

Peter Ablinger

# MUSIC IS NOT TRUE

or: Why there can be no philosophy of music

METAPHYSICS AND MYSTICISM. Metaphysics is the appeal to negativity, "to that tradition of thought that thinks the self-grounding of being as a negative ground"<sup>1</sup>; that is, also the appeal to that which is described by the 'outer limit' - negative - hence a precise description of the limit of the thinkable as the negative form of the unthinkable. This means that this appeal itself is by no means 'mysticism'. Mysticism would be the appropriation of the beyond of this boundary, the belief that one can 'have' or 'be' it. In contrast, the description of the boundary AS a boundary, and thus the formulation of its 'beyond' as a negative form, is metaphysics. However, this also means that metaphysics remains with us, because as long as philosophy is language, it remains connected to its negative ground.

SAYING AND SHOWING IN HEGEL. Hegel calls sensual certainty "the richest knowledge"<sup>2</sup> and at the same time makes the verbalization of this certainty a problem. According to him, "it is not at all possible that we can ever say a sensual being that we 'mean'." And the 'meant' is the unspeakable, which can only be shown. However, it is also said that the "truth of sensual certainty" is "the general" - and as Agamben puts it, "a truth that language expresses perfectly."<sup>3</sup> But what is the general doing here? After all, I am tempted to think of the realm of sensory certainty together with 'hearing'<sup>4</sup>, i.e. the concrete, and precisely NON-general sensory experience, which does not place me opposite the experienced thing, but right in the middle of it. And what does 'truth' have to do with sensory certainty? In sensual certainty there is no untruth, no NO, therefore no truth and no confirmation, doubling, affirmation, and therefore no rift that could open up between confirmation and the confirmed.

Now, what Hegel and Agamben say: IF sensual certainty "tries to step out of itself" (28) in order "to gain clarity

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<sup>1</sup> Giorgio Agamben, Language and Death, footnote 1. Most of this text was written while reading that book. My respect for the philosopher also applies where I attempt to counter the logic of philosophy, to escape from it - but in any case the outcome is uncertain, the success of such an undertaking must - in language - remain undecided.

<sup>2</sup> Phänomenologie 82, quoted from Agamben 25

<sup>3</sup> ibid. 28

<sup>4</sup> With regard to the concept of 'listening' used here, I would like to refer to my text "A Music That Withdraws" (in: Peter Ablinger: "NOW, Writings 1982-2021", MUSIKTEXTE Köln, 2022), to which the present text can be seen as a continuation, so to speak.

about its object", THEN it must "experience that what appeared to be the most concrete truth is nothing but a mere generality" (26). But is this not banal? Is it not clear that when sensual certainty leaves itself, as it were, to become language, that it then moves from the concrete to the general and becomes entangled in all the pitfalls of the discourse of truth and its negativity? Or what am I not understanding here?

Obviously the philosopher can't help turning everything into language. Leaving it at 'hearing', at 'sensual certainty' is not for him. But this is not a love of wisdom, but at best of truth. Truth is bound to language. Wisdom is not.

Furthermore, it goes against the supposed immediacy of 'showing'. But it is important to distinguish this, the Hegelian showing, from the 'showing of music'. The Hegelian showing distinguishes between showing and the shown, and can thus point to mediatedness. The showing of music does not know this difference: the showing is itself the shown; the shown exists/emerges only in the mode of showing itself. The showing is the only being of the shown.<sup>5</sup>

PERCEIVING (TAKING AS TRUE) SHOULD BE CALLED MISPERCEIVING (TAKING AS FALSE). As soon as the taking becomes entangled in the truth, it has become false. A 'sensual certainty', however, before it loses itself in the discourse of truth and thus annihilates itself, invalidates itself - what should such a thing be called? Certainly not 'taking of truth', but rather 'taking of wisdom'.

