

# A MUSIC WITHIN MORALITY

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## I

I have continually evoked the question of morality in many of my writings over the past year, most often in the context of the pure expression of the object itself or in the moral quality of humanistic composition, i.e. composition that produces something that can be used and enjoyed by anyone, not simply performers of contemporary music or virtuosi.

Yet, despite how it might be interpreted by contemporary readers, my use of the word morality, or even any moralizing attitudes, are not necessarily used in the sense that moralism is interpreted in contemporary society, which is often framed as a negative, restrictive action on the well being of others; indeed, it is rather the opposite: a totally moral life is one that frees others as to be able to live a proper and fulfilling life, one in which the object might express itself as it is, and moreover, one in which we might be able to experience the object expressing itself as it is.

And I must admit my own failure in the process of drafting my previous rhetoric, as it has been difficult to effectively put these into words because I am first not an ethical philosopher, but a musician who became a theorist in order to express my doubts concerning how we experience music, and, even more, what music truly is; moreover, I always find it difficult to find the right words for the ideas I wish to convey, and I often find myself inadvertently coming across as a fool—though, I imagine that if you have diligently waded through my writings up to this point that you must have at least a vague inkling of interest in what are radically fringe ideas!

This seemingly insurmountable obstacle notwithstanding, I have taken it upon myself to attempt to explain my reasoning for such a moral argument, and it might be phrased in such a way:

*First*, that an object, any object, expresses itself by the very substance of its being, or essence. What the thing is, as it is, is the state in which it exists to be experienced. Say, the classic example of the square: the experience of it is as a two dimensional object with four equilateral

sides. These traits are not placed upon it as a definition, but are what it is, as it is experienced, so that the definition is the response to the experience of it.

Because it expresses itself in such a way that it is not correctly defined by exterior definition or framing, the existence of its body (though not necessarily a body in the physical sense), is an existential necessity. It is not a pure idea, something that can be thought of abstractly, exterior to all other things, as in a Form—something that might determine the consistent expression of a square, i.e. the notion that all squares are equivalent because the experience of what a square is, as it expresses itself, is consistent among all squares in such a way that one could argue that there is a root, metaphysical idea that determines the existence of all squares—but it is a thing that exists not only in the context of itself; that is, not in a vacuum, but part of the total experience of the world. Recall that when Xenophanes views the clouds, he is not simply viewing them, because his experience of seeing can not physically perceive the cloud as separate from the place among other objects in the sky. Surely it would be so that, if he were to perform that sort of abstract conceptualization, then he would be using reasoning to make that decision based upon what we would hope to be firm observational examples; however, by the time he begins to abstractly conceptualize the cloud, he is no longer experiencing the cloud as it expresses itself, but as what he reasons the cloud should be! In the world, outside of us, all things, whether they be sentient or not, engage with one another as separate bodies: they indeed mingle with one another in such a way that the disappearance of one would alter how others would interact, not in the sense of consequentialism, that one action determines another, but that there is always a possibility for objects to engage with other objects in a way that we could interpret as meaningful; for, there is a world beyond our experience filled to the brim with objects that express themselves, and though a majority of which are beyond our ability to perceive, and thus not able to experience outside of pure reason, it does not mean that they do not exist, that they are bodiless, nothing more than ephemeral constructions of the mind!

*Thus*, if it is first true that an object that exists expresses itself, what it is, as it is, as to be experienced by other objects; and, if it is secondly true that these objects are not abstract entities facilitated via pure reason, but are objects that possess a “body” in the sense that they interact with other objects, inadvertently or not, through the sole reason of their existence, then it follows that, because it possesses its own body, separate from my own, but that body is not substantially

less than my own in any way—namely, that both my body and its body express ourselves, as we are, as to be experienced, despite perceived differences gleaned through our respective perceptive faculties, gauged by the fallible functions of comprehension, judgement, and reason—it is in the state of the phenomenological "Other," one that is equal to me the truth that it exists as I do, but not equivalent in that it is not myself, does not represent or convey myself, nor can be totally understood as if it is myself.

Because we are all bodies that inhabit the same space, according to the same principles of unconscious, inherent self-expression, any views of judgements of such an Other must be reasoned *praeter experientiam*. Equality is not a question of qualitative reasoning, but rather one of existential essentiality: if an object expresses itself, what it is, as it is, as to be experienced by other objects, then, no matter the nature of what it is in comparison to another object that expresses itself, what it is, as it is, as to be experienced by other objects, because both fulfill the base necessity for existence—which is really just the potentiality for another to experience it, even if not all other can perceive their experience of it—they are both equal.

*Therefore*, the wind, a fox, a rock, and I are equal, as we are all objects that express ourselves, what we are, as we are, as to be experienced by other objects in a deeply meaningful way:

The least movement affects all nature; the entire sea changes because of a rock. Thus in grace, the least action affects everything by its consequences; therefore everything is important.

*(Pascal 1958, 139)*

Allow me to preempt any arguments against this as spiritual nonsense, for one should not be tricked as to think of this as some new age or gnostic idea, that we all possess some sacred vibration or can attain some hidden truth that binds us, because there is nothing hidden here, nor any sort of ascended wisdom (I would never assert such a puffed up claim). Unlike new age, meditative grasping and gnostic secrets, these ideas are not found by turning inward, but extending outward: seeing as to know! Arguably, in our media centric, solipsistic lifestyles, we spend far too much time glancing inward, focusing on the self, in the search for what is, when what is has been made clear for us to experience outside of ourselves: what is apparent at first glance, at first experience, is that object, it offers

itself honestly, without conceit, because it can do nothing other than express itself. My argument about the object is, in all honesty, the furthest I might find myself from any sort of spirituality (considering, of course, my varied output of work often being strongly rooted in Pauline, Clementine, and hermitic and monastic rhetoric), because it is aligned with the work of Xenophanes and Parmenides, who flirted quite dangerously with ideas that could be interpreted as impious in the Ancient Greek world, as both of whom are interested not in solely spiritual relationships to matter, but to perceptual and comprehensional relationships and how those influence our understanding and appreciation of the universe, both physical and metaphysical.

