Sound Art and the Annihilation of Sound

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PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
SUMMARY

This thesis describes the way in which sound is taken up and subsequently suppressed within the visual arts. The idealisation and development of sound as a plastic material is able to be traced within the modernist trajectory, which, reflecting a set of cultural practices and having developed its own specific terminologies, comes to regard any material, or anything conceived of as material, as appropriate and adequate to the expression of its distinctive and guiding concepts and metaphors. These concepts and metaphors are discussed as already having at their bases strongly visualist biases, the genealogies of which are traced within traditional or formal philosophies. Here, the marginalising tendency of ocularcentrism is exposed, but the very nature and contingency of marginalisation is found to work for the sound artist (where the perpetuation of the mythologised ‘outsider’ figure is desired) but against sound which is positioned in a purely differential and negative relation. In this epistemological and ontological reduction, sound becomes simply a visual metaphor or metonymic contraction which forecloses the possibility of producing other ways of articulating its experience or of producing any markedly alternative ‘readings’. Rather than simply attempting to reverse the hierarchisation of the visual over the aural, or of prefacing sound within a range of artistic practices (each which would keep the negative tradition going) sound’s ambiguous relation to the binarism of presence/absence, system and margin, is, however oddly, elaborated. The strategy which attempts to suspend sound primarily within and under the mark of the concept is interrogated and its limits exposed. The sound artist, the ‘margin surfer’ is revealed as a perhaps deeply conservative figure who may in the end desire the suppression of sound, and who, actually rejecting any destabilising and threatening notion of ‘radical alterity’, anxiously clings to the ‘marginalised’ modernist pretence. It is the main contention of the thesis that the marginalisation of sound obscures the more pressing question of its ambiguous relation to notions of sameness and difference, and that its conceptualisation suppresses the question of the ethical. That the ethical question should (and anyway does) take ‘precedence’ over purely epistemological and ontological considerations, and that more genuinely open attitudes should be assumed with respect to sound studies are forwarded in this thesis.
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Declaration

I, Shaun Davies, declare that the following thesis *SOUND ART AND THE ANNIHILATION OF SOUND* has neither in whole nor part been submitted for a higher degree to any other institution.
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Introduction

Background

The entrance of sound, both heard and unheard, into the plastic arts heralded nothing less than a new beginning. In this beginning was the word, the spoken word, ambient sound, noise, music and silence; all allowed artists to transform the visual arts into a new and third realm. In this realm, compounded in the artist's mind of physical and metaphysical reality, the once discrete, static relation among artist, art object and viewer began to quiver and resound. The artist, once merely a craftsman, became a creator.¹

But:

Often the [avant-garde] attack on the status quo, the hegemony of bourgeois culture, merely resulted in what Peter Bürger has suggested is a 'renewing of the stereotypes'. Too often the works of contemporary artists, including those using audio technology, have capitulated to the production of discrete objects for exhibition and sale in the conventional manner associated with the dealer gallery system and its surrogates. This, or the aggrandisement of the artist's persona-as-star; the result is the same... An 'alternative,' which many audio and intermedia artists have intentionally adopted as a quasi-critical strategy, is the role enactment of the marginal...'outsider' figure. This role...ultimately reproduces the mid-nineteenth century ideologies subsumed within its sphere—identity(ies)—of the alienated artist figure.²

The aim of this thesis is to problematise the underpinning conceptions driving the burgeoning interest in sound arts practices and theories, and to challenge the notion of the marginality of this disparate set of activities. I wish to scrutinise the configuration of the sound artist as an 'alienated' and 'marginal' persona, and to emphasise how significantly natural and representationalist philosophies have borne upon the formulation of, and the arrival on the visual arts scene (the '...entrance of sound...into the plastic arts...') of the sound art 'object'. This is not to say that marginalisation does not take place, but that this architectonics is from the outset determined by the reduction, representation and reification of sound as an ideal, 'sculptable' material.

¹ Suzanne Delehanty, 'Soundings' in Sound By Artists. Eds. Dan Lander and Micah Lexier, Art Metropole (Toronto) and Walter Phillips Gallery (Banff), Canada, 1990, p36
² Bruce Barber, 'Radio: Audio Art's Frightful Parent', Sound By Artists. p124
The statement 'audio art [is] an activity arising out of visual arts practice...in which aural and visual realms are interdependently linked'\(^3\) reflects the perhaps more accurate proposition that the process of marginalisation takes place from within the ambit of visual arts practices, and that sound art is not actually an 'external' activity which has somehow sought 'entrance...both heard and unheard' into it. The musicologist Toshio Kakinuma concurs on this point:

Visual artists such as sculptors, designers, and light artists, as well as musicians, performers, improvisers and sound engineers are paying attention to sounds in their individual contexts. They did not necessarily start out intending to produce sounds, but rather have come across sound while they were working in their own field.\(^4\)

Others would argue that sound art already has a set of historical precedents dispersed over an number of disciplines, but with more recent developments able to be 'plotted within the trajectory of modernism'\(^5\). Sound art, in other words, has arisen both as a discrete set of practices around which specific codes and terminologies and modes of critical address have been organised (Douglas Kahn, for example, has argued for an 'epistemology' of sound, one 'less laden with visual clutter', and for this to be developed through 'discursive practices'\(^6\)), and in the postmodern sense where sound, as one of a number of given mediums, is co-opted into a broader set of 'cultural' practices. Rosalind Krauss has described this latter situation clearly\(^7\), pointing out that 'practice' is, in postmodernism, 'not defined in relation to a given medium...but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium...might be used'\(^8\). But either way, if, as the opening quote states, sound allows 'artists to transform the visual arts into a new and third realm' (beyond the 'visual clutter')... then the suppression and surpassing of a 'prior' realm is perhaps also being suggested. The construction of a 'third realm' or an 'epistemology' depends upon the conception of sound as having been somehow prior, original ('in this beginning was the word...') 'external' to, or prophesying it. It requires a conception of sound as having been at some time fully or ahistorically present, or existing as some kind of given sensible

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\(^{3}\) Daina Augaitis, 'As Told To: structures for conversation', *Sound By Artists*, p147


\(^{5}\) Colin Hood, editorial, *WEST (N° 5): Sound Cultures*. p2

\(^{6}\) 'Vibration, Inscription, Mostly Transmission', *WEST (N° 5): Sound Cultures*. p19

\(^{7}\) Referring to a type of art criticism 'still in the thrall of a modernist ethos' and suspicious 'of a career that moves continually and erratically beyond [its 'given' medium]' Krauss posits that this anxiety is the product of 'the modernist demand for the purity and separateness of the various mediums (and thus the necessary specialisation of a practitioner within a given medium). 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. The MIT Press, 1991. p288

\(^{8}\) ibid., p288
material—'sound itself'\(^9\)—again which falls squarely within the limits of the demands of modernism/postmodernism. Constructed as an ideal, conceptual object or given medium, sound is both able to be sublated and surpassed.

This same kind of movement through and over sound exists in some major strands of Western philosophy, so often those preoccupied with the attainment to ontologically or axiologically derived notions of truth. Here, sound is constructed as a necessary and binary 'other', exterior to reason, and to that extent an object of cognition of one form or another. In the opening quote, the heralding of a 'third realm' applies almost exclusively to the cognitive realm of the artist, who, once having existed as a 'mere craftsman' under a form of tutelage of some sort, now becomes an emancipated God-like 'creator'. Any proposition coming to regard the study of sound as radically and absolutely different from these conceptual or cognitive models ('prior', 'present', 'original', 'objective', 'material', and so on) suggests difficult and complex though interesting possibilities, and perhaps real (possibly utopian) alternatives for the development of sound theories and practices. It would also pose a quite serious threat to the 'quivering' stability of the new, 'resounding' relations existing among artist, art object and viewer. What I do not wish to do is re- or overstate the vagaries of the modern/postmodern debate, but to try to identify the possibility of 'thinking' sound in a perhaps quite radically different way. This however, often necessitates making reference to the treatment with which sound has been received within the sphere of influence of modernism as a whole, and with which it has been suppressed or cognised in the traditional philosophies of the West.

Sound art as it appears in the visual arts scene today often only seems to do so as something of an eccentricity, an experiment involving the prefacing or substitution of sensible 'forms'. But this in itself is perhaps only the reiteration and extension of the same old grand narratives of Western, visual arts discourse and representational philosophies. Sound arts practitioners very rarely attempt serious examination of the historical, philosophical conditions which inform and determine their practices (as evident in the construction of such terms as 'sound object', 'sound sculpture', 'sound architecture', and so on\(^{10}\) or the nature or conception of materiality generally:

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\(^9\) Kakinuma, 'Audio Art in Japan', op. cit., p7

\(^{10}\) By way of example, the sound artist/composer Ros Bandt, invoking a figure/ground, painting simile, says: '[Filtration is] your palette, from which you design...That's your business as a composer...to comb the sounds that you want into position. ... Silence is the right to have a fabric of space, an open canvas upon which you can place sounds creatively, where you have the opportunity to have as much contrast as you would wish, between the position of sound and not-sound. And for me it is rather like an open canvas upon which you decide to fill up to greater or lesser degrees.' Arts National. Radio National, ABC Radio, 16/8/94.
The artist’s assumption rests with the idea of sound as matter, that “sounds have physical properties defined by the volume, direction and form, which suggests an equivalency to formal visual constructs.”

If sound art has become only an aberration in the history and development of the visual arts, and its continued development is both anticipated and considered necessary, it would therefore also be necessary to attempt an expropriation of sound from its displacement in the margins of the visual, where, I feel, its potential is being stifled. From the outset, however, a note of caution should be sounded out: the very idea of expropriation itself implies the possibility of effecting a simple situational, hegemonic reversal of some kind. To construct an ‘epistemology’ of sound implies the construction of, or organisation of its knowledge (sound architectonics). The object of knowledge, where traditional philosophy is concerned, is truth, and the objects of cognition are, generally speaking, those which ‘endure’. Metaphysical correspondence theories of truth make the world of knowable or intelligible objects adequate to the world of ideas. Hegel, for example, considered that truth was able to be gained through a dialectical process, a process of reflection which compelled the philosopher toward truth’s revelation, ‘in a unitary dynamic which reveals what is ‘true’ only in the progressive emergence of the notion of truth itself’. For Hegel, moreover, these intelligible objects had to be perceived as ‘stable things’. A reversal of the hierarchical relations existing between sound and vision would therefore require a belief in either the priority, originality or actual presence of sound, or in the potential for elevating it to a superior, more enduring status, at least to the perceived stable level of any visual object. But this very belief may simply only reflect certain visualist or conceptualist ideologies, and may in any case prove impossible to realise. To effect a simple reversal of sound over the visual, in other words, would mean that some truth value, or some reliable propensity would need to be ascribed to sound. What if this were in the end to prove impossible? What if it

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11 Augaitis, ‘As Told To: structures for conversation’, op. cit., p159
12 ‘...sound art awaits further exploration.’ Kakinuma, ‘Audio Art in Japan’, op. cit., p7
13 ‘Philosophers have always wished to think of creation in ontological terms, that is, in function of a preexisting and indestructible matter.’ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*. Trans. A. Lingis, Kluwer Academic Publishers, The Hague, Netherlands, 1974, p110
15 ibid., p22
16 ‘Within the discursive space of modernist art, the putative opacity of the pictorial field must be maintained as a fundamental concept. For it is the bedrock on which a whole structure of related terms can be built. All those terms—singularity, authenticity, uniqueness, originality, original—depend on the originary moment of which this surface is both the empirical and the semiological instance’. Krauss, ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’, op. cit., p161
simply didn’t matter that sound was unable to yield the truth up? As Nietzsche says: “Suppose we want truth: why not rather untruth? and uncertainty? even ignorance?”[17]

On a more positive note, however, to be able to develop sound art ‘theories’ beyond the levels to which they currently aspire, or with a different orientation and emphasis, does seem possible. Sound’s philosophical development, for instance (the complexity of which is explored in later sections of this thesis), has by far exceeded the detail of its development in the visual arts—which is not to suggest that this philosophical development is not in itself problematic, or that it has not perhaps foreclosed or thwarted the possibility of other more interesting developments taking place. In analysing various philosophical models of sound, some of the gaps and confluences which exist between art and philosophy will be pointed out, but along with the suggestion that where these gaps exist they may well prove the more interesting places from which productive and imaginative thinking around sound art may spring.

It should also be stated from the very beginning that a full and detailed outline and analysis of the philosophies in question is not intended. It is hoped, however, that while some main philosophical themes are discussed and focused on, the suppressive movements regarding sound which inhere in them are also made explicit.

General

And so was born the concept of sound as a thing in itself, distinct and independent of life...Sound, alien to our life, always musical and a thing unto itself.[18]

Within the sphere of the contemporary arts, sound has come to be regarded as a kind of temporal substance—a ‘sound object’[19]—and it is treated in an almost identical manner as any other extended, spatial or plastic object. The paradoxical concept ‘sound object’ or

Nietzsche, however was actually concerned with overcoming ‘supreme’ truth (morally determined truth) which the true individual, or the individual who ‘wills’ his own truth or power, can not come to determine. In that sense, he is not against truth as such, just one (i.e. conceptual and therefore ontological and teleological) sense of its determination


[19] Borrowing Christian Metz’s example in the essay ‘Aural Objects’ (Yale French Studies n° 60, 1980), Martin Harrison also resists the temptation to categorise sound into a ‘secondary’ level, where ‘The sound’s cause—or, rather, the thing of which it is an indicator—substitutes as a primary category of certainty and solidity over (or perhaps, more correctly, under and beyond) the phenomenon of sound itself.’ But this may also imply a necessity to prioritise sound as itself an ‘object’, one, indeed, which is itself primary. From ‘A Sound Culture’, WEST (N° 5): Sound Cultures, p51.
'sound icon'\textsuperscript{20}, as well as the general philosophical conception of 'presence' will be analysed in this thesis, along with a study of the development and bearing of the philosophical concept itself. This analysis may not only (and hopefully) impact on the dominant, often taken for granted contemporary arts notion of 'sound object', but also, perhaps, on the notion of conceptual objects more broadly speaking.

The conception of sound as something which bears a certain phenomenal presence provides the perfect conditions for its realisation as an inexhaustible material. But the transformation of sound into substance, both conceptually and materially, requires the maintenance of a general, philosophically determined conception of substance—'matter' or raw material—in the first place. Despite the fact of sound's errancy or vagrancy (a proposition which I will later extend) there has never been, within this schematics, a substance conceived of as being so replete with signification, or with the potential to yield up an abundance of 'surplus value'. Sound's evaporation, its instantaneous obsolescence, is here perfectly attuned to the economics of repetition or reiteration (mass production). But the possibility of repetition or 're-presentation' (as said in the wake of Husserlian phenomenology\textsuperscript{21}) is itself dependent upon retention of the concept of presence—a valorised philosophical conception against which sound does not comfortably conform. In the earlier history of Western thought, the objects of the world come to be understood as representations of a divine substance; what is in fact present is this divine being, and the passing show of phenomena pay testament to this presence. Ontology is in fact revealed to be a form of theology, and its evidence is gathered in the forms of sensible, intelligible and enduring objects. Enduring objects have ever since enjoyed a more significant status in Western thought generally, than, say genuinely temporal or historical phenomena such as sound. The contemporary sound arts, I will argue in this thesis, has struggled to apportion this same privileged status to sound instead of perhaps attempting to rethink the positive implications of this very errancy. What has generally resulted is the reaffirmation of the sound artist as 'creator' in a quasi-scientific guise, as a kind of speculative metaphysician or alchemist conferring materiality upon the immaterial, or as a church-bell-ringing priest-class reaffirming the (ironically unrecognised) ontological aspects of their 'researches' into sound\textsuperscript{22}.

\textsuperscript{20}The Performance Space, Australian Broadcasting Corporation and The University of Technology, Sydney, Impossible Objects Invisible Cities. SoundCulture 1991. Exhibition notes, p20
\textsuperscript{21} Notably Jacques Derrida, Speech and Phenomena And Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs. Trans. David Allison, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1973
\textsuperscript{22} Nigel Helyer's work is described thus: '[A] practice [having] a tri-partite structure composed of inter-penetrating elements drawn from a wide range of media, developed under the generic title "Sonic Objects; Sonic Architecture". ... These interests are described in the University of Sydney publication Phainesthai V1. No 1. as "... the comparison of metabolic and digital domains and how these have a bearing on concepts of memory, spatiality and temporality. Research was manifest as sculptural architectures which propagate sound."' The titles of some of Helyer's work include: "Ding-Ding-Dang-
Even with the shift in orientation of Western philosophy to the sphere of mind or pure thought (which is explored in the immediately following section), where sensation becomes disavowed, or where the sensuous, material world was no longer regarded as containing the possibility of yielding up 'truth', the principle of 'vision' became the dominant metonymic contraction of the \textit{a priori} structures of cognition. Sight was retained and valued as that sense most able to supply the means to this end ('truth' \textit{qua} vision), the sense most able to be charged with the cognitive principle, and most able to objectify and distance the subject from the knowable, sensible world. At around 500 B.C., and despite being mistrustful of sensual perception, the Eleatic philosopher Heraclitus said: 'Eyes are better informers than ears'\textsuperscript{23}. Around two hundred years later, Aristotle said:

\begin{quote}
Above all, we value sight; disregarding its practical uses, we prefer it, I believe, to every other sense, even when we have no material end in view. Why? Because sight is the principle source of knowledge and reveals many differences between one object and another.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

Arthur Schopenhauer, two thousand years later, reiterates the same theme:

\begin{quote}
Properly speaking, only two senses, touch and sight, are of use to objective perception. These alone supply the data, and on their foundation the understanding enables the objective world to come about... space is the form of all intuitive perception, i.e., of \textit{that} apprehension in which alone \textit{objects} can, properly speaking, present themselves... a blind man without hands and feet could construct for himself a priori \textit{space} in all its conformity to law, but he would gain only a very indistinct representation of the objective world.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

In post-Socratic philosophy, the subject, in a circuitous movement through the sensuous, material world, is refolded back into the transcendent sphere of subjective ideality. Being less concerned with the world of discrete, worldly entities (\textit{ta onta}) and more with

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conceptions of the truth of those entities\textsuperscript{26}, or their forms or essences (\textit{eidos}), the philosophical enterprise bypassed the necessity to ascribe the same value to the temporal, existential world as it did to the universal and the eternal world of the concept. An ancient Greek myth resurfaces throughout the philosophical history of the West: \textit{Odyssey}. Mind in these later philosophies, is the subject's ithaca, its point of departure and heroic return. Put in very simple terms, the illuminated eye, charged with the principle of vision (\textit{theoria: to gaze at}), ventures out into the sensuous world, discriminating 'between one object and another' and profitably returns to the place from whence it began. There, it finds itself elevated to the status of a transcendent 'I', a kind of Odyssean hero who has crossed the limits of the known, temporal world. The arrival upon the arts scene of the sound artist may simply be the re-enactment of this Odyssean journey, or at least the homecoming. The attempt to 're recuperate' sound art as a legitimate form of arts practice by accommodating or configuring it within the conceptual schematics of the visual arts may possibly only result in the further displacing of sound into the margins, and more completely thwart the development of more interesting (illegitimate) and radical alternatives for sound arts practice and theory. This may be both deliberate and accidental. If both sound and vision are considered valid only within the sphere of epistemology, then the reversal of sensory prefacing (from visual to sonic) may only prove to be an ironical replay of this same cognitive or conceptual process: the reaffirmation of the subjective 'I' \textit{par excellence}, the artist, and the broadening of the range of artist's materials and activities. If sound is considered to be not present (and therefore able to elude the conceptualising grasp) it is perceived as a threat to stability and order. It is then either completely suppressed, or more subtly prohibited by allowing its admission into an 'legitimate' set of discourses and practices. More broadly speaking, little else will have been achieved than the reiteration of an old philosophical theme—and in all probability, worst of all, in complete ignorance. In the eternal return of the eye—or of the ear reconfigured as an optical tool—nothing is ever actually risked. But problematising the notion of 'originality' and presence, however, may offer the possibility of exposing the negational manoeuvring used in philosophy and the visual arts to elevate their own speculative status.

Wherever vision has surpassed and repressed sound in order to maintain its own elevated status, it has done so by thematising sound as its shadowy, external (and ideal) 'other'. To conceive of sound as something fundamentally dissimilar, as such, is necessary in order for it to be differentiated, negated and sublated in a dialectical play-off. Nominated as 'other', sound is able to be incorporated into the speculative project. Phenomenology, in its desire to conceive of sound as the concrete or ideal experience of the present, may have provided another, more definitive means for this differentiation to take place. To challenge the notion

\textsuperscript{26} 'The history of Europe since Socrates has been the attempt to make the value of truth determinative for knowledge, human relations and the arts'. Weston, op. cit., p64
of sound conceived as ‘primary’—and therefore fully present—may offer the possibility of disrupting the maintenance of this upheld visualist systematics, as well as the possibility of a radical alternative for a sound arts practice. It may pave the way for an aesthetic, economic irrationalism.

It may perhaps seem ironical that in this thesis I do not fully support a simple reversal of the primacy of one sensation, one set of signs, over any other. To suggest an inversion of primary status of two senses, or the reversal of hierarchical relations between two sets of signs, would, I feel, be paradoxical and would achieve nothing in particular. The question of metaleptic substitution (placing a visual metonym of cognition over and against an aural one, but which presumes the very possibility of configuring an aural metonym of cognition in the first place) does not mean that by a simple inversion of these relations anything in particular will have been achieved, save for the mere prefacing or ‘surfacing’ of ‘sound’. If it were possible to remove the necessity of epistemology—the object of which is ontologically derived truth—then metonymic substitutions would become meaningless, and sound art may be given the possibility of ‘organising’ itself around radically alternative principles. If sound is able to be considered neither present nor absent, for instance, hovering placeless between presence and absence, then the very possibility of an initial metaleptic movement, let alone its reversal, would prove impossible. As said, sound must first be conceived of as potentially present, ideal as such, in order for it to be surpassed, absented or negated and sublated, or metaleptically substituted.

Spoken and heard language is the enticer of visual imagery and not the other way round. While visual models may be basic for our understanding ultimately I would argue that language is more basic and that language is first thought, spoken and listened to within the domain of auditory phenomena. ... My sub-thesis is that a very explicit form of thinking is an inner speech which I would like to call an auditory imagination. ...in a similar way my inner speech or auditory imagination has the “irreal” presence which is distinct from the language I hear from another through a hearing perception. 27

In the above conception, sound is differentiated from the visual, and so may be, ironically, sublated. It is also conceived of as ‘inner speech’ (logocentrism) but in much the same way as any ‘external’, presenting or represented object. Developing a notion of sound as somehow different, but which remains within the sphere of the concept, often leads into this paradox. Thinking of sound as an ‘object in its own right’ achieves nothing more than a capitulation to the grasp of the concept; constructing it as the shadowy ‘other’ of the visual sublates and suppresses it. Jill Robbins28, in her analysis of metaleptical displacement,

27 Iude, Sense and Significance, op. cit., pp32, 33
28 In Prodigal Son/Elder Brother. The University of Chicago Press, 1991
offers the possibility of working through these difficult problems. It is to her and others, such as the ethicist Emmanuel Levinas, that attention will be directed toward the end of this thesis.

The methods by which Hegel and Husserl developed the ideal status of sound in order to elevate the status of the visual will be looked into via Derrida's criticisms of their philosophies. As well, an analysis of Heidegger's hypothesis in Being and Time\textsuperscript{29} which regards sound and utterance as the means for attaining truth (\textit{alethia}) will be undertaken. Some of the detail of Heidegger's notion of \textit{abgrund}, the absolute ground/site of the appearance of truth, and the role of his conception of '\textit{phenomena}' in the overall development of his 'ontology' will also be analysed.

The development of philosophical thought concerning the presence and representation of objects is as drawn out as it is complex, vast in its influence—but able to be traced. In the following section the development of the notion of Being will be gauged in order to trace its influence on notions of sound, particularly within the field of sound/visual arts practice today. Other sets of histories do exist, however, which are more obscure or less well delineated, but which may be used to invigorate sound arts practice and its theoretical development. Examination of some of these more obscure areas, along with Robbins' hypothesis, and discussion of their possibilities in re-thinking sound art will be made.

Part One: Sound and Representation

Preliminary Remarks

A clear example of the conceptualisation of sound as ‘temporal material’ is given in Jacques Attali’s account. For Attali sound is the medium through which the codifications of a familial/state apparatus take place. As sound’s form is ‘grounded’ in temporality and is able to be recalled to memory and/or broadcasted, it is also, he says, able to be utilised in the construction and individuation of (false) consciousness. Consciousness, itself thought to be temporal in nature (and so therefore directly and ontologically corresponding to sound), is considered to be the perfect material for the creation of cognitive and social transformation. But this transformation requires the production of sonic material, and the configuration of the desiring subject (the creation of demand) in the first place. Recognising the potential of this desiring-production, Attali describes the sound which could create cognitive and social development as ‘channelised noise’, noise which although ‘violent’ ‘carries order within itself’.

Sound, for Attali, heralds the birth of a new kind of consciousness. This, however, represents the continuation of the theme ‘consciousness’ and therefore the ideality or absolute ground of a mode of self-presence. For Attali, sound’s ‘object’ status in some ways reflects and is reflected in the ontological status of the listener—the listening subject. Sound and listener are in this equation representations of each other. The listening subject, moreover, comes to understand its objects (which includes itself as its own object) as individuated, self-representing projections. In this schematics the subject is subjected, and sound, conceived of as either exterior or ‘interior’ in relation to the listening subject (the sound of the world, or of ‘oneself’), subjects. Self-subjection—listening to the ‘interior’ sound of a new consciousness—constitutes a form of auto-surveillance (auto-audition), albeit with the added ‘benefit’ of taking place in a utopian, ‘collective project of emancipation’.

But this investiture of sound into a utopian social dynamism involves, I would argue, something of an ontological leap: the transformation of the radically temporal into
‘something’ conceived of as present, modifiable, and repeatable (reproducible). It is the

31 Ibid., p26
32 Ibid., p33
33 Ibid., Introduction. pXiii
creation, as Attali says, of 'stockpilable sign production'. Two notions of originality are incorporated into this transformational process; firstly, where sound is considered to exist in the 'mechanical' sense—as a fully present, measurable thing in itself, or where it is able to be traced back to a more explicitly material—often visual—'originary' source, and secondly, where its existence is determined as a self-differentiating and repetitive movement. In this second sense, sound's 'origin'—the point of its appearance—also marks the point of its disappearance or departure. Sound's 'origin' exists here as 'original difference'. But to be able to be interpreted (to work as a sign) sound must be thought of as maintaining a certain kind of presence, a kind of immutability. Sound must be maintained in a self-enclosed relation in order to act as an index or icon of something which exists over and beyond or before it. To act as a signifier, and so be able to be identified or given an identity, sound must be differentiated from its referent. Its repeated form must also be given value—much like a person's signature. As Jacques Derrida explains:

A sign is never an event, if by event we mean an irreplaceable and irreversible empirical particular. A sign which would take place but "once" would not be a sign; a purely idiomatic sign would not be a sign. A signifier (in general) must be formally recognisable in spite of, and through, the diversity of empirical characteristics which may modify it. It must remain the same, and be able to be repeated as such, despite and across the deformations which the empirical event necessarily makes it undergo...this identity is necessarily ideal. It thus necessarily implies representation...Now...this determination of being as ideality is paradoxically one with the determination of being as presence.

In the special sense that Attali gives repetition, sound, in order to be compete for a position in the market place, must be able to be played and replayed. Though he makes appeal to an 'ethical' reading and understanding of sound, his whole sentiment makes the fundamental mistake of situating the question of the ethical after the 'fact' of formal and material ontology, or the 'whatness' of sound. Attali's thought is given closer analysis in the part three of this thesis.

The 'mechanically derived' notion of sound seems to provide the general basis from which modern sound-arts practices have devolved. The notion of the material origin of sound, construed of as either a sonic presence in itself or as an attribute of some other kind of plastic material is that by which the late-modern sound artist is able to maintain, uphold and enact '...the role...of the marginal...‘outsider’ figure...', or as the creator of a commodifiable

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34 Ibid., p88
35 Andrew Benjamin interviewed by Flash Art, Vol. XXIV—Nº 160 Oct. 1991 p89, refers to this as 'anoriginality'. Originality here exists as a philosophical object, having "...a specific ontological state, namely [an] existence qua object of interpretation."
36 Derrida, Speech and Phenomena, op. cit., pp50, 53
and desirable material. It is within these 'mechanistic' terms that sound arts' practices also seem to be the most comfortably and usually couched. The conception 'sound object' is correlative to the modernist conception 'sound artist'.

Sound and Philosophical Objects

By tracing the ontological development and suppression of sound in philosophy, and by interrogating the generally held, ontologically reduced view of sound in sound-arts practices, the development of sound's objecthood in sound art may be revealed as the necessary condition for its admission into a conceptual, visualist paradigm. Speciously constructed as the binary 'other' and, so, the non-threatening complement of the visual arts, the totalising, visual arts economy gives the appearance of being more respecting of radical difference than it actually is. Differentiated in this benign, unreflectively conceptual and uncritical way, sound is only more completely drawn in to the visual paradigm.

Unless sound arts practitioners come to understand the complexity of relations which exist between the sound and visual arts through an analysis of the conditions predetermining the production and maintenance of art hierarchies, sound art may become limited to being understood—and perhaps quite purposefully—as a tolerably obscure and marginal practice. Would a practice taking place beyond these margins constitute a significant threat to this economy? Would an activity such as this still constitute an 'arts practice'? How would it be able to be defined? What would it mean to incorporate into an understanding of sound in sound arts practices and theories a non-teleologically oriented activity? If, as Kierkegaard suggests, 'it is essential that every trace of an objective issue should be eliminated', what would remain for a sound art practice other than uncertainty and the possibility of engaging in a genuinely temporal activity?

In this sense, questions such as 'What is it in the context of contemporary sound arts that strives to ascribe an object status to sound?' or 'What is meant by the term 'object' in these contexts?' take on loaded meanings. Perhaps anxiety over the existence of objects reflects a general tendency to subjective verification ('the artist's persona-as-star'), and therefore to the legitimisation of another set of modernist art practices. Christian Metz proposes an argument for the affirmation of sound as an object; that although sound in physics and philosophy is usually categorised as an attribute of something else, something overtly physical, spatially extended and relatively enduring, sound is an object in its own

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37 See Rosalind Krauss on authorship and framing in 'Sincerely Yours' in The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths, op. cit., p190-91.
39 Metz, 'Aural Objects', op. cit.
right. The question of sound’s attributive nature is historically pervasive, reflected for example in Lucretius’ notion of sound as a velocity of ‘surface-films’ given off as material from physical objects, like layers of skin from onions:

Sounds of every sort are surging incessantly through the air...So from every object flows a stream of matter, spreading out in all directions. The stream must flow without rest or intermission, since our senses are perpetually alert and everything is liable to be seen or smelt or to provoke sensation by sound.40

Hegel’s following proposition is somewhat similar, although it speaks of sound as a kind of double negation, negated from both the listening subject and a ‘prior’ mechanical object. His assessment of sound has more in common with Metz’s proposition, however, in that it is more ideal and, therefore, more closely aligned to the dialectics of being in general:

[Sound] is the transition of material spatiality into material temporality. In vibration, this form is therefore the ideality of materiality; it is a simple form existing for itself, and makes its appearance as this mechanical animation.41

Addition. As it is associated with weighted matter, sound belongs to the mechanical sphere. Form, as wresting itself from weightedness, and yet as still attached to it, is therefore conditioned. It is the free physical expression of ideal nature, although it is still linked to the mechanical sphere. It is freedom from weighted matter, but is at the same time of this matter.42

Sound is usually assessed in terms of its relation to some originary source, the ‘ground’ from which it emanates, which it signifies or is expressive of, or it is considered a simple, temporal and material substance. Sound, in short, is mostly judged in the context of figure/ground relations, thought of as either a figure of some kind or as the temporal ground from which productive, artistic activity may spring. Situated within the sphere of production (sound linked to, or as the material) also, of course, locates it within the parameters of the commonplace social and political. Even Roland Barthes’ utopian notion of ‘rustling language’43, with its emphasis on the sonic aspects of the phonic utterance, devoid of strict

42 Ibid., Vol. 2, p70
43 ‘[i]n its utopic state, language would be enlarged, I should even say denatured to the point of forming a vast auditory fabric in which the semantic apparatus would be made unreal; the phonic, metric, vocal signifier would be deployed in all its sumptuosity, without a sign ever becoming detached from it...’ Roland Barthes, ‘The Rustle of Language’. Trans. G.C. Spivak, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976. p77
linguistic meaning-determinations, takes place within the ambit of radiophony. It is enframed in nothing other than an institutionalized, technological ideology\textsuperscript{44}, though appearing in some ways aesthetically ‘autonomous’. Sound, having been historically and philosophically assessed as an appurtenance of the physical and the material, or as a mode of physicality or materiality itself, has lead to its judgement as the expression of certain prevailing ideologies. Its particular abridgement to the body, as voice, has given rise to an even more refined notion of ideological expression. The production of sound within arts institutional settings also reflects this tendency.

What does, in fact, Christian Metz mean by ‘aural object’? What could be gained by ascribing to sound this materialist or objective determination?

...sounds are more often classified according to the objects which transmit them than by their own characteristics. ...

There is nothing natural in this situation: from a logical point of view, ‘buzzing’ is an object, an acoustic object in the same way that a tulip is a visual object. ...

Culture depends on the permanence of the object, language reaffirms it: only the adjective has varied. ...

I have tried to understand why perception proceeds by means of objects. But I first felt, and felt strongly, that it does in fact proceed this way: phenomenologists have always made the same claim.\textsuperscript{45}

Here, the desire for an assessment of sounds as objects, classifiable by ‘...their own characteristics’ (sound’s own attributes...), becomes clearly and evidently a perceptual model of truth verification, or a kind of positivism (where knowledge proceeds by way of an analysis of the objects of perception). Here Metz develops an epistemology of sound, but by first reducing sound to the status of an object. Metz’s real objective, perhaps, is to develop some ‘new’ kind of knowledge, and his treatment of sound only verifies and affirms his epistemological claims.