For Hegel (and Agamben) the matter is clear: perception IS verbalization. For them, there is no 'before'; 'hearing', the phenomenon of music, 'sitting still in concert' remain unexplained. The unexplained as a phenomenon remains excluded and negative. However, what is described - in a breathtaking way - is the unspeakable in what is said. Language guards "the unspeakable by saying it, that is, by grasping it in its negativity" (31). Does this not coincide with the attempt to formulate the "border" and thus to give a clear contour to what is excluded?

THE UNSAID. Philosophers are quick to agree that everything that cannot be said is not worth talking about, or belongs to the negative and general. But none of these philosophers can tell us what music is, indeed they evade and silence the point that they would quickly become embarrassed by the 'negative and general' when it comes to the unsaid in music, which takes up as much space as an entire philharmonic hall.

LIBERATION OF LOGIC FROM LANGUAGE<sup>6</sup>. If music were to be understood, its logic would have to be thought independently of language. But what kind of thinking can be thought

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<sup>5</sup> cf. *ibid.* 28

<sup>6</sup> cf. *ibid.* 41; there is only talk of Heidegger's "liberation of grammar from logic", which Agamben considers unfeasible.

independently of language (?) - this is the crucial point that makes music (!)

SHOWING AND SHOWING. What distinguishes the pronominal act of showing in language from musical showing? The linguistic act of showing is the use, the utterance of a pronoun (e.g. 'this' or 'that', 'here' or 'now'). In language, that what is shown is replaced by the pronoun used. Or also: language replaces what is shown. This is precisely what is different in music: there is no difference between the shown and the showing. The thing shown does not exist without its showing. A thing would therefore be itself. That would be unheard of! And unthinkable in philosophy (in language). Because music doesn't think in words, it is perhaps 'unthinkable' - but 'at hand'.

OFFERING IN THE TEMPLE. This is also an act of showing: the child is shown to God/the high priest. Is this showing related to that of music, and does it lead to the (self-)criticism of a supposed selfhood? The purpose of showing something to the other is to fully constitute what is shown. It only becomes what it is in the gaze of the other. This brings us back to Lacan and the linguistic similarity of the structure of showing. Does this mean the fly (the music) has been swatted and is it off the table? It won't happen that quickly. Firstly, it is not yet entirely clear how far the parallelism of showing in the temple and showing in music actually extends. To what extent is something constituted when a concert is played? What is the difference between practicing and the final performance? And what about the amateur musicians who make music at home or only play for themselves and never show it to others? Secondly, the offering in the temple is probably more comparable to speech act theory, i.e. the fact that something is constituted in the act of showing (the complete member of the religious community). A comparable constituting gesture is unlikely to be found in music. Where a self-doubling (including self-negation) analogous to language is most likely to take place is in the aspect of interpretation versus composition: On the one hand, the composition only comes to its own fulfillment in the interpretation; on the other hand, the latter is always something other than the intended composition, always more or less than it. But then: what about the "instant composition", the improvisation, where the doubling that occurs in the performance is much more difficult to show; for example in the difference between the performance and a previous development of certain musical means, between the state of artistic possibilities and the state of the day.

"CANTUS OBSCURIOR", an expression of Cicero about the way the voice is present in every speech (and perhaps says something