Following this line of argumentation, if we are all equal according to our ability to express ourselves, then it is therefore immoral for any of us to deny that in such a way that would make us unequal—and this is where my line of thinking might begin to appear confusing—for, if the equalizer is this propensity for self-expression, then the moral way to approach an object is to identify it as it expresses itself, that is, honestly approaching and comprehending it.

Thus, the great immoral act is to deny that object the pure expression of itself, which is to deny it as it is. Think of wood: in which way does such an object express itself, what it is, as it is, as to be experienced by other objects? Certainly not in the cut, trimmed, planed, and organized form that we give it when it is made into a table, but that of its root, form that it first expressed itself as to be experienced: a tree!

The moral action demands that we serve the object of the other; that we not only recognize it, but its existence, as to serve it as an equal: to serve the other is to accept the other, to not serve it is to place oneself as higher than the other.

Therefore it might be said that my morality is highly Christological: that our lives are not important in themselves, but in how we come to use them for others; that we have not come to be served (to be experienced), but to serve (to experience others) as to fervently extol and confirm the existence of the other, as opposed to denying the other to benefit our own.

Indeed, it might even be said that the relationship among objects is one in which they all experience one another on essentially the same terms as objects that all express themselves, and to think of oneself as superior as to be experienced without equally experiencing others is a flaw that mutilates one's capacity to experience the exterior as it is.

And, knowing my argument for what the idea of the moral action

is, it might be important to break down the notion of these words moral and immoral as rhetorical devices; for, when I write of what is moral and immoral, it is not according to some law or rule, unlike how those who find religious dogmatics distasteful might react; note well, I do not want morality to be a highly implausible, almost herculean task, and I neither want there to be guilt over small, inconsequential actions, e.g. eating eggs and drinking milk, nor act in the grand American tradition of busybody abstinence pushers who place their morals upon others; rather, I want morality to be the means to live a purposeful, happy, just, and humble life; I want morality to be the means to the end-in-itself of seeing the world without clouded vision, to understand all things as they are, always with a certain sense of lucidity, but still work to protect that world in the sense that all objects might be able to express themselves as to be experienced.

It is as Paul wrote: the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. And, indeed, might I say: honesty and truth in seeing and living; against such things there is no law! So, I do not really expect rigorous moral adherence to anything I write, as if this be some divine mandate, instead I expect an honest and forthright attitude; for, the law forces one to act out of fear, upheld through coercion; after all, in our society it is not out of goodwill that men pay their taxes, but the fear of the barrel of a gun! Yet, morality, inasmuch as it is true honesty and true forthrightness, comes through one's willingness to be moral in not only right action, but, more importantly, in right mind; indeed, an action committed without honest intention, without right mind, is not a moral action, but one according to an exterior obligation. No obligations exterior to my duty to engage in life honestly are true, purposeful, or beneficial, for they are drafted to serve all ends other than that which might aid me in understanding my existence and its relationship to the existence of all other objects; conversely, it is so that not all ends have forthright means, and not all means have vitalizing ends. If life be not honest means to truthful ends, then there can be no life, only death! And in contemplating this I find myself returning to the powerful words of Ruskin:

THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy

human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others.

*(Ruskin 1912, 195)*

In struggling with the equality of those whose work appears to be less, we must struggle with our own selfishness, this question if it is right for us to place ourselves above others for the sake of vanity, that being, our exhortation of our own work in comparison to others?

Answer me this: what objects are to be given consideration over others? If the expression of a rock appears as lesser than the expression of a fox, and that of the fox appears as less than that of I, does that assumption actually give me the right to determine the value of their existence? If our criteria for the value of the work the laborers is the time that they work, not the quality of their work, then is it fair to pay one who works for one hour, yet more thoroughly and skillfully than one who works for eight and works shoddily? What of the made Christian—one who has a true change of heart upon the examination of their life—against one born into a Christian household—one, who has always expressed the manners and qualities of being Christian from an early age, without rebellion or strife?

Or, if I am to rephrase it: Is Augustine lesser than Bernard because he frivolously threw away twenty years of his life in debauchery while Bernard vigorously pursued asceticism from his youth onward?

If I am to gain the same as others, despite the difference of work, the question must shift from what I receive in exchange for the work to the quality of the work that I do in itself, and I should not take pride in the work I do in comparison to others, nor express disdain at others for doing less, especially if it is in earnest. Indeed, the reward of good work is not exterior, neither fame nor wealth, but interior: whatever my hand is able to do, I should do earnestly, for it is not about the size, length, or amount of a quality that determines the equality of men, but their earnest willingness and honest effort; and, if I may extrapolate: it is not about the manner of expression, even whether it be totally imperceptible, but that the object expresses itself, what it is, as it is, as to be experienced by other objects. The quality of expression then might not be in how apparent it is, but that it is manifested at full force.

Therefore, when one is willing to engage with the experience of life in a moral manner, then one comes to understand that, as all things are objects that express themselves, and it is wrong to deny their ability to express themselves, we should be aware that we should perform no act that denies any object to express itself without a sober understanding of what we are doing to that object, because our relationship to that object not only validates the existence of that object and celebrates it, but it also aids us in coming to know what has been put into place as to be enjoyed. Xenophanes disparaged a similar attitude the ancient Greeks had of their gods, that they supposed they looked like them, dressed like them, and even acted like them. They placed their own vision of the world upon it, as opposed to experiencing it as it was put into place to be experienced. One would think Xenophanes would be impious and immoral in doing so, as he had questioned the gods, but it was rather that he was morally superior to the Greeks, who, in placing their own opinion of the gods as true and denying the true expression of the gods, as they are, in favor of what they desire the gods to be.