What belies this perceived necessity to maintain the status of objecthood? This broader kind of question needs to be asked if for nothing else than to avoid the pitfalls of placing sound within highly delimiting frameworks. In acoustics, for example, sound is ‘measured’ and organised within predetermined, morphological parameters\textsuperscript{46}, all of which perhaps

\textsuperscript{44} ‘The rustle is the noise that is working well.’ Ibid., p76
\textsuperscript{45} Metz, ‘Aural Objects’, op. cit., pp154-161
\textsuperscript{46} For example: ‘A mechanical disturbance (in most solids, liquids and gasses of ordinary experience) will consist in a sudden increase in pressure at some point. The compression is not permanent, thus the compressed region will rebound, but then compress an adjacent region. The result of this cycle repeating itself is a compression wave, followed by a rarefaction wave. These waves are longitudinal, in
forecloses the possibility of extending or intensifying the ways in which sound may otherwise be thought, felt or experienced. The question of the conditions from which such delimited ‘objective’ analyses are arrived at is usually bypassed; empirical or rationalist analyses are often taken for granted and presumed the only true method for drawing an accurate ‘picture’ of sound. The adoption of such attitudes pervades the contemporary sound art world, which tends, generally, though with some notable exceptions, away from deeper, philosophical analyses.

Could it be said that the sound arts, at least in a very local sense, whilst appearing to be at the cutting edge of new theories and principles for the formation of radically new fields in the arts actually have as their basis the very same principles which have sustained and supported the visual arts for so very long? Perhaps this is no accident.

The metaphor of sunlight, or simply light (as divine origin or source of reason itself) abounds throughout the philosophy and religion of the West. It is that which makes the known world visible—and therefore knowable. Thought of as the final goal or telos of thought, Plato’s ‘Form of the Good’ is also the source of light and morality:

...once seen it is inferred to be responsible for everything right and good, producing in the visible realm light and the source of light, and being, in the intelligible realm itself, controlling source of reality and intelligence. And any one who is going to act rationally either in public or private must perceive it.48

Light is meant as that which makes the world available for apperceptive consciousness, but also as reason itself, evident in such phrases as ‘the light of reason’, and so on. Vision becomes the guiding principle of cognition itself; sight is mere sense. In the philosophy of the pre-Socratics (Ionic, Eleatic, Pythagorean, and others), the development of a profound distrust of the senses concurred with the movement from natural philosophy to the philosophy of mind, though the senses were in fact incorporated into speculative philosophy

the direction of wave motion. The waves thus generated travel through the medium at a speed that is a function of the equilibrium pressure and density of the material and, to various extents, of the specific heat (of a gas), the elasticity (of liquids and solids), and the temperature of the medium and the frequency of the wave. Regular sounds are characterised by periodic, dominant frequencies, or pitch. Sounds increase in complexity from a pure tone to those whose overtones render a sound ‘white’. Loudness of a sound is essentially ‘subjective’ and is measured only in relation to a standard reference sound under specified conditions. Sound waves can be reflected, refracted, diffracted and scattered, differences reflecting differences in wavelengths.” Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1987


as their guiding, first principles. This movement is outlined below. It is interesting to note, however, that despite the fact of sensation's being pushed aside in the development of speculative philosophy, the dominant image of knowledge has remained, nevertheless, that of light, 'vision'. A description of this influence upon Late Renaissance thought, in which the most profound expression of this light metaphor is made, is undertaken in this thesis. Its bearing upon the conceptual development of the object will also be described.

Pre-Socratic Thought

This section outlines the historical development of ontology in ancient Greek thought and examines some of its key themes. It indicates how the meaning and conceptual definitions of such terms as ‘being’ and ‘truth’ were constructed and refuted through different periods, demonstrating that such notions, despite the often dogmatic intentions of their philosophical progenitors, have never remained absolute. It also locates the point in Greek thought where a major shift concerning the meaning of human existence takes place. Here the notion of Being as flux or impermanence and change in which sensuous, worldly beings participate is superseded by the development of both the transcendent, unified object—pure Thought, or God—and the immanent object of sensual perception—the object for the subject. In both these cases, the object is determined by its enduring form, in which each to an extent inhere in the other. In this development sound and voice, because of their impermanence, are suppressed and categorised as simple objects of sensual perception or as representations or indices of being which is considered to in any case already exist.

Being historical, the philosophical development of ontological thought—the philosophy of being—tends, therefore, as much to the past as to the future. The ontology of Martin Heidegger, for instance, was primarily concerned with recovering 'possibility' and meaning for temporally existing, embodied beings, Dasein. Working against what he considered to be the decline of the modern period—or rather working to closing it off so he could start afresh 49—Heidegger's philosophy involved demonstrating the validity of recovering and reconfiguring otherwise historically distant philosophical terms. He proposed that history, temporality and their interpretation by beings determined the very meaning of and for beings which he felt had up until then been lost in the complexity, obscurity and narrowing visualist focus of Western philosophy.

49 As Charles Taylor says '...philosophy does not tend to arise when an age is in its prime, in the bloom of youth, but rather when it has already started to grow old. And by taking a reflective stance philosophy weakens the immediacy of commitment and helps along the process of decline.' Hegel, Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp510-11. Mark C. Taylor notes that Heidegger was aware of this process of decline, that he was '...fully persuaded that metaphysics has run its course'. Introduction, Deconstruction in Context. Literature and Philosophy, Ed. Mark. C. Taylor, The University of Chicago Press, 1986, p.18. This theme is taken up in a later section of this thesis.
The past remains closed off from any present so long as such a present, Dasein, is not itself historical. Dasein, however, is in itself historical in so far as it is its possibility. In being futural Dasein is its past; it comes back to it in the 'how'. The manner of its coming back is, among other things, conscience. Only the 'how' can be repeated. The past—experienced as authentic historicity—is anything but what is past. It is something to which I can return again.50

To understand oneself historically, for Heidegger, is to engage in one's past as an ever renewable source of possibility. Heidegger's philosophy, concerned with the possibility of renewing the question of Being, has itself influenced much of twentieth century philosophy, and because of its emphasis on the importance of sound, speech and hearing has influenced some developments in sound-art and critical theory. For example:

Possessed of a truth which cannot be gainsaid...lyricism places the burden of truth elsewhere...[T]hose sounds shoot forward as if nearly free of gravity. It seems that their recitation alone is sufficient to capture a speaking presence, neither of the poem nor of the reciter. In short, this momentary recitation of the poem is not dissimilar to Heidegger's comment about how we 'reach what is' by letting language do the work for us, albeit unknowingly.54

G.W.F. Hegel assessed the development of the notion of being in Western philosophy in terms of a historical and teleological movement which, in his System, is thought to be found its most fully expressed and highly developed sense, Geist. Michael Weston states this

51 The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, who introduced Edmund Husserl's phenomenological philosophy to the French-speaking world, and which itself influenced the development of existentialist thought, paid testament to Heidegger's influence and significance in an interview with Philippe Nemo on Radio France-Culture in 1981. He said: 'Sein und Zeit...is one of the finest books in the history of philosophy—I say this after years of reflection. One of the finest among four or five others...Plato's Phaedrus, Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind; also Bergson's Time and Free Will.' Published in Ethics and Infinity. Trans. R.A. Cohen, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1985, p.37-8
52 'The fundamental way of the Dasein of world, namely, having world there with one another is speaking.' Heidegger, The Concept of Time, op. cit., p.14E
53 'Heidegger accustomed us to...verbal sonority. This reeducation of our ear is unforgettable...' Ethics and Infinity, op. cit., p.38
54 Martin Harrison, 'A note on Juan Lamellar's Caballeros en el Jardin' in ESSAYS IN SOUND. Eds. S. Davies, E. Jokovich & A. Jonson, Contemporary Sound Arts, Sydney, 1992, p.97
55 'We...come to the end with Hegel, who...takes this last step of demonstrating the absolute as identity of subject and object in self-developing life. He shows the absolute to be thought, which is ultimately grasped in thought...We can now see that there has always only been one philosophy. It now reaches final form, but it has been going forward from the beginning...A new epoch has arisen in the
clearly: ‘Man does not just possess a divine element, but can in such [Hegelian dialectical] knowing become God as the ultimate ground of all being, self-conscious Spirit [Geist]’. Whilst Hegel’s outline of the historical development of being is tendentious—it is structured or interpreted in such a fashion as to retrospectively demonstrate the veracity of his own philosophical or dialectical biases and the notion of historical movement supplies the perfect reason for his annihilation of the thought of earlier philosophers—it nevertheless gives some indication of the development of an ontological and dialectical ‘evolution’.

Understanding that ontological thought is itself thought to devolve historically provides, therefore, the possibility of being able to critically engage with more recently developed ontologies in broader terms. Martin Heidegger’s speculations on history or the historical, for instance, may in fact prove illusory, insofar as they are teleologically oriented. It may be the case that his intellectual project may only have the status of any other non-philosophical intellectual project: as hypothetical, therefore, it may be ‘always capable, by further inquiry, of being overturned’. In later sections of this thesis, an analysis of the historically shifting meaning of interpretation or hermeneutics and its impact on the development of ontological thought is undertaken.

In the immediately proceeding section, a survey of the development of ontology in pre-Socratic philosophy is made, and is based almost exclusively upon a reading of Hegel’s lectures. This survey will focus specifically upon what Hegel considers to be signal moments in the development of the speculative method up until the Heraclitean period (around 500 BC) and also surveys some of Aristotle’s thought. Though Hegel continues his historical survey well beyond the Eleatic period, he claims that with Heraclitus the first significant point in a proper understanding of being—a self-contradictory unity or wholeness (which partly coincides with his own understanding of the unity of opposites)—is given: ‘Here we see land; there is no proposition which I have not adopted in my Logic’. He moves beyond Heraclitus, however, despite all the praise he has for him. The outline given below follows Hegel’s own version of the historical facts and chronological sequences, and will end at the Heraclitean period with a discussion on the Socratics and Aristotle. In terms

world’. Spirit at least seems to have come clear.’ Charles Taylor, quoting Hermann Glockner in Sämtliche Werke. Stuttgart, 1927-30, in Hegel, op. cit., p533

56 Weston, op. cit., p27


58 Summarising Hegel’s general, historically evolved notion of Spirit, and referring to the Lectures, Charles Taylor says: ‘Hence from the beginning philosophy has the intuition that thought is not only its medium, but its object, that everything is at base thought. ... Thus the history of philosophy develops in a sense a single philosophy through different forms.’ Hegel, op. cit., p512

59 Weston, op. cit., p44

60 Hegel, Lectures, Vol. 1, op. cit., p279
of archaeologising sound's suppression in philosophy, and for the sake of brevity, discussion of the key moments will suffice.

Ionic Philosophy

Thales (640 B.C.) held that water, having no particular form, was the Absolute, the universal essence of thought, and was that in which 'everything is resolved and comprehended'\(^{61}\). Water was determined as 'real'. The unity of thought and the sensual made Thales' a 'natural' philosophy\(^ {62}\). Though having no particular form, water, constantly being able to form and reform, was thought to have contained in itself 'movement'—the principle or ground upon which everything else was able to be determined\(^ {63}\). This marked for Hegel the first significant step towards the development of an 'infinite Notion'\(^ {64}\).

Anaximander (610 B.C.) considered the first principle to be the 'Infinite'\(^ {65}\) which was not able to be determined by anything material or sensual, such as water. Its main attribute was that everything passed from it and was returned to it. It was divine 'matter'\(^ {66}\) and out of this undefined 'one'\(^ {67}\) all definite (able to be determined, finite) opposites were separated out. The finite—definite, transient material—was negated from the infinite, but not opposed in any sense to it. This separation was considered by later thinkers, according to Hegel, 'as [a] development.'\(^ {68}\)

Anaximenes (?560-548 B.C.), considering 'matter' essential to sensual being, posited that air was the Absolute, and so, like Thales, predicated his philosophy of being on a natural element. From air everything else came and to it everything was returned; it was infinite, immeasurable and devoid of form. Added to this, it was in constant motion. This gave rise to the synonymous notion of spirit and air, 'pneuma', the ether from which the original notion of the soul (and later, consciousness itself) was developed\(^ {69}\). Anaximenes 'points out the transition of natural philosophy into the philosophy of consciousness...'\(^ {70}\). Citing Aristotle on a crucial point regarding this natural, corporeal philosophy, Hegel considered Anaximenes'

\(^{61}\) Ibid, p179
\(^{62}\) Ibid, p180
\(^{63}\) '...for the life of nature has its subsistence in the fact that one thing is necessarily related to the other.' Ibid, p182
\(^{64}\) Ibid, p185
\(^{65}\) Ibid, p186
\(^{66}\) Ibid, p187
\(^{67}\) Ibid, p186
\(^{68}\) Ibid, p187
\(^{69}\) 'It was...with the Greek concept of pneuma that air began to represent the vital principle, the soul and the fertilising 'breath' of God.' Frances Dyson, 'Circuits of the Voice: From Cosmology to Telephony' in ESSAYS IN SOUND, op. cit., p28
\(^{70}\) Hegel, Lectures, Vol. 1, op. cit., p190

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notion of the absolute to be 'one-sided'\(^{71}\) and inconsistent with regard to what he regarded as the immaterial basis of consciousness. Anaximines, according to Hegel, only considered the material or sensual side. This does not mean that Hegel thought there was no such thing as 'material' matter (limited or definite) but that the other side of the matter equation—the immaterial, 'universal' side—had been left out. For Hegel, however, Anaximines' thought marked the point where the ideal (infinite 'spirit') was considered 'real': 'Thought breaking free from what is sensuous, and, therefore, it is a separation between the intelligible and the real'\(^{72}\).

Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans

Pythagoras (?580 B.C.) determined number as the essence and substance of everything, and in this sense, according to Hegel, formed 'the transition from realistic to intellectual philosophy'\(^{73}\). Existence here is not in the order of the sensuously experienced; 'substance' or 'true Being'\(^{74}\) is that which is absolutely other than sensuous existence. Number begins with 'one', which for Hegel is 'being-for-self'\(^{75}\) and is indifferent to everything else, and all other numbers are repetitions of this principle. 'Being-in-itself' also means that it contains within itself both thought and materiality, the unity of opposites, which for the (Hegelian) development of the Notion, is an absolute requisite. So, for Hegel, in Pythagoras 'the reality of absolute essence [is] raised...out of sensuous reality, and expressed...as the essence of thought'\(^{76}\). Universal consciousness 'the spirit of a people'\(^{77}\) becomes the substance from which each individuated consciousness derives and which may eventually work their way back toward. But for Hegel pure Notion is not yet fully developed, as 'Thought' in Pythagorean philosophy is not yet 'free for itself'\(^{78}\). Pythagoras is not considered to be a full-fledged speculative philosophy, but only 'quantitative', as Charles Taylor puts it, not 'qualitative', only in 'the dead and most external of all domains of thought...the domain of understanding, of fixed distinctions and deductions'\(^{79}\). Modern rationalist thought, interestingly, finds its apex in mathematical measurement.

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\(^{71}\) 'Aristotle..."In the first place, they merely give the corporeal element and not the incorporeal, for there also is such." ': p192 (No reference to Aristotle is given in this passage but it probably comes from *Metaphysics* given that Hegel refers to this work frequently in this section of the *Lectures*.)

\(^{72}\) Ibid, p194

\(^{73}\) Ibid, p208

\(^{74}\) Ibid, p208

\(^{75}\) Ibid, p210

\(^{76}\) Ibid, p236

\(^{77}\) Ibid, p236

\(^{78}\) Ibid, p239

\(^{79}\) Taylor, *Hegel*, op. cit., p513
The Eleatic School

Hegel identified in the Eleatic School the development of the dialectic which he described as 'simply the pure movement of thought in Notions'\(^{80}\) and also the opposition between 'sensuous Being' and thought. Pure Being, or the 'One', is in this context anticipated.

Xenophanes (536 B.C.) separated out sensuous existence from the universal, which meant that what was considered to be changeable (that which could either 'originate' or pass away) was denied any relation to truth; sensuous existence was considered irreal or 'only a semblance'\(^{81}\). God was considered to be 'One'—unknowable, unchangeable and perfectly self-identical. As Hegel states:

Thus while we, in our conception, allow the actually of the finite world, the Eleatics are more consistent, in that they proceeded to say that only the One exists and that the negative does not exist at all...\(^{82}\)

Divine consciousness, 'the pure dialectic'\(^{83}\) negates the sensuous and annuls it. What is left to simple, sensuous beings is mere opinion. The dialectic at this early stage remains only abstract and subjective.

Parmenides (504 B.C.), described as a 'striking figure in the Eleatic school'\(^{84}\), opposed Being and non-being for the first time. Mistrusting sensation\(^{85}\), Parmenides considered truth and reason to be compatible only with Being. For Parmenides, the negated or 'not Being' is also part of Being. Referring to 'not Being' Hegel ironically states 'it is thought or it is said: we say something, think something, if we wish to think and say the nothing'\(^{86}\). In short, thinking and saying, for Parmenides, Hegel says, is Being: 'Thought is thus identical with Being'\(^{87}\). In other words, that which can neither be thought nor said is nothing at all. If it can not be thought or said, it is not identical with truth, and so is not part of Being. What can be thought can be negated, but nothing can not be negated: nothing is not something. Nothing can not be thought and nothing can not be said. Non-being, if it can be thought and said must, therefore, be something and, so, be able to be negated. Non-being is not the same as Being, however. It does not have the same value, being different from it—but it is still part of it.

\(^{80}\) Hegel, Lectures, Vol. 1, op. cit., p240
\(^{81}\) Ibid, p243
\(^{82}\) Ibid, p246
\(^{83}\) Ibid, p248
\(^{84}\) Ibid, p249
\(^{85}\) 'Yet not the much followed custom cause thee to take the rash eye as the guide, or the confused sounding ear and the tongue. Ponder considerably with reason alone... ' Ibid, p251
\(^{86}\) Ibid, p252
\(^{87}\) Ibid, p253
Parmenides’ Being, therefore, marks the passage to the Hegelian dialectic. Being—internally self-contradictory—is total and unchangeable. Thought, which is identical to Being, is also unchangeable, turning completely in on itself into eternity. The changeable or transient, however, being the sensual and the material, are for Parmenides ‘not to be trusted’\(^88\). Mere human ideas and opinions, based in relation to the sensual world, are illusive and so are not quite on a par with truth. But just what Parmenides means here is not quite clear. If the sensible and material world is part of Being (able to be thought and described in speech) he must give other meanings to thought and speech if the senses are not to be trusted, and which presumably do not indicate truth. According to Hegel, Parmenides separates out materiality and sensibility from thought when he ‘adds to this doctrine of the truth, the doctrine of human opinions’\(^89\). But what this ‘doctrine of human opinions’ is remains obscure.

This seeming contradiction is pointed out by the Sophist Gorgias (427 B.C.) who said ‘If anything is...it is either the existent or the non-existent, or else existence and non-existence. It is evident of these three that they are not’\(^90\). What he means is that what ‘is’ must be either the reality of the one absolute Being or the existence of sensuous being, and that this contradiction confronts us with a nonsense. If absolute Being is, it must also be what it is not, namely sensuous being, and vice-versa. As a result of such considerations, Gorgias wryly proclaims that ‘what is’ is Nothing (whatsoever). ‘That which is not, is not’\(^91\). As the Eleatics called sensuous being nothing, that in which trust could not be placed, Gorgias said it was just that—absolutely nothing at all. All sensible things, including the speech of the philosophers (and all speech: the expressive sound of words) are nothing. ‘Speech by which the existent has to be expressed, is not the existent; what is imparted is thus not the existent, but only words’\(^92\). The ambiguous and indeterminate nature of rhetorical expression disrupted the possibility of self-consciousness. Self-knowledge had to be constructed upon more stable ground.

The attempt to recover more secure foundations for the maintenance of self-certainty was made by Socrates (469 B.C.) who, preserving the discursive form of spoken argument—dialectics—sought to introduce an objective and quantitative (mathematical) principle of identity. For Socrates, any definition had to be made upon the ground of certainty—authentic self-knowledge, and not the exaltation of arbitrary will as it was for the Sophists who called into question everything that was external to the subject. Hegel: ‘Socrates’s principle is that

\(^{88}\) Ibid, p251
\(^{89}\) Ibid, p254
\(^{90}\) Ibid, p380
\(^{91}\) Ibid, p380
\(^{92}\) Ibid, p383-4
man has to find from himself both the end of his actions and the end of the world, and must attain to truth through himself. The subject, in other words, becomes for Socrates the locus of the universal criteria of reason. In this scheme, conceptual definitions make rhetorical forms of uttered expression conform to them. In Plato’s philosophy, the ‘idea’ is universalised as a mathematical concept, a Pythagorean ‘one’, and is made quite independent of individual expression. The expression expresses its object—truth or Being—but is quite separate from it. The objective principle of identity is that to which individual expression tends—the sensuous world is directed towards objective existence, and so, to truth. Hegel:

In Socrates and from him onward, we thus see knowledge commencing, the world raising itself into the region of conscious thought, and this becoming the object. We no longer hear question and answer as to what Nature is, but as to what Truth is; or real essence has determined itself not to be the implicit, but to be what it is in knowledge.

To ‘no longer hear question and answer as to what Nature is, but as to what Truth is’ means to retain rhetorical expression, but also to suppress it. The Eleatic and Sophist positions regarding Being and Nothing were with Socrates inverted. Essence and actuality no longer stood alone and separate. They each required the notion of self-certainty, and together truth was arrived at: ‘the true is essence as thought’. Self-consciousness was also consciousness of Being. It was consciousness of difference, therefore, and this knowledge enabled the unity of both, which was truth. As Hegel points out, however, knowledge had not been made into essence as if it were the content of essence, nor was essence the unity of Being and Thought—but the Socratists ‘could no longer speak of essence and actuality without the element of self-certainty’. Self-certainty was simply assumed and expressed: rhetoric, the expression of self-certainty, was preserved. The voice was the index of authenticity, and it also expressed truth. Under the Eleatic and Sophist dialectic of Being and Nothing, rhetoric completely ‘disappeared’. Although with Socrates rhetoric was preserved, it was at the same time suppressed. While it expressed truth, it was not considered to be in itself the truth.

In coming to this point—diverting from a chronologically ordered view of philosophical developments through Gorgias and Socrates—the philosophy of Zeno and Heraclitus was temporarily bypassed. Hegel considered Zeno to be ‘the master of the Eleatic school’ and

93 ibid, p386
94 ibid, p450-51
95 ibid, p451
96 ibid, p451
97 ibid, p261
'the originator of the true objective dialectic'. It was through Zeno that change, an attribute of sensuous being, was positively asserted. Pure Being, for Zeno, was the negation of motion. For the earlier Eleatics, change was pure or complete in the Absolute only. As Being was all or total, whatever was able to be said of nothing was denied of Being. For Zeno, what was sensuous involved change and so the separation of Being and nothing was not held as the starting point in his philosophy. Though in agreement with the Eleatics on the principle of the One, that Being alone was truth and the sensuous world contained no truth but was mere 'appearance', Zeno not only denied the truth of sensuous being but also conceded its positive existence. As Hegel makes clear: 'the nullity of the opposite does not appear in itself; it is not that it abrogates itself, i.e. that it contains a contradiction in itself'. What Hegel means is that the null is only asserted to be null from the standpoint of the assertion, and not through the thing itself. If the sensuous world involves motion, then it must be said that it has a positive side. 'Falsity must not be demonstrated through another, and as untrue because the opposite is true, but in itself; we find this rational perception in Zeno'.

Heraclitus (500 B.C.) thought of the Absolute in terms of an objective dialectic, that is, as a movement in itself, separate from the abstractions of a contemplating subject. In Heraclitus' thought, according to Hegel, this objective dialectic becomes the principle of Philosophy proper. He says: 'The truth only is as the unity of distinct opposites and, indeed, of the pure opposition of being and non-being...' . This universal principle was characterised by Heraclitus as 'Becoming'; origination and passing away both belonging to it equally. Further, they were identical. Hegel attributes to the understanding a misguided capacity for attributing truth to Being and non-being when they are in isolation from one another. Reason, on the other hand, is that by which one is recognised in the other. Hegel therefore gives a higher priority to reason than to understanding. He says: 'Subjectivity is...the “other” of objectivity...[Since each is the “other” of the “other” as its “other”, we here have their identity]. Being for Heraclitus was Becoming, that which involved constant alteration or process. He said: 'Everything flows; nothing remains. Everything moves; nothing is still. Everything passes away; nothing lasts'. The first form of Becoming comes in the form of the existent, that which presents itself to sensuous being as time, that which Hegel calls the 'pure Notion'. When time presents as perceptible and experienced and not as a purely logical expression of Becoming, it is what he calls the 'abstract Notion'.

98 Ibid, p263
99 Ibid, p277
100 Ibid, p263
101 Ibid, p264
102 Ibid, p282
103 Ibid, p285
104 Davenport, Heraclitos and Diogenes, op. cit., p14
105 Hegel, Lectures, Vol. 1, op. cit., p286
In time there is no past and future, but only the now, and this is, but is not as regards the past; and this non-being, as future, turns round into Being. If we were to say how that which Heraclitus recognised as principle, might, in the pure form in which he recognised it, exist for consciousness, we could mention nothing else but time...\textsuperscript{106}

Heraclitus required that the primary principle had to be process in itself, in order to be more objective and less ‘abstract’ (presenting to sensuous being alone). This meant that for the essence of nature to be implicitly infinite—and therefore truthful—it had to appear and disappear at the same time. Heraclitus called this unity in opposition ‘Necessity’\textsuperscript{107}, and fire became his primary principle: ‘Everything becomes fire and from fire everything is born’\textsuperscript{108} and ‘Fire catches up with everything, in time’\textsuperscript{109}. As Hegel interestingly points out, Aristotle also understood this Heraclitean process as ‘evaporation’ and said that the soul was the first principle: ‘...it is evaporation, the origination of everything; it is what is most incorporeal and is always in a state of flux’\textsuperscript{110}. Heraclitus considered the Thought of Being, the fully developed waking consciousness of this Necessity, the universal understanding, to be truth. Breath was understood to maintain the connection with truth, with divine or universal understanding, whether one was awake or asleep. It maintained contact with the Logos and took part in it. Heraclitus: ‘Man, who is an organic continuation of the Logos, thinks he can sever that continuity and exist apart from it’\textsuperscript{111}. What he means is that wherever sensuous being considers itself individually, it stands in error, and is disconnected from the universal. Breath, coextensive with Logos, becomes equivalent to Truth. It may be said in this sense then that breath, voice, pneuma and soul are each in flux, and are the sensuous expression of Becoming. Both listening and speaking participate in the Logos in, moreover, an ‘organic’ way, that is, aside from a purely objective or purely subjective, abstract way. Participation in the Logos combines them, but in this combination, the unity of opposites is understood as ‘Necessity’. ‘The mind of man exists in a logical universe but is not itself logical’\textsuperscript{112}. As Hegel says:

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., p287
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., p293
\textsuperscript{108} Davenport, \textit{Heraclitus and Diogenes}, op. cit., p16
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p23
\textsuperscript{110} Hegel, \textit{Lectures}, Vol. 1, op. cit., p288. Hugh Lawson-Tancred translates the same passage from Aristotle’s \textit{De Anima} as: ‘Heraclitus also holds that soul is the first principle, if indeed this is the same as his \textit{emanation}, from which he constructs everything else. This is also something very much disembodied and in continual flow and knowledge is for that which moves by that which moves. For he shared with the common man the thought that the things that exist are in motion.’ Penguin Classics, 1986, p136
\textsuperscript{111} Davenport, \textit{Heraclitus}, op. cit., p22
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., p22
The rational, the true, that which I know, is indeed a withdrawal from the objective as from what is sensuous, individual, definite and existent; but what reason knows within itself is necessity, or the universal of being; it is the principle of thought, as it is the principle of the world.\textsuperscript{113}

\textbf{Aristotle}

With Plato the Idea (or the Form of the Good) was considered substantial but completely independent from the individual being expressing it. In a somewhat Pythagorean turn, his timeless Idea makes the temporal possible, and together these form a correspondent whole, despite the doubt cast by Plato over the real existence of worldly, sensible objects\textsuperscript{114}. The retention of individual expression is Socratic, departing from the Sophist’s (particularly Gorgias’) notion of willful sensual being and the rhetorical expression of sensual being as being absolutely nothing at all. Rhetorical, individual expression, retained by Socrates and Plato, indicates the authentic existence of the particular speaker which is already presumed grounded in reality. The voice here participates in, or truthfully echoes the Logos—it is an index, representation, of authentic existence—particularly the voice of the philosopher. With Plato, the Idea or Form of the Good is founded on mathematical (Pythagorean) principles\textsuperscript{115}, and is to that extent, in Hegel’s terms, an ‘abstract universal’. It was Aristotle, however, who first objected to what he thought an ‘inadequate’ mediation between the Idea and sensuous existence. He expressed his objection thus:

\textbf{What do forms contribute either to eternal or transient sensibles? For (1) they cause no motion or change in them, and (2) since they are not in them, they are not their…}

\textsuperscript{113} Hegel, Lectures, Vol. 1, op. cit., p297

\textsuperscript{114} See Plato, The Republic, trans. H.D.P Lee, Penguin, 1955, part seven, book seven, (The Simile of the Cave), p278ff. For Plato, sensible things cannot be defined in themselves, because of their mutability. He turned his attention, therefore, to the supra-sensible, the ‘Ideas’, pure objects of cognition which sensible objects ‘participate’ in only insofar as they imitate them. They are therefore considered only to be poor copies of these extra-worldly things. They precise relation between them, however, remains quite unclear. The two elements of which Ideas are comprised (according to Aristotle in the first book of his METAPHYSICS, chap. seven) are the ‘material’ (considered evil) and the ‘formal’ (considered good). In unison, the two elements are called the ‘Ideal Numbers’; these are the ‘cause’ of everything else.

\textsuperscript{115} Again, this is according to Aristotle who presumably picked the information up directly from Plato’s lectures. According to A.E. Taylor (trans.), Aristotle on His Predecessors [containing the first book of Aristotle’s Metaphysics], Open Court: La Salle, Illinois, second edition, 1969; third printing, 1989, p103, such an idea is actually absent from any of Plato’s texts. The closest Plato comes, it seems, is in The Republic, book six, ‘Truth and Illusion’, in which he describes the geometry of the ‘divided line’, explaining how the degree access to truth runs in parallel to the contemplation of the world, in either its physical, visible sense (which indicates only a low level of truth, being illusory), or its ‘intelligible’ or ‘Real’ sense—i.e. the world of the ‘Forms’—which display a high level of truth content.
substances, and therefore contribute nothing either to the knowledge of them or to their being.\footnote{116}

Aristotle claimed, in the words of Hegel: 'activity is not to be found in these principles...to say that real things participate in ideas is empty talk, and a poetic metaphor.'\footnote{117} In other words Aristotle required the existence of a prime, 'unmoved' mover\footnote{118} or absolute substance which was both eternally fixed and yet clearly related to and able to affect the sensible world, so giving form to particular objects of existence or expressing its eternal essence through them.

Nothing...is gained by assuming eternal substances [such as Plato's Forms] unless there is to be in them some principle capable of causing change; but even this is not enough...For if it is not to act, there will be no movement. Moreover, even if it acts, this will not be enough, if its essence is potentiality. For there will not necessarily be eternal movement, since that which is potentially may possibly not be. There must therefore be an eternal principle whose essence is actuality.\footnote{119}

The first [prime] mover, then, exists of necessity; qua necessary its being is good, and it is in this way that it is a principle.\footnote{120}

Flux is here determined objectively: potential is given to actuality—given actual form. In Aristotelian thought, the opposition between form (actual being) and matter (flux/potential) is resolved; matter is determined by the universal idea and is given form. The universal idea, even as a mathematical (and therefore conceptual) determination, is itself determined by the activity of Absolute Substance.\footnote{121} The activity or prime movement of the One or the Absolute Substance gives form to matter. Subjective propositions may also, therefore, gain objective actuality or form: 'It is... only in thought that there is present a true harmony.

\footnote{116} Aristotle, \textit{Metaphysics}. Trans. and ed. J. Warrington, Everyman, London, 1970. p261. I am indebted to Colin Hearfield for bringing this quotation to my attention. Another version of this passage may be found in \textit{Aristotle on His Predecessors}, op. cit., p123\footnote{117} Hegel, \textit{Lectures}, Vol. 2, op. cit., p141\footnote{118} J.L. Ackrill, \textit{Aristotle The Philosopher}. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981. p128\footnote{119} Ibid., p128. Hegel offers this translation of the final three sentences of the same quote: 'Yea, even if it were active, but its substance only a potentiality, there would be in it no eternal movement, for it is possible that what is according to potentiality may not exist. We must therefore have a principle whose substance must be apprehended as activity'. \textit{Lectures}, Vol. 2, op. cit., p144\footnote{120} Ibid., p129\footnote{121} 'The highest point is...that in which potentiality, activity and actuality are united; the absolute substance (Metaph. XII.6.7; IX 8), defines in general as being the absolute..., the unmoved, which yet at the same time moves, and whose essence is pure activity, without having matter.' Hegel, \textit{Lectures}, Vol. 2, op. cit., p143.
between objective and subjective; that constitutes me\(^{122}\). But in the process, rhetoric, the mere expression of subjective self-authenticity—the mere expression of thought—is altogether suppressed. If an object of thought is not thought itself [reflection, therefore], it is held only as the object of an ‘opinion’\(^{123}\), and even if the object of ‘opinion’ is another ‘opinion’ (which would resemble reflection), then either way only a ‘secondary’\(^{124}\) mode of thinking could be said to be evident. An ‘opinion’ and its object are not considered to be the same thing, that is, they are not considered to be able to truly and actually coincide, even if the object of opinion is itself an opinion. When the object of thought is thought itself, however, then thought and its object are the same thing, and they coincide. With Thought—thought which thinks thought—the greatest ‘Good’ comes: ‘Thought which is its own object subsists to all eternity’\(^{125}\). Rhetoric, as an object of thought, and therefore only of an opinion (rhetoric not being thought), is, like the understanding, secondary to Reason.

Throughout, Thought ascends to a higher than ever status. It is that object which holds good the very unity of existence and explains it; it is an enduring and eternal presence. But in all senses, the meaning of ‘object’—primary (when the object of thought is thought) or secondary (when the object is an object of opinion)—is given paramount importance in the Aristotelian realm. For Aristotle, Thought is the most absolute and enduring object, but as Charles Taylor says, it ‘still does not [have] the character of generating all out of it’\(^{126}\).

Where, for Heraclitus, flux is Being—the objective and universal One—it also involves, though ultimately keeps separate, sensuous movement and change—listening and speaking importantly. For Aristotle, flux is given actuality or form, as subjective opinion or objective Thought. Aristotle’s, therefore, is both a dogmatic and sceptical philosophy.