that the words do not say).<sup>7</sup> Agamben brushes aside this aspect of the voice as irrelevant on the grounds that what is said only through the voice and not through the words is merely another form of signification, without considering the reference to speech as speech. Agamben misses here a wide field of the richest vagueness, paradoxes and impossibilities, namely the fact that in vocal expression we are dealing with a meaning that in many cases cannot be clearly named, if not with a meaning that does not mean. In other words, we are dealing with a phonetic system that is capable of causing the rigged game of linguists and philosophers to stutter. And this system can justifiably be described as a subsystem of music. Music plays this instrument at least as virtuosic as language (the voice in language). The non-/meaning that takes place in it is an event of form - a form that is empty, so to speak, but paradoxically highly differentiated: a complex and differentiated emptiness, a finely nuanced, multifaceted nothingness. Agamben's 'speech as speech' is a dry bun compared to such a rich buffet. But Agamben also recognizes the voice "as a mere intention to signify, as mere meaning, in which something gives itself to be understood without a specific event of signification having already taken place"(62). So if Hegel means that what is meant can never be said, then that which is meant would be most closely connected with the voice (in speech), but also with all other disciplines of non-/meaning, such as music and other arts, none of which would be what they are if they had not given so much space to the aforementioned "impossibility". And this connection is probably also the reason why these arts are able to move us so much: precisely because they have entered into a close complicity with the meaning, because in them we identify with something for which we otherwise cannot achieve any linguistic expression, no recognized existence, so to speak - and which is in contradiction to the highest urgency and non-presentable presence in the subjective feeling of each individual human being.

THE ADORATION OF LANGUAGE. Philosophy lacks a critique of language. It is true that language is its only object - but one might say: an object of adoration. The problem is the 'only': there are no other gods in philosophy besides language.

THE BEING OF LANGUAGE. According to philosophy, something like 'being' can only take place IN language. There is no being outside of it. So if I listen to someone and get so 'lost' in the sounds produced by the speaker that I no longer follow the text/meaning<sup>8</sup>, then this being lost is not being for philosophy. But I could just as well describe this losing

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<sup>7</sup> cited after *ibid.* 61

<sup>8</sup> see *Antiauthoritarian Etude*,  
[http://ablinger.mur.at/txt\\_antiauthoritarian.html](http://ablinger.mur.at/txt_antiauthoritarian.html)

myself as gaining myself. For what I gain in this moment is the difference between language as text and language as sound, between grasping the meaning and hearing it - and thus, for philosophy, between being and not (yet) being. In this difference I experience both sides as belonging to existence, or rather the experience of difference itself is what establishes the consciousness of existence. (Linguistic) being is thus a bracketed being, a not-all that must first be supplemented by its complement, the non-linguistic existence, in order to come to itself at all.

THE 'NOW' OF LANGUAGE. According to Benveniste, "man has no other means of living the 'now' than by realizing it through the insertion of speech into the world." And Agamben applauds this: "The central position of the relationship between being and presence in the history of Western philosophy lies in the fact that temporality and being have a common source: the 'constant presence' of the instance of speech." (68)

A HINT OF CINNAMON AND BANANA. Is the quality of wine dependent on verbal predications, on the flowery excesses of sommeliers? Does the wine only come into its own through these clouds of words?

THE BEING OF BEING. What the philosophers tell us is that wine tasting has no being before it has found its terms. The status of being is only granted to the mode that has found its concepts. Even more so than in the process of meaning in general, the comparison of the (still) wordless wine tasting with the word-illustrated wine tasting perhaps makes it clear how much the concepts here push something aside or impose it, close it up, nail it down, something that is perhaps much richer, more diverse, more differentiated, more special and particular without them - whereas the philosophers claim that no particular can be achieved before meaning, but only the abstract general.

OUTSIDE THE WORD. For Agamben, there is only the alternative between Hegelian dialectics or a mysticism that must remain mute. An experience "outside the word" remains unthinkable for him.<sup>9</sup> So what is art, what is music, if not precisely such an experience? Music/art can 'show' in a highly articulated way that goes miles beyond mere pronominal pointing, beyond the 'this', and in its specificity and concrete materiality also exceeds the Hegelian general, and ultimately has accumulated several thousand years of evolution and differentiation in the showing acts inherent to art, processes that are still alive, in progress and incomplete. And - what perhaps needs to be pointed out further - the showing of art is at least as identity-forming and subject-constituting as the negative

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* 90. And a few pages before that, a critique of Bataille with the same tenor (85ff)

movement of the thinking of experience in language. "Without question, sensual consciousness is the ground from which the dialectic proceeds, but its truth lies in being a mere nothing and as such intangible and unspeakable." (85) Music does not care at all whether its own ground is described as "nothing" or as "something". This distinction has no meaning for it. It also agrees with 'unspeakability', whereas the claimed intangibility does not apply to it at all - even if it understands that 'intangibility' must remain an insurmountable problem of language.