If one places their own belief over what is, then they express the notion that their own ideas are of greater value than the truth of the other, and then instead of living in the world, they fabricate their own false reality; for, who has the right to decide the payment of the laborers other than the Lord? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee; just as I am given the value of being experienced and respected, so too are all other things. I am not in the position to determine that which possesses the inherent ability of self-expression, and I am thus not in the position to denigrate them by making them into what they are not! Thus, the powers that I have been given are twofold: the power to exist and the power to experience.

As Xenophanes, in denying this fallacious pattern of self-aggrandizement and deification of mortals, flaws and all, protects the purity of the gods as objects that express themselves, I, my own life, can do no other: when I view the wood in my home, perhaps in the form of a table, I should not think of it in the shape that it has been forced to take against its expression of itself, but rather come to comprehend that it always expresses itself as the tree, even if it be cut down trimmed, planed, and organized into a new form, and that the immoral act was not making the table, but experiencing it as a table and not as the tree! The tree does not determine its shape, but is given it to express, and so it can do no more than convey itself. In the form of a table, all of those pieces of wood express themselves within that form, down to the individual woodgrain. The fact that a man chose to

rearrange the tree does not mean that the tree stops expressing itself as the tree, and it does not mean that I should stop experiencing it as the tree; for, the tree is honest to me in its unconscious, innate self-expression, and if I am to deny my experience of that, then I serve to destroy the purpose of that tree, which exists as to be experienced. Because it is the potential to be experienced that allows for an object to exist, to deny an object of itself is to eradicate it, to transform matter, being, into nothing, to eliminate its existential identity, *interficiere aliud*—to kill the other.

When one thinks of what Parmenides wrote concerning the notion that, if something was not, then it is not, as what must be an inverse of what is, that being something being, or, rather, existing, then the absolute existence of something must be paramount. What is has to exist exterior to experience in order for it to exist, and what is not is essentially nonexistent, as nothing can come from nothing,

That being said, the way of belief, of opinion or supposition, that the goddess is opposed to, allows for mortal to, in incorrectly (and thus immorally) interpreting or even reinterpreting what is, as to be what is but must not be; therefore, in denying the object and exterminating its self-expression, we are the ones who do harm to it, because we deny its existence, and therefore we invalidate its equality to us.

In order to engage with these things morally, we must toss away any suppositions, beliefs, or opinions about what the object is, for it is likely that those ideas, born from our reason and not from our engagement with the object itself, are wrong—indeed, bind yourself to no oath lest it prove false—and we must then take it upon ourselves to glance as clearly as possible into the dark glass to gleam within it what we physically can, and reason, to the best of our ability, what it is, as it is.

## II

It is because it is our moral obligation to identify and amplify this object as it expresses itself, and not to deny it or override it with our own interpretation of it, that I always seem to fragment my understanding of music as so:

*First*, the score, the page, the landscape, represents something in the composer's own experience of truth, that being their experience of, and engagement with, the object as it expresses itself.

*Second*, the action that results from the page is one's understanding of what is conveyed, the ideas the composer places onto the page are the estimation of what the true sound could be communicated as, thus the score allows one to seek that sound. This specific word, seek, is quite important, because often we view the score as the direct path to the sound, so much so that in the contemporary model of composition, or at the very least, engraving, the primary value placed in the score, in the first glimpse at what might be the music itself, is a technicality: what draws our eyes to the score is the phantasmical skill of making it appear as if it expresses something when seen.

However, the score is much more a philosophical than technical document in my eyes, and I say this because the final sound cannot be really explained by anything other than it itself. The technical score operates under the assumption that the sound one desires can be explained without experiencing it first; however, because I come from this mindset of it being immoral to be dishonest or deceitful by making assumptions or speaking for something and not allowing it to express itself, I think the score must not capture anything about the final sound; instead, the score must represent the means to seeking out the final sound, but not knowing what that sound could be, for in the moment it expresses itself we first come into contact with what it actually is! Therefore, the score acts as a way of I, the initial experiencer, giving another the opportunity to experience a sound that they might not have had the clarity or foresight to know about in the first place.

Moreover, in terms of the technical score, the great dilemma of music in the electronic age, or perhaps even music following the metronome, is that rhythmic acuity shifts from experiential, comparative to technical relationships; that is, the speed and timing of

a music becomes less about the balancing of meaning and feeling in each moment so that the length of each note or the speed of each phrase is only determined by how one feels it must in comparison to the last as to highly the qualities of similarity and difference found in the music itself, and this is something that can only be found in listening to the music itself, as it is, in real time as one performs.

The opposite of this is the strict nature of the metronomic *tactus*, which contrasts with the heartbeat's *tactus* in its overwhelmingly perfect rate of beating. The heartbeat is, despite its fluctuations, naturally steady, and though it moves according to the passions, it always retains a near perfect comparative rate of beating, which is different than the grid of the metronome, which cages the music so that it cannot really be engaged with, but instead enters a one-way relationship in which it is forced to conform to what we find necessary. Beat is necessary for the work to retain order, but it is not absolute, as we might understand it in the technical score; indeed, the heartbeat must be understood and known like any other object that expresses itself, that to find the proper rate one must perceive something beyond pure reason—whereas the metronome itself might be deemed pure reason personified!

