitosten Liitto, 2007), 29 – 38.

4 Tanja Tiekso, "Todellista musiikkia: kokeellisuuden idea musiikin avantgardemanifesteissa," (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2013), <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-305-002-0>.

5 Pessi Parviainen, "Äänten suunnitteleminen ja musiikin käsite," in *Äänen ajateltua: Kirjoituksia äänestä, esityksestä ja niiden kohtaamisista*, ed. Heidi Soidinsalo (Helsinki: Teatterikorkeakoulu, 2014), 64 – 73.

6 Jukka Sarjala, "Musiikin käsite tutkimuskohteena. Käsitehistoria ja musiikin todellisuuden muuttuminen," *Musiikki* 25, no. 2 (1995): 85 – 114.

Another reason to stick with the word is that words are not just words, not mere code for meaning. Words are not only in our heads; they are also physical. The spoken word is an embodied word, and the sonic vibrations of air, caused by speech (a muscular activity), are physically there. The written word is also a material thing, a visual fact.

The physical realm is not arbitrary. Therefore signs cannot be arbitrary – at least not completely. We cannot swap one sign for another without somehow affecting the meaning. This is what recent developments in cognitive linguistics and linguistic relativism are also showing us: language affects cognition.

The physical is not arbitrary, and language has its physical aspects. Therefore meaning is not arbitrary.

With language, we have agency, but not autonomy.

Matthew B. Crawford contrasts agency with the “autonomy” that quick-fix consumerism offers, and uses the learning of an instrument as an illustration. The skill has to do with physical facts, like how string length and tension affect pitch: “These things do not arise from the human will, and there is no altering them. I believe the example of the musician sheds light on the basic character of human agency, namely, that it arises only within concrete limits that are not our making.”<sup>7</sup>

Crawford wrote in the context of manual labour, but does mention Iris Murdoch’s account of learning Russian; the learner is the one who adjusts, not the language learned. The limits of agency are there in language, too.<sup>8</sup>

The word-concept of music is a *fiat*, a dogma, insisting on its autonomy. There is something in it that seeks to deny reality, to make for itself a solitary “paradise”, only to shun actual agency. Fantasy instead of engagement. This quality shows again and again throughout history in various ways (some examples of it are discussed throughout this text, particularly in chapters three, five, and seven).

The very act of subjecting a concept to conceptual history declares that there can be alternatives. I found this to be the case. There are historical precedents, of which I describe one: Ancient Hebrew. There was no “music” in Ancient Hebrew, yet singing and playing were discussed in abundance. In contrast to the religious terminology of the Greeks (music referred to the Muses, and corresponding

7 Matthew B. Crawford, *Shop Class as Soulcraft* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 63 – 64.

8 *Ibid.*, 65.

cults), the Hebrew words for singing and playing are very concrete and practical. In short, here we find the clash between dogma and practical life.

In the future, in collaboration with linguists, more such examples may be uncovered. Armenian, for example, may have words that predate Hellenistic influence.

I then describe the effects the concept of music has in various cases, pointing to its detrimental effect, causing hierarchical and oppressive thought constructs, even entire ideologies. It veers towards totalitarian thinking. (By totalitarian I do not necessarily mean a political system; I mean the kind of thinking that insists on its own totality, overtly or covertly. Therefore other thinking must yield to it - no difference is allowed. 'Narcissistic' is another word for this.)

Normally, we maintain a compromise. We allow multiple definitions of music to coexist. Music is whatever we choose to call music - as Luciano Berio<sup>9</sup> and Jean-Jacques Nattiez<sup>10</sup> have pointed out. But this compromise is not stable, and it does not give any language to understand the kind of artistic practice I have a passion for. The problem still remains, the artificial and dogmatic border between "music" and "non-music".

*Everything* has been defined as music, but this view has serious problems.<sup>11</sup>

Our current compromise defines *some* things as music.

The third option has not been explored recently: *calling nothing music*.

After discussing the problematic nature of the concept of music, I propose the third option. It is not at all necessary to call anything "music". But what would that be like? To answer this question, I present a description of the mental landscape where *nothing* is music. This is merely a beginning, and more work is definitely needed, not only theoretical, but especially experiments that involve practice. What happens to a hybrid creative collaboration when nothing is called music? In other words, how might changed thinking affect practice?

9 Luciano Berio, *Luciano Berio: Two Interviews* (London: Mario Boyars Publishers, 1985), 19.

10 Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Towards a Semiology of Music*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 47.

11 This view could be called a "Hellenist totality"; modern examples are found, for example, in the writings of Richard Wagner and R. Murray Schafer. More on this in Chapter seven.

I propose that the effect will be that a new kind of togetherness will be found between art forms: an organic and practical thinking, that avoids the dogmatic and oppressive pitfalls the concept of music has hitherto brought.

### **About methodology and objectives**

The theoretical (or linguistic) problem that this research addresses is something I have arrived at *through* practice. Most of this practice precedes my doctoral studies. Therefore, when I “zoom out”, I see here an alternation between practice and thinking: it was time for the thinking to advance to the place where practice already was. In walking, the advancing of one leg facilitates the advancing of the other. Now it was the turn of the “thinking leg” to move.

Because of the fundamental nature of the questions I wished to address, a strict methodological frame was not suitable. I was *looking for language*. It was not logical to assert a frame as the first step of that search, at least not any more than this: to look for language that would better grasp the hybridities of simultaneous “music” and “non-music” in my practice.

And while I did find precedents for that language, I also discovered that further work is needed on our discourse: I believe it needs to be formed again – reformed. That is the task of a translator, and it is a poetic task: saying something that needs to be said but hasn’t been said before. After presenting the case and background for it, I make an attempt towards this in chapter eight.

It is the proposition of this thesis that a radical dislocation is necessary. To discuss perception and experience as *not all in the mind*, and thus as *shared*, and perhaps most interestingly, as *ecological*, we need to disconnect from the Greek root of *mousike*, and begin anew.

The term *ecological composition* is intended to describe the process of planning and putting together various kinds of creative expressions, in a practical relationship to where it is done.

To summarize the methodology employed in this research, it turned out to be more about methodological development than using any clear premeditated method. The “walking method” advances in practice, then finds language (takes a step in theory) to understand the step taken in practice, then takes another step in practice with the fresh understanding concerning what is being done... and so on. The two-step dance we call walking is a seemingly simple operation with surprising complexity. A step isn’t done with only one leg: both legs par-

ticipate in each step, with alternating roles. So it is with the "walking method": I cannot say that practice is "off" when I'm looking for language, nor can I say that thinking is "off" when I'm in the midst of the process of practice. It is also important to note that physical walking necessarily takes me somewhere (unless I'm on a treadmill). The steps in the "walking method" are not done for the sake of themselves – that would be the treadmill, walking for the sake of taking steps, but getting nowhere. Both steps need to have the purpose of going somewhere. That becomes their source text, and the steps can then become translations, honed and refined as more steps are taken. The task of the artistic researcher is the task of the translator.

It was the "thinking leg's" turn to move, but this is not to say that the artistic component is unnecessary in this research. I see the written and artistic components as having a parabolic relationship. The essay film *Töölönlahti: a Parable in Landscape* approaches the matters discussed in the written component from its own angle. In regards to the "walking method", perhaps this is the practice leg helping the theory leg, supporting its movement.

Töölönlahti is the name of both a bay and a district in the centre of Helsinki, Finland. The film depicts a landscape that has been the subject of many urban planning attempts. Such attempts have tried to grasp the entire area, to bring it all together, but each attempt has failed. The landscape of Töölönlahti is a site of failed "Gesamtkunstwerks"; these compositions have been impossible to play, so to speak. The landscape never got to play more than fragments of these plans. Even Alvar Aalto's celebrated plan, that the renowned architect worked on for over a decade (1959-1973), was eventually put aside. Of the buildings he planned around Töölönlahti, only the Finlandia Hall was built.

Töölönlahti has seen a significant historical attempt to bring it all together in the political arena. In 1975, in the newly built Finlandia Hall, the nations of Europe, as well as the United States and Canada, met in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), to further the atmosphere of *détante* and avoid the worsening of the Cold War.

Using archival footage, documentary material, and small scale interventions by instrumentalists, the film explores and comments on this landscape of attempted togetherness.

The film follows from the written component, not so much vice versa.

It may be true that the written component could stand on its own, but I believe that together with this artistic component, it is far more understandable. The issues that the film explores, urban planning, even international politics, shed important light on the problems the written thesis lays out. For example, we can think about forms of creative expression as "nations", and their interrelationships as "politics". The lone instrumentalist, improvising in discussion with their environment, presents a case like the one Mr. Gerald Ford, President of the United States, referred to in his address in 1975 to the CSCE in the Finlandia Hall: if collaboration is possible in practice, in a small scale, such as between astronauts and cosmonauts, then surely it should be pursued between statesmen as well. If a drummer can be in a conversation with his environment, expressing himself without overpowering or being overpowered, then perhaps this can be done in a greater scale as well, in urban planning, and parabolically, in our mindsets concerning the interrelationships of artforms. And these are ultimately the same concern: if all humans are creative, it follows that how we think of the interrelationships between forms of creative expression *is* how we think of the interrelationships between all of humanity.

### *The Chapters*

In chapter one, I present the premise that was the starting point of this research: a live musician is more than just sound. The premise is laid out by exploring three viewpoints – instrument, action, and environment (or site). These viewpoints take their inspiration from the simple yet profound insight Augouyard and Torgue offer in *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds*: "No sound event, musical or otherwise, can be isolated from the spatial and temporal conditions of its physical signal propagation"<sup>12</sup>. In other words, a sound event has at least the three facets of *what happens* to *what*, and *where*. Sound happens in the togetherness of the aforementioned three (at least) facets. A sound maker can thus be understood more holistically. But considering the initial premise (that a live musician is more than just sound), the problem is that a musician does not mean the same as a soundmaker. This problem required an answer to the question: what is music?

12 Jean-Francois Augouyard and Henry Torgue (eds.), *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds* (Montréal: McGill – Queen's University Press, 2005), 4.

In chapter two, I discuss the concept of music. As Berio and Nattiez have pointed out, it is simply that which we choose to call that – music is what we call music. That means that searching for a definition of music is pointless because the concept of music *is* a definition. The definition of a definition is that it is what we say it is. A concept like this is utterly useless, especially in the context of artistic research, where thinking and practice should serve one another.

How can this be? How did we end up here? To better understand the problem, a conceptual history of music is necessary. To my surprise, *I could not find one*. Many histories of music have been written, of course; but these treat prehistoric bone flutes as examples of *music*, even though it is quite certain that is not what the bone flute players called it. A “history of music” is a history of what we today call music. A conceptual history, a *Begriffsgeschichte*, traces the story of the concept, starting from its emergence in language. I was not able to find a conceptual history of music, in any of the languages in which I could conduct searches, so I decided to write one. This became chapter three. Through this work, it became apparent that calling something music is not the only option. There are historical examples of different mindsets.

Chapter four takes an in-depth look at one such example, Ancient Hebrew. The difference between Hebrew and Greek thought is a well-known topic. The Maccabean Revolt is one of the more famous examples of this: the Maccabees successfully resisted the Hellenization that Antiochus IV sought to bring on them.

The word “musika” was imported into Hebrew about a thousand years ago, but there is ample literary proof that activities like singing and playing instruments were discussed in Hebrew for at least two thousand years *prior* to that. What does it look like to not have the concept of music? This chapter embarks on a Bible study, looking at words that have been translated as “music”. It appears things have been lost in this “translation”. The Hebrew thinking is rather down-to-earth, very concrete yet easily parabolic for this very reason. This is in strong contrast to the religious idealism and escapism found behind the music concept.

Chapter four also takes a look at New Testament Greek, in order to see whether or not the concept of music jumped in at that point. Ancient Hebrew did not carry it; but did early Christians do so? Based on a review of the New Testament, it seems they did not. The word *mousiké* is not used there, not even when playing or singing are the matter discussed. The lingo is, again, practical and descriptive. Musicians are mentioned once, but in a rather negative context,



and the word doesn't seem to mean instrumentalists because of context<sup>13</sup>. The concept of music stayed in use, not because of the rise of Christianity, but because of a Hellenist strand that stayed alive despite the historic shift, influencing early Christianity through Alexandrian thinkers (especially Philo) and writings. The Septuagint seems to have laid a foundation for this influence.

Chapter five reviews some ways that the concept of music shows in contemporary thought. These are grouped in two different groups, the "Neopythagoreans" (more or less obviously continuing Pythagorean thought and theories, such as the "harmony of spheres") and the "Redefiners" (who see the inherent problems in what the Neopythagoreans believe, and make various attempts to redefine the concept of music). But music is the utopian concept par excellence, and redefining it doesn't solve the problem. Removing it will.

Chapter six makes the case for vocabulary: it matters what we call things. Translation is crucial evidence for this. Linguistic relativism shows that language is more than mere code: it affects thought. Whether or not the concept of music is in use affects our mindset.

Chapter seven revisits the theme of chapter six and takes a look at the total work of art. In Wagner's *Artwork of the Future* we can see what the concept of music can lead to, if it is grown into a full blown world view – an ideal unity, a utopian globalism, the more monstrous the bigger it gets. Redefining the concept of music curbs such developments, but does not provide a real alternative. The third option is to discontinue the use of the concept of music entirely, cutting off the wings of ideal totalism.

Chapter eight presents a view into a world without the concept of music. This is decidedly anti-utopian, yet hopeful. To present these ideas, a conceptual history of music had to be outlined first. This took the bulk of the time and resources available for the written part of this dissertation. As a result, chapter eight is not very extensive. It begins to describe a world without the concept of music. It is a place where different forms of creative expression are understood better, and are also better combined, because dogmatic abstraction no longer hinders the understanding of their togetherness. This is particularly meaningful for the

13 Revelation 18:22.

performing arts and other areas that employ multiple means. This is where the starting point of this research (various “hybridities” of place, performer, and instrument) can be better understood. The term *ecological composition* is introduced as a conceptual tool for understanding the situation.

Chapter nine discusses the artistic component of this dissertation, *Töölönlahti: a Parable in Landscape*. This 55-minute essay film<sup>14</sup> focusses on the Töölönlahti Bay, located in central Helsinki, Finland, exploring its history, everyday goings-on in the area, as well as historic events such as the 1975 Conference on Security and Collaboration in Europe. With all this as their backdrop, four instrumentalists play simple site-specific improvisations in various locations around (and on) the Töölönlahti Bay.

The film is not meant to only be an illustration of the themes discussed here in the written component; neither is it independent of it. It is meant to complement the written component in a parabolic way, that is, to express the matter from its own viewpoint. I might even venture to say it is one possible translation of the written component.

14 By calling it a “film” I do not mean that the work was shot on film (although some archival materials originally were). *Töölönlahti: a Parable in Landscape* was shot, edited and finished in digital video. By calling it an “essay film” I wish to connect it with that genre. (“Video essay” generally means something quite different and “essay movie” just doesn’t sound right.)

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# 1 The Live 'Musician': More Than Just Sound

Jean-Francois Augoyard and Henri Torgue summed it up: “No sound event, musical or otherwise, can be isolated from the spatial and temporal conditions of its physical signal propagation”<sup>15</sup>.

Sound is always the result of something done to something somewhere.

In this chapter, I present my fascination with these three aspects, through reviewing artists and their works, including examples from my own practice.

We will start at the middle: the “something”, the object.

Next up is the “something done”, the action.

The exploration concludes with the “somewhere”, the site or environment.

These three “levels” easily interweave, for instance when an instrument fills an entire room, and could be thought of as an environment as well as an instrument (case in point: Ellen Fullman’s Long String Instrument).

## 1.1 Things That Make You Wonder

Experimental instruments bring to the forefront something that can be easily forgotten with more familiar instruments: sounds are made by doing something to something. When this interaction is unusual, it is highlighted, our perception of it is refreshed. When the action and the object are both very common – as they are when someone plays the piano in a normal fashion, for example – it is easier to forget *the act*, and hear “just the sound”. But even when it is forgotten, the action is still there. When an unusual sound-making invention is played, it makes us curious: what is that thing? What’s the player doing? How are those noises made?

15 Augoyard and Torgue, 4.

Bart Hopkin's titles *Gravikords, Whirlies & Pyrophones* (Ellipsis Arts, CD3630, 1998) and *Orbitones, Spoon Harps & Bellowphones* (Ellipsis Arts, CD3610, 1998) were nothing short of a revelation for me in February 2003, when I found them in the Turku public library's music department. Hopkin, an instrument builder and player, writer, and editor of the journal *Experimental Musical Instruments*<sup>16</sup>, presents a dizzying array of inventors and their sound-making gadgets in these books and the accompanying CDs. Besides better known ones like Harry Partch and Leon Theremin, I discovered other inventor-artist-instrument-builders like Ken Butler<sup>17</sup>, Ela Lamblin<sup>18</sup>, or Ellen Fullman<sup>19</sup>. I found a common characteristic in Butler's collage-guitars and violins, Lamblin's circus devices, and Fullman's Long String Instrument: they are sculptural works, that can also be used for performance purposes. For a sculpture student and a guitarist/bassist such as myself, these sculpture instruments were simply the best thing ever. By their works, Butler, Lamblin, and Fullman seemed to be saying that one could do *both at the same time*, and not just a combination, but something that has a unique quality, something that defies the categories of Western art. Are you a sculptor or are you a guitarist? Yes. Besides being sonic instruments, Butler's works are sculptural collages that can be, and are, shown in a conventional way in an exhibition.

16 "Bart Hopkin, musician and instrument designer," accessed 24 July, 2019, [www.barthopkin.com](http://www.barthopkin.com).

17 "Ken Butler's Hybrid Visions," accessed 24 July, 2019, <https://kenbutler.squarespace.com>.

18 "lelavision home," accessed 24 July, 2019, <http://lelavision.com>.

19 "Ellen Fullman," accessed 14 October, 2019, <https://www.ellenfullman.com>.



Ken Butler's collage-instruments. Photo: Ken Butler

Objects like these make us ask: what's that for? Can it be played? How does it work? What does it sound like?

Ela Lamblin's devices are made for extravagant performances on stage. Some of them, such as the Teetertone and the Violcano, are played in acrobatic ways.

Compared to Butler's repurposed collage instruments, Lamblin's devices make a show out of how they are played. It would be an exaggeration to say that Butler's guitar- and violinlike inventions are played "normally", but compared to them, Lamblin's devices bring more emphasis to the *how*. The act of playing the instrument-object is a circus or cabaret act.

A third variety of "a thing that makes you wonder" is when the instrument is almost *a place* in itself.

Ellen Fullman's Long String Instrument is an intriguing installation even when not played. I had the opportunity to see the LSI in person in Vancouver, Canada, in November 2005, where Fullman led an improvisation workshop at the

Western Front artist-run centre (this was done as part of the NOW Orchestra improvisation workshop series). The LSI was stretched between two walls in the “Grande Luxe” hall; it seemed to me as much a performance *site* as an instrument. The whole building was strung, as it were.

The Long String Instrument is played by walking along the strings, touching them with rosined fingers. The friction causes the strings to vibrate lengthwise – not sideways, as the strings of a guitar do when plucked. This way of exciting the strings brings out a unique sound that is very rich in harmonic content, resembling bowed string instruments.



Ellen Fullman playing the Long String Instrument. Photo: Robert Szkolnicki

Set between walls of a room, the LSI does three kinds of “thing-wonder”: the Butler variety of “what’s that thing?”, as well as the unusual action required to play it (as in Lamblin’s devices), and what could be called a site-specific variety of a “thing-wonder”: the way it relates to place, literally requiring a concrete connection to it.

In the autumn of 2003, in Toronto, I had the pleasure to meet Barry Prophet and Janice Pomer. Barry has built *percussion performance sculptures*, as he calls

them. Barry and Janice use them in their performances, combining percussion and dance.

Some of Barry's percussion performance sculptures use glass as the sonorous element. The Transparent Tone Arch is a metal structure in which numerous glass panes are suspended. The glass panes are struck with mallets. The panes are hung at all sides of the structure, so playing it requires moving around it; it's a sculpture that asks to be performed, and this happens through percussion and movement. The categories of sculpture and instrument, musical performance and dance are blurred.

Barry and Janice shared an interesting detail concerning the playing of this sculpture. The glass panes are hung from the top end, allowing freer resonance; but this means that they swing somewhat when played. Playing swinging glass panes requires a different technique from playing more normal, relatively static percussion. The swinging of the panes has also had a visual consequence: once, when the sculpture was used in a theatrical setting, a lighting designer figured out a way to make the glass panes change colour depending on their angle. When a pane swung one way, it would reflect one colour, and as it swung back, it would reflect another.<sup>20</sup>

I see an interesting uniqueness in all of these examples. It is a uniqueness that arises from hybridity. That notion challenges both modernist and postmodernist ideas at the same time.

The modernist ideal of autonomy insisted on the lack of reference to anything external. Representation, implying a relation to the external world, was held as slavery that deprives the work of identity. Uniqueness meant freedom from the world of relation and reference. On the other hand, the "fluid" identities of post-modernism resort to the other extreme, all reference and no self, all construction and no base; the idealist uniqueness has gained a world of relativity but lost itself.

What Butler's, Lamblin's, Fullman's and Prophet's works all have is a *hybrid uniqueness*, a paradoxical quality of being both unique and not. A hammer or axe made into a violin-size bowed instrument, that even fits into a violin case, is unlike a hand tool, and unlike a violin, but *also* clearly *like* those objects, at the same time. The same situation is present in the other examples given above. The Teetertone is like a bicycle, like a cranelift, but at the same time unlike

20 Janice Pomer and Barry Prophet, interviewed by the author in Toronto, Canada, October 2003.

them. The Long String Instrument and the Transparent Tone Arch resemble some conventional objects and instruments, but are also unlike them. There is a simultaneity of sameness and difference, not just one or the other. These instruments, sculptures, devices, whatever they get called, very happily refer to things like them, but also are very clearly unlike those things.

This is a very slippery idea, because it can be applied to pretty much anything. A book is like a bird: open it in the middle, flap the two halves, and isn't it as if it has wings? On the other hand, isn't a book so very unlike a bird, for if closed, in its rectangularity, isn't it much more like a *brick*? What a paradox! Isn't a book such a unique thing, bearing both sameness and difference!

Clearly we *can* point out this sort of uniqueness in many things, maybe even in most of them. But the mere possibility isn't what I'm getting at. I think that in the instrument sculpture inventions discussed above, the quality is somehow accentuated. Perhaps, as contradicting recognitions grow stronger, hybrid uniqueness is amplified? In Butler's objects, we can easily identify the source materials, the repurposed objects; and we can, with equal ease, identify what they now have become – a “violin”, “cello”, or a “guitar”. But both recognitions “fail”, and this failure takes us to a gap in our vocabulary, to a very poetic need of refashioning words. Most instrument inventors seem to also invent names for their devices, many by coining some variation of the *-phone* variety (Lamblin's *Stamenophone*; Barry Hall's *Flowerpotophone*; Hans Reichel's *Daxophone*, etc.). Some retain a hybrid portmanteau sensibility in the naming, too – in Lamblin's *Violcano* a viol(in) meets a volcano.

The failure in question is the failure to categorize. In *No Strings Attached*, a short documentary, Butler mentions the difficulty some [art dealers] have with his work: the objects are functional, they can in fact be played – and because of this use value they hesitate to call them fine art<sup>21</sup>.

An encounter with hybrid uniqueness requires a question. In Merleau-Ponty's terms, the art dealers' difficulty in their encounter is that they're asking the schoolmaster question: requiring from the encountered thing an answer that the asker already knows. It is the question mode of taxonomy, of categorizing, of dealing with a world that must be the way I say it is. Merleau-Ponty describes the painter's question as the opposite:

21 *No strings attached*, produced and edited by Emon Hassan, watched on Vimeo.com 29 January, 2014, <https://vimeo.com/53534472>.



*And so it is not a question asked of someone who doesn't know by someone who does - the schoolmaster question. The question comes from one who does not know, and it is addressed to a vision, a seeing, which knows everything and which we do not make, for it makes itself in us.<sup>22</sup>*

### *Univalve (2004)*

Inspired by Hopkin's books and the examples discussed above, I laboured to produce my own version in 2004, as my graduation project in the Art Academy of Turku Polytechnic University. The project, "Univalve", was an exhibition of five sound sculptures, installed in a black box space, and illuminated by a specially designed lighting sequence. I was a student in the sculpture department, which has a strong bronze casting tradition. Many opportunities to explore the process of traditional bronze casting were provided. I embraced these during my time there, and for my graduating show I used bronze in three of the five sculptures. One of them is called *Vaskikannel* ("bronze kantele", kantele, or kannel, being a Finnish folk instrument, a zither).



Pessi Parviainen: *Vaskikannel* (2003-2004), bronze, tuning machines, guitar strings, contact microphone. Photo: Pessi Parviainen

22 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind", in *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: basic writings*, ed. Thomas Baldwin (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 299.

The *Vaskikannel* is about 65 centimeters long. Although it is hollow, it weighs over twenty kilograms, meaning that it has to be set on a sturdy table or plinth to be played. It has ten guitar strings, guitar tuning heads, and is equipped with a contact mic. The design wasn't made for any particular tuning in mind, but because the strings' lengths are very close to the open strings of a guitar, guitar strings are used, and pitches according to the gauges (a .011" string is tuned to a pitch near the 'e' of a guitar's first string, a sounding one-line 'e', for example). The body seems to have a very pronounced metallic timbre with a mid range resonance peak, so unlike well-made acoustic instruments, it sounds like it wants to sing only in a very limited range. Outside that resonance range, the sound is less effective.

The *Vaskikannel* can be played in a variety of ways, by plucking, bowing, or percussively. I have found that it also makes nice sounds when seeds are sown on it: I tried this with sunflower seeds. The seeds can hit many of the strings at once, causing a rain-like effect.

Another sculpture instrument from the aforementioned graduation show is the *Nervehelm*, which is a welded steel helmet with protruding steel spikes. It, too, is



Pessi Parviainen: *Nervehelm* (2004), welded steel, contact microphone. Photo: Pessi Parviainen

equipped with a contact microphone. The *Nervehelm* can be played percussively, or by bowing the spikes with a violin bow.

“Things that make you wonder” draw attention to the visual, tactile, material aspect of musicianship and sound-making. Sound is never sound itself, never a standalone object for static contemplation: it is always caused by something done to something somewhere (to paraphrase Augoyard and Torgue). This is inevitably the case for even musique concrete and electroacoustic music. The examples described above highlight this in a special way.

By discussing *things that make you wonder*, I have started in the middle of “something done to something somewhere”, at the “physical signal propagation”. The next section deals with the ‘something’ preceding it, the something that is *done*.

## 1.2 Acts That Make You Wonder (Or at Least Laugh)

When the “something done” is emphasized or unusual, it can draw attention to the *how*. Often the *how* is called interpretation, at least when it comes to classical compositions: a good performer interprets the composer’s work well. But the classical idea of interpretation deserves to be asked: why must the work be interpreted “well”, and who decides what that means? This is a more or less dogmatic question. What I’m getting at here is something more, and at the same time more basic – simply the way the playing is done. It can easily be “more than sound”: visual, theatrical.

Robert Schumann wrote of Franz Liszt:

*“Within a few seconds, tenderness, boldness, exquisiteness, wildness succeed one another; the instrument glows and flashes under the master’s hands. . . . He must be heard and also seen; for if Liszt played behind a screen a great deal of poetry would be lost.”*<sup>23</sup>

Keith Jarrett speaks in a similar tone as he describes witnessing Miles Davis play:

23 Robert Schumann, *On Music and Musicians* (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1969), 156.

“When I see Miles play a note, how he comes at that note is not on a CD, you know?”<sup>24</sup>

How one comes at the notes one plays is a display of the relationship between the presenter and that which is presented. “Look at how I do this.” *How* and *what* not being separate: a simultaneity of the sonic and the visual, gestural, theatrical, “the musician as more than just sound”.

When such a presentation focusses on the *how*, there seems to be a modal paradox: the performance that has the purpose of soundmaking is actually intended to be seen. It is easier to do with songs or compositions that are familiar to the audience: the focus can be less on *what* and more on *how*. This is what Spike Jones did, and he called it (among other things) *musical depreciation*.

Spike Jones (1911 – 1965), an American bandleader, percussionist and arranger, was known for his unusual and comical percussion schtick. He would play pots and pans, shoot in the air with revolvers, and play melodies with car horns, and so on. This kind of unusual percussion shares a quality with the “things that make you wonder” – sound is highlighted as action by using an unusual *object*; in Jones’ case, not unique sculptural objects, but conventional objects in unconventional use<sup>25</sup>. But besides the unusual percussion, in the Spike Jones TV shows we can find unusual use of even conventional musical instruments: using them as tools for visual gags. Such instruments are not unusual in the way unique sculpture-objects are, nor are they found outside of their usual context like Jones’ percussion gear; but employing their visuality and tactility says (like using extraordinary sculptural objects or repurposed household objects) that they are not only ‘musical’ instruments, but can have a variety of uses. Examples can be found in numbers like *Black and Blue Danube Waltz*<sup>26</sup>. The cellist keeps on playing after some kind of firecrackers go off and smoke starts to come out of the soundholes. Later, tubular bells fall apart when Jones plays them.

24 *Miles electric: a different kind of blue*, directed by Murray Lerner (USA: Eagle Rock Entertainment, 2004)

25 On the other hand, we could look at Jones’ often-featured “percussion tree”, consisting of various bells, horns and other objects as a sort of a sculptural instrument.

26 “Musical Wreck-we-um,” Disc 2, *The Best of Spike Jones*, directed by Dick Bennett, Dik Darley, Ernest D. Gluksman (USA: SJ2 Entertainment, 2016), DVD.

In the Spike Jones Show, it does seem to be an exception, though, that a visual gag is done with the instrument in question actually played. More often, the playing we hear is played by someone off screen, and the visual gag is synchronized with it. Such seems to be the case with the bubblegum act in *Pass the Biscuits, Mirandy*<sup>27</sup>. A bass clarinet player blows a chewing gum bubble out of the bell of his horn, and it appears he does this by blowing in the horn; but the sound we hear sounds more like a tenor sax than a clarinet of any sort. (Not to mention that in order to get air out of the bell, one needs to close all fingerholes and play the lowest note on the instrument, but we see the clarinetist playing a busy melody.)

But isn't this cheating? How can a visual prank be even considered musicianship, if the act doesn't even involve the actual making of the sounds that are heard? Interestingly, this example from the analog era brings us to the current debate around liveness and digital instruments: digital musicianship is contested because digitally produced sounds are not necessarily identifiable as consequences of the performer's actions. A common accusation is that a stage performer using a laptop computer as their sound source could just as well be checking their email.

I believe the debate misses the point, when liveness is equated with understanding the causation of the sounds that are heard. This could be partly the fault of the word *performance*. Its etymology implies the completion of a task, seeing something through to its finish. But a live performance can also be thought of as a *presentation* – which, considering the root of the word, is the giving of a *gift*.

A living person on a stage gives the audience a gift. What matters is that the receivers of the gift can make the connection: that's the giver, and that's the gift. There's no need to *perceive* a direct causation, just the need to make the connection. If I send someone a gift, I don't need to be handing it over personally for them to understand that it is a gift from me. I can have the gift delivered. The receiver realizes, by reading the card, or hearing the words sung by the flower courier, that the gift was from me. The connection between the presentation (the gift) and the presenter (the giver of the gift) is made. It is a matter of communication, not technical causation.

In the same way, the gift of live performance can be delivered by audio playback, as long as we understand it as a gift given by the presenter. This is what an air guitarist does; this is what many of Spike Jones' comedy pranks relied on.

27 "Pass the biscuits, Mirandy," Disc 2, *The Best of Spike Jones*.

This is also a solution to the debate around liveness and digital instruments. It doesn't matter much whether or not the audience understands the *technical* connection between interface, processing, and sound propagation; what matters is the communication between presenter and audience. For a gift to be understood as a gift, the receiver must be given a way to make the connection between the gift and its giver. That's what "look how I do this" can accomplish in its explicit triangulation of giver, gift, and recipient.

Parody seems to be a very common strategy for highlighting the 'how'. If the *musical depreciation* that Spike Jonesenheimer und The City Schnitzels offered can be likened to frenetic circus stunts and screwball comedy, a more subtle and even *appreciative* style was what Victor Borge (1909 – 2000) was known for. Among his many tricks and routines were stunts such as continuing to play a fast run beyond the piano keyboard, resulting in him flying off the stool to the ground; adapting typical hand movements of various occupations into piano playing gestures (medical doctor palpitations, shoe shiner slaps and brushing...); and so on. But in all this he communicated a fondness for his instrument; where Spike Jones was "murdering the classics", laughing *at* the conventions of classical (and pop) music<sup>28</sup>, Borge was more in the attitude of laughing *with* them, conveying an appreciation for the trade of the concert pianist.

Musical parody is very common in popular culture – Weird Al Yankowicz, Frank Zappa, Flight of the Conchords, the Finnish comedy group *Kummeli*, just to name a few – but it is most often a matter of imitating style, adapting lyrics in a humorous way, and so on. Musical parody tends to use the same devices as that which it parodies; it is the artists' person and the songs that usually get parodied. It is less common that musicianship itself, with its actions, gestures, conventions, features, is the subject of parody. Borge was joking about, and with, all of us who have something to do with Western classical music and its conventions. Often the pieces he used for his act were familiar to the masses, from *Minute Waltz* to *Moonlight Sonata*; material that countless piano students have tackled.

28 What makes Jones' renditions "murderous" is the aversion towards adaptations in the realm of classical music. In comparison, in the world of theatre (and cinema), an outrageous adaptation of a classic play would not easily be called a "murder". Instead, adaptations that feature significant differences to the original have become commonplace (Shakespeare plays adapted to a contemporary setting, etc.).

A contemporary example in the Borge style is the violin and piano duo Igudesman & Joo (Alexey Igudesman and Hyung-Ki Joo)<sup>29</sup>.