INTANGIBILITY IN MUSIC. There is at least something that language could describe as such. (For those who haven't realized it yet: We are here in a Beckettian play in which the main characters, 'language' and 'music', are pitted against each other. The only difference is that there is no master who could command either of them to act or remain silent). There is something in sensory experience that language would call inconsistent. However, these descriptions do not correspond to the mode of sensory experience or art itself. In this mode, there is rather a value-free coexistence of different ways of perceiving the world or an object. 'Value-free' only in the sense that they are not necessarily mutually exclusive like the 'yes' and the 'no' of language, but not in the sense that there is no preference or no choice.

MUSIC ENJOYS. Should this really be possible, it would have to be based on the non-signifying aspects of music, or on those aspects that to a certain extent 'cancel out' (*german*: 'aufheben') signification or allow it to arise in the first place - and perhaps only as one of several possibilities: Very often, such signifying possibilities carry the structure or form of signifying without ever reaching the final point of an unambiguous signifier: The stars of a particular constellation could also be grouped differently, even if we have allowed a preference, a particular choice or way of reading for that moment. The process of signification, which cannot come to an end in art, remains in flux. Enjoyment is to a certain extent connected to this flow. The latter is the precondition of the former. Although there is a decision that allows us to differentiate, there is no once-for-all commitment to a solidified signifier that would "forever" cut us off from what it signifies. In this flow, the division of signification is not even completed: object and potential signifier are the same: the sound only shows itself. And the in-itself-absorption is the real pleasure of this experience.

IS MUSIC A CHILD? To what extent does the child's playing have to do with our question: the as-if state, or rather the suspension of the as-if: doing 'serious' to the last consequence, but at the same time knowing that it is not

serious, or the simultaneous knowing and not knowing (not wanting to know).

ANIMAL OR GOD OR LAUGHTER. Agamben writes about the enjoyment that cannot be achieved by (linguistic) human beings, which "is not a figure of the human, but of the animal or rather the divine, and that one can only remain silent about it or at best laugh at it." (86) The formulation encourages us to seek out precisely this simultaneity of the animal, the divine, the unspeakable and the ridiculous (or non-serious) as the actual place of music.

A "NOWHERE WITHOUT NOT". While man confronts the world in language, the animal, which "sees the open with all its eyes", sees being as "infinite" and "unconceived", while it dwells in a "nowhere without not".<sup>10</sup> Here again, the question arises as to how much we must also consider such a "nowhere without not" for music. But then always in conjunction with the "as-if", with taking the unserious seriously. Agamben mentions and at the same time overlooks the difference between Rilke and Heidegger: where Rilke says "nowhere WITHOUT not", Heidegger says "nothing is it and nowhere". Heidegger's "nothing" still seems to have a being, while the "not", the negation, is simply missing in Rilke. The "WITHOUT not" is the decisive factor in that place outside of language: there is no negation there. (95) Conversely to Agamben, I now pass over the negation in "nowhere" and simply read it as "indeterminacy of place" - without an awareness of a lack of a determinacy - no one has asked for it. And what applies to the animal always already applies to God: his place is nowhere because his place cannot be determined.

NEGATION OF NEGATION in music means that no negation has ever taken place, neither a first nor a second, rejects the possibility of negation itself. But ultimately this rejection is the comprehension of the profoundly negative, profoundly non-existent character of language. In front of the contrasting foil of the impossibility of negativity, the 'impossibility' of what constitutes us in language becomes perceptible at the same time. The negativity of the philosophers is a lapdog in comparison to the much more radical impossibility, fictionality and constructedness of how language produces the world. And the tangible 'nowhere' from which this impossibility can be observed can be found in music.