The result of working according to technical scores as opposed to philosophical scores is that performance does not exist in the context of the greater world, that it does not work to help us know and understand anything about what we are experiencing. We are indeed hearing the music that the composer has written, perhaps according to their highly deterministic and ordered attitude towards the object, that it serves as a tool for ends outside of itself, but I find this worrying not only because we are not respecting the object and are acting dishonestly, but because we are really cheating ourselves in the process. True knowledge cannot come from preexisting judgment, because the more angles and obstacles we erect when we come across the object, the less complete a view we possess, and if our view be clouded whatsoever, then it becomes impossible to come to know what is, but only a portion of it, which might as well be what is not.

The technical score represents something *supra probabilitatem*, being beyond something that could even be possible or even probable at the outset; for, at what point is the technical score accurate? When the score conveys information, what aspect of that information is real, what it is that has been revealed to one that truthfully appears in the score, and what of such a score is false, fabrications that either lie about or fail to provide the detail necessary for the performer to engage with the object as it expressed itself? And, indeed, at what point are these notes those of the composer, and not of the copyist,

the engraver, or the printer; errors of the hand, of smudged ink, of adding information where unnecessary or detrimental? Moreover, at what point are our own actions accurate? In what way can we admit to have fully understood the meaning beyond the ink, to honestly argue that we have studied and practiced it enough to deeply understand it, that we are not simply reading it and taking it at face value, or, even worse, treating it without the gravity it requires?

Such problems are not inherent to the music pertinent to this philosophy, but all music, for all music has rules not written, not conveyed in ink, either hand or print, that are apparent in the cultural, social, religious, and moral values that underlie the lives of those people. These things all affect not simply the way things are written, but the way in which those things written are interpreted and understood. In studying Frescobaldi's performance practice, and seeking what might be considered the proper technique (if one is of the opinion that the composer's performance is definitive), Frederick Hammond noted the varied problems of differing sources rather succinctly:

19.85 The sources of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century keyboard music, still emerging, make it increasingly clear that a single text, even when emanating directly from the composer, is not a blueprint for a performance. The *ricercari* of Claudio Merulo demonstrate the fluidity of written texts. The printed edition of 1567, issued during Merulo's lifetime, contains the most elaborate ornamental realizations. The posthumous edition of 1605 (Venice, Gardano) simplifies the ornamentation, but the source of this version (possibly an earlier manuscript version by Merulo himself) is unclear: perhaps the 1567 print represents the kind of ornamentation that would have been added in performance to the more skeletal version of 1605. The manuscript versions in the Turin tablatures (1637), while agreeing mainly with 1605, also present variants concordant with neither print. (The *ricercari*, originally in published in *chiavette* or high clefs, were transposed down a fourth in Turin).

19.86 Indeed, there are circumstances where the written text seems not the precondition for a performance but rather the formalized end result: “... if a beginner, who plays things that he has studied, & learned disgracefully incorrectly, wishes to play according to the rules it will be necessary for him to abandon all that he has learned ...”

*(Hammond, 2017, chap. 19, para. 85-86)*

Indeed, it could also be posited from this glut of resources over proper ornamentation—and, as Hammond would reveal about the unwritten affectations placed upon rhythmic figures depending on genre and tempo—that the proper way to perform a music is not necessarily revealed by the ink, and that the ink is nothing more than a shorthand the composer provides, one that, if one is, according to the philosophical and theoretical notions of their time, well practiced, intelligent, and possesses a certain searching quality about them, is easily decipherable.

However, beyond the simple (or rather, quite complicated) conventions of ornamentation in early music, this sort of notational shorthand can also create something of value in the experience of the performer: it facilitates a sort of weakness about performing, that one, when working, does not have the ability to exert force upon the music because one lacks foreknowledge of what it could be, and instead is at the mercy of it so that one cannot be confident of their ability to perform properly until they are within the moment of performance, in which that weakness, that inability to properly know prior to the act whether one can do, becomes strength: the clouds open up as the first notes sound, and one slowly begins to gain confidence in what one must do, as if descended upon like a dove.

Thus, in music, it seems to me that it is, as Paul says, that power comes from weakness: the right actions in music are not prepared for one on the page, but are imparted upon one as if grace! Men are not machines, we always will attack too fast or lag slightly behind, our heartbeat might falter slightly or we might hastily count one bar faster than another, so it could be possible that, in music, Pascal’s words might be true:

Man is only a subject full of error, natural and ineffaceable, without grace. Nothing shows him the truth. Everything deceives him. These two

sources of truth, reason and the senses, besides being both wanting in sincerity, deceive each other in turn. The senses mislead the reason with false appearances, and receive from reason in their turn the same trickery which they apply to her; reason has her revenge. The passions of the soul trouble the senses, and make false impressions upon them. They rival each other in falsehood and deception.

(Pascal 1958,27)

And it is possible that the highly absolute, in reading, becomes, in the act, wholly comparative; that is, it is the inability to assume the insurmountable perfection of following the score as if a machine, this thing, *supra probabilitatem*, beyond possibility, from which music appears, so that, in the music becoming totally comparative, becoming annotated, whether on the page or in the mind, in such a way as to aid a result, it becomes a living thing, not simply a recollection of a thing having been thought and written down.

It is in failing to attain perfection that the powerful expression of music appears, and in the struggle to properly identify the correct sound that we engage with the only possible sound: our experience of it. Therefore, the score, in its impossibility, causes us to fail, through which the true nature of the music becomes manifest.

