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Nietzsche, Dionysus, and the Ontology of Music

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Music, Science, and the Interpretation of Existence

Nietzsche is among a handful of philosophers for whom music was a powerful force and an abiding influence. A pianist, improviser, and composer, he contemplated a career in music before abandoning it to pursue philology and philosophy. His stormy relationship with Richard Wagner – the man and his music – found ample expression in Nietzsche’s philosophical writing, from his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, to one of his last, *The Case of Wagner*. And remarks on the music of Beethoven, Bizet, Berlioz, Bach, Handel, Mozart, Schumann, and others are sprinkled throughout Nietzsche’s corpus. Late in his career, Nietzsche bluntly concluded: “Without music, life would be an error” (*TI*, “Maxims and Barbs,” 33).

But just what is music for Nietzsche? And what is it about music that he found so important and philosophically compelling? In a telling passage, he explains how one might wrongly answer these questions and, in so doing, suggests the route to a more adequate response. Entitled “‘Science’ as Prejudice,” section 373 of *The Gay Science* is framed by the claim that “scholars, insofar as they belong to the spiritual middle class, can never catch sight of the really great problems and question marks.” Among such scholars, one particular group is singled out for its intellectual inadequacy:

[S]o many materialistic natural scientists rest content nowadays [with] the faith in a world that is supposed to have its equivalent and its measure in human thought and human valuations – a “world of truth” that can be mastered completely and forever with the aid of our square little reason. What? Do we really want to permit existence to be degraded for us like this – reduced to a mere exercise for a calculator and an indoor diversion for mathematicians? Above all, one should not wish to divest existence of its *rich ambiguity*: that is a dictate of *good taste*, gentlemen, the taste of reverence for everything that lies beyond your horizon. That the only justifiable interpretation of the world should be one in which *you* are justified because one can continue to work and do research scientifically in *your* sense (you really mean, *mechanistically*?) – an interpretation that permits counting, calculating, weighing, seeing, and touching, and nothing more – that is a crudity and naivety, assuming that it is not a mental illness, an idiocy. Would it not be rather probable that, conversely, precisely the most superficial and external aspect of existence – what is most apparent, its skin and sensualization – would be grasped first

– and might even be the only thing that allowed itself to be grasped? A “scientific” interpretation of the world, as you understand it, might therefore still be one of the *most stupid* of all possible understandings of the world, meaning that it would be one of the poorest in meaning. This thought is intended for the ears and consciences of our mechanists who nowadays like to pass as philosophers and insist that mechanics is the doctrine of the first and last laws on which all existence must be based as on a ground floor. But an essentially mechanical world would be an essentially *meaningless* world. Assuming that one estimated the *value* of a piece of music according to how much of it could be counted, calculated, and expressed in formulas: how absurd would such a “scientific” estimation of music be! What would one have comprehended, understood, grasped of it? Nothing, really nothing of what is “music” in it!

The musical example turns up at the end of this passage in what might seem to be a passing illustration of the main argument against reductionist, mechanistic science. Yet I think that the example is more than incidental to the passage and that, if we read it carefully, it will begin to open up not only Nietzsche’s conception of music but, indeed, his ontology more generally.

The central contrast laid out in the passage is one of horizons, perspectives, and interpretations. The text focuses on “scholars” such as “materialistic natural scientists” who are criticized for being constitutionally myopic, superficial, and reductionist in their interpretations of the world and of existence. These scientists inhabit a merely “human” horizon, according to which what exists is strictly what is sensible and discrete, what can be grasped and quantified by empirical science. Nietzsche calls this conception of the world “mechanistic” insofar as it reduces the world to the causal interactions of bounded entities or parts. He scoffs at the idea that mechanistic science adequately describes the way the world is. The musical example is aimed at revealing the inadequacy of such an interpretation, for no one who truly understands music would allow that a purely mathematical or physical interpretation would grasp its essential meaning.

What would be left out by such an interpretation? In a brief analysis of the passage, Brian Leiter offers this reply:

[I]t is a fatal problem for materialistic accounts that they omit the *qualitative* or *phenomenological* aspect of experience. e.g., what it is like to *experience* a piece of music as *beautiful*. It hardly seems plausible, though, that the beauty of a late Beethoven quartet is expressible solely in physical or mechanical terms – and yet it is beautiful nonetheless. (Leiter 2002: 25)

Leiter goes for the traditional philosophical alternatives, contrasting the quantitative with the qualitative, the physical with the phenomenal, the objective with the subjective. But I think this reading misses the mark. For the distinctions Nietzsche offers, in the passage quoted above and elsewhere, are different ones. To see this, we need to read the musical example in the context of the key contrast presented in the passage as a whole: the contrast between various ways of interpreting “the world” or “existence.”

Nietzsche is blunt, direct, and explicit in his criticisms of the “scholarly” and “scientific” worldview. But he is more elusive (and allusive) about the alternative in

relationship to which this worldview is found wanting. Employing a signature rhetorical strategy, he directs his hints at a select audience, one presumably comprising the “spiritual upper class,” a rare breed of like-minded philosophers capable of a more viable world-interpretation. What are the traits of such an interpretation? The passage suggests that it would surpass the narrow, limited, human horizon. To such an overhuman, *übermenschlich*,¹ perspective, the world would reveal itself as ambiguous. Ontologically, Nietzsche continues, this interpretation would not be superficial but profound, countenancing entities other than the discrete, measurable objects of ordinary sense experience. The musical example presented at the end of the section links the human/overhuman opposition with another key Nietzschean opposition, that between science and art, and alludes to an argument Nietzsche develops more fully elsewhere: namely that the aesthetic interpretation of the world is more viable than the scientific interpretation.² Indeed, contrary to Leiter’s commonsense reading of the musical example, I think it ought to be read as making a deep ontological claim. It is significant that the musical example appears as the coda to a passage that concerns competing ways of interpreting the world, for I think Nietzsche is suggesting that music is a guide to both hermeneutics and ontology, to world-interpretation and to the way the world is.