The parodists of musicianship highlight the 'how', but *Stomp* (by Luke Cresswell and Steve McNicholas) takes it stage centre. The compositions are precisely choreographed, but paradoxically do not matter as much as the way they are performed. Who would go to *listen* to *Stomp*? The "look how I do this" - factor is the show's central draw. Recalling Barry Prophet's term *percussion performance sculpture*, it seems like *Stomp* takes that approach to everyday objects - even basketballs and brooms can be approached like 'percussion performance sculptures'.

This approach is found also in the short film *Music for One Apartment and Six Drummers* (2001) and the feature film *Sound of Noise* (2010), both directed by Ola Simonsson and Johannes Stjärne Nilsson. In the former, a group of people wait patiently in a Volvo outside a Swedish apartment building, and once the residents leave, they enter and play each room, using the objects found there as instruments. As in *Stomp*, rhythm is emphasized. The soundtrack doesn't seem to be a live recording, but one gets the impression that this is not a fictional fabrication. The audio postproduction is not making a promise a live version would not be able to keep; rather, it makes a suggestion: you could do this with your room.

In the field of Composed Theatre the roles of musician, actor and dancer can be seen combined in various ways, even to the point where all would seem to apply to a performer at once. David Roesner relates Composed Theatre to the post-dramatic shift in theatre, where alternatives to text as dramaturgical basis have been sought<sup>30</sup>. He sees "a strong connection between what Lehmann calls the musicalisation of theatre (Lehmann 2006: 91 - 93) and [...] Composed Theatre"<sup>31</sup>. However, Composed Theatre is not a genre: "it is more a frame or a lens that brings quite disparate phenomena in view and collocates them. At the centre of this frame, the focus is on creation processes that bring the musical notion of composing to the theatrical aspects of performing and staging."<sup>32</sup>

29 "Igudesman & Joo," accessed 14 October, 2019, <http://www.igudesmanandjoo.com>.

30 Matthias Rebstock and David Roesner, eds., *Composed Theatre: Aesthetics, Practices, Processes* (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2012), 9.

31 *Ibid.*, 10.

32 *Ibid.*, 11.

I will mention two examples of Composed Theatre that I have had the opportunity to experience.

*Eraritjaritjaka*, produced by Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne and directed by Heiner Goebbels, was performed during the International New Music Festival NYFD, in the Salme Cultural Centre, Tallinn, Estonia, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of October, 2009.

*“Eraritjaritjaka– which, in one of the Aboriginal languages, refers to the feeling of being filled with desire for something that is lost – combines music, voice, movement, design and video to create a critic and poetic world, inspired by the thoughts of Elias Canetti, Nobel Prizewinner for literature, and featuring the actor André Wilms and the Mondriaan Quartet.”*<sup>33</sup>

The string quartet did not do anything out of ordinary. I do not recall them speaking any lines or moving in unusual ways – they were simply doing their part as a string quartet. But the way they were a part of the complex theatrical presentation gave their “normal” functioning something extra, something cinematic. At times, the quartet played inside a house that was part of the set. At times, I wasn’t sure if this was a video projection or live performance. It seemed to me that the interplay of the quartet and other elements of the performance made the players more than what they would have been, had they simply been playing a concert. The “how” element, in this case, was how the players related to the rest of the show. It was a hybrid *situation* or *place* (the first of the three kinds of hybridity listed in the Introduction), akin to the site-specific cases discussed in the next subchapter (1.3 Where it All Happens), albeit on stage, rather than in an uncontrolled environment.

During the Sound und Performance Congress at the University of Bayreuth, in Bayreuth, Germany, in October 2012, Clemens Sienknecht led a group of students in performing *A Work in Kongress*. The show employed clever interplay between live performance and audio playback, with great accuracy. Well-known pop songs had been skillfully edited, replacing original words with “Bayreuth”: “I’m an Englishman in Bayreuth” (Sting), “Big in Bayreuth” (Alphaville). Sienknecht was the conductor of the show, playing piano and interacting with a vinyl record player

33 “Eraritjaritjaka - Musée des Phrases | Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne,” accessed 14 October, 2019, <https://vidy.ch/en/eraritjaritjaka-musee-des-phrases>.



on stage, the device acting as a prop for the sound files played from off-stage. To my recollection, the student orchestra played and sang “normally”, not having actorly tasks. The performance came across as a parodic pop song cycle, using *The Final Countdown* by Europe as “bookends” framing the whole thing.

*A Work in Kongress* was a small-scale production compared to the amazing complexity of *Eraritjaritjaka*. Its general ambiance was also very different, a humorous vaudeville air, clever and entertaining, whereas the latter was erudite and surreal, more ponderous. The similarity is that in *A Work in Kongress* the playing (and singing) were quite “normal”, but the theatricality of the situation made it something more. The context affected and enhanced the “how”.



Performers from left to right: Jarno Sakki, Ville Kurki, Pessi Parviainen. Photo: Dave Berg

### *Lämmi (2010)*

In August 2010, I collaborated with director-dramaturg Ville Kurki and artist Jarno Sakki to present *Lämmi* (“Slapshot”), a street hockey show, as part of a live art event at the Mustikkamaa Summer Theatre (Mustikkamaan kesäteatteri) in Helsinki.

The show had its inspiration in a common gesture that hockey players make, if they score a goal – imitating guitar playing with the stick. I thought: that could be done for real. During Spring 2010, I made an electric guitar out of a hockey goalie stick, and a similar fretless bass. Both have three strings and electric guitar pickups. I outfitted them with wireless transmitters. The sticks remained usable as hockey sticks, but they now received new functionality as electric instruments.

In the show a game of one on one was played. Because the show was outdoors in August, we used floorball (indoor bandy) balls instead of hockey pucks.

There were no rehearsals, so we kept the rules simple. The game was limited to a duration of about ten minutes. The objective of each player was to score goals. If a goal was scored, the player had to celebrate it by playing the stick.



Performer: Jarno Sakki. Photo: Dave Berg

Also, at any point, the referee had the right to request any song to be played, by one or both players. The referee could also alter the rules at any point, making the game bear some resemblance to *calvinball* in Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes*.



Performers from left to right: Ville Kurki, Jarno Sakki, Pessi Parviainen. Photo: Dave Berg



Performers from left to right: Pessi Parviainen, Jarno Sakki, Ville Kurki. Photo: Dave Berg



Performers from left to right: Jarno Sakki, Pessi Parviainen, Ville Kurki. Photo: Dave Berg

The sticks make noises even when used for the hockey purpose, just like a normal electric guitar would if it was dragged on the ground and it collided with objects. The pliability of the hockey sticks adds a vibrato effect, resembling the use of a vibrato bar.

In the case of *Lämmi*, the “how” aspect came from the dual application of the instruments. Admittedly, the instruments aren’t particularly great in either of the applications – as hockey sticks, they’re a bit unwieldy because of the strings, frets and extra weight on them; and as guitar and bass, they’re too wobbly and tough to keep in tune. But this only added to the comedy of the whole thing.

### 1.3 Where it all happens

In “something done to something somewhere”, the third and remaining part to discuss is the “somewhere”, corresponding to Augoyard and Torgue’s “spatial and temporal conditions of the signal propagation” (but not exclusively: the “something done” is arguably a temporal condition, too).

The way sound-making literally *takes place*, its environmental relationship, can display “the musician as more than just sound”. I will describe this through a few examples: *Konela* by Jukka Perko and Samuli Kosminen, *Harmonic Fields* by Pierre Sauvageot and Lieux Publics, and *From Dawn till Dusk: Wanderings in Orbit* by myself.

*Konela* is the title of a site-specific concert by saxophonist Jukka Perko and percussionist Samuli Kosminen. Designed to take place in a metal workshop, it has been performed in 2006 in Suomenlinna (Helsinki) and in 2008 in Räämsö, Finland. The title refers to the Finnish word for machine, “kone”, and the suffix “-la” lends the word the meaning of a place. A rough English approximation would perhaps be “Machineville” (although the *-la* suffix does not necessarily imply a town or city, as *-ville* implies).

I had the pleasure to be in the audience for the second installment of *Konela* in Räämsö, which is a village in rural Southern Finland. Räämsö is vivacious in its cultural life, much beyond its small means. During 1991 – 2005 the residents organized a festival commemorating old agricultural machines, called Kowan Teknolokian Päivät (“Days of Hard Technology”). The machines have very distinctive sounds, and a CD featuring close-miked multitrack recordings of them was produced by the company Fantom Post Oy (in 2003?).

Besides the recording, the distinctive and endangered noises of the old combustion engines inspired two live concerts in which the machines were used, *Konela* by Perko and Kosminen, and *Maamoottorisinfonia* by accordionist Kimmo Pohjonen.

August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008 was a rainy and overcast day, but Räämsö had a nostalgic air about it. There was a sense of the whole village pitching in and doing their part, many volunteers contributing to the atmosphere of hospitality. There was a parking area, from which a bus connection to the performance site of *Konela* was arranged. The vintage Volvo B58 bus, maybe from the 1960s or 1970s, enhanced the yesteryear feeling even more.

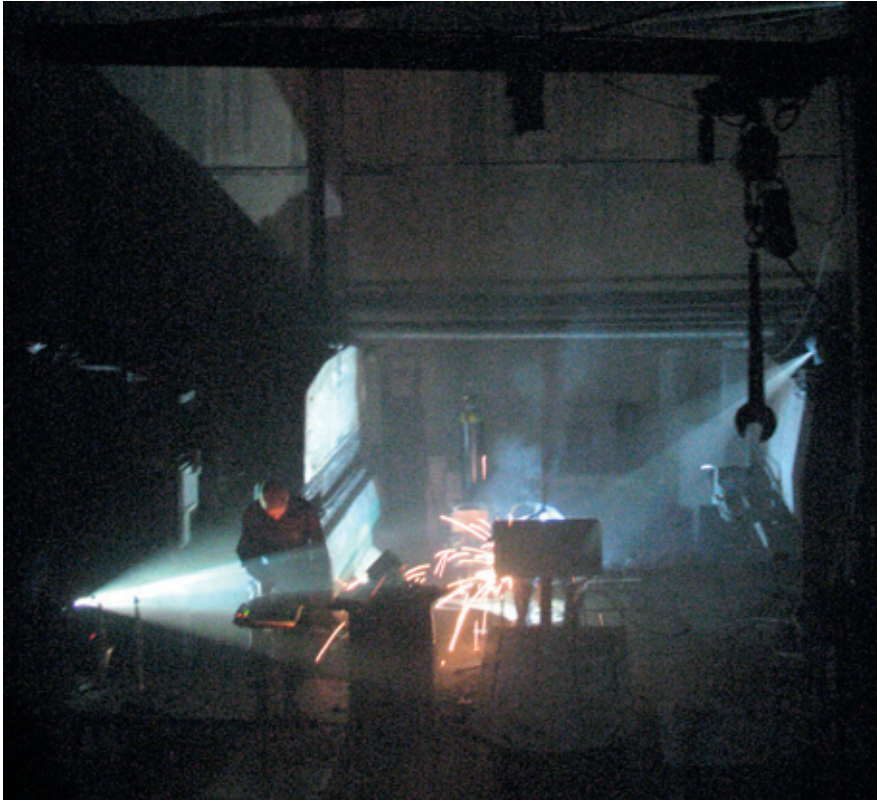
The bus arrived at the metal workshop, a fairly large corrugated steel structure sitting on an unpaved yard, full of little puddles from the day’s rain. After a while, a huge door on its side was opened, the audience were let in, and I found myself climbing up the rows of temporary benches erected for the spectators on one side of the hall.



Photo: Pessi Parviainen

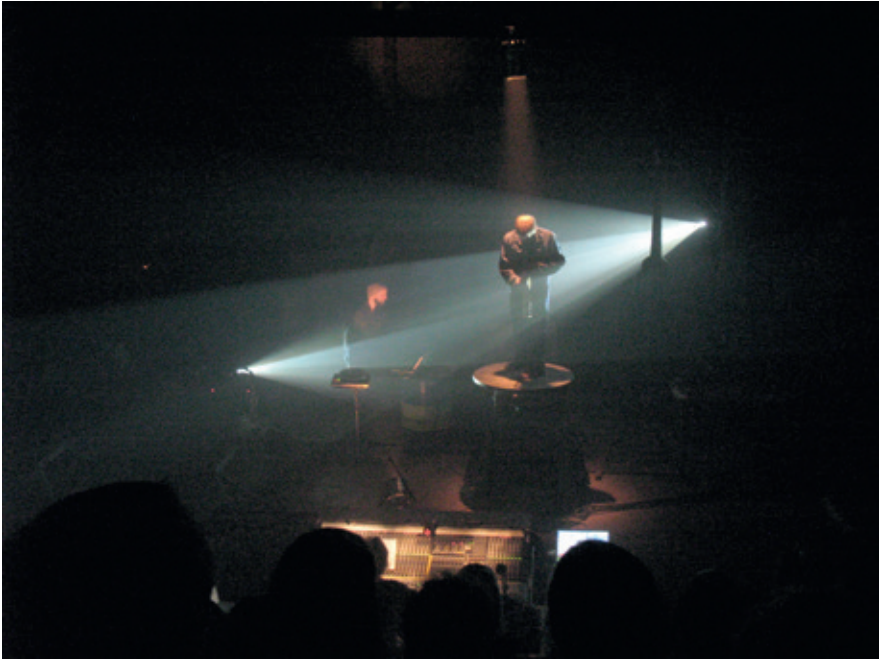
Inside, the lighting was low, theatre lighting revealing some select areas and machines. There seemed to be several large workstations – some drills, presses, pneumatic hammers, lifts, a bender, something that looked like a lathe. A worker (Mr. Eino Stenvik) arrived, as if to begin a day's work at the workshop. He sat down, enjoyed some coffee from his thermos, read the newspaper. Then he went to one of the metalworking machines and began to work on something. It wasn't clear what he was doing. After some while, Kosminen joined in, using various electronic instruments, perhaps samplers and MIDI percussion to trigger the samples, perhaps live processing of signals from contact microphones installed in the workshop's machines. In the dimly lit hall, it wasn't very clear what was used.

The worker, who had arrived first, moved from the machine he'd used to stage centre and began to weld, behind a protective plate.



Performers from left to right: Samuli Kosminen, Eino Stenvik; lighting designer: Antti Rehtijärvi.  
Photo: Pessi Parviainen

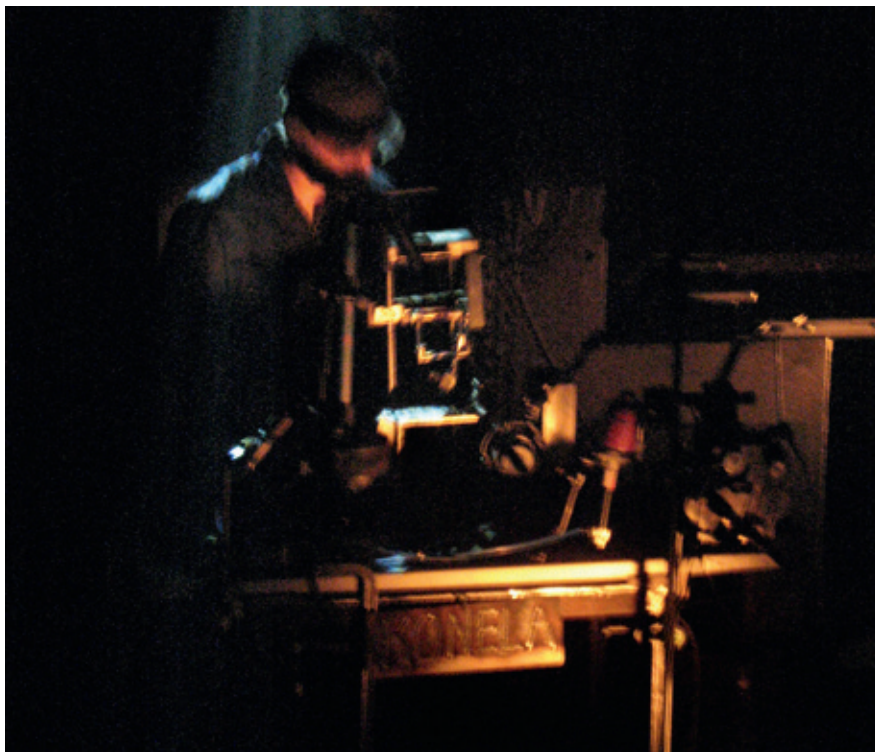
A bit later, Perko appeared into the fairly industrial soundscape with his miked saxophone. At one point, Perko stood on one of the lifts, which raised him about a meter above the floor and rotated him this way and that.



Performers from left to right: Samuli Kosminen, Jukka Perko; lighting designer: Antti Rehtijärvi.  
Photo: Pessi Parviainen

We then found out what the welder had done: he'd written KONELA on a plate. Still fuming a bit, the sign was hung in front of Kosminen's "soundstation", which seemed to have some pneumatic devices and microphones.





Performer: Samuli Kosminen; lighting designer: Antti Rehtijärvi. Photo: Pessi Parviainen

I can't remember how long it was before the unexpected happened. A massive door, the size of the entire wall of the workshop, opened, and a forester machine began to enter the space. It was like a large tractor, wielding a menacing chainsaw at the end of a terrifying hydraulic arm. Engine growling, it made threatening movements, swinging the chainsaw back and forth. We saw no driver: the headlights were too bright. Perko engaged in a duel with it, man against machine, alto sax versus treecutter. The sax had a harmonizer/pitch bender effect added to its sound; combined with the roars of the attacking mechanical monster, the air was filled with tearing noises. The smell of exhaust wafted in. Then, the monster gave up and backed off. The wall was closed, the noises gradually receding. Perko received an applause for his heroism.



Performer: Jukka Perko; lighting designer: Antti Rehtijärvi. Photo: Pessi Parviainen

I recall the remainder of the performance as the most peaceful and melodic part of the show. There were ambientish segments, leading to a quiet ending where, Perko and Kosminen having left the workshop/stage already, the lone worker went through the motions of wrapping up his workday. He took off his gloves and welding glasses, packed his thermos in his rucksack and left.

In *Konela*, what, where and how were so interwoven, it is hard to imagine parts of the show presented out of context. The context was *played*; taking the playing out of context would seem to be fairly impossible, and even if some excerpt could be uprooted from the metal workshop, it would be an orphan needing a new home. It was as if the relationship between the players and the place was an instrument. Certainly this relationship was more than sonic; it was visual, spatial, gestural, even historical. The machines, used in the village for the livelihood of the residents, were the objects of local history around which the event was at first organized; *Konela* took this as its starting point, but went further with it.<sup>34</sup>

34 *Konela* could certainly be described as Composed Theatre.

And what if the environment is the one that does the playing? Three years after seeing *Konela*, I was visiting Copenhagen and stumbled upon a poster:

**METROPOLIS 2011 præsentierer**  
**HARMONIC FIELDS**  
**- Vindsymphoni for 500 instrumenter**  
**13-21 august Amager Strand**

Harmonic Fields, *Champ Harmonique* in the original French, “a wind symphony for a moving audience and 500 instruments”<sup>35</sup>, is composed by Pierre Sauvageot and produced by Lieux Publics (Marseille, France). First presented in Martigues, France in 2010, the large scale outdoor installation has toured several locations in Europe.

On August 13<sup>th</sup>, I headed for Amager Strand. After a short walk from the Metro station, I found the public beach where the installation was spread. There was no formal reception; just a sign greeting the visitor and encouraging attentive listening, while discouraging photography, the use of mobile phones and loud discussion. At the entrance area, I saw that preparations were being made for an opening night reception, a catering service setting up their goods in a large tent.

I entered the installation area, which turned out to be quite large, perhaps three hundred meters along the beach, reaching about a hundred meters in from the shore. There really were hundreds of wind-powered devices, all making their own sorts of sounds. It would take an undue amount of space to describe them all here; but there seemed to be at least three types of them, and these I will briefly review.

Many of the instruments used a propeller that caught the wind, which was plentiful that day at Amager Strand; the propeller's rotation drove an axle, to which various hammers and things were attached. They, in turn, would strike glockenspiel keys, pieces of bamboo, drums, and so on.

Other instruments had air chambers with narrow openings – gourds, bamboo rods. As the wind blew over the openings, flute-like sounds were produced. These

35 “Champ Harmonique de Pierre Sauvageot - Lieux Publics,” accessed 14 October, 2019, <https://www.lieuxpublics.com/en/actes-artistiques/13/champ-harmonique>.

sounds were only audible at a fairly close range. The propeller-driven instruments were much louder.

Thirdly, there were instruments that caught the wind by a long string or tape. These were the most surprising: long tapes, stretched maybe ten meters wide and quite loose, made oscillating pulses not unlike what might come out of an analog synthesizer.

A particularly striking part of the installation was a circle of long poles, to which cellos and drums were attached. Long strings or cables were stretched over the resonating bodies. The result was a gradually shifting drone that was very rich in harmonics. The circle was made on a grassy patch, a short distance away from the shore. On the grass, there were mattresses. I lay down to enjoy the acoustic 24-channel surround sound (there were 24 instruments that formed the circle). The drones shifted every now and then, at times reaching a deep resonance, at times being noticeably lighter. The grassy area had a bit of an edge to it, forming some shelter from the steadily plentiful wind, making it easier to focus on hearing the drones.

I found *Champ Harmonique* to be a very pleasant place. I wandered around the area for over an hour, maybe two. There were more and more people visiting the installation as the evening progressed, but it seemed there were not more than a few dozen people at once. I noticed a few people wearing robes and Asian conical straw hats, walking slowly with long bamboo sticks in their hands. I approached them and asked if they were part of the installation. They seemed reluctant to talk, but informed me that they were indeed part of *Champ Harmonique*: they were the guardians of sound. Their job was to protect an atmosphere of listening. These were the enforcers of the recommendations on the sign at the entrance. It seemed, though, that they didn't play tough with these roles – I guess they were there in case anyone needed assistance. I never noticed any restriction enforced; people (like me) were taking photos here and there, but nothing happened to them.

As the evening grew dark, I noticed some torches were lit at the tent near the entrance. I decided to investigate, and found the catering operational and the opening reception in full swing. The food and drink were superb.

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What does *Champ Harmonique* have to do with considering musicians as more than just sound?

It is a case of using instruments deliberately in such a way that is not possible without the environment. The devices could be brought in a concert hall, and used to produce sounds in various ways, but what the wind brings out of them is only heard when they are exposed to the wind. This is rather obvious. Why state the obvious? Because what we have here is an emphasis on the relativity of sound-making. Even in a concert hall, sounds are made in relation to and with the (built) environment, but it is as if the events were isolated from the rest of the world. In the concert hall the emphasis is on focus and isolation, whereas *Champ Harmonique* emphasizes connection. It is a reminder: sound is a relationship. And not only sonic: as in the case of *Konela*, *Champ Harmonique* is in a visual, spatial, temporal relationship with the place where it is installed – more than just sound.

What *Champ Harmonique* expressed in a wonderful way had been on my mind for years. From thinking about sculpture as something sonic it is a short and logical step to consider matter as sonic. That step brings in the issue of the environment. If I look at matter from a sonic angle, everyday objects suddenly become possible instruments, mundane tasks can be revealed as curious sound-making actions, and the spaces I inhabit, visit or move through are either resonant or dampening or something in between.

I began to explore the possibilities of an environmental relationship in various works during 2004 and 2005. These were made in the context of performance art.

At about the same time, I became interested in acoustic ecology. I felt it to be close to my sculpture-based thoughts about sonicity; and combined with that, as an aspiring composer, I found the ideas concerning the soundscape quite fascinating – how all sound could be thought of as music and therefore material for composition. This idea has some very serious faults, and I will deal with them in the following chapters; but as a field of inquiry that tries to take a holistic approach to sound and the environment, acoustic ecology appeals to those who are not satisfied with disciplinary borders.

*From Dawn Till Dusk: Wanderings in Orbit (2008)*

I studied in the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, during 2005 – 2007. In 2007 I participated in the activities of The Vancouver Soundwalk Collective. The collective’s soundwalks introduced me to the compositional possibilities of this wonderfully simple form: a soundwalk is simply a walk that is done in the purpose of listening to the environment. In 2008, Vancouver New Music organized *Vancouver Vibrates*, a festival presenting several of the works of R. Murray Schafer. The Soundwalk Collective took part by designing a special series of soundwalks. I composed one of them, *From Dawn Till Dusk: Wanderings in Orbit*. It was loosely inspired by Schafer’s *Music for Wilderness Lake* – only loosely because I hadn’t seen the work performed, nor the short film made of it. But I had heard that the composition features brass players around a small lake, and a conductor standing in a boat in the middle of it, using signal flags to guide the performance. This sounded like fun, and I knew a place in Vancouver that would be suitable for something similar: Trout Lake in East Vancouver, near the Commercial Drive SkyTrain station. The lake is small, quite oval in shape, and has a little beach and paths all around it – perfect for placing players all around its shores.

I had been thinking about a “live sequencer”, that is, a row of musicians playing a melody in bucket brigade style, one note per person.

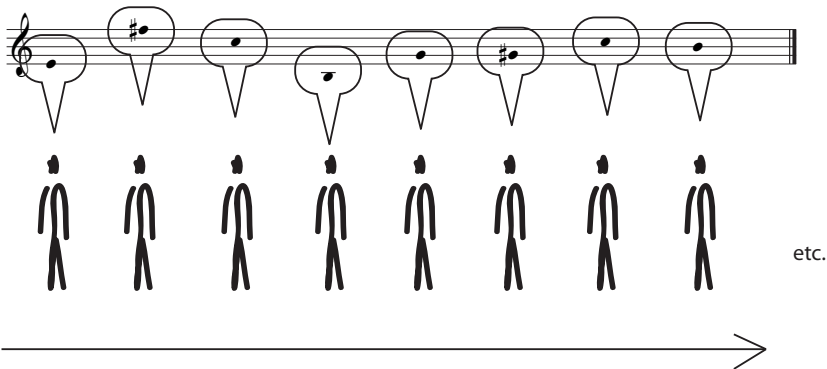


Illustration: Pessi Parviainen

I realised the row could be done in a circle formation, so that a melody would travel around Trout Lake.



Trombonist Blythe Polreis in “From Dawn Till Dusk: Wanderings in Orbit”. Photo: Jacky Sawatzky

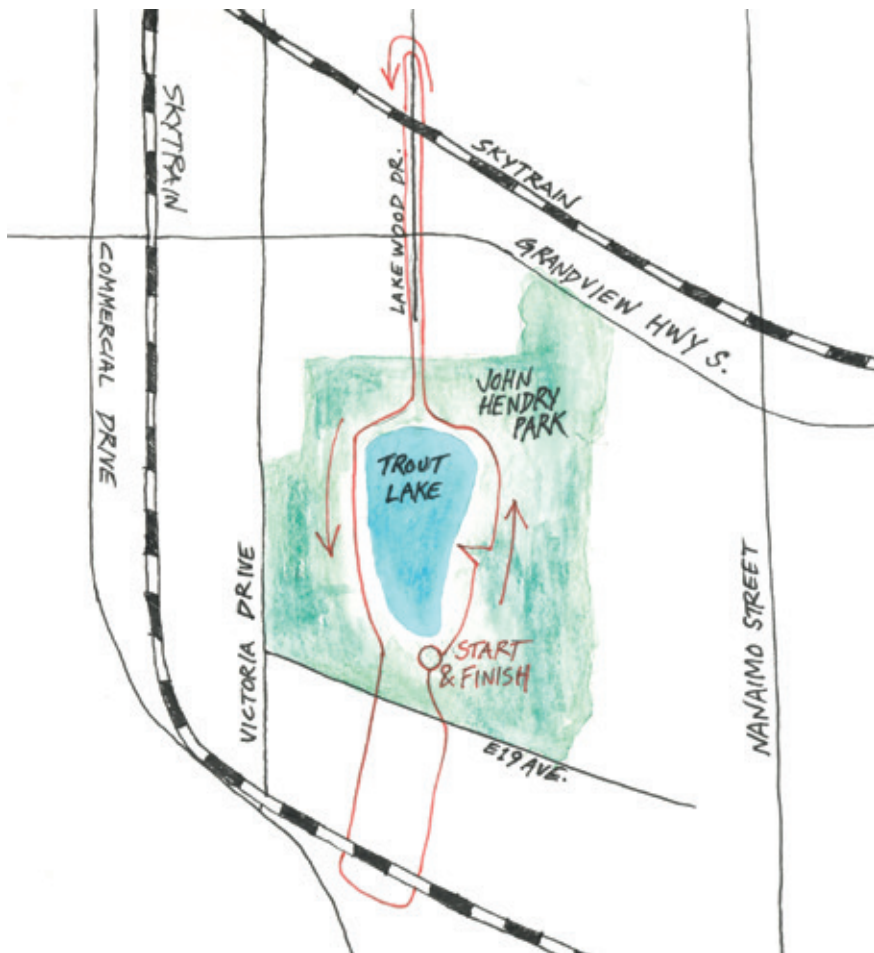
In *From Dawn Till Dusk*, the musicians were stationed around Trout Lake and played a simple sequence-based composition, which consisted in playing improvised notes, one at a time, in turns, and a written chord that was played together. There were thirty-second pauses between the rounds and the chord. The musicians kept repeating these for the entire duration of the soundwalk. I led the audience along a preplanned route which went around the lake counter-clockwise, making little excursions to visit the SkyTrain tracks, which are close to the park both to the north and to the south. It took about an hour to walk the route, keeping a relaxed pace.

*From Dawn Till Dusk* was presented twice during May 11, 2008: at sunrise and sunset. The sun rising just after 5 am meant that neither musicians nor soundwalk participants were very numerous. At sunset (a bit after 8 pm), there were more players and much more participants. This latter walk was wonderfully documented by Jacky Sawatzky (videography) and Megan Wilson (recordingist)<sup>36</sup>.

The “more than just sound” - aspect was present in many ways. To get the things that I planned soundwise to happen, spatial planning was required. Where, along

36 The video can be found on Jacky Sawatzky’s Vimeo channel: <http://vimeo.com/10095225>.

the shores of the lake, were the suitable spots for the musicians? Are there obstacles that prevent them from hearing one another? How far away could one still hear the other players? Where should the walk route go, so that the musicians could be heard, and what is the point where they are no longer audible? Even when their task was only to make sounds, the players were *spatial agents*, visibly occupying their positions. Yet the spatial is not an added dimension: it is inextricable from the sonic action. The “surround sound” provided by the musicians surrounding the lake and playing in turns cannot be heard without the spatial arrangement. It is “not just sound”, it is sound in space.



The soundwalk route of “From Dawn Till Dusk”, in Vancouver, BC, Canada. Illustration: Pessi Parviainen



The musician inevitably interacts with a place. A place, be it a landscape, a city, a room in a building or whatever else, is not only sonic – it is space that is perceptible through sound, but otherwise, too, as visible, tactile, fragrant, perhaps even tasty. How could a musician then be purely sonic, “just sound”, when sound and space are so deeply intertwined?

The examples discussed above – the instrumental aspect highlighted by unique objects, the modal aspect of the *how* something is played, and the environmental aspect – are not distinct categories. If we look at them as categories, we see that they overlap. Relating to the site can very well be an instrumental matter, or something that pertains to the performance style – the *what* and the *how*. In *Konela*, the machines of the workshop could be seen as both environment and instruments; in *From Dawn Till Dusk*, the players had to play so that the others heard them – the place affecting the *how*.

The initial fascination of this research is precisely that: no matter how you look at it, musicianship has this “more than just sound” quality. So, in light of all these examples, what do we have here? The keyword is relationship. A relationship to matter (a player relating to what’s played, the object the sounds are made with), other people (the way of making sounds *communicating to others* the player’s relationship to instrumental matter), and the environment (the communication relating to the space in which it inevitably occurs, sounds being necessarily spatial); a relationship that is rooted in the basic setting: sound is a consequence of something done to something somewhere.

Given this active relationality, it is artificial to think of sound as if it could be detached from the dynamic *verb* of these intertwined relational aspects, and placed under our inspection like a singular static *noun*. Sound is more than just sound.

#### **1.4 The Inner Problem of the Initial Premise: Equating Music and Sound**

And here is the problem that gave rise to this research. The initial premise was: the live musician is more than just sound. Going through the evidence, I find myself with *sound* being more than just sound, and thus *the making of sounds* being manifold and relational, as discussed above.

Where did the “musician” go?

If “musician” means the very same as “soundmaker”, everything is fine, there is no conceptual shortcoming preventing us from understanding musicianship as something more wholesome than just a live source of sounds, and we are free to explore all aspects of a musician’s performance. Composition can involve visual, gestural, as well as other modalities at once, together with the sonic.

But is it indeed so? It seems there are good reasons to question the equation of *musician* and *soundmaker*. I will briefly describe three reasons.

The first is common sense. There are many actions of sound-making that don’t seem to merit the title *musician*. A bus driver makes a whole lot of different sounds, but certainly a bus driver is not employed as a “musician”, that’s not the job description.

The second reason is that approaching music as something multisensory doesn’t seem to get called music, but theatre. The case in point is Mauricio Kagel:

*Music has also been a scenic event for a long time. In the nineteenth century people still enjoyed music also with their eyes, with all their senses. Only with the increasing dominance of the mechanical reproduction of music, through broadcasting and records, was this reduced to the purely acoustic dimension. What I want is to bring the audience back to an enjoyment of music with all senses. That’s why music is a direct, exaggerated protest against the mechanical reproduction of music. My goal: a re-humanization of music-making<sup>37</sup>*

Kagel’s “music for all senses” is usually called *music theatre* or *instrumental theatre*. Why? is there something about music that repels a multisensory approach, and delegates such endeavours to theatre?

The third reason is that equating musicianship and sound-making seems to somehow lead to an idea of a totality that is never called sound, but always music. This idea has been around at least since Pythagoras’ harmony of the spheres. A contemporary version can be found in R. Murray Schafer’s *Tuning of*

37 Mauricio Kagel, Nürnbergger Nachrichten, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1970, interviewed by Willi Wörthmüller; quoted in Björn Heile, *The Music of Mauricio Kagel* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 38.