And, if I might use an example from my own musical life, I say this because, being initially trained as a jazz rhythm guitarist, I have always been aligned to the grid, though in the rhythm section I noticed this sort of elasticity in even highly capable musicians: the drummer will falter and rush, the guitarist will drift and drag, and the bassist and pianist will remain tight, if not fluctuate between the two poles. I think this is natural, for the nature of comping and drumming lean towards these extremes: the spacing of the comping leaves room for such a drift, and the driving nature of the drum lends itself to pushing ahead; however, I also think this is of great value, for it allows the rhythm to breathe and the musicians with interact with one another not as readers of parts, but as those that form this cohesive whole, this meaningful engagement with others that I argued is the paramount way of being moral.

So I, in some sense as a response to this experience of elasticity, purposefully become a terrible solo musician; for I, using the page as an idea of which keys to press, interact not with the printed rhythms, but with the sounds that appear! How long is long and how short is

short when a note sounds? The page expresses quarters and eighths, but what do those really mean? The page expresses a speed, but is that total? At what rate am I to take each note in comparison to another, each phrase in the face of the last? My weakness in not knowing, in fostering a very poor rhythmic grid, grants me the necessary power in that moment to make such a decision! Every tone, every harmony, reveals to me the necessary speed and sound. And it is because I willingly engage with the sound morally, that I treat it as an object that expresses itself, and that I experience it in such a way, that it guides me to the proper sound; that, to me, is grace!

### III

Coming to know the object as it expresses itself is merely part of the issue; certainly, it allows us to identify as to convey, but what then becomes important is that means of conveyance, and such a thing is then compounded by the reality that we are conveying that object to another object, and thus we cannot overwrite one in preference to the other, but must amplify the expression of both. This is what I have been calling "humanistic composition," and a humanistic compositional attitude that allows for the performer the ultimate form of self expression is one that I like to place in the context of the unification of the apparent dichotomy of the music of James Tenney and Harry Partch.

In Tenney's music he puts forth the object itself as the point of importance, that the impulse for the act of making music is for the sake of listening. His music is always about the coming to know and comprehension of sound as it presents itself, and unlike other modernists he is never interested in shaping it, altering it from its natural expression, whatsoever; like Alvin Lucier, he is always pointing out the thing as clearly as possible, with as little artifice as possible, almost to the point where one might wonder if we are even making music as an art anymore! I myself find it a refreshing act of radical conservatism to take music to its purest form, to the brink of anti-art, in an age where everything is being raised to the pantheon of high art, as if such a designation makes these things more valuable!

In contrast to Tenney, Partch follows up the first with the acknowledgment of the inevitability of the second: the necessity of the act as expression, knowing that even when one expresses an object as it expresses itself, one will invariably end up expressing their own body. Once we break everything down to what it is at its most essential level, then we can use it however we please, as long as we are working in a way that is known and experienced as absolutely honest. The physicality of Partch's music, most importantly the physical nature of expression in his vocal music, is not about the compositional process, the system, or anything else other than the expression of the pure thing; indeed, I think Partch is the most important non-systematic, intuitive composer, not Morton Feldman, because Partch's intuition is built upon the fundamental relationship between the body and the world around it, in both interaction and reaction. As with Tenney's anti-art, Partch also denies the criteria of valuing things as pieces of high or low art and simply seeks the purity of expression as the highest point in human endeavour, though

his is much more focused on self-expression.

Thus, it might be said that we should view the musical philosophies of Partch and Tenney like how Ammonius Saccas made an attempt to unite the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, that despite their differences there is much more in harmony between the two, for each require this intense, intimate relationship with the object before one can truly perform according to it.

Moreover, the stances both take and their odds with the cultural considerations of what music, especially “good music,” conveys to me the old difference between talent and genius for which Schopenhauer is most famous: talent expresses itself according to the rubric that society places upon it; genius expresses itself according to the manner in which it must express itself; or even, talent does not express itself at all, but a rather effective and convincing appropriation of what society values, and for a pure individual there can be no other in expression other than honest self-expression!

So when I discuss this idea of human composition as something intimately related to—perhaps even intrinsic to—experiencing the object as it expresses itself, I understand it as the next step upon coming to know, otherwise the entire path of recognizing what one sees is simply a dead end. The conduit of an object always imparts a portion of themselves into their communication of it: ideas and objects exist as externalities, but our internalization of them as to come to know and understand them, and then the communication of that internalization to others, will always end up being the expression of the object via the unique expression of one’s body. This is not to say that we are incorrectly viewing something and expressing that incomplete experience, but that, after coming to know the truth, we internalize that truth in such a way that it becomes part of us and is expressed through us.

Therefore, if the score provides the key to attaining the right vision, and thus, proper knowledge of the object, sound, then the role of the performer is to engage with that object as to not only express it, but express themselves through their innate expression of that object.

I prefer to illustrate this tripartite relationship of sound, composer, and performer in the context of pottery, for crafts are the few forms of art in which the experience is not one of one separated into an “maker-perceiver” relationship, but totally built upon an active engagement in each role. This is thanks to the three ways in which the potter presents his or herself in the act of making pottery:

One expresses oneself in working with clay; one allows the pot to

express itself in the way they accent the natural qualities of the clay; one willingly allows for the user to do as they wish with the pot; thus, one retains the three expressions: one's own, that of the pot, and that of the user.

There are some interesting complications in pottery as an art due to this three way relationship. First, though the act of making is important, the potter is never making the work for the sake of making a work, but is instead bringing forth something through the work. Most, if not all, traditional potters state that the work is not complete until it is used, and certain schools of thought will argue that it will only gain its final form through use. The pot, though it is beautiful, is not an art object, but a utility that happens to be valued artistically, and a potter might not necessarily fuss over their work as if it were a painting or sculpture. Much of what goes into the pot is the tradework, and the majority of the work the potter does is essentially working with form and shape, which, though the foundation of art, do not constitute art in itself. In fact, the most recognized part of the art of pottery, the glazed result, is more often than not something beyond the potter's control, be it the clay itself or pure chance; indeed, the pot is given a shape by the potter, but is birthed through actions outside of the potter's, according to the varied results of mineral composition and, in traditional wood kilns, often uncontrollable firing techniques. Thus, what makes pottery art in our eyes is not simply the skill of the artisan, as this can only guide him toward an understanding of what is possible; instead, it is the result of that which is outside of his control, much more than of the pot itself than his own work.