As such, the passage leads us back to *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which Nietzsche’s philological argument concerning the origins of Greek tragedy rests on an ontological argument (derived from Schopenhauer) according to which music models the “essence of nature” (BT 2). From the perspective of Nietzsche’s mature work, *The Birth of Tragedy* is often seen as a problematic text. Its rich philological insights notwithstanding, the text seems to endorse a Kantian–Schopenhauerian dualism of appearance and thing-in-itself that, in his mature work, Nietzsche virulently repudiates. *The Birth of Tragedy* also notoriously celebrates the renewal of tragic culture in the music of Richard Wagner, whom Nietzsche would later consider his “antipode” (NCW, preface, “We Antipodes”). The mature Nietzsche himself often criticizes *The Birth of Tragedy* on these counts; yet he does not reject it, and neither should we. Indeed, in a retrospective preface added in 1886, Nietzsche criticizes the language and conceptual tools employed in the book, but not its core insights. “How I regret now,” he writes,

that in those days I still lacked the courage (or immodesty?) to permit myself in every way an individual language of my own for such individual views and hazards – and that instead I tried laboriously to express by means of Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas strange and new valuations which were basically at odds with Kant’s and Schopenhauer’s spirit and taste! [. . .] To be sure, apart from all the hasty hopes and faulty applications to the present with which I spoiled my first book, there still remains the great Dionysian question mark I raised – regarding music as well: what would music have to be like that would no longer be of romantic origin, like German music – but *Dionysian*? (BT, “Self-Criticism,” 6)

The later Nietzsche may disown some youthful formulations and aesthetic evaluations; but arguments and attitudes central to *The Birth of Tragedy* remain important to Nietzsche throughout his career. He continues to use the term “Dionysian” to name his naturalist and anti-metaphysical³ ontology and epistemology; indeed, that term

becomes particularly important in his final books. Nietzsche also continues to celebrate the tragic, to criticize Socrates and Socratism, to insist on the superiority of aesthetic to scientific world-interpretation, etc. For our purposes, there is one other crucial reason why *The Birth of Tragedy* remains a key text: it presents Nietzsche's most sustained consideration of music and of musical ontology in particular.

I want, then, to return to *The Birth of Tragedy* in an effort to recover this musical ontology and its relationship with ontology more generally. To unpack Nietzsche's musical ontology, we will need to unpack the notion of the Dionysian, with which, in *The Birth of Tragedy* (and beyond), music is so closely associated. Heeding Nietzsche's own remarks, I will try to read this text in light of his mature work. Along the way, I will also draw upon the work of a late twentieth-century Nietzschean, Gilles Deleuze, who, I think, provides distinctions and concepts that help us to see what is really at issue in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Dionysus and Apollo

Nietzsche contra Hegel, Kant, and Schopenhauer

The Birth of Tragedy is driven by the famous contrast between Apollo and Dionysus, "the two art deities of the Greeks," and by the "tremendous opposition, in origin and aims, between the Apollonian art of sculpture and the nonimagistic Dionysian art of music" (BT 1). Nietzsche aims to show that Attic tragedy represents the truce between, and the union of, Dionysus and Apollo, and that it also resolves an assortment of other oppositions in Greek theology, art, culture, psychology, and metaphysics that can be keyed to the Dionysian/Apollonian opposition: the Titans/the Olympians, lyric poetry/epic poetry, the Asiatic-barbarian/the Hellenic, music/sculpture, intoxication/dreams, excess/measure, unity/individuation, pain/pleasure, etc.

It is this fondness for oppositions and their dialectical resolutions that prompted Nietzsche to say, in *Ecce Homo*, that *The Birth of Tragedy* "smells offensively Hegelian" (EH, "BT," 1). Yet, Nietzsche's assessment notwithstanding, the central opposition between Dionysus and Apollo is surely not properly dialectical. Were it so, the Dionysian would be sublated in a higher form. But tragedy does no such thing. Rather, it thoroughly affirms the Dionysian, which is made sensible through Apollonian figures and forms. "[W]e must understand Greek tragedy," Nietzsche writes, "as the Dionysian chorus which ever anew discharges itself in an Apollonian world of images [. . .] Thus the drama is the Apollonian embodiment of Dionysian insights and effects" (BT 8). "In the total effect of tragedy," he writes later in the text, "the Dionysian predominates" (BT 21). Moreover, the overarching argument of *The Birth of Tragedy* is that, in spite of its historical eclipse, tragic pessimism is fundamentally superior to the optimism and progressivism of Socratic dialectics, of which the Hegelian dialectic is clearly a late flowering.

Dionysus and Apollo, then, ought not to be figured as a Hegelian thesis and antithesis.⁴ Nor ought they to be figured as Kantian noumena and phenomena or thing-in-itself and appearance. Of course, Nietzsche explicitly adopts this Kantian terminology in his presentation of the Dionysian/Apollonian pair. But we should

remember and take heed of Nietzsche's remark that, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he "tried laboriously to express by means of Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas strange and new valuations which were basically at odds with Kant's and Schopenhauer's spirit and taste." Derived from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's usage of the appearance/thing-in-itself dichotomy is twice removed from Kant. Indeed, Schopenhauer's own adoption of the dichotomy is peculiarly un-Kantian. Kant's distinction draws the line between nature and reason, between what can be empirically experienced and what, beyond nature and experience, can be rationally thought. Schopenhauer's thing-in-itself, however, is not an item (or domain) of thought or reason but one of direct physical experience. "Thus it happens to everyone," writes Schopenhauer, "that the thing-in-itself is known immediately in so far as it appears as his own body, and only mediately in so far as it is objectified in the other objects of perception" (Schopenhauer 1969: 19). In place of Kant's distinction between experience and thought, Schopenhauer marks a difference between two different kinds of experience or knowledge: the experience of the object and the experience of the subject, knowledge of the outside and knowledge from the inside, extension and intension. Kant's aim is ultimately to argue for the existence of a moral and theological realm that is super-natural, apart from the realm of nature and experience – "to deny *knowledge*, in order to make room for *faith*," as he famously put it (Kant 1929: 29). Schopenhauer has no such moral or theological designs and, indeed, openly scoffs at Kant's ethics and theology (Schopenhauer 1965: ch. 2).