*the World*, where he treats “the world as a macrocosmic musical composition”<sup>38</sup> and proclaims:

Today all sounds belong to a continuous field of possibilities lying *within the comprehensive dominion of music. Behold the new orchestra: the sonic universe! And the musicians: anyone and anything that sounds!*<sup>39</sup>

Why is it that considering all sounds to be music goes together with ideas of world domination? If ‘musician’ and ‘soundmaker’ are indeed synonyms (and thus, also ‘music’ and ‘sound’), why couldn’t all the world’s sounds be simply discussed as sound, without any need for the concept of music?

There is something about the concept of music that seems to have these effects. It seems to have a complicated relationship with the senses, and perhaps there is something about its relationship to power and hierarchy that warrants further study.

The problem that my initial premise came up against is the relationship of sound and music.

The following chapter addresses this. If sound is a consequence of something done to something somewhere, *what is music?*

38 R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994 [1977]), 5.

39 Ibid., italics original.



## 2 Concerning the Concept of Music

*“There is little doubt that each reader of this work believes firmly in the existence of music and subscribes to a specific conception of it, yet one ventures to assert that there is none who can imagine life without it.”<sup>40</sup>*

Thus ends Bruno Nettl his article, “Music”, in the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

These assertions sound rather religious, and unless Nettl was addressing only those sharing his belief, they can even be considered aggressive. They are also willfully blind to the fact which Nettl confesses earlier in the article: not all cultures have a word nor concept that would correspond to the Western word and concept *music*. There are and there have been those who do not firmly believe in the existence of music, and who have not only imagined but also lived life without it - life that includes singing and playing various instruments, but not the word and concept ‘music’.

Nettl’s confession that “providing a universally acceptable definition and characterization of both word and concept is beyond the capacity of a single statement by one author”<sup>41</sup> is not only bizarre, but also strangely discordant with his unhesitant treatment of the existence of music as a “universal phenomenon”. How reliable is this evaluation of the universality of music, if the author himself confesses that he cannot provide a universally acceptable definition and charac-

40 *Grove Music Online*, s.v. “Music,” accessed 14 October 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40476>.

41 *Ibid.*

terization? No-one can tell you exactly what it is, but it is found everywhere, and you must believe in it. It is a call to believe what the author wants you to believe.

Kenneth A. Gourlay criticized the universality of music, pointing out how in many cases it is the Western scholar who insists that a particular people group has “music”, whereas the concept may well be unknown to the people in question:

*“Our point of departure is the existence of two apparently incompatible ‘facts’: (1) that in no African language about which we have information, and in many used by other peoples who have oral rather than written traditions, is there a word corresponding to the English term ‘music’; (2) despite this, scholars have continued to write and talk, if not about ‘African music’, at least about the ‘music’ of a particular people. Where the term ‘music’ is unknown to the people in question, one can conclude only that what we are presented with is the investigating scholar’s concept of their ‘music’.”<sup>42</sup>*

Gourlay refers to the works of four scholars: Hugo Zemp, Alan Merriam, John Blacking, and Judith Lynne Hanna. Gourlay points out how Hugo Zemp artificially unites various aspects of ‘Are ‘Are<sup>43</sup> culture under the category of a ‘musical type’, despite the ‘Are ‘Are not having such a unifying concept for these aspects; how Alan Merriam speaks of “a concept which does not lend itself to definition in the scientific sense”; how for Blacking it is a “category of action widely accepted but not understood”; and how there is a similar situation concerning what is called dance. Judith Lynne Hanna admits to an “*intuitive sense* about dance without being able to articulate the necessary and sufficient criteria of its manifestation”, and that as with music, there is a behaviour “which appears to be dance, but which for the participants concerned is not dance because they have *no such concept*”.<sup>44</sup>

*This admission is valuable in bringing out (1) that what the scholar investigates is ‘not-dance’ to the people concerned but ‘dance’ to her, and (2) that she recognizes it as such intuitively.*

*The question remains – what is the basis for this ‘intuitive recognition’ (Hanna) or ‘wide acceptance’ (Blacking) of a phenomenon which is not ‘definable in the scientific*

42 Kenneth A. Gourlay, “The Non-Universality of Music and the Universality of Non-Music,” *The World of Music* 26, no. 2 (1984): 28.

43 The ‘Are ‘Are are a people living in the Solomon Islands.

44 Gourlay, 28 – 29.

*sense' (Merriam) and either has no general name or exists in a number of disparate categories (Zemp)?*

*Can ethnomusicology claim to be a science when the phenomena investigated turn out to be those selected by investigating scholars as the result of personal intuition? If certain phenomena rather than others are 'recognized' as 'music', then the problem of universals is again likely to result in tautology. Since the 'intuitive recognition' implies the existence of either consciously or unconsciously held concepts about 'music', the phenomena recognized by the scholar as 'music' will conform to such concepts and embody such universals as were present in the first place.<sup>45</sup>*

This is the result of the Western conditioning of music scholars (and the wider public). The concept (or concepts) of music are “acquired through a combination of formal education and personal experience which enables them to absorb something of what we may loosely call the *ethos* of western civilization”<sup>46</sup>. When the world is then examined with this *ethos* absorbed, is it any wonder that the examiner insists on the universality of its features?

In other words: as a music scholar researches that which he or she *intuitively recognizes* as music, the field of research is unclear as well as subjective, and the findings will inevitably display features of the intuitive recognition, describing the intuition rather than the subject of study. The intuition of this absorbed *ethos* is “everyone has music”, so wherever one goes, it must be found. Wherever you go, there you are again – wow, you’re universal!

Some music scholars seem to admit that this is indeed the case. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, summarizing his position, writes that “music is whatever people choose to recognize as such” (and that same goes for what is considered to be ‘noise’)<sup>47</sup>; composer Luciano Berio mentions “the futility of trying to establish the boundary between what is music and what isn’t”, and says that “music is everything that one listens to with the intention of listening to music”<sup>48</sup>.

45 Ibid., 29 – 30.

46 Ibid., 31.

47 Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Towards a Semiology of Music*, trans. by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 47.

48 Luciano Berio, *Luciano Berio: Two Interviews* (London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1985), 19.

Thomas Clifton says the same thing in a different way: “music is not a fact or a thing in the world, but a meaning constituted by human beings”<sup>49</sup>. Clifton’s “study in applied phenomenology” is decidedly Husserlian. The phenomenon is an internal event, ‘all in the mind’, not anything external: “music, whatever else it is, is not factually in the world the way trees and mountains are. [...] Musical meanings refer to nothing but themselves”<sup>50</sup>.

Isn’t there a conclusion that we should have made, a long time ago, concerning the nature of the concept of music? Despite going so far as to confess that music is whatever we call music, Nattiez, Berio, and Clifton do not continue to the follow-up question that begs to be made here.

What sort of a concept is in question, if its content is *entirely* a matter of what we say it is?

Such concepts are definitions. And of course, trying to establish a boundary is a futile business, since it can be moved simply by a change of mind. Since the meaning of a definition is whatever we say or agree it to be, the attempts to define the definition will only yield results like the ones Nattiez and Berio have given us.

The definition of a definition is that *it is what we say it is*.

I propose that this is *the* problem with the concept of music. It does not mean singing and the playing of instruments, it does not mean organized sound; it is supposed to mean what we say it does - an idea. The implied claim is that music means itself. As the meaning is entirely dependent on the sayer, it is abstract, it lacks a relationship with what we use it on. The other doesn’t matter.

The meaning is arbitrary and completely mental (in fact, aligning with its Ancient Greek origins). But we use the word and concept *as if* it means something more than just an idea.

Such discord causes problems. Treating an idea as if it isn’t just a thought, but the ‘external’ shared and perceived reality, and thus something that applies to

49 Thomas Clifton, *Music as Heard* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 5.

50 Ibid., 3.



others, one demands others to conform to the idea, and ignore any perceptual and experiential evidence should they be in contradiction to the idea. A person suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder may be thoroughly convinced that a door is not securely locked unless it is checked by the same person, uninterrupted, seven times. A person suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is not psychotic or delusional: “Obsessions are intrusive and unwanted thoughts, images, or urge that cause distress or anxiety. Compulsions are behaviors that the person feels compelled to perform in order to ease their distress or anxiety or suppress the thoughts.”<sup>51</sup>

By the distress, the obsessions bully normal cognition; the obsessive-compulsive person sees the door close, and hears the lock clicking in place, but the obsession overpowers the perception-driven thought (“it is locked”) with doubt, and compels the person to perform, for example, a ritual of checking the door seven times, not six, not eight - instead of just once, which could be considered to be within normal cautiousness.

Applying Clifton’s definition to itself, we come to this: *meaning constituted by human beings is not a fact or a thing in the world*. Reliance on such meanings describes OCD, in a literal or metaphorical sense. The trouble and torment of OCD is the incompatibility of the meaning that isn’t a fact or a thing in the world with meanings that are.

With the concept of music we have the same trouble. The discord becomes a problem when we try to understand *that which is defined as music and that which isn’t* on the same conceptual plane, so to speak - to have them together. They are utterly incompatible. This is what the works presented in chapter one are presented as evidence of: **through artistic means, it is possible to produce works that are impossible for our current conceptual tools to grasp.**

The Schaferian solution, declaring *everything* to be within the comprehensive dominion of music, may seem like it would take care of the problem. But let us take that statement to its logical conclusion. Since the concept of music is a definition,

51 “Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) / Anxiety and Depression Association of America, ADAA,” Anxiety and Depression Association of America [US], accessed December 31, 2019, <https://adaa.org/obsessive-compulsive-disorder>.

the comprehensive dominion of music would mean that the whole world must be considered an idea, not a real place we share. This would mean submission to a single opinion that vetoes all facts. There could be no plurality of views. No disagreement allowed, no evidence accepted. It would be a totalitarian system where anything that disagrees with the ruling definition would be judged *not real*.

There is a confusion concerning 'to define'. In common parlance, it is used as a synonym of 'to describe' ("My definition of a good dinner is pizza"). But it is one thing to *finish* something (*de-finire*), to say the final word, and a very different thing to 'write down' something (*de-scribere*), to give an account. The final word leaves others no room to add anything.

A descriptive account is not the last word; it invites further accounts, a conversation on the topic.

Descriptive accounts can be quite opposite to each other and still *agree* on *what* they are describing. In June 2010, I organized a soundwalk concert in Koli, Finland, as part of the World Forum of Acoustic Ecology conference held there. It was called *The National Soundscape*, and it featured five wonderful instrumentalists from the Joensuu City Orchestra. As part of the soundwalk concert, violinist Eila Helske played some of her own birdsong transcriptions, which are microtonal. Afterwards, two soundwalk participants approached me separately, and unbeknownst to each other, voiced opposite opinions concerning the violinist's performance. One said it was wonderful how she played so realistically – after all, birds do not usually conform to the Western system where a halfstep is the smallest increment. Another said it was unfortunate and displeasing how the violinist played so out of tune.

These very different opinions and preferences are compatible in that they both are descriptions of the same witnessed event. These were not judgments on whether or not the violin-playing was music or not; what was discussed was not merely an idea, but something perceived.

It is not possible to have such conversations on what constitutes music. It may not become evident right away, but since the concept in question is a definition, the conversation will sooner or later become a fight between incompatible stances, this word against that, unless there is agreement to begin with.

The meeting between David Rothenberg and three ornithologists in the BBC documentary *Why Birds Sing*<sup>52</sup> demonstrates this. Rothenberg *defines* birdsong as music. The ornithologists do not. The result is not a fruitful exchange of ideas and understanding concerning *birdsong*, but a quarrel concerning whether or not birdsong constitutes music.

Unlike definitions, descriptions converse; that a description needs an external target means that an encounter between descriptions will not get personal the way redefining does. Defining claims the object; describing leaves it in the commons of perception, and claims only the description itself; there is a value judgment in the act of describing, but it is not assimilated into the object of description.

By defining birdsong as music, Rothenberg steps on the scientists' toes, demanding that they think about their own field on his terms. This, understandably, troubles them.

Peter Slater's objection is particularly poignant:

"But music is a totally human conception! I don't really understand why you want to impose this *word* on something as absolutely wonderful as birdsong."<sup>53</sup>

Slater's objection is absolutely brilliant because several things are pointed out at once: music is a *word*, it is *totally human*, it is *imposed* on simply wonderful things (like birdsong in this case). This is dogmatic and oppressive. The concept of music is a *fiat* that only sees itself and is blind to everything else.<sup>54</sup>

The proposition I wish to make in this thesis is that we have a third option. Two have been upheld:

1) that some things are music (and some are not);

52 *Why Birds Sing*, directed by Archie Powell (UK: BBC, 2007). [https://youtu.be/f\\_cqJsdnOrg](https://youtu.be/f_cqJsdnOrg).

53 Ibid.

54 I should make it clear here that I am *not* calling David Rothenberg "oppressive" or "blind". His work is fascinating and wonderful, sparking curiosity and joy. I am only trying to make the point that the concept of music is utterly useless in understanding this kind of work. Ultimately, it is useless anywhere – which is something that I wish to lay out in the following chapters.

2) that everything is music.

Option 1 presents us with two incompatibles, giving us insufficient tools to understand the cases presented in chapter one of this dissertation.

Option 2 is completely absurd.

Clearly, the third option is

3) *nothing* is music.

What would this entail? Merely the removal of the music concept. Nothing should be put in its place; instead, what will happen is what is already being done, but without a nothingness ruling over it. Abstraction subsiding, we would use whatever descriptive, and thus *open and incomplete, non-finalized*, concepts are practical for the situation. These concepts exist already. A band rehearsing its material does not talk about *music*, it talks about melody, chords, bass lines, guitar riffs, lyrics, hooks, vamps, grooves. If nothing is music, it is nothing that should take its place.

To show that this is indeed possible, I wish to draft here a brief conceptual history of music. Through this, the concept is shown to not be universal. There is quite probably thinking that precedes it; but what is easier to show is that there is evidence of alternative mindsets. To make alternatives visible, I draw an outline of how the concept of music has survived through Western history. This is but a sketch, but I believe it is an important sketch. I haven't come across anything like this in the languages I know and can conduct searches in. A thorough *Begriffsgeschichte Der Musik* will remain a proposed work for interested radical historians!

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## 3 A Brief Conceptual History of Music

This conceptual history of music is different. The difference here is that I'm tracing the path of the original concept, trying to find its movements, and draw a rough picture from antiquity up to the present day.

Why? Haven't many done this already?

The answer is, lamentably, no. What *has* been done many times is the depiction of *what we nowadays call music* throughout history. But that is not a real *Begriffsgesichte*; that approach is blind precisely in the way Gourlay describes. The scholar, having absorbed the 'ethos', the 'intuitive knowledge', of music as universal, looks back and of course finds it everywhere, throughout history, since the dawn of man.

But that approach is blind as a bat and backwards. The concept of music cannot be understood by taking an intuitive absorbed predicated expectation of the universal and tracking backward in history with it. We must begin with the original viewpoint and trace its undulations. Only then can the contemporary situation be evaluated properly.

Such evaluation is necessary for understanding the problematic presented in chapter one. This is not only a fringe issue concerning artistic practice that falls in the in-between areas, this also concerns similar settings in larger scales. Ultimately, the total work of art displays the issues in an expanded form. (This matter is addressed in chapter seven.)

### **Beginning**

Historians typically place the beginnings of music at the dawn of humanity. Ancient bone flutes are touted as proof. But such placement is blind to the concept

that our culture uses: a bone flute is evidence of someone having made and played a flute, not of someone calling flute playing music.

Music has been such a pervasive concept in Western culture that it may be very hard to see the difference. But if calling something ‘music’ began later than singing and handclapping and the playing of bone flutes did, the difference is real, and we must conclude that it is not universal.

When did calling something ‘music’ begin?

Etymologically speaking, calling something music began in Ancient Greece. As is commonly known, the English word ‘music’ can be traced to the Ancient Greek *mousike tekhnē*.

These two words are an adjective and a noun. *Mousike* comes from *mousa*, ‘muse’, and means musical (although ‘musical’ is a double adjective where the -al is redundant: ‘muse’ with the suffix ‘-ic’ results in the adjective ‘music’); *tekhnē* means ‘craft, skill, art’ (and is a root word for ‘technology’).

Isn’t it interesting that the surviving word is the first, not the second? Considering present-day use of *music* (the word), why are we not talking about *tekhnē* if it is a craft, skill, or art that’s really in question? Why, at the level of words, are we giving credit to the Muses?

### Etymology and introduction

*The Idea of Music* by Herbert M. Schueller comes close to being a conceptual history. He gives away his hellenist disposition right at the start, though – beginning with mythological murk, as if music has been always. And hence, Schueller confuses, even within a sentence, the concept’s meaning for the ancients with its present day use.

Despite some shortcomings, Schueller’s work is useful for tracing the conceptual history of music.

Schueller calls μουσική “an untranslatable term modelled after the name of the Muses”.<sup>55</sup>

55 Herbert M. Schueller, *The Idea of Music: an introduction to musical aesthetics in antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1988), 5.

“At first it meant an activity, an art, or a craft (*techné*) over which the Muses presided. Originally it wasn’t confined to the art of pure sound we recognize today, or even to singing and playing as we know them. Instead, it shared in whatever governs knowledge and ability or capacity. Suggested is everything except gymnastics – that is, the mental, as compared with the physical man. It was thought that a person guided by the Muses was favored by them with a certain capacity which allowed him to pursue his own characteristic activities and skills. As god and leader, Apollo would transmit the gift of music to human beings. Homer and Hesiod, as they themselves remind us, were granted their priestly domain, functions, and gifts by the Muses, upon whom they not infrequently called for help in the course of their works. The musician created an aesthetic union of ‘music proper’ with poetry, epic, or lyric, or with drama and dance, or with all together, to form a single harmonic structure whose determining factor was words.”<sup>56</sup>

Music, in the most philosophical sense, was considered to be “free”, “because as a universal phenomenon it was intellectual and did not require manual work. It’s contraries were vulgar and servile arts like sculpture and architecture, which pursue practical ends.” There was a distinction between intellectual, theoretical freedom and professional, practical activities, arts and crafts, that were not free. The latter included *auletics* and *citharoetics*, the arts of playing the aulos and cithara - no more free than the job of sailing a boat or leading an army<sup>57</sup>. Contemporary English has preserved this intellectualism: to muse is “to be absorbed in thought”, not “to play an instrument”, for example. A dated sense of ‘muse’ as a noun was “an instance or period of reflection”. Concerning the origin of these, The Oxford Dictionary gives “Old French *muser* ‘meditate, waste time,’ perhaps from medieval Latin *musum* ‘muzzle’.”<sup>58</sup>. But ‘muzzle’ seems like an odd etymological proposition, since for ‘Muse’ (as a noun) the same Dictionary does not go there: “from Old French, or from Latin *musa*, from Greek *mousa*.”<sup>59</sup>. Perhaps another proposition can be made: ‘to muse’ is derived from the Muses, referring to a kind of self-absorption they stand for and encourage. Or perhaps musical self-absorption is actually a mental muzzle, preventing a person from

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 New Oxford American Dictionary, s.v. “muse,” Apple Dictionary application 2.1.3, 2005-2009.

59 Ibid.

really sinking their teeth on something. “Just be so concerned with yourself that you forget the world around you.”

Music was not everybody’s business. Together with mathematics and gymnastics (athletics), it meant education for the complete man (of high social rank), in a male-oriented society.<sup>60</sup>

So - μουσική is something very inclusive; yet, it is intellectual and excludes manual work. It addresses the whole society through men of high social rank. In this sense, it excludes women - except the Muses, idealized and dominant, in stark contrast to the status of real women.

We’re dealing with a religious concept. Playing a lyre was not music unless it was. Playing an instrument, plucking out melodies, was just that, playing an instrument. Only if it was deemed to be inspired, guided by a being called a Muse, only then it was music.

Not only playing instruments, but *any* activity of the soul that was considered inspired, directed by a Muse, was music. Hence the adjective: muse -ic. Music does not mean the activity, it means the purported inspiration. (*Tekhne* is the word that referred to the activity itself.)

This is the root reason why there can be no definition of music other than what Berio and Nattiez have given. Music is what we call music; the same applied in Antiquity. It was a religious label referring to supernatural beliefs.

Regarding its beginnings, it is of course likely that there is a predecessor. Earlier cultures were a source for many aspects of Greek myth and religion (Eusebius even called them thieves<sup>61</sup>). For an example, through the Pythagoreans came an Egyptian religious influence<sup>62</sup>.

The religiosity of the concept explains the current behaviour of the concept of music. Even if the beliefs are removed, music is still a religious label. Today it is (normally) used *as if* it isn’t, but religiosity enters through the employment of the

60 Schueller, 6.

61 Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* Book XI, Preface.

62 Christoph Riedweg, *Pythagoras: his life, teaching, and influence*, tr. Steven Rendall (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 7, ProQuest Ebook Central.



concept nonetheless. Whatever is defined as the “muse” that makes something “muse-ic” is what is exalted in such “religion”.

Speaking of the standardized manner of dress and behavior of professional concert musicians the world over, Christopher Small notes the parallel with the dress and stylized gestures of a priest celebrating mass. The roles are very similar: “Musicians, like priests, may come and go, but the music, like the liturgy, goes on forever. The parallel with priests is not accidental. Musicians of the Western classical tradition often perceive themselves, and are perceived, as having a kind of priestly function, as the bearers of something sacred and eternal, something that transcends time and human life.”<sup>63</sup>

The result of its use is a structure that is religious by nature, exhibiting features of the beliefs that are supposed to be long gone. The concept brings along its baggage.

What baggage? What were (or are) the beliefs in question, then?

### 3.1 The Religion of Music

In Hesiod’s *Theogony* the Muses tell Hesiod: “we know how to tell many falsehoods that sound like truth; but we also know how to utter the truth when we choose”<sup>64</sup>. The guidance of the Muses isn’t dependable.

The Muses were led by Apollo. Music was an Apollonian cult.

Besides music, Apollo was believed to be god of many things - youth, harmony, prophecy, archery, healing, and plague. The lyre is associated with him, and along with it, the idea of harmony between different spheres, rationality and higher thinking. Nietzsche associated Apollo with calm rationality and Dionysos with strong emotionalism<sup>65</sup>. Nietzsche’s idea isn’t supported, however, by the raging Apollo killing man and beast in revenge because of an insult in the beginning of *Iliad*<sup>66</sup>. Also, Pythagoreanism being both Apollonian and a development of a Dionysian root, Nietzsche’s distinction doesn’t seem justified:

63 Christopher Small, *Musicking: the Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 66.

64 *Theogony* 27-28, quoted in Schueller, 9.

65 Stephanie Lynn Budin, *The Ancient Greeks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 267-269.

66 *Ibid.*, 269.

*“The intoxication they [Orphics] sought was that of ‘enthusiasm’, of union with the god. They believed themselves, in this way, to acquire mystic knowledge not obtainable by ordinary means. This mystical element entered into Greek philosophy with Pythagoras, who was a reformer of Orphism as Orpheus was a reformer of the religion of Dionysus. From Pythagoras Orphic elements entered into the philosophy of Plato, and from Plato into most later philosophy that was in any degree religious.”*<sup>67</sup>

The Orphic lineage is central to the concept of music because of the continuing prevalence of Pythagoras and Pythagorean ideas. What is normally noted is the importance the Pythagoreans placed on numbers, their view of the universe as mathematical, and the connection of these to proportions in tuning and pitch.

But thinking of the Pythagoreans simply as a bunch of Greek math heads is ignorant of the mystico-religious basis from which the ideas and doctrines are derived.

Orphic mythology differs from Hesiod’s account. The Orphics have Dionysus to be the double incest-child of Zeus and Persephone, double because Persephone was the result of Zeus’ intercourse with his mother Rhea. Dionysus became a favorite son to Zeus. Hera had the Titans kill Dionysus; they ate him, but his heart was preserved by Athena, who gave it to Zeus. Zeus smote the Titans with a lightning bolt, and from their ashes humans were formed. Orphism, then, taught that the human body was composed of dead, evil gods. However, the Titans’ last meal was still in them when they died, and thus Orphism taught that Dionysus was also present in all humans, providing the immortal aspect of the soul. The flesh was therefore evil, and the soul good. The Orphic lifestyle was ascetic, vegetarian (no beans either), and nonsensual.

The ultimate goal was communion with the divine, possible only upon death as the evil flesh was shed. Orphism taught transmigration (metempsychosis), however, so even death was not necessarily the solution. Unsuccessful dealings after death resulted in unwanted rebirth.<sup>68</sup>

The Orphic origin myth can be seen in the Pythagorean saying *-(akousmata)* that “humans have come (to Earth) for punishment and should therefore in fact be

67 Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1947), 37.

68 Budin, 307 – 308.

punished”<sup>69</sup>. Riedweg suggests the view that Pythagoras’ teachings could well be seen as an exegesis of Orphic theogonic or “sacred” poetry<sup>70</sup>.

### **Pythagoras and Apollo**

Like Orpheus, Pythagoras was said to have been the son of Apollo, who was his patron god<sup>71</sup>.

The importance of Apollo for Pythagoras is well-known - his name is associated with the Pythian oracle<sup>72</sup>. This refers to the legend concerning Delphi, where Apollo slew the dragon Pytho and took control of her sanctuary and priestess, the Pythia<sup>73</sup>. Pythagoras was supposed to have had a seven-string lyre, a primordial instrument related to the seven spheres<sup>74</sup>, the lyre being Apollo’s signature instrument as well<sup>75</sup>. The people of Croton, where Pythagoras founded his sect, called him the Hyperborean Apollo. Pythagoras himself claimed earlier reincarnations that were distinctly Apollonian<sup>76</sup>. These are but a few examples; Riedweg lists many more<sup>77</sup>.

### **Pythagoras and the Muses**

The Muses played a significant role in the religious and cosmological thought of the Pythagoreans (Apollo being the Muses’ leader, this is hardly surprising). According to Aristotle, Pythagoras called the constellation Pleiades “the lyre of the Muses”, and according to Porphyry, Pythagoras believed that the sound of the nine heavenly bodies was identical with the nine Muses; and “While he compared the usual sensual pleasures with the ‘man-killing song of the Sirens’, he is said to have equated ‘pleasure in the good and the just and what is necessary for life with the harmony of the Muses.’” According to Iamblicus Pythagoras urged the people of Croton to build a shrine to the Muses, which they did<sup>78</sup>.

69 Riedweg, 76.

70 Ibid., 73 - 76.

71 Schueller, 13.

72 Riedweg, 5 - 6.

73 Budin, 269

74 Schueller, 14.

75 Budin, 268.

76 Riedweg, 4.

77 Riedweg, 72 - 73.

78 Riedweg, 13 - 14.

In summary - the harmony of the spheres is the same as the harmony of the Muses; and Apollo was the head of the whole thing. Porphyry recounts that Pythagoras was the only mortal capable of hearing this harmony; everybody else was limited in nature. Pythagoras was believed to be a transmitter of the harmony, imitating it with instruments and voice<sup>79</sup>, the intermediate between humans and the divine.

### Pythagorean doctrine

In the introduction to his translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Hugh Tredennick gives a summary "of the Pythagorean theory in its original form":

1. The doctrine of transmigration: the human soul "came in the first place from the Divine nature, which it resembles, and into which it will, when purified from sin in the course of many reincarnations, at last return".

2. This connection between divinity and the soul implied an analogy between macrocosm and microcosm - "the same principle of order constitutes the essential nature of the universe (considered as a living organism) and of the particular creature".

3. "It followed that the all-embracing Unity must be finite or limited; otherwise it could not be reproduced analogously in the individual. this is why the Pythagorean principle of order and goodness was identified with Limit, as contrasted with the Unlimited or principle of disorder."

4. "The analogy between whole and part consisted in the identical proportion or ratio of their ingredients. This proportion was described as a 'harmony' or perfect adjustment". This connects to the numerical intervals of the octave (2:1), fifth (3:2), and fourth (4:3). The musical (sic) scale, extending indefinitely in either direction, is defined by these fixed ratios, and "so in all other cases every definite unity is produced by the action of Limit upon the Unlimited, producing a 'harmony' which is essentially numerical. It was in this sense that the original Pythagorean school held that numbers are the primary reality."<sup>80</sup>

1. and 2., read with the background of the Orphic genesis myth, mean that the doctrine of the harmony of spheres essentially comes from the doctrines of transmigration and of the 'unfallen divinity' of the human soul. The correspondence

79 Riedweg, 29 - 30.

80 Aristotle: *The Metaphysics: I, Books I-X*, trans. Hugh Tredennick (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1961), xv-xvi.

between micro- and macrocosm is derived from these; therefore the insistence on the goodness and divinity of the soul is the ground on which the essentially numerical view of the universe stands.

There is a fundamental association of goodness being fixed, static, whereas change, the flux of the physical world, is an evil, chaotic aspect, the “sin” of which one must be punished. Transmigration is not a positive thing; rebirth is a punishment.

Transmigration of souls was also the basis and justification for the myriad rules and regulations of the Pythagorean sect. Obey, and avoid the punishment of having to live again. “Rather a network of cleverly devised reasons, with the doctrine of transmigration of souls at its center, held the whole system together and made the individual rules seem sensible.”<sup>81</sup>

### **The Pythagoreans as a sect**

The Pythagorean sect is famous for the curtain. Aspiring candidates who wished initiation into the cult had to remain silent for five years, never seeing Pythagoras himself, but only being allowed to hear him from behind a curtain.<sup>82</sup>

“The Pythagoreans saw the practice of silence not only as a way of achieving ascetic self-mastery but also as training for the duty to keep the teachings secret, which had to be strictly observed in the Pythagorean community, on the model of the mystery cults.”<sup>83</sup>

For Pythagoreans, “us” and “them” “was the primary frame of reference.”<sup>84</sup>

### **‘Harmony’ as division**

Due to the prevalence of Pythagorean ideas, it is worth pointing out, again and again, how the Pythagorean “harmony” claims to be all-embracing, a unity of all things, but somehow, in terms of human relationships, it results in the opposite

81 Riedweg, 71.

82 Taruskin mentions a similar setting practiced by St. Gregory (Pope Gregory I), who dictated from behind a curtain. Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music: Volume 1, The Earliest Notations to the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6.

83 Riedweg, 101 – 102.

84 Riedweg, 102.

- a fundamental division between “us” and “them”, insiders and outsiders. Not surprisingly, the Pythagoreans themselves were later divided into the “acoustics” and the “mathematicians”<sup>85</sup>.

### **‘Harmony’ as misanthropy and death**

Considering the foundational Orphic-Pythagorean belief that human life as such must be punished, there is a contemporary character that embodies this misanthropy - albeit unshrouded in religious rule and ornament, and depicted with a blatantly frank punk attitude. It is found in the British sci-fi comic *2000AD* (best known for the character of Judge Dredd). In a series of stories, Judges Dredd and Anderson face Dark Judges from another dimension, Deadworld. Deadworld is wiped clean of the living: life itself is declared a crime punished by death, since only the living commit crimes. The Dark Judges repeatedly attack Megapolis in order to administer their brand of justice. The leader of the Dark Judges is Judge Death, who declares to his victims: “The crime is life, the sentence is death!” Judge Death himself is undead, a state he achieved through the dark magic of the Sisters of Death, Phobia and Nausea.<sup>86</sup>

Judge Death may be a caricature, but not an exaggeration. The Orphic-Pythagorean decree is the same: life is sin, the solution is to purge life out; and it is not enough to simply die because that only results in rebirth via metempsychosis. The sought release from life was an undead state - to die while still alive, by evocation of magical Sisters, the Muses. Judge Death followed suit with Phobia and Nausea.

It is taking death as the governing principle and applying it onto life; the taking of a complete lack of ethics and applying it where ethics are necessary; the application of nothingness on everything.

The Orphic-Pythagorean doctrine teaches self-redemption. The human soul is thought to be divine, captured in the evil flesh of fallen gods; through self-administered purification and turning away from the world of cause and effect and completely towards the soul (the inward turn), a cathartic liberation from physical life and its accidentals is sought. This is “*gnothi seauton*”, ‘know thyself’ - to *know* in the sense of *ginosko*, the verb in question, implies experiential, intimate

85 Riedweg, 106 - 107.

86 Wikipedia, s.v. “Judge Death,” accessed October 14, 2019, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judge\\_Death](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judge_Death).

knowledge (the word was also used of sexual intercourse). What is really going on is worship of the self that leads to death - which happens to be also a rough summary of the myth of Narcissus.

Schueller sees a parallel between Pythagoras and Christ<sup>87</sup>, and between the Orphic cult and Christianity<sup>88</sup>. Here he is clearly mistaken and confuses the body with the soul: for the Orphics and Pythagoreans, the soul was not fallen, the *body* was. Therefore the flesh was despised, and the soul, the inner self, worshipped. In Christianity, the soul is the part that needs purification, because self-worship is precisely that which it fell into, and the purification of the human soul is only achievable by God, which is the whole point of the Christ. The commonly held association, that the Fall in the Book of Genesis was a matter of carnal knowledge, does not come from the Book of Genesis; instead, seeing sex as original sin shows an external influence – and it is not far-fetched to see this influence as Pythagorean, that is, Platonic (through the early Alexandrian Church fathers). Likewise, Schueller’s ‘parallels’ belong to a long lineage (Fludd, Kircher...) of thought, that takes Christianity as its name but maintains Greco-Roman religiosity as the essential element. This lineage explains the survival of the music concept, and it is essentially Platonic.

### 3.2 From Plato to the Romans

“... since Hellenistic times Pythagorean philosophy has often been aligned with Plato’s to the point of being unrecognizable...”<sup>89</sup>

Pythagoras left no writings. Platonic influence on accounts concerning Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism means that it is hard to say where one ends and the other begins<sup>90</sup>. But the influence was two-way: “...there are good reasons for assuming that Pythagorean philosophy was of considerable importance for Platonic thought and action”<sup>91</sup>. Certainly Plato’s thought also features the Apollonian inward turn to ‘know the self’, and a turning away from the physical senses as sources of treacherous illusion. Considering the concept of music, two features

87 Schueller, 20.

88 Schueller, 21.

89 Riedweg, 25.

90 Riedweg, 25.

91 Riedweg, 116.

stand out: first, that the Academy was a shrine for the Muses (and thus for Apollon; while the grove in question was a worship site for Athena, his sister) and secondly, how Platonic philosophy features the harmony of the spheres.