Aristotelian substance (\textit{ousia}) is that which comes into being from matter or material. Things do not come into being simply by a change of quality or by a change of some pre-existing thing into something else, like a chair into a red chair. Matter is that from which a \textit{thing} comes into being. Substance is ‘thingness’, which comes from that which is ‘underlying’. Matter is potent (it has potential); form (\textit{eidos}) is actuality. Substance is either, or is both.

\(^{122}\) Ibid., p150
\(^{123}\) Aristotle, \textit{Metaphysics}, (no other reference given) in \textit{Lectures}, Vol. 2., ibid., p151
\(^{124}\) Aristotle, \textit{Metaphysics}, (no other reference given) in \textit{Lectures}, Vol. 2., ibid., p151
\(^{125}\) Aristotle, \textit{Metaphysics}, (no other reference given) in \textit{Lectures}, Vol. 2., ibid., p152
\(^{126}\) Taylor, \textit{Hegel}, op. cit., p51
...substances... the things that simply are, come to be from something underlying. For there is always something which underlies, from which the thing comes to be, as plants and animals come to be from seed.\textsuperscript{127}

Aristotle's substances are expressions of material or matter: they 'come to be'. But that which has the power to reproduce and sustain itself, that having psyche—power—is that which is fully substantial or that which possesses both form and essence. The Aristotelian notion of soul is an example of this\textsuperscript{128}. For Aristotle, in short, substance has two main meanings: firstly, as the ultimate substratum of all things, and secondly as something which is separable from this ultimate substratum (able to develop voluntarily, having 'motion') so giving each thing its shape or form: 'And so form and the compound of form and matter would be thought to be substance, rather than matter'\textsuperscript{129}.

It is also interesting to note that Aristotle believed that Greek language in operation and the classification of things into name-categories 'accurately and finally reflected objective reality'\textsuperscript{130}. The distinctions he made between matter and substance may have been purely a reflection of the supposed reificational nature of Greek thought, thought and speech indicating concrete reality. '...the cause which makes this thing flesh and that a syllable...is the substance of each thing'\textsuperscript{131}. This 'problem' of the relation of language to knowledge of 'things' is broached by J.L. Ackrill\textsuperscript{132}, but in a sense he only reasserts a requirement that knowledge should be based on the primordiality or originality of matter itself:

[Since different languages classify things differently, and discriminate characteristics differently, can the particular way in which we in our language sort reality out into things...and characteristics...have any claim to objective validity?\textsuperscript{133}]

Things are contrasted by Aristotle both with what they are made of (their matter) and with the properties they have. But what, after all, is a 'thing' except matter with properties?...we might do better to say that reality consists first and basically of matter and properties, and that talk of things...comes later...\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{127} Quoted by Ackrill in \textit{Aristotle The Philosopher}, op. cit., p29

\textsuperscript{128} Aristotle also calls the soul a 'form', however. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the differences and similarities between the notion of soul as form or substance, or both, but the issue is taken up by Hugh Lawson-Tancred in his Introduction and translation of Aristotle's \textit{De Anima} in \textit{Aristotle. De Anima (On the Soul)}. Penguin, 1986. p155ff

\textsuperscript{129} Ackrill, \textit{Aristotle The Philosopher}, op. cit., p126

\textsuperscript{130} ibid., p31

\textsuperscript{131} E.E. Spicer, \textit{Aristotle's Conception of the Soul}. University of London Press, Ltd. London, 1934, p49 (quoting from Aristotle's \textit{Metaphysics}. Trans. W.D. Ross [date of publication unavailable],1044b,7)

\textsuperscript{132} Ackrill, \textit{Aristotle The Philosopher}, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{133} ibid., p30

\textsuperscript{134} ibid., p31
It is clear here that for Ackrill the requirement of knowledge of things material, whether what is being talked about are 'objects' or 'soul' is the only possible way to come to any understanding of the world and its contents (and including here the contents of consciousness). Speech, as it was for Aristotle, is reduced to opinion, or just 'talk'; it only reflects concrete reality, or is the expression of some lesser type of substance. It does not construct reality or express the essence of the prime mover, Absolute Substance.

The Late Renaissance and The Enlightenment

Renaissance metaphysics understood that its function was to interpret the light of God. If this light was too intense and powerful to be taken at full strength, it therefore required a mediating, filtering principle, Logos. Taking the example of the frontispiece from Giambattista Vico's *New Science*, published in 1725, this becomes abundantly clear. The first chapter of Vico's text explains the relevance of each of the objects in the image (Refer Fig.1). At the centre of this scene, most importantly, the figure 'metaphysic' stands above all of the world's institutions while she is in receipt of the beam of light streaming from the eye of God (which both sends and receives light). She wears on her chest a convex jewel which reflects and scatters the ray 'abroad' but also at the statue of Homer:

This poetic wisdom, the knowledge of the theological poets, was unquestionably the first wisdom of the world for the Gentiles...Unknown until now, he has held hidden from us the true institutions of the fabulous time among the nations, and much more so those of the dark time which all had despaired of knowing, and consequently the first true origins of the institutions of the historic time.¹³⁵

Generally speaking, the above quotation summarises the movement toward the acquisition of knowledge in the Renaissance. Broadly speaking, European metaphysics was divided into two main camps, influenced by either Aristotle or Plato. The theories of knowledge and of being, it is perhaps only too obvious to state, still exert an influence on philosophy and contemporary thought even today. It is the emergence of these theories that is central to the themes of this thesis, however, and to that extent it is necessary to examine some of

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Frontispiece from Vico's *New Science* (1725)
the motifs around which general notions of objectivity have developed. Some of the philosophers instanced in this analysis seem to offer themselves as nodal points around which this otherwise long, drawn-out historical development can be condensed. One of these philosophers is Tommaso Campanella.

Campanella

Nicholas of Cusa, a NeoPlatonist philosopher of the Italian fifteenth century, expostulated a theory of human knowledge which in some ways foreshadowed the Logic of Hegel. He distinguished three stages in the acquisition of human knowledge. The first is sense perception by which the external objects of experience are grasped but from which no judgement is formed. The second is represented by reason which, proceeding discursively, affirms or denies through the principle of contradiction of opposites, and, being able to produce scientific—limited—knowledge, is to that extent Aristotelian. The third stage is the ‘intellective’\textsuperscript{136} which surpasses the oppositions of reason and apprehends God as the incomprehensible synthesis of all oppositions in a unique and total, infinite being. Knowledge of God is limited, therefore, but ignorance in the face of transcendence is surmounted by the subject gradually becoming more learned. This is achieved by comparing and contrasting, and by understanding God as the complete unity of opposites, as the all and the nothing. The world and everything in it are considered parts of a whole, particulars of a general system, all tending upward to perfect unity. The world for Cusa, according to B.M. Bonansea, ‘is the unfolding of the absolute and most simple, divine being...it possesses unity and plurality...each one reflecting the entire universe’\textsuperscript{137}.

Absolute self-identity (Latin: \textit{idem}, ‘same’) implies self-negation, an internal contradiction, where, in order to maintain self-identity, the self must differ from itself. God is in this way able to be understood as an absolute substance, as the permanent substratum of all things. ‘When God is understood as the absolutely self-identical, which in-itself is complex, he is grasped as substance’\textsuperscript{138}. This substance has modes of being, but is a universal essence which contains all actuality and possibility. Presence is the property of absolute substance, and is also present to its own ‘other’—absence. This is the unity of being and not-being. If God is light, then this light is also at the same time its opposite—darkness. If the interpretation of light is understood as the acquisition of knowledge: ‘The light of God through which all things are intelligible can be compared to air and light, the means of all perception in the intelligible order’\textsuperscript{139}, God is both able to be known, therefore, and not be known (an ‘incomprehensible synthesis’). In this sense the darkness which ‘...was upon

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\textsuperscript{136} B. M. Bonansea, \textit{Tommaso Campanella}, The Catholic University of America Press, 1969. p9

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., p10


\textsuperscript{139} Bonansea, op. cit., p116
the face of the deep’ and which was ‘divided’ from the light, can be understood as modes or expressions of the same God which ‘...is light’. If total knowledge of God is never attainable, movement from darkness to light at least is: partial and increasing knowledge of God is possible through learning.

Theological thought such as this permeated the philosophy of the West. One of the principle figures of the humanist movement was the Catholic ‘panpsychist’ philosopher, Tommaso Campanella (b.1568), author of Epilogo magno (1595); the (interestingly titled) utopian City of the Sun (1602), a theory of syncretic and naturalistic doctrine, and the major work, Metaphysica (1604). Campanella took as his guide Bernadino Telesio (1509-1588) who vigorously reacted against the Aristotelian doctrine of interpreting nature through abstract ideas and proposed that a positivist position—where sensation is taken as the basis upon which knowledge can begin to develop—be taken up. For the positivist, matter is concrete and actual, not, as it is for Aristotle, also potency. The whole of nature contains sensation in varying degrees, and inhering in animated being is ‘spirit’, a material substance generated from within the body and which is located in the brain. This ‘spirit’ both anticipates and receives sense data. Campanella’s theory of knowledge, and his idea of the corporeal basis of spirit is based on an extension of Telesio’s ideas. His philosophy is also peculiarly Heraclitean in derivation.

Campanella believed that metaphysics had to begin with epistemology, and sought to establish the first principles or unshakeable foundations upon which a theory of knowledge could be based. Before Descartes’ Discourse on Method (1637), Campanella developed a universal theory of doubt—a fact which is very often overlooked—expressed as the 14 dubitationes. They embody all the objections a sceptical mind can muster in order to undermine the basis for developing knowledge. When they are refuted, epistemology may proceed to develop. Of particular interest are the seventh, eighth and fourteenth. These may be summarised as follows:

Seven. Things and their images cannot be known in their reality because they are in a continuous change and flow and are never the same. When a man wants to know something through the senses or the intellect, this thing has already been changed into another...Heraclitus comes to the conclusion that there is no knowledge of anything, for, before we come to know a thing, that very thing has already been changed.

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140 Genesis 1 Vs. 2, 3 and 4
141 ‘[Campanella] made methodic doubt the starting point of a systematic treatise of knowledge and applied it so universally that it included even one’s own existence. In this is found his originality as a philosopher.’ Bonansea, op. cit., p124
Eight. Even on the supposition that things do not change, we still have no real knowledge, for we ourselves are continually changing and are never the same.

Fourteen. The names that men give to things are a demonstration that there is no science. In fact, man communicates his knowledge of things to others in the way that he understands them and, for this reason, he indicates things by names, whose formation is due partly to chance, partly to convention, and partly to a manifest lack of knowledge...Sciences are often more mistaken in naming their objects than in explaining them...the most important thing to be noticed...is that no word indicates the thing itself, but only an external and accidental property of it or some likeness that it has to other things.\textsuperscript{142}

In part answer to the fourteenth dubitatione, Campanella explicitly states:

The correct name of a thing is that which corresponds to the nature of the thing itself. When something cannot be perceived directly but only through its effects, such as the divine substance, the use of analogies is permitted. Philosophers must however be very careful in their denomination of things, for this has to be in agreement with the nature of the things so named.\textsuperscript{143}

Campanella’s response is therefore in complete accord with Aristotle’s doctrine on the use and function of language in the formulation of scientific knowledge. Following St. Augustine, Campanella identified the process of sceptical refutation as the extraction of an admission of the truth by stating the fact of its negative opposite. For example, to state one’s doubt is to state one’s certainty of something: I know that I do not know. To remedy the malady of scepticism, he laid down the principle of self-knowledge:

Three things are absolutely certain to us, namely, that we are, that we know, and that we will. ...However, with regard to our being, our knowing, and our willing, there is no impression whatsoever of the phantasy, but only one perennial presence. ... I am most certain that I am. If you admit it, I have this certitude; if you deny it and say that I am deceived, you plainly recognise that I am; for I cannot be deceived if I am not. What is not can neither know truly nor be deceived. Likewise, I know that I know, and am not deceived. As I know that I am, so I know that I know that I am.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{142} Tommaso Campanella, \textit{Metaphysica}, Section I. Quoted by B.M. Bonansea, ibid., pp51, 52, 54
\textsuperscript{143} Bonansea, ibid., p120
\textsuperscript{144} ibid., p57 (further extracted from Augustine’s \textit{De Civitate Dei}, XI, 26 with additional note: “The quotation is not exactly correct, but the content is substantially the same.”)
Both Descartes’ *Discourse on Method* and Campanella’s *Metaphysica* bear striking resemblances, insofar as both philosophies attempt to solve the problems arising out of making the thinking subject the centre of philosophical speculation. Both metaphysicians dealt with the essences of things, not merely their appearances or those things not appearing immediately to the senses. Doubt, for both philosophers, was never absolute, however; rather, it was a provisional, hypothetical attitude adopted at the threshold of burgeoning philosophical systems in order to secure the firm foundations of epistemology.

Campanella seems to have developed a *fully fledged system of methodic doubt* first exerting an influence on Descartes. He also had an interest in Heraclitean thought. Campanella, before Spinoza, proposed the panpsychic notion that if anything exists it has a mind, and that this mind and matter are one, striving for self-preservation through a conatus. He did not set out to prove the existence of two separate substances (as Descartes did—*res cogitans* and *res extensa*): ‘All the parts of the material world, as well as their particles, are endowed with sense perception, which is either clear or obscure according to their need for conservation.’ The major distinction between the two philosophies is this, however: for Campanella, one’s existence already represents a secondary movement in the act of the self-knowing soul. Knowledge of things is merely the re-awakening or remembering of innate ideas (anamnesis) which are already obscurely and deeply known. This process by which memory of forms is invoked (maieutics) is purely Socratic, and so, Platonic. Thought is not the basis of the thinker’s being, as it is for Descartes, but, rather, the reverse: *I am, therefore I think.*

The human being, for Campanella, is composed of three substances: body, mind and spirit. Spirit, or as he calls it, ‘sensitive soul’, is the animating, corporeal substance which links body and mind. It is connected to the body via the blood, and so, necessarily, to the mind. It is both warm and bright and accords with the nature of the objects it both apprehends and has an appetite for. Because it is mobile, it is able to hear sounds; being bright it perceives light, etc. The sense organs are simply the passageways to spirit, and in this sense, the body has as many senses as there are objects presenting/apprehended by sense. The body does not, as according to Aristotle, have only five senses: ‘That there is no other

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145 ‘Long before Descartes had produced his famous *Discours de la méthode*, Campanella began his philosophical investigation with a *universal theoretical doubt* of all the determinations of thought...’ and ‘The French philosopher revised the doctrine that he took from Campanella and restated it in a completely new way. This statement of the methodological doubt, so used for the first time in history, prepared the way for modern idealism.’ Bonansera, *ibid.*, p49 & p65

146 Tommaso Campanella, *De Sensum Renum et Magia* (1590?). Quoted in Bonansera, *Tommasso Campanella*, *ibid.*, p67

147 Bonansera: ‘Knowledge is fundamentally knowledge of the self, either through self-presence or through self-representation of the external objects.’ *Ibid.*, p115
sense beside the five (which I take to be sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch)... 148. Yet for Campanella, radically, there is only one sensitive substance, and therefore only one sense. Spirit is corporeal to the extent that it is sensitive to bodily sensations, which contrasts with the idea of spirit being ethereal, and contained in the pneuma, inhaled and exhaled, as it is for Aristotle. 149 Sense knowledge is considered real and true, as are the objects which touch or present to sensuous being. This contrasts with memory, which is considered only a weak cognition of past sensations (but which in Husserlian phenomenology forms the very basis for his phenomenological reduction). The object presenting, also, may be the subject itself: self-presence. Ultimately, knowledge is formed through the apprehension of sense-objects. The ultimate end of intellect is the ability, through the activity of reason coupled with spirit, to apprehend the universal idea, something which man shares with the angels, and with God. Objects, present or self-present, are thus important to the extent that they form the basis of all epistemologies, and lie at the heart of metaphysics. Without the object, there is no basis for the formation of knowledge, for knowing the universal truth. Establishing truth as the telos of all worldly existence is the only possible means of gaining any real meaning for existence per se. To come to know God, for Campanella, is to exalt (immanent) existence, and to know worldly things is to get to know God. Knowledge of concrete objects represents the desire to know God, and ultimately to transcend worldly things; it represents the conformity of the concrete with the divine by application of the intellect. Ontology, generally speaking, is onto-theology.

Aristotle taught that sense-perception is the potential by which the 'form' of sensible things is able to be received—without the 'matter'.  

150 The subject is able to perceive and be moved or affected in 'the presence of a sense-object'. But perception is regarded 'in two ways, both as in potentiality and as in activity'. 151 The sense-object is spoken of in a likewise manner, as both 'in potentiality' and 'in activity'. For the perceiving subject to be moved, the sense-object had to be active, or act upon the faculty of perception. In this informational (in-form-ational) system, 'knowledge' of the object involves a certain 'unification' of subject and object: 'the sense faculty is like the actual sense-object...on being affected it becomes like and is such as what acts on it'. 152 This means that perceptive faculty has the potential to resemble the sense-object, but in perceiving an 'active' external object, it is transformed or becomes actually similar to it. In this sense, a

148 Aristotle, De Anima, op. cit., 'Book 3: Sense-perception, chapter 1: General Problems of Perception (1).', p.189
149 Aristotle, De Anima, ibid.
150 Aristotle, De Anima, ibid.
151 Ibid., p.170
152 Ibid., p.172
kind of 'coalescence' (alloiosis) takes place. For Campanella, this assimilation is possible only if the sensible substance, 'spirit', is itself corporeal and capable of modification:

If...knowledge is produced by partial transformation...then...the knowledge of external things belongs to being. In fact, just as in a total change whatever is transformed goes entirely into the nature of the transforming subject, so also in a partial change the thing transformed becomes partly the subject.

Sound can thus be considered a sense-object only as the form of something else, something 'given off' as the form of an object by which it makes itself known. It is discussed in two ways, as affecting and affected by consciousness—heard or listened to. Aristotle:

Now sound is in two ways, one in actuality, the other in potentiality....Now sound in actuality is always of something and against something and in something....the characteristics of the sound-sources are revealed in the actualised sound.

In the object-subject 'assimilation' it could be argued that perception of external things increases self-knowledge and the likelihood of attaining to truth; the knower may become similar to the known thing, and the more external things are perceived, the greater the potential for the subject to have innate knowledge of the divine or universal reawakened. For Campanella a thing must be real and concrete if it is able to activate this knowing process. But it does not in itself cause knowledge—the soul is not like the Thomistic or Aristotelian tabula rasa, but already has a confused knowledge of universal things. Knowledge of external things for him is therefore essentially the potential to develop knowledge of the universal—God—and this knowledge already inheres in the self. External things provide the means for reawakening this inherent knowledge. The intellect enables participation in the divine through sense perception.

Leibniz

G.W. von Leibniz (1646-1716) is known as the man who 'ushered in the Age of the Enlightenment' and whose theory of substances exerted considerable influence on western thinking generally. He was interested in:

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153 Ibid. Introduction, p76
155 Aristotle, *De Anima*, op. cit., 'Chapter 8: Hearing.' p176
156 *Leibniz Selections*. Charles Scribner's Sons, NY, 1951. Introduction, pX. (No editor's name given.)
providing the most satisfactory way of recording and communicating important truths, not only those of mathematics and the sciences but those of art and philosophy, morals and religion. He even thought that an aesthetic calculus constructed on the same principles as a logical calculus might help an artist in his composition...\textsuperscript{157}

Inheriting the main tenets of philosophy from the previous century, both Aristotelian and Platonic, Leibniz sought to further the possibilities of knowledge by extending the mathematical basis upon which a more truthful understanding of the world itself could be gained. This primarily involved gaining knowledge of substances which he thought reflected the structure of the entire universe, or truth in general. He said of substances: 'I believe [their] consideration a point of philosophy of the greatest importance and of the greatest fruitfulness.'\textsuperscript{158}

The impact of Enlightenment thinking was profound, but despite the advances it undoubtedly made, the development of a highly delimiting science of objects also reduced the possibilities for understanding the world in more general terms. As Martin Jay suggests:

\begin{quote}
[L]ater Enlightenment thinkers had assimilated man to nature in a manner that made man into an object, just as nature had been objectified in the new science. In their eyes, both men and nature were no more than machines. As a result, the assumption that nature repeated itself eternally [outside of time] was projected onto man, whose historical capacity for development, so closely bound to his subjectivity, was denied. For all its progressive intentions, this 'scientific' view of man implied the eternal return of the present.\textsuperscript{159} (My italics).
\end{quote}

Leibniz's thought influenced the nineteenth century philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, whose own theory of representation was largely a measure of the degree to which he resisted Leibniz's ideas. Schopenhauer said:

\begin{quote}
While Leibniz clearly felt that the object is conditioned by the subject, he was yet unable to get rid of the idea of objects existing by themselves, independently of their reference to the subject, that is, independently of their being represented. In the first place he assumed a world of objects in themselves which is exactly like, and runs parallel to, the world of the representation, and yet is connected therewith not directly, but only
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{157} Ruth Lydia Shaw, \textit{Leibniz}, Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1954. p21

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Leibniz Selections}, op. cit., Part III, 'Theory of Knowledge and Metaphysics', section 6, 'Excerpts From the New Essays On The Human Understanding [1704]'. 'Chapter XIII'. p422

\textsuperscript{159} Quoted in Joseph Kosuth, 'The Artist As Anthropologist' (1975), \textit{Art After Philosophy and After}. Ed. Gabriele Guerio, MIT Press, 1993. p108
outwardly by means of a *harmonia praestabilita* [pre-established harmony]. This is obviously the most superfluous thing on earth.\(^{100}\)

Schopenhauer developed a theory of the human will and representation, and explained by making use of the analogy of sound in the form of melody. This analogy will be analysed in the next section but one. An outline of Leibniz’s theory of substances is given below.

Leibniz’s substances, indivisible and whole, mirror God perfectly. Representing God’s omnipotence and expressing ‘...all that happens in the universe, past, present and future’\(^ {101}\) ‘individual’ substances are like genetic elements; they are expressions which themselves express. Primary substance—God—is ‘particular’ and expressive, and individual substances, each having their own expressive forms (attributes), are expressions of it.

Though relative to perception, extensivities (height, depth, etc) do not correspond to the soul in the same way as individual substances do. Nor do extensivities constitute substances; only expressions of substances—attributes—do. Attributes are not the same thing as extensivities, therefore. Individual substances, attributes of the ‘primary’ substance—God—are therefore not simple extensivities but the expression of final causes (entelechy), full of life and purpose. These individual, active substances, themselves expressing and expressed through their constitutive attributes, are called ‘monads’. Monads are also imitative of the omnipotence of God, the particular, original or primary substance.

The omniscience of God is such that his ‘view’ (his expression, which is also ‘truth’) constitutes the plurality of monads which express the universe. Simply by looking, God expresses and creates. It is only the judgements of humans and never their perceptions which are deceptive ‘...since God’s vision is always true, our perceptions are always true...’\(^ {102}\). The expressions of monads (independent, save for their dependence on God) correspond to perception. Perspectival variations really only signal differences in the measure or degree of perception taking place. What appears to be the action of one substance upon another is really only the degree to which one substance’s expression obscures the perceived degree of the expression of another. There is no real action of one substance upon another. Perception, in this system, is linked to substance, and therefore to truth.

\(^{100}\) Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, op. cit., p51


\(^{102}\) Ibid. Chapter XIV. p309
...the things proceed from him; if one may be allowed to say, that he perceives them; which ought not be said...for else it seems to signify that the things act upon him. They exist, and are known to him, because he understands and wills them; and because what he wills is the same as what exists.\textsuperscript{163}

In other words, monads, willed and understood by God through his expressions, are not attributes as such, at least not in the same manner in which the attributes of monads both express and constitute monads—they are the expressions of God but they are involved in their own expression. God is primary and constitutive of himself in a unity, differing only in himself. He cannot but express, but not in the manner of a second-level, productive expression.

Conversely, expression as production is grounded in a prior expression. God expresses himself in himself constituting \textit{natura naturans}, before expressing himself through producing within himself \textit{natura naturata}.\textsuperscript{164}

For Leibniz, therefore, to know an object is ultimately to come to know God. An idea simply emanates from the soul, and is not an immediate object of thought, which implies that it is expressive of the presence of some essence. Thoughts form themselves, but are activated into 'reminiscence' by external means, the contemplation of forms. This again corresponds exactly to Plato's (or Socrates') notion of anamnesis or maieutics, the theory of the existence of innate ideas, which Campanella also held as true. But nothing enters the mind from the outside, properly speaking, because one substance, Leibniz said, never acts upon another. Monads are individual. 'Nothing can be taught of us which we have not already in our minds the idea. This idea is as it were the material out of which the thought will form itself.'\textsuperscript{165} Leibniz's philosophy of the monad, of an active individual 'subject', is, therefore, deeply speculative as well as representational.

God is the only external cause which directly comes into contact with the soul and which affects being's perceptions. Monads are expressions of the 'particular' or the primary substance, and the contemplation of attributes or substantial forms enables the soul to be activated into reminiscence, and, so, to work its way toward the contemplation of God.


\textsuperscript{165} \textit{Leibniz Selections}, op. cit. Part III, 'Theory of Knowledge and Metaphysics', section 3, 'Discourse On Metaphysics [1686]', Chapter XXVII. p328
The question remains as to the nature of substance itself, which is enmeshed by Leibniz in explications on their form. What is the monad which expresses? What is this thing which is an expressive, ‘perceived’ thing of God’s? Leibniz goes only as far as sufficient reason permits, or as far as is adequate to the stating of an idealistic objective. The naming of properties of a substance of perfection and truth can not in itself offer proof of non-contradictory wholeness, as via a monad. Gilles Deleuze:

Until one gives a real definition, bearing on the essence of a thing rather than on propria, one remains among the vagaries of what is merely conceived, without relation to the reality of the thing as it is outside our understanding.  

Leibniz does not provide a real definition of God, but develops and extends the idea that the objects in relation to perception, objects of contemplation, awaken latent ideas which move the energetic centre—the monad—into closer harmony with an originary, expressive act of God. Attributes, expressive forms, are indexical; the prime possibilities are those which lie beyond knowledge, as knowledge is based on an understanding or contemplation of attributes only. Attributes perhaps only have a symbolic relation to primary ‘structures’, the presence of which are only, for Leibniz, implied and are unknowable. The power of the sign, moreover, is based entirely on its indicative capacity, involving an unquestioning assumption of the presence of something which underlies and is originary—substance. Leibniz said: ‘Let no one be afraid that the contemplation of signs will lead us away from things. On the contrary, it will guide us to the innermost nature of things’. Substance, further, is linked to the notion of truth. What Leibniz does not do is question the presence of God, the origin of all things. Contemplation of objects, (expressive forms or attributes) is for him, as contemplation of eidetic forms was for Plato, contemplation of the possibility of God’s revelation, and the full expression of innate ideas. Movement into closer harmony with an expressive act of God through the development of innate ideas is all that is possible and necessary in order to prove the existence of God. But Leibniz’s God seems little more than a ‘preestablished...inherent necessity’, which avoids the question of the objective unity of the world, of how the individualised monads cohere and coalesce in infinity. Leibniz’s finite individual, harmonised by God, constructs the world according to human principles and seeks to completely dominate ‘outer reality’. The Enlightenment, ‘ushered

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166 Leibniz says of naming: ‘Truths do not depend upon names and are not arbitrary as some of our new philosophies think.’ Leibniz, op. cit., p20
167 Deleuze, Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza, op. cit. Part One, chapter IV, p73
168 Discourse on Metaphysics, paragraph 24, quoted in Leibniz, op. cit., p20
169 A more exhaustive analysis of Leibniz’s (and others) philosophical thought regarding substance is provided in Roger Woolhouse’s Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz. The Concept of Substance in Seventeenth Century Metaphysics. Routledge, London and NY, 1993
170 Taylor, Hegel, op. cit., p526
in\textsuperscript{171} by Leibniz, 'directs against metaphysics a withering scepticism'\textsuperscript{172}—a metaphysics which sought to unite thought and being—and witnesses the arrival of a full-blown representational subjectivism.

Schopenhauer: Music and Representation

In this section the impact of representational thinking upon the question of the function and 'whatness' of music in the thought of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) will be looked at. Schopenhauer’s principle work The World as Will and Representation\textsuperscript{173} seems particularly appropriate to the analysis of sound, in that his thinking around music centred specifically upon its relation to the listening subject. Sound, organised as music, provides a good example of the development of the notion of its articulation as an 'object'. The emergence of more recent ideas regarding sound as an object may be attributed to this representational philosophy and demonstrate the retention of this thought in sound arts practices despite the emergence and proliferation of post-representational discourses. Schopenhauer’s metaphysics went a little further than pure representationalism, however, struggling with the conception of the nature of representation itself and so bearing some influence on the development of phenomenology.

Schopenhauer’s metaphysics conceives of the world existing in two fundamental ways. Firstly, it exists primarily and inwardly as will, and secondly, outwardly and derivatively, as representation. The individual subject exists in space and time, acquiring knowledge through senses of those phenomena which also exist in space and time. These phenomena, objects of perception presenting to individual subjects, are representations, responses to sense data. The object (phenomenon, representation) exists only as a mental picture of the knowing subject. The object is not determined by the nature of the object itself. The object, moreover, is conceived of materially as extended in space and time, reflecting the form in which perceptual experience is itself realised, further reflecting the individual’s ‘inalienable nature’. The entire world becomes a representation, and all changes in its state are caused by a precedent law of causality. But the subject also knows something called the ‘knowing subject’. This ‘knowing subject’ does not exist in space and time, and there is something ‘inner’ to it. Likewise, the phenomenal object, the representation, has something ‘inner’ which a subject has no access to—at least not directly. Because of the existence of the relation of the subject to the ‘knowing subject’, access to something beyond phenomenal representation, beyond the laws of causality, and which does not exist in space and time, is possible. This represents a way ‘in’ to the

\textsuperscript{171} Leibniz Selections, op. cit., pXI
\textsuperscript{172} Taylor, Hegel, op. cit., p526
represented object (a human body or any other external object) which bypasses its assessment as a phenomenal object. This inward passage reflects the primariness of will itself, from which phenomenal representation itself derives.

The ‘knowing subject’ is the experience of embodiment, not as object in the world, but as subject to changes from within, such as pleasure or pain. This is an immediate awareness, not thematised as a space/time phenomenon, but purely given in time, temporally. This is called an ‘intentional’ act, but which should not be confused with Husserl’s notion of ‘intentionality’, described in the next section. It refers more to self-consciousness, not of movement of the body, but of immediate (un-mediated) awareness. So, everything in the world has its ‘inner’ nature, and also a ‘will’. The world is will and representation. Representation is called the objectivity of the will. The will is experienced as object, phenomenon or representation. Further, the more ‘adequate’ the objectification of the will, the closer it resembles the Platonic Idea. This situation is problematised by Malcolm Budd as follows:

[A] Platonic Idea, a grade of the objectification of the will, differs from the inner nature of the world—the will itself—in only one respect: it is a representation, an object for a subject; it is not, however, an object with a location in space and time. But how is this possible: how can something be an object for a subject and yet be free from the constraints of the subject’s forms of representation?174

This adequation of the objectification of will involves the ‘loss’ of the individual subject’s individuality, in the pure, ‘special’ contemplation of the perceived object, disregarding its position in space and time, experiencing it as this ‘knowing subject’. The perceiving individual loses his individuality and becomes the pure, will-less, timeless knowing subject; and the object becomes in his perception, so to speak, the Idea it embodies. The Idea is in a certain sense an object for a subject. But object and subject in this case have equal weight. In fact they can no longer be distinguished. For the object is nothing but the representation of the subject and the consciousness of the subject is completely filled by the object represented....The world as will disappears and the world as representation alone remains.175

Contemplation of music, for Schopenhauer, yields this experience up in its most full and immediate manifestation and realisation. But there is a direct relation between the will and

175 Ibid., p83-4
music here—no mediation through the Platonic Ideas. He says: 'Music is a direct copy of the innermost essence of the world, the will'\textsuperscript{176}. Music is free from the phenomenal world, is not an 'object' mediated through grades of the Ideas, indirectly representing the will. But the paradox with the assessment of music as the immediate experience of will lies with the understanding of the will as being that which cannot itself be represented, for will can only be experienced as an object, a representation. The spurious solution lies for Schopenhauer with the assessment of melody, reflecting the temporal aspect of experience, anticipating the Husserlian notion of retention, primal impression and protention. As I have later stated: "...melody is constituted as an object in order to instantiate the internal time consciousness, the 'immanent temporal object' of the intentional subject". Music, if it cannot represent, can neither present as a phenomenon, as this, too, would itself constitute a representation. It hovers somewhere in between both, a close counterpart to the essential form and features of the will. Listening is a formal analogy of the will itself.

In music the 'inner side' of man, and also of the world in general, finds its most profound and complete artistic expression. And here, Schopenhauer holds, we have the answer to our question of why we respond to music in the manner we do, of why we feel that it embodies a 'truth' which we cannot, however, explain by treating musical works as striving to represent or otherwise signify particular elements in our perceptual experience. For what music actually gives us is nothing more or less than the 'secret history of our will', and in melody itself we find the extracted 'quintessence' of the innumerable strivings and emotions that make up and colour the inner life of each one of us; the very character of melody—the constant digression from and return to the keynote—reflects the eternal nature of the human will, which strives, is satisfied, and ever strives anew.\textsuperscript{177}

The shift in focus from representational discourse to the axiomatics of phenomenological experience carries with it the possibility and potential to re-define responsibilities for practicing sound artists. It has also made possible the problematisation of the relationship between the subject and the object, or between artist and art product. However, as seen in Schopenhauer's philosophy, and as will be seen in an analysis of phenomenology, the question which lies at the heart of this thinking remains one of ontological volition, a description of essences and identities, around which the certainty of knowledge reasserts its iron will. Questions of more radical nature, departing from the epistemological and tending more to the ethical and temporal/existential are disregarded or bypassed. It is through phenomenology however, that the possibility of posing such striking questions first

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., p86
becomes a possibility. It is necessary, therefore, to have some basic and general understanding of phenomenology.
Part Two: Phenomenology

Husserl

An analysis of the ideal status of sound in Husserlian phenomenology gives an indication of the way in which the notion of objects has in twentieth century thought been transformed and expanded. Phenomenological conception of objects differs outwardly from traditional philosophical conceptions where, generally speaking, they exist as discrete, extended and enduring ‘forms’, having some material and tangible content or other, existing insofar as manifesting as the representations of knowing or conceptualising subjects.