THE HISTORY OF 'SENSORY EXPERIENCE'. My question here is whether the concept from which Hegel starts, and on which the whole inception of his dialectic is based, namely 'sensory experience', is not itself a profoundly historical one. So,

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<sup>10</sup> Agamben draws here on formulations by Rilke, cf. 92, footnote

instead of placing it at the beginning of all things, we should ask whether 'sensory experience', as Hegel understood it, existed at all before Hegel. Agamben mentions "the modern idea that 'experience' provides the material that the poet has to express in his poem", and adds: "an idea little familiar to the classical world [...]"(113). In the same way, 'sensual experience' could have been a thought little familiar to the classical world. That from which everything proceeds, where everything begins, is presumably the topos that is subject to historical development more than anything else. What "everything begins with" could perhaps not have arisen anywhere else than at the beginning of the self-awareness of the bourgeoisie.

WHO GOES INTO A CISTERN. Agamben gives the beautiful example of the "Tenzone of Nothingness", Provencal, 12th century<sup>11</sup>, in which the experience of the sound of one's own voice in a cistern is described. Agamben describes this as a conjuncture of language and nothingness and derives it from the echo, the doubling of the ego in the echo, the alienation of one's own sound, the placelessness of one's own voice, its inability to hold on, its disappearance, its nothingness... Philosophers can only describe this experience as negation, because they set the 'I' as absolute in order to subsequently declare it untraceable. From the perspective of music or 'hearing', however, the cistern experience is not only the reflection of a non-existent 'I', but the answer of the space that grasps the 'I' as inseparable from itself.

MUSIC IS NOT TRUE - not any more than it is untrue. And philosophy would cancel itself out if it were to acknowledge such a broad field of human subjectivation that is NOT caught up in the dichotomy of true/untrue. Philosophy prefers to look away. This looking away has its roots in the two and a half thousand year old history of Western philosophy. According to this tradition, a 'philosophy of music' would be a contradiction in terms. It would be a philosophy that would have to exclude logic and dissolve its fundamental reference to language. A philosophy of music would therefore require a way of thinking that would no longer be philosophy in the strict sense, something that could think the both/and, the simultaneity of yes and no - a sort of Chinese Thought?

SOMETIMES while "philosophizing", when there are those moments when the abyss of language appears before your eyes and disappears again immediately, and where you dwell on the disappearance for a long time, and try to bathe in the atmosphere of what has actually already disappeared, until the bath becomes drier and drier, the soup thinner and thinner, and there is actually nothing left of the weighty experience

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<sup>11</sup> by Aimeric de Peguilhan, see 122

of the abyss, and you finally come to the admission of your own emptiness, which is actually an emptiness of emptiness, an absence of the abyss - then suddenly, when the emptiness is really completely emptied out, you realize that the sounds from outside are penetrating through the ventilation gap of the hotel window and you are sitting alone in a room.

ALONE IN A ROOM. Philosophy captures thought in its negation, but does it also capture it in its absence on the back of a sudden presence? Does it grasp the emergence of absence? Does it grasp that there actually IS something other than absence - that it is adjacent? Does it grasp the boundary, the change of mode from - I would say - negation to solitude?

THE LAUGHTER OF BRENNUS. Now that I am beginning to understand what philosophy actually does, I feel a little like the Celtic leader Brennus in front of the Delphic gods after he had taken over the most sacred site in the world at that time. We are told of his laughter in the face of the stone "dolls". But I am absolutely certain that it was an incredibly disappointed laugh: THAT'S WHAT IT'S REALLY SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN!!!? HAHAHA! YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING! HAHA! THAT CAN'T BE EVERYTHING! HAHAHAHA!