Schopenhauer, then, goes some way toward naturalizing Kant's distinction between appearance and thing-in-itself. Yet, in Schopenhauer's hands, this distinction remains curiously and problematically metaphysical insofar as he accepts Kant's description of the thing-in-itself as outside of space and time. This last vestige of metaphysical dualism disappears from Nietzsche's account. On that account, the Apollonian and the Dionysian (which play, respectively, the roles of appearance and thing-in-itself in *The Birth of Tragedy*) are thoroughly immanent to nature. Indeed, before they are figures that describe human artifacts such as music, sculpture, and drama, the Apollonian and the Dionysian are natural forces, "artistic energies which burst forth from nature herself, *without the mediation of the human artist* – energies in which nature's art impulses are satisfied in the most immediate and direct way" (BT 2; cf. 4, 5, 6, 8). For Nietzsche, then, nature herself is an artist who forms individuals and dissolves them in turn; and art consists in the "imitation of nature" not insofar as it offers realistic representations of natural entities but insofar as it reiterates these "*art impulses of nature*" (BT 2). In affirming art and nature in the same breath, Nietzsche radically departs from Schopenhauer. For, in Schopenhauer's aesthetics (which, in many respects, follow Kant's), the role of art is to offer a temporary respite from the natural, phenomenal world, a "contemplation without interest" that disengages the will. On Nietzsche's account, however, art exists as a thorough affirmation of nature and nature's power. His celebration of art is, then, a celebration of nature and an affirmation of existence.

We need, then, to find a way of construing the Dionysian/Apollonian distinction that does not revert back to metaphysical, anti-naturalist distinctions – *ontological* distinctions between a "true" and an "apparent" world or *epistemological* distinctions between an unknowable given and ordinary experience or knowledge. To be sure, the

Kantian–Schopenhauerian language Nietzsche often employs in *The Birth of Tragedy* can be read as endorsing these metaphysical dualisms. Yet this does not sit well with Nietzsche’s insistence that the Dionysian and the Apollonian are “forces of nature.” Nor does it square with his later assessment of *The Birth of Tragedy* as, ultimately, anti-Schopenhauerian and anti-Kantian, or with his claim that, in this text, “there is only one world” and “[t]he antithesis of a real and an apparent world is lacking” (WP 853). I want to suggest, then, that we read the Dionysian/Apollonian opposition in terms of a thoroughly naturalist opposition that plays a central role in Nietzsche’s later writing: namely, the opposition between becoming and being. Doing so will not only shed light on the central opposition in *The Birth of Tragedy*; it will also contribute to the larger task of this essay: to grasp the notion of music that Nietzsche so closely associates with the Dionysian, and to understand the meaning of music and existence hinted at in GS §373.

Becoming and being

We know that the Dionysian and the Apollonian are “art impulses of nature,” “artistic energies which burst forth from nature herself” (BT 2). But what are the characteristics of these natural impulses (*Triebe*) and energies (*Mächte*)? The Apollonian affirms the *principium individuationis*, “the delimiting of the boundaries of the individual, *measure* in the Hellenic sense” (BT 4). The Dionysian, by contrast, affirms “the mysterious primordial unity” (BT 1 and *passim*), “the shattering of the individual and his fusion with primal being” (BT 8). The Apollonian is associated with “moderation” and “restraint,” the Dionysian with “excess” (BT 4, 21). The Apollonian is concerned with pleasure and the production of beautiful semblance, while the Dionysian is fraught with “terror,” “blissful ecstasy,” “pain and contradiction” (BT 1, 5 and *passim*). The Apollonian celebrates the human artist and hero, while the Dionysian celebrates the individual artist’s dissolution into nature, which Nietzsche calls the “primordial artist of the world” (BT 5; cf. 1, 8). The Apollonian is a gallery of “appearances,” “images,” and “illusions,” while the Dionysian consists in the perpetual creation and destruction of appearances. “In Dionysian art and its tragic symbolism,” Nietzsche writes, “nature cries to us with its true, undissembled voice: ‘Be as I am! Amid the ceaseless flux of appearances, I am the eternally creative primordial mother, eternally impelling to existence, eternally finding satisfaction in this change of appearances!’” (BT 16, cf. 8; WP 1050).

What Nietzsche is offering in these poetic descriptions is an ontology: an account of what there is, of the genesis of individuals from pre-individual forces and materials. This account is strikingly similar to accounts he offers in his later work, where he contrasts becoming with being(s) and explains the genesis of the latter from the former.⁵ In *Twilight of the Idols*, for instance, Nietzsche insists on the reality of “alteration,” “change,” and “becoming,” noting that only a “prejudice of reason forces us to posit unity,⁶ identity, permanence, substance, cause, thinghood [and] being” (TI, “Reason’ in Philosophy,” 5; cf. GS 110, 112, 121). A few pages earlier, Nietzsche calls unity, thinghood, substance, and permanence “lies,” praising Heraclitus “for his assertion that being is an empty fiction,” and praising the senses for telling the truth by showing “becoming, passing away, and change.” Indeed, assessing *The Birth of Tragedy* in *Ecce*

Homo, Nietzsche explicitly connects the Dionysian with Heraclitean becoming, commenting that, in Heraclitus, one finds an “affirmation of passing away *and destroying*, which is the decisive feature of a Dionysian philosophy; saying Yes to opposition and war; *becoming*, along with a repudiation of the very concept of *being*” (*EH*, “BT,” 3).

It might be objected that, despite superficial similarities between Nietzsche’s earlier contrast of the Dionysian with the Apollonian and his later contrast of becoming with being, the latter is resolutely anti-dualist – insisting that there is only one world: the world of becoming – while the former is dualist – affirming the existence of two worlds: the world of appearance and the world of the thing-in-itself. Moreover, in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche claims that “the ‘apparent’ world” is “the only one” (*TI*, “‘Reason’ in Philosophy,” 2), while, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he asserts that Apollonian “appearance” is “illusory” and that there is a deeper, true realm of things-in-themselves. There is really no contradiction here. Again, the Dionysian/Apollonian opposition endorses no dualism. Rather, it affirms a basic ontology of becoming – the Dionysian as an incessant process of creation and destruction, a “powerful unity” that precedes and exceeds individuals – and explains how individuals, subjects, and objects come to be articulated as such by a series of “illusions” – the dream world of the Apollonian. Moreover, though it might seem that *Twilight of the Idols* praises appearance as “true” while *The Birth of Tragedy* deems it a realm of “illusion,” what is affirmed in both texts is “the ceaseless flux of appearances,” and the force of becoming that “eternally impel[s] to existence, eternally find[s] satisfaction in this change of appearances” (*BT* 16).