Husserlian time-consciousness\textsuperscript{178} exemplifies, for the phenomenologist, the most general structure of conscious life: intentionality\textsuperscript{179}. Intentionality may be described as a constituting act in which the contents of consciousness are scientifically examined but in which a representation, something ‘in’ the ‘mind’ of the thinker, is no longer regarded as the objective criterion of reality. Intentional ‘forms’ are the contents of a consciousness which is, however, no longer a consciousness standing apart from the thing it surveys. Consciousness is consciousness of. Intentionality makes possible a description of how temporal objects appear in the time-constituting acts doing the intending, and the constitution of these acts themselves. All objects appear, some in succession, such as sound, and others which ‘endure’, such as stone. Each ‘takes its own time’, but does so for a consciousness which is itself constituted temporally. The main point of concern for the phenomenologist is the idea of the ‘now’ phase of temporality, but there the fullness of perceptual presence recedes: ‘...since the now is a mode relative to past and future, one could not even claim that a genuine awareness of a now-point would be constituted...’\textsuperscript{180}. Elapsed phases are preserved in ‘retentions’ to provide the awareness of temporally extended objects. If this were not the case, sound would not appear successive, but (in a Cagean fantasy) all at once. To ‘appear’ as an object, sound must do so as a past event, as a discrete, historical fact. Its constitution via memory involves its apprehension as a form of evanescent ‘material’ (the acoustical ‘envelope’ of sound is well known) enduring in the intending act which is itself ‘immanent’ and ‘temporal’. For a phenomenologist, sound is an ‘extended temporal object’ (extended through time) but is constituted in an act of memory. The composer Iannis Xenakis takes up this latter point:


\textsuperscript{179} The term ‘intentionality’ was used by Husserl’s teacher, Brentano, who modified it after borrowing it from Aristotle. This issue is taken up by Hugh Lawson-Tancred in the Introduction to his translation of \textit{De Anima in Aristotle. De Anima (On the Soul)}, op. cit., pp.102-104

\textsuperscript{180} Brough, ‘The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness’, op. cit., p.272
What is time for a musician?...In truth, we seize it only with the help of perceptive reference events, thus indirectly, and on condition that these reference events be inscribed somewhere, do not disappear without leaving a trace. It would suffice that they exist in our brain, in our memory.\textsuperscript{181} 

This necessitates the preservation of the idea of originality or anteriority. The temporal flux depends upon the notion of movement and differentiation, and so depends upon the conception of 'formal' memory as original or 'anterior'. Synchrony, the Saussurian paradigmatic construct opposed to diachrony—history, the passage of time—implies the suspension of time, 'a given moment': 

Each language...has a wholly valid existence apart from its history, as a system of sounds issuing from the lips of those who speak it now, and whose speech in fact constructs and constitutes the language...in its present form.\textsuperscript{182} 

Despite being differentiated and relativised against a structural whole ('in language there are only differences without positive terms\textsuperscript{183}'), the negative as a 'now' may not in fact be experientially possible. The 'now' is preserved as an idealistic construct. Even at the level of the semiotic, the indexical or iconic (referential) aspect of the synchronic, the separation or difference of signifier from signified, is open to a universal time sequencing. 'Since language is fundamentally an auditory system, the relationship between signifier and signified unfolds during a passage of time\textsuperscript{184}. A sound as a memory is not simply a positively charged, formal thing: it only has 'meaning' insofar as it sits in a negative relation to some other 'absent' signifier, another sound say, or another memory. Also, any 'individual' sound is made up of a complex bundle of features which gives it its characteristic timbre; it is itself self-differentiating.

If the now-sound of language, the performative 'parole' aspect, is that which appears or manifests as 'the small part of the iceberg\textsuperscript{185} which is supported by the structure of the langue, and language, according to Hawkes, is 'judged to be "a form and not a substance"...a structure which has modes\textsuperscript{186}' then the existence of substance is always necessarily implied. The motifs of sameness and difference, the traditional, philosophical

\textsuperscript{181} 'Concerning Time', from Perspectives of New Music. Trans. Roberta Brown. Vol. 27, No.1, Winter, 1989, p87
\textsuperscript{182} Terence Hawkes, Structuralism and Semiotics. Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1978, p20
\textsuperscript{183} From Ferdinand de Saussure's Cours de Linguistique Générale (Fontana, NY, 1974) quoted in Structuralism and Semiotics, ibid., p28
\textsuperscript{184} Structuralism and Semiotics, ibid., p25
\textsuperscript{185} ibid., p28
\textsuperscript{186} ibid., p21
(particularly Aristotelian) binary opposition, remains current and indispensable to structuralist thought, and within sign-theory generally.

This relation or set of relations tends, however, to a confusion between time and space, that is, when a notion of time is formalised as a series of sequences in a relation of contiguity, as a discrete set of 'time events' relativised in terms of 'spatial' differences. The confusion can be partially overcome with the development of an expanded notion of 'anteriority'. Conceived of as being itself indeterminate, never wholly unified or fully self-present, the blurring of the 'originary' point breaks up the possibility of the differentiation upon which identity is able to be constructed and preserved. The idea of dissolution of the 'original' leads to interesting, though complex problems. As Rosalind Krauss puts it:

[If] the signifier cannot be reified; that its objecthood, its quiddity, is only a fiction; that every signifier is itself the transparent signified of an already given decision to carve it out as the vehicle of a sign—from this perspective there is no opacity, but only a transparency that opens onto a dizzying fall into a bottomless system of reduplication.¹⁸⁷

All of which is not to say that sound constituted in an act of memory as an idealistic construct or representation (as the composer Xenakis would have it¹⁸⁸) is all that there is to it. An attempt to situate sound, phenomenologically or conceptually speaking, within a more complex network of temporal relations, may provide a useful means of resisting the conceptual and figurative reduction of sound into the ideal realm of the visual. Xenakis simplifies this set of relations by making an analogy between sound and photography, providing himself with the means for extending his conception of rhythm ('temporal architectures') along the way:

[In the snapshot, the spatial relations of the entities, the forms that their contiguities assume, the structures, are essentially outside time (hors-temps). The flux of time does not intervene in any way. That is exactly what happens with the traces that the phenomenal entities have left in our memory. Their geographical map is outside time.]¹⁸⁹

This posits sound, constituted in memory as an isolated, spatial 'geographical' entity, outside of time. But, to repeat the point I made earlier, this situation is in a sense impossible; 'the photographic image signifies itself and something else—it becomes a

¹⁸⁷ From 'The Originality of the Avant-Garde'. The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths, op. cit., p161.
¹⁸⁸ 'One could say that every temporal schema, preconceived or postconceived, is a representation outside time of the temporal flux in which the phenomena, the entities, are inscribed.' From Xenakis, 'Concerning Time', op. cit., p89
¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p89
signifier remotivated within the system of a new frame'. As an 'itself' the photograph, or 'snapshot' as Xenakis prefers, must sit in meaningful relation to something else, all of which involves the passage of time. All this, as difficult and as complex as it is, still comes under the general heading, in philosophical parlance, as 'representation'.

Husserl thematised the temporal shift as *retention, primal impression and protention*, representing the comportment of an act of intentionality, each one relativised in terms of their differences from one another—none stand alone. Retention refers to more immediate recovery of the 'now' primary phase of 'original' consciousness, and is distinguished from 'memory' as such. This 'now' phase is in any case never actually a 'now' insofar as it is only ever able to be constituted as such in the moment of its disappearance. 'Now' equals its anticipation and its retention as a 'just past'. (William James, the pragmatist philosopher, called this the 'specious present'.) Intentionality constituted along a temporal act breaks away from the traditional philosophical notion of 'representation' (an object for a subject, represented in consciousness), and this is where consciousness, as such, drops out of the picture. The intending act is experienced—the 'immanent temporal object'—and the extended, temporal object is perceived in a 'marginal, non-thematising way'—together, harmoniously. But Husserl suggests 'that the phenomenologist is not concerned with objective time or temporal objects at all, but solely with the acts and contents positioned on the side of intending consciousness', which seems, ironically, to indicate a return to the subject, its reconstitution in a transcendent mode, involving the surpassing of the (ideally) extended temporal object, sound. But as Kierkegaard suggests: 'if an existing individual were really able to transcend himself, the truth would be for him something final and complete; but where is the point at which he is outside himself?'

The flow of consciousness seems to depend for the proof of its existence upon its being differentiated from consciousness of what it experiences, i.e. sound: 'The evidence that consciousness of a tonal process ['extended temporal object'], a melody, exhibits a succession even as I hear it is such as to make every doubt or denial appear senseless...'. Melody is constituted as an object in order to instantiate the internal time consciousness, the 'immanent temporal object' of the intentional subject. Both objects, the immanent temporal object (consciousness) and the extended temporal object (sound),

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191 'The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness', op. cit., p275
192 Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p176 quoted in *Deconstruction in Context. Literature and Philosophy*, op. cit., p174
depend for their existence upon one another in a relation of sameness (temporality), but also of difference.\textsuperscript{194}

The question of origins here again raises itself—both in terms of the distribution of sounds from an otherwise material source (existing in what Hegel called the 'mechanical sphere'), and in terms of the originary 'intuition' of space/time itself. The question concerning the 'natural' origin of time is raised by Husserl, but is effectively erased: 'We are indifferent to the question of the empirical genesis'\textsuperscript{195}. Husserl is more concerned with reality as that which involves intentionality. A sound becomes an object for Intentionality insofar as it is apprehended in memory. It has otherwise expired. Where sound is given in duration, as a 'now', it has also receded. The 'now' phase at which intentionality is directed is considered 'originary', but as a constant flux of 'originality'. The beginning of a sound is, in a sense, also its end. Its beginning is, therefore, also the beginning of a profound complexity.

The whole interval of duration of the sound or "the" sound in its extension is something dead, so to speak, a no longer living production, a structure animated by no productive point of the now. This structure, however, is continually modified and sinks back into emptiness (Leere).\textsuperscript{196}

The reproduction of sound here requires its expiration; the duration of sound is entirely an analogy of presence. A purely physical, extended object often retains the space it occupies, stationary or not; sound completely vanishes, its duration involves its recession: 'The sound itself is the same, but 'in the way that' it appears, the sound is completely different'.\textsuperscript{197} The point made earlier concerning sound's built in 'obsolescence' (Introduction, p6) would seem here to find some theoretical support.

As a phenomenological object, sound appears, William James would say, as 'speciously present'. Origin equals 'primary impression'—which recedes into the obscurity of consciousness. Meaning is generated via a memory, a retention of retention, suspended in consciousness as a kind of 'now'. 'Constantly flowing, the impressional consciousness passes over into an ever fresh retentional consciousness'\textsuperscript{198}. Each 'origin' is the modification of an earlier primal impression. Sound is, in a sense, a relation of pure difference. Its 'origin' exists in or as difference, which is itself constituted by an activity

\textsuperscript{194} It is perhaps significant that this apparent paradox is precisely the figure Heidegger employs in the development of his notion of 'true appearance', where the 'Same' is that space (abgrund) in which truth (aletheia) is born. What manifests as true is that which is revealed but which is at the same time covered up. This point is taken up later in this thesis.

\textsuperscript{195} 'The Lecture on Internal Time-Consciousness from the year 1905', op. cit., p278

\textsuperscript{196} ibid., p279

\textsuperscript{197} ibid., p279

\textsuperscript{198} ibid., p280
regarding it as existing in a specific ontological state, that is, as an object of interpretation. The sound ends only when the perception of its end occurs. This is called ‘silence’, but it consists only in relation to all those other sounds thematised by consciousness, as a flux, a continuum, filling in the ‘gap’.

Sound exists as a phenomenological object only as a retention of sorts; it is never a ‘true appearance’ enduring in space/time for apperceptive consciousness. Sound, as an ‘appearance’ is, neither, the simple unification of sensation with retention; it only ‘appears’ as something transcendent, recalled, ‘presented’, or constituted as a unity (i.e. as a song, tune or melody) through memory. But at the same time, it bears on the constitution of the flow of consciousness itself, and so also bears the capacity to influence the configuration of thought\(^1\). The flux of consciousness, recalling a past event, also recalls its own temporal flux. The flux constitutes the flux itself\(^2\). Sound, in this set of philosophical terms, is an object insofar as it persists in memory, not simply as a retention, but as the retention of a retention, which also involves an awareness of the retention of retention. As such, its capacity, when harnessed and distributed, to construct consciousness is powerful. Further analysis of phenomenological thought will be made in order to stress the persistence of the theme of presence in this strand of philosophy, and also to highlight the influence that earlier philosophies have had on it. A more rigorous critique of the theme of presence will be made at a later stage.

**James and Husserl: The Absolute Sphere of Pure Experience**

For William James (1842-1910) every philosophical distinction, even that between subject and object, thought and thing, had caused complicated theories of perception to arise which bore little relation to lived experience. Only a return to the world of perceptual experience could form, he thought, the ground upon which truths could themselves be developed. He turned against the notion that the acquisition of knowledge was contingent upon some mysterious force—such as ‘soul’—existing ‘beyond’ the world of experience or experience of the flux of phenomena, criticising rationalist and empirical philosophies for having reduced the objective world to a mass of atomised particulars. Rationalism, he felt, trying to resuscitate classical empiricism without criticising its basic presuppositions, had also looked ‘elsewhere for an explanation of the elementary organisation of experience’\(^3\).

\(^{1}\) This point was previously made in this thesis in the analysis of sound in Attali’s theory of noise—‘Preliminary Remarks’, p10

\(^{2}\) This is different from Heraclitean flux, which does not recall anything at all; Heraclitean flux is pure, unconditional Becoming: ‘Everything flows; nothing remains. [Everything moves; nothing is still. Everything passes away; nothing lasts.]’ *Heracliteos and Diogenes*, op. cit., p14

Two factors constitute Jamesean reality: the selective interest of consciousness and an ‘absolute sphere of givenness’—the passively pre-structured flow of experience. This absolute sphere, James says, antedates every entitative distinction, and is therefore not reducible to the ‘natural attitude’. Similarly, Husserl anticipates a return to this ‘life world’ but only through a monumental and complex scientific plan, the ‘transcendental reduction’. James, by contrast, holds that one must go straight to it. What is significant to both philosophers, however, is the special or essential constitution they give to the notion of ‘conscience’. For both, it is given a unique ontological status, and forms the first principle upon which all meaning is derived. For James, it is known as the world of pure experience; for Husserl the ‘phenomenal field’. As Stevens summarises:

Both philosophers reacted against the tendency to view the problem of knowledge in terms of a correspondence between events within consciousness and an “objective” fact-world. The only accessible field of investigation is the absolutely given domain of phenomena, or in James’ terminology, the world of pure experience. 202

For James, theoretical (‘seeing’) problems often falsified the nature of experience: theoretical questions are revealed as false ‘when entitative differences [the differences between the discrete objects of ‘natural’ perception] are replaced by relational or functional differences within a common sphere of pure experiences’ 203. James, like Husserl, resisted the attempt to transform the data of the ‘flow of experience’ into a series of subjective ‘facts’ which might be studied in the manner of factual, empirical sciences such as psychology. James insisted that psychological facts are not experienced, but the world itself is. Husserl’s ‘epoché’ was an effort to break out of the ‘natural attitude’ (the knower and known object duality) which, for him, falsified the approach to the problem of consciousness and reality. In the ‘natural attitude’, he said, ‘real objects instigate events in consciousness in much the same way as one material thing acts upon another’ 204—an efficient causality. A subject is lost in this equation because it is regarded in the same way as any other discrete entity of the world. Husserl, with the development of the epoché attempted to make possible the discovery of the ‘true nature of consciousness’, not something thought of as ‘already-out-there’. Methodical doubt, such as Descartes’ which also ‘brackets off’, only does so temporarily or provisionally until certitude is able to be established. By contrast, the epoché is constantly applied, exposing ‘nothing more nor nothing less than the fullness of the stream of consciousness’ 205. The only ontological status for phenomena is given in respect to appearances, requiring nothing ‘beyond’ them, or transcendent, to verify their

202 Ibid., p45
203 Ibid., p15
204 Ibid., p43
205 Ibid., p43
existence. The structuration of knowledge originates, therefore, in phenomenal appearances. The 'natural attitude', unless bracketed off, prevents the realisation of the region of absolute 'being'. This is the cornerstone of Husserl's science of phenomenology: the 'self-contained system of being' into which 'nothing can penetrate and from which nothing can escape'\textsuperscript{206} is made the absolute, first principle\textsuperscript{207}.

James attempts to avoid metaphysical axioms in his later writing, especially in regard to the 'nature' of consciousness, that is, in the equation 'the mind knowing and the thing known'. He moves, like Husserl, from behaviourist psychology to 'Radical Empiricism', asserting the primacy of pure experience which moves upward through an awareness of self or subjective states. The personal, unifying principle of consciousness is premature to the flow of the experience. For James, consciousness is where thought 'goes on'. For the infant, thought is impersonal and through a gradual process of discovering its own body as the focal point of experience it appropriates the stream or flow as its own.

\begin{quote}
Only new-born babes, or man, in a semi-coma from sleep, drugs, illness or blows, may be assumed to have an experience pure in the literal sense of a \textit{that} which is not yet definitely a \textit{what}...\textsuperscript{208}
\end{quote}

The return to the world of pure experience uncovers a world of primary perception able to be considered in abstraction from the selective organisation of conception or intellectual activity. The perceptual sphere is made obscure by the imposition of meaning. Husserl talks about a return to this world of pure experience, but this necessitates the structuring of a disciplined technique. His strategy is called 'archaeology'; the method involves digging beneath the layers of conceptual organisation to recuperate the field of perceptual experience.

For James, all objects are posited as a means of organising the flow of experience in a coherent manner, and are set against an ever expanding backdrop or horizon which is called 'reality'. This figure/ground relation infers the selectivity of consciousness—interpretation through 'pragmatism'. What is considered meaningful is that \textbf{which} is actively constituted, and this process is analysed below.


\textsuperscript{207} Husserl's 'nothing', however, is the corollary of 'something', without which 'something' cannot be said to exist. This means that the self-contained system of being also must contain 'nothing', which 'is' both within it and, at the same time, without it. Nothing is able, therefore, to both penetrate and escape from it. (It is interesting to compare this equation to Parmenides' notion of Being outlined in Section 1 of this thesis.)

\textsuperscript{208} William James, \textit{Essays In Radical Empiricism}. NY, Longmans, Green & Co., 1907. p19
For James 'sensible totals' exist, but these are considered neither separate nor self-enclosed, that is, they have no boundary or actual limits. What is able to be identified is done so by the selective application of 'attention'. The pre-structured perceptual field is complemented by the discernment of consciousness, and this organises 'patterns' along an hierarchical axis which extends from the sphere of primitive sensation up to the zone where highly complex conceptualisations occur. What is real, however, is never able to be determined by an 'apartness' from conscious life. In this sense, James' thought may be said to be, in part, Platonic. But truth, for James, is a matter of subjective creation; contrasting with rationalism, for which reality is 'ready made and complete for all eternity', pragmatism '...is still in the making...'. Conceptualism is considered more superficial than the sphere of pure experience. The plasticity of experiential data is gauged only by shaping reality according to subjective interests. There is no absolute reality, or absolute truth behind anything; experience compel us to manufacture meaningful 'reals'. The emergence of the reality horizon 'becomes a pragmatic criterion for measuring the validity of new conceptual systems, and for recognising and situating the world of imagination, dream and folly'. What is constituted as real is a unique source of absolute givenness provided by the selectivity of consciousness.

Only by abstraction can a sphere of pure sensation be isolated. A field of sensation requires the devising of an imaginative technique. In infancy, according to James, light and sound are the infant, they are neither 'here' nor 'there', 'true' nor 'false': no judgements are passed. The sensible totals, however, are filtered through the sense organs, limiting the experience to sensation. Consciousness 'focuses' on this or that, or upon one transitive relation, relegating all others to the fringe. Selectivity accounts for the phenomenon of constancy, and this is where sensation and perception interrelate. Perception has the function of formulating knowledge, having degrees of complication. Sensations gradually develop into perceptions within a widening framework of relationships. The exploration of fringes around a sensible total is a stage in 'getting to know', or setting a context. Truth is contingent upon the extent rather than the quality of knowledge, and to that extent it is arbitrary and subjective.

To be able to identify recurrent features within the world of pure experience enables meaning to be processed. Constancy and repetition, in phenomenology and Radical Empiricism, is fundamental to the formulation of knowledge. Sameness, which is a conceptual construct or synthesising activity of consciousness, involves both the exploration of fringes and 'focusing' on that which recurs. Constancy and repetition depend upon each

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209 William James, Pragmatism: A New Name For Some Old Ways Of Thinking. NY, Longmans, Green & Co., 1907, p257
210 Stevens, James and Husserl, op. cit., p25
other, or complement one other, like perception and conception. Conception is possible through almost exclusive attention to recognising relational, repetitive patterning. But conception returns to the flow of experience, which is fundamental and vital. Conception, for James, must already be within perception, therefore, for it enables the distinction between fringe and focus. Perception allows an indefinite number of perspectival views of the same object. In conception, clarity is gained but the richness of perception is lost. Concepts allow for reflection and manipulation of experience according to practicalities. Perceptualism is given primacy over conceptualism because it indicates `the deeper features of reality’\textsuperscript{211}, but the deeper features of reality are entirely based on the notion of sameness.

Conceptualism classifies and establishes a unified system of meaning. To name the object is to come to know it and to locate it in a relational, epistemological framework. This conceptualism, organised through the accumulation of meaning, must, James says, be counterbalanced with a `passion’ for the complex detail of the sphere of perception, or `knowledge by acquaintance’. This `passion’, he says, prefers `...any amount of incoherence, abruptness, and fragmentariness...to an abstract way of conceiving things that, while it simplifies them, dissolves away at the same time their concrete fullness’\textsuperscript{212}. The theory of psychic fringes was a reaction to the empirical notion of objects existing only in isolation or as a succession of discrete entities. James claimed that psychic fringes were themselves continuous, like a stream. An image of a chain or train was for James an inadequate model of reality as it did not indicate a flow.

In a descriptive, empirical analysis of sound, visual imagery is often employed or, equally, an adjective or a simile (`it sounds like...’; `it reminds me of...’; `it is the sound of a...’; `it is a...’, etc.). This indicates a propensity to apprehend sonic phenomena or acoustic/phonic experience in terms of objectifiable, empirically observable `matter’, something conceptually graspable. Sound is heard, then conceptualised as having presented in an ideal, original way (`first’ heard, then conceptualised). To place this within the context of arts practice and theory, the writer John Conomos says:

\begin{quote}
Given [Hill’s] background as a sculptor, what we see and hear concretised...is the foregrounding of an epistemological, formal and ontological exploration of sound. The unmistakable radicality of Hill’s project of electronic image making lies in its sustained post-structuralist emphasis on giving material form to sound.\textsuperscript{213}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{211} ibid., p30
\textsuperscript{212} William James, \textit{The Will To Believe, and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy}. NY, Longmans, Green & Co., 1904. p66. Quoted in \textit{James and Husserl}, ibid., p31
\textsuperscript{213} ‘Verbal Executions’. An essay on the video art of Gary Hill in \textit{PHOTOFILE} \textnumero 35 (May, 1992) p36.
This indicates the problem of subsuming sound under the mark of the visual, the attempt to frame sound within the order of concrete categories. A globalising visualism, in a turning a blind eye, would seek to regard sound as a discrete unit, or a chain of units, even as a discrete part of a relational pattern or Jamesian ‘flux’. As Conomos adds:

The feature[s] immediately discernible in...Hill’s [works is the]...main preoccupation with the contradictory clash that exists between sight and language and the underlying theoretical and formal objective to name the unnameable. \(^{214}\)

But what of that which appears as a sudden contrast, such as one of Edmund Burke’s ‘sublime’ episodes\(^{215}\)? Does a sudden contrast make what stands out discrete? James says a loud explosion as a genuine interruption is superficial—it is not a total rupture in the flow:

...a period of relative silence may be suddenly broken up by a clap of thunder, but our perception of the prior state of silence flows into and mingles with our perception of the thunder: “what we hear when thunder crashes is not thunder pure, but thunder-breaking-upon-silence and contrasting-with-it. Our feeling...is quite different from what it would be were the thunder a continuation of previous thunder...the feeling of the thunder is also a feeling of the silence as just gone.” \(^{216}\)

Language, as well as the concept, dissimulates transitive currents in the stream. To artificially isolate certain aspects in the stream means to suppress the perception of psychic fringes. Language and concept accentuate, but cannot grasp the transitive state because they are teleologically orientated.

If we attempt to focus on and analyse...[the fringes], we fix them in an immobility which radically transforms their transitive character. On the other hand, if we concentrate only on the conclusion to which they are directed, the impact of the conclusion tends to eclipse the transitional moments. \(^{217}\)

Thus, it is in James’ opinion impossible to observe transitive aspects of the flow in their pure state. Anticipation provokes the consciousness to listen or to look and so it becomes a

\(^{214}\) ibid., p37  
\(^{215}\) For example: ‘Few things are more awful [sic] than the striking of a great clock, when the silence of the night prevents the attention from being too much dissipated’. A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful. Oxford University Press. 1990. p76  
\(^{216}\) Stevens, James and Husserli, op. cit., p33. With a quote from William James’ Principles of Psychology. NY, Henry Holt & Co., Vol. 1, p222  
\(^{217}\) Stevens, James and Husserli, op. cit., p33
sort of empty psychic fringe about to be filled. Any gap (such as when trying to remember somebody’s name) orients and fires the conceptual faculty. Anticipation denies the delineating propensity of consciousness, leaving it more ‘open’. In some ways, James’ notion of psychic fringes cleaves open the possibility of considering the very structure of consciousness itself, that is, as a flowing, transitive and fundamental characteristic of human ‘being’. Often, James utilises sound to describe the flow of consciousness. This in some ways parallels Schopenhauer’s thinking on the matter. But as will later be seen, this very notion, appealing as it may perhaps be to theorists interested in the question of temporality (and so, possibly, to sound theorists) turns ironically upon the fundamental assumption of ‘presence’, or an appetitive, conceptualising activity either of which precludes the possibility of other factors of experience coming into play in the general understanding of existence itself. Perception is only the ground upon which the cognitive faculties are developed, and in the end, subjective interpretation figures most highly in the determination of truth. Perception is bypassed, though constantly returned to. Sound is often the highly idealised ‘material’ from which subjective experiences is able to be broadened. At heart, James’ theories are concerned with the derivation of truth, and turns upon the presumption of the factual, ontological existence of the knowing subject, or more importantly, the absolute and unique ‘being’ of consciousness itself. This subject is concerned with an understanding of concrete, factual reality whether conceived of empirically, or in an analysis of the existence of psychic fringes. Either way, the ‘flow’, necessary in the development of complex conceptualisation, is reduced to the status of a simple tool, in the acquisition of knowledge. Sound, under the concept, becomes ‘stabilised’ which loses sight of the fact of its inherent temporality. As an observable phenomenon, however, the constitutive activity of consciousness still anticipates it as capable of being lifted out of the ‘flux’. Ontological and epistemological concerns remain paramount: the question of other ways of ‘assessing’ or ‘thinking’ sound is bypassed. Sound is on a path to the constitution of knowledge and truth.

Ortega y Gasset

Jose Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) proposed a general phenomenological law derived from his understanding of Husserlian phenomenology. He asserted that deductive and inductive reasoning are not able to derive true propositions about anything at all because they are only ever inferences. What he means is that deductive propositions are arrived at by conjoining logical concepts with material objects, and that inductive propositions are drawn from a general, metaphysical axiom not conjoined with the material object but what is ‘given’ of it, such as some underlying eidos. But if, as he says, ‘this axiom were to shift slightly, it would collapse all our assertions about concrete objects’. This metaphysical axiom is the

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belief in the existence of substance and its attributes (material, in a very general sense, and what is 'given' of it) and the presence of the knower. An outline of Gasset's general phenomenological thought is given below.

As awareness of an object happens, it does so in the 'here and now', in the present, at this point in space. Awareness of the object and its individual, factual, 'existential moment' comes about, too. This is described as the 'natural attitude'. Freed from this facticity, the object enters the eternal realm, and remains ideal and unchanged. This is the perception of 'essence'. Contemplation of this perception, suspending the 'natural attitude' becomes, then, a 'phenomenal' perception. Contemplation of this phenomenal perception is purely passive, never seeking to explain the object. It is intuitive. But there is nothing substantial behind, or beyond this phenomena; it is purely descriptive, descriptive of essences.

Physics, says Gasset, describes 'things' as complexes of atoms which have imperceptible aspects. Physics seeks substance, or seeks to affirm the presence of abstract qualities which mechanically affect the sensory organs. It is not, therefore, a methodology based exclusively on perceptibility. Perceptibility begins with observation of perceptible things in time and space. Psychology examines the mechanism by which perception takes place. A physicist would look to or for the 'material substance' of a sound, say, or from whence it came, and seek to explain it that way; a psychologist would look at the way in which sound is perceived. Neither would look at the perception itself. Gasset's 'real being' is that which also includes a thing's 'being thought'—its essence—outside of space and time.

This plane of primary objectivity in which everything is no more than what it is as appearance (fainomenon) is consciousness, not as a temporal or spatial fact, not as the reality of a biological or psychophysical function ascribed to a certain species, but as "consciousness of." 219

Phenomenology's first principle is that an object is an object only when situated within the 'immediate presence' of consciousness. Phenomenology, as discussed in the earlier section on Husserl, seeks nothing beyond the phenomenal appearance, to the eternal and transcendent sphere which stands outside of time and space. But phenomenology makes this appeal to the transcendent sphere on the one hand and not on the other. Oddly, phenomenological perception begins with, or requires the 'natural attitude' from the start, if only in order to later 'bracket' it.

Science's theoretical judgements correspond to objective situations. It presupposes the capacity to be able to derive true knowledge. The theory of theory (philosophy) presupposes

219 Ibid., p108
itself as already secured in truth, as well as its subject, theory. But can it? If methodological procedure tests methodological procedure, neither end of the equation can be absolutely guaranteed. Philosophy is self-reflexive, not simultaneous with its object. But—through supposition, ironically—it considers itself ‘presuppositionless’, attempting to retain its status as a science. Gasset, in an attempt to secure the status of truth for the contents of cognitive functions, problematises some of the positions ‘philosophy takes with respect to its fundamental problem’\textsuperscript{220}. His main two points are:

1. Cognitive functions are those of a subject. At one end of the scale there is pure receptivity of the object which presents itself for knowledge. If there is error, it lies solely with the object, as reception is pure (contrasting with what Leibniz says regarding errors of judgement—this was discussed in the section on Leibniz). This is the position empiricism takes; there is no judgement of the relations between subject and object. But if nothing is ‘purely given’ and if ‘pure sensation’ is impossible, then so is the object. Behind the objects, supposedly, are elements (atoms, substance, etc) which are expressed through the object’s ‘form’. These elements are unobservable, hypothetical and transcendent. They are metaphysical axioms. Science presupposes; it is not presuppositionless. This problem also impacts on the terms ‘being’ and ‘knowing’.

2. If pure receptivity is possible, then perhaps pure activity is also? But the problem of presupposition arises once more. Nothing called ‘being’ is given in the act of cognition, that is, given as something alien to that act but which nevertheless becomes a part of that act. If knowing depended on the presupposed existence of the subject and a corresponding object, truth would depend on the prior truth of the existence of each. But, as Gasset says, ‘Knowledge is not a process [of causality] but an ideal object’\textsuperscript{221}. Confidence is placed in idealism. Being is made immanent, prior to knowing, thus making being and knowing ‘immediate’, or without mediation. Idealism constructs being as a pure given. ‘Physical objects are not...complexes of sensations; it is precisely light as seen and sound as heard that physics tries to reduce to objective determinations.’\textsuperscript{222}. Objectification here refers to the conversion of phenomena occurring in space and time into a quantitative relationship given ‘meaning’. This movement is Platonic in volition. ‘Being’ is given, exists, when an adequate is made between a hypothesis and an appearance. What ‘is’ is not ‘true’ unless this adequation is made. What ‘is’ ‘truth’ is ‘what exists’. Logic corresponds to the adequation of knowledge with principles, which establishes truth. Truth is the ideal unity of being and knowing.

\textsuperscript{220} ibid., p81
\textsuperscript{221} ibid., p87
\textsuperscript{222} ibid., p88
But does all of this sufficiently define existence? Theory generates its objects and
determines them; the two terms 'theory' and 'object' are required to be commensurable in
order for the subject to be able to construct them, all of which is contingent upon the
presupposition of the existence of being solely as a kind of self-representing fact, coupled
with a capacity for knowledge. If presence is considered the necessary factor in adequately
forming the meaning of existence then the question of history is effaced in this process.
What cleaves itself off from its past does not recognise a profound error; the whole meaning
of presence is contingent upon there being no possibility of a 'past'. A 'future present'
would require the abandonment of a 'now' which would mean that no 'now' had actually
existed. If presence is real, no communication is necessary. Subjects, communicating to
each other (and to 'themselves') transcend each other, therefore, through time. Formal and
material ontology does not accept this fact. As Emmanuel Levinas says: 'To be or not to be
is not the question where transcendence is concerned'\(^{223}\). Sound marks in a trace the
passing of time, but it is often ironically used to indicate the idea of a presence, in the
same way that language, for instance, nominates and selects objects out conceptually from
the field of temporal, fluctuating experience. This ideal is perhaps not to be denounced, but
does not recognise (re-cognise) the very fact, the conditions of its possibility. Sound art,
generally speaking, is ironically an activity which constantly makes the same mistake, and
stymies the possibility of other means for exploring radical alternatives for its development.

\(^{223}\) Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence*, op. cit., p3
Hegelian Movement

The movement of the subject in a circuit through nature, culminating in a return to the sphere of mind or self-consciousness is perhaps best exemplified in Hegel's 'System', the fully-fledged development of his 'dialectic'. Viewing philosophy as in decline, Hegel extended the binary thinking of the Pre-Socratics—notably Parmenides—which he identified as having as its 'first principle' the union of being and non-being. Surveying this early Greek thinking, Hegel then developed a notion of the life-flow as the unity of identity and difference, but this in the first place required a differentiation to be able to be made by a somehow already constituted identity or differentiator, one able to simply 'represent'. Passing through simple representation (an object for a subject), Hegel's subject then aims toward the goal of full self-reflection or 'Spirit', where it grasps itself by pulling together those differences which constitute it as an 'Identity'. Representation is, however, the starting point:

The activity of representation, the subject does not yet comprehend its own internal unity and coherence. Like the attributes of its object, the different aspects of the subject's mental activity remain externally related to each other. This makes it impossible to grasp the internal relationship between subject and object. In representation, subject and object continue to stand over and against each other.