THE BELLS OF HUDDERSFIELD remind me that I could be wrong - about EVERYTHING. The ten diatonically tuned bells span a decime, the order of which is constantly shuffled until they sound again in the initial sequence (a downward scale). But I can only hear this permutation as such in relation to a reference bell, typically the lowest bell. If such referential hearing is the model for all hearing, I have lost: EVERYTHING.

OH, FAILING, YOU AGAIN, GOOD FRIEND! Here you are again, just after you made me taste the half-bitter, half-triumphant laughter of Brennus! But, Failing, if you're the devil, then you can be bargained with, can't you? Can we make a pact?

THE NO-WORD. Philosophers say that the decisive moment that opens up the world and man's existence to him is his yes-word to the taking place of language.(141) But isn't it much more the no-word that decides? Is it not precisely the exit from conversation, from understanding, and the turn towards 'listening', in which meaning is not liquidated but is nevertheless 'suspended' ('aufgehoben'), where the awareness of that which we have just left can emerge?

THE NO-WORD TO THE NO-WORD. At first glance, it may seem confusing that this 'no' is supposed to lead us into the very area in which no 'no' exists. But this 'no' is only interpreted as a 'no' from the perspective of language, from the perspective of thinking. From 'hearing', on the other hand, we enter a positive area, something present, from which

the underlying non-presence of language appears. And - not to forget: the actual 'no' is the 'yes'! The consent to language is the recognition of what does not exist: the 'no'.

LISTENING IS UNETHICAL. Agamben says that this consent is the actual ethical act. Is 'listening' then unethical? Is that our pact, Failing?

CAGE/FAILING. So what did Cage achieve when he wanted to free sounds from their meanings? Even if he could not escape the 'melodies', i.e. the relationships between the sounds, or between the sounds and us, these relationships - and through them the meanings - have become 'other' - let's say - on the way from Schoenberg to Cage. What does this becoming other, i.e. the changeability of the relationships, tell us about the sounds themselves? Probably nothing. The sounds remain just as unattainable as the world or the things (in themselves).

WITHOUT WANTING, WITHOUT 'YES'. To my utter surprise, at the end of the book on language and death, Agamben considers a mode for escaping the 'yes' to language, the desire for language. He calls the mode "infantile, that is, without volition". "Infantile" - doesn't that fit with music, with its both/and, with its childlike seriousness, with its as-if? And isn't music, or rather 'listening', precisely this mode that leaves behind the 'yes' to language?

ON THE OTHER SIDE, THE TILTING IMAGES<sup>12</sup>: Don't they show that in music/listening, too, only a difference can be grasped, i.e. something negative? In contrast to the philosophers, however, the tilting does not only go in one direction: I can also go back; what has been abandoned is not lost forever. And in tilting back and forth almost at will, something is given to me as 'positive' after all: Of course not the truth of one of the two flip sides, but in a sense the certainty of the tiltability of my perception, even the absolute certainty that neither side is 'everything'. And this positivity includes something else that philosophy must categorically exclude, something that we could describe in a *contradictio in adiecto* as transcendentality experienced by the senses.

THE TRANSCENDENTAL SQUARE. When listening to 'Weiss/weisslich 7, Quadrat'<sup>13</sup> something (almost) always remains 'open', something remains unfulfilled, i.e. we cannot do anything (not enough) with the piece/sound. It is like a word that is said to us, but from which we cannot extract any meaning. A strange emptiness arises. We react with boredom or rejection. But everything that does not speak (to us) here shows something in

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<sup>12</sup> More on "tilting images" in: "A Music That Withdraws", cf. footnote 4. Tilting images refer to the strategy that makes the "object" in front of us appear completely different by minimally shifting the point of view.

<sup>13</sup> cf. [http://ablinger.mur.at/ww7\\_square.html](http://ablinger.mur.at/ww7_square.html)

return: in its absence, the construction of hearing is demonstrated once again. It shows that and how we must be able to do something with a sound in order to be able to hear it. It shows that this 'doing something' has a certain similarity to meaning in language.