So, it might be said that the potter and the pot are *both* the author, and it is their union that makes a work of art, or rather, something meaningful. The potter instills in the pot not only his formal and theoretical skill in shape and glaze, respectively, but also his ethical and social concerns: all that he believes is placed into the pot because it is formed by his body, so he expresses himself through the pot, imprinting himself into the clay, after which is the role of the pot to convey not only itself, but also those intentions.

Yet, despite all the stress placed upon the skill of the potter and the character of the clay, the user maintains the most important role in the relationship, as, again, they, in using the pot, finish it. The user is an elevated form of the observer, one who watches but does not interfere with the process of creation or has any role in the purpose of the final art object. Think of the viewer of a painting: what they see is the result of the painter engaging with the object and expressing their

knowledge of it. The work is complete even if it is never put on display because the purpose of the act of painting is to paint, the display is secondary to the impetus. Pottery does not naturally follow this distinction: there is no audience or passive observer, for participation in each situation is integral. This is what leads to the expression of the user, for they decide how to best use the pot. The potter dictates shape, and the pot itself the colors and patterns, but neither a certain manner of use; therefore, the way the user best makes use of the pot becomes their engagement with the object as it expresses itself as well as personal self-expression.

In reflecting on this in my own life and practice, I found that I slowly lost interest in the audience as an observant body, and soon discovered the denial of it a necessity in extending the tradition of Catholic liturgical chant—something that has become all the more plausible to me following the examples of the twenty century gagaku, as well as the music of Isang Yun and Chou Wen-Chung. In attempting to push forth the unique qualities found in liturgical chant as an expressive, not a technical, language, it seemed that the annihilation of the audience through total ritual, as in liturgy, especially in a monastic setting, had a similarity to the denial of observer in favor of user in the rhetoric of the *mingei* and British studio pottery movements (and, by extension, Warren MacKenzie's transplantation of that idea to Minnesota). In order for something to truly be meaningful, it must be experienced not only in a meaningful manner, but also directly through that state of grace in the act of making music, that connection to something beyond a keyboard or ink on paper—the medieval psalter is a beautiful object, but we must admit that it is without purpose in the museum. Pottery does so beyond the appearance of the pot: it can be beautiful, but if it is not used, then it is without meaning.

These three, when understood together in the context of music, as well as my prior statements, mean that humanistic composition requires three truths:

That it expresses the object itself, as it expresses itself; that it expresses the composer's engagement with the object; and, that it allows for the user to engage with the object and the composer's engagement with the object in such a way that they express their own innate physicality

It could be said that I have consciously worked, at a technical level, in the great precedent of the *Missa Cuiusvis Toni* for the very purpose of highlighting the possibility that perhaps our constructions of what something is might not always be the answer to what it might be. In

leaving the content totally open and only providing a contour or line, Ockeghem makes the case for, having experienced the object as it expresses itself, giving the performer not the exact experience he had, but the possibility to have that experience *in any possible way*, validating the unified nature of sound as one thing with many qualities. Ockeghem confirms the existence of those three roles in this work: his own experience in composition, the object itself in the contour as experienced without defined frequency qualities, and the experience of the performer in providing them the possibility to experience the object itself.

Ockeghem's influence no doubt had an affect on the short tradition of composition that allowed for the composer to be rendered as secondary or equal, not an absolute progenitor, to a work, and more as a companion or guide to finding *what is* in a sea of possibility, and still be taken seriously as a composer; yet, for a non-experimental composer it can be difficult to admit that it is not the purpose of the composer to express himself alone, but to create a space in which the sound naturally expresses itself, and one in which the performer has the freedom to, in engaging with that sound, find the inherent expression of their own body. In music, we have the intersection of three objects, all of which have strong, perceivable means of expression; the practical end for all of these is total self expression; the moral end is the manifestation of their equality.

# IV

Yet, what does all that mean without any sort of practical application of what is otherwise sentiment and rhetoric? I, of course, am not satisfied with the thought alone, but the way in which that thought can benefit a musical practice in a real, concrete manner.

We might find that my points, as always, leave me at a schismatic position with not only equal temperament, but also modern notational forms and the performance practices they engender. If I were to live in a time where the notation did not represent a specific tone, but a possible expression of one, then I might find it possible to rectify this fissure with the standard notational forms, but as I live in a time of overspecialization and needless complexity I do not wish to partake in anything that not only might go against my thought and ethic, but also something that could be totally misinterpreted as if something else.

Thus, I will explain my current notational ideas thus far and how I believe they are a correct response to the ethical dilemmas I face in taking up this philosophical position.

My music is primarily textual, and this for two reasons: first, I am influenced by Partch and the various branches of Christian chant, and therefore wish to work within a tradition of recitation; second, that the word is a perfect place for my ideas to take root in music, for, the word is both an object that expresses itself, but also an expression of the individual. A word has a physical, tonal quality, as all music must; a word combines the mind and the body into one in action, and is a total expression of the way in which that individual speaks; and, a word has a meaning in its expression by an individual that allows them to convey their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Thus, a word, more than any other sound, correctly solves the dilemma of both the engagement with the object as it expresses itself, as well as the unique expression of the individual that is the highest plateau of creative endeavour.