But this is not to say that representation is completely bypassed in the movement toward Spirit; in fact it is absolutely fundamental and integral to the development of his philosophy. This point will be returned to shortly, but in the meantime, the notion of authentic subjectivity will be explained in a little more detail.

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224 To have inserted this sub-section earlier in the thesis, thus following a purely chronological sequence with respect to philosophy's historical development, would have meant splitting off what is also presented here as a summary and critique of the development of representational thought. What I would therefore suggest, for practical purposes, is a reading of the next sub-section (which both outlines Hegel's notion of being and contains a criticism of his method) followed by a retrospective reading of earlier sub-sections of section two—at least the sub-sections on James and Husserl and Gasset. Through this 'retrospective' reading, these previous sub-sections take on quite a different hue. Section three—Post-representationalism—then becomes easier to grasp, having had the context for its reading pre-set.

225 'When the might of union vanishes...and the oppositions lose their living relation and reciprocity and gain independence, the need of philosophy arises'. Hegel, The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System, p91; 2: 22 (no other details given) quoted by Mark C. Taylor in Altarity. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1987. p5

226 Ibid., p15

227 In the same way, phenomenology first requires the 'natural attitude' in order to move through it. This was already noted in the section on Gasset.
Hegel recognised the ‘sameness’ of absolute self-identity and absolute difference. Identity, in other words, negates itself; it is difference. Or rather, identity is the negation of negation, the difference of sameness and difference. The negational aspect—a double negation, which is also self-contradictory—is the essence of identity.

Difference in itself is self-related difference; as such, it is the negativity of itself, the difference not of another, but of itself from itself; it is not itself but its other. But that which is different from difference is identity. Difference, therefore is itself and identity. Both together constitute difference; it is the whole, and its moment.²²⁸

Double negativity simultaneously distinguishes and reconciles opposites; it is the life-force itself. When reconciliation takes place, it is for Hegel a kind of resurrection of truth or the ‘concept’, the overcoming of decline (as mentioned above) and the restoration of ‘the might of union’. This movement, as stated, starts from something originary, moves out through nature, and self-restores as the true philosophical ‘concept’. This original ‘something’ is ‘abstract’ self-identity; simple subjectivity which only views itself as the other of what is different to it²²⁹. It is not in unity with difference, as it does not contain in itself self-contradiction.

Subjectivity, like everything else, is composed of three moments: undifferentiated identity, self-posting in difference, and self-reconciliation in which identity is reestablished by working through difference. Authentic subjectivity emerges through the activity of self-relation in which the subject externalises or expresses itself in determinate thoughts and deeds, and then reconciles itself with otherness by reappropriating difference as its own self-objectification.²³⁰

This entire philosophical, Odyssean movement is more generally known as reflection. The originary, ‘abstract’ self-identity depends upon the full self-negation of the object for its own resurrection as fully self-negating ‘being’, otherwise it remains in a simple differential relation to the object and so dependent upon it. What is initially thought of as self-affirmation turns out to be a simple negative relation to an object. To attain to the ‘concept’—truth—the subject needs to be fully independent, to self-negate, and to acknowledge the full independence and self-negation of the object. The subject must effect

²²⁹ The question of the origin of such a simple, ‘abstract’ self-identity is taken up by Jean-Luc Nancy in the essay ‘Identity and Trembling’, The Birth To Presence, trans. Brian Holmes, Stanford University Press, Cal., 1993. Here, Nancy claims, Hegel has overlooked the fact of the birth of the subject as such; if Spirit is eternal, which ‘puts death itself to death’, then so birth itself must prove impossible. p12
²³⁰ Taylor, Alterity, op. cit., p19
a negation of its simple negative relation to the object—and the reverse is also true. A double negation is required to achieve full self-negation or pure self-recognition. Hegel:

Substance is essentially Subject, is expressed in the representation of the Absolute as Spirit...The spiritual alone is the actual, it is essence, or that which has being in itself; it is that which relates itself to itself and is determinate, it is other-being and being-for-itself, and in this determinateness, or in its self-externality, abides within itself; in other words, it is in and for itself...it must be an object to itself, but just as immediately a sublated object, reflected into itself.\(^{231}\) (my underlining)

\[^{231}\text{Phenomenology of Spirit. Trans. A.V. Miller, Oxford University Press, 1977. p14 (Taylor's selection with my own added)}\]

Pure self-recognition in absolute otherness, this Aether as such, is the ground and soil of Science or knowledge in general. ...the individual is the absolute form, i.e. he is the immediate certainty of himself, and, if this expression be preferred, he is therefore unconditioned being.\(^{232}\) (my underlining)

Consciousness of other is self-consciousness, and the chasm existing between self and other is bridged in the development of this consciousness. It is to this notion of 'immediacy', underlined above, that attention will now be drawn as it pertains directly to our critique of the development of sound studies.

For Hegel, the 'content' of sensible immediacy is not the same as a 'concept'; it must be stored away in unconsciousness as a memory, in a kind of virtual existence. It is an ideal 'interiority' which is sublated (both recovered and repressed) in the elevating movement of the subject in a space-time 'intuition', an 'intuition' or re-presentation which is brought out into 'exterior existence'.\(^{233}\) Sensible immediacy presented to itself objectively as its own 'content' but as a past event involves its re-presentation, a 're-membering' or exteriorisation. What is stored as an 'image', retained in memory as an ideality, is not presented 'immediately' to space/time intuition but is 'breathed' into it, in order to temporalisae or animate it (give it a 'soul').

The image thus interiorised in memory (erinnert) is no longer there, no longer existent or present, but preserved in an unconscious dwelling, conserved without consciousness (bewusstlos, aufbewahrt). Intelligence keeps these images in reserve, submerged at the

\[^{232}\text{ibid., pp14-15}\]

bottom of a very dark shelter, like the water in a nightlike or unconscious pit (nächtliche Schacht, bewusstlose Schacht)\textsuperscript{234}

That which signifies (that which has the job of signifying—or animating) presence as an ‘immediate intuition’ is that which both ‘submerged’ and ‘relifted’ at the same time in a general raising up of the subject. Jacques Derrida, in the essay footnoted, marks the special significance of the voice in effecting this Hegelian, upward movement. Time, considered ‘past space, space as it will have been thought’\textsuperscript{235}, is that sign which is sublated; meaning that the signifier (that which signifies presence as an ‘immediate intuition’…) must pass away before the ideal meaning of the signified, the ‘concept’, can be given. The sign, as time, in order to effect this entire movement, must be both present (conserving itself) and absent (self-effacing). What achieves this best is sound, especially as a vocalisation.

It is sound, sound relevé from its naturalness and linked to spirit’s special relation to itself, the psyche as a subject for itself and affecting itself by itself, to wit, animated sound, phonic sound, the voice (\textit{Ton})\textsuperscript{236}

The voice, moreover, carries the inside to the outside, the interior to the exterior, but also conserves itself. Speech confers existence and presence\textsuperscript{237}. The ‘concept’ is that which is the movement beyond sensory existence; it is immediate presence ‘lifted up’ into a representation (re-presentation). Sound, as voice, is ideal and marks the transition from noise (nature) into meaningful language. Where light as a natural phenomenon manifests itself and opens the way to subjectivity (‘Nature, in light, manifests itself, sees itself, lets itself be seen and itself sees itself’\textsuperscript{238}), sound is not only able to do likewise, it is also able to lift sight to an even more elevated sphere. Exterior visual objects persist beyond the subject, ‘they resist the Aufhebung’\textsuperscript{239}.

\textbf{The ear, on the contrary, without turning itself to a practical…relation with objects, listens to the result of the inner vibration...of the body through which what comes before us is no longer the peaceful and material shape, but the first and more ideal breath of the}

\textsuperscript{234} Ibid., p77
\textsuperscript{235} Ibid., p89
\textsuperscript{236} Ibid., p89. \textit{Relevé} is, according to the translator’s footnote on page 88, the past participle of a play on what is ordinarily meant by \textit{relever}: ‘to point out’. It means, he says ‘to point out (reveler) what talking means is to point out that it means relever. ‘[B]oth lifted up and suppressed,’ says Derrida on the same page ’let us say, henceforth, relevé’.
\textsuperscript{237} And so for Aristotle: ‘Now voice is a kind of sound of an ensouled thing’ and ‘voice is a kind of sound with meaning’. \textit{Aristote. De Anima}, op. cit., Book II, Chapt. 9. pp178-79
\textsuperscript{238} Derrida, ‘The Pit and the Pyramid’, op. cit., p91
\textsuperscript{239} Ibid., p91
soul...Further, since the negativity into which the vibrating material enters here is on one side the relève (Aufheben) of the spatial situation, a relève relevé again by the reaction of the body, therefore this expression of the double negation, i.e. sound (Ton), is an externality which in its coming to be is annihilated again by its very existence, and it vanishes of itself.\textsuperscript{240}

This is not to state, however, that in this sublative movement the visual object becomes elevated, but that vision does. Sound elevates vision, and therefore enhances speculation—speculative philosophy. Because of its evanescence and its capacity for entering into a double negation with the subject, sound is both able to be suppressed and relifted at the same time. It instantiates presence and confers existence. The problem Derrida poses, however, is concerned with this strange ideality of sound; the ideal reduction of a sensual 'material' which is 'retained' as something virtual but which does not otherwise 'exist'.

Seeking a constant narrative of personal experience to verify its existence, the subject must draw the potential signifier of presence (ideally reduced sound) from the well, the 'pit', a 'space past', to breathe life, or a 'soul'\textsuperscript{241} into it. This signifier (of subjective self-presence) is the reduction of temporal, natural 'material' which must be endlessly repeated and represented in order for full self-presentation to be made, or thought, at all possible. But the very temporality of sound, and the voice (animated, signifying sound) subverts this possibility.

Structuralism decentralizes the subject in favour of the complex relations of signs but, as already seen, the notion of presence of a sign is able to be levelled by problematising its claim to synchrony. This critique extends to questioning the possibility of a (linguistic) sign-system being able to signify anything at all, given the lack of evidence supporting the existence of a 'now' phase in language. Although denying the integrity of authorship and even denying the author's existence, structuralist thought paradoxically remains faithful to the text, another sign-system.

The dismantling of sound's presence ideality also dismantles the possibility of a self-present subjecthood. The subject, by becoming its own copy, attempts to possess and identify itself; it must represent itself to an itself which is already a representation. This is true for both Husserl and Hegel. As demonstrated, the dependence of presence upon absence, or of identity upon difference, only compounds the problem of maintaining subjectivity as it is known.

\textsuperscript{240} Hegel, \textit{Aesthetics}, II. Trans. T.M. Knox, Oxford University Press, 1975, p890 quoted by Derrida in 'The Pit and the Pyramid', ibid., p92

\textsuperscript{241} Derrida, 'The Pit and the Pyramid', op. cit., p87
The absence of presence opens the gap through which the space of time appears. Time not only transpires “in” space, but space “indwells” time. The spacing of time creates a hole that can never be completely filled...\textsuperscript{242}

\textsuperscript{242} Mark. C. Taylor, \textit{Erring: A Postmodern A/Theology}, op. cit., p50
Part Three: Post-Representationalism

The idea of dismantling monolithic culture and philosophical architectures lies as much within the heart of philosophy itself as from without. The authority of the modern art product, its claim to represent a universal (often visual) aesthetic, was based on the broader assumption of its representational nature. While the avant-garde, which "proclaimed the autonomy of the signifier, its liberation from 'the tyranny of the signified"\textsuperscript{243}, tended away from representationalism, sound has always, when not ontologically reduced, presented a problem for both the metaphysics of representation and the philosophy of presence (What, in terms of sound, \textit{presents}? What does it in fact mean to say that sound is 'present'?). In the face of such difficulties, metaphysics has struggled to retain or apportion some kind of 'content' to sound. This is partly reflected in the distinctions made between modernism and postmodernism with respect to the 'truth-content' of art, its claim to possess some truth or epistemological value\textsuperscript{244}. Music, for instance, took precedence in representational philosophy over noise and other sounds as it was thought to represent some sense of order for the individual thinking subject. This notion still pervades the Marxist ideology of Jacques Attali for instance, functioning to support the ideologies of a social and political agenda. Alternatively, sound is sometimes considered present or substantial, something 'in itself'; it represents something like, or simulates, plastic material:

There was a time when theorists could refer to noises as "non-musical sounds", and this attitude still exists to some extent. But it is clearly unrealistic to make a distinction now, in the light of musical developments in the 20th century. The elemental building materials of this music are no longer limited to 'musical' tones, but may include other, more complex sounds, which in an earlier music would have seldom functioned as elements, if they occurred at all. The substance and material of this music is sound...this definition is unescapable...\textsuperscript{245}

But what is this material? What is its function? In Attali's terms, it is something which is able to organise and be organised, reproduce and be reproduced. What does this notion of 'presence' and reproduction imply?

\textsuperscript{243} Craig Owens, 'Feminists and Postmodernism' in \textit{The Anti-Aesthetic}, op. cit., p59
\textsuperscript{244} Frederic Jameson, from "'In the Destructive Element Immerse': Hans Jürgen Syberberg and Cultural Revolution" \textit{October}, 17 (Summer 1981), p113 quoted in the Craig Owens' essay 'Feminists and Postmodernism' in \textit{The Anti-Aesthetic}, ibid., p65
\textsuperscript{245} James Tenney, \textit{Mosaic (+) Hedos: A Phenomenology of Twentieth century Musical Materials and an Approach to the Study of Form}, Inter-American Institute for Musical Research, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1964, pp2,3
Representation, the representation of an object, is constituted through and by a representing subject. But if sound is regarded as that which can not reflect ‘truth’, if it is considered neither present nor absent, certain difficulties arise. In a phenomenological analysis of sound, in which subject/object distinctions are somewhat blurred, some of these difficulties become more evident, although it would suffice to say that there the notion of intentionality has necessitated a shift in the very meaning of truth. Wherever representation reigns (and it may be said, after having looked at some criticisms of phenomenology, that it still in some ways reflects representational thought) sound is placed in an equivalent relation to any visual object, as discrete, enduring and ideal. This in itself contains something of a double irony, as it may also be said that all visual objects constructed in this way are themselves reflections of an idealism of some kind. But where vision distances and objectifies, separating out subject from object, listening, in the way that it has, and will continue to be problematised in this thesis, cannot quite maintain the same separation. Unless sound is realised as a kind of present, visual construct, as 'material' which can re-present, listening lacks that interrogative, scissistic potential possessed by vision. Truth value with respect to sound, in other words, is apportioned more readily in representation when it is situated within visualist paradigms. As Craig Owens reminds us:

Modern aesthetics claimed that vision was superior to the other senses because of its detachment from its objects: “Vision,” Hegel tells us in his Lectures on Aesthetics, “finds itself in a purely theoretical relationship with objects, through the intermediary of light, that immaterial matter which truly leaves objects their freedom, lighting and illuminating them without consuming them.” Postmodernist artists do not deny this detachment, but neither do they celebrate it. Rather, they investigate the particular interests it serves.246

Owens ties his argument into an analysis of feminist concerns with visual representation and embodied experience. If ‘sound’ is substituted for ‘feminine’ or ‘female’ in the sense it is given in the following example, similar technical arguments and concerns to my own regarding representation may become more evident:

What can be said about the visual arts in a patriarchal order that privileges vision over the other senses? Can we not expect them to be a domain of masculine privilege—as their histories prove them to be—a means, perhaps, of mastering through representation the “threat” posed by the female?...[W]omen have begun the long-overdue process of deconstructing femininity. Few have produced new, “positive” images of a revised femininity; to do so would simply supply and thereby prolong the life of the existing

246 ‘Feminists and Postmodernism’, op. cit., p70
representational apparatus. Some refuse to represent women at all, believing that no representation of the female body in our culture can be free from phallic prejudice. Most of these artists, however, work with the existing repertory of cultural imagery—not because they either lack originality or criticise it—but because their subject, feminine sexuality, is always constituted in and as representation, a representation of difference.\textsuperscript{247}

The social and political agenda here is, of course, quite distinct from an analysis of sound arts practice. But a sound arts practice, lacking a thoroughgoing critical analysis, projecting a simple notion of ‘difference’, seems to place faith in a science of inquiry having at its base a metaphysical axiom, or anxiety, regarding the question or nature of truth. Sound is differentiated here, of course, only in terms of its relation to the visual, of its marginalisation within the sphere of visualist influence. The break from questions of ‘the real’, characterising the revolutionary nature of the modern, would seem to have put pay to this anxiety. It has not, however.

Wherever in postmodernism the question of referencing is problematised, where the question of the validity of substituting ‘referent’ for (art) object is raised, both ‘referent’ and ‘object’ as fully present things in themselves both fall out of the picture somewhat. There is nothing inherently truthful in either. The meaning of ‘effect’ takes its place, or substitutes the very meaning of truth. As John Cage puts it:

\begin{quote}
We know the air is filled with vibrations that we can’t hear. In Variations IV, I tried to use sounds from that inaudible environment. But we can’t consider that environment as an object. We know that it’s a process.\textsuperscript{248}
\end{quote}

Moreover, the status of the knowing subject also drops out of the picture:

\begin{quote}
[The] idea of presence remains highly problematic, and I would even say that it cannot be conceived, or experienced, or felt, at least according to the forms of our sensibility. In other words, there is no subject to refer to itself, since itself, the I, never stops reiterating its power of synthesising sensory data (here sounds) through the course of time. How could what constitutively repeats itself grasp the unrepeatable as such? \textsuperscript{249}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., p71.
\textsuperscript{248} Quoted in Gregory M. Ulmer’s essay ‘The Object of Post-Criticism’ in The Anti-Aesthetic, ibid., p101.
Heidegger’s Suppression of Sound

All that philosophers have handled for millennia has been conceptual mummies; nothing actual has escaped their hands alive. They kill, they stuff, when they worship, these conceptual idolaters...What is, does not become; what becomes, is not...250

As Nietzsche suggests, with the development of the metaphysics of presence and the application of its epistemologically attuned methodologies, the world came to be viewed as an accretion of objective forms from which inferences were drawn and meanings constructed; the world, and the beings inhabiting it, were thought to exist only as static (‘stuffed’) objects of representation. The epistemological criterion of reality secured itself, in other words, by placing the world and its contents—objects of knowledge—under the dominion of logocentric thought, itself made secure in the presupposition of being able to truly ‘know’ in a moment of absolute self-presence. Although this circularity of thought had been strongly criticised by philosophers such as Schopenhauer251, the metaphysical criterion for defining reality consisted, and has for the betterpart remained, entirely within the domain of knowledge and under the mark of the concept.

For Martin Heidegger philosophy had entered into a period of decline and was in need of an overhaul. As Mark C. Taylor explains: ‘[f]ully persuaded that metaphysics has run its course, Heidegger asks what and how we are to think after the end of philosophy’252. Husserlian phenomenology had also, in Heidegger’s view, fallen short of its own objective of adequately and scientifically describing concrete existence (the contents of consciousness) or of convincingly analysing the ‘things themselves’. Here, Heidegger attempted to replace the evaporating metaphysical dream of establishing a universal, doubt-free method for ascertaining truth with another method involving an analysis of understanding, of how beings come to understand their own ‘authentic’ possibilities. Heidegger, also wishing to speed up the evaporation of the traditional ontologies, shifted the emphasis from an analysis of ‘beings’ (as worldly units, like any other object) to ‘being’, or, more broadly speaking, the very status of beings, but by retaining certain fundamental phenomenological principles which in this section will be discussed. As will become evident, Heidegger’s phenomenological or ontological edifice still tended heavily to the side of epistemology; the development of his thought was at heart an anxiety over the possibility of revealing the

251 ‘Consequently, there is no knowledge of knowing, since this would require that the subject separated itself from knowing and yet knew that knowing; and this is impossible.’ From The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, op. cit., p208
252 Introduction, Deconstruction In Context, op cit. p18
presence of ‘truth’ (alethia), the traditional object of knowledge, ‘dis-covered’ in a moment of pure and silent vision.

Heidegger’s thought turns upon a phenomenological method of interpretation, an extension of certain historically developed strands of hermeneutics which are chiefly organised, according to Peter Szondi, around a Diltheyan model, ‘an analysis of understanding’253, characterised as a move away from idealistic, literalistic and objectifying pursuits of knowledge. Around the turn of the twentieth century, Idealism had lost credibility and a decisive turn towards more humanist, cultural or ‘direct life’ sciences was in evidence. As Szondi indicates, after the period of German Idealist philosophy the general thrust of hermeneutics tended toward a hermeneutics of the understanding and in some respects this moved hermeneutics from the exclusive field of writing (biblical exegesis, for example) into the audible world of the speech act, into the phonocentric world of the speaking subject. Heideggerian hermeneutics, as Rüdiger Bubner states, is ‘an originary attitude toward the peculiar structure of the Dasein’254, but Heidegger’s methodology, whilst oriented around ‘discursive’ analysis and the life sciences, ultimately remains, I would argue, Idealistic and objective. If, for Heidegger, coming into ‘authentic’ knowledge of Being is of primary concern to Dasein—the being whose primary concern is its own being—then any answer communicated in the form of conceptual knowledge gives the impression that the acquisition of knowledge of truth is in fact the primary objective of any analysis of Dasein. Furthermore, his ‘discursive’ analysis, almost fully elaborated in his magnum opus, Being and Time255, is rooted in silence, the complete absence of sound and the speech act256. Coming to an ‘authentic’ understanding of Dasein’s possibilities ultimately requires, for


256 As Heidegger turned towards an analysis of the concrete speech act later in his thinking (in Poetry, Language and Thought, for instance), this section of the thesis shall be restricted to a critique of certain, fundamental aspects of Being and Time which has in any case remained his most widely read and influential work.
Heidegger, the complete suppression of sound altogether; in fact Heidegger turns, in Being and Time, to ‘the moment of vision’ to verify the truth of Being, thereby maintaining the traditional and dominant metaphysical metaphor.

David Levin traces Heidegger’s train of thought, concerned as it was with the possibility of organising an ontological re-nascence, and infuses it into a moral proposition, an exhortation to restore the character of vision he claims has in modern civilisation been lost or forgotten. He says: ‘Heidegger’s critique of our vision, and of the philosophical discourses informed by this vision, is often the beginning of an effort to think a new way of seeing’ 257 and:

...this critical work...will contribute to the release of the great potential in vision, making it possible for this potential, a crying need, to be engaged by the more progressive, emancipatory forces in our society and culture, and to be fulfilled, accordingly, within the still unfinished project of the Enlightenment. 258

In Heidegger’s wake, Levin implicates the everyday experience of seeing as disengaged from any real or authentic correspondence with truth, thus denying beings the possibility of attaining to full and comprehensive world- and ultimately self-knowledge. He insists that the re-vitalisation and stabilisation of a methodically organised, more ‘authentic’ type of vision would be best organised around the development of a more concretised, speech-oriented discourse. Levin recognises Heidegger’s late invocation of listening and speaking 259 as the means by which these objectives may be met:

As this problematisation takes place, the hegemony of a vision-based, vision-centred episteme is weakened, and an experimental space is opened up, where it may be possible for people to practice and institute a new, postmodern paradigm for knowledge, truth, and reality, based and centred...on the norms of a communicatively formed rationality that are implicit in our speaking and listening. 260

In the development of this architectonics, speaking and listening become the means of access to ‘knowledge, truth and reality’. For Levin, language in operation, as uttered speech, makes the ‘problematisation’ and dismantling of the episteme of ‘ocularcentrism’ possible.

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258 Ibid., p206
259 Heidegger, post Being and Time, returned to speech as a possibility of acquiring vision. But even at this late stage, his objective essentially remains the same—to dismantle and replace traditional ontology, and uncover truth in a ‘moment of vision’.
260 ‘Decline and Fall’, op. cit., p192
But where the desired outcome is truth, and despite truth being circuitously but inextricably linked to this particular mode of discursivity, truth is in the end revealed in the Heideggerian ‘moment of vision’. Even in this later stage of Heidegger’s thought, sound is ultimately overlooked.

Earlier in Being and Time, Heidegger completely shifted the meaning of ‘logos’ (one half of the term ‘phenomenology’), taking it out of its historically conditioned or formally constituted ‘discursive’ sense and placing it the direct line of vision. (This shift will be discussed in more detail later on in this section.) Although Levin invokes the ‘rationality...implicit in our speaking and listening’, he likewise shifts the basis of the logocentric metaphor from sound to sight:

Beholden to the being of beings, to that which grants all beings the conditions of visibility and invisibility, we receive through our eyes the logos and nomos of a hermeneutical assignment to recognise and realise the ontological dimensionality of our vision, to see, through the structural differentiation of the figure-ground difference, the sheer openness of the ontological difference, that groundless event, that primal Ereignis [an ‘event’ or ‘appropriation’], opening up, for our eyes, a luminous field. This gift of illumination solicits our capacity for enlightenment as beings gifted with a capacity for seeing.261

Levin observes Heidegger’s commitment to the continuation of the visualist paradigm. Both appeal for a shift of focus in the darkening world of the modern epoch, that is, a world thought to have been made dark by the misguided concentration of an increasingly narrowing (declining) visualist and objectivistic focus, desiring the re-ascendancy of a once present, more genuine type of vision. Levin quotes Heidegger from Being and Time:

To keep the connection with this tradition, we may formalise “sight” and “seeing” enough to obtain therewith a universal term for characterising any access to entities or to being, as access in general.262

but omits to quote the sentence immediately prior to it: ‘Of course, every ‘sense’ does this [uncovers truth] within that domain of discovery which is genuinely its own’.263 Here the ‘existential’ dimension is accorded to every sense; each are nominated as ‘visionary’ because vision guarantees every understanding. Being atemporal, isotropic and fully

261 ibid., p209
262 Heidegger, Being and Time, op. cit., p193
263 ibid., p187
present, vision remains the primary mode for the verification of truth. Understanding, for Levin as for Heidegger and Husserl

...is, and must be, embodied...it will only have been achieved in, and through, thoughtful work with our experience as visionary beings, our experience of beings endowed with the capacity to see, and that it will be manifest primarily in the way we actually look and see things...264

The reasons for the shift in metaphor will be explained a little later. Reason must first be given in respect of the shift from one type of vision (degenerate or ‘ocularcentric’ and objectifying) to the other (primary, truth-beholding). For Heidegger the metaphysics of presence failed to take into account something which he calls the ‘Open’—an ‘opening’ which neither remains open nor closed, the ‘articulation’ of which results in a movement from darkness to light. But that which is unconcealed, brought to light or brought out into the ‘Open’, is always at the same time concealed or left in the dark. Heidegger calls this covering/dis-covering duality the ‘Same’. Presence always involves non-presence; Identity is difference. The maintenance of difference allows for the possibility or event (Ereignis) of the openness of being and its being grasped as such. Being, glimpsed in a kind of shadowy half-light, in the crepuscular, ‘groundless ground’ of the ‘Open’, is made possible in a kind of revealing and re-veiling. That which is glimpsed is ‘original difference’ or that which in metaphysics, for Heidegger, has been left unthought—the ‘difference of Being and beings’265, and only a more authentic type of vision is thought to be able to glimpse this.

In this conception the simple correspondence of subject and object is no longer maintained as the criterion for the establishment of truth, because that which ‘presents’ is also at the same time absent or ‘silent’. Presence ‘contains’ absence, and there is a lapse involved in the subject’s ‘own’ self-reflection as it propels itself forward towards its ownmost possibilities. Objectifying, ‘degenerate’ vision is thought not to be up to this task. In phenomenology, however, presence—subjective self-coincidence—is nevertheless maintained. Emmanuel Levinas explains:

...the substantive, the nameable, the entity and the Same—so essential to the structure of representation and of truth as truth of presence—remain the privileged and originary terms of consciousness. But, above all, phenomenology itself disengages these

264 Levin, ‘Decline and Fall’, op. cit., p194
265 Quoted from Heidegger’s Identity and Difference (no other reference given) in Deconstruction in Context., op. cit., p19
structures by reflection, which is an internal perception in which the descriptive operation “synchronises” the flux of consciousness, in knowledge.266

As Levin points out, the framing of questions in traditional metaphysical discourse was so narrow that it foreclosed the very dimensionality of being and the possibility of establishing a more 'open', embodied experience of the world. Heidegger, he says, '...was attempting simultaneously to accomplish the closure of a discourse that he read as increasingly closed to being, and to begin a process of opening it up (again)...'267 and points out that this new possibility was concerned with the character or clarity of vision. A new 'vision' would be where the 'authentic', seeing subject is given the possibility of developing a more direct, concretised and open relation to the world, one of humility, always open to questioning. This 'openness' becomes the Heideggerian criterion for the establishment of truth, the truth which is the very openness of being's interpretations. But to return to Emmanuel Levinas:

It is not a matter of overcoming any kind of limitation of seeing, of broadening the horizons belonging to the scheme in which seeing, thematised, appears and, thus, of being induced to recuperate totality from out of a part of totality by some sort of dialectic. To scan the objective horizon of the given in the theme where it appears would still be to take a naive course.268

What Levinas means is that despite the claims made about a new character of vision, this more 'open' subject first takes the dialectical process for granted, as able to provide the means of arriving at authentic self-knowledge. It is as if something like an 'interiority' (or, as he says, 'an internal perception') presents like an objective structure (a little like the Cartesian 'cogito'), which 'understands' this 'new' vision. Heidegger says that 'interpretation' (Auslegung) is itself the development of the understanding, by which he means 'the working-out of possibilities projected in understanding'269. As shall become increasingly clear, however, the very mode of this discursivity is rooted in silence. The 'dialectic' is invoked but denied any possible aural dimension.

The objective of Being and Time is stated, by Heidegger, from the outset:

267 Levin, 'Decline and Fall', op. cit., p188
268 Levinas, 'Philosophy and Awakening', op. cit., p210
269 Heidegger, Being and Time, op. cit., pp188-9
Our aim in the following treatise is to work out the question of the meaning of Being and to do so concretely. Our provisional aim is the Interpretation of time as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of Being.\textsuperscript{270}

‘Possibility’, it seems, given the special meaning he places on it, is one of his most important philosophical axioms. As he clearly states:

...possibility as an existentia is the most primordial and ultimate positive way in which Dasein is characterised ontologically. As with existentiality in general, we can, in the first instance, only prepare for the problem of possibility. The phenomenal basis for seeing it at all is provided by the understanding as a disclosive potentiality-for-Being.\textsuperscript{271}

Before entering into an analysis of what Heidegger means by ‘understanding’, however, it is first necessary to outline what his ‘phenomenological method’ is, what it means, and how he attempts with it to uncover the status of being—the phenomenon \textit{par excellence}. He differentiates between what has otherwise historically been derived as a formal and conceptual definition of the meaning of phenomena, that is, worldly phenomena, and his own conception and derivation of the term. The special approach he develops for ‘discovering’ the phenomenon of his unique phenomenological method, the being of beings, which he says has remained ‘half-hidden’ or forgotten in traditional ontologies, is contingent upon this re-working of the term ‘phenomenon’. He also shifts the meaning of \textit{logos} away from the manner in which it had (incorrectly, in his view) been received in the traditional or formal ontological conception. Together, \textit{logos} and phenomenon, in the new or resurrected senses he gives them, form the basis for his unique phenomenological (phenomeno-logical) method. Below, an explanation is given regarding how he arrives at these reworked versions of the terms ‘logos’ and ‘phenomenon’, how he dismantles what he considers to be obsolete and incomplete renderings of their meanings and how, in his view, this has occluded any real access to a true understanding of ‘being’. It is again necessary, however, to expand a little more upon Heidegger’s general approach to the problem of access to being so that his new conceptions of the terms can then understood as adequate to the task of his phenomenological undertaking. Along the way, the initial stages in his suppression of sound will become exposed.

Throughout Being and Time Heidegger describes Dasein’s ‘fallenness’ into the everyday, experiential and public world of the ‘they’ as an ‘inauthentic’ mode of Being, but maintains that no hierarchical or qualitative distinction should be thought to exist between the modes.

\textsuperscript{270} Ibid., p19. The translator’s footnote on this page makes the distinction between the use of ‘interpretation’ (Auslegung) and ‘interpretation’; the former denotes interpretation in the broad sense, the latter ‘theoretical or systematic, as in the exegesis of a text’.

\textsuperscript{271} Ibid., p183
'inauthenticity' and 'authenticity': [T]he inauthenticity of Dasein does not signify any 'less' Being or any 'lower' degree of Being\textsuperscript{272} and

On no account...do the terms "inauthentic" and "non-authentic" signify 'really not', as if in this mode of Being, Dasein were altogether to lose its Being....So neither must we take the fallenness of Dasein [characterising public, 'inauthentic' Being] as a 'fall' from a purer and higher 'primal status'.\textsuperscript{273}

The relations that do exist between the two terms are critical, however, insofar as 'inauthenticity' is to be understood as a mode of 'authenticity' or, rather, as shall become clear, the reverse. Heidegger characterises sound, where as it exists as an acoustical speech act, even when 'fully concrete', as an aspect of 'inauthentic' Being. Vocal, communal utterance—evidence of Dasein's 'falling' or 'thrownness'—is related to the evocative 'silent call' of consciousness ('Conscience discourses solely and constantly in the mode of keeping silent' \textsuperscript{274}), a peculiar mode of 'speech' of which 'hearkening' to raises the possibility of Dasein's 'authentic' existence which perhaps instantiates what Levinas means by 'some sort of dialectic'. Despite the 'reticence' of this 'silence' to communicate anything concrete, factual or worldly, and despite Heidegger's insistence that it is not some kind of indefinite 'mysterious voice'\textsuperscript{275}, the 'call' is inextricably linked to, and disturbs Dasein's most factual and concrete 'inauthentic' existence, a 'trivialised turbulence'\textsuperscript{276}, bringing it 'face-to-face' with its ownmost, 'authentic' possibilities. 'Inauthentic' worldly Being is the 'they-self' to which the 'appeal' is made and which 'gets called to the [non-objectifiable] Self'\textsuperscript{277}; 'inauthentic' being is somehow silently called out of its hiddenness in its mode of 'being-in-the-world'.