MEANING AND DOING SOMETHING WITH SOMETHING. Is there something in this relationship that gives us information about the underlying structure of both? In both cases, there is a compulsion to establish a relationship between us and a certain legibility of the respective thing. And this relationship is that of a desire, or a will, or an intention that connects us to the respective object.

OUTSIDE. What is more important, however, is that in the 'square', in its 'boredom', we encounter something that is NOT subject to the mechanism of wanting. Something seems to place itself outside of us, outside of our availability, accessibility, conceivability.

WITHDRAWNNESS. It seems that something arises in the 'square' that even wants to elude the 'construction' of hearing. There may be moments when a certain observation - a will, a projection - adds something to this withdrawn, some special quality, such as the spatial response. (In some rooms, the 'square' is quite acoustically rich, and produces deviations from itself that we like to listen to). But it is precisely in front of such moments that the difference becomes all the more apparent, that which remains withdrawn from us, that which does not let us in, leaves us outside: we stand in front of a wall without a window, without a door.

FOREIGNNESS. It seems that we are dealing here with a categorical foreignness, with something that as such is inaccessible to thought. We can only remember the situation in retrospect and thereby reconstruct our helplessness. All that thinking/memory can do is analyze our reaction to this foreignness, but it cannot reach the foreignness itself.

WHAT THINKING CANNOT DO, BUT MUSIC CAN. Here we are actually dealing with a fundamental difference between 'thinking' and 'hearing'. The foreignness cannot be thought, it can only be experienced. I could explain all possible aspects of the 'square' to my audience in an introduction to the work: the general dimension of white noise as totality, as everything; the art-historical relationship to Malevich and thus to the title of the piece; the opposition of silence and 'everything', and thus already the opposition of something fulfilled (silence) and something empty (everything); Yes, I could also point to the phenomenon of 'remaining outside', of not being able to do anything with it, of potential boredom or imposition - but all this is something completely different

from actually appropriating, from being exposed to foreignness. Any attempt to think these things is 'cozy', full and warm in comparison to the categorical emptiness and coldness of that experience in the actual act of listening.

WARM THINKING, COLD LISTENING. Thinking is always fulfilled, always cozy, always like a blanket that wraps us up and protects us from freezing. We cannot think without this protection, this cover. Thinking is the shell. And the comparative coziness of thinking also applies to the shivers of negativity, the dizziness of the abysses that make up the highest enjoyment and triumph of philosophers. With regard to the protective shell, hearing is generally by no means the opposite of thinking. Listening also consists to a large extent of constructing and establishing a relationship, and this is just as protective as that of thinking. But in hearing - and here perhaps more clearly than in seeing - there is the possibility that the shell will tear, that we will be exposed naked and unveiled to something that we usually try to evade with the defensive attitude of 'boredom' or 'disinterest'. (And of course the 'square' is not the only piece, the only situation that can do this. The experience of time in extended 'Wandelweiser' pieces, for example, is also something that can surprise us, at least the first few times - or in which we can surprise ourselves - quite independently of any information, descriptions or knowledge of the score that may have served to prepare us).

BANALITY. Now I've been thinking for so long, and I've come to a point where it seems clear for a moment what thinking can't achieve, and where listening goes beyond that - without mysticism - only to end up with a banality and truism: Music simply has to be heard/experienced, the experience itself cannot be accessed by studying the score, for example.

NEVERTHELESS. Thank you, Failing!

FAILING. But what I thought I had achieved was once again the negativity, the coldness, the nowhere, the foreignness. Philosophy DOES have a point. I have to admit it. The only thing that could rescue me would be the sensual experience of this foreignness, of failing. The only thing that would take us a (small) step beyond philosophy would be the immediacy of the unattainable, which philosophy places in the negative. Have I succeeded in doing that? Life simply goes on as if nothing had happened. Nothing has happened.

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