Admittedly, Nietzsche’s rather critical language of “lie” and “prejudice” in *Twilight* contrasts sharply with his praise of Apollonian “illusion” in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Yet this is a question of rhetorical context and interpretive perspective. In *Twilight*, Nietzsche is offering a criticism of rationalism, which wrongfully subordinates becoming to being. Elsewhere, however, the later Nietzsche praises the will to deception, error, lies, prejudice, and illusion much in the manner of *The Birth of Tragedy*: as an aesthetic impulse. In the *Genealogy of Morals*, for example, he endorses art as the anti-ascetic discourse *par excellence* – “art, in which precisely the *lie* is sanctified and the *will to deception* has a good conscience” (*GM* III. 25; cf. *GS* 107). Similarly, in his 1886 preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche repeats his affirmation of life, noting that “all of life is based on semblance, art, deception, points of view, and the necessity of perspectives and error” (*BT*, “Self-Criticism,” 5; cf. *GS* 344, *BGE* 4). This dual attitude toward the deceptions and illusions of being is helpfully explained by another passage, *Gay Science* 370. In this passage, Nietzsche accounts for the way in which, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he mistook Wagner’s and Schopenhauer’s romanticism for a tragic sensibility. He explains that “the desire to fix, to eternalize, the desire for *being*” (and, presumably also, the desire for lies and illusions) is ambiguous.

It can be prompted, first, by gratitude and love; art with this origin will always be an art of apotheosis [. . .] But it can also be the tyrannic will of one who suffers deeply, who struggles, is tormented, and would like to turn what is most personal, singular, and narrow, a real idiosyncrasy of his suffering, into a binding law and compulsion – one who, as it were, revenges himself on all things by forcing his own image, the image of his torture, on them, branding them with it.

In ontological and moral terms, the desire for art, illusion, and being can be prompted by an affirmation of the creative, procreative power of nature's becoming or by a rejection of it, an attempt to erect another, better world of being. Though *The Birth of Tragedy* essentially endorses the former view, Nietzsche tells us, it mistakenly enlists the forces of Schopenhauer and Wagner, who endorse the latter view.

Nietzsche's ambiguous attitude toward empiricism and sense experience also comes into play here and requires some explanation. In *Twilight*, he has nothing but praise for sense experience. "[T]he senses [. . .] do not lie at all," he writes.

What we *make* of their testimony, that alone introduces lies; for example, the lie of unity, the lie of thinghood, of substance, of permanence. "Reason" is the cause of our falsification of the testimony of the senses. Insofar as the senses show becoming, passing away, and change, they do not lie [. . .] Today we possess science precisely to the extent to which we have decided to accept the testimony of the senses [. . .] The rest is miscarriage and not-yet-science – in other words, metaphysics, theology, psychology, epistemology. (*TI*, "'Reason' in Philosophy," 2–3)

In other passages, however, for example GS 373 (the passage cited at the outset), Nietzsche criticizes the basic empiricism of materialistic natural science, which "permits counting, calculating, weighing, seeing, and touching, and nothing more," and, as such, grasps only "the most superficial and external aspect of existence – what is most apparent, its skin and sensualization" (GS 373). Similarly, in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche scoffs at "the canon of truth of eternally popular sensualism," and praises "the Platonic way of thinking," which "consisted precisely in *resistance* to obvious sense evidence" (BGE 14). Elsewhere I have offered an account of the epistemological reasons for Nietzsche's complex attitude toward empiricism (Cox 1999: 86–101). But there are ontological reasons as well. Nietzsche takes rationalism to task for criticizing the deceptiveness of the senses, which reveal a world in constant flux, an ever-changing array of appearances (*TI*, "'Reason' in Philosophy," 1). A thoroughgoing naturalist, Nietzsche comes to the defense of empiricism and the world of becoming and appearance to which it bears witness (*TI*, "'Reason' in Philosophy," 2–3). Yet Nietzsche is also aware that everyday sense experience is imbued with the "erroneous articles of faith" produced by the intellect over the course of its evolutionary history: namely, the illusions "that there are enduring things; that there are equal things; that there are things, substances, bodies; that a thing is what it appears to be [. . .]," etc. "[S]ense perception and every kind of sensation," he notes, has "worked with those basic errors which ha[ve] been incorporated since time immemorial" (GS 110).

And it is for this reason that Nietzsche resists crude empiricism and positivism. Instead, he endorses what, following Gilles Deleuze, we might call a "transcendental empiricism," which looks to becoming as the very condition of possibility for being, that is, for those entities that everyday sense experience takes as given: things, subjects, objects, causes, effects, etc. (see Deleuze 1994: 56–7, 143–4; 2001: 25–33). For Nietzsche and Deleuze, what is real is not being and identity but becoming and difference: the differential forces that drive the becoming and change that are characteristic of the natural world.⁷ For Nietzsche and Deleuze, the semblance of being (of things, subjects, objects, etc.) is produced by the coarseness of our senses, by slow speeds of

change that elude direct perception, or by the illusions of reason, consciousness, and language. “Cause and effect,” Nietzsche writes in *The Gay Science*:

such a duality probably never exists; in truth we are confronted by a continuum out of which we isolate a couple of pieces [. . .] there is an infinite number of processes that elude us. A consciousness that could see cause and effect as a continuum and a flux and not, as we do, in terms of an arbitrary division and dismemberment, would repudiate the concept of cause and effect and deny all conditionality. (GS 112)

In the *Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche reiterates this point of view, which places becoming and difference before being and identity:

A quantum of force is equivalent to a quantum of drive, will, effect – more, it is nothing other than precisely this very driving, willing, effecting, and only owing to the seduction of language (and of the fundamental errors of reason that are petrified in it) which conceives and misconceives all effects as conditioned by something that causes effects, by a “subject,” can it appear otherwise [. . .] there is no “being” behind doing, effecting, becoming; “the doer” is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything. (GM I. 13; cf. *TI*, “‘Reason’ in Philosophy,” 5)

