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Michael Schnitzius

Response #7: RCP Beauvoir, Perception, Husserl §18-27

My response will focus on the Perception chapter as it interacts with Thomas Clifton's discussion of musical structure in his discussion of Webern's op. 9, no. 1, Bagatelle for String Quartet (in his article "Music as Constituted Object"). Regarding musical structure (manifest as "tonality", "[atonal] set-structure", etc.), Clifton argues that the pursuit of perceiving musical structure "in-itself" is an absurdity that confuses the exact nature of structure in the first place. Since musical structure is a meaning-structure existent only to the extent that it is perceived as-such, Clifton argues that it is only valid to inquire about a piece's "structure 'for-me'". This view seems to align itself with Lewin's "*I hear [perceive] this about the [structure], and I think you can too*". Clifton goes on to argue that this structure "for-me" is constituted by means of a complex "network of intentionalities", which he claims is a term in the tradition of Merleau-Ponty (I am intrigued by this notion).

I agree with all of this to the extent that I understand it, and I think that the denial of real access to structure "in-itself" is a great point in defense of the simultaneous validity of contradicting "adjacent readings" in music (as in Morgenruss and in my planned thesis). What I am wondering about in connection to the reading on Perception in the RCP is how this claimed inaccessibility of structures "in-themselves" relates to the Cartesian theory of ideas. Are musical structures "real" *objects* of acts in the Husserlian sense? Or are they merely the "possibly less real" *contents* of musical-perceptual acts? Is either use of terms valid here? Is it valid to uphold the theory of ideas as it relates to structures (insofar as structures are subject-dependent meanings and not actual physical objects), or does a phenomenological investigation entail the indiscriminant denial of the law of ideas? Furthermore, are structures "in-themselves" inaccessible in both tonal and atonal contexts, making the apparent transparency of such

Is it possible to break into an object's "in-itselfness"?

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structures in tonal music an illusion? Or is this inaccessibility only an issue in atonal music? I know these are a lot of nitpicky questions, but I am convinced that they are at the core of my project's investigations.

For example, is the musical structure at work in the example below *actually* knowable (as a structure "in-itself"), or is this merely an illusion due to the relative simplicity of the example?

structure "in-itself"?

I ii⁶ V₄₋₃ I

this is an excellent question, I don't think so.

This sketch posits a background of basic tonality that is precisely not only in its nature, it finally finds its way back to the surface.

Series — the monolithic form which all sound is born!

If it is actually knowable (presumably on account of its simplicity), then is the structure "in-itself" of Webern op. 3, no. 1, *not* knowable (presumably on account of its complexity and nuance)?

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One-Page #7: John Williams's *Star Wars* Theme in the First Movement of Bruckner's Symphony No. 4: Illusion or Hallucination?

Chia-Ying (Charles) Wu 02/13/2012

Based on two types of perceptual error, illusion and hallucination, "we directly perceive non-physical objects" (RCP, 146). If a penny appears as elliptical to someone, the perceptual error "illusion" is involved (RCP, 147). The perceptual error "hallucination" operates in one's mind, if a tiger seems to be in a room when it is actually not (RCP, 147). Similar phenomena can be observed in the perception of the first movement of Bruckner's Symphony No. 4. In case of illusion, the beginning of a theme in m. 51-52 from the first movement of Bruckner's Symphony No. 4,



, may sound and appear like John Williams's *Star Wars*



theme, , since both share similar melodic idea. When one actually listens to the real *Star Wars* theme,



, one may realize that one's

illusion of hearing *Star Wars* in the first movement of Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 is really one's hallucination. The theme of *Star Wars* does not exist in the first movement of Bruckner's Symphony No. 4. In other words, John Williams does not quote or borrow melodic idea for the *Star Wars* theme from the first movement of Bruckner's Symphony No. 4.

oh, one is hearing a musical doubt!!

brilliant

well, you should present this idea in light of Heidegger's truth values!

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Gail Weiss' discussions on Simone De Beauvoir's interdisciplinary phenomenology, in particular, was thought provoking component of our assigned reading and deserves the attention of further discussion. Firstly, the combination, and resultant collegiate alienation, of philosophical study with other empirical branches seems prudent and potentially fruitful. Here I take my provincial, subjective understanding of these sciences as a means for making ethical judgments about this coming together of different practices for interpreting the knowledge of the world. An observer would place me in the existentialist camp for this support for amalgamated philosophical practices, to take the best of both worlds, defying those that hold to dogma, as Weiss describes it "not to rest content with the status quo". It is interesting to then appreciate, that Beauvoir is also very concerned with strict and rigorous observation of experiential data, the adaptation of much of Husserl's work is additionally provocative and insightful, the standard fair for the work of Simone De Beauvoir.

In pondering how a musical phenomenologist/existentialist would read a prominent work in the Western Musical Canon, in a way that was:

- 1) Not circumscribed to the accepted reading or analysis
- 2) A true analysis of an experience

This question is too length to fully examine in this short paper, but I will offer some rudimentary observations and ideas. For my example I take the much loved Cmajor Prelude from J.S.Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier Book I (see example one). Perhaps one of the most prevalent readings of how to understand the harmonic processes that underpin Bach's keyboard works, is the analytical practices of Heinrich Schenker. A simple harmonic break down, exemplifies harmonic patters and compositional devices typical of the baroque (see example two). In the Schenkerian method, goal related methodology gives impetus to a reading of the work as exemplifying a motion from a tonic centrality, to a dominant shift, with a final return to a conclusion on the original tonic key. If the phenomenologist was to observe a performance of the work, as opposed to score study of abstract symbols, the analytical results would be very different. An examination of pianist Glen Gould's performance interpretation of Bach's Well tempered Clavier, decidedly unique, could offer an alternate phenomenological reading of Bach's composition (listen example four, notice the fragmentation of each harmonic passage). There is much more to say about this.

You could have made this gender specific, you didn't need to, but it is interesting to think the gender studies approach of the book.

Excellent, you're saying (I think) that a phenomenological interpretation of Bach is one that articulates the grain of the voice as the body.

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EXAMPLE ONE:

C: I H⁴/₂ V⁶/₃ I

EXAMPLE TWO:

4 8 12 → 16 20 → 24 28 → 32 35

ii → V7 → I V7/V → V V7/V → V vii⁹/ii ii → V7 → I V7/IV vii⁹/V vii⁹/V V7/IV ii7 → V7 → I

domains: I V ii I IV V IV V I

EXAMPLE THREE:

3 2 1

I V I

EXAMPLE FOUR:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0egJr6nvCQI>