Moreover, the word allows for the elimination of time, an exterior force placed upon the sound. Instead of a metronomic beat exterior to the music, or a renaissance tactus that is interior to the music, the notion of the time for me becomes time as word: when there is word, there is time; where there is no word, there can be no determined time.

In each moment that one says a word, one finds the eternal present, and one is not focused on a metric relationship of beat one in comparison to beat two, of the differences of stress and rhythmic

delineation, but on the word that appears in one's mouth.

Each syllable represents possibly equivalent instances of rhythmic length: short and long (or, in other languages, unstressed and stressed), but in such a moment only those short or long syllables exist, undetermined by those before, and without effect upon those after; after all, one does not think of the rate of speaking while speaking, nor of what one has uttered before or after (we are more likely to think of the sentence as a present unit and not a strung together time series that can be atomized into phrases, words, and syllables, yes?).

It might be said that the idea of the length of a rhythm is not set, as if a quarter being exactly double an eighth, but rather that the notion of a short or long syllable is determined by the expression of that word and its tonal qualities, not qualities placed upon it by an exterior edict. These things happen in the moment they are born, spun into being, and thus they develop in their own manner.

Thus, there is no time (or, the exteriority of time keeping), but rather only the moment which is present (or, the eternal, highly internal, duration of the experience of now); however, perhaps it could be better expressed as Augustine put it:

And yet, Lord, we perceive intervals of times, and compare them, and say, some are shorter, and others longer. We measure also, how much longer or shorter this time is than that; and we answer, "This is double, or treble; and that, but once, or only just so much as that." But we measure times as they are passing, by perceiving them; but past, which now are not, or the future, which are not yet, who can measure? unless a man shall presume to say, that can be measured, which is not. When then time is passing, it may be perceived and measured; but when it is past, it cannot, because it is not.

*(Augustine, Book XI)*

The role of this eternal, unmeasurable present is intrinsic to the melisma, which, lacking rhythmic truth, exists in a point beyond time—a total present unit—wherein the expression of the melisma is only determined by the tone itself and it is up to the expression of the performer to grant those notes a physicality that they otherwise do not convey as they are. Thus, the object, having been identified and

absorbed, comes to determine the expression of the performer. It is not the performer that necessarily chooses their path, but that the knowledge of the object pushes the performer to react, just as the physicality of the word places itself into the mouth of the speaker.

This having been said, the notation of these ideas is very important, for it must deny the will of the composer that forces its own subjective view upon the object. Therefore, I use neumes which simply represent the rhythmic quality of short or long, the meaning of which is derived from the word or action applied to the neume. So you have in the music for voice alone a universe in which the speed and rate are always the word, and the expression of it. Thus we do not place any of our own ideas upon it, but rather it comes through, as it is.

I like to think of this as being ultra-idiomatic, and that all the music that I will come to write at one point (as I slowly begin to make sense of my final goal through each composition) will reflect only the idiomatic duality of musical expression: that the two things that express themselves in music are the object in sound and the expression of that object through a body. The object in the sound is much simpler in its idiomatic nature, for it is nothing more than a vibration at any rate, but it is much more difficult to grab hold of and connect to the idiomatic nature of the body that expresses the sound, for one can always force their own notion of what something should sound like upon the expressive body, and therefore deny the way in which it expresses itself as it is.

The same dilemma exists in instrumental music, for it is absolutely true that instruments, like bodies, possess certain naturally occurring, idiomatic particularities that alter the way in which one approaches them. From the conundrum of the tuning of open strings to the ways in which we lay out the keyboard, we are dealing with bodies that gravitate towards certain innate qualities. Just as the voice expresses the unique quality of one's body, how it is formed, in all its boons and flaws, so too would a flute made of bone express a particular set of qualities that alter how we engage with it. Notation to a certain point had glanced over these qualities, and often those who composed music for strings on keyboards or for keyboard with the voice seemed to be distant from the innate qualities of these things in such a way that when a composer did compose idiomatically then it would be a cause for great celebration.

In instrumental music we must deal with the complication that what the voice retains the instrument lacks, and we must come to terms with the inability for this music to have those definite traits found in the voice. To come to that we must first ask, what are some

of the essential traits of instruments? It could be said that a tone played on an instrument carries only two qualities: the possible sound and its eventual decay. Just as tone and rhythm are the primary traits of word that alter how we experience the object, so too are these to something such as the vibrating string. The voice can act as if a string or a pipe as long as it can sustain vocalise, but the instrument cannot act as if a voice, for it cannot express word, and thus it cannot express rhythm. And it is important to identify one of these traits, vocalise in the voice, as idiomatic, and the other, word in the instrument, as forced; indeed, one can spit and scream into a flute, but the body of the flute cannot innately express those things, rather, one is using the flute as if a ventriloquist, throwing one's own idiomatic actions into the it, denying it its voice and subjugating it to one's own.

Thus, if I come to acknowledge that rhythm is inherent to word, and word is inherent to the human body, then that must mean in some sense that rhythm might be an expression of our bodies; moreover, because a heartbeat, a *tactus*, always exists, where there may be no word, the heart will prove sufficient in begetting a rhythmic quality similar to what syllables can convey. This reveals to us that instruments, because they possess no idiomatic rhythmic qualities, no syllabic length or beating of a heart, have those qualities placed upon them in action. Where there is no word that requires us to identify its proper expression (tone, speed, length, etc.), we express only ourselves (heartbeat) and the object (tone); yet, if the tone does not express rhythm whatsoever in the object that determines it, e.g. string, but only a rhythm placed upon it by an exterior determination, e.g. word or heartbeat, then we cannot morally place such a thing upon an object such as a string or a flute.

Why should an oboe speak? Why should a violin play the short and long rhythms of the voice? Why should a beat determine the time of anything other than the body that it inherently regulates?