This silent 'call' which as a mode of 'Discourse' is 'equiprimordial with state-of-mind ['attunement'] and understanding' \textsuperscript{278} can nevertheless be heard, but not in any worldly, sensate or 'aural' and concrete sense. It instead may be 'hearkened' to, and is that which, in another sense, persecutes 'lost' and 'inauthentic' Being into 'authentic' existence: The call...is what makes it possible first and foremost for Dasein to project itself upon its ownmost possibility-for-Being\textsuperscript{279}. Everything, in fact, may in the end be said to come down to 'listening' in one form or another. Through this primordial 'attunement', 'inauthentic'

\textsuperscript{272} ibid., p68  
\textsuperscript{273} ibid., p220  
\textsuperscript{274} ibid., p318  
\textsuperscript{275} ibid., p318  
\textsuperscript{276} ibid., p223  
\textsuperscript{277} ibid., p318  
\textsuperscript{278} ibid., p203  
\textsuperscript{279} ibid., p322
Being may also ‘prepare’ or ‘understandingly’ allow itself to receive and respond to the ‘provocative’ call of conscience:

When Dasein understandingly lets itself be called forth to this possibility, this includes its becoming free for the call—its readiness for the potentiality of getting appealed to. In understanding the call, Dasein is in thrall to [hört] its ownmost possibility of existence. It has chosen itself.\(^{280}\)

Despite being ready to hear the call (‘Only he who already understands can listen [zuhören]\(^{281}\)), or a preparedness to ‘listen’ and respond to it, the consciousness which calls resists passing on ‘information’ and cannot be coaxed into manifesting in any worldly, concrete and so possibly ambiguous manner (‘That which calls the call...holds itself aloof from any way of becoming well known, and this belongs to its phenomenal character.’\(^{282}\)). Although it ‘keeps silent’, it does so in a ‘positive’ way: it keeps silent. It is both preemptive of Dasein’s opening onto the world of its ownmost possibility (it ‘calls Dasein forth to its possibilities’\(^{283}\)), is present as a phenomenological aspect of Dasein’s self-concern (‘Dasein is at the same time both the caller and the one to whom the appeal is made’\(^{284}\), but it is at the same time ‘beyond me’\(^{285}\), though not ‘alien’\(^{286}\) in the sense of existing as a completely separate, unknowable and transcendent God. It is exclusively and absolutely ‘interior’, but Heidegger in no way intends to invoke or imply the same sense of ‘interiority’ which characterises the Cartesian substantial, essential ‘cogito’\(^{287}\). The ‘call’ is a ‘positive’, pre-cognitive force, prior, that is, to any thinking. Being positive, the ‘caller’ is therefore not ‘just nothing’\(^{288}\)—although ‘[t]aken strictly, nothing’\(^{289}\)...is ‘what’ is called—but it is also not ‘something’, in the sense of a worldly or concrete thing or event. From a worldly point of view it is ‘nothing at all’ and is ‘heard only as such’, that is, in a positive but silent way: ‘With regard to Dasein, “that nothing ensues” signifies something positive’\(^{290}\). The call of consciousness is emphatically described as ‘silent’ then, but also to the extent that it is not a manifest ‘lack’ of presence. This obnubilescent call is in fact totally and unambiguously present (and so here actually reminiscent of Descartes’ indubitably present ‘cogito’),

\(^{280}\) Ibid., p334  
\(^{281}\) Ibid., p208  
\(^{282}\) Ibid., p319  
\(^{283}\) Ibid., p319  
\(^{284}\) Ibid., p322  
\(^{285}\) Ibid., p320  
\(^{286}\) Ibid., p323  
\(^{287}\) See Being and Time, ibid., p46  
\(^{288}\) Ibid., p319  
\(^{289}\) Ibid., p318  
\(^{290}\) Ibid., p324
although it does not present in any ‘factual’ way291 (somewhat like Husserl’s ‘transcendental ego’). What it does lack, however, is noise, or ‘hubbub’, which ensures that it communicates ‘unambiguously’.292

The ‘call’ may be seen to reduplicate the moment of non-vocal, non-fluctuating presence of logocentric discourse, or of logos per se. But Heidegger, as mentioned, problematises the formal conception of logos (which is etymologically linked to the term ‘phenomenon’, itself derived from phos, or light) where, defined as ‘discourse’ in the Aristotelian ‘apophatic’ sense, it ‘makes manifest what one is ‘talking about’ in one’s discourse’.293 There, it possesses a synthetic structure—it is talk about something or other. ‘Discourse’ only does ‘makes manifest’ ‘so far as it is genuine’, i.e., not in ‘idle talk’ (Gerede), and ‘when it has the character of speaking [Sprechens]—vocal proclamation in words.’294 But apophatic discourse or logos, as Sprechens, has the ambiguous characteristic of bearing the ‘false’ as well as the ‘true’: ‘because the [logos] is a letting-something-be-seen, it can therefore be true or false’.295 Not only does Heidegger reject the formal conception of logos because of its synthetic, relational structure, it may also, he thinks, degenerate into Gerede. Mistrustful of sound, Heidegger requires is something which gives more direct access to the true status of being: noein. Noein, the pure vision of beings, has, for Heidegger, the character of revealing truth (alethia) in a ‘more original’ way than logos, and which ‘can never cover up’ or be false296. In the apophatic sense, ‘genuine’ vocal utterance—Sprechens—may indeed set something up in a moment of vision, but even if it does reveal the truth and not ‘cover up’, it is in any case ‘overlooked’ during the ‘uncovering’. And vocalisation, as Gerede, is suppressed altogether because of its ambiguity. The ‘discourse’ of ‘silence’, however, ultimately revealing the phenomenon par excellence, the ‘being’ of beings, involves the clearing off all forms of sound and vocalisation altogether.

Besides the possibility of sound revealing falsity, or degenerating into mere ‘hubbub’ (the sound that the ‘they’ makes), there are two other fundamental reasons for Heidegger’s suppression of sound. The first rests with his desire to keep the tradition of vision going:

[F]rom the beginning onwards the tradition of philosophy has been oriented primarily towards ‘seeing’ as an access to entities and to Being. To keep the connection with this tradition, we may formalise “sight” and “seeing” enough to

291 Ibid., p314
292 Ibid., p316
293 Ibid., p56
294 Ibid., p56
295 Ibid., p56
296 Ibid., p57
obtain therewith a universal term for characterising any access to entities or to Being, as access in general.\textsuperscript{297}

The second rests with his concept of ‘anxiety’, an interpretation of which reveals something about the necessary presence of ‘silence’ in Heidegger’s phenomenology. Put as simply as possible, ‘anxiety’ is not a fear of something or any of worldly things, anything which can be known about. Worldly things are the things to which one flees in one’s ‘inauthentic’, self-disowning fallenness, after all. Being-in-the-world, however, reveals something about oneself. What this being-in-the-world ultimately reveals is the fact of the abovementioned ‘nothing’, that which is also ‘nowhere’. In the ‘nothing’ and the ‘nowhere’ lies the very disclosure of place, or the ‘real’ world as it seems actually to be, to be there. ‘Nowhere’ is not the mere negation of place, as if the world could be imagined not to exist; it is in fact the condition of, or the very possibility of place. Anxiety makes possible the discovery of a ‘somewhere’ for ‘inauthentic being’ to constantly ‘fall’ towards. The world is therefore in a sense a fundamental aspect of human existence itself and not something which lies ‘external’ to ‘mind’ as such. Coming face-to-face with being as such therefore means coming face-to-face with oneself ‘authentically’. ‘Anxiety’ motivates the fleeing toward the ‘discovered’ world and, although initially away from the Self, ultimately, perhaps ironically, right towards it. This is revealed when the world is exposed as a kind of refuge from the self but also as an aspect of the self. One constantly ‘falls’ away from the Self, away from ‘authenticity’ toward the constituted world, and is called back to it by the silent call of conscience. ‘Understanding’ all of this propels being forward into its ownmost possibilities, toward the finite self which comprises of its own, individual history or past.

Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about—its authentic potentiality-for-being-in-the-world. Anxiety individualises Dasein for its ownmost Being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself upon possibilities.\textsuperscript{298}

In anxiety, revealed as being-in-the-world, the worldly things, and others in it, sink back: ‘the world can offer no more...’\textsuperscript{299} In a kind of reversal, the world is exposed as that which, once a comfort zone, is seen as the result of an original anxiety, a mode of a more original phenomenon which is, most surprisingly, ‘nothing’. ‘Nothing’ comes from within Dasein.

In analysing and dismantling the formal definition of phenomena, (the second half of the term ‘phenomenology’) Heidegger discusses the difference between ‘phenomena’ and ‘appearances’, how each depend upon one another (‘...phenomena are never appearances,

\textsuperscript{297} ibid., p.187
\textsuperscript{298} ibid., p.232
\textsuperscript{299} ibid., p.232
though on the other hand every appearance is dependent on phenomena³⁰³), and how each of these may be interpreted. Formally speaking, a phenomenon is considered to be ‘that which shows itself in itself’³⁰¹, but there also exist those phenomena which only ‘seem’ to do this. Both are structured or organised along an axis which begins at ‘primordiality’ and extends to ‘mere semblance’. Those of the latter kind Heidegger dismisses as ‘privative’ or degenerate and secondary in relation to the positive and primordial kind, which ‘show themselves in themselves’. The ‘privative’ is founded by the first, but by contrast has the characteristic of simple mimicry. Heidegger:

Now an entity can show itself from itself in many ways...Indeed it is even possible for an entity to show itself as something which in itself it is not. When it shows itself in this way, it ‘looks like something or other’.³⁰²

Although he eventually bypasses the formal conception altogether, Heidegger reworks the meaning of phenomena as ‘that which shows itself in itself’ into his own phenomenological method, considering it to be basically correct. So what does he leave behind and why?

Though primary phenomena are structurally connected to the secondary type (‘...something which in itself it is not’ ), together they still may not unambiguously express truth. It is this power of the ‘secondary phenomenon’ which, in terms of sound, is interesting. Although bearing a representational capacity, it is somewhat similar to the Platonic notion of the ‘mimetic’—perhaps even a copy of it—which is suppressed in favour of a more primary mode of representation, that allegedly bearing a more fundamental, or essential relation to the ‘real’ or to ‘truth’. As Paul Patton explains:

[The ordered and hierarchical world of representation is threatened by figures of another kind whose essence lies precisely not in resemblance to the real nature of things but in their capacity to simulate such natures...Unlike the copies of reality produced in the discourse of the philosopher, which are supposed to bear an essential resemblance to things, simulacra are defined by their [constitutional] difference from what they represent...³⁰³

³⁰⁰ ibid., p53. Both varieties of phenomena are further distinguished from ‘appearances’ which may ‘appear’ in many, and often ambiguous ways. One form of an appearance, for instance, may show itself through something else, and so never in itself fully disclose to being. Still others, ‘mere appearances’, may remain quite hidden altogether.
³⁰¹ ibid., p51ff
³⁰² ibid., p51.
Whilst the suppression of the first, primary phenomenon is required by Heidegger, it being only a formal conception which cannot be applied in his phenomenological method, the complete suppression from the outset of the secondary, 'privative' type is in itself quite revealing. What is the power of this secondary term that Heidegger both invokes and absolutely suppresses?

What appears—the [secondary] phenomenon—is no longer physis, the emerging power, nor is it the self-manifestation of the appearance; no, appearing is now the emergence of the copy. And since the copy never equals the prototype, what appears is mere appearance, actually an illusion, a deficiency...\(^\text{304}\)

The copy has the power to destabilise hierarchies, in that it has a difference in its constitution from the real, or bears no essential relation to it. In a world of simulacra, nothing is fixed as the absolute ground-zero with relation to the distribution of signification: there is no central governance of power at any point; no distinction would be able to be maintained between what an actual, primary copy shows and what is revealed in a 'mere appearance'. In this anarchic world, the distinctions 'reality' and 'truth' would be abolished. If Heidegger's world were to be inverted, in other words, there would be no criteria for the evaluation of truth, and the possibility of establishing and maintaining hierarchical, differential relations between sound and 'vision' would be annulled. The very raising up of the question of the a priori existence of truth, as a presupposed given\(^\text{305}\), would in this analysis be wholly occluded. But Heidegger, in repressing the secondary, 'privative' phenomenon, maintains a metaphysics of identity where vision remains the crowned method of verification or direct mode of access (noein) to being. It would be a mistake, however, to say that Heidegger apportioned to all sound the 'quality' of 'privations' or 'mere appearance'. Although the 'mere appearance' or copy is from the outset absolutely repressed, sound as genuine, concrete language also 'disappears' or is overlooked during the time of the direct and truthful noetic 'appearance'. Sound as either fully concrete language or 'idle chatter', and perhaps sound in general, is hierarchised by the visual.

The power of the secondary phenomena is noted by Heidegger, in that it bears a constitutive link to the first, and so bears a capacity to destabilise it. In the formal conception of the phenomenon the 'primary' phenomenon must be able to be stabilised and maintained as such. It is because of the threat of the 'privative' phenomenon that it must ultimately be suppressed, however. The very possibility of access to the phenomenon 'being' is contingent upon its being done so completely unambiguously and directly, and so

\(^{304}\) Martin Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, p.154. Quoted in 'Decline and Fall', p.196

\(^{305}\) Heidegger: 'It is not we who presuppose 'truth'; but it is 'truth' that makes it at all possible ontologically for us to be able to be such that we 'presuppose' anything at all. Truth is what first makes possible anything like presupposing,' Being and Time, op. cit., p.270
abandonment of the formal conception of phenomena is altogether required, save for a vestigial rendering of the conception "that which shows itself in itself" considered by Heidegger to be essential and proper to the possibility of direct access. The philosophical paradigm of identity, even identity as difference, must retain its authoritative truth value. The secondary, privative phenomenon, annulled for moral reasons (it cannot possibly represent truth, and can cast doubt over the authenticity of the primary phenomenon) may also ultimately turn out to be idle chatter (Gerede) or unchannelled noise. Capitulating to a general theory of truth, a theory based in the image of that which is 'brought out into the light' (here reminiscent of the metaphor of Plato's cave), Heidegger drops his workaday tool, the speech act, as his brilliant, overhauled philosophical juggernaut rolls silently off the assembly line. The formal conceptions are for the betterpart are consigned to the scrapheap. Phenomenology, with the new conceptions of each half of the term, turns out to mean something like: 'to let that which shows itself in itself be seen from itself'. Without sound, of course, truth here can only come to equal silence. Phenomenology ultimately comes to require the impossible suspension of the Heraclitean flux in order to then be able to analyse the temporal structure of Dasein.

One 'listens', says Heidegger, to the silent 'call' of consciousness, the 'nothing' which is perhaps nothing other than one's own non-representable and imminent death, a non-thematisable mode of the most original and authentic phenomenon than any other—being itself. An ironical point: what more uncanny aspect of the world, revealed in a 'retroprojection' as a mode of this 'positive nothing' or silence, than sound, its exact opposite? 'Being-towards-death' may be the revelation produced through being-in-sound, sound as noise, speech (Sprechens or Gerede) which completely envelops and flows all around, through and from 'inauthentic' self. In 'anxiety' 'the worldly things...sink back...'. What worldly phenomenon sinks back more instantaneously in any case than sound, despite being's envelopment or 'hiddenness' in it, and despite Dasein's 'anxiety'? What other worldly phenomenon recedes so persistently that the 'fleeing' to or immersion in it always results or runs in proximity to a loss? Sound evanesces, and is never really quite able to be phenomenologically constituted. What could potentially draw one into a relation of 'anxiety' more than noise, the extreme opposite of silence (or perhaps the mode closest to it, it said to prevent one from 'thinking')? What other phenomenon than sound, revealed as an aspect or mode of nothing, is therefore more reducible to silence? If, in an ironic twist, volumes of silence seem to resonate across the very field of sounding-being, rendering it 'speechless'—
The mortal reflection (repercussion or reverberation [of silence]) is not only absolute but in reality absolving; it unites all the bonds formed with the ambient world, the public space of the “They”... 306

—then one can only wonder at Heidegger’s complete suppression of sound. Heidegger suppresses sound, and denies it any part in noesis, the direct, visionary uncovering of truth or alethia. He invokes sound first, however, but it is as if he unknowingly ‘understands’ the implications of the peculiar worldliness of sound (its receding or evanescence) and so anxiously suppresses it. This perhaps reveals something about Heidegger’s own anxiety and ‘inauthenticity’. He seems to both flee towards sound, sound which evanesces and sinks back, and unknowingly shrinks back from its own shrinking back.

In Heidegger’s conception, sound is exposed as a mode of...nothing, and vocalisation is reduced to nothing more than a confused, unintelligible babble (‘hubbub’). Only silence participates in the noein, lets stand forth in the groundless ground of the Open, in a moment of vision, truth. Or, rather, vision stands forth, and sound becomes or is as nothing. This recalls an enigmatic experience expressed Dante’s Divine Comedy (1320); having traversed the underworld, Dante, ascending the circling spheres towards Paradise guided by the ‘shade’ or ghost of Virgil becomes increasingly exposed to the divine revelation, which he describes as the ‘exalted’ and ‘changeless’ light of the holy Trinity, into which his own expanding vision or ‘sight’ penetrates:

For now my sight, clear and yet clearer grown,
   Pierced through the ray of that exalted light,
   Wherein, as in itself, the truth is known.

Henceforth my vision mounted to a height
   Where speech is vanquished and must lag behind,
   And memory surrenders in such plight.

Dante’s ‘vision’ coalesces, or becomes as One with a divine revelation, the ‘light of God’. His vision is the truth, and sound and memory (time?) fall or ‘sink back’. After the revelation, he is unable to adequately express the experience except in little more than babble or ‘hubbub’:

306 Jean-François Courtine, ‘Voice of Conscience and the Call of Being’. Who Comes After the Subject? op. cit., p82
Now, even what I recall will be exprest
More feebly than if I could wield no more
Than a babe’s tongue, yet milky from the breast...\(^{307}\)

Heidegger suppresses concrete sound in favour of silence, which alone is considered the necessary precondition for the ‘unconcealment’ of truth in a moment of visual epiphany. He says: ‘[f]alling’ [in which sound occurs] ‘has its temporal roots in the Present (whether in [‘inauthentic’] making present or in the moment of vision)’.\(^{308}\) Silence is considered more original, perhaps more ‘authentic’ than sound. I would suggest, to conclude this section, that it is only in as far as a relation to truth that sound, in its evanescence, stands the possibility of becoming suppressed. That the question of truth may be revealed a false problem in the study of sound is perhaps not unworthy of deeper and more serious consideration.

The claim of an ethical primordiality or supremacy based on knowledge—\textit{noein}—is for Emmanuel Levinas in any case a distinct impossibility. For Levinas the temporal abyss—an ‘an-archy’—is that which persecutes each being into an ethical, communicative relation with others; no being is able, through an act or event (Ereignis) of cognition, to collect or recollect in a field of illumination the truth which emerges as an appearance, or as an absolute, static presence. The sphere of absolute, irreducible difference is never able to be recovered in an act of conscious reflection or ‘dialectic’, much less as a figure which presents against the ‘groundless ground’ of the ‘Open’. Faced with the anarchy of time, the subject (or, for Levinas, the ‘who’ that is subjected) is assembled in an ethical response to this ‘always already said’. It is only \textit{after} experiencing temporal separation that any epistemological claims can be made, any concepts belatedly formed after the fact of the ethical relation. But this ‘prior’ ethical relation is only \textit{conceived} of as being ‘prior’. It otherwise completely escapes conception and understanding: it is, for Levinas, ‘\textit{otherwise than being}’. The next section will consider Levinas’s position, and other positions like it.

Heidegger may have desired an end to the metaphysics of presence, but he may also have unwittingly extended the claims of the same \textit{philosophies}, being so concerned as he was with questions of truth. Perhaps a more radical ‘closing off’ would involve non-participation in a metaphysical strategy organised around a chronic anxiety regarding truth—to think of sound, language, as a relation of absolute, temporal difference; a calamitous ‘discourse’, interrupting or perforating the very scene of presence and rendering absurd the dialectical approach to the conception of being. The \textit{interpretation} of such calamitous events, however, would be the thing to bear in mind, perhaps offering potential for a more interesting...


\(^{308}\) Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, op. cit., p401
development of sound ‘ideas’. Sound, noise and language in any case abound; despite the objective reductions of sound, or its complete moral annulment, it still resounds and so overflows all ontological categories, exceeding at every level the possibility of absolute ontological or epistemological reductions. An interpretation of sound which would not require its being understood as logically or chronologically ‘prior’ to the development of a concept or where the notion of ‘priority’ is maintained in a concept—the concept of ‘silence’ specifically—would radically oppose the requirement that it should ultimately come to reveal truth. I am also suggesting that the purveyors of sound-art or sound studies do not only not need to continue to seek for sound the status of an ‘ontic’ or a simple object, but also not feel it necessary to ‘rescue’ it from some metaphysical miscarriage or other and then restore it to a more authentic, even ‘noetic’ status. A different approach to sound studies altogether may be possible. It would indeed be deeply ironic that the question in question regarding sound studies should remain one of epistemological intent. ‘Listening’ and ‘hearing’ as epistemic bypasses to ‘authenticity’ may only be able to be organised along the pre-existing axes of visual volition or merely replace or substitute for the visual metaphor. Perhaps the study of sound need not be preoccupied with the question of truth, truth which may never in any case be able to be gathered together in a totality. One small suggestion: perhaps the sound artist, as the ‘author’ or creator of a sound art ‘product’, could otherwise think of themselves as an ‘interlocutor’. As Jean-Luc Marion suggests:

...the interlocuteur finds itself the derivative pole of a relation in which it no longer has any of the (autonomous, autarkic) substantiality implied by even the least subjectivity.309

Attali and the Channelling of Sound

Jacques Attali speaks of the capacity of sound to channel and configure thought in such a way as to maintain or to transform the structures of political power. He re-works these alleged aspects of sound back into the political arena, this strategy informed by a representationalist, materialist philosophy. This involves sound’s conception as materially evanescent, requiring its repetition, and deployment in the sphere of social and material transformation.

Beginning with the proposition that the semantic significance of music reflects ‘historical, social and psychological signifieds’310, but also proposing that this desire to ideologise is actually a form of ‘false consciousness’, i.e., where music is thought not to have ‘escaped

309 ‘L’interloque’, Who Comes After the Subject? op. cit., p243
310 Frederic Jameson in Jacques Attali’s Noise, op. cit. Foreword, IX
from its social tutelage, questions regarding autonomous, aesthetic values are then revitalised and relativised in terms of the dominant (Modernist) critiques pervading the notion of aesthetics. Dodecaphony, serialism, twelve-tone musical composition, etc., characteristic of the developments in early modern musical thought, exemplified by Webern and Schoenberg and extending through to Cage, were thought to reflect a utopian principle of freedom, a form of freedom of musical expression. For example:

The esthetic is what we think in the presence of the object. The artist's means are not esthetic but his thinking on them is; his esthetic thought prevails over the means to make a work of art. The rules of fugue or sonata form prophesy no esthetic consequence, except by the thought and doing of the artist. The sound object HPSCHD... may be the most elaborately defined sound composite so far achieved by deliberate formal composition.

or:

Schoenberg's piano compositions mark culminating points in his creative career. The concentrated sound of the piano combines highly personal communication with exemplary abstraction. ... They are the first work to sound out the atonal space of liberated dissonances. The sounds are free from functional relationships; they have taken on anarchic functions in their own right.

But these aesthetically 'autonomous' forms, according to Frederic Jameson, did not themselves avoid reflecting the social conditions with which they were contemporaneous. Further, they were thought to be 'retrospective' or '...at best as lagging behind concrete social development'. Attali's project, on the other hand, is to indicate the possibility of music anticipating 'a new, liberating mode of production' capable of counteracting the 'dystopian mode of production' insofar as being able to prophesy or annunciate these utopian dreams. As a Marxist, his dream is of course materialistic, but it is upon his notion of materialism and its transformation via sound that I will here focus my attention.

Within Attali's scheme, the notion of autosurveillance is foregrounded as the emergent condition necessary for the development of the capitalist power base. It also involves the

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313 Wolfgang Rogge, jacket notes, 1975, *ARNOLD SCHOENBERG. THE PIANO MUSIC*, Deutsche Grammophon, 2530531
314 Attali, *Noise*, op. cit., XI
incursion of informational technology into the sphere of development of individuated subjectivity. With *autosurveillance*, the individual self-monitors in full realisation of the processes involved, but is not aware of the ironies implicit, on a general social and political level, in the development of the ‘emancipated’ subject, ‘free’ to exchange labour for profit, to consume and spend ‘freely’, and so on. The emergence of newer societal relations comes, for Attali, from generating an awareness of how the preconditions necessary for formulating this new knowledge may be themselves set: utilising, as a social group, financial resources through the application of cost-reducing technologies. This reorganisation bears the capacity to transform the ‘subject of history’ as well as the material basis upon which the socially oriented subject proliferates. Moreover, the potential for this social and material transformation centres upon the channelling of ‘noise’ into ‘music’.

Material, for Attali, is no longer simple transformable ‘stuff’, it also includes what transforms it. Though he does not use the term ‘material’ to describe what he claims has supplanted the obsolete notion of ‘stuff’—the exchange of signs, the generation of information—this really only reflects a distinction he tries to maintain between material and what organises its transformation. Signs and information are, to all intents and purposes, the materials which are produced, stockpiled and exchanged.

But music ‘as mirror of society, calls this truism [its capacity to regenerate social theory] to attention: society is much more than economistic categories...’315. Recalling the phenomenological notion of sound as a thematised memory, a point made earlier in this thesis, Attali goes on to pronounce or extend the notion of how sound has the capacity to construct consciousness itself, and so, to generate knowledge of how to generate new societal relations:

...to listen, to memorise—this is the ability to interpret and control history, to manipulate the culture of a people, to channel its violence and hopes. Who among us is free of the feeling that this process...is turning the modern State into a gigantic, monopolising noise emitter, and at the same time, a generalised eavesdropping device [?] 316

Music is discussed by Attali as the means by which noise (sound in general? utterance of heteronomous elements?) is organised; music is that which maintains harmony through the channelling of order(s). ‘Noise is a weapon and music, primordially, is the formation, domestication and ritualisation of that weapon as a simulacrum of ritual murder.’ 317

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315 ibid., p4
316 ibid., p7
317 ibid., p24
Inverting the idea of music as a form of nostalgia (which Kierkegaard called ‘hope in retrospect’), Attali declares it prophetic, capable of structuring theoretical paradigms, ‘far ahead of concrete production’. This thinking is reflected in the following:

[Nono’s] works of the last decade are based on a historical consideration of musical material: it is not viewed as an invariable reservoir of sounds and expressions, but rather as an open field of possible constructions of musical sense. In this respect, the normative idea of Modernism is maintained: the compositional work as a production of the “radically new”—something which Nono expounded upon during these years in his concepts of “new listening”, i.e., “other ways of listening”... Each of Nono’s works since the string quartet Fragmento-Stile, en Diotima (1979-80), serves the intention of creating a new sound world in which the “unknown”—the “unheard” manifests itself. 318

The exponents of ‘sounds in liberation’, reflecting the canon of aesthetic independence and freedom of artistic expression, may still be viewed as those who are cognisant of their own historico-political situation and who may act, in Attali’s view, as the heralds of new productive and industrial forces. Where, otherwise, sound as noise is channelled to maintain order, stability and harmony (Musak, for instance, or talk-back radio), the capacity to apply knowledge, finance and technology in the transformation of theoretical paradigms signals the possibility of subverting current modes of concrete production. Sound, if thought of as phenomenally changeable, as an example of Heraclitean flux (something which is constantly ‘becoming’ but which never ‘becomes’), may be the source of this power, this capacity for change. But how far one, as an exponent of ‘sounds in liberation’, may be prepared to go in the pursuit of this ideology may be quite a different story.

The production of sound in this process belies the fact of its evanescence and instability. This simply bespeaks the way in which a critique of aesthetics upholds and supports the mainframe (superstructure?) of a certain ideology of presence. Sound always anyway drops out of the picture, and its afterimage (memory or reification) becomes the retrospective referent upon which the ideology of liberatory activity is carried out, a site of fetishisation. Heraclitus’ flux, after all, meant that nothing remained. A ‘flux’ in Attali’s ideology is a flux in which something remains; his is not really a flux in the Heraclitean sense, it is only idealised as such. Sound must vanish, and so its repetition must then be said to be necessary. The belief structure, the maintenance of commodity processing, stays in place. But what is maintained is not sound so much as the technological and informational apparatus, the ‘hardware’ in the hands of experts, through which sound is channelled, produced, and fetishised as an object. Sound as actual Heraclitean flux does not remain; it

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is a substitute for material, but in the way in which it is idealised, it is thought of as productive of certain effects in its wake or passing.

Sound's value as a sign is predicated by its capacity to function as a transformer of material, and as the material (sound as consciousness) it itself transforms. The meaning of sound is proportional to the degree it falls within the paradigms of production-consumption systems, in respect of how and what it organises: societal relations. Therefore, it is not valued solely in terms of the amount of labour expended on it, so much as how it is seen to mirror, enforce or usher in new, dominant codes of power. Noise, according to Attali, exists as a simulacrum of general violence or murder which, when ritualised, becomes the simulacrum of sacrifice. Noise is channelled and codified, or, in the era of late capitalist society, becomes one of the possible means for the enactment of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call 'reterritorialisation'. In 'primitive society', Attali says, sound is given a 'form' and this lies at the base of its religious ideas. Sound is considered 'original' and 'prior' once more. Reiterating a well worn theological cliché, and faintly echoing the words of Giambattista Vico, Attali says:

Before the world there was Chaos, the void and background noise. In the Old Testament, man does not hear noise until after original sin, and the first noises he hears are the footsteps of God. Music, then, constitutes communication with this primordial, threatening noise—prayer. In addition, it has the explicit function of reassuring; the whole of traditional musicology analyses music as the organisation of controlled panic, the transformation of anxiety into joy, and of dissonance into harmony.

In some ways this can be interpreted as the promise of reconciliation, the reconstitution of the sovereign subject, the 'I', the knower of the object. It presupposes the possibility of the construction of a 'form' out of which arises false consciousness, 'free will'. With the advent of recording technologies, 'ritual sacrifice' was able to be individuated, clearly marking out a new phase of capitalist organisation. With the emergence in more recent times of the

320 These are summarised as follows: The descendants of Ham and Japheth and the non-Hebraic descendants of Shem...had lost all human speech and institutions and had been reduced to bestiality, copulating at sight and inclination. These dumb beasts naturally took the thundering sky to be a great animated body, whose flashes and claps were commands...The thunder surprised some of them in the act of copulation and frightened [them] into nearby caves. This was the beginning of matrimony and the settled life. What might otherwise have been a random act...became a permanent lifelong companionship sanctified by the god of the thundering sky...The two institutions, religion and matrimony, have thus a common birth... ' Thomas Goddard Bergin's and Max Harold Fish's introduction to The New Science. Unabridged translation of the third edition (1744); Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1988. Translated by Bergin and Fisch. pXXIII
321 Attali, Noise, op. cit., p27
'sound-artist' what is being witnessed is probably only the rise of another artifice, an
archaism, the perpetuation of the notion of the free individual capable of producing a 'one-
off' modern art product. The composer, by contrast, is considered by Attali to be a kind of
'moulder' who rents his score to the producers of what is repeated in the mould—which,
having surplus value, is then sold. The more capacity this 'form' has to channel violence,
the more surplus value it produces. When, however, the 'mould' wears thin, part of the
surplus value must be used to create more demand, which in turn ensures that the
repetition of mould-making can happen.

The construction of the notion of dissonance, in this schematics, ensures the rupturing of
harmony from which a 'new' order is able to be established, and, in its turn, overridden.
This process, being repetitive, is in a sense constitutive of fashion. But it is the absence of
any other meaning for the mould-maker's craft that Attali laments. It is the absence of more
expansive thought or analysis over the meaning of sound as a 'one-off object', and of the
lack of assumption of other responsibilities for sound artists that this writer is trying to
address. Sound art, as it presently stands, resembles or is represented as something like
a 'dissonance' in the sense that it appears 'different' in respect to the visual arts, and on
the face of material manipulation is. But this may only serve to reinforce the dominant,
modernist mode of art production, in that it would appear to offer the possibility of
challenging and rupturing a (necessarily determined and often retrospectively assembled)
prevailing 'harmony', thus ensuring the maintenance of a privileged, avant-garde status for
the late-modern artist. A more fundamental question arises through a recognition of the
transition from the world of representationalism (from the overarching realm of traditional
philosophy) into the realm of post-representationalism, the impact of which, in terms of the
question of the historical contingency, determination and interpretation of the visual arts can
not be ignored.

The Problem of Metalepsis

Metalepsis—a form of metonymic substitution—is described by Jill Robbins as '...the
central trope of figural interpretation'. In revealing a negational process by which one term
is only able to be made explicable via another, Robbins not only exposes how the general
movement of literalism gains its authority (where, in deriving a text's content or 'truth'
value, it exclusively affirms, centralises and deploys its own procedures at the expense of
any other), she also problematises the very possibility of reversing this hierarchisation.
Likewise, as I suggested at the outset of this thesis, the Modernist tendency to organise an
epistemology of artists' practices readily substitutes one set of artists' materials for
another. In its conceptualism, the most important factor in Modernism, in which the

322 Robbins, Prodigal Son/Elder Brother, op. cit., p4
'development' of sound art has occurred, is the conceptualism itself and not the medium. Sound is easily substituted for any other plastic material, and in the process it is 'read' via a literalist, conceptual and visually oriented schema. If the modern artists' media is interpreted as a metonymic contraction or representation of the artists' conceptual interests, then it is plain to see that any material can be easily and conveniently substituted for any other.

As suggested in the first section of this thesis, the mere prefacing or foregrounding of sound within the sphere of the visual arts seems little more than an attempt to reverse a metaleptical displacement, and any reprioritising of sound, whilst it remains within the domain of the visual, only reinforces its reading through visualist, ontological metaphoricity, as a pure, temporal 'now', the simple negative correspondent of an equally fully present subject. As I have also suggested, sound as a pure, temporal unfolding is not easily thought of as an object except when it is organised as such in a conceptual reduction. As Jacques Derrida explains:

The new now is not a being, it is not a produced object; and every language fails to describe this pure movement other than by metaphor, that is, by borrowing its concepts from the order of the objects of experience...³²³

How sound may otherwise be interpreted remains a highly complex problem. An examination of metaleptic movement offers insight, however, into the means by which sound is drawn into the sphere of the visual, and in which it is codified and marginalised. I will look at how Robbins, in her attempt to 're-inscribe' something which is already figurally inscribed, addresses a similar kind of problem.

Referring explicitly to the Hebraic scriptural commentary 'midrash', a process which searches out meaning via a multiplicity of complex inter-textual references, and which also often involves Rabbinic comment over several generations, Robbins exposes the knotty paradigm of oppositionality which has been set up between variable intralinguistic interpretation and more explicitly 'closed' textual referentiality.