Plato set up a shrine for the Muses in his Academy, more likely because he sought to continue the Pythagorean tradition than for the reason that the tradition regarding Pythagoras was modeled on Plato<sup>92</sup>.

However much can be said about the differences between the philosophy of Aristotle and that of his teacher, when we take the point of view of tracing the conceptual history of music, it is clear Aristotle passed it on. Whatever in Plato was contested by Aristotle, *mousiké* and the Muses were not done away by him, and neither was Apollon - quite the contrary: the Lyceum got its name from the grove of Apollon Lykeios<sup>93</sup>.

Through the conquests of Aristotle's pupil Alexander the Great, science and philosophy took on a Greek cast "throughout the world and especially in the East". Hellenism became a dominant component of culture wherever it fused with oriental thought and life, particularly in Alexandria. "Greek science, Greek (transportable) art, Greek religion, and political thought travelled throughout Europe and Asia or, as has been observed, from the Aegean to the Indus and from the Caspian Sea to Ethiopia."<sup>94</sup>

Luther H. Martin succinctly describes Alexander's 'global village' vision:

"The goal of this young student of Aristotle was to transform the diverse local peoples in the eastern Mediterranean area and those of western Asia into a universal empire, unified by Greek language and culture. His empire irreversibly altered the sociopolitical world of the Greeks by replacing the local world of the polis, the Hellenic model of the independent, democratic city-state, with an internationalizing vision of the entire world as polis."<sup>95</sup>

92 Riedweg, 14.

93 Tredennick, viii; Budin, 393.

94 Schueller, 85.

95 Luther H. Martin, *Hellenistic Religions: an Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 4.



Alexander's successor in Egypt, Ptolemy I, built the Library of Alexandria, which was a *mousaion*, a temple of the Muses. Calling it a 'library' gives it the air of a secular knowledge centre, and misses the religious core.

As the Romans adopted Greek gods, the Muses came with the package. Virgil invokes a Muse at the beginning of *Aeneid* just as Homer in *Odyssey*, or Hesiod, a whole bunch of them, in *Theogony*.

By the first century CE, veneration of Pythagoras had become traditional in Rome. Riedweg gives several reasons to think that, contrary to commonly held opinion, it had not waned; instead, there was even a sense of local patriotism (since Aristotle the Pythagoreans were called the Italics).<sup>96</sup>

A central concept regarding the spreading of Greek and Roman religious thought is *interpretatio*.

### **Interpretatio graeca et romana**

"Among scholars of classical religion, the terms *interpretatio Graeca* and *interpretatio Romana* commonly refer to the "broad identification among Greeks and Romans of a foreign godhead with a member of their own pantheons."<sup>97</sup>

"[83] Age et his vocabulis esse deos facimus quibus a nobis nominantur? [84] At primum, quot hominum linguae, tot nomina deorum; non enim ut tu, Velleius, quocumque veneris, sic idem in Italia Vulcanus, idem in Africa, idem in Hispania.

[83] Come now: Do we really think that the gods are everywhere called by the same names by which they are addressed by us? [84] But the gods have as many names as there are languages among humans. For it is not with the gods as with you: you are Velleius wherever you go, but Vulcan is not Vulcan in Italy and in Africa and in Spain."<sup>98</sup>

96 Riedweg, 124.

97 Clifford Ando, *The matter of the gods: religion and the Roman Empire* (Berkeley, US: University of California Press, 2008), 43, Ebook Central Academic Complete.

98 Cicero, *Nat. deor.* 1.83–84, quoted in Ando, *The matter of the gods*, 46.

Cicero's remarks may seem like tolerance. But the foreign gods were not seen as the foreigners saw them; there's the attitude of "we already have that one in Rome". The foreign element is not respected as such, but in fact denied, in a sense. What is accepted is the pre-existing Roman conception that is deemed by Romans to be corresponding to the foreign. There is not much tolerance to speak of, quite the opposite really.

Isn't this similar to what Gourlay called the 'ethos of Western civilization'? Conditioned by that ethos, the Western scholar identifies African things as 'music', even when the Africans in question do not think that way, lack a corresponding concept, and instead, have something that works very differently. The Western scholar paraphrases Cicero: "Music is not known as 'music' in Africa, but it's still music." It is an attitude that is blind to what the Africans *do* know.

For the Romans, Vulcan was what they called Vulcan.  
Recalling Berio and Nattiez: music is what we call music.

Interpretatio graeca et romana never left the stage.

Interpretatio is the presumption, even conviction, that every new thing encountered ultimately fits the grid that was already in place. It is what *we* say it is. Nothing is really a surprise, because we have a system, we have it all figured out.

As an attitude, interpretatio evaluates all encountered new things on the terms of a system already established, a system that's considered universal and thus not in need of change. This conviction of the universality of music is what Gourlay critiqued; the unwillingness to adjust to the studied culture, to grant it the possibility of being fundamentally different.

Rightly Ando calls interpretatio naming, not translation<sup>99</sup>. For translation must be done on the terms of the target language - which means that there are possible non-translatables, something may be lost in translation; and also at times the need to form new expressions in the target language to convey aspects of the source. Translation is possible between equals, and for that reason can be done in both directions.

99 Ando, *The matter of the gods*, 43.

Interpretatio is a locked setting of one-way dictation: everything other than the Imperial grid is always the target language, and the Empire always the source, the giver of meaning to everyone else. “All roads lead to Rome”.

### Interpretatio continues along a forking path

*From Plutarch to Boethius (d. 524 A.D.), sometimes called the first great medieval thinker, musical speculations followed two paths: (1) that of the Hellenists, Neoplatonists, and Neopythagoreans, who added their own symbolical and mystical adjustments to the ancient Greek idea of music; and (2) that of the Neoplatonist-Hebraic Philo whose religious philosophy was in part adopted by the Fathers of the rising Christian Church. Beginning in Asia Minor and also especially in Alexandria, this Church carried a basically new musical idea to the West, eventually to make it Roman and European.<sup>100</sup>*

This twin lineage is distinctly Platonic. Plutarch (45 - 120 AD) was a priest of Apollo. Another Pythagorean-like feature is that he believed in the transmigration of the soul<sup>101</sup>. Boethius' Neoplatonist *Consolation* personifies wisdom as a lady who drives away the Muses of Poesie but has Muses of her own<sup>102</sup>, calling to her aid “the sweet persuasiveness of Rhetoric, who then only walketh in the right way when she forsakes not my instructions, and Music, my handmaid”<sup>103</sup>. She's also described as daily repeating in Boethius' ear and instilling into his mind “the Pythagorean maxim, ‘Follow after God’ ”<sup>104</sup>. Boethius doesn't name her, but he is alluding to Homer's attributes for Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom<sup>105</sup>.

Boethius' three levels of *musica* align with the Pythagorean doctrine of the Harmony of the Spheres. And can we see the spirit of interpretatio in his echoing Plato (and ultimately the Pythagorean ideas regarding cosmic harmony in intervals and consonances)?

100 Schueller, *The Idea of Music*, 133.

101 Plutarch, *Letter of Consolation* 611e.

102 Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* Book I, Prose I.

103 Ibid., Book II, Prose I.

104 Ibid., Book I, Prose IV.

105 Michael Fournier, “Boethius and Homer,” *The Downside Review* 128, no. 452 (July 2010): 201, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F001258061012845202>.

“Thus we can begin to understand that apt doctrine of Plato which holds that the soul of the universe is united by a musical concord (Plato *Timaeus* 37 A). For when we compare that which is coherently and harmoniously joined together in sound-that is, that which gives us pleasure-so we come to recognize that we ourselves are united according to this same principle of similarity. For similarity is pleasing, whereas dissimilarity is unpleasant and contrary.”<sup>106</sup>

The profound ethical issue in this cosmology is the intolerance of dissonance. Dissimilarity is “unpleasant and contrary”: what follows is that whatever is displeasing must be shunned. Boethius faithfully echoes here the Pythagorean “us” and “them” mentality.

Of course the other option is to “harmonize” the unpleasant element.

R. Murray Schafer’s *Tuning of the World* is a modern call for a harmonization of this sort. Especially in the last chapter, Schafer declares the same Pythagorean doctrines<sup>107</sup>.

Compared with path (1), the Neoplatonist-Hebraic path of Philo, continued by the Church Fathers, has a twist. What is suggested is that Greek and Hebrew heritages were mixed and this was carried on into what became Christian Europe.

Philo indeed upheld that Genesis was compatible with *Timaeus*; and later, Church Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria also saw Christianity as fulfilment and continuity of both Plato and Moses<sup>108</sup>.

The Renaissance saw the resurgence and amplification of this combination, as the Greek and Roman classics were reintroduced, with the unprecedented means of the printing press. Pythagoras, too, literally stayed in the picture - in Rafael’s *School of Athens* in the Vatican.

Luc Brisson explains how allegorical interpretation explains the survival of myth, even through substantial change brought by the end of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity.

106 Boethius, *De Institutione Musica* 1.1.

107 R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994/1977), 260-262.

108 Schueller, *Idea of Music*, 215.

*“The Neoplatonists sought to oppose the rise of the power of Christianity, and then its domination as a state religion, by establishing total agreement between Platonic doctrine they looked upon as ‘theology’ and all the other Greek theologies that could be found in Homer, Hesiod, Orpheus, and The Chaldean Oracles.*

*The appearance of Christianity, and above all its domination, complicated the issue. Henceforth myth had to not only accord with history and philosophy but it should also not collide directly with church dogma. Thus a new effort of adaptation and hence of interpretation, was agreed to, first by the church fathers, then by thinkers and artists in the Byzantine world as well as those of the Western Middle Ages.*

*This rescue was not easy in those trouble periods when the transmission of knowledge was a difficult undertaking. Yet it was genuine, so much so that the Renaissance inherited a treasure trove of narratives and representations whose true forms it fervently undertook to restore.*

*Allegory enabled the constant adaptation and interpretation of myths to fit the context in which they were received.”<sup>109</sup>*

Allegorical interpretation, in this sense, insists that nothing changes even when it does. It does this by dismissing the literal sense as superficial, or as introductory naiveté that one disposes of once one progresses to the ‘higher levels’. (Analogous with this is the despising of physical reality, and favouring the “higher” mental realm.) Thus the concept of music marched on along with other Greek religious ideas and myths.

### **Assimilation**

Pythagoras was supposed to have gathered rituals, rites, rules, initiations, and so on, from a variety of sources: Egyptians, Persians, Phoenicians, Chaldeans, Jews, and even Indian sages, Celts and Iberians.<sup>110</sup>

A few centuries later, in *Praeparatio Evangelica*, Eusebius justifies his Platonic treatment of Christianity by saying that the Greeks were thieves, and even called themselves that, and that Plato had got his philosophy essentially from the Hebrews.<sup>111</sup>

109 Luc Brisson, *How Philosophers Saved Myths: Allegorical interpretation and Classical Mythology*, translated by Catherine Tihanyi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 2, Ebook Central Academic Complete.

110 Riedweg, 7-8.

111 Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* Book XI, Preface.

Interpretatio could be characterized as a narcissistic worldview: everything is the same, because everything is about *me*. The entire universe is united at the self-worshipping self. The cult of Apollo claimed the navel of the world (Delphi). This attitude can firstly fuel collecting, and once a sufficient collection is built, a ruling. Rome goes everywhere and then claims that all roads lead to Rome. In terms of the surrounding world, interpretatio is parasitic.

In the *Star Trek* franchise, the Borg are an army of cybernetic organisms, “drones”. The drones are linked together in a hive mind called “the Collective” or “the Hive”. They strive towards “perfection” by assimilating other species into the Hive.

In *Star Trek: First Contact* (1996), the Borg address their target:

*“We are the Borg. Lower your shields and surrender your ships. We will add your biological and technological distinctiveness to our own. Your culture will adapt to service us. Resistance is futile.”*<sup>112</sup>

The mission of the Hive is narcissistic assimilation. There is no two-way communication; only the Hive has a say on the matter.

In another sci-fi feature film, *Guardians of the Galaxy 2* (2017), narcissistic assimilation is depicted in another way. The father of the main protagonist, Peter Quill, is called Ego. He presents himself as a loving father in search of his lost son, but under this guise, his agenda is the domination of the universe. Over millions of years, Ego planted himself on planets throughout the universe, and killed countless of his own offspring by laying his narcissistic agenda on them: they could not hold Ego’s “light” energy, and were killed by it instead. Their corpses became the soil of Ego’s self-planet. Quill turned out to be the only child of Ego who could actually hold Ego’s “light”. But this only served Ego’s purposes of turning the universe into himself.

In the final battle, narcissism is eventually defeated as Quill declines self-worship:

112 “Star Trek: First Contact (1996) – Quotes – IMDb,” IMDb, accessed December 9, 2019, [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117731/quotes/?tab=qt&ref\\_=tt\\_trv\\_qu](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117731/quotes/?tab=qt&ref_=tt_trv_qu).

*Ego: Listen to me! You are a god! If you kill me, you'll be just like everybody else!*

*Quill: What's so wrong with that?*

*Ego: \*No\*!...<sup>113</sup>*

The confrontation here is between the self-worshipping narcissistic Ego and the other-focussed Quill, who doesn't fight only for himself, but for his friends. His friends are his real family, as declared by Drax in an earlier scene:

*Nebula: [to Gamora] All any of you do is yell at each other. You're not friends.*

*Drax: You're right. ... We're family.<sup>114</sup>*

Ego's process of planting himself everywhere for the purpose of assimilation and domination depicts the process of *interpretatio graeca and romana*. Everybody else is ok, as long as I control them, that is, as long as they are me. Anyone outside of my control is a threat to this "harmony". Whereas the Borg represent a forced assimilation that is obvious, Ego's tactic is more covert, operating under a charming façade, at least at first. Only when the charm doesn't work, Ego turns to more overt and violent methods.

Quill's resistance represents the total opposite to this. The togetherness of the Guardians of the Galaxy is not a harmonious sameness. They're not held together by manipulation; instead, in several scenes, they are bad-mouthing each other. Compared to Ego's manipulative charms, the Guardians are honest characters that say what they think (for Drax, this is even a biological trait), even if that means venting. They are a family sticking together, in a rag-tag imperfection, in their challenging differences, that remain challenges because they're not forced to be the same; sticking together because of ultimately preferring each other, despite the friction.

### **The possibility of an alternative**

Philo, a Hellenist and a Pythagorean<sup>115</sup>, represented an allegorist extreme in Jewish thought of the time. From Jerusalem warnings were issued against such views. Louis Ginzberg, in the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia, writes of Philo that his philosophy "*furnished one foundation-stone to Christianity; his Allegorical Inter-*

113 "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2 (2017) – Quotes – IMDb," IMDb, accessed August 8, 2019, [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3896198/quotes/?tab=qt&ref\\_=tt\\_trv\\_qu](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3896198/quotes/?tab=qt&ref_=tt_trv_qu).

114 Ibid.

115 Schueller, 131-132; Riedweg, 124.

pretation, in an even greater degree, contributed to the Church's interpretation of the Old Testament; and strange to say neither his philosophy nor his allegorism had the slightest effect upon Judaism. Gfrörer has cleverly described Philo's allegorical bent in saying, 'It is madness, but there's a method in it' (Gfrörer, "Philo," i. 113).<sup>116</sup>

This opposition of two camps of Jewish thought - perhaps we can call them Hellenist allegorism and traditionalist conservatism - reveals a potential exception to the path of interpretation.

Philo was born into the Alexandrian Jewish community, which "had for nearly three centuries been almost exclusively Greek-speaking and indeed regarded the Septuagint (the 3rd-century-bce translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek) as divinely inspired"<sup>117</sup>.

"Philo's basic philosophic outlook is Platonic, so much so that Jerome and other Church Fathers quote the apparently widespread saying: "Either Plato philonizes or Philo platonizes." Philo's reverence for Plato, particularly for the *Symposium* and the *Timaeus*, is such that he never took open issue with him, as he did with the Stoics and other philosophers."<sup>118</sup>

In the background of the Septuagint is *The Letter of Aristeas*. It is one of the sources of the legend that the Septuagint was perfectly translated by 72 Jewish scholars arriving at identical results, despite working independently. According to Encyclopædia Britannica, the *Letter of Aristeas* has "Jewish apologetic features" and was written "to promote the cause of Judaism. [...] The author's purpose was to present Judaism in a favourable light to pagans and make strict observance of religious laws attractive to Hellenistic Jews."<sup>119</sup>

As unreliable as the *Letter* itself is, so is the *Encyclopædia's* understanding of Jewish apologetics. The author of the *Letter* mentions his plea to the king (Ptolemy), that he would release the Jewish slaves because "*they worship the*

116 *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Allegorical Interpretation," accessed October 14, 2019, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1256-allegorical-interpretation>.

117 *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Philo Judaeus," accessed June 30, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Philo-Judaeus>.

118 *Ibid.*

119 *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Letter of Aristeas," accessed July 6, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Letter-of-Aristeas>.



*same God - the Lord and Creator of the Universe, as all other men, as we ourselves, O king, though we call him by different names, such as Zeus or Dis.*<sup>120</sup>

Making the claim that the God of the Hebrews is the same as Zeus or Dis<sup>121</sup> is not Jewish apologetics, it is allegorical interpretation, and rather extreme, at that. It is certainly not “strict observance of religious laws”.

If the *Letter* is any indicator of the views held in Alexandria prior to Philo, Philo’s Platonic leanings are hardly surprising, and would seem to simply continue in the same vein. “Promoting the cause of Judaism” was, in this case, a matter of promoting the application of *interpretatio graeca* on the Hebrew Bible, and of the inclusion of the Jewish faith in the Hellenic canon, adding its biological and technological distinctiveness to the collection, adapting it to service the Imperial project of perfection. When assimilated, you cannot remain *you*. Only the Empire has its apologetics – you do not.

The Maccabean revolt (167 - 164 BCE) shows the clash of the two sides of the issue. Antiochus IV, also called Epiphanes, ‘god manifest’, ruled over the Seleucid kingdom in Syria. He set out to seize Judaea, and to remove the nuisance of the nonconformist Jewish religion. Nonconformism was not OK, because he wanted to unify his vast and heterogeneous empire by establishing one religion for all. He saw this as a continuation of Alexander the Great’s “civilizing” colonization process.

The Jewish view of life was totally in opposition to Hellenism’s “man is the measure of all things” ethos. *“It, too, was a total way of life, one lived in accordance with what the Jewish people believed was revelation. They regarded Hellenism as a form of nature worship. They saw it as the spiritual continuation of the religion of the Canaanites... [...] The Canaanite gods, they asserted, were merely the mythologizing of anger, hate, lust, envy, and greed of unregulated human hearts.”*<sup>122</sup>

Antiochus could not appreciate the Jews’ conception of revealed religion and loyalty to the Word of God, particularly since he himself was happy to be

120 *The Letter of Aristeas*, 15 - 16.

121 Perhaps meaning Hades, or Pluto later for the Romans; “Dis Pater” was a Roman reference to that god (Cicero, *De natura deorum* 2.26.).

122 *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Maccabees,” accessed July 1, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Maccabees>.

called “God Manifest”. After forbidding Jewish religious practices and enforcing Hellenization in a variety of measures, he eventually invaded Jerusalem and defiled the Temple of Jerusalem, dedicating it to Zeus on December 25th, 167 BCE.

A number of Jews chose the path of conformity, but resistance rose and was led by priest Mattathias and his family (the Maccabees). Thus, the ensuing guerilla war was as much a matter of civil war as of national resistance. Eventually, the revolt was successful, regaining and rededicating the Temple (commemorated to this day in the Jewish eight-day festival of Hanukkah, “Dedication”).<sup>123</sup>

The narcissism of Antiochus was not simply a personality trait. It was a logical consequence of the combination of great power and “man being the measure of all things”. The Jewish evaluation of Hellenism, that like with the Canaanites, the Hellenic gods were mythologized anger, lust, hate, envy, and greed, seems like a logical explanation. If the ‘gods’ were actually aspects of man himself, it is not surprising that man would ultimately come to the conclusion that he should think of himself as God. *Gnothi seauton* - worship yourself. Hellenization wasn’t as much about the Greek gods as such, but about peoples conforming to worship whatever the Emperor commanded, this meaning ultimately worshipping the Emperor himself. (Antiochus was certainly not the only example of this.)

Narcissism cannot be enjoyed by all, of course. The structure that it generates is not one of equality - it is a hierarchy of oppression. Only one Emperor can be at the top. Below him, there are those who worship him and are oppressed by him. Below those people, there are those who worship them: the oppression is passed on. Continuing further along these lines, matters get worse the lower one goes in the pyramid of narcissism. Each worshipper of the person above compensates the oppression they experience by oppressing others, that is, demanding worship from them. The horrible necessity of this power structure is that at the bottom there *must* be those who are *only* victims, with no one to oppress in turn. This bottom layer consists of non-people; they are not people because they cannot worship themselves. Self-worship doesn’t work if no one else agrees with it by allowing the self-worshipper to treat them as owing him or her worship. The Borg Hive cannot get enough and be satisfied with what it has, and become a peaceful colony. It has to keep assimilating. Stopping would mean that assimilation has been a mistake to begin with, because leaving even one out would cancel the “total perfection”. Eventually, the Borg would have to assimilate themselves, eat

123 Ibid.

themselves like the *ouroboros* of Egyptians and Greeks; even after having eaten everything, it has to eat itself because the assimilation must go on, the oppression cannot end, and it cannot be at peace with itself.

The view the Jews represented was annoying to this imperialism because it spoke of an antithesis to narcissism. God was held to be utterly “other” than man, that is to say, holy<sup>124</sup>. Man was therefore not worthy of worship, not by others, nor by himself.

What does all this have to do with the history of calling things music?

The Jewish resistance to the Hellenizing Borg and *interpretatio graeca* indicates the possibility of the kind of thinking that does not call things music (music being a religious Hellenic concept).

Richard Taruskin writes of a disjuncture that supports this possibility.

### 3.3 The Disjuncture...

“Until very recently it was assumed as a matter of course that the origins of Christian liturgical music went back, like the rest of Christian practice and belief, to the “sacred bridge” connecting the Christian religion with Judaism, out of which it originated as a heresy. [...] It turns out, however, that neither the psalmody of the Christian liturgy nor that of today’s synagogue service can be traced back to pre-Christian Jewish worship, let alone to Old Testament times. Pre-Christian Jewish psalmody centered around temple rites that came to an end when the temple itself was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. One has only to read some famous passages from the psalms themselves, as well as other biblical texts, to become aware of this disjuncture. Psalm 150, the climax of the Psalter, or Book of Psalms, is in fact a description of ancient temple psalmody – singing God’s praises – in full swing. I reads, in part:

*Praise Him with fanfares on the trumpet,  
praise Him upon the lute and harp;  
praise Him with tambourines and dancing,  
praise Him with flute and strings;  
praise Him with the clash of cymbals,  
praise Him with triumphant cymbals;*

*let everything that has breath praise the LORD!*

One will not find such goings-on in any contemporary Catholic Church or synagogue; nor were they ever part of pre-Reformation Christian worship.<sup>125</sup>

Taruskin also notes the lack of references to psalmody in early Christian accounts of worship. As an example, he mentions Justin the Martyr (mid- 2<sup>nd</sup> c.). “In short, there is nothing in the earliest descriptions of Christian worship to correspond with the later repertory of Gregorian chant. That repertory was not a direct inheritance from Christianity’s parent religion. It originated elsewhere, and later.”<sup>126</sup>

The beginnings of the psalmody of the Christian Church are monastic. Contrasting this with the “very public” worship of the Jewish temple, Taruskin notes how the origins of Christian psalmody are in “the secluded vigils of the early Christian ascetics” (a vigil being a nighttime service or offering)<sup>127</sup>.

Taruskin clearly ignores references to the singing of psalms in the New Testament.

But this doesn’t solve the disjuncture since Paul’s exhortations, “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”<sup>128</sup> and “singing to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”<sup>129</sup>, predate the monastic setting by centuries; and it does sound more like he’s talking about an everyman’s thing in a public or domestic gathering, not about a secretive nighttime activity occurring in a monastic location; “a corporate affair, not a professional event led by specialists”, as Frank Viola and George Barna put it<sup>130</sup>.

The Christianity for which Philo provided a foundation-stone was criticized by the Protestant Reformation.

125 Taruskin, *The Oxford history of Western Music*, 7 – 8.

126 Ibid., 8.

127 Ibid., 9.

128 Colossians 3:16 (KJV).

129 Ephesians 5:19 (KJV).

130 Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity?: exploring the roots of our church practices* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 158.

Martin Luther opposed the Aristotelian theology of the Scholastics. As his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* (1517) makes clear, he wasn't fond of Porphyry's Neoplatonism either:

*"41. Virtually the entire Ethics of Aristotle is the worst enemy of grace. This in opposition to the scholastics.*

*[...]*

*43. It is an error to say that no man can become a theologian without Aristotle. This in opposition to common opinion.*

*44. Indeed, no one can become a theologian unless he becomes one without Aristotle.*

*[...]*

*50. Briefly, the whole Aristotle is to theology as darkness is to light. This in opposition to the scholastics.*

*[...]*

*52. It would have been better for the church if Porphyry with his universals had not been born for the use of theologians."<sup>131</sup>*

Over three centuries later, Lutheran theologian Adolf von Harnack argued that the Gospel had been Hellenized.

*"... to the most important premises of the Catholic doctrine of faith belongs an element which we cannot recognise as dominant in the New Testament, viz., the Hellenic spirit."<sup>132</sup>*

In Harnack's view, the Protestant project had not reached as far as it should have.

*"In his major work, the History of Dogma, Harnack historically approached the origins and developments of Christian dogma in order to ground the knowledge necessary for the further assessment and development of Christianity. He began by defining dogma as the objective content of faith affirmed by the religious authorities, determining the boundaries of the Christian community. Traditionally, the Christian Church viewed dogma as the revealed truths of the Gospel. However, the historical study of the Gospel shows that these formulations did not exist the earliest Christianity but developed later*

131 Martin Luther, *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, in *Luther's Works, Vol. 31: Career of the Reformer*, ed. Harold J. Grimm and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), 12-13.

132 Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan (New York: Dover Publications, 1961), 48 - 49.

through theological debates concerning Christological and Trinitarian issues. Although dogma had its origin in the Gospel, as it developed the simple message of Christian faith became intertwined with the objectified knowledge of Hellenistic. In other words, **Harnack saw the development of Christian dogma as the intellectualization and Hellenization of the gospel.**

*Although the Protestant Reformation recognized this historical situation to some extent, Harnack argued that it stopped short and did not finalize its critical relationship toward the dogmatic contents of Christianity. The 16th century reformers revived the gospel's independence from moralism, ritualism, hierarchizing, and philosophical speculation, yet they themselves continued to adhere to the ancient dogmas and to a dogmatic mode of expression. Thus, the Reformation was an unfinished program that confused the essentials and non-essentials of the faith. Harnack urged a "critical reduction of dogma," that in the spirit of reform retrieves Christianity from the misadventures of the historical church.*<sup>133</sup>

Dogma, "a principle or set of principles laid down by an authority as incontrovertibly true,"<sup>134</sup> resonates with the concept of music. Both are *fiat*, sheer definitions, relying only on the word of a (human) authority.

In their radical Protestant critique of the practices of the Western Church, Frank Viola and George Barna locate the roots of its liturgical practices in pre-Christian Roman religious customs<sup>135</sup>. They also see a connection between the end of the persecution of Christians and the introduction of these customs, both after the *Edict of Milan* (313 AD). The choir (a Roman custom), and a specially trained musical clergy in general, was gradually introduced, and singing by the laity was even forbidden at the Council of Laodicea (ca. 367 AD)<sup>136</sup>.

The Edict of Milan seems to declare religious freedom. But it speaks of "the Deity" and various *modes of worship*, Christianity now being granted an unrestricted place among those modes. The *Edict* can therefore be seen as assimi-

133 *The Boston Collaborative Encyclopedia of Western Theology*, s.v. "Adolf von Harnack," accessed September 15, 2017, <http://people.bu.edu/wwildman/bce/harnack.htm>. (My emphasis.)

134 *New Oxford American Dictionary* (Apple Dictionary, version 2.1.3, 2005-2009), s.v. "dogma."

135 Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, 6 – 7.  
Luther H. Martin remarks similarly that "by the second century, Christianity had assumed many of the forms and practices of the mystery cults". *Hellenistic Religions: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 162.

136 Viola and Barna, 158 – 159.

lation. Christianity was given freedom, as long as “the Deity” was the same as every other religion’s.<sup>137</sup>

In the view proposed by Viola and Barna, free practice was eventually suppressed by the religious canon. It was a process that seems analogous with the Hellenization of the Jews; a sort of interpretatio is applied. Not exactly the same kind, of course; at Constantine, the canon assumed a Christian face.

This can explain Taruskin’s disjuncture. Despite a newly adopted Christian front, what Rome really kept going were its interpretatio roots. The concept of music advanced through this Greco-Roman channel, affecting the customs of the Church, showing up in thinkers like Boethius, finding more strength during the Renaissance due to the resurfacing of the Greek and Roman classics, and thriving in various articulations to the present day, even in Protestant societies, because the Reformation stopped short of exposing the Hellenic roots fully. Interpretatio graeca et romana never stopped; in Christianity, it encountered an unprecedented challenge, causing it to change appearance. But the tactics remained the same. What used to be imperial interpretatio, that is, the empire having the last word and being the top authority on the gods within the realm, became Church dogma, institutional control over matters of faith.

### 3.4 A review and possible alternatives

Although this brief conceptual history of music is but a sketch, two possible alternatives have become more visible through it.

The first possibility are other ancient cultures. Are there those that were uninfluenced by the Greeks? This is a difficult question because of the influences the Greeks received from other cultures, and on the other hand, the influences they passed on to others. The Pythagoreans were said to have drawn from Egyptian religion particularly<sup>138</sup>, and Alexander’s conquests brought Greek influences

137 *The Edict of Milan.*

138 Riedweg, 7 – 8, 55 – 56.

to early Buddhism<sup>139</sup>; and some recent archaeological findings suggest an even earlier connection between East and West<sup>140</sup>.

Finding alternative paradigms to the music-concept in ancient cultures would seem to require an extensive study in Ancient history and comparative religion.

A hint towards an alternative is found in Gourlay: pre-Colonial African languages. He mentions the Nigerian musicologist Chinyere Nwachukwu. In her dissertation, Nwachukwu writes of the Igbo language term *nkwa*, to which ‘music’ does not correspond, since “nkwa combines singing, playing musical instruments, and dancing into one act”<sup>141</sup>.

“Nkwa, in fact, is not ‘music’, but a wider affective channel”, Gourlay states. “The point of interest here is that Nwachukwu feels constrained to use the erroneous term ‘music’ not only because she is producing a ‘musical dissertation’ but because the ‘one act’, which the Igbos perform, has no equivalent in the English language.”<sup>142</sup>

The question still remains whether or not *nkwa* would correspond to a more ancient concept of music.

This possibility can be viewed more broadly, including other non-Western languages too. The Mandarin Chinese word *yin-yue* (音樂) is usually translated as ‘music’, but the characters of the word itself do not refer to the Muses or other religious concepts, but simply sound, wood and silk, and maybe even ‘joy’ because of an alternate meaning for the character ‘yue’. The *qin*, a traditional Chinese instrument, is a wooden zither with silk strings.<sup>143</sup> It would not seem far-fetched to think that *yin-yue* refers to the joy of playing or hearing a *qin*.

139 Wikipedia, s.v. “Greco-Buddhism,” accessed January 13, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greco-Buddhism>.

140 Wikipedia, s.v. “Tarim mummies,” accessed December 11, 2019, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarim\\_mummies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarim_mummies).

141 Chinyere Nwachukwu, *Taxonomy of Musical Instruments of Mbaise, Nigeria* (Unpublished M.A. thesis, The Queen’s University of Belfast, 1981), quoted in Gourlay, 35.

142 Ibid.

143 Dr. Stefan Kuzay, email message to the author, October 7, 2013.



On the other hand, Adrian Tien, in *The Semantics of Chinese Music*, says that ‘yue’ is orderly sound set to rites, rituals and ceremonies.<sup>144</sup> This seems to suggest that the concept is dogmatic much in the way ‘music’ is – institutionally defined and religious, not simply wood, silk and joy *regardless* of authoritative definitions.<sup>145</sup>

The second possibility that comes to view are Traditionalist Jews, Early Christians and Protestants, because of their resistance to imperial interpretation. What is in common to these chronologically disparate groups is their adherence to the Hebrew Scriptures (Early Christians started out without the New Testament, the texts of which were completed during the first century AD). Some of these Scriptures are ancient enough to qualify for the first possibility (pre-Greek). In the Grove entry cited above, Nettl mentions something interesting that concerns this possibility: the word *muzika* was imported to Hebrew about a thousand years ago. This would mean that the word must be absent from the Hebrew Bible. The question remains whether or not there are corresponding words.

Both avenues deserve further study. For the purposes of this dissertation, the second possibility is the more practical one by far, thanks to an abundance of resources.

144 Adrian Tien, *The Semantics of Chinese Music: Analysing selected Chinese musical concepts* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015), 2, ProQuest Ebook Central.

145 Christian Kaden seems to suggest a common religious root for the Greek, Chinese and Sanskrit terms: “WAS HAT MUSIK MIT KLANG ZU TUN?!: Ideen zu einer Geschichte des Begriffs ‘Musik’ und zu einer musikalischen Begriffsgeschichte,” *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, Vol. 32 (1989), 34 – 75. This could support the idea that the dogma of music came to the Ancient Greeks from another (earlier) culture.



## 4 The Ancient Hebrew Concepts

The number of existing Bible translations is immense. It is not at all sensible to attempt a comprehensive study concerning what Hebrew words are translated as ‘music’ (or its derivatives) in all of them. In the following, the King James Version (KJV, the 1769 Standard Text) is used together with *Strong’s Concordance*. In addition to *Strong’s*, more modern sources are also used in an attempt to find a descriptive understanding of Ancient Hebrew words translated as ‘music’ or its derivatives. Finally, these are compared with the Greco-Roman concept.