This last question also provides a dilemma, for we are so inclined to measure music according to exterior beating that to do the opposite is mad. Yet, my point is that the beat of a body equal to another (again, equal in the sense that all objects express themselves and are therefore totally equal despite how they appear) cannot force itself upon another as to regulate it differently than its own innate beat or lack thereof. In the Renaissance *tactus* one has an otherworldly pulse, beyond man, in God, which holds up the heavens and thus determines the structural grids of all things. This philosophy is valid where the former is not because it deals in the metaphysical qualities of a being above all these objects that are equal. And this manner of organizing time is intrinsic to a society where one

understands the permeating reality of God as that prime mover that puts all things into motion, and thus has ordered everything as to be in its perfect place. A strong, immovable beat is of importance to such a world, but in a society in which there is no agreed fundamental concept of such a thing, there is no opportunity for there to be an exterior pulse according to which all things align to. We have the metronome, but it, being made by man, does not represent a power higher, but beats for the sake of expressing itself (though only according to how we choose to allow it to express itself), which we then might choose to align ourselves to. So an object that is not only within the terrestrial world, as well as one made by man as to be subservient, to have its beat determined by its user, as opposed to expressing itself in the manner it must, despite the wishes of the perceiver.

So when one has a metronome, an object that is not exterior as God is, then one cannot say that such an object's pulse is the beat to which all other objects should conform, for, if pulse or beat is physical, not metaphysical, then its existence must be determined by its own self, and if its own self beats differently than another body, neither can force themselves upon one another, for their equality would be jeopardized; just so, the heartbeat of one body cannot sway that of another, and I cannot superimpose that pulse or beat to an object (or in this case a tone), because I cannot argue that my or any other interior pulse, or at least the time I express in counting, can become exterior and overcome the pulse of another; moreover, one could say that it is impossible to recognize the pulse of a tone because it will not externalise it, just as we do not obviously externalise the pulse of our own body.

It must be then so that because the composer is, despite the weight we give him, not a higher power, but another object that witnesses the expression of objects and conveys it so that other objects might experience such an object, that he, hopefully having experienced the object as it expresses itself, points to us the interior pulse of the object as to make that pulse exterior and reveal it to us.

If this be so, then how should things act? If he who first experiences the object is to convey it, he must convey it as it is, i.e. idiomatically. It is true then that the voice possesses rhythm and tone, and such is easily expressed and understood, but for the instrument without the rhythmic quality of syllabic length and stress, what can be done? If we set ourselves aside and view the object as it expresses itself, what is the idiomatic expression of the instrument? Attack and decay?

If we take the example of a string—to pluck it and allow it to

vibrate until it stops of its own accord, so that it properly reflects its own expression as a string—we must place as little of our own opinions on it as possible and highlight its essential nature. Think too of the keyboard: to depress a key allows for the string to vibrate as to produce a tone, but to let go of the key is to end it early, to deny it; indeed, in order to allow the string to express itself as a vibrating body is to allow it to cease its own vibration, give it the choice to determine its own end, not force our own choice of such upon it.

This reflection on the ways in which the object expresses itself allows for us to write not simply idiomatic music or music at all, but convey it as it expresses itself. So when I think of the conundrum of the instrumental, or non-word based, practice, the solution to the inability to convey the equivalent short and long rhythms that voice can in syllabic expression is to seek its idiomatic manner of decay: the plucked string is always long, as it dies away slowly, but the bowed string or winds are always short, as unless they are sustained their decay rarely lingers. All instruments could be placed within the same short and long paradigm of syllabic stress, with the length always being determined according to its own rate of decay so that short or long are not determined according to another short or long, but only measured against itself.

One might think that this would lead to highly mismatched music, for if in a set of instruments there are mixed levels of decay from the immediate stop of winds to the dying away of strings, then how are things to be lined up, especially if we cannot quantify and define length as divisions of a breve into equal parts?

Yet, and this is absolutely necessary, an understanding of the objects as they are, as they express themselves to be, and a correct conveyance of those to the performer so they can identify them, requires us to accept the mismatched, entirely relative durational qualities of short and long as the proper expression of the object! Remember, as stated before, rhythmically short and long are only as short and long as they are in that instance, not in relationship to any other short and long. The question of something being aligned or matched is that of human aesthetics, after all, as the saying goes, there are no straight lines in nature. We order things and seek out harmonies and concords, that is simply in our nature, and those things are all wonderful, but they are a cropped image of what actually is, and the longer we view that image and the less we seek the real thing, the more it is that the image *is* the real thing and the real thing itself becomes, for aesthetic or practical reasons, insufficient.

If one does not have the background of hearing the cacophony in nature, then one is less likely to identify non-aligned rhythms as

anything other than perverse, and it is perhaps because we have grown accustomed to such a cacophony being undesirable due to the influence of modern urban life that we tend to view a natural cacophony as impossible, and so it is perhaps of value to go out to the object, as I suggest, and take it in itself, as it is, as well as it is in relationship to all other things, in order to reveal to others this thing that exists beyond our beliefs, opinions, and suppositions.

And that sentiment is why I called this "A Music *within* Morality," because unlike the standard idea of the morality being within the music, that the music itself is the enabler of moral attitude, it is the moral attitude, the right view and correct understanding of the world, that leads to the sublime realization of all things as they are, to be experienced and enjoyed; moreover, it is also to not deny the musical expression of others, but rather to highlight the expression of those things that are often not identified. There is a place in our lives for all kinds of music, whether it be popular or art, traditional or contemporary, but there must also be a place in our lives for the work of those such as Tenney and Partch, for there are really two kinds of music: that which is honest and that which is dishonest, and just as there is not enough clay for bad pottery, there is not enough time for dishonest music.

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