The virtual and the actual

Becoming, then, is a realm of pre-individual, a-subjective, forces and processes that drive natural change. Insofar as it dissolves the boundaries between individuals and the distinction between subjects and objects, the early Nietzsche calls it a “primordial unity.” Yet this language is misleading, for it suggests a kind of undifferentiated, immobile mass, pool, or ether – a description that does not adequately characterize either the Dionysian or becoming. For the early Nietzsche, the Dionysian is “the eternal and original artistic power” (*BT* 25), “dissonance” (*BT* 17, 24–5), “struggle” (*BT* 16), “the contradiction at the heart of the world” (*BT* 9), a force associated with “excess” (*BT* 4), creation and destruction (*BT* 16, 8 and *passim*), “extravagant sexual licentiousness” and “savage natural instincts” (*BT* 2). Clearly, the Dionysian is a dynamic field characterized by forces, energies, and drives in tension with one another. The later Nietzsche qualifies his talk of “unity,” describing the Dionysian in terms of difference, tension, force, energy, and power. “And do you know what ‘the world’ is to me?” he asks in a note from 1885.

This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself; as a whole, of unalterable size, a household without expenses or losses, but likewise without increase or income; enclosed by “nothingness” as by a boundary; not something blurry or wasted, not something endlessly extended, but set in a definite space as a definite force, and not a space that might be “empty” here or there, but rather as force throughout, as a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and at the same time decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with tremendous years of recurrence, with an ebb and a flood of its forms; out of the simplest forms striving toward the most

complex, out of the stillest, most rigid, coldest forms toward the hottest, most turbulent, most self-contradictory, and then returning home to the simple out of this abundance, out of the play of contradictions back to the joy of concord, still affirming itself in this uniformity of its courses and its years, blessing itself as that which must return eternally, as a becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness: this, my *Dionysian* world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my “beyond good and evil,” without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal; without will, unless a ring feels good will toward itself – do you want a *name* for this world? A *solution* for all its riddles? A *light* for you, too, you best-concealed, strongest, most intrepid, most midnightly men – *This world is the will to power – and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are also this will to power – and nothing besides! (WP 1067)

The Dionysus of *The Birth of Tragedy* is indeed a precursor to the later Nietzsche’s most important ontological doctrines: becoming, will to power, and eternal recurrence. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche more soberly develops the notion of will to power as a play of drives and forces in a passage that helpfully contributes to our elucidation of the connections between Dionysus/Apollo and becoming/being.

Suppose nothing else were “given” as real except our world of desires and passions, and we could not get down, or up, to any other “reality” besides the reality of our drives [. . .]; is it not permitted to make the experiment and to ask whether this “given” would not be *sufficient* for also understanding on the basis of this kind of thing the so-called mechanistic (or “material”) world? I mean not as a deception, as “mere appearance,” an “idea” (in the sense of Berkeley and Schopenhauer) but as holding the same rank of reality as our affect – as a more primitive form of the world of affects in which everything still lies contained in a powerful unity before it undergoes ramifications and developments in the organic process [. . .] – as a kind of instinctive life [*Triebleben*] in which all organic functions are still synthetically intertwined along with self-regulation, assimilation, nourishment, excretion, and metabolism – as a *pre-form* of life [. . .] Suppose, finally, we succeeded in explaining our entire instinctive life as the development and ramification of *one* basic form of the will – namely, of the will to power, as *my* proposition has it; [. . .] then one would have gained the right to determine *all* efficient force univocally as – will to power. The world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its “intelligible character” – it would be “will to power” and nothing besides. – (BGE 36)

Here Nietzsche once again expresses his basic ontology in terms of a “powerful unity.” But this “unity” is now expressly a dynamic play of drives, affects, passions, and forces.⁸ Nietzsche is trying to construct an ontology in which forces, powers, movements, tensions, affects, and events precede the individual subjects and objects to which they are ordinarily attributed. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, he describes Apollonian individuals as temporary emissions (“image sparks”: *Bilderfunken*) from the Dionysian ferment. The later Nietzsche offers a similar account, describing subjects and objects as particular condensations and concretizations of forces and affects, particular instances and trajectories of will to power.

Wrongly pegged to the traditional metaphysical distinctions between noumena/phenomena, thing-in-itself/appearance, chaos/order, and content/form, Nietzsche’s oppositions between Dionysus/Apollo and becoming/being are more aptly characterized

by Deleuze's distinction between the virtual and the actual (Deleuze 1994: 208ff., 279; 2002: 148–52). Deleuze's distinction is meant to mark the difference between the realm of (actual) empirical subjects and objects, and the (virtual) flux of pre-individual, impersonal differences, becomings, forces, and affects that constitute these subjects and objects while also preceding and exceeding them. Deleuze often refers to the virtual as “transcendental” insofar as the processes and forces it encompasses (for example, geological pressures and movements, genetic codes and flows, relations of power or desire, etc.) are not given as such in actual, empirical experience. Yet he is careful to note that the “transcendental” status of the virtual implies no “transcendence,” nothing that transcends nature or matter. Rather, for Deleuze, there is only one plane of being and reality that he often calls “the plane of immanence,” which encompasses both the virtual and the actual, each of which is, for him, fully “real.” A variegated domain populated by forces in tension, the plane of immanence produces (or, in Deleuze's idiom, “actualizes” or “differentiates”) distinct entities through temporary condensations or contractions of forces and materials. The relative stability and durability of these entities can produce an “illusion of transcendence” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 73, 47). But, just as, for Nietzsche, being is an effect of becoming, so, for Deleuze, transcendence is an effect of immanence, and the actual made possible by the virtual.

Deleuze's notion of “the virtual” can help us in our appreciation of Nietzsche's configuration of the Dionysian. Indeed, Deleuze himself links the two concepts. The *virtual*, Deleuze tells us, is both distinct and obscure. It is distinct because it is composed of myriad “differential relations and singularities [that is, particular powers of becoming]”; yet the virtual is also obscure insofar as it is “not yet ‘distinguished,’ not yet differentiated [in actual entities].” By contrast, the *actual* is clear and confused, “clear because [virtual forces have been] distinguished or differentiated [in actual entities], and confused because it is clear, [that is, because the actual carries with it traces of the entire domain of the virtual from which it emerged and with which it corresponds].” “Distinctness-obscurity,” Deleuze continues, “is intoxication, the properly Dionysian Idea. Leibniz nearly encountered Dionysus at the sea shore or near the water mill. Perhaps Apollo, the clear-confused thinker, is needed in order to think the Ideas of Dionysus” (Deleuze 1994: 213–14).