*Strong’s Concordance* lists altogether one Aramaic and five Hebrew words translated as “musick”, “musician”, or “musical”, and two words as “instruments of musick” (Tables 1 and 2).

<i>English translation in KJV</i>	<i>Strong’s number</i>
Musical	7892, 7705
Musician	5329
Musick	7892, 4485, 5058, 2170

*Table 1*

<i>Strong’s number</i>	<i>Hebrew</i>	<i>Transliteration</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>
2170	זמר (Aramaic)	zemar	4 out of 4
4485	מנגינה	mangiynah	1
5058	נגינה	neginah	1 out of 14
5329	נצח	natzach	55 out of 65
7705	שדה	shiddah	2 out of 2
7892	שיר	shir	9 out of 90

*Table 2*

In addition to these, two words have been translated as “instrument(s) of music” (Table 3).

<i>Strong's number</i>	<i>Hebrew</i>	<i>Transliteration</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>
7991	שליש	shaliysh	1 out of 20
1761	דחבה (Aramaic)	dachavah	1

*Table 3*

### *Why a Bible study?*

The challenge here is that *Strong's* calls things ‘music’, true to the ‘ethos of Western civilization’. What is attempted here is a criticism of such translation, to see if it is justified. If interpretation is what has kept the music-concept alive, ‘*music*’ is not really a translation. Could it be that Ancient Hebrew is like a pre-colonial African language, featuring something different from the calling-things-music-ethos? If this is the case, Ancient Hebrew could provide a useful example of an understanding that is alternative to the ‘musical worldview’. Such a view might be more suitable for understanding the artistic situations described in chapter one. Without a music vs. non-music division, such “hybrids” would not have to be seen as hybrids or in-betweens.

### *Describing the Ancient Hebrew Concepts*

In Ancient Hebrew and other Semitic languages, morphology (word formation) is based on a root system. Words coming from the same root are related in a sense, and can shed more light on a word's meaning.

“The Semitic root is generally composed of three consonants. However, although the root is not a word, it is associated with a core meaning, which may be inferred from the group of words in which it is embedded. [...] ... aside from its phonological role, the root functions as a semantic determinative that indicates a certain semantic field, deduced from words in which the root is embedded.”<sup>146</sup>

146 Joseph Shimron, *Reading Hebrew: The Language and the Psychology of Reading It* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates 2006), 3.

**ZMR: *zemar*; *zamar*; *zimrah***

For the Aramaic *zemar*, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of The Old Testament* (herewith HALOT) gives ‘stringed music, musical instruments’<sup>147</sup>. The Hebrew *zmr* words (Strong’s numbers 2167-2173) yield an interesting feature set<sup>148</sup>:

## Zamar (I)

1. to play an instrument, to sing;
2. to praise;
3. to sing, praise;

## Zamar (II)

to prune (the vine);

## Zamar (IV)

kind of gazelle;

## Zimrah (I)

melody, sound (of an instrument)

## Zimrah (II)

strength; strength (i.e. the best products) of the land

Klein’s *Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English* has some further explanation on *zamar* (IV): “[...] Prob. meaning lit. ‘the jumping and bouncing animal’, and related to Arab. *zamara* (= it bounced, fled - said of an antelope).”<sup>149</sup>

A common theme seems to be a plucking motion - plucking the string of an instrument; a cutting or pruning of a plant; and the similar motion of a bouncing gazelle or deer, which does look like it’s ‘plucking’ the ground. There is a parabolic air: plucking strings is like tending to a vine to increase its fruitfulness, and a plucked melody is like choice picked fruit.

147 Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of The Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 1866.

148 Ibid., 273-274.

149 Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English* (New York: MacMillan, 1987), 200.

Interestingly, it seems that singing and playing an instrument are not separated here. The concept encompasses both. One gets the idea of singing accompanied by the playing of a plucked string instrument.

A modern manifestation of a ZMR concept is *klezmer*. The word is compacted from the Hebrew words ‘*kli zemer*’, ‘instruments of zemer’.

**NGN: mangiy nah, neginah, nagan**

Both *mangiy nah* and *neginah* mean a ‘mocking song’, for the latter also ‘music played on strings’ is given<sup>150</sup>. Both come from *nagan* (Strong’s 5059, “a primitive root: prop. to thrum, that is beat a tune with the fingers, especially to *play* on a stringed instrument; hence, (generally) to *make music...*”). In HALOT, ‘to play a stringed instrument’ and ‘string players’<sup>151</sup>.

*Naga* means ‘to touch, reach, afflict, strike’ in a variety of ways<sup>152</sup>, and is a very common Biblical word. Two-consonant roots also exist<sup>153</sup>, making it possible that *naga* shares a two-consonant root (NG) with *nagan*.

“To thrum, to beat a tune with fingers” certainly implies a particular sort of touch. A mocking song is intended to touch someone’s soul in a negative manner. The idea here seems to be tactile, like with the ZMR-words, but with a different hue. *Nagan* is to touch in order to cause a sound or to touch the soul by doing so.

A modern example: in klezmer, an instrumental can be called a ‘nigun’.<sup>154</sup>

150 Koehler and Baumgartner, 599, 668.

151 Ibid.

152 Ibid.

153 Shimron, 110-111, 195.

154 Velvel Pasternak (ed.), *The Big Klezmer Fake Book* (Cedarhurst, NY: Tara Publications, 2001), 167 – 175.

**Natzach (NCX)**<sup>155</sup>

*Natzach* is a word that appears at the head of many Psalms, and is often translated as “Chief Musician”. But this is based on tradition, not on the meaning of the word, which is uncertain. In *The Passion Translation*, Dr. Brian Simmons renders it ‘the Pure and Shining One’<sup>156</sup>.

In HALOT<sup>157</sup>:

## Natzach (I)

1. to inspect (works and activities concerned with the temple)
2. in title at the beginning of a psalm (55 times); uncertain meaning; trad. “for the director of the music”
3. to make shining

## Natzach (II)

(I)

1. splendour, glory (of God)
2. duration
  - a) throughout eternity
  - b) for ever
3. (in law) successful

(II)

Juice: meaning blood

In Klein’s *Etymological Dictionary*<sup>158</sup>:

‘To make brilliant, make conquer, vanquish’, ‘to endure, last forever’;  
 ‘to eternize, perpetuate’;  
 ‘Glory, eminence’, ‘endurance in time, everlastingness, perpetuity’;  
 ‘juice of grapes, fig. used of blood’.

155 Following Shimron’s notation where C stands for the Hebrew letter tzadi, and X for chet; Shimron, 6.

156 *The Passion Translation 2-in-1 Collection of The Psalms: Poetry on Fire and Proverbs: Wisdom from Above*, trans. Dr. Brian Simmons (Racine, WI, USA: Broadstreet Publishing Group, 2016), 46.

157 Koehler and Baumgartner, 716.

158 Klein, 423.

The idea in *natzach* seems to be enduring leadership, glory, eminence, having to do with the goings-on at the temple. It concerns a social role or status, a certain kind of (spiritual) position in the community.

As with *zamar* and *zimrah*, there is a parabolic reference related to wine-making. *Netzach* is used figuratively for blood and strength (Isa. 63:3,6). *Strong's* explains this to be via the brilliance of the colour (of freshly treaded grapes, of blood).

Related words further support an idea of radiance, whether in the case of the petals of a flower, or the feathers of a hawk<sup>159</sup>:

*Netz* (I): hawk

*Netz* (II): blossom, flower [From NTzTz (II) (= to blossom, bloom).

### ***Shir, shirah* (ŠYR)**

*Shir* means 'to sing' (denominative verb), or 'song' (this also *shirah*). It is used in a variety of contexts, from birdsong to secular to ceremonial-religious - meaning that the word itself doesn't involve a (religious) value statement. The croak of a small screech-owl is its *shir*; a drinking party may belt out a drinking *shir*; and a psalm sung at the temple is a *shir* of praise<sup>160</sup>.

An interesting detail is the expression *kli shir*, "musical instruments", but literally 'instruments of song'<sup>161</sup>.

### **"Instruments of musick": shiddah, dachavan**

Two of the translations in the list above turn out to be mere guesses and can be disregarded in this exploration. *Shiddah* occurs only in King Solomon's listing of earthly delights (Ecclesiastes 2:8), and HALOT speaks of 'concubines' or 'mistresses'<sup>162</sup>. Something similar is happening with *dachavan*, likewise occurring only once, concerning King Darius refusing something (Daniel 6:18). The meaning of

159 Klein, 423.

160 Koehler and Baumgartner, 1479 – 1483.

161 Ibid., 1481.

162 Koehler and Baumgartner, 1420.



the Aramaic word is uncertain, and the renderings vary from ‘musical instruments’ to ‘tables’, ‘perfumes’, and ‘concubines’<sup>163</sup>.

### **Some conclusions**

Compared to the religious *mousike* concept, these Ancient Hebrew words have a rather different air. They are concrete in nature: a plucking motion, the act of touch; the quality of glorious brilliance, and quite simply - song. Translating them as ‘music’ is not sensitive to this; where are the Muses or Apollonic rituals? As the usage of *shir* demonstrates, for example, these Hebrew (and Aramaic) concepts *themselves* do not differentiate on the basis of a religious definition. The concepts don’t contain such value judgments per se. They are not dogmatic. The worship of Nebuchadnessar’s golden image used *zemar* (Dan. 3:5,7,10,15), and the Psalms, while obviously sung to the God of Israel, not Nebuchadnessar’s image, happily use its Hebrew equivalent (Ps. 7:17 etc.). In other words, in the world of these concepts, it’s who you’re ‘zeming’ *to* that makes the difference, not the ‘zeming’ itself.

In the Septuagint, some instances of *shir*, *shirah*, *mizmor* (a *zmr*-word), and all of the Aramaic *zemar* are rendered as *mousikos*, while others are not<sup>164</sup>. Further study could perhaps reveal whether or not this is systematic in some way; for the purposes of this study, it suffices to note that this suggests a Hellenistic influence that made a definitive distinction where the Hebrew language itself did not.

The Hebrew Scriptures do not call anything ‘music’. Therefore, for a translation to really be a translation, it shouldn’t do so either. The ‘Ancient Hebrew ethos’ or mindset is rather simple and concrete. For *zemer* and *nagan*, corresponding English verbs are such as *to pluck*, *to pick*, *to play*, *to strum*, even *to sing*, and so forth; and *shir* is simply to sing a song.

In Ancient Hebrew and Aramaic, we can see evidence that the music concept is not ultimately necessary, and that it has not been used by everybody. It is possible to discuss matters with simple, descriptive concepts that do not depend on a definition given by an emperor or a priesthood.

163 Ibid., 1849-1850.

164 Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 935.

Something of an inversion has taken place over time. In contemporary use, ‘music’ as such isn’t thought to refer to something religious (for that, ‘*sacred* music’ is the common wording). Music is generally thought to be a secular word, whereas the Ancient Hebrew stuff easily evokes religious associations. In the end, however, it is ‘music’ that turns out to be a religious word while the Biblical ones are simple and lacking any religious judgments in the words themselves.<sup>165</sup>

### **The New Testament**

Considering the role of Taruskin’s disjuncture in the conceptual history outlined in the previous chapter, it is necessary to conduct a similar inspection of the New Testament.

Following the same method as above (Strong’s & KJV), there are only two verses to consider: “musick” at Luke 15:25 and “musicians” at Revelation 18:22.

*Symphonia* (4858) at Luke 15:25

Towards the end of the parable of the prodigal son, the elder brother comes back from the field and hears “musick and dancing” from the house, *symphonias kai khoron*:

*King James Version*

Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

*Textus Receptus*

ην δε ο υιος αυτου ο πρεσβυτερος εν αγρω και ως ερχομενος ηγγισεν τη οικια ηκουσεν συμφωνιας και χορων

*Symphonia* definitely sounds like a ‘music word’; it is the root for the English word ‘symphony’. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon explains it in just one word - “music”<sup>166</sup> - but

165 The word ‘secular’ itself has a religious origin. The secular games in Rome were a religious festival, held at the interval of a lifetime (saeculum). This, in turn, was “used in Christian Latin to mean ‘the world’ (as opposed to the Church)” (*New Oxford American Dictionary* [Apple Dictionary, version 2.1.3, 2005 – 2009], s.v. “secular.”)

166 “G4858 – symphonia – Strong’s Greek Lexicon (KJV),” Blue Letter Bible, accessed December 13, 2019, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G4858&t=KJV>.

the word is derived from *symphonos* (4859) “1. harmonious, accordant, agreeing; 2. thing agreed upon, compact”.<sup>167</sup>

From *symphonos* also come *symphoneo* (4856), ‘to agree together; to agree with one in making a bargain, to make an agreement, to bargain’<sup>168</sup> and *symphonesis* (4857), ‘concord, agreement’.<sup>169</sup>

All feature the prefix *syn-* (4862, ‘with’, common prefix meaning togetherness) and (a derivative of) *phone* (5456):

“1. a sound, a tone

of inanimate things, as musical instruments

2. a voice

of the sound of uttered words

3. speech

of a language, tongue”<sup>170</sup>

“... any type of sound, including human speech, but normally a distinctive type of sound as opposed to confused noise - ‘sound’.”<sup>171</sup>

The idea here seems to be that singing and playing instruments together is like an agreement, like a settled bargain. The related words clarify the idea behind *συμφωνία* : singing the same song, voicing the same thing in agreement.

The Book of Daniel mentions *sumponeya* (Dan. 3:5,10), an Aramaic word but “a loanword from the Greek *συμφωνία*”<sup>172</sup>. Gesenius explains it to be “a double

167 “G4859 – symphonos – Strong’s Greek Lexicon (KJV),” Blue Letter Bible, accessed December 13, 2019, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G4859&t=KJV>.

168 “G4856 – symphoneo – Strong’s Greek Lexicon (KJV),” Blue Letter Bible, accessed December 13, 2019, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G4856&t=KJV>.

169 “G4857 – symphonesis – Strong’s Greek Lexicon (KJV),” Blue Letter Bible, accessed December 13, 2019, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G4857&t=KJV>.

170 “G5456 – phone – Strong’s Greek Lexicon (KJV),” Blue Letter Bible, accessed December 13, 2019, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=G5456&t=KJV>.

171 Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains, Volume I* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 180.

172 Koehler and Baumgartner, 1937-1938.

pipe with a bag, bagpipes ... just as at present this instrument is called in Italy and in Asia Minor, *Zambogna*<sup>173</sup>.

*“In Lk 15.25 there are differences of opinion as to the meaning of συμφωνία. Some scholars contend that the reference is to music produced by several instruments, while others insist that this is music produced by a single instrument, possibly a double flute or a kind of bagpipe.”*<sup>174</sup>

A double pipe instrument literally does *symphony*, as the two pipes *sound together*. Maybe this is what the elder brother heard - someone playing bagpipe and folks singing and partying in a manner that could be heard outside (apparently the dancing could be *heard*, too). Whatever the specific meaning, it is the ‘translation’ that calls it ‘music’, not the text itself.

#### *Mousikon* (3451) at Revelation 18:22

While it is not the source text that calls συμφωνία ‘music’, the ‘musicians’ mentioned at Revelation 18:22 are definitely just that, *μουσικῶν*.

#### *King James Version*

And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft *he be*, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

#### *Textus Receptus*

καὶ φωνὴ κιθαρῶδων καὶ μουσικῶν καὶ ἀυλητῶν καὶ σαλπιστῶν οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι καὶ πᾶς τεχνίτης πάσης τέχνης οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι καὶ φωνὴ μύλου οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι

173 “H5481 - cwwmpowneyah - Strong’s Hebrew Lexicon (KJV),” Blue Letter Bible, accessed January 3, 2020, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H5481&t=KJV>.

174 Louw and Nida, 181.

The context is that these are words of judgment on Babylon, spoken by a mighty angel. The angel casts a stone like a great millstone into the sea, signifying God's judgment on Babylon, which is described as a deceiver, sorcerer and murderer<sup>175</sup>.

We find musicians in a list of sound-makers that will no longer be heard in Babylon: *kitharodon* (kithara players), *mousikon*, *auleton* (aulos players), and *salpiston* (salpinx players). This suggests that the understanding of the author of the text was that a player of a *kithara*, *aulos* or *salpinx*<sup>176</sup> is not the same thing as a musician.

This is the only occurrence of μουσικων in the NT; only Babylon is described as specifically having *mousikon*. The context is thus decidedly negative. The writer of Revelation places *mousikon* conspicuously in a place of deception, sorcery and murder, not anywhere else. There are many scenes of choirs singing and trumpets sounding in the text. Why would *mousikon* only appear in that one spot?

The other soundmakers in the verse – *kitharodon*, *auleton*, *salpiston* – do appear elsewhere in the NT, in different contexts, as do the words referring to the respective instruments (*salpiston* doesn't, but *salpizo*, to sound a trumpet, and *salpinx*, trumpet, do).

Singing and the playing of instruments is referred to with a variety of words in the NT, such as the verbs *psallo*, *ado*, *humneo*, and nouns like *psalmos* (derived from *psallo*) and *ode* (from *ado*).

*Psallo* (ψαλλω, Strong's number 5567) is of particular interest here. *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* explains it to mean 'to pluck off, pull out', 'to cause to vibrate by touching, to twang', 'in the NT to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song'<sup>177</sup>. We see here a concept very similar to *zemer* – it is about a plucking movement, and like with *zemer*, the word also refers to singing (accompanied with a plucked instrument).

175 Rev. 18:20-24.

176 A lyre, a reed flute, and a (metal) horn, respectively.

177 "G5567 – psallo – Strong's Greek Lexicon (KJV)," Blue Letter Bible, accessed January 3, 2020, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsgs=G5567&t=KJV>.

This is a difference between the Septuagint and the NT. The use of *mousike* or its derivatives is different in them: in the LXX, it is given as a “translation” for *shir* and *zemer*; in the NT, the single occurrence of *mousikon* does not suggest such correspondence. Instead, the only occurrence in the NT associates it with something evil, and moreover, discerns between the sounds of *mousikon* and the sounds of lyres and wind instruments.

The conspicuous use of *μουσικων* at Rev. 18:22 suggests an anti-music worldview. Further evidence for this is the way the leader of the Muses may be mentioned in chapter nine of Revelation: the angel of the bottomless pit, fallen from heaven, king over the locusts that torment men for five months, and “whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek has the name Apollyon”<sup>178</sup>.

The names mean ‘destroyer’, from the verb *apollumi* (‘to destroy’). Lexicons don’t say more<sup>179</sup>. There is an additional *upsilon* when comparing with Apollon; but that name has had various spellings. ‘Destroyer’ is not unfit for the Greco-Roman god Apollo(n): the Greeks saw him as someone who might just as well *destroy* as heal (in *Iliad*, for example), just like his precedent, Aplu of the Hurrians who was a god of the plague - both the inflictor and (then) a healer of it. And that Apollyon leads an army of locusts does fit one of Apollo’s Greco-Roman epithets - Parnopius, from *πάρονος*, “locust”<sup>180</sup>.

The aim of the exploration in this chapter is not exegetical. While there may be theological implications, the focus of this inquiry is not there. We’re concerned with the conceptual history of music because the concept causes certain problems, and because through examining the history of the concept alternatives may be revealed. Looking at how Revelation and other NT texts use the words discussed above, an opposition to the “musical worldview” becomes visible. There are musicians, but they are associated with evil; musicians make sounds, but an instrumentalist or singer is **not necessarily a musician** - it depends who one is singing or playing *to*. It seems justified to say that Revelation sees music as

178 Rev. 9:1,11.

179 Louw and Nida, 819; “G623 - Apollyon - Strong’s Greek Lexicon (KJV),” Blue Letter Bible, accessed January 3, 2020, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=G623&t=KJV>.

180 Wikipedia, s.v. “Apollo,” accessed January 3, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo>.

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the mystical religion of the Ancient Greeks, and posits itself against it. This is actually an instance of the music concept being used in a *descriptive* manner!

This seems like a plausible explanation for Taruskin's disjuncture. When it comes to the concept of music, the NT does not continue a Hellenic lineage, instead, it attacks it. It took a process of interpretatio to form the kind of religious organization where Christian *music* (sic) could begin. Schueller actually points in this direction when he speaks of the forking paths in the passage quoted above<sup>181</sup>. This interpretatio began well *before* Christianity in Alexandria with the Septuagint, was continued by Philo, and carried on in a new context by (some of) the Early Church Fathers.

181 Schueller, 133.





## 5 Effects of the Concept of Music in Modern Thought

The ways a *fiat* can become an amusing condition or even an impossible cul-de-sac are interestingly illustrated in a number of contemporary composers' works.

In *Con Voce* (1972) by Mauricio Kagel, a trio of instrumentalists are given notated material to play, but the score forbids making any of the notated sounds with the instruments. The players are still required to make the appropriate movements to operate the instruments, but are only allowed to make vocal sounds that more or less correspond with the score. The composer has used his definitive power to define the instruments to be silent, only to be used in a gestural role.

In *Failing: a Very Difficult Piece for String Bass* (1975) by Tom Johnson, the solo double bassist is required to both play the notation, which starts easy and gets increasingly difficult, and speak the text above the notation. The text lays out the requirements of the piece, resulting in a bassist's monologue, explaining the piece as it is performed. Even improvisation is at times required (also in the spoken part). But centrally, the player is required to fail. This shouldn't be done on purpose – that wouldn't be a failure, that would be succeeding to fail, and therefore failing to play *Failing* – but since the whole endeavour of playing the piece is very likely to be on purpose, the requirement is practically impossible, and of course extremely funny.

Shakespeare made use of this in *Othello*. There is an example of an impossible requirement in the third act, scene one:

**Clown**

Marry. Sir, by many a wind-instrument that I know.  
But, masters, here's money for you: and the general  
so likes your music, that he desires you, for love's  
sake, to make no more noise with it.

**First Musician**

Well, sir, we will not.

**Clown**

If you have any music that may not be heard, to't  
again: but, as they say to hear music the general  
does not greatly care.

**First Musician**

We have none such, sir.

**Clown**

Then put up your pipes in your bag, for I'll away:  
go; vanish into air; away!

*Exeunt Musicians. (Othello 3.1.11 – 21.1)*

In a contemporary adaptation of *Othello*, the First Musician might perhaps suggest *4'33"* by John Cage.

We might see Schueller's "forking path" as illustrative of two main kinds of reaction towards the impossibility of the concept of music. One religiously sticks to it, and denies physical reality. Problem solved. But others see the absurdity of such (extreme) idealism and try to redefine the concept of music in order to reconcile it with physical reality.

These strands can be seen in modern and contemporary thought. Hellenist-Neoplatonist-Neopythagorean ideas are still prevalent, professing music's immateriality and "purity". These ideas have taken a great variety of forms, but in the end, they can be traced to Ancient Greek idealism, to the utopianism of the soul: one's own soul is supposed to be the final serene paradise. To this, the physical world is ultimately – although this is not always readily apparent – a hinderance, a prison, Plutarch's soul cage.

Then there are those who contest outright Platonism and defend the "physicality of music": the redefiners, named here thus for their attempts to redefine music

as concrete, material, non-ideal. Views of this nature correspond more or less with Schuller's "Neoplatonic-Hebraic path".

The following is not an exhaustive survey. Its purpose is to show that the utopian abstraction, that the concept of music carries, *is still in effect* – it was not left behind at any point. It is the proposition of this thesis that it should finally be disavowed. Further reasons for this are given after the following survey.

## 5.1 Neopythagoreans

### R. Murray Schafer

When R. Murray Schafer's teachings on the soundscape are discussed, their ideological backdrop is rarely mentioned. This background is as Neopythagorean as can be.

Throughout *The Tuning of the World*, Schafer treats the world as a macrocosmic musical composition, and declares the 'comprehensive dominion of music' to include *all* sound<sup>182</sup>. The implication is startlingly total. Very little, if anything, is left out - what can you do without making *any* sound?

The world needs to be restored through Apollonian music, which "seeks to harmonize the world through acoustic design"<sup>183</sup>, that is, return the world to eternal perfection of the Music of the Spheres, an idea that Schafer locates in several religious and mystical traditions of the world - besides Pythagoras, in Sufism and Hinduism<sup>184</sup>. *Clairaudience* is the exceptional, mystical ability of hearing of it<sup>185</sup>, Pythagoras being one such adept<sup>186</sup>.

And what is the ultimate goal of the harmonization? It is not the improvement of the world, making it better to live in; the purpose is liberation from the senses, total silence, since the physical world is impure and imperfect<sup>187</sup>. The "tuning of the world" seeks to shut it down. Dominion over all sound – but to what end? Deathly nothingness.

182 Schafer, *Soundscape*, 5.

183 *Ibid.*, 6.

184 *Ibid.*, 260.

185 *Ibid.*, 10 – 11.

186 *Ibid.*, 260.

187 *Ibid.*, 260 – 262.

### Walter Pater, modernism

Lydia Goehr has pointed out how strange Walter Pater's famous phrase, "all arts aspire to the condition of music", actually is. If we take music to be *an* art, the claim is that music aspires to the condition of music - a redundant sentence<sup>188</sup>.

From Pater's *The Renaissance*:

**"All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music.** For while in all other works of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, **yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it.** That the **mere matter** of a poem, for instance—its subject, its given incidents or situation; that the mere matter of a picture—the actual circumstances of an event, the actual topography of a landscape—should be nothing without the form, the spirit, of the handling; that **this form, this mode of handling, should become an end in itself**, should penetrate every part of the matter:—this is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees.

[...]

**Art, then, is thus always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material;** the ideal examples of poetry and painting being those in which the constituent elements of the composition are so welded together, that the material or subject no longer strikes the intellect only; nor the form, the eye or the ear only; but form and matter, in their union or identity, present one single effect to the "imaginative reason," that complex faculty for which every thought and feeling is twin-born with its sensible analogue or symbol.

**It is the art of music which most completely realises this artistic ideal,** this perfect identification of form and matter: In its ideal, consummate moments, the end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression; they inhere in and completely saturate each other; and to it, therefore, to the condition of its perfect moments, all the arts may be supposed

188 Lydia Goehr, "Philosophy of music, politics of music," filmed 17 April 2015, Le Centre de recherches sur les arts et le langage (CRAL) Youtube channel, video, 1:39:08, <https://youtu.be/Gz-plgYzAtI>.

constantly to tend and aspire. Music, then, and not poetry, as is so often supposed, is the true type or measure of perfected art.”<sup>189</sup>

For Pater, the condition of music is such that

- a. the distinction between matter and form has been obliterated;
- b. the form should become an end in itself;
- c. it has become pure perception, rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material

This modernist ‘perfection’ is quite Pythagorean. Form must be an end to itself; it ultimately *discards matter*, having used it to achieve this self-focus. Perfection and purity are thought to be non-material, and above ‘mere intelligence’, just like the harmony of the spheres is held to be an ideal sound that normal perception cannot reach. Purified perception doesn’t perceive matter but “pure” form.

The way Pater talks about music could be better understood as a variation of Pythagorean mysticism: music is not just one of the art forms, it is the principle governing them all. The ‘condition of music’ is abstraction, that is, being withdrawn from the world of (normal, ‘mere’) perception.

The claim that all arts aspire to this abstraction suggests that art forms are to be combined, and that once they are, this abstraction principle must rule. An idealist totality of this sort – despising ‘mere’ perception – has serious ethical problems. These are discussed below (in chapter seven), concerning Pater’s contemporary, Richard Wagner.

### **The Romantics**

The Romantics voiced the liberation-from-the-world pursuit explicitly. Schubert’s lied *An die Musik* praises Music for transporting one into a better world from amidst *Lebens wilder Kreis* (which sounds a lot like the “wheel of birth” the

189 “The Project Gutenberg E-text of The Renaissance, by Walter Pater,” Project Gutenberg, accessed January 3, 2020, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2398/2398-h/2398-h.htm#giorgione>.

Pythagoreans sought to be freed from<sup>190</sup>). In Friedrich Rückert's *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* (known as the text of one of Mahler's *Rückert-Lieder*) where the protagonist wastes his time on the world, lives alone in his own heaven, and the world has not heard of him in a long time, and might as well think of him as dead.

The effect of Pythagorean ideas is present every time we encounter claims like “music is not about anything else, it's about itself”, or “music is not of this world” and so on. Music being about itself, self-referential, self-sufficient, is in line with the teaching of *gnothi seauton*: music knows only itself, is not about anything outside itself, and *you shouldn't either*, you should be so completely self-absorbed that the outside world fades completely away and you ‘escape’ suffering.

Music is the concept of *universal denial*, and this is why it can pass as ‘universal’. But it concerns nothing real, nothing that we as a humanity actually share (and is therefore also disconnected from ethics). At its root it is the denial of *everything*, a totality of nothingness.

### John Cage

John Cage rearticulated this universal denial: “The highest purpose is to have no purpose at all. This puts one in accord with nature in her manner of operation.”<sup>191</sup> Writing music, one deals not with purposes but with sounds; it is a

*“... paradox: a purposeful purposelessness or a purposeless play. This play, however, is an affirmation of life – not an attempt to bring order out of chaos nor to suggest improvements in creation, but simply a way of waking up to the very life we're living, which is so excellent once one gets one's mind and one's desires out of the way and lets it act of its own accord.”*<sup>192</sup>

Cage's nothingness may seem like a benign and peaceful thing, but this “affirmation of life” really is the message that you have no purpose. This is not a paradox, it is a contradiction. And the scary thing about purposelessness is that it gives

190 John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: A. & C. Black, 1920), 82 – 83, 97 – 98. <https://archive.org/details/earlygreekphilos00burnrich/page/82>.

191 John Cage, “45' for a Speaker,” in *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (London: Marion Boyars, 2004), 155.

192 Cage, “Experimental Music,” in *Silence*, 12.

no reason for ethics. Social justice *is* a desire; to care for another *is* a purpose. Cage seems to go the opposite direction from Schafer, but arrives at a similar place. Total abandonment and total control – les extrêmes se touchent. Schafer advocates an Apollonian project; Cage was called “the quintessential Apollonian”<sup>193</sup>; Schafer exalts the mind, Cage seeks to erase it – somehow the goal in both is the silencing of the world of purpose.

Reviewing one of the first Cage biographies by David Reville (*The Roaring Silence. John Cage: A Life*. New York: Arcade, 1992), Richard Taruskin shows how Cage was not a jester (he was very serious), and neither was his Zen an imported foreign sensibility. Taruskin locates the roots of Cage’s seemingly Eastern ‘purposeful purposelessness’ in Kant’s aesthetic: ‘purposeless purposefulness’ (*Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck*). What Cage called “Zen” differs, then, from the Romantic notion of “absolute music”, total aesthetic autonomy, only in its degree of rigor. The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde “magnified and purified the Romanticist notion of aesthetic autonomy, and among the midcentury avant-garde it was Cage, in his compositions of the early ‘50s, who reached the most astounding, self-subverting purism of all”.<sup>194</sup>

4’33” displays this in a startling way. The piece doesn’t call for any sounds to be made. That may seem like the composer has relinquished control over the event. But a composer is not only in control of sounds but people, too. Taruskin cites Lydia Goehr’s observation that what happens in 4’33” is that the formal constraints of the Modernist work-concept are strongly maintained.

*“It is a profound political point. A work that is touted as a liberation from aesthetics in fact brings an alert philosopher to a fuller awareness of all the constraints that the category of ‘the aesthetic’ imposes. Sounds that were noise on one side of an arbitrary framing gesture are suddenly music, a ‘work of art’, on the other side; the aesthetic comes into being by sheer fiat, at the drop of a piano lid. The audience is invited – no, commanded – to listen to ambient or natural sounds with the same attitude of reverent contemplation they would assume if they were listening to Beethoven’s Ninth.”*<sup>195</sup>

193 Richard Taruskin, “No Ear for Music,” *The New Republic*, March 1993, 28. Ebsco Academic Search Elite.

194 Ibid., 33.

195 Ibid., 33.

What is exposed, yet again, is the nature of the music concept: **a sheer fiat**. It seems that Taruskin comes close to making this point, yet doesn't. He does make, though, a very interesting point regarding copyright and thus economics: "4'33" has a published, copyrighted score. There are vertical lines, that in proportional notation stand for elapsed time. One of the pages is bypassed by such markings and is left blank. "If copyrighting a blank page is not modernist chutzpah, I don't know what is."<sup>196</sup>

### **Husserliana: phenomenological utopias**

Husserl's *Phänomene* are located only in the mind. 'To the things themselves' is not an orientation toward the things our senses perceive, it is *an inward turn*. The things we perceive, the external world, is merely a belief we've become accustomed to, a 'natural attitude'. But phenomenological reduction seeks to detach the consciousness from this 'natural attitude'.<sup>197</sup>

Husserl's *epokhe* is supposed to question everything, even information concerning the self; but despite that, the self is taken to be the one who gives an absolute reference point. The self is the yardstick for everything.<sup>198</sup>

What is really going on? Phenomenological reduction claims to focus on perception while, at the same time, calling the external world something like an illusion to be thrown away. On the basis of a relationship, that very relationship is thrown away, and the self is exalted.

Husserl's doctrine aligns well with Pythagoras. Phenomenological reduction is another name for the curtain.

Inspired by Pythagoras' curtain, Pierre Schaeffer spoke of "the perceptive reality of sound as such, as distinguished from the modes of its production and transmission". While for Pythagoras and his disciples, the device was a curtain, "today, it is the radio and the methods of reproduction [...]".<sup>199</sup>

196 Ibid., 34.

197 Edmund Husserl, *Fenomenologian idea: viisi luentoa*, trans. Juha Himanka, Janita Hämäläinen, Hannu Sivenius (*Helsinki: Loki-kirjat, 1995*), 19 – 21.

198 Ibid., 45.

199 Pierre Schaeffer, "Acousmatics", in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, ed. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (New York: Continuum, 2004), 77.