[The continuance of this oppositional structure, which is also a hierarchical one, underscores the sense in which the conflict of interpretations between midrash and [literalist, figural] hermeneutics...is not primarily historical. At stake is the discursive asymmetry between the two, speaking about midrash in the language of hermeneutics. Because of this discursive asymmetry, and because...midrash is a name for the eclipsed other of hermeneutics, midrash cannot, finally, be called an "alternative" to

³²³ Derrida, Speech and Phenomena, op. cit., pp83-4
hemeneutics. Hermeneutics and midrash are not two possibilities that appear in the same light. One is in the light; the other appears in a certain nonlight.324

The possibility of cleaving open and reinscribing texts exposes and challenges the presuppositions of literalist systems of representation, those in which textual meaning is considered to be unequivocal, hidden or latent, waiting to be uncovered by those who would ‘...give a single, exhaustive explanation that would close off the reading’325. In the literalist signposting of meaning, referents are conceived of as teleological figures or forms which retrospectively affirm the processes involved in their own decipherment. There, all conclusions are foregone; meaning is taken literally for granted. Meaning is only ever problematised as being embedded in the text, able only to be deciphered through the specialised interpretive faculties of textual archaeologists. Meaning is drawn from the text in a perfectly circular, conceptual route: signage is joined seamlessly from beginning to end and meaning (re)exposed in a flourish of interpretive activity. It is veiled and unveiled, buried and then unearthed by a mesmerising, and self-mesmerised, authorial hierarchancy.

Midrash, by contrast, cleaves open the text, introducing a more potent, non-teleological form of textual ‘signification’ which places the activity of reading (the ‘response’) prior in importance to the creation and maintenance of a relatively inert textual corpus. It opens the possibility of generating a scintillation (or, rather, a susurrus) of meaning, the brilliance of the colloquy which is, paradoxically, dazzling. Midrash pours the text out into an infinity of con-texts, a ‘place’ where the utterances of others resound and are given ear to.

However, one of the problems midrash faces given the dominance of literalism is the means by which it, or a method like it, may become a possibility for someone not initiated into the process. And, as Robbins reminds the reader, midrash is not simply an ‘alternative to hemeneutics’; one can not use the language of literalism to gain direct access the non-literal. The idealised ‘presence’ of the reader and all others ‘present’, guaranteed by their very utterances, is another problem326. Being aware of such problems, she looks to other means of accessing the non-literal: asymmetry.

Robbins explicates the manner in which literal and figural interpretive models have been constructed within the parameters of Greco-Christian (NeoPlatonic) thought, in other words

324 Robbins, Prodigal Son/Elder Brother, op. cit., pp19-20
326 ‘...intersubjectivity is first the nonempirical relation of Ego to Ego, of my present present to other presents as such; i.e., as others and as presents (as past presents). Intersubjectivity is the relation of an absolute origin to other absolute origins, which are also my own, despite their radical alterity.’ Jacques Derrida, Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry: An Introduction. Trans. J.P. Leavey, Jr., University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1989. p86

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by the symmetry of dialectical movement—'here/there; now/then; present/absent', etc. In this philosophy of presence and identity, the other's negativity is negated and so thematised as another aspect of the same's sameness. The same, recognising its incorporated difference, is unified in an internal contradiction (it is different in itself); it becomes the other of the other, and the other—for which the same conditions apply—is for it: difference is identity and identity is difference. It is a relation of pure and absolute symmetricality; otherness is (pre)figured and (mis)re-presented.

How, in an asymmetrical relation, can otherness in its absolute otherness, be 'thought'? If otherness is able to be thematised in a concept, could it not be said that it is not truly and radically other? But however complexly put, questions of ontological volition dodge the question of alterity; the ontological question is itself that which is questionable; the transcendent aspect of the other is denied when an epistemologically oriented question is proposed. Which is not to say that transcendence is not possible, but that the transcendent, in its transcendence, can not be thematised, reduced to an ontological 'presentation'. Transcendence can never 'coincide' in a reciprocal relation to an intending consciousness except when conceptually idealised, or metaphorised; its 'form', if the term may be used, may be eidolontic, but its 'image' would be neither representational, presentational nor absent.

In his essay 'Beyond Intentionality' Emmanuel Levinas outlines his philosophy of the priority of an ethical, non-reciprocal relation of self to others, which, preceding an ontological, conceptual level of correspondence, disrupts the possibility of differentially reducing otherness to sameness. Here, the very meaning of 'priority' changes: it is no longer a question of reversion to origins in any general, epistemological or ontological sense. In the philosophy of ethics there is no originary moment, no arche as such. The meaning of beginnings is maintained only as the beginning of a profound philosophical complexity where 'originality' is originally anoriginal.

In this essay, Levinas traces the development of Husserl's phenomenological thought and dismantles some of its key concepts. Meaning is derived from intentionality, the direction of consciousness toward a thing, and the thought of that thing is that upon which sense is bestowed. This process is called noesis. Noema, which is 'concrete in the intention of the noesis' comes from the primordial emergence of sense. Intentionality implies a sense of willing and so is equated with a notion of freedom. Taking responsibility for its own

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327 'By its very dialecticalness, the absolute primordiality of the Living Present permits the reduction, without negation, of all alterity. The Living Present constitutes the other as other in itself and the same as the same in the other.' Derrida, ibid., p86
329 Ibid., p101
intentionality, consciousness 'raises' itself into the transcendent sphere (though in an immanent fashion) in the present or 'here and now'. The presence of the body as the locus of a perceiving, intending subject is especially emphasised in Husserlian phenomenology. 'Since we must move around about things in order to grasp them, turning our head, adjusting our eyes and using our ears' (my emphasis) and is accorded more importance than 'mere images' (or 'representations'). The grasp of consciousness is verified through the eye, which in turn verifies the hand (the Heideggerian notion of 'tool' reinforces the ideality of bodily presence). Presence is the presence of a 'content' or

...the formal identity of *something* (*etwas überhaupt*), of a something which can be indicated and identified by an *index* as a determinable point within all which is present and gathered together: quiddity and identity of a thing, a solid, a term, a being.\(^{331}\)

Formal ontology therefore refers back to material ontology. In it, temporal alterity is gathered together, homogenised as an historical narrative, re-presented as a 'once present' or 'past now'. Only when sound is idealised as retentive of presence, as a memory or former 'now', the re-presentation of presence is made possible. Its historical aspect is gathered into a 'presence' even though at the moment of its manifestation as an ideal object it disperses and folds back into an historical, temporal narrative.\(^{332}\) Language is seen as the relation between two or more interlocutors, and the movement out of the self into the thought of another. Ideally never ceasing to remain within itself, sound also remains the sign of the subjective self, its index, and signifies subjective presence to another presence. The coincidence of reason is held '...on this view as the true inner life'\(^{333}\). Levinas asks, however, whether this proximity of one consciousness to another, or self to (it)self, does not, given the lapse of time involved, denote a failure to actually coincide. On the question of the possibility of knowledge of transcendance, Levinas expresses his doubts:

\(^{330}\) Ibid., p102. Also: 'Husserl clearly said this: insofar as signs can be immediately perceptible by everyone in their corporeality; insofar as they bodies and corporeal forms are always already in an intersubjective horizon, then sense can be deposited there and communalised (*metre en communauté*). Corporeal exteriority undoubtedly does not constitute the sign as such but, in a sense that we must make clear, is indispensable to it. *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry*, op. cit., p94

\(^{331}\) Levinas, 'Beyond Intentionality', op. cit., p102

\(^{332}\) 'Now if the originally self-evident production, as the pure fulfilment of its intention, is what is renewed (recollected), there necessarily occurs, accompanying the active recollection of what is past, an activity of concurrent actual production, and there arises thereby, in original "coincidence," the self-evidence of identity: what has now been realised in original fashion is the same as what was previously self-evident. Also coestablished is the capacity for repetition at will with the self-evidence of the identity (coincidence of identity) of the structure throughout the chain of repetitions.' *Edmund Husserl, The Origin of Geometry*, *Phenomenology and Existentialism*. Eds. Richard M. Zaner and Don Ihde, Capricorn Books, NY, 1973. p356

\(^{333}\) Levinas, 'Beyond Intentionality', op. cit., p105
Whether knowledge be sensible, conceptual or even purely symbolical, the transcendent, or the absolute, claiming, as it does, to be unaffected by any relation, can in fact bear no transcendental sense without immediately losing it: the very fact of its presence to knowledge signifies the loss of transcendence and of absoluteness. In the final analyses, presence excludes all transcendence.\textsuperscript{334}

In phenomenology, thought is concurrent with the (ideal) presence of ‘real’ things (which includes the presence of ‘real’ beings) before one-another. Levinas does not speak of the possibility of actual coincidence but instead allows room for a simple ‘gathering together’ under societal relations or relations of proximity. The ethical relation comes about not as a consequence of this proximal relation, being ‘prior’ to it, but neither as the result of a symmetrical mode of communication such as in Buber’s ‘I-Thou’ relation\textsuperscript{335}. Rather, a ‘summons’ is made from which a response is demanded, but demanded as a responsibility (response-ability) for the other. This response is given ‘prior’ even to the possibility of thematising the other, who always, through time, remains transcendent.

Beyond surface plasticities. Not in any sense an experience of the beyond, not the knowledge of another presence, which, if it were to be attributed to the beyond, would be quite absurd, reducing this beyond to a mere continuation of intentionality, extending into a mythological other-world. Instead, a beyond that is the break-up of presence, and, consequently, of synchronisable time. A relation of non-synthetisables, between non-synchronisables, a relation of the Same to the Other; ethical thinking or human fraternity.\textsuperscript{336}

This ‘fraternal’ relation extends across an abyss constructed by knowledge of others but which is not in consequence of the other’s otherness. This relation is ‘prior’ to any knowledge of the other.

I respond to a question more ancient than ‘my consciousness’, a question that my consciousness could not have perceived yet which commits me, in accordance with the strange schema evident in a creature that must have been able to respond to the flat of Genesis, before ever having been of the world and in the world, before having been capable of hearing.\textsuperscript{337}

\textsuperscript{334} Ibid., p106
\textsuperscript{335} ‘The Thou appears...as acting and being acted upon—not, however, linked to a chain of causes, but, in a relation of mutual action with the I...’. Martin Buber, I And Thou. Trans. R.G. Smith, T&T Clark, Edinburgh; Charles Scribner’s Sons, NY, 1958. p30
\textsuperscript{336} Levinas, ‘Beyond Intentionality’, op. cit., p110
\textsuperscript{337} Ibid., p111
What may be spoken of as a 'priority' here may involve a metaleptical inversion, but it is concerned with logical rather than chronologica sequence or figuration. Using the allegories of Odysseus and the prodigal son, Robbins shows how a coincidence of the same with itself disrupts the possibility of any radical non-coincidence; how that which does not ‘return’ (the ‘heteronomous’, as she calls it) is suppressed within the language of presence. Unlike non-being within a dialectical relation, this heteronomous ‘other’ is radically other; it is unable to be named although the ‘same’ still suppresses it (and so therefore acknowledges and idealises it) to provide for its own hegemonically constructed identity. The ‘radical other’ remains just so, unnameable, outside. The ‘same’ fails to grasp it in actual fact, but it fails to recognise its failure. It thinks it grasps it. The prodigality of the ‘same’ involves no real risk; any wandering outwards is the guarantee of a return, or rather, this return is contingent upon an initial wandering away, eerling. What is other is ‘written out’, but by ironically being ‘written in’ (the prodigal son’s elder brother is written ‘out’ by being written ‘in’ as he defiantly ‘stands outside in the field’). He is only de-scribed in a displaced relation to the dominant figure, the prodigal son: he who returns. Sound’s existence as an ideal object is similarly a reduction of the heteronomous to formal, material ontology.

Robbins’ project is to re-inscribe the ‘heteronomous’, but has no recourse to the ‘language’ of the ‘other’—at least not directly. Her method, like Levinas’, is elliptical and allusive; any logicality in the narrative is wayward and asymmetrical. Like Levinas she emphasises the ‘priority’ of the ethical to the epistemological, of action before thought, doing before knowing or of responding ‘before’ being summoned. Rather than taking up the term ‘heteronomous’ which would state positively what was not homogenous (the homogenous being the coincidence of the ‘same’ with itself), she favours use of the (awkward) term ‘non-heteronomous’. But of a ‘response before the call’—how so?

Levinas uses the very philosophical tradition which suppresses the question of the ethical to repose the same question, but in a manner which deviates—errs—from logical and dialectical convention. Reflecting Michèle Le Doeuff’s proposal that philosophy suppresses what is radically other (i.e. ‘woman’) because it cannot be incorporated into a totalising, symmetrical unity, Levinas seeks an asymmetrical relation with otherness but one which is not antagonistic or which induces ‘allergic’ reactions. Le Doeuff is similarly inclined, but differs in the way in which she claims suppression is enacted:

Only through the mediation of a man could women gain access to theoretical discourse. Here we find a predicament common to the feminine condition: that of not being able to do without a protector and mediator in any part of life defined as social. Moreover, the necessity of this mediation seems to me to be inscribed not so much in a prohibition
which would directly affect philosophy for women, but in a much simpler prohibition and a much more radical exclusion.\textsuperscript{338}

On the other hand, if a woman has to have a philosophy of her tutor-lover, she is no longer within the philosophical enterprise, because she is spared (that is to say prohibited) a certain relationship with lack, with that particular experience of lack, a radical lack which the Other cannot complete. And this, to my mind, forms the true starting-point of philosophy.\textsuperscript{339}

Here, Le Doeuff argues the case for a philosophy which remains wide open to the possibility of incompleteness. But the potential for a relationship with 'lack', of accepting incompleteness, is thwarted, placed beyond the woman-philosopher's experience because of the subtle prohibitions placed upon her by her tutor-lover who is anxious about the possibility of his own 'lack'. Through this relationship with 'lack', both find their starting points in philosophy, or rather, she finds a false-start. If the prohibition was lifted, she would be left free to have a 'particular experience of lack', and form a 'true starting-point' for her philosophy of openness. This philosophy would be radical, unlike one which would attempt to reconcile difference through the negation of negation. Le Doeuff's is a proposition, though, that does not wish to drift off into a form of emotional naïveté:

Where is the threat to philosophy in women being capable of it? It might be suggested that the so-called sovereignty of philosophy is at stake here. Philosophy, queen of the sciences...When a respected activity admits women it loses value: this is not a finding proven by some rigorous, scientific sociology, merely a theorem of intuitive commonplace 'sociology'...\textsuperscript{340}

...woman's placid botanical unfolding, falling short of anguish, serves as a foil to the real and substantial completeness of the philosophical, which, having striven through work, effort, suffering and thought, has transcended all inward fracture and is then beyond torment.\textsuperscript{341}

Elsewhere, Le Doeuff calls woman an 'atrophic' image (as opposed to a true or radical otherness), able to be negated and assimilated into a dialectical process. Le Doeuff's image of the atrophied body of woman may be contrasted to Georges Bataille's 'image' of

\textsuperscript{339} Ibid., p107
\textsuperscript{340} Ibid., p110
\textsuperscript{341} Ibid., p112
the corpse, a 'transitional object'\textsuperscript{342}, that which is neither living nor dead, and both of these to the image of the corpse of Theresa of Ávila\textsuperscript{343}, which allegedly showed no signs of decay for some time after her death. Her corpse was eventually hacked to pieces\textsuperscript{344} and these pieces used as holy relics upon which new churches were founded and consecrated. Only when considered corrupted—decaying, or torn from limb to limb—could Theresa’s corpse have functioned as the negative other in a theologico-dialectical play-off. Le Doeuff’s ‘atrophied’ body (woman as ‘atrophied’ image) may be seen as the negative equivalent of one which is or has become corrupted. Bataille’s ‘image’ is resistant to subsumption, as was Theresa’s—before it was desecrated.

The image of the slicing of a woman’s eyeball in the opening scenes of \textit{Un Chien andalou} (Buñuel and Dali, 1928. See Fig. 2, following page) is another example of what may be called ‘inclusive exclusion’. Blinded in one eye, but more particularly is left with a good one, she is made to appear disabled (unseeing); she is made, in a dialectical displacement, the explicable and admissible ‘other’ of her mutilator. She becomes ‘atrophied’. Despite being given the appearance of having an experience with ‘lack’ (lack of sight) and so admitted into the surrealist fold, it is at her expense, she is actually suppressed. Like Le Doeuff’s woman philosopher, who is inducted by her tutor-lover, she is left with one good eye (to gaze adoringly at her lover) and the other is deformed or turned away from its ‘true’ project which would begin, as Le Doeuff would say, with a ‘true’ experience of lack. The Surrealist, like the philosopher ‘proper’ (who appropriates), is uncomfortable about any sense of his own personal lack, and wanting to soar (sur) above prevents her from experiencing it herself; any acknowledgement of the possibility of lack would bring him crashing downwards. The blinding of the woman exposes the blind spot of Surrealism, but perhaps the slicing open of one eye, ironically, ‘opens’ it up in another sense—it perhaps affords her the opportunity to ‘look’ beyond the confines of a would-be panopticism, or rather to the hither side of it. Her ‘good’ eye becomes her bad, and vice-versa. Could metalepsis be inverted and not merely reversed?

\textsuperscript{342} M. C. Taylor, \textit{Altarity}, op cit. p127

\textsuperscript{343} An account of an episode in her life is given by Georges Bataille in \textit{Erosism, Death and Sensuality}. Trans. Mary Dalwood, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1986, p224

\textsuperscript{344} ‘...the fragrance that surrounded her uncorrupted body led to most disgraceful results. In the wild rush to acquire sacred relics, various of her limbs were torn from her corpse. Her old friend, Father Gracián...inaugurated her dismemberment by cutting off one of her hands.’ J. M. Cohen, in the Introduction of \textit{The Life of Saint Theresa of Ávila By Herself}. Penguin Classics, Australia, 1957, p16
Still from *Un Chien andalou*, Buñuel and Dali, 1928.
Is it possible to make philosophy...abandon its wish to be a speculation which leaves no room for lack of knowledge, to make it accept its intrinsic incompleteness and create a non-hegemonic rationalism, so that philosophy will no longer need a defence mechanism involving the exclusion of women—and children?  

Though vision, renaming (metaphoricising) and claiming sound as its own, as appropriate to it, has mutilated it, sound still phenomenally 'sounds'. In a differentiating movement—the 'development' of a 'new' medium—visual artists may merely be attempting to drag themselves out of the conceptual pit which they themselves have dug. But the problem of sound's 'sounding' remains complex. How can sound be 'reinscribed' and re-heard? Perhaps the clue lies in the very terms in which sound is described in its abridgement to the visual. In which case, the visual arts, like the Surrealist in relation to the blinded woman, may have unknowingly (precognitively?) done sound art an as-yet unrecognised favour.

Levinas invokes Plato's notion of the 'Good beyond Being' (from The Republic) as evidence of formal philosophy's acknowledgement of the transcendental status of ethics over ontology. However, heteronomous experience, the 'good beyond being', was and still is never able to be clearly delineated or straightforwardly described. The 'nonheteronomous' is, however, as is, consequently and importantly, the 'non-nonheteronomous'. As Robbins says:

In Levinas' argument, doing before understanding simply goes against the grain of the entire conceptuality of the West. Ultimately this is not just a matter of logic; it is in accordance with the philosophical priority of the knowledge we have of an act over the act itself. Generally we want to understand what we do and certainly to understand before we do.  

Levinas argues for the 'priority' of the act 'before' any opposition between fact and theory. The story of Odysseus, departing from and returning to Ithaca (i.e. re-inscription of the same, the recovery of the self-same) is thought of as 'nonheteronomous'. Abraham does not return: he wanders or 'errs'. His is a case of 'non-nonheteronomous' experience.

There is a dynamic tension in Levinas's text however, described by Robbins as a 'double bind', where the text's appeal (its authorial intention) to asymmetricality binds the reader in a symmetrical circuit: it says one thing but expects of the reader another. How can the

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345 Le Doeuff, 'Long Hair, Short Ideas', op. cit., p126
346 Robbins, Prodigal Son/Elder Brother, op. cit., p104
reader become unbound from the imperatives of the text? Does not ‘unbinding’ come in a chronological sequence after the act of reading? Levinas suggests the term ‘ingratitude’, a non-conformity with the other, as a means of rupturing the cycle of reciprocity or exchange. And Derrida problematises:

You have begun to receive his injunction, to render to yourself what he has said, and the more that you will obey him by restituting nothing, the better you will disobey him and will render yourself deaf to what he addresses to you.\textsuperscript{347}

But ethics, doing before thinking, requires more; it requires the maintenance of a wholly ambivalent attitude towards alterity. Robbins:

At the limit the discourse of the ethical is almost indistinguishable from the discourse of presentation. This is the logical form to which Levinas’s ethical discourse is absolutely vulnerable.\textsuperscript{348}

This involves the dissimulation, the ‘unsaying’ of what has been said. But how to ‘unread’ what is readable and has been read, or which requires reading? How not to hear (know) what is listened to? How to ‘unhear’?

Levinas’ ‘re-inscription’ does not merely reverse the hierarchical relation of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’—the subordinated term is not positioned as the dialectical opposite of the positive term. The other term, or the other as other, is never positioned and fixed in a simple, negative relation. It is only negated as a precondition of the positive term, and as ‘negative’ is duly negated. In Derridean terms, Levinas’ theologico-ethical project is written, described as ‘...a community of non-presence and therefore of non-phenomenality. Not a community without light, not a blindfolded synagogue, but a community anterior to Platonic light.’\textsuperscript{349}

The project of reassessing sound necessarily involves a radical rethinking of the figure/ground, positive/negative relation into which it has been written and thought. This involves no easy point of access, given the difficulty of recognising the futility of a simple reversal of hierarchical relations. One does not wish to speak of a simplistic ‘anarchy’ which would be the mere negative of a positive, substantive term (arche) which could be conceived, thought of as that by which a strictly ontological framework may find its architectural possibility. Perhaps sound could be thought of as ‘un-archic’ instead, or as

\textsuperscript{348} Robbins, ibid., p111

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Levinas says ‘an-archic’: the approximation of sound to a loss; an exorbitance, an expenditure or extravagance.

Sound is suspendible only if strained through a conceptual gauze woven upon an ontological loom. It is subject only to figural (visualist) interpretations and literal thematisation. Sound is that which is never able to be suspended or recovered, except [untenably] as a conceptual ideal, a memory (a form of hope in retrospect)—an impossible ‘was now’ or has-been. Sound is in no sense past-tense; this would imply its existence as having been once present, having been present but once. The tools for a non-figural, non-literary interpretation have yet to be invented, and may possibly never be. Usually, sound ironically becomes only one of a number of these same tools (grasped, as seen, in phenomenology’s less-than-sure hand), and yet, if this were no bad thing in itself, only certain uses are given to it—sound becomes the specialist’s tool; the tool of the sound-engineer and the sculptor, the architect, scientist and the philosopher, and for the composer of ‘sounds in liberation’.

The study of sound, or a different proximal relation to sound, can not lie in its assessment or re-working through a matrix of materiality, ‘...felt between finger and thumb’\(^{350}\) (as Attali’s ‘...stockpilable sign production’) which would simply represent a reconfiguration of an objectively determined space/time model, but as something like a ‘non-nonheterogeneity’. The dissimulation of the notion ‘sound-object’ has the potential to dissimulate the unity of its thinker also, i.e. it would involve a radical reassessment of the subject’s relation to a phenomena having no visibly orienting qualities which would otherwise ideally enable the subject to fold back into a homo-namos, coincidental relation, a self-same reciprocal exchange.

‘In the beginning was the word...’ perhaps best expresses the condition of a sound ‘uncontaminated’ by onto-theological certainty, escaping the grasp of conceptuality, if, as said earlier, by ‘beginning’ what is meant is the beginning of a profound complexity.

If it is the case, as Roland Barthes argues, that listening is active, not passive, then this implies its psychological, non-physiological dimension and so also a certain notion of free will, reminiscent of Schopenhauer’s philosophy: it implies the complicity of a consciousness at work in the activity. But does hearing exist before the sound ‘sounds’—and is listened to? Is responding (response-ability) possible before a sound ‘sounds’? Sound in this case subjects; it is not subject to an objective predication. The subject-ed responds, or is able to respond ‘before’ a sound is made; the subject-ed is made (ethically) responsible (response-able).

\(^{350}\) Densil Cabrera and Daniel Cole, exhibition notes accompanying VERDANT, CBD Gallery, Sydney, October,1993
Sound reveals as it reveals—if it is a metaphor, it is, in the language of metaphoricity, only a metaphor of itself. Its very coming into existence necessarily involves its going out of existence, a kind of double-speak, an apophasia (which ‘says’ that it will not speak). ‘It’ ‘is’ a certain ‘non-presence’ or ‘non-absence’.

One need not listen, even attentively: one (usually) in any case hears. Sound may not be so much that which is in short supply, or supplied as an abundant material, so much as an overflow, the excess of which is never able to be accommodated, contained, accounted for and preserved by the totalising proclivities of visualist, conceptual thought. An ethical/political question is not suppressed here, but brought out into the open, where it had formerly been suppressed under the paradigm of conceptualism.
Conclusions

Conceptualism and Ethics: Sound and Altery

For philosophy itself...in its own historicity must retain an element of the scandalous. Does not philosophy have to do with truth, and is not historical relativity inconsistent with the whole idea of truth? Does not philosophy make a fundamental claim to rationality, and is not rationality, properly understood, necessarily always one and the same? Is there not a profound error contained in the notion of the historical development of reason, since at least that reason which allows us to articulate the very notion has a validity which transcends history? Or is all possible knowledge of the conditioned character of alleged expressions of reason in their historical context itself conditioned in its turn? Is there any way out of this regress? 351

If the question of Being, considered to be an a priori, atemporal condition, is able to be uncovered or grasped through the reflective concepts of beings, then either the ‘autonomy’ of the latter, the ‘I’ uncovering Being through a highly delimited egological conception, is in fact dominated by an impersonal rational structure, or Being is in fact a historically determined conception. Faced with the question of its historical conditions, formal ontology seems only to have arrived at the scene of a crisis, or at least a critical stage in its development. Foundering on the very bedrock upon which the expression of its epistemes became even a possibility (the fundamental assertion of the primacy of Being), this sweeping trajectory of logocentrism, despite the depth of this irony, has not broken up completely. It has instead recognised and taken on board this very problem.

Similarly, in the wake of and in response to the perceived ahistorically of Modernism352, conceptual art as a formal or logical discipline attempted to breathe new life into the very meaning of art by interrogating and working against the highly structured power base which at the time determined the nature and worth of art, the conditions under which it was

351 Bubner, Modern German Philosophy, op. cit., p1
352 ‘The Modernist paradigm of art is culture made explicit and timeless—objective.’ Joseph Kosuth, ‘The Artist as Anthropologist’, Art After Philosophy and After, op. cit., p124, or ‘[A]s we have a more and more extended experience of the grid, we have discovered that one of the most modernist things about it is its capacity to serve as a paradigm or model for the antidevelopmental, the antinarrative, the antihistorical. ... This has occurred in the temporal as well as the visual arts...’. Rosalind Krauss, ‘Grids’ (1980) reproduced in The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths, op. cit., p22 (my italics)
produced, and which organised the modes of its reception. As the name ‘conceptualism’ suggests, conceptual artists were more concerned with assuming control of the definitions of art and the generation of its meaning than the realisation of the material art product.

During the early stages of conceptual art’s development, Joseph Kosuth was explicit on this point:

A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist’s intention, that is, he is saying that a particular work of art is art, which means, is a definition of art. Thus, that it is art is true a priori (which is what [Donald] Judd means when he states that “If someone calls it art, it’s art”).

Despite the logical structure upon which it was at the time developed, and despite the recognition of and commitment to broadening its social base, conceptual art, in these early stages, failed to recognise its tendency to solipsism (the apotheosis of ‘artists’ who ‘knew what they were doing’) — and, ironically, its ahistoricality. In these stages—if Kosuth’s documentation of the events indicates the broader scope of conceptualist concerns—conceptualism was at base a form of aesthetic epistemology, actually reiterating some of the main Modernist axioms. Recognising the need to move beyond the contradictory aspect of its earlier agenda, conceptualists instead began to re-examine the socio-historical context from which their own concepts and practices sprung, and take into account the cultural milieu upon which the subjectivity of the artist was organised. But despite this attempt conceptual art, I would argue, remained an exercise in epistemology, pinioned to the edifice of cognition and ahistorical rationalism. Taking the quotation Kosuth

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353 ‘For [Joseph Kosuth] there was something wrong with the artist’s...lack of control over the interpretation of his work and the subsequent manipulation of it by the media and market.’ Gabriele Guercio, Introduction, Art After Philosophy and After, ibid., pXXVII
354 ‘Art After Philosophy’ (1969), Art After Philosophy and After, ibid., p20
355 ‘...this questioning of the nature of art renders conceptual art an activity as informative and serious as philosophy, the audience for which, since it cannot take a position outside the discipline, consists of participants who are more or less informed.’ Gabriele Guercio, Introduction, Art After Philosophy and After, ibid., pXXVII
356 Introduction, Art After Philosophy and After, ibid., pXXVII. A surprising similarity in thought was expressed by Magda King a few years earlier (perhaps exposing one of Kosuth’s sources?): ‘The task is not to avoid or suppress the circle, but to find the right way to get into it. The way found by Heidegger in Sein und Zeit has been briefly indicated: the approach to being is made through the analysis of the being of man.’ Heidegger’s Philosophy, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1964, p32
357 See Joseph Kosuth, ‘The Artist as Anthropologist’, Art After Philosophy and After, ibid., p108ff. Kosuth quotes two sources supporting his proposition—Alvin Gouldner: ‘...objectivity is not neutrality, but alienation from self and society. ... Objectivity is the ideology of those who are alienated and politically homeless.’ and William Leiss: ‘The culmination of the development of transcendental subjectivity inaugurated by Descartes is to be found in Fichte, in whose early works “the relationship between the ego and nature is one of tyranny”, and for whom the “entire universe becomes a tool of the ego, although the ego has no substance or meaning except in its own boundless activity”. p110
borrowed from Bob Schole to argue the case for the shift that he thought conceptualism should by necessity undergo, this tendency to rationalist or epistemological thought is made clear:

...if we assume a continuity between experience and reality, that is, if we assume that an anthropological understanding of others is conditioned by our capacity to open ourselves to those others...we could not and should not avoid the 'hermeneutic circle'...but must explicate, as part of our activities, the intentional processes of constitutive reasoning which make both encounter and understanding possible.358

If the hermeneutic circle is instantiated by the question ‘What is the question “What is...?”’ then the possibility of moving beyond ontological constructs is only ever deferred. Though this may in itself be a positive thing—conclusive thinking may be replaced with more open-ended questions—the centrality of the ontological and conceptual motif never actually moves far beyond itself. My purpose here is not to denounce epistemology for the sake of it, but to point out that this thinking, based as it is upon the metaphysical axiom of presence, does not adequately address the very fact of history, of 'otherness', that it presumes a rational understanding of 'otherness' and takes for granted a 'capacity to open ourselves to those others'. Revivified conceptualism, though with the very best of intentions, also charges itself with these new responsibilities by presuming that 'encounter' and 'understanding' are made possible only through 'constitutive reasoning' and 'intentionality', all of which is based, in other words, on the conceived presence of the one who 'constitutively reasons'. Intentionality, as has been shown, does not in its constitutive movement concretely describe the fundamental temporal and historical aspect of the world of human agency. It takes for granted the possibility of recovering or re-presenting into the 'actual now' a historical moment idealised and ontologically reduced as a 'past now'. My belief, or ideal, is that a sound art taking into account these real historical or temporal facts may be able to move beyond this otherwise Modernist impasse. If sound traces the passage of time, passing like time in a kind of Heraclitean flux, and is not reduced to an undeveloped epistemological and ontological category of presence ('historical' presence), it may instead reveal the possibility of developing a more ethically oriented sound arts practice. Conceptualism, thus far, has not overcome the very problem of conceptualism, nor adequately understood the broader question of its 'real' historical, temporal determination. By turning the concept in on itself, in an otherwise irrational manoeuvre, the possibility of addressing the question of the ethical may, I feel, be at least approached.

Despite itself, philosophy has not come to an 'end', at least not in the sense of having expired or terminated. Recognising in the very question of 'ends' an impossibility, that is,

358 Used in his essay 'The Artist As Anthropologist' (1975), Art After Philosophy and After, ibid., p119
as regards culminating in some kind of nonexistent Platonic or Hegelian ideality, it has also
recognised in this impossibility the motivation for its continued development: philosophy
has tried to take into account the very historical facts of life and the question of radical
otherness. In the struggle to move beyond an aporia of its own construction—to address
the question of its historical development—philosophy has managed to salvage and retain
some of its principle motifs and claims. Unable to dispense with the tools at hand with
which it has always operated—logocentric discourse—and in order to regenerate itself,
philosophy has instead breathed new meaning and relevance into these metaphysical
expressions. If Western philosophy indeed develops historically, and if its relation to
contemporary life is in constant need of revision and relativising, then it is both required to,
and must always be able to 're-say' itself. Philosophy, as an historical fact, has no
alternative but to disclose an inherent tendency to failure, a failure to realise the possibility
of 'ending' or culminating in a self-enclosed synthesis and totality. But if the 'end' of
philosophy marks the impossibility of an ahistorical unity, it also, paradoxically, marks the
possibility of its re-emergence and the opportunity to resuscitate some of its most
persistent and pressing themes. The same, I feel, is necessary for sound art, and given
the philosophical and scientific orientation of its themes (the development of its
epistemology, for instance) it may perhaps have more to offer than it presently does.
Conceptualism, in its later stages, at least recognised the problem of ahistoricality, although
it did not manage, I feel, to fully address some of the questions it itself posed. The
problem, fundamentally, was that it remained, in its later stages, only naively conceptual.