In this characteristically dense and difficult passage, Deleuze draws a parallel between his conception of the virtual/the actual and Nietzsche's conception of Dionysus/Apollo. The Dionysian is the realm of the virtual, the “inchoate, intangible” (*BT* 5) flux of forces and energies that actualizes or differentiates itself in the Apollonian, whose “precision and clarity” (*BT* 10) must, according to Nietzsche's theory of tragedy, bear traces of its obscure origins in the Dionysian. At the end of the passage, Deleuze suitably relates the virtual and the Dionysian to a musical, or at least sonic, example: Leibniz's oft-repeated example of listening to a waterfall, a watermill, or the sea. Leibniz writes: “Each soul knows the infinite – knows all – but confusedly. It is like walking on the seashore and hearing the great noise of the sea: I hear the particular noises of each wave, of which the whole noise is composed, but without distinguishing them” (“Principles of Nature and Grace”: Leibniz 1989: 211).⁹ Like Nietzsche's Apollonian figures, the clear but confused experience of the seashore's white noise opens up for us the virtual domain of the Dionysian. And this felicitous example brings us back, finally, to music.

The Music of Dionysus

The Birth of Tragedy is centrally concerned with music. Its original title, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, announces this from the start. The book explains that tragedy emerged out of, and remains true to, the dithyramb: lyric song performed in the orgiastic worship of Dionysus, the Greek god of music. To the pre-Socratic Greeks, Dionysus expressed himself in music; and, Nietzsche argues, he does so to us moderns as well.

That said, Nietzsche has little specific to say about music – Greek or modern – and what in it discloses the Dionysian, tragic conception of life and its profound ontological insight. For the most part, Nietzsche simply repeats the general ontological claim that music expresses the primordial essence of things, and the claim that it is associated with the Dionysian half of the Dionysian/Apollonian duality. Here and there, Nietzsche makes some brief, though unhelpfully vague, attempts to concretize his claims about music. He describes pre-Dionysian, Homeric music as centered on “the wave and beat of rhythm, whose formative power was developed for the representation of Apollonian states,” and as “a Doric architecture in tones, but in tones that were merely suggestive, such as those of the cithara [or lyre].” He contrasts this with “the essence of Dionysian music (and hence of music in general),” namely “the emotional power of the tone, the uniform flow of the melody, and the utterly incomparable world of harmony” (BT 2). He associates Dionysian music with the strophic form of lyric poetry and the folk song, the “continuously generating melody” that “scatters image sparks all around, which in their variegation, their abrupt change, their mad precipitation, manifest a power quite unknown to the [Apollonian] epic and its steady flow” (BT 6). Later in the text, he proposes to offer “a single example from our common experience,” an analysis of Act III of Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde*. Before doing so, he tells us that he will “not appeal to those who use the images of what happens on the stage, the words and emotions of the acting persons, in order to approach with their help the musical feeling”; rather, he will address those who “speak music as their mother tongue,” “those who, immediately related to music, have in it, as it were, their motherly womb, and are related to things almost exclusively through unconscious musical relations” (BT 21). Yet the analysis that follows seems to violate Nietzsche’s own prescription. Strikingly general, its only direct comments about *Tristan* are, in fact, brief quotations from the libretto and quick descriptions of the actions of characters.

Perhaps we can account for this reticence by referring to Nietzsche’s claim that “language can never adequately render the cosmic symbolism of music,” that “*language*, as the organ and symbol of phenomena, can never by any means disclose the innermost heart of music” with which it is only in “superficial contact” (BT 6). Yet Nietzsche does offer several hints that can begin to clarify what sort of music a Dionysian music might be and how such music might relate to a more general ontology. The Dionysian, Nietzsche tells us, affirms “the joyous sensation of dissonance in music” (BT 24). What it “beholds through the medium of music is in urgent and active motion” (BT 6). In Dionysian music, we hear “the roaring desire for existence pouring from [the heart chamber of the world will] into all the veins of the world, as a thundering current or as the gentlest brook, dissolving into mist” (BT 21). In these poetic fragments, Nietzsche

seems to be describing *becoming* itself, becoming as movement of differential or dissonant forces. Quoting Schopenhauer, Nietzsche takes us further along this path:

“For melodies are to a certain extent, like general concepts, an abstraction from the actual. This actual world, then, the world of particular things, affords the object of perception, the special and individual, the particular case, both to the universality of concepts and to the universality of the melodies. But these two universalities are in a certain respect opposed to each other; for the concepts contain particulars only as the first forms of abstracted perception, as it were, the separated shell of things; thus they are, strictly speaking, *abstracta*; music, on the other hand, gives the inmost kernel which precedes all forms, or the heart of things. This relation may be very well expressed in the language of the schoolmen, by saying, the concepts are the *universalia post rem* [universals after things] but music gives the *universalia ante rem* [universals prior to things] and the real world the *universalia in re* [universals in things].” (BT 16)

Concepts, then, are abstractions *from* particular things.¹⁰ Music, on the other hand, *precedes* particulars, which actualize the forces it puts into play. Though Schopenhauer’s language here is Platonistic, we know that the Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy* is a naturalist for whom there is only one plane of being: that of becoming and the Dionysian, out of which Apollonian beings are actualized or differentiated, and back into which they eventually return. What Nietzsche is, once again, affirming here is something very much akin to Deleuze’s realm of the virtual: a natural, material flux of differential forces that is actualized in empirical individuals.

Yet *how* does music manifest this virtual power of becoming? And *what sort of* music exemplifies this virtual power? In *The Birth of Tragedy*, of course, Nietzsche found it in “German music” (BT 19), and, most fully, in the music of Wagner. Yet we also know that Nietzsche later retracted this claim and renewed his question: “what would a music have to be like that would no longer be of romantic origin, like German music – but *Dionysian*?” (BT, “Self-Criticism,” 6). For the most part, Nietzsche left this question unanswered. It is, I think, an untimely question, one not well answered by the nineteenth-century symphonic music that was Nietzsche’s milieu. Rather, I think, the question looks (or listens) ahead to a very different music, one that would gradually develop over the course of the twentieth century.