In acousmatics, “it is no longer a question of knowing how a subjective listening interprets or deforms ‘reality’, of studying reactions to stimuli. It is the listening itself that becomes the origin of the phenomenon to be studied.” “[...] not the external references of the sound it perceives but the perception itself.”<sup>200</sup>

This Husserlian inward gaze deliberately ignores causality and mediation, yet cannot live without them. Schaeffer acknowledges that communication becomes impossible without something in common to refer to; that there is a correlation between manipulations to which one subjects a tape and the perceived object. Even so, pulling the cart in two opposite directions, he insists on total abstraction. Only by “pure listening” in the acousmatic experience can the *sonorous object* be revealed. What is implied is that causality takes away clarity of perception. “... the sonorous object is nonetheless contained entirely in our perceptive consciousness.”<sup>201</sup>

Schaeffer preaches a technological utopia: all sounds within reach.

We have at our disposal the generality of sounds – at least in principle – without having to produce them; all we have to do is push the button of a tape recorder. Deliberately forgetting every reference to instrumental causes or preexisting musical significations, we then seek to devote ourselves entirely and exclusively to *listening*, to discover the instinctive paths that lead from the purely “sonorous” to the purely “musical.” Such is the suggestion of acousmatics: to deny the instrument and cultural conditioning, *to put in front of us the sonorous and musical “possibility.”*<sup>202</sup>

Edgar Varèse had a similar dream of techno-liberation. In 1939, he dreamed of a “sound-*producing* machine (not a sound *re-producing* one)”. Whatever the composer writes would “reach the listener unadulterated by ‘interpretation’”, just by the press of a button.<sup>203</sup>

Varèse is known for his definition of music as “organized sound”, but in 1962 he championed Hoëne Wronski’s, calling it the best definition of music, because it

200 Ibid.

201 Ibid., 79.

202 Ibid., 81.

203 Ibid., 19.

is all-inclusive: “the corporealization of the intelligence that is in sound.”<sup>204</sup> From early on, Wronski was a strong influence on Varèse<sup>205</sup>.

It is not a coincidence that Wronski was obsessed with Pythagorean theories.

From the Pythagoreans to the Romantics and contemporary esoterics, from Pyrrho to Husserl and his disciples, the utopian fantasy remains the same: escaping the annoying, limiting, painful conditions of reality by decoupling the mind from it. Ah, the solitary paradise of one’s own mind! If being in the world is the problem, utopia (ou topos, *no-place*) is the ‘solution’. If the mind is separated from anything outside itself, it can always be right. Ignorance is bliss.

But the separation is not real, it is an “as if”. A non-place is not available. The voice beyond a curtain is still someone’s voice. Neither is a voice on the radio any more disembodied than a person on an escalator is legless. Loudspeakers sound like loudspeakers. Mediation is a causal chain, not a split.

Comparing Schaeffer and Varèse with Schafer, it is curious how both techno-utopia and technophobic fantasy can be fuelled by the same Pythagorean ideology. But in both extremes, technology is seen as a split: for Schafer, a negative *schizophonia*, for Schaeffer a tool for Pythagorean ‘purity’. Both are mistaken in their ignorance of the nature of transmission. If there really was a schism, a split from the causes, the signal would not be identifiable.

## 5.2 Interlude: Champagne

The final scene of Jim Jarmusch’s *Coffee and Cigarettes* (2003), “Champagne”, juxtaposes two different attitudes. Bill and Taylor are having a coffee break in “the armoury”. Taylor isn’t feeling all right, in fact he feels “so divorced from the world”, “lost touch with the world”. He begins to hear Mahler’s Rückertlied *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* until it is suddenly gone. He suggests they pretend the awful coffee is champagne and calls it “nectar of the gods”. Taylor’s dream place (that they toast to) is fin-de-siècle Paris and its joie de vivre. While

204 Ibid., 19 – 20.

205 John Davis Anderson, “The Aesthetics of Varèse,” in *The Wind Band and Its Repertoire: Two Decades of Research as Published in the College Band Directors National Association Journal*, ed. Michael Votta, Jr. (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Music, 2003), 174.

the other man, Bill, prefers honest, “working man’s coffee”, he agrees to Taylor’s game, but adds “New York in the late seventies” to the toast. The scene ends with Taylor falling asleep, Bill trying to wake him up unsuccessfully.

Taylor represents the neohellenist stance, fantasy. It is nostalgia for something that hasn’t been experienced; escapist reverie fuelled by the “nectar of the gods” seeking to be detached from having to suffer in the world.

Bill represents the *redefiner*, whose feet are more on the ground. The redefiner has the common sense to discern between fantasy and nostalgia. We can easily believe 1970s New York is a place Bill actually remembers. The redefiner doesn’t seek to be abstracted from the world; at least not knowingly. But the redefiner does not disavow the fantasy completely, and perhaps with an air of amusement still plays along with the Hellenist reverie, but is actually affected by its propositions (“You’re right, the coffee really is awful”, says Bill, *after* Taylor plants that idea in the air).

### 5.3 The Redefiners

Redefinition may have its roots all the way back in antiquity.

Just as Aristotle wasn’t an Anti-Plato, his pupil Aristoxenus wasn’t exactly an Anti-Pythagoras. The disagreement isn’t of a *fundamental* sort. It concerns matters of scale, intervals, melody, tuning; in these matters Aristoxenus pitches his ear against the all-is-number doctrine of the Pythagoreans, but this doesn’t go as far as a rebellion against the Muses, in fact not the least. The disagreement concerns a subdivision, as the opening of *The Elements of Harmony* shows:

*“The branch of study which bears the name of Harmonic is to regarded as one of the several divisions or special sciences embraced by the general science that concerns itself with Melody. Among these special sciences Harmonic occupies a primary and fundamental position; its subject matter consists of the fundamental principles - all that relates to the theory of scales and keys; and this once mastered, our knowledge of the science fulfils every just requirement, because it is in such a mastery that its aim consists. In advancing to the profounder speculations which confront us when scales and keys are enlisted in the service of poetry, we pass from the study under*

*consideration to the all-embracing science of music, of which Harmonic is but one part of many. The possession of this greater science constitutes the musician.*<sup>206</sup>

Aristoxenus called music (*mousike*) an all-embracing science (*periekhouses epistemes*). His treatise is *not on music*, but on Harmony, one of many subdivisions of all-embracing *mousike*.

Aristoxenus defends the role of perception, but not concerning what *mousike* is; this is critique concerning practice. He's not de-idealizing gods or quitting church, he's just saying that Pythagoras & The Samoans don't tune their instruments right.

He also makes a difference between *musical* and *non-musical* melodies<sup>207</sup>. Therefore he is not making the case for melodies as such to be music - music is a (religious) purpose for which *some* melodies are fit and some are not.

Flora R. Levin points out how despite having been appreciated greatly during former times, Aristoxenus is "today all but forgotten", and "continues to be eclipsed by the figure of Pythagoras".<sup>208</sup> Why? Because he didn't challenge the foundation, he merely offered adjustments.

### Christopher Small's musicking

*"There is no such thing as music."*<sup>209</sup>

In *Musicking* (), Christopher Small redefines music as an activity: musicking. He sees music, the noun, as an abstraction of the *verb*.

The redefinition changes nothing. Small vehemently opposes Platonic reification, but right off the bat, he bases his neologism on the abstract concept of music,

206 Aristoxenus Tarentinus, *The Harmonics of Aristoxenus*, ed. Henry Stewart Macran (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974) 165.

207 Ibid., 167.

208 Flora R. Levin, *Greek Reflections on the Nature of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 64.

209 Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 2.

and thus submits to it. He tries to reorient towards real activity, but by calling even the cleaning of a concert hall *musicking*, he submits it under the thing that doesn't even exist, music. The result is the *expansion* of the non-thing, a sort of total reification, any activity being seen as an actualization of the abstract concept of music. Why? Because that concept is *kept in place*. Everything is put under the dominion of the abstract, despite the aim to do the opposite.

What follows is that Small does not really say anything new. He opposes the Platonic order but still ends up in a very Wagnerian and Schaferian place, talking about ritual as the basis for arts and their "former unity"<sup>210</sup>.

Small envisions musicking to be "an activity... modelling the relationships of our world"; "not the pregiven world of science" but "the experiential world of relationships in all its complexity"<sup>211</sup>.

He opposes the Cartesian split; but following Bateson, Small goes to the other extreme, where mind is matter. This is a cognitivist-style view of the mind, the brain as a computer. But such a brain, such a mind, is not relational. It cannot be in relationship because it is passive; the consciousness is only a result, not an instigator of anything.

Opposing transcendentalism with materialist views brings something to the fore. Materialism is idealism in disguise (or in denial), because it, too, is an *idea*. Because of this, it really does not assert the fundamentality of matter, but that of an idea concerning matter.

The problem with the "Cartesian" (Platonic) split is not the distinction between mind and body: it is the worship of the mind, the narcissism. It's antithesis is not blurring or denying the boundary between mind and body, anymore than the antithesis of Enlightenment hubris is the man-is-but-a-beast ethos of post-humanism. (Both are incapable of providing a ground for ethics!) It's antithesis is humility, placing the mind *in* the body, and (thus) limited, questionable, and fallible; but for this placement, the distinction between the two is indispensable. Humility cannot mean selflessness. How can I humble my non-existent self that is an illusion of some sort? That is an *illusion of humility*.

210 Small, 75 - 76, 109.

211 Small, 30.

Small yearned for change, but because his strategy was redefinition, he could not break away from the definition.

### Philip Auslander

Auslander has identified a disciplinary dilemma concerning performance studies and musicology. Not finding in any discipline a discourse that seemed to address musical performance in a satisfactory way, in 2004 he summarized the situation:

“This, then, is what I’m choosing to call the disciplinary dilemma confronting the scholar who wishes to talk seriously about musicians as performers: those who take music seriously, either as art or culture, dismiss performance as irrelevant. Those who take performance seriously are reluctant to include musical forms among their objects of study.”<sup>212</sup>

Revisiting the dilemma in 2013, Auslander seems to retreat:

“Perhaps, then, the solution to the disciplinary dilemma is to recognize there is no dilemma, no ontological or epistemological gap between music and performance that needs bridging. Music *is* what musicians *do*.”<sup>213</sup>

“Music is what musicians do” doesn’t solve the problem, however. Like every other *redefinition* before and after, the foundation remains: music is what we call music, and that *calling* is an act of definition - and therefore all redefinitions are that too. A redefinition can only add different steps, as if to distance itself from the core; but these steps always leave questions that inevitably return to the definition-core, the dogma, the fiat: “music is what we call music”.

In the case of Auslander’s definition, the question remains: who is a musician? And is all that a musician does then music, including walking their dog? The problem is the same as with Varèse’s organized sound: surely it doesn’t include *all* organized sound, such as footsteps, microwave ovens and fog horns; for music to be organized sound, a line drawn between organized sounds is still needed

212 Philip Auslander, “Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto,” *Contemporary Theatre Review* 14, no. 1 (2004): 3. Quoted in Philip Auslander: “Afterword: Music as Performance: The Disciplinary Dilemma Revisited”, in Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, eds.: *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 350.

213 Auslander, “Afterword: Music as Performance,” 355.

- and the result is that music is that organized sound which we call music. In Auslander's case, music is that which those who are defined as musicians do, when they do what we call music.<sup>214</sup>

Actually, a totality would be in line with the original. Mousike was all-embracing; *everything as the human being defines it*. All that disagreed with human definition was 'suffering', and musical mysticism was the way to get out, into one's private 'paradise' of nothing but self. The concept comes with the baggage *unavoidably* because there is no translation, no relationship to the external, no opening for experience to challenge the self; "me, myself and I" is the same denial then and now. The redefiners are pointing out very necessary issues (and as such, Auslander's effort deserves respect), but are trying to solve the case by finding the experiential in something that refuses the experiential. Whether I perceive or experience something is not a matter of definition, of personal, social or institutional agreement. But the concept of music is merely a definition, a sticker that can be placed anywhere, ultimately a completely unnecessary parasite concept.

A definition remains a definition if it is redefined. It is impossible to repair a problem caused by definition by redefining; to really grasp the things the redefiners are reaching for, it is necessary to abandon the concept of music completely. We need to change our thinking.

I believe there are discernable traces of anticipating this in Auslander, as he notes musicologist Derek Miller's "concern that the union of performance studies with musicology may cost the latter its proper subject"<sup>215</sup>, and in the following statement: "Ultimately, I shall argue that a truly productive approach to music as performance must move beyond formulations that mark off disciplinary territory, even in the interest of emphasizing complementarity, in favor of an approach that sees music and its performance as inextricably imbricated with one another."<sup>216</sup>

214 Auslander's keynote at the Sound und Performance Conference ("Music as Performance: The Disciplinary Dilemma Revisited [musicperformance ff music + performance]," University of Bayreuth, Bayreuth, Germany, October 4, 2012) discussed the disciplinary dilemma. After the keynote, I had the chance to ask the question: who's a musician? Auslander replied that it is a matter of institutional or social agreement.

215 Ibid., 351.

216 Ibid., 352.

Miller's concern is justified, and it is the consequence, once we "move beyond formulations that mark off disciplinary territory". Why? Because a discipline is a territory marked by a *defined* border. A truly productive approach is one that recognizes such borders as *temporary and arbitrary structures*, not as permanent or natural things; they are artificial frames that do serve the purpose of focus and that are necessary for it, but have the effect that a discipline cannot say anything about things that lie outside its border.

The concept of music is not just a disciplinary territory, however. As the collision with performance studies shows, it will not yield, it demands submission, and that's what it gets as long as it is not disavowed completely. Even Auslander's valiant effort ends in submission to it.

Music only accepts the place of the super-discipline, because it is only what we call *it*, not what we call something *else*. In other words: the concept of music refuses to be humbled to the status of a descriptive concept, of a name, to the level of translation. This is why music is always the leader in any formulated theory of Gesamtkunstwerk.

Music is not what musicians do. What the people that are called "musicians" do is playing guitar, tubular bells or autoharp. Whether or not that is called music is an entirely separate matter. If we want to discuss what these people do, we need to talk about *that*, completely free from the redundant and useless issue of whether it is called music or not.

#### 5.4 Against Utopias

In *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), Richard Taruskin addresses the dangers of utopianism. Referring to a non-place (Gr. *ou topos*), utopia orients away from reality towards something else. Utopian ideals were used as an excuse for coercive means and, ultimately, monstrosities, by the Third Reich and Communist regimes. "Utopianism, it would appear, always entailed a body count."<sup>217</sup>

217 Richard Taruskin, "Preface: Against Utopia," in *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), xi – xii.



The notion that the problem was the same on both sides has been resisted by the left. Nostalgic or ex-Marxists often contend that Communism was skewed in practice but that the ideals were sound, and that the vision was of a better world.

*But what utopians envision is not a better world. It is a perfect world – or in Kant’s two-centuries-old formulation, “a perfectly constituted state” – that utopians wish to bring about. And that is what makes them dangerous, because if perfection is the aim, and compromise taboo, there will always be a shortfall to correct – a human shortfall. There will always be those whose presence mars your idea of perfection or mine, and if you or I really believe that we have the means of perfecting the world, you may feel justified in doing away with me, or I with you.*<sup>218</sup>

Taruskin mentions Russel Jacoby, who stills wants to salvage (Marxist) utopianism by redefining it, hoping to thus reclaim it from the stigma. But the mark of utopianism still remains. Jacoby is dissatisfied with his students, who, given a chance to sketch out their own utopias, only come up with practical, achievable ideas for making the world better! Taruskin sees a ray of hope in the students’ practicality:

*They may yet achieve something worthwhile even as Jacoby goes on kvetching from the sidelines, for while they may have given up on utopia, they have not given up on social progress. Indeed, the idea of incremental progress without a determinate endpoint – what Hans Blumenberg calls “infinite progress” – is the best alternative, and the best defense, against the blandishments of utopian thinking.”The idea of infinite progress,” he writes, “has a safeguarding function for the actual individual and for each actual generation in history. If there were an immanent final goal of history, then those who believe they know it and claim to promote its attainment would be legitimized in using all the others who do not know it and cannot promote it as mere means. Infinite progress does make each present relative to its future, but at the same time it renders every absolute claim untenable. This idea of progress corresponds more than anything else to the only regulative principle that can make history humanly bearable, which is that all dealings must be so constituted that through them people do not become mere means.*<sup>219</sup>

It is noteworthy how Blumenberg’s words are “humanly bearable history”. Bearability sounds like the goal of a down-to-earth sense of ethics. But utopianism

218 Ibid., xii.

219 Ibid., xii – xiii.

sells a “paradise” of some sort – imaginary, *abstracted* from reality, escaping from the trouble of relativity.

Taruskin sees a “nexus between political utopianism and the kind that infests the world of classical music”: an attitude in music criticism that despises a real-world relationality between performers and their audiences<sup>220</sup>.

He does not take it all the way to the very concept of music. But music is *the utopian concept par excellence*. Redefining cannot salvage it. What could be a more practical view than Auslander’s – that music is what musicians *do*? Yet, even his redefinition attempt falls short – as do all others. What it does, though, is revealing more clearly how alien to reality the concept of music is. It cannot be *done* in reality. The utopian concept remains such, despite the best efforts to salvage it, despite the best of intentions.

I’d like to propose that utopianism remains as long as we talk its language. It insists on its definition – “it is what we say it is”. The concept of music is a *fiat*, and so is the goal that utopianism posits. The language of “infinite progress,” if it is to be the best alternative and defense against utopianism, should not have the concept of music. As long as the redefinitions, salvaging attempts, continue, the definition goes on and the seed of utopia persists. To understand that which we have been calling music in a practical, and thus, an ecological way, in and as a part of a place, rather than as something that eventually always returns to utopia, a change of parlance is necessary. We need to ditch “music” and talk in a different way.

### **Financial parable linking the three fiats: concept of music, dogma, and utopias**

In the documentary *Four Horsemen* (dir. Ross Ashcroft, 2012) our current system of money is described as doomed, unsustainable, *because it is based on a man-made law*. This law is a *fiat* system. Latin for ‘let it be so’, fiat means the value of money isn’t based on a golden standard, but on an institutional decree.

According to the documentary, the recent financial crisis seems to be (at least in the USA) a matter of the abuse of this basis of monetary value, through a corrupted and manipulative relationship between banks (who hold the money)

and governments (who set the amount and value of the currency). The documentary asks:

*“The Fiat system of money is a man-made law and it’s been abused. Is there a form of money whose law is not set by man?”*<sup>221</sup>

The classical economists had this issue in mind, and they thought money should be based on natural resources, say, gold. This was the case until fairly recently; fiat currencies rose to prominence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly after the United States effectively took the dollar off the gold standard during 1971 - 1973.<sup>222</sup>

Man-made laws: the concept of music; dogma; utopianism. Same problem in all. Music is a *fiat* definition, it is a *man-made law*, its basis is the same as fiat money’s: a definition. But is there a form of sound-making whose law is not set by man?  
**Could we have a golden standard for the artistic use of sound?**

#### *Samuel Johnson’s “I refute it thus!” and Artistic Research*

“It’s all in the mind” prevails unless its root is challenged, and this cannot be done in theory.

*“We went at looked at the church, and having gone into it and walked up to the altar, Johnson, whose piety was constant and fervent, sent me to my knees, saying, ‘Now that you are going to leave your native country, recommend yourself to the protection of your CREATOR and REDEEMER.’*

*After we came out of the church, we stood talking for some time together of Bishop Berkeley’s ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that every thing in the universe is merely ideal. I observed, that though we are satisfied his doctrine is not true, it is impossible to refute it. I never shall forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, ‘I refute it thus.’”*<sup>223</sup>

How do you refute an *idea* that asserts its universality? Not by another idea! By appealing to perception and experience. To Bishop Berkeley’s mystic ideal-

221 *The Four Horsemen*, dir. Ross Ashcroft (UK: Motherlode, 2012). (The quoted words occur at 1:19:15.)

222 “Fiat Money Definition,” Investopedia, accessed 18 March, 2018, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/f/fiatmoney.asp>.

223 James Boswell: *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (Oxford University Press, 1965), 333.

ism (essentially Pythagorean), Johnson replied not with a competing version, but with humble experience. Interestingly, in this case, a pious member of the *laity* expresses faith in the Creator and a rather Hellenist member of the *clergy* essentially denies Creation altogether as illusory. At another occasion, Johnson wonders at Boethius: "... very surprizing, that upon such a subject, and in such situation, he should be *magis philosophus quam Christianus*" ('more philosopher than Christian').<sup>224</sup>

Berkeley would have probably been immune to Johnson's refutation, dismissing it as mere 'sensation'. But this immunity is only the untouchability of denial: visual evidence cannot convince the man to whom it is secondary ephemera or outright illusion.

Boswell's story summarizes not only the issue of this dissertation, but also of Artistic Research in a more general sense. The clash is between a seemingly sophisticated idealism- in-denial and the simple acceptance of *dealing with the concrete world*.

*Let the man of learning, the man of lettered leisure, beware of that queer and cheap temptation to pose to himself and to others as a cynic, as the man who has outgrown emotions and beliefs, the man to whom good and evil are as one. [...]*<sup>225</sup>

Had Roosevelt been reading Samuel Johnson's biography? The famous excerpt (usually called "The Man in the Arena") from Theodor Roosevelt's 1910 speech at the Sorbonne resonates here:

*It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement,*

224 Ibid., 444.

225 "The Man in the Arena - April 23, 1910 - Theodore Roosevelt Speeches - Roosevelt Almanac," The Almanac of Theodore Roosevelt, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/trsorbonnespeech.html>.

*and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.*<sup>226</sup>

The concept of music is at the heart of the conflict between aloof “transcendental” idealism and pragmatism, because it is central in carrying the Hellenist legacy and its mindset of denial. The real obstacle Artistic Research faces is not institutional. It is a matter of mindsets. To really establish (artistic) practice *as* research, a Johnsonian mindset is needed. This is not available via redefinition; that path fails at the first step, and no matter how impeccable the following steps are, the foundation remains untouched.

But once idealism-in-denial is gone, Artistic Research can be a major stream, a trailblazer of a new understanding of research. What follows quite naturally is that what was once considered ‘artistic’ begins to steep into various areas of life, possibly even losing itself there, becoming entirely subsumed, permeating life to the degree that speaking of a separate area of life called ‘art’ becomes pointless.

It would seem that Johnson’s first move was with the foot. But his ‘refutation’ wasn’t really a refutation, it was a statement of faith: it’s *not* all in the mind. This is not a proof. Preceding the mighty rebound, there was *belief*, and the kick was acting upon this belief.

And neither is “it’s all in the mind” a proof, whether said by Berkeley, Husserl, or Pythagoras; it is a statement of faith.

It is detrimental to faith to use language from an opposing faith. The redefiners of music display this. It does not work. The attempt falls back to where it tried to lift off. Trying to make music mean *sounds* (Varèse’ organized sound, Landy’s sound-based music, etc) is trying to defend perception as something relational, something both internal and external, but using a concept that comes from a faith that is opposed to such pursuits.

It is the proposition of this thesis that a radical dislocation is necessary. To discuss perception and experience as *not all in the mind*, and thus as *shared*, and perhaps most interestingly, as *ecological*, we need to disconnect from the Greek root of *mousike*, and begin anew.

226 Ibid.



## 6 On Language

Platonists embrace the fantasy. Redefiners see its issues, offer some criticism, but fail to disavow the fantasy. There is a third option: a complete breakaway from the concept of music.

To explain why and how, this chapter will focus on language.

Schueller calls *mousike* an untranslatable term<sup>227</sup>. He explains this no further, but it does seem justified - wherever *mousike* has landed, it appears as a loan word, in a local spelling variation.

<i>mousike</i>	musik
music	musiikki
musique	muzika
musica	ミュージック ( <i>myujikku</i> )

What stands out is that Modern Hebrew has taken the loan word מוסיקה (*musika*; according to Nettle this happened around 1000 AD<sup>228</sup>), although the concepts for playing instruments and singing were there already in Ancient Hebrew *without* this loan word.

If music simply meant singing and the playing of instruments, the word loan would not have been necessary. Translation would have been sufficient.

227 Schueller, *The Idea of Music*, 5.

228 *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Music," accessed 14 October 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40476>.

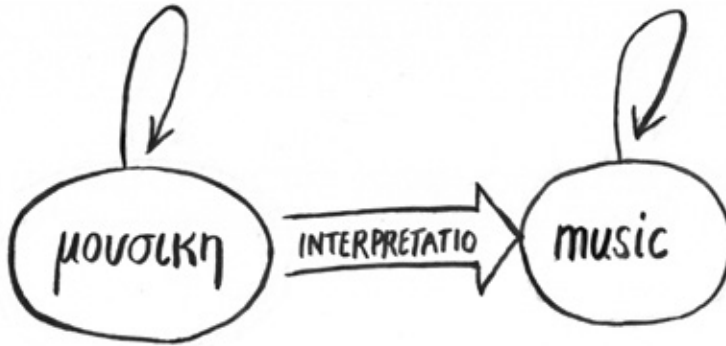


Figure 1. Illustration: Pessi Parviainen

The difference between interpretatio and translation can explain the widespread presence of ‘music’ and its spelling variants.

The movement from mousike to music is that of imposition. It is not a question, which would imply a two-way conversation. Interpretatio takes no feedback; the Empire is always the source, never the target. And what else could be done with a concept like music? Referring back to itself, it is blind to otherness and can only be imposed, like a sticker (Figure 1), causing problems of equivocation in areas where there may have previously been none.

Materialism is not the antithesis of idealism because it is an idea. Translation is that antithesis, because it necessarily acknowledges the non-ideas that ideas are in relation to. “The thing thought is not the thing perceived. Knowledge is not perception”, wrote Merleau-Ponty<sup>229</sup>.

If it is confessed that there is a non-arbitrary connection between source and target languages, it is admitted that we have distinct relationships with a shared reality. The relationships vary, but translations are possible between them because the relationships ultimately have something they share (Figure

229 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Prose of the World,” in Thomas Baldwin, ed., *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: basic writings* (London: Routledge, 2004), 246.



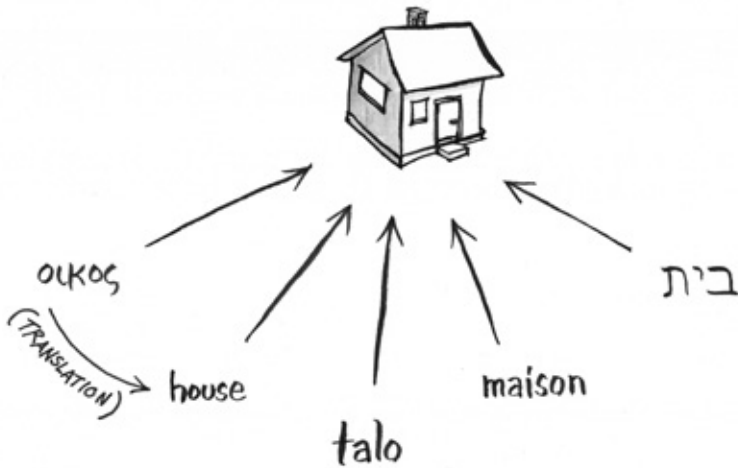


Figure 2. Illustration: Pessi Parviainen

2). On the other hand, translations are unavoidable because the relationships ultimately have differences.

*“The moment that we believe we are grasping the world as it is apart from us, it is no longer the world we are grasping, since we are there to grasp it. In the same way, there remains, behind our talk about language, more living language than can ever be taken in by our view of it.”<sup>230</sup>*

Merleau-Ponty sounds reminiscent of Gödel's incompleteness theorem – roughly put, the impossibility of a system to be so total that it would cover *itself* – and like he's describing the *observer effect* known in physics (observation affecting the thing observed).

I cannot watch something that isn't being watched. I cannot talk of something that isn't talked about. This relativity means that talking about language is, for us, inexhaustible. What else is translation but talking about language?

The movement from one language to another is metaphor (trans-latus -> metapherein). But it is not sufficient to see this only as a matter of carrying something over, as if a singular object was removed and left in a new location. The result

230 Ibid., 236.



Figure 3. Illustration: Pessi Parviainen

needs to be two distinct standing posts, each with its distinguishable vantage point towards a point that is shared. Metaphor is not a precise word here. The relationship between the two is *parabolic*, the simultaneity of complementary difference (Figure 3).<sup>231</sup>

### Ethics of translation and interpretation

It seems that for Benjamin, a translation is a flowering, a life that has a purpose, this purpose being in relationship to the original, but finding its significance in expression that is even more than expressing the original; and this means that languages are interrelated and translation speaks of their connectedness. *“Translation thus ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages. [...] Languages are not strangers to one another, but are, a priori and apart from all historical relationships, interrelated in what they want to express.”*<sup>232</sup>

A translation is not a recoding; it is a re-expression of an original that wasn't self-sufficient either, but pointed towards another, that the translation now comes

231 In the artistic component of this dissertation, the different approaches of the instrumentalists can be seen as translations. Each improvisation expresses a unique relationship with the Töölönlahti landscape, while the landscape connects these expressions; the improvisations have a translational relationship between them. (Granted, the precise location and time of the shoot is different in each case.)

232 Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1970), 72.

to point at from its standing point. In this dance of triangulation, original and translation connect in two ways that are both indispensable: in the tribute the translation pays to the original, and at the common point that both want to express.

Merleau-Ponty places both perception and communication in a setting very similar to Benjamin's, a setting of distincts that are parts of and within the shared whole.

*"I will never know how you see red, and you will never know how I see it; but this separation of consciousnesses is recognized only after a failure of communication, and our first movement is to believe in an undivided being between us. There is no reason to treat this primordial communication as illusion, as the sensationalists do, because even then it would become inexplicable. And there is no reason to base it on our common participation in the same intellectual consciousness because this would suppress the undeniable plurality of consciousnesses, It is thus necessary that, in the perception of another, I find myself in relation with another "myself," who is, in principle, open to the same truths as I am, in relation to the same being that I am. And this perception is realized. From the depths of my subjectivity I see another subjectivity invested with equal rights appear, because the behavior of the other takes place within my perceptual field. I understand this behavior, the words of another; I espouse his thought because this other, born in the midst of my phenomena, appropriates them and treats them in accord with typical behaviors which I myself have experienced. Just as my body, as the system of all my holds on the world, founds the unity of the objects which I perceive, in the same way the body of the other - as the bearer of symbolic behaviors and of the behavior of true reality - tears itself away from being one of my phenomena, offers me the task of a true communication, and confers on my objects the new dimension of intersubjective being, or in other words, of objectivity. Such are, in a quick résumé, the elements of a description of the perceived world."<sup>233</sup>*

Translation requires responsibility because the world is shared. In this lies also the hope of communication. But the distinctness of viewpoints means that this is not a unity that can be imposed.

233 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences," in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 17 - 18.

Translation isn't always possible. One cannot carry over a definite number into the Piraha language, where such concepts don't exist<sup>234</sup>. Any expression that relies on the genders of nouns will not carry over well into a language like Finnish, where nouns have no gender.

There is the uneasy contradiction that translation must be possible and should be done (because the world is shared), but can also be impossible and cannot be forced (because no two viewpoints are exactly the same).

These conditions are *practical*. Facing the conditions, the necessity and impossibility of translation means facing these ethics - it isn't an extra added layer.

Interpretatio ignores these conditions. As much as ethics is detached (abstracted) from the practical conditions of translation, from the uneasy contradiction, from the *suffering*, it becomes a matter of fantasy and ideals, capable of ignoring injustice.

When things can be lost in translation, or even be untranslatable, how reasonable is the assertion that every nation, language, culture, and - as recently has been claimed through cognitivist interpretation of the findings of neuroscience - even every *brain*, has *music*?

The concept of music imposes a forced unity by placing itself at the position of the shared world. It is not content to stay as a viewpoint. It isn't happy to be an incomplete reference to an other, like descriptive concepts are; it wants to be the One everything refers to. As a sticker on top of the world, it hides it from view, to the degree it is given that place.

But once it is truly displaced from that position, it's narcissistic blindness becomes apparent: it cannot be used for anything, it is a non-concept.

Insistence on intellectual knowledge that transcends 'mere' perceptual knowledge is blind much in the same way the *mousiké* concept is. Doesn't intelligence occur in the same locus as perception? Do not neuroscientists have brains? A brain studying a brain is not an unbiased setting.

In *Primacy of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty grapples with criticism that places his views in the realm of psychological description, having no universal value<sup>235</sup>.

234 Lera Boroditsky, "How Language Shapes Thought," *Scientific American*, February 2011, 64.

235 Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception*, 18.

But as for universals, surely the subjectivity of perception is an ethical option, and the assertion of super-perceptual intelligence, which nevertheless has to be admitted to be taking place *in a person* (not above), is the questionable one. What intellectual knowledge can be communicated without resorting to perceptual means - writing, speech, images? What intellectual knowledge can be attained without such?

In the belief in the superiority of scientific “pure” thought we have a modern Pythagorean doctrine, a reprise of the worship of the mind. What the Pythagoreans called suffering in the torrents of the “wheel of life” is now called ‘mere’ perception, subjective experience, where free will is held to be an illusion - all the more so since Benjamin Libet’s famous experiments<sup>236</sup>. Recent research has, however, challenged the interpretation that our brains make our choices prior to our conscious awareness of them<sup>237</sup>, proposing a different interpretation of the Readiness Potential (interpreted by free will-deniers to be the brain making the choice).

The specifics of neuroscientific discussion aside, the sheer monstrosity of “my neurons made me do it” should deter any conscious (sic) human being, scientist or not. How is it even possible that such anti-ethical interpretations emerge in the scientific community? As the music concept has survived and thrived throughout ages, has it not brought with itself the worldview it propagates, the idealization of a static harmony of spheres, free of the ‘accidentals’ of cause and effect, and thus, of responsibility and ethics? The latter-day effects of the musical worldview are what I believe Bruno Latour criticizes as the “contradictory metaphysics” of “action without agency”:

*“The disappearance of agency in the so-called ‘materialist world view’ is a stunning invention, especially since it is contradicted every step of the way by the odd resistance of reality: every consequence adds slightly to a cause. Thus, it has to have some sort of agency. There is a supplement, a gap between the two. If not, there would be no possible*

236 Benjamin Libet, “Unconscious cerebral initiative and the role of conscious will in voluntary action.” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 8, no.4 (December 1985): 529 – 539. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00044903>.