359 The question of the principle of radical otherness is discussed in Paul de Man's essay on Mikhail
Bakhtin's concept of dialogism. This principle of radical otherness is also called 'exotopy' and, as a
formal means of subiating formalism (as applied to literary theory), is described thus: '[F]ar from
aspiring to the telos of a synthesis or a resolution, as could be said to be the case in dialectical
systems, the function of dialogism is to sustain and think through the radical exteriority or
heterogeneity of one voice with regard to any other...The self-reflexive, autotelic or...narcissistic
structure of form, as a definitional description enclosed within specific borderlines, is hereby replaced
by an assertion of the otherness of the other, preliminary to even the possibility of a recognition of his
33, Manchester University Press, 1986. p109

360 "...the founding concepts of philosophy are primarily Greek, and it would not be possible to
philosophise, or to speak philosophically, outside this medium. That Plato, for Husserl, was the
founder of a reason and a philosophical task whose telos was still sleeping in the shadows; or that for
Heidegger, on the contrary, Plato marks the moment at which the thought of Being forgets itself and is
determined as philosophy—this difference is decisive only at the culmination of a common root which
is Greek." Jacques Derrida, 'Violence and Metaphysics' in Writing and Difference, op. cit., p81

361 Heidegger, for example, stated the problem regarding the meaning of Being thus: 'Ontological
inquiry is indeed more primordial, as over against the ontical [studies concerned with the facts about
discrete entities] inquiry of the positive sciences. But it remains itself naive and opaque if in its
researches into the being of entities it fails to discuss the meaning of being in general. And even the
ontological task of constructing a non-deductive genealogy of the different possible ways of Being
requires that we first come to an understanding of "what we really mean by this expression 'Being' ...'.
Being and Time, op. cit., p31
But as said, part of the problem of 're-saying' philosophy involves having to use the same, clearly epistemologically biased language system that has already, and for so long, been used to 'say' it. Heidegger's statement: 'The fundamental way of Dasein of world, namely, having world there with one another, is speaking' provides a clue to his particular approach or attempt to solve this apparent irony, and is especially relevant given that he was himself concerned with the possibility of philosophy's reemergence after the decline he felt it was undergoing. I would suggest that Heidegger was at least half right, insofar as he was actually suggesting an alternative for the very meaning of 'speaking' itself, taking into account the temporality, and very sociability of the act. Perhaps, however, his proposition could have excluded the necessity to concern itself with absolute, or 'historical' presence. Though recognising philosophy's incapacity to surpass time and space, to transcend history and to reconcile difference in a kind of eternal, Platonic heaven, Heidegger nevertheless maintained and demonstrated a high regard for the metaphysical notion of presence, even as an historical act or fact. He was in the end concerned with the possibility of Dasein's attainment to truth.

Rather than despairing over the unattainability of the traditional metaphysical goals of presence and totality (which lie beyond time), acceptance of the fact of irreducible, temporal difference and plurality seems to not only offer hope for thought at the 'end' of philosophy, but also the possibility of reformulating a 'better', more ethically oriented philosophy, such as that espoused by Emmanuel Levinas. Here, the renunciation of philosophy which is geared toward the separation out of subject and object, where subjectivity is (attempted to be) reconciled in an egological stasis, and where the object is conceptualised and idealised as a necessary condition for this very possibility, is also being suggested. Ethical, as opposed to conceptual relations may not only sully the possibility of a subject/subject

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363 "Howsoever the historical, as that which is past, is understood to be related to the 'Present' in the sense of what is actual 'now' and 'today', and to be related to it, either positively or privatively, in such as way as to have effects upon it. Thus, 'the past' has a remarkable double meaning; the past belongs irretrievably to an earlier time; it belonged to the events of that time; and in spite of that, it can still be present-at-hand 'now'—for instance, the remains of a Greek temple. With the temple, a 'bit of the past' is still 'in the present'". Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op. cit., p430
364 "Rather than asking what ethics is, in the hope of finding out whether ethics is onto-theological or not, one can ask if ethics is *better* than being. This sort of question is not an essential question. It does not...call for more vision." Richard A. Cohen in the translator's introduction to Emmanuel Levinas. *Ethics and Infinity. Conversations with Philippe Nemo*. Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1985. p8
365 A rigorous critique of Levinas' thought, which questions the assumption of radical otherness, may be found in Jacques Derrida's 'Violence and Metaphysics', *Writing and Difference*, op. cit.
coincidental or dialectical relation\textsuperscript{366}, but may also require the radical reassessment of aesthetic experience generally. It is upon an understanding of sound as that which is neither present nor absent that this proposition takes as its guiding principle. To address the question of the ethical, however, depends upon the very concepts it seeks to expose as an inauthentic attitude regarding life as an experiential whole.

The use of sound within the visual arts perhaps mirrors the more ordinary tendency of a hearer who, upon hearing or having heard something, turns their visual attention to the object which ‘signals’ to or at them. This process of acoustic location seeks to reaffirm the unequivocality of subjective sameness; it seeks to re-establish the subject’s ego—a conscious entity, present in space and time—constituted in a circuit passing through the external, sensual world. Metaphysics’ general problem regarding sound is that it is not able to get a clear fix on it, or fix it into an absolute static ‘image’ and thus neutralise it in a cognitive, conceptual grasp: sound is not quite able to be objectified and placed squarely within the confines or horizons of the ‘known’ or knowable world, as it at all times exceeds it. It can only be measured in terms of a capacity to be registered somehow, or as the ‘expression’ of something else. Its ‘essence’ is only ever able to be expressed as a conceptual ideal. It may not, indeed, be possible to reduce sound to some notion of essence. Unless, of course, its essence comprises of it having no essence as such. The problem of ‘ideality’ in general is also able to be raised here. What is the possibility of a conceptual account of sound which adequately addresses the question of historical determination?

How can sound be re-thought, given that the language of philosophy is the language of presence? The phenomenological unification of past, present and future renders each of the historical tenses commensurate and refolds them in an ongoing historical, eschatological narrative—a history of ‘nows’. But as was previously discussed, this notion of the ‘now’ is at the same time the expression of an ideality—as something transcendent—and this itself avoids the very question of temporal change, or the experience of an historical unfolding. Added to this, Levinas articulates an even deeper problem, one which must concern the identity of the sound artist as subject: ‘Temporalisation as lapse, the loss of [recoverable] time, is neither an initiative of an ego, nor a movement toward some telos of action. The loss of time is not the work of a subject’\textsuperscript{367}.

\textsuperscript{366} ‘The subject then cannot be described on the basis of intentionality, representational activity, objectification, freedom and will; it has to be described on the basis of the passivity of time. The temporalisation of time, the lapse irrecoverable and outside of all will, is quite the contrary of intentionality.’ Levinas, Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence, op. cit., p53

\textsuperscript{367} Levinas, Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence, op. cit., p51
It might be said that Heidegger’s notion of ‘coming-into-presence’ is the very formulation of his concept of *Dasein*, and that this accurately reflects the possibility of a fully temporal, historically unfolding existence. But for Heidegger, existence in the world or being ‘underway’ in the world as history (*Anwesen*)\textsuperscript{368}, coupled with the theme of ownership or ‘mineness’ (*Jemeinigkeit*)\textsuperscript{369}, actually affirms subjective, egological presence, despite the more general appeal of these claims and his being thought of as having always refuted the notion or possibility of an absolute existential ‘here and now’:

The present is an offspring of the future and past. ...The primary ecstatic (standing-out-of-Itself) of time is the future. The ecstatic unity of future, past and present, is called by Heidegger timeishness (*Zeitlichkeit*). Timeishness is not (i.e. It is not the presentness of a thing), but brings itself to ripeness. It brings itself to ripeness in bringing forth possible modes of itself as time, in the threefold unity of future, past and present.\textsuperscript{370}

But the conflation of historical time (the past and the future into the present) mirrors almost exactly the ancient Greek notion of the intelligibility of presence, and does not actually waver far from it. Being ‘underway’ always requires the resuscitation of a ‘past now’, as if it had never itself been temporal, the ‘simple return from present to prior present, an extrapolation of presents according to a memorable time, that is, a time assembleable in a recollection of a representable representation’\textsuperscript{371}. The future (the temporal mode upon which Heidegger’s ‘possibility’ is contingent) also relies upon the notion of presence. To be able to assess anything in terms of its temporal coincidence with itself or coincidence with something other than it, would appear, given the untotalisable diachrony of time, ‘the diachrony of the instant’\textsuperscript{372}, quite impossible.

But time, disrupting the possibility of coincidence, is that which motivates the rapport of one historical subject with another. If historical non-coincidence was not actual, communication would not be necessary. Non-coincidence, positively speaking, makes less appeal to an (impossible) reduction to ontological stasis or irreducible presence than to respecting irreducible otherness. Historical non-coincidence (two or more subjects separated through time, and indeed, from themselves) exposes the incapacity of one

\textsuperscript{368} ‘Dasein is determined by its specificity; in so far as it is what it can be, it is in each case mine...Yet how is this entity to be apprehended in its being before it has reached its end? After all, I am still underway with my Dasein. It is still something that is not yet at an end. When it has reached the end, it precisely no longer is. Prior to this end, it never authentically is what it can be; and if it is the latter, then it no longer is.’ *The Concept of Time*, op. cit., p10E

\textsuperscript{369} “We are ourselves the entities to be analysed. The Being of any such entity is in each case mine.” *Heidegger, Being and Time*, op. cit., p67

\textsuperscript{370} Magda King, *Heidegger’s Philosophy*, op. cit. p171

\textsuperscript{371} Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, op. cit., p51

\textsuperscript{372} Ibid., p49
subject to reduce the other to itself, and opens up the question of the radical
transcendence of the other. It also opens up the possibility of radical transcendence itself.
For Emmanuel Levinas, this subject-subject/subject-object temporal abyss is not a cause
for despair, but an opportunity to re- pose the more pressing question of the nature of the
social, leading him to a formulation which places ethical responsibility for the other prior in
importance to an ontological reduction of the other to the self (egology: power and control
over external objects) and the nature of conceptuality generally. ‘To think philosophically
[conceptually] is to comprehend—comprendre, comprendere, berge reifen to include, to
seize, to grasp—and master the other, reducing its alterity' 373. Philosophy, he says,
generally thinks of its other as its proper other, properly speaking, its property, proper to it,
appropriating it and losing sight of the fact of its otherness. In this equation irreducible
otherness is considered either not real, not able to be maintained (from Latin, manu tenare,
literally: ‘hand holding now’), or actual and the grasp of ontology fails—but fails to recognise
its failure. Levinas puts the language of philosophy to positive purposes, turning it against
itself in a catastrophic movement (Greek, katastrophein: overturning), exposing its flaws
(the nonrecognition of its failure to grasp irreducible otherness) and working from within
these interstices.

This unthinkable truth of living experience, to which Levinas returns ceaselessly, cannot
possibly be encompassed by philosophical speech without immediately revealing, by
philosophy’s own light, that philosophy’s surface is severely cracked, and that what was
taken for its solidity is its rigidity. It could doubtless be shown that it is in the nature of
Levinas’s writing, at its decisive moments, to move along these cracks, masterfully
progressing by negations, and by negation against negation. Its proper route is not that of
an “either this...or that” but of a “neither this...nor that.” 374

For Levinas, a philosophy of alterity, of going toward the absolutely other also means moving
toward God, but not the God of traditional western metaphysics—a supreme, transcendental
being objectified as a deity, correlative to the world or nature. This traditional God derives
from the Platonic, unified eidos of numerous instances of substance-derived entities
(phainomena), or from the Aristotelian unity of entities in a divine ousia (Absolute
Substance). A God of alterity on the other hand is traceable in the human, ethical urgency of
the call of the Other (the other person) and in the responsibility one being assumes for an-
other being who is ethically prior to the egology, the ‘ipseity’ of the self. This responsibility
in no way implies a teleological resolution, a two-way equivalent correspondence, so much as
sociability constructed through self-effacement before the ‘face’ of the other. Attending to
one’s self-preservation only enables the fulfilment of responsibility for the other, to enable

374 Levinas, ‘Violence and Metaphysics’, op. cit., p90
the responsibility of the other’s responsibility. Only then are the material needs of the
other met. Will-less self-effacement is never, therefore, a call to self-annihilation. Teleology
is a form of irresponsibility, in other words, and brings about the death of the other. The
transcendence of history—‘truth’, perhaps—equals the death of the other.

‘Going towards God’ is not to be understood here in the classic ontological sense of a
return to, or re-unification with, God as the beginning or end of temporal existence.
‘Going towards God’ is meaningless unless seen in terms of my primary going towards
the other person.

Levinas’ philosophy does not dispense with the subject, but re-invests it with a different
(ethical) meaning, bereft of any sense of an intentional, willing ego, and any notion of
freedom. The ‘I’ is an ‘I’ only insofar as it is an assemblage responding to the prior
question of the other. The Other, in short, is prior to the conception of the ‘I’, and so, of
conceptuality generally. The impersonal structure of Being, of ontology, is shown to be a
dominating power which effaces the question of the priority of the Other. Ontology is not
ethical.

But what has any of this to do with sound? In an essay ‘Reality and Its Shadow’ Levinas
touches on an area which may help to answer this question. Here, an ‘image’ of sound is
evoked in an attempt to explain a complex phenomenological problem, the question of the
possibility and meaning of transcendence. The ‘image’ of sound is used to demonstrate
that time is itself radical transcendence. Never able to be recovered, except as a memory,
time not only indicates the irreducibility of the other (who is separated through time), but
also reveals the fact of one’s estrangement from oneself. In the essay, sound is in no way
regarded as an object, external to the subject, nor an object conflated with a listening or
intentional subject. Neither sound nor subject are said to determine each other, though
each are both required and ‘perforated’ by them. The dissolution of an object-subject
relation neither implies an economics of negativity, nor a binary, negational philosophy,
culminating in some sense of a unity. Sound and subject are here, one might say, the non-
reciprocal relation of relations. In this relation of non-equivalence, sound is itself that which
‘is’ neither/nor. Levinas’ notion of alterity is posited by Elizabeth Gross as ‘...a site of

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375 "I am responsible for a total responsibility, which answers for all the others and for all in the
others, even for their responsibility. The I always has one responsibility more than the others.”
8, p99
376 ‘Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas’. Face To Face With Levinas, op. cit., p23
excess...a force which the subject realises it cannot assimilate.'\textsuperscript{378} Sound, invoked in this essay, traces the movement of this radical alterity.

Levinas' essay starts out with the proposition that art and criticism usually begin with the presumption of being able to reduce everything to essences—a dogmatic, cognitive expression which situates each within the world of ideas. To speak of cognition reveals the hand of metaphysics, the claim to transcendence as it is usually conceived—that which is both ‘unhistorical’ (timeless) and co-extensive with ‘truth’. On the one hand, Levinas says, art wants paradoxically to ‘express truth’ but not to ‘know’\textsuperscript{379} and on the other to seek autonomy by ‘going beyond’ (to ‘transcend’ the mundane experience of the everyday) whilst at the same time remaining entirely within the very dimensions of cognition. In the Levinasian equation, the real possibility of artistic/critical ‘disengagement’ is to be understood not as going ‘beyond’ the world ‘to the region of Platonic ideas and towards the eternal which towers above the world...’, but as remaining ‘on the hither side of time’, in its ‘interstices’\textsuperscript{380}. Understanding and knowledge are possible only through cognition, a region inexorably tied to an ‘unhistorical’ metaphysical framework. If non-understanding is a desire expressed by artists, then ‘disengagement’ would not be at all possible through anything like timeless transcendence or cognition because if it did, it would have still clung on to the privileged status of the real as an absolute and total presence. Levinas says:

\begin{quote}
Art does not know a particular type of reality; it contrasts with knowledge. ... To put it in theological terms...art does not belong to the order of revelation. Nor does it belong to that of creation, which moves in just the opposite direction.\textsuperscript{381}
\end{quote}

Levinas proposes that the position the artist initially takes up is in fact never one of conceptualism, which equals cognitively and actively grasping ‘real objects’ and substituting the object for a timeless concept. Blindness to concepts, however, never requires any form of conceptual substitution, the substitution of the object for its image. ‘Image’ for Levinas is not equivalent to ‘concept’: it is that which marks a hold over the artist who is bound in an unequal and passive relation, a situation departing radically from the Kantian conception of

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{378} Elizabeth Gross, ‘“The People of the Book”: Representation and Alterity in Emmanuel Levinas’. \textit{ART & TEXT}, \textbf{N}° 26, p34
\textsuperscript{379} Joseph Kosuth, states Gabriele Guercio, likened this kind of situation (‘the idea of the artist making believe he doesn’t know what he is doing’—Guerco’s use of a quote from Ad Reinhardt’s ‘What is Corruption’, \textit{SCRAP}, NY, 1961) to the artist’s apparent ‘lack of control over the interpretation of his work and the subsequent manipulation of it by the media and the market’. Introduction, \textit{Art After Philosophy and After}, op. cit., pXXVII
\textsuperscript{380} Levinas, ‘Reality and its Shadow’, op. cit., p2
\textsuperscript{381} ibid., p3
\end{flushright}
the artist as ‘genius’ who obeys the rules of nature in an equal, reciprocal relation\textsuperscript{382}. For Levinas, moreover, ‘[a]n image is musical’. Sound, here, is neither an object nor a concept: it is an image. Sound, as image, is equivocal and unstable. As Gross explains, it ‘preserves a difference, but necessarily a [historical?] distance between speaker and listener’ \textsuperscript{383}.

When the notion of rhythm is invoked, it is usually done so in mind of a closed order of internal poetic or musical logic which gives each their ‘form’. However, rhythm does not simply mean this alone; it also involves the way in which the listener is affected in a purely passive, univocal ‘correspondence’. Listening, despite being a psychological act, must also involve some initial degree of receptivity; it is contingent upon hearing, the part suspension of cognitive activity. There is never a moment in our experiential lives when we do not hear; our ears are always open: there is no such thing as silence. Silence = Death. Sound is as interminable as it is omni-‘present’. While listening, one is called to attention more than one calls to attention; sound exceeds the cognitive act\textsuperscript{384}. A sound, phenomenally, as an image, can not be grasped in a totality: it is not an enduring object and bears no relation to something like ‘substance’ in the more general meaning of the term. It is invoked purely along an historical, temporal and rhythmic axis. \textit{Neither} mundane (real) \textit{nor} transcendent (unhistorically ideal), sound is always out of bounds. If it is transcendent, it is \textit{radically} so. This radical transcendence \textit{is} time, the temporal axis which interrupts the very possibility of presence. Because of time, the Other (the other person) is radically transcendent. Sound marks the ethical passage to the other.


\textsuperscript{383} Gross, ‘ “The People of the Book”: Representation and Alterity in Emmanuel Levinas’, op. cit., p39. To the notion of ‘speaker’ I would also append the term ‘emitter’. Gross also explains the fundamental difference between the function of speech for the Greek and the Hebrew, which is one where sound itself takes on a completely different philosophical/theological significance. ‘[F]or the Logos inherited from Greek thought, [the] relation of language and being is essentially mimetic; both are kept separate, while claiming an isomorphism or correspondence between them. What is privileged here, in the order of discourse, is the subject-copula-predicate form of propositional structure, without which neither logic nor truth-values could function: truth is a relation in which the proposition imitates the reality it ‘re-presents’ (p38). In Hebraic thought, knowledge is considered temporal, not spatial, and so is not contingent upon knowledge of enduring, three-dimensional, substantial forms. Knowledge cannot ‘represent’; the voice, based as it is in sound—which is neither present nor absent—endlessly interprets. ‘[S]ound does not [for the Hebrew] provide an incontestable proof of (God’s) presence.’ p39

\textsuperscript{384} With respect to speech, to the speech of the subject for the subject or for the subject’s other, Derrida writes: “The verb must not only be the verb of someone—it must overflow, in its movement towards the other, what is called the speaking subject.” ‘Violence and Metaphysics’, op. cit., p98

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Rhythm represents a unique situation where we cannot speak of consent, assumption, initiative or freedom, because the subject is caught up and carried away by it. The subject is part of its own representation. It is so not even despite of itself, for in rhythm there is no longer a oneself, but rather a sort of passage from oneself to anonymity. This is the captivation or incantation of poetry and music. It is a mode of being to which applies neither the form of consciousness, since the I is there stripped of its prerogative to assume, its power, nor the form of unconsciousness, since the whole situation and all its articulations are in a dark light, present.\(^{385}\)

Caught in the rhythmic play of the image, a being is amongst things, but not simply in the sense of being amongst a world comprising of ‘heres’ and ‘theres’ (Da-Sein—‘there is’), which would lend this being the capacity to look through the image to an object beyond or world ‘prior’ to it. To be amongst things is to be a part of the scene, to be ‘outside’ oneself ‘...in a dark light, present.’ Levinas speaks of this region as beyond or outside of both consciousness and unconsciousness. Sound, that which is most detached from the object, or the conception ‘object’, has a quality not necessarily relating to the ‘source’ from which it ‘emanates’. It retains an independence from the categories and imperatives of mind, being always in excess of it. Psychologism, the study of mental ‘facts’, requires the reverse: the conversion of sensation into perception and therefore into cognition. Is it possible, therefore, to speak of a sensation which never involves introspection? Yes. No. All art (object-based, conceptual, classical, etc.) starts out with sensation. Each sensible thing has its image, but the difference is one of rhythm, not of degree of sensation. Sound, never ‘incarnate’, is only ever an image. But what is this image? That through which the world is represented? But what is this ‘world’? An image is not a sign. It does not necessarily refer to anything else. Levinas:

Must we then come back to taking the image as an independent reality which resembles the original? No, but on condition that we take resemblance not as the result of a comparison between an image and the original, but as the very movement that engenders the image. Reality would not be only what it is, what is disclosed to be in truth, but would be also its double, its shadow, its image.\(^{386}\)

I am reminded here of Heidegger’s description of the ‘privative’, degenerate phenomenon which was spoke about in an earlier section, that shadowy ‘copy’ constitutively linked to a primary phenomenon (that which makes the appearance of truth possible) and so which bears the capacity to destabilise the hierarchies of the concretised real. Levinas here, I think, conflates these ‘primary and ‘secondary’ phenomena, and attributes to both the

\(^{385}\) Levinas, ‘Reality and its Shadow’, op. cit., p4
\(^{386}\) ibid., p6
capacity to mark a new formulation for the notion of the real, which would not require epistemological verification by making appeal to an unhistorical 'truth'. Concepts do form, however, but are retrospective 'themes'. The ethical, historical relation 'defies thematisation, and yet at the same time demands it'.

The implication for the very being of the subject is therefore dramatic; it suggests that the subject is also a duality, not of body and soul, but in the sense of being a stranger to 'itself'. If sound is regarded as an image, through which it 'presents' itself, it is also that which recedes from or exceeds the grasp of the concept. Sound is that which in presenting itself does not present itself except in the simultaneous act of removing itself. Sound arrives upon the ear at the moment of its departure—it is always 'dead on arrival'. The image marks the site of an evacuation. 'Presence', in Levinas' thought, is neither 'presence' in the formal ontological sense, nor 'non-presence'. It is the asymmetrical relation neither/nor.

Sound art could be an activity far less concerned with the prior construction of, or conceptualisation of objects. Sound runs in proximity to a (conceptual) loss, and it is this loss which is the motivation of all desire to communicate, the desire to proceed toward that which always recedes. Concepts always come after the existential, historical fact. This relation in time, of a subject in relation to itself, as its own shadowy double, marks the very movement of life in time, or, more particularly, the time which is life. Mundanity—the experience of the everyday—could itself turn out to be radical, transcendent alterity. As Derrida says, in reference to Levinas' thought:

History [is] the very moment of transcendence, of the excess of the totality without which no totality would appear as such. History is not the totality transcended by eschatology, metaphysics or speech. It is transcendence itself. If speech is a movement of metaphysical transcendence, it is history and not beyond history.

Aliterity, for Levinas, may not just be '...on a line to infinity' as Elizabeth Gross states, so much as infinity itself, the endlessness of time. No teleology or eschatology is involved. However, the concept, 'an abuse of language' may in the end be useful, if not, in its contradictory nature, perfectly necessary.

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387 Weston, Kierkegaard and Modern Continental Philosophy, op. cit., p165
388 Derrida, 'Violence and Metaphysics', op. cit., p117
389 Gross, 'The People of the Book': Representation and Aliterity in Emmanuel Levinas', p26
390 Weston, Kierkegaard and Modern Continental Philosophy, op. cit., p165. Levinas himself uses this term in Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence: 'Already the synthesis of retentions and protentions in which Husserl's phenomenological analysis, through an abuse of language, recuperates the lapse...' pp51-2
We are compelled by reflection to recognise the necessity for both the logic of the said
[an address to the 'I' which was never present: 'A past more ancient than any present, a
past which was never present' 391] and its disturbance, and thus to attempt to bring to
language the source of this necessity, an attempt which in its perpetual failure keeps us
alive to the relation to the Other which is infinite responsibility. We must incessantly
unsay the said... 392

Jacques Lacan made use of a interesting metaphor relating to the structure of the subject
in a paper which he delivered at the Johns Hopkins symposium on the Languages of
Criticism and the Sciences of Man in 1966393. He invokes a scene—'Baltimore in the early
morning'—in which he describes himself standing near his hotel window early one morning,
appearing there as a form, a body of thoughts, revealed in the flashing on and off of a nearby
neon sign which was 'all that [he] could see, except for some trees in the distance...[T]he
so-called Dasein, as a definition of the subject, was there in this rather intermittent or
fading spectator'394.

Lacan makes the gesture toward the existence of the unconscious, which for him is
precisely '...a thinking with words'395. The quest is the rediscovery of the subject as a lost
object, its recuperation in thought, in concept via vision. Lacan's model is one deriving from
an ontology of the self, therefore. It is the retainment, the grasping of the subject within its
concept. This is not the same as the Levinasian image of the subject, which is always the
shadow of its own reality, never simply a concept appearing and disappearing, consciously or
unconsciously, in logocentric discourse. Levinas:

The recurrence of the oneself is not relaxed and lighted up again, illuminating itself
thereby like consciousness which lights up by interrupting itself and finding itself in the
temporal play of retentions and protentions. ... The oneself takes refuge or is exiled in
its own fullness, to the point of explosion or fission, in view of its own reconstitution in
the form of an identity... 396

391 Levinas, Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence, ibid., p25
392 Weston, Kierkegaard and Modern Continental Philosophy, op. cit., p166
393 'Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatevover' reproduced
in The Structuralist Controversy. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, editors. The Johns Hopkins
394 Ibid., p189
395 Ibid., p189
396 Levinas. Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence, op. cit., p104
Postface

The philosophical movements outlined in the first two parts of this thesis each display an inherent tendency to epistemological attunement and an anxiety over the possibility of attainment to truth. The grounds or first principles upon which philosophical knowledge was originally constructed is described as having been established and developed as a result of speculations over the nature of Being, the nature or world of objective, sensible experience and on the type of relationships understood as existing between the two.

Often, the image of an inexplicable, transcendent and all-knowing power was invoked to explain away what was supposed a total and pre-organised cosmos. The role of interpreting and deriving the meaning of this universe was assigned to consciousness, through which access to the empyrean sphere of absolute knowledge and unity could be gained. Only with the application of the faculties of reason, developed under the instruction of philosophers, could this ascendancy become a possibility. Even with the development of empiricism and rationalist conceptualism—representing a turn to the world of experience—the world was still thought of as a pre-given whole, or as a ready-made totality. The task of these philosophical sciences was to merely to describe and explain this pre-established structure.

In later or more recent stages in philosophy—in James’s Radical Empiricism and Husserl’s Phenomenology for instance—consciousness itself is apportioned a unique ontological status. The intending act or the selectivity of consciousness is held as that which organises the life-world into ‘sensible totals’ which are then apportioned meanings through the upward movements of conceptual development. All of this is contingent upon the capacity of consciousness to recognise the sameness and identity (ideality) of spatially extended objects through a manifold of perspectival appearances ‘profiled’ against a backdrop or horizon of pure, primordial worldliness. The active constitution of the object is made possible only through the unique spatio-temporal structures of perception itself or ‘internal time consciousness’. Posited as the objective fact of an obscure ‘pure consciousness’ (the ‘transcendental ego’ for which ‘names are lacking’\(^{397}\), which can only grasp itself in a backward, objectifying and reappropriating ‘glance’) the subject, at this high point in ontotheological development, took on a radically new meaning. But because of the unresolved problem of solipsism and the questions regarding the conditions and possibility of intersubjectivity, discussion over the real nature or the meaning of otherness became a necessity: the ethical question was raised and threatened the absoluteness of an elaborately devised and towering ontotheological architecture.

\(^{397}\) Husserl, The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness, quoted in Stevens, James and Husserl: The Foundations of Meaning, op. cit., p85

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Despite the vicissitudinous nature of philosophical thought—the splitting off of sensual being from thought and their subsequent reunification; the Platonic denunciation of the world of intelligible objects and the development of the notion of an immortal soul; the rise of empirical and rationalist thought and the atomisation of the world of observable objects; the decline of German Idealism and the collapse of the possibility of the absolute subject; the influence of Phenomenology on modern existentialist thought and the shift into post-representationalist thought, and so on—the ontological question and the maintenance of the distinctions of binary opposition (ideal/real; male/female; art/philosophy; east/west; substance/appearance, etc.) have nearly always remained paramount and central to its development. Radical difference, in the process, is totally annihilated.

The mark of the concept and the devolution of vision-centred theory has, I have argued in this thesis, reduced any understanding of sound to clearly ontological/ontotheological biases, and has overlooked the fact that this kind of thinking is itself by and large conditioned. Often, where the question of time has been broached in Western philosophy, it has been done so in terms of its bearing on the sphere of thought, the development of knowledge and the constituting acts and constitution of consciousness itself. Unwilling to admit to the existence of a flaw contained in the first law of ontotheology (the unsustainable presumption of the immediacy of thought or the absolute presence of the thinker), philosophy relegates time to the status of a tool, or, ironically, makes it the very condition for the preservation of the notion of presence. Time is something which is recollected and stabilised; a timeless object, it becomes the very condition for the existence of ‘presence of mind’. In this scheme, the entertainment of the notion of time as flux is highly conditional. Sound, that which best serves to unconditionally and impermanently trace a flux, something which lies beyond the grasp of the concept, is totally reduced through the configurations of the concept to the status of an ideal or real object. In sound art, this reduction is highly explicit.

The asymmetrical and temporal relations which exist between, and which may infinitely separate ‘beings’ is perhaps best indicated or traced by sound in its wake or evanescence, or because of its phenomenal instability. Sound may potentially discredit the claim to presence, although in philosophy, paradoxically, it is usually marked as its guarantor. The kind of ethical questions put forward by the rupturing of the traditional relations said to exist between one subject and another (one present ego, present before another) may impact on any understanding of the nature of communication. A sound art could possibly best address some of these issues or could at least foreground them. Throughout the thesis, I have hoped to demonstrate how ontologically derived conceptual thought has had a strong influence and bearing upon arts practices and theories, and has shaped and determined current notions informing sound arts generally. It seems ironical, but not surprising, that an
opportunity presents itself with the current development of interest in sound to introduce into arts practices and ‘theories’ an ethical or other dimension, a development which may open up the possibility of rethinking the nature and value of aesthetic experience, but because the contemporary sound arts so stridently follow in the wake of the modernist trajectory, they can only hope to be accommodated, measured and assessed by the imperious gaze of a timeless conceptualism. Sound, there, is ultimately regarded as simply any other kind of material.

Figure 3, a recent advertisement for a ‘Classic CD’ (see next page), clearly demonstrates this conceptual, and specifically visualist reduction of sound. There, sound (more specifically hearing and listening) is quite explicitly regarded as the means through which ‘Vision’ may be reached and upheld (a trace of Hegel’s and Heidegger’s thought seems to echo here), even though sound is what is ostensibly being sold: ‘You wish to see; Listen. Hearing is a step toward Vision’. ‘Vision’ dominates, and sound becomes its handmaiden; in a dialectical displacement, it is confined once more to the margins of the visual. This advertisement also contains some other interesting words and phrases—‘spirituality’ is contrasted with ‘sensuality’ marking and perpetuating one of the most fundamental binary play-offs in the entire Platonic trajectory; a ‘time warp’ is created, it is said, ‘where past and present happily co-exist...’ somewhat echoing the philosophical tenor of some of the Hegelian and Husserlian thought outlined in this thesis. The company, through the development of its product, has a chance of ‘joining that mega-selling fraternity’ (my italics). The distribution company’s name? ‘Sonart Music Vision’.

Sound, impermanently marking the trace of time and closing off the possibility of an otherwise transcendental or idealistic unity, is only ever annihilated under the grasp or stranglehold of conceptualism. The opportunity of recovering for sound studies a chance to cleave open the possibility of more radical thought, a transcendence ‘on the hither side of time’ as Levinas says, is only foreclosed with the unwillingness of sound arts practitioners who seem primarily concerned with the problems of epistemological verification or the exploration of quasi-mysticisms, and their ascendant status in what is otherwise a clearly modernist arts practice. What I have tried to introduce in this thesis is the possibility of working not in a diametrically opposed fashion to the negational, binary modes characteristic of Western thought (being mindful of placing ethical questions into the arena of negational manoeuvring which would undermine their radicality), but to point out that the possibility of cutting completely across it exists, although in a manner which mindfully incorporates the very tools at hand from which Logocentric thought operates. If this all seems too far-fetched, it is perhaps worth remembering that Plato himself, ironically, employed a variety of literary and artistic devices to suppress, condemn and annihilate various forms of art and literature.

398 24 HOURS. ABC Radio, October, 1994, p73
The notional existence of sensible objects or ideal, conceptually derived truths are themselves derived from a systematic inquiry into the nature of reality and a search for the ground upon which epistemology can itself be secured. This search has usually been guided by limiting the possibility of any external, disturbing factors coming into play in the acquisition of knowledge or by the complete suppression of elements which could interrupt or sully the ‘free-flow’ of totalising thought. Anything which could call into question the presumptions and conceits of the otherwise iron will of knowledge or by its very existence potentially cause its collapse is either annihilated or ‘written out’ by confining it within a highly delimiting discourse.

The limits of the processes of literalistic configuration have been described in this thesis and used to show how deriving any understanding of difference through the application of conceptual limit-cases has impacted on an understanding of sound and resulted in its being described as possessing material ‘form’. As a conceptually reappropriated, stable entity it has been pushed into the margins of the visual paradigm. Wishing to cut an alien profile and to promote their practices as marginal and modernist this situation is, for sound artists, perhaps only too comfortable. Real alienation could not possibly be the artist’s objective. Marginality in the modernist sense guarantees the reservation of a respectable place in the hallowed halls of the gallery system and the radio institution.

With regard to sound, the grasp of conceptualism in any case actually fails: sound at all times exceeds it. This is not, however, the problem which I think should be highlighted. The more resounding failure is the complete non-recognition of this failure, thwarting the possibility of posing more vital, perhaps more ethical questions. Sound art, the main subject of this thesis, without being thought differently—beyond the influence or confines of non-reflexive logocentric thought—stands little chance, otherwise, of being able to be understood as potentially ‘inhabiting’ a very unique place inside/outside the field of the arts.
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Exhibition notes

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