The music of the French American composer Edgard Varèse begins this trajectory (Cox 2003). In the early decades of the twentieth century, Varèse continually expressed dissatisfaction with classical music as it had come into existence since the Renaissance. In the 1920s he abandoned the term “music” in favor of the phrase “organized sound,” calling himself not a musician, but “a worker in rhythms, frequencies, and intensities.” At the same time, he complained that “the conventional orchestra of today precludes the exploitation of the possibilities of tone colors and range” and that “the division of the octave into twelve half-tones is purely arbitrary” (Varèse in Cox and Warner 2004: 20). Though he continued to compose for strings, brass, woodwind, and percussion, he began to introduce novel instruments such as sirens, theremins, and ondes martenot that would give his music a greater fluidity. Varèse was after a different sort of music: no longer a music of discrete tones and beautiful melodies but a deeply physical music of powerful flows and forces in tension. In a 1936 lecture he wrote:

When new instruments will allow me to write music as I conceive it, the movement of sound-masses, of shifting planes, will be clearly perceived in my work, taking the place of the linear counterpoint. When these sound-masses collide, the phenomena of penetration and repulsion will seem to occur. Certain transmutations taking place on certain planes will seem to be projected onto other planes, moving at different speeds and at different angles. There will no longer be the old conception of melody or interplay of melodies. The entire work will be a melodic totality. The entire work will flow as a river flows. (Cox and Warner 2004: 17–18)

Varèse would later discover such a sound world in electronic music, to which he dedicated himself from the early 1950s until his death in 1965.

Electronic music made a decisive break with the musical tradition. Dispensing with traditional musical sonorities and the various discrete instruments and instrumental families that produce them, it affirmed the univocity of sound, generating the entire musical field out of a stream of electrons emitted by an oscillator. Electronic music is a music of forces and flows, of mobile electronic particles contracted or dilated by filters and modulators. As such, it is often criticized as “cold,” “impersonal,” “dehumanized,” “abstract.” These descriptions are apt, for electronic music opens music to something beyond the human, the subject, and the person: the non-organic life of sound that precedes any actual composition or composer, the virtual realm of pre-individual and pre-personal forces and flows.

Another decisive break was made by *musique concrète*, which emerged slightly earlier in Pierre Schaeffer’s Paris studio. *Musique concrète* exploited the resources of newly developed recording technologies – initially the wax cylinder and, by the early 1950s, the tape recorder. Effectively dissolving the distinction between “music,” “sound,” and “noise,” recording tape provided a neutral surface that could register any sound whatsoever and make it the raw material for composition. Hence, works of *musique concrète* freely mixed the sounds of percussion instruments and pianos with the sounds of train whistles, spinning tops, pots and pans, and canal boats. Though they began with documentary material, however, Schaeffer and his compatriots celebrated the fact that tape music could give access to sound itself, liberated from any reference to musical instruments (see Schaeffer in Cox and Warner 2004: 76–81). Via various techniques (eliminating a sound’s attack or decay, slowing it down or speeding it up, running it backwards, etc.), *concrète* composers succeeded in abstracting sounds from their sources, thus eliminating all referentiality and short-circuiting the auditory habits of listeners. Their ability to do this was aided by the fact that tape music was “performed” without any visual element to speak of: no performers or instruments, just pure sonic matter emanating from loudspeakers.

John Cage moved even further along this path. He explicitly attempted to liberate music from human subjectivity, thereby opening up a transcendental or virtual field of sound.¹¹ Cage insisted that music precedes and exceeds human beings. “Music is permanent,” he wrote; “only listening is intermittent” (Cage in Cox and Warner 2004: 224).¹² “Chance” and “silence” were his transports into this virtual domain. “Chance” procedures allowed the composer to bypass his subjective preferences and habits in order to make way for sonic conjunctions and assemblages that were not his own, or, indeed, anybody’s. And “silence,” for Cage, named a sort of musical plane of immanence: not the absence of sound (an impossibility, he pointed out), but the

absence of *intentional* sound – a plane on which dance liberated sound particles.¹³ In his famous “silent” composition, *4’33”*, Cage invites the audience to hear the flow of non-intentional, environmental sound – wind, rain, shuffling feet, creaking chairs, humming appliances, etc. – as a musical event. By offering a composition that, paradoxically, abdicates the role of the composer, Cage opens music to the Dionysian element, for, as Nietzsche puts it, “Only insofar as the genius in the act of artistic creation coalesces with this primordial artist of the world, does he know anything of the eternal essence of art” (*BT* 5). That “primordial artist” is, of course, the plane of immanence of nature itself. And composition of this sort is “imitation of nature” – not a reproduction of nature’s actual forms but an imitation of its virtual power, or, as Cage often put it, “imitation of nature in her manner of operation” (see Cage in Cox and Warner 2004; on this notion of “imitation of nature” as the imitation of the “*art impulses of nature*” see *BT* 2).

Since the mid-twentieth century the experiments of Varèse, Schaeffer, Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and others have given rise to a new sonic or audio culture that considers music-sound as a natural flow on a par with other such flows (geological, genetic, linguistic, etc.). In the noise composition of Merzbow, the *concrète* performances of Francisco López, the soundscape recordings of Chris Watson, and the electronic signals that course through the work of Carl Michael von Hausswolff and Kaffe Matthews, and in so much experimental music today is disclosed the field of musical becoming, the virtual domain of music that, in his first book, Nietzsche called “Dionysian.” Like the white noise of the seashore in which Leibniz and Deleuze heard the Dionysian, experimental music today offers “a musical mirror of the world” (*BT* 6): an aural image of the distinct-obscure world of natural becoming, the dissonant play of forces that makes possible the world of empirical particulars.

Music, Science, and the Interpretation of Existence (Reprise)

With this, we can finally return to and unpack the passage with which we began. Recall that, in *GS* 373, Nietzsche criticizes “scholars” for “never catching sight of the really great problems and question marks.” Among these scholars, he singles out “mechanistic material scientists” for their merely “human” horizons, interpretations, and perspectives. Such interpretations take the world to be composed solely of discrete, sensible, and quantifiable entities. And they take natural change to be a matter of the causal interactions of these entities. Such positivist, reductionist, and mechanistic interpretations, Nietzsche insists, are superficial, stupid, meaningless, and worthless. At the end of the passage, he briefly notes that music provides a potent counter-example, asserting that, insofar as it cannot account for music, positivist and mechanist science fails to provide an adequate interpretation of the world.