237 Matthias Schultze-Kraft et al., “The point of no return in vetoing self-initiated movements.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 113, no.4 (January 2016): 1080 – 1085, <http://www.pnas.org/content/113/4/1080>.  
Aaron Schurger et al., “Neural Antecedents of Spontaneous Voluntary Movement: A New Perspective.” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 20, no.2 (February 2016): 77 – 79, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2015.11.003>.

*way of discriminating causes from consequences. This is true in particle physics as well as in chemistry, biology, psychology, economics, or sociology.*"<sup>238</sup>

Artistic research is indispensable since it is a matter of exploring the gap by deliberately and knowingly subjective action. It is a display and deployment of agency, a bold statement of "I refute it thus!". It refuses to be relegated to the status of mere decoration, to be the subjective scapegoat for the sins of another understanding, just as subjective, that insists on its eternal pure objectivity. This is not a rebellion, it is the firm insistence on a healthy boundary. If the cells of the human body lacked boundaries, cell walls, the structure could not hold together and function; but if the cell walls were not permeable, life could not flow between them. And it is not a battle of artists defending against natural scientists: in *Why Birds Sing*, it was the ornithologist Peter Slater who upheld this healthy boundary against Rothenberg's definition of birdsong as music. The Pythagoreans sought to avoid the suffering that is actually shared and common to all; Artistic Research can be the opposite to such escapism, a cry of appeal to all areas of research to acknowledge this humble position and work with it, instead of escaping to either narcissistic idealization or codependent despair.

### 6.1 Why Does the Word Matter? Linguistic Relativism

Why would it matter what we call it? Music, playing, singing, whatever – why should it matter so much what words we use? It's the *thought* that counts, right?

It is actually a feature of what could be called 'the interpretatio mindset' to assert that whatever *I* like to call something is sufficient. Nothing I encounter can prove me wrong, since I am the final authority – if man be the measure of all things, this mentality is the consequence. It is self-contradicting and absurd: the word used doesn't matter, but at the same time its user-defined meaning is asserted.

But what if language affects the way we think?

Linguistic relativism is sometimes referred to as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Edward Sapir (1884 – 1939) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897 – 1941) made known the proposition that languages condition our thinking in

238 Bruno Latour, "An Attempt at a Compositionist Manifesto." *New Literary History* 41, no.3 (Summer 2010): 482.

ways that are particular to each language. A widely spread meme that has come from this work is the idea that the Inuit have more words concerning ice and snow because they have a deeper understanding thereof. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has attracted a lot of attention and criticism over the years. Recently, it has been taken up again, and researchers are finding cross-linguistic differences in thought<sup>239</sup>.

### **Lakoff & Johnson: Metaphors We Live By**

Significantly influenced by Sapir, Whorf, and others who have worked in that tradition, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that our conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. This concerns not only the intellect, but our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Structuring how we perceive, how we get around in the world, how we relate to other people, “our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities.” Communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and doing. Therefore language is important evidence for what that system is like.<sup>240</sup>

Lakoff and Johnson demonstrate this through the example of how argument is conceived as war (in American English): *undefensible* claims, *weak points* in an argument, criticisms *right on target*, *winning* an argument, or *shooting them down*. This is not just parlance. It manifests in the way arguments are *done*. But argument is not a subspecies of war – the relationship between the two concepts is metaphorical. This is normal within the conceptual system, and in everyday use, one is hardly ever conscious of the connection.

*The metaphor is not merely in the words we use – it is in our very concept of an argument. The language of argument is not poetic, fanciful, or rhetorical; it is literal. We talk about arguments that way because we conceive of them that way – and we act according to the way we conceive of things.*<sup>241</sup>

239 Lera Boroditsky, “How the Languages We Speak Shape the Ways We Think,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Psycholinguistics*, ed. Michael J. Spivey, Ken McRae, and Marc F. Joanisse (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 618.

240 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3.

241 *Ibid.*, 5.

Conceive, talk, act: the underlying conceptual system governs thought, and is evident in both talk and act.

The difference between the Hellenic and Hebraic concepts discussed above (see chapters 3 and 4) can be understood as a difference in the underlying conceptual systems. That means that not only the words were different, but also that the underlying thought is different, and thus also actions, which are based on the way things are conceived of. This is a known issue in theology: Greek systematicism vs. Hebrew associative thinking.<sup>242</sup>

*Mousiké tekhné* cannot be associative because it is ideal. It is about the mind, and regarding the outside world, it is about withdrawal (abstraction), not about connecting with anything outside the mind. Because of this, it can only have a doctrinal relationship to something else – an imposed, dogmatic connection, a *fiat*. It demands submission. For this imperialism, translation is not enough, for translation is a lateral correspondence, a surrender to the risks of relationship – not a vertical hierarchy.

The *ethos* (Gourlay) is systematic; all encountered things must conform to its conceptual system. There can be no other. All peoples must have ‘music’; if some didn’t, ‘music’ would not be universal, and the whole system would become questionable, losing its claim for ‘comprehensive dominion’ (Schafer). The conceptual system of music is based on universality. It’s all or nothing. If anything insists on its distinctness *apart from* this conceptual system, the conceptual system of music cannot be universal and is in danger. Such was the danger the Maccabees posed to Antiochus: proving the absurdity of the man-is-the-measure-of-all-things mindset, simply by saying *no* to it.

### **Lera Boroditsky: How the Languages We Speak Shape the Ways We Think**

Lera Boroditsky offers an analogy between visual perception and language: both are limited input channels<sup>243</sup>. The physical underpinnings of vision constrain our visual perception; the same is true in the case of language. It follows that “what information gets transmitted is necessarily constrained by the particular properties of the language being used”.

242 Risto Santala, *Vanhan Testamentin Messias-odotus rabbinistisen kirjallisuuden valossa* (Kauniainen: PerusSanoma Oy, 1995), 24 – 27.

243 Boroditsky, “How the Languages We Speak Shape the Ways We Think,” 616 – 617.



Another way to see this is to think of language as an attentional guide. The information we receive from the physical world is much more than what we can attend to. Each language functions as a culturally created guide to attention, a way of highlighting certain aspects of the world important within a culture.

These cross-linguistic differences shape thinking. Boroditsky describes findings concerning spatial reference frames, colour discrimination, and the influence of grammatical gender on representations of objects and other entities.<sup>244</sup>

The most striking of these is found in speakers of languages that feature an absolute reference frame system. In Guugu Yimithirr and Kuuk Thaayorre, both Australian Aboriginal languages, only absolute spatial references are used – location is described in cardinal direction terms. This aligns roughly with north, south, east and west. Thus, the salad fork is not *left* of the dinner fork, but *to the east* of it; speakers of these languages say things like “the boy standing to the south of Mary is my brother”<sup>245</sup>. To speak these languages correctly, one must maintain a coherent sense of orientation, not only presently, but in memory as well. Thus, the cognitive difference between speakers of English and Kuuk Thaayorre is nothing short of amazing: a classroom full of English speakers probably cannot point at southeast if told to do so all of the sudden, but even the five-year-olds among the Kuuk Thaayorre can do so – without hesitation.

Because space is such a fundamental domain of thought, the difference in spatial thinking has been shown to affect other, more abstract representations, like time, number, musical (sic) pitch, kinship relations, morality, and emotions. The Kuuk Thaayorre understand time to progress from east to west, whereas English speakers see time moving from left to right.<sup>246</sup>

Cognitive differences based on language have also been shown in how perceptual judgments are made concerning colour, and in how grammatical gender affects how objects are described.<sup>247</sup>

But why should these effects be necessarily caused by language? One might propose that the Aboriginals’ ability could be an effect of their environment. But absolute reference frames are found all over the world, in very different environments (not just Australia).

244 Ibid., 618 – 623.

245 Ibid., 618.

246 Boroditsky, 619 – 620.

247 Ibid., 620 – 623.

Researchers have found clear support for causality – for the case that language affects thought. Teaching people a new way of talking does change their mental representations, and learning an altogether new language brings along new attentional patterns. Cognitive differences are found even in bilinguals depending on which language they are tested in.<sup>248</sup>

*“It appears that when we learn a new language, we’re not simply learning a new way of talking; we are also inadvertently learning a new way of thinking, a new way of partitioning, organizing, and construing the world.”*<sup>249</sup>

Cross-linguistic differences surface even in tasks that do not require the production or understanding of language.<sup>250</sup>

*“If language is indeed involuntarily recruited for most cognitive tasks (even ones that do not overtly require language use), then language is having a profound effect on thought by being an involuntary component of the processes we call thinking.”*<sup>251</sup>

In Orwell’s 1984, the Party controls thinking by controlling and manipulating language in order to create a new dialect – Newspeak. Ideas of freedom and rebellion are supposed to become impossible by the corresponding words and phrases being removed from language. Referring to Orwell’s dystopia, Boroditsky raises the question: are some thoughts unthinkable without language? Is language necessary for thought? She gives no definitive answer, but concludes that while language isn’t “a straitjacket for thought”, it exerts a profound influence on our minds: “... linguistic processes meddle in and subconsciously influence our thinking from the very basics of perception to the loftiest abstract notions and the most major life decisions. Language is central to our experience of being human and the languages we speak profoundly shape the way we think, the way we see the world, and the way we live our lives.”<sup>252</sup>

248 Ibid., 623 – 626.

249 Ibid., 625.

250 Ibid., 626.

251 Ibid., 627.

252 Ibid., 627 – 630.

*Music vs. Maccabees*

With language being such a profound influence on thought, is it a surprise that the language that featured *mousiké* would collide head-on with a language that had no such concept? The worldview of *mousiké* was (and is), after all, about a ‘harmony’ of everything. Any existing dissident actually questions the whole totality (and reveals it to be a doctrine, not a reality). Is it surprising that the Greeks (and Romans) would develop imperialism and *interpretatio*, collecting gods under a ‘Pantheon’, while the (traditionalist, non-assimilationist) Jews had no such pursuits, but instead insisted on a separate *identity*, both for God and themselves?

When Antiochus and the Maccabees clashed, two mindsets were found in an inevitable and extreme opposition. For one, everything had to fit in the same way of conceiving things. All gods had to be compatible and the emperor had to be in charge. For the other, not everything was the same, and thus the freedom to say no was paramount. It was Hellenism’s universal religion against Jewish freedom of choice. It was calling the harmony of everything *music* versus calling *nothing* music. This is a fundamental matter, universalism versus relativism; not just a slight difference in culture. *Calling it music* and calling *nothing* music are profoundly different cases. The difference cannot be called “mere semantics”. There are different mindsets involved.

If language shapes the way we think, abstraction is false. To be more precise, it is fantasy – the fantasy of being “free” from the limits of language, the fantasy of having no bias.

Modernist abstract art expressed this fantasy. The late Finnish art historian Sixten Ringbom wrote in 1970 that the claim that abstract art is free from influences can still be found; but abstract art is not *ex vacuo* nor self-explanatory. Theories behind it explain it.<sup>253</sup>

Art historians have shown that Modernist abstract art expressed the ideals of theosophy and other esoteric traditions and the occult (not only in the case of Kandinsky, but generally speaking as well). These owe a great deal to the Py-

253 Sixten Ringbom, *Sounding Cosmos: A Study in the Spiritualism of Kandinsky and the Genesis of Abstract Painting* (Åbo, Finland: Åbo Akademi, 1970), 15.

thagoreans. A central idea in them is the ‘ascension’ of the ‘exceptional individual’ above the general crowd, into a ‘purity’, a freedom from influences and conditions: a particular holier-than-thou thinking. It is the fantasy of having no bias.

In Stanislavski’s *An Actor Prepares*, the first-person narrator, Kostya, an acting student, receives an assignment to relax his body completely, like a cat or a newborn baby are supposedly able to do. But when the student tries to relax himself, he finds the challenges in the exercise. “I can’t say that it is difficult to note this or that contracted muscle. And it’s no particular trick to loosen it up. But the trouble is that you no sooner get rid of one tight muscle than another appears, and a third, and so on. The more you notice them, the more there are of them.”<sup>254</sup>

Removing definition concepts means giving up the fantasy of unbiasedness. It does not mean removing them completely; it is actually the fantasy of removing them completely that has given birth to the music concept. The fantasy of the abstract is the fantasy of the unbiased existence, resulting in narcissism, not unbiasedness. Narcissism does not rise from having bias, like “I’m more awesome than you all”; it rises from believing one has *no* bias.

When it comes to the arts, a concept like music, that asserts its unbiasedness, its abstraction from the world of conditions and circumstance, breeds as the consequence of its use a narcissistic mentality. We are how we speak. *There are always biases*. Language is not just a code - it is a place we live and think in.

Linguistic relativism may not be a completely new idea. In the Book of Acts, people who have come from all over the Jewish diaspora witness glossolalia, and ask: “... how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?”<sup>255</sup> In this passage, it is conspicuous how language is *a place* of birth. They came from various lands, but were born in languages. Linguistic relativism in antiquity!

How does our birth place, our language-abode, affect us? What does it do to us, if we’re living in a place that exalts abstraction and entertains a fantasy of unbiasedness? There have been reactions against this: the Redefiners (see chapter five). But these reactions have failed to address the root of the issue. Language needs to be renovated by removing the fantasy.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>255</sup> Acts 2:8, New King James Version. The translation here seems to be very literal, following the Greek closely.

Renovating our language opens up possibilities for translation. Removing fantasies of unbiases means that biases become more visible. These can be addressed in translation, whereas abstraction cannot (the untranslatability of ‘music’ has resulted in mere respellings, not translations: see the beginning of this chapter). Here we find the ethics of translation: I need another to see myself. The narcissistic fantasy of unbiases and abstraction deny this basic fact, a fact that is established by the sheer concrete reality of perception and experience, not by an issued code of conduct external or superfluous to it. Merleau-Ponty’s idea of the body as the basis for perception seems like a nice fit for understanding translation from a similar basis, rejecting both “doctrines which treat perception as a simple result of the action of external things on our body” as well as “those which insist on the autonomy of consciousness”.<sup>256</sup> This means an ambiguity between the exterior and the interior. This can be likened to the aforementioned bias.

Translation can be thus viewed as a very concrete, even physical, bodily challenge. To say something in French I need to “go to France” (or another francophone place) in a way; and a tongue differs from another in terms of the exercise it requires. The mouth can get tired from speaking a language it isn’t used to. A different language uses different muscles, different technique. If I haven’t acquired the bias that goes with it, by exercising my mouth to perform the movements required to produce its sound palette, I will exhibit another bias – an accent. Some consonants in English are challenging for Finns; for anglophones, clear and simple vowels may be tough to grasp since English has such a subtle range of them, not to mention a tendency to diphthongize. This ‘Anglo-bias’ becomes very clear in Finnish, where vowels have a different sound, a different role.

What, then, is the big picture? What kind of a totality is there? What is “complete” like, if it isn’t unbiased? Can there be unity?

Isn’t this the question we have arrived at, after postmodernism reacted against the hubris that preceded it?

It would be a serious mistake to *react* again. The swing would go back to a fantasy of unbiases, and there are already signs of this in the aggravation of various oppositions in today’s world. The “other” is seen as utterly evil. An incompatible

256 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Merleau-Ponty’s Prospectus of his Work,” in Thomas Baldwin, ed., *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: basic writings* (London: Routledge, 2004), 34.

worldview is called “intolerant”. A narcissist only sees fault in others, and because of this accuses others of his or her own issues. This is the opposite of translation. Translation becomes impossible when the other is not accepted to be within its range of possibilities. This is what abstraction does - it renders translation impossible. Abstraction can only be imposed.

Therefore the only unity that abstraction can have is the imperial sort: submit and thus be included. All roads must lead to Rome. There can't be borders and different currencies, that would require translation.

Translation speaks of a different togetherness. *It isn't unbiased*. It isn't abstract. It does not try to deny away friction and discomfort. “You're not friends.” “That's right. We're family.”

Translation declares the existence of borders. To ‘trans-late’ is to ‘meta-pherein’, to carry across. It is acknowledged that there is something to cross over.

If we're really exact here, because of its etymology, translation is ultimately not the right word for it. It has the air of “one at a time”: something changes place from here to there, crossing over something between them. But that is not what happens in translation. Both languages *exist at once*. There is no carrying over, instead, there is the attempt to point at the same thing from another place, another language.

Translation is not really the unity word. The togetherness of areas that have borders between them is *parabolic*. They exist side by side. Both similarity and difference can be seen in the juxtaposition. They are not one and the same, but they can function *as one*.

Consider the human body. It comprises trillions of cells, each having a membrane (depending on the type of the cell):

“The cell membrane [...] has two functions: first, to be a barrier keeping the constituents of the cell in and unwanted substances out and, second, to be a

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gate allowing transport into the cell of essential nutrients and movement from the cell of waste products.”<sup>257</sup>

Semi-permeable membranes like this mean that the cells are both distinct (because traffic is controlled) and connected (since traffic is allowed, under certain conditions). The trillions of cells that comprise the human body can function as one, despite their great diversity. Perhaps this is an answer to the question of unity: it is possible between connected distincts. Denying connection prevents it, but so does giving up distinctness. Unity is not an amoeba. It is a family, where parabolic translation is necessary between its members.

A family of this kind, consisting of artforms, cannot be done with the concept of music, with its narcissistic abstraction, and fantasy of unbiasedness. Despite this, such visions have been proposed. These constructs become the more detached from reality the bigger they grow. The following chapter takes a look at the Hellenism of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

257 *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Cell membrane,” accessed June 16, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/science/cell-membrane>.





## 7 The Concept of Music and the Total Work of Art

### *The Global Hellenism of the Gesamtkunstwerk*

Matthew Wilson Smith calls attention to how Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* is not fully understood if it is taken to be a formal concept.

"The most frequent translation of the word is "total work of art", but even this is by no means straightforward: other possibilities include "communal work of art," "collective work of art," "combined work of art," and "unified work of art." Indeed, the concept includes all of these ideas, for it is an art form as much about collectivity as about unity, about community as about totality."<sup>258</sup>

It is not a formalist project: "... Wagner's aesthetics are always inseparable from his larger political vision." The *Gesamtkunstwerk* is a collective, not individual effort, and when it comes to pass, "all social divisions will be transcended as the divisions between the three arts are harmonized".<sup>259</sup>

Wilson Smith sees a precursor to Wagner in Schiller. In "On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy", Schiller longs for a unity that is ideal. 'Nature' is not available to sensory perception, only as an idea; the artist's job is to bind this idea to a form that brings it to the powers of imagination, "truer than any actuality and more real than any experience".<sup>260</sup>

"Schiller ends his *Aesthetic Education* with an evocation of this ideal condition. Turning, in his final Letter, to the millenarian language of the medieval mystic

258 Matthew Wilson Smith, *The Total Work of Art: From Bayreuth to Cyberspace* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 9.

259 Ibid.

260 Ibid., 13.

Joachim di Fiore, Schiller associates this state with the glorious “Third Kingdom” of the spirit. The Third Kingdom, Schiller writes, would bring the realm of living form not to isolated individuals but to society as a whole.

‘In the midst of the fearful kingdom of forces, and in the midst of the sacred kingdom of laws, the aesthetic impulse to form is at work, unnoticed, on the building of a third joyous kingdom of play and semblance in which man is relieved of the shackles of circumstance, and released from all that might be called constraint, alike in the physical and in the moral sphere.’<sup>261</sup>

Wilson Smith isn’t blind to the grecophilia and Hellenism of the Romantics and Wagner, but he seems to dismiss how deep it goes. Schiller preaches a society of a collective Pythagorean escape of being relieved of the shackles of circumstance, released from all that might be called constraint, that is, from the “wheel of life”; and this is achieved by idealization, by the inward turn that worships the mind and despises sensory perception.

Wagner’s declared project in *The Artwork of the Future* is to advance mankind in an evolutionary step from the “generic national” to the “unnational universal”<sup>262</sup>, that is, the Hellenization of mankind:

*“Thus have we then to turn Hellenic art to Human art; to loose from it the stipulations by which it was but an Hellenic and not a Universal art. The garment of Religion, in which alone it was the common Art of Greece, and after whose removal it could only, as an egoistic, isolated art-species, fulfil the needs of Luxury—however fair—but no longer those of Fellowship,—this specific garb of the Hellenic Religion, we have to stretch it out until its folds embrace the Religion of the Future, the Religion of Universal Manhood, and thus to gain already a presage of the Art-work of the Future. But this bond of union, this Religion of the Future, we wretched ones shall never clasp the while we still are lonely units, howe’er so many be our numbers who feel the spur towards the Art-work of the Future. The Art-work is the living presentation of*

261 Friedrich Schiller, “Über den Gebrauch des Chors in Der Tragödie,” in *Schiller’s Werke*. 4 vols. (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1966), 215, quoted in Wilson Smith, *The Total Work of Art*, 13.

262 Richard Wagner, *The Artwork of the Future and Other Works*, trans. W. Ashton Ellis (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 89.

Religion;—*but religions spring not from the artist's brain; their only origin is from the Folk.*"<sup>263</sup>

Wagner's vision represents *mousiké* in an ancient sense. Originally it meant anything inspired and guided by the Muses. Wagner's unity is not a formalist unity, it is a religious one. This Universal Art is Muse-ic. Wilson Smith notes this in Philip Otto Runge's characterization of music: Runge

"argues for the predominance of music in the total work of art, writing that 'music is that which we call harmony and tranquility in the three other arts.' Runge's 'music', however, much like Schlegel's 'poetry', more of a universal, unifying spirit than a distinct art-form. Runge believes that the (musically inspired) total artwork would 'pull together all the eternally different natural forces into one being'."<sup>264</sup>

*Idealized organization: returning to the 'organic'*

In R. Murray Schafer's *Tuning of the World* we find a remarkably Wagnerian vision. Schafer speaks of *hi-fi* vs. *lo-fi* sound environments: "A hi-fi system is one possessing a favorable signal-to-noise ratio. The hi-fi soundscape is one in which discrete sounds can be heard clearly because of the low ambient noise level." This is associated with the pastoral, with the ancient, with the nocturnal<sup>265</sup>. The lo-fi soundscape, on the other hand, "was introduced by the Industrial Revolution and was extended by the Electric Revolution which followed it," a sonic environment characterized by sound congestion - the signal-to-noise ratio is bad because today's world "suffers from an overpopulation of sounds"<sup>266</sup>, where clarity and the ability to hear across a distance are compromised or impossible. The lo-fi is associated with the noises of technology, power, and the city. The 'harmonization of the world' is a longing for the idealized ancient pastoral landscape.

In this nostalgic dichotomy, Schafer echoes Wagner's fantasy of the Greek organic wholeness and resentment of the modern 'mechanism'. "Wagner often describes ills such as commerce, industry, and mass reproduction as though they were

263 Ibid., 90. My emphasis.

264 Wilson Smith, 14.

265 Schafer, *Soundscape*, 43.

266 Ibid., 71.

subsets of a broader category that has come to dominate the modern world. This broader category may be simply called ‘mechanism.’<sup>267</sup> Contrasting the category of “mechanism” is the idealised Hellenic *organic* whole, identified not only with the truly artistic, but with the ideal society.

The genuine, organic, artwork is something that shows no traces of the handiwork of the artist, “a created object that masquerades as an uncreated one”, whereas the “masterpiece of mechanism” shows the traces of its creation, and thus isn’t really artwork at all.<sup>268</sup>

Wagner saw the Jews (and the French) as *mechanical*, as opposed to the *organic* nature of idealized Greece; only able to artificially imitate but incapable of organic creation.<sup>269</sup>

The machine is selfish because it stands alone, not in the organic Hellenic whole; this ‘individualism’ Wagner called the Religion of Egoism, which is of the mechanism and only capable of Luxury (sensational effects but not true art). This enemy of mankind needed to be removed utterly:

**“Only when the ruling religion of Egoism, which has split the entire domain of Art into crippled, self-seeking art-tendencies and art-varieties, shall have been mercilessly dislodged and torn up root and branch from every moment of the life of man, can the new religion step forth of itself to life; the religion which includes within itself the conditions of the Artwork of the Future.”**<sup>270</sup>

The Hellenization attempts of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabean Revolt come to mind. Hellenization saw the (traditionalist) Jews as enemies 2200 years ago, and so did this latter-day Hellenic Religion of Universal Manhood. The opposition is not only religious: Wagner’s vision for the universal was *unnational*. Any group resisting total assimilation would be an opponent of such a vision.

267 Wilson Smith, 17.

268 Ibid.

269 Ibid., 18.

270 Wagner, 155.

Wagner's ideal artist is actually a god of sorts, someone who can create organic growth, not just make something with his hands. Not surprisingly: the Hellenic idealization of man, with its inward turn, is a self-worship paradigm. "Gnothi seauton" could be translated "worship yourself", since *gnosis* is not just simple awareness of something, it is intimate knowledge that is acquired by experience. To *ginosko* someone could also mean carnal knowledge.

In a self-worship paradigm of idealization, the gods stand for aspects of the *self*. The extreme manifestation of this spirit are the Roman Emperors who self-defined as gods, demanding not only submission but also worship. The antithesis of the self as god is, of course, an Other as god. For Greco-Roman interpretation, this was not a major obstacle as long as the Other was subsumable into the canon; but the Jews and Christians posed a problem because their God would not be one of many, but the only one. Ultimately the imperial solution was the Edict of Milan, resulting in something that could be thought of as Christian, but on the other hand did not disavow earlier practices either. The result may seem like a successful fusion, but it left a longing on both sides: the Hellenists longed for their Golden Age and Harmony of the Spheres, manifesting eventually in a Renaissance; the Christians longed for a singular focus, the putting away of the Hellenic elements subsumed into the Church, resulting eventually in the Protestant Reformation.

We do not see music properly if we see it as a thing in the world, as sounds, as the playing of instruments, as singing. It was originally religion, mysticism, a worldview; not a thing in the world.

The concept of music is inextricably tied to this history. Like with *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a mere formalist reading of its meanings is misled, and ultimately impossible because of its idealist origins: it either sides with the (neo) Hellenist views, or the endless and useless repetitions of redefinition, even with the best intentions. Our contemporary situation should be viewed with this in mind. Significant change is only possible through the third option, starting without the concept of music. The Protestant Reformation can be seen as a move in this direction in the sense that it distanced itself from the Hellenic, but it didn't discard the *concept*. (Like several Early Church Fathers, some Protestant factions saw the use of instruments as pagan and evil; that is, the criticism was directed at external *things*, not at the thinking concerning those things.<sup>271</sup>)

271 Viola and Barna, 162 – 163.

The concept of music is not only tied to the history of the Western world, it also affects it. It vies towards an ideal unity that cannot bear any ethical scrutiny. Redefining it has curbed this effect; yet, it has resurfaced. The third option, calling *nothing* music, is not simply a formalist solution concerning those artists whose work traverses lines of definition; it can achieve that which mere redefinition couldn't. Discontinuing the use of the main concept of idealist totality cuts off its wings.

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## 8 Without Music

### 8.1 Facing Translation

The problem that the solipsist has is sensory deprivation. It is as if one perceives something - but these are hallucinations, the perceptual instruments firing blanks as they express their need for relationship, their fervent desire to engage the world of perception. We are wired for relationship, not for escapism.

At the root of the music mindset is the denial of perception. The redefiners have tried to correct this denial, but its effects remain, hindering our discourse from having a shared relationship with the reality we share. With the concept of music in use, our communication cannot really reach the same level of communion that is possible in perception.

Neither does this hindered communication want to. There is no motivation in the inward gaze. Nowhere to move, only static nothing; no addressing any problems of the world, no building, only the narcissistic navel. In a word: fantasizing, wishing things weren't as they are, reveries of eternal silence, nothingness.

But facing the shared reality requires a discourse that takes relationship as its starting point. Concordant with this are concepts that *describe* rather than define.

And so it is not a matter of yet another definition replacing a definition. Turning away from the mindset of definitions that tries to call nothing something, our challenge is to face what we perceive - which, as Merleau-Ponty has shown, is a chiasm of subject and object, of attention (active) and reception (passive) - and then *name* that. Recalling that since time immemorial names have not been "just names", they describe, they express, they tell stories, they commemorate, a name is a product of the relationship between the name-giver and the receiver of that name, as chiasmatic as the perception that gives cause to the name.

Once we no longer define things as music, there will be no more territorial wars between the different borders drawn. This is not a utopia - challenges remain, but they are relational challenges of communication, “suffering one another”. How does a name (description, story, memory) relate to another name of what would seem to be the same named thing? And this relational challenge of communication can give birth to yet another name, and so on, a network of interrelated stories. This is the consequence of facing and dealing with something that is real. It is the uncomfortable, challenging and beautiful process of translation.

The process of translation is inexhaustible because of its limitedness. It cannot be done to its end (de-finire), it needs to be repeated. It is always in movement, constantly telling an ever-expanding story that strives to include every aspect of the story, every storyteller. Again, this may sound like the talk of a life coach obsessed with ‘positive thinking’, but it is not positive thinking nor utopian fantasy, it is the consequence of turning *away* from the fantasy of an escapist utopia and facing the relational challenges of being in the world, where we must keep talking because *we cannot say it to the end*.

## 8.2 A World without Music

Most of the effort in this dissertation has gone to identifying the problem and then describing it. The purpose of this chapter is to begin the work of looking in a new direction. This is done through a handful of viewpoints, that when combined will hopefully give the reader a picture of what a world without the concept of music might look like. The approach here is intentionally imaginative, even futuristic.

This is only a start – or a *restart*; to get further than that, the work of looking in a new direction requires practice and community. To really experience the effects of a change in thought through a change in language, the change needs to be cultural, not merely personal.

### *Without music #1: A different “Gesamt”*

A culture where nothing is called music looks different. The difference is subtle, yet pervasive. Everything is affected; the effect of removing the concept of music does not concern only the area that has been called music. When the arbitrary and baseless categorization is gone, thinking that concerns creative expression has unprecedented freedom. Playing a cello can be considered for what it is practically – for what it looks, sounds and feels like. And this goes for both creation *and* analysis. Practice and theory would have a shared language. No longer



would composers come up with practical forms that cannot be understood by the critics, as in the case of Kagel.<sup>272</sup>

To really see if and how discarding the concept of music would change things, an experimental community would be needed. The most likely way such a community might be formed is a research group consisting in a sufficient number of artistic researchers, covering a wide variety of practices. The group would benefit from including researchers from other fields, as widely as possible: science, technology, business and economy, medicine, and the humanities. A group like this is a microcommunity of sorts. The participants would have to agree to strictly avoid definition-concepts, most importantly, the concept of music. This “word fast” would result in a microculture where hopefully the effects of the elimination of abstract definitions would begin to show, especially in the back-and-forth movement between doing and thinking, between practice and reflection. Language is likely to be used in both. I dare to predict an outcome: practice and reflection will begin to merge in an unusual way, facilitating both aspects of the work. This will benefit even those participants who may not be very active in one or the other.

A group like this would be particularly well suited for “community work”, for projects that would engage a specific locality and its residents in their everyday life. The nature of the “no music” paradigm is that the border between music and non-music is erased; this will easily suggest erasure of the art / non-art border<sup>273</sup>. Creativity is not kept within artistic borders. Artists do not need to be artists in comparison to “non-artists”. Art can forget itself as it seeks to serve the everyday; yet, this is actually how creative work will find a much better purpose and a more thriving existence.

This could address, for example, an area of a city that isn’t well defined in terms of its use – some area that has fallen out of use and could use a brush-up. The group would work to bring to the inhabitants of the nearby neighbourhoods a creative presentation on the possibilities of the area, and organize participatory

272 See chapter 1.4. Mauricio Kagel longed for “music for all senses”, but he was categorized under music theatre or “instrumental theatre”.

273 The contemporary use of the concept of art seems to have the same problem as the concept of music: art is whatever we call “art”. It is merely a definition, manifesting similar problems as the concept of music.

activity, workshops and the like, to involve the inhabitants in the kinds of things that spark their interest.

An interesting precursor can be seen in the French group *Atelier Théâtre et Musique* (ATEM), led by composer Georges Aperghis who founded it in 1975. Theodore Shank reviewed some of the group's work in 1983:

“Five actor-musicians, together with Aperghis, comprise the entire group, taking on all of the research, administrative, technical, and performance responsibilities. They are subsidized in part by the city of Bagnolet, a bedroom suburb of Paris with a population of 36,000, and have attempted to relate their work to everyday life in the community. It is remarkable that they have been able to develop a form for their work uniquely different from that of other groups seeking a community involvement. They maintain an active relationship with community organizations through workshops, mini-performances, discussions, and improvisations, all of which serve as part of the research of the group.”<sup>274</sup>

One example of the work of ATEM was *Sans Paroles*:

“Work on *Sans Paroles* (*Without Words*) began in 1978 with acute observation of Bagnolet residents at a café – the gestures that they made, facial expressions, their nonverbal sounds, and the words they frequently spoke. [...] *Sans Paroles* was first presented at an actual cafe surrounded by unsuspecting customers. Gradually, the customers began to realize that the banal activities and sounds, usually ignored, were in fact part of a performance and they began to watch with interest.”<sup>275</sup>

Other projects involved the residents of Bagnolet in more active roles.

Shank even calls this kind of work *artistic research*.<sup>276</sup> In 1983, he certainly wasn't referring to the way these two words are used today, but it does catch the eye.

274 Theodore Shank, “Atelier Théâtre et Musique: Structuring Everyday Gestures and Sounds”, *The Drama Review: TDR* 23, no. 3 (September 1979): 3 – 4, doi:10.2307/1145225.

275 Ibid., 4 – 5.

276 Ibid., 9.

A TEM did not commit to a “word fast” concerning the concept of music. They are not a precursor in that sense. But as a research-minded artist group, that transgressed the boundaries of what has been called “music” in its performances – and doing that with a community mindset, they are a very interesting precedent.

Considering again the “experimental community” I began to imagine a few paragraphs ago (a diverse artistic research group that would cease to call things “music”): the meeting between the general public and an artistic research group like described above would obviously pose a challenge. How do the group members communicate with people who are not participating in the “word fast”? To eliminate this factor in the experiment, perhaps the group could work in two phases, the first involving only the group members. In the second phase, care should be taken to avoid any “indoctrination” of the general public. The whole point is to *remove* dogma, not to replace it with another. The “word fast” group would, on the other hand, need to keep their way of speech. The resulting conversations would probably be interesting material for research.

*Without music #2: lack of abstraction, parlance of practice*

There is no concept that should replace the concept of music. A profound change takes place by simply forgetting it. When nothing is called music, and importantly, *no other definition concept takes its place*, we will need to address the matter in a descriptive way.

This isn’t new. It is already taking place. When a band rehearses their songs (sic), “music” is not a necessary concept at all. What one hears in a rehearsal are words like intro, verse, bridge and chorus, head and solos; a bass riff, guitar vamp, or keyboard solo; chords, lyrics, harmony and unison; the score and parts, sul ponticello, jetée, flutter tongue.

Words like these are not arbitrary. They describe and name practical things and events: they are *practice-based*. Because of this basis, they cannot be completely arbitrary.

The world without music is a place where only concepts that can be affected by practice are used: concrete, descriptive concepts. There are no arbitrary borders of definition separating areas that could be connected on a practical basis.

This is something Artistic Research can bring to view particularly well.

*Without music #3: Ecological Composition*

In this landscape, a composition is not a lofty abstract Work that lowly earthly performance can never adequately represent. When nothing is called music, the composition is on the same plane as performance. It is simply a stage in the creative process, a plan for action. The composer needs to consider the conditions.

But isn't that what any composer would say of their trade? Of course a composer needs to be cognizant of the practical matters of the orchestra in order to compose anything successful. Calling it music doesn't seem to prevent this from happening.

This is true, but not thanks to calling things music – this is happening *despite* it. Abstract concepts hinder practical wisdom.

The purpose here, in describing a world without music, is to further advance the practical wisdom that already exists by defending the language of that practical wisdom, by exposing the unclothed emperor that has hindered its freedom.

Here are some features that will be seen when a composition is not “musical”, and therefore not dogmatically “separated” from the rest of the world.

## 3a. Humble generation

An *ecological composition* does not descend from an ivory tower. It is something that is born within an environment. It is made of the same stuff, it is on the same plane with its surroundings – hence ‘ecological’.

My use of these words differs from the natural sciences, where “ecological composition” refers to the contents (composition) of an ecosystem. But an ecosystem is defined: it has arbitrary boundaries, set in place for the sake of studying it. It is a frame, that makes it possible to count the number of organisms in a given area, and so on.

What I'm talking about is frameless. Ecological stands for the relationship between the composition and its environment, understood in a broad sense. Of course, ultimately, this means that the relationship is between a composition and everything else. It follows that the relationship is never fully defined, never fully grasped, it remains a mystery, inasmuch as ‘everything’ is not fully known.

### 3b. Always only a part of the whole

This environmental relationship is there also when an ecological composition is *presented*. It can never be *everything*. There is always more. For example, an outdoor concert may very well have the weather and wildlife join in. In the concert hall, there probably will be some coughing. A painting may be the size of the whole wall – but there is always the next wall, or people in the gallery, always something more than the presented thing or performance.

### 3c. A plan is just a plan

An ecological composition is both plan and performance, the score as well as the show. The realization of a plan is an indispensable part of its dialogue with its environment. Rehearsals affect the score. The specifics of the site of presentation or performance have their say concerning the plan.

### 3d. Adaptation

An ecological composition is an adaptation at the level of the composition, since it is made of existing materials. The composer doesn't literally give existence to anything, he or she only re-arranges pre-existing materials, mental, social, physical.

Adaptation theory has suggested this. Linda Hutcheon quotes Walter Benjamin: “storytelling is always the art of repeating stories”<sup>277</sup>, and continues that for “avid adapters across the centuries [...], art is derived from other art; stories are born of other stories.”<sup>278</sup>

Hutcheon also points out how adaptation is very difficult to define because we use the same word for the process and the product<sup>279</sup>. The situation is similar with the word composition, once we view it as ecological, and no longer as ‘musical’.

Translation, as discussed above, also comes close: “As openly acknowledged and extended reworkings of particular other texts, adaptations are often compared

277 Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” in *Theories of Translation*, ed. Rainer Schultze and John Biguenet (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1992), 90, quoted in Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 2.

278 Hutcheon, 2.

279 Hutcheon, 15.

to translations. Just as there can be no literal translation, there can be no literal adaptation.”<sup>280</sup>

An ecological composition is an adaptation at the level of the composer: the act of composing is an act of adaptation, of dealing with one’s existence in the environment one is in. The border between an ecological composition and its environment is like a cell membrane. There is a clear boundary, but it is also a process. An ecological composition emerges as the composer engages their environment creatively.

Merleau-Ponty wrote of Cézanne this way: “The landscape germinated in him, and he painted how it became seen in him”; Merleau-Ponty also cites Cézanne himself as saying “the landscape thinks itself in me, and I am its consciousness.” This “intuitive science” is a process of expression. It is not a matter of imitation or manufacturing something “according to the wishes of instinct or good taste.”<sup>281</sup>

Adapting to one’s environment through creativity is necessary. It is not a cultural frill, it is not decoration, it is not avoidable without avoiding life itself. It is vital.

Ecological composition is not a genre. It is a way of seeing any creativity. Removing the dogmatic concept of music opens the field up, when the dogma isn’t replaced with another. Practical boundaries remain like cell membranes, but a cell membrane is alive, not a stone-dead dogma.

*Without music #4: from categories to the sublime*

The world categorized in Aristotelian shards, when put “back” together, is not the world. The same thing that categorized it is putting the shards together – the human mind. Therefore, a category-based theory of everything cannot depict the world, but only exhibits what this categorizing mindset really is: that the world as such is not accepted, it is in fact accused (category: from Greek *kategoros*, ‘accuser’<sup>282</sup>); the world is somehow wrong and should be aligned to this categorizing mind. Everything *except* the self is blamed for paradise lost, the idealized picture offered by Wagner, Schafer, Small, and others. It is not a worldview of pragmatic

280 Hutcheon, 16.

281 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Cézanne’s Doubt”, in *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: basic writings*, ed. Thomas Baldwin (New York: Routledge, 2004), 281.

282 *New Oxford American Dictionary* (Apple Dictionary, version 2.1.3, 2005 – 2009), s.v. “category.”

improvement, but a denial of the whole thing, of how things are already together, of what our senses try to tell us. When the mind is exalted above everything else, the senses need to be denied because they disagree. And that is what “it’s all in the mind” is saying, from Plato to Husserl to 1960s counterculture and onwards.

The adaptation attitude of ecological composition means that it does not accuse. The world may have something wrong with it, but so may I. The totality is not an insisted one – a static universe of the Harmony of Spheres, where nothing ultimately has purpose, and therefore I do not need to change either. Instead, it is sublime – ungraspable in its entirety.

“As a human being, one has been endowed with just enough intelligence to be able to see clearly how utterly inadequate that intelligence is when confronted with what exists,” Albert Einstein wrote in a letter to Queen Elisabeth of Belgium.<sup>283</sup>

Adaptation at the level of the composer requires the acknowledgement of the possibility of the need for change *in the composer*, not *only* in the world. The challenge is that of humility, even repentance, not as a one-time event, but as an ongoing *metanoia*. A change of mind is the whole point of this thesis: changing our vocabulary will, over time, change our minds.

*Without music #5: On Instrumentality (the Case of the Guitar Paddle)*

A chair is an instrument. You *can* sit on a rock, or a treestump; but a rock may not be practical indoors, and a treestump is probably in a rather fixed location. A chair, in its astounding varieties, is *an instrument of sitting*.

So with a guitar. There is a basic event, plucking a string or gut or wire that’s held taut, and there are instruments developed for the purpose of the employment of that event: *chordophones*, ‘string-sounders’, including guitars.

What is fascinating about instrumentality is that this necessary specialization, this focus on a particular effect, does not separate an instrument from other applications. It doesn’t even mean that the instrument is necessarily a poor choice in applications it was never intended for by its makers.

<sup>283</sup> *The Yale Book of Quotations*, ed. Fred R. Shapiro (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 229, quoted in “Albert Einstein Quotes: 6 Sayings From the Theoretical Physicist on His Birthday,” *Newsweek*, accessed October 14, 2019, <http://www.newsweek.com/albert-einstein-quotes-birthday-said-pi-day-845494>.

I've been thinking about different ways of using a guitar. You can play a guitar like it was intended to be used, or even in unconventional ways ("extended techniques"), but what *else* can you do with it? And perhaps most interestingly, could that 'something else' *connect* with playing it in the conventional way?

One of the shoots for *Töölönlahti: a Parable in Landscape* took place on Töölönlahti Bay itself. In August, 2015, I rented a stand-up paddle board from Hakuna Matata SUP Rentals, attached a GoPro on it, and went for a spin. I soon found out that I was too heavy for the board. It wasn't very steady when I stood up. The kneeling position was much better, if not more comfortable.

I had an acoustic guitar with me. The plan was to simply play on the bay, but also to see if I could paddle with the guitar. I found out the guitar was *better* than the supplied SUP paddle! Kneeling on the board, I didn't need the longer reach the SUP paddle provides; the guitar was long enough. But suprisingly, the guitar was a lot better in other ways too. It was very light to use, because it floats. It was very efficient, because it is many times larger in area than the SUP paddle. These features meant that I could paddle faster with the guitar than with the SUP paddle!

The guitar was not designed for this, but the specialized design did not prevent the guitar from excelling in an unintended use. An instrumental specialization doesn't mean a withdrawal, that is, an abstraction.

Here is a beautiful picture concerning disciplines, interdisciplinarity, and the togetherness of what we've come to call "art forms". If they would be taken to be instruments (defined by their purpose) instead of abstractions (self-defined, therefore purposeless), specialization would not mean isolation.

Monastic isolation is importantly featured in the history of the concept of music. Perhaps we can use it as a metaphor, to illustrate the contrast between abstraction and instrumental specialization:

If God is abstract, the monk has to abstract himself, isolate himself (a monastery being a means for this).

If God is not abstract, devotion is a matter of specialization of the instrument, the devotee; this calls for engaging the world the instrument is applied to; not abstraction, not withdrawal from the application. Instrumentality stays in the world while focussing beyond.



Abstraction and instrumentality have opposite implications when it comes to unity or togetherness. A unity of abstractions is a self-contradicting idea since the point of abstraction is precisely the opposite of unity with others.

Instrumental specializations can form a unity, since specialized focus does not mean a detachment. This could be called a “non-dogmatic togetherness” – another way of saying “ecological composition.”

*Without music #6: hybridity and future prospects*

An actor plays an instrument, as part of the role they're playing. Is this performer an actor or an instrumentalist?

An actor sings. Is it acting or singing?

A drummer plays in an expressive manner, emphasizing the strokes with visually exaggerated movements. Is it drumming or dancing?

A flamenco dancer forcefully plays the floor with their steps. The group's guitarist takes their rhythmic cues from the dancer. Is the dancer a drummer?

Why are hybrids like these important? They are examples and proof of how forms of creative expression do not yield to rigid disciplinary borders. It is perhaps the easiest to see in the performing arts, in the ease that dancing, acting, storytelling, singing and playing instruments flow into each other. Practice speaks of unity; our disciplinary “conceptology”, with its Hellenist roots, cannot fathom this, except by building yet another Tower of Babel, a total system, the opposite of the freedom it is supposed to grasp.

That's a basic issue: trying to grasp freedom in order to understand it. It seems there is a Heisenbergian principle at play. The firmer the grasp, the less that grasp can comprehend the freedom it tries to understand.

The problem resides in language. Definition-concepts are a control mechanism. The traffic is one-way, that is, oppressive.

The solution is to let go of the need for control. The language that speaks of a fluid unity should not define and conquer the matter discussed, it should express it. It is a servant instead of an emperor, and through serving, unifies in a way that is beyond the reach of the conceptual violence of Hellenism. It describes and names. The best kind of theory expresses what practice can be; and as practice is also expression, the two are in dialogue and the flow continues. This kind of theory fuels practice because it is its servant and friend.

I believe in-between (or hybrid) forms of creative expression are going to gain momentum. We are already seeing this, but it will grow significantly.

It isn't just about the concept of music. When that issue is addressed, other divisions of the same nature are put in question, too: the dogmatic, abstract, fiat divisions that *hinder* practice and are not practice-derived. The concept of music is like a mother of all dogmas. When it falls, the others will follow suit.

*Without music #7: the creativity of all people: a Reformation*

What we believe about creativity concerns much more than just the area of culture and the arts.

If every human being is creative, our beliefs concerning creativity concern all humankind!

If we think that creativity belongs only to 'the culture sector', 'the creatives' or so on, we are segregating. Creativity is oppressed by such limitation and the 'non-creative' world is deprived of what they need.

If everyone is creative, creative expression doesn't only belong to 'the creative class'. If everyone is creative, creativity is a connector, a basis for a network of togetherness spanning all of human life.

Creativity in the arts needn't be disconnected by any qualitative judgment from creativity in government, business, or health care.

Separating the creative and the non-creative has created a priesthood of art. Art is 'sacred', and the laity takes care of the 'secular.' Various educational and institutional processes determine who is a 'priest' of art.

A Reformation is needed. Just like the Protestant Reformation reminded Christendom of the priesthood of all believers, humanity needs to be reminded of the creativity of all people. You do not need to submit to the Religion of Art and go through its hoops. You are creative, and you can apply your creativity in your sphere of influence. Whether it is called art or not is irrelevant; that is merely a 'theological' debate within the "Religion of Art" and has nothing to do with life.

This Reformation starts with language. When definition-concepts are not used, the divide between music and non-music becomes impossible to maintain. As

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a consequence, other divides of the same nature also begin to fall off: no more art, no more non-art. Creativity begins to flow more freely in all areas of life, no longer confined by dogmatic barriers.

This is the opposite of Wagner's vision of the total reign of the Hellenic Religion of Universal Manhood. A non-dogmatic togetherness is not a global uniformity that has defined problems away by forcing everybody under the same dogmatic doctrine. Instead, it is problematic, uneven, in process, in agreement and disagreement, requiring translation, but in all this – connected.

Since World War II, the Redefiner attitude has kept visions like Wagner's at bay. But this is not stable. As the population of the world grows, and its technological connectedness increases, the situation becomes more unstable. Mere redefining is not sufficient. The root needs to be addressed.



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## 9 Töölönlahti: A Parable in Landscape

### *Plan A: a soundwalk concert*

The artistic component of this dissertation began as a plan for an outdoor performance. This felt like a natural path to take because of earlier projects. In 2008 and 2010, I composed and organized outdoor concerts that the audience experienced by walking through them – soundwalk concerts. In addition to these, in 2011 I was part of the team producing Simo Alitalo’s large scale project, The Aura River Symphony, a massive performance that took over a five-kilometer stretch along the river Aura in Turku, Finland, with ships, boats, church bells, a cannon, and over eighty winds and percussion players. The audience could experience the work by moving within the area.

For me, the central feature of this kind of work is the meeting of two types of activity: intentional and unintended. The activity planned and intended by the composer meets the activity that happens in the environment regardless of the composer’s intentions and plans. A third kind may also arise: reactions of the environment to the composed events.

It is a meeting, a relationship.

I wanted to offer an experience where that relationship could be felt in different ways, along a route that visited key locations in the Töölönlahti area.

In 2013, I put together a plan for a soundwalk concert:



Illustration: Pessi Parviainen

The planned event turned out to be too big and expensive: the budget exceeded ten thousand euros. I didn't succeed in securing the funds for this. And even if I had, it would have been pretty risky in terms of weather: there would have been only one performance, on a pre-set date, rain or shine.

I found myself planning something too big, like the grandiose designs for Töölönlahti that many had tried before!

I made the same mistake, or met some of the same obstacles, as architects and urban planners before me – even though my design was only for a one-day event, not for the long term use and shape of the whole area.

The plan contained, however, the seed for something feasible. I wanted to have the event documented well on video. I had included a team for this in the budget. It wasn't a long stretch, then, to consider the possibility of doing the project entirely on video, to begin with.

*Plan B: an essay film*

The essay film, as a form, had already fascinated me. In a Toronto International Film Festival screening in 2010 I had seen some (by Harun Farocki and Georges Franju), and I was thrilled by how it was an audiovisual version of how W.G. Sebald wrote. Sebald's *Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz* are some of my long-time favourites. Without any of the baroque of magical realism, Sebald points to things in an unassuming way that reveals an everyday sublime of complexity, sparking an awe, a fascination of how life exceeds our capacity to encircle it with our comprehension. It is an intellectual version of what the stars are for the visual sense: I can go out and see them, but they are too numerous for me to count. Sebald entices the mind by describing the possibility of connection between seemingly disparate things, without making a doctrine, without explanation, without superiority; there is merely the notion, only the raw facts that resonate at their corners, linking there and forming a larger area, now an area of a mysterious meaning. Maybe that is the key: admitting mystery without renouncing meaning, the tension of wanting to know combined with the inability to fully grasp the direction of that desire.

In an act of adaptation, I downsized to something I could manage, and decided I would make an essay film about the Töölönlahti area, the key ingredient being different meetings between instrumentalists and the environment. This was much more feasible than the live event.

In 2014, I took a course on the genre of essay film at Aalto University's Film School (ELO). It was taught by professor emeritus of Documentary Filmmaking

Kanerva Cederström. She had made an essay film about Töölönlahti (*Paikan henki*, 1986) – something I did not know before the course.

The course was extremely fascinating. I became rather excited about the genre. Among the most stimulating films watched during the course was *Patience (After Sebald)*, directed by Grant Gee. It is based on Sebald's *Rings of Saturn*, one of my all-time favourite novels.

So it began to be clear that, in the fairly obscure genre of essay film, my current pursuit came together with some old favorites. I realized that a film I had liked a lot, Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard* (1996), could be described as an essay. I believe it could also be discussed as an example of artistic research. Pacino's original passion was to produce the play as a feature film, but ended up making something else<sup>284</sup>. *Looking for Richard* is not a straight-forward filmatization of *Richard III* the play. Pacino says something to that effect in the film itself, in a scene called The Quest:

*It has always been a dream of mine to communicate how I feel about Shakespeare to other people. So, I asked my friend Frederick Kimball, who is an actor and writer, and also our colleagues, Michael Hadge, and James Bullet, to join me, and by taking this one play, Richard III, analyzing it, approaching it from different angles, putting on costumes, playing out scenes, we could communicate both our passion of it, and our understanding that we've come to; and in doing that, communicate a Shakespeare that is about how we feel and how we think today. ... Now that is the effort we're going to give it here.*<sup>285</sup>

'Approaching it from different angles' meant interviewing Shakespeare scholars, actors, as well as people on the street (some of whom couldn't care less about Shakespeare), and various workshop moments, where Pacino and his team work on the material.

This is not simply a documentary, this is a "hybrid" form that expresses and communicates, a work that involves research and presents its own process.

284 "Looking for Richard (1996) – Trivia – IMDb," IMDb, accessed July 13, 2019, [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0116913/trivia?ref\\_=tt\\_trv\\_trv](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0116913/trivia?ref_=tt_trv_trv).

285 *Looking for Richard*, directed by Al Pacino (Chal Productions, Jam Productions, Twentieth Century Fox Corporation, 1996), DVD.





The pedestrian bridge over the railway, near Töölönlähti. Photo: Pessi Parviainen



Test shoot site somewhere in the woods of Hyljelahti, Espoo. Photo: Pessi Parviainen

In my own process, the first step was choosing the format. For sound, I was interested in 5.1 surround. Recording instrumentalists in dialogue with their environment would seem to call for that.

The Department of Lighting and Sound Design (VÄS) has a Soundfield SPS200 microphone for surround sound recording. In March – April 2014, I did two test shoots, one in the Töölönlahti area, one in a forested area in Espoo (near to where I lived at the time). The test shoot setup included a Canon dSLR camera (5D mark II or 7D), the Soundfield microphone, and a Sound Devices 788T recorder.

The shoots went well, but using the Soundfield material turned out to be difficult. The four tracks needed to be reformatted in ProTools, using Soundfield's dedicated plugin, into a 5.1 format. This I managed to do; but the next step proved to be too challenging. Despite repeated attempts, I didn't succeed in authoring a Bluray disc (in Adobe Encore) with the 5.1 audio. Sometimes the outcome was a stereo disc, other times the tracks were suddenly out of sync. I eventually concluded that producing a movie with surround sound was a task too impractical, at least for my one-man team.

I decided to use a binaural microphone (Soundman OKM), wherever possible, to capture location sound. That way there would be a "surround" experience available, at least for the viewer with headphones.

I began shooting material for *Töölönlahti: a Parable in Landscape* in August 2014. This went on until August 2017, when the last main shooting session was done (drone videography by Janne Ketola and Andree Pölluäär of Summit Media Oy). Additionally, during 2014 I discussed with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra if I could come and shoot the orchestra tuning up. I was hoping to have this in the opening sequence. The representative of the Orchestra was very helpful, and arranged for me to have their own video documentation (which they have because they stream many concerts anyway). I ended up having a multi-camera shot of the Orchestra tuning up at the beginning of a recent concert!

The aforementioned 'key ingredient', instrumentalists meeting with their environment, is featured in six different locations: contrabassist Ulf Krokfors in Villa Kivi, percussionist Simo Hostikka on a pedestrian bridge over railroad tracks, kantele player Juulia Pölönen in Hotel Scandic, overlooking the bay, and myself

in three locations (on the water using a SUP board and a guitar; in the Eläintarha Villa playing the on-site spinet; and in the Finlandia Hall playing alto clarinet).

There was one directive: to improvise *in* and *with* the environment, relating to it somehow. Each of these shoots turned out to be different. The player-environment relationships were unique. Four of them took place indoors, and only in one of these the outdoor sound was brought in: at Hotel Scandic, I opened the window of the room, so Juulia could converse with and comment on the street sounds with her kantele. At the other indoor locations – Villa Kivi, the Eläintarha Villa, and Finlandia Hall – there weren't significant outdoor sounds, so the improvisations were more simply solos, rather than duets with other soundmakers. In these cases, I saw the relationship of the improviser and their environment as something more indirect and poetic, having to do with acoustic and visual factors, as well as history: Villa Kivi is a prominent site in the history of Finnish literature, the Eläintarha Villa features a bourgeois home museum, and Finlandia Hall has been the site of many historic events, among them the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in 1975.

The two outdoor improvisations feature environmental sounds more prominently. The pedestrian bridge scene with Simo Hostikka, particularly, was set up as a 'dialogue' between the drummer and the trains. The initial idea came from Finnish drummer slang – *junakomppi* means a "train beat", imitating a railroad rhythm (one example of this beat would be steady eighths on a snare drum in 4/4, emphasizing the third, fourth, seventh and eighth notes; "xxXX xxXX", where x=lower volume and X=higher volume).

The stand-up paddleboard (SUP) scene was shot with a GoPro camera, housed within a waterproof casing. I played flamenco-type rasgueados in order to make a sound loud enough to be recorded through the casing. The sounds of the environment weren't recorded very well, but the waves hitting the board gave a prominent percussive sound, in retrospect somewhat reminiscent of flamenco clapping or dancing. I did not expect this 'conversation' with the waves; it was a pleasant surprise.

These interventions, particularly the outdoor ones, could perhaps be seen as what Jean-Paul Thibaud calls "sonic reterritorialization" of the urban space, "in the sense that sonic urban occurrences are recomposed in terms of musical

dynamics.”<sup>286</sup> Thibaud writes this in the context of the urban pedestrian using a Walkman, balancing the volumes of the foreground and background sounds – the Walkman sounds and the cityscape around them. Playing an instrument out loud is a different situation, of course. But perhaps the instrumental interventions, issuing their comments in the public, not in the privacy of headphones, are doing a similar thing (the public, here, means predominantly the viewers of the film; not many people witnessed the actual shoots). Taking part in an acoustic dialogue, the player is not a powerless subject, but active in shaping the moment; and with unamplified sound, the effect is not overpowering either.

In search for archival material for the film, I researched the archives of the National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI) in 2015, in hopes of finding archival footage depicting the Töölönlahti area in the past. There was a lot – dozens of hours, in fact; but most of it was from the CSCE conference in 1975. Eventually I narrowed down to newsreels and some key speeches from the CSCE. The Institute was very helpful and kindly provided the files for me.

Besides the improvisations and finding archival materials, I kept shooting around Töölönlahti, documenting different seasons and various events. Over the years, the material grew abundant, and coming up with an edit that had a viewer-friendly duration was going to be challenging. I wanted to keep it under an hour.

### *The process*

I began the work without any idea for a script. I only had three scene categories in mind:

1. instrumentalists within the landscape;
2. other events and everyday happenings of the area; and
3. archival material of the unrealized urban plans, as well as other historical material.

Weaving these three together was the basic plan. By simply juxtaposing these in montage, I hoped to lead the viewer to ponder the various approaches to the urban landscape, from grand schemes to simple improvisations. I enjoyed think-

286 Jean-Paul Thibaud, “The sonic composition of the city,” in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, eds. Michael Bull and Les Back (Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers, 2003), 334.

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ing about it like a “tag cloud”: a Sebaldian presentation of a variety of things, somehow linked, mysteriously meaningful but without trying to give the viewer an overall explanation.

But even with a “non-linear” approach like this, the linear single-channel format that I had chosen required me to figure out some kind of a script. I did have a seed for it: from early on, I took the landscape of Töölönlahti to be parabolic. It is like an orchestra, that has never got to play the symphonies written for it, because these grand plans have been impossible to play. It embodies the problem of the total work of art (in the Gesamtkunstwerk sense, at least): human planning that is detached (abstracted) from reality can not be realized. This is of course not the case for *every* urban plan devised for the Töölönlahti area, and I have no grounds to make the claim that the urban planners in question suffered from a Wagnerian hubris. But for various reasons, no complete plan has been realized, and the landscape is, as a result, a patchwork of sorts. It can be said that it embodies the failure of impractical planning.

I felt I needed a good deal of material before I could begin to think about any through-line for the film. With this as my excuse, I kept accumulating material, until I knew that I would be in trouble if I didn’t do something about the script. I took screen captures of every shot, printed them out (four per page), and looked at them. Eventually I came up with an alternating structure. “Playing” scenes would alternate with “other” scenes, hopefully giving each instrumental improvisation scene some breathing space around it.



The plan changed little from the first draft until the finalized edit.

Here is the basic structure of the finished product:

*TRAIN ARRIVES*

*THE ORCHESTRA*

*THE MUSEUM OF  
FINNISH ARCHITECTURE*

*KUMPULA POOL*

*VILLA KIVI  
(CONTRABASSIST ULF KROKFORS)*

*FINLANDIA SURVEYS (1960s NEWSREELS)*

*STAND-UP PADDLE BOARDING  
(GUITAR)*

*THE MOONLIGHT SWIM*

*TÖÖLÖNLAHTI UNDERWATER  
PRESIDENT KEKKONEN MONUMENT (POOL)*

*CSCE 1975 (ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE)*

*THE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE  
(DRUMMER SIMO HOSTIKKA)*

*HELSINKI DAY (LINNUNLAULU VILLAS)*

*THE BOURGEOIS HOME MUSEUM  
(OUT-OF-TUNE SPINET)*

*LINNANMÄKI AMUSEMENT PARK (FERRIS WHEEL)*

*SCANDIC PARK HELSINKI (HOTEL)  
(KANTELE PLAYER JUULIA PÖLÖNEN)*

*LUNAR ECLIPSE*

*FINLANDIA HALL  
(ALTO CLARINET)*

*PRESIDENT OF THE  
USA GERALD FORD'S ADDRESS AT THE  
CSCE 1975, REPRISE (MIRROR EFFECT LANDSCAPE)*

*END CREDITS*

*The soundtrack*

I did not think in terms of location sound vs. score, or “non-music” and “music”. I simply thought in terms of composing the stereo track that would be heard as the film is viewed.<sup>287</sup> Sound artist and researcher Petri Kuljuntausta writes of a similar approach in the context of composing soundtracks for experimental films. Kuljuntausta does distinguish “music” from (other) “sounds” on basis of tonal content (consisting of tones), but in the case of a soundtrack this is not meaningful to him, tones and other sounds are simply different means to the same end. What matters in the end is the whole of the audiovisual composition in question.<sup>288</sup>

Musicologist Susanna Välimäki describes the same situation: in contemporary film the guiding principles are more holistic than in traditional filmmaking. The soundtrack is considered as a whole, as an undivided sonic tapestry, “single enveloping sound texture”, as Välimäki calls it (citing Kevin Donnelly). Different parts of the soundtrack are in service of the meaning-giving of the film. The developments in audio technology, especially the arrival of digital tools (of both production and presentation), have contributed to a more unified aesthetic.<sup>289</sup>

It would seem that the film soundtrack is an area where it would be particularly useful to have a discourse unhindered by the useless concept of music. Sound designers and composers are both working to form the audible aspect of the film. What sense does it make to categorize the work of the former as “sound effects” and the work of the latter as “music”, all the more as today both may be working with the same tools – sample libraries and digital audio workstations?

In the documentary short *The Sound and Music of the Dark Knight Rises* composer Hans Zimmer and sound designer Richard King discuss their collaboration in the finale of the Batman trilogy directed by Christopher Nolan. Zimmer emphasizes the closeness of the collaboration: “[...] we work in a very different way than other people... Richard and I work really closely together. [...] Richard,

287 Keeping in mind the compositional strategy of juxtaposing intended and unintended events, perhaps it would have been pertinent to think of this even in the case of screening the finished film. But I didn't go as far as presuming any sounds coming from the audience, such as coughing or whatever. I am assuming that the viewers will most likely be quiet, not participating in the heard aspect of the film screening experience.

288 Petri Kuljuntausta, *Äänen eXtreme* (Helsinki: Like Kustannus, 2006), 356.

289 Susanna Välimäki, *Miten sota soi? Sotaelokuva, ääni ja musiikki* (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2008), 33 – 34.



Mel [Wesson] and I were forever crossing the lines of, you know, what's sound effects and what is music."

King says that he loves working with Zimmer "[...] because he approaches music in a similar way... the way I approach sound effects. Everything's music to him, all sound is music."<sup>290</sup>

It seems clear that Zimmer and King are not really making a philosophical statement here, they are discussing their practice, the closeness of their departments, and their very successful collaboration. But even in these few words, it is possible to see the problem that the concept of music inevitably brings with itself: the equality of music and sound is not real. Sound designers are not listed as composers, and we don't hear composers saying that their job is to make sound effects.

This matter has been discussed in previous chapters. May this fragment of recent film history highlight our dire need for a new parlance, free from the dogmatic constraints that the concept of music inevitably brings. Film and other inherently "multidisciplinary" forms of expression are the first to benefit from a renewed discourse. The words of Zimmer and King point to something that's been a fact for a while: practice has been already enjoying a measure of freedom. Let the tongue follow.

### *Final stages*

Once the edit was nearing completion, I began working on the copyright and permission matters. I had kept these in mind all along, but even with that, figuring out what permissions I needed to have turned out to be quite laborious. Archival footage, shots that feature any artwork or a private home, any audio track that contained a copyrighted song – all of these required specific permissions. On the top of that, the EU legislation concerning privacy of data changed during the process, and I had to figure out how the new GDPR regulation might affect my film project. The help of Senior Legal Counsel Maria Reh binder and her assistant Mari Pesola (at Aalto University) was absolutely crucial at this point.

The finished film was premiered on 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, 2019, in Kino Regina, the movie theatre and auditorium of the new Central Library of Helsinki, Oodi ("Ode").

290 *The Sound and Music of The Dark Knight Rises*, produced by Michael Coleman (USA: Soundworks Collection, 2012), <https://soundworkscollection.com/post/darkknighttrises>.

The library was built at the same time as the film was made, and is located only 400 meters away from the shores of Töölönlahti.

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## APPENDIX 1:

**Töölölahti: A Parable in Landscape  
Credits**

Camera, sound & montage	Pessi Parviainen
Drone videography	Janne Ketola & Andree Pölluäär / Summit Media Oy
Archival materials	KAVI / National Audiovisual Institute Ulkomministeriö / Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Videography of The Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra provided by The Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra (filmed in 2014 at Musiikkitalo - The Helsinki Music Centre)

Additional GoPro videography	Harri Savolainen
Contrabass	Ulf Krokfors
Snare drum	Simo Hostikka
Kantele	Juulia Pölönen
Guitar, spinetti, alto clarinet	Pessi Parviainen
Eino Leino	Kari Jagt
Maila Talvio / L.Onerva	Sofia Koski

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Hakuna Matata SUP Rentals

Scandic Park Helsinki  
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Antti Schroderus  
Seija Suontausta  
Micke Lilja  
Harri Savolainen  
Kanerva Cederström  
Tapio Piirainen

Maria Rehbinder  
Mari Pesola

*"Tölviks improvisation 2"*  
Composed and performed by Ulf Krokfors

*"Töölönlahti-suunnitelmat";*  
*"Töölönlahden kuutamouinti";*  
*"Töölönlahti-improvisaatio: Eläintarhan huvila";*  
*"Töölönlahti-improvisaatio: Finlandia-talo";*  
*"A Parable in Landscape: end credits"*  
Composed and performed by Pessi Parviainen

*"Sitten (Töölönlahti-versio)"*  
Composed by Pessi Parviainen  
Performed by Pessi Parviainen (el.g., synth., prog.) and Juulia Pölönen  
(kantele)

*"Linnunlaulun Bossa Nova"*  
Composed by Pessi Parviainen  
Performed by Pessi Parviainen (g) and Markku Syrjälä (fl)

Production: Taideyliopiston Teatterikorkeakoulu 2019





What is music?

Philosophers have pondered this question for centuries.

In his thesis *When Nothing is Called Music: Towards Ecological Composition* Pessi Parviainen makes a radical proposition: what if we called nothing music? How would the change affect our understanding and our practices?

A non-dogmatic discourse without 'music' would align better with practice. It would also open up unprecedented possibilities for synergy between areas of culture and society. Parviainen finds grounds for this proposition in artistic practice, philosophy of language and history. He presents an unusual version of the conceptual history of music, following the path of the word throughout time. The dogmatism of the word and concept 'music' is revealed as a surprisingly severe ethical problem.



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