At the outset, I urged that we take this musical example to be making not merely a phenomenological point or a point about aesthetic value, but a deep ontological claim about the way the world is. Here, as elsewhere, Nietzsche is urging us “*to look at science in the perspective of the artist, but at art in that of life*” (*BT*, “Self-Criticism,” 2), arguing that aesthetic interpretations of the world are better, richer, and more naturalistic than scientific ones. More specifically, I take him to be pointing back to his thesis in

The Birth of Tragedy that music is an ontological echo that provides us with an aural representation of the very nature of things. What music shows us, I have argued, is that the domain of individuated, actualized, fully constituted, empirical subjects and objects is premised on the domain of becoming: a virtual, transcendental realm of differential forces. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche calls this domain the Dionysian. Such a domain precedes and exceeds the horizon of the human and calls for a “transcendental empiricism in contrast with everything that makes up the world of the subject and the object” (Deleuze 2001: 25). Aptly enough, the symbol of Dionysus is the satyr, “that synthesis of god and billy goat” (*BT*, “Self-Criticism,” 4), a creature at once post- and pre-human. Tragedy (literally, goat-song) affirms nature and becoming as virtual powers that generate and supersede the human along with every other actual entity. “Dionysian art,” Nietzsche writes,

wishes to convince us of the eternal joy of existence: only we are to seek this joy not in phenomena, but behind them. We are to recognize that all that comes into being must be ready for a sorrowful end; we are forced to look into the terrors of the individual existence – yet we are not to become rigid with fear: a metaphysical comfort¹⁴ tears us momentarily away from the bustle of the changing figures. We are really for a brief moment primordial being itself, feeling its raging desire for existence and joy in existence; the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena, now appear necessary to us, in view of the excess of countless forms of existence which force and push one another into life, in view of the exuberant fertility of the universal will. (*BT* 17)

Gay Science 373, then, offers an ontology, an ontology alternative to the ontology of positivistic science, an ontology guided by music, which, Nietzsche suggests, provides an image of natural becoming or, in other words, “will to power” as a “*pre-form* of life.” The passage perhaps invites the objection that Nietzsche, the perspectivist, has no right to offer such an account of the way the world really is. To which Nietzsche would no doubt respond, as he does in another passage in which he presents the will to power as an interpretation counter to that of mechanistic science: “Supposing that this also is only interpretation – and you will be eager enough to make this objection? – well, so much the better” (*BGE* 22).

See also 3 “The Aesthetic Justification of Existence”; 6 “Nietzsche’s ‘Gay’ Science”; 8 “Nietzsche’s Philosophy and True Religion”; 9 “The Naturalisms of *Beyond Good and Evil*”; 12 “Nietzsche on Time and Becoming”; 30 “Nietzsche’s Theory of the Will to Power”

Notes

I thank Keith Ansell Pearson for insightful comments and suggestions that prompted this essay and shaped its argument, and Daniel W. Smith for helpful comments along the way.

- 1 This term is only suggested in the passage. Yet Nietzsche first introduces the term *Übermensch* earlier in *The Gay Science* (§143); and Book V, in which *GS* 373 appears, was added in 1887, following the publication of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in which the *Übermensch* is a central figure.

- 2 The argument that art trumps science is a key feature of *The Birth of Tragedy* and remains important throughout Nietzsche's corpus. See e.g. *BT*, "Self-Criticism," and *GM* III. 25. For more on this issue, see Cox 1999: ch. 1, esp. pp. 63–8.
- 3 In the literal, etymological sense in which Nietzsche often uses this term: *meta*: beyond or above; *physics*: nature.
- 4 For a more sustained anti-Hegelian reading of *The Birth of Tragedy*, see Deleuze 1983.
- 5 For Nietzsche, "being" has two related meanings. On the one hand, it names distinct and subsistent empirical particulars, individual entities. On the other hand, it names metaphysical entities that are not affected by becoming or change. As a naturalist, Nietzsche holds that there is only becoming and change and, hence, that, strictly speaking, there are no autonomous, subsistent empirical particulars. The illusion of empirical beings, Nietzsche holds, is due in part to the Platonist projection of metaphysical being into the empirical.
- 6 This notion of "unity" or "unit-hood" (*Einheit*) is surely different from that of the "primordial unity" (*Ur-Eine*) spoken of in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The former clearly refers to the (Apollonian) illusion of unity and individuation characteristic of empirical beings, while the latter refers to the indistinctness characteristic of the realm of becoming or the Dionysian. Aware of this potential confusion, the later Nietzsche qualifies his talk of becoming and the Dionysian as "unities," describing them instead as continuums or multiplicities.
- 7 For a rich, Deleuzian and Nietzschean-inspired analysis of natural becoming, see De Landa 1997.
- 8 The passage invites comparison with Deleuze's conception of being as both "univocal" and "multiple." See Deleuze 1994: 35ff., 1990: 177–80.
- 9 This example (and the associated examples of the waterfall and watermill) are recurrent in Leibniz's corpus. See also *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §33 (1989: 65), Letter to Arnauld (April 30, 1687) (1989: 81), and preface to the *New Essays on Human Understanding* (1989: 295–6).
- 10 The same is true of words, according to Nietzsche. See *BT* 6 and 19, for example. On the connection between concepts and words as abstractions, see also TL 81–4.
- 11 A composer, Cage remarked, should "give up the desire to control sound, clear his mind of music, and set about discovering means to let sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments" (1973: 10).
- 12 Compare Deleuze and Guattari: "music is not the privilege of human beings: the universe, the cosmos, is made of refrains" (1987: 309).
- 13 "There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot" (Cage 1988: 8). "[T]o me, the essential meaning of silence is the giving up of intention" (Cage 1988: 189).
- 14 In his 1886 preface, Nietzsche, the rigorous naturalist, corrects the Schopenhauerian phrase "metaphysical comfort," replacing it with "*this-worldly* comfort" (*BT*, "Self-Criticism," 7).

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